GLAZED WITH RAINWATER.

SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON

RED WHEELBARRA

BESIDE THE WHITE CHICKENS

winter issue 2005
"The better work men do is always done under stress and at great personal cost."
— Bill Williams

Thanks to: Faculty Advisor, Mike Delp
Technical Advisor, Therese Zielinski

Cover art courtesy of Easton Miller

Editors: Matt Minich
Mike Bushnell
hand. He listens to her breathe.  
"I had a dream and Gracie was a baby and she was dying and you were far away and we couldn't help her and she was in the snow and she was dying," Claire wiped at her eyes. "I've had it before except sometimes they've thrown Gracie in a garbage dump like they do in China, and sometimes she's drowning."

"Hey, she's safe now, Claire. I promise. She's with us, so she's safe." He walks over to the window and opens the blinds.  
"Look," he says, pointing up to the sunrise, and reaching over for her hand again. John straightens out the sheets and pulls them over his wife. He lies down under the comforter with her, stroking her hair until she sleeps.

The steady morning light comes in through the window. Claire opens her eyes. John is only a pillow away. She puts a finger on his lips to wake him.  
"Hey," he says.  
"Hey."

They hear the sounds of Gracie’s feet on the stairs. She climbs up on the bed and lies down between them. She smells like Fruit Loops. Claire and John each put an arm around her back.  
Claire thinks of the first time they had really held Gracie.

It had been the fourteen-hour plane light back from Guangzhou, China. The entire week before they'd spent with a group of other adopting families, shuttled back and forth between document signings and other paperwork. They'd barely been given time with their new daughter. But in those fourteen hours of the flight, John and Claire had held her the entire time. They watched her sleep. Her eyelashes made soft black crescents on her white skin. There, they’d decided on her name: Grace, Gracie. It had taken her two years to get to them. Outside their window, they could see mountains and trees and clouds as the plane moved them forward. And they held Gracie’s tiny body, they held her and held her, and she was theirs.
The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
glazed with rain water
beside the white chickens

the movements of the cranes. "Are any of those birds here?"
"No, they live where it's very cold. They live in icy water, and it snows all the time. Their wings don't work so they can't fly south."
"Why are they dying?"
"Well, we don't know yet, Gracie. We think it began with some time when the murres didn't get enough food. When those murres became parents, they couldn't take care of their own babies, so those babies didn't get enough food either."

Gracie takes off the binoculars and asks John to bend over so that she can slip them over his head. He looks up at her and they smile. She curls her fingers around his hand and holds it, even though hers could fit entirely inside his, and together they walk farther down the path.

John wakes without ever really sleeping. The nighttime brings only flat light. Tonight he has shut the blinds, and still he cannot sleep. He leaves Claire's shape in the bed, her hair dark on the pillow. As John walks up the stairs, she begins to have a terrible dream. In this dream, Gracie is left in a pile of snow on a street in China. She and John are on opposite sides of the street. Neither of them can reach Gracie. Her face is turning blue. John walks out onto the deck. The trees and the grass shift in the wind. The river glitters silver. The slightly violet haze fades into blue sky, and there are traces of pink. Somehow there is daybreak without the sun ever really leaving. In Claire's dream, she is trying to yell something at John. She is asking him what she should do, but her voice doesn't carry. Far away from her, his mouth opens and closes, arms waving. Gold lights up in the horizon. Down below in the bedroom, Claire has thrown off the sheets. John is walking down the stairs. His steps are sure. On opening the bedroom door, he sees his wife, chest heaving, her hair a dark tangled mess. He comes over to her side. He pushes back the hair on her wet face.

"Claire, what's wrong?" He reaches over to hold her damp
“Reading.”
Claire puts her hands on either side of Gracie’s head, running her thumbs along the smooth skin of her cheeks. Gracie looks up at her with round black eyes. “Okay. I’m going to work. I’ll see you tonight.” Gracie smiles, runs back to her book. Claire looks at Gracie’s back through the thin cloth of her tank top. Her shoulder blades look like folded wings, grown over by skin through time. Claire finds her bag and walks out the door.

John has decided to take Gracie out for a drive. In the car Gracie is quiet and attentive as always. John looks over to see her black eyes following the curves of hills, passing clouds, through the car window. They stop at what looks like large fields guarded by trees.

“This is called a migratory bird field. It’s where birds can stop and be safe and fed on their way south.”

They follow a path, lined with the green-gold fields. Sometimes a flock of birds will fly up out of the tall grass and meet in the sky, and John will point them out (“Look, those are swallows,”), but most of the birds stay in the distance. Gracie points to two tall ones, standing on long legs across the field from them.

“Cranes,” says John, and takes out the binoculars from around his neck. He focuses in on their slender white bodies. They are dancing around each other, awkwardly, not touching. “They are probably mates,” he tells Gracie, and lifts off the binoculars to let her see.

“What are mates?”
“Like... a married couple, like parents.”
She holds the binoculars to her face. They are heavy, but her small hands curl around them tightly. “They’re pretty.”
“Yes.”
“Did you save your birds yet?”
“No.”
Gracie peers through the binoculars, moving them to follow...
POETRY

"Nothing whips my blood like verse."
-Bill Williams

him, Claire’s shoes click back and forth across the tiles.

“What are you doing?” he asks, clinking a clean glass against the others in the dishrack.

“Just making some coffee.”

“Oh.” She opens and shuts a drawer. John scrubs around the rim of a plate.

“I think I’ll be going to the lab today.”

“You are?”

“The proposal.” John looks at the coffee pot, which is beginning to collect beads of water on the sides.

“Excuse me,” she hears Claire say.

“What?”

“I need to throw away the filter.”

