a tufts student publication
Outbreath

spring 2006
managing editors: samantha hilbert, kristina ceruzzi

web editors: steven schaffert

cover photography: julie furbush

readers: carmel curtis, edith elliott, phillip lobo, leonora mahler, jenna nissan, victoria petrosino, danielle stein, meghan wallach

founding editor: cal levis

funded by: tufts community union

printed by: uni-graphics, inc.

webpage: ase.tufts.edu/outbreath

e-mail: out_breath@hotmail.com
Why a square? What magazine comes in a square? We’re a funny little magazine with a pseudo-word for a title and a square, almost-roundish shape. Who decided that Outbreath could be a word? Was there an intended meaning or did it just sound artsy? These questions constantly plague those of us who were not around at its inception. I have nevertheless come up with my own answers to these questions. Why are we square? Simple: it’s easier to throw like a Frisbee. What does Outbreath mean? It sounded more intellectual than 'exhale.'

While we were not exactly sure how Outbreath came into being, as the answers graduated with the founders, the basics of one of Tufts’ oldest literary magazines are very much intact in this spring’s Outbreath. We give to you, the reader, some of the best short fiction this campus has to offer and a sampling of the finest photography around.

When our staff sat down to read the stories all we had was the text. No authors, no gender, no age - just the pages of written work. To our amazement the stories we chose represent every class year, each gender and a range of majors. Each semester Outbreath takes on a new flavor. Representing the interests, the issues and the idiosyncrasies of the student body, Outbreath serves as a means of expression for life at Tufts. This spring college relationships and the death of grandparents seem to be at the forefront of issues facing our peers, but the stories range much wider than a few topics, as you will see on the following pages.

After my four years on the Outbreath staff and my second year as an editor, I say with confidence this issue is worth reading cover to cover. I would like to thank the staff of Outbreathers who put their sincere opinion and dedicated energy into this magazine (even if they had to be dragged to the living room couch at the 2-1-5). Enjoy your Outbreath reading and I hope this little square can give to you a fraction of what it has given me.

Samantha Hilbert
managing editor
postrain

a photo by catherine jett
table of contents

7. nukey
   neil padover

13. one of the guys
   alexis tsang

22. the trip
   tim garcia

27. snow/static/silence
   philip lobo

38. not the last dance
   rachel zar

44. distance
   alexis tsang

50. about the authors
a photo by joshua wilmoth
“It’s on the line,” Warren Traub screamed.
“It was out,” I heard my father say calmly, matter-of-factly.

My dad let out a sigh, swallowed deep, and waved his racquet in the air. “Fine,” he whispered, thinking that only he could hear it. I was OK with his concession. After all, we were guests at Mr. Traub’s country club. Maybe there were different rules here. Maybe it was on the line. Either way, it didn’t matter. I stared at my father, his knees bent, swaying from side to side, eagerly awaiting the next point, his next opportunity to prove that a fancy membership didn’t mean a thing in tennis; and for some reason I thought of the stories he used to tell me when I was little.

He used to recount in such vibrant detail the war stories that his father had told him. As I got older the tales got more graphic. When I was twelve, it was the story of my grandpa spending his night off, guarding a tank in France so that some higher ranked officers could go off and enjoy a brothel. Of course, they ended up with syphilis, and my grandpa took their job when they were dishonorably discharged. When I was fifteen, my father explained the Nazi knife sitting atop the bookshelf and the man who had to die to get it there. My dad told me that Grandpa believed the Nazi soldier wasn’t wretched and lifeless, but what he represented was. But he always ended the stories the same way, with the same moral. “Nicky,” he would say, “don’t pick the battles you know you can win. Pick the ones worth fighting. Or else what’s the point?”

“Advantage,” Warren Traub shouted confidently. He glared over at Steven and smirked. Warren bounced the tennis ball against the clay surface three times. He held it firmly, swiftly tossed it up into the air, and came down on it with a vengeance. The ball flew at me at a thousand miles per hour but I stood frozen. It hit me square in the nose and I started bleeding all over the court.

“Aw jeez, grab a towel before they kick us off the court,” I heard Steven say.

“Shut up, son. Give him a few minutes to rest.”

“You all right, bud?” my dad asked. I had been too deep in the middle of World War II to just move a little to the left. I guess that’s what it must be like to get hit by a stray bullet. It’s not so much that you don’t see it coming, it just doesn’t interest you.

“Anyway, let’s take a little break,” Warren said, taking charge. “Steven, why don’t you hang back with Nicky, while me and Carl grab some water?”

“Are you going to be OK?” my dad asked. By this point I was sitting against a metal fence,
my head tilted back, Kleenex stuffed up my nostrils.

“Yeah. I’ll be fine,” I uttered, but they were already walking away.

“My dad really did a number on you,” Steven said.

“He’s got some arm,” I responded. “Pretty competitive for a friendly tennis match.”

“Dude. It’s never friendly when winning’s at stake,” Steven retorted.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“I mean…take Olympic hockey,” he started. “Those guys shake hands and stuff all the time, always saying in interviews how they respect the other team, they put up a great fight, true leaders, blah, blah, blah. You know what they tell those guys in the locker room?”

I didn’t answer.

“They say rip those mother-fucking Canadians to shreds.”

“Well, what do the Canadians say?” I joked.

“Fine. Laugh about my theories. But it’s the truth. We’ll win at any cost. Chess or football or whatever. I’m gonna publish all this stuff one day, and people are going to be like, ‘Yeah, you’re right, Steven. Men are fucking crazy.’”

* * *

“How’s the produce business treatin’ ya?” Warren asked.

“Ya know, I’m having a great year. My boss seems to finally be recognizing my talent, and that drives me even harder,” my dad replied. “How about the legal world? Are you still doing negligence?”

“No, I’ve actually gone in a completely different direction. I’m a divorce lawyer, now. Much more personal,” Warren said.

“How’d you get into that?” my dad asked.

“Well, it was right about the time Jules and I were going through a pretty messy break-up, and I realized if I spun everything a certain way in the contracts, I’d end up on top.” He giggled and shot my dad a ‘come-on-can’t-two-guys-kid-each-other?’ look.

“How is Julie?” my dad asked.

Warren Traub took a deep breath and looked serious, as if he was about to utter some earth-shattering truth that would bring to light why he and Julie had ever even gotten together in the first place. Maybe there was a decent, healthy pumping heart underneath that rough exterior, after all. “Truth is, we don’t really speak,” Warren said with his eyes pinched, as if he was in pain. “Steven goes over there every few weeks, to check up on her. She’s busy with her practice you know.”

“She still does non-profit?”

“Yeah, she loves helping the little guy. Me, I’m all about the big dogs, but not Jules.”
In fact, Julie Traub wasn’t helping guys at all. For the past six years, she had been representing battered women who couldn’t afford high-priced lawyers. The two dads paced back to the court clutching Poland Spring bottles. Warren swaggered in his Lacoste polo and said hello to club members who passed by, forgetting each time to introduce Carl. “Jeez, I’m such a prick. I’m so bad about introductions,” he would always say. No apology necessary. My dad knew most of the men anyway, and didn’t feel like being formally introduced to any of them. They’d have to say hello the next time they passed each other. Warren and my father approached us. I wasn’t tilting my head any longer but I still had tissues clumped up my nose. The bleeding had mostly stopped. Steven was nursing an almost finished cigarette, fidgeting with the pack in his hand.

“My son’s like a chimney,” Warren said. “You don’t smoke do you, Nicky?”

“Nah,” I answered.

“Well, how about we scrap the next set, and just grab some lunch? We’ll meet up with your mom and Meryl.” Warren was just speaking to me. It seemed like he never addressed Steven directly, or if he was he was usually just barking orders.

By the time we got into the shade, my mom and Meryl were already sitting at a table under a large white umbrella. They were chatting in such a way that suggested that neither woman had had female contact in decades. And in a way, it wasn’t so far from the truth. My mother’s only close friend lived across the country; they spoke every few months and wrote letters but hadn’t seen each other in years. And Meryl – well I don’t think Meryl ever had any women friends as far as I can tell. At thirty-four, she had three graduate degrees but had forgone employment to focus on her painting. She painted landscapes mostly, but none was ever very good. Each one just seemed so barren, longing for something more to be splashed all over the canvas. Nonetheless, they had become a fixture of the Traub decorative scheme since Meryl moved in six months earlier. She was petite, with bleach-blonde hair, and her breasts were ready to burst through her skimpy bikini top. Personally, I don’t think Warren was in it for the free art.

“Do you have any names picked out for the baby?” my mom asked.

“Honey, it’s only the first month…” my dad interrupted.

“Well…actually, I was thinking about Willow for a girl and Woodmere for a boy.”

Steven caught my glance and rolled his eyes. While the adults became wrapped up in another conversation Steven whispered to me, “Isn’t she hot?”

“Who? Meryl? She’s your stepmom!”

“Not yet. God, my dad’s such a player.” What was he talking about? I knew that there had been other women, long before Warren and Julie split up, but I thought he was done with that now. Hadn’t he had enough, gotten it out of his system? Or was that not how it worked? Maybe man is doomed to be always left wanting more. One woman will never be enough, unless just for a sweetly,
bottled moment in time. Some people probably think that the chase is the woman’s worst enemy, making her man run out on her, cheat, lie, flee. But really, if the chase destroys anyone, it’s us. Warren looks sad, like something’s missing. He’ll never find it, because it’s right under his nose, and he would never think to look there.

