

Sakatah



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South Central College

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For our friend

Cole McAdam

remembered most affectionately by his classmates
as *Beef*

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Ryan Dorr

I'm a Coleslaw Kind of Guy

I was glad when the beach people went away,
their towels replaced by a blanket of weeds.
They said the water was too green for swimming,
blaming it on the farmers, but I know the truth.
It was from all the peas in their macaroni salad,
since they throw their leftovers in the lake.

A small creek dawdles away from the beach and through the woods at the
pace of a young boy's walk. We escape together, stepping lightly over every
rock, pausing at every turn, and listening for our mothers to call. The tadpoles
follow us and hide behind our ankles like tiny black balloons, little brothers,
yapping dogs. The water gets deeper with every curve, and the current fights
my hesitation.

Our journey continues, and the trees give way to light poles, illuminating
frogs. My friend, now a river, is angry with decision. We scrape under the
archways of burning bridges—punching, kicking, and cursing. I plead with
you, dear friend, we're going much too fast. I'm sorry that I led you here.
Is it too late to turn back?

Tony Cruz Huaracha

A Delicious Lunch

What a great lunch I'm enjoying,
a favorite noodle soup of mine.
It's a pork-based dish that comes with a zing.
It encloses many flavors,
like the crispy dried seaweed clinging
to the chopped leeks and *tamago*,
a marinated soft-boiled egg which brings me to full
swing.
All of this plus the *chashu* and broth combined
creates the *Tonkotsu* ramen, a dish worthy for a king.

Chashu – Fatty slices of pork. Usually braised or
roasted.

Ashlynn Malecha

On the Farm

See the sunrise peek over the tall roof of the barn.
Fill your nose with the sweet smell of fresh cut hay.
Watch the dew drip from the hoods of green tractors.
Hear the dogs bark as they see you coming.
Walk into the barn and be greeted by the deep bellows of cows,
their neck chains clanking.
Hear the baby calves screaming to be fed.
Fill a five-gallon bucket with warm water and add a scoop of milk replacer.
Pour some to each calf as he jumps and slobbers anxiously.
Hear Dad yelling at the dogs, who are getting too rough moving the cattle.
Let the cows outside.
Scrape the barn floor.
Add fresh, dry bedding.
Let the cows back in.
Tie them up,
all one hundred and two of them.

Taylor Lenway

Her Power

Skinny dipping in dew-covered grass is not what normally crosses my mind when I am considering how to commune with nature. However, this is what poet Pattiann Rogers suggests through her piece “Rolling Naked in the Morning Dew.” As she describes the allure of experiencing bird calls, violets, and jelly slug eggs with your whole mind and body, it would seem we often miss out by limiting our contact with nature to only what our eyes and ears can relay. To accentuate the point, the author mentions the actress Lillie Langtry who believed wholeheartedly in the invigorating qualities of soaking her body in dew. The plot twist comes when Rogers suggests that the benefits received by Langtry are a result of her faith in the practice, not merits of the exercise itself.

This idea that our mental state affects our physical health and experiences is not a new one, but I think that it is especially interesting to consider when nature is concerned. Is the natural world really as powerful and moving as we build it up to be? Or do we consider it so amazing because it has been built up that way? After reading Rogers’ writing I would conclude the latter. However, when looking at the life of someone like Steven Mather, whose mind was healed several times through exposure to our national parks, what explanation is there but that nature is a rejuvenating force all on its own?

Whether nature draws its power from some mystical part of itself, the power comes from personal conviction, or some combination of the two, it is undeniable that the natural world affects many people for the better. As it did for Langtry, nature continues to renew individuals as it inspires them to learn, to

Lauren Schoolmeesters

When We Painted a Picture of Ourselves in the Sand

We were on a sandy shore. I played my ukulele while Jasper looked at tadpoles in the calm of the Whitewater River. He turned around to look back at me. I smiled. The sun painted the sky with burning reds that reminded me of Jasper's face from moments before. His hands had brushed over my skin like red sable. I became the watercolors that he painted with.

Before long, he had bent me in thousands of different ways, like the limbs of a wax sculpture. Our chestnut skin shone bronze in the summer light as sweat dripped from our bodies. We had turned into angels with songs of praise on our lips like chalk pastels. Jasper was thick like charcoal and as heavy as the gold he welded with. I became worth more when he finished. And as I slowly descended from heaven I felt the sand hot against my body. The sky was then covered in violets and indigos that bled together like India ink. The glowing evening light made graffitied walls seem softer, and canvases melt before our eyes. Enticed by our surroundings, we too, melded into our backgrounds.

