It is with pleasure that I can present this year's magazine. Working from a modernist aesthetic, we have crafted this issue to be a representation of the future, juxtaposing it with elements from the Bauhaus and Art Deco styles. Modernism was the beginning of the trend towards functionality and modularity that would become the world we live in.

In direct contrast from last year's medieval theme, we are recalling the era of sharp lines and clean work spaces. As editor this year, I strove to push us into the combination of modern, post-modern, and older elements that would be a representation of our contemporary moment that we all live in. I am so proud of the people I have worked with this year, they have tirelessly worked to help create what I consider to be one of the best issues thus far.

Joleen Zubek, Editor-in-Chief
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Smile Almost Warm
Yvonne Monterrosa

With a smile almost warm, laughs almost pleas,
Habitual humor recited with ease,
Weaving around in a jubilant guise,
Willing it linger until our goodbyes—
Nobody questions the one who agrees.

Keeping a stride and sure to appease,
Straining to skip with quivering knees—
The altruist makes an essential of lies
With a smile almost warm.

Numb in a squall of innate empathies,
Beguiling the day in keeping their peace.
Instead of her own, instead of her sighs,
Conditions the mind for the daily reprise,
Ignoring the burn of the imminent freeze
With a smile almost warm.
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Smile Almost Warm

Yvonne Monterrosa

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Five
Lauren Furushima
Mixed Media

Apothic Ladies
Eleanor Anderson
Illustration
**fathom**
Angela Freeman

when I sleep, my feet get tangled up in nets,
so I always have to bend down and untie, undo
the things that I forgot, the knots I left in place.

and my mind half-floats, half-sails
as a frown drifts onto my mouth and stays there,
like a sea bird alighting on driftwood.

up here, down here, there is no horizon.
just a lot of melting worlds at sea.

and though I kick the sheets from swimming
around my ankles,
there is always a remnant left between my toes,
or encircling my waist like a lover’s hands,
as a reminder that I am not swimming.

nor am I drowning.
I am simply
in between.

**Jack**
Angela Freeman

she called him
the needle in the haystack
a whirring cog, a winking diamond
buried beneath the rough clouds
in her city.

his mother called him
late for dinner
from a wheezing porch, asthmatic kitchen
in a voice like vinyl, worn by time.
“Please come back home.”
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Illustration
A Lack Thereof
Liam Hobbs

to extinguish the chasm
to dissolve the puncture
to destroy that which destroys
but that which also creates
the void that swallows all emotion
and creates only one
a lack thereof

Seating for Two
Moyu Zhang
Furniture Design

muscles defy neurons firing
signaling that it is time to get up
time to move
time to do anything other than lie here
endlessly
defiance not out of strength but out of
a lack thereof
Armor Neck Piece
Meagan Nevil
Metalworking

Scuba
Ann Marie McFee
Illustration
A Lack Thereof
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of it. The point of complete obscurity: that the result of a pin prick is the same as the prick of a knife until you venture to test depths, then, one result: the medicinal benefits of acupuncture, and the other: plain and simple death.

Nothing obscure about that.

Marching Band
Ann Marie McFee
Illustration
Obscurity
Christine Biles

What is when is where is the point of complete obscurity?

The moment you realize four or five years of "doing" is thirteen; where, exactly, a scar ends, and skin begins; when elegant copper hands click to midnight, but the grandfather does not toll; the fact that the you is the I, and the I am always you; seeing the mouse, the one you named Edolphus, white with a brown spot, lying dead on the front porch. Your Dad knows the answer, but he can't put it to words, which must be why he mutters to himself while "doing" the dishes—something he's done for years, four or five, thirteen, though the muttering is something new.

Is what is complete is when obscurity is where I say, "Good day, Mr. Jones" to a large, black dog, with a British accent, before going out in the rain to milk the goat named Pennyroyal and feed rooster-less chickens. As they eat, I dare ask if life is worth living without a cock. Their words are obscured behind busy beaks, like your father's, leaving me with nothing but the truth, the whole
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Can a Jellyfish Unlock the Secrets of Immortality?
Stevie Thompson
Illustration
A Pash of the Man

Eric Epstein

A pash of the man I am, a flash in the pan I am,
I got the heebie-jeebies, the screaming meemies!
I'd bet a lull over will let it all over,
But can't get you my thick skull over!
Mull over till I'm dull over.