I feel my mother’s hand gently touch my arm. “Well, Nukey was a C-section baby.” My face turned beat red. I didn’t like that nickname. It used to be endearing. My little sister couldn’t say Nicky as a tot, and all that seemed to roll off her tongue was Nukey. Like the bomb. And we used to laugh and love her charming pronunciation. But my mother was the only one who still called me it. “He was three weeks late. I don’t know what he was doing in there. He just didn’t want to come out. What were you doing in there, Nukey?”

Oh, God. Please end this miserable recounting of my childbirth. What’s up next on the agenda, the graphic pictures Uncle Dave took at my bris? It was worse.

“Did you have any postpartum, because one of my girlfriends…” Meryl began but I didn’t hear her voice anymore. I just kept thinking: don’t say I’m bipolar, don’t say I’m bipolar, don’t say I’m bi…”

“Well, I’m bipolar,” my mother said.

No one looked exceedingly shocked. If anything, there was a sense that all of the pieces had come to fit together. It was out there now. And she couldn’t take it back. Out there like a germ free-floating in the air, waiting to be passed on as gossip, waiting to fall on ears of rumor-hungry folk. I sat there waiting, hunched over, and praying that someone would break the silence. But all that anyone did was sip their pina coladas; not my mother, she couldn’t drink because of her medication.

Why didn’t you tell them that too, Mom? How could she do that? Let them in on our secret? It wasn’t hers, or mine, or my father’s. It was our secret. The secret that my family protected and cherished. The secret that was given like a gift to people, who had earned our trust, proved that they could understand. And all that safeguarding for what? So that my mother could just blab it off to some gold-digging, no-talent Barbie?

* * *

The ride home started out typically. Dee and Carl analyzed the dynamics of the day. They engaged in a point-counterpoint I was accustomed to. “She’s too young for him” one would say. “Love knows no age,” the other would retort. I used to listen without contributing, but I couldn’t sit silent. I was mentally agitated and felt my ears starting to burn. They stung and I felt blood rush to my head.

“I don’t understand you, mom,” I yelled.

“Excuse me?”
“I just don’t get it. You brief me and Alana on what not to say, when not to say it, where we shouldn’t say it. And you just tell the whole world your medical history whenever you want?”


“Nicky, what’s wrong with sharing? We’re open. It’s good to be open, to say what’s on your mind,” my dad said.

“Well, isn’t that what I’m doing right now? And since when are we so open? You can’t just change family policy because your therapist thinks it might be healthy all of a sudden.”

“I’m sorry. Next time, I’ll make sure to put it in writing.”
luz

a photo by catherine jett
It takes all the energy I have to lift my head from Alex’s lap to watch the train slowly pull into the station. “Finally,” is all I can say, as people pick up their bags and move towards the platform. The sun is shining through the wooden rafters and I’m forced to squint as I try to make out the numbers on the approaching train. It is dry and hot and my jeans are sticking to my legs, which are propped up on Zach’s knees. I reach into the grocery bag, pull out a can of lukewarm beer and pop the top off. I take a deep swig. A loud burp erupts from my mouth. “Woops, ‘scuse me,” I say, wiping my mouth with my hand.

“Oh come on, Grace, that was nothing. You’re losing your talent,” Zach mumbles from under the dirty Williams Hockey cap covering his face.

“Better than any of yours,” I retort as I grab the hat and jam it on my head. I haven’t washed my hair since I discovered cockroaches in the shower in our last hostel. I take the hat off and pile my long hair on top of my head. It’s so greasy that I can tie it in a bun without an elastic band.

The three of us have formed a messy but comfortable triangle of bodies, rucksacks and grocery bags. Our sneakers are strewn in the center and none of us care enough to complain about the smell anymore. We slowly get up and stretch. It is exactly 5:37 pm and we have been awake for thirty hours and drunk for twenty-four. I lean on Alex’s shoulder as we wait for the passengers to disembark.

Adjusting my backpack is no easy task, as it is the size of my entire upper body. Last night we had a stroke of inebriated genius and decided to see if I could fit in my backpack. We then decided to see how far I’d go if they rolled me down the boardwalk in an abandoned shopping cart. I had enthusiastically agreed until I realized that the shopping cart was headed towards a giant statue and, being zipped into my backpack, there was no way I could stop the cart from colliding with its final destination. As I lay on my back, half inside the shopping cart, I watched the rising sun turn the ocean orange and realized that I would never forget my junior spring break.

The three of us toss our empty beer cans into the tracks and lug ourselves onto the train. We’ve been traveling all day and this is the last leg of our odyssey back to Madrid. After maneuvering our way through the narrow corridor in single file, I finally see the numbers I’m looking for. I check my ticket again and nod at my weary companions. “This is ours,” I say, yanking the sliding door open. The compartment is tiny. There is a window, two benches facing each other and two passengers in their mid to late twenties. There is an Asian looking man, his back rigid against the wall, and his legs crossed neatly under the seat. His eyes are focused on a copy of “Le Figaro,” a French magazine.
about politics, but really more about how much the US (legitimately) sucks. Every now and then he casts a furtive glance our way. Across from him is a woman with hair neatly pleated under a baseball cap. She sits with her legs crossed and her hands on her knees. I notice her perfectly lacquered nails. They are baby pink. I also notice that her hands cover her entire knee. She looks up at us and smiles demurely. “I love your jeans,” she says with a heavy Spanish accent. I smile back awkwardly and thank her. Alex is elbowing Zach and blatantly staring at her. “It’s a man,” he’s whispering at me, his eyes wide. I roll my eyes.

The first hour of the ride proceeds in silence. As the train moves steadily through the countryside, the compartment gently rocks from side to side. Alex and Zach have passed out on top of each other. The French man continues to flip through his magazine. He carefully traces each line of print with his finger until he reaches the bottom of the page. He then licks his finger and turns it. Every now and then I catch him glancing at Zach and Alex who are both snoring. He then looks at me. I meet his gaze and he quickly averts his eyes. The woman that Alex is convinced is a man is sitting primly on the edge of the seat. She raises her hands and inspects her nails. She then fishes an emery board out of her purple bag and begins to file furiously at them. The Asian-ish man is observing this with a sour look on his face. I know most Francophone countries sell Le Figaro but I’m pretty sure this guy is French.

I wake to Alex tapping my knee. “You wanna get something to eat?” He asks me. It takes a second for my eyes to adjust to the harsh sun shining in from the open window. My mouth is dry and the taste of stale beer coats my tongue.

“Yeah,” I answer.

We slowly make our way to the dining car, our arms outstretched and balancing against the walls as the train jolts from side to side. The dining car consists of a dirty bar and a few tables littered with used napkins and empty cups. There is a small congregation of old sweaty men smoking rolled cigarettes and talking by the bar. They turn to see us straggle into the car, half falling as the sliding door closes violently behind us. They look me up and down. If this is growing old in Europe, I’m never marrying a European. Alex pushes past the old men and starts shuffling through the sandwiches piled on the bar. They look like they’ve been sitting out for a while. He’s growing frustrated with the variety of sandwiches. He’s doing that thing when his brows get furrowed and he starts shaking his head slowly and ‘tsking’ his tongue against his teeth. “This freaking continent,” he says under his breath.

“What’s up?” I ask quietly, glancing over my shoulder at the men. They are staring at my ass and whispering in Portuguese. Nice.

“What the hell is wrong with people here? Don’t any vegetarians exist in this country?” He mutters, tossing aside a ham and butter croissant. The bartender gives him a suspicious look. He continues to pick up sandwiches, scrutinize the label with squinted eyes, and then toss them aside.
“What about something else? There are bread rolls too,” I try to reason with him, handing him a tiny roll bulked up in several layers of cellophane. "No – I’m hungry. I want a sandwich. It’s like every single country outside of the US flagrantly ignores the fact that there are people with a conscience that understand the dangers associated with meat. Honestly, this is just so ridiculous, there are only so many times I can see ‘jamón’ and not feel like throwing up. Talk about narrow culinary horizons.” His words are coming faster as he gestures wildly with a wilted bacon and tomato sandwich.

I take a deep breath. Alex is always like this. It’s gotten worse since we started traveling around Spain, land of jamón, where any patriotic Spaniard will take a dagger to your eye and feed it to the pigs if you so much as utter a word against the stuff. Usually I just roll my eyes and start walking, but with these large Portuguese men ogling me, I’m not sure I’m as comfortable with Alex’s passionate soapbox oration. I grab the sandwich from his hand and hand five Euros to the surly bartender. Alex picks out a bread roll with his index finger and thumb, and dangles it in front of the bartender. He pays the bartender with an exaggerated sigh. “Rip me off too, while you’re at it,” he says loudly as he slides a few coins across the counter. I roll my eyes as Alex stomps out of the dining car, struggling with the door as he attempts to rip the cellophane from the roll. He tosses the plastic wrap onto the floor. I shake my head, pick up the wrap and put it in the bin. I shoot an apologetic look behind me.

Once we are out of the car I shout down the hall, “Alex, you’re an asshole sometimes.”

He turns to me and opens his arms. “But you love me,” he answers.

Although my mind tells me I should be in no mood for his antics, I can’t help but smile back. His curly brown hair is crazy from having just woken up and he has that scruffy look. No matter how close I am with Alex, I can always appreciate his good looks and charm. I go towards him.

“Excuse me,” a voice comes from behind me.

I turn and see a girl about our age making her way down the aisle. She is trying to keep her balance while holding two steaming cups of coffee. As I let her squeeze by, she turns briefly. “Thanks,” she says, smiling.

