



WILDER VOICE

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Founded in 2005, Wilder Voice is Oberlin's publication for creative nonfiction and longform journalism, in addition to art, fiction, and poetry. You can reach us by email at wvoice@oberlin.edu, or by snail mail at Wilder Box 43, 135 West Lorain Street, Oberlin, OH 44074. And for more fun stuff, visit us at wildervoicemag.com.



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“Desktop Air Fryer” by Brock Bierly

Drift

Oceanography in three easy steps

by Wiley Martinez

I.

“A watched pot never boils”
even though the coffee is hot
cubist centimeter water
tigers’ tummies are solar cells
that’s why seabreezes keep you cool
transmission of heat by motion
on the way to Lake Michigan
transferences of energy
make our pots of coffee or tea
from incompressible substance

II.

Physical properties of seawater
reviewed by experts in the discipline
who send results back to the editor
decision: accept/reject/revision
just look at the ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS section
voluminous comments from three people
moving heat around, phase changes happen
as cool as it is, it’s not peer reviewed
it’s the main ingredient in coffee
these are just some resources you can use
a lesson in human anatomy
a nonpolar universal solvent
we call it the mickey mouse molecule

III.

Down here in the asthenosphere
like our longitudinal timezone
oceanic-continental
each landmass reflects the other
magnetic stripes are everywhere
ridges: viscous & volcanic
post-pangeal rejigsawing
transformative & convergent
continent breakup/collision
the theory of plate tectonics

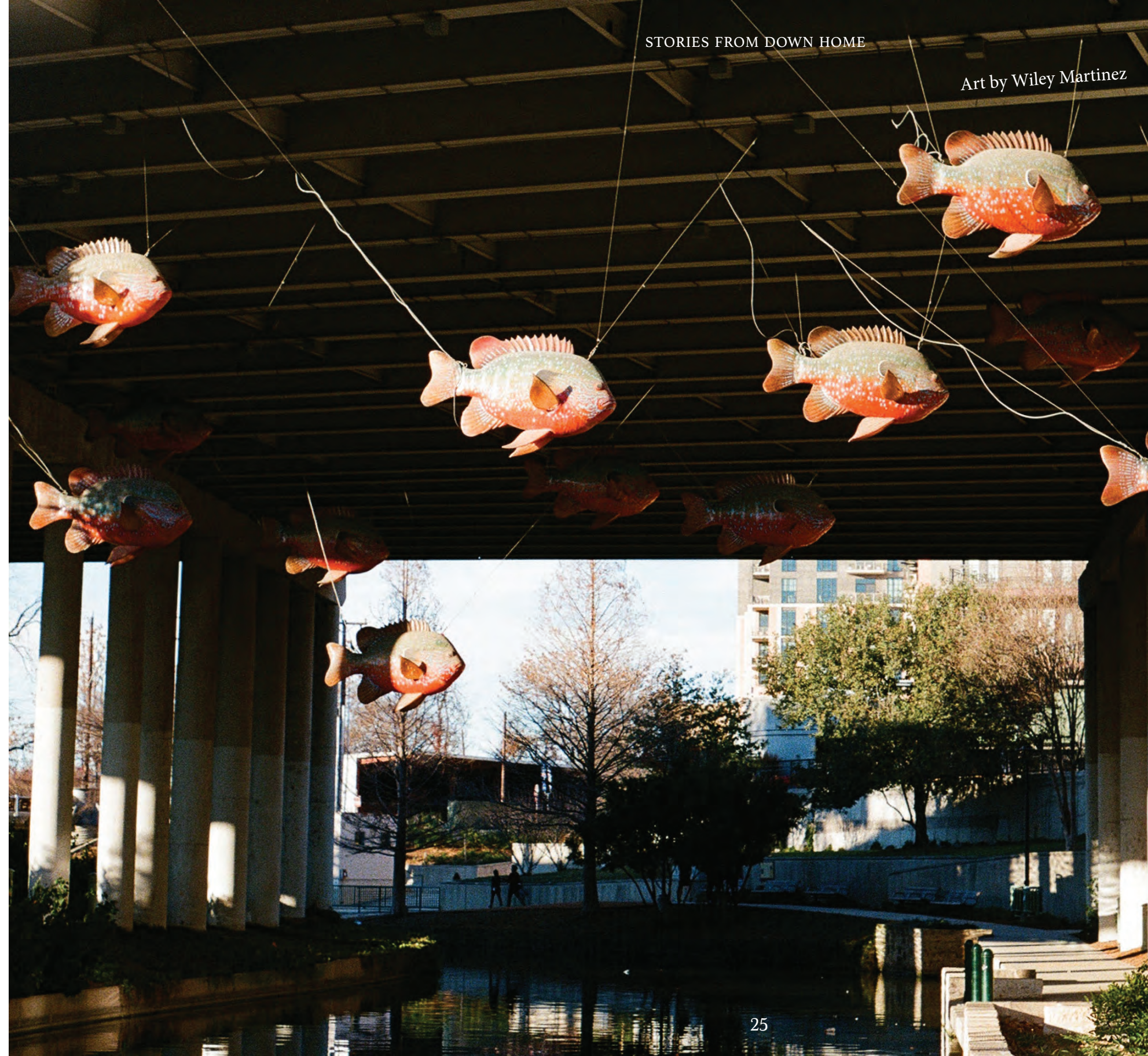
What I don't have many memories of, at least not that early, is speaking. I went to kindergarten a small and quiet thing. A lot happened inside of my head, but not much of it came out; whatever filter was between my mind and my mouth was undoubtedly blocked up by something. There was a lot of pressure, even then—I was the kid who didn't go to preschool but knew her ABC's, who was polite and shy, wore little pink cowboy boots and caught on quick. I think that speaking might have been too risky; so many folks had told me I was smart that I was afraid I'd prove them wrong.

