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## Editor's Note

Welcome to issue One Hundred Two. The pieces in these pages share a contemplative tone, reflecting on the past, evaluating the present, and speculating on what is yet to come. Gavin Broom returns with a lovely and subtle seaside story, and C. M. Donahue imagines a lunar adventurer's final moments in free verse. Heather Santo's flash fiction explains how science and art collaborate in the realm of the beyond. Askold Skalsky's sonnet explores the distance between desire and reality, and Emily Williamson's blank verse poem turns a landfill into a time machine.

— Laura Garrison

# The First Week in July

Gavin Broom

This is how my mornings go.

It's still early. The beach is quiet, the sea even more so. It's early July and hot and humid and thunderstorms never seem too far from the horizon. Somehow, lightning flashes without the need of a cloud.

Dad and I are in the water, throwing a battered and faded pink Frisbee back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. We did the same thing yesterday. We'll do it tomorrow. We've been doing this for a while. We'll be doing it for a while yet before Dad's hangover subsides enough for him to face the rest of the world. In the meantime, he's kneeling down so his head and shoulders and arms are the only parts of his body above water, his eyes hidden behind shades, stubble prickling from his face.

Despite what he calls his 'tender condition', he's very good at throwing Frisbee—we both are—and despite its signs of age and the fish nibbles around the edges, the disc normally flies parallel to the surface of the sea, straight into my hand from his and vice versa without either of us remarking on it. I like to imagine sunbathers on the beach watching us, whispering to each other about how good those two guys are at throwing a Frisbee to each other. That's how good we are. Sometimes, though, a gust will take it higher, like it's taken a step upstairs, and it'll carry it over my head.

"Jump, Andy," he'll say when this happens, usually while I'm already jumping, full-stretch, my fingers inches short of the rim.

“Andrew,” he’ll say when this happens, more disappointed than before.

While I go to retrieve the Frisbee, wading through the sea like it’s treacle, depending on how far he’s through what he calls his ‘recovery cycle’, he’ll start eyeing up the young women in bikinis until he gets to the point where he’s chatting to them, making them laugh, and I become a fifteen-year-old-boy standing in the Caribbean Sea with a faded pink Frisbee, looking for someone to throw it to.

That is how my mornings go.

This is how my afternoons go.

Afternoons, Dad works. His bank is in George Town somewhere, lost in a forest of other banks. I’m not sure of the name. I don’t know the address. I’ve never been. I’ve never seen it. I asked one time, a couple of years ago, if I could see his desk and see what he does for a living, but apparently no one takes their kids to work. I haven’t asked again. I haven’t asked why he doesn’t take more time off while I’m here because the last time I asked that he reminded me that he takes every morning off. This is true. Every single morning. We stand in the sea together.

After he leaves, I hang around the beach for a while. Sometimes, I’ll read a book. Sometimes, very occasionally, one of the women he’s been chatting to will try to chat to me. She’ll ask me if my dad really is a banker on the island. I tell her he is. She’ll ask if he’s a millionaire. I tell her I have no idea. Usually after that, she’ll quickly realize I’m not blessed with the same gift of the gab and, uncomfortably, she’ll wander away.

By two o'clock, the sun is so hot that the guy who drills umbrellas into the sand gives up for the day. At that point, me and the Frisbee head back to the hotel and take up residence at the pool bar. The servers always remember me from previous years, and remember Dad's tips, and they do their best to keep me company while the jukebox plays the same six or seven reggae tunes in a random order.

"Whatcha want, Andy?" Serena asks me once she's made sure every other glass along the bar is full. "Another Coke?"

"Rum punch," I tell her.

She laughs.

I slide a £10 note across the bar. "Rum punch. Heavy on the rum, light on the punch."

She gives me a Coke and leaves my money on the bar until the ceiling fan threatens to blow it away and I put it back in my wallet. Later on, round about five o'clock, earlier if there's a thunderstorm, when people leave to get ready for dinner and the pool bar is quieter, she slips me a rum punch that's maybe ten percent rum. When she does this, she sends me a wink that's code for 'on the house'.

"Don't tell your dad," Serena says.

"I won't," I promise. And I never do.

I down the drink in one gulp, hoping that I'll get at least half a quick buzz on my empty stomach. Sometimes I do. At some point, I'll grab the Frisbee, leave the hotel and head to his apartment, which is across the street. I'll let myself in, maybe take a shower if the heat and humidity have been especially bad, and I'll sit on his balcony just to get away from the small rooms, and I'll watch the



taxis and minibuses bustle their way along West Bay Road while the sun makes a hasty exit over the horizon.

At some point, I'll think about calling Mum, but I don't like using his phone. I don't like him knowing that I used it. I don't like Mum knowing that I felt I had to.