Michelle Samples

Let the Rain Kiss You

Water droplets fall.
Tap and sigh upon the glass,
The softest whisper.

One by one dancing.
Falling rain evaporates,
Passing of a storm.

Chasing rainbow skies.
Play of light in clouded air,
Multicolored arc.

Melissa Schulz

Crystal Essence



Kayla Horejsi

Brown Eyes

Heading down the street
In my lifted Chevy,
I watch yellow lines
Blur at high speeds

Passenger seat: empty
Radio: blasted
Windows: down
Tangling my mane

My hand reaches to grasp air.
The golden ring flies off my finger
Making my foot pound on the brake
Turning the wheel to whip a U-ey

The dangling globe spins in all directions
Threatening to disconnect from the mirror
As the truck flips around,
Seemingly on two wheels

That's when the snowmobile pulls up
Alongside my passenger door.
Brown eyes piercing mine
As lips ask me to join

"Yes"
I turn around and
The eyes are nowhere to be seen.
No tracks indented in the snow

I hop out of the cab to feel
Dirty snow ooze into my new Nikes.
I pace the length of a mile,
Hoping to see a glistening diamond

I find it perched at the end of the pavement,
The dirt wiping right off.
I hop back into my truck
Smiling like I never thought I could

I glance down at the speedometer,
Seeing the hand stretch for 97.
Still, I push harder
Blocking your image from my mind

The windows roll back up.
My hair no longer victim to
Angry wind.
I continue my drive

That's when the Ford pulls out.
I swerve to avoid him
But he does not turn
And his truck T-bones mine

My broken ribs need cool air
My sprained wrist needs pressure
My aching back needs a rub
My heart needs therapy

Desirae Brooks

It's a Dog Eat Doo World

Last Tuesday night I apologized to my dog for always pooping in the house,
It's too cold outside,
I told her,
My butthole might freeze.
I felt lucky that dogs never roll their eyes.
I felt luckier that she looked at me like I was her whole world—
Which I am—
but I wonder if she knows that she's mine, too?
Maybe she would if I pooped outside—
Or at least didn't flush the toilet so fast—
Just so she could get in one, maybe 2, sniffs.

Desirae Brooks

Inspired by Grace and Frankie 1.2

It's hard to Breathe, isn't it?
Maybe I'll crawl into bed
Or a hole
Maybe I'll drown myself in sheets
Or dirt
Maybe I'll bury myself alive
so I can preserve that ache in my chest
That concave feeling that is telling me
I am a Deflated Balloon
Which is to say
Without a purposeful and pinpointed force,
I am indestructible.

Marissa Bernau

Gone

There are several dirt-filled holes around my family's three-acre hobby farm. These graves contain my long lost furry friends and a number of other critters. During my childhood, no matter how much I hated to admit it, I knew a day would come when yet another animal would find its way into an underground home. It would take the form of a furry creature with four short legs and a tail, a ball of fluff that hopped around its outdoor cage, a clump of feathers and a beak, a big black or brown creature with a long flyswatter of a tail, or even a mass of wool that once called my family's barn home.

I always became excited at the arrival of spring and the prospect of new life. By taking one look at the bulging stomachs of our ewes or cats, one could easily tell that there would soon be spring lambs and kittens frolicking around our yard. I eagerly awaited the day when our population of animals would yet again increase, but there was always a reality lurking in the background that some would not make it. Countless times, my parents reminded me not to get attached to the newcomers, but it was difficult for me to heed their wise suggestion. I caressed the sweet kittens in my arms and blew kisses to the lanky lambs, wishing I could hold on to them forever.

