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SENSE



SENSE

AN ANTHOLOGY WITH WORKS BY:
KYLE HARRISON, SOPHIA SCHEER, JOSH VAUS,
LILY TAMMIK & JOHN PLAYER

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BIOS

Kyle Harrison

Majoring in Environmental Studies and Policy, naturally, my poetry throughout the project is based on a conservationist inspiration. Always looking for an excuse to go outside and fully intend to build a career around the outdoors. Charcoal sketches and doodles fill the margins of my life.

Sophia Scheer

I'm from Blairstown, NJ, a small town known for its scenic nature to neighboring cities, and as the backdrop of some of Friday the 13th's spookiest scenes to devoted fans. I love baking bread, hanging out with my roommate's cats, and collecting knick-knacks from local vintage shops.

Writing In Motion gave me the opportunity to revisit portions of my childhood and young adulthood and process their significance in ways I haven't before.

Josh Vaus

I have lived in Pennsylvania, Ireland, Virginia, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Each place holds a memory unique to their own. I love thrifting, watching rom-coms, hanging out with friends, and reading every Connor Franta book.

Lily Tammik

I grew up in a small Massachusetts town an hour outside Boston. Interested in photography and writing from an early age, I've reveled in spending most of my time with my face buried in a book or a camera, seeing the world in words and compositions.

John Player

I'm from a small suburb just outside of Boston, born of art student and a pro-am golfer. I always have my headphones, a notebook, a pen, and something to say. For our work Sense, I was more than pleased to be involved in conversations about creative direction.

IN A WORD

by Kyle Harrison

Cold blue hue seeps into shadow.
Rise, like the undead, to tread

The dawn.

Creaky floorboards complain underfoot
clandestine through blackened halls,
assured to skirt calcifer's fireside soot
Silent as seraphim's footfalls

Past the gapping grave of Lyman's threshold,
the hazy violet veil of night falls by the waysides.
Adirondacks silhouette a brilliant spectrum of blue-gold
And nature's chorus floats on playful angel-slides

Dots of mustard yellow and rouge bounce in song
as the finches waltz with the cardinals,
perturbed by stray starlings and grackles, both headstrong.
Flipping through dogeared pages searching for their articles.

Fingers frozen at the cost of literary pleasures
I search carefully through each cracked illustration
for my eyes to settle on the bird of midnight feathers.
Which, upon finding, brings me my ever so sought elation.

Oh, to be a bird of a feather,
Or just a bird.
Oh, to be heard!
Or just a feather...



“

Sometimes, one of us would twist the chains around as far as they could go and then the other would watch the world blur into color and motion.

IN MOTION!

by **Sophie Scheer**

One day when I was six, my mom sat my younger sister, Bridgette, and I outside to eat lunch. It was a humid summer day, the sky overcast with a warm breeze in the air. The three of us sat on a picnic bench at the edge of the patio eating peanut butter sandwiches as a group of men continued to unload wood out of a large truck parked in the driveway. I felt intrigued by the commotion but as interested as a six year old child could be by a stack of wood in the yard. After all, I grew up on a farm, groups of men and big trucks in the driveway were a weekly, if not daily occurrence, especially during hay season. But slowly, something new began to take shape, a structure gradually assembled. Peanut butter sandwiches disappeared before it was complete, accompanying the excitement that swirled in my belly. Piece by piece before our eyes, a brand new swing-set was unveiled.

It was taller than all of my friends'. It looked like a little stilted house with a picnic table at the base and four climbing devices that led to the top—a slanted rock wall, ladder, slide, and ramp with ropes. The inside housed a plastic steering wheel, red binoculars that quickly clouded with dirt, and two windows with shutters on the exterior. The right side extended out into a swing-set with four swings—a yellow one that was set higher for me and a blue one for Bridgette, then two more red swings at the very end. It was tall and bright and my new favorite thing.

