



# VOICES

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# Dublin: From Solo Traveler to Busker

Emily Stuebing

“Could you spare any change?” a man said as I rounded the corner from York Street to Grafton, one of the main streets in Dublin. “I just need enough money to stay in a hostel for the night.”

I was 19 and had just set off to travel alone in Europe for the first time with only my ukulele and a small suitcase. Though I had horrible stage fright and wasn't planning on performing with my ukulele, I figured singing and writing would help to keep me sane throughout my travels in eight countries alone.

The man asked again. However young and inexperienced a solo-traveler I may have been, I was still far from unaware of the ruses people played to get money from tourists. While traveling with family in Paris a few years prior, a woman had even dumped some sort of a sticky, smelly concoction of goo on our backpacks and then offered to take our bags and clean them for us. And while in Rome the year before, we'd been handed several roses and hand-made bracelets seemingly for free, until we began to walk away and were harassed for money. I therefore thought it best to ignore the man and looked away, everything to my right suddenly becoming riveting.

He stepped closer, now asking me directly. Finally, I turned toward him and who I assumed to be his family. His clothes hung from bony limbs and pale skin, and a woman similar in age—probably mid-20s—with red grease-slicked

hair rocked a baby in her arms. I raised my shoulders and shook my head in response, and eventually blurted out, “Sorry, I don't have any cash on me,” before quickly walking away. I hated turning down beggars with dogs or babies, but reminded myself it wasn't my responsibility. Being a broke college student myself, I had to save money for the rest of my travels. The excuses allowed my guilt to die down long enough for a stroll up and down the red brick-paved pedestrian walkway on Grafton.

It was a sunny and warm summer day with Dublin's infamous rain having died down after a dreary Wednesday, and the street was brimming with people enjoying the city. Locals and tourists from all over the world were gathered on Grafton; I heard conversations in Russian, Chinese, German, and more as I made my way down the road. It was lined with shops of all sorts—high-end jewelry and clothing boutiques, a Disney store, chocolate shops, fast food chains, and more—in residential-turned-commercial buildings, each one adding to an architectural mix of Victorian, Gothic and even ornate Italian styles.

What really made Grafton come alive, however, were all the street vendors and street performers in front of these beautiful historic buildings. After passing St. Stephen's Green Park and the homeless family at the start of my outing, I encountered something/someone new on every corner. In a span of about ten minutes, I saw a group

of five break-dancers doing flips and tricks to the beat of a boombox with a large crowd gathered around, a florist setting up shop outside a pharmacy, a frail older man sitting on the ground and playing Mozart on a weathered violin, a man in silver metallic clothes and paint standing completely still and dancing only when money was dropped into a bucket beside him, and a band equipped with drums, guitars, and a full sound system playing Bon Jovi's “It's My Life.” Later I got to see a band playing Irish music as well, with the lead part played by a man on the flute. The street was rich with energy and culture, and yet I couldn't stop thinking about the homeless family. That's when it occurred to me what I would do.

I quickly walked back toward the corner where the family was standing and was equally relieved and nervous to find that they were still there. I slowed down and began to approach them.

My heart raced and I felt my face flush. *No, I can't do this*, I told myself and walked past them once again. Once I rounded the corner and was out of sight, I collected myself. *I'm doing this*. Closing my eyes and taking a deep breath, I turned back again and walked right up to the man.

“Hi. Listen, I really wanna help you guys out but I don't have much money. I'm staying in a hostel myself. But I was thinking; I'm traveling with my ukulele so maybe I could play on the street and make you enough money for the night,” I said before I could stop myself.

The man's face brightened. “That would be amazing! I'll even watch out for you while you perform and make sure no one tries to hurt you or steal from you.” I hadn't thought being hurt or stolen from might be a concern, and decided not to dwell on it. I was nervous enough already. “What's your name by the way?”

“Emily.”

“John. Nice to meet you,” he said, shaking my hand. “Thank you so much!”

“No problem, I'm happy to help. I'll get my ukulele and meet you back here soon.”

And with that, I was off—and still in disbelief that I'd made the agreement. *Is this even legal to do without a permit?* I wondered. *Even if it is legal, how the heck will I do this when I've only performed once before in front of about ten people? What if I lose my voice or it cracks, or I forget the words? I'm gonna sound like crap, especially compared to real musicians who do this all the time.* The rush of adrenaline kept me going though, and I jogged back to the hostel to grab my ukulele, now with just two

thoughts running through my mind in constant rotation: *I'm doing this*, and, *This is insane. There's no way I can do it.* But I couldn't let John down.

On the way back to Grafton I passed a small pub. The only inhabitants were two older men, one the bartender and the other a customer or friend sitting and chatting with him at the bar.

I marched up to the bartender, feigning confidence despite my heart beating so fast it felt like I was having either an asthma attack or a panic attack—maybe both? I set a few euros on the counter and said through loud, deep breaths, “Two shots of Jameson, please.” Some liquid luck—just enough to calm the nerves and clear the pipes, I told myself.

The men stared at me with a look of confusion, but the bartender complied. With no hesitation I finished the shots in two big gulps. Though I was trying to avoid looking at the men, I'm pretty sure their eyes shifted back and forth from me to my ukulele case the entire time. Feeling extremely uncomfortable (a good reason to keep moving!), I left to find John.

When I got to the corner where he'd stood, he wasn't there. I wandered further down Grafton in search of John and his family. A few minutes later, they appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

“I thought you weren't coming back,” John said. He put a hand on my back and guided me toward the busiest part of the walkway, pointing out places I could perform. Nothing seemed good enough. I had no microphone nor amplifier of any sort, and began to question whether people would even be able to hear me with how busy Grafton was that day. I was convinced I'd look completely amateurish next to the other talented musicians on the street who must've done this a hundred times before. There was no more backing out anymore though.

Finally, I found an empty spot less noisy and crowded than the others. *I'm doing this*—the only thought I allowed myself from there on, because if I'd thought about what I was about to do, there was no way I'd have had the courage to do it. So I sat down, set my case in front of me, and started to sing. John moseyed around, always staying within sight, while his family wandered off.

The first song I sang was “Radioactive” by Imagine Dragons. When I finished it, John walked over and simply said, “Wow, you can really sing.” That gave me the confidence boost I needed to keep going, and to sing the way I knew I could.



After the second song, a man dropped ten euros in my case and said, "I saw you here earlier and you were really good." He must have confused me with someone else but I wasn't going to tell him that. I thanked him and continued.

Throughout an hour of playing, I was surprised both by people's generosity and especially by the myriad of people who approached me just to ask questions about myself. I met a father and son from New Jersey who had to decide to travel the United Kingdom together. The father had a black circle around his eye, as they told me they'd been violently mugged the day prior. I lamented with them and shared that I was a university student and had just begun travels including medical and research internships in Germany and Switzerland that would help me reach my goal of attending medical school one day. Despite having lost their credit cards, some cash, and identification in the mugging, they gave me my biggest donation at €20 and said, "I think it's great what you're doing. Keep going."

During the next song, an Asian woman stopped and took a video with a big iPad. At the same time a young couple, a woman with tattoos and a flowy skirt and a man with big-framed glasses and a goatee, stopped and listened as well. The young woman closed her eyes and swayed back and forth to the rhythm. They each tossed a

few coins in my case and continued on their way after a couple songs. Later on, a young man in dress pants and a button-up stopped and said, "I work around the corner and hear people here all the time. You're pretty talented. Sorry I don't have any cash on me, but I wish I did." He passed me on his way back to work later and simply gave me a thumbs up.

After that hour of performing and conversing with several interesting and gracious people, my voice was raw and I'd run out of songs ready for performance, but had made €51.43. I waved John back over.

"You can take all of it," I told him.

"No, it's fine. I'll just take the nine euros I need."

I handed him the nine euros. "Are you sure? I did this for you guys and really wouldn't mind if you took it all."

John hesitated. He seemed unsure of what to tell me, but finally said, "Listen, you've been so nice I feel like you should know... I just wanted this money for some weed."

Though I was shocked and initially disappointed by his response, I knew it was because of him that I'd pushed myself out of my comfort zone and met some incredible, kindhearted people. I laughed it off and decided I'd treat myself to a nice dinner that night with what I'd earned. 🍷

# Exit

Elijah Acquah

You enter a world detached from your own  
Due to your curiosity and mystery of the other side.  
As you fly across the portal of the doorway,  
You land onto the soft ground of the new, effervescent realm.  
This opposite world has everything you could ever wish for;  
It has all of your most cherished desires  
Such as a large, exquisite house different from your old, cruddy shack,  
And a bright sky that shines over you, not clouds pouring endless rain.

After spending time in wonderland, you feel that you're missing something  
Because, of course, you couldn't spend time with the people you care about the most.  
Why would you want things to make you happy?  
Your best friends and family do that all the time.  
So, you try going back home through that portal.  
You fly on the beams, through quick winds.

However, you end up in another world different from your own.  
It's grayer than the last two, and its mountains churn out black tar.  
The portal behind you has disappeared in the atmosphere.  
Quickly you run across the landscape of dead grass and rough stones.

You soon find out that an exit is in a lake of sticky tar.  
With nothing on your back, you hold your breath and jump into the tar.  
Fortunately for you, you safely go through the portal.

Unfortunately, you are not home. You are far from home.  
You are in the deep space of the universe.  
You could breathe but not for long. You can fly on stars, but they disintegrate  
As they fly around gas giants pulling you in with large forces of gravity.

Across the stars, you find another opening in the hole rippling in space.  
Jumping in, dashing in the speed of light, you end up in another universe.  
This time, it has inverted colors from the first world you've travelled in.

You then feel like, instead of enjoying the experience you had the first time,  
You should have the worst experience you could ever imagine  
In order to find a way back home and live with your friends and family.

Sadly for you, there is no direct way finding home  
Because all of the portals you have found lead you  
To places light years away from your own land.

But when you finally make it back home, you have grown old;  
Years have passed by; your parents and your friends no longer recognize you  
Because you do not look like the young individual with the clean appearance.

An exit can lead you to hundreds of millions of new worlds,  
And you may end up alone in your own when coming back.

Trust me, I know from experience.

# Phubbing: Is Your Phone Ruining Your Relationship?

Cassandra Poulos

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders, affecting millions of people worldwide and posing a significant public health issue. When examining the main factors that lead to depression, it may not surprise you to learn that marital discord is high on that list. When married couples experience distress in their relationship, it tends to mean a lack of spousal support when issues arise and a loss of emotional connection. Experiencing these issues can significantly increase a person's chance of experiencing symptoms of depression. Furthermore, researchers from the Renmin University of China were interested in how specific behaviors, namely phubbing, by married couples, influence their relationship and their probability of developing depressive symptoms.

While the term 'phubbing' may sound unfamiliar to you, it is likely that you have either been the perpetrator or the victim of phubbing at some point in your life. Phubbing is shorthand for phone snubbing. It describes the situation

where a romantic partner or spouse uses or is constantly distracted by their phone while with their significant other. Are you feeling guilty yet? It is thought that this behavior reduces and undermines meaningful behavior spent with one's spouse and can decrease relationship satisfaction. In a world where technology is incredibly pervasive, it is imperative to be aware of the effects of phones on daily interactions with significant others and their consequences to one's mental health.

To investigate these consequences, researchers for the University of Renmin in China interviewed 243 married adults. They were asked to assess the seriousness of their partner's phubbing, their relationship satisfaction, and took surveys to assess the degree of their depressive symptoms. Researchers discovered that the incidence of phubbing significantly decreases relationship satisfaction and increases the risk of experiencing depressive symptoms. While this may be unsurprising, the researchers also found evidence that the effects of phubbing are much greater in couples that have been married for more than 7 years! This means that couples that have been married for a long time are particularly vulnerable to phubbing and feeling ignored or disconnected to their partner.

While this study focused on married couples, these consequences may also apply to dating couples. Whether you are married or just dating, invest time in your partner and disconnect from technology while together. It will make conversations more meaningful and help avoid feeling disconnected from your partner. While phubbing may seem harmless in the moment, it may lead to decreased relationship satisfaction and indirectly to depression. 📱



# The Most Important Day of My Life

Ana Laura Grazziotin

*To Ampelia and Celestina*

On a beautiful Friday of August 1959  
the cold breeze brought everyone inside.  
The wooden stoves were burning indoors  
and warming the village's homes once more.

That winter was bringing a new journey ahead  
and three women were gathered around a bed.  
It was in that very simple wooden room,  
that was witnessed a mother's nature bloom.

No doctors, no anesthesia and no cuts.  
You might say "these three women had guts!"  
But back then, it was just one more home birth  
as it had been for generations all over the Earth.

With supporting words and caring doula hands,  
full cervix dilation, and no rush or demands,  
smoothly a baby's body was making its way out:  
a 7-pound girl birth delivery was kindly carried out.

The umbilical bond was left peacefully there for awhile,  
enjoying a skin-to-skin hug, they broke into a first smile.  
From the womb, to the arms and to the powerful breast,  
mother and daughter sealed their bond in a breastfeeding nest.

This is a story of a strong woman who I met.  
A fearless grandmother who I'll never forget,  
whose first pregnancy at a mature age of 38  
unwarily gifted us the girl who'd connect our fates.

