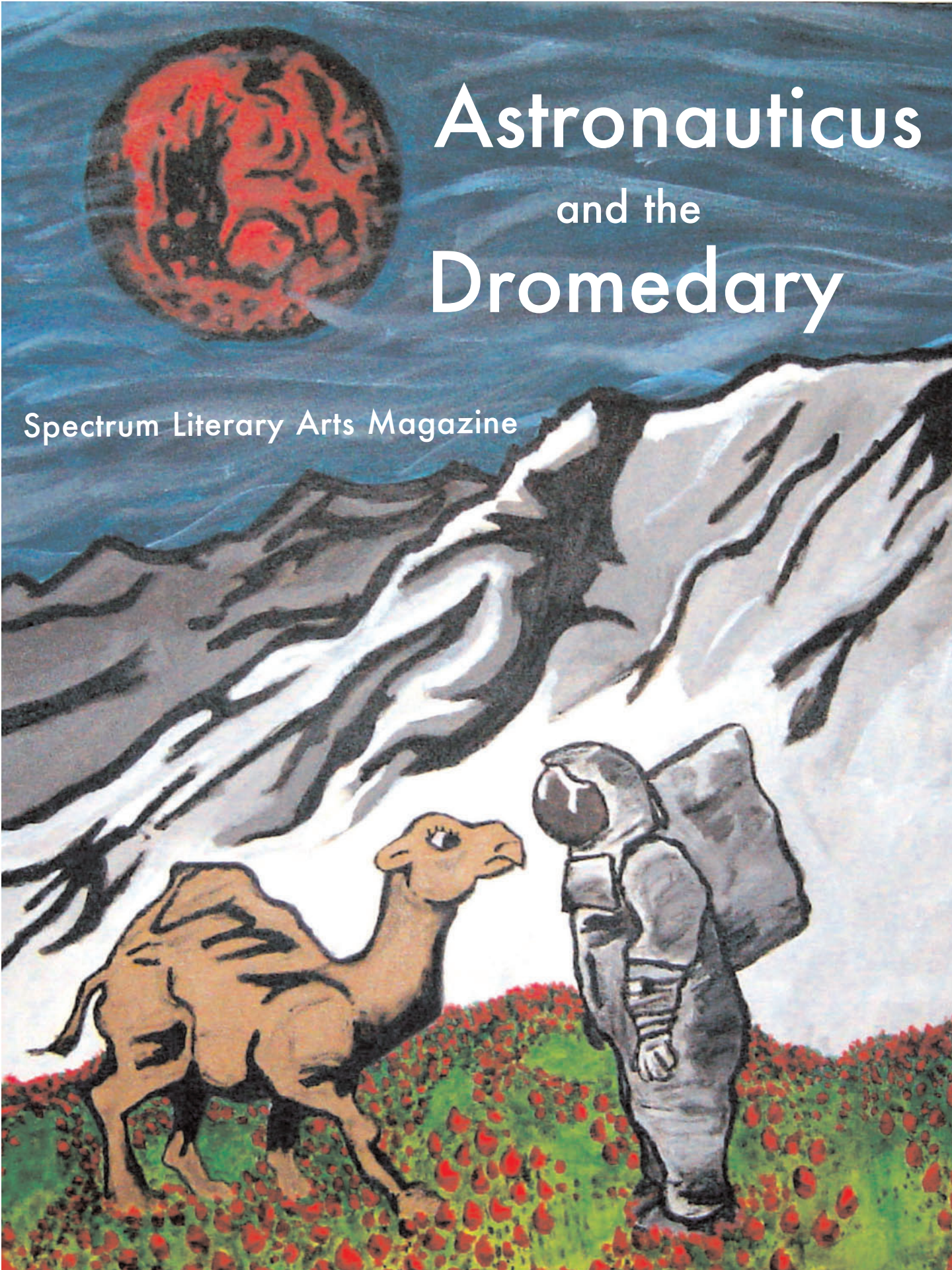
Astronauticus
and the
Dromedary
Spectrum Literary Arts Magazine

Astronauticus

and the

Dromedary

Spring 2006



Northeastern University Spectrum Literary Arts Magazine

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Letter From the Editor

I am not ready for the real world or a life of placid acceptance. I do not want to experience the joys of cubicles, mortgages, and student loans. I am bored of the same old places and the same old faces. I want the unexpected.

I am ready to meet you. I am ready to see you, feel you, smell you, and touch you. I do not particularly wish to taste you. Yet. I want to wrap you in red velvet.

I want to explore the different planes of consciousness. I want to shout out to you over the expanses of someone else's fatherland, hear the echoes take over and claim it for our own. I want to fight against the armies of Wei and make friends with a daydream generation. I want to walk between sunlit trees on a Sunday while holding your hand.

However, I am just the emboldened messenger. I deliver the cries of every soul within envelopes torn open and hastily taped shut. I bring you an open invitation to journey with no destination in mind.

You may not be ready to know me, but I am ready to know you.

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Spectrum Literary Arts Magazine is dedicated to showcasing the unique and extraordinary talents of writers and artists at Northeastern University. The magazine thrives on a variety of original material collected through submissions.

For more information on how to submit your work or become part of the staff, please visit our website at www.spectrum.neu.edu or email us at spectrum.magazine@gmail.com.

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Glass of Water

- Tess Matukonis

Menu: toad ash cut of lamb
one day from rotten grapes.
Choice: the mind's eye is never
quenched. anything suffices.
Order: chilled friend with the glass exoskeleton,
void the yellow bloodwood side.
Wait: nerve wrecked napkin.
patterns pressed firmly
into cigar smoke rings.
shade and light joust.
salacious musings ripen.
flit stare blink. skeletons
distract from
current events in waxen seas.
in the distance legions clink.
Served: condensation gloved
pulsing algae. steaming cold.

Consume:

Pay: faceless money.
Leave: unescorted.
filter air brings a mollusk
warmth to the lung.



"Strawberry Bowl" by Kyle Kerr

Tell Me

- Michelle Patawaran

Tell me a way to make it clear to you
That you will listen and comprehend
That my feelings of you mean nothing
But dust
Blown by the dying wind

Tell me a way to achieve what I want
That I can strive on my own
That I can be the person you want me to be
        No longer
Dependent on your security

Tell me a way to express my thoughts
That I can be free to create
That I can imitate originality
        Not marred
By your blackened ugliness

Tell me a way to be who I want to be
That I no longer have to hide
That I no longer have to pretend
        Your perfection
Of a china doll

"Depression" by Tatyana Uspenskaya-Murphy



I have been for many years,
An advocate of wantonness,
But never a practitioner
(Though I did manage at times to affect it)
Until that fateful night
When its avatar
Came to bless me with her presence

And now, like all who are visited by spirits,
I am changed
My spirit now as free as my mind

Muses

Like all who are driven to write
I am in constant search of muses
Whom the Greeks were largely correct
To portray as women
But, beyond these famed ladies of inspiration
There are a sacred few
So rare that many doubt that they exist
Whose inspiration reaches beyond
The ephemera of the page
Who drive us not to write and learn
But to live and breathe

- Peter Bailey

Baby, baby, baby

loverboy your pretty
tea-color eyes and
long clean lashes
make me feel like
milk and sugar
all over
baby i want you to
see me in clouds
baby i want to help make
the medicine
go down

- Emily Lemiska

"Duck"



By Amanda Bediones

Budding

- Emi Gonzalez

Rain droplets
turn into streams of water
Run down
making my view
of budding trees
a liquid blur
The gushing sound
of rain
from my drainpipes
makes me think
how once barren trees
are now budding
with nature's first attempt
at springtime

Rain

- Hannah Leigh Reis

Do you remember
the taste of dew on the grass
on autumn mornings?
It puts a sort of tingle on your tongue,
that sweet Indian curry. I
tried to show you, but you didn't
want to know. There were
things to be done—to
be fixed, to be cleaned, to be
watched on that glowing little box
we've become slaves to.
"Who has the time for dew?" I know
what you think, love,
but I do.

Autumn dissolved, and winter brought
the frost and cold, woolen
scarves wrapped tight, snowmen
with their numb charcoal eyes—but we
seemed trapped in a globe
filled with swirling
white pellets meant as something
more. That passed, too. Now
the beetles are crawling about and
tiny sprigs of green keep popping
out from inside the earth.
But even with the warm touch of spring
it's too late for us here,
where unhatched birds are raining in the streets.

Writing is Like Nausea

Writing is like nausea. It is the act of ingesting all the junk food you can and then purging it from your system. A dull pain begins in the back of your mind, a headache follows and soon you feel so full of something that is just not sitting well inside you; you have to get it out somehow. You sit for a moment, waiting for the feeling to pass, but when you realize the under-digested fodder inside you must escape, you hope it will come out your mouth and not your ass.

You procrastinate doing it, knowing how much work it takes to expel and how uncomfortable it is to ejaculate it from your system. But you cannot stop the feeling or harness the bile and you must let it out. It gains momentum and power and your mere mortal body can no longer hold it.

Finally, hand-over-mouth, you run to the bathroom and lean over the toilet, ready to project your heart and your soul and your stomach into the ceramic bowl.

You regurgitate your feelings, observations, conceptions, in addition to what you ate last night. Your stomach experiences spasms of convolutions, trying to purge itself of its contents. Half-chewed food along with half-brain ideas flee from your lips.

After you have emptied your mind, as though emptying your stomach, it continues to contract, not ready to cease its fire.

