The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

William Carlos Williams
A note on this issue:
When we first started brainstorming ideas for the Red Wheelbarrow this quarter, we knew we wanted to do something to alleviate people's midwinter blues that usually set in this time of year. We also wanted to connect the Red Wheelbarrow to ecological issues in our community. Since the Red Wheelbarrow uses so much paper, we figured the best thing to do would be to use recycled paper. Therefore, the issue you are holding in your hands is printed on 100% recycled paper, except for the cover, which is made from 50-75% recycled paper.

Enjoy!

Love, the Editors:
Chloe Zwiacher, Lucy Nepstad and Catherine Bueker

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What Makes You Tough

I can remember seeing Mike from the corner of my eye, laughing with Sam. I felt like a good father, bringing my boy's baseball team to a real sports bar, letting them watch the Reds game on the big screen, buying them wings and pizza. It was the first time in a long while everything felt normal. The boys were laughing at something on the TV, the fathers and I drinking beers and swapping stories. They had won their game that afternoon, Mike pulling a triple out from nowhere in the bottom of the ninth and Sam scoring the winning run. They had butted chests like the older boys and did a victory dance, their teammates cheering from behind the fence.

The bar was crowded and smoky, my eyes watering, and the big screen TV was blaring the game, the announcers calling stats. The waitress had pushed together three long tables. The other dads and I sat at one end and the boys at the other, bouncing on the booth cushions. The bar, The Red Barn, was known for its dark, mahogany bar that stretched the entire back length of the building to the stage on the other side where cover bands and karaoke artists played on weekends. There was already a cluster of bottles in the middle of our table and the boys had spilled a pitcher of Sprite, making everything sticky.

I turned my head to make a toast to the team, our road to the state finals just beginning. I saw Mike's face twitch and change just slightly. His eyes clouded over and his fists clenched at his sides before he raised his arm, swung around and hit Sam on the bridge of his nose. Sam grabbed his face, blood flowing red through the dark lights. The arc of the punch was a perfect, smooth, curving line of a right hook. I was proud for a fleeting second, proud of my son and his rock-solid fists, but the moment that blood started running from Sam's nose the pride was replaced by a sick feeling deep in my stomach.

"Mike!" I yelled, pushing my way through the other fathers. I grabbed my son's shoulders and shook them, kneeling down to eye level.

"What do you think you're doing?" Mike's eyes dropped to his rubber cleats
and he tensed under my grasp. Sam’s father was holding his son’s nose with a wad of paper napkins, asking Sam the same question. “My triple wasn’t a fluke,” he said, rocking back on his heels. “Sam said that I can’t hit, that it was just luck.” I turned to Sam’s father. “Look, Chris, I’m so sorry. I’m sure they were just messing around.” “This isn’t okay,” he said, shaking his head. Sam had stopped whimpering and was already starting to purple. I could see the bruise blooming under the white napkins. “Alex, you need to control your kid,” he said, trying to keep his voice down. Then turning to Mike he said, “I’m sure Sam was just messing with you, Mike.” “He was not!” my son yelled, stomping his foot, tears still running down Sam’s face. “Alex, as the head coach I can’t let this happen. I’m going to bring it up with our sponsor,” he said, pulling Sam away from Mike, closer to his chest. “What?” I asked, my eyes darting between both boys. “Don’t come to practice before we get this settled,” he said. “Violent like this, it’s not good for the other boys.” Mike was shaking under my grasp, breathing hard and clenching his fists again. Sam hid behind his father. I pulled Mike’s arm. “He over-reacted. I’m sure he’s sorry,” I said, Mike shaking his head no, no, no. “I’m not sorry!” he yelled, pointing at Sam. “I’m a better player than you’ll ever be!” Sam looked up at his father, and I could see the blood starting to slow, the red of the napkins starting to fade. “We’re done here. Don’t bring him to practice. He’s off the team.” Sam nodded and his father turned back to the other men, some of whom were nodding or motioning their sons to them. Mike was making faces at Sam. “We’re going home,” I said. “I already paid for the food, you guys stay as long as you want.” I apologized to Sam’s father again. The other dads and the kids were still silent and ignoring the big screen. “Let’s go, Mike,” I said, grabbing him by the wrist. He dragged his feet behind me and kicked a chair, which fell with a hollow crash that rang throughout the entire bar. When Mike’s mother, Susan, died he had stopped talking for two weeks straight. It had been almost three years and he rarely talked about her. I found him
Meditation on Longing in the Desert

We live in a castle in a desert that used to be a lake. I have no recollection of being born and I have always lived in this desert. We know it used to be a lake from the finger paintings on our walls, which spell water in green and blue, buffalo in red.

Sometimes my father takes me out to watch sand sift between bleached bones. Sometimes when the moon rises, it paints our turrets the color of his dreams: an inky, inscrutable blue.

My father is in love with a ghost who lived in our castle a hundred years ago. The hem of her dress, like the wind, stirs sand in our dry moat. I wish I could see her; I imagine she was beautiful and soft before she dried up with everything else. My father dances with her to smoky old blues music off the broken Victrola in the watchtower. I can barely make it out, each note buffered by a minute, like after claps of thunder.

At night, I hear the sounds of their lovemaking rocking out to sea.

Mike and Susan had a connection that I couldn't break into. Susan always knew what Mike was crying about when he was a baby, always knew the right lullaby to sing, the right flavor of baby food. Whenever I held Mike he'd cry until his face turned red. She would just laugh and take him from my arms. After she died, Mike wouldn't talk about the secret language they had created when he was five, or about the hollowness that was left in her place. He was the only reason I didn't get rid of her clothes. I wondered briefly if tonight he'd end up in that same corner and wake up smelling like Susan's perfume.

"Why did you do it, Mike?" I asked, standing in the doorway of his bathroom, watching him brush his teeth. He shrugged and spit into the sink. "Because I wanted to," he said, mocking my tone. "He called me Lucky, and said that I usually chickened out at the plate." I remember the flash of exhilaration in his eyes the moment his fist made contact, and how my stomach churned with both panic and momentary pride, that thrill of a well-landed punch when I boxed as a teenager. The dance around the ring was what I lived for, and that same look was in Mike's eye the moment his fist connected with Sam's nose.

"You shouldn't be punching your best friend." I wiped the counter off and hung up his towel.

"I don't want luck," he whispered. I had spoken with Mike about the difference between luck and talent. Susan thought he was talented in everything he did. I explained that talent was what kept you going, what made you different. It was what made me different when I boxed. "Talent is what you're born with," I told him. "Luck is the lazy man's excuse for winning." He nodded and said, "I've got
talent, right, Dad?” I shook my head and said, “I’m not sure yet.”

I walked into the room his mother and I had painted when he was two, light blue with navy trim on top. He had filled the walls with posters of his favorite sports stars, crayon drawings he had made in school of lions, and Polaroid pictures I’d taken of us at hockey games, basketball games, and swimming at the pool during the summer. He had a picture of his mom over his bed, taped around the edges. She was laughing, tossing her dark hair back and he was staring up at her.

“What do you want to read tonight?” I asked, pulling the bin of books from under his bed. He turned to face the opposite wall.

“I don’t care,” he said. I grabbed the latest *Harry Potter* and flipped it open to where we’d left off. This was a tradition we had kept alive since he was three. The act seemed so childish for a boy who had just gotten into his first fistfight, had purposefully hurt another boy. I stopped reading for a second.

“There will be consequences for this,” I said. Mike shifted in bed but without uttering a single word.

Susan had told Mike the story of how we met at one of my matches, and he had watched the videos of them when he was little. Susan would put him in front of the TV and he’d sit, mesmerized, until the tape stopped. As he grew he’d ask me if I liked punching people. I had told him, yes, but that it wasn’t for fun, it was for sport. I had quit when Susan and I got married, and thought briefly of going back to boxing after she died, getting someone to take care of Mike while I fought at night in the clubs. All of the anger I had as a teenager, that I used when I boxed, had come rushing back the moment she was gone. But something stopped me, the thought of violence rubbing off on Mike.

The next morning he made his breakfast and sat at the table with me. I read the newspaper as we sat silent, the sound of chewing echoing in my head. I had been up most of the night, trying to figure out what I was supposed to do with him, the appropriate punishment for punching one’s best friend in the nose. Part of me wanted to put him in a boxer’s stance and show him exactly what he had done wrong. Show him that his fist landed a little too high, say, “That’s why it bled so much,” then correct his fist, put his thumb next to his fingers instead of in front of them. He had his mother’s small hands and feet, and was smaller than most of the other boys. She had wanted him to be a gymnast but I had enlisted him in the more physical sports: baseball, hockey, football. He had to work twice as hard as the

of a girl he’s never seen
and asks for help finding her.
My father opens his mouth to tell
him that he might as well stop looking.

But he wakes then,
sitting up straight
and sweating in the night,
and staring out onto the porch where I am sad and smoking and ashing my clove
on the carpet.

Kat Reece
My Father's Dream

One night I sit on my back porch and smoke a cigarette in the dark. In the next room my father dreams that he has lost me in a crowd. He spends a year, ten years looking and still I’m nowhere.

And all the strange men, when he asks if they recognize the girl in the pictures he shows them tell him there is no hope, that they know; they have all lost their own daughters.

And eventually he stops looking, stops showing the picture, wandering the streets and subways at night. And he works at other things and tries in earnest to become like all the strange men around him.

But it's hard, because my hair was always so short and messy, and my body cut almost as straight as a boy's, so occasionally a small man will transform himself into me just long enough to remind my father of what he has lost.

One day, another man approaches him with a picture bigger kids but could always hold his own. Susan hadn’t let me enroll him in boxing, afraid I'd be encouraging the wrong kind of behavior.

"Why do you get so angry?" I asked, not looking up from my newspaper. He stopped chewing and put down his spoon.

"What do you mean?" he asked, and I folded the sports section and laid it out in front of us, and said back, "Why is it whenever someone makes you mad you act out? You slap people, you yell. Your teachers have all said you have a temper, that you can't 'communicate your feelings effectively.' What really made you so mad at your best friend?" I took a sip of my coffee, waited for an answer.

"I don't know," he whispered, walking up to the kitchen sink. Then louder, "I don't know." He tossed his bowl into the sink too hard and a side of it broke off.

"Mike!" I said, standing now, and pointing at the broken bowl. "This is what I mean. What do they say in pre-school? Use your words? You need to use your words!"

"Talking doesn't do anything," he said, and grabbed his backpack from the floor and headed towards the door. I could hear the stagger as he drew in his breath, trying not to cry.

"I gotta go," he said, and slammed the door behind him.

That afternoon I left work early and drove home before Mike got off the bus. I locked the basement door to his PlayStation was cleaned up his room, putting his binders of baseball cards in my room under the bed. I made sure the TV remotes were out of his reach on the mantle. At three-thirty he sauntered in the front door, a shiner silhouetting his left eye. He tossed his bag and walked to the basement door. When he couldn’t open it he kicked it loudly.

"Why's the door locked, Dad?" he asked, walking into the kitchen.

"Why do you have a black eye, Mike?" I countered.

"Sam punched me back. We were at recess and I called him a crybaby. I said that only losers hide behind their dads when they get into a fight. I told him if he was really as tough as he thought he'd punch me, too. I totally didn’t think he had the guts." Mike cracked his knuckles and touched the area around his eye.