# The Career Transition of a Conductor

Anyu Zhang

You see the man sitting behind the counter. His name is Tony, who is a SIM card dealer. If you know his previous experiences, you will be shocked. It's hard for you to believe that he has been a famous orchestral conductor. Furthermore, you will have a strong desire to get to know him. Tony is in his sixties. He is not very tall, but he is very confident and sharp-eyed when he walks. When I saw him for the first time, I noticed that he was unfamiliar with the installation of software. Sometimes he had to consult others to finish the whole process. I was a little confused about this. One day, I accidentally saw an album on his counter. Tony was on the cover and conducted for an orchestra. It's hard for me to connect the man on the cover with the SIM card dealer who stands in front of me. When I asked him about this curiously, Tony smiled and said calmly that he had been a conductor of a famous orchestra. Tony was born in Taiwan, and then he moved to Japan. After that, he came to the United States to study. Tony thinks each step gives him different perspective about society and life. Tony also talked about his most exciting experience in Bulgaria when he was an orchestral conductor. Tony said he went to Bulgaria for a week. He had three rehearsals and held a concert with other musicians. He thinks his experience in Bulgaria was very rewarding. But I strongly want to know why he became a SIM card dealer. For Tony, the circumstance that was familiar to him became unfamiliar when he changed from an orchestral conductor to a SIM card dealer. This transition definitely has an effect on his life. When the circumstance that is familiar to people becomes unfamiliar, what kind of effect will it bring to them? Further, how can people adapt to new circumstances?

According to several studies by Allemand and other scientists, there is a relationship between people's personality and changes in circumstances: "...many life events are associated with changes in specific personality characteristics, thus supporting the idea that personality

can change in response to changes in life circumstances" (Luhmann). This affirms the effect of changes in circumstances on the psychology of people. People will adjust their behavior and thoughts in order to adapt to exterior changes. In addition, "...higher life satisfaction is associated with an increased likelihood to become married and to become parents and with a decreased likelihood to lose or change jobs" (Luhmann). From this result, we can infer that a desire to achieve greater life satisfaction might have been a potential factor that led Tony to switch his career.

For Tony, being an orchestral conductor not only gave him pride and won him respect; it was also a satisfying creative process. One creative achievement that Tony is most proud of is a systematic organization of the violin playing. Tony personally derives this concept from years of practicing. He believes not too many people have this organized concept. However, sometimes people prefer to be ordinary rather than famous because they want more spare time and freedom. Perhaps Tony also has similar thoughts. He wants to experience life and achieve self-realization from a totally different perspective. Speaking of switching jobs, it's a very common phenomenon in both the West and the East. For example, Charles Dickens was well-known as a novelist, but he had been an apprentice and a journalist. He also worked in a law firm for several years. President Donald Trump was a businessman and a writer. He became a presidential candidate in 2015 and changed into a politician. In 2016, he was elected to be the new president. Yu Minhong is the founder of New Oriental Education Corporation. Before being a famous entrepreneur, he had been a teacher and a regulator. Qi Baishi was a Chinese painter in the 20th century. Before he became a painter, he was a carpenter. All of them have experienced changes in circumstances. Finally, they adapt themselves to the new circumstance and even make achievements under such conditions.

We have known the effect of changes in circumstances from the scientific perspective. It's necessary to know the opinion of common people. In a blog post on *Lifehacker*, which is a weblog that shares life skills and technological knowledge, Dachis thinks people are fearful of change because it will bring stress and loss: "In fact, a long-used psychometric for measuring stress is the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale. Most of the items on this scale represent a change in a person's life that is known to lead to some amount of stress. ...even good change is stressful" (Dachis). From Tony's perspective, the main stress that he would face at first includes the inadaptability and psychological gap. He might feel uncomfortable when he works as a SIM card dealer. But now Tony has already adapted to the transition of these two careers. Tony thinks his two careers are the two things he cherished the most. In his view, being an orchestral conductor is a great joy, because he creates a composer's idea and also forms live performance spontaneously. As a SIM card dealer, Tony thinks his goal is to service customers, bring them the best product and benefit their usage of the phone. From previous experiences, Tony knew what he really needed and found a more specific goal in life. For some people, it takes much time to accept changes in life events and adapt to new circumstances. Even if they adapt to changes, they still have psychological gap when they think of previous experiences. But Tony has overcome his psychological gap. No matter how circumstances change, Tony enjoys the process of change and what life brings to him. This is what makes him special.

Since sometimes changes in circumstances are inevitable, it's important for us to know some feasible methods to adapt to new circumstances. One of the effective ways scientists found to help people adapt to changes is situation redefinition: "it involves the cognition of seeing a situation in a different light that either augments or diminishes the perceived severity and/or cause of that situation" (Stone 188). Basically, this means people can reconsider changes in circumstances from another perspective and try to gain the value of changes. Tony can redefine his transition as a rebirth of career. When he works as a SIM card dealer, he gets to know people who are totally different from those he knew before. Besides, Tony needs to deal with different things, and some are more difficult than things he tackled as an orchestral conductor. On the surface, they are challenges to him. But actually, they enlarge Tony's social community and bring

new techniques to him. He can learn more valuable things under the new circumstance, such as communication skills and analytical skills.

To some degree, Tony's experiences as a conductor not only help him with self-introspection and social relationships, but form his own interpretation of life. Tony thinks the experiences from conducting contribute to his view of how a person should be disciplined. As a conductor, Tony produces a product at the final stage. When he puts on a concert, it has to be successful and fantastic. Therefore, he forms his practices around that goal. This concept carries over to Tony's daily life experiences that he always tries to do best in resolving his personal conflicts or conflicts with others.

Tony's transition from an orchestral conductor to a SIM card dealer is relatively special. For him, the transition helps him find a new way of living. He can perceive things from a common person's perspective. He also gains value and happiness by helping others. In addition, his previous experiences as a conductor let him become more confident. The confidence lets him keep the stability and calm of his mindset. These characteristics are very useful for a dealer. Just like Tony, there are many people who are experiencing changes in circumstances. The most important thing for them is to keep a positive attitude. They need to accept the change rather than doubt it. The acceptance process may take a while; some even take several years. But once people get through the transition and fully adapt to the new circumstance, they will realize that all the things they experienced are worthwhile.

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# La yuma en La Havana

Emily Stuebing

Voy caminando en San Martín  
Oyendo silbidos y sonidos de besos  
Sonrío a los cubanos y su felicidad sin fin  
"Hola, princesa" me dicen los muchachos

Los hombres arrugados que conocí ayer  
Se sientan detrás de la cerca decorativa  
Agarrando el pomo que nunca paran de beber  
Saludando con la mano libre a la chacha yuma

Vemos en la esquina a los taxistas cubanos  
Que nos traen a bailar y caminar en el malecón  
Nos muestran primero unos apartamentos verdaderos  
Y el secreto de los canales ilegales de televisión

¿Qué piensan de nosotras, de las estadounidenses?  
Ahora con Trump no sabemos que va a pasar  
Pensamos que allí hay muchas oportunidades  
Y que aquí en Cuba nada va a cambiar

# The Corvette Story

Brian Leal

**M**y car smashed into a cement light pole, my father bleeding from a silver dollar sized wound right above his hairline. His bruised and immobile hand, and his dilated brown eyes are my memories of my first car. My love for cars began at an early age and the memories I have of my family and cars we've owned make them more than just a means of transportation.

On one of my visits to Grandpa's house I asked, "Grandpa, what was your first car?" and with Grandma in the room he looked across the room at Grandma then back at me and responded, "A black two-door '57 Bel Air." He added, "That's the car I got your grandmother with."

Grandma's brown cheeks immediately turned red and she rolled her eyes and said, "Ay Pedro (Oh Peter)." My first car, a black Chevrolet Corvette, and my grandfather's '57 Bel Air are American icons. They are the American equivalent to the German Porsche 911. All three are highly sought after and are the pride of the American and German car industry, respectively. To me, more than the history, collectability, or a means of transportation, my Corvette was where, like my grandfather, I would create my own memories that I could one day hopefully share with my children and grandchildren.

Obtaining my first car was a long process. I saved up for four years and we drove 300 miles from my hometown to Houston in search of my first car. It was a familiar Texas spring day with triple digit temperatures and humidity. My brother and I were excited. We got out of school, arrived home, and darted to our rooms as Mom cooked dinner. We each packed a pair of clothes and picked up a dolly from our friend's car shop. On Monday we had stated looking for candidates on Craigslist and we had picked out eight

cars scattered across the Houston metropolitan area. Without our Garmin we would have had no idea how to navigate around the fourth largest city in the United States. It was Friday and we were going to spend the weekend trying to find my first car. It was Sunday and with no time left we believed we had found a complete car—unlike three of the cars we had looked at—that was within our price range.

The car had been sitting for two years; it was covered with dust and the spider webs on its spoilers made it seem like it had begun to fuse with the ground. Dad and I walked around the car looking for any dents or scratches. I dropped to the ground and crawled on my back under the car to make sure that the floor pans and exhausts were not rusted out. It was hot and humid, the sun was right above us, and the pavement quickly evaporated the sweat on the back of my arms and on my shirt. It did not help that I had forgotten to remove the spider webs from the area where I crawled under. The spider webs got on my hands and head as I moved into the bottom of the car and to my delight it was even hotter under the car. A cloud of dust and dirt blinded me as I dragged my body under the vehicle. The air caught between my back and the ground lifted the dust as I moved up under the car. The only good part of being under the car was that unlike the pavement exposed to the sun, the pavement under the car did not sear my skin. The floor pans were nice and gray and the exhaust system had been upgraded to an aluminum setup that made the car a bit more enticing. By the time I pulled myself from under the car, the owner had come out from his home and he had given my father the car keys to go for a test drive. He had, altruistically, volunteered to drive the car. We sat our sweaty stinky bodies on the burning black leather seats. Dad inserted the key

and after the first turn the car started right up. Dad looked over at me and with an insecure frown and said, "Purrs like a kitten."

I rolled my eyes and said, "Let's go Dad. I have school tomorrow."

The engine was quiet and civil and it wasn't until Dad introduced the pedal to the floor that a sound much like Han Solo's Millennium Falcon erupted from the engine bay. It took us less than two minutes to circle the neighborhood and my father was sold. As we were driving back to the seller's house dad told me, "I don't care what you think. It is this car or no car." It did not sound like much of a negotiation so I just nodded my head and let Dad do the talking. The seller said that it was going to be his Sunday cruiser but unforeseen family expenses meant the car had to go. Dad negotiated with the seller for about an hour and they reached a price the seller said would leave him in good standing with his wife and would leave us enough money to get back home. We handed the seller a stack of hundred dollar bills, strapped the car to the dolly, and hauled it back home all in time to make school the next morning.

The gremlins soon peeked their furry faces. We began doing the routine maintenance that had not been done in over two years. All of the men of the house were wrenching on the new toy and none of us had a clue of what we were doing. After about two months of tune ups, fluid changes, lubricating hinges, bearings, nuts, and bolts the car was almost ready to be a daily driver. All that was left to fix were the brakes.

We were having our daily portion of triple digit heat and humidity on a Friday afternoon; Dad, Mauro, and I were at a brake shop getting my car's brake pads and rotors replaced. The mechanic walked through the door of the waiting area and handed Dad the keys. He asked us to take the car for a test drive and make sure that we were satisfied. Dad immediately volunteered to take the car for the test drive.

No more than a block down the road Dad crashed my car and almost lost his life. He was not wearing his seat belt and the impact of the car should have launched him through the front window. To our relief instead of being launched at an acute angle, right through the front window, he was launched at a broader angle. And though most of his head hit the roof of the car the part of his head that hit the front window shattered the front window. The shards of glass, like a butcher's knife, cleanly sliced his scalp. At the hospital we found out that Dad had also fractured his hand the day of the

crash from breaking the steering wheel with his palm and wrist after the impact.

For months and even today, family, friends, and people that hear the story make fun of Dad and tell me, "Don't lend your car to your teenage father because he will wreck it." I was disappointed with Dad but not because he had wrecked my car but because when he was given the car keys to go for the test drive, he had floored the throttle that caused him to lose control and slam into the cement pillar that totaled the car. His reckless driving had almost taken his life.

I never addressed what happened that day but I did share with him that I was glad that he was okay. Months after the incident, Dad and I were alone in his room and without warning he looked me in the eyes then lowered his look and told me, "I am sorry I crashed your car, Pa." I looked at him and responded, "It's okay, Pa, I probably would have done the same... you just beat me to the punch." We both grinned and have not talked about that since.

It was my dream to go for a drive with my grandfather in my first car. I also intended to keep my first car so that unlike my grandfather I may have the chance to go for a drive with my grandchildren in my first car. Grandpa passed away before I purchased my first car. I purchased my car a year after his death. He was the first person I thought about when we bought it and I realized that the memories that I would make with the car would be without Grandpa. What happened with Dad was not part of the plan but it is nonetheless a memory. To this day, I keep my car's rear badge in a drawer next to my bed in my parent's home in Texas. I will never get to ride with my children in my black Corvette but what I will do, is share the memories that their great grandfather made in his black '57 Bel Air and the memories I have of my black '92 Corvette. 📷



## CHARACTERS

YOUNG: 23-year-old male, wears a white robe, mute

OLD: 67-year-old female, body mostly absent, voice mostly present

*"YOUNG" and "OLD" are not their real names. They are anonymous.*

## SETTING

YOUNG's mind.

## TIME

Present day.

## CLOUDS

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A Ten-Minute Play

by Elijah Acquah

YOUNG is sleeping in a fetal position on the ground. He wears a white robe that covers his naked body.

