

Curios

Magazine

creative works by northern Arizona artists



CURIOS

Magazine

Curios fosters the breadth of creative expressions across our northern Arizona community by providing publication opportunities to local writers and artists. The Magazine is produced annually by Coconino Community College students enrolled in COM 181 with the guidance of CCC faculty and staff.

For submission guidelines and charitable contributions, please visit us at: coconino.edu/curios

Cover image by Elaine Dillingham

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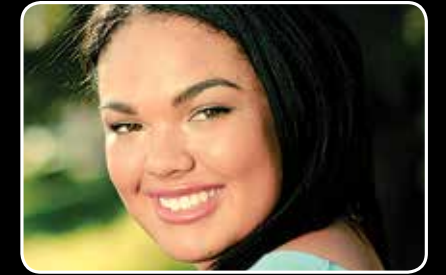
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Table of Contents

Painting

Blues Moon, Elaine Dillingham	10
Tiger, Elaine Dillingham	11
Mirror, Elaine Dillingham	12
Striped Scarf, Elaine Dillingham	12
Gus, Jim Schoeder	19
Purex Building: Hanford Nuclear Reservation, Four Views, Alan Petersen	23
Alebrije, Hannah Valdovino	24
The Dragon's Eye, Hannah Valdovino	25
Grubsteak, Joe Cornett	28
Rad Luv, Cayla Hoover	29

Poem

Cactacea, Isabel Lanzetta	6
Watercry, Isabel Lanzetta	13
Elegy for a Found Man, Peter Davidson	20
The Churn, Perry Davidson	21
A History of Adultery, Isabel Lanzetta	30

Short Stories

Kindred Spirits, Larry Hendricks	4
Animal Time, Mary Sojourner	8
Lucky Cup, Larry Hendricks	16
Driving While Intoxicated, Jill Divine	26

Photographs

Horseshoe Bend, Kiril Kirkov	2
VW, Lena Inigo	5
Antelope Canyon, Kiril Kirkov	7
Sedona, Kiril Kirkov	14
Spoons, Trace Glau	19
Blue Vase, Ben Roti	22
Rubeum Bulbous Jar, Ben Roti	22
A History of Adultery, Sophia Lanzetta	32





HORSESHOE BEND

Kiril Kirkov

KINDRED SPIRITS

Everybody knows ghosts live in the darkness, even if they won't admit it.

Therefore, without question, I'm afraid of the dark. Even so, I walk out into the darkness for practice every night. I whistle while I walk to keep the raised hair on the back of my neck and on my arms from forcing me back indoors and into the light.

It's snowing, and I take a detour downtown – mostly because there are lights, and the darkness doesn't hurt so much.

"You do what you need to do, Burt," my wife says to me before I leave each night.

She understands. Liz has always understood.

It's Saturday, and the sounds of bands playing in the bars are vibrations in the air, disturbing the silent dance of the snowflakes in the yellow glow of the streetlights. I smell wood smoke, fried food and wet concrete. I am bundled warm, and the cold doesn't bother me.

A young man lies on the sidewalk in front of an Irish-themed bar – the kind that is popular with the college kids these days. He's covered in snow and rests by a still-steaming puddle of puke. Young people, laughing and talking loudly, walk out of the bar and step over or around the young man as he curls on the cold concrete in the snow. I stop, because I've been there, and I nudge the young man with my foot. He raises his head. He's alive.

"You all right?"

"I just got some food poisoning," he says. He slurs. His eyes cannot catch focus on me.

"Yes, I've had that kind of food poisoning, too," I say. "Many times."

He smiles and lays his head back on his concrete pillow, a dreamy look on his face. He doesn't shiver despite not having a coat.

"You want me to call for some help?"

I ask because I've been there, too, and it is he who has to decide, because a call for help could end up a night in jail.

He says, still slurring, the reek of booze thick as an orchard of rotting apples, "Nah, I'll be all right. I just need to catch my bearings."

I watch him fall into his own dark, little hole, and I remember that I have been through so many dark nights that no matter how strong my fear of the dark may be, I won't be letting it keep me down. The worst things in my life have happened already, I like to think. I want the young man on the concrete to survive the darkness like I do.

The snow falls. I stroll away from the young man and the lights, toward where the darkest parts live.

And I whistle at the ghosts.

VW

Lena Inigo



CACTACEA

Like silenced motors, stillness upon
the edge of a canyon,
the desert:
expansive wasteland now watered and replenished

