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Essence Fine Arts and Literary Magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who express themselves through various artistic mediums. The works contained within are considered, by Essence staff members to be some fine examples of creative and literary expression. The Essence staff expresses appreciation to all its contributors and readers for sharing in this publication.
ADVICE FOR THE LIVING
JANNA MAE ADAMS

You can wear black to my funeral.
Dig in the back of your closet
Dress shirts, nylons, old jackets.
Find your solemn black suit, your simple black
dress.
Pair it with your practical black dress shoes.
Put it on, look sad, and be on your way.

It's not that I demand you be in mourning—
To be moved by my death or not is your own
choice.
But black looks clean, black looks put-together.
I just want you to look your best
While surrounded by so many others
Living, looking their best,
And trying desperately to look their saddest.

Give my father a hug,
Or my brother, my sister, my best friends.
Hug them and tell them you love them; do not
say you are sorry.
Sorry for what?
That I'm dead?
If people are not sorry that I'm dead, they can
say that aloud.
Just hug my husband,
My kids if I've had them,
And share the mutual feeling that I am gone,
and you are still here.

Don't look at me too long at the viewing.
I'm sure I'll look just terrible—just completely
washed out.
Maybe I should practice lying in bed,
Draped in my best dresses, best shoes.

But I'll have no shame.
That's what you do at funerals—put the dead on
a pedestal.
Except, I'll be in a coffin.
Maybe you should just have them close it and be
on your way.

Make sure you get some coffee, if I die in the
winter.
Standing by my grave will be cold, especially in
your tights, your thin suit.
If it's in the summer, bring along some lemonade.
Pass it out to other funeral-goers as they stand
in the sinking grass.
Tell them it's too nice to not be drinking
something.
Spike it with a little vodka.

You can have a wake, if you wish
At some pizza shop nearby.
But don't you dare talk about my death while
you're there,
Sitting around a table, dipping breadsticks in
sauce.
Talk about tomorrow's football game—
The way my sister still can't roll her R's.
Talk about all the work you still have to do before
the end of the week—
About that new horror film that looks terrible
And how desperately you want to see it.

Forget where you've just spent the previous hour
While still dressed in the solemn, clean black
You can wear grief to my funeral
But leave it there.
I still search for you in everyone I meet. Collage.
AVENGE ME
KIMBERLY WINTERS

Avenge me!
Gurgles his blood
As it bubbles and bursts
Bright and brilliant
From ruined flesh.

And your own blood,
Flying like a flock
Of startled sparrows
Through a thin blue sky,
Sings in response.

Avenge me!
Wails the organ,
Each cracking note
A broken sob
Over dark casket.

And your own body,
Heavy and still
As the corpse beside it,
Cannot help
But tap its foot.

Avenge me!
Sigh the dark clouds
As furious raindrops
Attack two figures
Amid cowering tombstones.

And your own hands,
Spurred by wet blows,
Drown themselves
In paste-soft throat
And river-fast blood.

Avenge me...
The whisper dies
In listless wind
Until at last
There is silence.
LUCIDITY
CAMERON WERTZ