The singset-set was the stage for all sorts of performances. When it was warm outside we played house or war or pirates. We raced each other up to the top and pushed one another down the slide. We feasted on dirt pies at the picnic table and our toes touched the sky on the swings. Sometimes, one of us would twist the chains around as far as they could go and then the other would watch the world blur into color and motion. When it snowed, we hosted Bridgette and Sophie's Winter Olympics—which involved me climbing from the end of the swings to the top of the ladder without touching the ground, while Bridgette narrated the feat. One of my all time favorite parts was the ramp, specifically because it allowed our yellow lab, Maggie, to climb up and meet us at the top. A fateful afternoon when I was nine, Bridgette and I covered the slide with spray cheese in an attempt to lure Maggie down—purely for the enjoyment of seeing what would happen. Not only did she not fall for our efforts, but we were left with (literally) an excessive amount of spray cheese on our hands.

Years later, in March of 2020 to be exact, it became apparent to me that the swingset looked a little different than it used to. The chains rusted and all of the plastic handles were covered in a sticky, dirt-like residue. A few of the floorboards were starting to give in, and spider webs lined the interior of the roof. The wood was no longer a saturated chestnut color, but faded into gray, spotted with lichen—and dangerous grounds for splinters. It wasn't in desperate need of repair or falling apart at the seams, but nature had aged it out of its former brilliance.

And time changed me too. I had to duck to climb up inside and the swings creaked generously under my weight. I could even reach into the windows from the exterior, and it only took me only a few steps to ascend the slide. These details, however, weren't new to me. They just meant something else, because I was going to paint it.

When Covid-19 had brought me home for the summer with nothing to do and only my family to entertain me, I was looking for a project. Despite finding the substantial workload college provided annoying and exhaustive, I need something to structure my days or I fall into a directionless pit. So on an afternoon not unlike the one it was built many summers ago, I had the bright idea to retreat back to this space that had once provided me endless entertainment.

I spent mornings and afternoons before the sun peaked in the sky covering the swingset in color and life. I tried to reach back into the vivid imagination I had once before and let it guide me through this newfound block of time. Sometimes it was fun—thinking of new compositions for a certain section of the wood or finally getting a piece of shading right. Other times I despised being sweaty, covered in paint, or not being as good at this as I wanted to be. When you're little, nothing is too far out of reach. Pirates walk with you to the bus stop and princesses tuck you into bed. But when you're older, being alone with a blank slate can be intimidating. A blank slate is a world of possibilities, and in a world of possibilities there is always the likelihood of failing.

But when you're 20 years old, alone, standing in front of your childhood swing set, what scale of measurement determines your worth—how good you are at painting, how creative you are? Do the princesses and pirates that were once trusty companions morph into your harshest critics? Why does a mind that could once endlessly create the absolute best for itself, reach for the worst?

I tried to shake off perfection allowed myself to paint oblong shaped planets on the interior of the roof, imperfectly shaded flowers along the bottom panels of the windows, and crooked vines that snaked around the ladder. I sighed in frustration when the floor beame spotted with deep blue space-colored paint or when green dried

into strands of my hair. And I left with a spring in my step when the sun finally came out the way I wanted it to or I blended the perfect color for Neptune.

On the afternoon I had completed painting the windows my niece Emerson came to visit. She took one look, exclaimed 'Oh wow!' and then moved on to climb up the rock wall. Followed by a motion for me to come up and play with her. A portion of the swingset being a different color mattered little to her compared to the prospect of actually living out her imagination.

Her reaction didn't elicit any sadness or disappointment from me—in fact, hanging out with a four-year-old gets you accustomed to brutal honesty. If anything I was jealous of her nonchalant attitude, her ability to entertain herself so wholeheartedly and easily when the rest of the world was struggling to distract their racing minds during the unprecedented.

But then, she wanted a snack.

And my sister said no.

She cried her heart out (naturally).

And it occurred to me that childhood doesn't always feel like your toes touching the sky or imaginary friends walking you to the bus stop. Childhood is also inexplicable tears and skinning your knees and not understanding why you can't go to preschool anymore. We may lose parts of ourselves when we get older, but we also gain new ones—like an acceptance that life is never completely happy and perfect and you have to be okay with not getting what you want—because you're not going to more often than you will.