reds turn to greens,
shrubbery in shelters javelinas
dance beneath

The land rumbles like the belly of a coyote,
small, silent
praying for rain

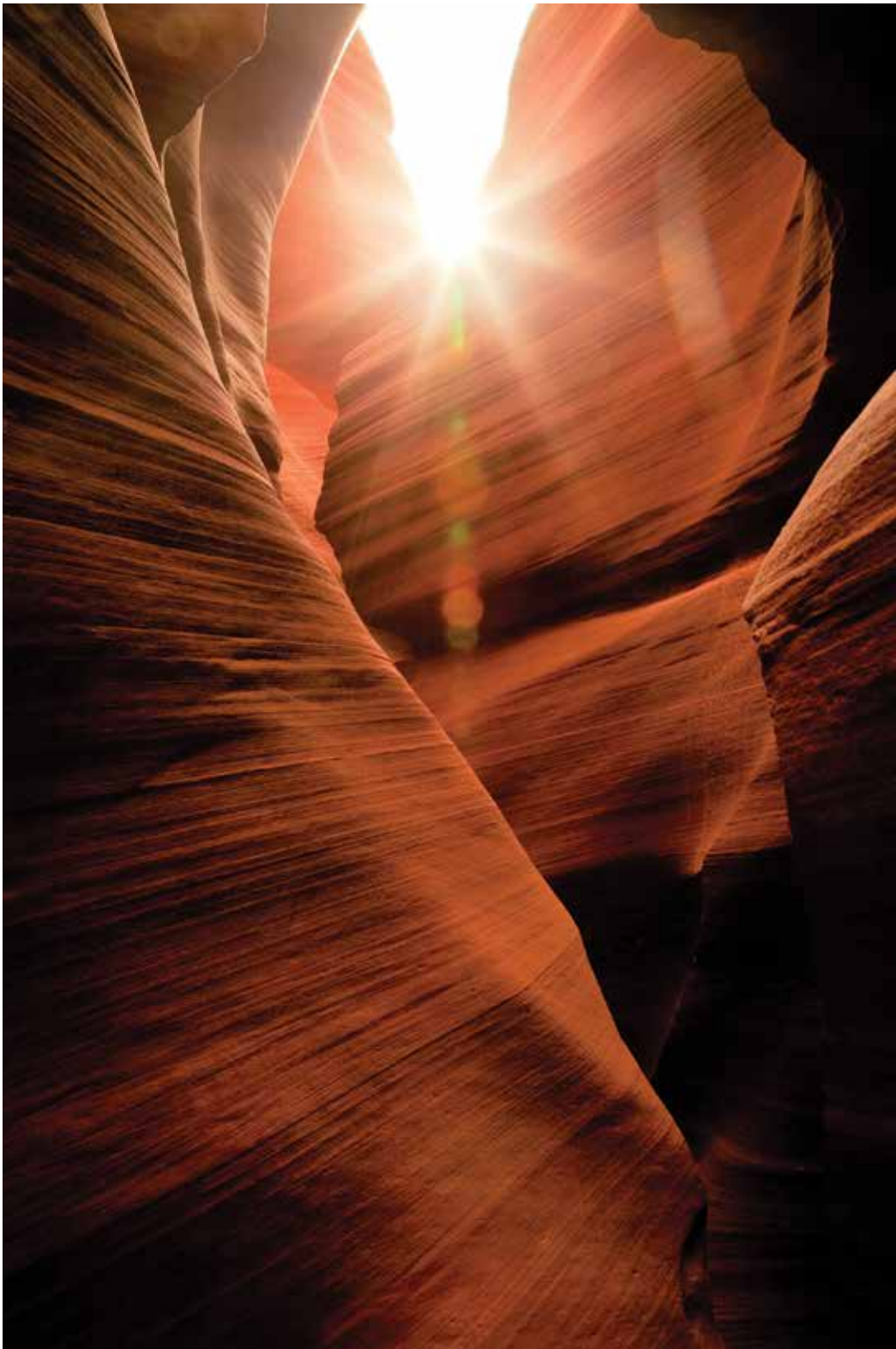
incomplete -- an avalanche of
nature's wrongdoings
surrendering to afar mountains of
creekbed blue

red sand turns its nose to
billowing clouds
as they stream across the sky
in search of hurricanes,

always in search of hurricanes.

ANTELOPE CANYON

Kiril Kirkov



ANIMAL TIME

ANIMAL TIME, 2005; ANIMAL TIME, 1985

I woke in the heart of night. Full awake. I could not find any comfort around which to curl my restlessness, my sense that the rest of my life was spinning toward a bleak survival and a lonely death. The moon was a round diamond. Its light sliced through the treetops as though someone, something wielded a knapped mineral blade.

I lay still. I was a broken-bone woman on a shattered-bone earth, the planet's damage not caused by age and good use. I watched the slow arc of the moon and did not fall asleep.

In the morning, I remembered a time twenty years earlier; I had been a whole woman, the earth a little less ravaged. I poured my coffee and opened my book, *Solace*, to the essay "Animal Time." There was no solace in the words; there was the cold comfort, reliable as the cycles of the moon, of remembering how tiny I am, and how huge are the words I am given to write:

Animal Time - 1985

The western sky worked on me. The Big Whatever, which was the closest I could come to naming god/goddess/Pan/Kali/Ma Earth, lived part-time in desert dawn and the last sliver of twilight. That much I knew for sure.

And the more I knew light, the more I knew how little I knew of myself—my

animal self, the inner ebbs and flows of blood and spirit that responded not to clocks but to the immutable shifts of sun and moon. I understood that in disconnecting from pain, I had also removed myself from my deepest knowledge. In running toward the shelter of men's arms, I had fled the greater haven. And, in my frantic busyness, had out-run the heart-beat of the earth.

The moon jolted me awake—more precisely, the absence of moon. I had been offered a little rental south of town, a one-room cabin in a cluster of other cabins in an old resort. There was no running water, no central heat. A woodstove sat in the middle of the living-bed-dining-room. There was electricity, and a weather-beaten shower house a few hundred feet away. The cabin and its surrounding meadow and pine forest seemed like wilderness. Vast. Harboring the possibility of bears, the assurance of silence. One more step toward nowhere to run.

I called the owner. "I'll take it." and moved in late summer. The first evening I stepped out of my cabin to walk to the shower. I carried a flashlight, a whistle and a can of bear spray for the fifty yard journey. Sunset burned rose-gold. The Full Moon drifted up beyond the dark pines. I stood alone in the clearing, tilted my face to rose light, then silver. I tucked the whistle in my bathrobe pocket and put out the flashlight.

The next night I walked out at the same time. No flashlight. No whistle. No bear spray. The setting sun glowed molten. The eastern sky cooled and went dark. I waited for the moon. And, waited. I wondered if I had stepped into a twist in time. Or finally gone crazy.

At last, the moon rose. My landlord came out of his cabin.

"The moon was late," I said.

He laughed gently. "No," he said. "It's right on time. You've been in cities for too long."

