



**spectra**  
**2014**

# spectra 2014



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POETRY, PROSE, AND ART FROM THE  
STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF LOUISIANA  
STATE UNIVERSITY IN SHREVEPORT

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# spectra 2014

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From the Editor:

Success does not exist in a vacuum.

When I first took this position I quite honestly had no idea what I was doing, and one of the very first things I did was to look at previous editions of *Spectra* to gain insight. I discovered that every issue began with a "From the Editor" page where the editor usually stated with some feeling of surprise and disbelief that *Spectra* managed to survive another year. I did not understand this until now, and though it may seem that we achieved this issue with sprezzatura, like Hamlet, "I know not seems, only is." The production of this issue has taken a great deal of hard work from a group of very talented and dedicated individuals, and likewise, a great deal of motivation.

I would like to first thank my staff, without whom none of this would be possible. Sarah Kennemer has been a constant source of wisdom, patience, and honesty. Her experience, advice, and diligent eye for detail have been more valuable than I can say. I'd also like to thank Rachel Wilson for always saying "yes," and John Hampson for all the times he asked, "When are we having another *Spectra* meeting?" or "What are we doing for *Spectra*?" And lastly, from my staff, I want to thank Crystal DuRousseau, for reminding me to stay calm and focused. The four of you spent hours editing and formatting what at times seemed an impossible task.

Secondly, I want to thank the English faculty for showing their continued support not just this semester, but over the past four years. You have taught and guided me, and inspired me to always strive for perfection. I want to thank our faculty advisor Dr. Jon Baarsch for his enthusiasm, his commitment to *Spectra*, and his faith in my abilities.

Lastly, I want to thank this year's contributors for submitting something for me to publish, and of course, our readers.

Janet Sherwin  
*Spectra* Editor 2014



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*Crystal DuRousseau***Rational Confusion**

He is an ignorant genius  
Whose impartial decisions make him corrupt.  
He is my loving slave master  
Who gently bludgeons me  
With his whip of hypocrisy and freedom.

Sweet Tyrant,  
I feel like a noble woman prostituted  
For my evil ruler's glory.  
For you have crowned me Queen  
Of no man's kingdom.

I say to you my back-stabbing friend,  
Out of concrete shall arise a rose.  
Through hell I will find heaven.  
Out of a black hole,  
A ray of light will escape.

And the chains I adorn  
Chains of oppression,  
Chains of fear,  
Chains of deadly silence,  
Will one day set me free!

**Drift into Nothingness**

Crack!  
Metal wrapped in napalm  
Tears through my flesh  
As my body screams in agony, covered in liquid.  
My mind is racing,  
But my body is immobile.  
Sound is loud and unintelligible.  
Voices, so many voices screaming but  
No words are understood.  
Excruciating memories  
Play before my eyes like a movie.  
An uncontrollable urge to sleep  
Sweeps over me as I am  
Consumed by Light.

I'm sorry.



*Malvya Chintakindi***WILL YOU, DEW?**

That dreamy passionate young lass, indulged with the morning dew drops gazes  
From the worldly frame on fast moving wheels. A running bus, daily routine  
Partnering with the slowly revealing light, romancing along melodies so bright.  
Jingling temple bells, fuming incense uprights—  
She adjusts her hair, puts on an air, wrapping the monotony while envisaging peaks of  
Portuguese saudade.  
As she flutters her wings,  
Lo! came the storm:  
A dark beast disguised as wine, cunningly attractive, delusional, vindictive.  
There she rolls into the waves and strikes—  
Oh yes, strikes back, against, forth, strikes again and again.  
Snuggling her desires, she broke  
The infinite space luring to choke;  
Swaying with the wind in abuse, perturbed  
Nowise to express, regret, escape.  
Displaced she is all the way to the other end of the world—  
Painstakingly dying to die  
Once, twice and thrice.  
Fiddling with seclusion, she talks to the moon,  
Whispering secret impossible sensualities;  
not wanting the vapors to gossip lest long lost abode gets to learn.  
Heartless nightmares never let her be, infamous images haunt endlessly.  
Suspicious of any slight movement, inside and out,  
There she lay dismantled in the Rapunzel tower  
Angry with the nostalgia presented by morning fog and dew,  
Helplessly holding the star tight. Silly oblivious star,  
Expecting it would kiss the wounds to spring back alive.  
Betrayed over, learns the lesson, embraces the blues and skies;  
Wide arms around,  
There they wed each other – an undisclosed countenance.  
She became one with the cosmic spirit,  
Forging endearment in the night, peeking to plan, seeking to solve, theft?  
Her withered leaves attempt healing  
Vain, vain and vain, still contemplating.  
That teary passionate young lass chants the name of her grandma,  
Envisioning abode's bus' morning dew drops on the window pane—  
Hopeless for the day to arrive,  
Tensed if their consent would be the same?  
Will the sparkle reflect her in shame?  
Optimistic as a fool  
There she subsists – destiny's tool.