"Sit down," I said, motioning to the chair next to me.

"Not now," he said. "I want to go down and play," and he walked to the door and, when it still refused to budge, he kicked it again and again. I stood up and pulled him away.
"This is what I'm talking about," I said, his muscles tight and poised to lash out again. I tightened my grasp and sat him in the chair, his face was red, his bottom lip shaking just slightly.

"The door is locked because I locked it, and what does kicking it solve?"

"I don't care," he shouted.

"Listen," I said. "Look at that door."

"What about it?"

"What about it? What about it!" I could feel the heat of my anger clenching the muscles in my neck.

"It's a door, it's locked. You have more to do in the house than holing up down there for hours to play PlayStation. Go outside. Play with your friends." He rubbed his eye, it was a mean yellow and black that stood out against his pale skin.

"I don't want to," he whispered.

"Why not? There are tons of kids on this block who you used to play with. Go ride your bike, your scooter. Go ask Steven if he wants to play. What ever happened to all of you kids playing capture the flag?" I stood up, paced in front of the fireplace.

"That's dumb," he said. "None of them are my friends anymore. They do stupid stuff. Who wants to hang out with dumb kids?"

"You're a dumb kid," I said, throwing my hands over my head. "That's my point. You're not an adult, you're ten and you can't punch people in the face and think it makes you tough."

"I am tough!"

"This is ridiculous," I said. Mike glanced at the mantle, at a picture of the three of us at the county fair. I was standing behind him and his mother who were both kneeling, feeding the goats. The goat Mike was feeding had the corner of his shirt in its mouth and his mother was trying to pry it out. They were both laughing and I was rolling my eyes.

"You're ridiculous," he said, almost a whisper, and at that moment I hated him. I hated him for staying calmer than I was, for not getting angry when it seemed like getting angry was the only thing he could do these days, and for being able to look at the snapshots without crying. I walked to the mantle and flipped the picture down.

"Here's the consequence, Mike. No more sports. I'm pulling you from..."

WILLIAM

Let's go.

He exits, and Lynn and James follow. Once he is beyond the curtain, he says loudly-

WILLIAM

They're losers anyway!

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS

The small group walks for a few minutes in silence. They start down the hill.

LYNETTE

Hey Will? Maybe... well maybe we could start our own fort.

Will's face softens as he looks at his cousin.

WILLIAM

Yeah? Let's do that, squirt.

He grabs her around the neck and gives her a half-hearted noogie, then lets her go. She rubs her head.

From where they are walking, it is the view of the playground again, from the other side than we previously saw it.

We fade back to present day, the new playground, the half-melted snow. Lynn in Daniel's pickup rolls down street away from the playground.

Allie Quiller
Will snaps back around and pushes Josh.

WILLIAM
She's my freaking cousin, buttface.

Josh pushes Will back.

Will throws his body against Josh's and Josh resists. They struggle against each other.

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS

Lynn bites her lip with concern. She backs up from the curtain as the scuffle moves her way, and as it moves the other way, she opens the curtain all the way to get a better view: she no longer cares if she is seen or not.

INT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS

William's head is in Josh's chest, and they are punching each other in the ribs. Will elbows Josh in the stomach, and he staggers back. Josh rushes Will and knocks him to the floor. As they fall, we see that Lynn is standing in the doorway.

All the while, Fizz is cheering for Josh while James roots for William. Andrew just looks distressed and backs himself into a corner.

James spots Lynn, and stops cheering. He looks at her for a long moment, then jumps into the fray and begins pulling Will off of Josh. Will is clearly winning the fight.

JAMES
Will, Lynn's here. Dude.

Will backs off, and Josh scrambles away.

JOSH
(under his breath)
Asshole.

Will turns to Lynn, who looks horrified. He is breathing heavily. He picks up his baseball cap from the ground and runs a hand through his hair before jamming it back on his head.
Excerpt from Ghazals for the Journey

14.
When I think of you I cover my neck with those pearls I bought in France. The stairs were stone. You are the only one who has seen me wear nothing but that pink glow.

After they stung me I took branches of grapes and crushed them on the porch. I waited for yellow jackets to come. I brought the mallet down on their bodies.

You pointed toward the black birds resting on driftwood. That’s a ‘murder’ of ravens. Sometimes death is everywhere.

My class pretended to be pioneers. At five am we milked cows in the dark. All I remember was the long fall from the loft to that sweet bed of hay.

Baba Yaga ages a year for every question asked of her. Each answer adds to her wisdom. The fools keep knocking on her window.

Tove Danovich
Guys, we have a problem.

Lynn waits until the curtain has closed behind them, and then follows. She positions herself next to the doorway, and peeks through a gap in the curtain. Her view is over Will’s shoulder, and she can see the interior of the cabin.

The argument continues inside.

She’s my cousin, man.

No girls! We had that agreement from the beginning.

The rest of the guys mutter disapprovingly, except for James, who stands up expectantly.

It’s okay. I know her. She’s cool.

Fizz takes his focus off of Will and turns to James.

That’s not the point! The point-

JOSH

interjects, pushing Fizz behind him.

The point is, we have rules, dude. What the hell is the point of an all guy’s fort if chicks are allowed too?

William

C’mon, man! She’s only eight. What’s the big deal?

Belenke-Ibori lived in the crawl space under my house, playing with marbles that permeated a very small light. I snuck out of my window one night when I heard him moving in the dark between the floor boards, and shined a flashlight into the darkness. We couldn’t figure out why all the lambs tied behind the house had died, why the puppies at the back door lay sleeping flatly with their eyes open, why the cat had gone down there to give birth to kittens, and run hissing and spitting, trailing afterbirth, her kittens nowhere.

Belenke-Ibori played marbles while I watched him, occasionally looking up into the beam, his eyes shining like some dark animal caught in a car’s headlights. “Those are my marbles,” I said. “I thought I had lost them, but here they are.” He looked at me from an old face, fingered the marbles with the hands of a child.

“Don’t worry,” he said back to me, “I couldn’t reside here with the babies, but I’ve fixed that. Bring me rum and sugarcane. Bring me bush rats and palm wine. I will protect your father.”

“What will happen if I don’t?” I asked. He looked at the marbles in the dust and leaned down so his eyes were level with the ground. Down there, between the real world and his own, where nothing lives but everything exists, it reeked of thriving garbage. Something dead but breathing.

He positioned himself and shot a marble out of his palm with his thumb. The purple piece knocked a small green one out of the circle. My neighbor’s house caught fire.

Jenna Davey
Autonomy Song

There are so many things we will never know, friend.
Once, I was committed to the fortunes I could find,
and so were you. So the palm reader was right:
the stars spell something like fate for us
in a braille so bright and close we could never read it.
True, it is by chance that we met,
maybe like marbles in a playground game,
or little stones washed together in the current.
The sound of either makes a chorus for us
to sing to while we think we're sewing our palms together,
or our feet to the ground. And though while we work
in our cinder cell the honey is growing bitter,
the moves we make to stoke our quiet laughter
are unmistakably deliberate. There is comfort
in this certainty, that if two short brothers
on a chessboard are moved,
they have chosen to live and sing together,
and so whether they are being moved
or moving forward
makes very little difference.

Lou Lou Ford

She's cool. Practically a boy.
Fizz studies him for a moment, then nods, pushing his glasses up on his nose.

FIZZ
Come inside, and we can talk.

WILLIAM
Stay here, Lynn. I'll be back in a second.

She nods, and Fizz and William go into the fort.

INT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS
The inside of the cabin is dark and musty. Three boys are in the fort, all looking expectantly at the curtain.

JAMES (10) is a squirrely looking kid wearing a backwards black baseball cap. He has black hair that sticks through the hole in his cap, and blue eyes. He is sitting closest to the curtain, on a upturned log.

JOSH (12) leans against the back wall. Josh is the tallest and oldest of the group. He isn't overweight, but is big. He wears a wifebeater that looks awkward on his kid body, has a shaved head, and has holes in his jeans.

ANDREW (10) stands nervously next to Josh. He is a tiny little guy, with a scrawny neck and hair that keeps getting in his eyes. He can't stand still- he keeps shifting his weight and flexing his fingers.

Josh approaches Will and they exchange a practiced hand shake that involves thumping of fists and snapping. It is immediately obvious that Josh and Will are the 'leaders', and there is a little bit of tension between them.

JOSH
'Sup, man.

Fizz stands in the middle of the room, his hands on his hips.
WILLIAM

Shh!

A boy's head pokes out from behind the curtain. He has black glasses and blonde hair. He has pudgy cheeks. This is FIZZ (11). Fizz is the brain of the group.

Will sees Fizz, and puts on a fake smile.

WILLIAM

Fizz, what are you doing here?

FIZZ

What do ya mean what am I doing here?

He notices Lynn.

FIZZ

What is she doing here?

Will acts cool, and strolls towards Fizz.

WILLIAM

She wanted to see the fort. I don't see what the problem is.

Fizz exits the fort, shoots a look at Lynn, who is standing by sheepishly, then walks up to William. Fizz is significantly shorter than Will. William widens his smile charmingly and Fizz scowls.

FIZZ

The problem is, she's a girl. Dude, it's the rules. You know that.

LYNETTE

I just wanna see.

WILLIAM

(to Lynn)

It's cool, Lynn.

(to Fizz)

A Dream – January 26th, 2007

I dreamt last night
of a rabbit caught in a trap
whose face was a city
where you lived in a brown house
with flower boxes in the window
that grew pencils.
Your lover, which could have been me,
picked them, already sharpened,
and put them beside your bed in one
of the bell jars that you kept above
the kitchen cabinets.

You never left the house on Tuesdays –
only wandered out to the courtyard
to pickle peaches that you picked
from a tree that looked like a bonsai.

You would sit and read your Whitman.
You would smile, or cry,
and your lover,
who could have been me,
would want to ask so badly what could push you.
He, maybe me, would wash the bell jars for hours,
watching you.

But you did not love him,
your lover, who might have been me,
you knew, because at the end of the day
the pencil erasers were so easily worn down
and the nubs of graphite were so soft
that it seemed you could roll them between your fingers and they would flatten.

You lived your life in thoughts that your lover, that phantom with hands that cupped like flowers every time he reached up to grasp a bell jar, only heard when he kissed a spot behind your right ear.

In this dream, when you woke, you looked, I remember, tired and beautiful, and to see that once more makes me so tired of waking.

Kiley Harrison

EXT. PLAYGROUND- CONTINUOUS

The two figures run across the playground towards the hill behind the school. William paces himself so that she can keep up.

Once they reach the bottom of the hill, Will starts climbing it, his feet sliding in the shale. Lynn starts up after him, using all four limbs to climb.

Halfway up the hill, Lynn is breathing heavily, and Will pauses to give her a break.

LYNETTE
(out of breath)
Where is it? Are you sure no one's there?

WILLIAM
Don't be so impatient. I'm sure no one's there... it's Saturday. There is a special on milkshakes at the OMI on Saturdays. I'll just give you a peek inside, then we'll go, okay?

LYNETTE
Okay.

They start up the hill again. They crest the peak, and go over the side.

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- MOMENTS LATER

The boy's club is a run-down cabin that was probably once a miner or prospector's home. Its big enough to seem large to the kids, but couldn't have housed any more than one person comfortably.