I spoke a lot to Momaw, though— about birds, about books, and about Hannah Montana. I talked to her about aliens and Kentucky and my friends, and she told me funny stories from down home, like how one day, she told me, she and her eight siblings went to catch a fish to eat, but they forgot to descale it and cooked it with the scales on. She couldn't spell, but neither could I, and she sure was a great storyteller.

...

As I got older, I got bolder and less reflective. I joined theater, and, most formatively, the debate team. I learned words like constituents and ethical and justice, staged protests, wrote essays, and won gold keys and championships. I felt like the master of language, like I had lived up to how smart everyone told me I'd always been—I'd studied the way the Cleveland kids talked, and I was rewarded for it. Words were like a weapon; my tongue was quick and sharp against anyone who didn't see the world as a revolution waiting to happen.

I was not as nice to Momaw as I used to be. The more words that I learned and the better I got at using them, the bigger divide between who I wanted to become and who she was. Her misspelled grocery lists made me angry, and the way she pronounced things made me itch. She did not fit into the narrative that had been created for me since I'd tried to write my first sentence, the character that my family always saw me as: the one who would "get out", the smart one, the one who was more than what my mother and her mother had been. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy; my family hated how poor and dumb we were so much that they made me hate those parts of us, too. So I cast them away, and I criticized the fact that Momaw didn't.





to do more. College was the way out—the way to class mobility, wealth, and hope. It makes sense why a kid placed under that sort of pressure would reject any behaviors that didn’t fit into what an “intelligent” person looked like, and no one was writing characters like Momaw in the novels I read in AP Lang. Those were the women I was supposed to be. I think that some part of me corrected the way she spoke because I wanted people to respect her as much as I did. I was on the path to save all of us from being poor, and I wanted to take her with me, so I demolished the parts of us that didn’t fit. It’s what the classroom told me to do.

One Friday last fall, I drove to the Goodwill in Oberlin in an effort to cheer myself up. At that time, and still sometimes now, I wasn’t sure who I could call to explain the hurricanes inside of me, Canton and Oberlin and Momaw and Not Momaw all ricocheting in my head. I have always presented myself as polished and quick-witted—how would I explain the last two years of my life to someone here, a place that still feels foreign to me in a lot of ways?

I wandered through the aisles looking for mugs, one of my favorite treasures, but stopped when I noticed a glass dish that

looked so much like the ones Momaw used to line our walls with. She was obsessed with Fenton glass, even went so far as to ask to take trips to the warehouse to pick out new treasures for her birthday. I picked it up, tears welling in my eyes, when I heard a voice creep up from behind me.

I can tell ya how to figure out how much that’s worth. It was a woman’s voice with an Appalachian accent, maybe a little like how Momaw’s used to be. I turned around and she took the glass from me as if I’d offered it, showed me where to look for the stamp.

