

the plum creek review  
fall 2018





# the plum creek review

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abby bentley



# Research

*film photography*



cole burchiel

## To Claude in his Later Years

[From *Wisteria* by Claude Monet]

I wanted to ask about the vines. Did you mean  
how they are quivering against themselves in the breeze  
but are still not quite brave enough?  
Wings and leaves are not so different, after all.

It is okay if you just meant that vines  
are very pretty until suddenly you are needing a new roof.

You missed a spot in the corner, but I forgive you.  
Yesterday on the radio they were talking about pausing mid-shave  
to take funny pictures of yourself with a mustache.

You've missed a few spots, really. Why did you leave all these holes?  
I'm worried about you. It's not good to leave a thought unfinished.

I know you are just painting, but  
it's not good to let a person feel like a drop cloth.

I like that the cardinal is also the feet of the bluebird.  
Maybe that is not what you meant but I like it in any case.  
The way vines are not afraid of heights or large open spaces.

I love swimming on windy days, too.  
I am glad we have that in common. To lay on your back.  
There is nothing like bringing your arms slowly from your sides  
to way above your head. The water is soft on my cheeks  
and I am thinking to it: Be brave.  
Kiss me.

**Home**  
watercolor





## Seeds

Bare feet on cold tile I pad to the kitchen,  
Look to the broken screen window, see  
Outside the mango trees are bent  
With the weight of the fruit they bare—

Heavy, dripping with soft green shells  
I know will soon turn orange and beg  
To be plucked by the greedy hands  
Of my baby sister, heavy and soft  
And she will beg for me to lift her up so she  
Can grab them, fingers soft and sticky,

And Mama will watch from behind the  
Broken screen of the tile kitchen  
And rub a warm hand on her belly,  
Soft and heavy, waiting for her daughters.

She knows we will soon come back inside  
Grinning with the weight of the mangoes,  
Spilling them onto the counter and begging  
For her to cut them—soft slices, a heavy knife,  
Greedy hands grabbing as juice runs down my  
Sister's baby chin and drips sticky on her belly.

**Lux 150**

*film photography*



cole burchiel

**who am i to judge**

*reduction woodcut*



## *from Atlanta*

my first memory of the city is the backseat  
of my father's 2000 jeep liberty  
after a saturday spent in children's church.  
the sun had long since set  
though the sky had not yet resigned its blue. the boxy homes  
beside us, cast prematurely as nighttime silhouettes,  
didn't stand a chance.

daddy sped up on the cascade ridges  
and upon their peaks,  
i, buckled in tightly, hollered and beamed, begging for more  
of the rush. we were alone on the sidestreets to home.

in a few months, he'd sell the jeep for a more sober  
ride: one more proper for booster seats  
and cheerio spills. having a father and a grandfather  
as preachers in common, he understood the doctrine  
of restraint; though alone on that way back from zion hill, just a boy  
and his son, he rushed on the uphill  
trying to reach heaven.

on the rests, we sang together—

*he's got the whole world,  
in his hands;  
he's got the whole world,  
in his hands;  
he's got the whole world,  
in his hands;  
he's got the whole world in his hands.*

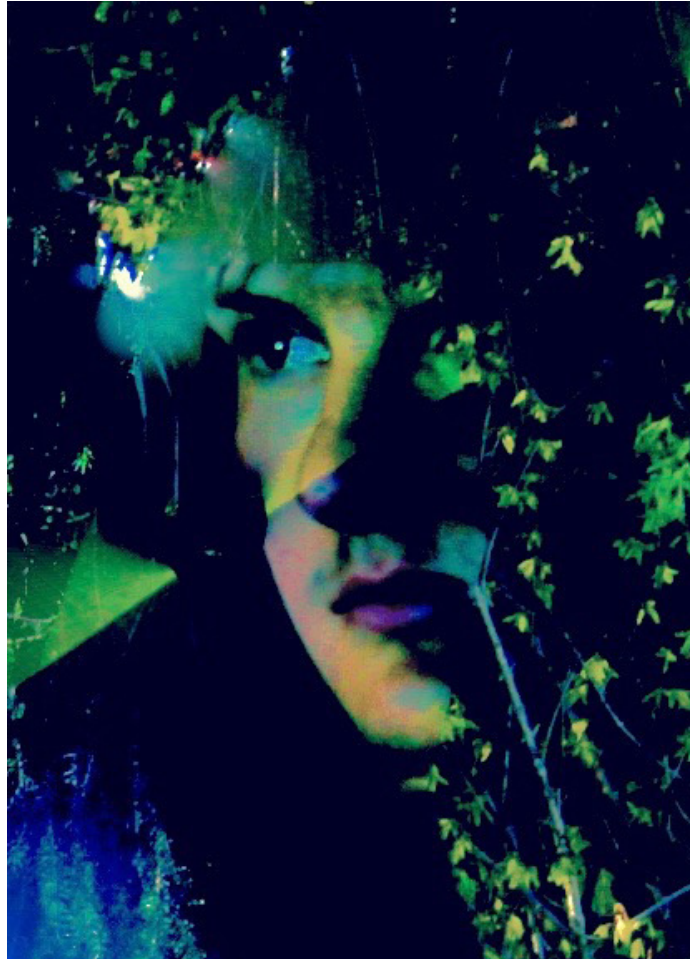
**i'm a dot  
in the middle  
of the cyclone**  
*monotype*