You declare yourself finished, and you wipe your face with toilet paper, wiping away the sweat from your brow, the lingering particles on your lips and the throw-up dripping from your chin. With a weak hand, you flush the toilet, watching your hard work swirl around, chicken-scratch handwriting overtaking the once-blank page, before it goes down the drain, and you think, “That was inside of me?”

Replete, you lean against the bathroom wall and slide to the floor. Your eyes close and you draw strength from the coolness of the tile seeping into your back.

Still out of breath, you sit quietly, trying to collect your wits. Though exhausted, you feel calm and satisfied and your stomach and heart know a restfulness they didn’t have twenty minutes ago.

For a few more minutes, you stay like this, resting on the bathroom floor, allowing your diaphragm and writing hand to relax. But then your name is called and you stand, refreshed, wash your hands and face and get ready to return to the world of the living, where you ingest more.

- C. Mae Waugh

Ode to Lit Love

- Aniko Nagy

Alice's Looking Glass was like a door
And so are you but so much more.
You lead to other worlds I find
In which I play within my mind.

With books your ancient namesake overflowed
In Alexandria of old.
You are tiny compared to it,
Into which you hundreds of times could fit,
But to one lonely reader you are Shakespeare's stage,
Every painting ever sketched, every tale from every age.

Pictures adorn books inside and out;
Others are serious, "words only" throughout.
All held on your shelves at night and by day,
When I'm asleep, do your characters play?
Acting out stories within their covers told
Or visiting each other, new ones and old?
Does Elizabeth Bennet know Bridget Jones?
Do they speak of their Darcys in hushed, loving tones?

Perhaps you're just my library, a collection of books,
But, to me, you're the world and not just my home's little nook.



"Peter" by Chessie Monks

You Tied Your Apron like a **Noose**:

A Spotty Chronicle of a Hated Summer Job

President's Training

So, on the first day of being allowed to actually touch the cash register at work, the head honcho Shannon comes over and asks me how I'm doing. Fine, I say, and shoot her a sweet little grin, a smirk I plan on abusing many a time to get out of working Customer Appreciation Weekend, or something lame like that. "Complete all the training?" She gestures with a fat thumb towards the back room, the education room, where I spent exactly two and a quarter days on a computer, my feet swelling from sitting for so long, completing a simulated training that covered topics such as "Tending the Sale," and "Counting your Till." Yes, I say, I did. "Great. Ready to face the world?" this question drops from Shannon's lips as much as a statement as a question. "Why, yes, Shannon," I coyly reply. That's how every notable person takes on the world. Sitting in the back room of a home improvement store, praying the vending machine doesn't run out of its second tier soda so on their break they can flirt with the tool boys while selecting a Brewed Iced Tea and 6-pack of mini cupcakes.

Three Inches off the Ground

I always imagine when I'm working if anyone would mind if I took off my apron, and tied it right around my neck, and looped it around the top of it the eight foot tall post that has a number at the top of it, and hanged myself. And I don't mean this in a morbid I'm-going-to-kill-myself kind of way, but I guess I kind of do. I'm just wondering if anyone would notice if my feet where hanging just a few inches off the ground, swaying over the pile of returned ant killer gel and a plastic baggie of 52 washers. Just swinging, carefully, and maybe my foot would hit the little switch on the bottom of the pole, so the light would go out, and customers could be easily redirected to a new line, and not waste any extra seconds wheeling their carts over to a register with a dead cashier...

One Quarter of Social Security Payoffs

Work improved for me the day a grandmother that swore so much you didn't think she was a real person and not a character in some overdramatic satire, waltzed into register two, next to my very own register three. She hated being a cashier with a fervor I could meet and match, and she talked about hating it with a dedication I admired. Dot broke all the rules of securing a good reference for your next job—she would say in a voice that was a tinge too high to be a secret that she hated the head cashiers because they didn't void her null sales fast enough, she would tell customers that if she won the lottery she would get the fuck out of the job (giving any sort of hint to the customers about how you disliked the store was a crime against capitalism itself, as was explained to us in training), she wouldn't even care if I accidentally put a check of mine in her drawer, throwing off the carefully crafted system of check procedures the vault room workers had papered the walls of the break room with. I didn't work with her much as I would have liked, because Dot didn't work there long. She only needed one more quarter of wages to collect social security, so once her ninety days were up, she went back to a life that I imagined included a pack a day and lunchtime gin and tonics over daytime soaps, with ease.

Fat Geek Eating Nerds

I ate all my lunch breaks in the bathroom. Happily. One time the cleaning lady named Marilee was cleaning the bathrooms on my break, effectively rendering them useless to hang out in, and I came dan-

gerously close to crying. I liked to eat Nerds, the watermelon kind, on my break. I liked to do this no matter the time of the day, no matter if I was hungry or not, no matter if I had just let three reasonably attractive men walk out the store with two hundred extra dollars in merchandise. I just liked to eat them in the bathroom, and text friends on my phone. My first text of my first day was to a girlfriend, Thayer, and all it said was "I've hit a new low—I'm eating applesauce in the bathroom of a home improvement store on my fifteen minute break." Once I realized that stuffing my face with food in the privacy of a stall was more socially acceptable than stuffing my face at a table with other employees, however, I stop complaining about hitting rock bottom, and just kept digging.

Pineapple Plants and Hispanic Ladies

A lot of my customers were couples. Especially on weekends, it's the thing to do to travel to a home repair store with your other half and pick out items including but not limited to carpet liner, tile grout and light fixtures. It's kind of disgustingly sweet, in a too-much-ice-cream-on-a-hot-day kind of way, to see pregnant women picking out paint colors for their nurseries and for a concerned boyfriend to ask, "are you SURE you like this version of sea foam jade rather than seaside emerald? We can return this right? 90 days with a receipt? Honey, don't lose this receipt. Have a good one."

So this one lady, she and her hubby of probably like thirty-five, forty years came though with this one huge plant and these two small plants. And her husband gives her hell about needing two small plants and can't they just make do with one? "Money doesn't grow on trees, Carmella." Or at least this is the conversation I imagined them having, since the majority of it went on in Spanish and the only words a failed high school experience with second languages could allow me to pick out were the name of the store, "money," and "selfish." So the lady puts down this one plant. And normally I don't really look at reject items, I just kind of stash them away under my counter and put them in the returns cart during a slow time, but for some reason I notice that's it the most beautiful pineapple plant I've ever laid eyes on. Scratch that, it's the first pineapple plant I've laid eyes on. But, honestly, it was so top-notch. And now, I know I'm no garden associate assistant manager, but, I swear to god, this plant spoke to me. So, at the end of my shift, I was forced by some higher flower power to pay $14.99 on a debit card to give myself the privilege of having a large plant ride shotgun in my jeep for the summer, until thieves stole the car from the parking lot of the store, thereby rendering both my automobile mode of transportation and my pineapple plant lost to the vastness of the world. Now, understand, I hope I'm not just being theatrical, but you need to comprehend the symbolic nature of the one thing I ever bought from that store being stolen from the parking lot, in the one thing that literally carried me to that store. Oh, Alanis, isn't it ironic?

The Birthday Closing in Relation to Sticking it to the Man

My last day was my birthday. Well, my suppose-to-be-last-day was my birthday. Now mind you, I had never called in sick. Not once. Not even when the last thing I wanted to do was spend nine hours in a warehouse selling goods, the majority tools and types of mulch I could not name or even fake a remote interest in. But on my birthday, I did call in. As a final act of liberation, really just a planned birthday gift to myself, and you know what the manager said? You know what that man said? "Oh, I didn't realize you were on the schedule today." That is so typical of this life, spent trying to make large grandiose gestures that have wider moral fiber and societal meanings, and the bourgeoisie just shuts you down. It's all very class conflict and Karl Marxish, if you ask me.

- Molly Ford

"Deep Within"



By Tatyana Uspenskaya-Murphy

Woody Allen's Phantasmagoric Plethora of Beer Petals and Bicycling Heartbreak

- Dr. Lecithin H

Crisp mutilated tinsel burns away like turpentine-drenched toothpaste, like photographs fanning grease fires. Anachronistic reminders enshroud crowded hearts and muddled words, and this life is but a puddle of incendiary insolence. Solace, solace is all I seek but hindered ways and broken-legged attempts at courtesy shatter my resilience into microscopic cataclysms, leaving behind naught but bitter, bitter truth a la Hemingway, Camus, Sartre, and Mr. Illich. Duane Hall would be pleased as punch flavored headlights. Jet black Bostonian February swallows me, another shot, another round, face down in the snow with 18 inches to spare. 18 inches 'til next year, but I feel 2 millimeters tall around you. Gigantic, gigantic, a big big disappointment of elegiacally malformed intentions, bruised prohibition, vocal inhibition. Dissipated by a fresh frost of Golgothan immediacy, I'm retroactive in my decision but proactive in my disgust. Locusts swarm the peace proceedings, shells fall and it's Ardennes all over again. I've got a patent on loquacious discontent, a master's degree in fire fighting repression, and absolute obsession. Kill it. Kill it. Take lots with alcohol, leave the ashes in the rust pile, dismantle the pleasantries, do away with everything that is Sonnet 116. Let the pedantic ice flows of misplaced affection melt away, you'll be you again someday. You'll thank yourself for this, when you wake up, when you feel the liquid nitrogen grasp your lungs. Because love's a flamethrower and we all need a cool drink sometimes.

I fear….
what else is new

Time cuts me
slashes my
feet and my
concentration
count down
to a fork
in my head
with crippled toes
and ragged shoelaces
eye trip over
everyone else
stalled
do I take either
path worn or
freshly laid brick
About face
I limp
toward memory
and hibernation
Dormant
on the only side
of a wish-
bone that
chance
and age
cannot break

what else is new
I fear….

