

Scrub Palms & Pines!

oh.

oh.

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down in the dirt
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churches
& daddies**

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You can't be free or strong until you can speak up



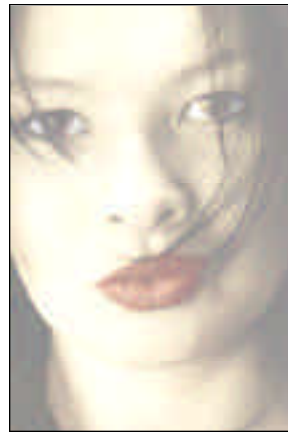
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oh.



assorted artists.
thanks for creating.

magazines children, churches & daddies & down in the dirt
scars publications & design
a m e r i c a



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the “oh.” computer scars compact disc enclosed
mp3 files, real audio files, internet files, e-books, hypercard stacks, aif files and video
(installers for software for Macintosh and Windows included)





lemme out!

(meow)

(there's a
CD in here...)



note from the editor

7

We originally thought this book with the cd would amount to be around 100 pages total - and now we have found ourselves at over 200 pages! We're thrilled with the format this book is in, and we are thrilled to be able to add so many good short pieces to this collection.

In looking for new formats for getting writing out there, we thought, well, we tried the book, and we even released an audio compact disc to accompany a collection book. What more could we do?

Then it occurred to us - we have been able to put so much good material on the web and on the computer in the past, and there's no way all of that material could attempt to fit on an audio CD (I mean, an audio CD can't put video or photographs on it...). Wouldn't it be nice, we thought, to run a CD *like* a web site where you have access to *all of that information*?

That's when we decided to get creative. Okay, wait, they'll love RA files, and MP3 files, and art to view and writing to read... They'll need a browser choice, and installers for e-books and Quicktime, Shockwave, Media Player and Stuffit... Hey, we could even add Macintosh *The Gallery* Hypercard Stacks to people to view!

This is when we started to get scared - there was so much we wanted to add that we had to figure out how to make it all fit! So we have given you a taste of everything, and we hope you like all the information we got together for you.

Rev. Janet L. Kuypers, Ph.D.

Doctor of Philosophy, University of Wexford, 1996, Reverend through the Universal Life Church, 1999





Moments

Bernadette Miller

Moments. Meeting Ian. A chubby blond cherub, silken curls skimming a wide, second-generation Ukrainian forehead, large hazel eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses. In his tenement railroad apartment, his oil painting barely concealing cracked plaster, I want to entwine a curl around my chubby Jewish fingers. New Year's Eve. Chattering guests filling the small living room and overflowing into the large kitchen with corner tub. Sure, I'd attended Manhattan parties since arriving from Maryland four years before. But this one's different.

I smile shyly as Ivan touches my long shiny black hair, and says, "Jenny, you look like a pretty Russian with those big black eyes and wide cheekbones. Let's kiss under the mistletoe." He points to a cluster hanging from the bedroom doorway.

A virgin, I step back from such boldness, but I study the painter with his gentle eyes and three college degrees, the baggy trousers and roguish orange ascot. A brilliant cherub? Look, his accomplishments cover his apartment walls! The critics in Philadelphia, his home town, label him a surreal impressionist. Surreal impressionist... who wouldn't be awed? I, a secretary cum great actress, try to impress him as I sip my drink beside him on the saggy couch. "I like that abstract of sperm and egg." Well, it's a start.

The artist nods. "Tell me about your acting career."

Flattered, I babble about the Stanislavsky Method, basing my character on a real person. He smiles. I admit that I also write poetry and short stories.

"Forget acting, concentrate on writing," Ivan says, sipping wine. "Acting is interpreting someone else's art. Writing is creating."

“Oh, no, I’ve always wanted to act.”

He nods; we chat. Coincidentally, he’s working temporarily at a drafting company around the corner from my job, just long enough to catch up on bills.

“Let’s meet for lunch,” he suggests.

I beam at this good fortune. What does he see in me? “Okay!”

Moments. Snugly warm despite the winter wind howling against windows, grimy shades drawn. Our limbs entangled in Ivan’s bed squeezed between bureau and chair, the tiny room awash in shackled canvasses. Late night whispering about painting, literature, haute cuisine, archaeology, philosophy. I am melting. He has so much to teach me and yet he wants me, think I’m pretty. I can only gaze with gratitude at the tender, wistful eyes, grin at the sly mischievous smile when he wants sex.

I squeeze my cherub one March evening. “I love you.”

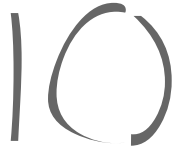
“Me too, you too,” he gushes, and we kiss.

Moments. Springtime, splurging on a taxi to move into his Lower East Side apartment. The two of us lugging up four flights my heavy suitcases and cartons of books. Puccini would have adored our “artist-struggling-in-a-garret” existence, but my mother, who took care of herself in New York while my grandparents raised me in Maryland, predicts disaster at my new living arrangements.

Moments. Her morning calls to the office with that horrible Brooklyn accent I swore I’d never adopt after painfully learning standard midwest English at a Manhattan drama school. I proudly remain accentless. A deep sigh from my mother; hadn’t I inherited any of her practicality? “Why are you throwing your life away? Thirty-five and he doesn’t even earn a decent living?”

A sigh to match hers. “Mother, you don’t realize my privileged situation. Ivan could become a major American painter. I’m so lucky he chose me.”





“But think about it! A cute girl in her twenties could land a rich Jewish dentist with a beautiful house in Westchester!”

Back in his musty apartment, cleverly avoiding the sofa’s broken spring seeking my back, I stare at my orange-crated books squatting beneath two shade-drawn windows. My presence here is verified, but I’m still awed. We’re mismatched’ he’s too brilliant for me.

That evening, setting the kitchen card table with his dime-store dishes, no two alike, I burst out, “You know I can’t marry you!”

A cherubic smile, long curly lashes fluttering while he stirs the thick spaghetti sauce simmering on the old stove, releasing a heavenly aroma. The week before I’d enjoyed his paella and Beef Stroganoff -- a gourmet cook; was there anything he couldn’t do? I with my humble drama degree know so little. When can I catch up?

“Let’s take a bath together before dinner,” he says, and crosses the kitchen to turn on the tub faucets.

“It won’t work! I’m so far behind you.”

His plump hand reaches down to swirl the water with bubble bath. He clothing drops onto the linoleum; he eases his bulk into the tub. “Perfect. Come on in.”

“All right.” Tense after handling business correspondence all day, I carefully hang my skirt and sweater in the bedroom closet, and rush to sink into the bubbles at the opposite end of Ivan.

Chubby arms rest on the tub sides, his paunch grazing the water’s surface like a pink submarine. “Jenny, you worry too much.”

“You drink too much. It frightens me.”

He sloshes bubbles over my shoulders, pudgy toes stroke my belly. “I’ll free your inhibitions.” His shy smile opens my confessional gate, like so many previous nights.

“Ivan, I realize I must overcome my insecurity at Mother’s abandonment, but I’m afraid of becoming too depend-

ent on someone.”

He gulps the glass of wine on the tub-side chair. “Poor little poopsie.” A pudgy hand brushes aside the golden curls shielding his eyes. “You need me. I think we’ll be very happy together.”

Silently, I watch him pour more wine. Then, I stare at the faded linoleum’s missing checkered squares, and the lone fern struggling to survive on a dirty window sill without sunlight; it needs Southern Exposure.

Moments. Salvaged memories of our first year living together. Ivan decides to study theatrical set designing with someone famous. He will collect unemployment checks until he passes exams.

“Yes, but what about your painting?”

While pouring wine, he explains, “Good set designers make a lot of money! I could work part-time then and paint. But you’ll have to support us while I study for the exams.”

I nod, uneasy about this sudden new ambition, and continue my hated secretarial work, hoping Ivan will paint soon. Coming home tired, I unlock the door, frustrated as always with the key sticking in the lock, but smile at Ivan soaking in the tub. The wine bottle is nearly empty, though full when I noticed it earlier in the fridge. My smile fades. Was he drinking all day? What about the exams?

Ivan, noting my disapproving look, squashes my silent protests. “Jenny, I bought you something special in the living room.”

Rushing there, I see atop an orange crate a laptop computer, a printer nearby, and an old hassock drawn up as a chair. I am entranced.

Moments: Ivan cooks and drinks; I type. Ivan soaks in the bathtub and drinks; I type. Ivan reads and drinks; I type. My short story about my childhood is dull, dull, dull, but my new husband of three weeks, our relationship legalized at City Hall, will teach me how to write professionally. Meanwhile, in case I can’t learn, I continue reading Show

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Business and Variety.

Ivan, pouring more wine during dinner, says, "Why are you still hunting Auditions? You've been writing every night since I bought you the computer."

"Writing is challenging, but it is just a hobby."

He nods and persists with his urging.

That winter, failing the set designer exams, he decides we shall buy a house in the country, live a simpler life, return to basics.

Moments. Ivan, pudgy hands cupped around a coffee mug, saying earnestly one spring morning, "You really want to create, like me."

I stare at the now healthy fern blocking a window. "I've wanted to act since childhood. I can't give it up!"

"Yes, you can!" His hand strokes mine, the hazel eyes shiny. "You have a lot to learn about writing, but your efforts are sincere. It's what you should do." A pause. "Jenny, let's move to Long Island. You'll write there and I'll paint." He returns my surprised smile. "I know I shouldn't have stopped. I'll feel inspired again with grass under my feet and the smell of oxygen." A shy smile. "I've always wanted to be a country boy."

I gaze at him while contemplating the impossible, bent day after day at my computer, my mind crowded with senses I can't translate onto paper. And yet, the thrill of coaxing life from nothingness... I've become a masochist!

"Give up the theater to become a writer?" I look dubiously at Ivan who nods vigorously; his enthusiasm is contagious. Grinning, I reach over to poke his plump belly, and he giggles like a child. Why is he so lovable when sober? And suddenly I visualize doing exactly what he asks. "Yes, you'll paint again, the thing you do best!" I picture him with brush, grabbing tubes, furiously filling a canvas with bright colors, one-man gallery shows, rave reviews. Moving to the country seems so promising. I, a small town hillbilly, will be an artist, like he is. I am awed.

Moments. The mover hurriedly loading our cheap furniture and possessions, along with a cabinet, drawer of unfin-

ished stories. Ivan travels with the mover's truck. I, on the train, gaze dreamily at the long mural outside my window, stretching from Manhattan to our small Long Island town. The real me is emerging at last: a writer.

And, oh, our charming New England saltbox with eaves, and the smell of pines, and scurrying chipmunks, and birds fluttering from tree limbs. Weekend moments: painting the house fire-engine red with white shutters, and planting rose bushes around our two-acre forest of pines that soar eighty feet, forming a leafy sky. Spongy pine needles squash under our sneakers like a sun-dappled carpet, our German Shepherd puppy at my heels. Paradise: what more could one want?

Moments. Meaningless chats with neighbors about babies, recipes, and household shortcuts -- the opposite of our exciting Manhattan artist friends. At first, I'd plunged into work in my studio after Ivan left for his drafting job. Like Jacob wrestling with the angel, I stubbornly persisted. Finally, I admitted to my talented husband that I didn't know what I was doing, embarrassed at his unjustified faith on me.

"Keep trying and you'll learn," he's said, pouring more wine.

I believed him because I wanted to. But why wasn't he painting?

Moments. Ivan, hating the nine-to-five routine, arrives home by train at six o'clock. He pets our German Shepherd wagging her tail at the kitchen screen door, silently gobbles down the stroganoff I've prepared as a surprise, finishes a bottle of wine, and sprawls on our new tufted couch, passed out by nine o'clock, his misery at earning a regular living soothed. With only our dog for company I stare at the television. Despite the lovely fairy-tale surroundings, the paneled, beamed living room with its stone fireplace and latticed windows, I ask if this is the natural conclusion to marriage and art?

Time passes. I plead with Ivan to paint; he presents excuses and continues drinking. Struggling at my computer, refusing to quit, I finally take a correspondence course on creative writing. If only I could discuss my stories with Ivan.

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Evenings, he snores on the couch, a flannel-shirted arm flung toward the new marble-topped coffee table, his troubles calmed by the empty bottle facing him.

Finally, I gaze into our idyllic forest one evening, and try to remember the years here, but can't, only blurred moments: Ivan's increased drinking, fights and crying accusations and recriminations.

"What more do you want?" he shouts in the living room and lurches toward the winding staircase where he'll find peace in alcoholic slumber. "I'm supporting you, for God's sakes! All you have to do is take care of the house and write. I'm too exhausted to paint."

"I want my husband back, not this terrible loneliness!"