Before I can respond, Alex breaks out the megawatt grin. “No problem,” he answers for me. His voice is deep and slow and his eyes are on her.

Her wavy brown hair goes down to her butt and it sways as she moves. As soon as she is past him, Alex’s eyes automatically go to her ass and follow her as she walks down the aisle.

“Nice, no?” He muses, hardly expecting an answer from me as he focuses on her hips.

I feel a twinge of irritation. “Yeah, she’s pretty cute,” I answer curtly. I can’t believe how fast Alex can go from lecturing passionately about protecting the earth, to checking out girls. This is, however, pretty characteristic of him. Alex lives for the game: the discovery of a prospect, the pursuit and the final conquest. When Alex and I first met, he battled his way through the first two stages,
only to fail at the very end. As attractive as I found him, I could not imagine hearing his soapbox speeches every minute of every day. The thought of him spouting off those facts about the poor dying animals while having sex both cracked me up and appalled me at the same time.

"Aw Grace, come on, don’t hate. You know you would hit it if you could," he chides, chuckling. He loves it when he thinks he’s made me jealous.

I sock him in the arm. "I’m not hating. I said she has a nice body. And I could hit it faster than you could. So shut up," I snap at him.

He wiggles his eyebrows at me. "Oh yeah? Is that a challenge?" he teases, and then wraps his arm around my neck, putting me in a headlock. We wrestle for a bit and then make our way back to the car.

Alex bursts through the sliding doors of our compartment. "Yo, Zach, there was this banging girl outside," he exclaims excitedly. Zach is just opening his eyes and stretches lazily, his long legs touching the other bench.

"Oh, yeah? Did you hit it?"

The two of them go on about the girl and how Alex could have approached her, and it is then that I realize I am in the presence of two extremely skilled players. Both very charming in their own ways, they still usually play as a team, targeting pairs of girls and drawing them in as they play off one another. Sometimes they try to use me as a prop or decoy, to which I usually agree, but I would much rather sit back and admire them working the crowds. I watch them laughing and slapping each other high fives and think I may be jealous.

Half an hour after I’ve devoured my snack, I am starting to feel nauseous. I’m not sure if it’s the crusty sandwich or the fact that I am feeling extremely American next to Mr. Figaro, but either way I decide to leave the compartment and walk across the narrow corridor to the window. I stand on my tiptoes with my back to the compartment, cross my arms over the ledge of the window and put my chin on my clasped hands. We are slowly chugging through the Portuguese countryside. The train is old and rickety and I feel like if I were to walk these tracks, I would probably reach Madrid first. I watch the mountains slowly roll by and wonder whether there are any hikers wandering through the lush green. There’s no air conditioning on the train so the hint of a tiny breeze is refreshing. I stick my head out of the window and close my eyes, trying to make as much of the dry and hot air as I can. Just as I am imagining that I am a beautiful bohemian girl with long, flowing (clean) hair, backpacking across Europe with nothing but the shoes on her feet and unlimited time to wander, instead of a girl who hasn’t showered in four days and has five final exams to go home to, something flies into my eye. I jerk backwards and crash into the wall. I hear a snort of laughter erupting behind me and turn to see Alex and Zach laughing hysterically. The Asian man and the man/woman are giggling along with them. I haven’t seen the Frenchie crack a smile the entire trip. I’m glad to see they are bonding over my brush with blindness. I rub at my eye and then flick Alex and Zach off. I can feel my face turn
beet red but I’m secretly pleased that everyone seems to be getting a kick out of my utter lack of grace.

We have been sitting on the tracks for ages, sweating in our stifling hot car, when we learn that our arrival will be delayed by an hour. As soon as the announcement is made, “Oi”s and other assorted grunts and groans erupt into the air. Passengers throw their hands up in despair and shake their heads. People gesture in exasperation as they commiserate with one another in between jerky drags of their cigarettes. Zach shrugs and says, “There’s only one thing to do.” He uncorks the first of our four bottles of wine and passes around plastic cups. The transvestite demurely accepts and says, “Gracias.” She reaches out and daintily takes it in her hands. They engulf the small red cup. As she takes it, she holds Zach’s glance for just a bit too long and he, in typical Zach fashion, flashes her an easy grin that shows off his perfectly straight white teeth. She introduces herself to us, but mostly to Zach, as Aline (although she corrects Pat with an “Aaah-leeen”). Alex nudges me hard with his knee and I immediately grab his leg.

“Stop,” I say through my teeth. Aaah-leeen is talking to Zach in rapid fire Spanish and making expansive motions with her huge hands while he laughs and nods. She is perched on the edge of the seat, her legs still crossed neatly, while he is leaning back, legs splayed and arms extended across the seats. He’s doing that thing he does when you could swear he was hanging off every word you say, his huge green eyes fixed on yours. The awesome thing about Zach is that he usually is truly engaged in whatever you have to say. Alex and I observe the scene with amusement. We are used to this. I’ve known Zach since freshman year of college and have watched as he morphed from a slightly awkward skater geek into one of Williams’ most eligible bachelors. Sometimes I think it’s that eccentric streak in him, his inclination to list “Spanish” as his first language instead of English, his obsession with skater videos that no one else can appreciate, the hours he spends downloading random Arabic music that he can’t understand, that makes him a gust of fresh air sweeping through the Odd Quad. By second semester of freshman year, all the girls were enamored with Zach and his Lacoste polos straight out of the 1980s because they had gotten bored with the boys who wore Nantucket red pants from J-Crew. My girlfriends always pestered me about why I never hooked up with him and I just shrugged, said he smelled weird and pointed out that guys who’d never had girlfriends were always bad in bed. The truth is that I could never see him in any other light than as one of the coolest and quirkiest kids I knew at Williams. He was always just Zach, my best friend with that blond mop of hair consistently hanging in his eyes, those Converse sneakers he had been wearing since middle school and a penchant for playing the penis game in any and every public area. Watching him now, I am starting to see what all the girls – and guys – were fawning over.

By the second bottle I’m drunk again and slurring my newly acquired Spanish vocabulary. It turns out the Asian man is a quarter Japanese, a quarter Portuguese, a quarter Swiss and a quarter French. He is laughing along with me, although I’m sure it is more at me than with, and we are arguing in French.
I am starting to use my hands to supplement all the ridiculous arguments I’m making about Villepin’s ascendancy to power and he just smiles and shakes his head at me. I know I’m drunk but my case still seems pretty convincing. Apparently he is not drunk enough to appreciate my political savvy. Zach and Aline are still talking and Aline’s hand is now on Zach’s leg. I look over at Alex who is completely unanimated.

“What?” I ask. He shakes his head and throws back the entire cup of wine and then goes for the door. Zach and Aline are deep in Spanish conversation so I excuse myself from my new international friend and follow Alex out of the compartment. He is sticking his head out of the window, his hands gripping the dirty ledge.

“Alex,” I say, as I approach him and place my hand on his back.

“What’s up?” He answers, his voice distant, his eyes staring ahead into the darkness.

“What’s wrong?” I ask. I hand him a cigarette and he accepts, putting it to his lips and fishing around in his pockets for a lighter. He is silent as he lights the cigarette, takes a deep drag and exhales into the wind. The smoke disappears immediately into the darkness. We are passing through a large field.

“Nothing,” he responds.

“Okay...”

He takes a deep breath, stubs his cigarette out and flicks it out the window. “Well, it’s just gross,” he bursts out.


“Yeah, what do you think I’m talking about?”

I am quiet for a second and all we can hear is the sound of the train steaming along the tracks and the quiet hum of the world passing us by.

“She seems like a nice girl,” I answer.

He snorts, “Nice, yes, girl, no.”

I am silent again. There are tiny lights dotting the hills, little cottages, I imagine, where shepherds and their sheep huddle during the night. They shine brightly like the stars moving slowly across the sky. I recall the world that I’ve abandoned for the past three weeks, a world where the buildings reach up to the clouds and the only lights that you can see in the sky come from airplanes racing across the expansive darkness. It’s never quiet there like it is here.

“Whatever, Alex, it’s not like they’re making out, they’re just talking.”

She or he or whatever is all over him,” he says, an edge of disgust clearly present in his voice.

“Well, I don’t think Zach cares,” I say, trying to reassure him.