This is real beautiful, she said, a real good find. She handed it back and picked up a crock pot, telling me how it would be

a good bargain if it wasn’t broken. All the while, my heart seemed to stop. I realized at that moment that this was the most at home I’d felt since I’d moved to Oberlin College—standing there, in the aisle of Goodwill. The woman’s voice soothed me in so many ways that I didn’t know I’d needed. I related more to her than any of the people I sat next to in Ethics or American Politics, and she was easier to talk to than any of my friends. I realized that the voice I’d silenced in Momaw was the voice that felt the most authentic, most precious, to my life. It unraveled every part of me, and I realized the greatest truth of all, at least from my perspective:

Language is not for classrooms. Language is for loving and hating and cursing and misunderstanding and mispronouncing, and Momaw’s will forever be the most familiar language of all. This does not make me poor, or stupid, or unrefined. It makes me hers. It makes me me.

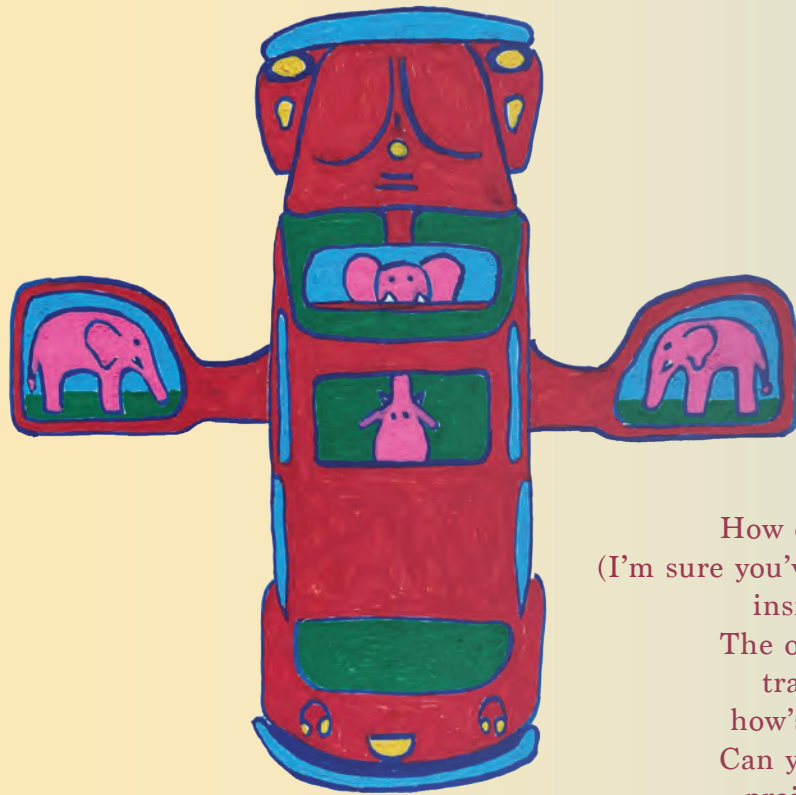
Beyond

I don’t blame myself for being indoctrinated by academia’s propaganda; poor, dumb kids from Canton join the Army, and poor, smart kids go to college and get good at Standard Academic or White Mainstream English. I still love language because it made me who I am, but I hate the way I used it to become someone that I will never be—a Hathaway Brown kid that I probably wouldn’t get along with, anyway. There is something about the mystery in never having to think about language that made me crave linguistic perfection even more—but I let that go around the same time I decided this story was worth telling. I have realized, now, that sounding like everyone else doesn’t make the fact that you’re first-gen go away.

Momaw didn’t sound like the families at Oberlin College’s parents weekend, and I never will, either, but I think that might just be what Oberlin College needs. I spent so long thinking about what this higher education could teach me that I forgot what lessons I might have for others, and that I have something that many other folks don’t; generations of women like Momaw in my voice, a voice peppered with Ohio and Kentucky and strength and everything in between. And for now—for us—that is enough.