He wakes up and sits with his legs crossed. He looks around and notices that his surroundings are sky blue and white.

He hears wind blowing softly into his ears. He inhales the breeze through his nose.

He then looks down and touches the floor with his hands.

As a reaction, he jolts upwards, realizing that he is situated on the top of a cloud.

He touches some more by wafting the cloudy soil. The substance disperses from his hand movement, but it comes together again smoothly.

YOUNG begins to stand up, slowly rising from the ground. His feet stand firmly on the soft substance. He doesn't sink into the cloud nor, oddly enough, does he feel the ground touching his feet.

YOUNG then decides to take a step forward on the cloud. But suddenly, with his first step, the cloud becomes bigger with more particles of air forming with it.

The male takes more steps; the cloud gets bigger.

On his thirteenth step, a black cloudy mist appears.

It forms itself into the shape of a feminine face. The physiognomy is too blurry for YOUNG to recognize.

This cloudy face is known to be OLD, and it speaks.

OLD

I guess you're wondering how you've ended up here?

YOUNG cannot speak. He notices that when he tries to push his vocals through his throat.

He nods instead.

OLD (CONT'D)

Well... you are in a coma.

YOUNG lights up his eyes in shock.

OLD does a quick nod.

OLD (CONT'D)

That's the truth. You're in your mind right now. And I don't know how long you're going to stay in here, honestly.

YOUNG opens his arms out to the dark mist, as if he is asking whether or not it knows what would happen in his mind.

OLD (CONT'D)

But I can tell you this.

I know that you are going to re-encounter moments in your life that have been suppressed. These moments could be, possibly, the best

birthday party you've ever had, or the day you graduated from high school, or rather that time a crash gave you an endless stay at a hospital.

YOUNG opens his mouth, trying once more to ask. He wants to know about the last moment that was mentioned: the hospital stay.

But the OLD is already starting to disappear in the horizon.

OLD (CONT'D)

You will physically meet with your past when you're in your mind. And be mindful of your surroundings because your mind is a battlefield.

After OLD says what she needed to say, she camouflages in the atmosphere and blows herself in the background.

YOUNG is all alone.

But suddenly, a little toy train appears behind his back. It is on a small, white cloud coming from the background.

Its cloud gets connected to YOUNG's large cloud.

YOUNG notices and turns his body to look back. His feet are still.

He pauses and stares.

He then takes light footsteps toward the little train.

Bending down, he observes its features.

It is covered in a plastic coating. It flashes bright colors of yellow with red covering the top.

YOUNG picks up the toy train. He continues to look at it as he turns it on every axis.

He lowers the train down, turns forward and looks up.

He puts his fingers on his chin.

He realizes that he always used to ride on trains in order to travel.

All of a sudden, voices appear around him.

They are sounds of the passengers who read the newspaper, talk on their phones, play on their handheld devices, and mingle with each other.

The clouds around YOUNG start forming a huge train. They trap YOUNG inside of them.

The clouds become larger.

*(They cover up the entire stage.)*

They paint themselves with the colors of the toy train. They become solid with rugged edges on the inside.

There are no seats or poles for YOUNG to hang onto.

The floor accelerates, making YOUNG feel rumbling below him.

He crouches down and touches the floor to observe the vibration.

But then the train goes into a loud *crash!*

YOUNG tumbles to the ground hard, headfirst.

He stays there while voices are screaming and shouting.

The wailing, the yelling, the choking on blood all grow louder.

YOUNG tries to get up from the ground, but he could only pull his head up to see.

Black steam appears from behind YOUNG. It gives out a loud hissing sound.

YOUNG quickly turns his head around and notices this.

The dark mist surrounds him until all that YOUNG could see is pitch black.

*(The mist covers up the entire stage until it becomes*

*completely black or dark.)*

YOUNG's white robe glows, bringing some light inside the uniformly dark clouds.

He finally puts his entire body up.

He then looks around frantically.

OLD's voice enters the mist.

OLD

I'm here to protect you... just like I have when you were alive and well.

YOUNG gives a confused expression. He looks around, trying to understand where OLD is coming from.

OLD (CONT'D)

You had always been a confused individual. But it looks like you're being more watchful of things around you right now.

I hope you were aware of this: the last message you were reading.

OLD brings out her face on YOUNG's right. It becomes a little clearer, but it's still blurry.

*(The face will appear on the left side of the stage.)*

As YOUNG turns to his right side, a message appears. It clears away some of the fog in order to show up.

It says: HOW R U FEELIN?

# Her Own Place

Devin Van Dyke

We buried Mom during spring break. She came from a town in northern New Mexico, right up next to the Colorado border, cozy like. She went in the ground there so she could be close to her Mom, or Nana, to my generation. We had to do it in the spring because my brother's kids couldn't miss out on school for the several days it would take us to fly there, take care of business and fly back.

We tramped through the airport with me, the middle-single-son, leading the party and helping out with my niece's luggage and carrying mine too. We had to make a connecting flight and when I do something like that, it's go like hell until I know I'm okay—it was the same thing with burying Mom—go like hell till she's in the ground. Then maybe I'll feel better.

We rented cars in Albuquerque for the four-hour drive to the seldom-changing small town, Raton, Mom's childhood home and chosen resting place. Our four-wheel drives plodded along, caravan-like on a snow-covered interstate, in birth order, led by Mom's executor, Korbin. Malingering and heedless of the collective fatigue, we took a circuitous route. In Raton we checked into a near deserted motel and then carried our luggage into our side-by-side rooms, and then comforted each other over a sit-down restaurant meal.

The next day we met with our great aunt, Nana's sister, in an aircraft-hangar like space hemmed in by a two-storied rectangle of empty motel rooms. We were the only people in the football-field-sized space. It wasn't as warm as my room with the heater on full blast, but it was good enough for Mom's progeny

to hear stories from our oldest living relative. I didn't listen long—I just wanted to be warmed up, by myself, and watch TV. My brothers, sister, and their spouses listened and recorded for posterity's sake all the memory-treats great aunt Faye unwrapped while I discovered darkness never begins or ends, it just is. The pain is present in all of us. Mom's loss was the conduit it could use to be set free and become omnipresent in me.

I wanted to remember the good times in Raton from when Mom was alive, so I convinced my brothers it was okay for me to drive around Raton in one of our rentals. I went past the still open cinema and found my way up to the top of the hill above the town. It was probably where local teens went on Saturday night to be together unparented. I drove out past the mesa where Korbin, Rand and I went for a hike and saw a rattlesnake, when we visited years ago and we were all still in school. I stopped at a reservoir my great grandfather had taken me and Korbin to as kids to fish on a visit years before the hike and before brother Rand was born. I cried a little and then a lot.

Back in February and in California, I went to the funeral home where Mom had her memorial. I thought about the house she lived in before she passed. It was the kind of home she'd wanted to buy whenever she and Dad went house shopping. It was neat, clean and small but with enough room to accommodate her kids and grandchildren. All the appliances worked and the front yard was well groomed with a small lawn. Unlike the houses she had raised her kids in, her new home would never be cluttered with Dad's projects, tools and hobbies. It would never smell like the fresh sawn redwood he made retaining walls with, thirty years before; or the smell of chicken eggs fresh from the cages. Dad would have no presence in this home she made for herself in her last few years of life; it was her own place.

Now she lay before me hundreds of miles from her last home in California in the town she knew as a child, in a coffin, and in clothes I didn't know she had. The funeral director had escorted me into the viewing area and then let me be alone with her. Mom wore her glasses most of the time. They had been removed so we could all look at her closed eyes. She was still as a picture and as motionless as a statue. The funeral director said I could put some make up on her if I wanted. I'm probably the same Momma's boy he's consoled a hundred times before. He knows I'll be able to do a little lipstick but probably shouldn't try much more. He asked if he could put this little vial thing in the corner

on the outside of the coffin in case they ever needed to dig her up and be sure she was still Kay Van Dyke, Mom, like right now. I said sure and grabbed another handful of tissue.

When I got back from my ride around town, I parked between two other similar four-wheel drives in front of our row of rooms. It was cold and dark. Hardening snow crunched under my feet as I let myself into my ground floor room with a view of three parked cars. I went to bed believing in sleep and awoke having got none. Mom's funeral party rose in the morning and left behind our similar spartan rooms temporarily inhabited by our grief. We went to a restaurant and everybody tried to avoid my ongoing angry mien. It wasn't them I was mad at, it wasn't me, and it certainly wasn't Mom.

A hostess met us in the foyer and asked how many we were. Watery-eyed sad faces looked up and we all heard Korbin say "Ten, non-smoking please." We ate breakfast, subdued but not silenced, dressed in clothes as nice as what we'd worn to each other's weddings; the women and girls in dresses, the men and boys with top shirt buttons fastened and shoes shined to a new car gloss. The nice clothes we wore didn't make us feel better—I guess maybe everybody dresses up because it gives them something to channel their energy into and makes it easier to say goodbye. Thinking hard thoughts is easier when well dressed.

I had known Mom was on her way out—but my brothers and sister knew nothing until the last month or so. We were all surprised—they were unaware of Mom's end and I was caught by how close I was to her and by how much I would miss her. By the time her spring burial happened we were all worn out—tired—of grieving—of comforting each other—we all needed to have it done. The whole dying thing had become a major disruption. Once she was in the ground, we could get on with our lives and hope we could keep Mom alive in our hearts, albeit at a safe distance. As we finished our meal I announced I wanted that last ride with her to the cemetery. My brothers' kids weren't done eating so my brother in law, Chris, volunteered to drive one of our rentals behind the hearse carrying Mom.

Chris drove our snow-dirtied rental behind the showroom-clean hearse down the freeway. I sat in the back of the rental, limo style with my suit jacket rumpled and my tie askew, alone. Cars flew past eager to get ahead, paying no heed to the hearse and its cargo or

the lone vehicle escorting it. The funeral director knew I wanted, *needed*, all the extras in a final tribute to my Mom.

At the gate to the cemetery we slowed to a casual walking pace. As we crawled along it felt like all of the children of dead Moms were with me. It was as if this procession—me, Mom and drivers—was the one enduring thing in human history. The wheels became solid wagon wheels bumping along on a gravel road escorted by throngs of people dressed every which way. They were dressed in the finest clothing from right now, rags of the middle ages or the furs and skins of prehistory. Mom was leaving the land of *is* and entering the land of *was*.

As we rolled to a stop at the straight-edged right-angled hole in the ground where Mom and her coffin would rest, no other people were present except me, Mom and our drivers. She would have the place, several acres covered in trees, grass and rectangular rocks standing on end, all to herself for a while.

The hearse had a rear door that was bigger than a regular car door with a push-button-latch to match. A light came on as the door swung open, just like a regular car when you're getting in to go somewhere. It was as big as the back of the car. The hearse had curtained-windows all around. They were drawn shut.

Mom's cream colored coffin all glossy and shiny like an Oscar or an Emmy sat on rollers in the back. Light blue shag carpet covered the floor of the hearse and went a few inches up the sides. It looked either brand new or freshly vacuumed. The inside smelled and looked like a model home in a sub-division—all new and fresh materials in a never been lived-in place.

After the hearse maneuvered around so the coffin could be easily removed and carried to the gravesite, the rest of the family showed up. Mom's box seemed a lot lighter than it had looked or when we moved it, I wasn't pulling my weight because it sure was easy to get out. Mom was toothpick-thin when she was put in it, but I don't think she would have seemed any heavier even if she'd weighed a couple of hundred pounds—it was just plain easy to help, one last time.

Since there were ten of us there were more than enough hands to set her in the prepared hole. There was a lowering device of some kind the funeral director used to let the box down into the ground and we set Mom on that. It's surprising how deep six feet is. I can't fathom why it's

so deep—an animal sure ain't going through the six-inch thick coffin—no matter how lightweight the materials may be.

Not walking on graves where people already rested was easy for the old folks—they'd been through this whole routine before. But if this was a first, the idea of not walking on perfectly nice grass stretched out endlessly periodically separated by regular neat rows of markers, was a different experience. It was a little disorienting to embrace the idea that under regular green golf-course-uniform grass a body was buried—there was no indentation—no clue except a marker at the head of where the person lay.

A guy wearing a suit as nice as the funeral director's and carrying a Bible showed up along with Aunt Faye and a few other older locals who knew either Nana, Mom or knew of us, her kids. Together we made up a small crowd huddled around a fresh pile of dirt a few feet away from the hole. Nana's marker was at the top, off to one side. After we all settled in, but before the cold got us, I think the guy who showed up with the Bible or the funeral director said something—but I can't remember who or what. Then the coffin sank into the earth.

I'm pretty certain they actually used a backhoe to dig the hole, but there were a couple of brand new looking shovels stuck in that pile of dirt. After people started to act like the whole affair was over and started to leave, I grabbed one of those shovels and started throwing dirt on Mom's box. My nephew threw some too. We buried her under spring's fresh-growing green grass, under a tree with new buds on a cloudy breezy not-too-cold day.

We didn't put a lot of dirt on her coffin. For me it was kind of like a reflex and it was the last thing I would do for her, except remember her. My nephew got in the car he would ride back to Albuquerque in, and Korbin told me I could drive by myself if I wanted to. I did that because now I knew it was over. The other two four-wheel drives had the rest of my family in them and the mothers of my family's next generation.