I lie here strewn out on the crumb-infested, soda pop-stained couch—which probably contains about four dollars and thirty-seven cents in its cracks from years of neglect—watching the colors from the television dance across the walls. The shades of purple, blue, and red morph together into hardly recognizable shapes, but I watch them perform their waltz across the walls anyway. There is a certain elegance in the way they flash and flutter on the white canvas. I look at them as if they have some hidden meaning, as if they’re going to tell me the secrets of reality. What is real, I ask myself. Am I lying here? Is this nearly empty bottle of cheap scotch, clutched so tightly between my fingers it could fall at any moment, real? Is the sweat now beading from my hairline down my brow and along my left cheek real? Is any of it real? The nonchalant questions plague my mind. Do any of them really even matter? The noises emanating from the television set are quarantined in a section of my mind so far from my consciousness they are but a faint whisper landing on distant ears. It’s like the vagrant noise never existed at all. I can feel the heat from the cherry of my cigarette as I take a long drag from its tar-tainted filter. The smoke fills my lungs and I can feel the nicotine’s effect creep over me as if the smoke itself was rising over my cranium. The thick smoke exits my lungs in a plume cloud spreading through the dancing lights. The colors have a new, lively element to them, reminding me of the distinct formations of Aurora Borealis. The rays move effortlessly through the layer of smoke now drifting in the air, but the lights come to life in a new and intriguing way. The orange ember clinging to the end of my cigarette now burns my fingers, but it doesn’t bother me. I don’t even know if the pain is real or just a fabrication of my mind. The constructs of this world are questionable, and I find no trouble in questioning them. I wonder if I am dreaming or just growing distant from the world I inhabit. The first seems the most logical but the growing truth behind the latter was a strikingly resenting thought. Could a person really grow so far out of touch with reality? Have I slipped into a world in between worlds, between reality and lucidity? I flick my outstretched cigarette butt into the fireplace, hardly four feet to my left, and it bounces off the wood rack before landing in a pile of at least fifty-some others—all smoked right to the end of the filter. Remembering the liquid gold in my right hand, I raised the bottle to eye-level and sloshed it around, the golden honey-colored liquid in its glass prison. I need to free it. It’s a shame there isn’t more to be freed, my mind tinkers. How anyone could hate the stuff was beyond me. Hell, I preferred it to people most times. With one blurred motion I opened my mouth and poured what remained of the scotch down my throat. My hand trailed in the air, further hinting that I was no longer in a state of reality; although, it could have been the booze. The bottle slipped from my grasp as my hand bobbed on the dense cushion; it rolled slowly on the hardwood floor, making that familiar shrill sound that would grab anyone’s attention—it seemed to go on forever. The loud hollow clang it made when it hit the end table sitting a few feet away echoed through my ears. There were moments when the sound made me cringe, but I shook it off and returned my attention to the peculiar lights floating above my head. They seemed entangled with the smoke still lingering as a thin layer in the air. It really was an amazing sight. I still didn’t know if this place was real, but I knew I never wanted to leave. In my entranced state I reached out to touch the lights. Perhaps they would wrap around my fingers, and I could join them in their dance across the night sky—the night sky? Where did the ceiling go? I looked around. The walls were gone. My chair was gone. The lights were gone. Everything... was gone. I had been sleeping after all. Had nothing been real? Or had it all been real? Is reality only what we perceive in a state of lucidity?
TV
ELIZABETH LEAVENS

We stayed up late watching
Your new favorite show
But you are asleep on my shoulder,
Arm on my hip.

You're still a fucking bed hog.

You are level headed.
You make sense.
You are shy and comfortable.

But you still make me swoon
Like the day I heard you read
Some dark humored fiction
In the form of a suicide note.

I'll kiss your sleepy lips
And wait to tell you in the morning.

FOUR WALLS
CAMERON WERTZ

Plastered in stale white
Unforgiving; daunting in nature
I hated these four walls
These four walls

Staring and resenting
These four walls
Broken thoughts; empty thralls
Chills, sweats and spitting regrets
These four walls

Coerce me to regress
Infantile in their presence;
Nothing, hardly an existence
To be said. Drawn from the earth
Or drawn from dirt?
Knees to chest; Hands to elbow

These four walls
Like sitting on death row
To the end of fright
And first morning's light
These four walls
Stare back at me
ELEVEN
CAMBREA ROY

A front porch at eleven
Reaches in the night, like a harbor
Grabbing water.
A floating street corner
Burns like a torch in the glory
Of the night.

No lovers meeting,
No secrets part their lips,
No quiet goodbyes.

And fog falls from its mouth,
An exhale of a smoky drag floating
down to meet you.
While trees reach for its face,
Framing it with satin sheets of
Nocturnal elegance.

And the night bows down,
And the wind finds its rest,
And the darkness dwells.

Still, the moon watches over,
Giving a kiss to the shadows below.
GROW UP
ELIZABETH LEAVENS

I've got too much to say
But nowhere to fit it

On pages of groceries
And reminders
And receipt paper
From nine hour shifts.

If this is growing up
You can take it back.

DREAMS
KAYLEIGH SABO

I want to kiss you
at the skating rink back home
in midnight snowflakes
MEMO:  
AMAZON HR DEPARTMENT [DRD]  
BILL REPKO

Dear Amazon Employees,

We regretfully report that Nancy Borrachero, leading sales manager for our East coast facility, has passed. It is with deep sorrow we must inform you all of this matter; but rest assured, Nancy behaved with the utmost professional grace in passing. When our Seacolorum Division entered the premises and discovered her body, they found poor Nancy collapsed and face-down on the floor. They proceeded to turn her neck so as to include a picture for their files, and made a note of her savvy taste in eye-wear. Our crew also took notice of her elegant taste in décor and the magnificent color-scheme of the walls. She truly died in the same fashion she lived: the locus of inspiration through style! And the vase she specified in her Last Will & Testament will carry that message into oblivion!

