

# UNDERSTOOD

POETRY

GREGORY LIFFICK

DOWN IN THE DIRT

2013 CHAPBOOK

PUBLICATIONS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Lot” was previously published in *Soul Fountain*.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Over	4
Find	5
Flesh	6
Magic	7
Vein	8
Drama	9
Fixed	10
Unkind	11
Pools	12
Attention	13
Easy	14
Redeye	15
Under	16
Offcolor	17
Patch	18
Asleep	19
Made	20
Solid	21
Down	22
Rescue	23
Design	24
Puff	25
Shut	26
Reflect	27
Lot	28
Amount	29
Radio	30
Lip	31
Worse	32
Wreck	33

# OVER

More than  
should fit  
in the  
small  
space  
of a  
poem.  
Syllables  
packed like  
riders  
in a  
Japanese  
commuter  
train.  
Elbow room  
improves  
as words  
get off  
at various  
stops  
before  
the end  
of the  
line.

# FIND

A lazy  
search  
leaves  
stones  
unturned.  
Something  
to  
look for  
does not  
make  
the spirit  
willing  
or  
the flesh  
less weak.  
No one  
chases  
a  
string  
without  
a good  
carrot  
at the  
end.

# FLESH

Love has  
serious  
teeth.  
Long and  
hungry.  
Sinking  
into skin  
with a  
passion.  
The  
better  
to eat  
desire  
with.

# MAGIC

Nip and  
tuck  
were  
fairy tale  
characters  
granting her  
eternal  
youth.

They  
pulled back  
the skin  
on her  
face  
so the  
mirror  
could lie  
and say  
she was  
still  
the  
fairest.

# VEIN

The pen  
drains  
the poison  
of the  
bite  
of day.  
Filling  
the  
empty  
page.  
The body  
feels  
the relief  
of  
letting it  
from the  
blood  
of the  
writing  
arm.



# DRAMA

Changed  
the color  
of the  
wall  
so that  
it  
didn't  
seem to  
close in.  
Wished  
he lived  
on a  
stage set  
with only  
three  
sides.

Would  
be able  
to breath  
through  
the  
imaginary  
fourth one  
out  
into a  
calming  
dark,  
larger  
space.

# FIXED

Beat  
dogs  
won't  
fetch  
or bury  
the  
bone.  
Apathy  
needs  
its ear  
scratched  
and its  
belly  
rubbed.  
It will  
lick  
the hand  
that brings  
a treat.

# UNKIND

The little  
daily  
hurts  
of a  
long life.  
Too  
many  
small cuts  
to bear  
as a  
whole.  
Better  
to be  
stabbed  
once and  
for all  
in the  
heart.

# POOLS

The eyes  
give  
novas  
a run  
for their  
money.  
Shining  
out of  
a face  
like  
headlights  
on a  
dark road.  
Full of  
tears,  
you could  
swim in  
them  
or drown.

# ATTENTION

Look  
through  
the door  
that is  
open.  
Something  
needs  
to be  
noticed.  
Something  
wants  
seeing  
and  
hearing.  
If only  
a quiet  
unoccupied  
room.

# EASY

The chair  
holds  
the weight  
of his  
world.  
Tired  
skin  
and bones  
press  
cushions  
into their  
own  
sad mold.  
Siamese  
joining  
of fabric  
and body  
until the  
morning.

# REDEYE

News  
of loss  
is  
always  
a flash.  
So bright  
and  
sudden  
it burns  
the  
tender  
parts  
of us.  
It  
lights  
too much  
the  
picture  
of our  
hardest  
moments.

# UNDER

She  
couldn't  
stay  
afloat  
on his  
ocean.  
The waves  
of his  
hand  
seemed  
to sweep  
her head  
below  
the water.  
She did  
not  
want to  
drown  
in his  
sea  
of love.



## OFFCOLOR

Old men  
dyeing  
their hair,  
as if  
that's all  
that  
keeps them  
from  
death.

Like  
homeowners  
spraying  
brown grass  
green.

It improves  
the look,  
but  
doesn't  
bring back  
life.

# PATCH

The tree  
of  
life  
didn't  
grow in  
his yard.  
Nothing  
bore fruit  
that he  
planted  
in the  
garden.  
Was it  
the  
soil  
or the  
dry  
nature  
of his  
blood,  
sweat  
and tears.

# ASLEEP

Dreams  
come in  
the night  
window,  
up to  
rapid-eye  
mischief  
in  
slumbering  
heads.

No  
watchdog  
in the  
snoring  
barks  
of slack  
mouths

# MADE

True  
to the  
simple  
set of  
letters  
closely  
acting  
like family  
in hard  
times.  
Blood  
is thicker  
than  
water  
in the  
ink  
of  
written  
verse.

# SOLID

Specks  
of dirt  
and skin  
join hands  
atop the  
surfaces  
of the  
den.

A tiny  
union,  
resisting  
the forces  
of  
rags and  
feather  
dusters.

# DOWN

Memory  
lived  
in the  
cellar  
of the  
house.

A  
flashlight  
broke  
its fast  
of  
light.