He shakes his graying blond head with disgust and vanished upstairs. Boots thud over my head as the master staggers to our bedroom, right out of a gothic novel. How can I explain to him that his drunken pawings in bed repel me? Yet, I feel torn -- seeing a sensitive artist, draining of inspiration while he drives himself to support us.

Moments. Cooling off with iced tea during an intense July. At the barbecue table in the clearing near our kitchen stoop, I try to picture an Ivan-less future: struggling in a Manhattan tenement to write stories I might never be capable of. Later, lying beside my snoring husband who is sacrificing his great talent to live a "normal" life, I blot my pillow with tears. Rising, I don a robe and sit by my studio window, staring into the forest. Ivan and I have stopped talking, sex is gone; he is too tired and drunk. I fill with grief, mourning my dead marriage.

Moments. November: a brisk, clean morning, the hint of snow. Sipping coffee at the wooden table while our Shepherd chases a squirrel amidst the pines. Despite my smile at her antics, the emptiness inside me suddenly becomes more vivid than all my seven years with Ivan. Here, in a beautiful forest, I am the only unreal thing. Wishes: the present fades; I am back at my former Upper West Side apartment. My Shepherd nuzzles my hand, awakening me, and I hug her. Ah, this is my reality; my future is only a dream--La Vida Es Sueno. I am wishing for rainbows. I am beaten,

nothing to strive for, as though all my efforts will collapse in failure.

This depression terrifies me. Shaking, I drop the glass against the scarred table. The ice cubes and tea bounce and splash as I reach over for a cloth to wipe up the mess. I must survive to write.

That evening, I dare to tell Ivan, "I want to leave you, return to Manhattan."

Trembling he pours wine at our wooden dining table. "why?"

"I feel... empty..."

"That's ridiculous, Jenny! Marriage can't be a continuous honeymoon. After a while it reaches a plateau."

Biting my lip, I scan the charming built-in cupboards and cherry-cafe curtains. Sitting opposite, stroking my hand, he urges me to be reasonable; marriage is an investment not to be dissolved lightly. I gaze at those hazel eyes magnified behind the glasses, bloodshot yet still boyish, and I agree, as always. What is unhappiness, anyway? Self-pity! All couples reach a plateau; marriage is shared suffering.

"Jenny, tell me what's wrong," Ivan says suddenly, leaning toward me.

"I don't know," I whisper, and snuffle into a tissue. Perhaps if we could discuss it, I'll again see him as that brilliant painter: knowledgeable, self-confident, inspiring. But now my will seems to have dissolved into our beautiful surroundings, and I dread each predictable, deadly day.

Moments. Skipped meals, nausea, failing health., I cannot eat, I cannot write, I remain silent. What is the point? Nothing to anticipate but struggle. And we'll all die anyway.

Ivan, finally alarmed, buys fattening goodies that would overjoy a dieter: rocky road ice cream, devils food cake, and peanut butter cookies. I ignore food to brood; he eats. I diminish; he balloons. I'm becoming a robot, mechanically cleaning, cooking, caring for our dog, until one afternoon my soul screams, "Enough! Go! Don't analyze it, just do it!"

Sunday, I don't ask permission, but state flatly, "Ivan, I'm returning to Manhattan."

This time, a shrug while pouring wine. "Jenny, if that's what you want, okay."

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My stare of disbelief. No fights, no guilt, no mis-givings? “Thank you,” I manage to offer for releasing me, as perhaps I have released him.

My last moments with Ivan: a tearful hugging at the kitchen door, while a kind neighbor, who’s offered to drive me to Manhattan, waits in his van with my luggage, books, stories, and computer. I leave everything else. It isn’t part of my real life. That’s before me.

“Well, take care of yourself, Jenny.”

“You, too, Ivan.”

“Do you really have to go?”

“Yes, I’m so sorry.”

“My God...”

Moments. Affectionate hug of the German Shepherd, her tail wagging excitedly; she doesn’t know she’ll never see me again and that I’ll miss her for the rest of my life.

Duane Locke

TIME

Hours that have the same designations
Are different.

11: 59 PM is different when you are twenty
from when you were forty,
from when you were sixty.

At seventy, 11.59 PM no longer
Has a number and a PM,
But has lips, hips.

The Gift Giver

Bernadette Miller

17

She welcomed his gifts, although he didn't interest her romantically. Minoo with his fair skin, dark eyes, and straight black hair was sweet, holding doors open for her, treating her to fascinating restaurants as in his native India, and then taking her home by taxi. He didn't even ask for sex, just a quick hug at her apartment building stoop, and he seemed satisfied.

But Barbara, her roommate, felt that Emily shouldn't have accepted the pearl necklace, gold ring, and designer slacks from a man old enough to be her father. Emily argued that despite Minoo's forty-five years as opposed to her twenty-five, he was a successful accountant who asked for nothing in return. So why shouldn't she accept his gifts?

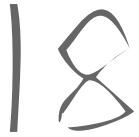
In their small, fourth-floor walk-up on New York's Lower East Side, Barb looked up impatiently from her canned corned beef hash dinner that she spiced with ketchup. "Affordability isn't the point! It's unethical to encourage him, knowing that you don't care for him."

"He doesn't seem bothered by a platonic relationship," Emily said, wishing she were again enjoying mulligatawny soup, rather than another cheap meal. "Besides," she continued, "Minoo promised to help me achieve stardom through his show business clients." She paused. "Maybe I could learn to..." Her voice trailed off.

Barb stopped pounding her ketchup bottle to stare at her, shocked. "You could become attracted because of the gifts?"

Petite Emily sighed. "I guess not, but I didn't graduate with a B.S. in theater arts to become a part-time receptionist. For three years, nothing, not even off-off-Broadway. It's so hard." In the July heat she patted her blonde pageboy and swiveled toward the living room fan.

Barb rose to pour iced tea in the tiny kitchenette, and then handed Emily a frosted glass. "Try to be patient.



Remember, I'm ten years older than you, and I haven't given up, although I, too, hate office work."

Emily nodded and held the glass of iced tea to her moist forehead, refreshing in the tenement apartment with its low ceiling, rickety furniture, and worn carpet. She knew she'd never love Minoo the way she'd loved George in college, although she'd refused to have sex with George because a husband with children might preempt and acting career. But lately Emily realized that a husband could support her while she attended auditions. Perhaps she'd be happy with Minoo if she tried. Except that she dreaded sex with a physically unappealing man.

Of course, Andy Dolan was different. She could be crazy about him if she let herself, but she'd be foolish to fall in love with a penniless actor and part-time bartender. Where was the happiness in their shared struggling? Yet, she also worried about fossilizing her virginity. Once she lay awake nights, wondering what Andy might be like, while Barb, who dated several boyfriends ever since her divorce, slept peacefully.

The dishes washed, Emily curled up on the sofa to study Juliet for next week's class. She tingled at perhaps seeing Andy who'd play Romeo. Rugged Andy, tall and lean, had tightly curled red hair and angular features. When near him, she could scarcely breathe, as if her heart refused to obey her head. The perfect Romeo! Perhaps if she dated Minoo less, she'd at least get to know Andy as a person, not just an actor. No, no, she mustn't be tempted. Concentrate on her goal: Minoo helping with her career!

The next evening, after improvisation class, she bumped into Andy as she hurried across the narrow corridor. Heading in the opposite direction, he touched her bare shoulder beyond the sun dress, and said playfully, "Hey, slow down! You won't become a star if you're exhausted." He paused as they gazed at each other. "How about some leisurely coffee at the corner deli? We could rehearse our lines?"

"Oh, I'm sorry but I have a date," she gushed nervously, yet she felt grateful at seeing the disappointment in his

gray eyes.

He smiled. "Have a nice evening."

Emily smiled back, her heart thumping. "Perhaps another time."

"Sure." He strode toward the men's room, past the posters of famous actors.

She stared at his broad back and shoulders, a lump in her throat, and reminded herself that great actors sacrificed to make stardom possible. Still, she lingered to see if he would turn around for another glance, but he entered the room, and she felt a pang as she ran outside to catch a crowded bus. She'd be late again, but Minoo wouldn't mind.

"Emily, whatever you do is fine," he'd said.

She couldn't abandon such a kind man, Emily thought on the bus. Her father had deserted her mother when Emily was six, then her mother died in a car accident when Emily was ten. Shuttled among relatives, she'd grown up mostly with a Milwaukee aunt, so that in New York she'd felt lonely until meeting Barb who needed a roommate. Then, two months ago, Emily met Minoo, a vegetarian, when they simultaneously reached for a non-trans fat margarine and he politely offered to pay for her groceries because of causing her a disturbance. When she hesitated, he smiled and said with a flippant British accent, "You are so beautiful, you must be an actress."

Her almond-shaped blue eyes widened at his prescient compliment. She explained that since childhood she'd dreamed of sharing other people's lives, and she worked hard to pay for an acting coach and glossy photo composites with resumes.

He'd insisted on treating her to dinner, if she could stand his company. The following evening, in the taxi, he said, "Undoubtedly you have numerous boyfriends," and he seemed surprised when she admitted to not having any. "That is surely amazing," he replied, beaming, and helped her from the car. He protectively tucked her arm under his jacketed elbow as they entered the Ceylon-India Inn.



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Later, she wondered if their encounter had been an accident, but she felt flattered that a sophisticated professional, a Harvard graduate, had taken an interest in her and might launch her career. But after several dates she wished he were younger and acted more impulsive, instead of treating her like a porcelain doll. Last week, auditioning for *Wuthering Heights*, Emily longed to experience the passion between Cathy and Heathcliff, instead of possibly wasting her youth on a man she didn't love.

At her deep sigh now during dinner, Minoo said, "A penny for your thoughts." His long, bony fingers stroked her hand on the tablecloth, his brows knitted together, his face seemed even thinner, the chin more pointed. Only the warmth of his dark eyes appealed.

"I was planning my future as a star," she said.

"Ah, yes, but you must also learn to savor each moment," he said softly.

"Oh, I do," she said, and munched a vegetable fritter, glad he's introduced her to Indian cuisine. While the waiter served pungent shrimp curry, Basmati rice, and pouri, puffed white Indian bread, Emily scanned the small restaurant with its heavy drapes, Tiffany style lamps, and fringed tables crowded with Indians and Pakistanis, the diners serenaded by flute music. As usual, she enjoyed dining in an exotic atmosphere, far removed from prosaic Milwaukee.

Minoo paused over his curry and reached into a jacket pocket. "I brought you a little something." Smiling, he extended a tiny box wrapped in white tissue and adorned with a red satin bow. Remembering Barb's admonitions, she started to protest, "Oh, Minoo, you shouldn't have," but she couldn't resist tearing apart the paper and bow, to gasp with pleasure at opening the box. The pearl ring with surrounding baguettes matched last week's necklace.

"Do you like it?" he said, studying her reaction.

"Oh, yes, thank you so much." She placed it on her pinkie and extended the scarlet fingernail to show him that it fit. "How did you know my size?"

“Emily, I would do anything for you--”

“I know,” she interrupted, feeling uneasy. She bent over the shrimp, hoping he wouldn’t propose. “But you must realize that I care for you deeply.” He awkwardly touched her cool arm in the air-conditioned room, reminding her of her opposite reaction to Andy’s touch. “I know you don’t feel that way about me,” Minoo added sadly, “but I hope that someday you will.”

She exclaimed, “As a matter of fact, I like you very much, you’re a wonderful person! But after all, you’re much older than I--” She bit her lip at possibly hurting him. He was too nice to be hurt! Guiltily she watched the thin lips tighten, and then his attempted smile.

“Please forgive me for mentioning it,” he said softly. “I do not want to spoil our lovely evening.”

“Minoo, I’m sorry, too...” Her voice trailed off. How could she tell him she didn’t feel anything other than a friendship? How could she explain that he was too old, too thin, too bony, whereas Andy made her heart sing? How could she admit her regret of not loving a man as sincere as he? Instead, she fell silent. They ate for a while, passing the chutney and ordering more fritters.

“I would like you to meet my family next week,” Minoo said finally, handing her the remaining pouri. “My parents, two brothers, and sister will be visiting my Long Island cousins, who will prepare a home-cooked meal, like my mother’s in Bombay.”

Emily smiled. An actress needed interesting experiences to play different roles. Then she realized that meeting his parents sounded serious, and again she felt uneasy.

The next morning at breakfast, Barb exploded when she saw the pearl ring. “Emily, you can’t continue accepting gifts from this fellow who adores you unless you intend marriage. It’s unfair!”

“Well, I guess I’m old enough to know my own mind!” Calming, Emily reiterated that Minoo was single, free to follow his chosen path. Besides, how could she hurt him when he’s been so good to her? She might marry him anyway,

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despite the lack of romance.

She busied herself with herbal tea, not adding that Minoo seemed to have a passion for young women. Just last Sunday, he'd mentioned a former girlfriend, about Emily's age, who'd dropped him, and his feelings of betrayal.