I wondered where I had been through all my northeastern nights, blind, perhaps—and how an intelligent woman with a background in laboratory science had seen so little. I began to rise with the sun and watch through sunset. I'd wait to put on the lights in my cabin, let the place grow cool blue, then gray, then dark. I felt the days shrink, the nights begin to stretch out. I felt my spirits lift as sun broke free from monsoon clouds. I understood how the gray light of my eastern home had dragged me down, how the western light was changing the cellular structure of my body. Transmuting my inner clock into a keeper of animal time. Animal time. What geese know, and lizards, and my own species long long ago.

*The moon jolted
me awake—more
precisely, the absence
of moon.*

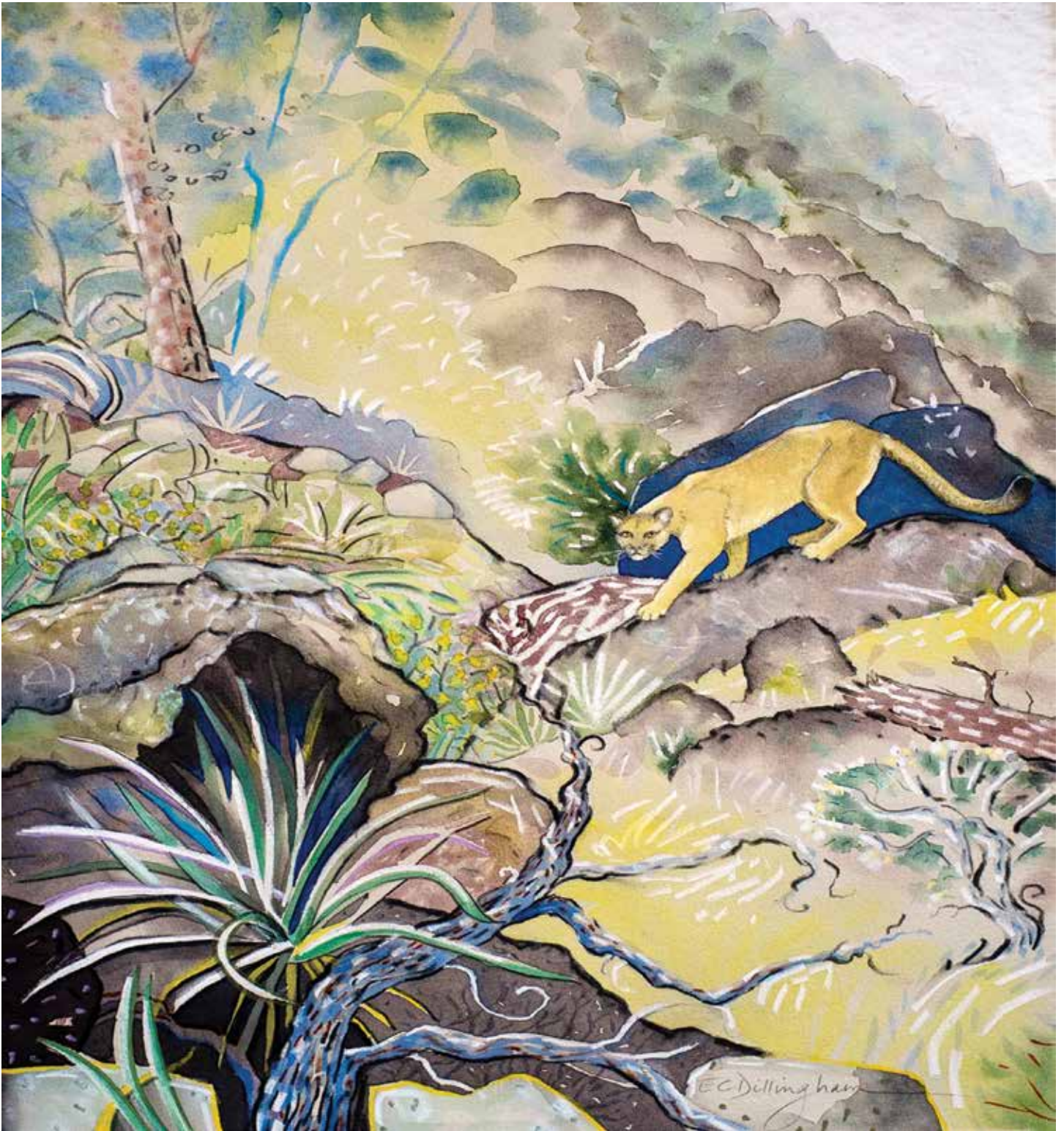
BLUES MOON

Elaine Dillingham

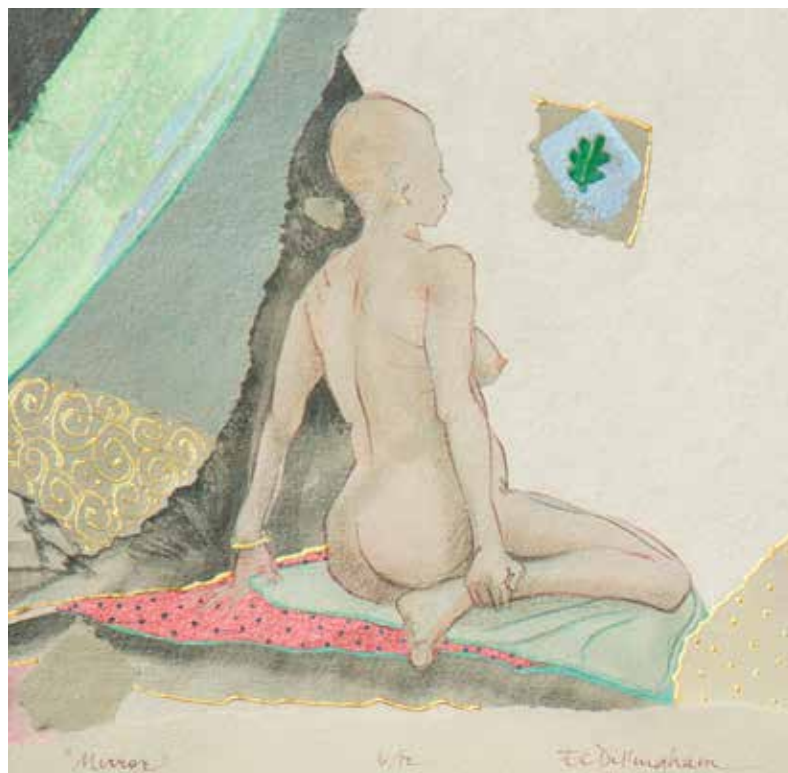


TIGER

Elaine Dillingham



*Art is a combination
of technique and
creativity, and art is
the development of
the ability to see. To
draw it, you have to
know it, and to know
it, you have to see it.”*