I stopped along the way and had something to eat—I had four hours of freeway speeds to catch up. I spotted them about ten minutes from the turn off for our motel and I slowly crept up to where they were. One of them noticed me in a rear view mirror and when we dropped together into formation and made a nice neat line—it felt good. The comfort and the naturalness of it made me feel like a significant part of a greater whole. 

# Ascended

Elijah Acquah

Orange skies and yellow clouds  
Fly over me and the green meadows.  
My legs are crisscrossed,  
And they would usually be  
Next to Emma, with hers laid together.

We would look at the sun--  
A star that shines across the landscape  
Throughout the calm afternoon.  
We would watch it burn out  
When the setting turns violet.

Emma was also a beauty who shined brightly.  
She was a very kind fellow,  
Who saw me as her tranquility.  
She had sunlight that glistened until  
The end of the day.

The sun descends in the horizon  
And takes away what I've consummated:  
My deeds that have been completed;  
My breaths exhaled; my energy depleted  
From the bright rays of light.

Today, alone, I stare at the sun,  
At all of the shining specks of heat.  
The sunset had been Emma's favorite pastime  
From childhood to adolescence.  
But I now watch it without her.

The gleaming sun vanishes  
Into the heavenly distance  
With valuable substances.  
It would take away my love,  
Spirit, divinity, and liveliness.

All I have left is despair.  
I can't stop feeling the loss  
Of that beautiful girl.  
And I sense the pain in my heart  
As the grass withers and sleeps.

Sitting alone,  
The loneliness pervades around me.  
I think about Emma while  
The sun's descent tells me that

She has ascended.

# The Truth About Red Wine

Cassandra Poulos

Scientific publications have always been deeply disconnected from their portrayal in the media. Unfortunately, the material in a meticulously crafted publication is often diluted to an exaggerated headline and a three paragraph description, if you're lucky. By the time a publication gets into the hands of a journalist, the juicy headline and the projected public outcry have already been calculated.

In his popular book *Houston, We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story*, science writer Randy Olson describes this relationship perfectly when he states, "That's a whole lot of exaggeration, leading to the telling of bigger and more exciting stories than what actually exist in the real world. This is bad news for science, which seeks to document the real world, regardless of how good the story."

No headline has been more exaggerated, and more disputed than the Red Wine Myth. In 1995, it was announced that among 6,000 men and 7,000 women, those who drank three to five glasses of wine a day had a 49% lower rate of death over a ten year period. Great news, right? Unfortunately, the researchers did not account for any other life factors such as exercise, diet, or family history that could also account for these findings. Without all factors taken into account, how could a decrease in death rate be attributed to red wine alone?

Again in 2015, red wine was held up as the new fountain



of youth when resveratrol, an antioxidant found in red grapes, was discovered. A study was conducted that showed that a resveratrol pill could prevent the formation of amyloid plaques, protein tangles that cause memory loss in Alzheimer's disease. Amazing! However, in order to achieve these same results, a person would need to drink 1,000 glasses of wine a day to consume the same amount of resveratrol in the study. Furthermore, these results were indirectly attained and it is unknown whether resveratrol can reduce or reverse existing amyloid plaques.

In the past, it was asserted that red wine could reduce the risk of prostate, as well as lung and colon cancer. However, this result was only seen in light to moderate drinkers. And since then, this claim was debunked in a 2015 study done by Harvard. They found that even half a glass of wine a day can actually increase the risk of certain types of cancer in women, particularly breast cancer by 13%. For men, drinking a couple glasses of alcohol a day was associated with a 26% increased risk of cancers such as liver, colon and esophageal cancers. With all of this back

and forth, it is no wonder why the same headlines that proclaimed red wine to be the cure for cancer didn't get the same attention when the 'oh wait, no it's not' article came out.

The general public will probably always remember hearing that a glass of wine a night does the heart good. However, all types of alcohol are considered carcinogenic and consumption should always be kept in check. Circulation of clichés like this are the work of the exaggeration nation. Exciting stories make for good headlines and stick in the minds of readers. Publications that have retracting or overriding statements have minimal exposure and more than likely will not be covered. Should the media be held accountable for their exaggerated claims and often false statements? Or is it in the hands of the scientists to emphasize the meaning and ramifications of their work, so they do not get overstated? Even if scientists properly state the consequences of their study, is there any way for their results and work to be properly conveyed to the public, without exaggeration? 

# Dear Emma

Yejun Bae

**D**ear Emma,  
Hope you are having a pleasant day with your wonderful students. I could not stop smiling whenever I entered your classroom because of your warm welcome and your students' active participation in classroom activities. I love to see the lively atmosphere of your classroom.

I appreciate you having meaningful conversations with me about students' hardships in learning science. Your keen observations on students' learning provide me with opportunities to think about diverse students' learning, especially ELLs and low SES students.

Below, I hope to provide some answers to your two questions based on what I learned from the class Writing in the Science Classroom. This is not only a part of my final project but also a good opportunity to introduce theoretical views that I wanted to share with you whenever I listened to your questions and thoughts. I will focus on your critical questions related to students' science learning:

- 1.) Why do students struggle to explain natural selection to younger audiences in their summary writings?
- 2.) Why do students' backgrounds, especially native language and social status, affect their science learning?

## Summary writing – language transformation towards younger audience

First of all, I would like to share why writing is critical for students' learning based on what I understood from several articles. Galbraith (1999) emphasized writing as a 'knowledge constituting process.' He argued that writing is an essential learning process because learners turn on their episodic memories and dispositions related to text production and are engaged in the problem-solving process. Based on his arguments, writing in science classrooms requires two elements: learners' dispositional dialects and translation.

Dispositional dialects are kind of learners' final choices of knowledge for writing tasks from the potential content of knowledge. For example, when you ask students to write about what they learned about natural selection in the last class, students will

recall their memories and make final decisions that they believe are right answers to your questions. He stressed in his article that writing provides opportunities to learners' constituting knowledge with interactions between writers' neutral representations and tacit knowledge like a decision to turn on one bulb among several bulbs.

Translation processes are operated during students' writing. According to Galbraith, when learners are in the translation process, three elements of the cognitive process are activated: planning, output depicting, and goal setting. They will plan how to express their dispositional dialects with texts, consider types of writings such as reports, journals, or letters, and set goals of writing tasks. In this point, 'audience' plays a significant role in translation processes. If you ask them to write to younger audiences, their translation processes must be different from writing to their teacher. McDermott and Hand (2010) also emphasized the importance of audience in writing. When students have diverse audiences except for their teachers, they have to consider explanation of particular science vocabularies for audiences who are not familiar with them. And their recognition of those language translations improves learners' conceptual understanding because they have to go through self-feedback systems among their implicit and explicit knowledge.

## Students' diversity matters in Science Learning

Your critical observation on ELLs and lower SES students inspired me to become a science education researcher who particularly works for those students. I believe your understanding on argumentation and student-centered learning, and your teaching practice play significant roles in students' development of critical thinking skills. Your class values students' voices and providing equal opportunities to learn regardless of their native language, disabilities, and socioeconomic status.

Schoerning, Hand, Shelley, and Therrien (2015) explain power relationships and language access in science classrooms. They focused on ELL students' science learning and provided empirical evidence on how ELL students in SWH classrooms become stakeholders who have ownership in their learning. The authors stressed 'learning is negotiation', which is also Brian's philosophy. For the sake of students' equal opportunities, classroom discussions and conceptual understandings must invite all students. In SWH classrooms, students are empowered regardless of differences in their backgrounds because teachers

have ultimate responsibility and power over creating student-centered classrooms, and students are involved in learning environments with authority. Teacher roles in SWH classrooms are critical because students become investigators by sharing their knowledge with their peers and teachers and evaluating knowledge they generated only in student-centered learning environments.

Ardasheva, Norton-Meier, and Hand (2015) described student-centered learning as 'non-threatening learning environments.' The authors valued students' cultural experiences and practices as powerful science learning tools and emphasized teacher roles in diverse student classrooms. Teaching requires teachers' recognitions of social justice in that teaching practice cannot be separated from social contexts and valuing knowledge. Curriculum that reflects mainstream content knowledge with native language makes it easy to marginalize students who are non-native speakers and have limited experiences of mainstream cultures.

To sum up, as school curriculum and science knowledge have cultural elements in their nature, science teachers need to be aware of their beliefs in knowledge, cultural understanding, and teaching practices in classrooms. All learners are willing to learn regardless of their native language, disabilities, and socioeconomic status. When teachers value their past experiences and diversity as materials for diverse student learning, and provide student-centered support, all learners will achieve learning goals.

Sincerely,  
Yejun

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# Elecciones

Samuel Jambrović

- I  
¿Terminar de leer para clase o escribir un poema?
- II  
¿Ser el engañador o ser el engañado?
- III  
¿Decir que no y sentirte mal o decir que sí y sentirte mal?
- IV  
¿Perder todas las fotos en tu celular o dejar que alguien te ayude a recuperarlas teniendo en cuenta todo lo que va a ver?
- V  
¿Hablar con los que piensan distinto a ti o quejarte de ellos con los que piensan igual?
- VI  
¿Desafiar a tu abuelo racista/misógino/homófobo/clasista o aceptar la justificación de que «simplemente es de otra generación»?
- VII  
¿Vivir con tu abuelo o vivir con tu ex?
- VIII  
¿Perder a un amigo o apoyar a una comunidad?
- IX  
¿Tener un acento o tener una voz?
- X  
¿Seguir creyendo que escribir te obliga a salir de tu zona de confort o admitir que realmente lo haces porque tienes miedo a hablar?

# Choices

- I  
Finish reading for class or write a poem?
- II  
Be the deceiver or be the deceived?
- III  
Say no and feel bad or say yes and feel bad?
- IV  
Lose all of the pictures on your phone or let someone help you get them back knowing everything they will see?
- V  
Talk to those who think differently than you or complain about them to those who think the same?
- VI  
Call out your racist/misogynist/homophobic/classist grandfather or accept the excuse that “he’s just from a different generation”?
- VII  
Live with your grandfather or live with your ex?
- VIII  
Lose a friend or support a community?
- IX  
Have an accent or have a voice?
- X  
Keep telling yourself that writing forces you out of your comfort zone or admit that the real reason you write is because you are afraid to speak?

# Yoyo

Elijah Acquah

When I was a newborn, my parents gave me a yoyo. It was an effervescent little toy that glistens in the sunlight with its bright zigzag patterns of warm and cold colors. It was a toy that my parents laid eyes on longer than usual before purchasing it. It stood out among the other toys in the aisle because there was a simple word engraved on its cover: TIME. Mom and Dad were intrigued by this word because they knew they would spend all of their time on me for the rest of their lives.

I had played with the yoyo throughout my young life. I threw it around every direction. It would fall out of my hands, and I would pick it back up. It flew into the air with a push and back into my palm with a yank. It would also break apart sometimes when it hits the ground. But it was easily attachable, so I can put it back together. It was such a fun thing to play with.

But likewise, I had also played with myself. During those times, it always had to do with the yoyo, for it was a deep distraction. It was much noticeable around my high school years. Since the start of the ninth grade, I had meditated on the yoyo, rigorously training myself to be the best yoyo master in the world. I wanted to be known as "The Man With a Million Tricks."

My attachment led to the point where my aunt and uncle had to take my yoyo away from me. "You're such a shut-in!" my aunt complained.

"No, I'm not!" I denied. "I spend time with plenty of friends!"

"Then how come you barely talk to them?" my uncle questioned. "I keep getting calls from all your teachers saying that you play with your yoyo too much. You wouldn't talk to them or the other students because this yoyo is so damn special to you!"

"That's because it is! It is the only thing that I have left of my parents!"

The argument with my aunt and uncle continued for nearly an hour, and it ended with me shouting "I hate you!" I claimed that I would rather live with my best friends (which I did not have).

And so, the next day was when I started to break apart from my relatives. I was kicked out of my aunt and uncle's house with only the clothes on my back.

"And don't forget to take this because it's your family." My aunt threw the yoyo on the ground, and it broke apart. As I tried to put it back together, my uncle slammed the door. That was the last moment I had with them.

At that time, I was only a seventeen-year old, a junior in high school. I honestly had no idea where I could go. I had always imagined travelling the world to win yoyo competitions. I just knew they exist. However, I also knew that I couldn't reach them because I didn't have a car or anything else to travel some place safe.

I had walked around the city, and I could not get any proper shelter. When I had gone to school, which was fortunately very close to my old home, people had walked away from me. I had been focused on finding someone to be close to, but many of them wanted to be distant. I could not worry about the yoyo in my pocket because I could not befriend anyone.

But in the moment I did think about the little toy, I was on the crooked sidewalk, burning under the sun, sitting alone in wrinkled clothes while well-dressed civilians pass by. I pulled the yoyo out of my pocket. I observed its weathered design, but I could see the word "TIME" was still clean.

"I wish you were both here," I moaned under my breath, and tears started running down my face. "I wish you didn't die in that fire."

"Excuse me," someone said. I looked upward to see who said that. It was a young man who seemed to be the same age as me. He was wearing a plaid shirt, but he also had a large tattoo on his neck.

"Yes?" I responded. "Is there something you want?"

"I'm trying to help homeless people get back on their feet. It's a part of this big nonprofit organization in Iowa City."

"What's it called?"

"Second Chance Housing."

"Can I have a place to stay in there?"

"Absolutely, man!"

He kindly helped me as I picked myself up. I stared back down at the yoyo in my hand, smiling at the word "TIME."