"Feet" by Chessie Monks



Emptiness, Luck, Hurt, Pain, Love and Happiness

- Uncertainty in Percentages and Numbers

Jayded

- Lauren Chapman

I'd spent sunny days
toting my affections around the city,
scampering to keep up with
a sentimental satisfaction
that hung on your lips
like a sideways teardrop
on the tip of my nose.

Musing through the hours
in the shade of an aged overhang
outside a north end café;
stretched out on the grass,
embraced by the muted blades
of chlorophyll tickles
on the inside of my ear;
you never figured that out.

My skin drowned in humid air,
drenched with the harbor's sweat,
I could taste her in my lungs;
swirling bittersweet vapors
coiled inside me like
patterns in a bottle of sand art.

I watched you insult reality,
with your ten steps ahead and
your chronicles of telephoto lies
that make the world seem beautiful.
I wondered then if you would ever
show me life through your lens.

But on the way back
we stumbled together,
tripped over jealous stones
embedded in the sidewalks
lining the path to our hearts.
So I packed up my hope
in optimistic wrapping and slung
the weight of failed attempts
over my shoulder, carrying
my love all the way back home.

The Unseen

The bridge between land and endless sea and sky is tenuous.

Shaky so that the beautiful painting may fall away in flecks – Reveal a dark, glittering membrane beneath … The floorboards under the carpet.

It's not stable enough to stay all clean air, sea breeze and oceanography untouched.

When it bends at the nape of the horizon it gives way to Void. And there are passageways at every increment between; ladders posing modes of ascent in every note and half-note.

- Widow



"Another Blizzard" by Emi Gonzalez

Éire

Where the hills pour like green velvet
to a sea as blue as sorrow
and cliffs perch as moss covered stones
at the edge of the world's deep,
we lope through lonesome islands,
a patchwork quilt of rocks and loam,
dusting emeralds from our eyes
and breaking tongues to translate
a language to understandable fluidity.
We listen through ancient cracked walls
and crimson draped polished wood doors
to discern history and vulgar politic.
Sipping on perfection we run through
black liquid nighttime streets
on our way to dawn break
with no regrets of wasted hours of sleep.
My last thought is of home
and my first hope is wasted
on dreams that already came true.

- Joseph Eveld

War

the sun falls over me,
shadows tripping on
each sleepy limb. i'm so tired,
baby. but the war is over.
the cold front is receding,
the winter lines are drawing back.
open the shades and take off your
shoes, let that dream of day come
flooding through. reclaim the
feeling in your toes, your souls.
the war is over,
my love is marching home across the fields
where dandelions are blooming
out of landmines...

and it is good,
so good
to be alive
on this sunday afternoon

- Emily Lemiska

Rain. The only sound is the rain. The symphony of splashes upon the flora surrounding my solitary figure serenade me, lull me into a calm that one can only know in a rainstorm. The dazzling drops form a nebulous curtain of moisture that blends the distant trees of my forest into gray smudges. It seems to blur reality. Enveloped in their screen, the heavenly beads cascade upon my prone form, running down my skin in rivulets of cool constancy. A rabbit moves in the brush a few feet off, the sound of its movements through the leaves and brush a muted harmony in the song of the storm. The beads of the liquid valance are visible too upon his form, lending him the appearance of a furry aristocrat, draped in a coat studded with exquisite opalescent orbs. I stir not, for the timid creature would bolt and lose the precious coat, and the staccato sound of his hasty retreat just will not do quite yet.

I stare downward at the small, leafy lichen that cling to my stone. Their frills seem to be the only free part of them: they must anchor most of themselves in my stone to survive. They desire no release from my stone, though; they are not prisoners of it. Rather, they call it home and live in comfort upon it, much as I could call my stone a home. I call it my stone because it fits me. I sit for hours, days sometimes, in comfort upon this stone. I know that this stone will be here long after I have gone, and was here long before I came. Still, it is my stone; it fits me. So too this forest is mine, though I was not here neither when the first tree began to grow, nor when the first bird composed its first song. Nor will I see the last tree fall, neither will I hear the final note of the avian melodies; still, it is mine. Yet though it is mine, I am not part of it. There is a discordance in me that separates me from this melody, as if I am a slightly sour note, just flat enough to be discernible among the infinite harmonies of Nature's piece.

A bird flits between the branches of a tree, quickly bobbing up and down in flight, as if the air were her sea, as if she moved upon some surface that we bottom-dwellers cannot see or comprehend. She alights on a branch, and lends her voice to the sylvan strains, a fragile, trilling soprano complementing the movement. Almost to counter the pitch of her aria, the bass of a far-off thunderclap, Nature's tympani, rolls through the forest. It is a heady sound, producing a tingling in the small of the back, an anticipation of the devastating majesty approaching in the gray sky.

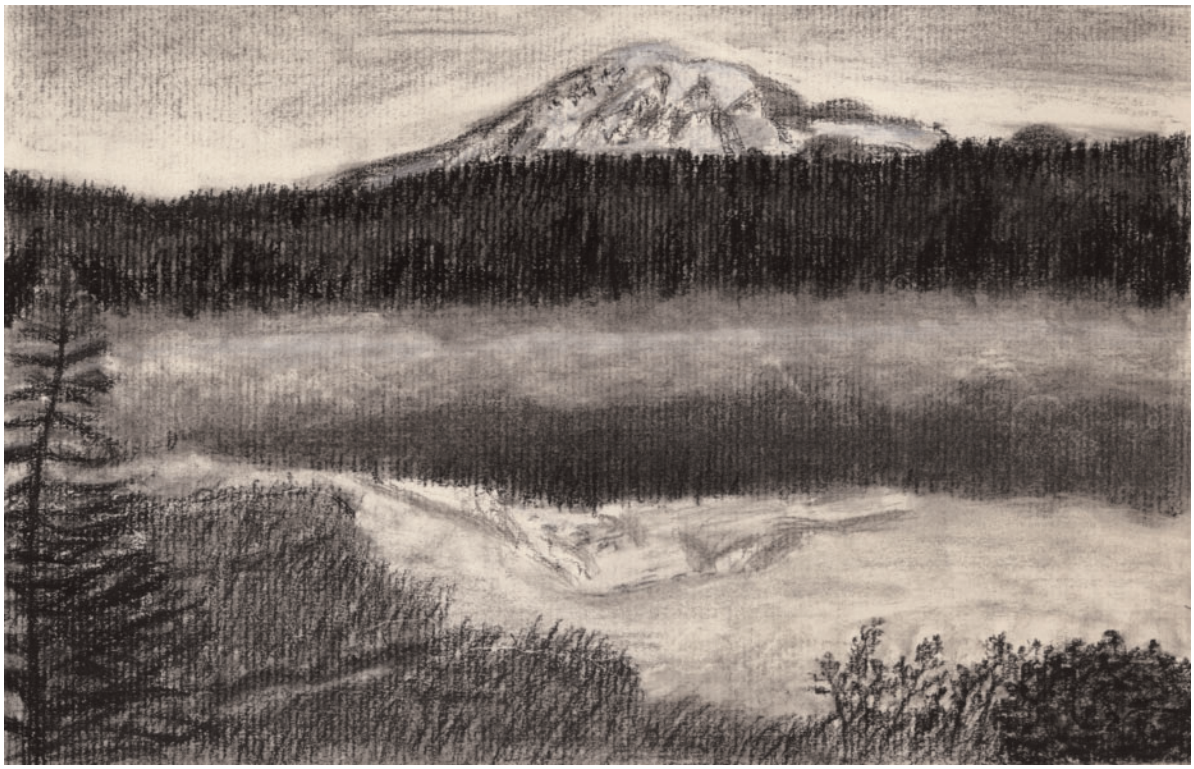
As if responding to the prickling sensation, the curtain descends more swiftly in a visceral crescendo, widening the rivulets into torrential rivers, pouring down my body as if to scour it clean. The thunder becomes more rapid, now accompanied by the lightning, adding another layer to the sensual currents of this new and intense movement surrounding me. My body responds with its own thunder and rain, though where the sky-water is pure, mine is tainted with salt. As the rains pour on, I begin to feel the truth of my surroundings. I realize that this world belongs to me as much as it belongs to the stone I sit upon and the rabbit I saw in the brush. It belongs to the bird that swam through the air, who still adds its voice to what has become, but has always been, the true song. As the heavenly droplets cascade upon my prone form, I realized the true beauty of the symphony is not in the sounds alone. The beauty is that while I experience it, I also contribute to it: the sounds of my rain are but a tragic movement in that greater piece. I find comfort in the knowledge that I am an integral part of this beauty which I also have the joy and sorrow of experiencing, that I am not a mere observer but simultaneously a performer.

Eventually, our thunderclaps subside and our rains together slow, the clouds above breaking as my clouds do, the diminuendo revealing another layer of the masterpiece. Where the other one was solemn, this one is blissful; for a time it is hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. Yet now the gravity has faded from the melody, and as the sun's first rays caress my face, I feel as if I have been absolved of my discord. With this new movement, I am now a harmonious part of the rock, the rabbit, the bird, the forest, the symphony. I am again at peace.

I know that, as Nature is wont to do, the rains will come again and again, but they are no cause for dismay; they are part of the symphony in my forest. Without them, the masterpiece would be naught but a spectre: the forest would wither and die slowly, and all would be mean and insubstantial. Though I will forget this, and again become discordant, the rain will cure me once more, and I shall again know the truth of it. With this knowledge, I leave my stone, the Stone of Sorrow, to again traverse the wide woods in search of everything and nothing.