MIRROR

STRIPED SCARF



WATERCRY

the nails: dead skin

the ash, likewise:

still dead

-but-

to take the dead

up with the dead

makes vibrato

on the coastline, where

the dumping

is said to occur.

Before me, others

have put the dead

onto tongue,

to enliven body

in their own

-but-

greed & life

are lovers

who,

all too soon absorb

the dead

No, I shall store

the dead

with the dead

where neither might make

to consume;

I shall sacrifice

golden tulips into

raging ocean waters

and thrust from sand

by currents of air

The body of my

blood to stay

with the dead

body of my own

under chipping paints

and cuticles

Until seeping out

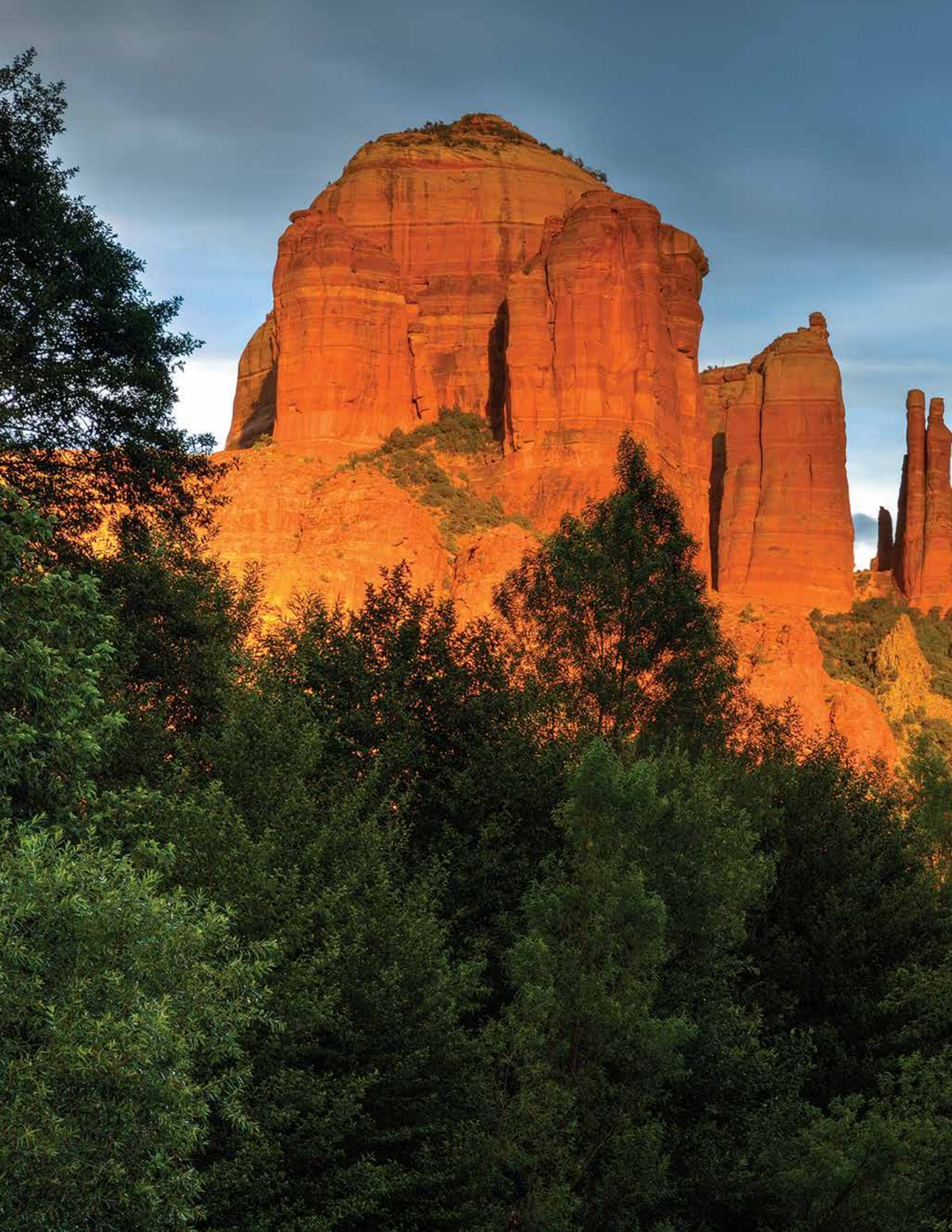
& away, away

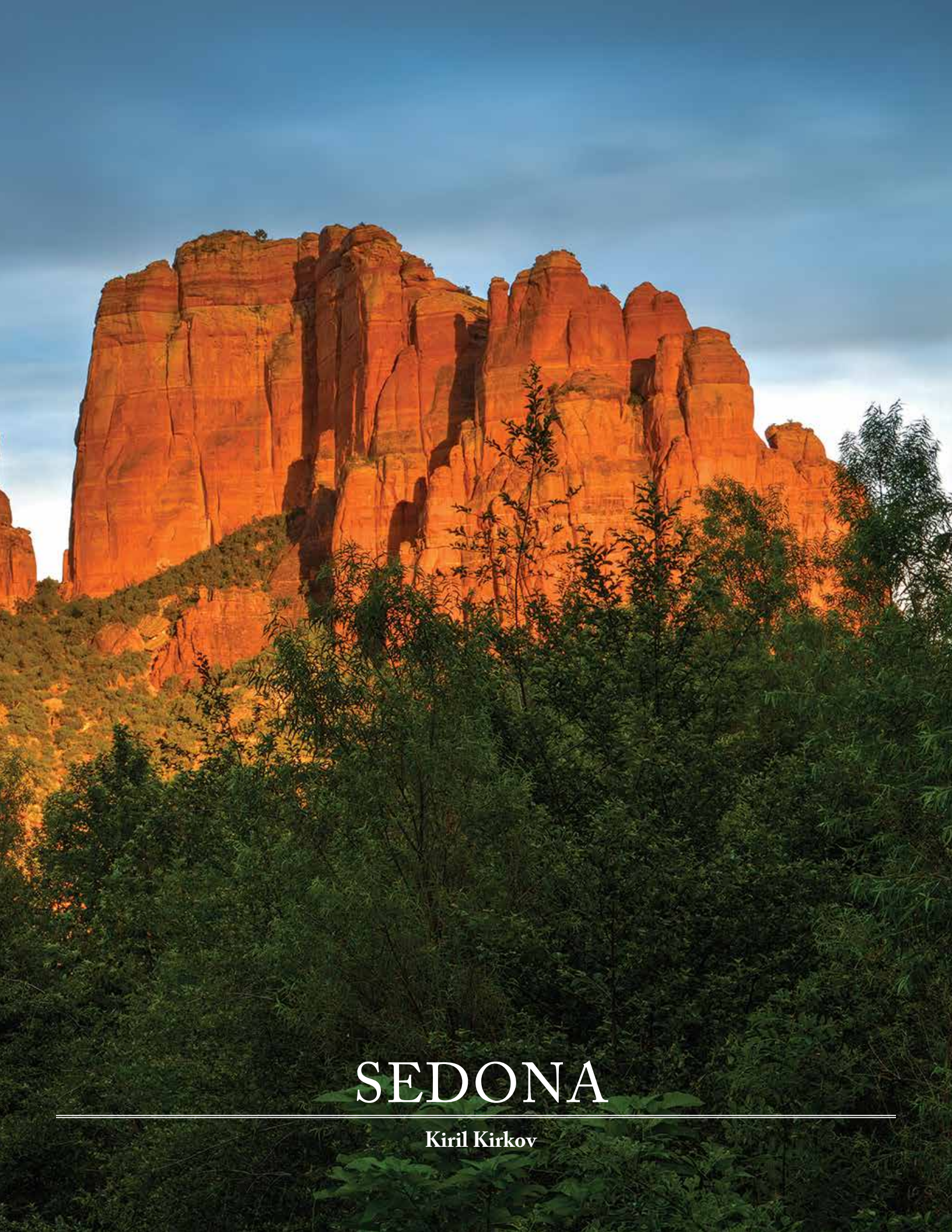
so slowly,

unnoticeably

like all those past

we should have known.





SEDONA

Kiril Kirkov

LUCKY CUP

For Jeff Jones

I can't believe I am about to take time out from my vacation to work, but it's the only way I'm going to get it done in time. The Beast of Modern Life demands to be fed its daily ration of reports, pie charts, and supply-versus-demand ratios.

"We need to be on the cutting edge, Billy," I can hear by boss say.

"Of course we do," is my customary response.

My name is Bill. I've told my boss that, and he still calls me Billy. My boss exhausts me.

Barb doesn't stir when I get out of bed in our little pop-up trailer. I quietly dress in jeans, flannel shirt and my fleece jacket. The coldness of my boots gives me goosebumps when I slip them onto my feet. Outside, our two girls sleep, snug in their sleeping bags, heads hidden. Birds chirp, and fog covers the still lake. The fishing will be good today if I can get to it without worrying about the work. I breathe deeply of the wet pine scent floating in the morning air.