Hey, I'm a million laughs, jest me up!
I'm in giraffes, the clown dressed me up,
Let's globe-trot with you, country-hop with you.
Bring lions in threes for you? Swing a trapeze for you?
Bump through groups for you? Jump through hoops for you?
Breathe fire for you? Jump higher for you? Stunt flier for you?

I'll test the waters, call Neptune's daughters,
You'd fan a gale through, but I'd man a sail through,
But if more than they'll crew,
My plan to tail you turns to jelly,
End me up like Jonah burns in the belly,
Can a tale true send me up a whale through?

It'll make much sense to take such lens:
I'm your rose-colored specs that chose convex,
Share the pros with me, spare the lows with me,
And wear your nose with me up next.
Can a Jellyfish Unlock the Secrets of Immortality?
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Tendril Vessel
Meagan Nevil
Metalworking
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I'd be the Grinch of you, so said little miss Who?
I see every inch of you—I'm your ruler,
Numbers never truer! Eh? I'll school her.

Make a note of you? I already wrote of you!
I've a nook on you, take a look on you,
What? The library never took on you?
Pooh-phooey! I'd do plea with Dewey.

Bust rhymes for you? Just dimes for you? Trust it'll suffice?
Unjust crimes for you! Must times with you for twice the price!

How shall I couch it in one sitting,
Clothe it in words with one fitting?
How for the life of me will I find a wife-to-be?
My lowball stance isn't well:
Not a snowball chance in hell!
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Not a snowball chance in hell!
a girl who
Michelle Civil

a girl who collects special relationships
as a type of game, a token
for herself: to prove it.

flee now
feel that tug? that's her rope.
magically, suddenly, like a strong current,
"want to smoke a cigarette?" you've been latched.

time is a filler,
like a temporary insulation that crumbles when you want it to.
or when she wants it to.
space diminishes // the rope appears // the girl sketches
deceitful.
specific words tailored for specific people.
her relationships are crafted, built like a sculpture's—from the ground up, but by the artist only.

besides,
the one that holds the rope
holds all the power.
Intuition
Jessica Sorrell

Dear nebulous chinchilla down
When hung about the neck will tickle ears
Will be unconcerned with daylight or with making clear
distinctions
like prescriptions
like a judgment.
Would you come more near?
A shape sans center, it would not abide
By relativistic law
being algorithmically derived.
No, no.
But yes
and like Zeno
ever closer.

Home Sweet Home
Rebecca Merriman
Illustration
a girl who
Michelle Civil

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as a type of game, a token
for herself: to prove it.

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Now stillness
where this sweet, seductive angel's fingers stroke
my sleepy head made dizzy with lust lingering in smoke.
She whispers, parrots films and fiction crassly, 'Let me in,'
But all doors here breathe, all windows open,
permeable as skin.
And that, I think, was the beginning of the end.

Well I learned how to look up once,
and since that day, I've been enamored of the sky
where the sun hangs just as still in silence
as clouded by cacophonies of 'why?'
My lover's left me, disappointed
inviting me to see
the world's not found in an eyelash,
but a story.
One I'd very much like to read
inscribed on every grain of sand
recumbent on the beach.
On the Sometimes Salutary Effects of Doing Nothing
Jessica Sorrell

I might have watched the clouds catch fire
litter phosphorescent ash across the sea,
but in years of frantic pacing I was pleased to watch my feet.
Thought sharper eyes would tell me if there was anything to see.

My debts now paid or dwindling
momentum spent, there is no source
of gravity, no well-lit midnight porch
or question drawing, begging for
a voice. No walls to bound and echo, croon, "Yes, we are near,"
So why all the noise up until now?
Were we hoping someone else might hear?

My head shook with conviction, damn near desperately
"No! I swear, it's all for me
It's only ever been for me,"

So keep quiet til you pick up on the frequency
Of nature versus nurture in our kind, polite and politic
Each station built by regulation, airing public decency
But all that's lost in static, friend, is what you really need.