The door is missing, and in it's place is a flowered curtain held up by nails that the boys installed. "AMY BOYS CLUB" is painted on the curtain in black paint.

Lynn and Will approach the club. There is a noise from inside.
I promise.

I need better than that. Listen, Lynn, you are gonna be in the second grade now. That's practically grown up. I need you to understand how serious this is.

I said I pro-

Will cuts her off by pointing a finger at her nose.

Do you swear on our blood?

Lynn looks disgusted.

Our blood?

You know. The blood of our family. What makes us cousins and all.

Okay. I'll swear on our blood.

And your mom and dad? And Grandma?

Yeah! Alright I do. Where is it?

Will rolls his eyes, and backs out of the shadows.

(under his breath)

I shouldn't be doing this.

(out loud)

Okay. Follow me.

Share and Tell

FADE IN:

INT. STONYBROOK PREP ACADEMY KINDERGARTEN - DAY

A modern classroom, clean and well-furnished - colorful accents, small desks in small clusters, stimulating posters, Mac computers lining one wall - it's as if we have stepped into a Pottery Barn Kids' catalogue photograph.

The desks stand empty as the children of the class, a gaggle of kindergartners, sit at the front of the room in a semicircle of beanbag chairs to hold Share-and-Tell.

There is a whiteboard with some writing and the class teacher MISS HARRINGTON's (27) desk. The desk holds books and a phone. She sits in her pleather swivel chair and looks on as JEREMY (6), a boy who's big for his age - maybe even...fat - shares his toy dump truck with everyone else.

JEREMY

...and then my dad said that if I stopped crying in the car he would get me a Mega-Action Dumperizer 3000 so I did and we got it. The End.

He sits down.
MISS HARRINGTON
Jeremy, aren’t you forgetting something?

JEREMY
What?

MISS HARRINGTON
It’s Share-and-Tell Day, Jeremy. We SHARE.

JEREMY
So?

MISS HARRINGTON
So aren’t you going to SHARE with the rest of the class?

JEREMY
No.

MISS HARRINGTON
Jeremy?

JEREMY
No!

Miss Harrington puts on a brave face.

MISS HARRINGTON
Come on, Jeremy. Please share with the class.

She gestures for him to pass the truck around.

Excerpt from Amy, Colorado

EXT. AMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—ELEVEN YEARS AGO—DAY
It is early fall, and looks warm. Instead of the plastic, new-agey playground we saw previously, there is simply a metal slide, a swingset, a basketball hoop and a huge map of the United States spray painted on the blacktop. Colorado is painted green.

Two kids run onto the playground. A little boy runs ahead, about eleven years old. This is William. Behind him is a girl (8), who is recognized as Lynette by her wavy red hair.

WILLIAM
Come on, Doofus! You’re so slow.

LYNETTE
I’m hurrying.

EXT. UNDERNEATH SLIDE—CONTINUOUS
William runs beneath the slide, and backs up so he is hidden in the shadow. As a boy, he is as smooth and confident as he will be throughout his life. He has freckles and a blonde cowlick. He wears a new-looking white baseball cap that is too big for his head.

Lynn runs in and falls to her knees, looking at William expectantly. The girl version of her is a bit pudgy, and is dressed in a lumpy turtleneck and jeans.

William motions for her to be quiet and leans on his knees to talk to her.

WILLIAM
(Whispering)
Alright. Before I take you, I need your oath that you won’t say anything about this to anyone.
of her bones.

He found butterflies pinned inside with little labels by their vivid orange and blue owl wings.

He didn't have the chance to kiss her goodbye before the sun began to rise, blooming from under the frost of her breath.

Her hurt flutters against his hands. Pressing her heart between his palms,

a green stem shoots straight up.

Every evening under the autumn moon—. Bright blue since man landed in nineteen sixty nine—.

He waters the heart, the stem blooming into a poppy, while everything else is frozen under her breath.

Ines Pujos

Jeremy clutches his rightful property. She glares. He prepares to take a stand.

Jeremy BAWLS. She takes the truck out of his hands and starts passing it around the circle. He goes to grab it back but she slaps his hand.

Miss Harrington grabs Jeremy's shoulders.

Jeremy balls up into a fetal position, doesn't get up: Miss Harrington pulls him out to the door. She pauses at the threshold.

Well...who's next? Lizzie?

Lizzie (6), a girl small for her age, seated next to Jeremy's now empty seat, picks her head up.

Lizzie, while I talk to Jeremy, could you please go ahead and start?

Miss Harrington drags Jeremy out with a final burst of energy and shuts the door. For a while, Jeremy's (slightly muffled) SHRIEKS can continue being heard.

Lizzie hops up to the front of the class. She smooths her dress and smiles, then pulls out with a flourish a ten-inch, glistening, sparkly, purple vibrator. "Sabrina" is printed in flowery script along one side.

**LIZZIE**

Today, for Show-and-Tell, I brought my mom's magic dagger. It's magic.

**CLASS**

(in unison)

Woaaaaah.

**GIRL #1**

How's it work?

**LIZZIE**

Well...first of all, it makes a buzzy scary noise to scare monsters away.

**BOY #1**

I don't believe you!

She turns it on and it's a scary NOISE indeed - on the Richter scale, Sabrina's seismic activity would be an 11. She levels it at the boy. It catches the light and Lizzie looks like King Arthur wielding Excalibur. The boy

---

**Blossomed**

At night while the city sleeps he gets out of bed.
The light bulb in his kitchen is blinking on and off through the night, flickering at the autumn moon, bright blue since man landed in nineteen sixty nine.

At the kitchen table sits a human heart cold as the dirt he fell asleep on with her that evening in spring, when the poppies bloomed from under the frost of her breath.

She told him to call her the inventress.

He had pried her torso open, lifted a wooden box wedged in her rib cage, her bones bleached white from the moon that night.

He opened the box as she closed her eyes, while his hands traced the outline
sidewalk and wondering how they got in there, how they cracked through that.

This is the world: shops and shop's windows flying past—dresses, statues, flowers sandwiches snow plows saunas slim black trees going green sharp yellow dandelions coming through the sidewalk cracks pretty lonely women. Music, someone else's songs from open windows, open doors, a big leashed dog feral cats under restaurants.

Darry tightens his hands and narrows his black eyes. His foot is on the gas, the bass is in his bones, the spring is running through his windows. His right hand reaches into Laura's tangled hair, and he feels her long smooth neck. Darry Hall is alive.

Rikki Miller

shrink in fear. Lizzie switches Sabrina off again.

LIZZIE
And...it's also magic 'cause my mommy can stab herself with it a lot and still be okay. She likes it when she stabs herself with it. She has fun. I saw it.

BOY #2
Lemme see it!

LIZZIE
Here!

She "stabs" him in the crotch. The boy looks on in wonder.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
She stabs this spot.

CLASS
Ooooooo.

LIZZIE
You guys can see.

Lizzie passes it to the girl next to her. Sabrina circles around the class. It reverently goes from child to child.

GIRL #2
It's stinkyyyyy. Pee-ew!

The kids pass the vibrator around a little more.
The kids pass the vibrator around a little more.

GIRL #3
And it's sticky.

A little boy with thick glasses turns it on, screams, and drops it in terror. The batteries fall out like sweet electric candy from a piñata; some kids try to grab them.

Lizzie rescues her precious Sabrina. She also grabs the batteries and sticks them back in. Sabrina ROARS to life once more.

LIZZIE
Hey! Watch out!

At this moment, Miss Harrington walks back in with a placated but sulky and tear-streaked Jeremy. She looks at her class...

MISS HARRINGTON
Is everyone still doing okay?

...and goes rigid.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
...What's that?

Lizzie runs over to Miss Harrington and claps her teacher's knees. Sabrina hits Miss Harrington right in the va-jay-jay.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Oof!

The plane is humming, and with a sigh it folds in its wheels and lifts into the air, rising, rising faster than Laura remembers it ever having done before.

The floor lurches under her, and the planes shudders, the wings outside Laura's window slapping at the air even though the sky looks bright and autumn-clear. It shakes and someone's black purse sails into the aisle. A baby shrieks and Laura looks over to see its mother smothering it to her chest. A couple grab each other's hands. The flight attendant grabs the seat ahead of him until his knuckles go white. There is a tremble of sound, whispers and whimpers, scent of sweat—fear of death like a great communal pulse. Laura balls her hands and bites her lips, feeling the plane steady under her, and she hasn't take anyone's hand, hasn't pressed anyone to her chest, but her heart is beating fast as any. She shuts her eyes, feels it and hears it and nods.

June 2000

"The weekend!" Darry says, holding out his arms and tossing back his head as if embracing all that time that lies before him. It's sophomore year, and Laura is in the crook of Darry's arm, and she bounces up to kiss him on the cheek. They are going on a date to somewhere, neither of them even know where yet, but they are going to do something with this beautiful day. They rush with everyone else through the parking lot glittering with broken glass and half-melted snow. The clouds above are moving fast, so that the sun breaks briefly and brilliantly. Laura is sitting up close to him, so close he feels her pulse through his arm.

Somewhere ahead, Rory is driving, is pulling around a corner and feeling the whole truck behind her, as if it is part of her, as if she is a giant. Her window is cracked and she thinks she can smell the scent of thawed earth somewhere beyond all that exhaust. Somewhere behind, Jim is walking home with his phone nestled in his pants pocket, his eyes down turned, seeing dandelions coming up past the
flight.

Laura works her way to the back of the plane, glances at her ticket. A window seat she thinks, and it makes her smile. She sits down and no one sits beside her. It turns out to be empty when everyone else is seated.

The flight attendant is a young guy, Italian looking with curly dark hair and dark eyes. He opens the safety packet and runs through the procedures. He smiles when he explains how the seat cushion doubles as a floatation device, as if delighted with the novelty of the idea. Laura looks down and strokes her velvety blue seat, imagining hugging that to her chest out in the ocean. It makes her miss Jim, and she decides that is love.

She remembers the first boy she said she loved, Darry Hall, and for a flickering moment wonders if she did, then, the way she said it—but no, Darry Hall is dead. Of course she loved him. Even Jim knows she loved him. When they first started dating, senior year of high school, he had asked her all about him. She had showed him the scars on her neck, her torso, her chin, and showed him all the ways she had been hurt but hadn’t died, and said that was what was left of Darry Hall. He had been a good guy, she had said, and had told him about how when they went to homecoming as sophomores he had brought the florist dandelions because they were Laura’s favorite flower and asked them to make a corsage out of dandelions, and the florist had laughed at him and told him they were only weeds. He had told them they were flowers and to make it anyway.

She told him about when they had gone to their first movie together and their hands had sweated so much but neither of them would let go, and how the movie had been Finding Nemo, and how they had both pretended to love it then and only admitted right before he died how stupid they both thought it was. Jim had listened and nodded, sometimes snatching at her fingers and squeezing them like he thought she needed to be held, but she could tell he wanted more. Everyone wanted more of Darry Hall, and all she had was scars, but damn it she was alive.

Damn it I’m alive is what she finally told Jim at the end of all the talking about Darry. I’m here. And truth was the time she fell in love with Jim was when he smiled and kissed her and she knew he would never ask for more.