Some did not make it far past birth. While I was saddened by the death of a friend whom I had not had the chance to meet, it was less difficult to let go. Meanwhile, I found myself increasingly attached to the weak ones, hoping my love for them could make them stronger. I picked up a tiny kitten, wishing I could take her with me on all of life's journeys, or bottle fed a rejected lamb, whose eyes told me the whole story. But it always seemed that the ones I held closest to my heart ended up the furthest from my reach—in a place where I would never be able to cradle them in my arms again. One kitten found her fate at the bottom of the water tank, a few more were carried off by an intruding animal, and there were always some that just disappeared. Some were too small or weak to have much of a chance, and others got sick and were unable to be brought back to life. There were more than a few cats who had ventured a little too close to the road and never came back. And too many lambs had experienced a difficult birth, or weren't healthy enough to survive. No matter the cause, I was saddened by the loss of another friend who had buried its way deep into my heart. These critters filled my thoughts on the days that followed and, at times, occupied my dreams at night. I grappled with the

Marissa Bernau

reality that I would never see them again. I wished that they would dig their way out of the holes in which they were buried and greet me on the weathered doorstep in the morning—yet I knew that this would never happen.

Throughout the course of multiple summers, a skunk or coon would find its way into the chicken pen and snatch up the hens. All that remained from their feast were some stray feathers. It never seemed that there was such a thing as a predator-proof chicken coop. Later, one of our two old rabbits was found without any life left in him, and the other followed closely behind. Even those that left our farm alive took with them the hope of a happy reunion. We could only have so many ram lambs and, in the end, they all had to go. And while I knew that our steers may come back, they would not be in one piece. Even for a sweet, calico cat named Maria, who always seemed to return, a day came when she no longer could.

Maria showed up by the house one day during my early elementary years. No one knew where she came from, and none of the neighbors claimed her. Not long after, she had kittens, and just about every summer after that, she went away for a while, but always came back home to increase our herd of felines. After a few years, I picked up on this habit of hers and stopped worrying that she would never return. After all, I had seen this cat look both ways before she crossed the road at the end of my family's long, gravel driveway, and she had been a good mouser. Maria had a special way of getting into our hearts. She loved to snuggle on our laps, or just sit and be stroked on a sunny summer day. She mothered many rejected kittens that wouldn't have made it without her, and seemed to break up many arguments that arose among her comrades. Maria played with the kittens, even in her later years, and always knew just how to rub up against our legs to get attention. She often welcomed me home from school with a purr, and kept me company while I picked up sticks or weeded the garden. As the years went by, she began to get thinner and lost much of her energy, and I watched as old age set in for my dear feline friend. I knew that she wouldn't make it much longer. All too soon, Maria was no longer able to curl up on my lap or welcome me with a purr, as she joined many of our other cats that were out of my reach for good.

Marissa Bernau

Although I was always saddened by the death of another creature, most did not occupy my thoughts for very long. By now, I don't even remember many of the critters from my childhood; they have become a lost memory in the depths of my mind. I have come to expect the lives of my friends to come to an end at some point, and I continue to walk the path of life in the midst of their death. While my sorrow may last for a few days, I know that there is nothing I can do to offset the reality of death; and I continue to move on in a world filled with its presence

Taylor Lenway

Thoughts



Tony Cruz Huaracha

Haiku Sequence

The Cold Weather blows
Causing the bleak trees to cry,
Disturbing the peace.

Snowflakes fluttering,
Landing so gracefully hushed,
Respecting the trees.

The hawkish snow comes,
Bathing everything in light
Making White rabbits.

Samantha MacDonald

You Are What You Eat

My loving mother once said,
“You are what you eat.”
So, I thought to myself,
What would I consume?
What would I want to become?
Pretty.
Wanted.
And so began my diet.
Monday morning, I ate concealer and highlighter,
To cover up my flaws, faded mistakes, and to give myself that natural glow.
Tuesday morning, I ate mascara and eyeliner,
Wanting a perfect cat eye and fanned eyelashes.
Wednesday morning, I ate tinted tanning lotion,
To hide the fact that I’m naturally translucent.
Wednesday evening, I couldn’t look at myself in the mirror.
Thursday morning, I cried.
Thursday morning, I ate a size 0 pair of jeans,
To make my waist smaller.
Thursday evening, I ate a size 34DD bra too,
Giving guys something to lust after.
Friday morning, I didn’t eat.
Friday morning, I couldn’t find happiness in that fake shell of mine that I created.
Friday, I questioned if this diet was worth my losing myself over.
Friday evening, I slipped two fingers to the back of my throat,
And vomited up everything I thought I wanted.
Saturday morning, I was hungry for something that would make me feel whole.
Saturday morning, I ate sunshine,
Taking in every ounce of joy and energy it brought with it.
Finding serenity within myself.
Sunday morning, I ate my first real piece of happiness,
And it tasted just like a California Cheeseburger and seasoned fries

Tori Frank

Darkest Demons

I can't escape my demons, they know how to swim.
It's always a struggle when I get out of bed.
I stay in my dungeon, where the lights are dim.
While they still taunt and scream in my head.