It's all been charted out, I guess
Arranged by better minds than ours
We've signed upon the dotted line at birth
our promise to uphold
this, a proud tradition, of conceit over our souls,
kept neatly pressed in closets, til we clean them off to mend the holes.
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Out of Place
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Illustration

Gardenia
Amber Tracy
Painting
Anonymous
Yuxiang Dong
Photography
Out of Place
Colleen McNally
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Painting
Anonymous
Yuxiang Dong
Photography
Release
Meghan Boilard
Photography

Objects of Memory
Catherine Hellsten
Photography
A Midnight Vision on the Nature of God  
Nathaniel Mathews

You stand on a road, cracked asphalt with no shoulder or center lines.  
The trees are red and golden, crisp;  
cautious.  
A bus crests the high high hill  
and it stops just for you.  
You climb in, the ridges of the stairs harsh on your bare feet.  
The silence whispers lonesome in that motionless bus,  
windows down, chills in the air — just you and the busdriver.  
You ask where the bus is taking you,  
but she doesn’t know.  
Methuselah reborn, skin of ebony and rosewood.  
Her eyes are green frogs, but she’s just as lost as you are while the doors close of their own volition  
and you sit way in the back.  
The wheel-well is there, and you have to pull your knees up to fit.  
They knock against your chin as the bus rocks back and forth  
and the rhythm of the drum in your jaw pounds out ‘forever.’  
The windows show cornfields and mountains,  
forests and waterfalls,  
traintracks.  
The swaying never ceases, but it doesn’t last nearly long enough:  
The bus rumbles, Goliath in its belly bursting forth, a beached whale exploding,  
and the flicker behind the windowpane  
slowly and stops.

Emily  
Joleen Zubek  
Photography
Objects of Memory
Catherine Hellsten
Photography

Release
Meghan Boilard
Photography
You stand on a road, cracked asphalt with no shoulder or center lines. The trees are red and golden, crisp; cautious. A bus crests the high high hill and it stops just for you. You climb in, the ridges of the stairs harsh on your bare feet. The silence whispers lonesome in that motionless bus, windows down, chills in the air — just you and the busdriver. You ask where the bus is taking you, but she doesn’t know. Methuselah reborn, skin of ebony and rosewood. Her eyes are green frogs, but she’s just as lost as you are while the doors close of their own volition and you sit way in the back. The wheel-well is there, and you have to pull your knees up to fit. They knock against your chin as the bus rocks back and forth and the rhythm of the drum in your jaw pounds out ‘forever.’ The windows show cornfields and mountains, forests and waterfalls, traintracks. The swaying never ceases, but it doesn’t last nearly long enough: The bus rumbles, Goliath in its belly bursting forth; a beached whale exploding, and the flicker behind the windowpane slows and stops.
Family Game Night
Brent Aguilar
Illustration

Castle
Maliya Travers-Crumb
Illustration
For a Parking Lot Behind My Aunt’s Dance Studio
Nicolas Eckerson

For a moment in the morning perfect for being alone, the parking lot behind the plaza, the part past the dumpsters away from the brick walls and steel doors flat closed, where the posts mark every hundred feet with night lights that make it orange all after nine. The moment of God knows people get up for the kind of work kids never know is done until they get older to the specifics of life and facts like “someone does that for money every day;” in this part of the morning, a sunrise matches the orange of the post lights and lights on walls, and the past pushed up piles of snow arrive again in the air where it snows in cross hatch on the paved, once leveled spaces.
The sun sets off the sensors, the orange shifts control, people in airplanes no longer see streets as gold and wild copper chains dropped in coils and laid out in lines on the black felt land.
For the moment of no cars parked behind these buildings, in this effected spot where one might turn around, lost.
For those who have been in this parking lot you have to remember that at heart, this is a thing more than a place, a thing made for service as long as it’s needed, and then better left vacant off the clock, relieved between shifts, as the day means the sun and lights means the night.
Family Game Night
Brent Aguilar
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Illustration
For a Parking Lot Behind My Aunt’s Dance Studio
Nicolas Eckerson

For a moment in the morning perfect for being alone, the parking lot behind the plaza, the part past the dumpsters away from the brick walls and steel doors flat closed, where the posts mark every hundred feet with night lights that make it orange all after nine. The moment of God knows people get up for the kind of work kids never know is done until they get older to the specifics of life and facts like “someone does that for money every day;” in this part of the morning, a sunrise matches the orange of the post lights and lights on walls, and the post pushed up piles of snow arrive again in the air where it snows in cross hatch on the paved, once leveled spaces.
The sun sets off the sensors, the orange shifts control, people in airplanes no longer see streets as gold and wild copper chains dropped in coils and laid out in lines on the black felt land.
For the moment of no cars parked behind these buildings, in this effected spot where one might turn around, lost. For those who have been in this parking lot you have to remember that at heart, this is a thing more than a place, a thing made for service as long as it’s needed, and then better left vacant off the clock, relieved between shifts, as the day means the sun and lights means the night.
exhale
you murmured that we should take it slow, but you’re the
one that left love bites between my breasts. I don’t know if
leaving my own on your neck was the best idea; I just get
very passionate very quickly.

