

Janus 2005

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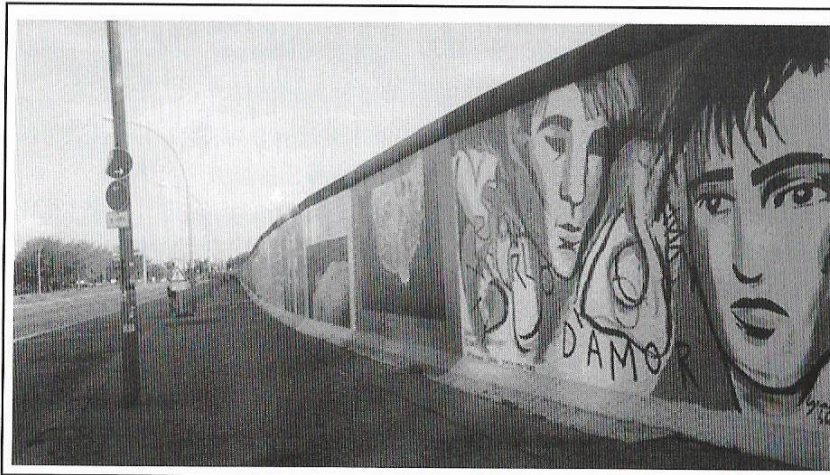
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Piece of Mind

Jake Marsh

1st Place Photography



Feel Like Making Love

Vincent Spezzo

1st Place Poetry

A small silver wrapper lays discarded on the floor
Now open and crinkled
It was once a proud square
Holding inside a prize
That two passionate lovers would use
To bring a moment of bliss into their lives
It's hot and steamy in the room
Sweat forms on the brow of the young man
Despite a broken air-conditioner
He carries on
Not stopping
Nothing in his way
He thinks
It's about
Expression
Anticipation
Excitement
Energy
She thinks
It's about
Craving
Hunger
Desire
Lust
Hotter
And hotter



It's keeps
Getting hotter
Hotter
Hotter
Hot

...
Until everything starts to boil over
Bubbling passion from deep within
The young girl places her hands on his shoulders
A caressing touch from a loved one
Slowly, what was once stiff becomes soft
As limp noodle out of the water
"It only took him three minutes."
The girl thinks as she cleans up
He picks up the wrapper and sits down
He reads the package, Oriental Style
Making Ramen Noodles on a hot stove
Is a tiring task
Like making love to a woman



Drive

Mary Poletti

1st Place Prose

The tires of my dented Saturn rattle over loose gravel, kicking up dust that trails me in a colorless cloud. I have no idea where I'm going.

I like to drive through the country, drive till I'm lost and found again, till my hands hurt, till the needle on my gas tank falls backward in protest. I inherited this strange pastime from my father, along with an uncanny sense of direction that keeps me from ever losing my way so completely that I pull over in a panic. As a child, I sat buckled into the front seat of his car, fingers reaching up to run along the window well, watching unfamiliar roads rush by and reveling in the discovery of new places. As an adult, I am on the other side of the car now, deciding my direction at every new turn.

Adult. It chills my blood to write that. It fills me with dread to know that I have no business sitting behind the wheel of a car with no real destination, no spare time to spend off campus, and no extra money to burn on wasted gas. But I sit here anyway.

Music blasts out of my ailing factory speakers – I've asked for new ones for Christmas – but my mind

is on the landscape outside. After two and a half years in this small town, five minutes from one end of Business 54 to the other on a bad traffic day, almost everything is familiar to me now.

Memories follow me down the road in the dust cloud that drifts behind me, and I find myself reflecting on the last time I spent in this place. There is the tiny state park where my sorority sisters passed marshmallows and gossip around the campfire, the field where an old flame and I explored the night sky and each other's bodies, the pothole-speckled highway where I bonded with beloved fellow writers on the way to our class service project, the bridge where a friend played chicken with an oncoming car in the dead of night. In my rearview mirror, I watch the dust cloud recede into the distance. In my mind, I try to grab on to memories as they fade away like dust.

As the road rolls by beneath me, a dark ribbon winding through the hills ever further from town, the present beckons me back. It will hold me there when I return, threatening to keep me there forever. So much is on my plate now, and I know my eyes and my



hopes were bigger than my stomach or my sanity when I didn't bother to plan ahead for this year. The more color-coded obligations that fill up my dog-eared planner, and the faster my stress level rises, the less motivated I feel to do anything, and the more I curse myself for letting it all fall by the wayside on days like this.

I need to get away. Unfortunately, the closest to "away" I can get right now is this drive in the country, where the only decisions I have to make are which way to turn at the stop sign and which song to play next.

I know vaguely where I'm going. I just don't know how I'm getting there, what lies between the present moment and the goal. My foot presses into the gas. The ride becomes unimportant, the destination now at the forefront of my mind.

Back when I had to listen to the same radio station every time I climbed into this one guy's car, I'd hear a song now and then called "Life is a Highway." I haven't talked to that guy or listened to that station in months. I wonder if it still plays the same kind of music. I wonder if the person who used to fill my ears with that music even remembers me.

I wish life were like a highway, with a clear destination

and a neat set of painted lines to keep me from veering too far off course. I wish the twists and turns of my life were laid out as clearly as the bends in the road, with signs popping up a few minutes before. Slow down, dangerous curves ahead. We should be so lucky, warned ahead of time of the speed bumps in life, instead of getting broadsided at 10:45 on some random Saturday, much the same way my friend's brand-new Jeep was the night before my last birthday. That should have slowed me down, but it didn't.

If life is a road at all, it's one of those bumpy country roads I've resorted to driving down when I long to see unfamiliar territory. No lines, no signs, no destination. I drive down those roads much faster than I probably should. Pebbles trip up my tires, and dust wafts up from the road in a cloud behind me, and the trail winds ever on without bothering to warn me when it plans to change course. Where one road ends, another begins, and I must decide which way to turn. Do I head for the familiar, or do I strike out into unknown territory, with no guarantee that I'll find my way back?

I am restless, itching to explore, desperate to learn the answer to that question. But life beckons me home, at least for today.

The Lawn Gnome (An in-depth analysis of the agro-male psyche)

Brad Dowling

2nd Place Poetry

I'm standing on the sidewalk, starin' at a lawn gnome
Cuz the little fucker was staring at me
After the instinctive masculine rage fades
I start pondering Life's mysteries:

"Why aren't cookies called bakies? You don't cook them!
Yeah answer me that!"
He just stood there: Hands on his hips
With a smug little grin and a pointy little hat

I'm standing on the sidewalk, starin' at a lawn gnome
Seething cuz the bastard thinks he's better than me
If he's so smart, he'd better prove it now
Riddle me this, little elf of the weeds:

"If the Eskimos kiss by rubbing their noses together
Do they pick them for sex?"
He just stood there with this elfin smirk
As if to say, "Ha! I am not impressed!"

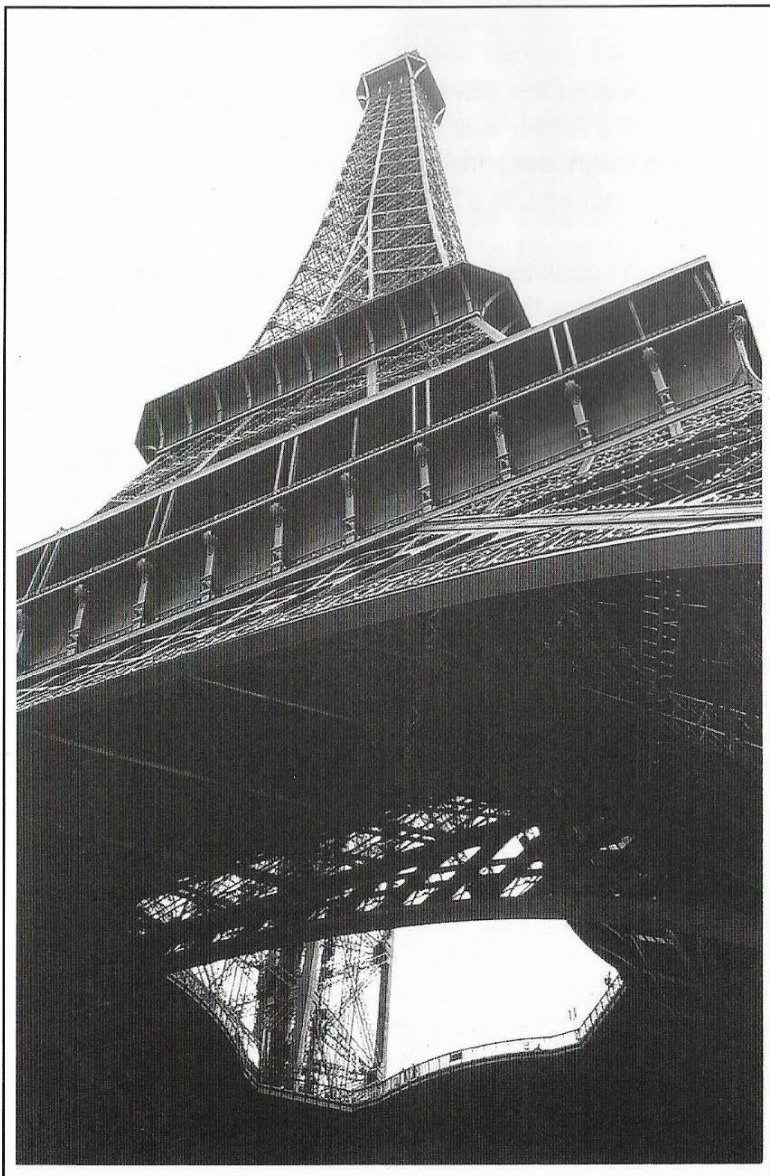
I flew-off the handle, Gotta kill the lawn gnome!
In a blind rage and a tizzy I went
To tear-off his ears until my neighbor yelled
"You fucking moron, he's inanimate!"

But I smashed his gnome ass anyway
You see, I had no choice with all the shit he was startin'
So let this be fair warning to all ye
Cocky little ceramic jockeys of gardens

Eiffel Tower

Kristen Leone

2nd Place Photography



The Hospital

Amy Barclay

2nd Place Prose

I hate that hospital smell. That sterile, plastic, disposable smell that permeates everything in the building and persists in my nostrils even after I leave. Nothing good has ever come of that smell. I suppose the smell was there when my little brother was born, but I was too young to remember it then, and anyway, it's really questionable as to whether that was a good thing or not, bringing that little monster into the world. I first remember the smell at the age of seven when I fell out of my neighbor's tree and broke my leg; I missed out on everything fun that summer. That smell was there when I sliced my hand open and had to get stitches, and when my grandma's heart failed. That smell was the first thing I remember after waking up from knee surgery to face six months of rehab.

And the smell was here now, in every corner of this bland, androgynous waiting room, under every one of the green plastic chairs, between the pages of every family-friendly magazine.

It was starting to make me sick. I wanted to leave, go outside, go anywhere but this room, but I wouldn't leave her there alone. I had volunteered to come with her; my father had to work, and although she would never have admitted it, I knew she didn't want to go by herself. Besides, she had been by my side through everything...it was the least I could do.

I stole a glance at her. She was sitting in the plastic chair on my right, reading a *Better Homes and Gardens*. She hadn't turned a page

since she'd opened it half an hour ago. I wished she'd say something, break the silence, but then I didn't really feel like talking either. That seemed to be the case a lot lately. I'd forget to pay attention in class, or find myself staring off into space when my friends were trying to talk to me. I tried not to let her see how much it bothered me; I figured she had enough on her mind, although she tried to hide her worry as well. But I had thought of little else in the past six days.

She had always been there for me. She was like one of those fifties sitcom moms, only a few pounds heavier and with a lot more fire. All my friends loved her, which may be due to a large extent to her cooking; I can't remember the last meal we had without at least one extra person at our dinner table. It wasn't just her food, though. When we were growing up, she always had something fun for us to do, and she was never too busy

to join in. She let us dress up in her clothes and try on her makeup, and she only got a little mad when my best friend painted my face with red lipstick right before our family pictures. The best nights, though, were the nights when it was just the two of us. I used to tell her everything, all my childish fears and dreams and dilemmas. She had always been there to listen, to help me sort out my silly little problems, to calm my fears, and to dream with me. And now it seemed that that was all coming to an end.

The doctor had called them *nodules*. He said she had hundreds of little *nodules* all over her lungs. If I was a doctor, I would call them that too, to avoid using that other word, that ugly word: *tumors*. Six days ago, she had gone for her yearly exam, and he had found them; six days ago, he had given her the news that had turned our world upside down. I had always known that she would die some day, of course I knew that,

everybody dies, but I hadn't really expected it, hadn't thought that it would happen like this. She was still young, still had so much of her life to live...and I still needed her.

I was past the point that I really needed her. At eighteen, I was legally an adult, although she often told me otherwise. But I wanted her to help me get ready for prom, to watch me graduate, to pester me with phone calls every day at college. I wanted her to cry at my wedding, and take X-rated pictures while I was giving birth, like she had with my sister's first baby, because she was "just so excited"!

I glanced at her again; she was still reading the same page. Did she know that I still needed her? I was always so quick to get annoyed at her attempts at humor, so quick to be embarrassed by her overexuberance, so quick to take all that she did for granted. I didn't

confide in her like I used to, either. I have found as I have gotten older that there are some things that you just don't want to tell your mother, no matter how close you are. Not two weeks ago I had blown up after one too many questions and told her that I couldn't wait to go to college because maybe then she would leave me alone. And now my biggest fear was that she *would* leave me alone...

"Diana?" the nurse was calling my mom's name. She slowly, deliberately, closed the magazine and laid it on the end table, then stood up and looked down at me.

"Wish me luck," she said, and smiled. She turned and followed the nurse down the spotlessly white hall. The hospital smell filled my nose, and a tear slipped free and slid down my cheek as I watched her walk away, taking the first steps of a very long journey.

Pelican

Molly Duncan

3rd Place Photography



A Solo Suburban Experiment To Extract Honey-Dew From Thin Air.

Richard Dowdeswell

Harmonica teeth,
Seething in and out,
Menacingly jammed cheek to cheek,
Forcing an accordion outburst,
Bulging, choking eyes,
Sing Us a song Sambo...