Suddenly the plane starts rolling forward, and Laura leans her face against the window, glad to get the window seat. They roll faster and faster and faster past all that graying grass and Laura smiles at a couple late dandelion poking through.

Miss Harrington! Oh my gosh! I was showing my magic dagger for everyone and they stole the batteries and they’re meeeean!

Miss Harrington gently pries Lizzie off her knees and Sabrina out from between her legs. She takes Sabrina and holds it at arm’s length to turn it off, then takes the girl by her shoulders.

MISS HARRINGTON
Lizzie. Look at me. Where did you find this?

LIZZIE
Well...l was in my mom’s closet playing dress-up and I was looking in her drawers and I found this.

Lizzie reclaims Sabrina and waves it around. She “stabs” Miss Harrington as well.

MISS HARRINGTON
Lizzie, do you know what this is?

LIZZIE
My magic dagger!

MISS HARRINGTON
Oh, dear.

Miss Harrington takes Sabrina back. She strides over to her desk and drops it into her top drawer.
MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Well, first of all, Lizzie, girls
have to be at least 18 for one of
these
"magic daggers".

LIZZIE
Aww.

MISS HARRINGTON
Look, I'm going to hold this for
the rest of the day. Okay?

LIZZIE
Nooo!

MISS HARRINGTON
You can have it back when you go
home. But you can't bring this to
school anymore.

LIZZIE
All right, I guess.

Miss Harrington crosses her arms and SIGHS.

MISS HARRINGTON
Who's next? Montana? What do you -

But before she can finish, a BELL RINGS.

BOY #1
Yayy!

November 2005

Laura realizes guiltily that she loves the smell of airports. Since the accident, most pleasures make her guilty, but there is something to the movement of it, the scent of all these many people and their clothes and their hair that jangles her. There are these monks floating down the escalator on the other side, all dark skinned and dressed in orange robes, and Laura turns and stares at the backs of their shaved heads until she reaches the top step and hits the tiles.

Her flight back to Lansing leaves in ten minutes, so she resists the urge to follow the monks and power walks to her gate. She is returning from Thanksgiving down in Tennessee, where her great Aunt Marg decided to host the family this year. It was good, but she wants to get back to college and her boyfriend, Jim.

She joins the line and gives the tiny white-haired lady in red her ticket. The lady smiles at her and looks up with watery blue eyes. Tells her to have a good
has remembered her birthday since she told him when it was two months ago, and wrote her phone number on his wrist with a sharpie so it didn’t wash off for weeks. He is quiet, but he can remember things. He can remember. Is that all he has? A couple of wrists to write on and remember by?

It makes him squint to think about it.

Darry Hall had been his neighbor and all, maybe he can play it off like they had been like brothers. Like crossed fingers and all that, even though the truth was they had only talked a couple of times. Even though the truth was, one time he had really looked into Darry’s eyes was after there was a fight across the street, shouting and all that, and Jim had heard the garage door open, and looked over the couch and looked out the living room window and across the street Darry had looked back at him. And Jim didn’t know if Darry was squinting from tears or anger. They were both fourteen at the time, and that moment just about tore their lives apart, separated them forever. More so than Darry dying, even, Jim suspected, though of course he can’t really say that, and he can’t explain it to Laura, who dated Darry for two years and likely never once on one of her dates with him asked about Jim across the street.

But Darry Hall wouldn’t want his girlfriend to be alone. He wouldn’t, Jim tells himself, and feels himself walking faster toward Laura. Darry Hall would support him, man—and the dead boy is with him, is in him, is alive in his steps, alive in his throat as he calls out her name.

Laura turns, all that dark hair flopping around her face, light catching on the scar on her chin. And Jim feels like Darry is his brother, like no moment ever came between them. He straightens his back, smiles.

“You have a minute?”

October 1999

Mr. Hall has heard them say I love you in the night, on the telephone. Darry and his girlfriend, Laura. Makes him laugh. They are only sixteen, have been together for two years, is it? Two. Kid doesn’t know what love is. Mr. Hall doesn’t know what love is. Kid couldn’t possibly know. Or maybe he does know, maybe he knows they are just words. Maybe he figured it out one day: they were the same three words he wrote his grandma on her holiday cards, same three words he used to tell his old

The class runs out SCREAMING.

MISS HARRINGTON
Excellent.

She slumps down in her chair and rubs her temples.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONTD)
Recess. Thank God.

She reaches into another drawer and pulls out the school phone book. She flips open to the middle.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONTD)
Narter, Peter....Nichols, Elizabeth. Aha.

Miss Harrington starts dialing Lizzie’s house. After 5 RINGS, the phone goes to voice mail.

THE NICHOLS FAMILY VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Hi, you’ve reached the home of Mary Nichols and my partner, Linda Nichols. We can’t come to the phone right now, but if you leave your name, number, time of call and a message, we’ll be sure to get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks, and have a great day!
MISS HARRINGTON
Hi, this is Carrie Harrington, from
Stonybrook kindergarten. I'm
Lizzie's teacher. I'd like to speak
with you about your
daughter's participation in
class today. We...had a very
interesting show-and-tell after
your daughter brought in what seems
to be a...very personal item to you.

She pulls out the vibrator and examines it.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Please return my call at 738-926
6549, extension 339. Thanks!

Miss Harrington hangs up.

She takes out a canister of Wet Wipes as well and wipes off
her hands. A pause. She goes through about three more wipes
frantically trying to clean up Sabrina. Flustered, she stands
and walks briskly out of the door.

After about ten seconds there is a wheeling SOUND and a
male JANITOR enters with his cleaning cart.

He starts to rearrange some desk chairs, then goes over to
empty the garbage can by Miss Harrington's desk. He bends
down to take out the bag when Sabrina, shimmering on the
desk, catches his eye. He cocks an eyebrow, and stuffs the
vibrator in his overalls' front pocket.

September 1991
Grief is a word she knows so well but never really dwells on. Her husband died
when her baby was six months old. She keeps her son close, loves him more than his
dead father. Little Jimmy. He is seven years old now, dark haired, pale eyed,
freckled. He looks like his dead father, and is chubbier than the boy across the road,
Darry Hall. Is more robust. He should be—Jimmy's mom keeps a close eye on him,
unlike the Halls. When she first moved in she used to talk to the Hall's but then she
realized they were not like her. They were people who drank too much and played
loud music—jazz, no less, and no elevator jazz. Mrs. Hall didn't work, and
sometimes slept until noon, and in their house there was always a TV flickering.
Once, Jim's mom had seen Mr. Hall with Darry on his lap, letting him steer their old
Volvo down the street. Actually, Jimmy had seen them from the window, and had
ran over and told her Darry was driving.

"No," Jimmy's mom had scolded him. But Jimmy just kept nodding his head
and so she shook hers and followed him to the window and there they were, big
blond Mr. Hall with Darry between those thick arms, Darry's hands on the wheel.

Jimmy's dead father wouldn't have done that. Would he?
It didn't matter.
If Jimmy were to die, too, she decides she would die herself. It is simple to
her. Once the neighbor Mrs. Hall had joked about "the little rascal almost drowning
himself," in regard to Darry learning how to swim in the lake, and Jim's mom had
gasped aloud. Her son she would keep close. Her son would be immortal.
And the world, it closes neatly in around itself—a twisted lid, drawn blinds,
a fire, a white swan returning to the surf.

October 2002
Jim is watching the spot of white that is the nape of Laura's neck, an impossibly
perfect stretch of smooth skin between a tangled bun and dark sweater. She is
walking just ahead of him toward the parking lot, taking those big fast steps she
does. Darry Hall dated her. Jim doesn't want to think about it, but it is there, it was
there like the plaque out in front of the school by the parking lot—In Memory of
Darry Hall. No matter that he is already half in love with Laura. No matter that he
The swan spreads its wings and puffs itself out until Darry can see it is a dinosaur, a white monster. It stretches its neck its long smooth neck and hisses. He realizes he is so tense he is quivering.
The swan runs a couple steps forward and stops. Its wings are six-feet wide, and it's no more than a couple meters from Darry, who suddenly folds his arms and is quite still. The swan puffs itself then deflates a bit, smoothing out. It hisses again, and grows smaller. It shakes its tail and waddles about, then back toward the shoreline, shrinking as it moves. It folds its wings and lowers itself to the surf and paddles back out.
"Jesus, that thing coulda broke your bones!" the man yells at Darry. He believes it. But it was worth it, Darry is certain. It was worth it all.

Rory never has dreams. It has been seven years and she doesn’t replay the accident that killed Darry Hall again and again in her mind, the way the mirrors on her semi full of frozen peas were so wide and blank, like the smiles on pretty women. She doesn’t feel that press of steel into steel, doesn’t hear it, doesn’t watch it. She doesn’t even smell it, those hot tires melting into the road, the packs and pack of peas ping into the walls. She didn’t go to the funeral, so she can’t even imagine the faces of the Hall’s, the way Mrs. Hall bawled like an animal and Mr. Hall didn’t make a sound, the way the girl, Laura, was still in the hospital.

What she does is, she wakes up. Her alarm clock sounds, and outside it is dark. Her sheets are white but stained, and she climbs out of them, all two-hundred thirty pounds of her. What she does is she walks to the bathroom and shuts the door even though she is alone. What she does is she brushes her teeth, and she never looks in the mirror. And she washes her hands, each finger.
Then she goes down the hall to the kitchen and pulls on the light, which hums to life. She opens the door and shuts her eyes at all that white light. She pulls out chunks of cold pizza and eats it standing. She pauses a moment, eyes shut, and feels as if she is nothing at all, as if she is only what she can see with her eyes shut—that vast red space full of drifting shadows. No one asks who was Darry Hall. Rory opens her eyes. She always does. And what she does is she puts on her shoes, and opens her door to the blind white of winter, seeking what grace there is to be had.

He finishes tidying up the classroom. When he is done he exits whistling and pulling his equipment.

FADE OUT.

James McCormack and Cathy Bueker
The Life and Afterlife of Darry Hall

“What brief wicks we fuel with our blood.”

Jim Harrison


Who was Darry Hall? someone asks.

Some guy, someone answers.

June 2000

There is a broken car and blood on the road. There are horns in the distance, and people pouring from the strip malls on either side of the cement. There's a semi with Spartan written on the side and a dent, and a woman inside who isn't shutting her eyes, not even to blink now. The car is a little white Volvo, and there are two bodies inside, and more blood than anyone on the sidewalks had ever seen before, so much it seems like water to them.

Traffic is stopped for miles. All the cars in the Burger King drive through are trapped. A woman in a minivan three blocks down hears sirens and sees lights in the silver spring air. She feels her heart tick. She feels herself falling out. She picks up her cell phone and calls her son Jim, her son Jim who is 16 and she thinks handsome, though his hair is too long, but she thinks he is the handsomest boy in his grade.

"Jim?" she says, “Jimmy? There’s a bad accident,”

The voice on the other side mutters something.

"Oh good," she sighs, "it isn’t you." She presses her wet palm to her chest,-shutting her eyes and smiling.

26 July 1994

Darry Hall realizes he is in love with July. He is ten and so thin it gives him muscles, makes his shoulders look like wings. Riding his bike to the beach this morning, he looked down at his arms and saw how tan they were and looked up and smiled then squinted at the world like a man. It was one of those days you could suffer all winter for.

