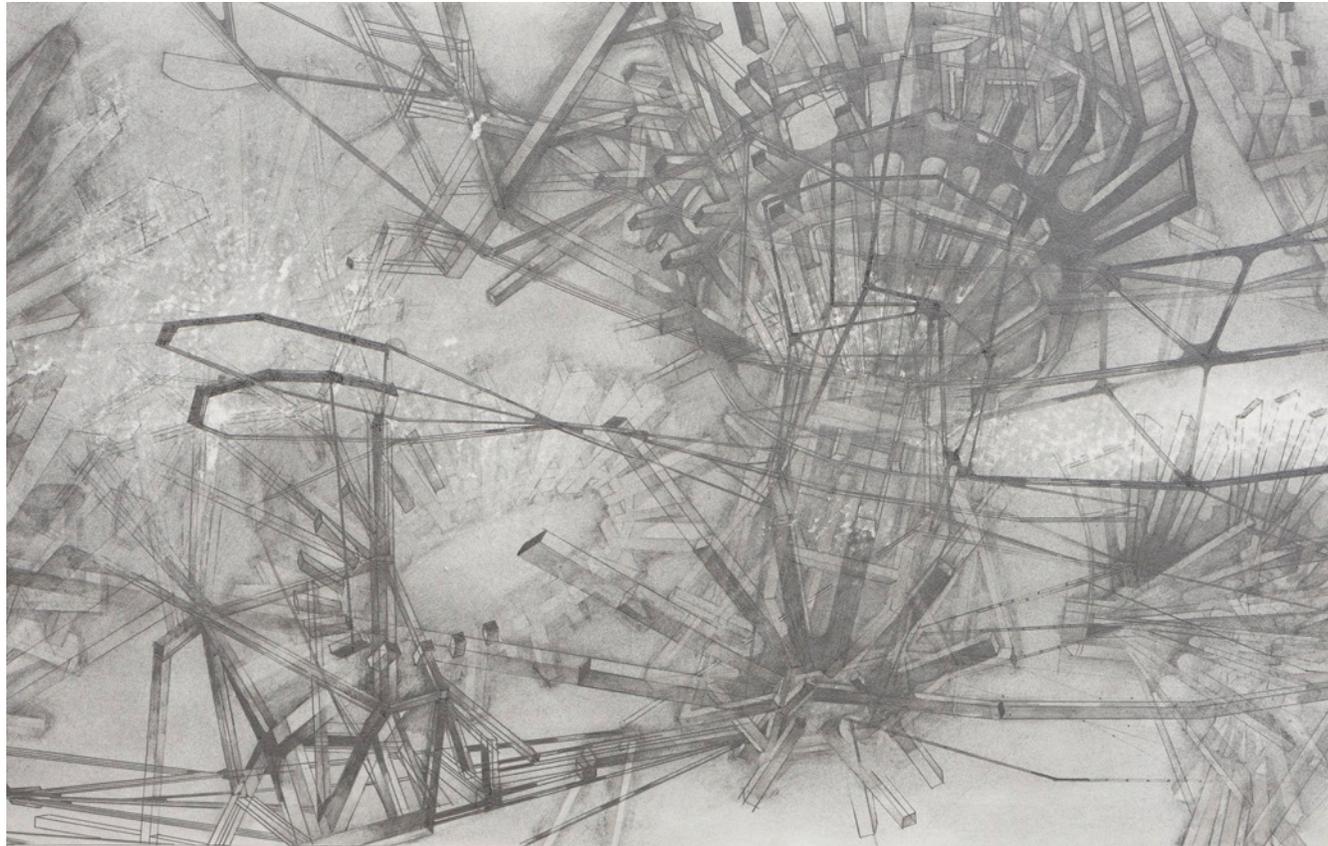


STEPHEN TALASNIK

Memory (with detail), 2015-2016
Pencil, 16 x 50 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO CREDIT: JEFFREY SCOTT FRENCH

CAROLINE GOODWIN

Amaranth

The Language of Memory

for Scott Hewicker

Any kind of wind in a hedge reminds me of the dancers I saw in London at a small theater next to the Opera House. They wore leotards that matched their skin. Also the raven, way off to the east, and pigeons. The oil-colored throats. The urban wilderness.