“He should. And by the way, that weird guy is definitely trying to get a piece of you,” Alex adds on casually.
Alex shrugs. “It takes one to know one,” he mutters.
I don’t know how to react to what he just said. My mind is racing to give it meaning but no matter what interpretation I settle on, they all make me uncomfortable. I look down at the ground. “I don’t think so,” is all I can muster.
“Well, I guess it’s only natural he’s trying to get some from some American girl,” he says bitterly.
Zing. I swallow my hurt and put my hands in the air and back away. “Okay Alex, whatever you say. I really think it’ll be fine.”
I go back into the compartment and leave Alex standing by himself at the end of the corridor, dangling his arms out of the window. I can feel his eyes on me.
All of us are talking now and our neighbors have banged on the door numerous times, shouting at us in Portuguese in Spanish. We all say “sorry” in English while Figaro attempts to soothe them by apologizing in Portuguese. By the third time however, he dismisses the knocking on the door and tells us not to open it. Aline is going on about how she’s going to try to break into modeling in Madrid while Zach translates breathlessly, smiling at me. He feels important and very Spanish right now. It turns out her real passion lies in French politics. She debates for hours with Figaro, as Zach translates into English and I translate into French. Figaro talks about a hip hop video he saw on TV once called “Laffy Taffy” and he asks us what the hell Americans are thinking by producing a song that consists of two words usually used to describe candy. Zach decides to see how many languages we can sing the song in. It turns out we can sing it in Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Hebrew and German.
The entire time Alex sits in the corner, staring at the passing scenery, unwilling to even meet our eyes. Aline and Figaro try to speak with him through us, asking him questions about becoming a vegetarian. Usually Alex would hop right back on his soapbox and talk for hours, complimenting his speech with diagrams and additional readings. But tonight he is quiet and answers us with monosyllabic words. Zach and I exchange glances but shrug it off. We’re having too much fun. By the time we’ve drained the fourth bottle and exhausted our library of bad 80’s hip hop songs, Zach is passed out on Alex’s shoulder again. This time, however, Aline has managed to contort her incredibly tall body into a ball and her head is lying in Zach’s lap. I am falling asleep on Figaro’s shoulder and I wake up to find myself drooling on his crisp blue oxford shirt. “Je suis trop désolée,” I say, embarrassed. He merely smiles at me and nods his head.
I am awoken by the blaring of the announcement over the speakers. We have arrived in Madrid. It is early morning and the sky is a pale blue and everything is muted. There’s a dewy misty feeling in the air. I remove my head from Figaro’s shoulder. I can’t believe he even sleeps sitting up completely straight. I gently rouse Alex and Zach. My head is pounding. I can tell Zach doesn’t feel
too good either. Despite the fact that Alex didn’t drink too much the night before, he has an awful look on his face. As the train comes to a stop, the five of us get up to stretch and smile politely at each other. The awkwardness soon wears off however as we start joking again about Laffy Taffy and Zach’s horrific laffy taffy dance. Figaro and I walk off the train together and we exchange kisses on the platform and I promise him I’ll email him a list of good 80s rap songs. Aline has given Zach her phone number and he promises to call once exams are over. As we walk onwards I turn around and see Alex shuffling behind us, his hands in his pockets and a distant look on his face. Zach has gone over to Alex and they are talking. I apologize to Figaro and tell him to go ahead. I turn and wait for them to catch up with me.

“Yo, forget it, man, we’ll find you something to eat and you’ll feel better, trust me,” Zach is saying to Alex, his hand on his shoulder.

Alex shrugs him off, and continues dragging his feet, a vacant look in his eyes.

Zach shoots me an exasperated look from behind Alex. Zach wants me to do something because that’s always my responsibility when Alex is sulking.

“Alex, come on, walk faster, babe,” I exclaim, giving him my best smile, cocking my head to the side and putting my hands on my hips. I do a little jig as I gesture for him to hurry up, which I figure will prompt at least a giggle. Nothing.

“Come on, grumpy pants, let’s go get you that vegetarian sandwich,” I say lightly, trying one more time. As he approaches, I put my arm around his shoulder and pull him towards me as we walk. He doesn’t come closer but he doesn’t shrug me off. I keep going, hoping that I’m getting somewhere. “Just imagine biting into a nice big vegetarian sandwich on a baguette with melted cheese and spicy sauce… mmm. It’s exactly what you want,” I say.

He turns to me. “You don’t know what I want, Grace. And somehow, I don’t think I’ll get what I want anytime soon,” he snaps at me with an incredibly harsh tone. He then shakes off my arm and picks up the pace, leaving Zach and I standing in his dust.

We both watch him in silence, our mouths hanging open.

“What was that?” I ask, flabbergasted.

Zach puts a hand on my arm. “Don’t take it too personally. I don’t know what he’s talking about but I’m gonna catch up with him,” he says, giving me a sympathetic look as he breaks into a quick stride. I pull my backpack on tighter and go to follow him but then stop. They are walking onwards together now, their steps fast, wide and in sync. I would have to run to catch up with them. I could call out to them but I stop. The distance between me and the two boys grows as every second passes. For once, I don’t feel like one of the guys.
quiet yet happy
a photo by naeema campbell
Henry was visiting his grandmother for what would probably be one of the very last times. He looked around the room, avoiding making the first eye contact, and understood why she had asked, and then begged, to be left in her old house. It was a depressing room, even for a nursing home. And it wasn’t so much the sights, but the smells that disturbed him and flicked on images in his mind of apathetic suffering and helplessness, something similar to the sensation that hospital aromas gave him but at the same time more subtle. Henry couldn’t go to hospitals because they brought him dangerously close to vomiting all over himself, specifically all over his hands and his lap while waiting in the lobby. This room that his grandmother was now living in had a different effect, one he connected with the feeling he got as a small child when he noticed he was walking over a handicapped parking spot, right over that blue paint, and felt somehow unprepared, and very self-conscious, and like worms were crawling in his stomach.

Henry sat down and looked at the fully mechanized bed where his grandmother lay. It looked comfortable, really comfortable. He imagined himself using a bed like that while he played video games, where he would just have to push on a few buttons to get to the perfect slouching posture. It was a concept that should be looked into, Henry thought, but maybe it wasn’t something the elderly considered too often.

A female nurse came in, said hello to Henry, and then adjusted the bed so that he and his grandmother could more easily interact as they spent the next few minutes together.

“Hi, Grandma,” said Henry.

It was a brilliant introduction, perfected after a couple of decades – being used at every single visit – into something so musically correct that it probably could have been used for the basis of a modern symphony. She knew it by heart and looked up expectantly, and Henry became aware of the complete lucidity now present not just in his grandmother’s eyes, but about her entire head. Normally imprisoned severely by Parkinson’s disease, it was completely steady, if not perfectly still. Any motion that did come was premeditated and flowing, the head swaying in a fashion similar to the way tall pine trees can move in a breeze. Henry’s grandmother had clearly been given the reins for complete control over her muscles, although her face made no sign of surprise at this sudden change. Her eyes were still a steely Irish blue, a little too wet maybe, and her red hair, thinning but present, gave a nod to its past by appearing shiny and naturally colored.
"Henry," she smiled, "how is your sister?"
"She’s fine."
"Not giving you too much trouble?"
"No, no."
"Because, you know, it’s perfectly fine every once in a while to give her a whack or two if she needs it." She said this with another loving smile.
"I know, Grandma," said Henry.
She was in control of her humor as well as her muscles. Henry turned his head and took in more of the room. There was a door in one wall which led to a bathroom, and Henry reminded himself that old people shit, too. His grandmother, when she needed to go, and wasn’t in such an aware state of mind as now, would whimper quietly to her nurse not in words, but in a tone that signified her need. She would then have to be helped, or even lifted out of bed, probably into a wheelchair, and taken across the room. Henry would be sure to wipe his own ass every time when he became an old man. No nurses and no wheelchair. Until then, he would try not to think as much about old people and their bowel movements.
The twitching of his grandmother’s fingers above the bedcovers brought Henry’s eyes back from their wandering.
"You look very handsome today, Henry."
"Thanks, Grandma. You look nice, too. How are you feeling?"
"Oh, I feel fine." Henry’s grandmother met his eyes and then winked. He was unsure if the wink was intentional.
"Have they let you out of bed much?"
"No. No, they haven’t." The fingers had stopped their rhythmic twitching and now moved to rest quietly on top of Henry’s own hand.
"Grandma, how would you like it if I drove you in my car for a bit?"
"I think I’d like that, Henry." Her legs moved a little under her blankets and Henry could see from the strained look on her face that she was trying, and then failing, to sit up in bed. So he got off his chair and moved closer, bracing himself to lift her into his arms. Henry was accustomed to the advisory phrase, “lift with your legs,” and this was what he did, except this was a lifting job that could probably have been accomplished by a six-year-old girl. He compared her weight to that of a feather, and then to a piece of tissue paper, and finally concluded that what his grandmother actually weighed was nothing at all. It was like cradling a clear plastic garbage bag.
"Don’t make any noises, like coughing," Henry cautioned while exiting the room sideways. “I don’t think you’re supposed to leave.”
Silently, and very quickly, Henry walked down the corridors of the nursing home, his grandmother
sitting in his arms with her hands draped like ribbons around the back of his neck. He looked down to see her tight-lipped but beaming face. It was true that this woman didn’t weigh much, but that light little body next to Henry’s was like a furnace now, as he crouch-walked out of the lobby using some potted synthetic plants as cover.

The car, a convertible that belonged to Henry’s father, was parked directly in front of the building. Henry gently settled his grandmother into the bucket seat on the passengers’ side, and then performed a slide – in a sitting position with arms straight out – over the car’s waxy hood before hopping in and pealing out of the parking lot and onto the main road.

“Where to?” Henry asked.
“The hills!” yelled his grandmother.
“The hills?”
“Those ones!”

Henry took a turn and headed out of town. He started to slow for a yellow traffic light, but was surprised to find that his fragile passenger had placed her own hand, minus its customary shaking, on the stick shift. Instead of slowing down, he quickly let off the gas and pumped down the clutch as his grandmother shifted the car into fourth gear. Once again, Henry noticed how calm her head had become above her shoulders. It was looking out through the windshield now, at the hills in front of them, and Henry found the lack of expression on her face slightly alarming.

She wasn’t dead. He knew this because her hand had maintained its guard on the shifter, moving there from her lap whenever Henry let off the gas in the slightest. He wondered if he would feel any different tomorrow if, during this short road trip, his grandmother simply passed away. Henry thought about how for the last two years in the nursing home, all his grandmother could look forward to when she fell asleep at night, usually, was another day of trips between the bed and the bathroom. During his most recent visits to her, there hadn’t been any conversation at all between the two. There was some very shaky handholding, and that was it. Henry was positive she wouldn’t make it two more months. She was waiting, however patiently, to die.