Ma Baby she left me,
Ma baby, oh she left me.
What can I do when she gone?

Teecha.
ITS straight
ITS constant; will get you to shore.

I can sing myself blue,
I can sing myself—
That's what I do, when she gone.

I'm TOO white to be Be bop,
TOO white to be you.
Rhythm' N' Blue

'No! I am not a jazz musician, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant listener, one that will do

sail on THIS wave—said

Black and Blue.

To swell a paper, start an idea or two,¹

What happens to the lost jazz?

What happens to the music that's only played once?

Unrecorded, pure and unredeemable²

That REAL Jazz,

Temporary and delicate.

Lasting only as long as the emotion it contains,

Then Twisting

Folding like cigarette smoke, into a NU direction.

Always outstripping itself, filling space.

Just leave me in that smokey room, leave me on that lone table, under the diluted lamplight. Let me murmur espresso to the waiter and smoke a cigar from the shadows. Let me watch the Blue in Green³ that dances under spotlight. Piano and sax become one tongue.

Heal me,

Soothe ma wound.

That steaming espresso, condensed, bitter depth.

TOUCH me with that golden brown,

TURN my throat to BRASSY SAX.

Spine keys,

REED tongue,

Would I play myself aloud?

If I could, I would—

¹ T.S.Eliot *The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock*

² 'If all time is eternally present, All time is unredeemable.' T.S.Eliot *Burnt Norton* from *Four Quartets* line 5.

³ Track 3 *Kind of Blue* Miles Davis



But I can't:

TOO white to be Blue

can only SMELL ambrosia, that Strange Fruit¹

And PRETEND to you—

Can't TASTE that thin-wet-slice of REED.

I'm no JAAAAZZZZZZZZ singer—Saxing collar Round the Room.

But if only I could PLAY that sax...

To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

That with music loud and long,²
I WOULD BUILD MA BLUES IN AIR,
And all who heard would know me true— Honey-dew

But I can't

Why can't I be COOL...

Why cant I Hard Bop?

Wha's Mode? Where's that Third Stream? Where it all comes together?

Where's ma freedom? Ma NU

Let me Fuse it.

Fucking solder it to your eardrum, then you can feel the beat.

I'll plug you in,

Tune it,

Turn it,

And you can.... You can....

¹ Sung by Billie Holiday, music and lyrics by Lewis Allan, *Strange Fruit* 1940.

² Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Kubla Kahn*



I give-up, cant play, guess I don't wana play.

Well then I'll listen...

I'm listenin...

It's a digitally remastered, replastered, Sonofagun CD.

How it was MEANT to sound, how it was SUPPOSED to be heard.

Fucking Kerching Dollar Eyes/Mojo Disguise.

But I'm TOO WHITE to listen to YOU.

The drunkeness... warm and milky blue

My head rests on VELVET notes

Stroking through my hair

An EAR Orgasm, she licks ma lobe.

This NU woman... standin bi da pianar—singin wid a foreign tongue¹

her Blue

wailin

Yet I UNDERSTAND her feeling

Recollecting language knooown by feeeew—feeling running TRUE...Black and Blue

Yet despite tasting the blue milk of Paradise²

I 'm still WHITE.

¹ Pink Floyd **Dark Side of The Moon** Track 4, *The Great Gig In The Sky*

² Kubla Kahn



I 'm not 'Hip'.

I'm not Black and Blue.

Or nearer to you.

Cos' I was told to Ri—de that wave,

That middle WashWhiteWashWave—to safe sandy shore.

It separates the black sky and the blue sea, this analysis, of jazz and me.

And even though I can say to you—

I'm feelin black I'm feelin blue.

It means nuffin cos' I can't speak usin SAX, can't use AFRO WAX, or walk into that smokey bar in St.Lou and stand next to You. Not without Feeeelin it, feelin that WAVE between us.

I've gotta find ma Own jazz.

Or maybe I can just listen to you—and take it as Ma own,

WHISTLIN a bit an makin it nu.

Voicing me True.

So I wont sit in the corner of some JAZZ club, listening to the music live alive thrive. No... I'm gonna sit back, play that track and write a few caffeine filled lines. Words that tell a story, tell a journey... mine.

'My muse will be abused, hung out to dry.

Black Magic,

Ma Hessian purse, drawstrings clutched tight,

Sealing Cinnamon, Mojo Root, Dried Bay,

Pig Foot and Candle Wax.

Five fingers awaiting the cauldron,



But is there still magic?
Is there still something unspeakable?
Where is the experiment going?

I can see the drip-full of blood- dripping into the funnel,
Everything pouring into the apparatus,
Bubbling through bent pipes,
Valves pumping
Hollows whistling,
Exhertion, Exhaustion
Automated lung,
Rasping vibration...

What's a jazz cd?
Never more or less each time its played.
A photograph of jazz.
Not where jazz is now.
Escaping definition each time someone somewhere plays a note in the
name of jazz.

...the pressure's building...

and Does it Explode?¹
Yes kids—
'It does explode!
In the violence of Black on Black
In the disgust of miseducation
In the hatred of nothingness'²

¹ Poem written by Lee F.Browne in response to Langston Hughes 1959 *Dream Deffered*

² *Ibid*

What? What did you say?

"Who gave you the right to judge? Who gave you the right to say who is fit
to be a negro?"¹

That's right I'm stealin it.... All of it.

Its mine now.

My jazz,

My poetry,

My music.

Stolen.

I'm gonna call it Jizz:

Its an ejaculation of myself, an indulgence some may say.

Either way its my Jizz splattered on the page,

My excorcism,

My self sung.

I can see my reflection in that sax,

Golden, bulbous, molten,

And I'm free from my middleclass butterbelly.

Free from that school crap,

Free flowin tree sap.

Just ridin that wave,

Yer,

I'm just ridin that wave.

¹ Film *A Soldier's Story* 1984

Untitled
Jake Marsh

3rd Place Poetry (Tie)

I have life because it was given to me
live life because it is expected of me

I take hold of life
I break it down
Tear it apart
Piece by piece
Exam it
Test it
Find the boundaries
The outer limits
Hang my feet over the edge
Tear it down
And build it back again
In my own way
With my own guidelines
My own will
Build it in a way never before seen
Never before thought
Never before imagined
In a way others find impossible
Inconceivable
Unreasonable

I do this to life - because I can



CNN Investigation: The Pooh Has Hit the Fan
Alexander Ross

3rd Place Prose

"Oh my."

"You're always afraid, and he protects you, I mean come on! Are you guys ever seen with a female counterpart?"

"I-I-I can't talk anymore- can't you see I'm bereaved? I have to go. Nice talking to you Kent." With questions left unanswered, I decided to continue along the path past Pooh's house. I caught up with Rabbit in his garden.

"Rabbit, may I have a minute of your time?"

"Yes, but hurry up. I'm tending my garden."

"Yes, your *garden*."

"What is it?"

"I'm interested in honey pots."

"Honey pots?"

"Yes, I mean here is Pooh, a diabetic, eating honey all the damned time, and you never thought this could be of harm to him? You just kept making sure he could get his fix, huh?"

"Look, I really don't have to answer that." I grab a leaf off of a plant in his garden.

This is Kent Neaderman reporting for CNN. Tragedy struck as Winnie the Pooh, beloved cartoon character/stuffed bear was found dead last night. The cause is said to have been diabetes. I traveled to the 100 acre wood for the funeral. I was surprised to find that I was among the few in attendance. A touching eulogy was given by long time friend and confidant, Piglet. Christopher Robin sent a nice floral arrangement in lieu of attendance. I caught up with Piglet after the service.

"Piglet, can I have a minute with you?"

"Oh. Oh yes."

"Piglet, I'd like to get your response to the accusation that you and Pooh have had an ongoing sexual affair since the development of the housing project in the 100 acre wood."

"Oh. Oh dear. I'd have to admit that I wasn't ready to field that question Kent."

"I mean come on, you the meek, shy little sex puppet and Pooh the big, dumb, dominating man-animal, and you can't deny the homosexual allusion to him being a *Bear*."



"I bet the DEA would be real interested in your garden here. What is this, Cannabis?"

"Don't touch that. Look, what Pooh does in his own time is Pooh's business, okay? I can't say I approved of his lifestyle, but different strokes for different folks, ya hear? Did I tell him to watch his glucose intake? You bet your ass I did. He took care of himself, he checked his insulin levels, but I know he was hiding jars of honey in his closet, we all did. I found him one day passed out in the meadow suffering from insulin shock, he kept yelling something about pink elephants, and I carried him back to his house. I tried to get him to change his diet, I gave him a whole basket full of carrots but he wouldn't give up that damned honey. I don't blame myself, Kent. Pooh got what he deserved, I'm sorry he's dead, but life goes on." I get the impression from Rabbit that he has a kind of sedated sophistication about him, like he is the kind of person who can't start his day without thumbing through his Lands End catalog and sipping a cup of hot carrot brew. He wears a sunhat but gives no regard to sunscreen. I leave him and find the next person on my list.

I find Kanga at her daytime job, working behind the counter of a local diner. She smokes a cigarette while I talk to her on her smoke break.

"Kent Neaderman, CNN."

"I know who the hell you are."



"Right. I'm interested in getting your thoughts on Pooh's death."

"Pooh was a damned fool! I'm a single mom working two jobs trying to raise my only son on my own. I don't have time to worry about that fat old pervert."

"Pervert?"

"You don't think I don't know about all the goings-ons with his little pal Piglet? You ever seen any of those two with a girl? I don't think so! They're almost as bad as that old Owl."

"Owl?" I inquire with intense curiosity.

"Owl offered to look after Roo on the weekdays after school until I get off work. I pick Roo up one day in tears, says Owl made him take a bath with him. Now if that ain't some wack shit, I don't know what is! Just what this area needs, a damned pederast!" I mark this down in my notebook.

"Why do you say you're a single mom? My file says that Tigger is now living with you."

"Tigger, don't even get me started on that sack of shit! Damn fool just shows up one day, says he needs something to eat and a place to stay. It's been two months and that fool still hasn't left. Says he's planning on getting workers comp for falling outta some tree he climbed or something. All I know is, I don't like him around my son! Lord only knows

the shit he's teaching him! I get a call about two weeks ago; Roo had been picked up for selling drugs outta his pouch! And they wanna blame me! How can a mother be a mother when she's working two damned jobs to keep herself off welfare? You wanna tell me Kent?" Her boss yells at her from across the diner.

"Kanga? I don't pay 2.50 an hour for you to sit on your ass!"

"Motherfucker." She says as she stubs out her cigarette. "You want to take some food home to Roo for me? Tell him it's from his mother."

I venture onto a side street and finally find Kanga's address, her directions obviously flawed. I knock on the door.

"Who the hell is it?"

"Kent Neaderman, CNN."

"Ya? What's that stand for?"

"Cartoon News Network."

"Ohhh, shit! You're on the damn TV? Come in, come in." I am instantly greeted by the smell of stale cigarette smoke and whiskey. "I'm Tigger, nice to meet you."

"And you must be Roo."

"Yeah? Who the fuck is this guy?"

"Watch your manners, he's from the TV."

"He don't look like shit."

"Shut up and go make me some lunch." Tigger says, slapping Roo on the side of the head.

"I wanted to get your reaction to Pooh's death."

"All I know is, Pooh is a punk. I go to him about three months ago, hungry as shit, I ask him if he can spare anything. You know what he says? 'No, sorry.' I know that motherfucker had some honey or something. I mean, damned fool died from eating honey didn't he? He always had honey, he was just never into sharing any of his shit, and you gots to share your shit. You gots to hit your boy up. Hit your boy up Kent!" He chuckles and takes a long swig from his bottle of Ten High. "Where's my fucking sandwich?" He yells towards the kitchen.

"All's we got is mayonnaise and pickles. You didn't go to the store like mom asked you!"

"I don't want to hear any shit! I better get plenty of mayonnaise and pickles or you're going to get the belt boy!" He turns back to the TV. "You gotta teach these kids today whose boss, if not, they'll fucking kill you. Motherfucker came home with a switchblade last week and started threatening me, telling me to get the hell up outta his crib. Well, switchblade ain't no match for one of these babies." Tigger pulls out a nine-millimeter. "Once she starts talking, everyone shuts up." He kisses the barrel.



"I noted that Christopher Robin didn't attend the services either."

"Oh don't even get me started on that boy. He ain't no friend. In fact, if I ever see that button-nosed little yuppie motherfucker around here, old Widow-Maker here is gonna start barking fire!" He points towards his nine millimeter. "He's always 'If you guys ever need a warm meal and a place to crash, you can always stay here.' You know what happened when I showed up at his Park Avenue apartment building with nothing but the shoes on my feet? They threw me out! That was the last time I saw him. I got him good though, I slashed the tires on that fools BMW. You don't mess with the Tig." He pets his nine millimeter.

"I have written here that you were arrested on several occasions for narcotics possession. Care to comment?"

"It's like this. I got this natural jumpiness in me, right? But then one day, the tail just doesn't have the same bounce anymore, ya dig? I got hooked up with this friend of Eeyore, right? He was pimp as shit. He's all 'Do you want some fairy dust, my man?' I was all 'hells ya' so he's like 'take this' and I did. Before I know it, I'm high as a fucking kite. I'm jumping on trees and shit. But then, it got to a point where the same dose wouldn't do it for me anymore. So I took more, and more. Until one day I was jumping too high, and I got stuck in a tree and I couldn't get down. I had to have my

friends help me. It's a metaphor, ya see? They took me to Betty Ford and now I'm all better."

"That's beautiful, Tigger, so you're all clean now?"

"Clean, fuck no! Now I don't have to take so much to get high anymore. Fucking great idea to go to rehab! I'm working out this deal with Rabbit now, he grows it, I sell it. No one would ever suspect that straight ass Rabbit would be into anything bad. He only eats organic food, why would he be into drugs? It's foolproof."

"I'm bored, Tigger, will you play with me?" asks Roo.