I look towards the window, glancing at the light.
The light, I've only seen the pain it holds.
I sigh at the thought: I wish it were night.
I stay in my darkness and watch it unfold.

Listening to music works like a veil.
Reading books lets my mind wander away.
Listening to the lyrics, listening to their tale,
But my demons still trap me and tell me to stay.

The tears I hide, please leave me be!
I question myself, what has become of me?

Charity Langfald

Anger

His blood runs hot, the devil bursts from within.
With the biggest heart he can become the beast.
On the brightest of days, the darkest clouds can scare the sun away.
The boat barely moving on the Cannon River, can be thrown
into the waves of the Devil's Sea.
No wind and no sound can be quickly turned into a roaring stampede.
He does not quit but has his pointer on the trigger.
He tries his hardest not to put it to the test.
The screaming voices behind his pearl white eye, oh how he wishes
he could stay calm.
The emotions fighting out of his chest, he tries to control the evil inside.
His head is spinning like a top, he grabs a pill and lets it drop.
It's the end of the day, he closes his eyes and put the beast down far away.

Jessica Pinske

“Why do I hold on to you?”

Why do I hold on to you?

It's holding on to broken glass and not expecting to bleed

As blood drips from my fingertips, I'm reminded why I should let go

But I still clench on and continue taking the suffering for all the wrong reasons

I've done so much for you

You've done so little for me

Yet I hang on and bleed for you.

Melissa Schulz

Monochrome Majesty



Jane Greathouse

My Meditation

Snow still covers ground.
Hard green shoots emerge. Ready.
Let the party start!

Warmer days beckon.
Black centers, orange petals.
I missed you Poppies!

Ants crawling on blooms.
Breathe in their sweet memory,
Of grandma's back yard.

Buy a pallet of
Impatiens. Red, white, pink, striped.
So underrated.

Exploding green leaves.
Behold, the mighty Hosta!
Slugs, "Beware," I say.

Seedling in a cup
Gives birth to Datura.
Damn prickly seed pods.

Ah Echinacea!
Is it good for colds? Who knows?
Cut some for a vase.

Days start to shorten.
Phlox blooms tall in the garden.
So does Turtlehead.

Ash trees are leafless.
A few hardcore blooms hang on.
Time to finally rest.

Kayla Horejsi

January Wind in Minnesota

A bandana shields her wrinkled face
An attempt to hide from me,
Yet I find my opening
Scathing the already dry knuckles of her delicate hands

Her dress is uncanny
Pink floral skirt drapes over her legs
Fuzzy boots protect her toes
Green jacket reaches for the ground
Large purse hanging from her arm
Still, she did fascinate me
Until Spring decided
To take her away for good

Now, there is a short girl walking
Across the parking lot of the grocery store
Moving quickly,
I aim right for the nose
Making her eyes water
From the lack of moisture.
I throw her hair into her view
To help dry the tears

She reaches the entrance of the grocery store
I'm left lonely
I desperately search for my next victim

Taylor Lenway

A Close Encounter

On an overcast Thursday in February, I set out to begin my career as a nature photographer. That sounds very inspired, but in reality, I simply needed to take three black and white photos for one of my spring semester college courses. I began by searching a wooded hilltop that I had noticed several times on my drive home. Unfortunately, the wind was picking up, promising more snow, and that spot did not yield the three pictures I needed. Cold, but not discouraged, I decided to scout the lakeshore just down the road.

I arrived at the little beach only to discover that the parking lot seemed to be covered with as many layers of ice as the lake itself. Undaunted, I managed to pull in close to the shore. I left the car running and scrambled to capture my moments in as little time as possible. As the snow really began to fall, I was safely back in the car, ready to head out. However, as I turned to get back on the road, I failed to notice several large ruts left by weeks of wind rushing unimpeded off the water. In no time at all my front wheels were stuck quite stubbornly and I had no idea how to coax them out.