Trunk

by Wiley Martinez



How do you fit four elephants
(I'm sure you've heard this one before)
inside of a red Volkswagen?
The opening/closing sequence
transforming the literature
how's it useful for elephants?
Can you prescribe overzealous
praise to the wings of desire
inside of a red Volkswagen's
chronotope configuration?
How to fit four elephants in
temporal/spatial relations:
make heterotopic mirrors
inside of a red Volkswagen.
Our intrinsic connectedness
to paraphrase in simpler terms
is how, for you, elephants fit
inside of a red Volkswagen.

Back Brake Companion

by Brock Bierly



Do boy bands only perform pop music? Do boy bands have to dance? Can boy bands play their own instruments? Do they need to be commercially successful? It is, perhaps, one of those unsolvable mysteries that we'll just have to live with. Perhaps the definition of boyband will always be amorphous and ever-changing, like all of pop culture. Really, though, to me a boy band is more of a feeling than anything that can truly be encompassed in a succinct definition. You know a boy band when you see it.

Sure, some boy bands are small ensembles, but some, like South Korean group NCT, have twenty-three members. NCT has four different subunits, and some members have never met one another. But they're a boy band. The Jonas Brothers do not dance and do play instruments, but they are unmistakably a boy band. When I was ten, my friends all loved Fall Out Boy and obsessed over individual members. Fall Out Boy isn't necessarily pop music, but they're a boy band. When I was eleven, my dad took me to see West Side Story at an old movie theater, and I become obsessed with the Jets for a few months. They're not real, but they sing and dance. Boy band. In a broad sense, a boy band is really just a group of boys who entertain. Anyone and anything can be a boy band.

The summer after sixth grade, Ringo is my favorite Beatle. I like that he's kind and awkward and that his eyes always look a little sad. A few months later I dress up as vampire Ringo Starr for Halloween and wear my dad's suit jacket as a costume. The jacket is way too big and my drawn-on fake mustache is lopsided, but I'm convinced that I've never looked better.

But first, my parents send me off to Jewish summer camp in the mountains of Pennsylvania, and on night one my cabin competes in the camp talent show. I'm shorter and clumsier than my cabinmates. They've started wearing makeup, while my only real accessory is thin, too-small glasses. I don't want anyone to see me or, really, to look at me at all.

For the talent show, we're performing *I Want it That Way*. We're wearing our best 90s attire and dancing to corny choreography that our counselors prepared for us. But we're supposed to dress like *boys*. Nobody likes this idea. In the end, I'm the only one who really looks like a Backstreet Boy: I'm wearing a backwards baseball cap, a denim jacket, and my counselor's oversized sports jersey. I'm practically swimming in it. And so I'm front and center, mouthing, "Can't reach to your heart / When you say / I want it that way" and doing all the dance moves full-out, like I've never danced before. We win the talent show that night, and something is unleashed. Everyone is looking at me, but I'm okay with it. I want them to look more. I wear the baseball cap more days than not that summer.

That's the summer of 2012: the summer of One Direction. My cabinmates all have posters of them taped up next to their bunk beds, and while only days before boy bands had been all I could think about, I want nothing to do with this one. Every night, my cabin gathers in a group to look at the posters. It's a ritual of sorts, pointing at them and fighting over who would be best with who, trying to top one another with trivia knowledge, imagining weddings and families with these boys they've never met and never will. This is important.





Multiverse Theory

For March 11th, 2022

by Rose Rasor

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about all the other possible worlds: pages of books in a library that stretches on beyond understanding, roots and branches of a tree whose growth defies any gravity. Universes stacked like card-decks, only a whisper apart yet never touching. I hope she's doing good out there—the other me, the funhouse mirror reflecting all the paths not taken. I hope she's never choked on fear behind a mask's faceless blue, that these two years have been nothing more than a calendar's flipped pages and not a lifetime carved upon her heart.

I hope she cut her hair on a whim and got a sunburn and went to class hungover. I hope she's been sick on heartache and cried in a shitty airport bathroom. I hope she got lost in an unknown city and watched her phone die helplessly. I hope she rubbed her feet raw dancing in shoes she should have known better than to trust and forgot a jacket as she shivered on a house party's porch. And I hope, above all things, that her heart is worn with use, each beat a note in a steady melody that needs no guidance.