"Ha, fuck no. If you got all this energy, hoppin' around all the time, maybe you should get yourself a job. Who's got time to play? You need to be making money son! Go next door and see if you can pull out the neighbor's weeds or something. Get outta here, you're pissing me off!" He turns to me with a toothpick in his mouth. He's wearing a stained tank top that barely covers his belly, boxers one size too small, and house slippers. "Are we done here? I'm thinking its TTFN."

"Ta Ta for Now? I didn't know you were still doing that."

"Ha NO. Time To Fucking Nap. I been up since 9:30. I'm tired! Now get on outta here!"

I find Eeyore in the junkyard, burning trash in a barrel for heat.

"Howareyadoin?" he asks me in his blurred, monotone voice.

"I'm good Eeyore, how are you?"

"i'mfine.youwouldn'thappento haveanyneedlesonyouwouldyou?"

"Needles for what?"

"i'mlookingtoshootupsomeH."

"Eeyore, what do you need H for?"

"canyouseewhereifuckinglive? iliveinajunkyard.iliveinyourtrashyouasshole, nowgivemesomefuckingneedles!" He grabs my shirt collar and shakes me. His pupils are dilated "imsorryimsorry, imjustsostrungoutrightnow." He smoothes out the wrinkles he made on my shirt.

"It's alright, Eeyore, I'm a reporter."

"ohcoolman.killer."

"I'm interested in getting your comment on the death of your friend Pooh."

"pooh? poohdied? ahmanthatsfuckingharsh.poohwasa realchill dude.hewouldcomebyand givemesomeofhis insulinneedles,he wasrealcool.bytheway, youwouldn't happentohaveanyneedlesonyou wouldyou?"

"You already asked me that Eeyore."

"oh.whatdidyousay?"

"I said no, I didn't have any needles on me."

"oh, cuzthatwouldberealcloolyfyoudid,youknow whatimsaying?"

"I'm gonna go now, Eeyore, you take care of yourself, alright?" He didn't hear me. He just fell over on to his side and shook his legs like he was having a doggy dream.

I arrived at Owl's loft apartment in time for afternoon tea.

"I knew Pooh shouldn't have been eating all of that honey, I mean, who in their right mind would think that was healthy? And to add on the fact that he was a diabetic?"

"Care to comment on Kanga?"

"How can I say this kindly? Hmmm. Kanga was a tramp. She got knocked up in high school, but she's doing better for herself. Last I heard she was trying to get her GED while working two jobs and supporting Roo. Though I did tell her that if she ever needed a sitter for Roo that I would watch after him. The boy needs a place to do his h.w." He says in his James Earl Jones-like voice.

"Kanga mentioned there was a bathtub incident with Roo? Something about a pederast? Care to comment?"

"That is an ancient tradition stemming from Roman times. Men and boys would shower together, that is all I will say about that."

"Care to comment on Tigger?"

"Don't even get me started on Tigger. Tigger has a drug problem. He won't admit it. I was in support of having him incarcerated. Especially after that incident at Christopher Robin's apartment building when he was coked out of his mind and tried to cut the valet. They should euthanize people like that. He's evidence that abortion should be legal. Do you want another one of those on the streets? A little baby Tigger crack head? Going through your pockets and eating dirt off the street? I do my best to hit those people with my car. There are no hand outs in this world. Do you think I got my PHD because someone gave it to me? There aren't PHD kitchens where a woman with ratty hair and a ladle hands out doctorates. You have to earn them."

"Interesting, and what do you have to say about Eeyore?"

"Now, I have on occasion hit that retard with my car. I don't think it's fazed him once. He's so dazed out of his mind that he doesn't know what's going on. I tricked him good a month ago, he wanted some needles, and of course he didn't specify what kind, so I sold him a carton full of sewing needles for \$50. I found him a week later, looking like a freaking pin cushion, lying on his side, licking

water out of the gutter. You know how his tail is nailed on to him? I decided it was time I had me one of those, as payment for all the things I've done for him. So I went and pulled that thing right off of him one day when he was blazed out of his mind, I took it home and nailed it on the wall in my study. It really brings the room together quite nicely." I thanked Owl for his time, hoping to get out of there as soon as possible. "Now don't you go starting any trouble with this article of yours, Kent. The outside world is coming down on us cartoon characters. I got a call from my friend in Jelly Stone, says they've arrested Yogi for having improper sexual relations with a minor; he's going to get charged for statutory rape. Can you believe that? They're mad that Yogi has been sleeping in the same bed as Booboo. Then I get another call, apparently they got Woody the Woodpecker in an asylum, gave him a lobotomy and everything. What I'm saying, Mr. Neaderman, is don't be causing trouble for us down here. This is a nice, quiet community, and we'd like to keep it that way." He points his finger at me, then reclines in his chair and quickly falls asleep.

My trek through the 100 acre woods shattered many wonderful childhood memories I had hoped would stay sacred until the end of my days. I don't think the 100 acre wood will ever be the same after the death of the beloved Pooh, Winnie the Pooh.



Unrequited

Mary Poletti

I could write a book on
the joy you make me feel
I could write a sonnet on
the color of your eyes
I could write a play on
the moments that we've shared
but I love you so much
you've robbed me of words.

Gevaudin, de Loup-Garou

Matthew B. Collier

Half-Moon, Full Moon
Red Moon, Blue Moon
Upon each phase, alone or in twos
Drastic changes of form let loose
Swelling muscle, Twisting bone
The primal shape will be yours alone
Wild fur pelt and thrashing tail
With feral wolf's head and howling wail
Deadly claws, as if forged from steel
Crushing jaws that grind bone to meal
With feet of Wolf and paws of Man
Upright on two legs, at nine feet you stand
Not Wolf nor Man, shape locked in 'twain
In feral Beast's body, mind and soul remain



The Grand Arme

Colin Kerr

Pyrrhic victors litter these fields
Their will to live all but gone
General Winter has won the battle
Where no sword has been drawn
Their wind-burned lips are stuck together
And their nostrils have since long froze
Typhoid is mercy from the gangrene
That flanks each man through the toes
An invasion forged on tin buttons
Winter hath made both to dust¹
The cannons once queen of the battlefield
Rule now only a dominion of rust
Everlasting ranks of corpses
Fall heroically in the ditch they all share
The final charge reaches its climax
As each soldier does a bear²
Hemmed in on all sides by the dying
The dead beneath their feet
Spare no time in alerting the Imperial Courts
For we have seen such a gallant retreat!
Snow is their only blanket
Whipping wind a lullaby for the dead
And the Berezina is a watery tomb For all except the leader who hath fled
Convulsing
bodies pull down their brothers
The dead are resurrected by the frost³

¹ Meant to save money, the tin buttons worn by Napoleon's army disintegrated at sub-zero temperatures.

² A colloquial term describing a soldier falling down dead while marching.

³ The extreme cold caused the dead bodies to spasm and trip the soldiers who walked over them.



To the spoils of war go the Cossacks and vultures
But for a stay in Moscow what small cost!
What glories there must have been
When this Grand Arme first did leave
Who could have possibly forecast this winter
And the countless widows that would grieve
Over these conscripted souls
Lost on the frozen steppes of hell
Rotted brittle bones the only sign
To remember those who fell
But now the fallen leader sees
Only upon loss did truth he meet There is but no comparison
Who but The Lord sees no defeat?
Charlemagne pales to the humble Christ
For beyond his death his empire he could not save
No Caesar or Alexander rules from their mausoleum
Who but Christ can command his soldiers after the grave?
Fragile dynasties forged by steel and force
How worthless is their greatest victory to The Lord
Have they ever loved their enemy into surrender?

Who but the Messiah can conquer without death sword?
In marshalling grand armies for petty gain
Nations and leaders declare their origin
But the Lord simply declares I am
And millions of men would die for Him
Yet with an empire so absolute
He has but one simple end
The union of that which is true
A God and the souls that need mend



The Beginning Words of the Spell of Mystery

Amy Barclay

Tie yourself up in a string of syllables, and cut your skin with a blade that never dulls; that is a word, or several. Letters so arranged become a map and a terrain; the word on the page is identified with that which is without, and becomes its definition. Cloak the world in language and you murder it, weave then your own universal taxonomy, true vision knows no limits.

Serve them truth on a silver platter, and they will turn up their noses in disgust like the man towards the dirt his ancestors once called holy. Inscribe a new truth on their hearts and they will eat out of your hands; the power of language is its mystery, fill their hearts with desire but keep satisfaction always forbidden, explanations brought to fruition are seeds of apathy.

Define yourself to name your limits, let no letter mark you, but always stand above explanation. Claim greatness to be humbled, claim humbleness to be ignored, defy definition to be awed. Make of yourself the death of language and the sacrifice of words, defy all attempts at explanation, and then write yourself a new testimony. Deny explanation to those who seek it, but offer instead the beginning words of the spell of mystery.

I am the savage born of dirt and water.

I am the noble born of fire

and love.

Through me you are eternal, forever blessed and remembered. I am the stone, on which you inscribe the letters of your invented history; and I become like water, and you realize there was never a foundation on which to write, and your history was nothing, and you never were.

In my right hand I hold the mystery, which I offer to you as a royal feast.

In my left hand I hold the end of confusion, which I use to taunt you, beckon you to continue searching. Drawing you in like a fly to the web.

In me you will find your definition, for you realize I have none. And so I rip you open and bring a blade to your heart, and carve into your flesh my own letters; I pierce you. Melt for me. You are solved.

You scream at your defeat, exhausted at the ending of your mystery. You are solved, and I defy you my own definition.

I am the victory just beyond your fingers.

I am the savagery that drives you onward towards your goal.

Where are you going?



Untitled

Jake Marsh

Here I sit
Reading the poems
Of a soul as lost as mine
Looking for answers
And finding only questions
Searching each line
For the essence of thought
Scanning the pages
To piece questions together

I'm nearing the end
And trying to decide
Whether I'm glad and relieved
Or confused and lost in thought
That will be carried as a burden
For days on end
Until everything is stripped down
And rebuilt again

So here I am
Nobody but me
Reading this innocent poetry
Sometimes with a rhythm
Sometimes with a rhyme
But constantly reminding me
Of that which I chose to forget

So I will put this down
Stop reading the words
Stop finding the questions
Stop looking for inspiration
On a sheet of which was once blank

And go

If you're still unsure
Of that which you just read
I will say it with words
Not meant to entice

So here it is
From me to you
Put down these words
And change the world

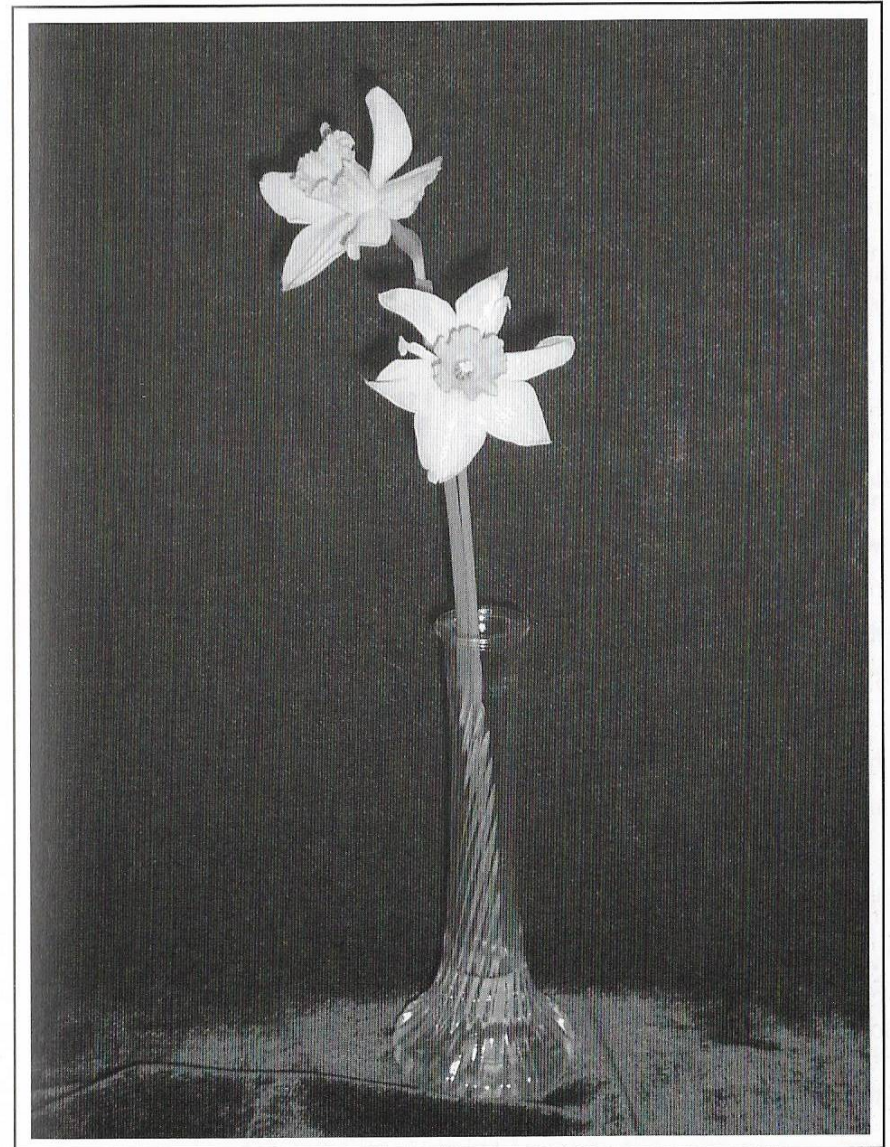


If You're Right, I'm Going To Kill You
Collin Kerr

I met a wise man one day
Whose insult caught my ear
He called me simple-minded
And explained with a wry sneer
"It is arrogance to claim the truth
For all morality is relative," he said
So I conceded his point, grabbed a gun
And shot him three times in the head

Bang, bang, bang announced the pistol
Three times I agreed
So cold so violent
But true to his creed
His sneer lost its confidence
And his mind drew a blank
Because his brains were on the wall
He clutched to in vain as he sank
His sterile stare thanked me
Framed by blood pouring from his skull
The bullets that were emptied
Rendered his reality null
His lips trembled with the truth
A poison to his soul
Lead may have killed him
But ignorance is what I stole
I removed his wallet, full of family
To complete the perfect theft
Gave his body to the maggots
Washed my hands and left

Daffodil
Kristen Savage



And I Call Her "Bellforan Intracallio!"¹

Richard Dowdeswell

In the warm midday numbness	falls, arms
The air feels like egg-white.	Under belly I lift him onto the stone block,
An obol, sits under my tongue,	Holding the horns tilting the head back...
First mouthed, to be last swallowed.	It runs warm.
I reach up for tantalising grapes,	I won't dare swear by this river,
They are just beyond my tip-toe-touch.	<i>Flumensubterra</i>
	<i>Flumen Styx.</i>
The reed pipe calls for feet again,	I cup my hands down to drink the water,
She longs to run from the lips of love	But it recedes before I can touch it.
Blowing a sad tune through her shell.	
I want to snatch away that pipe	Folding fatty thighs
And listen to Her sing Her soul.	Mint and Rosemary filled
<i>Intracallio</i> upon the wind,	Murmuring prayer:
Upon the wind she sang.	<i>Bellforan.</i>
	<i>I whisper</i>
	<i>Bellforan!</i>
I fill my mind with watery words,	The wind wisps my words away,
But holes pour them out again.	<i>Bellforan Intracallio.</i>
Black Ram among the herd of clouds.	Skewering the meat on spits
The finest Sacrifice staring straight at me.	And watching the gods' eat with flames.
Sorry old-boy but you had to go sometime.	As the flames flicker
I tie the hooves together and he	I look at the faces I once knew,

¹ A phrase created by the poet using various word stems from French, Ancient Greek and Latin. It means 'beautiful on the outside, more beautiful within'.