Being a relatively new driver of only a couple years, I had never experienced being truly stuck. I tried in vain to move the car but was sorely underprepared. Finally, I called my mom and begged for help. As I hung up the phone, I noticed that a van had pulled in and the driver was heading over. A kind woman, noting that I was stuck, had pulled off the highway in order to come and assist me. A few minutes later, another car stopped and released a group of girls who also marched across the frozen lot to come to my aid. With the help and experience of my rescuers, I was safely back on the road before my mom arrived. After humbly offering my profuse thanks, I was finally on my way home, all three photos in tow.

The point of my college assignment was to find new ways of looking at nature and I feel like I accomplished this. For example, I now see a new side to seemingly innocent snow-covered parking lots. I also look differently at the wind and at humans. The kind actions of several people whom I had never met before changed my perspective on this world; however, I was not able to capture them in black and white

Emmanuella Shokare

First Time Far Away From Home

When an average Nigerian child hears the word *abroad*, it is like being given something that you have always longed for. I have caught myself several times at that moment. I watch some of the Hollywood movies and I am always amazed at what I see: children do not get flogged by their parents or teachers, the well-paved roads, sophisticated buildings, I just can't count. When my aunt traveled to the United Kingdom for her master's degree I saw that as an avenue to go abroad having the belief that I would be able to experience what I was seeing in the movies. Unfortunately, my parents refused but now I am in the United States.

At the time I was in Grade 11 (Senior Secondary School 2 as it was called in Nigeria), I heard about EducationUSA that was in Nigeria. When I was done with the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) exam, I registered with EducationUSA in Abuja (the state capital of Nigeria). I had to start preparing for the Standard Assessment Test (SAT) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exams. SAT mock examinations were conducted at the EducationUSA center. We EducationUSA members used flashcards to learn new words, how to pronounce them, spell them in American English, and fit them into different sentences in preparation for our exams and to improve our grammar. I also tried to communicate with some Americans at the embassy since there was a little difference between the British and American English. After both of the exam results were out, I started applying to different universities. I spoke with my parents to decide on which of the universities I would be going to. It was a tough decision but at least we all came to a conclusion. . . .

After the outings and making new friends, it was time to go to the place that brought me here- Minnesota State University, Mankato. When I got here, I was indeed a bit satisfied with what I experienced here. The people here are nice, students can reach out to the professors easily which is quite different from my home country. I believe that my brief experience in reading and writing will see me through college. I can't wait to overcome new challenges and face new adventures through my journey in college.

Jon Hammerschmidt

Baby



Melissa Schulz

Regeneration

Blessed are beings with unbound will—
Or so the Story goes—but Here
Dead Oaks give life to friendly Moss
And windy secrets—cease to blow

The gifted Live in Eden—a privilege
Mankind no longer has. What good is free will
Anyway—A question never asked.
Miracles unfold without us—

A looking glass into the garden—not just left for me
Oh—to shed this cocoon—Ripping free,
Earning rebirth—with every single tug
To see through upgraded eyes—to know.

Alexis Bussert

Fibonacci and Newton's Law

Math thinks I hate it.
Following me around, pointing out
I can't live without it.
I wish it would stop.

Math is absolute,
yet insecure.
Waiting for me to try and disprove it.

My chair
breaks down into parts.
A square, arch, and six lines,
interconnected, a complex form,
upon four cylindrical legs bent at 78° angles.

A shirt,
The interwoven threads,
building millions of tiny squares and lines
creates openings that expand and fill,
stretching until they reach their limit
— the asymptote where they cannot cross.
They snap.

Even my food gets tainted,
the Fibonacci sequence spiraling through.
0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34... It goes on and
on.
My pineapple ruined,
tendrils weaving through in a 5, 8, 13 pattern.

Math invades my hair,
making spirals that will not be tamed by water
alone.
Each revolution downward a sine or cosine
wave,
the helical structure being pulled by mass until
only messy waves remain.

It needs to realize, in recent years my feelings
have changed.

I'm grateful for mathematics, which has taught
me how to calculate the velocity of a bullet.
AR-15
— 3,300 feet per second,
flying through a window only slowing when it
hits a seemingly immovable object.

Calculate with me
the speed one needs to run to avoid what has
begun to become a constant in the equation of
my daily routine.

117 attempts on student life in my generation
alone,
almost 8 per year.
I wonder what those people would say, how
much they knew.
Mathematics can only calculate,
but it can't help where the bullet lands.