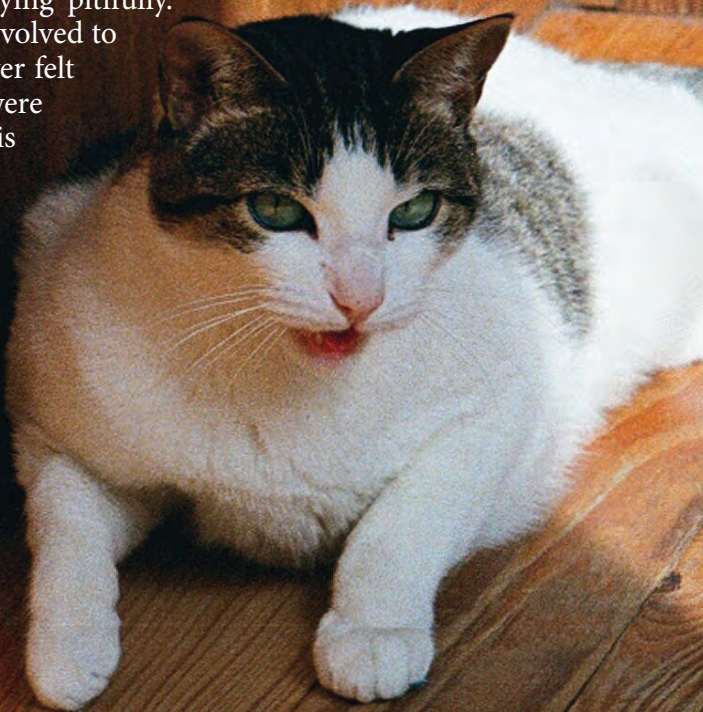
Strays

by Peter Fray-Witzer

A meow is something you always think you have heard wrong the first time. It's only on the second or third that you realize "wait, there's actually a cat out here." And then, if you are me, on the (painfully) early morning the day before your college classes start, you turn around to see a little cat trotting towards you out of a drainage pipe, and without a second thought, you scoop her up and carry her inside.

It was somewhere around five in the morning. I had spent the last fifteen some-odd hours on a train from Boston, Massachusetts, to Elyria, Ohio—my typical commute back to Oberlin College in the fall. I had just moved the last box into my dorm room and said my quick goodbye to the lovely woman who drove me from the train station to campus, ready to flop onto a completely bare mattress and sleep for as long as my body would allow me to. That was when I first heard the cat.

She was a young cat, probably less than a year old, with white and black spots, and was crying pitifully. People love to say that cats' meows evolved to mimic newborn babies, but I've never felt that the cries of my cats at home were all that reminiscent of a human; this cat's yowls, on the other hand, would get any new parent running to the cradle. She trotted up to me, out of a drain-age pipe, crying the whole way. But when I scooped her up, she was instantly soothed.



Once in my room, she walked around purring, carefully inspecting each of my still-unopened boxes, butting her head gently against my legs.

I was slumped up against the wall sort of numbly, bone-tired and feeling a little disconnected from reality as the little cat wove between my legs. It was far too early for this. I couldn't deal with all of my conflicting thoughts: She might have rabies. You really are not allowed to have a cat in your college dorm. Oh my god she's meowing again, she is going to wake everyone up. Most prevalently though, throughout the whole morning, I could not stop thinking, this is my cat.

I've always had a soft spot for cats. My family has two, both shelter rescues, but for some reason I have always dreamt of saving some poor lost kitten and taking it in. It seemed somehow heroic to me, conducive to the kind of lifelong bond people aspire to have with their pets—more so even than effectively doing the same thing by adopting a shelter cat, the personal involvement of physically finding and taking in had a greater appeal for some reason. My sister had expressed similar dreams to me. She once complained to me about how she was seeing all these videos come across her social media of people taking in stray kittens, saying "When is it my turn? Where are all the stray kittens? Why haven't I found one?" I had actually done it. And something about stumbling upon this cat right at the moment I returned to campus, when I, too, was feeling lost, made my finding her feel like fate.