He lives in one of those neighborhoods next to town and by the lake, one of those abrupt little cul-de-sac and one-story house neighborhoods. There was only one other kid on his block, Jimmy, and Jimmy he guessed wasn’t allowed to play with him, because he had one of those moms his mom said were real hard-asses. His mom wasn’t like that. His mom was cool, she was younger than Jimmy’s mom and her hair didn’t look all gray, and Darry’s dad was cool too, a real cool guy, although already Darry knows to watch how much he drinks and can track the phases of his drunkenness. But he is a cool guy, you know?

Darry slows down just before the road and half glances for cars and shoots across and straight into the grass, into the sand. He jumps off his bike and lets it drop.

Already there are jet ski’s out on the bay, and a couple girls all greased up and trying to fry. They look like rotisserie chickens, all bony and red-skinned, and it makes Darry smirk. The sun is burning it’s way over the sky, and already there is the hum of a hundred conversations, the slickness and scent of sunscreen and oil. And the swan.

Darry sees it edging up the beach. It is a big one, a male he thinks, though he doesn’t know what makes a man swan. It’s drifting up the waves, ruffling itself bigger.

The swan is watching Darry with it’s big eyes—Darry can feel it. He bends his arms like stubby wings and shuffles toward it.

"Don’t harass the swan!" a fat, sun-burned man yells from his boat. The swan’s black feet hit the sand and it steps onto the beach. Darry throws open his arms.

"Don’t harass it!" the man repeats.

"Yeah, don’t harass wildlife," someone adds.

"Oh my god," says someone else.

Who was Darry Hall? someone asks.
Some guy, someone answers.

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"Jesus, that thing coulda broke your bones!" the man yells at Darry. He believes it. But it was worth it, Darry is certain. It was worth it all.

January 2007

Rory never has dreams. It has been seven years and she doesn’t replay the accident that killed Darry Hall again and again in her mind, the way the mirrors on her semi full of frozen peas were so wide and blank, like the smiles on pretty women. She doesn’t feel that press of steel into steel, doesn’t hear it, doesn’t watch it. She doesn’t even smell it, those hot tires melting into the road, the packs and pack of peas ping ing into the walls. She didn’t go to the funeral, so she can’t even imagine the faces of the Hall’s, the way Mrs. Hall bawled like an animal and Mr. Hall didn’t make a sound, the way the girl, Laura, was still in the hospital.

What she does is, she wakes up. Her alarm clock sounds, and outside it is dark. Her sheets are white but stained, and she climbs out of them, all two-hundred thirty pounds of her. What she does is she walks to the bathroom and shuts the door even though she is alone. What she does is she brushes her teeth, and she never looks in the mirror. And she washes her hands, each finger.

Then she goes down the hall to the kitchen and pulls on the light, which hums to life. She opens the door and shuts her eyes at all that white light. She pulls out chunks of cold pizza and eats it standing. She pauses a moment, eyes shut, and feels as if she is nothing at all, as if she is only what she can see with her eyes shut—that vast red space full of drifting shadows. No one asks who was Darry Hall. Rory opens her eyes. She always does. And what she does is she puts on her shoes, and opens her door to the blind white of winter, seeking what grace there is to be had.

He finishes tidying up the classroom. When he is done he exits whistling and pulling his equipment.

FADE OUT.

James McCormack and Cathy Bueker
Hi, this is Carrie Harrington, from Stonybrook kindergarten. I'm Lizzie's teacher. I'd like to speak with you about your daughter's participation in class today. We... had a very interesting show-and-tell after your daughter brought in what seems to be a... very personal item to you.

She pulls out the vibrator and examines it.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Please return my call at 738-9266549, extension 339. Thanks!

Miss Harrington hangs up.

She takes out a canister of Wet Wipes as well and wipes off her hands. A pause. She goes through about three more wipes frantically trying to clean up Sabrina. Flustered, she stands and walks briskly out of the door.

After about ten seconds there is a wheeling SOUND and a male JANITOR enters with his cleaning cart.

He starts to rearrange some desk chairs, then goes over to empty the garbage can by Miss Harrington's desk. He bends down to take out the bag when Sabrina, shimmering on the desk, catches his eye. He cocks an eyebrow, and stuffs the vibrator in his overalls' front pocket.
has remembered her birthday since she told him when it was two months ago, and wrote her phone number on his wrist with a sharpie so it didn't wash off for weeks. He is quiet, but he can remember things. He can remember. Is that all he has? A couple of wrists to write on and remember by?

It makes him squint to think about it.

Darry Hall had been his neighbor and all, maybe he can play it off like they had been like brothers. Like crossed fingers and all that, even though the truth was they had only talked a couple of times. Even though the truth was, one time he had really looked into Darry's eyes was after there was a fight across the street, shouting and all that, and Jim had heard the garage door open, and looked over the couch and looked out the living room window and across the street Darry had looked back at him. And Jim didn't know if Darry was squinting from tears or anger. They were both fourteen at the time, and that moment just about tore their lives apart, separated them forever. More so than Darry dying, even, Jim suspected, though of course he can't really say that, and he can't explain it to Laura, who dated Darry for two years and likely never once on one of her dates with him asked about Jim across the street.

But Darry Hall wouldn't want his girlfriend to be alone. He wouldn't, Jim tells himself, and feels himself walking faster toward Laura. Darry Hall would support him, man—and the dead boy is with him, is in him, is alive in his steps, alive in his throat as he calls out her name.

Laura turns, all that dark hair flopping around her face, light catching on the scar on her chin. And Jim feels like Darry is his brother, like no moment ever came between them. He straightens his back, smiles.

"You have a minute?"

October 1999

The class runs out SCREAMING.

MISS HARRINGTON
Excellent.

She slumps down in her chair and rubs her temples.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Recess. Thank God.

She reaches into another drawer and pulls out the school phone book. She flips open to the middle.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
Narter, Peter...Nichols, Elizabeth. Aha.

Miss Harrington starts dialing Lizzie's house. After 5 RINGS, the phone goes to voice mail.

THE NICHOLS FAMILY VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Hi, you've reached the home of Mary Nichols and my partner, Linda Nichols. We can't come to the phone right now, but if you leave your name, number, time of call and a message, we'll be sure to get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks, and have a great day!
MISS HARRINGTON (CONT’D)
Well, first of all, Lizzie, girls have to be at least 18 for one of these

"magic daggers".

LIZZIE
Aww.

MISS HARRINGTON
Look, I’m going to hold this for the rest of the day. Okay?

LIZZIE
Nooo!

MISS HARRINGTON
You can have it back when you go home. But you can’t bring this to school anymore.

LIZZIE
All right, I guess.

Miss Harrington crosses her arms and SIGHS.

MISS HARRINGTON
Who’s next? Montana? What do you think?

But before she can finish, a BELL RINGS.

BOY #1
Yayy!

November 2005
Laura realizes guiltily that she loves the smell of airports. Since the accident, most pleasures make her guilty, but there is something to the movement of it, the scent of all these many people and their clothes and their hair that jangles her. There are these monks floating down the escalator on the other side, all dark skinned and dressed in orange robes, and Laura turns and stares at the backs of their shaved heads until she reaches the top step and hits the tiles.

Her flight back to Lansing leaves in ten minutes, so she resists the urge to follow the monks and power walks to her gate. She is returning from Thanksgiving down in Tennessee, where her great Aunt Marg decided to host the family this year. It was good, but she wants to get back to college and her boyfriend, Jim.

She joins the line and gives the tiny white-haired lady in red her ticket. The lady smiles at her and looks up with watery blue eyes. Tells her to have a good

man. Maybe he knows they are just words, and it reminds Mr. Hall of Darry’s delight when he finally confirmed the kid’s suspicion there was no Santa Claus. Little Darry’s face had lit right up then. I knew it! he had squealed, and tore at his presents hungrily under the fake tree set up in their little wood-paneled living room with its view of the street.

Mr. Hall is standing in that same living room right now, looking out the window at where Darry and Laura are standing in the front lawn in their homecoming clothes. Mrs. Hall is trying to get a good picture of them, but all she is getting in the background is the neighbor’s sad dark house, where some single woman and her son live. Darry is all grinning and hugging at Laura, who looks antsy, even if she is grinning too. Her dress is green, and she has some silly little yellow corsage, looks like it’s made of dandelions. Mrs. Hall keeps on messing up the pictures, forgetting which button to push, but finally they finish up and she walks over and half hug Darry and says something to Laura Mr. Hall cannot hear. Darry looks toward the window and Mr. Hall nods, waves. Darry squints, nods back. Mr. Hall decides he is a smart kid. Decides he will tell Mrs. Hall not to worry about setting a curfew. Decides Darry Hall should have a good time tonight, heads toward the fridge for a beer, and standing in that white light and cold imagines living it all himself.
Laura works her way to the back of the plane, glances at her ticket. A window seat she thinks, and it makes her smile. She sits down and no one sits beside her. It turns out to be empty when everyone else is seated.

The flight attendant is a young guy, Italian looking with curly dark hair and dark eyes. He opens the safety packet and runs through the procedures. He smiles when he explains how the seat cushion doubles as a floatation device, as if delighted with the novelty of the idea. Laura looks down and strokes her velvety blue seat, imagining hugging that to her chest out in the ocean. It makes her miss Jim, and she decides that is love.

She remembers the first boy she said she loved, Darry Hall, and for a flickering moment wonders if she did, then, the way she said it—but no, Darry Hall is dead. Of course she loved him. Even Jim knows she loved him. When they first started dating, senior year of high school, he had asked her all about him. She had showed him the scars on her neck, her torso, her chin, and showed him all the ways she had been hurt but hadn’t died, and said that was what was left of Darry Hall. He had been a good guy, she had said, and had told him about how when they went to homecoming as sophomores he had brought the florist dandelions because they were Laura’s favorite flower and asked them to make a corsage out of dandelions, and the florist had laughed at him and told him they were only weeds. He had told them they were flowers and to make it anyway.

She told him about when they had gone to their first movie together and their hands had sweated so much but neither of them would let go, and how the movie had been Finding Nemo, and how they had both pretended to love it then and only admitted right before he died how stupid they both thought it was. Jim had listened and nodded, sometimes snatching at her fingers and squeezing them like he thought she needed to be held, but she could tell he wanted more. Everyone wanted more of Darry Hall, and all she had was scars, but damn it she was alive.

Damn it I’m alive is what she finally told Jim at the end of all the talking about Darry. I’m here. And truth was the time she fell in love with Jim was when he smiled and kissed her and she knew he would never ask for more.

Suddenly the plane starts rolling forward, and Laura leans her face against the window, glad to get the window seat. They roll faster and faster past all that graying grass and Laura smiles at a couple late dandelion poking through.

LIZZIE
Miss Harrington! Oh my gosh! I was showing my magic dagger for everyone and they stole the batteries and they’re meeeeaan!

Miss Harrington gently pries Lizzie off her knees and Sabrina out from between her legs. She takes Sabrina and holds it at arm’s length to turn it off, then takes the girl by her shoulders.

MISS HARRINGTON
Lizzie. Look at me. Where did you find this?

LIZZIE
Well...I was in my mom’s closet playing dress-up and I was looking in her drawers and I found this.

Lizzie reclaims Sabrina and waves it around. She “stabs” Miss Harrington as well.