There is a street artist named ROA who painted three enormous sea lions on a wall on Bartlett Street in San Francisco, and a family of opossums at Fifteenth and Valencia.

Every other weekend, I ride my bike north for an hour in order to admire the fields of brussels sprouts along the coast.

I have a friend whose husband does embroidery. He taught me that there is such thing as a “widow’s sampler”—traditionally made by the grieving woman in honor of her husband lost at sea. I might like to learn embroidery myself someday.

I see the white emptiness at the center of the painting and cloud shapes in every muted color. A true anthem where the sun is a hole. Wagon wheels and gold coins, they burn us equally. I understand this now. It is the canal and the gate, it is the girl next door whose parents were divorced and whose father lived in a faraway place called Sunnyvale. She was very thin. She wore blue Dr. Scholl’s sandals and big dangly earrings that looked like peacock feathers. I wanted her friendship. After school the boys swept down the long hill on their skateboards, which made a gorgeous whooshing sound. We watched from the manicured lawn, giggling. Sometimes one of them would ride the skateboard in a handstand. Bees in the thickets, their yellow legs.

There was a boy named Bret who visited me while I was babysitting and showed me the glossy photographs, the women tied up and pleading. I can see Bret now; he looks like a fat lazy slob in his profile picture.

There were blackberries at the yard’s edge, and a white trellis rose. At the corner store, a girl named Lalina, the hot dogs turning, cigarettes. Behind the Quik Stop, we hurled glass bottles into the ravine. At the intersection of Lake Otis and Tudor, we gestured for the truck drivers to sound their horns and they did. At Goose Lake, we sprinted across the sand into the water and did the American crawl out to the floating dock. The surface of the dock was gray and cement-like, very gritty. Sometimes, we floated around on the cold water in large black inner tubes and got bitten by mosquitoes.

When I see the young man on the corner of Runnymede and University, I imagine him catching a sparrow and biting off its head. It's a European house sparrow, and the man breathes heavily as if to challenge me, several mouse-brown feathers stuck to his bloody chin. Shards of glass in the road, the sound of splintering, of a jackhammer, of all the traffic on I-5 blowing past the slaughterhouse. And so I have learned to value the seed beads, the peyote stitch.

When we board the *MV Columbia* in Bellingham, we look at one another and at the clouds hunched up all around us. Espresso, a woman with her fist in the air, an old man creeping along with his walker, a scratchy wool shirt.

I really like my Bigfoot coffee mug. I really like my cherry-red nasturtium and my Alaska raspberry nasturtium.

My friend owns a car shop where he lights the sage wand with a blowtorch, then gets down and does the child's pose on the concrete floor right next to the lift. This is to keep him relaxed and focused throughout the day.

When I hear chopper blades I think of Ferguson. Riot gear. A jar of local honey at the market, fireweed, field mint. With my molars, I crack the black sunflower seeds and I watch the baseball game. My breath, oranges, a cool wind to the east filled with pelicans.

After the sun sets, my daughters lounge around in their fleece jackets and sweatpants and I can hear the neighbors arguing and their voices cover my eyelids like two small wings. In the raised bed, a tomato fills up with juice. The moon pours itself into the yard.

My favorite pitcher is clear glass rimmed with blue, made in Mexico, tiny bubbles trapped in the handle. Walking home from the Universidad de Guanajuato, I glanced into the flour mill and I saw an elderly couple sitting on burlap sacks, staring out. The air was filled with dust, their faces gaunt. I thought of kittens or baby owls with huge, shining eyes. Mummies on the hilltop, in the museum. The more little mummy on the world. A statue of the Pípila, hero of the Mexican War of Independence, standing over the valley with a torch.

In the gravel underneath my kindergarten classroom there was a doll with x's for eyes, ropey hair. You could see it if you stood on a cinder block and peered through the grate.

When I was eleven I owned a mirror shaped like a

sunflower and inside it I discovered the black rims around my own irises, and the other colors there.

I have a friend who can harvest an otter skin. She can also spin wild mountain goat wool with a drop spindle. The dye comes from nettles or lichen.