The sunrise exists about an hour into the future. I tip-toe lightly through the pine needles to be as quiet as I can. The ashes in the campfire feel warm when I put my hand near, and I nestle in a couple of juniper logs. They will heat and smolder and should be ready to go for a morning fire. The girls will want pancakes slathered in butter and maple syrup when they get up.

With a sigh, I hop into our hybrid sport-utility vehicle. The car makes no sound when I hit the "start" button, but the lights on the dash indicate the vehicle is on. I slide the transmission into drive, and the only sound of my crime is rubber crunching on dirt. I leave our little campsite next to the lake to head into town. I saw a coffee shop that boasted Wi-Fi there when the family and I passed through. A couple hours of work and a hot cup of coffee – the girls will never be the wiser.

The coffee shop belongs to a chain. Even small towns are not immune. Several cars already occupy space in the parking lot before 6 a.m. Early risers around here.

I open the door and smell the burnt sweetness of the heavenly bliss I have come to associate with a good cup of coffee, even if it is from a chain. People occupy tables, their faces intent on computers, or smartphones. I place my computer bag at the nearest empty table to save the space.

I get in line and immediately notice the smell – not quite overpowering, but indicative of a human body going ripe and in need of a good shower. I glance at the man in front of me. Dirt covers tan pants, the hiking shoes dusty, and a windbreaker wears shiny at the elbows. He champions grit under his fingernails and a blue button-up shirt with stains on the chest. A face presents the world with grizzly beard, and dopey green eyes of a simple mind—either by birth

or by a wet brain of boozing. He smiles at me. I smile back.

He holds a disposable cup of the chain in which we stand, the holiday variety, but it is seven months past the holiday season. The cup has seen better days and carries the battle scars of heavy use, with greasy film from fingers not interested in hygiene. The top is blackened and crinkles cover the once-smooth surface.