"I would have given Amelia anything," he said to Emily, "but devotion was not enough." He stroked Emily's hand while they sat on a park bench.

"Why didn't you find a woman your own age?" Emily blurted, and immediately regretted her impetuosity, fearing again to hurt kind Minoo, but he smiled and gazed at a sturdy oak, its enormous branches barely moving in the sudden breeze.

"Middle-aged women are uninteresting," he said. "They seem too knowledgeable, too jaded. But girls remind me of tender rosebuds, new and fresh. Ah, such enthusiasm, such eagerness to learn! Yes, it is true, young women delight my soul."

"Perhaps you have not met the right older woman," Emily said, gently tugging away her hand and folding her arms across her lap.

"Oh, I met a goodly number at my office and art parties, but younger women charm me into seeing the world with new eyes. Indeed, I have not met the right one, and I'd like to, well..." Flushing with embarrassment at pressing the subject, he stammered, "Emily, my dear...if you could even bring yourself to feel that way about me, I...I would do my best to make you happy, believe me..." He gazed at her earnestly, his face still flushed.

Emily frowned. She disliked discussing sex and marriage with him, like analyzing it with her Milwaukee uncle, a very old man in his fifties, who'd warned her repeatedly about avoiding pregnancy if she wanted a career. Mentally she reexamined their age difference. When she's still in her thirties, Minoo will be her uncle's age. Clouds dimmed the sky, as if an omen. Shuddering, she turns away.

“I am truly sorry,” Minoo apologized again, trembling with anxiety. “Please forgive my hasty remarks. Emily, I would never cause you grief.”

She tried to console him. “It’s all right, I just want to concentrate on my career, until I am established.” She pitied him, his desperate need to be with her when she felt nothing, and yet she resented his encouraging her dependency, so that eventually she must marry him because she glimpsed no other choice.

The following afternoon he gave her a cool, crinkly madras dress from India. After ordering their tea in a diner, he handed Emily the box, and asked her to wear the garment at his relatives’ dinner.

She held up the flounced dress against the hot sun shimmering through the curtains and she admired the crinkling hues of reds, greens, and blues, and the matching belt. Then, replacing the dress in the box, she worried again about severing their relationship. Better end it soon, or her desertion might devastate this gentle man. Yet, something inside her postponed it, as if she feared letting go of faithful Minoo, and then facing desertion herself by someone else.

Meeting Minoo’s relatives, Emily had felt impressed by the spacious house with its manicured lawn and clipped hedges. In the foyer, she smiled shyly at the exuberant introductions, the warm handshakes from the women with their colorful saris, and the men with their conservative business suits. As Minoo has taught her, she steepled her hands, as in prayer, and said with a modest bow, “Namaste,” hello, pleasing the guests that this demure young lady had taken an interest in Minoo’s culture and coyly still bear many children.

After consuming the spicy dishes, the men chatted in the living room, while the women gossiped over tea. Then, their slippered feet padded across the plush white carpet as the women joined their husbands on overstuffed furniture to question Emily about her family background. She answered honestly, despite nervousness at being interrogated as a marriage prospect. Several times she stressed, “My friend,” hoping they’d realize that Minoo wasn’t her intended fiancée. But they nodded and smiled as if she has unspoken passion.

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Still, Emily enjoyed the luxurious surroundings and abundant food, and she explained to Minoo in the returning Taxi, “When I become a famous actress I’ll travel extensively to meet the natives and broaden my horizons! Oh, it’ll be so adventurous!”

“But you must live in the present, as I have urged you,” Minoo said. “Otherwise, your entire life might slip past, unobserved, while you awaited a moment that never arrived.”

“Acting is my dearest dream,” Emily protested. “I read Backstage and Variety every day for casting calls.” She gazed at the twinkling Manhattan skyline. “My roles will bring happiness to millions of people, renew their faith and hope in mankind.”

He smiled.

His next gift came several nights later during a taxi ride from a movie, when he handed Emily a small package she had wondered about. Perhaps dangling earrings to match the triple-strand copper necklace. Or another choker. Or a pin. Tearing off the floral wrapper, she stared in surprise at a book.

“Have you heard of Rabindranath Tagore?” Minoo said. When Emily shook her head, he said, “Please read him, especially where he describes a man wooing a woman who tells him she hopes to light up the entire sky with her lamp, but he replies, ‘Ah, but the sky is more brightly lit when you light up the heart of one human being.’” Minoo paused with a humble smile. “I am paraphrasing, naturally.”

“I never heard of Tagore,” Emily said thoughtfully, studying the jacket picture of a tree trunk entwined with flowers. “Thank you.”

He squeezed her hand. “It brings my utmost pleasure to do these things for you.”

At her apartment building, he escorted her up the stone stoop, and asked if he might kiss her, that is, if she wouldn’t mind.

Grateful for all he’d done, she nodded and felt his lips dryly pressing her. After several moments she pulled away

and climbed the four flights to read Tagore's book while Barb was on a date. Then, for several hours, Emily pondered Minoo's kindness and her guilt at not returning his love, and her longing for Andy. Gazing at the book, she thought about lighting up her own heart as well as Andy's, and finally she decided to end her relationship with Minoo, and tell Andy she'd like to have that cup of coffee with him. From now on, she would stop yearning for distant tomorrows and instead seek the potential happiness in each day. Perhaps this was Minoo's greatest gift.



April Bulmer | Pilate's Wife

Too late when I groaned and the dream slipped from me, a black cord loose round its wet throat. A noose Pontius cut like a midwife, his hands thin as knives, and delivered to the festival. My breasts were jars of milk curdled in the hot sun as the priests, the elders abandoned my dream. Rattled their death charms.

They led Jesus away, his hips slender, but his belly swollen like a woman's, bearing a weight and a skein of rope knotted to God. Slack to grasp, though our hands are blades still wet with blood.

26

Rene Battelle

Jennette Selig

HAIKU IV

Here, they must have kissed.
See footsteps leaning inward
On the fickle snow

I longed for a voice
to fill up the silence.
Until I realized
the silence was the answer.

Tell me a fable
and let me forget
this faithless world
and this fragile regret,
for I am restless tonight.

The day you left,
I put on my music,
and danced like a maniac
in the middle of the night.

The shadows played on the
blinds,
so that it looked to outsiders
as though it were an asylum,
and I was having a fit
of freedom.

Michael Ceraolo | Essay on a News
Report (25)

Apparently the crack investigative reporter
had run out of things to investigate
for during a recent ratings period
the station aired his 'greatest hits'

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Michael Ceraolo | Essay on a News
Report (36)

The jock-sniffing mouthpieces of one of the local sports teams
did countless unpaid promos for the team's charities,
somehow always failing to mention the fact
that the teams multi-multi-millionaire owner
only gave about half the money collected
to any charities other than himself

Grover Gall | Against The
Grain

the sharpest sliver
finds its way easily
--deep into innocent flesh
which presses only subtly

against it
--through ignorance
--through chance.

28

Charlie Newman

010505

this is not the wind in the willows, sunshine

your god
has more
aliases
than my junky ass has excuses
&
sweetness
is sweetness
is sweetness
no matter what you call it

Rose E. Grier

Lit Keypad

From the shadows you step
as the bottle blue light exposes you.
I know you were there.
You know it too.
Your scent encircles me.
My breath quickens and
you permeate my senses like liquid smoke.

There is a certain smile on your face
that I remember.
Not touching,
we dance in the alley.
You take the familiar lead
and rape me.
I cry as you type your perversions
in the dark.

bluebird falls from
nightsky to dense
city by the freeway
as pagans watch
with hungry eyes

in time of sowing
rain clouds: sky's burden
moist earth opens leering
growth may happen here

dripped into blood puddle
river of childless burning
show begins angry people
flame licks singe flesh

back to broken treetops
this secret aurora borealis
measured deception in silence
loose lock of hair

Justin Taylor

29

untitled

ten car pileup
the interstate
flamenco guitar
and if I am ever
in a highway mess
of bloodied asphalt
and flashing lightnoise
know my dear that I loved you
by the soft green of a flamenco guitar

at the gazebo

let's play something soft
that builds, but gently
could be an arab dirge
but isn't

let's play something quiet
that is also beautiful
like sunrise
in the desert

30

Carla E. Anderton

Bargaining with God

Six months plus, long months of
Playing second best to inferiority
The light in my eyes growing
Dimmer and finally, extinguished
Forty minutes an hour spent in silence
Internally bargaining with God, tasting
Victory sporadically, caring little
Who won as long as she lost
Fifteen minutes stolen, hasty embraces
Inhaling the proof of your adoration
No one else permitted entry into
My heart or my mind or my soul

Susan Wilby

Damned Tired

I'm so tired of this exhaustion
Draining my heart empty
Leaving my body quivering
With weakness and sorrow.
I'm so tired of falling
And losing my way in
Life's capricious plays.
I'm so tired of having to
Put my bright face on,
My best foot forward,
And all the rest of that crap.
I'm just so damned tired
That I want to lay down and
Never have to wake up...

Jeff Michaels

IN THE ARMS OF THE MADONNA

31

Can't sleep
Got to watch out for the fucker in the next bed
He threatened to poke my eye out with a fork
Maybe I should take him out before he gets to me
Who the fuck is talking?
This is a serious matter
She said she would take care of me
Wake me up in the morning, make my bed, take baths
with me
I wish these voices would get out of my head
Either I am someone great or I am nothing
I think I will go to the art room in the morning
When they call us
I will paint a picture of the naked Christ
In his mother's arms
Sleeping

Sean Fortenbaugh

My Favorite jacket

I yawn
Cigarette smoke rising
I'm wearing my daydream jacket
With a mansion in the pocket
Bleeding soul colored water fountains
Black light glowing paints on no canvas
Fluorescent stripes
A neon light up
Peg pieces in the box's bottom

32

Jennifer Rowan

Cheap

99 Cents
cost of being
me

Jennifer Rowan

De-Caffeinated

Cinnamon Swizzle
Sticks in an otherwise dull
and empty cup of
Joe, spinning cream and sugar
into bland homogeny

cheryl townsend

i gave up

my nightmares of
wrong faces
All the reasons
I could never conjure
and I settled into
a you and I belief
Now that you are gone
I see you everywhere
Like daydreams
of right that was left

Pleasure

The morning after
you may contemplate
insanity
as cruel chastity
fills the blood stream

now we are no more
than summoned faces
sullen
smiling softly
under the stars

I fumble for the key,
as your body
refreshes me,
yet again

its christmas eve

its christmas eve
and snow is falling
on the scooters
parked outside
a late night kimbap
restaurant
I'm walking a mangy little dog
that the neighbours keep
on a 2 and half foot chain
for 11 hours a day
terrified of people
its sniffing hopelessly for a little place to piss
and I know I there is something
that I should be doing
there is something important to be said
but this dog is taking its time
and bright eyed girls are
scraping snowballs from the sidewalk
and dark haired guys
are smoking their cigarettes in telephone booths
and everything else
has let fall
under the weight of all this
and built white
on the black seats of the scooters
holding
like a word held
in breathless wonder

Rocco de Giacomo

33

34

cheryl townsend

I DO PUMPKINS

He was as young
as my son
were I to have one
with a blatant facade
of sincerity as he asked
to conform to my hotel room
with his interpreted promises
But I left him as bold-faced
as the clock that had already
run out of more time than we
could surrender

artwork by cheryl townsend



artwork by cheryl townsend

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36

Rhonda Warden

Always You

my lungs filled
with the death
you poured from your lips
to shut me up
into a nonexistent being
so you could walk in your wrong
with supreme confidence of my obedience

Beneath The Noise On Channel Six

J Dyson

brittle fingers breaking one by one beneath the strain of the relentless
soap scum sun that burns and blisters the back of my neck until i've
reached the empty end that is my day.

broken glass i've stepped on twice
swallowed whole
the good advice of the doctor is followed to the point of my demise.

a scheme! i scream i scream

this fateful day the sun went down and left no shadows to be found as
finally the blanket of blackness devoured her whole.

no relief shall come from the falling sun
falling stars like raining hell

all that's left is one last breath, a fiery death and the static on channel six.

Beneath the white noise there is a message.

A GREAT MEDICINE CALLED POETRY

37

The Freedom of Poetry



Raymond Fenech

Poetry has no definite form or shape. That is why it is one of the best mediums through which human life can be interpreted. Men can only survive if they are free from conformity, allowing their true identity to speak for itself; without becoming slaves of conventionalism and conservatism; and if they were allowed the space for spontaneity and imagination. The art of poetry offers this freedom, hence why it is so sublime.