A moment of silence will be held in her memory between 4:59-5pm. Because of this tragedy Amazon hopes you will learn something about yourself you never knew before – life, like sales, is precious. Please, make sure to check out the upcoming addition to our website: Funeral Gadgets & Accessories!

Sincerely,

Suzanne Lamprey [Director of HR Death Reconciliation Dept.]

1. Dressed in a vintage Versace ‘Vicky Flower’ print shift dress: mixed with antique yellow, magenta, and lollipop pink, she had continued to redefine sexy post-mortem – a template to feminine wile (95% viscose, 5% elastane).

2. Hand-scraped 8” engineered chocolate maple wood flooring, compliments of Jasper Co.

3. Elegantly adorned with a Blue Nile princess-cut diamond solitaire pendant (18K white gold; refer to Employee Catalog, Pg. 233).

4. A part of Warby Parker’s Sims-style violet magnolia line.

5. The orange & white shaded Toch brand leather sectional sofa set, with Safavieh Finn decorative polyester pillows. A Golden Sparrow white leather Detroit loveseat; Naguchi glass-top coffee table from the Herman Miller collection; and the South Shore pure-white, line harmonized bookshelf.

6. Valspar Reserve paint - primer with hydrochoma technology – 40% more durable than the leading paint brand: shades so vibrant, if you couldn’t see the writing, ‘Beautiful!’, on the wall before, you can see it now.

7. The Dale Tiffany Leslie vase adorned with straw and oval patterns crafted onto a sheen crystal finish is still one of our top-sellers!
Ah, Mademoiselle,
you've a new style,
a gift from the people
in light of your trial.

Your rouge blush is gone,
replaced by cold fear's:
A color untouched
by garbage or tears.

Two ropes round your wrists
like rosary beads
for each cracking prayer
your bleeding lip pleads.

Your skin is rubbed soft,
dress rough as a sack,
while your posture's kept straight
by the post at your back.

Your feet are tied small
as a Chinaman's daughter,
and big eyes grow bright
with the shining of water.

The fire flicks up,
an upside-down skirt,
hiding you from lewd eyes
staring up from the dirt.

Heavy lashes are laden
with flakes of soot
as the flames eat away
at each delicate foot.

Baby-soft flesh
grows heavy as stone
and, brown as a roast,
oozes off of the bone.

Fire licking your face
like an old Irish Setter,
you fall down in black hunks.
And you've never looked better.
PLAYTIME
KIRK GRIFFITHS

Skinheads must hate the game Twister...
that's a lot of colors.

THE MARKET
REBEKAH MILLER

Soft smelling herbs
Partition three generations.
A child's hand suddenly in mine whispers.
There, she placed a few flower petals
And spearmint, a bitter sweet song on my tongue
Simple Fascination.

Trunks full of pimpled pumpkins
Storm and frost and rain they weathered.
Experienced exteriors encompass
Centers ripe and sweet.

The knife cuts
The shell open, cracks
Spilling flesh.

Him sitting there, grayed.
Muscles slowed and routine,
His face hardened and creased by time,
But his soul formed and wise; ripened.
Hers green and tangy and new.

Later

I am partitioned by books
Experiences and livings recorded
Now memories
Bound, now a history
Is this time?

The sun illumines
The fields of gold
The soybeans,
Unlike lettuce, hearty green.
We harvest when they are brittle brown,
And when in wind they quiver.
My mother,
Her lips perfect gold sun illumined
As she drives and tells me this
Knowledge of her childhood farm days.
The ticking clock partitions
The space into segments of time,
But the space is infinite
And our interpretations inadequate,
No matter how hard we try, partitioned not.
Three generations walk side by side on a single tether
Equally to learn from each other.
Sorrow slices and carves a space we can but cover
And fill not; however,
I realize human life is so short
That I may learn these sister necessities
Sorrow and Maturity
While he idles and
While she so green
Plucks the soft smelling herbs and her mother scolds.
JUST LET ME

JUST LET ME  MIXED MEDIA LINOCUT
CLOAK
KYLE KUTZ
Darkness
Shall reveal
More than light
Can hide.