“Oh.” John steps back to let her dispose of the soggy coffee filter into the trashcan. “I’ll stay home with Gracie then.” He follows the back of her head as she closes the cabinet door.

“Okay.”

John hears Claire sigh behind him. The plate in his hands is very heavy. He is afraid that he will drop it, that it will break. Even in their worst times, nothing has ever been broken.

The coffee buzzer goes off. “Claire, will you…”?

“Yes?” He hears her hesitate, then pour the coffee into a mug.

“Never mind. Where is Gracie?”

“I don’t know. I thought she was still up here.”

“Hm.” John turns off the faucet and dries his hands on a washcloth. He passes Claire and walks downstairs.

Claire leans against the kitchen counter, making circles in her coffee with a spoon. “Gracie? Are you up here?” She holds the mug in her hand, listens.

Gracie’s little feet run across the carpet of the living room and onto the kitchen tile. Her shiny black hair bounces around her small white face. She wraps her tiny arms around Claire’s legs and looks up at her. “Yes mommy?”

“What’ve you been doing, baby?”
Eyes open wide to the white wall of the bedroom, Claire can hear Gracie pouring milk into a bowl of cereal upstairs. She turns silently to face her husband. John is on the other side of the soft canyon the morning light has made between their bodies. She stares at his slightly opened mouth, his closed eyelids. The distant sounds of Gracie in the kitchen travel down the stairs.

It is summertime, late June. It is Fairbanks, Alaska. It has already been a month since the family moved there from Seattle. In moving, Claire and John are leaving behind eight years of their marriage, only five of which they want to remember; the two spent waiting to adopt Gracie from China, and the following three when she was finally living with them. The rest of it was city noise, rising up from the Seattle streets and pushing through their campus apartment windows, drowning out the silence that had grown between them.

When the job offerings came in from the University of Alaska, an Arctic Wildlife teaching position for John and research assistant for Claire, they had thought that, surely, Alaska was what they needed; an open sky, a river, pink Denali mountains. A vast, empty landscape couldn’t hold their silence. And, they had told Gracie, being so close to the islands, they could finally save the birds they had been studying. (“See how beautiful! And they are dying,” they’d said, showing her pictures of the black and white murres.) They would have the summer to prepare, get themselves together. Write the proposal to save their murres.

And there is the open sky above their beautiful, simple house; in the distance, the river and the mountains. And there is Claire, eyes turned back to the wall, John, eyes closed in sleep, and Gracie, making herself breakfast upstairs. Every room in the house glows with the light from the windows.

Claire and John are in the kitchen. They have all just had breakfast (“Are you sure you don’t want to eat, Gracie?” “Uh huh, I already ate.” “Come on, Grace, Mommy and Daddy don’t want to eat all alone.”). John is washing the dishes, rinsing and scrubbing until each plate turns white and smooth under the soap and water. Behind

---

**Warning Labels**

Because he couldn’t live on sunflowers or stars, couldn’t bear to skin his paintings with the kitchen knife, van Gogh made a meal of colors: a daub of cadmium throbbed in his chest, cobalt leaked into his irises—every streetlamp wore a halo.

My mother was a printmaker; she cooked with poison on her hands for years, until it bloomed near her heart, titanium white and hungry.

Now she carries clay beneath her nails, strips lead paint from an ancient ceiling barehanded, maskless. Hundreds of feet in the air, the chips rain into her lashes, hair,
lungs.

In the darkroom, the chemicals work into the skin between my fingers, the cuts on my lips. I fish each print from its red pool with chapped hands I never wash. I can taste D-76, stop bath, fixer crystals in my food.

Their labels: "WARNING! TOXIC!"--and we know our bodies will become our strangest landscape, a palette where clusters of cells will pile like dried oil paints.

d. He didn’t think they’d mind the cold. “What do you want to talk about?”
”I don’t know, Amano, do you want to move to America?”
“No. Why?”
“The tests and all.”
“Our children will do fine on the tests.”
“I didn’t.”
“I know. Don’t worry. You shouldn’t worry so much.” He smoothed her cheek. In this lamp light she looked like a different woman. Delicate black eyebrows rose like wings over her eyelids. He lay down beside her. He told her she was beautiful.

“Thank you,” she replied, she had tried to look beautiful. “Amano, I know our sons will be smart, maybe even smarter then their father.”
“Even smarter than me?” He grinned. He was very in love with her now.

She kissed him. “Yes. Even smarter then you.” She looked up into the sharp stars. Far off to the north a shifting curtain of yellow-white light was shining. It swam in the sky like a water snake. “Amano, look!”

“I thought they were red or green.”
“That’s them. I know it!” She kissed him again.

The couple next door were quiet now. He reached over and turned off the light. The shadows of caribou and moose that had been playing over the walls vanished. It was very dark in the corners of the room.
give her until he forgot the incident in the morning, when it would still be dark. "That's okay, darling. I know how much you want everything to work out."

The woman's hair was spread around her face like a dark hood. "You are so smart, darling."

"Nonsense. If I were smart I'd be working with Seiji San."

"I know you will, they are just watching you now, seeing if you are reliable as well as smart. You've got to be both you know."

"I know."

"I wish I worked in a big company."

The man looked down into his drink. He wondered at what temperature sake would freeze. "No you don't."

"Yes I do. I worked as hard as I could."

"Aren't you happy in the apartment?"

"Oh yes, of course I am."

They didn't say anything to each other. Next door a couple was talking and laughing in Japanese. They sounded very happy.

"Maybe they saw the lights," she said.

"Do you see any lights?"

"No."

"Then they didn't either."

"Will you come and sit with me?"

He set the shot glass on the table.

"Will you shut the shade. I don't like seeing all that snow, it makes me cold."