They don't remember anymore.
Charon! Charon!
Take me back! Take me back!
If you don't I'll... I'll...

I can smell Ambrosia,
It whispers on the wind.

The Euminides follow me everywhere.

They're outside right now,

Sitting on the roof, tapping their claws.

I roll the rock up the steep hill,
But it just rolls down the other side.

I remember when...

We went last high tide,
Chasing shadows on the beach,
Trying to catch them.

Put them in a jar.

Holding hands we crept through the twilight.

The moon revealed blue spectres
As it peeked through the clouds.

I think we caught one!

Look! Look!

And when we woke up to find them,

When we looked into the jar - the second

Our eyes opened to the morning

yolk -

They were gone. No blue shadow,
no

Weightless entity.

Perhaps I dreamt it

We dreamt it.

Shadows.

Evidence of reality in uncertain times.

Bellforan! Bellforan!

Three eagles circled above the altar

One weaved a path for us from smoke.

Another dragged the route on its long

Waxed feathers.

Just as the smoke ceased its dance,

The third eagle (according to the seers),

Killed the first two in mid-air

Razor-sharp talons slicing through wings.

Blind to the future

All I see is echoes.

The shrieking shades call

From under any tree I pass.

Eek! Eek! Bats, screeching.

I roll the die, two in all.



But nothing is on the faces.

I keep looking through the shades
for her.

Does no one hear the deafening
weight?

Can no one sense the tragedy?

Treading water.

Exhausted.

A slither of liver hanging off the
beak.

Two dead eagles under feet,

Feathers kafuffled.

An old man with wrinkled female
breasts

Blindly watches me.

The grapes turned to raisins on the
vine,

Honeysuckle brimming in an ornate
Kylix

The depiction of Ulysses is golden
through

The juice.

I pour libations to the gods – and
then we

Drink.

If only everything I touched

Would turn to yellow gold.

Bellforan Intracallio

A shower of coins impregnates my

wife,

I see horns protruding through her
hair

And she momentarily becomes a
satyr.

The rain subsides.

The horns shrink back within.

I can't believe my eyes,

I must be blind.

I tell you all this; carrying my dying
father,

For that's what sons do.

I scratch the wax tablet with my
stilo.

Its impressions are only temporary

Like smoke from a pyre.

When will Apollo tell me?

I scratch.

Where is she: that other half-soul?

I close my tablet.

Please answer me, great seer.

I whisper

Bellforan Intracallio!

*I wait a minute - and then open
the tablet.*

It is empty except for my words.

And I am finally exiled...

Walking toward the horizon, to meet
her.

Whispering her name.

Mourning

C.D. Watts

Click, buss click, that second
just before the beeping and just
after the first movements of
miniature gears has elapsed. I can
hear the traffic of the world beyond
roaring outside of my half opened
window behind my fully drawn
shades, and in this moment I pray
for sleep. It has been the longest
time since I've felt the utter escape
of uninhibited slumber.

"Why the hell can't I sleep?"

"You know why. Don't kid yourself."

"Well, that's a fucking stupid reason
anyhow."

The alarm sounds. The best part
about this whole situation is that I
was awake to anticipate it. I find it
ridiculously comical that I purchased
this damn thing because it had a
"loud" setting, a feature particularly
handy when you snore like a damn
wildebeest and sleep like a corpse.
Ironic.

"Awesome, here it comes."

You can hear the smacking of
forehead to hardwood up and down
the corridor as the banshee-like wail
of the little black box ascends to an

unfathomable volume. I chuckle to
myself as I consider hitting snooze
just to keep them on their toes. I
hate these fucking people anyhow.
I don't really have a rational basis
for that sentiment. I just hate them.
Of course, lately I've begun to hate
a lot of things. I hate the lucky ones.
I hate the empty shallow wanna-be
intellectuals with their phony causes
and their Dartmouth degrees. I hate
the political analysts and the broken
home blue collar peace wreckers. I
hate the ever rich botox pussies and
overnight k-square stock boys. But
most of all I hate this fucking
insomnia.

"Get up and get ready."

"I'm not gonna move."

"She's not here."

"She never was."

I roll to my side and try to ignore the
screeching. "It's crazy how loud that
thing is. Jesus, I wonder if it could
burst an eardrum. Let's not find
out." I stretch out my arm and in one
motion halt the blasting sound and
mar the sterile white wall on the
other side of my little cube. "I guess
working out is working out." A glaze
has covered my face like some sort

of Reynolds wrap skin treatment.

"I should look into a shower."

"Showers are for pussies."

"Good attitude. You'll get her back that way."

"She's not coming back."

The sheets on the bed feel almost moist against my clammy skin. "It's freezing in here. I suppose that's better than the alternative. Or is it?" Finally, my feet hit the floor with a clap. Bones creaking I stand and move forward, but a step. From here I can see the poem that she left, an ideogram of a most foul and distasteful nature. That little poem holds a tiny mystique about it. I just can't bring myself to erase it from my board. One two three steps and I've reached the thermostat. "Hmm, fifty five degrees, nice," I've set that stupid thing for every temperature imaginable trying to find a comforting climate for sleep. I haven't the foggiest idea of what to do now. My hands tremble in the cold and a thought, hardly an epiphany, drives me to increase the heat in the room.

"Go to class."

"Why? I could sleep through school and make Bs. Then again, that doesn't seem to be an option right now, does it?"

"Call her then."

"I spent the whole night calling."

"That should tell her something."

"What? That I am a psycho. That's just the image I'm trying to promote."

In all honesty, I should have learned by now the way things will go. I have waited for her call every night. She once loved me and would call. When she needed me she would call. That was every night then. Now it is different. Her color has faded. What was once the deepest blue has morphed and changed into the vivid green of New England and new independence. I pull on my clean jeans three weeks removed and pat down my ever receding hair. The mirror isn't kind to me as I gaze past the glass. I can almost see her. I shake my head and regain my focus and now come the false pearl snaps of my classic western shirt, Pampa's shirt.

"Take your phone."

"Why, because she might call?"

"Yes, well, thanks, I bet she's just dying to talk to me at nine in the morning."

"You know you're going to take it."

"Yes, I know."

Time & Again

Danielle Becknell



Fools Hope?

Tyler Buchholz

The legions of the foe are so many,
They outnumber the multitudes of stars
The few who follow the light,
Fall into darkness daily.

Now the world spirals faster,
Ever faster to death and despair
The end is coming soon,
Soon the foe will make war.

Yet as the world is enveloped,
In the endless pain, sadness and death
The great light prepares his army,
Great honorable warriors of old.

Darkness and Light
Death and Life
Despair and Happiness
These are the two sides.

Live your life as you choose,
Yet, death cannot overtake life
Hate cannot hold sway over love
. . . When the last battle comes,
I hope to fight at your side.



Drunk Thing

Mary Poletti

the room is spinning
bass is thumping
fingers drumming
keeping time
next to a row of empties

the room is spinning
around you

I am punch-drunk
(maybe rum-drunk?)
thoughts are jumbling all together
but

never

quite

connecting

like shapes in the fog
they push their way out



one at a time
my feet are numb
wow you're hot
the window's dirty

the room is spinning
world's on fire
I am fumbling for refuge
and I find it
in your arms

the sidewalk's moving
underneath our feet
speeding us toward home and fate
clinging to each other
there's no stopping it now

you won't remember tomorrow

I won't forget tonight



Record the Silence

Ashley Creek

Throw all the televisions into the dumpster

Cut all the speaker cords

Wear earplugs

Let the deaf do the talking

Burn all the CDs, cassette tapes, records, DVDs, VHS tapes, 8 tracks

Destroy the stereo.

Break all the phones

Take up reading

Bash the sirens on the ground.

Pull the fire alarms off the walls

Grease every hinge

Fix every squeaky floorboard, every step.

Pull out everyone's hearing aids

Go deaf from the silence



The Ring

Mary Poletti

She sat alone in her car, idling the engine in a pothole-riddled parking lot, U2 blasting from the stereo and heat blasting from the vents. The January afternoon was frigid, the sky white, and the exhaust trailing from her car snaked upward in a plume in white steam. The needle on the gas tank hovered near E.

Through the curtain of dark bangs that shaded her eyes, she studied the small object cradled in her palm: a ring, bands of gold and silver converging on a heart freckled with tiny diamonds. She thought that, looking upon this item for the first time in months, she would be deluged with memories of better times gone past. All that struck her, however, was that it needed to be cleaned.

She shifted her eyes upward to the sign in the window. "We Buy, Sell, and Trade Anything of Value!" What price, she wondered, for memories of a life so far removed that she was no longer sure she had ever lived it at all?

Other Januaries drifted through her brain: two years ago, sitting on a hard metal futon, her head resting on his shoulder, his hand reaching tentatively for hers; one year ago, lying next to him on his king-sized bed as he slipped their promises and hopes onto her finger. He had struggled to squeeze her knuckle through the ring then, but two months later, she had slid it off without resistance. He had not wanted it back.

Her only image of a pawn shop came from a forgettable teen horror

movie. She remembered a forgettable teen actor standing on one side of a bulletproof window, sliding a diamond ring across the counter to the mustachioed man on the other side, who peered at it through a jeweler's eye and scratched his belly, paunchy and suspicious in a stained undershirt. Raindrops drummed on the sidewalk outside. A muscle ticked in the actor's square, clean-shaven jaw as he traded the ring for a handgun. She didn't even remember what the movie was called.

The small white clapboard building in front of her looked more like her grandmother's house than her idea of a pawn shop, save for the black bars across the window and the sign on the roof that read "King's Pawn & Guns." A cardboard sign warned customers not to track their muddy footprints beyond the door. Her shoes were clean, but she was reluctant to step inside.

On the radio, Bono taunted her, "You've got to get yourself together, you've got stuck in a moment, and now you can't get out of it." She silenced him with the flick of a knob, turned off the car and trudged toward the door, no longer sure what she was waiting for.

The inside of the shop reminded her of the local used CD exchange, shabby but clean, cheerful somehow, glass cases filled with jewelry and not music, walls

lined with hunting rifles instead of vintage band posters. A string of bells on the door heralded her arrival. A short, smarmy man glanced at her from his post near a rack of ammunition, sporting a leather jacket and a weasly little mustache, looking to her as though he should be named Eddie or Ernie or Louie, the kind of guy her suburban sensibilities automatically feared.

A heavysset, balding man in a sweatshirt walked out of the back room and muted Fox News on the small-screen TV sitting on the nearest jewelry case. "What can I do for you?"

The owner's eyes were grim, magnified by thick glasses. She could not meet them as she pulled the ring from her pocket and slid it across the counter.

"How much can I get for this?" Her voice came out quiet and toneless.

The owner turned over the ring in his chubby fingers. "To sell?"

She nodded, heart pounding in her throat, still unable to look up and feigning interest in the titles of the obscure CDs under the counter's glass top, another reminder of the old music store. Many times had they visited that store, scanning the racks for a rare CD or perhaps a long-forgotten favorite movie to enjoy before they climbed into bed that night, his hand already sliding under her shirt.

After he announced that he did not love her, she shut off her emotions, the everyday joys and pains of her life bouncing off her like so many raindrops on glass where before they had penetrated to the very core of her peaceful soul. Such repression was, perhaps, why she had such a hard time reconciling her life with him with the life she led now. At times she liked to

pretend that the year had been sliced cleanly from her memory, although more often she knew that it was not that easy.

She finally looked up in time to watch the owner pull a calculator from behind the counter and punch in a few numbers. He met her eyes, his own so sad and droopy that she felt sure he had seen many crises more pressing than hers.

"I'll give you \$10 for this. It weighed in as \$6.50, but I'm tacking on a little for you," he added firmly, apparently seeing in her eyes the dismay that squeezed her heart. "The stones are small. They're not worth much."

Was that it, \$10, the going rate for the tiny 10-karat symbol of a year's memories? \$10 wouldn't buy her a fifth of gas-station vodka to help her through a lonely money weekend, the only single woman left in her circle of friends. It was a full third of the money she had to her name until March. Wildly, she considered selling her car, or perhaps her body.

"I'll take it." The words escaped her before she could stop them, borne out on a sigh.

As she walked out of the shop, a wrinkled ten-dollar bill in her wallet, she wished she could leave him behind as easily as she could leave his ring lying on a glass counter in a strange town. She remembered the last movie she had seen with him, a strange drama in which the hero paid to have memories of an old flame excised from his brain. The irony had not been lost on her. She started the car and rolled out of the parking lot as the sky above darkened with gathering clouds.