"I'll show you the way," he said. "We'll cross this street right here and then make a right past that building over there."

And so, we walked down. We were close to each other as we passed the vehicles that had stopped at the red light. In a pickup truck, there were a couple of guys wearing leather jackets that had the same tattoo from the young man's neck.

"I feel I'm gonna be safe from now on." I could only look at the yoyo. 



# From Peru to Bolivia and Back

Emily Stuebing

After spending three weeks traveling in northern Chile and southern Peru with friends, we parted ways one morning as I left to take a seven-hour bus ride from Cuzco to Puno, Peru. I was determined to cross the border from Peru to Copacabana, Bolivia the following day, and to see if I could beat the system and satisfy the adrenaline and travel junkie in me in the process. Since I'm a dual citizen of the US and Germany, I planned to enter Bolivia with my German passport and skip paying the \$160 reciprocity fee Americans are required to pay upon entrance to the country.

For months I'd dreamt of traveling to Bolivia to see the diverse mountainous landscape, to talk with locals and take in the differences between their Spanish and the Spanish in Chile—where I'd been studying for the previous five months—and to see as much of South America in one trip as possible, considering flights are not cheap. And, to be perfectly honest, having recently turned 21 I wanted to celebrate by crossing into one more country: my 21st country for my 21st birthday. Unfortunately, I had no one to go to Bolivia with. I had gone to Peru with Americans who had agreed to travel together at the end of our

semester abroad, but they didn't want to pay the fee to enter Bolivia. However, we weren't far from the border, so I decided to travel solo to Copacabana, the most easily-accessible Bolivian destination, only three days before my flight from Chile back to the US. I'm already here so why not? I thought.

That afternoon I arrived in Puno struggling to keep my eyes open and walking on feet swollen from the high altitude and a complete absence of movement. I'd been in a cramped seat with a headrest bent too far forward and only one armrest since the man beside me had taken mine over and snored for about six and a half of the seven hours we spent on the bus. Not to mention the fact that I couldn't get past the man as he was in the aisle seat, preventing me from using the tiny excuse for a bathroom directly behind us. Though I can't say I'm sorry to have missed using the bathroom on a bus for which I'd paid only \$8 to cover over 200 miles of ground.

Needless to say, I was ready to get to my hostel and do nothing but sleep. Cab drivers waited outside of the bus station, ready to charge a price much higher for tourists than locals. No matter how tired I was, I refused to pay

\$10 for a five-minute cab ride. I had no idea where to go though and with no Wi-Fi or international plan, my phone and its all-knowing maps were useless here. So, I grabbed a map from an information desk and marched right past the drivers as they yelled and walked alongside me, trying to "help" me with my bags. Instead I asked someone on the street for directions since I couldn't even tell where I was on the map, let alone my hostel.

A woman with straight black hair, tan skin, and a second-hand sweatshirt reading "Varsity Track" along with the name of a U.S. high school I can't remember, politely looked at my map and pointed me in the right direction. "You need to go to Avenida Titicaca? That's far. You should probably take a cab."

I thanked her and continued in stubbornness. A half-hour later, I arrived at the Cozy Hostel tired, grumpy, and on feet that were now both swollen and throbbing. My shoulders hurt from a heavy, overstuffed backpack with days' worth of dirty clothes and accumulated souvenirs, and my shirt was damp with sweat. I spent the rest of the night in at my hostel after what felt like the longest check-in, instead of leaving my room to explore for the first time in weeks of travel, enjoying (rare) good Wi-Fi and telling myself it was OK not to explore this new destination. It would only stress me out, and I needed the rest to catch my six o'clock bus to cross into Bolivia in the morning.

I cuddled up in the bottom bunk of a bunk bed in a shared room with seven other beds and thought about how nice it would be to sleep in my own bed again in only a few more days. I'd already seen and done so much during my five months in South America, did I really need to do this too? My exhaustion suddenly turned into a lack of motivation and I called my mom, asking if I was crazy to go to Bolivia. What if they turned me away at the border? What if they got mad about my switching passports and held me for questioning? What if I ended up locked up in a Bolivian prison? It wouldn't happen, my mom assured me. You're already there, you may as well just try it.

It was still dark and a bit chilly when I checked out and, reluctantly, I agreed to take a cab back to the bus station. I was prepared. I'd bought and printed my bus ticket the day before and arrived at the bus counter with nine minutes to spare. The printed ticket, however, confused the ticket lady, who escorted two fellow passengers to the bus and told me to wait at the desk.

5:56...5:57. Still no Ticket Lady.

Forget her. I'm catching this bus! I thought. I ran outside

in search of the right bus and found Ticket Lady standing next to it, speaking with the bus driver, who was already seated, buckled, and ready to go.

"No, there's no room. You can't get on this bus," she told me.

"But I bought a ticket. I have it right here and already paid for it," I insisted.

"There is another bus at 7:30. You can take that one." Great. I stood and watched in disbelief as she continued to allow other passengers to enter the bus. Their things were packed away, the doors were closed, and they were ready to take off.

"Never mind," Ticket Lady suddenly said, grabbing my bags and throwing them in a storage compartment. "You can sit up front."

I'd never seen someone sit with the bus driver before. But it was either that or wait another hour and a half, costing me precious time in Bolivia. I climbed in and seconds later we drove off. The driver spoke to me in a Bolivian Spanish I could hardly understand (I was accustomed to Chilean Spanish after spending several months studying there). Despite the language barrier, he tried to make me comfortable, giving me a blanket and sharing coca leaves to chew on to prevent altitude sickness. He asked questions about my travels and told me about himself and Bolivia, where he said he was from. Sitting on the seat next to him was a plastic grocery bag full of the coca leaves he'd shared with me, which he chewed while talking so that little pieces would fly out from holes of missing teeth when he spoke.

The driver treated the 80 km/h speed limit as more of a suggestion as we flew across dusty winding roads that work with Peru's hilly landscape. Dry, brown mountains could be seen in the distance with the occasional lake showing small mountain towns in its reflection. We were surrounded by tan and brown fields sporadically dotted with green trees.

All too quickly we approached the border, and I began to question the flimsy plan I'd devised to get into Bolivia as the driver handed me the Customs form to start filling out. What do I declare on the form—that I'm American or German? My American passport had my visa for Chile in it, meaning I'd probably need stamps proving I'd exited Peru so as not to raise any red flags when re-entering Chile for my flight out of Santiago. I needed to use the German passport, however, to enter Bolivia without paying the fee, but what would Customs do in Bolivia when they saw I had

no stamps proving I'd entered South America at all, having used my American passport for the rest of my travels?

Luckily, a Customs employee on the Peruvian border helped me, allowing me to pay a \$40 fee to switch passports instead of paying the \$160 reciprocity fee. I'd be able to switch back to my US passport when I came back into Peru, he assured me, and put an exit stamp in my US passport. Though I wasn't happy having to pay for the passport change, I was more relieved than anything that it was even possible. Step one, done!

I returned to the bus only to be told we couldn't get back on, yet the bus driver didn't explain why or tell us what we were to do instead. I waited for the other passengers to return from Customs. Once everyone was rounded up, the bus driver simply pointed at the Bolivian border, hopped back on the bus—which still had all of our things in it—and drove that way without us. We all exchanged a few nervous glances, raised our shoulders, and started to walk. Along the way, we passed several women wearing colorful layered skirts, with hair braided into two strands reaching their lower backs, and woven circular bowler hats sitting

atop black hair. Many used beautifully decorated cloths called aguayos that hung over their shoulders and tied at their chests, in which they carried babies or transported materials.

After crossing the border and getting our passports stamped, we loaded onto the bus once more and were taken into Copacabana. It was a small town, and I easily located my hotel on the bus ride in and dropped my things off. I was pleasantly surprised to find my booking included a private room and bathroom. The thought of staying to rest was tempting, but this time I was determined to make the most of my short trip and left to explore town.

Again, I was prepared with a plan for the trip and again, not much went as expected. First, I'd explore town and grab some lunch, which I did. I walked uphill toward the town square and bought a Bolivian-style empanada called an "Empanada Tucumana" from a street vendor. It consisted of peas, carrots, potatoes, pieces of boiled egg, and chicken enveloped in some sort of pie crust-like casing. Juices from the empanada spilled down my hand as I ate and walked past shops chaotically lining the street,

each one with products overflowing from the storefront, making it hard to tell which items belonged to which store. Most sold clothing like t-shirts and baseball caps saying Copacabana or Bolivia, and colorful cloths similar to what the women had worn. There were also many artisanal jewelry stores with beaded and woven bracelets and necklaces. Though touristy, the town was alive with locals darting about.

At the top of the hill was the town square, surrounded on three sides by more shops and on the other an enormous white 16th-century Spanish basilica enclosing the square. The simple white exterior of the basilica was in stark contrast to booths full of religious trinkets: cross necklaces, mini statues of the Virgen de Copacabana, framed images of saints and Biblical characters, and much more. The booths spanned the entire length of one side of the town square. There wasn't much to do in the square, however, and I was already getting tired, maybe from the high altitude, and could only think of the private room waiting for me. But I had to see and do *something*. I walked down the hill to Titicaca's lakefront.

This seemed to be where the tourists had gathered on the sunny day it was. The street filled with more and more bars as I got closer to the lake, many with outdoor patios where tourists drank with a view. Other tourists rented canoes or paddle boats and waded in the lake. Most seemed to be from Europe and Argentina. In fact, I met no others from the US—maybe they were unwilling to pay the fee as well, or maybe they thought it was dangerous, as many had insinuated after hearing my plan. What is it about Bolivia that worries everyone so much? Theft? Scams? General crime? I'll never know; none of these happened to me and I felt safer in Bolivia than I had in much of Chile—especially after having been with a friend who was tackled to the ground for her phone once. Bolivia felt safe and peaceful, and the lakefront embodied that with locals lounging around and their kids skipping about playing games.

I figured I should continue on my way so I could climb Cerro Calvario for beautiful views of the city and the lake. First I would go back to the hotel though, just for a little break.

Five hours later, I woke up on the bed in my hotel room to discover it was dark outside and I'd slept the entire day away. Considering I'd be taking a bus back to Peru the following morning, I had one day in Bolivia and the way I saw it, I had wasted it. A chronic stress-eater, I went out for

a nice cheer-myself-up dinner. I ate a churrasco sandwich, a beef sandwich made often with mashed avocado and tomato on white bread and eaten in many South American countries. To drink I had a yungueño, a traditional cocktail made with a mixture of orange juice, simple sugar, and singani, which is a brandy produced only in Bolivia. Luckily for my low spirits, there was a two for one drink deal, and I quickly began feeling better while listening to live instrumental Latin-style music.

A man at another table even joined me for a drink and sat down to talk. I learned he was a 28-year-old Argentinian taking time off of work to travel in Bolivia and northern Argentina. We ended up speaking for over an hour until our drinks were long gone. He eventually walked me back to my hostel and promised we would meet in Argentina one day.

The next morning, I got on another bus and headed back to Peru. There we stopped again at the border where I received an exit stamp from Bolivia in my German passport and proceeded to walk across the border to Peruvian Customs.

That's when I discovered that the passport switcheroo is generally frowned upon.

"You did what?" the Customs men said. "You can't just switch passports. Only one passport."

"Well, some guy told me I could and I need to get back into Chile with the US passport because my visa is in it."

"Who! Who told you that you could switch?"

"I don't know but he was standing right there!" I said, pointing toward the entrance where the Customs official had stood.

The men paused and looked at each other. They spoke quick Spanish under their breath so I couldn't understand and looked back at me. "Fine. We will help you," they said, and put an exit and entry stamp in my US passport. (This was all in Spanish, by the way.)

After getting back on the bus, the driver saw my two passports and explained, "You know, you only need one."

Yes, I know. Thank you. I just grinned in response and sat on the bus once more, finally allowing myself a breath of relief and a wide smile spread across my face. I'd done it. I'd successfully gotten in and out of Bolivia and added a 21st country to my list. I'd argued my way through Customs in a language that was not my native tongue. And, I'd done it all on my own while getting a taste of Bolivia, because even though my friends thought I was crazy for going, I knew it'd be worth it. 🐾



# Parts of the Impossible Whole

Cavan Jones

## Blurry Attraction

Infatuation from across the street  
fades out or festers  
depending on where we cross.  
From a distance  
my oh my.  
But don't come too close  
or you'll lose your foreign.  
The potential to love you  
fades  
with your proximity  
to me.

So leave me unfamiliar,  
departing with endless possibility.  
Because I'll love you on the plane  
but not when we land.  
In the moonlight  
and in pictures,  
but not in person or in the sun.  
If there were another earth  
I could not fall in love on this one.

## Golden Gate Bridge

You ever compliment someone early on  
only to wish you could take it back?  
Like you'd given them something they didn't deserve?

I told a girl that if there were pictures of her on the Golden Gate Bridge  
nobody would jump.

She didn't deserve those words.  
But what's worse  
is that now  
I can't give them to anyone else.

## Minimally Content

'Fate' and 'destiny' are harmful entitlements—  
turning mishaps into must haves.  
With them, a lack of courage proves pivotal—  
bad habits become essential.  
Surely this idea of 'out of one's control'  
was first dreamt up by the crucified and wrongly imprisoned—  
then borrowed by loners and the shunned  
and now, cherished  
by everyone who misses the bus.  
We like the notion of things being 'out of our control'  
when they're guided  
by a force  
that will take us somewhere we're meant to be.