He pulled the velvet curtain closed and sat beside the woman. He turned off the overhead light. There was a lamp on the bedside table. The shade was painted with Eskimo art, the smooth, surreal shapes of caribou and moose. He turned it on. The shadows of animals rose on the walls. Strange, the thought, I've never seen something that big. Only squirrels, a monkey maybe. He thought out to the white plains, wondered what caribou did on nights like

---

Morning

I wake still waiting for the thieves to leave.
Every morning the slivered glass melts like ice on the rug.
I still look for it across the floor.

Some small dreams yet evaporating:
algae clings to soft wooden pillars,
wading through rows of shining black waves,away from the night shore,
the way placed fire soaks only in its own scraps,
sometimes to spit spark
from behind its mesh cage.
to burrow smoldering into the rug
and plant an end to these wooden places.

I attempt to wake.
I check the rug again: no smoke.
The open window's lawnmower drone pulls me out of bed.

Now, some headaches.
A tiny thing being spread across
an expanding sound wave,
louder every minute.
The walls crumble, release
their pour of orange flame.

I check the window, already closed.
and I check the rug once more: still here
I check the room: I am still in it.

Now the window opens:
cool wind pours over me,

There are those who say the world has been melting ever since it began.
The sky has not yet run out,
I search for signs of blood red clouds,
I find none.

It seems I’ve started another day by mistake.
The cereal is already poured.
The lawnmower, passes by my window over and over.
again the noise, again the grass.

“Will you hand me my drink?”
He gave her her drink.
“ I am happy to be here. It just silly that we’d be doing something like this.”
“ Like what?”
“ Coming here because of an old wive’s tale.” She held her shot glass. Her face was flushed. He hoped she wasn’t about to cry.
She made an awful lot of noise when she cried. He wanted to stand at the window and look out onto the city. He didn’t want to comfort her.
“ You aren’t going to cry are you, darling?”
She drank her sake. “ No.” The wind pushed fine, freezing snow over the skylight. She looked up. “ Do you think we’ll see them tonight?”
“ The man promised that if we stayed a week we’d see them.”
She fluffed a pillow and lay looking up into the night sky.
She felt very small. She was glad the room was warm and that light was coming from a bulb on the ceiling and falling over the man’s face. “ How long have we been here?”
“ Five days.” He kissed her shoulder. His body was heavy and warm.
“ Not now, Amano, we have to wait for the lights.”
He was sick of waiting for the lights. “ Maybe they’ll start while we’re at it.”
“ I’d rather wait.”
He sighed. He got up and poured more sake. The drink was thin, it didn’t feel like he was drinking anything. He poured another shot. Outside a man was walking against the wind, the fur ruffle of the parka rippled like a woman’s hair underwater. He felt bad for the man, whose hands and face must be very chapped. He wondered what it would be like out on the tundra on nights like these. He had always lived in a city.
“ Sorry, Amano.”
He sighed. He knew she wasn’t sorry and he wouldn’t for-
A Northern Story

"It really is lovely," the man was saying. They were drinking sake in the hotel room. They had paid a lot of money for the place and he was wishing they had just stayed in Japan.

The woman was young but not as young as she should have been. Her hair was cut in a stylish bob so she looked like twenty other women he worked with at the office. She was sitting on the bed. Her kimono fell open across her chest. "It is lovely. Its only that I wish we could get out more."

"What were you expecting, Hitomi? It is quiet nice though."

He drank his sake.

"Would you like another?"

"Yes. Thank you."

She poured him another shot then another for herself which she set on the bedside table. She lay down on the bedspread. There was a big window over the bed. At night the draft was very bad. There were heaters on either side but it was still cold. Outside it was dark. It was always dark here in winter, she had remind herself. It wasn't like Kyoto. The stars were very bright. She didn't like them because she thought they looked like broken glass.

"I love you."

"I love you too, Hitomi. What are you thinking about darling?"

"Do you think I'm silly?"

He set down his shot glass. There were thick velvet drapes over the window. He opened them. The street was unlit. It was very late. Out past the city he could see the white mountain range. There was a terrible wind. The walls of the hotel were thick. He was glad he didn't have to hear it ripping through the city off the bay.

"I don't think you're silly. This is a lovely place for a honeymoon. I've always wanted to see America. Haven't you darling?"

Her kimono was falling down her thin arms. He remembered how much he'd wanted her when they first met. He drank his sake and sat down beside her.

Maintaining My Wildness

I bury watermelons in the cold sand and rocks under Long Lake.

The soles of my feet red from the fresh water, and rough path leading down to this burial ground.

Watermelons don't keep in the refrigerator, they need knowing hands to slide them into the silt.

Each grain rubs on my cold fingers, as I'm pushing the melons under the lake.

Days later, I come back for them.

The stone markers never stay, but drift off, so the watermelons have to be found.

I crouch, the water warmed since I buried them. They are ripe and I now push my hands, arms, then shoulders in the water and sand. Finding those hard melons, cooled and wild.
We got to answer the door, my sister and I
And look down at the man's yellow boots.
He smiles. Takes of his hat,
His boots on the rug.

My mother comes in, tells him
To put the package on the table,
Unwrap the newspaper.
Five pounds of bacon.

He opens his knife and peels a piece
From the parchment for my sister to touch.
A week ago she found a seed
And thought it was an eyeball
From the slaughter house
At the top of the hill.
I told her it was too round and brown
To be an eyeball.