*   *   *

They were past the hills.
“You can turn us around now.” Henry’s grandmother was looking at him from the passenger seat. Her hair shot back away from her forehead like the tail of a meteorite. Her face was an icy nucleus.

“You’re ready to go back to the home?”
“No. But I think I should. Don’t you?”
They pulled into the retirement home parking lot. Henry looked at the building, and then again at his grandmother, who was now trying to shape her hair back into its normal boundaries. This task was made more difficult by the fact that her hands and arms were under no more control than her hair had been in the wind. Henry walked around to her side of the car, dipped his arms in over the door, and carried his lighter-than-air burden toward the building. His grandmother was no longer the fiery bundle she had been before their trip, so that as he snuck through the artificial shrubbery and down the blank hallways, Henry almost forgot he was carrying anything at all.

They were practically one person now, and Henry wished that he could make this transformation permanent. He would not leave his grandmother behind in her bed when he left, but would craftily arrange pillows under the covers with his free left hand, carrying his grandmother in his right. They would exit the building as one yet again, and from then on they would live out Henry’s life together. And he would not be impaired by carrying her. She was a lightweight and versatile bionic attachment, and Henry wouldn’t mind using only one arm for other things. Driving a car? Simple. Grandma shifted gears like a racecar driver. Grocery shopping? Henry would push the cart while Grandma picked the food. He would only put her down at night, where she could sleep in a makeshift hammock in his backyard.

Henry turned and slowly sidestepped through the door to her room, gently inserting her back into the mechanical bed. She had fallen asleep in his arms during his careful process of the nursing home infiltration. Henry pulled the covers over her, and then operated the switches and buttons on the side of the bed until she was sleeping in what he deemed to be an appropriate level of comfort. He put the palm of his hand next to the side of her face, leaving half an inch of space between their skin, and then exited the room and quietly shut the door.
a photo by
julie furbush
A play in one act

Characters:
GOGGLES-wearing man
HAT-wearing man
MASK-wearing man
VOICE on the radio

Scene: A small cabin in between two mountains, in a forested cleft. The windows are shuttered. It is dark. It is night. It is snowing heavily outside. There is a table in the center of the cabin, with three chairs around it. A gas lamp hangs over the table from a rafter. There is a small stove against one wall, with a pile of cut logs next to it and some newspaper. The door is set on the opposite side. It opens. GOGGLES enters, powdered with snow. He wears a heavy winter jacket, a pair of dark tinted goggles, and carries a single ski pole. He trundles to the table, pulls off his gloves, and pumps the lamp into life. The room is lit. He blows on his hands, shivering, then notices the stove. He goes to it, opening the grate and setting a log inside, along with some newspaper. He takes out a spark strip and strikes sparks onto the paper, starting a fire. After a few moments he closes the grate, and gets up, moving to the table. He sits.

GOGGLES: Jesus, what a storm. Lucky to be here in one piece. Jesus.

(He blows on his hands again, looking around the room.)

GOGGLES: Small, but you can’t complain. When the storm lets up, it’ll get better. Can’t complain.

(The door opens again. HAT enters. He wears a similarly warm outfit, only his eyes are uncovered, and instead his ears are padded by his hat’s earflaps. A pair of bells hang from the flaps. He spots GOGGLES, and lifts a hand in greeting. GOGGLES considers HAT for a moment before smiling.)

GOGGLES: (Half joking.) Welcome to my domain. Got it all cozy for you.
HAT: (Understanding, but unamused.) Ah. You saw I was coming.

GOOGLES: (Still joking.) Nothing gets past me.

HAT: (Seeing the stove,) Is that working?

GOOGLES: Of course it is. I already got it started. We’ll be warm in no time.

HAT: How many logs did you put on?

GOOGLES: One.

HAT: We’ll need more than one, you know.

GOOGLES: One is just fine. Waste not, want not.

HAT: (Moving towards the stove.) I’m putting another couple on.

GOOGLES: Like hell. Don’t touch it. I started it, so it’s my damn responsibility. Just sit yourself down, rest your legs.

(HAT hesitates, then goes to take the middle seat, to the left of GOOGLES. He takes off his gloves, sets them on the table. He adjusts his hat. The bells jingle.)

GOOGLES: (Indicating the bells.) What are those for?

HAT: What?

GOOGLES: The bells. What are they for?

HAT: (A little incredulous.) How many times have you been out like this?

GOOGLES: (Somewhat peeved.) More than you have, I bet.
HAT: They’re for the bears.

GOOGLES: The bears?
HAT: Yes. The bears. (Seeing GOGGLES clearly still doesn’t follow.) So they can hear me? You know, the bells alert them to my presence, so I don’t surprise them.

GOGGLES: Because the first thing you have to worry about if a grizzly’s nearby is surprising it.

HAT: It may not seem so, but it’s very much the case. You surprise a bear, it’s much more dangerous.

GOGGLES: Seems silly to me.

HAT: Well, that will be your funeral, won’t it?

GOGGLES: Guess so.

(A long silence.)

GOGGLES: Hell, all the bears are hibernating now anyways.

HAT: Be that as it may…

(They are interrupted by the door opening. MASK enters. He wears leaner winter gear, darker, and wears a balaclava which covers his mouth. A rifle is slung over his shoulder. He takes note of each only briefly before taking the last seat. He doesn’t bother to check the stove. GOGGLES and HAT watch MASK, but do not address him. Another silence follows.)

It’s death out there.

GOGGLES: You don’t know that.


GOGGLES: How do you know that?

HAT: Are you about to go out there?

GOGGLES: No.
HAT: See? Death.

GOGGLES: Doesn’t prove a thing. I just like to be warm.

HAT: Warm? It’s still freezing. I’m putting on more logs.

GOGGLES: One is just fine.

HAT: I beg to differ.

(HAT gets up and goes to the stove, opening the grate and adding three more logs. GOGGLES glares. MASK slings his gun from his shoulder, takes out a cloth, and begins to polish the barrel. HAT closes the grate, turns back towards the table. He spots the gun, and stops.)

What is that for?

GOGGLES: For hunting your bears, maybe.

HAT: It’s not hunting season.

GOGGLES: (Shrugging.) I’ve hunted from time to time myself.

HAT: Senseless…

(HAT retakes his seat, still watching MASK warily. Quickly, however, the interest fades. MASK stops polishing his gun.)

GOGGLES: What brings a man like you all the way out here?

HAT: Same reason as you, maybe.

GOGGLES: I don’t know about that.

HAT: Really? Then why don’t you tell me why you’re here.

GOGGLES: I’m here because I am supposed to be here.
HAT: That doesn’t mean anything.

GOOGLES: What, you want my whole damn life story?

HAT: Well, it’s not as if we’ve much else to do.

GOOGLES: Damned curious bastard.

HAT: Maybe.

GOOGLES: I had a wife.

HAT: Had?

GOOGLES: Yes, had. I had a wife. We lived out west. Had a nice place, just right. Everything a man needs. Not too hot, not too cold. Lived comfortably, lived properly. Didn’t have any real worries.

HAT: How idyllic.

GOOGLES: Damn right. It was just right. But then she, my wife, she had to fuck it all up.

HAT: Oh?

GOOGLES: I provided for her, did everything a man ought to. I didn’t break my back working. Who should? But you know women; they always want more than they have. Enough’s not enough for them. I didn’t see it coming. But I should have. See, she started going out more often, going to see friends. Friends, hell! We didn’t have friends. Just me and her, and that was fine, but of course I believed her. I had no idea. No damn idea.

(At some point while GOOGLES is speaking, MASK reaches into his jacket and takes out a handful of bullets, and begins standing them on the flat of their shells. GOOGLES and HAT do not notice.)

It wasn’t like I didn’t take care of her. I took care of her. Saw to everything she could have wanted. I’m a good man. I take the straight and narrow path. I stick to my guns, I abide by the law, and I follow the rules. But she, she couldn’t stick with it. Can’t trust women to, I guess. Just can’t
handle it. Not that I’m disrespecting women. They’re just different. More sensitive, and more easily
tempted, you know? Well she was tempted, all right. Should have seen it. I did see it. I saw it, I just
didn’t think it meant anything.

(MASK counts his bullets. There are seven of them. He takes three, pockets them. He counts
the remaining four, pockets them. GOGGLES and HAT still don’t notice, or don’t care to.)

It’s easier for women to get away with that. They leave lipstick on collars, not the other way
around. But I figured it soon enough. I’m not stupid. I gave her a piece of my mind. It got ugly.
Very ugly. So I don’t live there anymore. I needed time to think. Think about what I did wrong.
Because you know, when something like that happens, its not just like were wronged, it’s like you
did wrong yourself. You’re shamed. You share in that failure. So I’m here. I’m here, because I’m
supposed to. Because that’s the way it has to be.

HAT: Because you’re guilty?

GOGGLES: I’m not guilty! I didn’t do anything wrong!

HAT: But you said yourself…

GOGGLES: Hell with what I said. It’s just a feeling. It’s her damn fault. I stand by that. She’s
the reason.

HAT: That you’re hiked out here, in the freezing cold, alone?

GOGGLES: Go to hell.

(Another silence. GOGGLES gives a shiver.)

Those extra logs didn’t do a damned thing.

HAT: Of course they did.

GOGGLES: I don’t feel any different. I feel colder.

HAT: It’s warmer. It must be.
GOGGLES: Always certain, aren’t you?

HAT: No. But I try to be.

(Pause.)

It’s death out there.

GOGGLES: You don’t know about out there.