rachel weinstein

# untitled

*digital photography*





## A Boy, Afraid of the Dark

So I am waiting, quiet now, at the top of the stairs  
for nothing more than a hand to hold. I would leave this all behind  
if I could run to him as children run to fathers,  
alone in the dark of night. I would always choose to go  
early to bed, and somehow still, after all these years, I am  
drawn to the morning as I was then. He left  
late, into the moonlight. Him, always  
far and farther; I remember so much of wishing he could have stayed.  
Perhaps tonight is the night I will run.

The streetlamp on the corner is nothing more than a photograph  
of the sunrise. It is a coat in a snowstorm, all wool worn thin.

Perhaps tonight is the night I will run  
far and farther. I remember so much of wishing he could have stayed  
late, into the moonlight. Him, always  
drawn to the morning as I was then. He left  
early to bed, and somehow still, after all these years, I am  
alone in the dark of night. I would always choose to go  
if I could run to him as children run to fathers.  
For nothing more than a hand to hold I would leave this all behind.  
So I am waiting, quiet now, at the top of the stairs.

# Looking South from Palomarin Trail

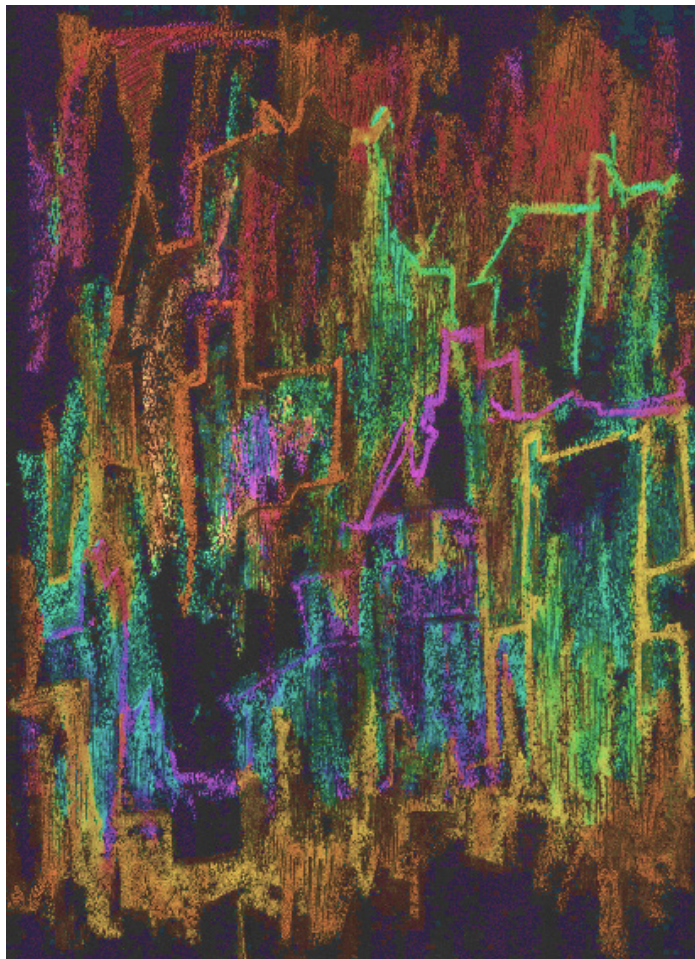
*digital photography*



zachary vaughn

# Memory

*oil pastel on black  
paper*



### I. Teen Dream

House of army boy  
in the oaks on the east side of time  
puppy ears and his Chevy's white