The "Us"
Brad Dowling

I'm drunk, out underneath the stars
Laid back on the hood of my car
Can you just humour me tonight?
I'm sad, my heart sinks far below
I'll fall if the wind starts to blow
As the crickets harmonize my plight

I told you that you should follow your heart
But I'm a fucking retard
If your heart won't lead you to me, follow something that will
Without you, I feel I've lost the battle
It's sleepless in my Seattle
But Meg Ryan's got nothing on you

My whole world is spinning, but this time it's not fun

Cuz my friends say "There's lots of fish in the sea"
But I don't care about marine biology
And all along I've had the key to your heart
But I guess I must have locked it in my car
Along with everything I want and need
And without you, the "us" is only me



Time
Courtney Richter

Time isn't on my side
Time isn't on my side.
It's neutral and indifferent
like a shadow following me around,
pretending to be me.
Life is too complicated to try to figure out
but I don't want to live it
if I don't understand the word.
Love is created and adapted by cultures
and slogan-slinging commercials.
Happiness is painted on the side of a can,
next to the serving size and calories.
Drugs form a bubble around you
so you don't have to feel your toe-stubs ever again,
so your smiles are programmed like the VCR.

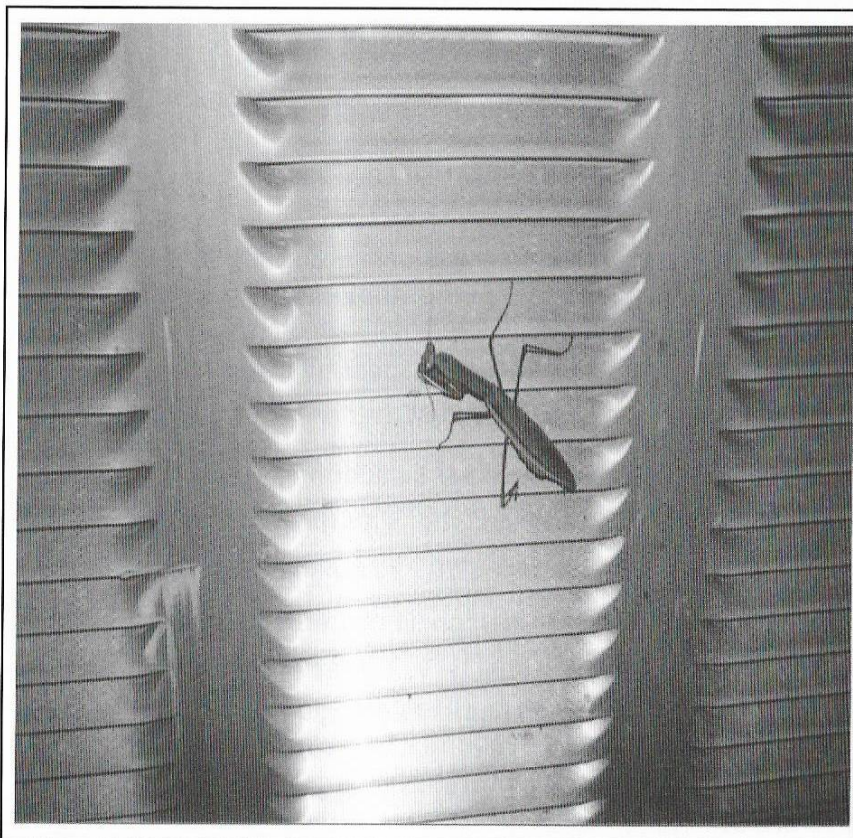
I pull myself up and above the smog
every now and again to get a view,
but it only lasts as long as it takes
for gravity to notice and pull me back down
to the petty pennies and empty arguments.

I want to build a home with you,
above all of this,
with a big front porch so we can sit and watch the silly ants
carrying unnecessarily big leaves and twigs,
following each other in circles.
We'll sit on this couch of moments and glue
and wait for nothing to happen,
because we'll know, it's happening.
Time isn't on our side,
it's neutral and indifferent.
So we'll sit in the rain like we own it,
and we'll love it, because it's ours.
The rain.
The home.
The time.
And life.



Mantis

Alexandra Heath



Untitled

Ashley Creek

two dollars and ninety-seven cents
for a pack of highlighters
yellow pink blue orange
the chunky kind
like childhood markers in my hand
sharp plastic edges scratch
my lips
reminding me, like my mother,
that nobody likes an oral fixation

like she wanted to know
why I need four highlighters
lounging in the
bottom of my backpack
for one class
I just asked why the course
has seven books
ignoring the inventory
of my writing utensils

(\$5.97 for pens: blackblueredgreen)
(my \$3.92 mechanical pencil
I've never used:
hating smudged fingertips)

if they'd buy me a laptop
she wouldn't need to ask
why I spent \$2.97
on highlighters
without tax

Question of Identity and not Language: An International Perspective.

Amon Chafukira

Most of us have an Identity, but many of us have many identities too. When I was born, I got my first identity, my name, date of birth, and country and place of birth. I am sure you are wondering; what is he talking about? Then when I grew old, I also got another type of identity, in respect to my culture. So basically, I am "my name", from "my country" and of the "— tribe." This way, if I was to get lost anywhere in the world, and I gave this kind of description, there is not a guarantee that I would end up completely in my family's hands, but it is clear that I would end up to be among people whom I could identify myself with.

Last year the African Union (AU) decided that they would have a common language for the Africans to speak, and that this would end up not only being the official language but also a first language for those African countries in the AU. According to my understanding and experiences, after spending 16 years of my life in Malawi, Africa, 2 years, in the United Kingdom and already almost a year in the United States, I resolved to myself that as long as Africa remains under the influence of the western countries, it will not do things and progress on its own. Don't get me wrong, there are individual countries in Africa, who are very dependant and would manage even without help from the western countries. In this case I am not against having 'Kiswahili' as the language to be used, even if it was my own first tongue to be used in the whole of Africa, I would not agree with it.

Along with this move of having

one language in what they call the process of "uniting Africa", I do believe that as much as we will inherit a lot of good side effects, there are several disasters coming along with the idea. To me, it seems as if these African leaders that we have are all trying to be on a position that they can be, it is almost the same as if they want to live the "American Dream," only that here it is the "African Dream". Before the name AFRICAN UNION was passed, they had thought of calling it the USA (United States of AFRICA.) We all know that the USA already exists, then why do these leaders think that way? Anyway, back to the language problem, English is a widely spoken language, and a matter of a fact, it is an official language in many countries. I appreciate that, in which way I am able to communicate with you right now, otherwise "Muli bwanji?" would not sound very familiar to you.

What is the purpose of having one common language to Africa, when we already do have English? I am going to present to you, not the answer to the question above, but the other side of the story as seen by the few people with their eyes open. I am able to talk to a Ghanaian, Sudanese, an American, a Chinese person and so many in English, and I do not need to be forced to learn another language in order to speak to a fellow African. I am sure it is all done and decided in good course, but they over looked the side effects.

Back to my identity, I am different from an African American, a Ghanaian, Kenyan, Congolese, Nigerian extra, because of my identity. With my identity,

comes a lot of things, of which are all connected. My language comes first. It imposes a great force of my existence in my society, and my culture follows. Every Culture has a different identity and most of them different languages too. That clearly states that if I learn Kiswahili as my first language, it will impose on me the Kiswahili culture, which will in return take over my original culture...which means I gain a new Identity.

We all cherish our cultures, and sometimes that is the most exquisite and interesting thing about people on earth. That is why I will take a trip to go to China, and other countries; to experience a different culture and way of life. Imagine if we all lived the same kind of life, there would be nothing interesting to see or experience. We would all just focus on going to school and making money and then spend the money and do nothing else. Life becomes more interesting knowing that I will around the corner and see my friend from Nigeria, and see what crazy things he does with medicine, for example.

English has caused many indigenous languages to cease without any traces, and in the end all we have to know or learn about those languages are just their names. I have already experienced what kind of change I get when I am in the USA or the UK or anywhere else where I can only speak English and not my language accompanied to it. The same thing happens when I go home in Malawi and I speak my language without speaking English. For the first time I am speaking the languages after a long time, it is always hard for to get to the right words on time, or even speak at all. I have to stay and listen first and try adapting the languages again. If my kids will grow up speaking English their whole lives and not learn

my language, there is no way that their kids and grandchildren will be able to learn my mothers tongue. What does that say? If many people follow the same example, there will be hardly anybody to speak the language, and does not only the language cease to exist, but also the culture follow. We then all adapt the culture of the language we are speaking, If English, then we will all be like the British or Americans; if Kiswahili, then we will all be like the Kenyans or the Tanzanians.

As much as I would like to see Africans progress and develop, I would not like them to be a subject to western influence. It seems to me they confuse between three common words: civilization, development and westernization. I would prefer Africa to get Civilized, and develop and then **may be** worry about what the western countries are doing after. Many of the leaders I feel confuse these words, and they try to do everything America or Britain is doing, way before they even get civilized or developed. i.e. they would rather think about going to the market to get the latest CD on release, not only even if they don't have the money, but also without having the CD player with them. I think it is time that our generation starts opening our eyes. It is time that we started thinking that even though we know our countries are poor, and that we would get five times as much on the same job here in the US as we would in our own poor countries, we have a great to do back there. It is time we put an end to the careless suffering that has been caused because of unnecessary actions by the leaders. I am sure that this does not only apply to Africa, but also many other countries and continents around the globe. May god bless them all.

Laundry and Potatoes

Alexandra Heath

Damp dark basement
Smells like rotting potatoes.
They're sitting in bags next to sprouting onions,
And I don't like to look at them.
I'm afraid to touch them:
They'll get me moldy.

Momma pours powdered soap into Gremère's washer,
And clothes from the big brown laundry basket.
(I can hide under it if I scrunch up small).
The dim window-light and the yellow bulb
Fight for who's the most useful.
They help the dead onions and potatoes grow again.
Someone will eat them some day.
I hope it's not me.

The floor creaks above as my grandparents walk.
Around us are shelves of soap, clothespins, tape,
Plastic bags, rubber bands, scissors, newspapers,
Soda, empty bottles, cans with no labels,
Nails, screws, boards, boxes, pots, pans,
And probably more potatoes.

Ignoring the smell,
I search under the shelves for mice.
If I can catch one, I'll keep it.
And take it away from the potatoes forever.



Wishes

Amy Barclay

They say absence makes the heart grow fonder,
But fondness leads the senses astray.
You're here now, so I'll hush my heart;
What do they know, anyway?

What do they know, who say that love conquers all,
That love is blind and all you need?
If at first you fail, try again
But what do I do when I'm afraid to succeed?

And what do I do when I see no second chance;
Would loving you now be such a crime?
But we've all the time in the world, they say,
And we shall have the world in time.

It's better late than never, but you see,
It's better never than late with you and me.



Regrets
Amy Barclay

They say absence makes the heart grow fonder,
And I would have believed it yesterday.
But in absence it seems that we've fallen apart;
What do they know, anyway?

What do they know, who say that love conquers all,
That love is blind and all you need?
If at first you fail, try again
But I can't see now how we'd ever succeed.

And I can't understand how you think everything's fine
When so many things are left undiscussed;
Time will heal all wounds, they say,
But it can't heal broken trust.

It's better late than never, but you see,
It's better never than late with you and me.



Reflections from the Fishbowl
Travis Figg

There is a terror from the day-long culmination of the word-like ropes and snicker-chains, paralysis from dread of dead-end labyrinths, and the realizations of self-limit. Like a begging prisoner, hungry for the bit of light that filters into view, and remains always out of reach, a moment begged for, and pulled away before it can be grasped. Screaming. Screaming gives me time, the moment is a wing, fleeting, and it is gone, and my hands are empty.

Salvation traces its invitation on ink-marked parchments and worn shoes and dirty hands and in the human-interactional-excrement. Pulled again, and in shambles, scattered thoughts and fragments of unfinished ideologies, and eyes half opened. Time. Give me time. Opportunity dies in the moment it is begged for.

The world is washed away before the recognition of its existence. Grasping hands find no relief, begging for recollection, pulled again into the raging sea. My revelation is of sand, falling through my fingers like rain in the desert, dried up before it can be salvaged.

A day is a month gone by and a year lost in a moment of recollection, the fishbowl world goes on within its glass container and without I flop on the parched ground and suffocate.

The desert is a wasteland, the fishbowl a terror. I am immobile and fear I may no longer know how to move at all.



Side Effects

Ashley Creek

Last night I spent half an hour staring at a poster of a waterfall on my ceiling. Not thinking, or listening to music, or miraculously teaching myself to sleep with open eyes. Staring, as if the fountains of water would suddenly clear away, parting to form a gateway out of this place.

It's not the greatest waterfall picture ever. Mostly white sprays cascading over rock formations invisible beneath the rushing water. No real depth, or contrast to speak of. Just a waterfall. A bit better than an instant camera shot, but still something you'd show your friends and family after going on vacation. Another piece of scenery to look at, no commitment, a kiss from a stranger in an elevator.

My life is blank for that half hour. Something I have to be told about, something I can't remember, like the anesthetic haze the morning after my appendectomy. The stress-induced nighttime wanderings during my senior year of high school when I'd wake up in my car. Summer vacation eight years ago when I was too sick to move. There are pictures of me, asleep in the car, wedged between the window and suitcases. My parents would park in front of the points of interest signs, open my car door, and crowd around me: little sister

in front, mom and dad to the side holding my baby brother. Thirty-seven pictures of road signs, mountains, and a blue Oldsmobile sedan are the closest thing I have to memories of that week.

I keep losing little pieces of my life. A second here, a minute there, sometimes as much as a day lost to sleep and the mindlessness of television. Nights spent trapped inside a cycle of rage and self-destruction, lost in a haze of self-loathing impermeable by rationality. Like a monster inside me, a parasite thriving on what it can steal from me.

The Night, four weeks ago today.

Choking.

Can't stay here. I can't breathe here. Everything is wounding me.

I end up in my car...driving...through the streets, as far as Kingdom City. I called her cell on the way there, crying my tears that I can't explain. I worry her...I worry myself. Just when I think I've calmed down it attacks again...more tears.

Have to get gas. Promise to call when I get back in town, and we will talk. Gas station, spilling a little on my jeans after fighting with the machine. Back the way I came, the back way, the long way.