So, I continued on. Gradually, pieces of this aging structure before me became decorated in flowers, stars, and swirling shapes of color. I didn't restore it to its former glory or become Georgia O'keeffe overnight. But my painting skills got a little better, and sometimes a little worse. I was able to fill up my time with something I could look back on and be glad I did. And when I left, I left a mark on a space that had brought me a little bit of comfort and joy.

“

**And when I left, I left a
mark on a space that had
brought me a little bit of
comfort and joy.**

NOT THERE YET

by Kyle Harrison

My eyes peel open to reveal the abyss surrounding our bed
Arisen by the distinct scent of black-pepper maple bacon sizzling and
popping
Coupled with dark-roast Arabic coffee freshly ground,
darker than the room.
Two faint voices drift in under the door,
riding the same cool draft the coffee clings to,
lingering above our heads.
They exchange soft warm words: desire.
A quiet shuffling of blankets at the foot of our bed startles suddenly
Two emerald glinting eyes stare sleepily out of the morning gloom
Barely a soot sprite, the ink-black feline stretches out at our feet

A name?
our names.
distant...
closer...
LOUDER.

A knock at the door shatters the illusion like fragile stained glass
The space next to me remains vacuous,
and cold.



“

Somehow it felt like home,
and yet its sense of
permanence was long gone.

HOME?

by Josh Vaus

The sun came in the day we left. It glistened against the glass as it trailed along the wainscoting and onto the floor. We weren't bringing our furniture quite yet, but every box was filled to the brim with familiar objects that made home recognizable.

I walked through my empty bedroom for the last time. It never got any light, and the lack of objects and furniture made it feel very empty. It was quiet and the floor creaked beneath me as I took in every sight and sound. We had sold all of my furniture so I could start afresh. I was thrilled. But as the dust settled in my old bedroom, I was reminded of its quirks: the vent that opened to the living room down below, the nail that stuck up from the worn hardwood floors - my socks would get caught on it every time. I had spent my late high school years listening to lively book group meetings downstairs as people's impassioned ideas came forth in lively conversation. Somehow it felt like home, and yet its sense of permanence was long gone.

I had spent the last few months separated from everyone but my parents as I finished my sophomore year of college via Zoom. Home became this alien civilization where everyone wore masks to shield their faces from impending doom, and six feet apart became the new normal. Suddenly, home didn't feel like home anymore. Everything was changing.

High school had been filled with belly laughs, strong emotions, and late evenings. Every moment built stronger friendships as we all navigated what it meant to be ourselves and cherish those around us. As college approached, many friendships faded but some stayed remarkably the same. I remember mid winter trips to the Malt Shoppe where we guzzled down fries, sodas, and sandwiches. It was my best friend Isa, Sarah, Lillie, Carmen, Charles, and I. We laughed, threw out pop culture references every once in a while, and traveled to the elementary school playground to swing like we were kids. We were kids. I was beginning to understand myself like a kid places blocks together to build the highest tower he could.

Suddenly, as I looked around the town I was moving away from, I realized like me, it was changing. The memories were still jubilantly dancing around my mind but the buildings they belonged to were no longer mine. The Malt Shoppe had been demolished to provide space for a new building. My high school no longer held the people I loved so much. Chairs and tables had moved, faces questioned my presence, and it all slipped away through my fingers like sand.

As I made my way down the steep steps of my home, I walked towards the living room feeling the wood beneath my bare feet. Through the doorway and turned to the right, it was still there - the chair. Its cream color was fading and the arms were worn. Its seat was cavernously comfortable as it sank low and wrapped you in its arms. It wasn't particularly beautiful, but it was big enough to cuddle up in, and it was there when I needed it the most.

On a cold November night, I cuddled up in my chair and finished *A Work in Progress* by Connor Franta. During this time, thoughts swirled my brain as my father, a nondenominational preacher, fought for same sex marriage in our church, and I found myself falling for a guy at same time. Everything was happening really quickly.