Sylvan Storm

- Aiden Michael O'Leary



"Rainier" by Greg Morehouse

"Sunlight Between the Trees" by Emi Gonzalez



Yearning

- Tess Matukonis

pancake batter satterday mornings.
iridescent green flickerings
out the winder.
a cow let loose.
a turbid tattoo
underneath overalls.

metal hard grass and logs
a slice of escapism
at a firepit with a canoe,
a crew of buds and a pack of brew.

return to the stomping grounds.
baby carriages
yell weed-killer and mourn
scenic dreams

Jefferson Boulevard

Lapsing down Nostalgia Avenue,
singing softly in murmurs
under a breath that's sighed
beneath you. It's the first time
I've been back since I swerved
onto that detour so many lives ago.
It all comes flooding in,
draining down a radial blur that
dizzies my head and I
question my ability to drive.
Look left, look right and hey!
there's Familiarity across the street;
stop and say hello, "Old friend,
tell me, how's the weather been?"
"Oh fine, just fine, the trees, you know
they still tell the same old stories.
I'm sayin', love, some things

Never Change.

Time, she got herself
side-swiped switching lanes on
Route Reverie, she's still
a'tickin' though."
Ah yes, forcing its way through
consciousness, comes recollection;
down on that dangerous drive
where I built life before you.
"Yeah, that place looks like
Hell's been though."
"Why sure, I tell you this -
these days, yesterday's only
safe between your ears,
behind these eyes, oh,
I see things nobody sees no more.
Say, here's for all your troubles."
I bid Familiarity goodbye,
stowing the muse he handed me
in the back of my glove box.
Immersed in the Melody and
feeling infinitely lighter, I realize
I'd left all my regrets
five miles down the road and I
didn't even feel them
dying under my tires.

- Lauren Chapman



"Etchasketch" by Jason Jedrusiak

You use me as a parking meter,
Only minutes at a time,
Expect ten more for every dime.

Turn the knob.
Twist my mind.
Tired of your kind.

Parallel parking, great job
Forward and reverse.
I should be reimbursed

For the burning marks of rubber.
Screeching brakes left behind reckless carnage.
Residual pain from unpaid damage.

Treading over the tip of my temper.
You cut off the circulation to my lane.
Stop congesting my arteries and veins

You filled my 2 hour limit.
Now you're through.
I'm too bruised and battered from obeying you.

Worn from the weight you wheeled through my heart.
No second chance to push in your commands
Or fume your rage, not even as friends.

Now a tow away zone
For the tires you drove over my chest.
I will no longer digest.

Spit back every single cent.
On my spot, I nailed up a sign.
It reads no parking anytime.

Stare at the oval of glass.
An arrow points to zero.
I no longer swallow

Blood red sign tells your tale.
No longer do I admire.
Always and forever your time remains expired.

The Hours

- Hannah Leigh Reis

You were looking for your watch—
    Forgive me;
    I don't know what came over me.
I put it in the nightstand,
beside the remote.

I wanted you to forget
the hours,
to lose yourself to the night.

A Poem

- Timothy Patrick Boston

if tongues were fortunes, then you'd have a *list* of things to say

if feelings were capsules, you'd swallow and you'd say
"we truly live in a modern age."

if hearts were feathers, then the flight were fleeting
and fossils wait for the bones to grow.

stacked on pointed fingers, the stilted city sways and waits
for the returning waves to swell
and sell the last inflated life raft.

if salt preserves, then let's kiss these lips and ask for time.

if time perverts, let's fill our cups and drink for wine.

when on the statue, eyes bestow compliment's flattering favor
let not the analyzing mind sigh and anaesthetize

sensual as it is, the stretching moment

granting amnesty & impetus, reaching.

if this is all we know, then let the fireworks begin.

Bones

I died tonight and came to an old stone bridge over a river. The water was brown with a haze of humidity hanging over it.

The light lent itself to the idea that time had stopped. Not dark, but nothing bright enough to revive sluggish senses either; a silent, yellowy, bronzy hue.

A thick, gnarled, bare tree had rooted itself beside this stagnant, polluted river of dreams. Lethe.

I leaned over the bridge's waist-high stone wall. The still, brown waters reflected a sheen of orange from a nearby street lamp. Dense rushes of dried reeds ten feet tall or more grew on either side. At their tips and softly brushing the humid night air were panicles that looked like soft brown peacock feathers.

I rose and turned from the scene. Having accepted my fate, I strolled nearby the water. I came upon a thorny labyrinth of many small plots of dead gardens, each surrounded by a low, black painted iron fence.

The gardens were not well tended. They seemed forgotten, and stretched on forever.

Row behind row of these exsiccated, sapless garden plots appeared out of the haze. Wasn't it supposed to be winter? Why wasn't I wearing a jacket? Pieces of the gardens faded in and out of the picture; the lines around a thorn bush or the grooves in a section of tree bark would appear exaggeratedly sharp and then vanish into the different shades of brown and yellow, desiccate and indistinguishable from the panoramic lull.

If I had had any goal, if I had been walking anywhere in particular, I'd forgotten. I dragged my boots over the gritty dirt path as I continued. There were small things, long forgotten, laying about motionless in the gardens.

A dirty plastic goose lawn ornament; a wide hole in its back in the absence of soil and plant growth. Grey, weathered wooden chairs with nobody sitting in them; blind eyes staring out of their garden plot cells.

Unpainted ornamental wooden well covers with tiny peaked roofs with shingles like small deserted cabins, stripped of distinction from the rest of the labyrinth and impossible to place as being in one section or another of the masses of gardens. They were simply there or not. This land drained the color from any being or object that found itself gazing into its softened, hushed features and then pulled in and quietly laid into the ground, becoming one of the garden plots.

Towering weeping willows with enormous trunks stood like sleeping sentinels here and there along the path that wound around, into and twisted impossibly throughout the gardens that stretched into the horizon. Their denuded, yellow branches nearly swept the hard-packed dirt path and dead grasses that had been cut too short. They had nothing to offer me but a million hanging, groping tendrils to submit my lifeless body to.

I allowed the mildew and dirt splotched marble monuments and benches (no one to sit on them and reflect), the grey, yellow and brown, dark brown exoskeletons of dispensed plant life to pass by in my peripheral vision. Was I walking or were they moving?

A few stunted pine bushes, but they were covered in dust. I had become used to this graveyard, adapted to it. I spotted a short, strangely gnarled tree that spread its branches side to side instead of reaching for light and growing taller. It was encircled by a grey gravel path and a few good sized smooth, tan rocks like a Japanese rock garden. I braced myself on the fence surrounding it. I looked down at my hands to find I was gripping a dead vine as thick as an aspic with thorns like fangs.

Soon the buzz of streetlamps behind me, behind the path I was on, meandered into my consciousness, drew me away from the river – And the image of the tall reeds, the dead plants all caged in wrought iron, and of Lethe began to fade.

- Widow



"Reflection" by Chessie Monks

Wide Open

as every quiet breath, word, move
echoes through the universe,
in a shattering tidal wave of
significance - Emily Lemiska

we will fall backwards into forever

and we can cry
in unkempt sobs and
laugh with our mouths
wide open,

taste
sunlight on the back
of our throats

when on that
last moment before
nothing but darkness stretches out on every side

we find it was so little

(*yet we made it mean*
so much)

"The Noonday Quiet Holds the Hill"

-Alfred Lord Tennyson

For Theda

You are a gust of wind
that settles in the west
You have become accustomed
to breeze between massive Redwood trunks
and soar above a small Arcata campus
just skim the surface
Never gravitate to declare a major
or wait your turn for the dryer

Today, I still don't have
your permanent mailing address
You are penciled in
and scribbled out many times
You are a gust of wind
that never settles for less
Tonight, when the wind whistles
and stirs up the fallen leaves of Autumn
when my windows gently rattle
I will smile in bed
at you tapping and smiling back

- Emi Gonzalez

"Sleeping"



By Chessie Monks

Seven kinds of sin
surpassed by such
indulgence we come
together in a rosy haze
hardened by the light of
dawn the kind
you miss when you
lose the day to loving.

- Ms. Marie

Pulling him in
fingertips slide across
smooth pleasure
most sensual seduction
a sinusoidal rhythm
setting bodies in
an erotic inertia
permeating passion
rolling crashing driving
deeper into an amour
submerged in salty sighs
his lips laced with
the taste of love
a sultry start to morning
eyes run for cover
in the back of my head
grasping gripping grinding
building up the pressure
on our molten bodies
slipping against layers
of brine between us
sweet scents ascend and
mingle with our carnal
desperate breathing
clutching closer still to
glistening pores penetrating
the surface of his skin
carving marks of desire
in distinct patterns
until we collapse into
the ocean now between us
sipping softly from his
neck back up again we
writhe in rapture and
release retreat in a
momentary meltdown
gliding against
a savage soul subdued
he left his skin
underneath my fingernails.