Once, after my first daughter was born, I put her in the car seat and drove around town until dawn while my husband slept. The light came up behind Harbor Mountain, hulking. Two eagles perched on the Russian cross. At the end of the road, the salmonberries fattened. Now I hold my daughter's thin hands in the night, and I bless them and I bless them. A chorus of clouds to the west, the cirri spun out into nothing, like threads of silk. Home sign (or kitchen sign) is the gestural communication system developed by a deaf child who lacks input from a language model in the family. This is a common experience for deaf children with hearing parents who are isolated from a sign language community. Several different voices inhabited the snowdrops and horsetails, the water ouzel and grebe. There were a few faces in the cottonwood grove as well; there were several noses and pairs of eyes. Roethke: All the leaves stuck out their tongues.

In Anchorage, the bus took me downtown, past the park strip and the lagoon, the playgrounds and the duck ponds and bike paths. A woman with long gray hair tied back in a red handkerchief stood beside the creek smoking weed. "Do me a big favor," she said when she saw me on the footbridge. "Pray for someone you hate."

Driving into San Francisco this morning I had the thought of chopping the city into tiny pieces of confetti and placing them in a glass bowl, a colorful gift for my daughter. We could soak it in warm water, or we could light it on fire.

One time my dog Wilma ran away and I could hear her barking through the lightning storm. My boyfriend and I walked up and down the alleys until we found her, tied up in someone's backyard.

I have seen a pod of killer whales. An Alaskan brown bear feeding with her cubs at a river mouth. A lynx peeking up from a snowbank, in my headlights on the Alcan. A three-hundred-pound halibut. My thumb sliced open by a salmon tooth when I chucked the dead thing into the lake to protect my new puppy, who was eating it. Sea urchin eggs, laid out on a piece of pilot bread.

My mother loved the campfire and the olive-green lawn chair, an enormous blue down coat with a hood, a bag of peanuts or baby carrots. When a dry wind arrives from the east, we take off our hats. The roofer at the neighbor's house shouted fucking cunt several times in one afternoon while operating a nail gun.

I have a friend who can make lavender crème brûlée, venison roast with a blueberry glaze, smoked sockeye.

When I wake up, I often feel exhausted. I want to go back to sleep, but I don't.

I wonder about the beautiful tapestries in Peet's coffee shops. They are embroidered with metallic thread, but who performed this handiwork? How long did it take them, and was it difficult for them to part with the finished piece?

My husband chews with his mouth open and drinks directly from the milk carton.

Last night I had a dream in which a famous poet asked me what I've been working on these days and I answered, "An exploration of trauma, you know, the gift that keeps on giving." In the dream, she stopped her work at the granite statue she was chiseling and looked at me hard. Then she said, "All righty then," and smiled knowingly.

I am a fan of public transportation and the concerto grosso for string orchestra composed by Christopher Cerrone entitled "High Windows," which is based on the Philip Larkin poem of the same name. When I first heard it, I felt as though I'd been peeled. I sat in my seat in the theater, breathing in and out slowly, aware of my new skin.

I have a friend who purchased the old senior center van and drives it around town; it is his personal vehicle, although it has the traditional bus-driver bucket seat and the lever that opens the folding passenger door. On Tuesday nights, he takes the guys out for pizza after the meeting. I met a man in Melbourne, Australia. His name was Bernard. He was born and raised in Lyons, France. When he came to Alaska, he lived in my friend's woodshed for three months and worked in the cannery. One evening he got a seventy-five-dollar fine for fishing without a license. He had gone out onto the rocks by Halibut Point to bring in a few Dolly Vardens for dinner. He told me he'd reeled in and tried to run away but there were two rangers, and they cut him off. Another time, he got a verbal warning for harvesting chicken of the woods in a National Historical Park. Whenever I take Highway 1 through Pacifica, I feel slightly afraid.

This summer, I have been bringing fresh sweet pea flowers into my house every few days. I grow them in containers, from their seeds. It is, perhaps, the most satisfying activity I have discovered to date.

The fossilized bone of a walrus penis is called an oosic. I have been photographed wearing a plastic Viking hat, sitting in a chair with a musk ox pelt, and kissing a large brown oosic.