We planted it on the roof of a round building
In the middle of four acres of land.
We walk there, and are not the only ones:
People leave the dreams they find there

In little houses by the river. There is no river now
But someone left rocks in the valley
And told me there once was. Someone lost their
Dog and asked us to pray to Jesus, Buddha

a slight space between the porch and the cement steps, leaving room
for small animals and car keys to vanish. Once, the heel of her shoe
got caught and she broke her ankle. She waited for him. glad that dusk
was coming on so she couldn't see the unusual angle of the bone, but
he didn't come home till long after midnight. The neighbor with three
children and a constant trunkful of groceries saw her crying, tears all
trembly from shock, and helped her inside. From the emergency
room, late, she called him to pick her up. "Just home," he said. "I was
wondering where you were."

Jill watches an ant crawl into the crevice. Standing, she
pushes her hair back and straightens her jean shorts. "I'll get ice
cream," she says. "It's a hot day. Vanilla okay?" Even the grass in the
front yard is a withered tan green. She doesn't wait for his response
but opens the screen door and grabs her purse off the coffee table.
Stepping off the porch, she wonders if he's watching her
through the kitchen window as she searches through Bubblemint gum
wrappers and matching lighters shaped like dolphins for her keys. She
glances back surreptiously, squinting, but from the driveway she
can't see the screen.

She puts on her sunglasses, rolls down the car windows and
places her purse on the passenger seat. In the rearview mirror as she
pulls out, everything looks different.
Jill lies in the hammock on the front porch and stares at the weathered slats in the roof. Inside the house, he is still moving around. She hears the static sound of the TV turning on. “You know I have always loved you,” a voice whispers, throaty and conspiring, “but I must go with Maurice.” She looks at her watch, the one he gave her last Christmas instead of the pearl necklace she asked for. It is 2:00. The show is her favorite soap opera. She listens to find out why Elana is leaving Jared, but the TV clicks off. The stillness hovers in the air, uneasy.

She looks at the trellis and wonders why she ever decided to grow climbing roses. Her mother had told her they were a good investment. “Honestly, honey, you don’t know a thing about gardening. You don’t have to do anything for them, they’ll grow all on their own.” Now she wishes she had a little more control. One vine has wrapped itself around the place where the hammock is tied to the porch and when she moves, legs shiny from the heat and sticking to the rope, she is afraid she’ll prick herself on a stray thorn.

“Mark, do you need anything?” The kitchen window looks out onto the front porch. He doesn’t answer, but she hears his stocking feet tramp softly across the tiled floor. A chair scrapes. “Ice cream, maybe? I can run to the store.” The Subaru Outback, so sturdy and safe, looks welcoming. She imagines herself like the brave women in all those movies, wearing sunglasses. They’re always running away from something but they don’t care because everything is tinted sepia and they are driving into the sun.

The ropes of the hammock make marks on her face. She sits up and watches diamond shadows from the trellis flick across the edge of the porch and disappear in the grass. There’s...
Down from Kratka Ridge

We drive the high road
that breaks through the snow
and bends itself back
down the mountain—

Long black steps
unwind through the base flats,
them lie straight for miles
lined in white paint and fence.

Flame that burns
behind the trees—
city lights
lit high off the haze.

A Winchester rifle
sights deer on a billboard,
and grows to full-size
as we near.

“It’s a long way,”
says my father.
wrists sag against the wheel.
I’m already drifting to sleep.

The hum of the car
sinks
as the road bows down.
    The eyes of the city
turn up.

“I think all writing is a
disease. You can’t stop it.”
-Bill Williams

Jesse Littlejohn
A worn hat and cane hang from the side, 
the ebony handle cracked. Which poker friend 
will buy Mr. Jenkinson’s things from her husband? 
He was always too strict with the girls, 
they never came back. 

In line, a pregnant woman holds a pink blanket. 
It’s Dara’s, the youngest. 
She was quiet and knew what I was up to, never spoke. 
Lost track of her, heard she got married. 
I hand $2.50 to the lady 
at the end of the tables. 

Flipping through the photo albums, looking at pictures 
I’ve never seen, while an old lady walks off with a dress, 
same one as in the picture. 
This is the closest I’ve come to having them. 

He touches my shoulder 
and says something soft. 
I let the skin 
catch in my throat. 

Ahead, 
the clouds open, 
and looms of water stretch, 
threads down 
to lay, 
their ice licks 
on the road. 

We unravel 
cold miles 
in silence.
Falling Apart

After Nick Bozanic’s poem, Departures

Sometimes I pause there where the air is cooler and imagine this is how my ghost will see the world: wildflowers up to her knees, hair blown back, the sun in her hands.

Once I found two ghosts chatting at my kitchen table—the wife’s hair dark was as a lake, her husband’s skin so clear I could see the poems in his fingers. “It’s about letting yourself move on,” he was saying, “your hands in one place and your soul in another.”

“It’s not that easy for me. I can’t just decide to up and abandon my fingernails.”

“I’m not a pro either.” He sipped hot chocolate out of my mug and tipped back in my chair. “I think the trick is distance. Having nothing to leave, leaving nothing to love.”

She brushed hair out of her eyes. “I’ve been in love a hundred different times.”

“Dead people don’t love, sweetie.”

This is how it will be, I know. Walking places I’ve walked and saying everything I’ve said before. Standing outside a coffee shop with my nose pressed up against the window, the glass always dry under my breath. The sky at my ankles, my spirit heavy with muscle and bone.

My Neighbor’s Estate Sale

None of the Jenkinson’s daughters came, maybe they were busy.

I hadn’t seen any of them in years, remembered their pale skin and absent eyes, wanting to hold them, smell their hair.

A crowd has already formed, fingering objects on tables.

A little girl places a tarnished tiara on her head and runs to her mom.

Amanda was homecoming queen in 73’ prettiest of the sisters, fragile looking, long, silky, brown hair, a lot like Olivia Hussy.

Got around, never with me though.

A mom is looking at dishware.

I know the design by heart: red-brown roosters surrounded by orange leaves.

A little girl places a tarnished tiara on her head and runs to her mom.