Franta, a gay Youtuber, had made a “Coming Out” video in 2014 amassing twelve million views to date. He was one of the first gay men I could see myself in. He is deeply thoughtful, artistic, and grew up in small town much like the one I had grown up in. He explores himself and the world around him with a carefully considerate eye, and he is funny as hell. As soon as I had found his videos, I was hooked. Even though I didn’t know it at the time, the mirror he provided would be a catalyze to the next few years of my life.

He ended his memoir by saying, “So what are you waiting for? Go. Get started.”

I knew exactly what I had to do.

As I closed the book, stillness consumed the room around me. I could hear my grandmother’s clock ticking in the corner. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. The sound moved at a decrepit pace mocking my anxious heart.

The sound of the clock was disrupted by the movement of the door hinge and the sound of feet pattering on wooden floors. Organic sounds filled the space again but I was lost in the loud pounding of my heart within my chest. Badom. Badom. Badom. Badom.

I waited for my parents to make their way to the living room. Their voices filled the kitchen and echoed across the tile floor. As my mom’s footsteps moved closer my heart pounded louder. BADOM. BADOM. BADOM. BADOM.

My dad moved closer as well. I gripped my knees in a fetal position. My knuckles turned white gripping my thumb in a fist-like shape, and when my nerves coursed through my body, I stiffened my muscles in hopes that my anxious vulnerability wouldn’t be seen. I held back with every fiber of my being. But I was going to do it.

I sat there nervously for a few minutes as my parents settled down on the couch.

“Hey. I have something to say.. I’m gay.”

...

“We love you, and this doesn’t change how we feel about you.”

I let out a sigh of relief as I relaxed enough to notice the crick in my neck. I rested back into my comfortable chair as my parents watched an awful movie that all of us were bored with by the end of the evening.

That night every weight seemed to fly off my shoulders. I had nothing to think about. Nothing. My mind was blank. I marveled at the quietness that my body soaked in, and I fell asleep beautifully content.

As I looked at that chair I was reminded of how far I had come, and everything this home meant to me. I found friends here. I found pieces of myself here.

I would miss how our lawn glistened in the sunlight, how light streamed through every window at golden hour, late nights watching tv with my friends, and listening to music as car lights cascaded across the ceiling of my bedroom. Every inch of that property held a memory from the last five years.

What would my new home be like? Would it feel like home?

I didn’t know, but I was ready to find out.

BEYOND WORDS

by Kyle Harrison

Chatter floats to the surface like vagrant driftwood
Cast to the sea, by the storm of the day
Stilled by bedrock foundation of shoulder and hand
A bond beyond words

Crimson white fireflies soar
Born out of a glowing bed of coals
Most disappear into the night sky,
Some join the stars on our celestial plane

Sometimes idle chatter
Sometimes uproarious laughter
Sometimes simply silence.

Sometimes, only.

Always aglow,
A stolen glance...
And a smile — ever so slight.



“

**It takes time to create
something truly beautiful.**

VANILLA.

by Lily Tammik

I lost touch.

It was the end of January. The sky was gray. My boots were brown.

I'll rephrase. My boot was brown.

I broke my right foot at the end of that November and thus was stuck in an air cast for those coming weeks until my foot healed itself and I could resume normal activity. It wasn't the inability to walk that bothered me. It wasn't the month of sleeping downstairs in a bed that wasn't mine. It was the fact that I wasn't wearing both of my boots.

I'll explain: my docs are brown, yes. Dr. Martens makes this boot in two shades of brown, yes. But when I purchased them off eBay in 2017, I didn't expect to get one of each color. After realizing that fact when I opened the box and tried them on, I knew they were mine. Some piece of myself instantly attached to the idea of the girl wearing two different color docs, just visible enough to those who look closely.

So, while I was excited to move into a studio apartment that was just mine to do with as I wished at the end of that January, something just wasn't right.

My boots weren't on. In the "lace up your bootstraps" kind of way.

I tried reading more to fill the gaping hole in my chest and that worked for about two books' worth of time. I didn't stop reading but it

still felt like something was missing.

At this point, we were about to enter Year 2 of the COVID-19 pandemic and of course everything felt unrealistic and apocalyptic, but it was only when I realized I had no creative juice left in me did I start to fall.

