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## Two Lives Saved

### Abstract

That night, after visiting his father at the hospital for the final time, Franklin went for a swim at his motel. A locked rusty gate surrounded the pool. He retrieved a key from the manager and was told not to dive. He promised he wouldn't. The kidney-shaped pool was shallow at both ends. A light built into its wall tinted the water enigmatically blue. Sodden leaves and grass clippings bobbed on the surface alongside dead bugs.

### Keywords

hotel, pool, ladybugs

### Cover Page Footnote

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**BOOTH**



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## Two Lives Saved

Fiction by Alex McElroy

That night, after visiting his father at the hospital for the final time, Franklin went for a swim at his motel. A locked rusty gate surrounded the pool. He retrieved a key from the manager and was told not to dive. He promised he wouldn't. The kidney-shaped pool was shallow at both ends. A light built into its wall tinted the water enigmatically blue. Sodden leaves and grass clippings bobbed on the surface alongside dead bugs. Franklin cannonballed into the deeper end (four feet). The concrete floor scraped his knees. The manager, visible through the motel's glass entrance, glared at him. He expected her to come reprimand him, but all she did was glare.

He strode back and forth, pumping his arms, splashing water. The activity bored him. What had he liked about swimming as a child? There was nothing to do except be wet? He remembered a fun game he used to play in his neighbors' pools, when they weren't home. In the game he would swim with slow, deliberate strokes, lips parted, trying to collect bugs in his mouth. He lost if he swallowed a bug. He had loved playing as a boy, but after two rounds that night he felt foolish. He didn't want to be a man who tried to recapture his childhood. Nor did he want to be a man who turned his back on it. So, he kept playing. He quit midway through the sixth round. Something was tickling his molars. He walked to the edge and spit seven(ish) insects onto the concrete ledge: a moth, two bees, three-quarters of a dragonfly, a cricket, and a pair of frantic ladybugs, both still alive. They scuttled over the lifeless insects, reorienting themselves, and then looped off into the night. Franklin felt like a hero.

Alex McElroy's fiction appears or is forthcoming in *Indiana Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Nashville Review*, *Tin House Flash Fridays*, *BULL*, *Pinball*, and elsewhere. He currently lives in Arizona, where he serves as the International Editor for Hayden's Ferry Review.