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3728: For John and Sheri Hart

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About the Contributor

David Grandouiller is a Junior English major at Cedarville University. He is interested in the unglorified, concrete moments of human experience: O'Connor's dust, Paul Harding's toothache, Brian Doyle's Ash Street, Francis Schaeffer's blue pomegranates.

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3728

FOR JOHN AND SHERI HART

NONFICTION BY DAVID GRANDOUILLER

Sangria is the color of the front door frame – like a permanent Passover, but no one enters there, let alone the angel of death. I like that. You’ve done away with the cold formality of doorbells and entryways, of limp handshakes, coat closets, the awkward smalltalk which is the required atonement for friendship. The blood-colored door-frame has paid your debt to all those tired rituals. It baptizes the house in a red warmth that welcomes strangers with familiarity, through the side door, into the kitchen, into communion, the breaking of bread and of barriers.

Into the space and comfort of your living room come your cousin and your second cousin. Friend. Stranger. Your Matthew-five neighbor. Line them up, the ghostly memories of them, the redness of their faces, the light reflecting in dilating pupils that see (or ones that don’t) the warm colors, the ceiling beams like welcoming arms reaching from wall to wall. Imagine how many have been here; see lives filling up the room until they can’t help but touch one another as you have touched them.

I feel so mischievous with one foot through the window – like one hand in the cookie jar, like one eye over the newspaper, like one ear to the keyhole – of your blue room. My window, you’ve told me, but if it’s mine then why do I always feel like I’m trespassing as I set my foot on the impossibly small classroom desk-chair (if there’s a word for that, I don’t know it) under the sill?

When my grandfather was only a father, he came home, key-less, one night to a locked front door. He climbed his way in through my uncle’s window. I feel like that: a welcome intruder, breaking in without breaking anything.

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Your pool is hibernating. All seven hundred and fifty gallons of void in the darkness beneath a green cover, replacing the blue one you sun-dried, some months ago, on the lawn. Who knows what lives there now? Amelia Earhart shares the space with Elvis and the yeti's cute, furry, little grandchildren. But they'll be gone in May when you peel back the heat-trap ceiling – like the doors of Digory Kirke's wardrobe – for another summer getaway. Your island of water is magical.

From the patio, on windy nights, I've heard a trunk creak overhead – just like a hinge opening, like the back door of the universe. I think maybe if I were brave enough, if I could climb up there and feel around for the knob, I might fall through and see the world from the outside: all its mass of raw wiring, inputs and outputs for each individual star, the depths of every ocean's stomach jutting out like an iceberg bummock but whipping and waving like a grocery bag in the wind of the ectocosmos.

CEDARVILLE
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I'm sorry the forest is balding. Where, from the back deck, you used to see thick layers of trunk and branch, Ash and Beech and Hackberry, now the earth's bare, cratered scalp bristles like goose-flesh under the autumn air. Trench-warfare-brown and Bobcat-yellow have chewed away, like parasites, the green of Puck and Robin: taking from the living to give to the dead, replacing the woods with mulch gardens and man-made fountain ponds. You can pity the children who will play there – in their plastic worlds, not knowing what has been taken from them – and know that yours were offspring of the outdoors, last of a dying breed.