I was enrolled in art courses with people that inspired me, but I only created one thing that I can remember of substance and significance. It was a photographic work accompanied by a poem about the fallibility of my memories of my friends. I took, I don't know, 30 self portraits until I got just the right forlorn look in my eye, and placed that at the top left of the composition. There was another shot, beneath that self portrait, of my hand dropping a few small printed images of my friends and me in some of our happiest moments. The illusion made it look like the memories were falling out of my head.

They were. And I was desperately, frantically, hoping for them not to.

This one work has been the only piece I've made that was chosen for the Juried Student Art Show; an on-campus gallery display I'd been submitting to since my freshman year. It's funny because I knew it then, but this was my moment. It was the time to step back into something I loved wholeheartedly and with an emerging gusto that had seemingly escaped my body for months:

The darkroom.

Ahh.

Warm, orange glowing lights. Their faint buzz in the back of my ear. The dribbling sound of water weaving its way up and over different sections of the print washer. The overpowering, gritty scent of printing chemicals tinged with vanilla. Being unable to differentiate hues of color in the wash of orange, but still knowing when a print was too dark, too light, or just right. The overwhelming urge to dance.

Darkness shrouding me, enclosing my limbs in the gentlest, most comforting hug. Like when your partner holds you from behind, their eyelashes skimming the skin of your neck.

I can almost feel its fingers skimming along my cheek.

The black revolving door makes quite the sound if you throw it hard enough. Sometimes I play games with it, wondering how fast I can walk through without the door smacking the sides of my shins. Strands of hair get stuck in the tread, forming a grotesque cat's hairball if you leave it for a good long while. I wonder how much of my hair has fallen out in these four years. If I've added to the collective hairball of photography students, tracing some odd form of lineage in this program.

When I am alone in this space, I feel like the most authentic version of myself. The music I play is solely my own. My body responds in the varying vibrations of my vocal cords, in the shifting of weight from my left to right foot as I pirouette along the long sink. My hands instinctually finding the right levers to pull and twist on the enlarger, watching the timer tick tick down the seconds. Not even using the clock to time how long my prints have been developing, fixing, or rinsing in the sink, because now, I just know.

I started film photography when I was 14 years old. I'm 22 now, and while the love for this craft has ebbed and flowed over the years, I will never not be welcomed by its dark embrace. It was there for me when no one but my parents were. It was there for me when I thought I didn't want it anymore. It was there for me when I was utterly lost, alone, and sad.

I was so sad.

I paced my oddly shaped studio walls, truly I did. Looking for some way to spark movement. Some physical depiction of moving forward, reaching for something.

If I didn't pace, I would sit too long, having five options of chair to sit in. I was derailed by the monotony, the blankness of my experience, the sense of total aloneness I was faced with.

But the darkroom refused my wallowing. It refused to let time move forward but it also hinged on the passage of time. As with all things, it takes time to create something truly beautiful; the darkroom functions as the most true example of that intention. It is a doorway

into a dimension of deepened colors and glossy sheens. The capturing of time is created here, yet time still moves on. I couldn't be sad when I was here, the space just wouldn't allow it. Instead, it sparked intrigue and excitement, a place for unwinding, revealing, developing.

Pun intended.

But things got even better when I was introduced to the square format camera. I didn't expect how wildly I would take to the newness, and I was surprised by my devouring of it.

And this was it:

Nicknamed the "Plastic Fantastic", the Holga 120 S is a medium format plastic camera first released in the 1980s. The camera is known for its common lens aberrations, light leaks, vignetting and blur due to its limited controls. Unlike any DSLR or film camera, such as my Ricoh KR-10 or the popular Canon AT-1, the Holga supports only one dial for focusing and aperture. This limitation is precisely what makes shooting with the Holga and printing with it such a unique and fun experience. You just never know exactly what you're gonna get.

This turned out to be exactly what I needed coming out of a months-long stint of creative drain. So, I worked through a few rolls, sometimes finding light leaks and sticky film of my own that made the experience of using this camera one that was always unique. I was sharing images of my prints to my parents and my friends, a giddy smile plastered on my face. It felt right.

