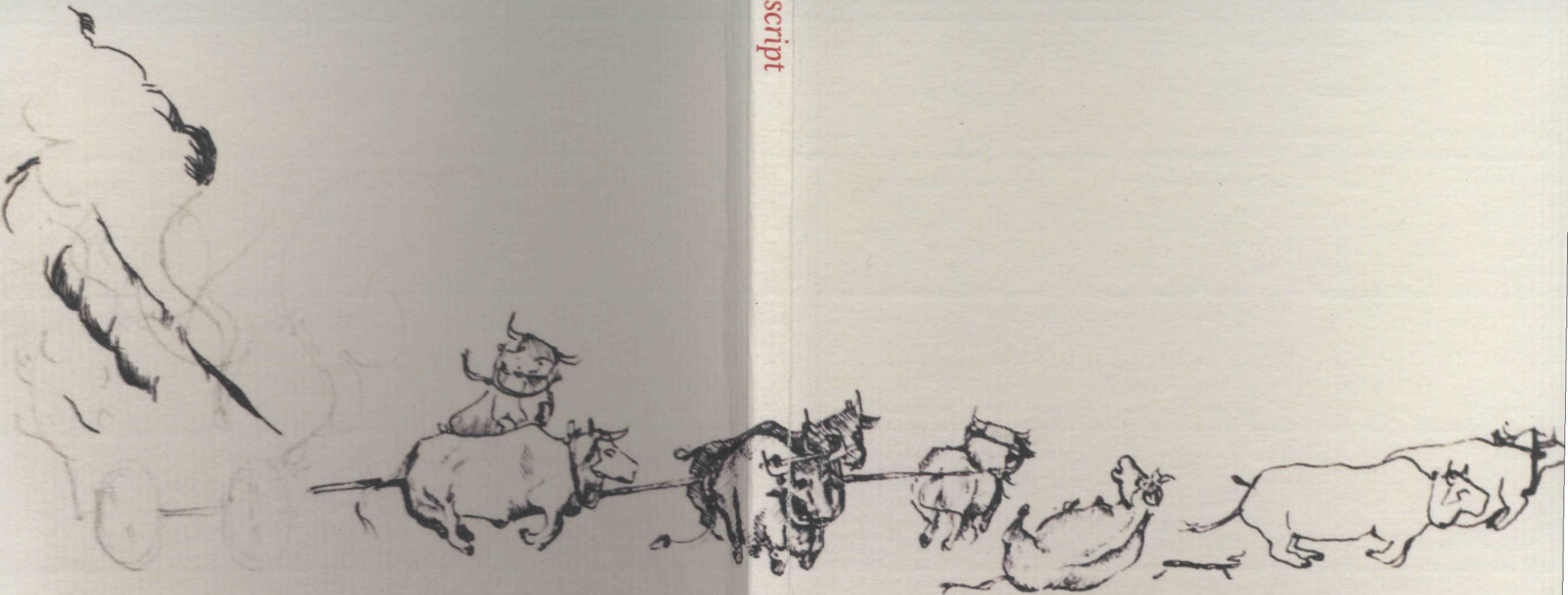


script

24.2014



## Faithless

molly case

We stand smoking by that red barn.  
It's been for sale since I've lived here.  
Our eyes strain to see,  
leafless trees, tall yellow grasses, the river that  
threads through it.

Though I know these pastures,  
I begin to wonder what the tall  
grasses could hide.

I lost my faith in you like this.

Close enough to touch,  
we stand in silence.  
I keep my day, and you keep  
yours.

## Slice

mikayla ludiker

My grandfather wants to jump off the rock. “When I die,” he says, “I want you to scatter my ashes over the edge. If I get some damn terminal disease I’ll jump just to end it.” I am twelve and my grandfather wants to fly over the forty foot drop in his backyard—my grandfather instills in me the yearning to fly. “Don’t get too close to the edge now.”

There is a bench here on this rock. It is rusted brown and weather-beaten; it was here before my grandparents bought the property. Someone loved this place long before us and it shows. The bench is nestled behind a large bush but high enough for us to see over the trees and into the city petering out just shy of the mountains bordering the river beyond the railroad tracks that partition farmers’ fields. On very dark nights, we can see the ARENA sign from the high school stadium and the floodlights at State-line Speedway. One night we watch a solar eclipse. Many nights—many fourths of many Julys—we watch fireworks from six different counties shatter the sky above. Sometimes the rest of the family comes, but this is our place, me and my grandpa, and they always leave.