SATURDAY

Still feeling his wake
in the late afternoon
thirsting for more
of his **saline love.**

" Love" by Victoria Ferrara



Hot Saké

- Peter Bailey

Forgive the way I stammer
I should have told you it only happens
When you're around
It's not that I'm uncomfortable
Despite what you probably think –
It's just that you go straight to my head
Like hot saké
Even the mechanism is the same
I want to drink you in
Experiencing you by the same tired method
To which I'm accustomed
But your warmth
Bathes me with those
Intoxicating vapors
And I am helpless
Not that I would leave
It teases my papillae
With just a hint of
Every flavor
Just as you
Make me long
For one more sense
So that I could enjoy you in that way, too

"Clovelight"



By Andrew Berlanstein

cigarette flicked into the slush good bye day hello night.

hair follicles choke lungs and I'm trying my hardest to breathe
coffee(like words) ripping my lungs apart and i often find myself spewing
trash and tar and hot liquid.

she says "sometimes i want the remove the tumor
and others i just want to let the cancer take over, it
depends on the day it depends on the weather and
also whether or not i ingest the sugar love drug
or if instead i decide to fucking deal with it."

she said "i am like Picasso i
watch the world fall down i watch the paint dry the
phlegm dry i watch the day turn prematurely grey
face morph face distort and it's all i can do to
keep staring straight(wish i wasn't sober)and
pretend to be concerned with your rowboat misery and
hardhat complex. fuck that."

she says "i preach bullshit i am professor of lies
i take lives, pseudo souls and i don't play fair
i am far too cold for that."

reply reply on time telephone cry "i'm done with the
day to day i'm done with sunrise and set before i can
properly think ahead (what did you say about time? it is nothing!
fine, grand we'll go with that-tomorrow is just another
dead walk full of regret)
and most of all i'm done with your sickness and overprotective
voice and i'll never set foot in your house again."

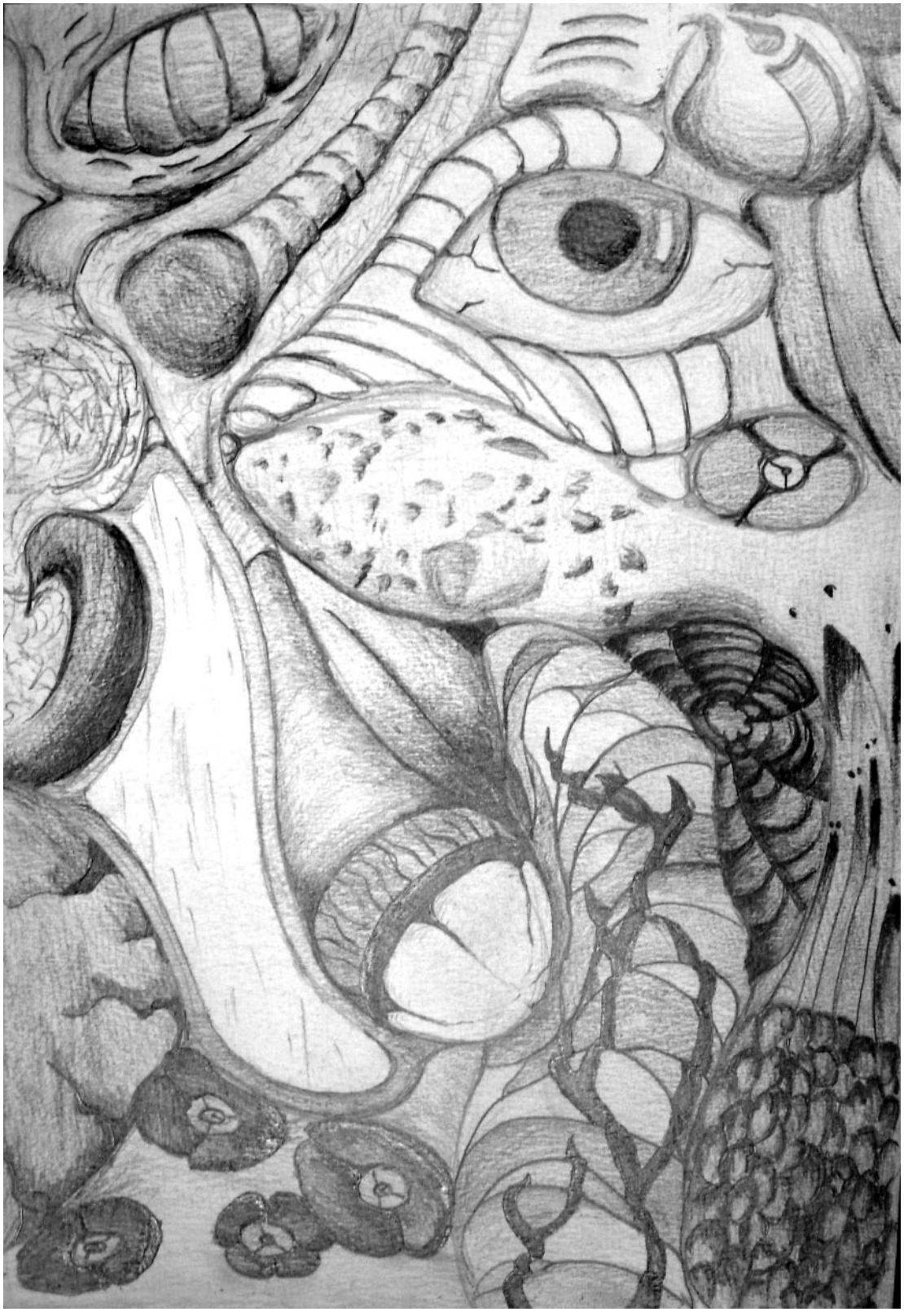
the day went by it passed so fast and the horse buggy carriage
trio caught the insomnia bug and i don't think
the industry has ever really recovered (last word was that
somewhere in south america they were found heavily armed
spouting word salad sentences and
foaming at the mouth.)

arms crossed and again she is just a little
china doll frozen on the shelf.

- Morgan Jensen

LOVED RUG

“Phallic”



by Jesse Silverberg

Afflicted

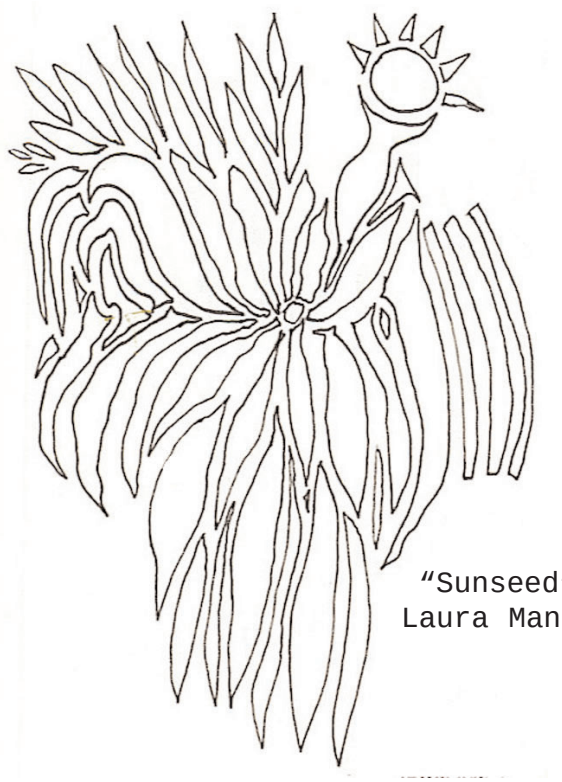
- Suzanne Igarteburu

It arrives with the butterflies-
Frenzied, beating wings
Against the confines of his
stomach lining.

It lingers with the haze-
Oppressive, distorting smog
Stagnant in wells of pink
convolutions.

It claws its way out
In violent ejaculation.

She feels the butterflies take
flight.



"Sunseed" by
Laura Mangano

Chant

- Tess Matukonis

.
it hurts.
seasoned and scratched.
But isn't hurt
some kind of ecstasy?
.
Like a cigar dangling off lip?
no, more seductive.
.
Where do you find your energy?
solar panels, an anise bruise.
.
Just say it
no.... this isn't a lucid dream.
there are consequences.
Chant...
;[hesitation. interruption.]
CINNAMON IS THE LIQUOR
CUMIN, MY CUNT.
SPEARMINT IS YOUR PENIS
WITH RED PEPPER LIFE'S BEGUN.
.
if you invite me to the edge
I will go.
I've been.
You are there already
Didn't you know?
.
;[pause. stomach descends.]
[*silence*]

I Told You I Wasn't A Minimalist

- Nikki Frankel

I want to touch your daughter and make her scream. I want to make anyone scream. I want you to be afraid of me. I could snap at anytime. I could snap and that'd be just fine.

I could snap you in half if I tried.

It kills me. Everyday. Sitting around, staring at the very same people who want me dead on the inside, and having to smile. Having to tell them to have a nice day. I really don't care if their day is nice. I really don't care if they walk out of the store and get hit by a bus. They are gone. The numbers go up, credibility goes down, hands on the clock go round and round. It's all the same to me.

The music stops and I'm wondering what was so damn profound to constitute an ending. Thought provoking? Waste of time? It's not worth it if it makes me want to pick up the razor again.

I just want to kill myself with you. That's all.

Of course I've got to make it personal. It could be this obscure individual lurking in the corner. It could be the stressed out mother of three suffocating in her minivan. It could be the first grader who still wets the bed. I could be these people. I could be anyone I want.

Suffocation isn't the same as choking.

The pillow pressed against her face. Clogged her nostrils. Infiltrated her mouth. She had pretty fingernails. They broke off in my skin. They're in a jar on my dresser.

I watched the butterfly for a good five minutes in the park. It swirled around in forty six perfect circles before being caught between the hands of an overly curious five year old.

All good things must come to an end. But it's your fault that he's still on the streets.