CRICKETS
MARANDA MILLER
I hear their song,
I know they're there,
But I see not a one.
Their music comforts me:
White noise against
The roaring silence of the night;
Drowning out the chase of
Scattered thoughts in my mind.
For a moment,
I feel peace.

LIGHTS
KYLE KUTZ
The merry moon damned
Within crimson cloud
threads strands of silk
One reed at a time.

Crafting, weaving
the tapestry of lore.
Savoring nightfall
Upon Siberian sky.
I see my father.
Standing upon his shoulder
is a devil. Seeking pounds of
Flesh.

My father never told us
How much that place hurt him
Day after day, lips pressed tight,
pressure filling up.
But no complaining
not even a mention
And now a winged shadow stalks him.

Depression howls with laughter
at the sight of light, at the glimpse of hope
frothing at the mouth.
This scent of suffering
like carrion rotting in the sun
Attracted a devil
And now a winged shadow stalks him.

The devil is a crow sitting
on my father's shoulder.
Its eyes are ripped out.

Lacerations produce beads of dark blood
like pin heads near the empty eyeless pits.

The crow attaches to a soul
and sucks up all of the Life
Drinking so greedily
Blood running down the corners of its beak,
leaving red drops on its feathers
Swallowing oceans of my father's soul.

Days pass. The crow becomes engorged
on my father's flesh.
It devours pounds of it. Emaciated, my father
walks through valleys of delusions
False realities play upon his lips.
Flickering fantasies spark behind his eyes.

At night, his eyes stay open.
My father stops sleeping.
The crow tells him to lie,
so he becomes a magnificent liar.
When I look at him, I see a stone bust.
His face has lost all expression
like the dead sea where nothing can survive.
NOTHING REMAINS
SAMUEL BENNING

When I come to, the blood on the asphalt is dry already—like warped paint. The gun lies on the ground next to me. I pick it up and flip open the chamber. Five empty casings and one bullet. Piece of shit.

I never asked for this.

I get off the bench and leave the park, heading into the city. Emptiness. Silence—stretching forever. Abandoned cars line the streets, rusting. Bleached bone skeletons dot sidewalks—all strewn about. I pick up a skull and throw it against a brick wall. It splits into a dozen pieces. I scream. Echoes—back and forth down empty streets. Nobody hears me.

I stand before the tallest building in the city—a lopsided pyramid of steel jutting towards the sky like a dagger. The door is locked. I punch the glass. It cracks. I punch it again. It shatters. Broken shards cut deep gashes along my hand and forearm. Blood flows. I ignore it. Ascending the stairwell, I look at the wound, and it’s healed like it never happened. I emerge on the roof and gaze down upon the city. Stillness. Quiet—deafening quiet. No colors—just gray and brown.

Looking over the edge, down to the street below, I wonder why I’m doing this. Then I step over. Falling, I feel nothing.

Cold pavement on my cheek—a pool of dried blood surrounds me. Everything looks the same. I scream. Echoes—silence.

I go back to the park and sit on the bench. This is where I was when the planes flew over. They dropped an invisible chemical. An hour later, everyone was coughing blood, their organs liquefying, their flesh melting away. The next day, everything was dead. The trees and plants too had withered and died.

I remember my life’s work. So many days in the lab, ignoring my family, my friends.

It’s funny. I’ve heard legends of lifetimes spent searching for the fountain of youth—some elixir of immortality. I plunged it into my arm with a hypodermic needle. And now there’s no one to share it with.

If only there had been more time.

Sitting on the bench in the park, I look the gun over again. One bullet.

I stick it in my mouth and pull the trigger.
JUST GO BACK TO SLEEP

KIMBERLY WINTERS

Last night, I had a dream
where I bathed in blood.
I lay submerged to my neck,
hair dampened and darkened
by the red liquid,
strands curling wetly against my skin.
Every inch of me wonderfully warm,
I sank in deeper
so that sticky droplets splashed up
to cling to my nose and tickle my chin.
A sound whispered in my ears:

Drip. Drip.

I ignored it, half-asleep.
But the blood kept climbing,
laying tiny kisses against my bottom lip.

Drip. Drip.