I presume the man homeless. I surmise we're about the same age, give or take a few years.

"A beautiful day," the man says.

I nod in agreement and say, "It most certainly is."

His smile never wavers, and I smile again in that uncomfortable manner I do when I'm not sure of what to do.

"Can I help you?" the barista asks. She's thin, young, and wears the customary uniform of the chain like the other two workers scuttling around like June bugs behind her as they fill orders. She is vanilla, in vanilla surroundings. She does not smile at the man.

"Can I have a refill?"

He proffers the cup. She glares at it.

"That cup's no good anymore."

I can't see his face, but the cup lowers, his shoulder slump. He turns and shuffles out the door. I watch him through the glass, and he sits

*His smile never
wavers, and I
smile again in that
uncomfortable manner
I do when I'm not sure
of what to do.*

on the edge of a metal chair at a metal table with an umbrella canopy. He plays with the cup in his fingers.

"May I help you?"

I turn, and the barista looks at me with a smile and cheery eyes.

"Coffee, please," I say.

"Coming right up."

She rings me up. I give her a \$5 bill. She gives me back change. I throw a dollar into the square plastic tin for tips. One of the June bugs scuttles over my coffee. I have to ask before I leave.

"Why wouldn't you give that man a refill?"

"His cup's no good," she says.

"Why?"

"It just is."

Apparently, that settles the conversation to her satisfaction, and she glances over my shoulder to help the next customer in line.

"If I buy him a cup of coffee, would he be able to get refills with the new cup?" I ask.

She glances out the window at the man staring at his cup. Her face sours for a second before she catches herself.

"Sure," she says. "If he has 55 cents."

That is less than I put in the little tin for her tip.

"How about another cup of coffee?"

"You got it," she says and rings it up.

I put a \$10 bill on the counter.

"Whenever he comes in, let him have a refill until this runs out," I say.

She squints at me, but she nods.

I take the cup of coffee and head outside.

"Thought you might need this," I say.

He looks up, sees the coffee and smiles.

"Thank you."

He takes the coffee, has a sip and sets the cup down next to the old, beat-up holiday cup.

He grabs the holiday cup and hands it out to me.

"You can have this one," he says. "I only need one lucky cup."

He smiles, and I take the cup.

"I may need a lucky cup someday," I say, and I smile in that uncomfortable manner I do when I'm not sure of what to do.

He nods in understanding.

I go back inside and fire up my computer. The Wi-Fi blinks and wants to know if I want to connect. I stare at the computer screen, then to the old holiday cup, then back to the computer screen.

I close the computer and stuff it back into the bag.

Outside, the birds chirp and the city comes to life as the sun burns away the morning chill.

"A beautiful day," the man says, still sitting at the metal table.

"Absolutely," I say.

I get back into my vehicle and put the holiday cup on the dash. As I drive back to the campsite, I glance at the cup from time to time.

My mouth waters with the thought of pancakes slathered in butter and maple syrup. Fishing will be good today.

GUS

Jim Schroeder



ELEGY FOR A FOUND MAN

Save for the chimes, the sugar on the wind would have blown by unvoiced,
like the ashes of the dead.

But for your work boots, empty in the boathouse, we would have left it unlocked,
waiting, still waiting
for the chimney to give its gift and brush the low-set sky
with the ashes of the dead oak trees we cut last fall,
brushing soundlessly past the bells on the churches,
in the town where you did
your most joyous penance.

THE CHURN

We know that precious is a hand that weeps its hardness into the plough,
into the wood-splitting axe, into bread dough,
into the littlest bits of toil.

This is the way you knew love, as the forgotten,
as a spent replacement for yourself,
as a former conscript, laboring your way toward release,
so that, at last, you could return as a volunteer,
shed of your fictions,
to your nested baskets, lye soap, and soft linen napkins
snagging on your own restless skin and cried-out fingers.