And when we're at least minimally content  
fate tells us that all the other possible roads  
we could have taken  
would have surely led us to a place worse than this.  
Can you imagine how terrible?  
Being anywhere other than *this*.  
Can you imagine?  
Justifying all the wrong you've done  
just because  
you're now  
*minimally content*.

And when we're distraught and shaken and lost  
we're simply  
in a phase.  
A phase that will *somehow* change *something* about us.  
And fate says  
it's an important step.

Fate can do no wrong.  
And with it,  
neither can you.  
It's essential  
that we need to have ended up where we were supposed to.  
But undoubtedly  
we've all made ourselves, marginally  
worse off  
than we could have been.

The worst internal crime we commit  
is denouncing the things that are completely in our control  
as the things that aren't.

## Georgetown

She jumped in and slurred hello  
the driver and I shared a glare.  
She was studying at AU from somewhere with an accent.  
I remember thinking how I'd tell this story in the future  
and how I wished I could describe  
the way the houses fit together on their corners.  
The alleyways were dimply lit—  
indenting a story  
that beckoned  
to be either inspected or left alone.

These small peeks into a world outside your own—  
these brief moments of pure foreignness.  
Maybe the only way to live life freely  
is to live it in a midnight cab.

## In Granville, Ohio

She grabbed the banister with her right hand  
and swung herself  
into the kitchen.

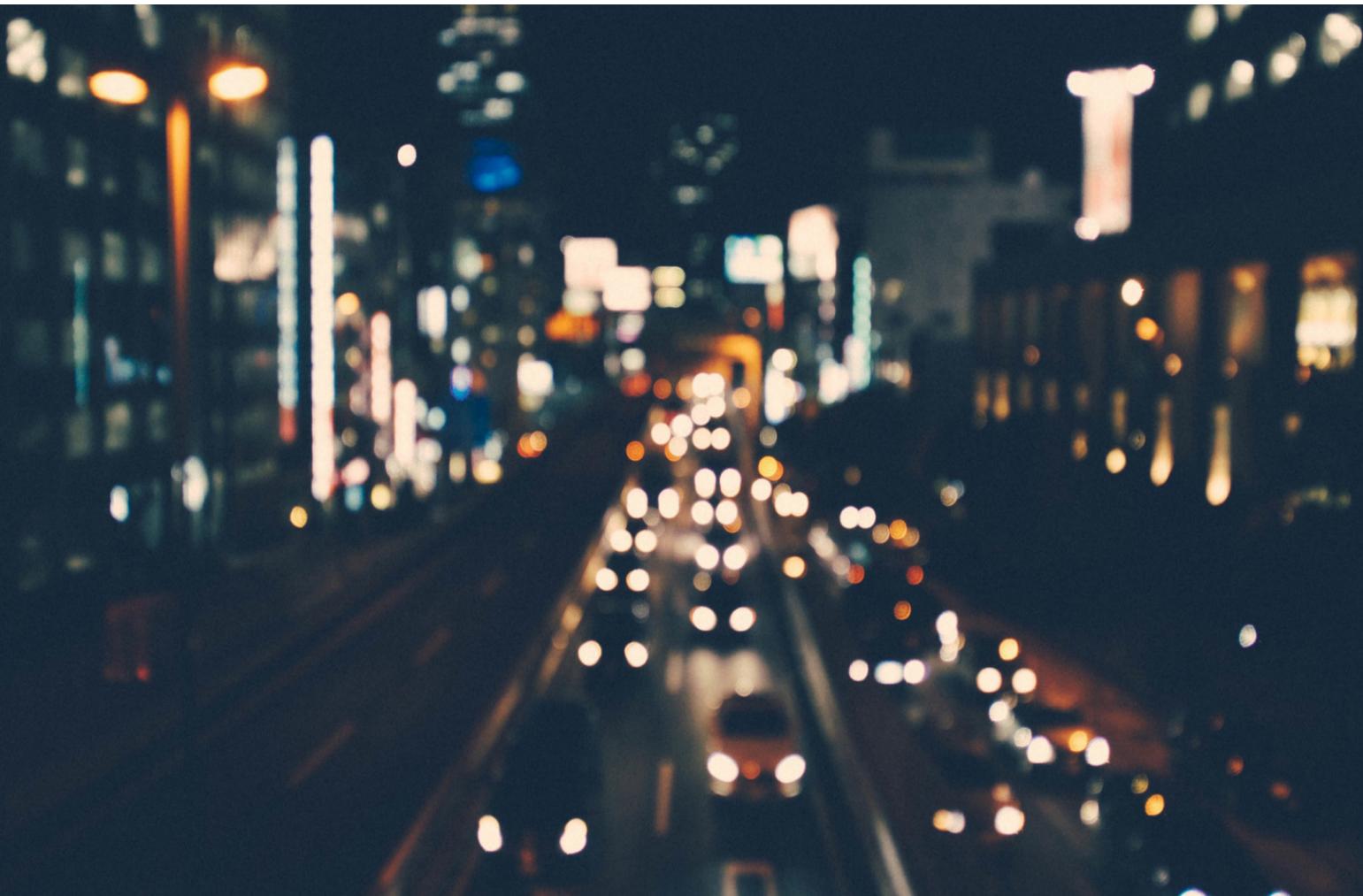
And I thought:  
*For the rest of my life  
no girl will ever be able to use a banister  
to swing from one room to the next  
like her.*

Love is when you see someone do a completely ordinary thing  
and think  
no one will ever be able to do *that*  
like them.

## Consolation

Everything I do is for an epiphany.  
With no heaven, no destiny, no force in the air  
the search is grounded, earthy and self-reliant.  
So I'll go where I haven't gone  
and watch the flames flicker like they've got something to say.  
I'll choose good company  
and I'll sing and I'll dance and I'll read you this poem.  
And find purpose in these activities  
not because they make me laugh or love.  
But because these are the moments most appropriate  
for enlightenment to crash land.

And  
in the end  
if enlightenment tragically finds safe passage  
at least  
I will have won  
some consolation prizes.



I had to constantly convince my colleagues and superiors that I wasn't going to hell," says Clyde McNeal. Devoted to a religion that fundamentally finds his lifestyle a sin, Clyde has faced countless barriers pursuing a pastoral job as a gay black man, yet his faith and resilience remain.

With his sure yet soft voice, Clyde nostalgically recounts his memories in a low hum, from his upbringing in San Antonio, Texas, touching on everything from playdates, high school, his time in the ROTC and the strong influence of his faith. He wears a large plain white shirt and moss green khakis while we sit in his living room. His penthouse in downtown Omaha reminds me something of 1930s-1940s Old Hollywood, with the mustard fringed lamps, grand piano, and strong presence of mahogany wood. When I comment on the impeccable spotlessness, he responds, "I believe cleanliness shows the relationship to the things God gave you. Jeff doesn't think that way." He chuckles thinking of his partner, and my uncle, Jeff Sinclair.

I notice Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Chaos or Community" novel on his nightstand, right next to a boxed TV set of *Cops*. He sips on a cup of coffee while discussing how his father traveled for the Negro Baseball League and his mom practiced nursing. His dark brown eyes sparkle when talking about his Great Aunt Julia, whom he lived with once he was eight. Clyde recalls that, although his parents requested he live with Julia, his father lived in a nearby neighborhood and visited often. "I'm not sure why they made the decisions that they did, getting divorced and requesting I live with Julia, but we always knew we were loved." In spite of these circumstances, Clyde remained positive and strong for his brother, Michael, who was a year younger and his older sister, Denise.

Throughout Clyde's childhood, church played an integral role. His Great Aunt Julia wanted to respect Clyde's parents' Baptist upbringing so she brought Clyde and his siblings to both a Baptist and Catholic Church every weekend. Clyde remembers having weekly breakfasts with the priests of his Catholic church while they asked him questions regarding his faith. Although he didn't think much of it at the time, Clyde was the only young member the priests invested so much time in.

The pastors of his Baptist church also seemed to notice something special about Clyde as they eventually asked Julia if he could accompany them on weekly visits to the sick. He recalls going to various homes and hospitals every Friday or Saturday, along with members of the congregation and the church choir. Sometimes, the pastor

# Pastor Clyde McNeal

Hannah Sinclair

would request Clyde sing something to the sick or to just simply go and talk with them. Still not knowing exactly why the pastors took an especial liking to him, one day he overheard snippets of a conversation the Pastor was having with his Great Aunt Julia, which Clyde was hesitant and almost embarrassed to share. "Whenever I take him into the room, I ask him if they're going to live or die, and he's never been wrong..." Clyde recalls hearing his pastor say. No one ever brought this up to Clyde himself, so the notion was eventually pushed to the back of the young boy's mind.

Because of a generally pleasant childhood, memories of racism aren't prevalent though Clyde is able to reflect back and realize that his race most likely contributed to certain instances. He recalls one incident where his neighborhood best friend got angry and hit Clyde's head with a large metal car while calling him a "nigger." This was the first time that five-year-old Clyde had heard the racial slur: "It shocked me because I thought we were brothers. I had heard how people could be racist from other people in the family, so I vaguely knew it could be an issue but I didn't know it could apply to me." Clyde responded by unapologetically knocking the young boy out, a defensive mechanism that would continue through his adult years. "Very rarely will I be the first to initiate an altercation, but I will always stand up for myself and let people know I am not to be messed with."

As far as a definitive moment of realizing he was gay

or coming out to his family or friends, Clyde never had that. "It seems as though everyone knew before me, but it wasn't a big deal to anyone I was really close with." His Great Aunt Julia, although devoted to her Catholicism, was accepting of Clyde, "She somehow always knew, but we never talked about it. She was always okay with it and she never did not love me. An amazing lady she was..." Clyde would later reflect. For a boy in high school, Clyde demonstrated a strong sense of self-confidence, a trait that he attributes to his faith and his upbringing. "I felt welcomed everywhere. There was no place I felt like I failed in high school whether it be sports or clubs; I was always comfortable in my own skin." This isn't to say intolerance didn't exist at his high school, it just didn't seem to faze Clyde.

"Of course there were sometimes where I had to beat people up because they thought I was gay, but I never let it get it to me." Clyde nonchalantly chimed in.

One instance in particular drastically affected the rest of his high school experience. Since Clyde was on the football team and involved in the arts, he had a diverse group of friends. One day, he heard from one of his theatre friends that a football player, Danny Marquotto, was going to "beat up all fags" that auditioned for the annual school play, "Yell Leader," which Clyde was planning on being a part of. Clyde walked right up to Danny and asked, "I heard you're gonna beat up all fags, are you gonna beat up me?" Although Danny and Clyde didn't get in a physical altercation, Clyde said everything changed from that moment on, "They dropped me like a hot potato" Clyde matter-of-factly chuckled. As for the annual "Yell Leader," the school cancelled it as a precautionary measure, which disappointed Clyde. He considers the cancellation an example of the institutionalized homophobia and racism that existed at his school; while not explicit, it existed in the undertones. To Clyde and his friends, cancelling the play

was letting the ignorant jocks win- they weren't scared of them and wanted them to know that. Nevertheless,

Clyde wasted no time being upset about his football friends turning on him, "I never once felt like a loser. I got to hang with the creatives, the eccentrics, the gays, the outcasts... The good people." Clyde had a solid support system of his best friends and family and that was all that mattered to him.

The acceptance of his family and friends was also demonstrated by his peers in the ROTC, which Clyde joined after a scholarship he was depending on fell through. Due to his fluency in Spanish and his studies in Arabic and Egyptian, Clyde served as a linguistic interrogator until he, unwillingly, moved to the Air Force where he was responsible for picking up

messages in the belly of a plane. "We sat on our helmets so we wouldn't get shot in the butt," Clyde stated with a straight face. Not at all happy with this change in positions, Clyde went to his commanding officer requesting his former position again, but the officer guaranteed that would not be a possibility, "the only people I see leave here is in ambulances" Clyde remembers him saying. Stumped, Clyde volunteered that he was gay, hoping that may help his chances of getting to leave. Without hesitation, the officer responded, "Of course you're gay. If I had a damn nickel for every air man that said they were gay to get out, I'd be rich." Although Clyde is rather certain the officer knew that Clyde was telling the truth, he, "frankly did not give a rat's ass." As far as the other men in the ROTC, Clyde blushed and looked off to the side when he said, "I had more fun with men in the army then without it. Being gay for me wasn't an issue." Eventually, Clyde was able to receive honorable discharge and complete his time in the ROTC.

Upon his completion in the ROTC, a few of Clyde's friends invited him to stay with them on the Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska where he remained for three



months until he moved to an apartment where he has been since. While he's happy to call Omaha home, his demeanor intensified as he shares that Omaha is, "the most bigoted place I have ever lived. In the South, it's more blatant, they don't like you but there's a certain cordiality that exists, like 'I'm sorry Sir, don't drink from here' or signs that explicitly stated 'Nigger don't let the sun set on you in here' in which case I simply avoided the place. Omaha is more institutionalized racism...more hidden, and that terrified me." Despite these traces of racism, Clyde made himself at home and became active in various comedies and musical plays. He met his partner, Jeff, at a local bar 28 years ago. Jeff smiled as he recalled the exact date, March 11, 1989, and mentions they have been together every night since then. He also joined the Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha, which reaffirmed his decision to become a pastor.