HAT: I don’t? I’ve got a radio.

GOGGLES: What?

HAT: (Enunciating clearly) A ray-dee-oh. (He reaches into his coat and takes out a radio, which he sets on the table. MASK peers at the radio for a long moment, then loses interest, staring off into space. GOGGLES looks at the device suspiciously.) See? I can hear what it’s like out there on this.

GOGGLES: No way that will work.

HAT: Of course it will work. You watch. (HAT turns the radio on. He tunes it, until, through a thick crackle of static, an automated, clearly inhuman voice states.)

VOICE: The time is 1:23 AM. The temperature is -50 degrees Celsius and -58 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds are approximately 40 miles per hour, with heavy snow. A warning has been issued to seek shelter and stay warm. The time is 1:24 AM…

GOGGLES: Turn that thing off.

HAT: (Turning off the radio.) See. Seek shelter. Death out there.

GOGGLES: That didn’t tell me anything I couldn’t already see for myself.

HAT: Oh, so you can tell what the temperature and windspeed by yourself?

GOGGLES: Go to hell.
(They are interrupted as MASK unslings his rifle once again, and loudly slide the bolt open, peering into the chamber. GOGGLES and HAT freeze, watching MASK. MASK takes no notice. He slides the bolt closed, and reslings gun.)

HAT: I…

GOGGLES: Shut up.

HAT: (Glaring at GOGGLES.) What’s wrong with you? You were decent enough to start.

GOGGLES: I’m cold. It’s cold in here. Your logs didn’t do a thing.

HAT: Then add some more logs of your own.

GOGGLES: I added my log.

HAT: Your one log.

GOGGLES: That’s right. My one log.

HAT: I can’t believe I’m out here, bickering about this. I have better things to do.

GOGGLES: Like what?

HAT: I’ll have you know, I’m a man of no small importance.

GOGGLES: Is that so?

HAT: I’ve worked very hard to get where I am. I’m the top of the heap where I come from.

GOGGLES: Where is it you come from?

HAT: The east. I came from the east, way back when. Back when I was young and didn’t know anything. But I grew, bit by bit, and I learned. You see, to make one’s way you have to learn where you fit in. You have to adapt. So I adapted. I found out what I was good at, and I stuck to it. I found education, worked my way bit by bit, worked hard. Honed my mind into a keen instrument, my best
asset. I was good with my hands as well, still am, but my mind was the real advantage. Others fell behind, got stuck, but I kept climbing. I ended up with a job in management. Running things. Like I said, I’m top of the heap where I come from.

(MASK seems to have fallen asleep. His eyes are closed and his head is tipped back. GOGGLES, on the other hand, is wide awake, and looking very, very skeptical.)

The trouble with being on top, however, is the responsibility. With so much under you, you have to be careful where you step, what you do, because when you’re in charge, you can badly mess things up. That’s a lesson you learn with time and practice. At first. I did what was best for me, to keep my edge. Certainly, others had to pay for it, but it was early in my career, and competition was fierce. Later, though, I was established. And when you’re established you can get careless. I’m sure you understand.

(GOGGLES gives a non-committal grunt.)

Well, I got careless. Made some…bad allocations. Outsourced in the wrong places, drew resources from the wrong departments, and things heated up. Things got messy. Jobs were lost. I was still doing very well, of course. I was in charge, and I still am, thank you very much. But even where I was I could feel some of the effects. And it was my fault. I screwed up. I admit that. I accept that. I hear the voices from below. I understand.

(MASK seems to wake at this. He sits up straighter, and his eyes focus on HAT. HAT does not notice.)

I just need time. Time to think it over. I know I can put things to rights, but it’s not that easy. Being on top isn’t easy. I’m sure you understand. I’m here by choice, and by accident. It’s an accident that I screwed up. I didn’t know better. But now I do, I chose to come here. To think. That’s what I need to do, to think. That’s the first step.

(HAT notices the MASK is watching him. He becomes instantly very uneasy. GOGGLES still looks skeptical, and even a little scornful, but upon noticing MASK he too becomes unsettles. MASK looks to GOGGLES, then back to HAT, then unslings his gun again, and begins to polish. A long silence.)

GOGGLES: Maybe we ought to throw on some more logs.
HAT: I was about to suggest that myself.

GOOGLES: No need to freeze.

HAT: No. No need.

(They sit, looking at each other, each expecting the other to get up.)

GOOGLES: It’s getting colder and colder.

HAT: Indeed. And the radio said to keep warm.

GOOGLES: Best keep that fire going. We’re in this together.

HAT: That we are. Both of us.

(MASK pockets his polishing cloth, and slides open the gun bolt again with a cloud ‘clack’. GOOGLES and HAT look to MASK, a little fearfully. MASK removes a bullet from his jacket, slips it into the chamber, and slides the bolt back into place. He lifts the weapon, looking along the sight. He gets up from his seat, and moves to the door. The two other men watch him in silence. MASK, gun in one hand, takes the door’s handle, turns it, and pushes out. The door cracks open very slightly, and the sound of howling wind fills the room. MASK closes the door, and turns back to the room, eyes falling on GOOGLES and HAT.)

GOOGLES: The door’s stuck?

HAT: Well, we’re better off in here, right?

GOOGLES: You think?

HAT: It’s death out there.

(The stage goes black. Curtain.)
a photo by
abby berg
Malena had only worn this dress once before, at a club back in Seattle. It was red and the halter straps tied in a neat bow behind her neck. It flowed gracefully over her tiny waist and hugged her hips just right. When she spun in the mirror, the skirt bloomed, and the red layers formed the inverted petals of a tulip. Her long brown locks curled over her bare shoulders and swept into voluminous, bouncing corkscrews by her shoulder blades. She swayed and felt them roll silkily across her back. Her lips were but a shade darker than the dress, the color of cherries. She stood across the room from the full-length mirror she’d hung the day before. As she walked toward it, she swayed her hips slightly to the beat of the salsa music vibrating from the old boom box on the table next to her bed. The dress swooshed and breezed her legs above her calf muscles, toned above her silver stilettos. She turned sideways and held her stomach in as she brushed her hands down her sides, smoothing the silk against her bare skin. She placed her right hand on her hip and smiled seductively in the mirror. She was ready. She pressed the stop button on her boom box and put her cell phone next to the flyer on the table:

SALSA NIGHT! At Club Bailar
9 PM – 4 AM every Saturday
$30 cover, open bar

Her cab honked from the bustling New York street below. After one more glance into the mirror, she went to meet it.

*  *  *

Colored lights flashed from the ceiling of the club, piercing the air, dimly lit and smelling of smoke and sweat. Bodies crowded the dance floor. As expected, there were many women and few men. About a dozen women danced at the very center of the floor. They held hands and swung their hips and heads. Long, straight hair whipped their faces. They all wore similar black dresses, except for one. She wore a dress the color of ripe melon. When she spun, the bottom lifted to reveal a patchwork of brightly colored layers underneath. One woman’s red hair was so matted with sweat that a single drop from its tip drew a zig-zag line down her back and disappeared behind a fold of black fabric at the small of her back. At one point, the woman in the melon dress kicked her leg so high that she revealed a pair of black panties. The women laughed and attempted to mimic not the last dance

rachel zar
the daring move. They seemed completely ignorant of the gentle beat of the music, and moved ferociously. Malena wondered how these women could dance like that—so carefree and without a man to stroke their tightly wrapped curves. From her vantage point, she could only see five men in the entire club, and they had all clearly come with someone.

Malena headed for the bar and ordered a martini. She sipped it slowly as she sat on a bar stool and watched the crowd dance. A short, slightly plump man grasped the hands of a forty-something woman. He could not have looked less comfortable. His eyes never left the woman’s feet as she moved them lightly in beat with the intricate drums. Next to them, a couple performed a well-rehearsed combination, turning, dipping, and swaying in perfect time.

Malena looked desperately for a man to dance with. Any man. She wasn’t one to dance by herself, unless alone in her room. She touched her own hip and, closing her eyes, remembered the firm feeling of a man’s hands wrapped tightly around her tiny frame. When she opened her eyes again, a new song was beginning, and a lone man standing at the opposite end of the dance floor caught her eye. He was tall, with dark hair and his deep set eyes traced the crowd. His shirt was midnight black to match his pants and shoes. Gay. It didn’t matter; a man was a man. She finished her drink and placed it on the bar. She knew that she had to act fast. There was no way a lone man would last very long before being swept off to dance. She sucked in her stomach and glided through the crowd, swaying her hips with the beat and always delicately placing her hand on the more attractive men’s shoulders as she passed. She’d notice out of the corner of her eye when the men would turn to look at her, but her main focus remained on the man in the corner. One man’s glance lasted longer than the others as he swayed his hips in time with a young, blonde woman. Malena noticed the way his white shirt clung to the muscles in his chest and smiled as his eyes traveled over her figure. His partner pulled his face back to meet hers and gave Malena a domineering look.

When her eyes returned to her target in the corner, another woman had approached. Her hair was blond with dark roots. Her dress was blue, tight, and short. Whore. The woman placed her hand on his back, slid it over his ass, and whispered in his ear. He quickly pushed her away and shook his head. The woman walked away.

Malena walked faster now. The beat seemed to quicken to match her pace. As she walked, she wondered what she would do when she reached him. She didn’t want to make the same mistake as the spurned woman before her. She didn’t have to think for long, for when she was ten feet from him, he turned to look at her. She kept walking, confident now, and he met her half-way without letting his penetrating stare leave her eyes.

