

EDITOR'S NOTE

My dad told me the other day that he was tired of breathing. As if he were announcing his intention to move to San Diego. Not exactly off hand, but also without surprise or drama, a slight question in his eyes. I was in the middle of proofing Pam Houston's "Contents May Have Shifted," which is probably appropriate (though it occurs to me that many of the pieces in this issue might have been just as appropriate), and it took me a moment to understand what he was saying. It should have been her part about the air funeral in Tibet (got the name of that wrong, I know), but his timing has been off ever since he stopped playing music because of his hearing loss: Dad played in the Glenn Miller band when he was in the service. I don't know which is worse, a player who can no longer hear, or a wind man who can barely breathe.

Anyway maybe it wasn't the air funeral but the part where she prays, or where she has the spikes pulled out of her body. Or maybe it wasn't Pam Houston's story after all but Kevin Moffett's and the boy was just then learning that his father wasn't quite what he wanted him to be or the father was just then realizing he hadn't quite lived up to his potential for the boy. Or it could have been Lee Posna's about Theseus, whose father, well, or Josh Kryah's about "a body made to plead," or Erica Bernheim's about what to keep and please stay here. I don't remember now.

Strange how you read for what you're looking for sometimes (though I didn't think I was looking for anything except misplaced commas), which is how I know it wasn't Fred Sasaki's piece about solicitous volunteerism, say, or Jay Nicorvo's about the adventures of chicken husbandry, if there is such a thing. Speaking of chickens, it's April and we could have put the birds back on our cover again, to judge by how many ended up in key moments of this issue. Besides Nicorvo's brood, we've got Melissa Ginsburg's dove song and more, Jason Ockert's inscrutable crows, Houston's man-sized vultures, Jackson Wills' baby-faced nightingale, Ashley Wurzbacher's human-burdened swan, and that's just a sample. Call it a tendency rather than a theme. Something about the spring maybe.

Not that I've been proofing alone. Former Associate Nonfiction Editor Jenna Hammerich has stepped in to serve as interim managing editor, gra-

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ciously moving this issue along to press. A heartfelt thank you to Jenna! Which brings me to something else about the spring: babies! One in particular—born to our managing editor Lynne Nugent (and her partner Kembrew McLeod): Alasdair Mark Nugent-McLeod. Welcome, Alasdair, and warm congratulations to his parents from us all! Jenna will be perching at Lynne's desk for a while longer, until we have to move the bassinet in next to the printer....

Jenna and I have also been helped by Assistant Managing Editor Bryan Castille, who, early in the process of putting together this issue, plunked himself down in a chair in my office and said, "Man is there a lot of dark stuff here!" Yes, but there's light too, intense and shaped. We hope just enough. Like when something obscure and difficult finally makes sense, or when a chord resolves, or when someone you've been missing comes home. Or, for instance, like after the meds take hold and the tension in your lungs starts to ease and at last you're able to take a long, slow, painless breath.