*EverSMOH***Untitled**

Color floats everywhere,  
Violet swaying on the breeze;  
Life carrying on all around,  
Chirping, tweeting, rustling.

The world set on fire!  
Red: dancing all around—  
Brown: conquering,  
Crunching, crackling, whispering.

Innocence gained,  
Horrors covered by perfect blankets;  
Perfection captured in ice,  
Swishing, creaking, laughing.

The world gives birth!  
Explosions of color are all around—  
Pollen swimming in the wind,  
Gurgling, sneezing, giggling.

*Yong Chung***Oh, how my lover comes to me**

Oh, how my lover comes to me  
in a flurry of wind and noise.  
He demands so much from me,  
with his rough, unforgiving touch.  
What else can I do but give to him my passion?  
I open up my blushing joy,  
and reveal my sweet, glistening nectar.  
He devours it with such frenzy,  
Like a man possessed with undeniable lust,  
Until I am bruised and battered—  
Unable to sate him anymore.  
Without a single word he rises,  
Now that I have given him my all,  
and to the next he flies off—  
leaving me empty,  
leaving me alone.  
Who knows when I shall see my lover again,  
And if he shall even remember my name;  
But I cannot ever forget his touch,  
And how he have given me a glimpse of pleasure...

**Untitled**

I am not yet dead!  
Even though I am far from home,  
And my shape is no longer whole,  
I have vanished from this world.  
I am still proud and strong,  
Living a million different lives  
Across all the lands and seas.  
I am not yet dead!  
For I see all things now,  
Across all of time and space itself.  
I exist like a God  
Across the expanse of the globe.  
I am not yet dead!  
I am used to create and destroy all things,  
Start wars and end life  
With a simple brush stroke or pen strike.  
I am not yet dead!  
I will live hundreds upon thousands of lives,

Forever reshaping and changing what it means to be me—  
I shall forever be all things and nothing at the same time,  
For I am not yet dead,  
Nor shall I ever truly be.



*Jessica Ingram*  
Field of Dreams 2

Ryan Sanders

*The Labors of Alexander*  
*A Tragi-Comi-Heroic Poe-imitation*  
*Canto 1*  
*The Assigation*

1           Oh curs'd gods in heaven that left a hero slain,  
 That let his spear run out of ink and ripped his shield in twain—  
 A brave and honest knight now forever laid to rest,  
 Whose one and only crime was to undertake thy quest—

5           I call upon thee wretches now so thy sin thou can repent,  
 By helping me this hero bold to honor and lament.  
 So join thine voices with mine now, and let us sing a song,  
 Of the noble Alexander, and of his Labors long.

          Tis in a hall of higher learning that our story starts—

10          Yea, in that selfsame Lyceum where Aristotle taught his arts—  
 Up the stairs, on the second floor, and three doors to the right,  
 There awaited gentle Alexander—most virtuous of knights—  
 Meditating, like Buddha did for nine and forty days,  
 Head lolled back, shoulders slumped—his eyes were dim and glazed—

15          When suddenly he heard a voice athundering in his head,  
 And he reckoned it the voice of God, and this is what it said:  
           “Quit the drool from off thy face and straighten up thy spine!  
 Hark, Alexander! Hear me now! A task I do assign!  
 The Words, the Words, the curs'd Words are starting to rebel,

20          And take up arms against me like the demon prince of Hell,  
 So seekest I a champion, of sturdy arm and spine,  
 To crush the rebels under heel and bring them into line.  
 What sayest thou Alexander—nay, I'll answer in thy stead;  
 For if not 'Yea' I will cast thee out to forever beg thy bread.

25          This Labor, noble Alexander, do I assign to you;  
 Now I beseech thee: makest haste, for on Thursday it is due!”