MISS HARRINGTON
Lizzie, do you know what this is?

LIZZIE
My magic dagger!

MISS HARRINGTON
Oh, dear.

Miss Harrington takes Sabrina back. She strides over to her desk and drops it into her top drawer.
The kids pass the vibrator around a little more.

   GIRL #3
   And it's sticky.

A little boy with thick glasses turns it on, screams, and drops it in terror. The batteries fall out like sweet electric candy from a pinata; some kids try to grab them.

Lizzie rescues her precious Sabrina. She also grabs the batteries and sticks them back in. Sabrina ROARS to life once more.

   LIZZIE
   Hey! Watch out!

At this moment, Miss Harrington walks back in with a placated but sulky and tear-streaked Jeremy. She looks at her class...

   MISS HARRINGTON
   Is everyone still doing okay?

...and goes rigid.

   MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
   ...What's that?

Lizzie runs over to Miss Harrington and clasps her teacher's knees. Sabrina hits Miss Harrington right in the va-jay-jay.

   MISS HARRINGTON (CONT'D)
   Oof!

The plane is humming, and with a sigh it folds in its wheels and lifts into the air, rising, rising faster than Laura remembers it ever having done before.

The floor lurches under her, and the planes shudders, the wings outside Laura's window slapping at the air even though the sky looks bright and autumn-clear. It shakes and someone's black purse sails into the aisle. A baby shrieks and Laura looks over to see its mother smothering it to her chest. A couple grab each other's hands. The flight attendant grabs the seat ahead of him until his knuckles go white. There is a tremble of sound, whispers and whimpers, scent of sweat—fear of death like a great communal pulse. Laura balls her hands and bites her lips, feeling the plane steady under her, and she hasn't take anyone's hand, hasn't pressed anyone to her chest, but her heart is beating fast as any. She shuts her eyes, feels it and hears it and nods.

June 2000

"The weekend!" Darry says, holding out his arms and tossing back his head as if embracing all that time that lies before him. It's sophomore year, and Laura is in the crook of Darry's arm, and she bounces up to kiss him on the cheek. They are going on a date to somewhere, neither of them even know where yet, but they are going to do something with this beautiful day. They rush with everyone else through the parking lot glittering with broken glass and half-melted snow. The clouds above are moving fast, so that the sun breaks briefly and brilliantly.

They are cracking open the doors of the white Volvo. The key is twisted and someone puts a CD in.

Darry is driving. He is coming fast out of the parking lot and making his tires shriek. He is turning on Junction. He is going past the residential section around the squat white houses, past Chestnut Elementary and the black playground fence. He is driving past 7-11. He is turning on Park and into the city, and Laura is sitting up close to him, so close he feels her pulse through his arm.

Somewhere ahead, Rory is driving, is pulling around a corner and feeling the whole truck behind her, as if it is part of her, as if she is a giant. Her window is cracked and she thinks she can smell the scent of thawed earth somewhere beyond all that exhaust. Somewhere behind, Jim is walking home with his phone nestled in his pants pocket, his eyes down turned, seeing dandelions coming up past the
sidewalk and wondering how they got in there, how they cracked through that.

This is the world: shops and shop's windows flying past—dresses, statues, flowers sandwiches snow plows saunas slim black trees going green sharp yellow dandelions coming through the sidewalk cracks pretty lonely women. Music, someone else's songs from open windows, open doors, a big leashed dog feral cats under restaurants.

Darry tightens his hands and narrows his black eyes. His foot is on the gas, the bass is in his bones, the spring is running through his windows. His right hand reaches into Laura's tangled hair, and he feels her long smooth neck. Darry Hall is alive.

Rikki Miller

shrive in fear. Lizzie switches Sabrina off again.

LIZZIE
And...it's also magic 'cause my mommy can stab herself with it a lot and still be okay. She likes it when she stabs herself with it. She has fun. I saw it.

BOY #2
Lemme see it!

LIZZIE
Here!

She "stabs" him in the crotch. The boy looks on in wonder.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
She stabs this spot.

CLASS
Ooooooo.

LIZZIE
You guys can see.

Lizzie passes it to the girl next to her. Sabrina circles around the class. It reverently goes from child to child.

GIRL #2
It's stinkyyyyy. Pee-ew!

The kids pass the vibrator around a little more.

Miss Harrington drags Jeremy out with a final burst of energy and shuts the door. For a while, Jeremy’s (slightly muffled) SHRIEKS can continue being heard.

Lizzie hops up to the front of the class. She smooths her dress and smiles, then pulls out with a flourish a ten-inch, glistening, sparkly, purple vibrator. "Sabrina" is printed in flowery script along one side.

LIZZIE
Today, for Show-and-Tell, I brought my mom’s magic dagger. It’s magic.

CLASS
(in unison)
Woaaaaah.

GIRL #1
How’s it work?

LIZZIE
Well...first of all, it makes a buzzy scary noise to scare monsters away.

BOY #1
I don’t believe you!

She turns it on and it’s a scary NOISE indeed - on the Richter scale, Sabrina’s seismic activity of would be an 11. She levels it at the boy. It catches the light and Lizzie looks like King Arthur wielding Excalibur. The boy

Blossomed

At night while the city sleeps
he gets out of bed.
The light bulb in his kitchen
is blinking on and off through the night,
flickering at the autumn moon,
bright blue since man
landed in nineteen sixty nine.

At the kitchen table sits
a human heart
cold as the dirt he
fell asleep on with her
that evening in spring,
when the poppies bloomed
from under the frost
of her breath.

She told him
to call her the inventress.

He had pried her torso
open, lifted a wooden box
wedged in her rib cage,
her bones bleached white
from the moon that night.

He opened the box
as she closed her eyes,
while his hands traced the outline
of her bones.

He found butterflies pinned inside with little labels by their vivid orange and blue owl wings.

He didn’t have the chance to kiss her goodbye before the sun began to rise, blooming from under the frost of her breath.

Her hurt flutters against his hands. Pressing her heart between his palms,

a green stem shoots straight up.

Every evening under the autumn moon—Bright blue since man landed in nineteen sixty nine—

He waters the heart, the stem blooming into a poppy, while everything else is frozen under her breath.

Ines Pujos

JEREMY

NOOO!

Jeremy clutches his rightful property. She glares. He prepares to take a stand.

JEREMY

No! Way! Jose!

Miss Harrington grabs Jeremy’s shoulders.

Jeremy BAWLS. She takes the truck out of his hands and starts passing it around the circle. He goes to grab it back but she slaps his hand.

MISS HARRINGTON

You! hallway! now!

Jeremy balls up into a fetal position, doesn’t get up: Miss Harrington pulls him out to the door. She pauses at the threshold.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT’D)

Well...who’s next? Lizzie?

Lizzie (6), a girl small for her age, seated next to Jeremy’s now empty seat, picks her head up.

MISS HARRINGTON (CONT’D)

Lizzie, while I talk to Jeremy, could you please go ahead and start?
MISS HARRINGTON
Jeremy, aren’t you forgetting something?

JEREMY
What?

MISS HARRINGTON
It’s Share-and-Tell Day, Jeremy. We SHARE.

JEREMY
So?

MISS HARRINGTON
So aren’t you going to SHARE with the rest of the class?

JEREMY
No.

MISS HARRINGTON
Come on, Jeremy. Please share with the class.

Miss Harrington puts on a brave face.

MISS HARRINGTON
Come on, Jeremy. Please share with the class.

She gestures for him to pass the truck around.

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Excerpt from Amy, Colorado

EXT. AMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—ELEVEN YEARS ago—DAY

It is early fall, and looks warm. Instead of the plastic, new-agey playground we saw previously, there is simply a metal slide, a swingset, a basketball hoop and a huge map of the United States spray painted on the blacktop. Colorado is painted green.

Two kids run onto the playground. A little boy runs ahead, about eleven years old. This is William. Behind him is a girl (8), who is recognized as Lynette by her wavy red hair.

WILLIAM
Come on, Doofus! You’re so slow.

LYNETTE
I’m hurrying.

EXT. UNDERNEATH SLIDE—CONTINUOUS

William runs beneath the slide, and backs up so he is hidden in the shadow. As a boy, he is as smooth and confident as he will be throughout his life. He has freckles and a blonde cowlick. He wears a new-looking white baseball cap that is too big for his head.

Lynn runs in and falls to her knees, looking at William expectantly. The girl version of her is a bit pudgy, and is dressed in a lumpy turtleneck and jeans.

William motions for her to be quiet and leans on his knees to talk to her.

WILLIAM
(Whispering)
Alright. Before I take you, I need your oath that you won’t say anything about this to anyone.
I promise.

WILLIAM
I need better than that. Listen, Lynn, you are gonna be in the second grade now. That's practically grown up. I need you to understand how serious this is.

LYNETTE
I said I pro-
Will cuts her off by pointing a finger at her nose.

WILLIAM
Do you swear on our blood?

Lynn looks disgusted.

LYNETTE
Our blood?

WILLIAM
You know. The blood of our family. What makes us cousins and all.

LYNETTE
Okay. I'll swear on our blood.

WILLIAM
And your mom and dad? And Grandma?

LYNETTE
Yeah! Alright I do. Where is it?

Will rolls his eyes, and backs out of the shadows.

WILLIAM
(under his breath)
I shouldn't be doing this. (out loud)
Okay. Follow me.

---

FADE IN:

INT. STONYBROOK PREP ACADEMY KINDERGARTEN - DAY

A modern classroom, clean and well-furnished - colorful accents, small desks in small clusters, stimulating posters. Mac computers lining one wall - it's as if we have stepped into a Pottery Barn Kids' catalogue photograph.

The desks stand empty as the children of the class, a gaggle of kindergartners, sit at the front of the room in a semicircle of beanbag chairs to hold Share-and-Tell.

There is a whiteboard with some writing and the class teacher MISS HARRINGTON's (27) desk. The desk holds books and a phone. She sits in her pleather swivel chair and looks on as JEREMY (6), a boy who's big for his age - maybe even...fat - shares his toy dump truck with everyone else.

JEREMY
...and then my dad said that if I stopped crying in the car he would get me a Mega-Action Dumperizer 3000 so I did and we got it. The End.

He sits down.
that it seemed you could roll them between your fingers and they would flatten.

You lived your life in thoughts that your lover, that phantom with hands that cupped like flowers every time he reached up to grasp a bell jar, only heard when he kissed a spot behind your right ear.

In this dream, when you woke, you looked, I remember, tired and beautiful, and to see that once more makes me so tired of waking.

Kiley Harrison

EXT. PLAYGROUND- CONTINUOUS

The two figures run across the playground towards the hill behind the school. William paces himself so that she can keep up.

Once they reach the bottom of the hill, Will starts climbing it, his feet sliding in the shale. Lynn starts up after him, using all four limbs to climb.

Halfway up the hill, Lynn is breathing heavily, and Will pauses to give her a break.

LYNETTE
(out of breath)
Where is it? Are you sure no one's there?

WILLIAM
Don't be so impatient. I'm sure no one's there... it's Saturday. There is a special on milkshakes at the OMI on Saturdays. I'll just give you a peek inside, then we'll go, okay?

LYNETTE
Okay.

They start up the hill again. They crest the peak, and go over the side.

