Tropos: A Magazine of Literary and Artistic Works 2012-2013

Lawrence University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lux.lawrence.edu/tropos

Part of the Fiction Commons, Illustration Commons, and the Poetry Commons

© Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Recommended Citation
http://lux.lawrence.edu/tropos/2

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Organizations at Lux. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tropos by an authorized administrator of Lux. For more information, please contact colette.brautigam@lawrence.edu.
Tropos

2012-2013

Lawrence University
Appleton, Wisconsin
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untitled by Mary Curtin</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookit by Sadie Lancrete</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plea by Anonymous</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labyrinth by Maisha Rahman</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanius by Joey Astwood</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucian by Joey Astwood</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Re)awakening by Abigail Hindson</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Wet Bark Where Your Body Used to Be</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards the Pebbled Brink by Julian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delfino</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipanema by Mary Curtin</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Rings by Keita Jett</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uphill Battle by Susannah Gilbert</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Walk Home Through the Forest by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Cebulski</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good man by Vivian Burnette</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed by Kaitlyn Mussar</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Colors by Haley Hagerman</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimless by Haley Hagerman</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should call facility services by Athena Naylor</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A More Profound Bond by Haley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagerman</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterglow by Emma Moss and Elena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabile</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man versus Manatee by Rachel Arnow</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am Really, Really, Really Cool by Bryan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebulski</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Patterns by Susannah Gilbert</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegas Skyline by Sara Harris</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherworldly Drag by Elizabeth Graber</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Symphonic Tone Poem by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke Martin</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dialogue, Incomplete by Anonymous</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster by Rachele Krivichi</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know by Athena Naylor</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Care by Athena Naylor</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It Helps with the Blues by Bryan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebulski</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tropos is Lawrence University’s literary and arts magazine. Founded in 1938 as The Contributor, the name was changed to Tropos in 1967. The magazine is comprised of student works selected and compiled by the student editorial board.

Tropos Editorial Board
2012-13

Editor-in-Chief: Athena Naylor
Cover Art: Haley Hagerman

Layout Editors: Allie Thome
Amanda Bourbonais
Andrew Kim
Athena Naylor
Susannah Gilbert

Editorial Board Members: Allie Thome
Amanda Bourbonais
Andrew Kim
Bryan Cebulski
Claire Bassett
Jen Gragg
Joey Belonger
Lauren Nokes
Marty Allen
Mary Curtin
Shantelle Kind
Susannah Gilbert
Vivian Burnette
Untitled
By Mary Curtin

These words, whispered, scratch at my skull
Supplication for paper and pen
and a moment’s pause
Voices, mine but not my own
would carry me where I would go

My mind is fettered by the chains of expectation
Deadline links to deadline
Weigh me down and I am drowning
If only I could catch my breath
Ready to chase these lines to fresh pages
and hardbound, solid freedom

Red ink pulses beneath these
shackles that rub me raw
Would that I could follow its flow
I am yet bound, pinched,
chaffed, I still strain
My feet freed would run as my pen

Plea
By Anonymous

Cut my hair and wipe me clean
If it means that I can be beautiful, too—
That I can join the myriad of sneering clowns
With joy and paint on their faces.

Peel away my coat of winter fat
And I will reawaken
To this dismal world I knew so well,
My bleary eyes blinking to
See just what you want me to see
Once again.

Strip me down to bones and brass,
Annihilate the evil inconveniences of my skin,
Now and forever
If it means that your society will take me in and
Include me in your holy definition.

Take all but my heart
And turn it into glitter and gold,
Like those of your new civilization.

Give me a shining, transparent body
Where I can no longer hide my shame and guilt
Behind a mind or a soul,
For you have left me without either,
A quivering empty shell—

And at the end of this fruitless day
Prop me up in front of the lights,
Let me look into the camera,
Into the mirror,
And try to smile.
Labyrinth
By Maisha Rahman


Lanius and Lucian
By Joey Astwood
(Re)awakening
By Abigail Hindson

Slowly, s l o w l y
I fall into forgetfulness.
It shrouds me in bleakness
protectively, suffocating—
extinguishing—
the brilliance
of my long, blue sky.
Thousands of smiles,
once sunny,
icandescent
shriveled dry—
autumn leaves
swept away
on an invisible wind of loneliness.
They are flashes
copper, crimson,
fiery against the slate-gray ceiling
of the world.
Suspended in the void
I wait
wait.
A golden burst,
blazing!
breaks the eternal
nostalgia—
black and white—
of my clouded mind.
I long for the vivid colors
of the chestnut and the fern
and the overflowing sunset
collecting my hopes
drop by
rosy drop
until I am
brimming.

