

pearl press



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Three Sisters: Ellie Musgrave



Self Portrait with Wounds: Patrick Carew

DADDY'S GUN

My Daddy always had a gun in the house. He kept it in his study, right above the mantle desk. It had a shiny gold trigger with wood on the sides, like a nice pipe you'd like to smoke. Me and my brother always used to run around the house playing cops and robbers. I was always the robber, "ka plow!" I'd yell "ka plow!" And he'd hold his heart, the whole bit.

Daddy came in one day, and said "That's a silly game you know? Someone could get hurt, and don't come into my study." We both looked up at the gun, like it was pointing at us. It wasn't, it was just hanging horizontal, on its gun holder brackets, probably have to go into a stud or something for those. He snapped his fingers, and we looked back at him, he said "that gun ain't for you and never will be, it's for protection, got that?" We looked down at our feet and slowly nodded.

Daddy isn't around anymore, he took off, not left us or nothing, just died. He left me the gun and my brother got the bullets. Me and my brother don't talk anymore, no real reason except he's in Arizona and I'm out here in Jersey. I could go get some bullets, easy, he could go get a gun, easy. But we don't. When we spoke last Christmas he told me he put the bullets in a locked safe, all standing up like soldiers and I explained to him that the gun was under my mattress, helped align my back.

He said that didn't make any sense, and I told him neither did his soldier bullets. We always ran around the house, ka plowing and holding our hearts.

I took the gun out from under the mattress and carved into the wood the word "sense" and mailed it to my brother. FedExed it there and it went pretty quick.

He opened it up, laughed a bit, then threw it in the fireplace, the metal took a while to burn down he said, the wood made the whole thing "hot as the devil in Tucson." That's where my brother lives, down there in Tucson, he thought that was funny.

I got so mad he burned up that gun that I went down there and ka plowed him, my own brother, with something I could hold in my hand.

I found the safe the day I shot him, the one with the bullets, it was a heavy piece of shit, carrying such little things. I hauled it into my truck bed and broke into it back home, the bullets came tumbling out towards me and I backed up all quick. I let out a small chuckle then.

They ask me why, why, how, and I always say "That gun was our father's and our father's father's and he burned it up like it was nothing, like it was a light thing, I couldn't stand for that, I loved my Daddy."

Jennifer Klockner



Cake as Cadaver: Patrick Carew



Lace (Untitled III): Patrick Carew

GIRLS IN CLOSETS AND WHY THE PITCH- ER IS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO AIM

My great-grandpa used to sit at the living room window in his house in St. Louis, his wheelchair rolled up to its edges, so that he could spend all afternoon and early evening looking outside. His stroke made him almost paralyzed—left with a dead left arm and legs that could barely work, his eyes made up for the lack of movement. Alert and curious, he spent all day staring outside. He didn't talk; he didn't smile, he exhibited a calm stoicism that I secretly envy as an adult. On game days, we would turn on the a.m. radio station to hear the play-by-play of the Cardinals on the field. Mostly we would enjoy each other's silence. I would sit on the blush velvet sofa with plastic wrapped around the seat and edges; my great-grandma sat in a plush velvet chair in the corner.

At the top of each hour, their dark brown grandfather clock would chime, announcing the time that had passed while we sat in a comfortable solace. Dinner was always at 5 p.m., and afterward, we sat at our respective perches in the living room. Every day was the same, each evening was routine. On Sundays, we would get in the car to go to church—my great grandmother was the First Lady of the church that my great grandfather built decades before. He couldn't get in and out of the car without help from his caretakers, so we kept him at home. We ended each day with a baseball game.

I've grown to find solace in silence with each passing day, perched on my great-grandmother's nightstand next to my dog—a return to familiar settings that make me feel safe and comfortable; grounded. We both stare out the window of my Brooklyn apartment, embracing the cool spring breeze on our faces.

As a young girl, I would sneak into my great-grandmother's bedroom to see if any coffee was left on the nightstand; I loved its taste—full of sugar and milk, similar to hot chocolate but lighter and frothier. Sometimes I would look through the stack of books behind the coffee cup: Hymnals, Bibles, and quote books on how to be a good person. I found the texts of these adult books incredibly boring: none of them had pictures, and the words were printed in the tiniest of fonts. The cold, stale coffee and the hope of finding a book that was enjoyable to a child was well worth the risk. I never got caught, and over the years, I've grown to hate the taste of hot, black coffee—light, sweet, and cold is the only way I take the beverage. I spent a lot of time at that ranch-style house in St. Louis. Its plush, dark red liv-

ing room carpet, the blasting sounds of television so my great grandfather could hear Wheel of Fortune, the TV dinners in the den, the stacks and stacks of books that lined my great-grandmother's cream-colored bookcase and nightstand—each memory stays close to me as if tucked inside a locket.