I called just about everyone I knew, including my friend who worked at the local cat shelter, to no avail. No stores were open where I could get her food, or a carrying case so that I could go to sleep and leave

her contained. And even if I did manage to contain her, she was loud, so much so that I feared I'd wake someone who would report me to the college for having some unsanctioned stray in my dorm. I brought her outside after she got so rambunctious that waking someone really was a worry, and I tried to stay with her until the shelter opened up. I tried trapping her in an empty cardboard box to no avail—each time I got her inside she managed to weasel her way out. I willed the sun to rise faster as I walked around in the grass with her, watching her scamper around. She usually didn't stray too far but occasionally I did have to chase after her a bit. The process was made significantly harder by the fact that I started to not want to touch her. I realized there's a pretty fine line between a playful kitten getting a little too rowdy and a cat succumbing to rabies—one of the first warning signs, actually, is a cat who acts incredibly friendly and then suddenly lashes out, which she did a few times, with a sort of wild look in her eyes. It wasn't safe to keep her. It wasn't easy to let her go. In the end, I watched as she ran down the street, hoping really desperately that I would be able to find her again. Then I went to bed.

The next morning I looked around for her and found nothing. I knew I was going to be at least a little obsessed; not only did I know I was not going to fully stop looking around for this cat. That morning, something clicked into place that I realized I really hadn't thought about before—there are really a bunch of stray cats around Oberlin, and a lot of people devoted to their wellbeing. The owner of Ginkgo Gallery, Liz Burgess, fosters stray kittens in the back of her shop, which students frequently visit to see and play with. There's also a shelter in town called Community Action to Save Strays (abbreviated as CATSS) which focuses ex-



almost wandered into the trap's open gate, and Lucas shooed him away. Lucas showed me some of the features of the trap. It looked, essentially, like a long metal cage, not much taller than your average house cat, with a metal door at one end, hinged at the top with several latches, some to keep it propped open, and some that kept it closed once it shut. The actual trapping mechanism was fairly simple. You put food in the very back, and a pressure plate on the far end shuts the spring-loaded latch when the cat steps on it. He showed me how to set the trap, then told me to try it. I fumbled awkwardly through the steps with his guidance, and he told me to do it again until I could set up the cage on my own.

:::

Sitting on the cold concrete floor of the CATSS office with this simple metal trap, it would be easy to underestimate how much CATSS actually does – it covers the entire thirty-six square miles of the Oberlin School District and beyond, taking on more responsibility for that insane amount of kittens even than animal control. And safely bringing in just one cat takes a mind-boggling amount of effort; each cat has to be individually trapped, by a single person, then taken to a vet appointment almost immediately, appointments that take advance planning, are difficult to secure, and often have to be canceled at the last moment if the trap fails and the cat gets away.

The way that CATSS – and Lucas – care about strays may seem like that of a particularly devoted category of animal-lovers and rescue groups, but stray and lost cats have wormed their way into our culture in some unexpected ways. The narrative of saving the stray is incredibly appealing to people- for evidence one need look no

further than social media, where people are constantly posting videos of themselves finding animals with resounding positivity in the comments, as is the case on Tiktok especially, where the #straycat tag alone boasts over one hundred million views. My love for strays is not as niche as I might have thought.

I was forced to wonder, then – what does this mean? What does it say about humans that we care so deeply about lost animals, that we want so desperately to care for strays? The optimist in me thinks perhaps our fierce desire to protect strays is proof that humans, despite all our shortcomings, can be good. That we put effort into correcting our mistakes. Stray cats – everywhere, not just in Oberlin – are unequivocally our fault. Our limited available research suggests that there are about thirty-two million stray cats in the United States alone, and that over three-fourths of those live in urban areas. They are castaways. And those numbers are only growing. Say what you will about cats being wild creatures, once we took them into our homes they became ours- once we cast them out, the stray cat population became our problem. The way humans take ownership of strays is a recognition. We take in a cat. We make it well. We need to do this, to say I'm sorry - I'm sorry I did this to you. Let me make it right.

But in the months I spent thinking about my own decision to take in my stray, this theory began to seem like an oversimplification, and a self-congratulatory one at that. As much as I want to believe saving strays, in general, is a fully altruistic practice, I had to admit to myself that uglier reasons exist. Humans have an incredible savior complex. We feel the need to both exert power over and feel intense compassion for animals; the idea of a lost pet prompts feelings of

both pity and ownership. I had, after all, found my stray when I was in a state of particular emotional vulnerability, after moving to a new place and at the peak of my exhaustion. Is that not a big factor in our “saving” of lost animals? Do we not project onto the poor lost kitten in an attempt to feel better about ourselves, and feel like heroes? What makes us think animals want or need to be rescued?