Dark Wet Bark Where Your Body Used to Be
By Sadie Lancrete
Towards the Pebbled Brink
By Julian Delfino

He will never gain the distant door –
The lock and leaden key
Span silt lines shore to shore,
Crenellated sky and clouds beneath the floor,
The fastness of an eremite.

The poise to note, but the word to flee;
Time tucks in the distance, and place, the sight:
The greenest eyes whelming, or the sea.
A bowl of sunflowers was his levee
The day the tide never stopped advancing

Dim cynosure – a murmur, or slight
Lilt and repose of a glance.
A shawl can fetter dying height
Or a draught set skin alight
That salt spray can restore.

By orison or chance,
The key slips, and the tide runs before.
Time makes him forget her dance,
And the sea’s bare expanse;
He opens and shuts the door to flee.

Ipanema
By Mary Curtin

Starless sky and saxophone blue
Shivers down your spine to settle low
Swings your drowsy hips from side to side
The candlelight flicker-flares in time and so
Your eyelids slip lower, the tiptoe piano sliding in and
Out over cicadas’ sibilation
Murmuring mais linda over softly strummed strings
Faint tin tsa tsa tsa sways you slow and smooth
Cool breezes skin across sun-kissed skin
Rustling palm tree leaves sh sh sh while
The wine is red warm earthy dry
As the dust beneath your samba soles
And just a touch bitter
As the music is sad enough to keep it sweet

Uphill Battle
By Susannah Gilbert

missing you is an exercise in futility
but I do it anyway.
Sisyphus with my cross to bear,
mixing mediocre metaphors,
English major out the window.
like always when
you are all that’s on my mind.
I am sappy, succumbing, seduced
by the lure of broken-heartedness.
my journal is
your name written twelve hundred times
in different words,
different poems.
I loved you once.
sweet tasting, bitter hearted
but you broke every promise,
every heart on my sleeve.
and this endless
uphill battle
is the unreasonable result.

Tree Rings
By Keira Jett

The other day, I saw this thing online.
Some people took a cut out of a tree,
And put it on a record player.

Tree rings make tonal music.
Did you know that?
The ‘music’ wasn’t rhythmic or consistent at all.
It was not elegant or exact.
It was full of dissonance.
And it was the most magnificent thing I’d ever heard.

If that lives in the hearts of trees,
Then what is in the layers of our skin?
What does a scar sound like?
Is the grace that hangs between overtones the prep-beat breath of God?
Then what does it mean to sing?
A Walk Home Through the Forest
By Bryan Cebulski

The factory lights reached across the river into the forest, brightening the snow as it sank in graceful flurries between the bare branches of the trees. It landed in thin sheets that would only last a few hours before melting into the earth.

A boy walked through the forest—a shortcut home—and tried to admire this. He figured it must have been pretty. If he weren’t so stoned and pissed off maybe he could have found it pretty.

He’d gone to another shitty party. The same people getting drunk and high with each other every weekend. He didn’t even want to dignify them with names, just wanted to use pronouns until they all melded together into this pile of pitiful shallow inane repetitive cliches. Oh no, she slept with him again! Oh no, they’re mad at her! Oh no, she’s crying about him! And those two friends are fighting, and they’re jealous of him, and she’s secretly dating him, and they’re ostracizing her, and they’re currently not speaking, and she said something mean that another girl overheard, and blah, blah, blah…

Worthless annoying friends. All they did was stir up drama. And not even because there was actually any tension or conflict. They were just bored and needed something to make a fuss about.

Snowflakes stuck on his jacket, white speckling black. He looked really good in this jacket. Good enough for that one guy to kiss him. What words did that guy use to describe him? Oh god. It was something really stupid. Yeah, extremely stupid. That was it. That guy leaned in and whispered “You’re pretty and pale and lithe,” didn’t he? Ew! Ugh. Who says words like that? How did that even work? Being intoxicated wasn’t a good enough excuse. What the hell. He shouldn’t have let that guy kiss him…

The boy nearly slipped on a frozen puddle.

“Shit!”