I cook the times you know  
I put them in speckled re-burned CDs  
and feed them to the birds in the park

Me and army boy on the A-3  
Riding front seat out of Eagle River  
north into grasslands and forests sway

Setting camp aside the tallest mountain  
Box wine and streaking across the top of the tarn  
We talk about what is in a blank space

Perhaps when I am forty  
and selling my shoes  
on a street somewhere in California  
I will think about the songs we sang  
on the walk back down

## II. Teen Dream

You and I  
again on the A-3  
by the marsh  
to exit soon

you turn  
and ask me  
what I listen to

and we know  
in that moment  
I could die

I cook songs  
about moods  
even days of the week  
there are even  
songs about you

### III. Teen Dream

Around the time my band broke up, we went out for a walk  
we walked on opposite sides of the street, passing Humphy's  
(that bar where you got into that brawl)

Amelia had started a job in Fairbanks that fall  
as you awaited deployment, you'd go to shows  
and perhaps every once and a while think of me

For now I'm house-sitting Amelia's 19th and Kodiak  
her dog's name is Linus, a blond husky maybe five years old  
there is not much else to do but throw in the yard outside and wait

until the sun hangs low, close to midnight  
in the summer months, and put on a light jacket, and walk to Humphy's  
the usual crowd, they see me and they ask after you, like I know

it's those nights I have the dream: where I'm on the east side, early dawn  
and I walk inside to find your housemate, passed-out watching anime  
the mail is just delivered, the coffee hot, and always you are gone

#### IV. Teen Dream

Who could  
say that when we  
grow old that we  
may be thin and  
frail and coarse

We could be  
just like then  
maybe tighter  
but the smiles  
still sewn more so

Wine boxes  
at the base  
of a mountain  
we could  
we could

Wonders  
wave up  
will wash critics  
and kids like us



I'm Sure (Teen Dream)  
Amelia I can't even think of a time  
when I can't think of him  
and I can't not I mean

that party at U of A for example  
I turned to him and realized  
he was a dying kind

one that would kiss in his  
Chevy with the windows down and  
not know and not care

he sent songs, Amelia  
to curl up to and drink  
mountain box wine to

look I look at me  
look I know u don't want to talk about it  
butt I need loook at

but you and I both know  
that in the end there was no one  
like the people we created in our heads

oh, Amelia

there's a show, a big  
show Amelia  
tonight  
there's a show

come  
take my hand  
see what songs we know

# Exit Ghost

photoshop



claire wang

# Pacifica

*digital photography*



## Blessed Blues

*\*content warning: domestic violence*

Too grown for lullabies, too big  
for the cowboy costume gifted  
on Christmas winters ago.  
Can you remember those matching  
brimmed hats? Mine brown, Dad's black,  
and together we were cowboys.  
But I can't act out Christian mornings like I  
used to, the organs blasting blessed blues from  
soul to stomach like a horny thought in church.  
The hymns don't ring from my mouth  
anymore, my wailings are all off-pitch.  
Dad's hand on little Billy's throat against  
the shower wall and I've cried for our  
Black Lab who was beaten to the rug. And  
I've tried to meet Jesus on every surface I  
could, kneeling on hills and in creeks turned  
rivers in rain-born floods, in bowling alleys.

I've prayed a suicide, half-joked a killing,  
meant to let it go – promise I did.  
I've driven the old roads a billion times,  
the yellow lines worn invisible, and nodded  
to the old cows swatting flies. I've recalled  
what it means to believe this heart and yes,  
I've forgotten again. I've played the Powerball  
on Tuesdays just for shits and I've known my  
odds. I've dug deep to make space for  
burials and oh mama, all I've shoveled is  
mountains to the sky.

**Saint**  
*film photography*



cole burchiel

## THE PROCESS

We said our goodbyes.  
She left my apartment and  
climbed down the stairs.  
There came to be a time  
when I looked out the window  
and watched her walk away.  
I said goodbye again,  
this time to a raised drawbridge  
as transparent as glass  
and the size of a small window.  
And this time to a sky  
so itself there was no  
place in it for clouds



I said goodbye again.  
Ahead of her on the sidewalk  
a moat as shallow as  
a sheet of glass and  
the size of a pool of rain.  
There came to be a time  
when she reached the other side  
in one long stride.  
Come up short  
she did not, yes,  
one of her feet did not  
drown and resurrect  
itself in the process.