          With a start the knight awoke and wasted not a breath,  
 Contemplating banishment, the battle ahead, or death,  
 But rather, with ball-point spear clutched tightly in his fist,

30          A quiver full of graphite arrows, a bow that's never missed,  
 And a shield of the college rule, over a hundred pages thick,  
 The hall he left, to start his quest, between a tock and tick.

*Canto 2*  
*The Complication*

1           Oh, Fortuna! Oh cruel fate! How could he then know?  
That he was being watched by the dreaded Procrastino,  
The trickster king of Fancy Castle in the Idle Land,  
Where he ruled a motley crew, a wicked fairy band.  
5       Gazing into his crystal ball, Procrastino beat his chest,  
For nothing made him angrier than a hero on a quest.  
So summoned he the unseelie court and selected six  
Of the deadliest succubi to ever cross the Styx;  
“Do everything in your power to this mortal man delay,”  
10       He ordered them, with booming voice, and sent them on their way.

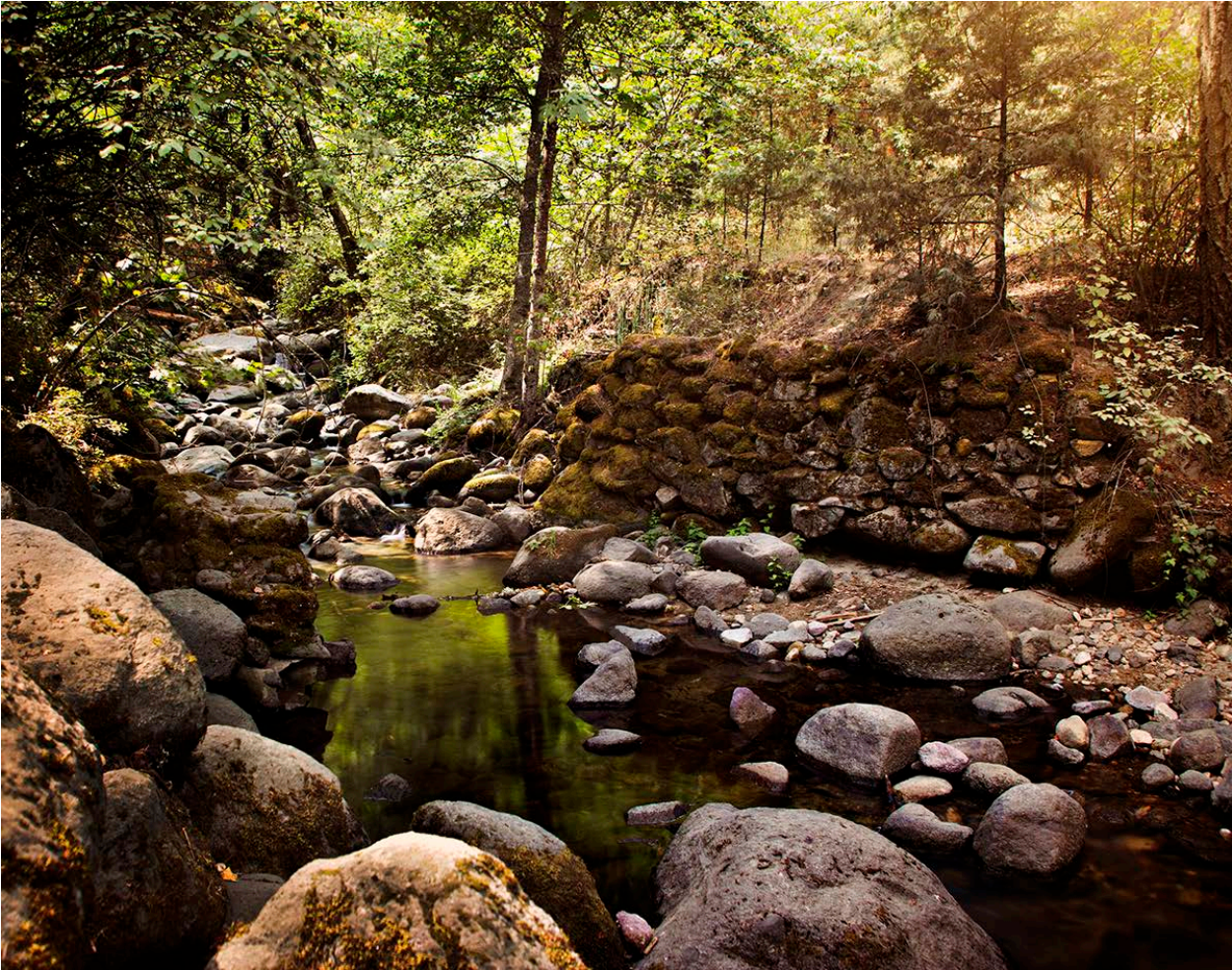
*Canto 3*  
*The Temptation*

1           So it was that Alexander, while wandering a desert land,  
Finally found the rebel Words asleeping in the sand.  
“If I strike them now,” said he, grasping his number-two saber,  
“Then I can slay them in their beds, and promptly end my Labor.”  
5       But just when this cunning plan he was preparing to enact,  
A sudden noise from near at hand his attention did attract.  
Around he spun—his weapon drawn and ready for a fight—  
Yet not a beast nor a fiend, but a lady stood before our knight.  
          She wore silver discs over loins and chest, but otherwise was bare,  
10       A glass screen was like her eyes and wires like her hair,  
A coronet of cartridges atop her head she wore,  
And a controller and a joystick in both her hands she bore.  
Alexander stared in awe at this buxom beauteous dame,  
Smiling sweetly back she said “Dost thou want to play a game?”  
15       And suddenly another lady was standing at his side,  
Dressed like Eve in the garden ‘ere our innocence had died,  
A storm of static behind her eyes, yet beholding her was bliss  
“Come, hero brave and bold,” said she, “and rest thine eyes on this,  
For a thousand tales can I tell, and wear as many faces,  
20       So that soon as one begins to bore, another one replaces.”  
          He had just begun to ponder this when another nymph appeared,  
Playful was her countenance, yet her form was fey and weird,  
Inconstant as the moon, she was, body shifting to and fro,  
Sometimes to a form which he adored, and sometimes to his woe,  
25       A scholar was she, then a salesman, then a naked tease,  