RUBEUM
BULBOUS JAR



BLUE VASE

PUREX BUILDING: HANFORD NUCLEAR RESERVATION, FOUR VIEWS

Alan Petersen



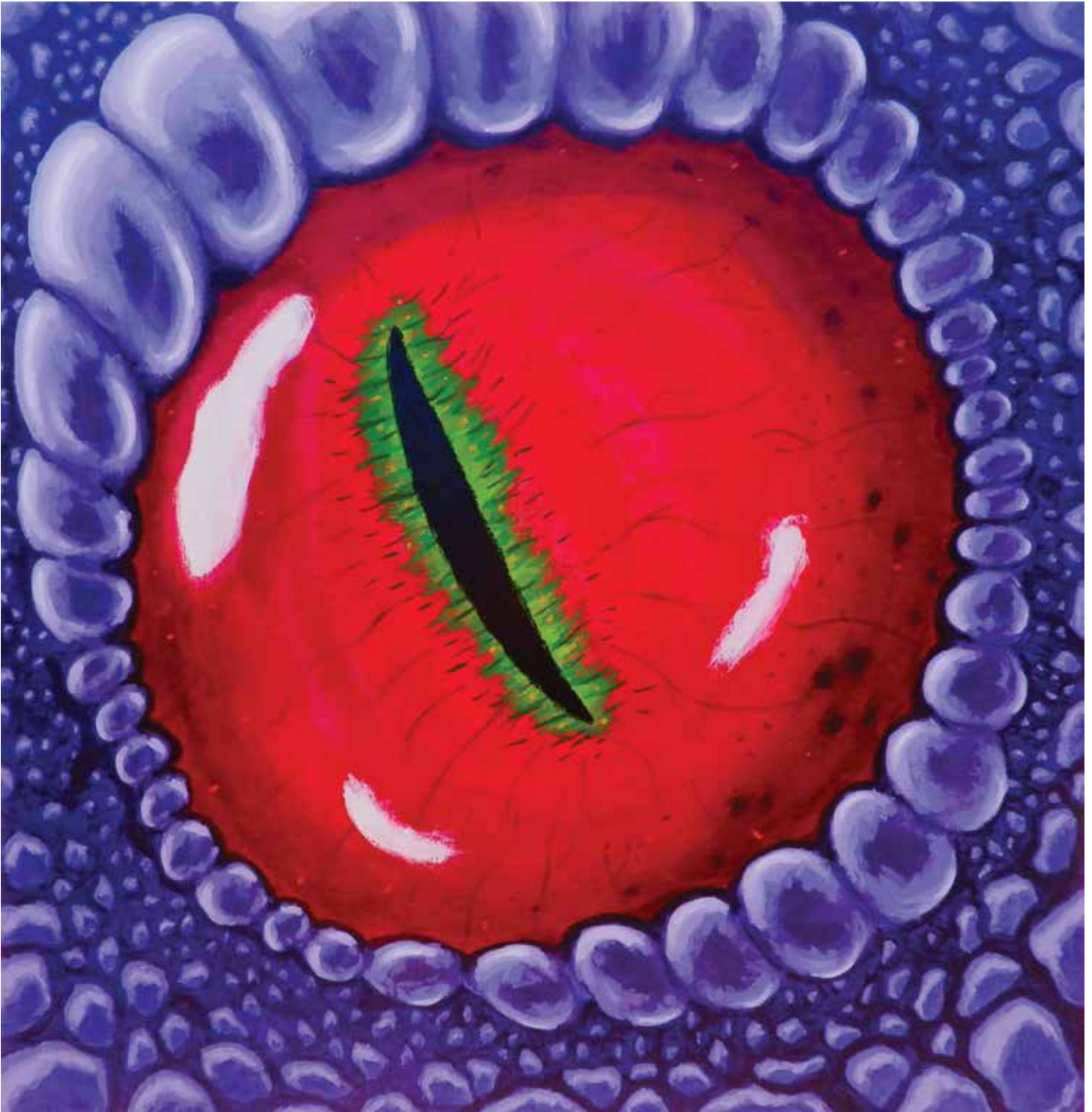
ALEBRIJE

Hannah Valdovino



THE DRAGON'S EYE

Hannah Valdovino



DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED

They tumbled out onto the street. The bar left a stain of light behind them. Betty was crazy about him. His eyes were blue as night. His white patent leather shoes, slacks, and suit coat lay like a dead Elvis in the trunk of her car.

"I'm just crazy about you," she said. "Just crazy."

He had nice hands. At her car, he took his clothes and hugged her, the shoes hard between them.

"Thanks for bringing my stuff back. We'll do the dance floor again soon. Crazy about you too, baby," and he was off, head down, walking back to the bar.

She got in the car; dizzy with love, the windshield spun. Yesterday had been rough. No phone call, no message, no sight of him all morning. She'd had to leave work early to avoid a melt-down. But today was just another dream come true. He called and asked her to meet him at the Black Cat. He wanted his suit, and he wanted a dance. They danced up a storm and a half, and now she had him stuck in her head, just like an Air Supply song. Betty started her car.

On the road she thought about him. Shifting gears, turning corners, stopping at stop

signs; him. Him, him, him. She turned left on Canary Lane and hummed to the radio. The red flashing startled her, and she pulled over.

"Ma'am, have you been spending time with someone you're crazy about?" The cop's face was hovering above the street. A woman cop, with pinched lips and a mustache. A woman cop with a crucifix around her neck.

"Maybe one hour, not more than two." Betty's voice was nervous.

"Well, little lady, you're going the wrong way on a one-way street. I think you're going to need to step out of the car." The cop whined in Betty's ear like a bug.

"But I'm okay, I can drive." Betty laughed nervously at the situation unfolding on the one-way street.

"Just get out of the car." And the cop began to write in her spiral notebook.

Betty stood on the glowing sidewalk in front of the bank. The streetlight shone down on the two of them and Betty started to do a little dance, hopping from one concrete square to the next. She would tell him all about it tomorrow. She would have a reason to call, a reason to connect again with the wonderful man who had sang the Del Monte applesauce

jingle in her ear.

"I think you need to be a bit more serious here, sister." The cop grabbed her by the forearm and stopped Betty's love dance. "I think you spent more than two hours being crazy about someone, now didn't you?"

"Okay, maybe three, but no more than that. I know, I can remember everything." Betty thought about his hands in her hair, about how his pinky fit right inside her ear. She did another little dance step on the cracked cement.

"Don't start until I tell you to!" The cop was getting mad. Betty could see her scribbling wildly in the book. "Stand straight, put your left foot..."

Betty's right leg was up in the air, bent at the knee.

"I didn't tell you to start yet, AND THAT'S THE WRONG LEG, SISTER." The cop threw the spiral notebook on the ground.

Betty laughed out loud. She was happy. The streetlight kept on like a torch and little sparkles hovered in the black asphalt of the street. Betty smiled at the woman in the blue uniform.

"Sorry. I'm okay though. I already know how to do this stuff." Betty tipped her head back and touched her nose.

"I didn't tell you to do that one yet. You are behaving like someone impaired." The cop's mustache shadowed her upper lip. "Turn

around. I'm going to have to put the cuffs on you and take you down to the station."

"Now just a gol-darned minute here. I am perfectly fine." Betty thrust her arms out behind her. "Okay, I'm feeling a little dizzy. I'll go real slow the rest of the way home, and I'll listen to static on the radio. Real loud, so I won't so much as think about him. Please." Betty didn't mind begging a little. She wanted to get home so she could fix hamburger helper and canned corn. It was his favorite meal and she wanted to learn to make it just right. She tried to recall which variety he liked the best.

"You are in no shape to drive. We're going down to the station, so I can test your sweaty palms for that wretched, smelly heat of love. Then we'll see how damaged you really are." This time the cop, her left eye-brow twitching with exact precision every four seconds, was the one smiling.