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- MOMENTS LATER

The boy's club is a run-down cabin that was probably once a miner or prospector's home. Its big enough to seem large to the kids, but couldn't have housed any more than one person comfortably.

The door is missing, and in it's place is a flowered curtain held up by nails that the boys installed. "AMY BOYS CLUB" is painted on the curtain in black paint.

Lynn and Will approach the club. There is a noise from inside.
WILLIAM

Shh!

A boy's head pokes out from behind the curtain. He has black glasses and blonde hair. He has pudgy cheeks. This is FIZZ (11). Fizz is the brain of the group.

Will sees Fizz, and puts on a fake smile.

WILLIAM

Fizz, what are you doing here?

FIZZ

What do ya mean what am I doing here?

He notices Lynn.

FIZZ

What is she doing here?

Will acts cool, and strolls towards Fizz.

WILLIAM

She wanted to see the fort. I don't see what the problem is.

Fizz exits the fort, shoots a look at Lynn, who is standing by sheepishly, then walks up to William. Fizz is significantly shorter than Will. William widens his smile charmingly and Fizz scowls.

WILLIAM

The problem is, she's a girl. Dude, it's the rules. You know that.

LYNETTE

I just wanna see.

WILLIAM

(to Lynn)

It's cool, Lynn.

(to Fizz)

ADream – January 26th, 2007

I dreamt last night
of a rabbit caught in a trap
whose face was a city
where you lived in a brown house
with flower boxes in the window
that grew pencils.
Your lover, which could have been me,
picked them, already sharpened,
and put them beside your bed in one
of the bell jars that you kept above
the kitchen cabinets.

You never left the house on Tuesdays –
only wandered out to the courtyard
to pickle peaches that you picked
from a tree that looked like a bonsai.

You would sit and read your Whitman.
You would smile, or cry,
and your lover,
who could have been me,
would want to ask so badly what could push you.
He, maybe me, would wash the bell jars for hours,
watching you.

But you did not love him,
your lover, who might have been me,
you knew, because at the end of the day
the pencil erasers were so easily worn down
and the nibs of graphite were so soft
There are so many things we will never know, friend. 
Once, I was committed to the fortunes I could find, 
and so were you. So the palm reader was right: 
the stars spell something like fate for us 
in a braille so bright and close we could never read it. 
True, it is by chance that we met, 
maybe like marbles in a playground game, 
or little stones washed together in the current. 
The sound of either makes a chorus for us 
to sing to while we think we’re sewing our palms together, 
or our feet to the ground. And though while we work 
in our cinder cell the honey is growing bitter, 
the moves we make to stoke our quiet laughter 
are unmistakably deliberate. There is comfort 
in this certainty, that if two short brothers 
on a chessboard are moved, 
they have chosen to live and sing together, 
and so whether they are being moved 
or moving forward 
makes very little difference.
FIZZ
Guys, we have a problem.

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS
Lynn waits until the curtain has closed behind them, and then follows. She positions herself next to the doorway, and peers through a gap in the curtain. Her view is over Will's shoulder, and she can see the interior of the cabin.

INT. AMY BOY'S CLUB- CONTINUOUS
The argument continues inside.

WILLIAM
She's my cousin, man.

JOSH
No girls! We had that agreement from the beginning.

The rest of the guys mutter disapprovingly, except for James, who stands up expectantly.

JAMES
It's okay. I know her. She's cool.

Fizz takes his focus off of Will and turns to James.

FIZZ
That's not the point! The point-

JOSH
interjects, pushing Fizz behind him.

JOSH
The point is, we have rules, dude. What the hell is the point of an all guy's fort if chicks are allowed too?

WILLIAM
C'mon, man! She's only eight. What's the big deal?

---

Baby Killer Playing Jacks

Belenke-Ibori lived in the crawl space under my house, playing with marbles that permeated a very small light. I snuck out of my window one night when I heard him moving in the dark between the floor boards, and shined a flashlight into the darkness. We couldn't figure out why all the lambs tied behind the house had died, why the puppies at the back door lay sleeping flatly with their eyes open, why the cat had gone down there to give birth to kittens, and run hissing and spitting, trailing afterbirth, her kittens nowhere.

Belenke-Ibori played marbles while I watched him, occasionally looking up into the beam, his eyes shining like some dark animal caught in a car's headlights. "Those are my marbles," I said. "I thought I had lost them, but here they are." He looked at me from an old face, fingered the marbles with the hands of a child.

"Don't worry," he said back to me, "I couldn't reside here with the babies, but I've fixed that. Bring me rum and sugarcane. Bring me bush rats and palm wine. I will protect your father."

"What will happen if I don't?" I asked. He looked at the marbles in the dust and leaned down so his eyes were level with the ground. Down there, between the real world and his own, where nothing lives but everything exists, it reeked of thriving garbage. Something dead but breathing.

He positioned himself and shot a marble out of his palm with his thumb. The purple piece knocked a small green one out of the circle. My neighbor's house caught fire.

---

Jenna Davey
14.
When I think of you I cover my neck with those pearls I bought in France. The stairs were stone. You are the only one who has seen me wear nothing but that pink glow.

After they stung me I took branches of grapes and crushed them on the porch. I waited for yellow jackets to come. I brought the mallet down on their bodies.

You pointed toward the black birds resting on driftwood. *That's a 'murder' of ravens. Sometimes death is everywhere.*

My class pretended to be pioneers. At five am we milked cows in the dark. All I remember was the long fall from the loft to that sweet bed of hay.

Baba Yaga ages a year for every question asked of her. Each answer adds to her wisdom. The fools keep knocking on her window.

Tove Danovich
Will snaps back around and pushes Josh.

WILLIAM
She's my freaking cousin, buttface.

Josh pushes Will back.

Will throws his body against Josh's and Josh resists. They struggle against each other.

EXT. AMY BOY'S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Lynn bites her lip with concern. She backs up from the curtain as the scuffle moves her way, and as it moves the other way, she opens the curtain all the way to get a better view: she no longer cares if she is seen or not.

INT. AMY BOY'S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

William's head is in Josh's chest, and they are punching each other in the ribs. Will elbows Josh in the stomach, and he staggers back. Josh rushes Will and knocks him to the floor. As they fall, we see that Lynn is standing in the doorway.

All the while, Fizz is cheering for Josh while James roots for William. Andrew just looks distressed and backs himself into a corner.

James spots Lynn, and stops cheering. He looks at her for a long moment, then jumps into the fray and begins pulling Will off of Josh. Will is clearly winning the fight.

JAMES
Will, Lynn's here. Dude.

Will backs off, and Josh scrambles away.

JOSH
(under his breath)
Asshole.

Will turns to Lynn, who looks horrified. He is breathing heavily. He picks up his baseball cap from the ground and runs a hand through his hair before jamming it back on his head.

baseball, soccer, all of it. You're going to stay home with me and learn to act like a kid.

"You were a boxer. Why can't I be a one, too?" He rubbed his nose with his fist, trying to prevent the tears already stinging his bruise.

"Because your mother doesn't want you to be one," I snapped, not thinking before I spoke. I could see his face contort in one last attempt not to cry, one last attempt to maintain the tough attitude he wanted so much to put on. He lifted his eyes and looked past me

"But you do," he said.

"No. If I let you box you'll just get angrier."

"I hate school and I get angry because kids who are ten are stupid. I get angry because when I come home..." His eyes shot downward, his mouth contorting. He looked back at the frame lying on the mantle.

"I get angry, too," I said. "But you can't punch people, Mike. You can't kick the wall, and you can't yell or scream or throw things. If you want me to teach you how to box you have to make sure that's the only place the anger goes."

"I can make it go anywhere," he said. I sat down on the couch next to him.

"No more punching people then, okay? No more punching friends."

"Okay. Can I punch you?"

"How about we get a punching bag instead and hang it in the basement?"

"Can I get boxing gloves?" He looked up, a half smile playing on his lips.

"There's a boxing match on right now," I said, and took the remote down from the highest ledge. Mike walked into the kitchen and grabbed a bag of frozen peas, setting it gently on his eye.

"Steak is better," I said. "We'll get some later tonight." He nodded.

"They sure are angry," he said, pointing at the burly men on the screen.

"Not at each other," I said.

"Everyone's angry at something," he said.

"Yup," I said, and watched their jabs, their bob and weave, and the arcs of their perfect punches.

Meggie Cramer
“This is what I’m talking about,” I said, his muscles tight and poised to lash out again. I tightened my grasp and sat him in the chair, his face was red, his bottom lip shaking just slightly.

“The door is locked because I locked it, and what does kicking it solve?”
“I don’t care,” he shouted.
“Listen,” I said. “Look at that door.”
“What about it?”
“What about it? What about it!” I could feel the heat of my anger clenching the muscles in my neck.
“It’s a door, it’s locked. You have more to do in the house than holing up down there for hours to play PlayStation. Go outside. Play with your friends.” He rubbed his eye, it was a mean yellow and black that stood out against his pale skin.
“I don’t want to,” he whispered.
“Why not? There are tons of kids on this block who you used to play with. Go ride your bike, your scooter. Go ask Steven if he wants to play. What ever happened to all of you kids playing capture the flag?” I stood up, paced in front of the fireplace.
“That’s dumb,” he said. “None of them are my friends anymore. They do stupid stuff. Who wants to hang out with dumb kids?”
“You’re a dumb kid,” I said, throwing my hands over my head. “That’s my point. You’re not an adult, you’re ten and you can’t punch people in the face and think it makes you tough.”
“I am tough!”
“This is ridiculous,” I said. Mike glanced at the mantle, at a picture of the three of us at the county fair. I was standing behind him and his mother who were both kneeling, feeding the goats. The goat Mike was feeding had the corner of his shirt in its mouth and his mother was trying to pry it out. They were both laughing and I was rolling my eyes.
“You’re ridiculous,” he said, almost a whisper, and at that moment I hated him. I hated him for staying calmer than I was, for not getting angry when it seemed like getting angry was the only thing he could do these days, and for being able to look at the snapshots without crying. I walked to the mantle and flipped the picture down.

“Here’s the consequence, Mike. No more sports. I’m pulling you from

WILLIAM

Let’s go.
He exits, and Lynn and James follow. Once he is beyond the curtain, he says loudly-

WILLIAM
They’re losers anyway!

EXT. AMY BOY’S CLUB—CONTINUOUS
The small group walks for a few minutes in silence. They start down the hill.

LYNETTE
Hey Will? Maybe... well maybe we could start our own fort.

Will’s face softens as he looks at his cousin.

WILLIAM
Yeah? Let’s do that, squirt.

He grabs her around the neck and gives her a half-hearted noogie, then lets her go. She rubs her head.

From where they are walking, it is the view of the playground again, from the other side than we previously saw it.

We fade back to present day, the new playground, the half-melted snow. Lynn in Daniel’s pickup rolls down street away from the playground.

Allie Quiller
One night I sit on my back porch and smoke a cigarette in the dark. In the next room my father dreams that he has lost me in a crowd. He spends a year, ten years looking and still I’m nowhere. And all the strange men, when he asks if they recognize the girl in the pictures he shows them tell him there is no hope, that they know: they have all lost their own daughters.

And eventually he stops looking, stops showing the picture, wandering the streets and subways at night. And he works at other things and tries in earnest to become like all the strange men around him.