# In The Garden

*collage*



## Psalms In The Tallgrass

And the fearful sons of fearful fathers  
cursed the snakes in the tallgrass

And I thanked God for the snakes  
in the tallgrass and all their wits

And you thanked God for poets  
in the rough and all their wisdom

And we few, we poets of the prairie,  
made music only for the flycatchers

And the stragglers of the bison herd, who  
thanked God in a music we do not know.

And those fearful sons,  
those righteous sons

And pious sons who  
knew no thanks at all

And knew no music neither,  
plugged their ears

And their pockets full of  
whatever they could find

And took to cleaning their  
rifles with such fervor

And grace, you would have thought  
they were working wood.

And you worked your rifles  
too, a pen and a throat instead,

And calmed the prairie's  
quick and unsteady mind,

And I thanked God once more  
for all of your wise music

And all you could say was  
"Good Lord, the music!"

And you need not repeat yourself here,  
I know what music you speak of.

# Adrift

*digital photography*



abby bentley

# PRPL CRWN

*image transfer*



In March they laid the pipe, taking no rests  
Snow had melted but the ground was still hard  
Metal claws strained with rocks, men in bright vests  
Yelling, aching into the trail they carved  
False veins to carry the Earth's thick black blood  
Metal rods pumping and hot oil burning  
They drained her, sold her for all she was worth  
Ancestors lost in winds, hot oil churning

Now the claws have retreated, the men gone  
The used ground is barren, now dry and cold  
The poisoned water whispers what went wrong  
And the poisoned air tells us we were told  
To protect, yet we listened to her cry  
As plastic hats and black suits bled her dry

**smote**

*photoshop*





## Botham Jean

*\*content warning: violence*

can't nobody break through my door of dandelions & sever my head/ my apartment a garden/  
guarded by the strongest roots & / bronze statues that don't shatter/ & i don't shatter/ i don't  
shatter/when they want/my niggas frolick to heaven/heads swaying like wind swept petals to  
the sound of the vine swamped boombox/ reverberating metal through its wooden entrance  
/where an eventual bang reaches the door/ & ain't nothing scarier than an archangel with a  
badge & a flaming sword/trying to break us in/to paradise too early/bronze bodies unearth  
themselves from their nests & swarm around her warrant/ swaying their emerald necklaces  
/ & pointing the splintered thorns of their rose stems at the officer/to tell'em "*we don't live  
here/ we grow here/ & we gon' keep growing here/ & you can't take our bud away from us  
tonight*"/cause ain't that love the willingness to die for another/abandoning tangerine horizon  
hillsides & brothers & roots/tethering you to home/to not break your bronze/ feet planted  
beneath in floorboards/skin scorching/coughing blood in this oven/no this coffin, love & burnt  
dark chocolate crumbling/down to pretend handcuffs are cookie cutter for burnt batter/ force  
battered black bodies hardened & uniformed/painted orange/when they're already black  
flowers scattered under gravestones/ & this is their obituary

**broken teeth**  
*monotype*



## Nineteen

Annie tells me she's not what her younger self expected for the age of nineteen;  
I realize I've never hoped for anything but skinny for the age of nineteen.

So long to clay filled mountains, ancient hills. I am the same as I've always been.  
The days I waited to change were half a month, an exchange on the nineteenth.

My mother, standing in the kitchen, making pear preserves  
and sweating, tells me of having a belly like mine, a stage of nineteen.

I listen to my favorite story on audiobook. Harry kisses Ginny on his seventeenth  
birthday. I secretly ache for Hermione to kiss Luna in her days of nineteen.

A stranger murmurs something in a kitchen.  
I watch his face, try to gauge his age. Nineteen?

Probably you were clueless while calendar days passed me by;  
there was no blood stain on cotton until assuage on the nineteenth.

Lauryn tells me I gave it up too easily. I feel foolish  
then saved, by her miseducation, the easy ways of nineteen.

An essay called Why Is Mason Reese Crying plays in a car stereo. Dark stains  
dark seats and I inch away from the podcast. The middle of July, heat drains me, nine-  
teen.

I am a good southern christian woman, half formed, but I know who I am. Corrie  
ten Boom's hiding place changed my mother, changed me, arranged me through nine-  
teen.