I meet John Steinbeck at the rock. Sob to Lois Lowry, “Her name was Rosemary.” Dr. Seuss and Phillip Pullman are my old familiars; we convene every Friday afternoon for lunch. I come here to read and to cry. Sometimes my grandpa is there sojourning as well, and we sit in silence or talk about insignificant things like the weather or who I’m dating at the time. Few boys I’ve dated have been admitted to the bench. One awful day—sophomore year I think it is—my grandma paints the bench red. It

## Laden

katherine walker

stands out like a robin’s breast in our muted forest, a scarlet stain on our sanctity. “Come sit next to me.”

Bare, unpainted toes and smudged, sensible workboots over a generous nothing sky. In our waking dreams, we throw ourselves over the marmot droppings and porcupine den in the base, past pine trees and deer bones, across the manicured wheat fields to the nameless peaks beyond the sunrise. No pinecone or rock can worry the bones as he comes down to rest on his own patch of earth.

with each step.

But where else

is the weight so gentle?

## All The Things

dana stull

I am a collector.

If I find something, I put it in my pocket until I get home. When I was younger, I took so much time arranging my treasures, putting them in one box, then another, carefully checking to make sure they were there. I spent no time folding my clothes, and neatly putting them away. My mother would check the drawers, and grab handfuls of shirts and pants, throwing them on the carpet. I would stand in the doorway, watching fabric tear through the air, and try to apologize. She would say nothing, her face tight, until the drawers were empty. She would leave, and I would have to start over.

An inventory of my desk drawer:

pair of glasses

set of car keys

pack of sewing needles

a wooden horse

a rusted horseshoe

five blue pens

six black pens

one green pen

dolphin box (empty)

deer box (shell and heart) bobby pins

There are things back home that I want. My mother collected all of the important childhood milestones into a large, wooden chest outside of my father's office. The hinges are broken, and the lid is heavy. Inside, there are report cards, school photos, baby teeth, art projects, old shoes, and plaster handprints. A tiny pair of overalls with a flower print. I imagine giving them to my future daughter. My baby blankets, one white, one yellow, that I folded up when I was five. I am old enough now to take them back. But each time that I go back, I heft open the chest, and never take anything.

I can collect more here than in Arizona. It is easier to breathe outside, and the forest is better for exploring. At first, I picked up every piece of wood covered in moss. It is unusual to see everything so damp and alive and bright green. Eventually, I became slightly more selective. I found a bird's nest, perfectly spun, the smallest white flowers, owl pellets, a full pack of cigarettes. Save for the owl pellets, I have kept them all. They sit on my windowsill, next to the coffee-maker.

Things I cannot collect, for various reasons:

the lemon drops next to my grandma's sewing machine the smell of desert after rain

birthday cards

the coffin I made for my hamster my mother's college clothing

the first leaves I saw with glasses on my mother's copy of *Charlotte's Web*

## All The Things

On the inside of the front cover, Tracy is scrawled in pencil, large blocky letters. I like the image of my mom crafting anything that untidy. I am not sure if she knows I took it, but she has never asked for it. I found it in a pile of old books in the guest room, next to the Christmas wrapping paper, so it doesn't seem particularly nostalgic. It sits on my bookshelf now, precariously balanced on top of British literature books and a make-your-own tofu kit.

Then, there is my letter box. After about two years, it has reached it's full capacity. I can re-read letters for hours, and remember exactly how it was the first time. Some came in handmade envelopes, which were carefully folded and placed under the letters. At the very bottom of the box, there are pressed flowers. I have the first lilac sprig from last spring, and a sunflower that was pinned my jean jacket during the summer. There is a curl of palo verde bark from my old front yard. It is smooth, carved away from the exposed root.

Granddaughter.

*Having a  
granddaughter like you  
means having  
someone to be proud of.*

## Grandma's Purse

Some things I hid, just so I could find them again.

At Confirmation camp in seventh grade, we painted picture frames to house our small group photo. I painted mine black, with multicolored polka dots. Years later, I brought the frame with me to school, and undid the back to get the photograph out. There was a bow, without arrows. A small twig, perfectly arched, wrapped gently with a supple pine needle. I had forgotten how we all made these, sitting in Bible study half-listening, our fingers bending the wood carefully so it would not break. I do not remember sealing it in the back of the frame. It is the most fragile thing I know.

- (1) The father who left the farm but still cared for his children
- (2) A husband who followed his wife to California
- (3) The salesman who convinced her to move to California
- (4) Jesus