The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) was founded in 1968 after a couple members felt unwelcome in their church home due to their sexuality. Its focus is on inclusion with specific outreach efforts to the LGBT community. Fellow member Wuen-lin Suen shares his experience of the MCC, "What they talk about is essential truths— what it is to be a human who happens to be queer. Not that it has to be a big deal to us, but because the world makes it a big deal we have to recognize it for what it is and we also have to deal with that part of it. It is a church that lets you know you are loved, unconditionally, in a community when we have been rejected by our family or friends." Since 1989, the MCC has grown to 43,000 members across 22 countries.

Upon Clyde's decision to become a pastor, he attended school at Southern Christian University, now Ambridge University, located in Montgomery, Alabama, to study Bible & Ministry. His sexuality became a prime topic of class discussions by both his classmates and professors. Whenever anyone was willing to sit down with Clyde and listen to him, Clyde focused on the theory that the bible isn't intended to be taken literally and that certain flaws did indeed exist. After all, men wrote the bible, and men are inevitably imperfect. University of Iowa Religious Studies Professor, Jordan Smith, says that there's only four or five verses in the entire bible that address homosexuality, but because of its current controversy, tremendous weight is put on these few passages. While Clyde says he was only able to open the mind of a few classmates and professors, he said being forced to constantly defend his faith made it that much stronger. Upon his graduation in 2008, he

then attended graduate school at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado and earned his Master of Divinity in Religion, Bible, and Ministry studies.

Since back in Omaha, finding a job as a pastor has been much more difficult than Clyde anticipated. While he has married numerous couples and preached for multiple churches, he has yet to find a stationary church home. Though two Metropolitan Community Churches have offered him pastoral positions, Clyde did not feel confident these churches were right for him. Unfortunately, the chances of him finding a pastoral position outside the MCC are low: according to a study done by the United Church of Christ, only three Christian denominations openly declare they are willing to ordain homosexual pastors (the Alliance of Baptists Church, the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ) compared to 19 denominations in Europe. Individual churches within other denominations can still choose to ordain gay pastors; they just haven't declared as an entire denomination they are willing to do so. Additionally, with the rising trend of non-denominational churches, it is completely up to the specific church on whether or not they accept homosexual pastors. "Religious institutions' identity and world view is based on the idea of an eternal and unchanging God, so change becomes tricky, because it somehow implies God has changed. If it occurs, it happens very slowly," Professor Smith says. "Still, if I had a gay friend that approached me and wanted to be a pastor, I would say he or she has many more options now than they had even just 10 years ago."

Though Clyde admits he has become a little frustrated with the lingering process, it is in his nature to remain positive and confident that a pastoral position will open in a church that he is proud to be a part of. When I ask what Clyde's hopes are for the future, he selflessly responds, "I hope that people remember to love one another and to see God. I'm afraid that they're forgetting." 

#### Sources

Clyde McNeal: 402-818-7049

Jeff Sinclair: 402-504-2077

Professor Jordan Smith: [jordan-a-smith@uiowa.edu](mailto:jordan-a-smith@uiowa.edu)

Professor Diana Cates: [diana-cates@uiowa.edu](mailto:diana-cates@uiowa.edu)

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# Monotony

Elijah Acquah

When I'm in college, I think to myself, "Why am I here?" I constantly ask this question at the near end of a semester. It flies around my brain as I stare at a pile of homework in front of me. Those four words come during a time when I am alone in my room, staring at my laptop which shows the endless list of assignments I need to finish. I ask this question when confronting a burden of stress.

I did not feel that burden at the beginning of the semester. I would be so excited about the new semester at the time. My anticipation comes from the urge of being a great writer. It stems from the aspiration of learning about the numerous authors that have shaped creative writing. It arises from the determination of having a career in novels and screenplays made for the entertainment industry. It's the main reason why I came to this university.

Going into the semester, I prepared myself into reading different works for the classes. I had to read George Orwell's profound opinion on the politics of the English language for the foundations of creative writing. I thought it was very interesting, to say the least. I could learn more about the ideas of Orwell beyond *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*.

There was also the young poetry crafted by

Lucy Terry and Phyllis Wheatley for African-American literature. They made their poems at the time when slavery was not at the climatic conflict of war. Because I have much more of an interest in short structures of poetry and not the long lines of prose, I've really enjoyed reading about the themes they've had, such as Christianity, in their work.

Additionally, oddly enough, there were three pages I had to retype from an old essay for intermedia. I could choose anything to retype; it was one of the easiest assignments given to me. All I did was write the first few pages from an academic essay I wrote for the Topics in Poetics class. I received an easy A on that.

For the first week, I felt that I could handle the workflow. It was a simple routine. On Mondays and Wednesdays, I had to go to the Film Theory and Playwriting classes to discuss the assigned readings. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I went to Creative Writing, Intermedia and African-American Literature to work on my projects. For Tuesday, there was a movie screening I had to watch for Film Theory, and on Fridays, there was an extra discussion section for that same class. I understood my class schedule and the free time that I have between courses. I was ready to finish all of my work before the deadline.

# Coming of Age during Times of War

Zohar Nadler

However, as time moved on, throughout the upcoming weeks of the spring semester, I started to slow down. The pace of projects assigned to me became faster. My classes all seemed to have given me more projects than usual. When I would finish one project, another one came out of nowhere and demanded to be completed in three days.

The essays became longer. The books became larger. The pages had thousands of words that were bombastic and cantankerous. I had spent hours upon hours trying to finish reading only one of the assigned readings, and it had eaten up my free time.

Because of that, my schedule turned into a disorganized closet of random things. I started to become tired of going

to my classes, walking everywhere to get to my destination. Discussions were only gibberish noises, as the topics were abhorrent to me. Authors became boring, telling their stories in a banal manner. I could not handle the constant attention from these blandly shouting projects. It became much more important that I need to understand the world outside of the classroom.

Trying to take advantage of my leisure time, I had utilized the idea of surfing on the Web while reading out of a big anthology book. I also spent time playing games on my phone as I read the essays on the computer. This idea only slowed me down even more, and it still continues as I write this very piece. I went into the habit of distraction: the routine to stop reading and then quickly go to the Internet to watch YouTube videos. It had been like my brain was rewired to require background noise while I worked.

Throughout this semester, the Internet had pulled me harder away from reading and lured me into staring at screenshots of cartoons. Additionally, it had much more interesting events happening in the world than the books with isolated events that happened in the foggy past. After the incidents of yesteryear were over, the world became much more hysterical by boycotting products and other trivial things through their social media accounts. The targets of these boycotts ranged from a movie about a reincarnating dog to a fast food restaurant to an innocuous show with an intentionally provocative title. In comparison, the stories I had been assigned to read only contained stories that I've heard of thousands of times before. Many of the stories, of course, had to do with slavery.

And now, at the near end of the semester, the rate of assigned projects is at maximum overdrive. I cannot fully appreciate the words that are written because all I could see is scribble. All I carry is confusion and fatigue. I cannot decide on which assignment I should start on first.

I could only wish for the semester to be over. From what I've expected to be a great experience turned into a miserable one. Maybe the next semester would be fun. 🐾



In Marjane Satrapi's graphic autobiography *Persepolis*, she retells her coming of age during the Iranian Revolution. Satrapi quickly goes from being a kid, to an adolescent, to an adult—not because she wants to but because she must. Likewise, in *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, Anne journals as she is hiding in Amsterdam during the Holocaust. Anne and Marjane's personal freedoms are affected during these times of war. Although both girls are growing up during entirely different conflicts, both undergo a similar maturation process. They both rebel, endure their first love or heartbreak, and discover their identities. By the same token, given the contexts of Marjane and Anne's experiences it could be argued that Anne's coming of age process is more confined in a space while Marjane's confinement is found in not being able to express her personal freedoms. While both girls are independent they are also vulnerable which is why they long for love and companionship during their coming of age.

The context for Anne's maturation is World War II in Europe. Anne Frank's coming of age begins as she leaves her hometown of Frankfurt, Germany. Ian Webster, author of the article "Forty Years On, sums up Anne's switch in environment by saying, "in 1933, the Frank family fled from

Germany and its anti-Semitic atmosphere to Amsterdam" (Barnes 1). By using the word "fled," one can capture how fast the Franks had to escape. The word "fled" emphasizes the necessity of leaving Germany and the fear instilled in their migration. On July 5, 1942 the Germans called Margot, Anne's 16-year-old sister, for deportation. The next morning the Franks began hiding in the "secret annex," the warehouse and office of Ottoman Frank's (Anne's father). Resources were scarce, the space was small, but this did not stop Anne's provoking independent thoughts and curious mind as she came of age. Unfortunately, Anne never ages after her coming of age. It is harder for Anne to outwardly express her maturation given the difficult context.

On the other hand, the context for Marjane's maturation is the Iranian Revolution. Marjane faces different circumstances. She grew up in Tehran but eventually moved by herself to Vienna at age 14. In Vienna, Marjane struggles to find a friend group. She then finds herself living on the streets for two months. Chris Reynolds-Chikuma describes the beginning of Marjane's journey as a "child mindset and struggle during dictatorship" (Reynolds-Chikuma 2). This quote puts Marjane's coming of age into perspective. It shows that she was not ready to grow up so quickly. She faces a lot of adversity but it eventually

empowers her as she matures. Marjane lives on to retell her story for others to learn from. It can be said that Marjane faces more lenient circumstances than Anne Frank because she is self-imposed and experiences the world rather than being confined.

Despite growing up during different contexts, both Anne and Marjane rebel as part of their coming of age. Anne and Marjane are expected to behave at their best, but they are young minded girls who still need to rebel to learn. Is this not what being an adolescent is? With regard to Anne, she refuses to listen to her mother as much and she finds them growing apart. Marjane, on the other hand, feels her coming of age as she smokes her first cigarette. Marjane has places to go when she rebels. But their maturation is not identical because of their different contexts. Marjane can meet new friends. Anne, however, does not have that option. She is stuck in the annex until the war is over. It is harder for Anne than Marjane to rebel because Anne is confined to a small space for months on end with seven other people. Marjane has more personal freedoms as to leaving her house but is confined to how she expresses herself.

A closer look at Anne's rebellion shows her maturation process. In a diary entry written on September 27, 1942, Anne writes "Dear Kitty, I just had a big bust-up with Mummy for the umpteenth time...I can understand my friends better than my own mother-too bad!" (Frank 30). This line shows that Anne is growing apart from her mother. She feels it in her heart. She does not really care much either, rather she finds it frustrating. By using a rebellious phrase "too bad!" Anne shows that gaining a better relationship with her mother is irretrievable. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary part of rebellion is defiance (Merriam-Webster.com). As she is coming of age, Anne is developing her own judgment and opinion. She no longer feels the need to always listen to her mother. This is affecting the relationship Anne has with her mother because Anne is challenging her mother's actions. Along with this, Anne has nowhere to escape to if she wants time to herself. Rather, she is stuck in the small annex.

Another factor that contributes to Anne's rebellion is the distress that she is in which puts a damper on the relationship Anne and her mother have. Anne rebels against her mother as proxy. Author Silvia Tennenbaum describes Anne's reason for distress best by saying, "it is death at the door, hunger in the belly, and fear in the heart" (Tennenbaum 1). Death, hunger, and fear...not the

typical troubles of a fourteen-year-old girl. Anne is aware of what is going on, she reacts to these conditions by growing up quickly and rebelling even at the slightest, like quarrelling with her mother. Anne develops her own opinion, and Anne is not afraid to use it. This is what causes a rift between Anne and her mother. In a larger sense, the tiniest acts of rebellion are what allow Anne to express her maturation in larger ways. Her thoughts grow deeper through rebellious acts, and this gives her more to analyze in her diary. Anne becomes more independent which also makes her more vulnerable for someone else to love in her life.

A closer look at Marjane shows how her rebellion is different than Anne's. Marjane's acts of rebellion are bolder. A true coming of age moment is when Marjane smokes her first cigarette. She inhales the cigarette and begins coughing; as she raises the cigarette in the air she says, "with the first cigarette, I kissed childhood goodbye... Now I was a grown-up" (Satrapi 117). Marjane's face is wide-eyed. This illustrates her fear of growing up. The raising of the cigarette represents her sense of empowerment and the fact that she must come of age quickly because of the circumstances of war. Her coughing is representative of this bittersweet moment as she comes of age. Marjane realizes she is no longer a sweet innocent little girl for her complete innocence is stripped after this cigarette. By "kissing childhood goodbye" Marjane accepts the fact that she is coming of age. Both Anne and Marjane rebel but Marjane does so in a more daring way. i.e. smoking her first cigarette, whereas Anne just talks back to her mother, which is expected of a young teenager.

Another aspect in both Anne's and Marjane's maturation process is their encounters with love and the loss thereof. Although there is war, this does not mean there is no room for love. With regard to Anne, after a year and a half of living in the annex she notices the way Peter looks at her. Anne develops deep feelings for Peter. Eventually they share their first kiss. Marjane, for her part, falls in love with Marcus in Vienna. Marjane eventually catches him cheating on her and becomes very depressed. While both girls find love, Anne is in stricter circumstances due to living with her parents. Thus, if Anne and Peter were to fight they still must remain civil to be less miserable in the annex. Clearly, in both Anne and Marjane's cases, love is an essential ingredient of coming of age; however, each girl experiences love differently but vulnerably.