He planted one foot down hard and grabbed at a nearby tree trunk to steady himself. He couldn’t manage and collapsed. One elbow went down before the rest of him and pain shot through his arm. His face made contact with the ice and fallen snow and he realized how cold he was.

He stood up and wiped the snow off his jacket. Weed didn’t usually make him hate himself more than usual. Tonight was different. Or maybe he was different. Maybe the weed was different. He could never depend on his friends to buy decent weed. Now it was just like, fuck everybody and everything.

He made it out of the forest and arrived at the end of a dead-end street. His neighborhood. Snow fell brilliantly under streetlights.

He saw an old man at an intersection. He knew the old man by sight but not name. They lived on the same street. Sometimes they said hi or waved. Not often. They were about to cross paths.

“How are you tonight?” the old man called out.

His voice was so cordial the boy was compelled to mask his dazed frustration. “Doing well,” he said. “You?”

The old man smiled. “I couldn’t possibly be better!” he said, and walked on.

The boy’s ears were frozen and his face was numb. He looked down to protect himself from the wind chill. The snow was piling up. He hugged himself and looked up for a moment. White flakes falling.

He felt goofy and began to laugh. He was certain it wasn’t because of the weed. He kept laughing and laughing and laughing and when he could laugh no longer he kept a big stupid grin on his face.

It was so cold and pretty.
A good man
By Vivian Burnette

Reading Romans close to midnight:
of course I do this because it’s
certainly something I should do like church
on Sundays before 11 a.m. nodding along or seething
to the pastor’s voice and all the while wondering
if this is certainly absurd You see, not being

a Christian is, at times, hard It’s the
upkeep of refusal when appearances say
otherwise, I think that becomes
so tired Because I can imagine giving in easily enough
when I’m sitting in the pews and all that’s
to be done is shake hands and get on with it
I can leave it up to assumption and
it’s no bother, really but inevitably

I know there’s an expectation for confession
which I cannot answer cannot bring myself to
complete the statement: I am a Why
this halting (I-I-I) then this frantic denial whenever pressed and
at times not even pressed (you’ve got
it all wrong) I must dispel any rumors because being
a Christian is, at all times, hard for a heretic

So I just believe in Something More and shuffle and duck
around Protestant values Catholic sympathies There’s
a bible under my pillow a crucifix over my bed but
hush now I swear I will not never tell a lie

Possessed

By Kaitlyn Mussar
Primary Colors

We should call facility services

Aimless
A More Profound Bond

By Haley Hagerman
Man versus Manatee

Afterglow

Do come in, good brother, what shall it be today? A backyard fencing match with garden posts and plastic spears, or an expedition for the best path behind the backyard fence, we team for strategy.

Or a ride in a couch-car and then a boat, where you remind me not to look backwards. Shall we dive below the current and count who comes up first or wade in shallow pools in search of sea glass that didn’t come from a boater’s beer bottle.

Teach me to climb trees and outrun the blind. Play me my other half, and maybe I’ll smile for you.

All aboard the bandwagon of blatancy for the boys who don’t know any better. A hose on the hill and a runaway bicycle, no words when others had too much to say, just pack up bags and leave, leave behind the dust and concrete. I don’t know who left first.

I’ll wait for you on the broken bridge, legs swinging high above the mighty seaweed streams. I’ll count the scrapes on your knees and tell you, don’t worry, you’ve no more than me.

By Rachel Arnow
I Am Really, Really, Really Cool
By Bryan Cebulski

Humphrey Bogart’s ghost gave us his slight nod of approval when you and I spent prom night together smoking cigars on the rubber surface of the playground next to the ladybug spring riders aware that we are not trying to be cool (though we are SO cool) but just desperate to feel something lovely, cloudy, and new

Bob Marley’s spirit flashed us his toothy smile of approval when you and I almost finished a bowl together by the river that spring afternoon the wind blowing out the lighter, the murmur of crisp running water aware that we are not trying to be cool (though we are SO cool) but just painfully desperate to feel something lovely, cloudy, and new

Charles Bukowski’s dark apparition raised his glass in approval when you and I got drunk until sunrise in our friend’s backyard and we stumbled back to my house together to spend the morning basking in the sunlight on the back porch, sleepy-eyed, listening to Steely Dan aware that we are not trying to be cool (though we are SO goddamn cool) but just trying with a growing desperation to feel something lovely, cloudy, and new

Sleep Patterns
By Susannah Gilbert

falling asleep at school, I am assaulted from all sides opera pours from the neighbors on the left, dubstep and chatter from the neighbors on the right, my roommate’s keyboard clicks below my bed, frat boys, like wolf packs, send up their calls outside, and despite it all, I sleep the sleep of logs, rocks, the dead. falling asleep at home, I am the last one awake, no sound but cat feet and soft snoring, so quiet, too quiet, I can hear myself sleep.