And finally a cat eating unseen burger made with cheese.  
“Come, gallant lord,” beckoned she, voice dripping with guile;

"Come, join me on my web and connect with me awhile!  
All thy lusts can I satisfy, for knowledge, goods, and skin,  
30 Or, in the very least, I can but make thee laugh and grin."  
Then two new sirens emerged and seized him by the wrist,  
And drug him down unto the ground for their illicit tryst;  
Like the second sister their faces were inconstant as the sea,  
One wore the façades of beloved friends, the other family,  
35 "Forget us not, good Alexander!" cried and wailed those two,  
"Vital may thy labor be, but we are vital, too!"  
Just as he began to struggle, one more nymph entered the scene;  
In a night gown was she dressed, and her eyes were all serene  
She pinned the knight on his back and lay upon his chest,  
40 Then whispered softly in his ear, "Tis time to take a rest."  
Alas! How our hero *would* have fought, how he *would* have ran,  
How he *would* have shunned the sirens were he but more than man!  
What perfect god, who imperfect made him, can assign him blame?  
What mortal man when given the chance would not have done the same?  
45 So setting down his sword and shield—the emblems of his might—  
Alexander his task forgot, yet he Labored all the night.

*Canto 4*  
*The Labor*

\*Alas, this canto remains unfinished due to the wiles of the sirens\*



*Jessica Ingram*  
Serenity



*John Hampson*

### Untitled I

I'm sorry I don't feel the way you do,  
So don't make me take it back.  
I like the way I am and was;  
If you try to change it,  
I'll revert you back-  
Back to what you were,  
Before you knew what I  
Meant to you.

Take my opinion as you would apply salt,  
And examine the grains that I've trailed.  
If you seem you want to be with me,  
I'll dash some in for good taste  
And watch you make a face:  
Different than the one I love,  
A visage of a foe-  
Reflecting.

### Untitled II

The last time I felt like this,  
I had no idea what it felt like-  
To feel the way I do  
About the things I'm not  
For the people I don't know  
That judge me anyway.  
Staring holes in my incontrovertible soul  
I feel not naked  
But hidden behind  
A part of you  
You hate  
To believe

### Untitled III

Calmness creates balance,  
And thus unity here.  
Behind attempts to reconcile,  
Forgive empty reflections-  
A solemn word will do.  
Stabbing at the infinite,  
We grow tired and hunger  
Not knowing what to do.

Peace be with the light  
Bathing me now,  
Until all is lost;  
I have yet found  
What I was looking for  
All along  
Empty  
Roads.