But love is not experienced in a vacuum. There are



familial consequences. When Anne asks for her father's approval of her and Peter he hesitantly approves. This is the biggest rift between Anne and her father. Anne elaborates on her emotions about this and writes, "why didn't father support me in my struggle? Why did he fall short when he tried to offer me a helping hand?...he used the wrong methods" (Frank 261). Ottoman's hesitant approval suggests that he realizes this is Anne's only chance at love. Perhaps he realizes her innocence for love as well. A parent may realize that sometimes one wants what one cannot have. The fact that Anne's father was hesitant of her being with Peter makes Anne grow a deeper love for Peter. Her love and feelings are much more mature than the typical fourteen-year-old. She describes how she feels for Peter by saying, "...my life now has an object, and I have something to look forward to, everything has become more pleasant" (Frank 156). In a small annex, Anne longs for a deep love to sustain her happiness and she finds it. She uses this love to grow and experience emotions she has never felt before. Anne's love experience is shaped and enhanced through her relationship with her father.

With regard to Marjane, her love experience centers around Marcus. After living in Austria for some time, Marjane meets Marcus. She is lucky to have the chance of meeting new people. Marcus gives Marjane a purpose to be better and he makes her life more fun. The young couple is head over heels for one another, or so Marjane

thinks. Marjane finds Marcus cheating on her. She writes, "I had no family or friends. I had counted on this relationship for everything. The world had just crumbled in front of my eyes" (Satrapi 232). For being so self-imposed, Marjane proves she still needs someone to make her happier. It seems that Marcus was what Marjane was missing in her life but the heartbreak she endures suggests she might have been better off without him. Marjane falls into a deep depression. She questions why she ever loved Marcus. She calls herself stupid but most importantly Marjane grows from the adversity. Marjane uses this experience to realize what she does not want in her life. She makes the choice to go back to Iran and be with her family. Marjane feels ashamed about what happened between her and Marcus. She does not want to discuss it with her parents but over time she becomes stronger and more determined to better her life. Marjane's experience with Marcus plays a key role in Marjane's maturation. The heartbreak Marcus put Marjane through makes her more self-reliant in the long run—Marjane becomes fearless.

The ultimate result of both Anne and Marjane's coming of age is their discovery of their identities. With regard to Anne, she sees herself becoming a journalist in the future. She loves books and writing. Anne may have not realized it at the time, but she gives hope for society. Her purpose is not always direct, but it is there. She sees the good in even the worst situations or people. Marjane, on the other hand,

uses her struggle when coming of age as a lesson. She writes the book *Persepolis* to show that one can overcome any adversity. It may take time, but it is completely attainable. Although the process of finding one's self is hurried because of the war, both girls ultimately get there. Anne's hurried coming of age turns her into a dreamer. She accepts whatever will happen to her. On April 5, 1944 Anne writes, "I want to go on living even after my death! And therefore I am grateful to God for giving me this gift, this possibility of developing myself and of writing, of expressing all that is in me" (Frank 197). Anne's hope is depicted in this quote, yet she is still highly uncertain of what will happen to her. She wants to leave a legacy after her death. Anne is grateful for the chance she got in life to make something of herself. Although Anne ends up being murdered by the Nazis, she does in fact leave a legacy. Ralph L. Wahlstrom describes what Anne has shown the world through her diary, which is "infinite hope, faith, and optimism" (Wahlstrom 3). Anne shows the world that even during the worst times, there is light at the end of the darkest tunnels.

Marjane also finds the light at the end of her dark tunnel. She uses her coming of age to find a love for art. She also grows into a very honest young woman. After a long journey of depression, she decides to apply for graduate school in Tehran. "A few months later, I learned via the director of the department of art that the Mullah who had interviewed me had really appreciated my honesty. Apparently, he even said that I was the only one who didn't lie. I was lucky" (Satrapi 284). Marjane found a way to tie in her art with her honesty. In her interview to get into art school she answered given questions in a brutally honest manner, even regarding religion. Marjane found herself—she now had that "take it or leave it" attitude. She sees the light, and her dream is at her fingertips. Marjane

lives and makes a life for herself. She is offered numerous opportunities. Marjane lived past her coming of age. She changed the world with her story.

To be sure, Marjane and Anne are both admirable. While Marjane endures a longer journey of coming of age with more personal freedoms, Anne endures a more accelerated journey of coming of age with fewer personal freedoms and opportunities. Despite the difficult circumstances, Anne and Marjane experience rebellion and love, and they discover their identities. Anne did not get the chance to live on after her diary, but she still manages to impact the world immensely with her thoughts and her story. Furthermore, Marjane lives on after her coming of age to tell her story. Essentially, Anne and Marjane reach their dreams in life—Anne just reaches her dreams after her life ends. 

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# Life is Beautiful

Alex Vargas

Life will devastate you

Life will expose you like a rotting carcass forgotten on the side of a country road  
 You spend your life building a life, until life crushes your bones with its weight  
 Life won't stop until you're nothing more than debris, trapped in the darkness of an urn

But the rotting carcass feeds the crows that pick its flesh  
 The crushed bones provide a foundation for a nest to house the birds and their young  
 The debris of ashes dance and fly with the wind as they are spread across the prairie

The crows return to their young with the remains, giving them the strength to soar the skies  
 The flock is now safe within their walls from the night and lingering predators  
 The debris is taken to all parts of the world as it ascends in the sky

An Odd Occurrence About  
Adam Anagnostopoulos (AOOAAA)  
-----  
A One-Act Play in Simultaneity  
by Elijah Acquah

## CHARACTERS

ADAM GREGORIOS ANAGNOSTOPOULOS #1 (ADAM #1): A man in his early 30s who dresses in business attire. He has short hair and wears glasses. He works as an accountant for a bank.

ADAM GREGORIOS ANAGNOSTOPOULOS #2 (ADAM #2): A young man in his mid-20s who has long hair and wears a sweater vest. (He wears a black jacket at night.) He is a hacker.

*(The two Adams are very similar in facial features, but they are not identical twins.)*

EVELYN SMITH: ADAM #1's coworker. She has blonde hair, and she wears a skirt and a white, buttoned-down shirt. She works as a customer service representative for Adam's bank.

DETECTIVE JOHN SMITH: Detective in the Chicago Police Department. A muscular man in his 30s who wears a police uniform.

## SETTING

Chicago, I.L.

*Events in Scenes 1 and 2 occur simultaneously. This is same case for Scenes 3 and 4. The stage may be divided into two sections for these scenes to unfold at the same time.*

*Left side of the stage plays Adam #1's story in scenes 1 and 3. Right side of the stage plays Adam #2's story in scenes 2 and 4.*

*The stage cannot be divided in scene 5, for both of the Adams will appear in the same setting.*

## Scene 1

The office lights up. On the left side of the office, there is a door and ADAM #1's cubicle. On the right side, there is EVELYN and her desk. She types on her computer while she looks at some paperwork. In the background (up stage), there are other computer desks and a wide window.

From the left, ADAM #1 enters into the office. He sits inside his cubicle and rests his

head in his arms on his desk because he is tired and depressed.

*At this point, ADAM #2 is already running around in his room trying to figure out a new plan.*

EVELYN

You're already feeling tired on a Monday morning?

ADAM #1

Yeah. *(sits up)* I just, honestly, don't like working like this every day. I sit in front of a computer screen, staring at a bunch of numbers and punching in stupid answers. *(gesturing with his fingers)* I mean, I had to go through four years of college for a degree in economics. I had to learn about business and entrepreneurship. I had to leave my town in the Sioux Falls and go to Chicago to find my place in life. *(stops gesturing)* I had to sacrifice a lot in order to become successful. But instead, all I do is sit in front of screens, think about numbers, and nothing else.

EVELYN

Come on, Adam. You know this job pays you well. I mean, you have a large house, larger than anyone else out there. You have the time to pay your bills. And after all, *(flirtatious)* you got the time to have me.

ADAM #1

No, Evelyn. I don't live in a fancy house. I live in a condo. I'll be middle-classed worker who sleeps near twenty other people to make it through the day. And also, I can barely afford my own house if I keep working like this. I don't have any friends or relatives staying with me. They pretty much don't know that I exist.

EVELYN

That's not true.

ADAM #1

Oh, it is true. I only got myself and nothing else. Mundane chores are what I'm stuck with.

ADAM #1 goes back to staring at his computer screen.

And not only that, nothing amazing happens when you're an accountant.

EVELYN rolls her eyes and shakes her head.

ADAM #1

Sigh, I wish life could get more interesting.

ADAM #1 begins typing away on his keyboard. He looks sullenly into his computer.

EVELYN looks at her computer and looks at some news online. She finds an article that is very suspicious.

*At this moment, ADAM #2 is hacking into the system of the Social Security Administration.*

EVELYN

Adam, did you rob another bank?

ADAM #1

What? No!

EVELYN

I'm reading a news article that says, "a culprit named Adam Anagnostopoulos robbed the Regional Bank at 13 Preston St in North Chicago." The guy looks a lot like you.

ADAM #1 gets up from his chair and walks over to EVELYN's desk.

He looks at her screen. He sees that the culprit in the photo has nearly the same facial features as his.

ADAM #1

*(pointing)* But that is not me.

EVELYN

Then who else could it be?

ADAM #1

I don't know!

ADAM #1 dashes back to his cubicle. He pulls up Google and puts his name in the search bar. He can see dozens of articles saying Adam Anagnostopoulos robbed a bank.

ADAM #1

Now this has turned interesting. I'm gonna ask my boss if he is aware of this.

ADAM #1 quickly walks to the left and gets out of the office.

EVELYN follows him, and she leaves the office as well. She turns the lights off. The room is now pitch black.

*(End Scene.)*

Scene 2

ADAM #2's apartment already has the lights on. There is junk all over the floor: newspapers crumbled up into balls, beer cans, shoes, small notebooks and a large desktop. The computer desk is in the background (up stage) while the bed is in the front (down stage). A window is on the left of the apartment, and the door is on the right.

ADAM #2 enters inside his room frenetically. He breathes rapidly. Wearing a backpack, which he quickly takes it off. He removes the band that ties his hair back. He then starts taking off his sweater vest and black pants. You can see he has been wearing a stained white T-shirt under those clothes. ADAM #2 then puts on his sweatpants.

*At this point, Evelyn begins talking.*

ADAM #2

*(whisper scream)* Fuckin' shit!

ADAM #2 puts his backpack on his bed and zips it open. He dumps out bails of money. He counts them quickly, but then he turns his head towards the ceiling.

ADAM #2

*(speaks softly throughout this scene)* Is there a camera on me?

Looking around, ADAM #2 sees there is no camera. He exhales deeply.

ADAM #2

I guess not.

ADAM #2 puts the money back into his backpack. He then jumps onto his rolling chair and turns on his computer.

ADAM #2

Must be a way to hide myself... again. *(while he logs on with a wickedly long password)* What was that thing my guys were talking about?

With his computer on his desktop page, ADAM #2 digs into his pockets.

ADAM #2

*(feels something)* Wait a minute, I got some notes.

He pulls things out of his pockets. They consist of a wallet, some keys, some coins, and a pocket knife. He also finds a small piece of paper, and it says "Go to ASSA on your TOR if you want to change your looks." He does so.

*At this moment, Evelyn finds out that a man named Adam Anagnostopoulos has robbed a bank.*

ADAM #2

All right, I'm here. So how do I do this? *(looks back at his notes)*

"Go to the search bar at the top right corner and type in your full name." OK.

After doing so, ADAM #2 ends up at a search with two people with the exact same name.

ADAM #2

There's another guy named Adam Gregorios Anagnostopoulos? And he looks a lot like me.

He opens up ADAM #1's personal information.

ADAM #2

Accountant... *(unsarcastically)* sweet job. *(continues looking through the information)* Hm, so this dude has a lover named Evelyn Smith. They work in the same bank, and he has "Single with Girlfriend." What bank do they work at? *(looking)* The Bank of Illinois. But that's... that's like a couple of miles from that other bank.

ADAM #2 then travels to his own private information. On his page, he has a lengthy criminal record that ranges from arson to assault and battery to, of course, robbery.

ADAM #2

Pretty easy.

ADAM #2 turns off his computer.

Afterwards, he puts on a new sweater vest, which has a different color. He combs his hair and sprays cologne on himself. He then puts on a new pair of black slacks and a nice pair of shoes.

He then puts the things he took out back in his pockets.

ADAM #2

Time to make a new Adam.

Taking his backpack with him, he turns off the lights and goes out the door. (He does not forget to lock it.)

*(End scene.)*

# Hope

Shingho Luk

He was trapped in coldness.  
A howling and crowded chamber.  
He was relieved by brightness.  
A candlelit library on snowy nights.

Ravens cawed on the branch.  
He saw their claws penetrating and greasy.  
As a sickle peeled off the callous on his right hand.  
He rose up arms against them for aurora.

Ravens flew away with unwilling Croaks.  
He went through that tunnel in void  
But before baptism began.  
He dropped from the clouds.

The dark blood spilled out.  
He is now printed into brightness,  
As a limpid stream for lost men in desert.  
He becomes a **candle** in a musty library.

A kid approaches him.  
For the warmness he carries.  
And the similar eager for brightness.  
Two callow hands slip over his skin.  
Redolent. Coarse. Boxy.

A CELEBRATION OF WRITING DONE IN AND  
AROUND THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
WRITING CENTER

EDITED BY ENRICO BRUNO & ELENA CARTER

WRITING  
CENTER



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Department of Rhetoric