I turned heavy-lidded eyes towards the sound
and saw an arm arcing gracefully
over the tub's side.

thin wrist bent to show off a diamond ring.
The blood fell darkly from her fingertip.
I leaned forward, bath rippling,
to grasp the bloody hand with my own.
My breath coming in thrilled shivers,
I pulled the reddened finger
past my lips and eagerly bit down.

I woke up tasting blood,
my hair slightly damp,
a lingering scent of something
on my pillow.

I hurried to the bathroom,
almost tripped over a heavy
rug, I think,
and ran a shower.
The water chilled my neck,
droplets racing down my spine,
carrying my dream down the drain
in curls of red.
THIS IS WHERE IT HAPPENED OIL ON PLYWOOD
MEGHAN BAUM
RALPHY-BOY
KIRK GRIFFITHS

"But Diana, I've applied to every store in both malls! You know I'm trying."

"You know that's not the issue Ralph. I can't keep doing this."

"Is it the beard? Babe, I only grew it 'cause I look like a fourteen year-old without it. But I can get rid of it Didi... I love you. I know I don't say that as much as I should have, but I mean it. I love—"

Ralph kept the phone to his ear, in hopes that the love of his life would pick up the phone that she had accidently dropped. He kept the phone to his ear in hopes that his one and only sweetie-pie would forgive him for being forced to put on a rat costume to entertain children every weekday. He kept the phone to his ear in hopes that his soul mate would begin to cry. Ralph hoped for anything other than having to face the reality that he no longer had someone to play Uno with.

The phone had turned into a functioning organ that had become a part of Ralph's body. As painful as he knew the removal would be, Ralph amputated the phone from his blood-pounding head. He figured he should lay down on his hole-riddled futon before his legs failed him, driving his limp body into the plank wood floor. He did not know what to feel. While his body was as empty as his bank account, his mind was hosting a tornado. While the thought of death was violently thrown into the front corner of his brain, vivid memories of holding hands and watching bad Drew Barrymore movies rattled the back of his throat.

Rituals were abandoned. The fact that there had been one light switch off and two light switches on did not faze him. He did not feel the urge of tugging on his right ear until the lobe dangled approximately a quarter inch lower than the left. It did not bother him that an obnoxious daytime soap opera was on the television, for it was just white noise. He wished he could vent his feelings to Oscar, his best friend who had passed away several seasons ago. With no one to hug or a good friend to confide in, Ralph decided that he would not leave the worn-out futon, for it was the only thing that would never leave him.

Ralph's anguish made the sun turn its beaming bright face onto the other side of the earth. Just as Letterman began his monologue, the phone rang. Ralph sat up. Was it Diana? Had she realized that the two were meant to pick out coffins together? Ralph picked up his missing head piece. "Diana, you there?"

"No Ralph, it is Derrick. Where the hell have you been? Been trying to reach you all week. Figured you were dodging me, so I had to call you when I knew you wouldn't expect it."

"Oh... Derrick. Listen, I've been busy all week with a few things. I can't really talk now either—"

"What do you mean you can't talk? The guy who's trying to make you the next DiCaprio calls you forty-four times this week and you can't talk? Hope you're not getting too comfortable in that rat suit."

"It's temporary—"

"Yeah, well I'm trying to get you something permanent. Something permanent that comes with a couple of golden house ornaments and a hand-job from one of the ICarly girls. Or wait, let me guess, you have to get the thumbs up from your owner first?"

Ralph paused for a moment. "It's over."

"What, you and the lady? Mazel tov, my man!"
Thought you were trapped into spending the rest of your life with that one.”

Ralph’s eyes began to welt up. “Listen Derrick… I have to call you back sometime.”

“Hold on wait… is this why you’re in hiding? The girl who wouldn’t let you audition for Snake Train 3 ’cause she thought it would give you nightmares? Consider this a good thing, buddy.”

“You would never understand—”

“Understand what? That you’ve been seeing this girl for like three weeks, she leaves, now you’re contemplating whether or not drinking bleach is faster than downing the medicine cabinet? Trust me Ralphy-boy, love only leads to giving up half your shit along with two of your beloved Range Rovers. Now you can either go off the deep end and see how many slits the big green vein can take, or you can get over this broad and get ready for your audition tomorrow morning for the new Gaspar Noe flick.”

Ralph’s pupils morphed into bowling balls “Is this a joke? Thought that movie was already booked?”

“Not when your money maker is Derrick Goldstein! Come to the office tomorrow, get you prepped up. Get some sleep.”