When a poet writes, he is free, free from inhibitions, free from the conditions set by society. He has to liberate his mind from all these, or else what he composes cannot be called poetry. Liberty is the basis behind genuine inspiration, behind every poetic word created. There is no poetry in calculated mathematical stanzas. There is no such thing as a pre-studied, pre-planned poem. There is only the spontaneous poem from the heart that touches the hearts. If poetry could be taught, all computers would be aspiring poets. If poetry was only reserved for critics and academics, its mission, its scope, its sole purpose of existence would no longer have any significance. In fact poetry as an art would have failed.

Poetic Energy

Poetry is in all and everything. The poet is needed to teach men how to extract this form of art from life and its surrounding. For poetry means living; poetry means appreciating life, nature, all that is earthbound and even that which



goes beyond. Poetry is forever and belongs to mankind. There is no life worth living, or life after death, no immortality without poetry.

Poetry is the vibrating energy without which the difference could be as distinguishable as that from night and day, life and death, water and fire, the invisible and the visible. American poetess May Swenson once wrote some notes about poetry:

“Poetry doesn’t tell; it shows. Prose tells.

Poetry is not philosophy; poetry makes things be, right now.

Not an idea, but a happening:

It is not music, but it sounds while showing.

It is mobile; it is a thing taking place - active, interactive, in a place.

It is not thought; it has to do with senses and muscles.

It is not dancing, but it moves while it remains.

And it is not science.”

Inspiration

Poetry strikes when you least expect it. It is a lightning of inspiration that must be vented forth from the system. It froths and bubbles, it kicks the poet to a higher level of consciousness and makes him the number one human observer, with extremely sharp hyperactive senses, volatile, almost spiritual. Poetry is a bridge between mankind and everything else. It calls as loud as silence and no poet can refuse to be the medium.

Poetry is the strength, the fibre behind humaneness. Without poetry men would be missing an important link, that which makes them complete, in full synchronization and one with nature, the environment and last but not least, the soul.

No Place for Poetry In Malta

Having said that, the situation regarding poetry in Malta is indeed alarming. Over 20 years ago when I started writing poetry, there were no creative writing courses. In fact the only “writing” course available in journalism at the University of Malta was abolished in 1979. Today, the situation is still very much the same. The only progress is that a bachelors degree in communications is now available. More recent the university of Malta is realizing that there is a great need for writing workshops. However, little is being done to organize similar activities.

Once I was advised by an editor of a certain book-publishing house in the UK to publish my poetry in my country. Usually I never reply to an editor’s rejection comments, but on this occasion I made an exception. It was quite obvious that he did not know what he was talking about.

The Parochial System

Poetry here is dying a very slow death. Maltese poets are the victims of what I call, “the public’s indifference syndrome”. Few people read poetry and most of these are academics. Actually academics do it not for the love of the art, but because to them, reading and understanding poetry is a sort of a status symbol. They feel poetry is reserved for intellectuals and scholars like them. They are the privileged few. Their behavior is ninety percent the cause for the negative attitude taken by most people towards poetry. For most youngsters poetry is like a taboo. It is frightening even to look at. The real poets are not within this academic group, they are the few but neglected social outcasts who cannot find publication.

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To Write in Maltese or English

Furthermore these same academics seem to think that only those who write in Maltese are worthy of attention. They seem to forget that there is more to writing poetry than the language chosen by the writer as his medium. American Poet, Gregory Corso once said:

“My concern is not just American poets but the poets of the world because a poet is first of all a universal being, he is of man, not of a particular place of man - that is why it is impossible for a true poet to be nationalistic. To write poems for the state and not of his heart is death for the poet.”

Corso is being quite clear in saying that writing poetry has nothing to do with being patriotic. There are many other ways of promoting one's language and the most elementary is to introduce its proper education in schools, something which we still lack in my country.

Poetry is still taught in the old fashioned way. So whether a poet writes in English or Japanese is immaterial. The most important thing is that every writer uses the language, which suits him best and which he feels is the most comfortable when expressing himself.

One of the annual major national literary prizes awarded for literary achievement, by the Culture and Education Ministry states in its rules that entries submitted have to be in Maltese. This is far from being fair with all those writers and poets who write in English and who can never take part in this contest. In my opinion the competition should award another prize for the best literary work in English. One cannot possibly erase 150 years of Maltese history under British rule - hence why our second language is English and why for many, English is still their first language.

Personally, I have often been criticized for not writing in my home language but I do not feel guilty about this at all. Besides the fact that I feel that freedom of expression can be practiced in any language, English is a universal language which offers everyone the possibility of exploiting it towards having his “message” transmitted to as wide an audience as

possible. I feel that this is my first obligation towards my poetry and do not regret having followed my intuition.



No Guidance or Encouragement

Another disturbing factor is that there is no cooperation between Maltese poets. Upcoming talent finds little or no guidance from the more experienced fellow writers. Poets here are divided into two categories: there are the isolated individuals, or the ones belonging to the academic clans. In reality the latter suffer from inferiority complex. New talent is a constant threat because it might steal the pedestal which is so indispensable to their status symbol and ego. Once it was suggested to a leading writer to give some lessons on his craft. His answer came in the negative, saying that he was afraid his students would steal his ideas!

When I was 15, one of my friends, now an English university lecturer wanted to show some of my poems to a certain literature professor who was incidentally also a poet. I remember I had gone with my friend to the university and waited for him in the library thinking that he would come back with some constructive criticism, about my poetry. I was wrong. He just brushed them aside and his only remark was, "It's just youthful craze - it will pass and he'll forget all about it." Well, since then 30 years have passed and my craze for writing poetry is still very much at large!

Marketing Poetry Abroad and Publishing in Malta

Apart from the fact that I have always loved the English language, I have always kept in mind the fact that the market for poetry here is non-existent. Unfortunately, I have met with very few people who take an interest in reading poetry. Had I written my poetry in my home language this would have limited my possibilities of publishing my work on an international basis. So far my poems have been published within the small press community in ten countries, so I was right in the first place to do what I did. Here, small press magazine publishers are non-existent. Major publishers

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would tell you outright that they do not commission poetry books because they know that poetry does not sell. There is little one can do about this situation.

However I have always believed that where there is a will there is a way. It takes 90 percent determination and only 10 percent talent to succeed in any career one wants to pursue. I began writing poetry at the age of 13. I loved John Keats and his poetry was like a match applied to the wick of my talent. Since then I never stopped writing, in spite of the fact that there were no writing courses at the time. I learnt how to improve my writing and how to market my work through correspondence courses. Then, I started subscribing to magazines, buying market guides and finally submitted my first poems most of which came back with rejection slips - until that first acceptance!

My warning to budding poets is that, particularly the poet is the most underpaid of all writers. The poet is the least to aspire fame and riches from publication. There is no such thing as a professional poet anywhere in the world. In other words there are no poets who earn their living by writing poetry. Just think, a poet laureate has a very small annual income! So if anyone out there is asking himself, "what's in it for me?" if measured in pounds shillings and pence, the answer is NOTHING! On the contrary, expect to spend a little fortune every year on postage, stationery, poetry books and subscriptions to magazines. Writing poetry is a vocation and the best that can be earned from publication is satisfaction, perhaps eventually prestige.

When a poet surmounts the first difficulties, the experience is unbelievably ecstatic. To quote Anais Nin, writers must remember that, "The role of a writer is not to say what we can all say, but what we are unable to say."

Wayne Ray

PRISONER OF WAR

PART TWO

All the things that I do to survive
and all the words of hope that I hear
are in desperation. The bridge
of my life is on the horizon
and I can see the broken railings now.
Only a fool sees past them
to the other side and I am pacing
my own footsteps to the edge.

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Wayne Ray

1989

for the Colonel

1989
was not a good year for war vets.
Few made it past Christmas,
some slipped through the New Year.
All of them slipped through our memories.



(Scars Illustration unrelated to the author or the writing)

Shanna Sandmoen

Cigarette

The smoldering look of the cigarette
and the grainy feel of it on my skin,
as I exhale my life away and
burn death into my flesh—
It's sallow butt setting fire
to my skin

little cigarette girl, kiss me
and lick the ashes off my
tongue as I put your flame
out of it's misery.





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Mimi McCormick

I'm Waiting

I'm waiting....
If you would touch me, hold me, love me
You would set a spark, start a fire, burn me.
Passion is there so possess me, take me, own me.
To be loved. To burn. To be owned.
I am yours to control, bend, mold.
Ignite me....
I'm waiting...
Make me fly, let me soar, set me free.
I will lift you up, melt you down.
Feel my heat. Know my heart. Sense my need.
I'm waiting...

Jay Frankston

untitled

Words, words,
hanging from the clothes-line
like sheets, like towels, like pillowcases,
hanging outside, out there, in the rain,
dripping, dripping, dripping from the line,
from the sentence, from the meaning,
dripping from the mouth
onto the floor, the shirt, the paper,
making stains that cannot be removed.
Words without definition,
like dribble, like courage,
tiny and insignificant,
seeking attention,
splitting hairs,
splitting headaches,
splitting sentences,
falling to the ground like dead leaves
crushed underfoot,
crumbled into dust
and blown away, away,
away into silence.

Alexandria Rand

Finest Feeling

Drench me
in the finest furs
surround me
in the rarest silks of the Orient.
Rest me in the clouds.
I don't care.
I still contend
that the finest feeling
is laying
with my head
on your shoulder

47

John Mullin

To Wealth

O honeyed balm that soothes a failing cause,
Sweet nectar sucked by some forsaken dream,
Elixir granting disappointment pause
And dark despair new hope within your beam;
A remedy for life's unreasoned ills -
A panacea binding fear and doubt,
Established cure when melancholy chills
And solace as its legions storm without.
And yet, O Wealth, alone you're incomplete
Despite the veneration due your name,
Fidelity (exclusive) shall defeat
Those healing riches from a proven claim;
By Honor, Courage, Truth, yes even Health,
Can man prevail though great should be his wealth.

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Infomercial Away from Enlightenment

(A Shallow Discussion About God, Heaven, and Livestock)

Mike Hovancek

People can learn a lot by going to church. Me? As a youth I learned how to sneak out of a crowded mass without being detected by my parents. I also learned about swearing from the performance my father gave every Sunday when he and the entire congregation tried to pull out of the church driveway at the same time.

I'm not terribly religious. My grandmother, on the other hand, was promiscuous with religion. I guess grandma felt that if she gave money to enough religious groups she would be guaranteed a spot in Heaven, where she could prevent my long-dead grandfather from getting laid. Grandma was, perhaps, the only person who could turn my

Grandfather's stay in Heaven into a living hell.

That's why Grandma wasn't afraid of death. She simply imagined Heaven as a place with an unlimited supply of knitting needles, Kleenex, pork rinds, and all the other luxuries that made her life on Earth so remarkable. To Grandma the afterlife was sort of like a time-share condo deal.

I, on the other hand, want a God who I can afford. That's why I'm hoping to come across one who is too well off to need my money. For example, I'm waiting impatiently for Jesus to come back to do some book signings. I think he could make a fortune collecting the royalties from that "Bible" thing. No, technically he didn't actually write the Bible but, hey, Nancy Reagan didn't write her autobiography and she still gets royalties. Besides, even if the royalty deal falls through, Jesus could make a lot of money doing talk shows and product endorsements. In fact, with a lot of hard work, a few convincing infomercials, and the right public relations crew, Jesus could eventually be more popular than the Beatles. Imagine that.

Religion, after all, is a lot like capitalism. Look at those Born Again Christians, for Christ's sake. These people are the Amway salesmen of religion. I found that the only way to get them off my back is to agree with them.

Born Again person: Excuse me, have you given your soul, your life, and 38% of your taxable income to our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ?

Me: Absolutely!

Born Again person: ...You.....you have?.....

Me: Sure! Keep up the good work, brother!

Born Again person: ...You have not!.....have you?...



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I once had a co-worker, Steve, who urged me to become Born Again. I explained to him that my mother would never go for the idea. She is still having second thoughts about letting me be born the first time. Besides, I imagine that it would be much more painful for her the second time around, seeing as how I have grown considerably since my first birth.

Steve eventually began to lose interest in his religion when he tried to call Jesus collect from a pay phone and Jesus refused to accept the charges. Disappointed, he married a contortionist and left the church. Apparently, Steve decided that he preferred hugging, kissing, and other forms of violence to the security of everlasting life in paradise. It made sense to me.

People do a lot of strange and gruesome things in the name of religion. If they aren't cutting off the ends of their children's penises or throwing virgins into volcanoes they are watching the 700 Club. It's almost enough to make me pray to God that there isn't a God.

Despite my discomfort with religion, I have to confess that I am fascinated by Amish people. In fact, I have been thinking about building a house right in the heart of Amish country. All I really know about these people is that they have a belief system that requires them to wear those "invisible pedestrian" outfits in order to keep nighttime motorists on their toes. They also swear off modern technology like refrigerators, electric lights, and all the other tools of Satan that lead to eternal damnation.