"Cheeseburger macaroni!" Betty shouted out.

The cop jumped back and drew her gun. Betty danced on the cracked sidewalk.

"That's it! That's the one he loves. He told me about it, how he pushes some of the corn into the cheeseburger macaroni!" Betty explained. "More than two kernels but never over six. That's what he said."

Betty realized then that, yes, she was the imbiber of too much love.

The cop pushed Betty hard into the back of

the patrol car. She hit her face against the metal screen separating the front seat from the back.

The cop just smiled as she walked around to the driver's seat and climbed in.

"See here sister, we make the laws. You'll never love again if I can help it. You could have hurt somebody bad, or got pretty messed up yourself. From now on you'll love in moderation or not at all. You'll love in the privacy of your own home and you better keep it quiet. I don't even like nobody no more and see what it's done for me. I'm a first-class, law abiding citizen and proud of it. Not like you,

you little love scum. It's folks like you that I have to keep off the street."

The right side of Betty's face was bleeding and it dripped onto her new rayon skirt. "For rayon, it sure looks like silk," Betty thought. The handcuffs bit at her hands and she rested her head on the back of the steel cage. She closed her eyes and saw his face. She knew she was in big trouble now.

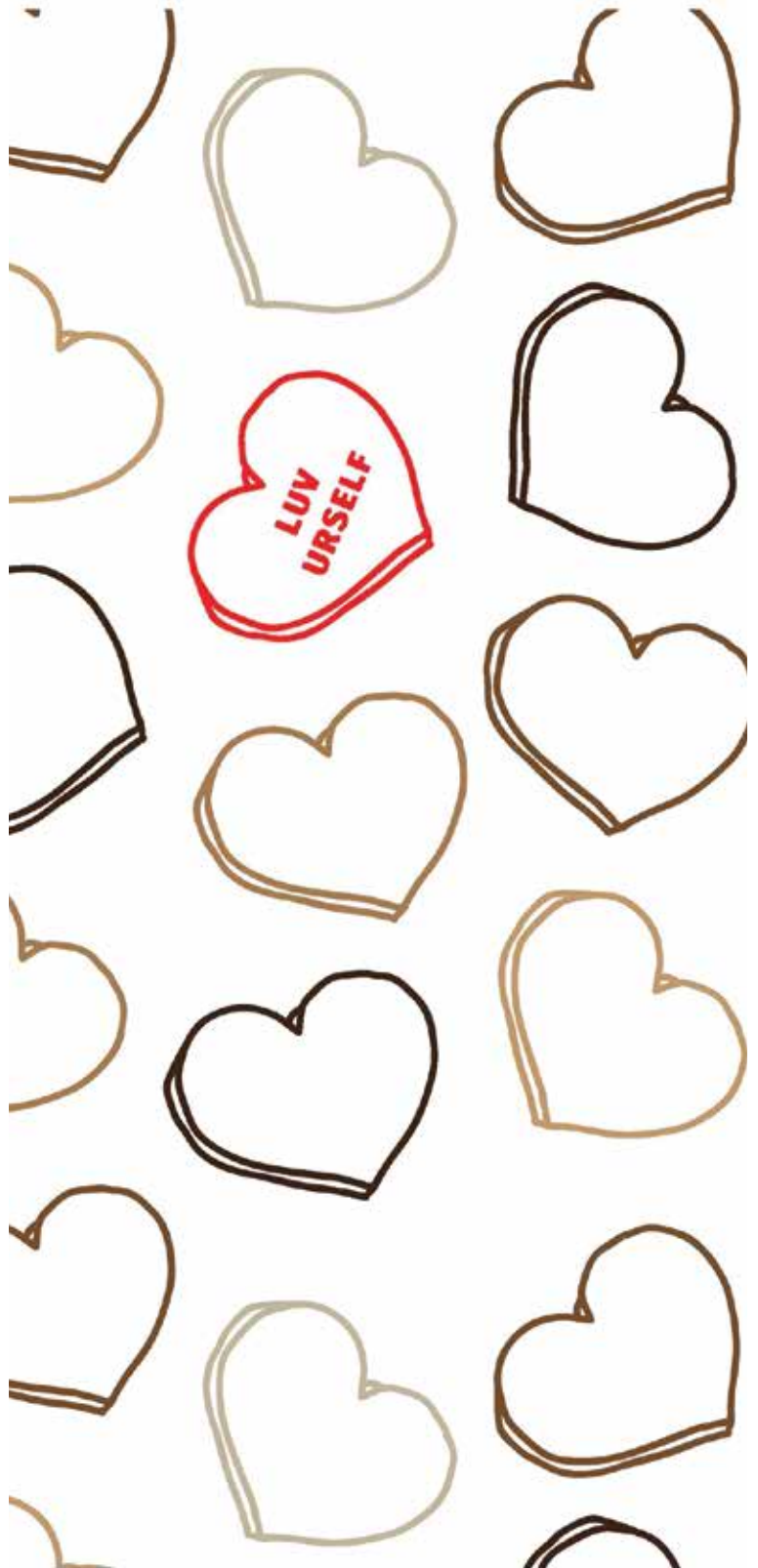
GRUBSTEAK

Joe Cornett



RAD LUV

Cayla Hoover



A HISTORY OF ADULTERY

A History of Adultery; I

dusk
pigment r
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net) dont let the
(eyes

w a n d
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Slept With the Earth Personified

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recapturing*

*invalid lens

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(stanza continued)

Femineities Breach the Cavity

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SHE, with golden
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 aurora
 of evening

Of My Inarticulate Womanhood

 nearly
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 captivate the
 enflamed dance
 LAST
 and dismissed
 k i s s e s
 behind the mounTains
 at last

{Isabel Lanzetta}

A HISTORY OF ADULTERY

Sophia Lanzetta

