1. Professor Wendell Arneson taught painting for 37 years and told his students to work quickly, to "save all the scraps," to walk twenty feet back from an easel, "have a quick look, a blink, then keep going." Wendell made everyone paint with knives and putty scrapers and iridencent paper and showed them how to find the color a canvas was missing in the accidental edges of their palettes. When he danced in the studio in Minnesota, he kept his eyes closed and the exhaust fans on and lifted two peace signs, alternately. He wore red or black. He'd gather everyone in the middle of a classroom and start whispering. Then he'd pin down a scrap of canvas with one hand and start swiping at it with a wet brush in the other. "Go fast," he'd urge, "try overlapping this with that. If the composition seems unbalanced, cut it in half. Then you have two. Then try this." And his students would huddle in, craning our necks over shoulders, glancing side-eye. "Yada yada yada," he'd trail off. Then he'd make a wide "O" with his mouth, hook a finger behind his cheek, and pluck it, like a starting gun. Wendell began every class with a "shelter" assignment. "Make a painting," he said, "then make a shelter somewhere inside it." So for him I painted cocoons, printed shells, and carved shacks into my drawings. I left clues. I saved a place to live inside every composition.

2. In Iowa, my friend Lonnie and I camped in the yard at the edge of the woods behind my mom's condo, where black turkey chicks hatched on land that was once my great-grandmother's farm before she sold it to the city. We pitched a tent and pasted the ceiling with heart throbs, men whose pecs and chins I recognized but whose names I never knew. I drew four-pane windows and pasted those to the gabardine walls. Night fell and we kept a flashlight on, talked ourselves to sleep. Then we heard a child scream from the woods. The scream ascended right to its highest note and stuck before getting choked. We stopped breathing and my heart socked my ribs as the tent zipper bounced at the fly.

My grandfather's friends used to chide him, "Some girls have a mink in their closet, but Rodge's wife has one in her fridge!" He met my grandmother at the UofI, and sold his books to buy her ring. They were hardback law books he'd bought with trapping money from catching mink and fox during the summer on his mother's land out past the city.

"It's a rabbit," I whispered to Lonnie in the tent, "Rabbits scream like a human when they're caught." Lonnie stared at me with big eyes, and said, after a minute, "What caught it?" Then we crawled, single file, from the tent to the house.

3. *"The popularity of the log cabin pattern probably relates to the pioneering mythos of westward expansion. Not always, but most often, the central square is red, which by tradition has become identified with the glowing hearth." "Significantly, Log Cabin quilts were most popular during [that period], when women would want to transport pieces of their lives from one location to the other."*
— Mara Wizling, "Quilt Language: towards a poetics of quilting"

In a Log Cabin quilt pattern, the diminishing lengths of patches produce the optical illusion that half of the sections recede in space, or overlap on the shoulders of others, the way my father first taught me to lay branches for a campfire. We alternated 1-inch sticks and wove these with brittle twigs, filled in the open center with brush. The same way Lincoln Logs, stacked correctly, protect a cooking fire no prairie wind can spread. In this way, Log Cabin quilts describe how home is a focal point; home is a flame surrounded.

The "chatel house," or Log Cabin, is a structure that dates back to the bronze age. It's a design that lasted not because it was permanent, but because it was easy for people on the move to disassemble and carry with them. The most common version of the Log Cabin quilt design is known as "Barn Raising Pattern," which includes a variation called "Pinwheel," a name that reminds me how Log Cabins of all types always suggests a clockwise turn, a cycle of rebuilding.

4. *"In 2005, in an exhibition called "Quilt Voices," Ellen Danforth explained, "When words fail me, I make a quilt... My quilts, therefore, start with something I have to say."*

In Athens, OH, "Home City Ice," sells water, and the frozen stuff ("better than homemade") at the Speedway in my neighborhood where 4x4s sit with their engines on for hours every Saturday night. The concept of "home" is somehow different here in Appalachia. Or perhaps it's the way my students say it during their first semesters here at school. Home is where they are going this weekend, for spring break, Easter, Columbus Day, for the rest of the summer. To somewhere else, Ohio, where someone else will make them dinner, buy them beer. "Home Pizza" is where my favorite student worked for three years during high school. On Google Earth a semi truck is parked in Barnesville, OH between the three-legged camera and the doors to "Home Pizza," but my student swears that the window there reads "Just like Home."

5. In Illinois I had a friend who called her mother "Mom," even when she was talking to friends who used "my mom" to differentiate. "On Friday," my friend would say, "Mom made us wash the dog," or, "You really did convince Mom that you were vomiting at my house on Satruday because you accidentally ate meat and not because we were wasted."