Dark  
can bury  
any  
keepsake,  
until  
spare  
moment  
opens a  
cobwebbed  
door.

# RESCUE

No one  
sucks out  
the poison  
they put  
under  
the skin.  
The sinking  
fangs  
of the  
death  
of the  
feelings  
begs the  
quick  
first aid  
of  
apology.  
Draw  
the venom  
from  
bad blood  
with  
sorry lips.

# DESIGN

Dull,  
slow-  
motion  
existence,  
angering  
the spirits  
in the  
walls.

A house  
divided  
by  
longing.  
Architecture  
a maze  
for  
meandering  
spirits.



# PUFF

Smoked  
a pipe  
that didn't  
make  
peace.  
Got  
in the eye  
of the  
guest  
and  
brought  
tears to  
the  
talk.  
The air  
was  
thick  
with  
unwelcome.

# SHUT

A hand  
over the  
mouth  
of a  
smile.  
The teeth  
don't want  
to be  
seen  
in public.  
The lips  
tighten  
and  
smother  
the look  
of joy.

## REFLECT

Letting  
mirrors  
demean us.

Putting  
them  
all over  
the house,  
helping  
them to  
mock us.

A kind  
of  
feng shui  
of  
self-deprecation.

# LOT

Parking  
is  
limited  
for a  
soul  
in the  
city.  
It can  
circle  
and blow  
its horn,  
fists  
pounding  
on the  
wheel,  
but  
no space  
will  
open  
for its  
make or  
model.

# AMOUNT

Pour  
into me.  
You  
make me  
full or  
empty.  
I only  
hold  
what  
you give.  
I am  
the  
measure  
of us.

# RADIO

Many  
voices  
spoke  
from his  
head.

A live  
mike  
in his  
psyche,  
picking  
up the  
hosts  
of his  
soap opera  
program.

On air  
from  
dusk to  
dawn.

# LIP

Poems  
had  
words  
with him.  
Felt  
readier  
in his  
head  
than  
out of  
his  
mouth.  
Verse  
not on  
the same  
page  
with him  
was  
a slap  
to his  
face.

# WORSE

The  
thought  
no longer  
counted.  
Only the  
material  
left.

A  
shopping  
list and  
prenup  
joined  
hands and  
tore up  
the  
marriage  
license  
and vows.



# WRECK

Love  
bent  
sideways  
by a  
head-on  
breakup.  
Crash  
not seen  
coming,  
blind  
in the  
eye of  
romance.  
The road  
a  
hazard  
for  
careless  
passion.

# UNDERSTOOD

# GREGORY LIFFICK

scarsunground

Down in the Dirt magazine

<http://scars.tv/dirt>

ISSN 1554-9623

(Internet ISSN 1554-9666)



Writing Copyright © 2013 retained by the author.  
Design Copyright © 2013 Scars Publications and Design

## Magazines:

Children, Churches and Daddies (cc&d magazine), founded June 1993, Down in the Dirt, conceived 1994, founded 2000