**Oparara**  
*film photography*



cole burchiel

**"Once Upon a  
Time in Decafe"**  
*digital photography*



## backyard burial

neither of our old cats have died yet,  
but when they do, we have a plan:

a memorial service in  
the backyard, a prayer, then:  
the compost pile.

turn the pile  
twice a day  
for a month, then:

spread  
the compost in a thick layer around the  
pear tree the cats love so much.

water the tree  
three times a week  
carve their names into the bark.

i stroke the smaller of the two.  
she is fragile and beautiful and bony,  
delicate, stretching in the sun.

the larger tabby follows me down the street  
both of us barefoot and jesus the pavement is hot  
i pick him up and wrap him around my neck, a sweaty scarf.

they follow my mother out to the clothesline, perch at her feet  
wander over to the pear tree, sharpen their claws on the bark.



**Tamalpais**  
*digital photography*



zachary vaughn

**heart to heart**  
*monotype*





# A Moment in the Color Blue

*watercolor*

averly sheltraw

## Two astronauts

Walking on the realm of an exotic planet  
Step by step  
Around them vivid pink burst into bloom-  
the color of dreams

Teeming weeds and flowers bring some amount of pump  
Is that the look of end of life?  
On the hard muddy grass, flowers flutter along the wind,  
Like wind grass living in the wood  
Malevolently they draw near to the tourists  
Until their senses are out

White flying insects dance over the pinkish pond  
Ripples sparkle to keep the intruders still  
In pink clouds human organs scatter around  
Blood lies in the camouflage of rotten roots, combine in one  
Making their color more lurid

Their shoes start to dissolve, feet grow into the ground.  
NO PAIN, NO SHOUT.  
Only the motherlike warmth remains, meek and cozy.

The explorers' will melt to candies  
Sticky maltose entangles with his mind  
"It's time for home," he thinks  
His companion nods with silence  
They talk without speaking

*A blue sun in coldness rises up  
Initiating the clock with another sixteen hours.  
Shadows hide behind the black sculptures,  
Observing  
The bodies to which they once belonged.*

**everything  
comes in pairs**

*film photography*



## wood frog

*\*content warning: gore*

How do you think a body feels when it freezes? Cold quiet  
pouring like concrete in a hollow, filling up  
limb and cavity heavy, don't-move that grows like kudzu,  
drowns. I like to think it fucking hurts. Guts icing  
up into  
little mirrors. If you picked up a frozen frog, inside  
would be a frozen heart, tucked up quiet in a shining knot.  
If you bent one of the legs,  
it would snap. If you bent one of my—

The bodies thaw after winter and then they can move, undamaged,  
no rough-up scars or memory. Mirrors make  
puddles of reflective shit-sludge in a membrane.

Once a year and still for seven months, two thirds of  
the water inside the frog's body is frozen.

As a being, it's dead.  
As a being, I'm awake with a bedsheet braided  
through my tendons, brittle arms sticking over  
girlwaist, two thirds bodywater dead. As a being,  
I'm losing consciousness at dinnertime with my own heart pressed over my ear,  
wet  
fist thudding, and I shut the skin of my eyelids  
over an open skull, two thirds bodywater dead.  
Pulseless, sleep colder. Watch winters stretch out. Think  
you're not gonna fall  
in, yeah? Maybe warm's not gonna get us back. So  
how the fuck do you think a body feels  
when it freezes with faith that a  
spring is coming?