Vegas Skyline
By Sara Harris
Otherworldly Drag
By Elizabeth Graber

Shaniqua looked intently at her face in the mirror. Her purple and gold eye shadow blended perfectly with her pale blue skin. Her thin lips looked lush and full with their purple lipstick and gold outline. Her cheeks were lightly tinted with lines to accentuate her cheekbones and make them look higher than they were. All that was left to do was to apply her false eyelashes, pad her bra, and put in the sparkling sequined gown hanging on her closet door, and then she would be ready.

The gold nail polish on her webbed hands flashed in the light of the makeup mirror as she applied the eyelashes. The nail polish would, of course, have to come off at the end of the night, along with the false eyelashes and layers of makeup and long artificial hair. Tomorrow morning, Shaniqua would go back to being Martinus Buxby, intergalactic customs officer at Checkpoint Gamma Beta. He would wear a boring brown uniform (which never matched his skin tone) and stamp boring papers all day long to receive a paycheck. He would eat a boring lunch in a boring brown staff lounge (which never matched the boring brown uniforms or his skin tone) and by the end of the day he would be very, very tired of being bored.

But for now, Martinus Buxby was Shaniqua. She was glamorous, colorful and glowing, and everything she did was exciting. She threw on her glorious purple sequined gown with a flourish and admired herself in the mirror as the bright light glinted off her fabricated curves. Her webbed feet were encased in gold sandals, which matched their own gold nail polish. Making flirtatious faces in the mirror, she swayed her hips and made sweeping gestures with her hands. Great cosmos, she was beautiful.

A knock came at the door, and the little green-skinned stage manager trembled eagerly when she opened it.

“Five minutes, Shaniqua!” he announced excitedly, and hurried off. Shaniqua took one last glance at herself in the mirror, grabbed her feather fan and strode out of the dressing room. She made her way down the hall toward the stage manager’s console. She could hear the crowd as she approached. The crowd was colorful: people piscine, murine, feline, and lupine thronged the stage. She took her place and pose behind the red satin curtain and nodded to the stage manager.

With a rush the curtain flew open and a wall of lights flashed behind Shaniqua. The music started instantly. As the recorded drum set beat out its pattern, Shaniqua danced, shaking her padded hips, parading about the stage, holding up her false bust like the queen she was. Her lips mouthed the words, and her body moved with ease. Colorful lights flashed across the stage with the steady beat. Occasionally she would wink at a thrilled audience member or touch a hand that had been extended toward her.

The song ended with a bang, and the audience whooped and cheered. Shaniqua took her bows with a wide, beaming smile and a graceful flourish of her hand. In the dressing room, Shaniqua hummed her song to herself and danced as she removed her navy blue wig, took off her purple sequined dress and replaced it with a boring blue shirt (which did, in fact, match her skin tone) and boring white pants. She wiped what makeup she could from her face. Shaniqua looked into the brightly lit mirror, and Martinus Buxby looked back. But as he put his boring brown boots on over his webbed feet for the trek home and the gold nail polish on his toes flashed in the light of the mirror, and a smirk crawled across his face.
The Last Symphonic Tone Poem
By Brooke Martin

I
Homage to a Disbanded Symphony

Approximately 100 oddly shaped boxes locked
their treasures hidden buried
in the past silence
is golden and the world is rich

II
Silent City

As I walk from one end of the city to the other
I see many faces.
As I glance in the shop windows
I see many things.
As I read the itineraries
I see a lack of culture.
As I walk from one end of the city to the other
I see many faces of artists, jobless.
As I glance in the shop windows
I see many instruments, pawned.
As I read the prices
I see they are desperate, to make ends meet.
As I walk from one end of the city to the other
I wonder
Why did we do this to them?
Why did we do this to us?

III
Advice From a Teacher to His Student

You could have been a musician.
A long time ago
When concert attendance was high and unemployment low.