It is just a finger wrapped around a trigger,
the thought to pull traveling slower than the
shot itself.
Forget about Fibonacci, focus on Newton's
law.
An object in motion will stay that way until it
is acted upon by an outside force.

The past was logic skewed by childish
thoughts,
the present flawed by fear of death.

Mathematics used to torture me.
Now it helps me keep my breath.

Alexis Bussert

Slide

Do not say that I am a fallen stone when I spin like a top.
I rage and twirl until eventually I fall.
I hate the broken wooden floors that I dance on every night.
It's easy to despise the dusty, broken radio that weaves a shaky tune.
Onward I twirl, leap and soar and fly.
I jump high and tumble down, suddenly shot from the sky.

The piano cuts off.

I look around the room.
The night fades to a grey clouded morning.
Where feet no longer leave the floor.
Half-buried in the ground.
An Acorn made of plastic,
giving way to the green plastic trees that covered the stage I now moved on.
I dance along the smooth floor, drift and float and glide.
I thought it was better to soar.

But I now prefer to slide.

Josh Cabasal

For When I'm Gone

When I'm gone try not to cry yourself to sleep,
And instead scream my favorite songs in the dead of night.
Read the stories that made me what I am,
And make a mess of the house and be sure it's not too neat.

When I'm gone I want you to take a walk underneath the starlight,
Make sure to take the dog with you for I am sure he would like that.
Go sit at the bench I built that summer we married,
And make sure to bring some citronella so the mosquitos don't bite.

When I'm gone be sure to go see the Christmas lights and get some fresh air,
Because we both know it's easy to stay cooped up during winter.
Remember to take our yearly trip to the fairgrounds,
And try to find someone who will win you a giant teddy bear.

When I'm gone I want you to find yourself back in love,
But I would appreciate it if they weren't more attractive than me.
Make sure they know about your sassy side,
And know I'll be watching over you from high above.

William Dvorak

The Cottonwood Tree

There's something about life
That resembles to me
The ambiguous strife
Of the cottonwood tree.

Although pleasing to find;
Although charming to be;
Without a tight, strong bind,
Gusts will blow the roots free.

Melissa Schulz

A Boy and His Dog



Bailey Hopwood

Green Saturn

I drive by your house for the second time today
Your orange tabby poses in the windowsill that I know holds your brother's fish-bowl
Your mom sits on the second story balcony smoking the first cigarette from the box she found between your sheets
I spot your green Saturn abandoned in the driveway and suck in a breath
Only to exhale and leave my lungs as empty as you left this town

We haven't spoke in weeks
I wonder if you still think about the last afternoon we spent in your bed the way I do
How we crept under the sheets
When you were done, you rested between my breasts
I cradled your head against my heart
Did you hear it break when you told me you were leaving Thursday?
I bet you saw my eyes turn bluer as you went to kiss me goodbye
And soon as your lips left mine
A cigarette took their place

You flew as far west as you could and hid in the forests where no one could find you
Now you spend your mornings waking up to the warm air brushing your cheeks
A replacement for my fingers
And I spend my mornings waking up to a cold bed
A reminder

My desire these days is to kiss your crooked nose once more
Tell me if I'll ever get the chance
Or tell me you're never coming home

Lauren Schoolmeesters

Stumbling Hands

Your fingers tangle in nylgut strings

Trip over frets

Get lost somewhere between the bridge and the head

Your eyebrows furrow as the blue orbs below them look on

Third finger on the 6th fret of the E string walking up to the 4th, 2nd, 1st

1st fret C string

3rd fret—trip

You start again

This time you wear running shoes

3rd fret G string

3rd fret C string played with vibrato

1st fret C string

3rd fret—trip

You say your bracelet got in the way this time

You take it off

2nd fret E string

4th fret A string

6th fret E string with vibrato

5th fret—trip

You get up again and again without ever taking your eyes off your fingers

You run

One, two—step—one, two

Third step—trip

You look up this time to see the night sky above you

Air rushing through your hair while you fall at ten thousand feet per second

You look below into the darkness realizing that you ran off the board this time

Your eyes turn upward again to the stars aligning themselves like fret markers

6th fret, 4th, 2nd, 1st, 3rd, 3rd, 1st, 3rd—trip

You blink

Untangle yourself

Feel the instrument beneath your hands again

This time you know the way