To be honest, the only reason I am interested in the Amish people is because I think they would be easy to manipulate. I can make them think that I have magic powers by performing a few miracles (for example, I could work an electric can opener or a lava lamp in front of them). Once they are convinced that I am a god of some sort they will have to do all kinds of absurd things to appease me. Pretty cool, huh?

My only concern about moving to Amish country is that you never know what the neighborhood will be like five



years down the road. Will I be able to keep up with that fast-paced, swinging Amish lifestyle? Will the neighborhood become overrun with Amish crack houses? It's so hard to say.

Anyway, I guess the Amish people think that all this hard work and self-denial will result in an eternal stay in paradise. What do you suppose the Amish people think paradise is like? Do they imagine Heaven as a place with lots of cows? What a raw deal. What's the point in living a life of hard work and self-denial if the only reward is an eternity of more hard work and self-denial?

I would rather go to Amish hell. What do the Amish people think hell is like anyway? I'll bet there aren't any cows there. I mean, what could a cow possibly do that would result in an eternal stay in hell? It isn't like they can take the Lord's name in vain or anything (unless, of course, the Lord's name happens to be "Moo").

Maybe they picture hell as a place where there is a lot of wild sex, wanton fast food consumption, and the unruly use of toasters, microwaves, and other unholy electrical appliances. I don't know.

I assume that Amish hell is very different from the hell that my Catholic grandparents used to talk about. The way I understand it, Catholics aren't allowed to use contraception because they are supposed to have a lot of kids. Why do they want a lot of kids? So they can get a taste of hell years before they actually die.

I think religion is basically a lot of people wishing that they had control over the uncontrollable (it's a lot like being a parent). What would this world be like if all our wishes came true, though? I know what this world would be like if all my wishes came true. I would tell you about it but my therapist has recommended that I keep my mouth shut until after I meet with the Grand Jury. Stay tuned...

52

artwork by cheryl townsend



artwork by cheryl townsend

53



54

helena wolfe

Changing Garments

Agonies are
one of my changes of garments,

I do not ask the wounded person
how he
feels
or
who he
is

I myself become the wounded person,
My hurts turn livid upon me
as I lean on a cane and observe

helena wolfe

Did you know I was watching?

Did you know I was watching

you know, i watch you
when i'm sitting in the corner
and you're in your circle.
you know the circle, the ring
around you

that's what I've been
trying to avoid

and I've done a pretty good
job of it, haven't I

Worms

Worm is like a cub of cream
 And it breaks itself in half
 And it grown into another worm
 As it slithers down the path

The worm has a water skeleton
 So that's why he is easy to break
 He can be short, or fat, or long, or thin,
 And a part of him's called the worm steak

Worms eat mostly vegetables
 And some people use them for wishing

But the best thing you can do
 Is rent a boat or two
 And of course - take him out fishing



Mulberry Zoo

If you want something that's interesting, special
 Then go to the Mulberry Zoo..
 You'll see the McGoffs, the Treps and the Sloffs
 The Glems, and the Gillastems, too.
 Pass by the cages, see the Grems in their rages
 For eighty pound meat scraps - a few!
 See the exhibits of Mogs that say 'Ribbit'
 That are searching for something to do.
 Yes, if you want something that's interesting, special
 Then go to the Mulberry Zoo,
 For if you eat globbles, and love to see plobbles,
 Then this is the place for you!

56

shannon
peppers

mean to me

i ain't got no money
and nothing's for free

how many times are you
going to pull on me

what do you have to give me
what do you expect of me

when I've got nothing
when you've got nothing
what are you supposed
to mean to me

Alexandria
Rand

Like Daggers

I can't think of anything else.
like daggers
speeding
slicing the air
the thoughts race through my mind.
I can't help but think
of his stunning eyes
his sensitive touch
my weakness.
How he's torn my life in two.

shannon
peppers

Have To Ask

his sister was surprised
she was surprised that I thought
that the man i loved
didn't have a photo of me
in his wallet
but she never told me why she was surprised
so I'll have to ask

gabriel athens

understand

down	silence	music
in	me	shoulder
understand		faces
different	beg	image
	cry	laughing
day	conform	smiling
life	type	conversing
interrogation	them	envy
face	those	why
		me
change	understand	
	learn	face
will		room
	respect	dream
break	human	never
	me	life
day	room	
battle		

shannon peppers

my life changing

When he wanted something
wanted something from her
and he always asked her

and you know now, now that I
think about it, he never knew to ask
and he never knew how to want
and she never knew how to answer
and this was their little world

and this was how they argued
and she was always right
and she always wanted to argue



Alexandria Rand

Like Daggers

I can't think of anything else.
 like daggers
 speeding
 slicing the air
the thoughts race through my mind.
I can't help but think
 of his stunning eyes
 his sensitive touch
 my weakness.
How he's torn my life in two.

aeon Togan

Any Help At All

I'm tired
 of doing things myself and
I'm tired
 of looking for my own answers
 for all the troubles I experience
I'm tired
 of looking
 I want someone help on this one

with my head on my shoulders
they got tired
 of looking in my direction
to see if I need anything

but I always want
what others don't expect

sydney anderson

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nights

If I have to -

I'll put on the mask
I'll play the game
the facade

Oh, I'll do it -

I'll go through the motions
I'll live with the lies
the fantasy world.

Just to spend my nights with you.

my

my eyes
no longer see
I close them
my hands
are numb
I no longer feel
my heart
is cold
I cannot love

sometimes
the light

Sometime the understanding
Travels into the realms of the unknown
All we can do is hope
search
dream
Because we will never find.
Sometimes the light is not enough.



Alexandria Rand

naivety

The naivety is over.
Now we must put our little toys away
and stop playing house.
This is the real thing,
and I won't fool around anymore.
Not with you.

You threw around the words
"I love you"
as if they were no more than water
as if you really didn't know
their value.

But this isn't a game,
and when I get hurt
kissing it
won't make it better.

aeon logan

A New Patient

how many colors are in the pack of crayons

There's a child here with
color pack of crayons with his coloring book

the boy is with his mother
does the mother have a patient here?

how many colors are here

This little boy can speak well. And walk.
That's important for little boys,
do other simple tasks
I wonder if the average patient learns to walk
or dress
or talk
or learn
or eat

how many colors are here

Yahoo Real Estate Theory

Mike Hovancek



I finally gave in to the national mental illness and started thinking about buying a house. I don't know why: I had been living happily in a slum apartment complex for years and I didn't have any pressing need to live like a human being. I guess I just longed to get into a thirty year debt with a mortgage company that is staffed entirely by people who don't cast a shadow.

My father was very excited about this news. In his mind, a man isn't truly heterosexual until he owns a house. He called right away to share some of his years of wisdom with me from his jail cell in Cleveland. It had been a while since Dad and I had a real conversation. The last time we spoke on the phone he asked, "So, how's college going?" "Great!", I said in the most enthusiastic tone I could muster. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I graduated from college a decade earlier.

Dad had all kinds of useful advice for me when it came to real estate. He told me not to use a realtor in my search for life-long debt. Instead, he recommended that I find an elderly widow who is easily confused and offer her a fraction of the market value of her house.

Following Dad's instructions, I checked out the obituaries to see whether or not there were any real estate deals brewing. It seemed like a sleazy way to operate, though. I felt like I was one step away from buying an orphanage and forcing the kids out into the cold on Christmas morning. I'm not cruel enough to do that kind of thing. I am more likely to wait until the day after Christmas to force orphans out into the cold.

So, I gave up on the obituaries and began searching the real estate listings. I didn't realize what a piece of white trash I was until I saw the kind of homes that were available in my price range. For some reason, they were all deco-

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rated with cement lawn jockeys and tractor tires. I knew I was going to have to work hard to keep up with the fast-paced red neck lifestyle if I was going to survive in any of those neighborhoods.

If I bought a house there I would have had very little money left over to fill the front yard with wrecked cars and abandoned toys. I mean, it would have taken me years to get a competitive amount of garbage strewn across my lawn. In the meantime, I would be the laughing stock of every toothless bumpkin on the block. Hell, I didn't even own a sleepy old hound dog named "Mavis."

One day, I looked at a house that was located near my apartment complex. Before I saw it, the realtor told me that it was a beautifully decorated "doll house." It was my first taste of real estate jargon. As it turns out, a "doll house" is a dilapidated shack, a "fixer upper" is a condemned building, and a "motivated seller" is a guy who is trying to sell a house while it is completely engulfed in flames.

I checked out the "doll house." The border in the living room was a row of giant pineapples and the dining room was decorated with a tragic pig theme. Several of the walls in the house were slathered with shiny pink paint and inflicted with the kind of decorations that you can only find in the flaming bowels of Hell (or, possibly, on the Home Shopper's Club).

I could have re-painted and re-decorated the place easily enough but there were other problems. The siding was sloughing off like a layer of dead skin and the furnace looked like an artifact from the Cro-Magnon era. The only thing about the place that reminded me of a "doll house" was its size: The rooms were just big enough to house a small gathering of dwarves.

I was also concerned about the family photos that littered every room of the house. Many of them reminded me of the "before" photos from a plastic surgery demonstration. This caused me to suspect that the family was actually part of a secret government program that required them to store nuclear waste in their basement. It was no wonder they were in such a hurry to sell the house, those tricky mutants!

The realtor was an extremely rude, gruff man who I hated immediately. His business card included a photograph.

In it, he was wearing a white suit and a big cowboy hat that was tilted at a jaunty angle. He kept rolling his eyes and scolding me whenever he talked about the real estate business. I was about to make the biggest investment in my life; the last person I needed at the helm was a suburban cowboy with an anger problem.



Over the next couple of months, I went from one house to another, listening to friendly lies from realtors in snazzy blazers. People say the nicest things when they are trying to take thousands and thousands of dollars from you. I wish I could afford to have people treat me like that all the time.

Over time, I learned most of the tricks of the real estate business. I found, for example, that if you drive around and look at houses shortly before Easter you will get a good sense of how annoying the neighbors are. If you find yourself surrounded by large, inflatable bunnies and trees that are decorated with colorful plastic eggs, lock your doors and speed away. I guarantee that if you linger in that kind of neighborhood for any length of time the locals will run up to your car and try to invite you to a Tupperware party or a father-and-son breakfast at the Lion's Club Lodge. Trust me, you can't live in a place like that unless you actually want to spend the rest of your life hosting Cub Scout meetings and fondue parties for the local yokels.

Here is another real estate trick: When a person sells a house he is legally required to inform all potential buyers of any murders that have occurred on the property. This drives the price down because, for some reason, people are freaked out by murder. Go figure!

If you want to turn someone else's personal tragedy into fabulous savings for yourself, call a real estate office and ask them for a list of all the murder houses in the county. It's that easy! For those of you who aren't comfortable dealing with real estate agencies, I advise you to go out and buy a police scanner. When a call comes in for a homicide, rush to the house and check it out. If you get there quickly enough you can get a good look at the place before the police put up that annoying crime scene tape.

The image shows the numbers '64' drawn in a simple, sketchy, hand-drawn style. The '6' is on the left and the '4' is on the right. The lines are dark and somewhat irregular, giving it a personal or artistic feel.

There was only one murder house available when I was looking at real estate. A guy stabbed his girlfriend during a drug binge and she wandered around the house for several hours -coked out of her brains- until she bled to death. Her boyfriend rolled her in a rug and carried her out to his car. Once he was in the driveway, though, he realized that he was too high to fit her into the trunk. Alert neighbors saw this desperate act and called a real estate office right away.

Coke-heads are good for the real estate business. They always own a lot of flashy stuff and they are in the habit of being murdered and imprisoned. Unfortunately, this particular couple lived in an area that was inconvenient for me and I had to pass on their house. It's a shame. I bet they had a nice stereo and television that would have been included with the deal...

After a few months of touring tarpaper shacks and engaging in inept haggling sessions with real estate shysters, I found a house that I wanted. It was in a really great neighborhood where the streets were lined with big old trees and where most of the houses were nicely maintained. The previous owner could have sold the place for a lot more money if he took the time to fix it up but he was in a hurry to sell. He said something about the house being built on top of a sacred Indian burial site...

All of this is part of my "Yahoo Theory of Real Estate":

Find a yahoo with a nice house that is in need of renovation and offer him a fraction of the market value for it.

Spend the following year like a prisoner in a forced labor camp, doing a major overhaul of the house.

Buy a lot of power tools and spend a lot of time in the emergency room as a result of said power tools.

Live in luxury and exhaustion while you wait for your injuries to heal.

Spend a lot of time yelling "Hey you kids!!! Get off my lawn!!!" and accumulating worthless trinkets until you are too old to schlep up and down the stairs.