You could have been a musician.
Why not now, you ask?
Because today, being a musician is a much more daunting task.

You could have been a musician.
But that dream was no more.
New technology such as digitization has put that occupation out the door.

You could have been a musician.
Now you’ll find the concert hall empty.
Because people would rather listen on an ipod than to pretend they’re one of the gentry.

You could have been a musician.
Just maybe, with luck.
You might have been a musician, but you’d be better off driving a truck.

IV
The Unfinished Symphony

The large black rectangle standing in the corner is covered with dust. Its purpose is unknown.

Black and white rectangles individually covered with dust stand waiting for someone, a hand to stroke.

These silent dusty rectangles my grandfather once played, Try as I might finding the on switch is impossible.
I asked a man
strolling down the street
how he could smile
after losing his job
he has had
for 30 years.

Patting his case
(a violin enclosed)
he said,
"I did not lose a job.
That was not just a job.
We (he and the violin)
know how to live.
We’re moving on.
Now it’s your turn."

A Dialogue, Incomplete
By Anonymous

Does the tree ever cease to grow, or
Quiet its leafy rustling rhyme?

Do the ancient hills ever still the roll of
Their eternal sweeping sublime?

Does the rocky vale shorten its breath of wind, or
The perilous peak its climb?

Does the icy storm ever calm its blast,
Do the rains fail to cleanse our earthly grime?

Can the bird learn not to sing his song,
The lonesome forest’s heavenly chime?

Could the sun forget to rise, or
The stars neglect to shine?

Do the black waters haste to freeze
In the face of some mortal crime?

Does each man not succeed to die
By the quicksand of slow time?

Monster
By Rachele Krivichi
The autumn breeze brought a milky coolness to the roof of the Lost Horizon that evening. It mellowed Jules out, made it easier to talk with her. That is, before I said something that took her off guard.

“Y ou’re never going to college?” she asked.

“Probably not,” I said. I sipped up the last of the martini and set it aside.

“Humble inadequacy? Oh fuck off.”

I smiled. She wanted the best for me. I don’t know why I was arguing against her.

“Think about it from my point of view,” I said. “I don’t wanna take for granted that I’ve been born into this business. I’ll work here or another one of our places awhile… and eventually, probably, take it over.”

“So you’re going to be a dumbass and an alcoholic.”

“More or less. Hey, I can still study stuff in my free time.”

“Whatever. What’s your dad got to say about this?”

“For the time being I’m saying I’m taking a gap year. He won’t care though.”

“You know, you’re the last person I thought’d be lecturing me about college.”

Jules scooted upright, tucked her knees in, and lay her cheek against them, looking at me. “I expect a lot from you is all. Get out of this town, meet new people, make an impact… et cetera.”

“Y eaaah. But this simple culinary management stuff is a good fit for me. I’m not like you. Y ou’re gunna be the next Joan of Arc and make a ridiculous impact.”

She cracked up at that. “Me, Joan of Arc?”

“Why not?”

“I’ll be lucky if I end up the next Amy Winehouse. The big secret is I only wanna sit around and get high all day. I need to do something meaningful just so it’s justified.”

“You know you don’t mean that.”

“Well, half serious.”

I’d set up a portable stereo on a card table nearby. It was playing Bill Evans’ Conversations With Myself. Jules asked me to recommend her some older music. “So I can sound sophisticated at the cocktail parties I’ll be attending in my 20s,” she explained. She went to me for things like that: books, movies, cool jazz, fancy drinks.

As it happened she was drinking something simple, a whiskey sour, swishing the glass around every so often to watch the ice cubes shift. She complimented me on how I’d mixed it. There was no technique worth complimenting, but I cherished her words regardless. She had the uncanny ability to make small remarks like that totally melt your heart.

The bar was expectedly unpopular tonight. Like the cycle of the moon, if you pay attention long enough you can develop a feel for the rhythm of the Lost Horizon’s nightly popularity. There’s at least one quiet weekend every month, I don’t know why. People must work extra shifts or spend more time with their loved ones or catch up on lost sleep. The Lost Horizon appealed to simple people like that—traditional but amicable middle class men and women who want a peaceful retreat after work. The bar softly developed a reputation for such people over the years. It was definitely my favorite of my family’s establishments.

“Well, anyway, thanks again for getting me drunk,” she said.