Twenty years later, and after almost a decade of living in New York, all I have from my previous life are infrequent memories from childhood--lumped together like the Cream of Wheat my great-grandmother served on Sunday mornings before church. Memories start to coalesce: were you three or four when you realized you could touch both walls of the hallway at once? Were you nine or ten when you stopped going to church? How old were you when your grandma Janice would drive around in her bright red Mazda Miata to take you to the arcade? Were you eleven? Some memories haunt you, like sitting on the plush red carpet of my great-grandmother's lamplit living room to hear that my grandma Janice died in the hospital that evening. I was 12, and could almost remember the date and exact time, but have spent much of my adult life trying to forget that moment.

Transplanting my entire life to New York was oddly easy—I packed a large suitcase, put my great-grandmother's bedroom furniture in storage, sold my first car to my mother's mechanic an hour before my flight, and hardly looked back. My grandma was the first to go, followed by my great-grandpa, my great-grandma was next—they both lived late into their 90's, my great aunt died while I was in college. By the time I was 24, my great-grandparents' house was sold, the Miata was given to a family friend, and those closest to me, save for my much younger brother, had not only left St. Louis but also this Earth. Nothing stopped me from starting a new life in New York City.

I sit at my window with my dog thinking about Virginia Woolf, and how I've always made a room of my own—as a child, it was my bedroom closet where I would write fictional stories, hiding from an abusive single parent. I always felt emotionally displaced, but physically I preserved whatever space was allotted me. At my great-grandparents' house, I would find the most interesting of their books—usually an encyclopedia from my great-grandfather's room—and go into the den closet, taking an unused couch cushion and a lamp for my pre-teen-age nest. The soothing sounds of the Cardinal's on TV and knowing that my

great-grandparents were just a sliding door away made my private room not only palatable but enjoyable. These days New York is stricken with Covid-19, and we are forced to hide out in our personal spaces—something I learned how to do very well as a child. Never do I tire of being alone: it enlivens me, gives me purpose. My dog and I can handle all things from our Brooklyn apartment, surrounded by my great-grandmother's cream-colored bedroom furniture.

Soon I'll move on from New York City to rest hopefully permanently in Paris.

“It's best to sell your furniture, it's old anyway,” my mom has often said, whenever conversations arise about my move to France and the unfathomable cost to ship furniture. “I'm sure you can find another vintage set in a thrift store in France. It's the same style anyway ... French Provincial.”

Comforting me and protecting me like a talisman, this bedroom set from the 1940s is my greatest possession—it holds remnants of a former life almost completely forgotten. When those who are closest to us leave the Earth, they say that their memories live on inside of us. For me, it's the tangible artifacts that embody these memories, reminding me that no matter where I am, and no matter how hard things get, I'm never completely alone.

Kristyn Potter



Mom's Diamonds: Vikesh Kapoor

SONSALAWYERS

It was a money clip I found
when the money was coming in
I was a welfare king and a day trader
My grandfathers were long dead

I shook out a blue duffel my Gigi gave me
Gigi means grandmother in philadelphian
I was looking for what's called chapbooks
but I found that monogrammed money clip today

It was my mission to go take the cash out
my next unemployment check
while I write books and drink wild turkeys and eat avocados
I eat dozens of bacons with my eggs and consider the hidden meaning

It wasn't my intention to spend 300 dollars at the Costco and consider what it means
Take my mom and my in laws out for dinner and she cries and consider what it means
I just took the cash out and put it in this money clip, my Zaydee's initials
mean mine or my brother's or my cousins' and Zaydee means grandfather in philadelphian

A person will think they are my initials
While I pull out 300 dollars in the line at costco
I'm a welfare king turned day trader
They say I am writing the great American novel, if you have not heard, it's going to make me the
big bucks
I run 5Ks and make briskets for my in laws
if you have not heard, it's going to make me
the big bucks

yes I am living flashy and stupid
yes I am making slow progress
yes I am buying clothes online
yes you are cringing but some of you should be smiling

David Miller



Untitled: Audrey Kenison



APPLE CAKE

I cut up eight apples for the cake that I made for Lena's shiva. I held it close in the bumpy car ride through Queens, and sliced out a piece for my uncle, Sender, to try once we arrived. Papa and I walked across the aisles of gateways until we reached the somewhat familiar stairway with the new shrubbery lined up on the patio. I began thinking of what I will consume, food for thought maybe. "Like most humans, I am hungry..." M.F.K. Fisher writes, "...our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it..." After much of my consumption for Fisher's writing, I discovered that food for thought may have another explanation.