People shouldn't take their families to get portraits done. Those perfect pictures of everyone sitting down and smiling at the camera are so fake. We should install cameras in all houses that take pictures every time there's motion in front of it, like the ones on the roller coaster rides.

Random snap shots of real life. People caught unaware. That shot of your hands around your son's neck would look wonderful in the hallway. The picture of you cheating on your husband on the kitchen table would be a great conversation piece.

Pictures of my family wouldn't be all that scathing. We're hardly ever together.
The urge to throw myself on the floor and scrape my skin against the carpet is overwhelming.
Simulation of past events brings back the memories that would remain dormant otherwise.
Because it's still all my fault.

Tomorrow is Sunday. And that makes me sad, but not for the obvious reasons. I don't care about going back to school. It's Sunday, one more Sunday that I make a decision that puts one more check in the column sending me to hell.

And he won't be there with me.



"Self-Destructive" by Jason Jedrusiak

Little Pumpkin

- Hannah Leigh Reis

Even at sixteen I was still
"Daddy's little girl,"
a willow tree
doing circles on the dance floor
opposite a six foot four
noodle of a man,
limp-backed in his skin-tight
80s jeans.
(I would always be that
little pumpkin
twirling in circles on the lawn
in a torn summer dress.)
He never seemed
to notice the fire in my eyes, the
blazing blue orbs
of poetry, and how they
dulled when we would talk of the weather.

One night when I was young a storm
brought down the willow in
our side yard, drawing
the shallow roots and earth up with it.
I saw the worms squirming in the mess
of dirt and ladyfinger leaves,
and I dug my hands into
the dark, wet soil,
spreading my fingers
to feel every inch. I wanted
to know their home.
"That's dirty," he chided.
"You'll get yourself dirty."
Dirty?
He didn't see it then,
but I did—
the beginning of a silent season
hiding in the leaves.



"Roostapillar" by Laura Mangano

Swing Saturdays

- Emi Gonzalez

Every Saturday night
our house echoes
with the voices
of sweet Peggy Lee
and Dick Haymes
or Artie Shaw and
Guy Lombardo's
classic 1930s sound,
"Garrett is playing
good music tonight,"
you say,
though it seems
we've heard those songs
one million times before
Echoes of the Past
every Saturday night

The Only Thing We Have To Fear

Crouching in the corner of my little ship
I gaze lovingly at the vessel
my final stronghold against this ocean of uncertainty
protecting me from the sea of changes I'm floating in.

Waves rock my wooden ally
new experiences tap
tap on the hull
memories waiting to be made
wash against the sides
searching for a way in
a path past my defenses-
but I am safe for now.
Silver steel nails keep freshly cut planks together
a watertight seal perfected by
stubbornness
and red paint in the shapes of foot-high letters
spelling out the name of my floating fortress.
I smile approvingly at the good ship Fear
my last resistance to the surrounding sea.

Time passes and Fear springs a leak-
water can go everywhere
enter anything-
I do my best to stop it
but change rushes in
too fast to be thrown back
too strong to be denied.
The shiny nails quickly rust
waterlogged wood rots all around me
the water's weight, the strength of change
becomes too much
too great a strain-
with a loud Crack!
Fear splits in two
the pieces sink
and disappear from view
I'm left thrashing in the water
then I notice the sea is calm,
the warm water is welcoming,
and I realize I was running from
something that was far worse in my mind
than in reality.
Change isn't so bad, I think
as I let myself go
and slip under the water's surface.

- Josh Olejarz

The Fall of the Wei Dynasty

Our defense penetrated,
Revealing our gaping wound.
Spill forth from the wound, soldiers!
Block their foreign bodies.
My Kingdom,
The true might of this land
Will not be destroyed.
There is no end to my strength,
I will rise and conquer…
I am now surrounded.
Your blades pierce only flesh,
Not the ideal of Power
That I created,
That I perfected.
My Dynasty shall be built upon your stupidity.
Ghosts of my anger, savagery, and heart
Haunt your future descendants.
A gateway to the enemy's camp,
That is Death to the Wei.
Our charge never ceases.
The scars you hold in this battle
Shall curse you.
You bear the mark
Of a fallen Wei.

- The King of Wei

"Temples"



By Joshua Cristiano

"The Gig"



By Victoria Ferrara

SCRATCHER

~ By Josiah Proietti

Life is not my top priority;
I RUB DAYS OUT LIKE SCRATCHERS
Matching numbers that already disagree under their mercury silver mask
On the surface is pattern, and COLOR SCHEME
TEASING ME WITH IMAGES OF RELIEF, HOPE, & RESOLVE
but when I rub the ashy wax off my invitation to prosperity,
all that promise turns to the same grey mess
THAT GETS EVERYWHERE
It smears into my cuticles and under my nails
* and for a moment *
They look like an ARTIST'S — or a COAL MINOR:
Like I've been working on something
My first GREAT Masterwork, Or my latest day in the SOOT
It's hard to tell in a room full of ripped up duds
that resemble only IN PART YOUR WELL PLOTTED INTENTION
SEE, I LONG ~~to~~ TO BE CREATING: and even if I WON'T,
I'll be comforted by the LOOK of it ~ even if I am not what I thought
Like using scoring paper to write poetry
if i can make it look like SOMETHING HAPPENED, maybe it DID.



"Abstraction" by Jesse Silverberg

Daydream Generation

The future dazzles
For the young who
Sit and stare
At the cascading rays of sun
That shower the streets,
And fondle the bosom of their society.

Everything tastes superb
In this metropolis of successors.
All challenges educate and entertain,
No one has a low score
In this game
Of life.

One thing is certain
These children will never be adults
They don't know loss
Or pain or faults.
They will live forever
In a state of colorful inebriation.

- Rodney Dominique

Scatological Misgivings or, An Oak Falls in a Deaf Forest

- Dr. Lecithin H.

I'm bound in electron clouds, a dead star in Oort's melancholy nimbus. I'm embittered, with firmly squinted eyes like Renee Zellweger, sans recognition from the academy. Piano chords slash through slackened air to bring these emotions out of remission. I'm of poor craftsmanship, you can see the strings when I fly. You'll see me breathing after I die. I'm Bela Lugosi's pathetic swan song, I'm a watch sold on the street. Return me to the factory. It's been outsourced. The shipping will cost an arm and a leg. I'd give that and my life savings to not feel this way. Seeing you is self-deprecation, mental mutilation, pure masochism. You're twice as beautiful on that shelf. The sun hits you right all the time now. I wish I could return your heart. At night it stares me down. Another 1000 miles and I'll fall apart. I'm blowing smoke, my tires slashed themselves, and my heater's on the fritz. Sighs and sighs and sighs and coughs. I'd never wanted it to be like this; "friends" is myopic doublespeak for silence. I'm tuning in to white noise, I'm glued to the radio. I've made my choice. I let a good thing go. It hurts, it melts, it's becoming—it's empty and unloving. Freedom is a leap of sacrifice—the frying pan's cooler than the fire. The grass may be green elsewhere, but all I see is asphalt, and it's all my fault. It's all my fault.

Exits

- Morgan Jensen

“Emergency Exit” and “Alarm Will Sound”
but I’m not worried because
they’re all dead anyway huge and tall
with black/green faces and maggot mouthed words-
sucking the fuel out of any fire.
Stomach clenched and hands numb with cold
i can practically feel the skin shedding
layers, can feel the body turn to muscle
bone gore. Scratch the itch but once you do
the desire to move will go away and i’ve got
places to go, misspelled words to pronounce,
fuck it’s about priorities and mostly survival
but i’m not feeling the heat yet, i’ll remain
standing (surrealist dream) until
time winds down.