Amanda was homecoming queen in 73’ prettiest of the sisters, fragile looking, long, silky, brown hair, a lot like Olivia Hussy.

Got around, never with me though.

A mom is looking at dishware.

I know the design by heart: red-brown roosters surrounded by orange leaves.

A little girl places a tarnished tiara on her head and runs to her mom.

Amanda was homecoming queen in 73’ prettiest of the sisters, fragile looking, long, silky, brown hair, a lot like Olivia Hussy.

Got around, never with me though.

A mom is looking at dishware.

I know the design by heart: red-brown roosters surrounded by orange leaves.

A little girl places a tarnished tiara on her head and runs to her mom.

Amanda was homecoming queen in 73’ prettiest of the sisters, fragile looking, long, silky, brown hair, a lot like Olivia Hussy.

Got around, never with me though.

A mom is looking at dishware.

I know the design by heart: red-brown roosters surrounded by orange leaves.
Falling Apart

After Nick Bozanic's poem, Departures

Sometimes I pause there where the air is cooler and imagine this is how my ghost will see the world: wildflowers up to her knees, hair blown back, the sun in her hands.

Once I found two ghosts chatting at my kitchen table—the wife's hair dark was as a lake, her husband's skin so clear I could see the poems in his fingers. "It's about letting yourself move on," he was saying, "your hands in one place and your soul in another."

"It's not that easy for me. I can't just decide to up and abandon my fingernails."

"I'm not a pro either." He sipped hot chocolate out of my mug and tipped back in my chair. "I think the trick is distance. Having nothing to leave, leaving nothing to love."

She brushed hair out of her eyes. "I've been in love a hundred different times."

"Dead people don't love, sweetie."

They noticed me then, standing at my stove with my hands in my pockets. The woman looked like she might say something but the man shook his head and they disappeared.

This is how it will be, I know. Walking places I've walked and saying everything I've said before. Standing outside a coffee shop with my nose pressed up against the window, the glass always dry under my breath. The sky at my ankles, my spirit heavy with muscle and bone.

My Neighbor's Estate Sale

None of the Jenkinson's daughters came, maybe they were busy.

I hadn't seen any of them in years, remembering their pale skin and absent eyes, wanting to hold them, smell their hair.

A crowd has already formed, fingerling objects on tables.

A little girl places a tarnished tiara on her head and runs to her mom.

Amanda was homecoming queen in 73' prettiest of the sisters, fragile looking, long, silky, brown hair, a lot like Olivia Hussy.

Got around, never with me though.

She didn't listen.

left home at 18.

never saw her again.

A mom is looking at dishware.

I know the design by heart: red-brown roosters surrounded by orange leaves.

I ate over at their house once; Mrs. Jenkinson made spaghetti and Laura felt up my leg with her foot. I was too nervous to call.

A big box, full of trophies, ribbons, and medals nobody wants. A clothes rack, Mrs. Jenkinson's poker buddies rummage through old dresses, only their size in mind.
A worn hat and cane hang from the side,
the ebony handle cracked. Which poker friend
will buy Mr. Jenkinson’s things from her husband?
He was always too strict with the girls,
they never came back.

In line, a pregnant woman holds a pink blanket.
It’s Dara’s, the youngest.
She was quiet and knew what I was up to, never spoke.
Lost track of her, heard she got married.
I hand $2.50 to the lady
at the end of the tables.

Flipping through the photo albums, looking at pictures
I’ve never seen, while an old lady walks off with a dress,
same one as in the picture.
This is the closest I’ve come to having them.

He touches my shoulder
and says something soft.
I let the skin
catch in my throat.

Ahead,
the clouds open,
and looms of water stretch,
threads down
to lay,
their ice licks
on the road.

We unravel
cold miles
in silence.
We drive the high road
that breaks through the snow
and bends itself back
down the mountain—

Long black steps
unwind through the base flats,
then lie straight for miles
lined in white paint and fence.

Flame that burns
behind the trees—
city lights
lit high off the haze.

A Winchester rifle
sights deer on a billboard,
and grows to full-size
as we near.

"It's a long way,"
says my father,
wrists sag against the wheel.
I'm already drifting to sleep.

The hum of the car
sinks
as the road bows down.
   The eyes of the city
turn up.
Jill lies in the hammock on the front porch and stares at the weathered slats in the roof. Inside the house, he is still moving around. She hears the static sound of the TV turning on. "You know I have always loved you," a voice whispers, throaty and conspiring, "but I must go with Maurice." She looks at her watch, the one he gave her last Christmas instead of the pearl necklace she asked for. It is 2:00. The show is her favorite soap opera. She listens to find out why Elana is leaving Jared, but the TV clicks off. The stillness hovers in the air, uneasy.

She looks at the trellis and wonders why she ever decided to grow climbing roses. Her mother had told her they were a good investment. "Honestly, honey, you don’t know a thing about gardening. You don’t have to do anything for them, they’ll grow all on their own." Now she wishes she had a little more control. One vine has wrapped itself around the place where the hammock is tied to the porch and when she moves, legs shiny from the heat and sticking to the rope, she is afraid she’ll prick herself on a stray thorn.

"Mark, do you need anything?" The kitchen window looks out onto the front porch. He doesn’t answer, but she hears his stocking feet tramp softly across the tiled floor. A chair scrapes. "Ice cream, maybe? I can run to the store." The Subaru Outback, so sturdy and safe, looks welcoming. She imagines herself like the brave women in all those movies, wearing sunglasses. They're always running away from something but they don't care because everything is tinted sepia and they are driving into the sun.