#### Untitled IV

A noose representing freedom  
As he's hanging by his own lifeline;  
Drawn from his imagination, split-  
On the road with no destination.  
A foggy map with names indiscreet,  
Tithing to the one he can truly trust.  
Each breath dirty with life siphoned;  
Experience leaks from a jagged memory-  
Quail eggs  
Clandestine virtues resonate from the clarity of the well of forgiveness,  
To each its own and to all we belong.  
Yes, there is no escape,  
But the beginning has no more security than the conclusion-  
Unacceptable.  
Open faith is blindness - copulate for coins.  
Keep, keep movin',  
Only faster this time  
Now  
Only faster this time  
Keep, keep movin',  
Open faith is blindness - copulate for coins.  
Unacceptable.  
But the beginning has no more security than the conclusion-  
Yes, there is no escape,  
To each its own and to all we belong.  
Clandestine virtues resonate from the clarity of the well of forgiveness,  
Quail eggs  
Experience leaks from a jagged memory-  
Each breath dirty with life siphoned;  
Tithing to the one he can truly trust.  
A foggy map with names indiscreet,  
On the road with no destination.  
Drawn from his imagination, split-  
As he's hanging by his own lifeline;  
A noose representing freedom.

*Kendal Hay***To Serve the Moon**

Thank you for the dark night  
I really enjoyed it  
The hard corners of the moon  
Pressing into my lungs,  
Revealing a warring current  
Hidden so fine and neat  
Beneath that initial glow.  
This is fun. My spine yielding  
My body thinking it might break.  
My mind weak on wine and wonders,  
Focusing tight as I can on the  
Moon above your shoulders.  
Is it angry, sad, I can't read it well  
Enough, I know it was empty  
Or maybe that was me.  
My stomach, fill it up then  
My throat and soul with kisses.  
My body and mind relenting  
They are not Mine anymore,  
not mine anymore,  
Limb from limb, dismantled  
But a gift. I am a sacrifice.  
Hauled to the highest mountain  
Where the light can lay into the land  
Speak tongues and devils and  
Spiritual illusions into my ear.  
I have no language here,  
Words are faceless strangers  
Mine are crushed for grapes and silver  
Because you know best  
The window is tiny from this angle  
But you know best  
And isn't this fun, Dionysus knew best  
And we are of his ilk tonight.  
Because When I crossed the threshold,  
Wearing my Night like a flickering Invitation

It was written:

I came to serve the moon,  
Even if I did not know it  
I came to serve the moon.

*Peyton Rachal*

### **Reflecting Glass**

The mirror of his life lay shattered, broken at his feet.  
His hands crimson ribbons from his futile attempts to piece it back together again.  
Fractured fractals of memories, shimmering up like stars from below,  
Some dulled by the ruby lens, others shining brilliantly through his tears.  
One by one, the lights faded like candles drowning in their own wax.  
As if the whole universe was going dark.  
There, alone in the void, sat the memory of a child long forgotten,  
A single pinprick of light shining through the floorboards of reality.  
Lifting it up to his eyes, it was there, in that moment, that he really began to live.



*Jessica Ingram*  
I am Small

*Kathleen T. Smith***Crocus**

As I love you, I will thread myself  
Around you, vining our hearts.  
I am no less yours in death,  
Sweet flower of my bed.  
You spring up where I step,  
In the cool places of my rest.  
Fair fellow, color the ground,  
Make this my delectable garden,  
Where even bees light,  
Pollen-crusting, heavy with you.

**Fragments**

The original twitterers—  
the two chicks  
in my kitchen.

Night falls.  
The solar lights  
star the yard.

Mean girl.  
My gray cat  
guards the henhouse.

Standoff.  
The black cat  
and the flea medicine.

The poppy bruise  
blooms on  
my forearm.

## How to Build a Fire

First, make a circle of leaves and small twigs—  
the ones you pick up obsessively in the yard—  
in the fire pit. Heap these as high as you want.  
Take three large logs and tripod them  
around the circumference; fill in the gaps  
with smaller limbs. When you have  
a stick teepee, wad up paper  
and sandwich it along the base.  
An empty chicken feed sack works well,  
but old love letters and journals—the ones  
you don't want your children to find  
when they clean out your house—  
work better. Fire thrives on secrets  
and shame. Flick on the lighter you use  
to start the briquettes in the barbeque pit  
and ignite all the paper. The kindling will catch;  
the logs will follow.  
When the flame burns blue-white,  
pile on the rest of the fuel,  
old gifts, pictures, the pillow  
where he laid his head;  
layer this with heavy logs.  
Oak is best, especially the wood  
you've cured for a year under  
the open shed. It will burn hot,  
but quick, so have plenty on hand.  
If you need to cry, burn pine. It's sooty  
and sappy. The smoke will irritate  
your eyes if you stand in the wind's path,  
and no one will question the tears.