Acceleration

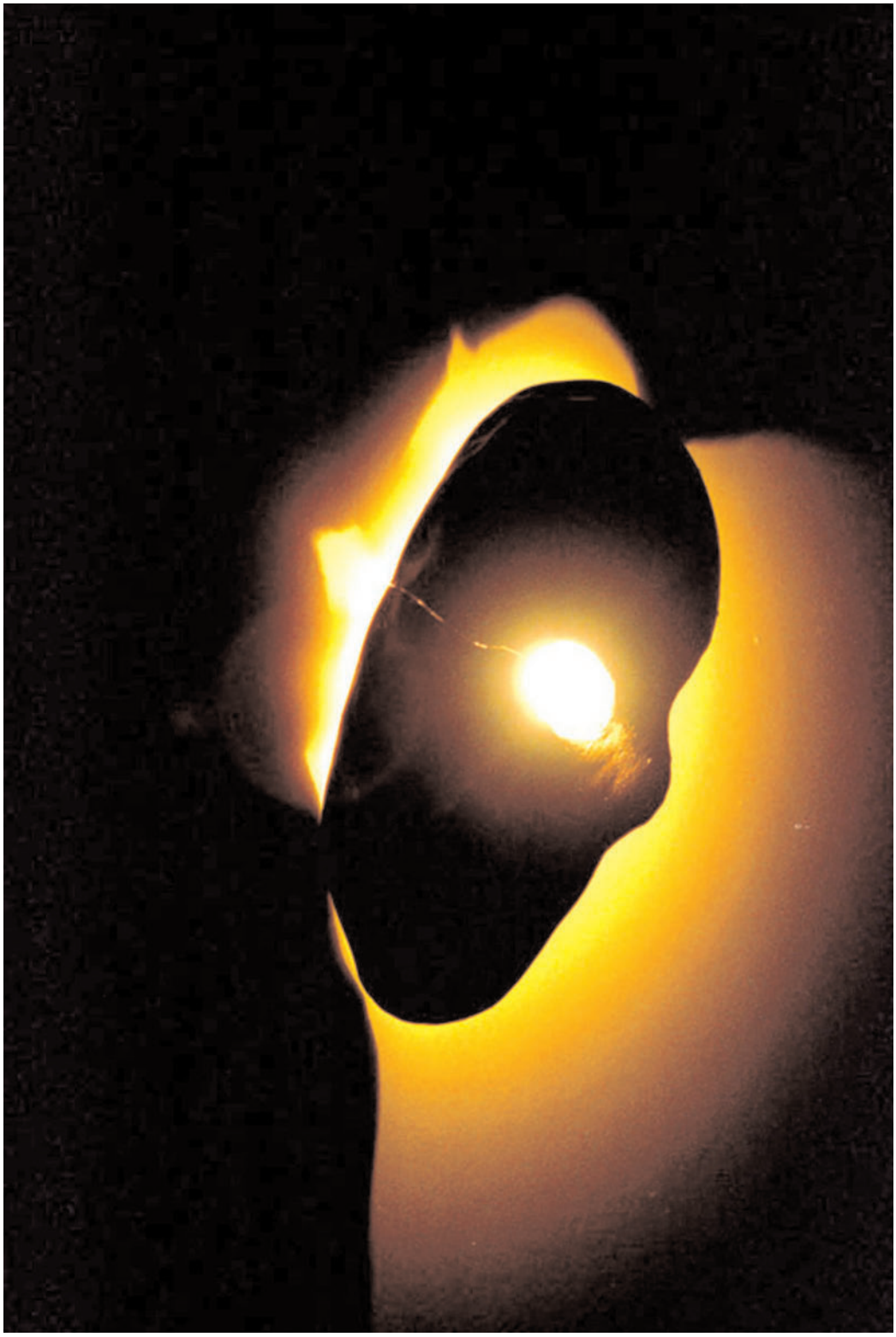
- Widow

I’m burning – burning my foliage; all that has grown up out of my crown in splayed bouquets of head-rushes.

I’m burning and rising higher to where the flame turns cobalt blue and lies low and flat.

Until everything in me is heated to deathless, angelic white fire.

“Light Face”



By Kyle Kerr

The **Worst** Fathers of All **Time**

Father's Day isn't that far off, and perhaps you find yourself struggling to find the good things about your dad. We at Sullen Thin White Men Enterprises are here to help you - as bad as your dad might be, he's not as bad as the fathers we've separated out for this list. These are the Five Worst Fathers of All Time, and I'm going to determine who the worst of them was with this handy little list I've comprised below.

The list of the all-time worst fathers was compiled by our experts, so you might agree or disagree with who's on the list, but Science has proven they all belong there. We've left out a few other likely candidates for reasons of bias. Jehovah, for instance, sent his only son to Earth to suffer and die. Still, Jehovah's actions are, by nature, mysterious and divine, so we've decided he's not a good candidate for the list. Abraham, who nearly killed his son at Jehovah's request, was similarly left out because of the continual involvement of the mysteriously murderous Jehovah. Also, Christian hate mail is fun most of the time, but not all of the time. Some people have a real problem with God comedy.

The Five Worst Fathers of All Time

Marvin Gaye, Sr. - This one's easy. The poster boy for filicide, Marvin Gaye is an easy target for any "Worst Fathers" list. Marvin Gaye, Jr. - who taught us all about "Sexual Healing" and "terrible drug-induced depression" - made constant threats of suicide to his family. On April Fool's Day, 1984, Marvin Gaye, Sr. decided to help Marvin Jr. along, shooting his son a day before Marvin Jr.'s 45th birthday. The story goes that the father shot his son twice in the chest with a gun the son bought for him. Irony!

Ivan IV of Russia - Called "Ivan the Terrible" by his own people, you could easily guess Ivan wasn't the best guy around the homestead, either. One day in 1581, when Ivan was unhappy with his daughter-in-law's dress, he began by insulting her. But he grew more and more angry, and found her dress so unacceptable that he began beating her like a red-headed stepchild. Ivan's son - conveniently named Ivan - interfered on behalf of his wife, who was seven months pregnant. Ivan IV turned his fury to his son, beating him to death with his staff. As a result of the violence to his daughter-in-law, she lost the baby. Ivan was a bad father and a bad grandfather, so that might be worth double-points!

Darth Vader - Although he turns on his evil master in the end, Anakin Skywalker was never a very good father. When his wife was pregnant, he used the Dark Side of the Force to choke the bitch out, leaving his children orphaned. Later, when he learned his son's whereabouts, he cut off Luke's right hand, then revealed to Luke that he was, indeed, his father. Simple logic dictates that you should reveal this fact before cutting off your child's hand. He then demands that Luke continue the family business (Sith Lording) much to Luke's dismay. If Vader had an ounce of "good father" in him, he'd have delivered the news to Luke a lot more gently.

Titus Andronicus - Let's face it - you haven't read Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus. Few people have. You may have seen one of the movie versions, but I bet it still doesn't make much sense to you. I'm not going to try and analyze it here. Suffice to say that the father character, Titus, isn't the best dad on the block. When one of his sons defies him and protects his sister (Titus' daughter), Titus kills him. But filicide itself isn't the sure path to being the Worst Father of All Time. So, in order to seal the deal, when his daughter is raped and mutilated (her hands are cut off and her tongue is cut out), Titus kills her (to "end her shame and suffering") in front of his pie-eating guests, Tamora and Saturninus. He explains to Tamora that her sons raped his daughter. "And, by the way, they're in the pie." Titus Andronicus is truly a fucked-up play, not only for featuring filicide and cannibalism, but also for defiling the sanctity of pie.

King Laius - Everyone's heard of Oedipus and his suffering, but few people realize that it's all the fault of his dad, King Laius. It all began when King Laius decided to rape his male student, Chryssipus, thus becoming one of the founders of ancient pederasty. Hera, wife of Zeus, was upset by this and forbid Laius from having children. Hera probably realized he wouldn't make a good father. But Laius still got married, drunk, and forced himself on his wife. Laius found out that his son would kill him and marry Jocasta, his wife. Laius wasn't keen on that, so he left his son Oedipus out in the woods. Inevitably, some folks found Oedipus and raised him - what did Laius think would happen? After much incestuous death, King Laius' parenting was so bad that it killed his son and his wife.

The competition is stiff, but in the end who can resist the nutty appeal of Titus Andronicus? He is yet another example of how truly disturbed the Romans can be. Sure, he was a fictional general and some people say this play wasn't even written by Shakespeare, but no matter who created him, when a man kills his daughter to end her embarrassment, he takes the cake for the Worst Father of All Time.

- Evan Umansky

By Faith Alone

I know where it is not
This thing that escapes you
This thing that haunts you
This thing that makes you
Tremble in the night!
Cry out in anger, in spite…
In spite of your own self
Whatever they call you
It is all the same, nothing changes
…I know where it is not!

You need not ponder existence!
It lies not in the psychedelic
You need not see pianos
That reflect off the glass that
Covers the light bulbs on the
Ceiling, on the floor…no!
Not there…not even close
Go ahead though…nothing changes
This thing still escapes you
It will still haunt you, always…

Make you tremble…
Why go and search for meaning?
The answer, oh so obvious
Slips not through your fingers
Like the phantasmal…
Like tobacco smoke that
Blows back into the room
With the cold air pouring,
Pouring through the open window
That you've contemplated

Jumping out of before…
All because of this thing
That haunts you, it is not
The thing of nightmares,
Not tangible like that at all…
Cannot be wrapped up by your
Head…no…no…no…and it
Cannot be driven away…
Pull yourself out of it by the
Collar, go ahead and try

- Jay Cinq-Mars

Not one of the saved?
Go ahead, drown and die
Die in this life, but still move
And think and realize
That we are naught by flies
Gorging on our own brown
Vomit, sitting on an orange.
…I'll call The Answer by a name
You may not have heard before
If only for variety's sake…

You'll have that at least…Yahweh!

Apocalypse

It was a delightfully cloudless day as the sunshine toasted the happy citizens of the earth. Dotted across the landscape were children and adults blissfully enjoying their lives underneath Helios' rays, as if all their miseries had dissipated like the great oaks' jade leaves come autumn. Little did anyone realize that, on this day, the hand of Fate would extend itself from the sky and change their menial lives forever.

As noon approached, the sky slowly grew darker, and shadows extended towards the earth. Those whose fine days were pestered by this inconvenience did not react. It was only a couple of clouds, they all thought. In all honesty, any soul that dared look up would have described, in great horror, two giant orbs descending from the heavens to create an eternal eclipse of the sky. The earth soon became a pitch blacker than black, with no heavenly bodies to speak of.

Their perfect days became a mere illusion as a foul stench took over the land, sweeping across the continents like many great generals had before. Following this plague was a monumental wind that uprooted trees, tore down houses, and flung giant clumps of mud across the landscape as an acidic rain poured down upon the helpless people. The depths of their confusion knew no bounds. And as suddenly as it had begun, the shadow over the earth lifted, once again revealing the clear blue skies.

Then He zipped up his pants.