In 1987 my husband was in the habit of smoking crack with a man named Hambone. When Hambone drove his van to Potrero Hill to get some rocks, my husband had folded up a dollar bill to look like a twenty. This is called "pulling a gaffle." The man on the corner unfolded the dollar and saw the trick and came in through the back door of the van. He cut up Hambone's forearm with a razor blade and stabbed my husband in the right thigh with a switchblade. My husband spent three days in San Francisco General Hospital.

I do not feel a sense of pride or accomplishment when I think about my two college degrees. I don't know why this is.

On a good day, I wake up in time to make myself a bowl of McCann's steel-cut oatmeal sweetened with my homemade blackberry jelly.

I had a cat named Jeffrey who brought me a dead sharp-shinned hawk. I grew up with a dog named Kenai; one time she ate a leech that had been fastened onto her belly for a while.

I distinctly remember visiting Portage Glacier when I was a child and being in awe of the blue-green color of the ice and the feeling of the cold air against my face.

My parents encountered a wolverine while hiking in the Yukon. It ran away.

Sometimes I take BART from Colma to Sixteenth and Mission and walk around by myself for a while. Then I take BART back to Colma and drive home.

When I tried to make a huckleberry pie, the berries looked like salmon eggs and it was too sweet and the crust was very soggy.

I have a friend who built a hot tub out of a fish tote and a Snorkel stove. After a good soak, he dives into the ocean at the end of the dock and swims through the bioluminescence.

When I was in fifth grade, my friend and I smoked

Marlboro Reds while walking down Cache Street to gymnastics. Her older brother had gotten them out of a vending machine at Robert Service High School.

When I did the Walk for Hope in Anchorage in 1975, the music on the radio was “Run Joey Run” by David Geddes and “My Love is Alive” by Gary Wright and “Radar Love” by Golden Earring and “Billy, Don’t Be a Hero” by Bo Donaldson and the Heywoods.

My husband’s father died when my husband was four years old. His oil painting, *Manscape*, won a significant award from the New York Museum of Modern Art and toured the United States in the early sixties with an exhibition called *Figure Studies*. Frank O’Hara was one of the judges. *Manscape* now hangs in my living room so that every day I look at a painting and think about the father-in-law I never knew and about Frank O’Hara. *Manscape* is mostly black, with a thick blue line for the sky.

Both of my daughters’ eyes are dark blue, like mine.

When I was nine I saw a giant green anemone in a tide pool and I named her Charlotte. I visited Charlotte on a daily basis and caught bullheads for her with my hands. “Here you go, Charlotte,” I said. “It’s lunchtime . . . eat up.” I watched the soft tentacles close.

I possess the ashes of my daughter Josephine and the ashes of my unborn daughter, Sage, and the ashes of my german shepherd, Winnie.

When my oldest daughter was five she was invited to a birthday party and she wanted to give her friend some of her baby sister’s ashes as a gift. “Please,” she said, her palms pressed together as she gazed up at me. “Just a pinch?” One time, I did allow her to take the ashes to school for show-and-tell, and one of the other children looked at her solemnly. “You must really miss her,” he said.

In knitting, I have now learned the bee stitch. I think it is a beautiful stitch, hive-like and difficult.

I like to be near a glass of water. A clear glass of clean water.

Once, I heard several ravens making a huge ruckus on the telephone wires by Crescent Harbor. A dead raven lay on the sidewalk below them. They were so loud!

My daughter Josephine died in the hospital at Stanford when she was eleven months and eighteen days old. She was very sick. Her older sister was four at the time. When Josephine was alive, I often took the girls walking

around Half Moon Bay—to M Coffee for ice cream, to Moon News, to the library, to the little park by Pilarcitos Creek. Josephine lay back in her stroller, a feeding tube taped to her cheek with gauze. The tube ran up her nose and down into her tummy, delivering the formula. People would glance at us and look away. Now I wonder what they saw: an exhausted mother and a terrified child, a baby taking in the world for a few months? In the bookstore, the staff was always very polite and allowed us to lean and loaf at our ease, observing the children’s section.

After Josephine died I spent hundreds of dollars in the yarn shop on yarn for afghans. I had to make something to thank every person who had helped us; I had to cover myself and my daughter. I made a solid blue one in a ripple pattern. I made two enormous 100 percent wool garter stitch ones on size 20 needles. I made a heavy cotton one in rusty orange and forest green, and another one of multicolored granny squares rimmed with black.