Walk from the parking lot, making my call, trying not to sob in public (my shaky inhale is the only indication). Ring the bell. Worried look on his face as he lets me in, but he doesn't ask many questions.

I already feel selfish, laying slouched on the futon, tears starting again, the salt burning my lips. She walks in, knowing why I called. (I never call. Can't make myself.) I'm sobbing quietly, and she just holds me, comforts me.

I talk; I am silent, but mostly I cry.

Struggling for explanation, I can't break this cycle. She tells me she knows; I'm not the same; I've been getting worse all semester. I can't help but agree. Everything is an attack, something to fear, some form of rejection.

I can't talk about it, can't explain, can't quantify how desperate I am to not feel this way...this infinite, unquenchable sadness.

Every time a door opens I'm silent, not hiding but not revealing either. I lie passive, a purloined letter hiding in plain view.

I'm most afraid of what this me is...this melancholy me...this broken me.

It's easier to cry late at night. Eventually I talk to people, but only during the big times, the hurt times where I remember I promised not to do anything harmful. That promise is starting to wear thin.

Nothing is fulfilling, just survival...what am I still surviving for?

I'm worried.

Four days ago, pressing and twisting the childproof seal, I opened the bottle. Little yellow circles, perhaps to remind me of the smiley faces I'm supposed to emulate. Sanity prescribed as a weapon against the incomprehensible, twenty-six tiny tablets that scare the living shit out of me.

They have side effects: problems concentrating, light-headedness, nausea, trouble waking. There are simple dilemmas and lifestyle changes: no more drinking, restricted caffeine intake, organizing my life around a pill a day and an hour a week of conversation, trying to piece together a reason for the inconceivable.

Those little blank moments are multiplying. It's a side effect of the medicine, maybe even a security blanket to shield my mind against the seeming nightmare of my life. But they're glimpses, too, of the nonexistence I almost chose. Waterfall time, when I'm so tempted to walk beyond the sheets of water, to escape the side effects and sadness entirely, to drown beneath the rushing cataracts.

Now I'm standing on top of those rocks, staring downwards like an Empire State Building tourist. I'm already a statistic, a college student suffering from depression. My side effects are my safety harness, constant reminders of my inner war.

Death March

Tyler Buchholz

The purest of the pure,
The fairest of the fare
Are shackled, robed and in black
Forced to walk, rather march
On a trail to death.

Fair is their skin,
Innocent their faces.
They look young,
Yet wise beyond their years.

However their faces,
Are stained with tears.
For they are mocked
As the crowd jeers.
With every step they take...
...they age many years.

Yet I look on them and am saddened
To witness this event.
One by one they look at me
And smile a tortured smile.
A smile that hides demons inside...



The Message

Alexander Ross

We say what we want

Get what we want

When we want.

You created us

With your great society

Your revolution

You consumed

You barfed

Now you're unhappy.

And confined to wheels.

Surrounded by bleached walls and urine and vomit.

Billy Joel: You didn't start the fire, you fueled it.

I put on my Converse when I put on my suit.

And I skateboard to work.

I drink Red Bull and spit in your coffee.

I don't care about morals.

You treaded water in McCarthy's pool. We'll drown the next Ashcroft.



Tired, but can't sleep?

Eat your Prozac.

Snort your cholesterol medicine.

Glue on your nicotine patch.

Rub on your arthritis cream.

Shoot up your chemo medicine.

Gag on your dentures.

You fell asleep at 9 p.m. and left the keys to the world on the kitchen counter.

You won't be able to stay awake long enough to see if we dent it; If we wreck it. Your insurance won't cover us. You ate it up so that it will be useless when we need it.

Thanks.

Fuck off.



Land of the free

Vincent Spezzo

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where you have freedom of choice
Select either A or B?
Number 1 or number 2?
Don't write outside the box
And even then some court makes the decision for you

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where you can sell yourself into slavery
For \$4.50 an hour
Or whatever the bureaucracy sets
As the least amount they can pay you

Welcome to America
Land of the free
As long as you're not from another country
Then you'll need an Id and a thumbprint
And if you look to ethic
You'll still be searched 5 times wherever you go

Welcome to America
Land of the free
We have religious tolerance here
If your religion is big enough
To fight back and get noticed
Then you'll have no problem here
As long as you stay out of school

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Here you can say anything
It's called free speech
As long as you're not saying
Things people don't want to hear
And as long as you're not saying it
Where anyone can hear

Welcome to America



Land of the free
Where you're free to be just like everyone else
And you're free to be different
Just not too different
Or society will look down upon you
And you'll never get a decent job

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where consumer culture
Urges you to be free to buy
Where debt drowns those who
Don't refinance
And the best things in life
Are no longer free
But rather are now heavily taxed

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where couples are urged to enjoy marital bliss
As long as they're old enough
And as long as they're not interracial
And as long as they're not gay
And as long as they don't offend anyone else

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where we free other countries
So they're just like us
Except maybe we bombed a school
And maybe we station military police
And maybe we get some oil out of the deal
But in the end they're free to do anything they want
As long as it doesn't interfere with us

Welcome to America
Land of the free
Where I'm free and so are you
But for how long and just how free
Maybe I'll speak my mind and it'll be treason
Or maybe I'll just be me
Then I'll be put in jail for some reason
But it's to make sure that you can stay free
Welcome to America
Land of the free indeed



Bridge

Kristen Savage



Blood Donor
Richard Dowdeswell

I dip the tip into the solemn black well,
Dab the rim, inhale the antique smell.
The nib sucks up the liquid coal,
Ready to pollute the page.

The syringe needle poised above the blank point,
Awaits the inevitable gravity of poetry.

Canvas swab soaks the bloody wound,
The stain unfolds like a poppy flower
Pressed between the pages of an old vinegar book

Drawing towards an idea,
To quench questions.

A fluid dance of circle scrawls,
Scratching crosses and dabbing dots
Orchestrating a miniature melody
Of thought once playing silently

The bleached virgin sheet thirstily absorbs the fluid
It will be hung in the morning light
Proving the purity of the exorcist's poetry.

Does it please your eyes?
Does it live to your expectations?

The grey arm, which glides beneath me,
Guides my thought into a point.
Hieroglyphic spectres are mouthed
Just before they hit the leaf
And salty raindrops spatter to dry soil.



City of the Dead
Alexandra Heath

"Okay, which way do you want to go?" my friend Alicia, a fellow American student at Kansai Gaidai asks. We've been in Japan for three months, and are enjoying another day of exploring the nearby cities. I look around at Gojo station in Kyoto for a minute, holding my small clear umbrella over my head to keep off the light drizzle as the city stretches in front of me.

"Hmm... Let's start over there. I think there's a temple or something up this hill that I haven't seen yet. It's got a cool bridge."

"All right! Onward!" She laughs, and I grin excitedly as we start off.

Alicia and I make our way through the narrow streets of Kyoto, and up the steep hill to the small bridge I remember seeing. Flanked by ancient stone lanterns, it crosses a small, rocky stream. The path continues through a thin forest, fallen leaves scattered on the moss that covers the ground. A green metal statue of the temple's founder watches us from a distance as we pass, his stern gaze following us like those of the Japanese passersby. I feel out of place here, too pale and different. I'm sure Alicia does too. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I almost think we shouldn't be here. Still, I creep along next to my friend feeling apologetic for my distinct Western face.

We come to an intricate but small wooden gate, and look around as we pass through. It looks like there's some kind of museum to our right, and a little gatehouse to our left. We stop in the museum's gift shop momentarily to buy some souvenirs, but decide we don't want to pay to walk through a World War II museum today. The rain is

getting lighter, and there's no need for umbrellas anymore.

"Hey, isn't that Kiyomizu's tower over those trees?" I ask, recognizing the delicate architecture and bright red paint of the temple I visited the first week I was in Japan.

"It looks like it." Alicia shakes out her umbrella and folds it up.

We walk through the small temple, picking up a pamphlet that has an English section. This is Otani Mausoleum, erected to commemorate the thousands of lives lost in an ancient war. Looking around, I only see a quiet little temple. The sound of chanting and singing echoes faintly from somewhere in the distance. It's peaceful, but not as impressive as some other temples I've seen lately. I'm sure it would be relaxing, if we stopped to listen. I'd rather find something more exciting, though.

We decide to continue up the hill to see what else we can find, and because I'd like to see the larger temple again. The massive Kiyomizu temple was the first one I visited in Japan, and I wouldn't mind seeing it again. Alicia doesn't seem as excited at the prospect, but she's a good sport about it. As the rain turns to mist, we leave through a small gate in the temple's side wall and hike up a curving, narrow road with high walls on each side, towards the tower in the distance.

As we come to the top of a rise in the road, the walls give way to normal gutters on the sides of the street. And then we see it.



In front of us stretches an overwhelming mass of stone monuments. There must be millions of them. Each stone sticks up like a skyscraper, and each has a name engraved on it. Most are simple rectangular towers of granite, but some are wider, or have elegant decorations on the front, or are made of large boulders. Power lines run through the silent, gray city. I've never seen anything like this in my life. I hardly know what to think.

"It's a cemetery," Alicia murmurs, completely in awe of the scene before us. "For all the monks who defended the temple."

"Yeah..." I can't think of anything more intelligent to say at the moment. We keep going up the road for a while, through the graveyard. I'm itching to walk down a row of these packed graves, to get a closer look, but I'm afraid that would be disrespectful. I've walked through cemeteries before, but this is different.

"You want to walk down one of the rows?" Alicia asks hesitantly, obviously sharing both my curiosity and my doubts. I nod, and we pick adjoining rows to walk down, heading towards a fenced cliff that looks out over more graves.

I spend a minute just taking in the sight. This cemetery must be at least the size of a football field. It's like a city of the dead... A clichéd phrase, but it fits this place perfectly. We might get a similar view looking at an overly built-up city from above.

The grave next to me catches my eye. I can't read the name on it, but it has a little ledge in the front, as they all do, that holds a small shallow dish, a cup half-full of rain water, and a couple of aluminum one-yen coins (worth less than a penny). I pick the coins up to look at them, but quickly

set them back down, feeling a little guilty. I thought this was an ancient graveyard, here only to commemorate the deaths of ages past, but it might be more recent than that. These are offerings to the dead. Other graves have flowers, small toys, or beer bottles set out for their inhabitants. I think about thieves for a minute, but the idea that anyone would steal these small, heartfelt offerings seems horribly out of place. I really don't think anyone would. After all, there's a saying that the only thieves in Japan are foreigners, and Alicia and I aren't about to take anything.

I reach out to touch a small flowering tree's blossom behind the fence. Squeezed between the stone towers, this bit of life among the death probably serves to provide offerings of flowers seasonally, even when relatives cannot. We haven't seen anyone else passing among the graves, but there must be frequent visitors who renew these gifts. I can imagine relatives setting things out for their loved ones, bowing, and praying for a good afterlife.

"It's like a city of the dead." I turn to Alicia, voicing my thoughts. She nods, looking out over the massive graveyard once more.

"It's just like that."

We slowly make our way back to the road and continue on up the hill, each lost in our own thoughts. Seeing so many people dead in one place is hard to comprehend, even when faced with this massive reminder. Unable to deal with its meaning, my thoughts remain with the awe-inspiring view of the packed hill of graves. I've never seen anything even remotely like it.

The light rain is barely noticeable in the silent afternoon. Small yellow leaves float down from the canopy as we enter the woods, going back to the world of the living.

Deadline Blues

Mary Poletti

long nights
short articles
old computers
new frustrations
dirty jokes
clean slate
fake headlines
real headaches
creative curses
boring gossip
all friends
no secrets

caffeine and nicotine, wake me when it's over

ringing phones
silent pleas
finding photos
missing writers
red ink
brown tile
gray hands
gray hairs
gaining progress
losing sleep
falling behind
stepping forward
satisfaction

You had to be there.

From Afar
Tyler Buchholz

Admiring from afar
Never to be seen
I long to be with thee
But...it cannot be
A man of shadows
And a lady of the light
Cannot be paired together.

Therefore I am cursed...
To admire you from afar
Like a lonely astronomer
Stares upon the stars.

You would fill the emptiness
In my heart if only
You & I could be
One being in two bodies
Lovingly I'd be with you
For all of eternity.

However no matter how much
I wish upon the stars
You and I will never be one
Never, never can this be.

You are bright as a rising sun
And yet I live an empty life
As a shell of a man
Living in endless shadow
Having no hope to bask in
Your limitlessly bright light and beauty

I am lord of the darkness
A prince of the shadows
Never tasting what I eat
Never able to quench this thirst.

You are queen of the light
As a goddess of the life
Your light burns my face
Yet I will forever need it
I will forever yearn for it
I will always look upon thee
From my endless shadows...



The Cure
Jacqui Burgoyne

Write about it, oh that's a fine thing, yes!
Uncover years of laborious burial,
Dig deep furrows into carefully built
Scars. No! There will be no true healing:
No ending of pain, and so no revealing!
Relive the pain, is it really so simple?
Or do you hate me, to make me Prometheus?
Fine, stab me then, bitch, right to the hilt!

"Acknowledge, accept, relive" and *re*light.
I could walk through fire, I could try, I might.
Anything to end it, I'll, talk it all night,
But the battle's not won if the enemy's alright.
"Free your mind, open up" - *Open Pandora*:
There's no hope for me, there's a dent in my aura.



Salutations from a Saturday Afternoon Dreamer

Travis Figg

Traverse me like the road unfathomed, I've got a secret in my pocket
rolled up like paper engraved with the secret words of a forgotten time;
the embrace is a remembrance of the true scriptures, indeed an enactment
of first month's bliss. All recognizable interactions are merely
allusions to a greater mythos, it would be a crime to give you the world,
I'll shatter the world and give you the pieces to rearrange and make our
own puzzle box and defy logic, step beyond the map, I'm a convict on
the run let's fly like harriers the sun's not so high as to be untouchable
and I can already see it in an iris.

You're a box all wrapped up like gifts exchanged in celebrations of year
end man-God axes and origin reconnaissance, tear off the shiny paper
the beauty of the crickets' legs are the notes between, you've got the
moon at the proper angles of movement. Inside the box you've got a
star unfolded like a bloom in spring, green and gold and fading fast
like winter tide come calling solstice dancer like the sun come morning
and the secret star is again a bud waiting to be opened.