## Books:

Hope Chest in the Attic, the Window, Close Cover Before Striking (Woman), Autumn Reason, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Guy's Guide to Feminism, Changing Gears, the Key to Believing, Domestic Blister, etc., Oceans, Exaro Versus, L'arte, The Other Side, The Bass Lady's Editorials (regular and 2005 Expanded Edition), Doubly, Seeing Things Differently, Change/Rearrange, Death Comes in Threes, Moving Performances, Six Eleven, Life at Cafe Alpha, Cranes, Rough Mixes, The Entropy Project, The Other Side (2006 Edition), Stop, Sing Your Life, The Beauty and the Destruction, c&d v1&75 (Writing to Honor & Cheer, editor edition), Blister & Burn (the Kypers edition), S&M, c&d v17&5 Distinguished Writings editor edition, Living in Class, Silent Screams, Taking It All In, In All Comes Down, Rising to the Surface, Galapagos, Chapter 38 (v1, v2 & 3), **Really, Literature for the Sassy and Elite (v1, v2 & part 1)** - a Wake-Up Call From Tradition, (recovery) Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Kypers, Evolution, (sweet), Get Your Bizz On, Janet & Joen Together, po-em, Taking Poetry to the Streets, the Cane-Discs City-Union, the Written Word, Dad, Prepares Her for This, Unaccreted, Living in a Big World, Pulled the Trigger, Venture to the Unknown, Janet Kypers: Enriched, Shit's an Open Book, "40", Session and Other Stories, the Stories of Women, Prominent Fun (Kypers edition), Elemental, the 2012 Databook, Prominent Tongue, Chaotic Elements, Fusion, Stability Stability Stub Stub, a Picture's Worth 1,000 words (color art book and b&w art book), Life, in Color, Post-Apocalyptic, Give What You Can, Down in the Dirt v084, Come Fly With Me, Clearing the Debris, Sectioned & Sequestered, Six Six Six, Skeletal Remains, Out of the Web, Don't Tread on Me, Lines of Intensity, Entering the Ice Age, When the World Settles, Into the White, Along the Surface, Life... from Nothing, the Line to Power, Fear the Forsaken, Down in It, Falling Into Place, Wake Up and Smell the Flowers, Unknown, Looking Beyond, Forever Bound, See the World Burn, Exploding on the Scene, America the Lost, Moving the Earth, Catch Fire in the Treetops, Sulphur & Sawdust, Slate & Marrow, Blister & Burn, Rinse & Repeat, Survive & Thrive, (not so) Warm & Fuzzy, Torture & Triumph, Oh, the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing to Honour & Cheer's, Distinguished Writings, Breaking Silences, Unlocking the Mysteries, the Book of Sara, In the Pools, Life on the Edge, Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets, Deceptio Remains, Cleared Remnants, Hope & Creation, Binding the Curve, Layers of Creation, Dark Matter, Survival of the Fittest, Crawling Through the Dirt, Laying the Groundwork, Weathered, etc., Ink in my Blood, (bound) (4 editions), Enriched Poetry, c&d Enriched Prose, Enriched with Dirt, An Open Book, Literary Town Hall (2 editions), Prominent Poet (2 editions), 100 Words, 1,000 Words, the 2012 Literary Data Book, It Was All Pre-ordained, Cultural Touchstone, the Mission (essie edition and chapbooks edition), Purpose, Falling, Cheap Thrills, After the Apocalypse 2013 date book, After the Apocalypse (poetry edition), After the Apocalypse (prose edition), Entanglement, Gail by Association, Infamous in our Prime, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art, the Electronic Windmill, Changing Women, the Swan Road, the Significance of the Frontier, the Svetesvetovara Unpublished, Harvest of Gems, the Little Monk, Death in Malaga, Memento Mori, In the Palace of Creation, R.L.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Drive, Thomas at Tea, Crashing Down Nineteenth, Blue Callar Ballet, nappin, In Your Heart the Apostrophe's Teardrops of God, the Adventures of the Key to Believing Bear, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art (second printing), **Duchard Kider / Charlie Newman**, 12 Times 12 Equals Gross, a Marble Nude Pauline Borchese with a Marble Apple in her Marble Hand, Challenge of Night and Day and Chicago Poems, Lighten Up, Not Far From Here, Watershed, You Have Finally Won, Avenue C, Suburban Rhythms, Down Syndrome, the Dark Side of Love, the pill is a man's best friend, Angel's Syllable is Good Boss of Devil's Spine, Poems and Stories from the Blue Callar Book of the Dead, Cat People, Death of an Angel, Ghost, Science: R. Carmichael's View, Ghost Dancers Leaping from a Tomb, the 4-D Window, Open Wounds, Anne Junkie, Interstice, Gunther, Cats, Scream Cloud Island, When the World was Black and White, a Petal Under Pavement, The Holy Sea of CEE, Book 15 "Thailand to Volcanoes, Lost in an Echo, I Was Charles Bronson's Secret Hostage, Erasable Bond

## Compact Discs:

Mom's Favorite Vase the demo tapes, Kypers the Inal (MP3 inclusive), Woods and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Axing Something is Sweating, The Second Axing Live in Alaska, Petter & Kypers Live at Cafe Alpha, Pointless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Kypers Seeing Things Differently, 50/50 Tick Tack, Kypers Change Rearrange, Order From Chaos The Entropy Project, Kypers Six One One, Kypers Step, Kypers Masterful Performances mp3 CD, Kypers Death Comes in Threes, Kypers Changing Gears, Kypers Dreams, Kypers How Do I Get There?, Kypers Content Control, the DMU Art Connection the DMU Art Connection, Kypers Questions in a World Without Answers, Kypers SIN, Kypers WZRD Radio [2 CD set], Mom's Favorite Vase and The Second Axing These Trudles, assorted artists String Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life At The Cafe [3 CD set], the DMU Art Connection Indian Flux, the DMU Art Connection Manic Depressive or Something, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #1, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #2, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #3, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #4, Chaotic Radio Chaotic Radio Week #5, Chaotic Radio the Chaotic Collection Collection #01-05 [5 CD set] etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), Chaotic Elements [2 CD set], Chaos in Motion [6 CD set], 50/50 Searching to a Hall (EP), P&A Two for the Price of One (EP), Kiki, Jake and Haystack An American Portrait, Kypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the Jordan Powers Trio Fusion [4 CD set], produces the Evolution of Performance Art [3 CD set], Kypers Live [14 CD set], the DMU Art Connection the Things They Did to You [2 CD set], Kypers Seeing a Psychiatrist [3 CD set], Kypers St. Paul's [3 CD set], Kypers the 2009 Poetry Gama Show [3 CD set], Kypers and the Ballman of South Africa Been Through Me [2 CD set], Kypers' 40", Kypers's Session and Other Stories, Kypers the Stories of Women (amazon.com release), Kypers "Dobro VeCa" [4 CD set] Kypers "Humana" [4 CD set], Kypers "Letting it All Out", Kypers "What We Need in Life" (CD single), Kypers "Made Any Difference" (CD single), Kypers/Herbick "Across the Pond" [3 CD set].