inhale
you told me that you weren’t very romantic, but I think the
way you touch my face could rival Byron and Keats.

exhale
I’m scared to ask if I can kiss you in public. I’m too
frequently the girl whose lips dry up. Since I’ve spent so
much time only kissing myself, I’m terrified that again I’ll
be the drug to dull loneliness.
already, my mind is on fire
Madeline Rizzo

inhale
you took my hand in front of your friends and mentioned how cold it was. Your palm was lukewarm and sweaty, but I kept that to myself. I just want to think you’re nervous around me.

exhale
I’m traveling 200mph in a 65. Breathe and think, don’t just feel. I need to let my pulse take a break, but I don’t know if it’s possible with you tied up at my dock.

inhale
more often than not, you’re throwing back your head to laugh the loudest laugh I’ve ever loved. Everything is at ease with you. You’re my own personal generic form of Zoloft. My therapist noticed I seem more centered. But the cigarette burns on your arms show me that this has been a hard winter. I don’t want to be another case of frostbite.
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Here We Are
Hillary Vinokur
Photography

My Back
Daniel Jurman
Illustration
Stepping over and ducking under the gaping rupture,
Sharp, rough, chopstick thick wires scraping across skin
Leaving a trail of salty sweet tetanus.
The soft pound of careful footsteps beneath bare legs,
Sudden crack of yellowed, watered paper underfoot.
New York State Office of Mental Health
A hundred, maybe two, handwritten, history of insanity.
Special incidents, restraints, etcetera.
Who came, who left, who ran, who died today.
Casually strewn across sheets, strewn across dirt.
Marron, Peter. Number 30880. Deceased. June 30th, 6:45 AM.
Next of Kin: Not available.
Family members to notify: No.
But Karl May locked up the medicines and the vaporizer
He even signed for it, but not until evening shift...
Just another crazy.
Life under thick manila,
Thrown out of a sunken file cabinet,
Scattered by the stray and feral,
Behind the broken fence at the Kings Park Lunatic Asylum.
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Stepping over and ducking under the gaping rupture, Sharp, rough, chopstick thick wires scraping across skin Leaving a trail of salty sweet tetanus. The soft pound of careful footsteps beneath bare legs, Sudden crack of yellowed, watered paper underfoot. New York State Office of Mental Health Ward Report and Journal, For Period Beginning: May 1st, 1980. A hundred, maybe two, handwritten, history of insanity. Special incidents, restraints, etcetera. Who came, who left, who ran, who died today. Casually strewn across sheets, strewn across dirt. Marron, Peter. Number 30880. Deceased. June 30th, 6:45 AM. Next of Kin: Not available. Family members to notify: No. But Karl May locked up the medicines and the vaporizer He even signed for it, but not until evening shift... Just another crazy. Life under thick Manila, Thrown out of a sunken file cabinet, Scattered by the stray and feral, Behind the broken fence at the Kings Park Lunatic Asylum.
squinted her blue eyes shut as the slick wood floor continued to carry her across the hallway. Her tangled long auburn locks swept across the floor like a mop, generously picking up dust particles in its ragged nest. Becky despised grooming her hair. If it were up to her, she’d cut all her hair off. But her mother loved tending to Becky’s locks. Delicately, like an artist, Becky’s mother would run brushes and combs across the scalp and hair, which became a canvas. Becky would sit impatiently, twiddling her thumbs and shaking her lanky legs, as her mother would sculpt delicate creations from the hair, from French braids to twisted buns. As soon as Becky was free, though, she’d run outside and get grass, mud, and leaves all throughout her mother’s hard work. Needless to say, at this moment Becky’s now-dusty hair did not distract her one bit.

Regaining her footing, in a frenzy, Becky locked Raggedy Ann within the small knuckles of her right hand and ran towards the white plastic porch door. With the pit stop to rescue Raggedy Ann, Becky did not think she had the time to delicately open the door before her mother caught her. Instead, she let the door slam behind her as she ran across the small wooden porch onto the dark green grass of her backyard. The clashing of the door against the plastic frame caused Hunter, the family’s German Shepherd, to wake and release excited barking bellows. Still running, Becky turned to Hunter and held her index finger up to her chapped lips, making a “shh” motion. Hunter did not understand, and continued to boominly yelp. Rolling her eyes, Becky turned forwards again, towards the corn field and ultimately, towards the forest.