I saw what she’d done. She’d put our argument in her back pocket, where it would remain until she felt pissed again.

“No problem,” I said. “Never would’ve guessed you like whiskey.”

“I like a lot of things I’m not supposed to.”

“What else?”

“Mm... well, I guess hard liquor and weed mainly. Douchey liberal stuff. Another big secret is I’m the template for the liberal teen girl cliché.”

“Sure are.”

“And you’re the dumb overprivileged straight white male who’s too lazy to go to college cliché.”

“All those?”

“Yup.”

“Well. I wouldn’t call me lazy. Unambitious at worst. What was wrong with ‘humble inadequacy’?”

“Fuck off,” she said. She took another sip. Her hair—the color maybe dark auburn—shuddered in the wind. Otherwise her body was static, like a photograph.

Then she added, lowering her voice, lips barely moving, “I guess you do have it made here…”

I lowered my head, circled my finger around the empty martini glass. “Can’t complain.”

We sat there. I wondered what Jules thought of Bill Evans, but she didn’t seem to have been listening. Part of me felt like I should have been mildly upset, but I wasn’t surprised. Jules was always distant. Neither up in the clouds nor in her own little world, but some dreamy foreign idyll unknown to the majority of mankind. She stared at the black of the sky, the glow of suburban lights too bright to allow for stars. She seemed stuck on something.

Half an hour later I went downstairs to make us another round. I decided to drink plain vermouth this time, the taste of it somehow calling to me.

I made another whiskey sour for Jules. She didn’t pay much attention to taste. Not that she was unrefined—it just wasn’t something she needed to focus on. She always differed with me on insignificant things like that. I enjoyed it.
Back on the roof, Jules had her cell phone in her hands, eyes fixed on the screen, face lit with blue, scanning every word of a text message. She looked at me, looked back at the cell phone.  
  “Ugh,” she groaned. “Shit.”
  “What’s up?”
  “It’s this friend. Uh… I hate to ask, but do you think he could maybe join us?” She asked this in a cute, pleading way, innocently aware it was impossible to refuse. “I’m really worried about him. He’s sending me these really long texts about all the majorly depressing shit that’s been going on with him. He should probly be around people.”
  I tried to hold back my disappointment.
  “No, no, that’s cool,” I said, hoping to sound sincere. “Who’s the friend?”
  “Dennis Tucker. Know him?”
  “Dennis Tucker… Dennis Tucker the freshman?”
  “That’s the one.”
  “Yeah, his gym locker’s like right next to mine. How do you know him?”
  “I used to hang out with his big sister a lot. Got tired of her, ended up getting along better with him. We usually just text or talk online though. He’s a sweet kid. Let’s just cheer him up and get him drunk.”
  “In that order?”
  “Whatever order works. Thanks for this, honestly. I owe ya.”
  Jules typed out a text and put the cell phone back in her pocket. She snatched her refilled glass and gulped it down. She didn’t grimace. I don’t think she ever grimaced.
  About half an hour later Dennis called. We were by this point joyously buzzed.
  Phone to her ear, she told me he was in the parking lot across the street. I told her to tell him to cross the street and go around back, where we’d let him in. She relayed the message. After a few “uh-huh”s and an “Okay hun!” she hung up.
  “Well he’s definitely been crying or something,” she said.
  “Uh-oh. What drink helps broken hearts the best?”
  “You should know that. What else but cheap vodka?”
  He took a bottle from the top shelf and gave it to me. It looked like it’d been up there for some time. Wasn’t even labeled.
  “Get rid of this for me, will ya? It’s the worst of the worst. Probably made out of children’s tears.”
  “Uh, sure. Thanks Gordon,” I said.
  “You better! That was quality coke!”
  He went back to talking to the old man. I saw some of the patrons giving me suspicious looks. They probably knew I was underage, but the Lost Horizon was graciously situated in a relaxed liberal suburb. As long as my inhibitions weren’t shot to the point of potential black-outs or alcohol poisoning (and I’ve never allowed myself to reach that point), I was perfectly welcome.
  My father’s rules for me in and around the bars were lenient. He seemed to have stopped caring once he realized we had the financial stability to make anything involving the word “lawyer” disappear. And besides, by the time I turned seventeen he felt I was more than mature enough to spend some quality time within the establishments that comprised his life’s—our whole family’s—work. Plus ever since the divorce he really wanted to establish himself as the “fun” parent. He could be trusting of me to a fault. It’s just his luck I’m a more or less reserved person.