In the months after losing my stray, during which I had picked up several books on the psychology of keeping and rescuing animals in hopes of finding the reason behind my obsession, I discovered a select cadre of psychologists who had noted as I had how strange the phenomenon of keeping cats actually was. The phrase that came to me as I knelt on the cement floor next to the steel cat trap Lucas had laid out for me was a paragraph from *The Lion in the Living Room: How House Cats Tamed Us and Took Over the World* by Abigail Tucker that seemed to me to almost ooze shame: “They don’t need to remain among us. They are cats after all. They can always step back into what’s left of the wild.”

With this sentence in mind, and a building sense of guilt, I asked Lucas what he thought it meant about humans that we needed so desperately to tame and take in strays. Should we just let them remain wild? Were we even doing the right thing?

He nodded knowingly. “ I mean, a feral cat isn’t going to enjoy being around people, and so it’s important to fix them so that they can’t continue to reproduce and exponentially grow our cat population. But at the same time if cats enjoy being around people, then why not bring them indoors and keep them out of the cold- it gets very cold and snowy here, a cat’s going to have an interesting time being outdoors.” As if to prove this point, Licorice jumped up on the couch by the window, pushing open the blinds to reveal the snowstorm that had started while we were inside.



Kraft. Casual races among Ingels and friends in the Rose Bowl parking lot soon developed into dedicated karting tracks, the Go-Kart Club of America, and a new staple in American popular culture. The idea was introduced in Europe by 1960, and soon the Commission Internationale de Karting (CIK) was founded, spawning the World Karting Championship and an association with the FIA, the governing body of Formula 1 racing. In less than fifty years, karting had transformed from a backyard project into a global fascination, one that was launching the careers of racers both in its country of origin and elsewhere.

Despite the worldwide appeal of karting, the separation between the European and American motorsport worlds left Formula 1 overshadowed in American racing circles for decades. But with the surge in Formula 1's popularity stateside, speculation has intensified about what young talent will become the first American in decades to achieve Formula 1 fame. Whoever they are, such a driver will likely get their start on a karting track. For an example of just such a place, I found myself looking no further than my Northeast Ohio backyard.

A former karter himself, Kris McCrone knows how fundamental karting is to the sport of racing. The Ohio native's father fostered his love for the world of motorsport, and was there every step of the way as he and his brother progressed from driving karts into driving full-size cars. At the age of twenty, things were looking promising for McCrone, who was on the cusp of negotiating a major sponsorship deal. But during that same week, his dad passed away, a crushing blow that led both McCrone and his brother to walk away from the racing world all together.

About four years ago, however, the thrill of motorsport called him back in. After his kids became curious about his history as a racer, he found himself back out on track with them. Within six months, he was buying chassis and engines again, just like old times. "I knew in my heart, in my soul, that I was going to do something inside of karting and something inside of motorsport," McCrone told me. "I just didn't know when and where."

Now the CEO and founder of McCrone Motorsports, a kart shop and race team based in Lorain, McCrone has his sights on something big—the construction of a new karting track in Cromwell Park on Lorain's east side. Ironing out the proposal was not a quick process; McCrone and the Lorain Port Authority have been developing it since March 2021. But with the approval of the Lorain City Council and a final site plan in progress, the project should be able to break ground in July or August.

A new kart track will not only be an economic boon to the community, but also a fantastic opportunity for young racers to get their start. In addition to a rental kart track, where anyone can race, there will also be a track for competition karting, where things start getting serious. "We'll be bringing in big events from people all



Art by Wiley Martinez

across the US and some from outside the US," McCrone said. "And there's a natural feeder program from trying the rental cars to then getting your own parts—it's a natural progression to grow the sport."

Given a track to start, the path may seem simple. Begin with karting, move to full-size cars, rack up some competition success, and fight your way to the top. But the path to get there is littered with obstacles. And the truth is, to get more talented drivers of all kinds into the sport, changes need to start from the very beginning.

As karts became more sophisticated, evolving from a hobby into a pipeline to a serious professional career, the sport has unsurprisingly become more and more expensive. Let's say you're a young kid at the beginning of your karting career. The first big expense will be purchasing your own kart, which can cost anywhere from \$1500 to \$5000 used and will certainly need to be replaced over the years as you grow and get better. But buying a kart is like buying a violin — if you want to succeed, the physical object on its own is not enough. You need to join a group to



Don't Wake the Dead

by Ben Shaffron-Davis

As I lay awake, arms at my sides,
my eyes as heavy as bags of sand,
I found myself visited by the sky's youngest child,
delivered from the clouded mass above.