Becky’s pale skin was juxtaposed by the darker brown corn stalks, and they initially tripped her up as she entered their maze. Crunches of the aging stalks were emitted from each one that she hit, but she was a fast learner and was soon able to navigate around the stalks and avoid them with relative ease. Shoeless, Becky’s feet became entirely camouflaged with wet dirt. The leaf-like skin of the stalks’ exteriors had morning dew on them, which transferred their water droplets to Becky whenever she brushed against them. In her peripherals, Becky could see her foggy breath appear in front of her face, and quickly disappear as she inhaled and ran past it. Becky kept her eyes focused forward intently as she raced through the corn field. Soon, these sounds and touch sensations were drowned out as Becky got used to the pace. Stalks flew past silently as Becky’s mind began to think of something other than her flight.

“He’s getting very sick, baby. We’re going to have to move somewhere new.” These words her mother had softly uttered last night engulfed Becky’s thoughts. Becky loved the house, yard, and field. She didn’t notice the dilapidation of the house, she didn’t notice its dirtiness, and she didn’t notice the lack of cable television or telephones or the
occasional flickering of the electricity. Instead, her innocent eyes saw a castle, and she was the queen of the farm. Her chariot was her father’s tractor, which he let her ride on his once strong lap as he tended the crops. Her princess was Raggedy Ann, always by Becky’s side, as Becky reigned over her kingdom, riding high on her green and yellow chariot. Her crown was her father’s cowboy hat, which he would playfully place on her head, so large it would cover her eyes. Unstoppable giggles would emerge from both of them, although they were muffled by the loud tractor’s engine. Becky wished she could ride on that tractor one last time.

Ever since the fall began, Becky’s father had been riding his tractor less and less. Orange pill bottles began to scatter the kitchen table, along with doctor’s paperwork and medical bills. Becky’s mother, who had once only worked to tend Becky’s castle, had to get a job outside the home in an attempt to pay for these new health expenses. Becky didn’t know the details of what caused her father to not feel so well. She noticed recently that her father had lost some weight. His once broad shoulders began to dwindle to nubs, housing sticks for arms. His shaggy brown beard had disappeared, as did his short brown hair. His blue eyes, once as bright as Becky’s, had grown worn and bulged out from his wrinkled face, with dark bags encircling the exterior. She would hear him cough and vomit in their small bathroom. Becky tried her best to comfort him, thinking that if he got up to play with her, he would feel better. However, he didn’t have the energy for that anymore. Instead, Becky would obligingly lie next to him, rubbing his aching shoulders and hugging his now-emerged ribs, wishing that her queenly jurisdiction could have some control over his state.

Becky couldn’t handle the last night’s news of the family’s impending move. That was the final straw that broke her strong exterior. Her castle was crashing down around her—her kingdom would be lost. Becky had sobbed hysterically, thrusting her head into her pillow and screaming with rage. She wanted her king back, healthy and happy once again, so they could rule their corn dominion together, ceaselessly.

Now, Becky was a peon, dwindling within the corn stalks, running past them like a commoner instead of above them. Surprised at how long she had zoned out for, she was shocked back to awareness when she saw dark tree silhouettes emerge ahead. Eagerly, she quickened her pace until she reached a grassy gap that signified the end of the cornfield and the beginning of the forest. Tenderly, Becky walked across the dewy grass towards the line of dark elm trees. As she got closer, she noticed that thorn bushes scattered the perimeter of the forest, which would make it nearly impossible for her to enter.

Frustrated, Becky paced up and down the edge, scanning urgently for a suitable

Queen Becky
Erin Hutson

Becky’s tiny feet plummeted down the stairs, swiftly thumping on each step. Gravity quickened her pace and consequently increased the thudding’s clamor, but she deliberately shifted her weight to her chipped pink-painted toenails. Her bona fide nightgown, simply an undershirt of her father’s, hung at her knobby, scabbed knees, swaying back and forth with each step. It wouldn’t provide her any warmth on this chilly autumn dawn, but Becky didn’t have time for such technicalities. The only thing she knew for sure was that she needed to get out, and fast.