When my husband found a pregnant garter snake in the grass near the new apartment, he brought it home and put it in a glass terrarium in the kitchen. Every weekend, he fed it several goldfish that he bought at the Feed & Fuel. A whole bunch of baby snakes were born soon after and we took them back to the field and let them go.

I often feel hopeful that eating flaxseed meal will indeed make my skin healthy and my hair shiny.

There is a bonsai tree in New York that is more than 112 years old.

When I was seven, I had a next-door neighbor named Ronnie Carmen. When he decided to pee his name on our driveway, my mother came charging out of the house screeching at him to go home right now.

I wonder what trauma really does to a person, to their thinking and to their art. At the center of the painting, the blank hole, the sun, the flower that never fades.

One Halloween I shaved my head completely bald and when my husband saw this he said, “I told you what I thought about that,” in an angry tone. “I just wanted to see how it felt,” I said.

I often eat graham crackers for a midnight snack, or handfuls of dry granola.

In the packing room at Sitka Sound Seafoods, Glazin’ Dave called me “darlin’.” When I went to grab a basket of between six and nine silvers just coming off the glaze tank

scale, he pushed the basket toward me slowly, shaking his head and saying, “Here you go, darlin’. Lots of fun.” Glazin’ Dave was a stooped, skinny guy with a full brown beard. At the Pioneer Bar he drank cans of Rainier and ate plain Corn Nuts.

I own three different bromeliad plants and four orchids that were given to me as gifts. People also like to give me very beautiful small books with blank pages inside.

I read field guides from time to time, because of moments like this: “*Icmadophila* translated from Greek means ‘moisture-loving’; *ericetorum* comes from the Greek meaning of the heath or *Ericaceae*—plants including leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne*), labrador tea (*Ledum*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium*). Look for this lichen while picking blueberries or along the edges of your favorite bog.”

I was a junior varsity cheerleader in high school, but when I tried out for varsity I didn’t make the cut.

When I worked at the McDonald’s on Indian Head Highway, I wore a lime-green polyester uniform. My best friends on the job were the night custodians, Dudley and Roscoe. On my third night alone at the register, a man reached across the counter, grabbed a stack of fives, and ran out the door. I couldn’t stop crying.

In October 2010, eight years after Josephine had died, I took my two daughters to see the mama blue whale that had washed up at Bean Hollow State Beach just south of Pescadero. She had been hit by a ship. We walked in the blood and seawater with a few other people, reverent. The fetus lay on the rocks about thirty feet west of the mother. When I asked the docent to illuminate me—How had the mama given birth? Was she dead?—the docent looked at me gravely and said, “Gas.”

I have a friend who wakes up in the night in a panic, thinking he forgot to tighten the oil drain plug on the car that was just in the shop. He gets up and gets dressed and drives to the person’s house with a flashlight, crawls under the car, and checks the oil drain plug. Then he can go back to sleep.

In 1985, I held a real Olympic gold medal in my hands when I met a member of the U.S. rowing team in the Portland airport.

I would like to travel to Y Wladfa, the Welsh settlement in Argentina.

The night before I left Alaska for a semester in Mexico,

I went to the Pioneer Bar with Glazin’ Dave and lost my wallet. I did, however, have my passport and plane tickets. Not knowing where to meet my professor and group of students in Mexico City, I hailed a cab and told the driver my dilemma. He stayed with me as I went into every hotel in the Zona Rosa to inquire. At last, we went to the U.S. embassy, where they told me to check into a hotel and start telephoning all eight hundred of Mexico City’s hotels, one by one. When we left the embassy, the driver took one more spin around El Ángel de la Independencia, turned right onto Calle Niza and right again on Calle Hamburgo, and there was my professor and the other seventeen students coming out of a restaurant together. The cab driver had spent five hours with me, so I gave him every penny I had in my pocket at the time.

When I was ten I crocheted myself a red, white, and blue granny square vest and wore it to Solid Rock Bible Camp.

The first boy I kissed on the lips was named Brian. I was in eighth grade; he came in the house to say good-night to me after a middle school dance. In high school, Brian was in a car that got hit by a drunk driver on Indian Head Highway. His friend was decapitated by the steering wheel. Another boy died. Today, Brian has a glass eye.