- Punleu Kitiyakara



"Energy Ball" by Kyle Kerr

"The FatherLand"



By Paul Sousa

Do It Yourself
Lawn & Garden

Mulch
I fertilize flower soil and my fleshly
mowed grass
Industrial leaf shredder the remainder
of your body parts
On a pleasant afternoon for yard work:

Chop
I sever miss your mantelpiece memory
John Dear Jane Doe Chainsaw
disfigurement, aww
Honey, bees around your hollow
neck making nests, cozy up to
codling moths in cocoons

Clip, clip
I van gogh your forgetful lobes
Slicing rust resistant gardening shears
Cockroaches crawl and crickets chirp
inside your ear canals

Crop
I scalpel off your nose job
Using a cordless Black and
Wreckher weed whacker
While your nostrils bloom with
grubs and beetles

Trim
I sharpen my hedge clippers
Against your skull; a little off
the top
Maggots feast on your fresh scalp

Rip, rip
I press your baby blues
Into suction, lift lawnmower blades
And your eye sockets fill with
an infestation of fire ants

Rake
I mangle your flawless complexion
A razor backed, spading fork
face wash
A horde of cutworms chews on
your cheekbones

Snip, snip
I cut out your perfect smile
with stainless, steel pruning
scissors
And feed your fake lips to sewer rats

Please recycle your Love and Leaves
I brown bag the rest of your
decapitation
Chuck your carcass at the gutter
Schedule for pick up

On our anniverasary
Perfect Craftmanship
"Makes Anything Possible,"
Even a better home and garden.

- your welcome,
for all the flowers

Shouting

- Morgan Jensen

incense on the window sill
i wait for it to hit me
"give me whiskey or
give me death!" she shouts
out to no one in particular
he says with me you'll have
the best sex of your life
stick with me and i'll
fix what's wrong with your life
hell i could make you my wife
but tie her down pull her hair
wait for it, wait for it,
and "it" is futile.

she sleeps alone she doesn't
own a phone she says she claims
this is my life this is my
desperation this is my
" i am waiting for truth"
cry help,
city clean dry
wasteland of poverty and
disease
she says "double standard "
over and over and
invents gods to help her get by
she says "a day is not over until
i have lied."



"Amber" by Melanie Bishop

The Ambush on the Shu Encampment

- The King of Shu

The fire attack starts.
My troops stand their ground against the flames
Of an uninvited revolution.
I am the beacon of hope for the people.
Now there are only stains of grief and failure
Splattered upon the threshold of this land.
Our formation is that of Justice.
It procures the people hearts' and
The loyalty of my men within it.
No warrior enters battle without purpose.
My adversaries come with much more.
Bringing the art of insanity in the midst of the flames,
Withholding any chance of retreat.
The people need their savior,
To deliver them from the hatred of the enemy.
I cannot perform my duty.
If I must die now let the people know
That a hero of the three kingdoms
Will rise from the mind and heart.

On Parting

- Peter Bailey

You had one gift left to give me
Though we knew not when or how
The greatest gift you gave me
Is the one you gave just now
My dearest friend, it's over now,
And must be put to bed
I thought of you for untold hours,
And this is all I said

Red Hands

- Kyle Kerr

Maria woke suddenly, thick sweat covering her body and making her shirt stick awkwardly to her skin. The cold air around her seemed to be closing in on all sides, constricting her chest, her breaths coming in painful gasps. Something was wrong, and she knew it without any doubt.

She threw the covers aside and raced from the bedroom and into the hallway towards her son Andy's room. Too fast. She tried to catch herself as she fell, but it was like trying to walk on ice with flat-bottomed shoes; her socks slipping on the smooth hardwood flooring. Instead she ended up pitching forward, her head bashing off the handrail leading to the ground floor, resulting in a resounding CRACK that pierced the otherwise deadly silence that filled the house.

Maria cried out in anguish as pain radiated from the point of impact; an explosion of light and color burst into life in front of her eyes as she collapsed onto the floor. Through the pain, a warmness spread from the side of her head and down her face. It took a moment for Maria to realize that it was blood running into her eyes and not tears as she had initially thought.

Her stomach clenched tightly and Maria remembered suddenly why she was running down the hallway in the first place.

Rubbing the blood out of her eyes, Maria got to her feet, legs shaking, and made her way to the door at the end of the hall. Immediately she knew that she was right, that something was terribly wrong, because Andy's door stood half open. Andy never slept with his door open; he was too scared otherwise.

Maria threw herself against the door sending it crashing backwards. The momentum of her charge sent her staggering as she did, before coming to a stop at the foot of Andy's bed. Her heart felt too big for her chest as she grabbed the edge of the blanket and ripped it clean off with one fluid movement, throwing it onto the floor.

A scream caught in Maria's throat. In place of Andy was the family dog, or rather what was left of it. All four of the poor beast's legs were ripped off and the hilt of a knife was sticking out from between its bloodshot eyes.

Maria backed quickly away from the bed, her heart beating somewhere in the area of her throat, and crashed into one of Andy's dressers, shattering the mirror that stood atop it, the glittering splinters showering down around her feet. She doubled over and heaved.

It wasn't more than a minute before she rushed from the room. Andy had to be there somewhere. Maybe he was hiding. Maybe he had gotten away. Maria knew this wasn't true before she even finished the thought.

Down the stairs and into the living room. Not there.

Around and into the guest bedroom. Not there.

Into the garage. Not there.

Then Maria raced into the kitchen and saw a few things all at once. On the counter she was confused to find an empty bottle of cooking oil, a pot and a funnel. On the wall leading to the dining room, a message had been written in black marker:

You took them from me, now I take them from you.
We're even. Maria – 1, Jon – 1.
Your move.

Dazed, she ran her hand absently over the lettering as she walked into the dining room. She could almost see the words typed out on a piece of paper, some random text from a novel that was not her life.

"He really does it," she said aloud to no one.

Maria fleetingly noticed the small puddle

of blood on the table, but there seemed to be nothing else of significance in the room, and surely no Andy. Then a drop of crimson liquid fell from above and splashed into the little pool, the sound almost deafening in her ears.

Maria's eyes slowly rose, and in that instant her soul died. There was her baby boy, his naked body wrapped around the chandelier that hung over the table, his broken back arched unnaturally backwards making the top of his head touch the tips of his feet coming around the other side. The skin around his mouth had been burned raw and his throat was red and swollen many times larger than was normal. Maria realized with a start that this was why she hadn't heard Andy scream, because surely having your whole back broken backwards was a painful ordeal; Johnny had poured boiling-hot cooking oil down Andy's throat and scorched his voice box, effectively sullying her son's ability to scream. His arms drooped down; small red slits near his wrists the source of the ever growing pool of blood on the table. Then her eyes locked with his, open wide and bulging from their sockets, staring at her, pleading. He was still alive.

All of the oxygen seemed to have been sucked from the room and Maria could not take even the smallest of breaths. Her legs would no longer support her weight and she tried in vain to support herself against the wall. At that moment, Maria's vision went black and she crumpled to the floor.

* * *

Christopher yawned and stretched, rubbing the impending sleep from his eyes. He looked down at the notebook lying open on the desk in front of him and smiled favorably at what he had written.

He was particularly pleased with the imagery formed about the dying boy; his body bruised and broken, the wide surprise in his eyes, the way he had been so trusting of his loving father. Christopher could smell the burnt flesh from around the boy's mouth and even taste the tinge of copper wafting through the air from all the blood. It was brilliant – perfect – just as he remembered it.

A good start, I should say, he thought to himself. He felt it rejuvenating to write about someone who really deserved all the pain and suffering he brought upon her. All of those other hapless broads had been a warm-up for what he had just accomplished, and surely the sales of those previous novels were in reflection of that. This novel was special, though, and he was sure it would climb to be a top bestseller. So much work had gone into this that it could not possibly be anything but. He would have to remember to thank Julia for that one day.

He took a sip of coffee, cold from neglect, before picking up his pen and continuing to write.

Chris had barely made it two lines down the page when he was disturbed by a persistent rapping at the front door of his apartment. He put down his pen and headed towards the door.

He twisted the deadbolt until it clicked into place, and then turned the lock on the handle. Before Chris could open it, however, there was a loud noise from out in the hallway. He was thrown several feet back and saw as a section of the wooden door exploded in a burst of thick splinters. He barely had time to register the dull pressure building up in his stomach before the door was thrown roughly open before him.

Standing in the doorway was Julia, the gun in her outstretched hands pointing slightly downward, her now soulless eyes boring holes deeper into him than the bullet that was now lodged in his gut.

"Maria?" Chris said, his mind swimming.

"Maria? Fucking Maria?" she shrieked as she cocked the gun. "You know my fucking name. My move, right?"

Pain radiated from Chris's knee as the second bullet shattered his kneecap, the force of the blast knocking his feet out from under him.

"Your own son, how the fuck could you do it? Your *own son*."

Chris pulled himself around on his

stomach and started to crawl towards the couch, under which his gun was hidden.

"He loved you so much." Julia could hardly be understood through the gale of her sobs. "Stop and look at me you coward!"

Another shot, this one immobilizing his right arm at the shoulder. He screamed so loud he feared his lungs would tear.

The scream, however, died down and slowly transitioned into a roaring laugh. Chris rolled onto his back as the almost alien sound filled the room and looked at the woman standing over him.

Julia's face deeply reddened. "You're about to die and yet you laugh."

Chris spit out a mouthful of blood before saying, "Damn, I wish I would have seen this coming."

A Cheshire grin spread across his face at Julia's obvious confusion.

"The perfect twist," he clarified.

The last thing Chris ever saw was the barrel of the gun pointing directly at his forehead, its dark entrance seeming to suck everything into it as if it were a black hole. It consumed the whole of his vision before the world went black.



drom • e • dar • y

n: one-humped camel
of the hot deserts of
northern Africa
and southwestern Asia