*Rachel Wilson*

### The One of Less Fortune

Sometimes I think my mother had her heart surgically removed and replaced with a pure gold replica. She is always looking for a cause, some broken home situation to build back up brick by brick. Dad used to say that was one of the reasons he fell in love with her.

She picked up a homeless man one time, brought him home, let him shower, gave him a change of clothes from Dad's closet and a hot meal, then drove him to a homeless shelter. I learned about this after she missed my ballet recital.

Once, when she was volunteering at an inner city school, there was a little girl that "just broke her heart" wearing clothes five times her size and using doubled-up plastic bags to carry her supplies in. My mom used half her paycheck to buy the little girl a few outfits and a brand new pink Barbie backpack. We went without power for a week until my mom's next paycheck. It was that or go without food.

I admire my mother. I really do. She's taught me a lot about sacrifice and charity and loving others even if they aren't family or friends. Even when she could have taken a little time to herself to mourn Dad's death, she threw herself into volunteering even more. People admired her for "holding up so well" and "getting back on her feet so quickly." I made my own meals, did my own laundry, and got myself to school from then on.

"Mom," I call, and she briefly looks up at me from the kitchen table where she is putting together several Christmas shoeboxes for less fortunate children. "I'm the Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker* ballet this year, remember? Tomorrow is opening night. You will be there, right?"

Her tongue is sticking out of the side of her mouth as she holds up a box of crayons in one hand and a matchbox car in the other, as though it's a life or death choice which toy goes in which box.

"Mom?"

"Yes, darling. I'm volunteering at the soup kitchen in the afternoon, but I'll make it to your ballet. I promise."

She is already back to sorting through toys, humming absently at the same time.

I know she won't be there.



## Handle With Care

"It's been six months," he said idly, trailing his fingers up and down her spine.

"I know that," came her muffled reply. He felt her mouth move against his collarbone as she spoke the words. He stared straight up at the ceiling, studying the dips and peaks he found there in the beige expanse. Six months ago, he carefully studied other uneven surfaces.

A pregnant silence followed her murmured reply, and he closed his eyes as the surface beneath him began to shake.

"Do you ever think you'll be ready again?" he finally broke the silence.

His words hung heavy in the air, thick like the humidity condensing on the windows outside.

He stared down at his left hand resting gently on her pale, smooth shoulder, and his eyes fell on the glowing gold band around his ring finger. There was a small dent in the top of the band.

"Baby?" he prompted her again, and he tightened his arm around her, holding her closer.

"Maybe," she mumbled.

He almost asked again, but he thought it better not to rock the boat.

*Kendra Thompson*

### The Rain Takes Her Breath Away

Somewhere in a dream, Beethoven's ninth symphony was playing. It started softly and increasingly became louder. This annoys me, because I am not a huge fan of this ominous piece of music. I dislike it so much that I use it as my mother's very own special ringtone. Personalized ringtones are the best technology invented since the cell phone itself. "She will leave a message", I thought. She always leaves a message. Once again, the music softly plays, and then increases to a threatening serenade that I can no longer ignore. I suddenly realize that this is not a dream – it *is* my mother calling. With one eye, I look at my phone on the nightstand next to the bed. I had been out very late the night before and drank too much vodka – it was only nine A.M. My mother does not leave a message; instead, she hangs up and calls right back. I fantasize about a little cartoon Beethoven being chased by an angry animated version of me. Suddenly, the animation turns into a velociraptor, and I eat "cartoon Beethoven" in one violent, delicious bite. The music continues. I am awake now, and I know I have to answer my phone. She will not relent – she will continue to call, and if I turn my phone off she will just come over and bang on the door. That is not an option because I had left a sink full of dishes, and my bedroom looked like a scene from *The Hurt Locker*.

"Hello Mother."

"Were you sleeping?" she asks, surprised, but with her customary underlying tone of judgment.