When I was eleven, my friend took me to her friend Crystal’s house and made me lie down underneath a blanket with Crystal’s older brother, Tommy, who pretended to be having sex with me. He looked at me and moved his hips, but kept himself propped up as if doing push-ups and did not touch me. When we emerged, my friend smiled at me triumphantly. “There you go!” she said. She may even have slapped me on the back. “Your first experience with a boy!” she said. Then we made Tommy lie down naked on his back while we swatted at his dick with a shoe.

Every year, on my birthday, I make myself a box of Kraft macaroni and cheese and stir a can of Bumble Bee tuna into it. Then I sit down and eat it all straight from the saucepan.

I wonder why Josephine’s hand was gray and shriveled when she lay in the little casket. I can understand why her body looked hollow, as if tapping her sternum with a fingernail would produce a sound like tapping on an empty shoebox. But, the shriveled left hand—how had that happened? If someone were to sit me down and explain it

to me, I would listen carefully. I would try to comprehend every single word.

In the morning, my black cat is often covered with a thin layer of dew. She sleeps in the yard. I like my house best when it's just the cats and me.

In July of 1990, a river otter crossed the road in front of my truck under a full moon. The next day, my friend Wayne came off his motor scooter and hit his head on a rock by Totem Park. He was in a coma for a month and then he died. He was twenty-one.

Yesterday I saw a river otter in Lake Temescal, near Highway 24 in Oakland, California. It was peering up through the reeds at me while chomping loudly on a fish. I would be lying if I said this didn't frighten me.

The moments from Sylvia Plath that come back to me most often are "This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary" and "What a thrill— / My thumb instead of an onion."

When I camp on Mount Diablo, I prefer to be alone. I eat Hebrew National hot dogs on Wonder Bread buns with Heinz ketchup, mustard, and sweet relish. I eat traditional s'mores. I walk around the campground at night by myself, after the air has cooled down. I enjoy the distinct vanilla smell of a ponderosa pine.

I like the words cypress and divinity.

My grandfather grew potatoes, raspberries, and butter lettuce in his home garden. He took me hiking up Indian River and when I said I wanted to sit at the hill and wait for a deer to come down for a drink, he said, "Okay." He said he'd wait for me back at the car. Then he went behind a tree and roared and came out and told me to get going, that might be a bear. I remember the sound of his keys jingling as he ran along the trail behind me, and I think I remember the sound of him chuckling.

One night my husband yelled at me for bringing the kids home late and waking him up on a work night. We had taken BART to a gallery in Oakland to see a friend's senior project, a glass show. I told my husband, fine, if we were bothering him so much we would just fucking leave then and I packed my daughters into the car and drove around crying for an hour before I went home. It's one of my biggest regrets.

My favorite flower is the sweet pea, and of these I prefer the purple ones or the white ones.

I know a woman who, in her forties, was engaged to marry an attorney she had met through eHarmony. After a year of dating, courtship, wedding plans, etc., he suddenly went crazy and beat her from head to toe. He even broke her collarbone. I have learned that this does happen to women, without warning. There exists a type of batterer called a cobra.

I enjoy Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream. Also, Chubby Hubby.

I know a woman who has survived three Alaska brown bear attacks. I know a man who has survived two Alaska brown bear attacks.

I want to learn woodblock printing or stained glass. I want to have a studio filled with trinkets and ivory figurines. I inherited my grandmother's inkwell made of a walrus tusk.

When I turned fifty, I walked through my old neighborhood in Anchorage with a friend of mine from childhood. It was very cold and dark, and our breath rose in puffs. The same streetlamp lit the small park by Campbell Creek. It was December. It is one of my fondest memories.

I have had three different writing students who've reported dreaming intensely about hummingbirds. Always, the birds are unfriendly and pierce the dreamer's eye or chest with their beaks.

I enjoy driving long distances in complete silence.

I cry when people yell at me, even if they are strangers. I cry when people honk at me for not turning fast enough at an intersection.

My brother's second and third toes are connected by skin. My husband has a fleshy lump the size of a walnut in the middle of his back, to the left of his spine.

I knew a woman whose husband would wake her in the night to have sex and then not remember it the next day. I learned that this is a disorder called sexsomnia. I suggested that she write a comic piece about it.