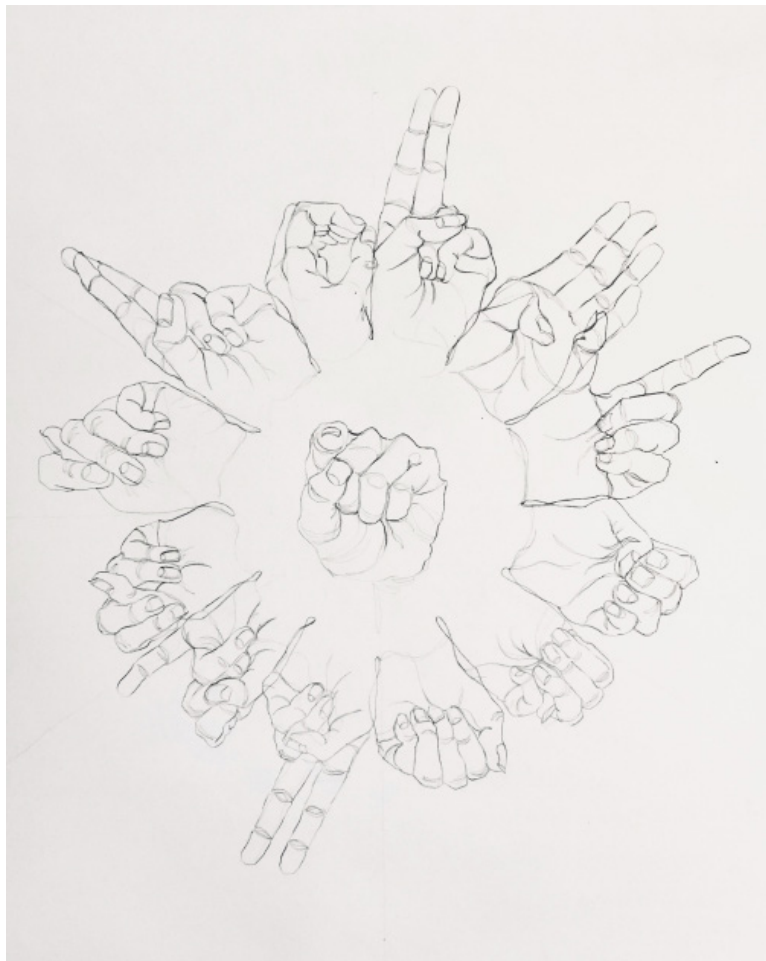
## **Fragility**

*colored pencil and  
gel pen on tonal  
paper*

zimmy chu

# troublemaking

*graphite drawing*



I look down at the weak  
cloth bundle I cradle in my arms:  
My son suckles my breast

like his father did before him,  
like his father will after him,

like all lovers have,  
like all babies do.  
They think my body is theirs:

A rolling landscape to pioneer  
and claim, conquer. Stick

your proud flag in my soft earth,  
but woman is not made for man—  
Man is made from woman.

Eve, mother and daughter, was not  
sculpted from the bony rib of Adam,

Adam was birthed by Mother Nature:  
pulsating lips, a rock crevice cracked open  
and life was heaved out—

bodies tumbling and spilling,  
an overflow of limbs and hearts.

Now my son closes his eyes, full and resting, delicate,  
and I whisper his grandmother's stories of Mother Earth:  
how she watches quietly as slowly the moon spins, slowly sons

replace lovers, slowly lovers replace mothers—  
always hungrily, never carefully.

When I was a girl I wanted to meet her.  
When I was a girl I thought  
I would climb mountains.

# Andes

*film photography*



cole burchiel

# Fire and Marshmallows

*digital photography*



## The Bear

Halfway down the Steward Highway, an hour outside of Anchorage: the bear.

Oatmeal knees in salt water, picking, picking, picking for salmon: the bear.

The bear has dark and stormy eyes, good figure, berries and some scratches on the back of its neck.

The bear does not subscribe to most bear conventions; does not follow the latest trends in how the kids wear their hair these days.

The bear does not date inside or outside any species. (Grizzlies are fine.) No dietary restrictions.

The bear enjoys exercise, shady knolls, freshwater streams; long walks on the beach.

The bear has a real libertarian streak. But its parents caucused for Al Gore.

This bear is seven years old; it's on its gap year, just to take some time to find itself before settling down, starting a family, finding a steady hunting ground, etc.

At the exact moment you drive by, the stars will align, the moon will pitch in one direction in the universe, and the magnetic pull of tides will render an abundance of salmon. Into its paws, six distinct salmon will fling themselves, flopping, gasping, fresh, particularly pink and full of juice. The bear will raise its cupped hands and dig its teeth indiscriminately into the pile of flesh.

You will capture this moment indisputably on your iPhone 6.

The bear will be immortalized on your Facebook page.

Your mom will see this picture and will be moved unequivocally. She will decide, at last, to come to visit you, opting to take a cruise from Washington because she wants to see the Inside Passage, a series of fishing towns and islands in the southeast part of the state. On this cruise, in the early hours of the day, she will see another bear in a clearing of woods on the shore. She will think it is the same as our bear, but we will know better, shaking our heads on the phone: no, Mom, that's ridiculous, there are thousands of bears in Alaska, I doubt it's the same one. But on a family vacation, several years later, on that same stretch of highway, hands pressed on passenger side windowpane, there will be no bear. And you will wonder, for a moment.