The ropes of the hammock make marks on her face. She sits up and watches diamond shadows from the trellis flick across the edge of the porch and disappear in the grass. There's

Unusual Angle

And the river. That night a storm knocked
Four birches over, all pointing south.
The dog ran home and the woman
Came by and thanked us for praying.

The bacon man owns this land
And tells us he grew up in mangroves
Eating spiders and fish eggs.
My mother orders bacon. Two pounds.
And cleans the slick grease off the wood.
We got to answer the door, my sister and I
And look down at the man's yellow boots.
He smiles. Takes of his hat,
His boots on the rug.

My mother comes in, tells him
To put the package on the table,
Unwrap the newspaper.
Five pounds of bacon.

He opens his knife and peels a piece
From the parchment for my sister to touch.
A week ago she found a seed
And thought it was an eyeball
From the slaughter house
At the top of the hill.
I told her it was too round and brown
To be an eyeball.

We planted it on the roof of a round building
In the middle of four acres of land.
We walk there, and are not the only ones:
People leave the dreams they find there

In little houses by the river. There is no river now
But someone left rocks in the valley
And told me there once was. Someone lost their
Dog and asked us to pray to Jesus, Buddha

a slight space between the porch and the cement steps, leaving room
for small animals and car keys to vanish. Once, the heel of her shoe
got caught and she broke her ankle. She waited for him, glad that dusk
was coming on so she couldn't see the unusual angle of the bone, but
he didn't come home till long after midnight. The neighbor with three
children and a constant trunkful of groceries saw her crying, tears all
treibly from shock, and helped her inside. From the emergency
room, late, she called him to pick her up. "Just home," he said. "I was
wondering where you were."

Jill watches an ant crawl into the crevice. Standing, she
pushes her hair back and straightens her jean shorts. "I'll get ice
cream," she says. "It's a hot day. Vanilla okay?" Even the grass in the
front yard is a withered tan green. She doesn't wait for his response
but opens the screen door and grabs her purse off the coffee table.
Stepping off the porch, she wonders if he's watching her
through the kitchen window as she searches through Bubblemint gum
wrappers and matching lighters shaped like dolphins for her keys. She
glances back surreptitiously, squinting, but from the driveway she
can't see the screen.

She puts on her sunglasses, rolls down the car windows and
places her purse on the passenger seat. In the rearview mirror as she
pulls out, everything looks different.
It really is lovely," the man was saying. They were drinking sake in the hotel room. They had paid a lot of money for the place and he was wishing they had just stayed in Japan.

The woman was young but not as young as she should have been. Her hair was cut in a stylish bob so she looked like twenty other women he worked with at the office. She was sitting on the bed. Her kimono fell open across her chest. "It is lovely. Its only that I wish we could get out more."

"What were you expecting, Hitomi? It is quiet nice though."

He drank his sake.

"Would you like another?"

"Yes. Thank you."

She poured him another shot then another for herself which she set on the bedside table. She lay down on the bedspread. There was a big window over the bed. At night the draft was very bad. There were heaters on either side but it was still cold. Outside it was dark. It was always dark here in winter, she had remind herself. It wasn't like Kyoto. The stars were very bright. She didn't like them because she thought they looked like broken glass.

"I love you."

"I love you too, Hitomi. What are you thinking about darling."

"Do you think I'm silly?"

He set down his shot glass. There were thick velvet drapes over the window. He opened them. The street was unlit. It was very late. Out past the city he could see the white mountain range. There was a terrible wind. The walls of the hotel were thick. He was glad he didn't have to hear it ripping through the city off the bay.

"I don't think you're silly. This is a lovely place for a honeymoon. I've always wanted to see America. Haven't you darling?"

Her kimono was falling down her thin arms. He remembered how much he'd wanted her when they first met. He drank his sake and sat down beside her.

---

**A Northern Story**

I bury watermelons in the cold sand and rocks under Long Lake.

The soles of my feet red from the fresh water, and rough path leading down to this burial ground.

Watermelons don't keep in the refrigerator, they need knowing hands to slide them into the silt.

Each grain rubs on my cold fingers, as I'm pushing the melons under the lake.

Days later, I come back for them.

The stone markers never stay, but drift off, so the watermelons have to be found.

I crouch, the water warmed since I buried them. They are ripe and I now push my hands, arms, then shoulders in the water and sand. Finding those hard melons, cooled and wild.
and I check the rug once more: still here
I check the room: I am still in it.

Now the window opens:
cool wind pours over me,

There are those who say the world has been melting ever since it began.

The sky has not yet run out,
I search for signs of blood red clouds,
I find none.

It seems I’ve started another day by mistake.
The cereal is already poured.
The lawnmower, passes by my window over and over.
again the noise, again the grass.

"Will you hand me my drink?"
He gave her her drink.
"I am happy to be here. It just silly that we’d be doing something like this."
"Like what?"
"Coming here because of an old wive’s tale." She held her shot glass. Her face was flushed. He hoped she wasn’t about to cry. She made an awful lot of noise when she cried. He wanted to stand at the window and look out onto the city. He didn’t want to comfort her.
"You aren’t going to cry are you, darling?"
She drank her sake. "No." The wind pushed fine, freezing snow over the skylight. She looked up. "Do you think we’ll see them tonight?"
"The man promised that if we stayed a week we’d see them."
She fluffed a pillow and lay looking up into the night sky. She felt very small. She was glad the room was warm and that light was coming from a bulb on the ceiling and falling over the man’s face. "How long have we been here?"
"Five days." He kissed her shoulder. His body was heavy and warm.
"Not now, Amano, we have to wait for the lights."
He was sick of waiting for the lights. "Maybe they’ll start while we’re at it."
"I’d rather wait."
He sighed. He got up and poured more sake. The drink was thin, it didn’t feel like he was drinking anything. He poured another shot. Outside a man was walking against the wind, the fur ruffle of the parka rippled like a woman’s hair underwater. He felt bad for the man, whose hands and face must be very chapped. He wondered what it would be like out on the tundra on nights like these. He had always lived in a city.
"Sorry, Amano."
He sighed. He knew she wasn’t sorry and he wouldn’t for-
give her until he forgot the incident in the morning, when it would
still be dark. "That's okay, darling. I know how much you want
everything to work out."