I want to learn to make braided rugs from strips of old fabric. I have a friend who does this; the rugs are beautiful. She lives in a trailer, keeps two singing finches in a cage, and knows how to dress a deer. She is a retired nurse.

I fell in love with my husband when, at a self-help meeting, he used the word apeshit to describe his anxiety and how it made him behave.

I always notice it in the spring when a crocus pokes up through the soil.

The diamond fell out of my wedding ring about four years ago and, although I found it on the floor and put it in a Ziploc, I still have not taken it to the jeweler to be fixed.

During spring breakup in Anchorage, I stepped into a snowbank and my right boot filled with icy water. The sensation was amazing.

I am afraid of people who are intoxicated; I have an abnormally strong reaction, which includes an increased heart rate and sweaty palms.

The moments from Dylan Thomas that come back to me most often are: "After the first death, there is no other" and "famous among the barns."

When my dog was alive, I walked her every night for at least half an hour.

I have a friend who claims that he hasn't had sex in so long, his pubes are full of cobwebs.

Two of my former students have died from methamphetamine addiction. One of my former students died when he put a chain around his neck and hopped onto his three-wheeler to go pull a friend's three-wheeler out of the ditch. Once, on a field trip, we came upon a salmon carcass full of maggots on the shore.

Last year I made a tapestry of a Day of the Dead skull out of seed beads. It hangs in my kitchen window.

I am a fan of the colorful cotton tablecloth and the mason jar.

Tonight, two great horned owls are in conversation in the trees outside my bedroom window.

I have learned, over the years, to keep the peace in my home by being quiet. I almost always agree with my husband and I make sure I am not the one who comes up with any real ideas. Sometimes, I am ashamed of this fact and other times I think it's the smartest thing I've ever done in my life.

The word for wind in the trees is psithurism.

I know a woman who has a blurry memory of being molested by her father in the shower. She has the image of his toes, and his voice. Not sure of herself, but very troubled by her memories, she decided to go to the courthouse in Denver where she discovered, in official family court documents, that her father had scored a three out of five on the SSPI (Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests).

I like a very hard-boiled egg with a lot of salt and pepper.

I had an aunt who looked vaguely like Harry Dean Stanton. She got kicked out of several nursing homes for sneaking cigarettes in the gardens.

I wish I knew how to fight fair with the people I love, like my brother, but I don't. I always run away.

I have carefully considered the differences between the words forest and jungle.

There is something offensive to me about the movie Forrest Gump although I would not be able to articulate exactly what it is. This is also true for the movie Big.

When I think of the painting entitled Anthem of the Sun by Scott Hewicker, I understand that there is such a thing as a white hole and that it has a specific energy all its own. In crochet, I have learned the African hexagon flower pattern.

When I was a Girl Scout, my troop went on a retreat north of Anchorage. There were sticklebacks in the lake and tiny golden frogs that freeze solid in the winter. One night, as we were returning from the outhouse, my friend's father jumped out of the bushes and roared in order to frighten us.

I can drive a forklift and a skiff with an outboard motor and a large U-Haul van. I don't particularly enjoy riding a bicycle, although I know it's good for my health, and I cannot drive a motorcycle, nor do I want to.

When anxious, I close my eyes and call up the image of a shimmering green lake.

Goat eyes creep me out and cat eyes do not.

I have heard an elk bugling in the Rockies.

When I was twelve, I lay on a frozen lake in the Matanuska Valley with my brothers and watched the aurora borealis. The ice boomed and cracked underneath us and the world was alive.

I believe in Sasquatch.

I own every size of crochet hook and knitting needle, and an "Eskimo thimble," which is a small piece of seal hide that fits over my index finger.

I have seven tattoos on my body and I believe every one of them will look beautiful when I am old.

My godmother gave me a pottery vase that she bought in Tehran in 1977; it is one of my most valued possessions.

When I got married, we hosted a square dance at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in Sitka, Alaska. The band was called Fishing for Cats. My husband and I rode from

the Presbyterian Church to the reception in a bicycle-drawn carriage behind Kermit, the local Deadhead. He wore a top hat and tails and took us around the Russian Cathedral twice on the way to the hall. My husband still talks about how stressed out he became that day, what with all the people and the expectations. There is a photograph of me smoking a Marlboro Light behind the church before the ceremony. I am with my new mother-in-law, Shirley, from the “People’s Republic of Berkeley, California,” who is trying to inhale the secondhand smoke.