That is how my afternoons go.

This is how my evenings go.

Dad gets back from work late, around eight. I've suspected for some time that this is because he takes the morning off but he insists he always works to that time.

"It's a twenty-four-hour world," he says as though that explains anything.

We go to dinner, usually in George Town, sometimes a little further north nearer West Bay and the turtle farm, always somewhere that has a good whisky selection. Dad tends to know the owners of wherever it is we eat. They give him their chat, he sucks it up. Wherever we end up, we're usually among the last to leave.

And then eventually one of the evenings will be the last evening and I'll have to do my packing because regardless of the time of my flight back to England, he'll drop me off around noon and leave me to go to work.

"Should I pack the Frisbee?" I ask. I ask it every year.

"Sure," he says.

"I never throw it back home."

"What makes you say that?"

“Nothing. It just seems to make sense to keep it here, y’know, where it gets used. It sits in my suitcase all year.”

“It doesn’t take up that much room in your baggage, does it?”

“Well, no. It’s just a Fris—”

“Probably best just to pack it, then.”

That is how my evenings go.

One year, the first year I came to visit, when I was ten, we caught a tiny plane and flew to Little Cayman. Even though I’d just spent eleven hours flying to Miami and then another two hours from Miami to Grand Cayman, all on my own, this little half-hour flight was terrifying. Dad told me the plane was called a Twin Otter. It had two propellers. It sat about twenty people although that day it was maybe half full. Someone had to move over from the left side to the right because, Dad said, there was a fat guy sitting up front throwing the weight distribution off. I’ve never been so sure I was going to die.

Somehow, I survived. We spent six days of my seven-day holiday round about Blossom Village. We swam. We played with turtles in the sea. We hiked to the highest point on the island, a whole forty feet above sea level according to Dad. We didn’t wear shoes. No one ever mentioned a bank in George Town. At that point, I had even less of an idea of what Dad does for a living than I do now.

Thinking back to that year, it was awkward, and things that I didn’t really grasp at the time I realize now were signs that he felt the same, maybe even a bit worse. For my part, I was getting to

know my dad at about the same time I was getting to know my step-dad. I had my own issues.

On the last day of the holiday, we went souvenir shopping on the one store on the island that wasn't a liquor store. I hadn't touched the holiday money Mum had given me so I splashed out. I bought Mum a turtle brooch and a t-shirt that said, 'Island Time' and had a picture of a turtle snoozing on a hammock. I got Ella, my baby half-sister, a toy turtle that was so big I struggled to get it to flatten into my suitcase. Dad didn't say anything at the time, but later at our last dinner together, he asked who the toy turtle was for. I told him it was for Ella and something seemed to slip from his face for a moment and whatever it was, when it came back, it wasn't the same. I also bought myself a bright red Frisbee, which was about the only thing in the store that didn't have a turtle on it.

We spent the rest of the last full day on Little Cayman standing in the sea, throwing the Frisbee back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and I laughed when the wind grabbed it, carried it away from us, far above our heads, and dropped it in the empty sea where I could swim after it, and where the local fish mistook it for something they could eat.

Born in Scotland, **GAVIN BROOM** now lives and writes in Michigan. His collection of short fiction and poetry, *A Documentary About Sharks*, is available on Amazon for less than the cost of a coffee. He produces two indie podcasts—*Common Language* and *The Talk of the Street*—with his wife, which gives them an excuse to talk to each other. He'll tell you what he thinks about movies at [gaviano.wordpress.com](http://gaviano.wordpress.com).

***Yutu***

**C. M. Donahue**

*“‘Goodnight Earth. Goodnight humanity’: China’s Jade Rabbit Rover  
Tweets Its Own Death”*

—The Independent, 03 February 2014

Upon landing on the moon,  
I reach my robotic arm out  
into the silence. My solar panels,  
like metallic sunflowers, blossom  
and angle to find light. The solar wind  
coats my body with a layer of dust  
as I take in the grey desert  
and the vast darkness beyond it—  
my new home.

After my first lunar night.  
I trundle across the highlands  
to survey the maria and craters stretching  
in canyons before me. My wheels  
plow through soil like snow  
with a scent resembling spent gunpowder.  
My arm extends to capture samples:  
basaltic rock, volcanic glass beads,  
the ubiquitous dust of comet particles.  
I store them in my pockets, souvenirs  
for the journey back.

Weeks later I awake to find  
I can no longer move—a glitch  
in the control circuit. Rooted  
to the surface, I listen to the static crackle  
from my radio as my mind wanders  
to the image of a single boot print.