She couldn’t tear away from his smoldering gaze. Without speaking, they began to dance. Her hand was positioned delicately on his shoulder, his hand on her waist. He pushed his strong fingertips into the small of her back, pulling her closer. His hipbones pressed against hers. She couldn’t look...
away. Holding the top of her back gently, he let her arch backwards and swing, slow at first, but then quickly so that when she returned to him, she felt the need to grasp him tightly to stop herself. There was no one else in the room: no band, no other dancers stumbling over one another’s feet, no bright lights. The music radiated from his stare and traveled down to her hips being gently guided by his left hand, and to her feet that knew what to do as if they’d always been here in these shoes, on this floor, with this man, and they could keep dancing forever. Straight. He brushed his right index finger up her spine, and she shivered. Smiling at her reaction, he rested his hand on the back of her neck and slid it down her spine again, inducing another shiver, before laying it to rest on her hip. The music slowed, and he took her right hand in his left.

He smiled as if he was just now realizing that he’d known her for years. She smiled. He spun her, and, before she knew it, she was pressed against his chest, his arms wrapped tightly around her upper back. His lips were at her eye level. As the lights flashed, they changed from a dark maroon to the color of strawberries. But did they taste like strawberries? She returned to his eyes. He seemed to be wondering what her lips would taste like. He bent his knees slightly so that his deep brown eyes were level with her lashes. His hands held her tighter, and his eyes began to close.

His lips felt full as they pressed against hers. Her eyes were closed. The beat pulsed in her chest. Wanting to taste, she let her tongue sweep the crease between his lips. Their tongues touched for an instant.

A stray dancer interrupted with an abrupt, “Oh, sorry.” He looked startled and started drifting back in to the crowd. The music seemed to get louder. She was lost, back in this world. She couldn’t move. Her right hand grasped his left. He walked backwards until their fingertips were touching, than smiled and blew her a kiss as he turned to walk away. She wanted to call to him, to run after him and tackle him from behind and tell him to never leave her. She parted her cherry lips, but no sound emerged.

He was gone.

*   *   *   *

Four months later, she sat across from Greg at her kitchen table reading the Tempo section as she sipped her coffee. Business section in hand, Greg took a bite of his bagel. A dot of cream cheese lingered on his upper lip.

“Greg,” she said.
He looked up. She grinned at the white blob.
“What?”
Her smile grew.
“What?”
She motioned with her hand.
He swipe at the cream cheese with his napkin and rolled his eyes at her. She went back to her paper. Downing the last of her coffee, she stood up.
“What are you going so fast?” he said.
“Work.”
He stood to meet her. “OK, babe, have a good day.” He kissed her lightly and tasted like cream cheese.
She turned to grab her briefcase off the couch.
“Wait,” he touched her right hand, and she turned back to face him.
“What is it?”
“It’s just that…”
“What?”
“I love you.” He said it quickly as if it were a secret. Malena held her breath. Shit. He gave her a quizzical look. She nodded. Was that enough?
As she turned to walk away, he grabbed her wrist.
“Don’t,” she said. He pulled her towards him. His hip bones knocked hers.
“Why don’t you ever say it?” he said. His voice wasn’t angry, but his eyes grew wide.
“Would saying it really change anything?” She looked at his feet. His blue slippers clashed against his black, pleated pants.
He brushed a stray brown lock from her eyes, “Why won’t you say it?”
“Let go,” she said, “I have to go to work.”
“I love you,” he said.
“I have to go.”
“Malena, I love you!” She pulled her wrist free. Why? Why was this so hard? Before she knew it, she’d broken free from his grasp and was running toward the bathroom.
His voice was muffled through the hot water from the sink cascading over her face, “Malena, talk to me baby, please.”
She heard herself sob. Why? He’s perfect. He’s handsome, smart, wealthy. Why can’t I love him? Something was missing. She craved it. Is it love? No, it’s deeper than that. She wanted to long to be with him when she wasn’t. She wanted them to be one. He shuffled behind the door. She shut off the water. The mirror was fogged.
When she opened the bathroom door he was still there. He wiped under her eyes with his thumbs. She thought of what she must look like. Puffy, splotchy face. Mascara and eyeliner running down her cheeks. She licked a fallen tear from a cherry lip.
“Come with me,” she took his hand and lead him to the bedroom. Her comforter was pushed
to a corner of the bed. The sheet was mostly on the floor, attached by only a corner to the bed post: a disheveled mess as a result of the previous night. She kicked her sheet under the bed on her way to the old juke box. She pushed play and her beloved salsa music seeped into the room. She turned the volume knob until it wouldn’t go any higher. He cringed by the door.

She closed her eyes. She felt it. Her chest pulsed to the beat. She started slow, swaying her hips. She let her hands creep slowly up her sides, sometimes crossing them to caress her stomach or chest. Finally, she raised them above her head. Now her movements were sharper and harder. Love. She opened her eyes. He was still standing by the door, eyes wide. She motioned to him with one finger.

“Dance with me!” she said.

He shook his head, “Babe, you know I don’t dance.” She kicked the boom box off the side table with one swipe of her black pump. The plug came free from the wall, and the music stopped abruptly. They looked at each other. Her chest lifted and fell as she felt the air rush heavily through her nostrils. She walked toward him until her eyes were level with his lips, and she kissed him. The kiss was full of passion, but this passion was not for him. She walked to the couch, picked up her briefcase, and went to work, smudged eyeliner and all.

*   *   *

She only returned to the club once, the next Saturday, to look for him. She sat on the barstool sipping martinis until the lights blended together and the many people took the form of one amorphous blob of flesh, heat, and sweat. She scanned the crowd in search of a set of deep penetrating eyes. Where is he? Why didn’t he come back for me? Their faces were blurry, and she knew that she could never find what she was looking for. The chemistry, the moment, the music, the passion, the kiss: these things could only co-exist so perfectly once.

She could have sat there in Club Bailar forever, but she wouldn’t have found it again even if he had miraculously appeared. Never. She wondered if she could ever be happy with anything less. She craved to be with him again. It was as if, with one dance, he had given her a soul, and with his absence it had perished leaving behind a hole directly above her stomach and below her ribs. It hurt.

She sat on that barstool watching the blur all night long. She never got bored and she never stopped her constant swaying to the beat. Finally, the DJ announced the final dance of the night, and Malena walked to the center of the dance floor and stood, letting the waves of people circle her. She closed her eyes and let her hips sway slightly to the beat. She stayed there, dancing alone, until the song ended.
Le conflict actuel

a photo by amanda fencI
When her hair was slick with sweat, he would wipe her forehead with a soft facecloth. Tonight, the nightmares had not started yet. He gently brushed a strand of hair away from her closed eyes and kissed her on the forehead. “I’ll be back,” he whispered, knowing that she would not hear him. Lately, when she closed her eyes to sleep, she lost herself to the deep darkness that overwhelmed her. She never remembered her dreams the next day. Instead, she would scratch her matted hair and shrug when he explained that she had spent most of the night kicking the blankets from the bed.

He pushed the screen door open and stepped into the cool night air. The narrow residential street stretched from his left and right, lined on each side with old New England houses in poor condition. It was late at night and early in the morning. Whichever he preferred, the bottom line was that he should have been sleeping. He used to sleep in his dorm, but he hadn’t been able to get a good night’s rest knowing that she was alone in her cramped and stuffy room, littered with unused textbooks and notebooks. So he had brought his overnight bag here hoping that lying with her would give him the peace of mind he needed to rest. He soon learned that he wouldn’t sleep here, either.

Kevin flipped on the porch light, pulled out the plastic lawn chair from under the battered poker table and eased himself into the hard seat. Lighting a cigarette, he closed his eyes and leaned back, allowing the breeze to cool his face. It was that exact turning point between summer and fall when the days were still warm and mellow but the nights chilly with a bite. He could hear the bass of a top fifty rap song reverberating through the night air. Apparently, there was a party going on somewhere in the neighborhood. A girl scurried down the street clutching her arms. She was wearing a short skirt and a low shirt. Another victim of the chameleon weather. Or maybe just a freshman.

When Kevin first met Leila, she was not one to shy away from wearing the least, drinking the most, and flirting just the right amount. A tiny girl with a thirst for liquor that could rival any hardened alcoholic, she had been chugging from a funnel hanging off a senior’s porch when Kevin first noticed her. She was so small that she had to stand on her tiptoes to grasp the hose and bring it to her mouth. After funneling the beer, she ran a hand through her wild mane of hair, pumped both fists in the air and then danced back into the house screaming, “What pussy is scared of the funnel?” Later that night she had called him a pussy, shoved two cans of beer into his jeans pockets and scrawled her number onto his arm in permanent marker.

“Kevin?” He turned to see Leila emerging from the house, wrapped in the quilt her mother
had sewn for her when she was little. She shuffled across the porch, her naked feet barely making a sound on the old wooden planks. Leaning down, she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed the top of his head. Her damp hair brushed against his face. Her usually unruly curls hung limp, tamed by the sweat that shone upon her cheeks.

“Hey, baby,” he answered, nudging out the chair across from him for her to sit down. She lowered herself into the chair slowly. “Can’t sleep?” She asked as she hugged her knees to her chest.

“Naw,” he said as he tapped his cigarette against the rim of a plastic cup. Three stale butts floated lazily in the cup, slowly turning the water gray. Leila nodded distractedly and turned away, her eyes idly scanning the street. She didn’t seem to have any interest in continuing this line of conversation. Kevin fidgeted with the cup in his hand, thinking of something he could add, a new topic he could bring up, anything at all. The absence of words hung heavily between them.