And because my friend had a twin sister who also said "Mom" without the "my," I wondered if it was a kind of twin-talk. Otherwise the habit seemed insisting and precious, as if their mother was of a more familiar brand, or a higher order, until I learned that "Mom" was not this friend's mother after all. "Mom" was the woman the twins' father had married the year after their birth mother was shot by deer hunters while she was standing on their back deck. The hunters got off without charges. Afterwards, "Mom" did function more like a surname, a more precious word because it recalled the absence and its surrogate. The kind of reverence I hear inside "home" in Appalachia. Like the way god-fearing folks sometimes say "scripture." Each incantation has a practiced dignity, but also some type of hole.

6. "Home City Ice and Water" was named after "Home City, Ohio" (today Sayler Park), which sounds to me like overheard conversation: *Question: Home City? Answer: Somewhere, Ohio.*

Home City Ice also reminds me that "Home" is not about quality or membership. Like Home Field, the significant advantage of "Home Ice" is its familiar slick, that it offers no secret notches, no risk of surprise to a skater. Likewise, the thrill of "Home Ice" hinges on the notion that what is unfamiliar is bad because it trips routine, especially for an athlete whose success relies on the unconcious. The inherent goodness of "Home Ice" is about that ice being hallowed. About more of your fans than theirs. In marketing terms, Home City Ice does not need to be sold because it already belongs to you. Except, in the places I'm from, "down home" still means backwardsness—not comfort—as it does here. I confess that I still drive past "home cooking" establishments for the same reason. Conceptually, according to my raising, the best food never belonged at home but from somewhere outside of it, from a place where we were always trying to arrive.

7. *"There is, contained in the paradoxical meanings of cloth in our culture, a manifestation of the deepest, most primitive mammalian drive to make a place, to protect and house, to meet the needs of the first human relation that connects mothers and their infants.*

There is something about the cultural classification of textiles that is 'homely,' in the American sense of the word—not beautiful or unsexy—but this anxiety conceals something far more interesting which derives from the European sense of the home as one-half the antithetical unheimlich: the uncanny.

It is the uncanny, the troubling anxiety of familiarity and otherness which generates the heightened ambivalence our culture has about cloth and clothes."— Claire Pajaczkowska, "On Stuff and Nonsense: The Complexity of Cloth"

8. In Tucson, where I last lived, it was dangerous to drive west at 6 in the evening because the angle of the sun made it hard to see through the windshield and impossible to read traffic lights. If you sat still at 2 in the afternoon, everything the sun touched went hollow. My skin didn't burn there, but it got harder, and tougher. It retained a kind of temperature like the hot blue of the desert sky.

Sometimes, at night, police helicopters would dip low over the adobe houses and shine spotlights across the windows, chasing (they'd say later), after someone running the neighborhood on foot. Their lights would turn the bedroom walls and the backyard silver, like sun in an old photograph, and then just as suddenly leave everyone awake in the dark, looking out at each other through our windows.

9. In college, I learned quickly that Wendell loved a series. He made wall-sized oil paintings, always in threes, built of layered, abstract textures. Most were dotted with ladders, and fences, tipped one way or the next ("Ways to stay in or get out!"). He taught me that paintings made to be viewed in a sequence can be linked by visual rhythms, repeated images that an audience will register unconsciously.

"See this pentagon, here?" He told me, "You keep making it the same way. But if you hide it somewhere in each painting, change the scale and your materials, then the viewer will know the canvases are linked even if they don't really know. They'll know something, at least, about a home."

10.
Q: *Home City?*

A: Twice, for my birthday, in the two years since my grandmother died, my father and stepmother have sent items of her old clothes gathered from her house. In some sense I know this is a message about regret or bitterness for my never being around, and in another I know that they are trying to pass on a burden, to find relief from her materials and deliver a material relief.

11. My great-great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother and sister and I were all born in the same hospital wing. It feels awkward now all the homes I have lived in have been destroyed or sold to other families. A kind of betrayal not to live in Iowa or expect to ever again. It's been an adjustment, like the expression on the faces of folks when they first learn where I'm from. First a whiteness to the eyes that says they've identified some quality they couldn't place at first, followed by a second, cloudier look that means Iowa is a type of origin, they realize, that people won't return to if they leave.

12. Q: *Home City?*
A: Once, in Arizona, as I turned down the side of a foothill between a sharp drop and a thin shoulder, rotted the body of a horse, rounded through with sun, under the inner shoulder, and I had to look down and through the body to follow the highway as it curved.

13. My grandfather worked at a racetrack in Virginia as a kid and held the reins of the horses having their winning photographs. He told us once about the time the barn burned, when they had to tie mad horses to the fence. The ones they couldn't catch kept running back to their stalls panic. Horses on fire at full speed, circling back to their bright home.