After two years, I still huddle  
like a Rabbit, waiting  
for Chang'e, the moon goddess  
drunk on the elixir of immortality.  
Between periods of blinding sun  
and opaque shadow, I look out into space:  
eddies of neon nebula amid  
the scattering of stars hypnotize,  
lull me into sleep mode  
as I look back to earth, a blue crescent  
pinned to this lonely horizon.

**C. M. DONAHUE** holds a BFA in Poetry from Emerson College and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Connecticut. Poetry by C. M. Donahue has recently appeared in *Amaryllis* and *Sonic Boom*.

# The Distillation Process

Heather Santo

I lightly smooth the creases in my white lab coat with the palm of one hand. The patch above my left breast pocket, stitched in black letters, says my name: ALMA. Taking a deep breath, I mentally prepare for another workday. "Good morning, Mike."

He smiles warmly and tips his hat in greeting. "Another big delivery," Mike says, handing me a clipboard.

I sign and carefully take the packages from him. "Thank you," I reply. "See you tomorrow."

I enter the lab and set the boxes on my receiving bench. The room is awash in bright light, reflecting sunbursts off the shiny metal surfaces. Comfortable and familiar in this open space, I put on gloves and prepare the first wash bath.

As the bath warms to the appropriate temperature, I take a package from the top of the stack, remembering the words of my mentor. "They never cease to take my breath away," she'd told me in my days as a young apprentice.

Pulling a tab, I open the box and remove the packing slip. The top line reads, "Johanna Schmidt, age 32." I move to the computer and begin my notes. Once I have all the necessary information logged, I return to the package and tilt it slightly.

Out spills a fluid-like material, lighter than silk, billowing in all the deep colors of an evening sunset. I smooth it out much like I had my own lab coat, nodding in agreement with my once mentor.

To this day, they still take my breath away.

I slip the soul of Johanna Schmidt, age 32, into the wash and watch the colors wick out, staining the bath in rainbow swirls. It's fairly quick, and after several minutes I remove the material, now snow white, from the basin. There is a line on the opposite lab bench, where I drape the cleansed fabric to dry. At the end of the workday, I will collect everything on the line and package it for shipment to the next location.

For now, I return to the bath and transfer the colored liquid into a still pot. I add boiling chips and place this into a sand bath atop a hot plate, connect the condenser and then the receiving flask. While the pot heats, I turn on the cooling water, adjust the vacuum and increase the temperature.

This is the distillation process, which takes some time. I multitask and prepare the next wash bath. Once the distillate is collected, I turn off the hot plate and remove the still pot from the heat.

Finally, I hold the receiving flask up to the light.

Prior to this, my role is entirely analytical. However, the reason I enjoy my work so much is the element of intuition I am required to bring into practice. The shelving in front of me holds a library of colored vials. I approach and a familiar excitement pulsates in my chest. The blue vial on the middle shelf, a shade like winter sky, draws me closer. I pick it up with my free hand and return to the lab bench.

I weigh blue powder into the flask, set it on a second hot plate, and then return to the distillation station to prepare clean glassware and start the procedure over. It's a streamlined process. Once the next distillate is collected, the first will have crystallized and I will have prepped another wash bath.

Here I pause to admire the first crystal of the day. Gently, I pour the crystal over filter paper. Each varies slightly in shape, size and clarity. This one is roughly as large as my thumbnail.

I remove the crystal with tweezers and place it on a glass slide, which I carry to the microscope.

With a few turns of a knob, I bring the crystal into sharp focus. I blink my eyes several times and watch as the memory, one perfect moment in time, plays from within.

There is snow. I can see a cold river cutting through a valley, white-capped mountains looming in the distance. From this point of view, I am hunched on the ground with a camera in my hands. Across the river a lone black wolf pauses at the edge of the river. Her fur is gray with age. She looks up and we lock eyes.

I lift my face away from the lens of the microscope, slide out the crystal and take it back to the lab bench. I unclasp a box and place the crystal inside a small slot.

The workday continues much in the same fashion, a practiced pattern but each time I look at a crystal under the microscope, I see a different memory. When the box is full, I shut the lid, snap down the clasps and start lab shut down protocols. The white cloths of recently departed and cleansed souls are folded and prepared for shipment. I place them by the door for pickup.

Instead of dropping the box on the same pickup shelf, I carry it upstairs to Lucas. He is the most talented mosaic artist I've worked with in my career. Our professional association has bloomed into friendship, and I look forward to passing off the box to him each night.

"Hello, Alma!" he exclaims. Lucas is standing atop a platform supported by tall scaffolding.



I wave in return, set the box on his worktable and take in the scene before me. His canvas is made of dark velvet, fixed with the many glittering crystals that make up all the stars in the universe.

**HEATHER SANTO** is a development chemist living in Pittsburgh, PA, with her husband, four cats, two puppies and a tarantula. In addition to writing, her interests include travel, photography and collecting skeleton keys. Follow her Instagram and Twitter @Heather52384.