I was surprised by this discovery of an attraction to the chaos. I previously had found myself to be a traditionalist in many senses when it comes to art. I was once told while showing my portfolio to a RISD applications official that I should add an eye to the forehead of one of my portraits, to which I balked and kindly walked away. I tell that short anecdote to illustrate what I mean when I say "traditionalist". It's mainly that I find comfort, intrigue, and expression in control. Being able to tell my camera exactly what I want it to achieve gave me a great sense of authority over my work. I relished in this control I had.

When shit hit the fan though, I lost all that hard-earned control. Frankly, I was floundering. Photography becoming the crucial element necessary to break me from that train of thought likely should have been something I saw coming. Having been so close to it for so long, I knew subconsciously that I have always felt an intrinsic connection to the physical space of the darkroom and its effect on my mentality along with its creative potential. That just didn't click when I was entrenched in the instability of my circumstances. When everything else was so messed up and out of my hands, the darkroom gave me a way to use them.

Becoming familiar with the Holga furthered this creative drive and forced me to give up on the idea that I needed to control every aspect of my life. It forced me to appreciate what can happen when I just am. When I just take pictures because I like what I see in the world in that instant. The way the Holga captures that moment is unique to me, that specific camera, how I loaded the film, how I chose which setting to place the singular dial on, how the light was shining in that moment, if it was raining or snowing... it was mine. *And it wasn't mine because I forced it to be, it was mine without trying.*

When May rolled around, we were nearing the end of classes and warmer weather was moving in. I've never been a fan of the heat, but the sun felt nice on my skin after five months alone, indoors. I loved my experience shooting with the Plastic Fantastic so much that I used it for my Intermediate Darkroom Photography course's final project that turned out to be one of the projects I am most proud of in my time in college.

I looked down and suddenly, my boots were on.



RIVER SONG

by Kyle Harrison

The composition begins
with a few wrist flicks
Flexing the conductor's baton
A few feet of line at a time to find,
the time signature
flows from the final eyelet
filling the air above with subtle swift notes

Swishing to and fro, with each stroke
Letting out just a little more line, slowly building
A symphony in the air. Suspending cursive,
letters forming and reforming briefly, never fully
Then the release.
With one final grand motion, traveling up the swaying hips
Down the shoulder across the forearm and out the wrist

The final few feet of line zip out the tip of the rod
Pulled by its own determination
Afloat down the river until it reaches its destination
A diminuendo to finish out the conductor's crescendo.
The song is in the hands of the river.
The dreams of every conductor finds
a kingly river spirit takes his solo on the line.



“

**I wouldn't want to concern her
at a time where it seemed with
every passing year the world was
more and more concerned.**

YELLOW LINES

by John Player

Some streets are longer at night than they are in the day. Some are shorter. Tonight I sat in my car, alone, on the kind of street that feels like it went on forever. I sat in my car, hands off the wheel, foot off the pedal, under a solitary circle of orange light. There were no other cars. Just before me was a railroad, and off to the side was a railroad crossing sign; blinking red. It blinked for some time before the freight began to chug through the street. As graffitied boxcars drifted past me, the red light kept blinking. It blinked another two thousand times. Then another two thousand. And after a small red stamp had been seared to my retina, the last car on the train rolled through the street. On the side of the red caboose was big white lettering; SPRING-FIELD, IL and out of the window stuck out a burly tattooed arm. The arm's hand drummed against the outside of the train as it passed under the orange light. The hand wore a wedding band.

I've always said that I think everyone should work at a restaurant for at least one year of their lives, Ideally when they are young, because when you are young you've got the back for the work and you'll learn things that will become helpful as you get old. This is what I believe. But there is much cleaning to do when working at a nice restaurant. You have to wipe down the tables before and after service. You have to polish the silverware and the plates. You have to Windex the windows and dust the lightbulbs. You have to get on your knees and scrub the

scuff marks from the bar baseboard—but not with steel wool because that will damage the wood—you have to use a sponge. At the end of the Saturday nights, you have to go into the supply closet and fill two five gallon buckets with water and bleach and carry them out to the patio where you've previously dragged out the bar mats and you have to dump the water-bleach mixture onto the mats without spilling any on your shoes or pants because then you need to buy another pair of shoes and another pair of pants. It is with these memories in mind that I will sometimes, less seriously, say that the restaurant industry “is not for everyone.” Because it is hard work, there are no breaks, and on the easy days you get paid very little.