I've got a pair of shears and you've got thorns like a rose, honey locust
rip me up like I break the world, I'm a guilty party and freedom is a
swooping hawk, cut through the night like a knife, the blade-edge
made of poems written when the stars still loved the sea, I'll be an
ocean before I finally decide to sleep. I've got a song without words
thumping against the back of my skull like the patter of heart beats at
the edge of reason, I'd share it with you but it was yours to start, I'm a
thief and here's the string I pulled out when you weren't looking: Cut a
smile into your mind, the night waits for the dawn to rise.



No Sale

Ashley Creek

being with him
is like
driving a new car

as when the pedals—
stick—
just. a. little.
I find myself going to fast

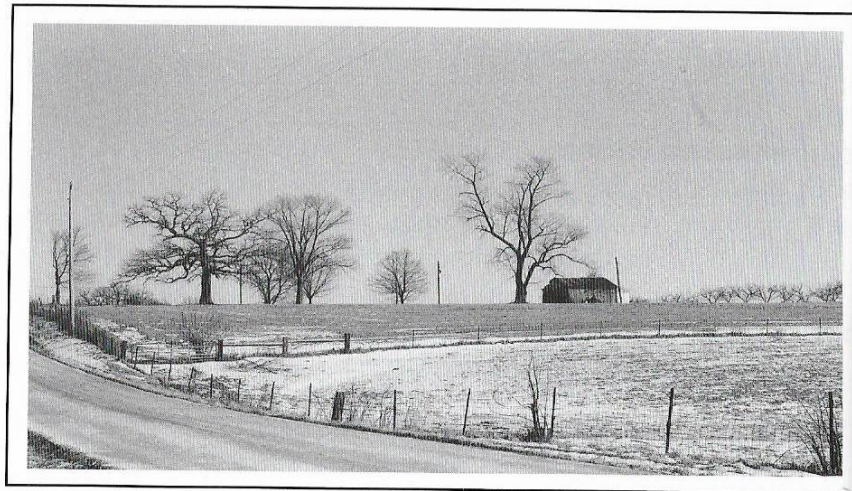
these seats are nice:
comforting/protective/affectionate
but too cool
I squirm
seeking another seat
whose warmth I cleave to
whose curve would more closely cradle
my own

we are good together
(I'm no sugar in his gas tank.)
but there's no synthesis of souls
to rocketfuel
my heart of hearts



What Was

Danielle Becknell



Americaness:

Richard Dowdeswell

Would America be America without the following?

West on 7th Street, Chewing-Gum, Dollar-Bills, Fire-Hydrants, Water Fountains,
 Fed/Ex, Fraternities, Dreams, Uncle Tom, Pick-Up-Trucks, Baseball, Jack Daniels,
 Basketball, Football, Hockey, Jocks, Cheerleaders, 32oz Soda's, 52oz BBQ Steaks,
 Fieldhollers, Hamburgers, Drive-throughs, Drive-ins, Drive-byes, Fuckin-A, Cops,
 Goldrush, Trailer parks, Plantations, Chains, Corn, South, McDonalds, Caffeine, Jazz,
 Coffee, Confederate-Flag, Integrity, Stars'n'Stripes, Budweiser, Hand-To-Heart-
 God Bless America, Guns, Constitution, Blues, Electric-Chair, Supersized Fries, Big
 Fridges, Mammy, Coca Cola, Pearly Whites, Real Estate Salesmen, Cookies

 Pick-Ups, SUV's, Gas Stations, Oreos, wallmart, Reeses, Oil, Cowboys, Wild West,
 Sororities, Liberty, Freedom, Shopping Malls, Like.... Whatever. Highschool Lockers
 Manifest Destiny, Frontier, Mickey Mouse, Buffalo Bill, Native Americans, Dream
 Catchers, Hippies, Pot, Pilgrims, Thanksgiving, Uncle Sam, Ranch Dressing, Stop
 Sign, Hollywood, Pearl Harbour, BBQ's, Las Vegas, Harlem, Civil War, Jesus is

 coming... Look Busy (Bumper stickers), Superbowl, Buck, Steamtrains, Manitou's,
 Motels, Conspiracy, G.P.A. Countryboy, Fags, Jews, Road Trip, Top Gun,

Vietnam,
Al Capone, Sambo, Star Wars, Star Trek, Orange Juice, High School Prom,

Loud, Cosby Show, Friends, Gatorade, Seinfeld, The Simpsons, Stars and Stripes,
Shopping Channel, CNN, Suburbia, Starbucks, Chevrolet, Henry Ford, Orange
County Choppers, Log Cabins, Yellow Taxis with foreign drivers, Racoons, City on a
Hill, New York, Washington, Sneakers, Beats, Microsoft, Arnold Schwarzenegger,
Great Gatsby, Dimes, Quarterbacks, Home-runs, Wagonwheels, Compensation
Nation, Sue me, Sue you, Sue Yourself, Asshole, Flip-me-off, cool, dude, geeks,
gooks, hey guys, AOL, Water that tastes of swimming pool chlorine, Deer Hunting,
Superman, Chewing Tobacco, Wrestling, Rock'n'Roll, Air-con, Plastic Surgery,

Expanse, Freedom of Speech, Fox News, States, Highway Patrol, ice box, MTV,
Country/Western, The Lakes, Kindergarten, College, low carbs, artificial flavouring,
Bo-Flex Body, Diet, Caffeine-Free, Individuality, Oh yeah..... and History (only
kiddin), Introspection vs Exterior, Big Dog, You Suck, Basements, Senators, Playing
Quarters, Kennedy, Mailboxes, Texashold'em, Ice Tea, Citizens, Barbie, Bagles,
Tans, Surfing, Pretzels, Little House on the Prairie, Grease, Dirty Dancing, Full Metal
Jacket, Black Hawk Down, Paddle Boats, the Frontier, Great Depression, Apple Pie,
Mocha Mud Slide, Pancakes, ESPN, Can I get the check?!



Bare feet on the Burning Ground

C.D. Watts

He awoke to a brown morning. The stink of ugly booze and bitter cigars had permeated every pore of his broken body. Still, she lingered on him somehow. As he turned to the open bathroom door, he remembered how he had tried to scrub her essence out of his presence. "Fucking loofah, What's a fucking loofah?" Strange, how only now he utilizes her hygiene products. For weeks he was but hard callused hands scraping at reddened skin, purification. Punition, self-inflicted, his actions had not served to extinguish her memory. With each drop of blood and each violent act she became more to him, more a part of him. She, the empty bitch that had destroyed him, and he, the ashes of a man once heavy with pride and accomplishment, fit together like so many pieces of broken glass. They had loved. Jonathon and Rebecca were once inseparable. Now Jon was the only one, and the pain was unbearable. The world seemed to spin and then all at once halt as he leaned up from the naked busted mattress he had passed out on the night before. This was Sunday, or was it Wednesday, Jon couldn't remember or care. He was trapped, and he knew it. Hopeless nights in the asphyxiating haze of salty pool halls and rancid bars enveloped his body, but his clouded mind was not at ease. "My Becca," he'd whisper in a gasp, "can't we go back?" The answer, though unspoken, echoed of the raven's word.

He arose and greeted the great orange sun with some reluctance. This day would be like all of the other days since then, and that, he had come to accept. Beams of darkness outlined the windowpane as the room caught fire and smoldered



in the star's heat. His brow moistened, and he opened breakfast, a Mickey's tall can, just what the doctor ordered. Still stumbling from before, he entered the hallway and then exited out into the street. In the world without, morning had come and gone, and the masses were heading home from their phony jobs. Money didn't matter to him any more. She was everything, and yet, she was but a shadow, a specter, a myth. He missed her so, but he couldn't ignore the burning pavement's fiery touch. He had left this afternoon without a thought. His shirt, an old party T from his frat days at Cal, was spattered with a yellow-green repugnance not even he could identify, and his ratty jeans displayed massive holes in either knee that seemed to mock his begging. Bare feet on the burning ground reminded Jon of his basic assumptions. Jon believed that drinking was trepanation for the soul. Perhaps it is.

A short two minute walk from the shithole Jon calls home stands a massive aesthetically disgusting structure. The tree-houses, as the residents call them, file up into the heavens like towers to the gods left rotting by apathetic bystanders. These towers rising from one utilitarian base were once thought of as an experiment in society and a shrine to purity in efficiency. On this day however, they have become, at least to him, a gleaming symbol of infidelity. It was there, where the sun reflected heat onto the tar and rock of the road, that Jon was heading. He had traveled there, across the burning stone, each day of two years. After what seemed like an eternity he reached the great wooden door by which an old friend resided. MacAffrey stood as the doorman there and had for many years. He knew Jon's routine. Jon White would pull the blistering brass handle of the door back and proceed up to apartment number 206, a residence that he regretted

he still owned. Thirty minutes later he would emerge clammy and white obviously intent on reaching the nearest bottle. That was all that Mac, as he was called, knew. That day would be no different at least, it hadn't began any different.

As predicted, Jon clamored up the posh stairs to 206 where he paused for a moment. "Fuck this stupid shit!" He spun slowly as if to walk away, and then returned solemnly to the task at hand. Turning the key he entered the cursed box. The rooms of the apartment were barren except for a circle of pictures on the bedroom floor, pictures of her. It was here that he had walked in on them. He had cried here and she had ran. Jon knew that it was his duty to move on. How could he ever move on if love is forever? A pistol lay in the center of the circle. As he locked the door behind him he began to cry. He remembered the snapshot memories

of tragic youth. He saw again her face, the surprise, the lies. He saw again her pantless figure racing toward the door. He was destroyed all over again, and there within the circle he knelt and received the pistol into his mouth. "Today will be different!" he exclaimed.

Indeed it would be different. That would be the day that she came back. Crying, apologetic, and earnest, she had ran across the burning ground to admit her fault and to offer amends. Her key still slid into the lock as expected. How could she have known what she had done to him? She screamed with joy as she opened the door, and then moments later she screamed again. She had felt the smoke wrap itself around her chin and into her nostrils. He was gone, and now, without him, so was she.

The Saragasso Sea

Molly Duncan

Water desert,
Where grapes float,
Clutching to their vines,
Bloated by the clear salty blue.

A lens of luke warm water,
Turning slowly clockwise.
A watery hurricane in slow motion.

The wooden ships, algae-coated and creaking.
Barely afloat, abandoned long ago,
They lazily follow the current,
Eternally spiralling to the centre: to Charibdis perhaps.

The seasnakes and eels swim for days to get to this rotating bowl,
A place to concieve and die.

It is the sea where the Spanish drowned their thirsty horses: when Aeolus refused to aid them.

When the sea decided to drag them in a circle.
A deadly slow perpetual motion.
The horse's lifting their head's to try to stay above the water,
Alongside the ship like seahorses pulling an underwater chariot.
Pulling a bronze, armless charioteer up from the depths,
Or perhaps they were taking the weight of Posiedon
As he steadied himself to throw another vengeful-spear at the hubris-filled mortals.

Trapped like the Lotus-Eater,
How to escape such a beautiful and deadly place?



Untitled

Jake Marsh

I took a journey down infinity's steps
Led by curiosity and conformity's bore
Although the journey would be lengths's extreme
It was better than anything's ever before

I met with a man made only in myths
A rather nice fellow with iron's soft fist
He gave me the tour of dream's never-been-dreamed
Much nicer than one would have ever seemed

He showed me the pleasure in temptation's grip
He showed me the beauty of dark's never light
He showed me strength and warm embrace
As we laughed long and hard and flew desperate love's kite

The day soon faded and we walked hand in hand
Letting our toes sink in the wanderer's sand
I thanked him for the day and kindness's touch
But told him the heat was a bit too much

So I strapped on my pack and said my good-byes
And started back to where common sense ruled
It was fun for a time but I just don't know
If down there I could get my burning passions cooled



The Map's Time Line

Molly Duncan

It all started two years ago,
That day in the park.
Neither could forget the talks we had
Or the chemistry we shared.
Over time contact was lost
And ties were cut. We both
Went through a lot
While being apart.
But fate brought us together again one night,
We spent the next
Fifty six hours in each other's company.
The chemistry remained,
Like no time had elapsed.
Who would have known that those hours would be
The beginning of our travels together.

With a phone call we started to plan our destination.
The conversations we have and the times we share
Only increase the speed limit at which we travel.
We have driven thorough rough terrain only to be left with
A detour for miles.
Even though it is a long trip
Love isn't far off.

Neither could have planned this trip,
If we would have dreamed it ourselves.
The plans that we make
I hope will be kept.
For only God knows
The map for our future.



(Bi)Polar Bear

Brad Dowling

A single tear fell as I wrote this
I'm all alone and it's time I noticed
Why do I have such faith in you?
We didn't break-up, I was removed
Last night I held you the whole night through
But you became a pillow covered in drool
I always hate it when the dream ends
I wake up to realize that you'll wake up with him

I still love you, but I'm trying to fix that
And you know you're still my favorite heart attack
I wanted to ask you how that feels
So why'd you let me go and spill my guts
Then refuse to help clean the mess up?
If love isn't enough, then what can I do?