## Indeterminate Drives

Askold Skalsky

When I grew up, I wanted to be a microcluster  
and have a safe life, to be incorporated into larger  
wholes, part of a clutch, like a hand holding out  
its fingers, like globules of stars moving in the same  
direction with nearly the same speed. Just a clot in a  
coagulated mass, a portion of a roundish, viscous lump.  
Later when my individual tendencies crystallized,  
I opted for a pyrotechnic signal, a group of fireballs,  
maybe a mineral formation like a bunch of grapes  
or a decoration of silvery acorns and oak leaves.  
But something had gone wrong: I began to feel thick  
and nondescript as though degenerating into a canister.  
My hopes diminished; my prospects fell like fragment-  
ation bombs released from an aircraft at great height.

Originally from Ukraine, **ASKOLD SKALSKY** currently resides in Hagerstown, Maryland, and has had poems in over 300 magazines and online journals in the USA as well as in literary publications in Canada, England, Ireland, mainland Europe, Turkey, Australia, and Bangladesh. Over the years he has won several prizes for individual poems as well as two Individual Artist Awards in Poetry from the Maryland State Arts Council. His first book of poems, *The Ponies of Chuang Tzu*, was published in 2011 by Horizon Tracts press in New York City.

# Adaptation

Emily Williamson

*I'm a very simple man. You've got to have, like, a computer nowadays to turn the TV on and off, and the nightmare continues.*

—Ozzy Osbourne

Can't blame the man who wants a simple choice,  
A single flavor of things, like milk or bacon,  
Or, hell, the joys of bat decapitation.  
I share this with the OzMan—our nightmare of logins,

Reboots, control-deletes and verifications,  
And tweets, repeat and post, like the whole damn world  
Is a password lost, my mother's maiden name,  
The street where I grew up, my best friend's dog.

If I were to slice a landfill clean as a loaf,  
I'd find the thrown-out goods there stratified.  
The patient possessions of the past still lie  
There, flawless as Pompeii or Oetzi from the Alps.

I mean the Walkman layer. The one with gremlin heads,  
Wall phones with cords, and decals like *Baby on Board*,  
Warped VCRs, and carbon paper, Flowbees,  
Monopoly thimbles, Moon Boots, Rotary dials,

Parachute pants, the moon, and Garfield's ass,  
(Poor fella, caught in all those crank-up windows)  
The hollow carcass of the Millennium Falcon,  
And a Breyer horse, a still-born Polaroid.

The trash tells all. From where it started out  
To me—a dinosaur—now gone the way  
Of the wallpaper store, the sewing machine repair.  
We're made of all the stuff we've thrown away,

From arrowheads to ear spools, fishing hooks  
Of abalone shell, and ferrous awls,  
The broken dish the maid could not abide,  
The hand-wrought nails, the medicine bottle glass

Turned lavender by sun and manganese,  
Patinaed window panes and baby teeth,  
Old whiskey jugs, and ironstone, great stacks  
Of broken headboards, chairs, steel barrel hoops,

Distorted wagon wheels, mining claims,  
Red Bakelite casino chips and beads,  
Bel Airs and Chesterfield tobacco tins,  
Sweet Esther Williams' face on a Wheaties box,

Ford engine blocks, and stirrup pants, and cans  
Of faded Pabst Blue Ribbon, and like I said,  
The gutted remains of Ozzy Osbourne's tapes—  
Their shiny ribbons flashing in the sun.

It's all there, stacking up, still growing.  
But if I had to pick one single thing,  
One fragment of a temporary life,  
The exceptional phenomenon of me,

It's just this off-white café coffee mug,  
Crazing and chipped, in a plain café, in a town  
Where the coffee's even plainer, when it comes,  
Burnt black but weak, with cleverly tepid cream.

A coffee that won't put on airs, that won't  
Declare its kinship with dry cabernet  
Or camembert, where I can stare through panes  
Of unwashed windows, to a steady mountain range

And all its folded age, its stoic frown.  
Just watch. It doesn't move. It doesn't change  
In the sunbaked sky and all I ever knew.  
A simple thing that keeps on slowing time.

Formerly an archaeologist, **EMILY WILLIAMSON** is a writer, editor, and literary agent currently based in Baltimore, MD. Her poetry has appeared in *The Waterhouse Review* and is forthcoming in *Measure*. Her short stories have appeared in *Blackbird*, *Word Riot*, *Peacock Journal* & *Peacock Journal Anthology: Beauty First*, another was a finalist in *Glimmer Train's* Fiction Open 2012. She has a BA in Anthropology from American University and an MA in writing from Johns Hopkins University.





**On the cover:**

**"Untitled"** (chair)

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