He descended without noise,
and I paid him no mind,
until he began knocking at my door
with the gray limbs of a tree.

With gnarled fingers, he lifted up a pair of gloves,
colored by stripes of pearl and sepia,
Plain in appearance,
yet shining in colored contrast.

A gift for you, he said, *to warm your stiff fingers*.
My fingers need no such warmth,
I responded back,
Although I couldn't seem to reach them anyhow.

The child withdrew the offer,
but was soon back with another:
a rose, freshly picked,
Black as a raven's feathers.

A gift for you, he said, *to soothe your eyes*.
My eyes will not be soothed,
I retorted,
Although I then realized how little I could see.

The child withdrew again, pausing, for a moment,
before he returned with his final gift,
pulling aside to reveal a dark hole
angling down, deeper into the unknown.

A gift for you, he said, *to capture your mind*.
My mind seems to have been clouded already,
I said, finally shaking out of my torpor,
Now begone, and release this cursed trick at once!

As if satisfied, the wood grew still.
I have played no trick, nor laid no curse,
the child seemed to smirk,
I merley came to observe the state of things.

Explain yourself! I blustered,
But as I tried to sit up, my ceiling seemed to shrink,
And before my eyes I saw, carved plainly in small print:
Batesville Casket Company.



The Extravaganza

by Paris Mercurio

We hadn't expected the Extravaganza to look the way it did, but then again, we had no clue what to expect.

"We're sure this is the right place?" Kate asked.

Sarah looked down at Google Maps one last time. "This is definitely it."

Ahead of us, music emanated from a small, ivy-covered pavilion. I took a deep breath as we approached; there was no way of knowing what we were about to walk into.

The venue was set up like a miniature wedding or a sweet sixteen, with several round tables scattered around the floor. More than anything else, it looked like a family reunion. There was an empty space reserved for dancing, and the band was set up along the front wall. I scanned the crowd, which didn't take long; there were only around twenty-five people there. Most of them were middle-aged or older, sitting upright in their folding chairs and nodding along to the music as a handful of young children hovered around them. The families of Matt and his band members, presumably. Towards the front, I noticed a group of guys who looked about our age. An elderly man sitting at one of the back tables rose to greet us.

"I'm Matt's father," he said.

"Nice to meet you," Sarah replied. "We're big fans of your son."

The man leaned back and smiled. "He's always been creative. Musical from a young age. I'm proud that he was able to find a way to make a living out of it. He's even roped me into it... Have you folks seen *Don't Let the Riverbeast Get You?*"

We exchanged uncertain looks. A few nights before leaving school, the three of us had gotten drunk and purchased *Don't Let the Riverbeast Get You*, arguably Matt's most well-known film, for three dollars on Tubi. We found it so unsettling that we scrapped the venture less than twenty minutes in. It felt wrong, though, to admit to this kind man that we, who had traveled sixteen hours to see his son in concert, had not worked our way through his filmography.

"Oh, yes, we did watch that. A while ago, though."

He beamed. "I play Ito Hootkins!"

"Oh!" Sarah said. "Of course!"

"Ah, I see it now," I added.

Matt's dad ushered us to an empty table, where we discovered a program detailing the night's events. The first page provided a schedule for the concert: There were to be four

Nest

by Wiley Martinez

There is something that exists within
a feeling with such undesirable infamy
that overshadows my century of solitude
& keeps me company in lieu of you

not quite like a ghost in its ability to haunt
but more akin to what was once a home
but can now only be called a house, with
visible scars making it all the more dreadful

I am only fully aware of my disease
& that I am only nominally weatherproof
& that the watermarks grow on rainy days
when the people & the buckets are gone

I have tried & tried to write a lullaby
that recontextualizes the effects of oxytocin
giving me some semblance of autonomy
in my impermanent but inescapable solitude

& yet it always points me back to you
& the loving ways you tolerate & taunt
my taking of the things you have given me
& the successes you have adorned me with

but there will be no replacing the memories
they were the way they were, & that is that
I will expect you forever & for always whenever
I'm lonely as long as I'm living & after I die