Ralph stood still as his jaw dropped, almost touching Oscar’s preserved litter box. He flipped his futon over and flickered his light switches on and off vigorously. It was as if a camera crew knooked on his door and delivered one of those billboard-size checks for two million dollars. A new tornado had taken control of his brain. Ralph gazed into the ceiling from the floor, whispering out loud a refreshing thought:

“Diana loves Gaspar Noe.”
A WARRIOR’S FINAL MARCH
ELIZABETH STANTON

On and on we march into the echoes of eternity.
And as we go along that winding road with certainty,
We realize that all our work will pay off in the end.
Just as soon as we can get around that fast approaching bend.
Marching, marching on and on
Until we reach the eternal dawn.
Hit, tap goes the drum
Telling us where we come from.
The men in front show
Where we have to go.
Into the light
So calm and bright.
Into the twilight of dawn.
Never again to march on and on.
FOR YOU
ELIZABETH LEAVENS

I wanted to tell you to run,
To flee,
Because I thought
I was still ready to be alone.

I never wanted you
To do the dishes,
And take out the trash,
And kiss away my tears.

I was sure you’d grow tired
Of my stubborn roots,
Of my messy room,
Of my fingertips,

Of me.

Because I couldn’t remember
How it felt to belong
To someone.

It was a slow turn around.

But I ended up in your bed,
In your arms,
In love,
Because I didn’t know
I was ready for you.
A TRIP WITH SALLY D
LAWRENCE FLYNN

Salvia Divinorum—the diviner’s sage. AKA Sally D. AKA one of the most bat-shit crazy hallucinogenic drugs you can get your hands on. Used by Mazatec shamans to connect with the mother spirit or some shit like that.

I pull slow and gentle on the pipe, just enough to coax the flame down into the black-green plant matter in the bowl. It ignites bright orange. A thick, heavy smoke scrapes down my throat and spreads to the farthest reaches of my lungs. The taste of ash and butane stains my tongue.

One. Two. Three. You have to hold it for 20 seconds or else it won’t work. That’s what the internet said. I run my hands over the zebra-stripe shag rug. I don’t feel anything yet.

Five. Six. Seven. The smoke burns in my chest. My lungs scream for fresh air. I don’t know if I can do it.

Ten. Eleven. Twelve. Everything begins vibrating. I look down at the rug. The wavy black and white lines are writhing like snakes.


Blast off. I look at my hands. These are not my hands. My body, my physical presence dissolves to nothing. I look to my roommate. She is two dimensional. She melts into the black and white waves of the carpet as they consume everything. I want to warn her, but I can’t because I do not exist anymore.

This is a strange place. Out to infinity stretches a flat sea of stark black and bleach white splotches wrapped up in wild, marble-cake swirls that slither and spill together. The sky is a hazy gun gray. A dim sun hovers directly overhead. This is all there ever is or was.

A series of infinite black planks hangs suspended in the air and splayed upon them are fragments of a previous existence. Everything contained on them is utterly unintelligible, like a language whose meaning has been lost to the centuries. They begin parading in a uniform, drum-line procession, begging to be understood. One by one, they fall and sink into the sea.

A voice speaks soft and sweet from a higher plane, and suddenly, the concept of I flashes into existence. Now I understand that I am an entity separate from this world. The voice is trying to tell me something, but I cannot understand the words. It is my mother’s voice.

I am once again a child. The voice wants me to do something, but I cannot figure out what it is.

I’m on a conveyor belt looking up at a series of screens upon which my entire life is playing out. In one of them, my mother stands by the stove, a spatula in hand, making pancakes and bacon.

On another screen, I’m walking down the sidewalk on my way to class, and my consciousness flies there, to that moment. But I am not myself. I am
the sidewalk. I see myself how the sidewalk sees me—just another faceless being with hopes and dreams and big ideas like every other person who treads here. How strange a perspective it is.

I'm back above the black and white sea, looking at the gray sky. I am empty. I tell myself that I am in college, but I do not understand what college is. Pieces of things I once knew rush back at me. I have family, friends, a job. These things start to make sense. Everything I am, everything I knew has been deconstructed and put back together—exactly how it was.

The sky falls away, and I am hoisted back into myself. I see the ceiling of my apartment's living room. Everything is how I remember it.

"How was it?" my roommate asks.

"It was something," I say. "It was definitely something."
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