The woman's hair was spread around her face like a dark
hood. "You are so smart, darling."

"Nonsense. If I were smart I'd be working with Seiji
San."

"I know you will, they are just watching you now, seeing
if you are reliable as well as smart. You've got to be both you
know."

"I know."

"I wish I worked in a big company."

The man looked down into his drink. He wondered at what
temperature sake would freeze. "No you don't."

"Yes I do. I worked as hard as I could."

"Aren't you happy in the apartment?"

"Oh yes, of course I am."

They didn't say anything to each other. Next door a couple
was talking and laughing in Japanese. They sounded very happy.

"Maybe they saw the lights," she said.

"Do you see any lights?"

"No."

"Then they didn't either."

"Will you come and sit with me?"

He set the shot glass on the table.

"Will you shut the shade. I don't like seeing all that snow,
it makes me cold."

He pulled the velvet curtain closed and sat beside the
woman. He turned off the overhead light. There was a lamp on the
bedside table. The shade was painted with Eskimo art, the smooth,
surreal shapes of caribou and moose. He turned it on. The shadows
of animals rose on the walls. Strange, the thought, I've never seen
something that big. Only squirrels, a monkey maybe. He thought
out to the white plains, wondered what caribou did on nights like

---

**Morning**

I wake still waiting for the thieves to leave.

Every morning the slivered glass melts like ice on the rug.
I still look for it across the floor.

Some small dreams yet evaporating:

algae clings to soft wooden pillars,
wading through rows of shining black waves,
away from the night shore,
the way placed fire soaks only in its own scraps,
sometimes to spit spark
from behind its mesh cage,
to burrow smoldering into the rug
and plant an end to these wooden places.

I attempt to wake.

I check the rug again: no smoke.
The open window's lawnmower drone
pulls me out of bed.

Now, some headaches.
A tiny thing being spread across
an expanding sound wave,
louder every minute.
The walls crumble, release
their pour of orange flame.

I check the window, already closed.
lungs.

In the darkroom,
the chemicals work into the skin
between my fingers,
the cuts on my lips.
I fish each print
from its red pool
with chapped hands
I never wash.
I can taste
D-76, stop bath, fixer crystals
in my food.

Their labels:
"WARNING! TOXIC!"--
and we know
our bodies will become
our strangest landscape,
a palette
where clusters of cells
will pile
like dried oil paints.

this. He didn’t think they’d mind the cold. “What do you want to talk about?”
“I don’t know. Amano, do you want to move to America?”
“No. Why?”
“The tests and all.”
“Our children will do fine on the tests.”
“I didn’t.”
“I know. Don’t worry. You shouldn’t worry so much.” He
smoothed her cheek. In this lamp light she looked like a different
woman. Delicate black eyebrows rose like wings over her eye lids. He
lay down beside her. He told her she was beautiful.
“Thank you,” she replied, she had tried to look beautiful. “Amano, I know our sons will be smart, maybe even smarter then their
father.”
“Even smarter than me?” He grinned. He was very in love
with her now.
She kissed him. “Yes. Even smarter then you.” She looked up into the
sharp stars. Far off too the north a shifting curtain of yellow-white
light was shining. It swam in the sky like a water snake. “Amano,
lk!”
“I thought they were red or green.”
“That’s them. I know it!” She kissed him again.
The couple next door where quiet now. He reached over and
turned off the light. The shadows of caribou and moose that had been
playing over the walls vanished. It was very dark in the corners of the
room.
Eyes open wide to the white wall of the bedroom, Claire can hear Gracie pouring milk into a bowl of cereal upstairs. She turns silently to face her husband. John is on the other side of the soft canyon the morning light has made between their bodies. She stares at his slightly opened mouth, his closed eyelids. The distant sounds of Gracie in the kitchen travel down the stairs.

It is summertime, late June. It is Fairbanks, Alaska. It has already been a month since the family moved there from Seattle. In moving, Claire and John are leaving behind eight years of their marriage, only five of which they want to remember; the two spent waiting to adopt Gracie from China, and the following three when she was finally living with them. The rest of it was city noise, rising up from the Seattle streets and pushing through their campus apartment windows, drowning out the silence that had grown between them.

When the job offerings came in from the University of Alaska, an Arctic Wildlife teaching position for John and research assistant for Claire, they had thought that, surely, Alaska was what they needed; an open sky, a river, pink Denali mountains. A vast, empty landscape couldn't hold their silence. And, they had told Gracie, being so close to the islands, they could finally save the birds they had been studying. ("See how beautiful? And they are dying," they'd said, showing her pictures of the black and white murres.) They would have the summer to prepare, get themselves together. Write the proposal to save their murres.

And there is the open sky above their beautiful, simple house; in the distance, the river and the mountains. And there is Claire, eyes turned back to the wall, John, eyes closed in sleep, and Gracie, making herself breakfast upstairs. Every room in the house glows with the light from the windows.

Claire and John are in the kitchen. They have all just had breakfast ("Are you sure you don't want to eat, Gracie?" "Uh huh, I already ate." "Come on, Grace, Mommy and Daddy don't want to eat all alone."). John is washing the dishes, rinsing and scrubbing until each plate turns white and smooth under the soap and water. Behind
“Nothing whips my blood like verse.”