I admire the way in which black spores line up on the underside of a fern frond.

I have eaten living ants. In 1987, I ate frog legs on Thanksgiving in Indonesia.

During childhood I spent entire weekends exploring a small marsh full of horsetail and wild mint. These plants made a soothing hollow sound in the wind. In my favorite photograph, I am wearing jeans, a blue sweatshirt, and black rubber boots. I am bending at the waist, long blonde hair swept over my right shoulder as I peer down at the earth.

In cities, I often notice living fossils like the Ginkgo biloba tree and both phases of the horsetail.

I do not attend meetings of the Parent-Teacher Organization, convinced that the other mothers know about my permissive parenting style and are judging me.

I know a woman whose husband was electrocuted while he was using a chainsaw.

I have heard that there are men who have had sex with roadkill.

Once, a private detective collected a DNA sample from my husband, who was a suspect in the unsolved murder of a twenty-year-old woman in Alaska.

My great aunt Josephine was placed in an institution after World War II. She had served in Europe as a nurse. My Uncle Bob enlisted during the Korean War with the idea of quitting alcohol. Crossing the Pacific, he experienced the delirium tremens and shot himself.

After my daughter Josephine died, it was Dave Chappelle’s Chappelle Show, and only the Chappelle Show, that gave me hope.

I sometimes become so anxious that I can barely speak, or I speak a whole lot without making any sense at all or even really knowing what I’m saying.

Once I walked off the elevator at the Space Needle in Seattle and saw a woman, Ellen, whom I’d met the year before while traveling in Indonesia. When I called her name and she looked at me, I realized she wasn’t the woman I’d met in Indonesia after all. Her name, however, was Ellen.

There is a flower called the amaranth, which is imaginary and never dies. The name comes from the Greek word amarnton, meaning “unwilting” (from the verb marineshtai, meaning “wilt”). In the fourth book of *Endymion* (1818), John Keats wrote:

..... The spirit culls
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.

The Swedish metal band Amaranthe takes its name from the flower. I call this piece of writing “Amaranth” because of my friend the painter Scott Hewicker and his piece entitled *Anthem of the Sun*. Anthem, amaranth.

In March 2016, threatened snowy plovers were spotted in record numbers on San Francisco’s Ocean Beach.

One Sunday afternoon, many years ago, I picked a fight with my husband about his tone—I didn’t like the way he was interrogating me about my spending habits. After about twenty minutes, I decided to take a break and go into town for some chicken soup at New Leaf Market. Driving home on Highway 1, I ran over a cat. When I turned the car around to see if it was okay, I saw it get hit again. It was black and white, very fluffy. The stain was on the road for a long time.

No movie has made me cry more than *Il Postino*, about Neruda’s time on the coast of Italy. My husband cried openly during *Saving Private Ryan* and *Bridge to Terabithia* and Michelle Obama’s speech at the 2016 DNC Convention.

When I was twenty-four, a friend and I took a black Glad garbage bag to a rocky beach along Sitka Sound, poked several holes in it, and gathered dozens of smelt. We rinsed the fish in my kitchen sink, then dipped them in egg white and seasoned flour and cornmeal and fried them in Crisco. A storm that lasted for a week was moving in off the Gulf and my friend told me stories of his grandfather in Kentucky, how he learned to tie a silver darter and a gray ghost and cast them into the Ohio River. It was fall,

it was almost the end of the black cod season, it was long before I knew about such things as the Folsom Street Fair or dungeons or twinkies or the fucking machine or Kink and Fetish Porn for the Adventurous. I hadn’t even been pregnant yet or contracted a venereal disease. I had just rented my first apartment behind the Forest Services building at 729½ Siginaka Way, and the only furniture I owned was a futon. I didn’t have a single tattoo. Jerry Garcia was singing: “Maybe the sun is shining, / birds are winging—” My friend and I popped open a jar of mild Pace salsa, then sat side by side on the kitchen counter and ate the smelt whole.

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