Each cedar step that Becky descended down creaked under her small stature. The wooden-plank walls of the stairwell, almost an identical shade to the dark brown stairs, provided a tunnel for the sounds to echo through, back up to the second floor where Becky’s parents slept. Becky was usually good at orchestrating her motions in such a way as to cause the least amount of sound, knowing the detriments that the stairwell’s echoing qualities caused thanks to many nights of sneaking. Becky loved nature, perhaps due to the beautiful landscape the aged farmhouse in which she lived was built upon. A large patch of green grass lay squarely behind the red vinyl siding of the house. The flat grassy area contained a doghouse, a single overbearing maple tree with a homemade tire swing hanging tautly from its steadfast branches, and a rickety red-and-white paneled shed. Right past the grass was a plethora of cornstalks, extending as far as Becky’s short frame would let her see. From her second story window, Becky could see a forest at the edge of the cornfield, off towards the horizon. Becky dreamed of reaching those trees, one day. Today would be that day, she convinced herself.

Becky struggled to dampen her sharp respirations as she ran, hitting the bottom of the stairs with a definitive plop. The wooden planks of the first floor almost caused her bare feet to fly out from under her, but she regained her balance and whipped to her right, focusing her attention on the backdoor several feet away. As she turned, Becky’s Raggedy Ann doll slipped from her hands and flopped down behind her. Quickly realizing the loss of her close companion, Becky frantically spun around, slid across the floor on her belly head-first, diving majestically to snatch up Raggedy Ann. Panting, Becky hugged Raggedy Ann and
squinted her blue eyes shut as the slick wood floor continued to carry her across the hallway. Her tangled long auburn locks swept across the floor like a mop, generously picking up dust particles in its ragged nest. Becky despaired grooming her hair. If it were up to her, she'd cut all her hair off. But her mother loved tending to Becky's locks. Delicately, like an artist, Becky's mother would run brushes and combs across the scalp and hair, which became a canvas. Becky would sit impatiently, twiddling her thumbs and shaking her lanky legs, as her mother would sculpt delicate creations from the hair, from French braids to twisted buns. As soon as Becky was free, though, she'd run outside and get grass, mud, and leaves all throughout her mother's hard work. Needless to say, at this moment Becky's now-dusty hair did not distract her one bit.

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Frustrated, Becky paced up and down the edge, scanning urgently for a suitable
entrance. Becky could hear geese cawing above, and looked up to see their black figures flap by overhead. Becky stopped her pacing. Once again, her fogged breath filled her vision. The sky was red with the impending sun’s rise. Cold, Becky shivered and rubbed her arms with her even colder hands. She gazed at the somewhat cloudy sky, admiring its reddened hue, which emphasized the dark red, yellow, and brown leaves that topped the trees. Becky smiled, imagining the leaves were like her hair, and Mother Nature like her own mother, tending to each tree’s leafy scalp. Her mother didn’t have much time for that now, and for once, Becky wished her mother would tidy up her hair, without any other cares in the world. Small cries built up in Becky’s throat as she choked them out, tears streaming down her flustered face. She squeezed Raggedy Ann, embracing the doll against her father’s shirt, squinting and howling upwards towards the red sky.

Becky’s sobs gradually turned to cries, then to sniffles. Eventually, the tears ceased. She rubbed her eyes, clearing them of the tears, and admired the forest that was in front of her, the sky above her, and the cornfield behind her.

“We made it,” Becky tenderly whispered into Raggedy Ann’s cheek, where an ear would ordinarily be. Becky kissed Raggedy Ann’s forehead, and stared deeply into Raggedy Ann’s plastic black eyes. After a moment, Becky made a tough decision.

“Ann, I’m not going to be living here much longer. But someone’s got to rule over this kingdom when I’m gone. You’re the princess, you’re next in line.” Becky assuredly stated, firmly grasping Ann’s shoulders. “I trust you, I’ve got to leave you behind. You’ll be the best queen ever.” Becky smiled as she propped Raggedy Ann up against a corn stalk that bordered the grassy barrier. “It’s up to you to watch over the corn field and explore the forest for me someday. I’m trusting you, Raggedy Ann. You’ve been my best friend, but it’s time for me to go.” Becky spoke confidently, though tears were budding from the corners of her blue eyes. She took one last look at her cotton companion, patted her stringy red hair, and soothingly confided, “I’ll always love you.”

With that, Becky stepped back into the cornfield, beginning her final stride through her farmland kingdom.
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Into the Woods
Brent Aguilar
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