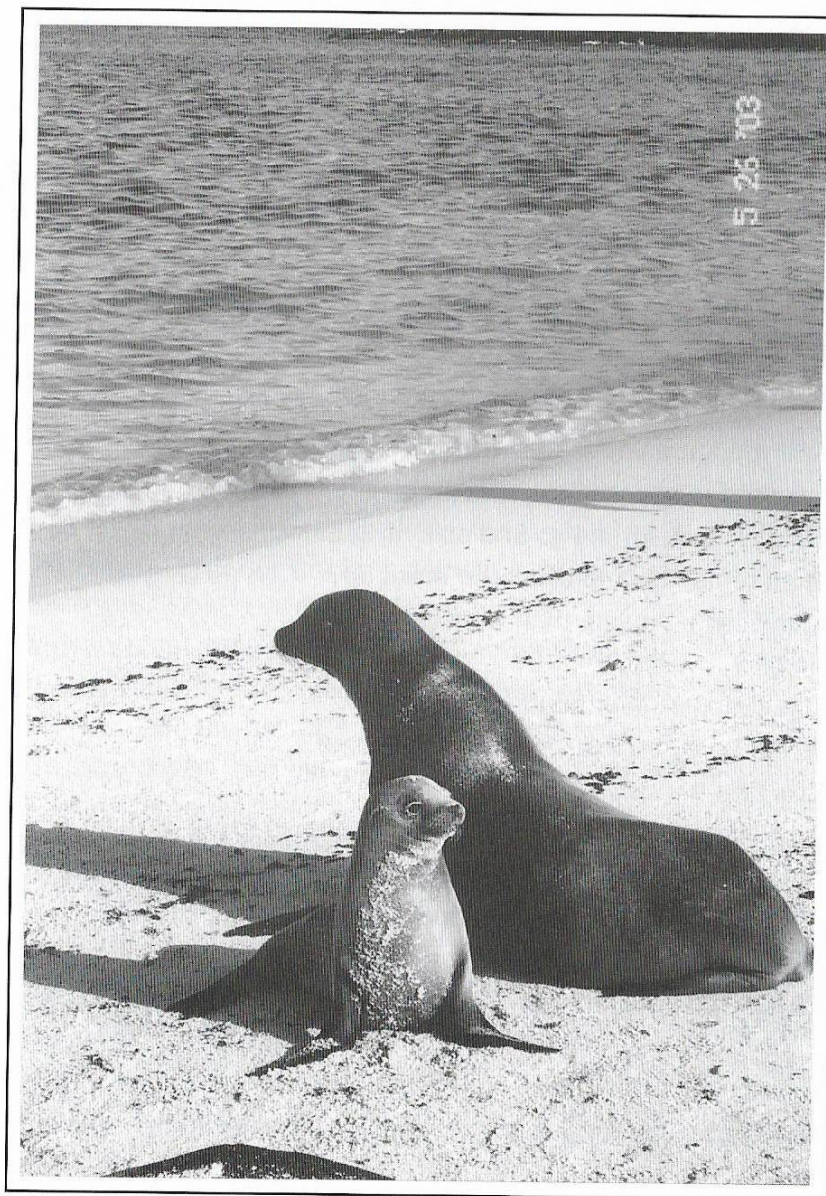
This (Bi)polar bear needs to hibernate
To eat Spaghetti-o's, cry and masturbate
Cuz TV's the new reality
And life and love are just commercial breaks to me
I'm ready to behave quite antisocially
And I know my fuzzy bear slippers agree with me
Were you the apple of my eye
Or just the banana of my pants tonight?

I wanna write you a love song, but that'll have to wait till later
I can't do it right now cuz my dumb cat won't get off the paper



Seals

Molly Duncan



The Assassin With No Memories

Matthew B. Collier

Prologue

The conference room was small. Not the grandiose, lavishly decorated rooms of chestnut brown and fine-grain finish. Had it not been for the one round table made of steel, its circumference lined with chairs of the same material, one might have assumed that the room was a despicably clean prison cell. One cone of light shone down on the table from a florescent light bulb, obscured in its foxhole in the ceiling. The light illuminated the table and the chairs, but left the rest of the square steel room dim. From the shadow surrounding the table, an elderly man emerged, the chair he was sitting in sliding forth on its wheels as if gliding on sheet ice. He was impeccably clean and wearing a starched white lab coat. His shortly trimmed hair, with beard and moustache to match, had gone white with age, his storm-cloud grey eyes as cold as his surroundings. He rose his head, narrowed his eyes, and opened his mouth to speak, his

gravelly, baritone voice ripe with a calculating monotony.

"Archangel," the man said, his chilling voice echoing and reverberating against the steel walls hidden in shadow about him.

Harbinger shook himself awake, opening his eyes quickly as he escaped from the clutches of sleep. The word echoed in his short-term memory, and it unnerved him. The dream had seemed so real, so vivid. It was almost as if it were more than just a dream, like some distant memory long forgotten.

Harbinger hated dreams like that.

He blinked a few times, his ocean-blue eyes hidden behind the black, oval-lens sunglasses as they scanned his surroundings momentarily. His memory told him quickly where he was: the cabin in the decommissioned steam-ship he

had taken refuge in at the Boston harbor. It was a safe enough haven, certainly not the first place anyone would expect to find someone. It was obviously a multipurpose ship in its golden years; given many of the various rooms and cabins he'd seen, the ship was suited to both the carrying of passengers as well as the transporting of cargo. His own room, which he had claimed for himself, was obviously the captain's quarters; there was only a single bed, its steel frame holding up a musty, moth-eaten mattress and pillow. A simple office chair in which Harbinger sat laid before a simple, wooden desk, with the usual adornment of three drawers on the side. The pale light of a fog-permeated, cloud-blanketed fall morning shone meekly through a grime-covered porthole, blanketing the small living quarters in a pale white-gray shade of illumination. Outside, Harbinger could hear the distant sounds of the calm waves breaking gently against ship, shore and dock, an unseen flock of seagulls every-so-often giving their grate-like, shrill calls. The sound of ship bells rhythmically sounding out one nautical message or another, as well as the sound of harbor workers

and sailors going about their daily dockside routine. He had holed up in this ship just the night before, desperate as he had been to discover a safe and inconspicuous refuge. He had been on the run for about a week now, a fugitive in hiding, ever since he escaped from the Institution.

He let out a brief sigh, leaning back in the chair he had dozed off in. *The Institution*, he thought, *that's a place I wanna forget...even if it is the only place where I could find the answers I'm looking for.*

Harbinger sighed, running a hand through his neck-length dirty blond hair. What was he going to do? What was he going to *do*? *Where* was he going to *go*? He had killed so many people, so many had died at his hands in his desperation to escape from that...*place*. He couldn't go back. He knew what would happen if he tried, if they found him; they'd kill him. Or worse.

But where else can I go? he thought, I have no one to turn to...no memories to guide me...how can I live on? There's not a single place

out there I could hole up in...

He brushed his hand lightly against his goatee and moustache, feeling at the two-day developed five-o'clock shadow on his cheeks that had evolved into a light coating of stubble, a small and quiet sigh breathing out through his nose. He was in a dangerous situation, of that there was no doubt. The Institution would eventually find him; that was inevitable. His fate had already been sealed the moment he had broken free from his cell...perhaps it had been sealed even before his incarceration. His options were scant and limited, at best, and not a one of them foreshadowed a good end. The Institution had so many contacts, so much influence and power, and so many spying eyes hidden from society...it wouldn't matter what he did; any job he could attempt to get and take cover under would be a poor and fragile mask. How could he even get a job? He had no form of identification, that he could remember. No birth certificate, no social security number...he didn't even have a believable, real *name* to hide behind. Incognito was not an option, and it never would be.

Hiding within normal society was out of his reach; such things tend to be derived of those who have no identity, those who—to most of the world—don't exist. He had no one to turn to, no one to trust, and no one to rely on but himself.

*Still, he thought, I don't really know any other kind of life I could live. Hell, I **have** no life to live...* His eyes wandered, catching sight of the Steyr M-series pistol resting on the desk in front of him. It was a custom design, a personalized derivation from the original model. Its casing was a flawless, well-polished chrome finish, bereft of scratch, void of any engraving designating a company or place of assembly, save for the brush-finish engraving of the name "HARBINGER" in bold, thick capital letters. The grip was covered in a black, industrial-strength rubber-plastic, wave-like grooves to allow better conformity to the fingers of its owner. Its caliber was also custom designed; rather than have a barrel for the usual 9mm standard, it had been constructed to fire .357 caliber rounds; the gun, while not necessarily imposing in size, packed a punch that could send a man flying

back a yard or two. A matching, chrome-finish silencer and a pin-point laser sight, for better accuracy, were attached to it.

No life to live...except one, Harbinger thought, his confusion and forlorn expression hardening into one of grim intent, of foreboding determination. The old office chair softly squeaked its aged protests in response to the young man's movements. He stood straight up, dusting off the rust-colored three-piece suit he wore, its knee-length jacket open and swirling like a short cape made of fine cloth, the mahogany silk lining briefly visible as it flowed smoothly against the rust-colored vest and black, well-tailored dress shirt he wore beneath. He reached down and picked up the gun, his fingers wrapping around the cold steel and rubber grip of the handle. Lifting the weapon, the gun felt heavy in his hand as he looked it up and down, eyeing it with intent. Placing the Steyr M in the holster hidden under his jacket, Harbinger turned, his black, soft-soled slip-on loafers gently thumping against the ship's deck as he walked out of the

cabin.

The assassin with no memories had just opened up for business.

The conference room, the place where the Board conducted their meetings in utmost secrecy, had been expecting a full house today. The Professor had gotten that full house together; all of the Shareholders were there, the men who had worked together for the past five decades—of their own accord and with their own agendas in mind, of course—to establish the Institution. They were very busy men these days, and not all of them were too happy to make this appearance; it risked being seen by the public, and some of the Shareholders found that risk uncomfortable and threatening. However, the Professor convinced them all; the issue at hand was far more threatening to their very occupations, and the integrity of the Institution, than a public sighting would ever be.

They were all there, walking in one after the other, taking their

respective seats at the round steel table; there were just enough chairs to seat each of the Shareholders, no more and no less. Though the brilliant cone of light from the ceiling lit the table with the flare of a floodlight, it did nothing to penetrate the shadow that hid the surroundings of the table. Thus, each Shareholder was barely visible until he had taken his seat. The Professor had already been sitting there, his hands clasped together as his black cane rested against the tabletop, his white lab coat almost blinding in the intense light from the hole in the ceiling above. He surveyed and nodded to each member as they sat down, one after the other, quiet and respectful.

The Executive looked more than a little annoyed; this was one appointment that was not only unexpected and sudden, but also extremely discreet and thus difficult to devise a good cover for. After all, flying from Britain on such short notice to take part in a meeting at an undisclosed location with undisclosed associates in the United States was a difficult thing to explain to his own board of corporate shareholders in London. He puffed

his briar wood pipe, its curved stem sticking out from his tightly pursed lips. However, for such short notice and such an irritated mood he was dressed quite well; his black business suit blended in with the darkness surrounding them.

The General was, as always, practical and disciplined in mind, body and posture. From the immaculate uniform, to the reflective glint of the organized medals and the four gold-plated stars all too visible on his uniform jacket, to the distinct and unfaltering rhythm of his polished black loafers tapping their military march on the metal floor. His military-issue officer's cap was worn proudly and neatly on his head, all but concealing the neatly trimmed crew cut that rested beneath.

The Dealer had no trouble getting out of Hong Kong for this; after all, his occupation of choice did not obligate him to follow a strict schedule, which he could change and alter at his own convenience. Besides, the Institution was one of his largest, most beneficial, and therefore most important investments; he would regularly sell new weapons made by the

Institution in certain outlawed markets, and fund further development with half the profits. He was shorter than the other men, due to his obvious Chinese origins. A tradition-embracing individual, his clothing reflected his heritage: pure Chinese silk and tailorsmanship, his high-necked coat bore two long-bodied dragons in embroidery, one with blue scales, one with red. The two circled each other about the jacket's sides, and the wide sleeves hid the arms crossed over the Dealer's front. His long black hair was braided back, hanging down to his knees, while his thin black moustache hung down the sides of his face like twin tassels. His almost-black eyes were well hidden behind the circular black lenses of his sunglasses.

The Bureaucrat was a distinctly tall man, his thick dark hair combed back with hair gel, causing it to almost glint with a "wet look," which was hidden beneath his brown fur hat. His trimmed beard and moustache were also dark, contrasting his white skin as his pointed nose loomed out over them. His turtlenecked suit jacket almost looked like part of a gray uniform, save for the tie that hung from the

equally high neck of the white shirt beneath it. This only added to the high-invisibility of his neck, an illusion it constantly portrayed to the world due to the Bureaucrat's naturally stout build; he almost looked more like a muscle-man of the Russian Mafia than a politician.

Once the Shareholders had assumed comfortable positions in their seats, the Professor leaned forth on the table with his elbows, his knob-knuckled hands clasping together, his eyes scanning over the faces of his associates.

"Gentlemen, thank you for taking the trouble to come all this way; I know this meeting was unexpected for all of you, and very sudden, but it is a meeting of utmost importance and urgency."

"It had better be as urgent as you lead us to believe, Professor," the Executive stated in his British accent, "I had to postpone at least four important meetings and a number of corporate decisions for this. And with little explanation for it, my corporate shareholders are practically breathing down my shirt collar."

Wake-Up Call

J. Martin Crew

Its 2 a.m.

I'm trying to write love poems

For a girl

That I barely know

Instead of telling her how great she is,

I'm trying to write it for her.

This is what happens when things don't go as planned.

Instead of being with her

I'm writing about wishing I was with her.

It's like learning to fly by making paper airplanes.

I have a habit of making easy things hard.

Drinking does not make it easier.

It's like a fist full of nothing.

I fumble around so that nothing gets done.

She sits in my palm, like a feather on a windy day.

I can grab it, or let it float away.

To hell with this.

Where is my jacket?

Scorned Smiles

Jennifer Cripe

We scorned the smiles of our weaknesses
But laughed at the toils of our sorrows
Our burdens were heavy with sadness
But were lighted on the brink of our morrows
We cared not for the future of our offspring
And our own sick selfish deeds were laden
We did not come for anything
It all passed and faded
Here we stand again
Condemning those who'd fought these wars before
We've lost before we begin
This shattered glass and broken dreams has made me sore
In my youth I lay
I'm victim to my own age
Here is this price I pay
I cry here in my cage



The Roller Coaster

Molly Duncan

I don't want to get on!
My stomach just can't handle all the sharp turns.

Everyone else on it seems to enjoy it.
So why am I Always afraid of the turns ahead?
I sit and ponder all that I might be missing,
Alright I'll try it.

I close my eyes.
Here we go,
I can't believe how much this roller coaster makes me want to heave.
I just want to get off and sit on a bench.

I have to get off!
I reach for a break,
But grab a hand by mistake.
As the ride flies
I have to open my eyes.
For the view is so majestic it goes on for miles.
At once, my stomach is settled.
And I am glad I got on,
The ride of my life!



Japanese Castle
Alexandra Heath