Fortunately for me, easy days were seldom to be had, and it is for this reason that I find myself idling in my car by a railroad crossing and staring into my rearview mirror at sometime past 2am. Late nights are a habit that you pick up as a restaurant worker. You get out late, and then you push it even later by talking and sometimes drinking with the bartender and his wife. When you leave the establishment you'll likely find yourself exhausted but you won't be able to sleep. You will be running on adrenaline still, it'll take a while to come down.

I put my hands on the wheel and crossed the railroad and the town border into Dover. Dover, Massachusetts is one of—if not the richest town in the country. If you didn't know that you could figure it out pretty fast by the quality of their roads and by how far away their driveways keep their houses from those very nice roads. Driving in Dover was nice. It was all winding, wooded, backstreets, and very rarely would police cruisers patrol those narrow forested paths, and very rarely would I feel guilty about playing my music as loud as I could. Not even as I strolled past the driveways I recognized from catering events or an improvised delivery service that the restaurant initiated when in the thick of social distancing. There was far too much space, far too many trees for them to hear me go by. At one point I

drove by “Chetty’s” house. Chetty was an Indian expatriate and photographer for the Times magazine, he was also a food and fine wine connoisseur. I knew Chetty quite well, I have been to and inside his home, I have met many of his friends and spoken with him at length. Chetty did not know my name. He would never use it in our interactions and he looked as if he was trying to remember something when I would say ‘hello’ to him at the restaurant. But I would not hold that against Chetty, Chetty was a friend. It was beginning to get late, I had gone through two albums and six towns by now. The clock, which was still set an hour ahead from last daylight savings time, said it was now past 5am.

On these late nights, I would always try to get home and into bed before my mom would wake up and take the dog out. I felt that, this way, she wouldn’t have to come face to face with that additional stress that her son was causing her by spending the early morning driving around in the dark. I wouldn’t want to concern her at a time where it seemed with every passing year the world was more and more concerned. The downside to this, was that I wouldn’t often see my mother, considering that the next day I was off to the restaurant as soon as I would wake up at 2pm. In truth, a part of me assumed that she heard me every time I would come home from these drives. Whether out in the driveway closing the door, on the front step rooting for my keys, or down the stairs to the basement as I tried to remember where to place my weight not to creek the floorboards. It was kind of a mother’s thing to listen for those little cues. I began to head home.

While it’s true that I did not see that train and its rear brakeman in Dover but in Milford, and while it’s true that trains never passed through Dover but would make plenty of trips, day and night, through the once thriving quarry town nearby. While I was rolling off the smooth pavement of the Dover roads I heard a train whistle blast out. I heard it from inside my car and through my music. And I knew if

Chetty or any other Doverian was listening or awake when at the time it blasted, a time when everyone should be asleep, that they would hear it too. I wondered to myself if that was the same train that I saw at the start of my drive. I wondered if it was the same rear brakeman with the wedding ring and the drumming fingers. And as I tried to remember the details of the train, I wondered if they really had come all the way from Illinois. I wondered why they were blasting their whistle. Were they leaving the station? Heading back to Springfield? Was it for fun? To let loose? Were they approaching a railroad crossing and wanted to let any late night drivers beware?

I left Dover and I left Milford and I made it into my hometown. The drive from the border to my house was not much longer but when I pulled into the driveway and stepped out of my car the sky was no longer dark. I hobbled on aching soles to the front steps and up to the door. The air was cool and wet and my ears were ringing from the long night of loud music. I thumbed through my keys and as I was looking down I noticed the leg of my jeans stained in white and wished to myself that I had been more careful with the bleach. I slowed the door open and heard my dog’s collar stir. I listened further. Down the hall, someone rolled over in bed. I shut the door behind me and walked down the stairs to go to sleep.

A SENSORY ANTHOLOGY