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Sell the house at a fraction of the market value to a pompous idiot who keeps calling you a “yahoo.”
Move to a cheesy condo in Florida and wait for the sweet, sweet relief that death can bring.

I’m in step three of this process right now. As a result, the house looks like a bombed-out building. There is plaster dust everywhere and most of the rooms are in one stage of deconstruction or another. Ironically, I would have been in safer and cleaner surroundings if I had stayed in the slum apartment complex.

I am still living out of boxes because most of the house is uninhabitable at the moment. Once things are fixed up a little better I’m going to have to spray the cats down with “Endust” and chase them around the house to get the place clean.

I’ve become really boring since I bought the house. I keep finding myself giving long monologues about drywall, plumbing, and paint to perfect strangers. People cross the street to avoid me now. They don’t want to hear me ramble on about the trials and tribulations of floor sanding or the joys of epoxy-based wood filling. I don’t get it.

The only people who will talk to me now are other suckers who bought houses in my neighborhood and they keep giving me really bad advice like “Don’t worry about shutting off the electricity when you work with those wires, they have safety features that are supposed to keep your from getting shocked” and “No, that isn’t a load-bearing wall. Go ahead and knock it down!”

If things continue this way I’ll probably have to write the rest of my articles by poking at my computer keyboard with a stick or by communicating them to nurses through an elaborate series of blinks and grunts. With that in mind, I should warn you that it might be a while before my next book is finished. Stay tuned...



Paul Cordeiro

Shakespeare & Company

We've got Shakespeare
playing in the Sixteenth Century
whom we know little about
and many argue he couldn't
have done it all by himself.
Nowadays we don't make any
Shakespeare's but we create
millionaires who dunk
twenty times a night
and they brag on it
and the 10,000
women they've slammed
and scored on hardly breaking
a sweat.

Paul Cordeiro

Bull Riding With Madonna

Madonna cowboys and kicks up dust
and squirms and twists around
unlike an airbrushed pinup
puffed up for guys to jerk off on.
Though she pretends to scratch
her crotch, feel how it hangs
when kicked in the balls
and feel it sore there.
She doesn't go whoa
when she fingers her own bouncy flesh.
The men she's mastered
and money earned in the saddle
gives Sean that wonderful desire
to punch an old photographer
in the face after the wild bull ride
through the dirty-minded town.

Ruth Latta

FEBRUARY
PHOTO - 1950

The mother props the baby on her arm.
The older child stands on a kitchen chair.
Framed by the window, all show some alarm
At Daddy with the camera standing there.
It's February, bright but bitter cold,
So why a picture on this day of days?
Because the little girl turned four years old.
She's solemn as beside her, Baby plays
With tiny fists, as Mummy fondly smiles.
The winter is half over: they'll come through
The bitter nights of cold, no one for miles,
Snowbound and bored, beset by colds and flu.
But they have apples -- root cellar's surprise
And later she will make the family pies.

67

Jayne Fenton Keane

69 Same Dreams

He watches close-ups of his feet.
Vats of bodies spill red along the edges.
He leaves nothing behind but blood prints.

68



69

Mead



"Thirty One Kisses"
We open, lips pressed
heads forming one heart
Close, I dream with eyes



70

open to the closing

reverie of yours'

Head to head, nose to nose,

there is a pulse in the stillness

We feel its soft whirr



Mead

**Tandem reclaims us,
souls seeking entrance
Cradled, what sights
do our eyes spy?**

Mead



71



**We are landscapes for each other
I would bury myself in your shoulders,
your back. Be my strong sentinel
keeping watch**

72

Mead

**This is near eclipse—
You, me, we are penumbras
for the moon that we form**



Mead

**Lay me down so I may know worship
bestows its love back
Raise me up, face to face,**



**devotion the symmetry in this space
shaped between
Encompassed once more
all is awash
Are we fated to be as such
For souls should touch the infinite
And in such power there is gentleness**



Mead

74

**The strength to be tender
Hold the revving force,
an angel's shawl,
our very arms**

**Navigator, chart the circumference
We share the secrets of statues**





We are listening without words
The Beasts, the legendary Beauties
of idolatry

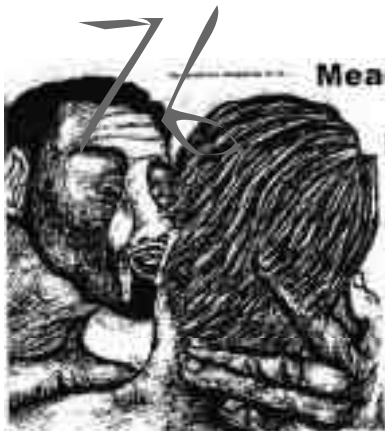
Mead



The primitive whispering in us
Hold the present, precious, one gaze
on the look out
We are molten as stone

Mead





Mead

Passions' waters course over

We are mysterious as half light,

half dark

And you eclipse me, a candle,



where my eclipse returns the soft warmth

My neck, your hand, the length, the breadth

of this sweetness is sighs

And if in tumult I will embrace you still

For the stretch of us I see the future

Mead





We are light in this cavern

I rest in trust here that you will hold

We rest, not spent, but reflecting renewal



Mead



78

And we dream of spirit together as flesh



Mead



Mead



Mead





helena wolfe

In The Room

maybe i'm reading too much into this
maybe you're unhappy with her
I wonder what you're like when you are happy
when you're interested in talking
and you want to smile more
and live more
I want to know you when you're like that
maybe you act that way with me

helena wolfe

But I Won't

when you think of truck drivers you think
of people who live on the road driving semi trucks

but the view is higher in there
and you feel that no one could hurt you there

it handles the road

my philosophy is
do something if you get the chance
take that chance
because you don't know how many chances you'll get

Beth Gibson

Angels in the Snow

I remembered how you looked
Pulling my sled through the snowstorm
Brushing snowflakes from graying hair
With a slightly stiffened hand
Then lying in a drift
Your yellow face against the white powder
Flapping thin arthritic wings
To make me some angels in the snow

I suppose in 1940
You built snowmen in a meadow
You were young
The snowmen knew your touch

And I remembered how you looked
Hollow frame in an iron wheelchair
Blue eyes sunk in a mass of wrinkles
Staring blankly into space
As I turned to leave the Home
Your trembling hand reached out to touch me

I kissed the helpless fingers
That once made
Angels in the snow.



Susan Osterman

UNTITLED REALITY

reality is subjective
if i feed it into the typewriter
then reality is still subjective

in the classbard syndrome of mass sexecuted
does anybody dream of his torment?

my cat is wing-tipped
she floats on the floor
backwards
and slants upward honey

82





83



Penelope Talbert

nooner

the shadow we cast
dances in midafternoon sun
while the world pushes paper
and watercooler gossips
warm lovely sweat falls from
your brow
trickling over the favorite part of
my porcelain shoulder

being scott church

Penelope Talbert

i am not me
i'm you
swimming in your skin
watch me dance on nails
i'm you
momentary silence as i
touch your finger to your thumb
i'm crushing your head
i say your words
feel your touch sting
your battered cheek
and i'm not leaving
it's now a hostage crisis
you're not john malkovich
i won't come
crashing
down
on the shoulder
of the new jersey turnpike
although anything would be
better than here
in you
superglued

Apple Apple Crates



Apple box crates

Beds or tables

Furniture of the Ritz

Or storage of the migrant

Workers in the fields

Or thoughtful slaves

Rough hewn boards build

Apple crates for export

Cottage décor and lining torn pockets art nouveau

Apple crates stacked with pride

By calloused leather hands

Seen by sunken eyes

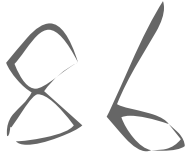
Feast or famine, red or green

Brown hands rugged for the lilies

Blossoms unfolding

Or wandering weeds





Christopher Mulrooney

the gnome

they always go too far the crooks
and take too much so that
the schools have no books
and the construction falls into a hat

the best defense is a good offense
fight foes with fauxs
turn the Miracle Mile's innocence
into Neo Art Deco that shows

Christopher Mulrooney

Eli

Eli Broad the housing magnate
collector of art and
patron of the artist Charles Ray
walked around the Los Angeles County Museum of Art
and decided he didn't like the look of it
"a disparate campus" he said "needs unifying"
even though it exhibited his collection
Jasper Johns to Jeff Koons
architects were hired

Wayne Ray

PRISONER OF WAR

We were unable to help you
flesh torn barbed wire
scraping red your bare skin
like a lover's fingernails digging in
drawing you closer to her.
I, we, saw you running, muscles pumping.
Your heart filled our eyes with tears
both for your last burst to freedom and for fear.
Fear of dog tracks in your footsteps
as they clamped your throat and drank
your breath into their hot lungs.
Ripped bone white you hung
in your new found freedom
and as the guards pulled you
from your steel sanctuary,
two blood stained barbs caught your cheeks
and pulled a smile across your face.

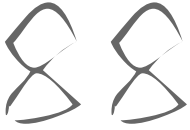
87

rini anastasia

Bunga Randu (Cotton Flower)

Kubawa sejumput bunga randu
kupintal menjadi kain
kujahit menjadi selimut penghangat
di malam-malam dinginnya
di lelap tidurnya
Kupersembahkan kepada yang tercinta
buah dan hatiku
selamanya...

(I bring a bunch of cotton flowers
knit them
sew them become a warm blanket
in those cold nights
in those tight sleeps
presented for the most beloved one
my own blood and flesh
forever...)



Jehangir SaLeh

I wish

Elvis never died
Indulging in deep friend
Peanut butter and bacon
Sandwiches
And
Prescription pills

I too
Wish to have
A false celebrity passing
A cholesterol confused death
So I may sink into the
Pits of hell
Wonderfully stoned
Ignorant to the reality
Of the world
I have corrupted

I wish to die like Elvis

SKIM: JUN 01 1488

I manage my weeks
by the expiration dates
on milk cartons.
Living cautiously.
Weaving in and out of life,
Bleeding between the stitches.

I've waddled away --
Left the hope-filled fountains
of youth.

During my foolish years
I was the victim of a
Homogenized milk bag bombing.
Ever since,
I've been a homophobic.

Each night,
I nuzzle my knotted
Patchwork of reality
and dream of reviving dying
dandyions.

IF NOT A MEDICAL DOCTOR, THEN WHO?



by Jim Sullivan

Two major questions surround medicide, Doctor Jack Kervorkian's concept of physician-assisted suicide. First and foremost, should terminally ill persons have the legal right to end their lives? And second, is it proper and ethical for a medical doctor, sworn by the Hippocratic Oath to protect life, to assist in ending one?

Because the initial question depends, to a large extent, upon one's religious and/or philosophical bent, it won't be discussed further. But the second question can be looked at logically and sensibly by anyone, even laymen such as myself.

The answer to the question is, yes, for to have any other profession assist in a suicide would be absurd. A case in point: some folks might consider an appropriate alternative to be a veterinarian. After all, they're professional doctors, too, though for animals. And aren't we all--animals? What's more, vets are experienced. They've been terminating creatures' lives for a very long time now.

A fatally ill patient could easily get to a vet. No leash would be required. And the patient wouldn't have to be placed upon a counter for the final exam. Further, no excessive tail wagging nor loud barking would disrupt the vet's office.

The professional could simply look the patient over, lift the tail and inspect, check for fleas, feel the ribs, check the color of the tongue and condition of the teeth, and run both hands over the fur coat. If found in agreement with the patient's final diagnosis, the vet could assist in putting the patient permanently to sleep. This process would be known as crittercide. As a courtesy, collars would be removed and presented to the family before the procedure began.



Conversely, another experienced terminator would be a run-of-the-mill prison warden (from a capital punishment state, of course). Perhaps for a reasonable fee, the correction official could be persuaded to do the nasty job.

He or she and the sick person about to die could walk the last mile, so to speak, together. The warden, after complying with the patient's last wishes, could then put that person in a chair, sometimes called 'old sparky,' strap the individual in, hook up the necessary electrodes, and show the patient how to pull the switch. Or, in progressive states, those out of the dark ages, the warden could assist with a lethal injection. In either case, the result would be called penicide. Don't look for any last minute reprieves, however.

If that sounds too harsh, what about using your local electrician? He knows what it takes to zap someone. Getting shocked, and avoiding same, are just part of his occupation. Moreover, this electrician hasn't taken any sort of oath, Hippocratic or hydrostatic, before becoming a journeyman tradesman. Thus, it wouldn't be against his or her code of professional ethics or anything like that to assist in ending a life of suffering. And the job would be called powercide. Don't expect this person to rewire your circuit breaker box afterwards.

For a fee, some lawyer might do it, too. But how? Perhaps charge you to death or hit you with a suit. If successful, the act could be dubbed baricide. Plumbers, on the other hand, may have the necessary equipment. Or do they? Word is, they don't even use lead pipes anymore, but plastic. Besides, plumbers can be expensive and hard to find. But their handiwork could be called flushicide.