I grabbed three glasses, filled an ice bucket with ice, and took cranberry juice from the fridge. Arms satisfactorily full, I went back up to the roof.

Bill Evans was on “Stella by Starlight”. The album had been repeating all night. The music emanated so low that my memory of the song filled in for the muted keystrokes.
Above the whimsical piano a young man sobbed. Dennis curled up in Jules’ arms. He made feeble attempts to stop, but couldn’t hold out for long before a loud heaving whimper came on and he exploded into another bout of wails. Jules’ sleeve was soaked and stained with tears and snot.

Semi-drunk as I was, I only noticed the extraordinary way Jules nurtured the poor guy. Her eyes were closed, her face solemn as the Virgin Mary, and a soft “Shh, shh…” escaped her lips as she tenderly rocked the boy back and forth. I almost felt jealous.

I tended to the drinks. I set everything down on the card table, dropped a few ice cubes into each glass, and poured equal amounts vodka and cranberry juice. Dennis looked up as soon as the drinks were poured. He withdrew from Jules, jumped to his feet, scampered over to the table, and, not skipping a beat, drank all three. Just slammed them down one-two-three.

I stared at him. I have no idea why I didn’t intervene. It was one of those train wreck scenarios.

He took the bottle of vodka and started chugging it. His Adam’s apple bobbed up and down. It must have been burning holes in his throat. I could only stand there deliberating over whether this scene was pitiful or comical or tragic or what.

He hardly had three swigs down before his cheeks puffed with the contents of his stomach. He slammed the bottle back down and ran to the edge of the roof. He was lucky to get there in time.


Dennis Tucker. Dennis Tucker the freshman who shared my PE hour, who I’d never spoken to aside from pleasantries, and even then barebones pleasantries. My knowledge of the kid was limited to a general idea of his character: shy, frail, “cute” as the girls would say. He had friends but I never saw him with anybody. I vaguely recall overhearing some rumor about how he was gay. It wasn’t impossible. Maybe he wanted to confide in Jules something regarding his latent sexuality? Jules was a good person for lost souls to flock to.

I wanted to ask him whether this was the case, but even in my semi-addled state I couldn’t bring myself to just offhandedly blurt it out. He might get offended, as teenage boys tend to when our sexuality is questioned. That would make things a whole lot worse.

So nobody talked. Dennis went through a few drinks. I poured them for him, less and less alcohol with each refill. We were hoping they would loosen his tongue. But no. He sipped slowly, eyes downcast. He turned up the stereo, probably to drown out his own thoughts. He kept playing “Spartacus Love Theme” over and over. I guess it helped, if barely, to ease the tension in the air.

Jules rubbed his back or played with his too-long hair, smiled at him, let him know somebody cared. She drank water, hoping to sober up before the night was over.

I drank my cranberry juice and vodka. A lot of me resented Dennis for ruining my night with Jules. I tried to feel bad for him, tried to summon some sympathy. I wished I could be as caring and patient as Jules, but thinking about it just made me angry. The poor little boy all of a sudden became something so pathetic. His quivering lips, his unwillingness to talk, the tears. It was so maddening to look at, to hear, to be a part of.

I thought about what a tougher man than me might say. I thought about what he would say to Dennis. You think you’re the only person in this world who’s in pain? You think you’re so special you deserve pity? Fuck your pain. Fuck pity. Fuck being special. The world has no need for wimps. The world has no need for more self-loathing assholes. At the very least confide with these people. Tell them about your little issues. Let them in. They’re here to help and you’re just being a whiny punk.

I thought these things. I said nothing. I only sipped a fruity mixed drink.

Two and a half hours went by somehow. Not a peep from Dennis. The night ended with an awkward parting of ways. Jules drove him home. I stayed on the rooftop and watched them speed away. Did they even tell me they were leaving? My senses were so numb I couldn’t tell. My mind regressed with each silent minute, till the whole outside world collapsed in on itself.

Somebody stopped Bill Evans a long time ago. I took the stereo and folded up the card table and went downstairs. The Lost Horizon was long closed, the employees gone. The frustration I felt earlier in the night was replaced by pitiful melancholy.

With defeat exacerbated by drink and with nothing else to do, I passed out in one of the booths.

Dennis killed himself two days later. Jules didn’t talk to me for a long time.