-Bill Williams
"Reading."
Claire puts her hands on either side of Gracie's head, running her thumbs along the smooth skin of her cheeks. Gracie looks up at her with round black eyes. "Okay. I'm going to work. I'll see you tonight." Gracie smiles, runs back to her book. Claire looks at Gracie's back through the thin cloth of her tank top. Her shoulder blades look like folded wings, grown over by skin through time. Claire finds her bag and walks out the door.

John has decided to take Gracie out for a drive. In the car Gracie is quiet and attentive as always. John looks over to see her black eyes following the curves of hills, passing clouds, through the car window. They stop at what looks like large fields guarded by trees.

"This is called a migratory bird field. It's where birds can stop and be safe and fed on their way south."

They follow a path, lined with the green-gold fields. Sometimes a flock of birds will fly up out of the tall grass and meet in the sky, and John will point them out ("Look, those are swallows."). but most of the birds stay in the distance. Gracie points to two tall ones, standing on long legs across the field from them.

"Cranes," says John, and takes out the binoculars from around his neck. He focuses in on their slender white bodies. They are dancing around each other, awkwardly, not touching. "They are probably mates," he tells Gracie, and lifts off the binoculars to let her see.

"What are mates?"
"Like...a married couple, like parents."
She holds the binoculars to her face. They are heavy, but her small hands curl around them tightly. "They're pretty."
"Yes."
"Did you save your birds yet?"
"No."
Gracie peers through the binoculars, moving them to follow

---

**Table of Contents**

- Warning Labels  
  Laurel Black  
  5
- Morning  
  Cory Ferrer  
  7
- Maintaining my Wildness  
  Cynthia Drake  
  9
- The Meat Man  
  Olivia Murray  
  10
- Down from Kratka Ridge  
  Jesse Littlejohn  
  12
- Falling Apart  
  Sarah Resnick  
  14
- My Neighbor's Estate Sale  
  Christie Maurer  
  15
- Unusual Angle  
  Amelia Klock  
  18
- A Northern Story  
  Megan Baxter  
  20
- The Birds  
  Taya Kitaysky  
  24
The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens

...the movements of the cranes. “Are any of those birds here?”
“No, they live where it’s very cold. They live in icy water, and it snows all the time. Their wings don’t work so they can’t fly south.”

“Why are they dying?”
“Well, we don’t know yet, Gracie. We think it began with some time when the murres didn’t get enough food. When those murres became parents, they couldn’t take care of their own babies, so those babies didn’t get enough food either.”

Gracie takes off the binoculars and asks John to bend over so that she can slip them over his head. He looks up at her and they smile. She curls her fingers around his hand and holds it, even though hers could fit entirely inside his, and together they walk farther down the path.

John wakes without ever really sleeping. The nighttime brings only flat light. Tonight he has shut the blinds, and still he cannot sleep. He leaves Claire’s shape in the bed, her hair dark on the pillow. As John walks up the stairs, she begins to have a terrible dream. In this dream, Gracie is left in a pile of snow on a street in China. She and John are on opposite sides of the street. Neither of them can reach Gracie. Her face is turning blue. John walks out onto the deck. The trees and the grass shift in the wind. The river glitters silver. The slightly violet haze fades into blue sky, and there are traces of pink. Somehow there is daybreak without the sun ever really leaving. In Claire’s dream, she is trying to yell something at John. She is asking him what she should do, but her voice doesn’t carry. Far away from her, his mouth opens and closes, arms waving.

Gold lights up in the horizon. Down below in the bedroom, Claire has thrown off the sheets. John is walking down the stairs. His steps are sure. On opening the bedroom door, he sees his wife, chest heaving, her hair a dark tangled mess. He comes over to her side. He pushes back the hair on her wet face.

“Claire, what’s wrong?” He reaches over to hold her damp...
hand. He listens to her breathe. 

"I had a dream and Gracie was a baby and she was dying and you were far away and we couldn't help her and she was in the snow and she was dying." Claire wiped at her eyes. "I've had it before except sometimes they've thrown Gracie in a garbage dump like they do in China, and sometimes she's drowning."

"Hey, she's safe now, Claire. I promise. She's with us, so she's safe." He walks over to the window and opens the blinds. "Look," he says, pointing up to the sunrise, and reaching over for her hand again. John straightens out the sheets and pulls them over his wife. He lies down under the comforter with her, stroking her hair until she sleeps.

The steady morning light comes in through the window. Claire opens her eyes. John is only a pillow away. She puts a finger on his lips to wake him. "Hey," he says. "Hey."

They hear the sounds of Gracie's feet on the stairs. She climbs up on the bed and lies down between them. She smells like Fruit Loops. Claire and John each put an arm around her back.

Claire thinks of the first time they had really held Gracie. It had been the fourteen-hour plane light back from Guangzhou, China. The entire week before they'd spent with a group of other adopting families, shuttled back and forth between document signings and other paperwork. They'd barely been given time with their new daughter. But in those fourteen hours of the flight, John and Claire had held her the entire time. They watched her sleep. Her eyelashes made soft black crescents on her white skin. There, they'd decided on her name: Grace, Gracie. It had taken her two years to get to them. Outside their window, they could see mountains and trees and clouds as the plane moved them forward. And they held Gracie's tiny body, they held her and held her, and she was theirs.

In Memory of
Paul Klock
1952-2003

"(once we will) remember / confidently / only a moment, only a fleeting moment — / With a smile of recognition.

- Bill Williams
"The better work men do is always done under stress and at great personal cost."
— Bill Williams
GLAZED WITH RAINWATER.

~A WHEELBARRA.

SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON

513T.A.V/VTINl HTIW

m

BESIDE THE WHITE CHICKENS

RED WHEELBARRA

BESIDE THE WHITE CHICKENS

winter issue 2003