Cutting apples for the cake she was making for dessert, Babushka fed the rest through a juicer for me. I remember the smell as if walking through an orchard in their small Queens apartment. Babushka and Dedushka lived in Forest Hills for the entirety of my life. As a child of about four or five, I was a picky eater, pushing away food I so happily would scarf down now. The apple cake that Babushka was preparing was the simplest joy, a pound cake filled with apples in its most basic form, but the flavor is complex like nostalgia. Sweetened with vanilla and spiced with cinnamon, it was a staple for our family parties, I remember because it was almost all I ate. I pushed away the borscht so I could save more room for Babushka's apple cake. Everyone would come, Babushka and Dedushka prepared the meal and that is almost all I can remember. Being so young when they passed away, I have few memories that I can recall without the playing of an old tape or a story from my parents. I couldn't quite understand what it meant when Bab and Ded weren't there anymore. As adults, we reflect, we think about our choices, our family, our past, passings. Now, I reflect. The memories that I taste are of apple cake which started to quickly become a speciality of my Great Aunt, Lena's. Moist and warm. I soon created new memories of Lena and her cakes and spending time inside with family.

Lena had beautiful red hair and wore the most incredible patterns. She shared her earrings and necklaces with my sister, Michal and me and told us how pretty we looked with her clip-ons dangling off our lobes. I can't remember if her ears were ever pierced but I do remember the pain of the clip on shortly after it was clipped off. She made us borscht and potatoes and different salads, tea and apple cake. A lot of Lena reminded me of Babushka, her kindness and her smile, her warmth and her open heart. Much like Bab and Ded, Lena and my Great Uncle, Asik lived in Queens and had a house in the Poconos that I adored. Every

time we went to see my grandparents, we would visit Asik and Lena, drive up their curved driveway and bust through the screen door excited to run around in their enormous backyard. The best part of their homes was the carpet; jumping around barefoot in it right after playing marbles on the floor. My favorite marble was clear with the prettiest specks of color all around. The Poconos felt like my second home, on carpet is how I feel 'at home' nowadays.

Visiting the Poconos as I got older I was able to see Babushka's golden curls, the way that the Pocono Mountain sun hit her pale skin. I see her blue eyes that shone for her husband, her children, her grandchildren. I see the beach. It wasn't a very large beach but a quaint one, from home videos and maybe from my recent trips, I can make out a lifeguard in a very tall chair, a few park benches placed in the sand, clear water and Michal running toward it calling for me to run by her side. Babushka sat in the sand with us and let us play with her curls, pinning them up with her lobster clip while Dedushka swam in the open waters, swimming far to show us bravery. I would ask papa how Dedushka wasn't scared to go out far, not knowing if he'll be able to get back to the shore, and papa just smiled because he knew his father, he knew what he was capable of. Papa smiles for me like that now to show me what I am capable of.

I found Babushka's apple cake recipe a few months before Lena passed away. My first round at making the cake was hardly a success. It looked as if it's volume was deflated and its spice subpar, but papa seemed to like it. That night, I ate the majority of it, critiquing it each time I took a bite. My second attempt was getting there. The airy pound cake complimenting the acidity of the apples, perfectly sliced by hand as I watched Casablanca for the first time. The next round I decided to bake when Michal came home, she helped me with the batter while I sliced. Each attempt got closer to Babushka. When I realized that baking helped me feel that way, I ran with it. Lena knew exactly how to mimic the cake along with her other delicious creations that I loved so very much. Like Babushka, she put her heart into her baking and you could taste it in the batter.

The night of Lena's shiva, papa and I walked up the stairway, the one I climbed only a few months before to visit Lena while she drank hot tea and sat smiling at us, love radiating off of her warmth. Papa and I found the door, we rang the buzzer and entered the crowded apartment. I saw old and new faces, family and family friends. I smiled and put down my apple cake so I could grab a knife to begin slicing. Sender received the first piece, he said the cake reminded him of his mother's. Papa smiled at me as if I had swam across the ocean to get there.

Delilah Twersky



Maya and Sam, 2017: Monica Uszerowicz



Jessica and Maya II: Monica Uszerowicz

THE LARGEST SCULPTURE GARDEN ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD

We were petitioning to add Tim to the largest sculpture garden on the eastern seaboard. It was an uphill battle. The first thing to do was to convince the Board of the Art Administration that Tim was a sculpture. We met them on the rooftop bar of their six-story skyscraper. We told them, “We would like to add our friend Tim to the sculpture garden,” and they said, “He needs to eat and drink,” and we said, “We can feed and water him under cover of night,” and they said, “What about his urine and feces,” and we said, “Think of him as a fountain,” and they said, “We will need to see a demonstration.”