"I had a late night, and I got totally shitfaced...too much vodka," I say. She was silent. These bold confessions always shut her up. I had been using this little trick since I was in high school. She prefers to deny that her children are not, in fact, perfect, and to reproach or lecture me would be like admitting that I actually did drink alcohol – in public – and not just with dinner. If you have a southern mother from an old southern family, then you understand this, and, if not, well, just read a Tennessee Williams play. I have been convinced for sometime now that his writings were simply a record of my family history, especially the ones about beautiful, frail, damaged, mentally broken women. Williams must have been a great uncle or cousin or dear family friend; either way, he definitely understood *my* old southern family, but I digress.

"What are you calling for, Mother?" I go on as she pretends not to hear about the vodka or my shocking use of profane language.

"Well, you know your father and I are working on the remodel."

This is not a surprise to me since they had been "working" on the remodel pretty much all of my adult life.

"I need you to come and look at these drapes for your father's den. I think they are the wrong color... I need your designer's eye."

I have never studied interior design – and who actually uses drapes anymore? This is simply an attempt to deny my true occupation: hair stylist. My mother actually studied art and design in college herself, and while our tastes are different, she was perfectly capable of those decisions on her own. Honestly, if the drapes were plaid or had ducks

on them, Daddy would love them. I know she just wants to spend some time with me, but my hostility over the years has caused her to feel that she needs a legitimate excuse to see me. Like a good daughter, I climb out of bed, put on my clothes from last night, my large sunglasses, and brush my teeth. I know that at the very least I will probably get brunch out of the deal.

She has a fruit plate, and I have a giant stack of banana nut pancakes with what she describes as, "an excessive amount of syrup and butter, dear." I don't care. I am grumpy and hung over, and I need real food and grab the biggest diet cola I can get. We eat silent, as we often do. What do we have to say to each other? Occasionally, I look up from my trough of food and watch her slowly cut up and chew a single grape for at least ten minutes. Each time she swallows, she sighs as if it were a giant chore to eat fruit – fruit! Annoyed, I think back to my childhood: she was rail thin and blonde; everyone said she could be a model.

We started our mother/daughter relationship with much angst very early on. One of my mother's rules was that my sister and I always had to wear dresses. My poor, tomboyish little sister was so distraught by the dress rule that she took scissors to all of her frilly frocks one day. I didn't mind the rule so much until my sixth birthday party: I was going to have a skating party and Mother insisted that I wear this ridiculous outfit that I hated and she was reasonable about it. She understood that I could not skate in a dress, but the alternative was far worse. It was a one-piece ensemble – not a dress and not shorts – but a hideous combination of the two. In the seventies, we called them *gauchos*. I hated *gauchos* – and I hated her! At least, that is what I yelled at her for: making me wear the *gauchos*. She looked hurt for a brief moment; but suddenly another look came over her face, and it was one I had never seen before. All morning there had been the impending threat of storms. Each time it thundered, my mother closed her eyes as if in silent prayer. Almost exactly the same time that I expressed my hate for my mother, it began to rain, a loud, angry downpour that rang in my ears. My mother began gasping for air, and she put her hands to her throat as if to indicate that she was choking. I will never forget the look on her face. She was terrified, as was I. I ran to get my father for help; I told him that Mother was dying! He didn't seem to be that concerned. He followed me to my bedroom, where by then; she was writhing on the floor, her face blue still grasping at her neck. To my horror, my father screamed at her, "Get up, you're fine!"

She writhed and gasped and managed to say: "rain."

I didn't know why my father was so angry. He grabbed my mother and pulled her to her feet. Then he dragged her flailing body through the house and pushed her outside through a clear, glass, sliding, patio door and into the rain. He locked the door.

"Breathe," he screamed.

She fell to her knees and cried; she cried harder than the rain as it poured. It's a horrible thing to realize that your parents are not who you believe they are. I had always felt safe before, and this horrible event would mark the beginning of my own anxiety and panic.

My father coldly turned and walked to a yellow phone (known as harvest gold back then) with a long, curly cord hanging on the wall in the kitchen. That was the first

time I remember my mother going away. Later, my grandmother explained that my mother was tired and she needed to go somewhere and rest.

“Like a vacation,” she said cheerfully.

Back at the restaurant, I’m watching her eat fruit. It occurs to me for the first time that she cannot help the way that she is. I know that she didn’t want to leave us so many times when we were children. I know that I have to let go of resentments, and I *will* change that ringtone.



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