But it’s hard, because my hair was always so short and messy, and my body cut almost as straight as a boy’s, so occasionally a small man will transform himself into me just long enough to remind my father of what he has lost.

One day, another man approaches him with a picture bigger kids but could always hold his own. Susan hadn’t let me enroll him in boxing, afraid I’d be encouraging the wrong kind of behavior.

"Why do you get so angry?" I asked, not looking up from my newspaper. He stopped chewing and put down his spoon.

"What do you mean?" he asked, and I folded the sports section and laid it out in front of us, and said back, "Why is it whenever someone makes you mad you act out? You slap people, you yell. Your teachers have all said you have a temper, that you can’t ‘communicate your feelings effectively.’ What really made you so mad at your best friend?" I took a sip of my coffee, waited for an answer.

"I don’t know," he whispered, walking up to the kitchen sink. Then louder, "I don’t know." He tossed his bowl into the sink too hard and a side of it broke off.

"Mike!" I said, standing now, and pointing at the broken bowl. "This is what I mean. What do they say in pre-school? Use your words? You need to use your words!"

"Talking doesn’t do anything," he said, and grabbed his backpack from the floor and headed towards the door. I could hear the stagger as he drew in his breath, trying not to cry.

"I gotta go," he said, and slammed the door behind him.

That afternoon I left work early and drove home before Mike got off the bus. I locked the basement door to his PlayStation was cleaned up his room, putting his binders of baseball cards in my room under the bed. I made sure the TV remotes were out of his reach on the mantle. At three-thirty he sauntered in the front door, a shiner silhouetting his left eye. He tossed his bag and walked to the basement door. When he couldn’t open it he kicked it loudly.

"Why’s the door locked, Dad?" he asked, walking into the kitchen.

"Why do you have a black eye, Mike?" I countered.

"Sam punched me back. We were at recess and I called him a crybaby. I said that only losers hide behind their dads when they get into a fight. I told him if he was really as tough as he thought he’d punch me, too. I totally didn’t think he had the guts." Mike cracked his knuckles and touched the area around his eye.

"Sit down," I said, motioning to the chair next to me.

"Not now," he said. "I want to go down and play," and he walked to the door and, when it still refused to budge, he kicked it again and again. I stood up and pulled him away.
talent, right, Dad?” I shook my head and said, “I’m not sure yet.”

I walked into the room his mother and I had painted when he was two, light blue with navy trim on top. He had filled the walls with posters of his favorite sports stars, crayon drawings he had made in school of lions, and Polaroid pictures I’d taken of us at hockey games, basketball games, and swimming at the pool during the summer. He had a picture of his mom over his bed, taped around the edges. She was laughing, tossing her dark hair back and he was staring up at her.

“What do you want to read tonight?” I asked, pulling the bin of books from under his bed. He turned to face the opposite wall.

“I don’t care,” he said. I grabbed the latest *Harry Potter* and flipped it open to where we’d left off. This was a tradition we had kept alive since he was three. The act seemed so childish for a boy who had just gotten into his first fistfight, had purposefully hurt another boy. I stopped reading for a second.

“There will be consequences for this,” I said. Mike shifted in bed but without uttering a single word.

Susan had told Mike the story of how we met at one of my matches, and he had watched the videos of them when he was little. Susan would put him in front of the TV and he’d sit, mesmerized, until the tape stopped. As he grew he’d ask me if I liked punching people. I had told him, yes, but that it wasn’t for fun, it was for sport. I had quit when Susan and I got married, and thought briefly of going back to boxing after she died, getting someone to take care of Mike while I fought at night in the clubs. All of the anger I had as a teenager, that I used when I boxed, had come rushing back the moment she was gone. But something stopped me, the thought of violence rubbing off on Mike.

The next morning he made his breakfast and sat at the table with me. I read the newspaper as we sat silent, the sound of chewing echoing in my head. I had been up most of the night, trying to figure out what I was supposed to do with him, the appropriate punishment for punching one’s best friend in the nose. Part of me wanted to put him in a boxer’s stance and show him exactly what he had done wrong. Show him that his fist landed a little too high, say, “That’s why it bled so much,” then correct his fist, put his thumb next to his fingers instead of in front of them. He had his mother’s small hands and feet, and was smaller than most of the other boys. She had wanted him to be a gymnast but I had enlisted him in the more physical sports: baseball, hockey, football. He had to work twice as hard as the
Meditation on Longing in the Desert

We live in a castle in a desert
that used to be a lake.
I have no recollection of being born
and I have always lived
in this desert. We know
it used to be a lake
from the finger paintings
on our walls, which spell water
in green and blue, buffalo in red.
Sometimes my father takes me out
to watch sand sift between bleached bones.
Sometimes when the moon rises,
it paints our turrets the color of his dreams:
an inky, inscrutable blue.

My father is in love with a ghost
who lived in our castle a hundred years ago.
The hem of her dress, like the wind,
stirs sand in our dry moat. I wish
I could see her; I imagine
she was beautiful and soft
before she dried up with everything else.
My father dances with her
to smoky old blues music off the broken
Victrola in the watchtower.
I can barely make it out,
each note buffered by a minute,
like after claps of thunder.
At night, I hear the sounds
of their lovemaking rocking out to sea.

Mike and Susan had a connection that I couldn’t break into. Susan always knew what Mike was crying about when he was a baby, always knew the right lullaby to sing, the right flavor of baby food. Whenever I held Mike he’d cry until his face turned red. She would just laugh and take him from my arms. After she died, Mike wouldn’t talk about the secret language they had created when he was five, or about the hollowness that was left in her place. He was the only reason I didn’t get rid of her clothes. I wondered briefly if tonight he’d end up in that same corner and wake up smelling like Susan’s perfume.

"Why did you do it, Mike?" I asked, standing in the doorway of his bathroom, watching him brush his teeth. He shrugged and spit into the sink.

"Because I wanted to," he said, mocking my tone. "He called me Lucky, and said that I usually chickened out at the plate." I remember the flash of exhilaration in his eyes the moment his fist made contact, and how my stomach churned with both panic and momentary pride, that thrill of a well-landed punch when I boxed as a teenager. The dance around the ring was what I lived for, and that same look was in Mike’s eye the moment his fist connected with Sam’s nose.

"You shouldn’t be punching your best friend." I wiped the counter off and hung up his towel.

“I don’t want luck,” he whispered. I had spoken with Mike about the difference between luck and talent. Susan thought he was talented in everything he did. I explained that talent was what kept you going, what made you different. It was what made me different when I boxed. "Talent is what you’re born with," I told him. "Luck is the lazy man’s excuse for winning." He nodded and said, "I’ve got
and he tensed under my grasp. Sam’s father was holding his son’s nose with a wad of paper napkins, asking Sam the same question.

“My triple wasn’t a fluke,” he said, rocking back on his heels. “Sam said that I can’t hit, that it was just luck.” I turned to Sam’s father.

“Look, Chris, I’m so sorry. I’m sure they were just messing around.”

“This isn’t okay,” he said, shaking his head. Sam had stopped whimpering and was already starting to purple. I could see the bruise blooming under the white napkins.

“Alex, you need to control your kid,” he said, trying to keep his voice down. Then turning to Mike he said, “I’m sure Sam was just messing with you, Mike.”

“He was not!” my son yelled, stomping his foot, tears still running down Sam’s face.

“Alex, as the head coach I can’t let this happen. I’m going to bring it up with our sponsor,” he said, pulling Sam away from Mike, closer to his chest.

“What?” I asked, my eyes darting between both boys.

“Don’t come to practice before we get this settled,” he said. “Violent like this, it’s not good for the other boys.” Mike was shaking under my grasp, breathing hard and clenching his fists again. Sam hid behind his father. I pulled Mike’s arm.

“He over-reacted. I’m sure he’s sorry,” I said, Mike shaking his head no, no, no.

“I’m not sorry!” he yelled, pointing at Sam. “I’m a better player than you’ll ever be!” Sam looked up at his father, and I could see the blood starting to slow, the red of the napkins starting to fade.

“We’re done here. Don’t bring him to practice. He’s off the team.” Sam nodded and his father turned back to the other men, some of whom were nodding or motioning their sons to them. Mike was making faces at Sam.

“We’re going home,” I said. “I already paid for the food, you guys stay as long as you want.” I apologized to Sam’s father again. The other dads and the kids were still silent and ignoring the big screen.

“Let’s go, Mike,” I said, grabbing him by the wrist. He dragged his feet behind me and kicked a chair, which fell with a hollow crash that rang throughout the entire bar.

When Mike’s mother, Susan, died he had stopped talking for two weeks straight. It had been almost three years and he rarely talked about her. I found him

And my father asks her: Why was I born a hundred years too late?

Phoebe Rusch
I can remember seeing Mike from the corner of my eye, laughing with Sam. I felt like a good father, bringing my boy's baseball team to a real sports bar, letting them watch the Reds game on the big screen, buying them wings and pizza. It was the first time in a long while everything felt normal. The boys were laughing at something on the TV, the fathers and I drinking beers and swapping stories. They had won their game that afternoon, Mike pulling a triple out from nowhere in the bottom of the ninth and Sam scoring the winning run. They had butted chests like the older boys and did a victory dance, their teammates cheering from behind the fence.

The bar was crowded and smoky, my eyes watering, and the big screen TV was blaring the game, the announcers calling stats. The waitress had pushed together three long tables. The other dads and I sat at one end and the boys at the other, bouncing on the booth cushions. The bar, The Red Barn, was known for its dark, mahogany bar that stretched the entire back length of the building to the stage on the other side where cover bands and karaoke artists played on weekends. There was already a cluster of bottles in the middle of our table and the boys had spilled a pitcher of Sprite, making everything sticky.

I turned my head to make a toast to the team, our road to the state finals just beginning. I saw Mike's face twitch and change just slightly. His eyes clouded over and his fists clenched at his sides before he raised his arm, swung around and hit Sam on the bridge of his nose. Sam grabbed his face, blood flowing red through his fingers in the dark lights. The arc of the punch was a perfect, smooth, curving line of a right hook. I was proud for a fleeting second, proud of my son and his rock-solid fists, but the moment that blood started running from Sam's nose the pride was replaced by a sick feeling deep in my stomach.

"Mike!" I yelled, pushing my way through the other fathers. I grabbed my son's shoulders and shook them, kneeling down to eye level.

"What do you think you're doing?" Mike's eyes dropped to his rubber cleats
Writing:

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Visual Art:

Jenna Kreyche / cover, 14, 34, 36, 49, and end
Ashleigh Powell / 47
Allie Quiller / 25
A note on this issue:
When we first started brainstorming ideas for the Red Wheelbarrow this quarter, we knew we wanted to do something to alleviate people's midwinter blues that usually set in this time of year. We also wanted to connect the Red Wheelbarrow to ecological issues in our community. Since the Red Wheelbarrow uses so much paper, we figured the best thing to do would be to use recycled paper. Therefore, the issue you are holding in your hands is printed on 100% recycled paper, except for the cover, which is made from 50-75% recycled paper.

Enjoy!

Love, the Editors:
Chloe Zwiacher, Lucy Nepstad and Catherine Bueker

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The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends upon

a red wheel barrow

glazed with rain water

beside the white chickens

William Carlos Williams