The next thing to do was to explain the thing to Tim and his family. We came to his front door and rang the bell. Angela answered and we said to her, “We’ve come to inform your husband that he’s being added to the largest sculpture garden on the eastern

seaboard,” and she said, “Oh, dear,” and we pushed our way inside. Tim was sitting with his kids around the fireplace, tossing stones in it, and we said to him, “You’re going to be a sculpture, and we need you for a demonstration,” and he said to us, “Oh, dear,” and he said to Angela, “Good luck with the kids,” and to the kids he said, “Well, so long,” and kids said, “Daddy, we’ll come visit you,” and Daddy said, “Really, I’d prefer if you wouldn’t,” and the kids said, “Well, then, so long.” He ruffled each of their hairs and gave Angela a good kiss on the cheek. He put the fire out and left his family for good.

We piled into the car and drove to an undisclosed location. “What happens now,” asked Tim, and we said, “Well, we need to make sure you can deliver before we present you to the Administration,” and Tim said, “I’ll need to quit my job at the factory,” and we said, “It’s been taken care of,” and Tim said, “No going back now, then.”

The undisclosed location was a large, open space, miles away from the nearest tourist trap, such that our activities would not be spied upon and our intellectual property would not be stolen. We decided that the best thing would be for us to stand in a circle around Tim while he became a sculpture. “May I have a chair?” he asked, and we said, “It would be more impactful as a work of art if you would stand,” and he said, “Very well,” and he asked, “Shall I strike a pose?” and we said, “Whatever makes you feel most comfortable,” and so he stood with his knees slightly bent and his hands on his hips, looking off into the distance with his head held high. After about an hour we got tired, so we sat down, and he said, “Can I sit too,” and we said, “No talking,” and he said, “Yes, of course.”

“Should we cast him in concrete?” asked Darcy. “It’s a start,” we all agreed, “but Tim’s death should be avoided if at all possible.” “It’s more impactful as a work of art if he’s alive,” Darcy mused. “Much more impactful,” we all agreed.

“What we need is something to stiffen the muscles,” Casper said, “Perhaps some kind of venom, or poison.” “Like Botox,” said Amanda, “Or the ingestion of poison hemlock.” Tim threw up a little in his sleep, so we turned him over. “I’ll do some research,” said Casper, flicking his index finger across his phone. “It would be good to order the stuff by sundown,” said Amanda, “That way we’ll have it by Monday.”

Well, we couldn’t find any Botox online, but there happened to be a crop of poison hemlock growing in the cracks of the sidewalk by the Wendy’s across the street from

our undisclosed location. We were delighted, and gathered a certain amount of it in a basket using rubber gloves. We set up a date for the demonstration. We figured that on the off chance the poison hemlock killed Tim, the Administration would still be suitably impressed by the urgency of our work.

On the day of the demonstration, Tim said, “Well, here goes,” and we said, “Mmm,” and we piled into the car and drove from the undisclosed location to the six-story skyscraper. We all had drinks at the rooftop bar, except for Tim, who didn’t want the alcohol to affect his balance, or to interact with the poison hemlock in a way that would be detrimental to his health.

“Shall we begin?” asked the Chief Executive of the Art Administration, and we said, “Yes,” and Tim said, “Shall I strike a pose,” and a Board Member of the Art Administration said, “Be as an elephant,” and Tim said, “Of course,” and he positioned himself on his hands and knees, with one arm stretched out as to imitate the trunk of the elephant, and we said, “Are you ready Tim?” and Tim said, well, Tim made the sound of an elephant, somewhere between a honk and a wail, and we shoved the poison hemlock down his throat, and just like that he was petrified. We were silent.

“Is he dead?” asked the Chief Executive, and one of us, maybe it was Casper, said, “Yes,” and was met with deafening applause. The Board had loved it! “What a rush,” said the Board, “Really, wow.”

“What do we do now?” the Board asked, and the Board answered, “We must call the police at once,” and another answered, “No, first we must contact a mortician, to preserve the urgency of the work,” and another said, “Will this bring us good publicity, or bad,” and the Board Members looked at each other, and erupted in laughter, and we laughed, too. The thing was out of our hands now. In November, Tim was installed in the Violet Garden, real primo real estate for sculptures. At the opening, some of us were asked to speak, and others were asked to remain silent. Angela was initially slated to perform a eulogy, but backed out at the last second due to some minor ideological quibbles over the nature of urgency. It opened to rave reviews from most of the nation’s major publications, save for one notable holdout. It was marvelous. It really kickstarted my career.

Liam Cloud Hogan



Saltgrass, Truro: Kristen Bartley



UK Grass: Ellie Musgrave



Self Portrait in Parents' Clothing: Kristen Bartley



Careful: Emily Ridings





Mango: Martina Tuaty

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