So, who's left? Tree surgeons could commit oakicide; witch doctors, mumbojumbocide; herbalists, gingericide; and dentists, rootcanalicide. None seems quite right to assist in the final delicate job. That, then, leads us right back where we started: with a medical doctor and medicide. This professional is the only logical, reasonable, and acceptable person to assist in a suicide. Perhaps the physicians' oath will have to be interpreted more broadly, rewritten, or updated to accommodate the questions of the day.

Chris Toll

my life in the movies

Drop everything and follow me.
Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid
courted by Incapacity.
Ruthie says come see her.
Why is there less in a lesson
and when will it be a blessing?
Mount your machine gun in a shopping cart.
Buffoons are in charge of laws
and the laws have claws.
Cruelty is woven into the airwaves
and the wind is full of hymns.
Who could imagine light and shadow would weigh so much?
Consistency is the hobbyhorse of tiny minds,
regard Sorrow as a Principle of Construction,
and the big faces are so holy.



Gerald Harris

Dust on the broom

It's been carried from cities to towns
kept in its own room
Comes out when dirt is to be removed
It has the best and most accurate view
It's picking up the truth
From where it falls
Where it always ends up
Is below the ceiling
Looking at us all
Swept up and deposited in the bin
Some of it always remains
Stuck and clinging
can't be removed
To the bottom of the broom
Hidden away in a little room

92

Swan

The New Light

Step off; see what happens.
Step off into the air
and wait for murky water
to catch you and slow you down.

Yes, step off and say your final prayer,
and feel the surrender flow through your veins
and the wind blow tightly against your face,
and let your long dark hair jet back. . . jet back

into the night and through the dawn,
and give in to the new light: pink, orange, and purple.
I'll be there,
and we'll fly out over the mountainscape together.

Rochelle Hope Mehr, The Other

Always this tug
between the outer and inner:
centrifugal lusting
after the other
the other sex
the other religion
the complement to
make you whole
the other course of study
the other ethnicity
Look outside
and fill your need
divert yourself
the other fashion statement
the other literary style
the other political persuasion
play devil's advocate
succor everything
as long as it is alien
familiarity breeds contempt
love thy neighbor more than thyself
despise thyself
place a mirror in front of thine eye
and see thyself only
as their tattoo

Amey Tippet

Strange Encounter

Creeping through the velvet fog,
I meet your face,
masked despair;

Dank summer midnight,
pleads insanity,
through bent lies;

Running on-
without acceptance-
you ignore the past;

The truth lies hidden,
forgotten by wrinkles,
confused by time.

Jerry Oleaf

The Deaf Man

He notices the patterns of silence
And its colors and its intonations.
He can sense one's spirit in eye movements
And he can sense one's soul in hand motions.
He has contempt for whispers and for screams.
He is unmoved by cackle and by yawn.
Every argument that he perceives seems
To be the same as every other one.
He closes his eyes if you laugh or cry.
In the heavy air he waits for beauty.

93

Larry Blazek

Descending Into Winter

Wearing long underwear and a cheap guitar I
visit a rabbi and demonstrate my lack of musical skills
he plays an impossibly mutilated blues record
climbing into a white Rambler with broken windows
and a non-functional gas guage I descend into winter

94

Charlie Newman

-- one : teshuvah --

it is as if they still existed [somewhere] [anywhere]
windmills awaiting their demented don quixote
& his train of symbolic birds &
paper puppets &
sliced diced iced vestigial virgins
splattered across this picasso landscape
of cringing cathedrals of power
mislaidd in my memory

- three : tzedakah --

other exploits will not do what needs to be done &
other arguments will not say what needs to be said
up & down the thoroughfares of dust & ash leading to
the shattered breath of the loved
who [only] seemed destined to be here for all time
& then were so suddenly gone
yet I am here
like I always have been

-- two : tefilah --

gifts to leaden masses
dropped sometime [anytime] before eternity
even if no one understands them or
[for that matter] asked for them
on their way to from between
the monument that was there yesterday
to greet the rising sun



Kelley Jean White MD |||

Shut

What I thought
I needed to focus on
is meaningless.
It really will end
with a minor misjudgment,
an ill-timed phone call,
the honk of a horn.

Still

Wearied at work
my hand at my forehead
surprised by the softness
of my own hair;
yawning, the hand held
before my mouth
carries your scent
still

Trying

The house is so quiet
Light so dim
I have wanted this
I have cocooned myself
Why is it so hard to breathe?



Christopher Mu1rooney

Ruhrta1

the mining engineer explains
we cut a third of our employment figures
and most importantly middle management
the old rule of thumb
being
a third will support change a third
wait for the bandwagon and the rest
just won't

Christopher Mu1rooney

untitled

the town declared a war against Van Gogh
and sent its warplanes all around the world
to rout him out lest at any time Ann
Taylor Fleming should bewep her son the artist
"he only sold one picture in his lifetime" ever

they always go too far the crooks
and take too much so that
the schools have no books
and the construction falls into a hat

the best defense is a good offense
fight foes with fauxs
turn the Miracle Mile's innocence
into Neo Art Deco that shows

R. London

untitled

Around and around
astride him, behind a toothy grimace
gold filigree, hard wood
and brass
Merry go 'round once in a year
this time in hours, only twenty three
the ring's lost
only a shimmering illusion I thought was meant
for me.

Sabra Chalmers

SPINDLE

The wayward stare of a forgotten way
The ever clear look during that forgetfull day
Sitting by windows
Having my own fullness of wear
Seeing what makes the masses
Appear to be that much sadder
Thinking about reasons
I can only fathom

Roche11e Hope Mehr

Washing My Hands of the Affair

Trying to remember
what it was
who it was
what he said
what she said
the feel of the steel
the reel
the grill
the drub
the snub
the scrub

97



jamie lynn gilbert

Barbie Doll

Basement bookshelf holds
tarnished trophies / says its for
her mother / but she likes to see
the sparkle of her success

Quiet recitations boost
scarred self-concept / refuse to fail
mother's expectations / never let 'em
see you sweat

Can anyone be so
artificial ingenuine / undeniably
plastic / manufactured
by mattel

jamie lynn gilbert

Introspection on an October Monday

In a semi-conscious surrealistic state
injected caffeine gnawing lethargically
I can smell you on my pillow

I did not consent to be the other woman
although I won't claim I was tricked into it
Sometimes the bad girl turns out to be you

jamie lynn gilbert

Pipedream

Is it still going?
My love's keeping it alive, I say
as I slide to the floor

The billowing white air is as
a virgin's creamy thigh
Soft and warm and
somehow magic

I pull him to me
Exhale sweetness
Just one more, I plead
Cashed

A Series

The Fibonacci numbers start with ought,
 Then one, then one, then two, then three, then five,
 The eight, thirteen, and onward, spiraling toward light,
 Infinity, and all the things that live.

They rule the “stately mansions” of the leaves
 And blooms and seedling cones and gyring thoughts
 Of Yeats, the ordering that chaos loves
 To build as chance deforms our sprawling lots.

There is no perfect order, chaos neither
 In any macro-micro world perceived
 By human probes, a number series rather
 Teases to thought with certainty removed.

The backyard Norway pine has dropped Spring cones,
 And children’s romps extend the living zones.



Connections among the Lost

The Big Lost River fails by miles to meet
 The Little Lost, they disappear in mud
 And ash still separate, their fading could
 Mean lava tubes that drain them down to great
 And unseen depths which surface in some neat
 Conjunction way the hell and gone that would
 Not make a mark on any map but should
 Make wonder, lines that should not miss a beat
 But do, in central Idaho, a place
 As real as any other on the chart,
 Beyond our ken unless we try to trace
 An unseen flow between two things apart
 By etching lightning jumping space
 Between synapses making thought and art.

100

J. Quinn Brisben | Learning from
Flaws

A pure perfection cannot teach, it takes
Some clumsy journeyman to show us how
To breathe a life in things so we can show
Good ways to break the form and cook the cakes
Of art, astonish tastes: the sound which makes
The mind start up and blows the straining prow
Through waves resisting thought, so let us now
Praise famous clods who made mind-forming quakes:

Our Steinbeck, Lawrence, Wright, O'Neill, Celine,
And Sandburg, Faulkner, Lindsay, Dreiser, Crane,
Brash country boys who never met the queen,
Matriculated in saloons, the bane
Of canons, coarse, unwashed, and green
In thought who broadened language with crude pain.

J. Quinn Brisben | An Image
Encompasses
Saint Ursula

The brand-new color printer chuffs and spits
Hans Memling's unhistoric virgin saint
Who shrouds the midget myriad limned in paint
That smoothly glows; the real one sits
In Bruges, a reliquary chest admits
An opportunity for pride to taint
The holy; copies spread the real but faint
Reflection of this sin which art commits.

Step up and pay your euros, see
It turn and use the glass to magnify
This gilded gothic box; it's worth the fee,
Though looking at it will not these days buy
Indulgences and cures; but art can be
The finest thrill we share before we die.

A Tentative Sketch of Everything

Asymmetrical, arrhythmical,
Each particle is built from numbers but
Always feels the lazy sidelong pull
Toward chaos from the primal knot or nut
Of nothing breaking into speed of light
Electroweak and binding strong and mass
So oddly faint but oriented right
Side up for daily use, no clues, alas,
Of meaning save our wonder at the curves
And spirals, matter missing somewhere there,
But lack of certainty alerts the nerves
And drives the need to witness what is where.

Equations with their multiple unknowns:
Nothing mirroring nothing in these zones.

101

Celebrating Bloomsday

He was in love with daily bread and beer
And female butts imperfect only in
Their uncompactness, blessing din
With tongues, mnemonic stroller who could hear
The babbling books and drunken Citizen's jeer,
The layered nightmare underneath old Finn
Again arisen, and Homeric kin
As great as anything, but now and here.

To celebrate quotidian works and days
With lore from Here comes Everybody makes
Conundrums for the scholists, forces ways
Of knowing common things so preening fakes
Must blow away, in Dublin's artful maze
We learn our oneness for our loving sakes.

102



103



Thanks for the Memories.
writings from past issues of children, churches and daddies magazine

104

Jordana Abraham

A Typical Man

So typical that he forgot
so typical of a man
he can't even remember what he did last night
let alone recall his vows of devotion
well fuck that !
I don't need you to bring me down, I don't need you at all
I'm strong and I'll survive
I can't excuse you, and I can't make this hurt go away
are you ashamed of yourself, are you satisfied?
don't you even care?
liar, your such a lying bastard
a fucking typical man

Sylvia Berta Alaniz

Dog Song.

I just heard someone
beating a dog.
The whining of the dog
pierced my being
and come out the other side,
like a memory of those cries
that were already inside me -
waiting to spontaneously jump
into my mind.
The cry of the dog
ran down the street
toward my neighbor's house,
expecting somebody
to catch it,
and maybe being it back.
As though the animal's whimpering
and high whining were now
permanently mine.

Caron Andregg

Breathe

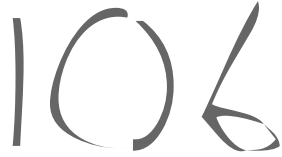
Of all our indulgences
I most miss your kiss
The one that steals my breath
The one that drives me mad
Where time becomes an empty glass
Our bodies empty shells
No legs, no hands, no eyes
Oblivious
All that we are is liquid
Slung along spiraling tongues
The click of your fine white teeth
The taste of your mouth
Let me live in that kiss
And please
Don't make me
Breathe

105

Salima Alikhan

Untitled

And you bury yourself deep deep deep in me
Needing me
Spiraling down into God with me
Luring Christ to come and watch
And sit back on his heels and nod in approving unsentimental
yet sympathetic Love
For these Lovers who abandon their fortunes, heads aching,
drowning in vortexes of each other
The same hellish black vortex familiar in both chests
trying for a single moment to forget
its own ugly face
Christ's smile is half-amused



I Am Not A Team Player

Cynthia Arbuthnot

I am not a team player. Other people may think I am arrogant, antisocial, and rude, but I am not. I just like to do my own thing my way, and if other people think that there is anything wrong with that, then they are wrong. I do not judge them by saying that they are communistic, socialistic, and nosy. Therefore, why should they have the right to say cruel things about me just because I prefer to do things the way I want them done, all by myself.

Even when I was a child, I was this way. My grandmother once told me that when my children are in school, I should get a job just to be around other people. My mother and grandmother are not great people's persons, either, and my grandmother blames this on the fact that they were homemakers for so many years. In Grandma's case, perhaps, but I do not think my mother was ever a people's person.