“Yeah, I can’t sleep either,” she finally said. Kevin looked up immediately. He felt a feeling he hadn’t experienced in so long. He was hopeful. She was talking. And she wasn’t tossing and turning tonight. It had been a month since she had been awake after eleven. Before the nightmares came, they used to talk, as they lay tangled in bed, their faces pressed close. Other nights, Leila would throw her homework aside with an “aw fuck it,” pop in “Mrs. Doubtfire,” pack a bowl, and they’d get high as the sun slowly crept into the room until the den was entirely bathed in sunlight. Lately, it was bed by eleven, nightmares by twelve. He slowly sat up in his chair and cleared his throat. Dropping the cigarette in the cup, he watched it fizzle out.

They sat quietly, shrouded in the dim light from the naked bulb above the doorframe. Every now and then it crackled and sputtered but would then right itself and hum quietly. Leila rested the side of her head on her knees, looking into the street. The air was always significantly cooler out here than in her room, and Kevin could tell she was enjoying the fresh air. “It’s nice out tonight,” she said, “I didn’t know you sat out here when I went to bed.”

The quilt slipped from her pale shoulder. Kevin leaned over to arrange it around her shoulders, but Leila brushed his hand away. She let the quilt fall down around her waist. “It’s alright,” she said, as she stretched her arms and leaned all the way back in her chair, exposing her white belly. Kevin could make out the top of a little blue leprechaun peeking out from under the waistband of her sweatpants. He felt a familiar flutter in his stomach.

“Yeah, it’s been nice out. But when it starts snowing I wont be going anywhere. I’ll be buried in the blankets with you,” he answered her.

The two sat across from each other over the beat up poker table, even though Leila faced the street, Kevin could make out a tiny smile. He watched her a brief moment longer and then ventured, “You should join me more often, you know, when you can’t sleep.”
She looked him in the eyes, leaned forward, and slowly, the corners of her mouth turned upwards in a slight smile. “There are other things we can do when we can’t sleep,” she said. Kevin’s heart leapt. He wanted to kick off his flip-flops and do a victory lap around the house. Instead, he put the ashtray down and reached across the table for her hand. She accepted and he gave it a long squeeze and then interlaced his fingers with hers.

They both watched the street in silence as they held hands. The cops had just busted the party and people were spilling out of the door and dispersing across the neighborhood. One girl and four guys were making their way down the street. The girl was teetering precariously in her high heels as the boys sauntered behind her, watching her body jerk from side to side.

“Come on, baby, where you going?” One of the boys laughed and pushed her. She toppled forward, catching herself.

“Stop,” she complained, giggling drunkenly. The boy laughed and picked her up, throwing her over his shoulder. As the group made its way down the street, the boy lagged behind his friends and put the girl on the ground. He pushed her up against a tree and pressed his face into hers.

Kevin was still gazing at Leila, marveling at how the dim porch light softened her curls and how much he had missed her, when he noticed her eyes were fixed on the scene in front of them. Leila watched as the boy and girl kissed, the boy pushing the girl further into the tree, his huge body completely overwhelming hers. Leila took in the scene, her face blank. Her hand had gone limp in his, and she shook her head, causing her curls to shake and tumble. A scowl had taken over her face.

“He’ll obviously be getting some tonight,” she muttered with disdain. She watched the scene in disgust for a moment longer and then abruptly stood, yanking her hand from Kevin’s, her chair scraping against the wood floorboards as she backed away from him.

“I’m cold. I’m going inside,” she said flatly. Kevin jumped up. The two stood in silence as the light bulb flickered. It was beginning – that long unbreakable silence that cloaked her first and then slowly enveloped him, choking off all of his words. The table stretched out between them, the scratchy green surface bare except the plastic cup sitting in the center.

This wasn’t the first time it had happened. That sudden and cold switch to silence and then he was cut out of the frame and Leila, scowling and frozen Leila, was all that remained. He was used to feeling as if the distance between the two of them was physical, as if he had been propelled back into his dorm room, miles away from Leila. What he wasn’t used to was seeing a spark of Leila’s old self in her eyes. And he didn’t want to let that spark die. He had to say something this time. He cleared his throat and moved to the side of the table, just a bit closer to her. But the closer he got to her, the harder it was to speak. He opened his mouth and immediately shut it. Finally, he swallowed and side-stepped the poker table. He came toward her, reaching out for her wrist. She started for a second and then raised her head and Kevin felt his heart break under the weight of her gaze. “I’m going inside. I
just need to sleep. I need to sleep,” she said, her voice hard.

Kevin dropped his hand automatically. It felt like lead hanging from his arm. He couldn’t raise it again to stop her as she reached for the handle and swung the door open. “Leila, what is going on?” he asked in desperation.

“Don’t,” she said abruptly without turning. As she stepped over the threshold and entered the house, he realized he couldn’t move.

Inside the house, the water had stopped running, the bathroom fan had been turned off and he could hear Leila crossing the wood floors. The bedroom door opened and then shut. Outside the light bulb above him popped and the porch was plunged into darkness. Taking a deep breath he walked into the house.

As he approached Leila’s door, Kevin noticed something different about them for the first time. He stopped for a second, gazing up at the French doors which used to be cluttered with faces and bodies; some embarrassing, some just odd. They used to be completely covered in photos from freshman and sophomore year. It had been a chaotic collage of faces and colors; her depiction of the typical college experience. He recalled the numerous times she would walk towards her room, stop under the frame, glance up briefly and then rip a photo down. She would only take one down at a time, tearing them off so nonchalantly that he always assumed it was just that one picture that she thought ruined the color scheme of the overall collage. He figured it was just one particular photograph and nothing that would drastically alter the big picture. Now, all that was left were grease stains, left over blue tack, and a few scattered photos. Looking up at those naked doors, he realized it must have been something much more. One of the only pictures left was of her and Kevin lying in the grass. It had been one of the first spring days of the year and Leila had insisted that they take their studying outside. They had been reading on the grass, the quiet interrupted every now and then by the sounds of Leila kicking her feet against the ground and singing random lyrics as she listened to her I-pod. All of a sudden, she had pulled out her camera, stretched out her arm and asked him to come close. She had pressed her lips against his cheek as she snapped a picture of the two of them, her brown curls tumbling over her face and exploding across the camera frame. His eyes were closed, and he had a goofy grin plastered on his face. It was one of his favorites. He loved the way the sun brought out the gold highlights in her hair and the way her curls spread across the picture as if they never stopped moving and twisting. Turning the doorknob slowly, he quietly slipped into the room.

It was always at least ten degrees hotter in there than outside. And yet Leila was lying on her side, hugging a body pillow and completely wrapped in her big blue comforter. Although her hair was still damp, it was tousled and spread across the pillow as if it still clung to some of its former bounce. He took her in for a second, trying to capture the way she so rarely looked – peaceful and
like her old self. He closed his eyes and took another deep breath. He steeled himself for the task at hand. He would gently rouse her, ask her nicely for her attention and then beg her to tell him what was wrong. Tell her everything that was wrong with him and try to explain why he felt so helpless and why he could never talk to her anymore. Try to describe how he loved her more than anything but he didn’t know what to do anymore. Smash down the doors keeping her inside and him outside. He leaned down, kissed her head and then carefully pulled the covers aside and crawled into bed as he got ready to shake her. She suddenly turned to him, her eyes open. He started with surprise. She gave him a slow, sleepy smile and kissed him on his nose.

“Hey there,” she whispered. He could feel her breath on his face. “Let’s get some rest, shall we?”

He opened his mouth. “Leila,” he started.

“Shut up. It’s bedtime for you and me,” she answered, laughing quietly and then kissing him on the mouth.

For a second, he couldn’t move. She looked and felt so peaceful against him. So carefully, he put his arm around her waist and rested his head against her shoulder. She reached up and gently brushed his hair off his face. There was no space between their bodies and her heart was beating at a steady rhythm. All of a sudden, everything he wanted to say could wait until tomorrow.
Tsya Mahay! Fa, vazaha mahay!
a photo by Amanda Fencl
Tim Garcia was born and raised in Vacaville, CA. At age eight, his interest in Native Americans was temporarily revived when he found an arrowhead in his back yard. In his spare time, Tim enjoys sitting down in a quiet room and painting self-portraits (oil on canvas).

Phillip Lobo is proud to have his one-act play published in Outbreath this semester, after squeezing in just under the line last time. He’s currently a sophomore, but don’t bother to ask him directions because he’s likely more lost than a freshman, trust me.

Neil Padover is a junior majoring in English with a minor in Communications. A New Jersey native through and through, he enjoys writing music and playing guitar. He spent last semester in Spain which although it was awesome, led him to understand why America is the best country in the world.

Alexis Tsang is a senior majoring in International Relations and English. She hails from Hong Kong which, contrary to popular belief, is not a part of China. Alexis enjoys competitive activities such as eating more than all of her friends, dance offs and making a lot of money. Alexis’ plans after graduation include a 2-year stint at an investment bank during which she will sell her soul to the devil, and then repurchase it at a discount once she has made aforementioned exorbitant amounts of money.

Rachel Zar is a Freshman from Chicago. She was Editor-in-Chief of her high school newspaper, and enjoys dancing in her spare time. At Tufts, she is also a member of Sarabande and TDC. She loves to write and is excited to be a part of Outbreath.
a photo by abby berg
Submit to the fall 2006 issue of Outbreath

Now accepting short-stories, one-plays and photography.

To submit attach word documents and photos and email to out_breath@hotmail.com