My mother is just quiet and tends to like to do things like sew, read, garden, and spend time with her cats. A lot of people would say that she is reclusive, but what is wrong with that? I think that if you enjoy spending time alone, there is nothing wrong with it. For some people, like my aunt (a realtor), there would be something wrong, because my aunt likes to be in the company of people all the time. To be in the company of people all the time would drive my mother crazy.

My mother is not as reclusive as other people think, either. She is a beautician who works with other people all day long. She has the Type B personality needed in order to do this job and enjoy it. I, on the other hand, am more of a Type A person who would get impatient with people complaining and have to go to something else fairly soon. I think my mother has earned her free time alone with her books, cats, garden, and crafts.

I think the main problem certain members of my family have with Grandma is that she calls them almost daily and wants them to come over to visit. Grandma tends to get a little upset when no one will come visit her. Therefore, her arthritis or Parkinson's get a little worse. I know that she has problems with these things, but what I do not know is whether or not she plays them up in order to get company. There are some members of my family who say yes, and others who say no. I say that she is Grandma, therefore, she

should get respect from her offspring and attention.

I do not feel that I am antisocial or anything like that. To me, antisocial behavior consists of things like vandalism and maliciousness toward other people or animals. I am not malicious or destructive. I just do not like people around me all of the time. I like sports that feature individuals competing against each other as opposed to sports where teams compete against other teams. I am a very competitive person at heart, so I am not a reclusive person. How can someone be competitive and reclusive at the same time?

When I was in high school and college, I tended to choose passive partners for projects that called for "lab partners." My reason for this was simple: I like to do things by myself and feel that other people slow me down. My passive partner took notes while I did the project and dictated what he/she should write down. This way, we both learned something from the project while at the same time doing what we liked to do best. This is the part where other people who do not understand would say that I am an arrogant person. I am not arrogant. I just like to do things my way and get what I feel are the best results for my partner and me. Invariably, the people I chose did not want to do the "hands on" part of the lab, and I liked that part the most, so this worked out well for both of us.

To summarize, some people are social animals. These people enjoy having other people around all the time and are stimulated by the interpersonal activities going on. Other people like to be left alone to pursue their own agendas. These people are stimulated by the pursuit of things they feel are important not only to them, but possibly to other people who may reap the benefits later. There is nothing wrong with either viewpoint, because they are both viewpoints and the people who follow them are happy and healthy people.

108

Mordantia Bat

Loss is an Aphrodisiac

When I learned to deal
with my own fears about abandonment
by pushing people away first,
I thought I'd learned such a clever trick.
I congratulated myself
on my independence and self-sufficiency,
pretending
that when I started to weep uncontrollably
after drinking a bottle or two of wine
that I was just drunk.

Jessica Arluck

TIME

if time were made out of logic
it would play in rewind
for disillusion thrives on years
as inevitable experiences regress the soul

Madeleine Baran

birth

Birth is no privilege
lifting me out of
the bundle of flesh
the doctor grinned
sarcastically,
went to the cash register
rang up the bill,
and forgot to give her a receipt.

well, tell me what you thought...
love,
maddy

Dream of Loneliness

you are here
 a dance at midnight
 dressed in June
 alone watch wait
 satellite pale
 no wonderment
 tears for the loss of excitement
 blue eye tide
 wind ripples velvet skin
 --what is empty never fills--
 comfortable solitude
 among small dancers
 desperate to connect
 circle you - ice real
 move to the music of silence
 damn your continents drift
 and you cannot care
 or reach out
 even as lights begin to dim

109

windows of the soul

Azure Orbs
 heavy with old grief
 reminiscent of another pale soul
 revealing salted wounds.

For me, that old feeling
 mixed with forboding.
 I understand the futility
 of that pain
 but cataracts blind the translucent blue
 spooked because they cannot see
 my good intentions.

I want to swim
 in enticing oceans
 though clearly,
 sharks patrol those waters.

110

Erin Bealmear

Tommy's Tale

I was always looking for something to do. When I was thirteen I spent a year planning a way for Gilligan to get off the island. Every time the Skipper got angry and started to perspire I thought he was going to hack up Gilligan. My mother said I was too attached to the show. "Tommy, you're like a dog fucking another dog, you can't let go."

ernie Bernstein

A Row of Burning...

bushes lights our way to grandfather's house on this crisp Thanksgiving Day. The bushes glow in crimson

light between the white white snow. We walk the lane as we walked it before, momma and

me with our daughter Jan; just us three to grandma's place in the deep deep country

with a burning bush and a burning bush as we make our way this November Thanksgiving Day

jeana bonacci

xanax

tiny x
x-ed out my eyes
led me to away to some
sleepy time asylum
scribble out those anxiety slayers
doctor
forget addiction
and let me creep off into a
lazy eyed, quiet
pacifist ideal

Cantaloupe

Gina Bergamino

He like her, even thought she was a woman. He forced himself to touch her when she cried. As a child, his mother would wake up every morning screaming, seizing the panic. Melons smashed against the tile wall, books bolted across the dining room, one time her own blood spurting to the beige carpet. But that was the last time and the only way her remembers her. He touches her tears with his fingertips, but they roll too fast to wipe away. "Do you love me?" Angela asks, slowly lifting her eyes to meet his. "Yes." he manages back as he kisses her bent thumb. "Then move in with me" she pleas. In his head all he can see are melons, shattered crystal, his father loading the gun. Breakfast at Denny's would cure it all. Doesn't it always? The all-you-can-eat bar like a 3-D painting as he watches the hands pulling and grabbing beneath the glass. But he would never eat the fruit, no matter how sweet and ripe it looked.

Anthony Lucero

Untitled

my poem for christmas
is my poem for christmas
it's for no one else but me
merry christmas
anthony



Charles Bernstein

at the lake

holding hands, we
abandon sorrowing tales of woe
twisted new york suburbanized
terrorism at its best
raw egg faces glistening
like rat teeth in your dreams
holes disappear overnight
you are safe for the moment,
safe here tonight

112

Larry Blazek

America

take what you want
with guns
never mind
malcolm's chickens

A 20 Minute
Visit

Ben Beyerlein

Everything's the same except she's unusually happy. I look at the two things that interest me in this too small space. And since neither of them interest me that much, I skim through the movie summaries on the back of the cases while I watch the fuzzy television screen. She always seems to have baseball on. My attention is almost distracted when I hear her listing how she's been trying to fix her life. But I realize they're the same things I tried, only when I tried them I didn't have anybody to tell that I was trying them. Now I'm mesmerized by the clean-cut close-ups of the baseball players on the fuzzy screen. I don't want to answer her question, even though I doubt that she'll ever be able to answer it herself.

john binns

a bad dream

I had a bad dream,
I was struck by lightning
And there was a hole
In my stomach
A foot wide,
I nearly died
But not quite

alan britt

green bananas

You had the greenest bananas.
They were unborn parrots
or the skies
of adolescent passion.

Jack Bowman

75 Miles an Hour.

The engine accelerated to a comfortable hum
as the distance shrank pulled back
beneath the wheels
he felt the harsh laboring of life
masked in the clarity of the engine in motion
this day was not what he dreamt
but what occurred regardless
he had no control, little influence
except over the truck and the
semblances of life
passing by at
75 miles an hour.

Lida Broadhurst

Freeways as Seen Near Gargoyles

Freeways straddling the undergrowth like animals,
Whose creators omitted brains or heart,
Offer contrast to gargoyles.

Those stone masks carved from hatred
Provide catharthis for the sculptor, although
Rain, not invective, pours from silent lips.

113

114 a street called pain

b. benedict braddock

Carmine Stellano sat on his front porch and gazed down in the direction of Washington park. Some of the boys were shooting hoops while Johnny Pop made his daily quota. He was pacing back and forth across the parking lot, trying to ignore the crack heads that were pestering him for a handout. Every few minutes a car would pull up and Johnny would lean into the drivers window to make the deal. He had learned not to remove himself from the window until the cash was in his hand. They'd burn you every time they could on the hill. Carmine turned back toward the street and thought about Vinny. He was one of those guys you met and never forgot. If it hadn't been for his habit he might've been something really big, something people respected. They had found him in a closet last Sunday morning. The police said it was suicide, but word on the street was there wasn't a chair or ladder. The boy had gotten whacked. Johnny Pop was driving Vinny's car these days. He had his stereo and gold watch too. Hell, he even had his girl. It was funny what crack would buy on the hill. Word was that some boys from the city had fronted Vinny an ounce of snow for the weekend. He had always been good before about paying his tab by deadline. He had made himself a name in the park, even cutting out Johnny Pop now and then. But not this time. He used the stuff himself. The boys came for the pay back, no money, no dope... then it was Sunday morning. Carmine wondered if Vinny really didn't have the cash. He had never freaked and burned anybody like that before. Across the street Rita was searching through the tall grass for cans. If she got enough of them she would cash them in at the corner market and cop a nickel bag of off Johnny Pop. If not, she would be his personal sex slave for the whole night, and for probably the same amount of crack the cans would've gotten her. He watched the Jehovah's witnesses over at Mrs. Reynold's house. One thing was for sure, they

wouldn't stop and offer Rita one of their little booklets. They would walk right past her like she was a dog and move on to the next house. Bullshit.

Carmine hadn't exactly found religion, more like just another chance. He wasn't about to go preaching door to door, but he wasn't gonna hang in the park anymore either. They stayed in their back yard and he stayed in his. Carmine watched his back if the boys passed on the street though. They didn't let you out that easy. The way they figured it, if you cleaned up you were on the fiveO's payroll. And a rep like that could get you into the closet next to Vinny. Mrs. Reynolds got tired of the religion freaks and slammed the door in their faces. They started to cross the street, saw Carmine, and changed their minds. Looking like he did had it's advantages. He had changed his outlook, not his wrapper. The doorway preachers were apparently intimidated. As he suspected they walked right past Rita. She had tried to say hello but couldn't talk. She was coming down hard as usual. Carmine called across the street to her. "Yo, Rita." The girl looked up for a moment and then right back down to the ground. She was searching now to see if any of the boys had dropped a bag while walking to the park. They never did, but she always checked. "Rita." She saw him now and started across the street. Carmine stood up. "Whoa, Baby. Watch out for the cars, girl." Somehow she made it across without getting killed. Carmine reached into his pocket. "Here, Rita. Here's five bucks. You keep hanging on the street and they're gonna bust you sure as hell." The girl smiled but still couldn't talk. She grabbed the bill and ran down toward the park and Johnny Pop. It would last her five minutes and then she'd be right back searching for cans and viles along the street.

Carmine had only been clean for a few months, but it felt good, really good. It bothered him still being in the neighborhood and all. The hill district was no place to be when you were trying to kick the habit. Carmine saw Rita reach Johnny Pop down the street. The boy smiled like he knew he owned her. Carmine regretted giving her the five bucks.

115

116

B.J. BROWN

Mother

I wear God,
Around my neck.

Stephanie Jean Adams

The Disease

(To anyone who has known someone who had fought or is fighting cancer)

The bloodthirsty creature runs mad through this unknown realm
The attack so rapid and unpredictable
The world at an unspoken pause
For it wasn't until this day, that I was attentive
That horrifying disease could rupture anyone's soul.

The child's face I thought I knew, now pale, swollen, and shattered
What once shown bright and starlit eyes
Now dark, hopeless and tired
Long days gone by and nights so cold
Many more to come before the beast is conquered.

An endless prayer in this mind
An eternity of hope
For that child's face I know to give his strength and courage
For I wish to see the effervescent smile again
I pray for all eternity that this monster gets defeated.

carol f.
brown | Untitled

Heartbeats in the dark
short, deep breaths
moist internal quivering.

Michael H. Brownstein

ENDS

(after an Aztec myth)

They gave me five wives for a year
and asked me to walk to the stone knife.
I did this willingly, not like the tales of history,
but because I had to.
I was god,
the closest one to the sun,
the owner of the heart that grows larger.
Without me the sun will stop in the sky.
I alone walk the steps.
I alone meet the knife.
I alone give my heart to the sun.

William C.
Burns, Jr.

The Old Man

He bragged about
beating Death at its own game
His sweat mixing with the soap
as he washed the car
His ratty T-shirt
showing his freckles and moles
on his back
And the scar of the man
that tried to kill him

117

118

Night Sounds Revisited

Jane Butkin Roth

I lie in my own bed, own a child's body, own a child's heart, need my bedtime story, need my mama's kiss, some sweet lullaby she sings-- I know she sings-- but I have no mama, there's no childhood here, no bedtime comforts, only night noise; that's our ritual. And what I fear is what I know, and I know there is no safety where there is this sound. Someone! Stop the noise, my night sounds. Mama! Rescue me! My heart beats wild, jump-starts in the dark as his foot-steps move closer. Coming for me, or my brother.... And I climb on my familiar ride, my wave of nausea, as I brace myself again against that first slice. That's when I hear the sound of his footsteps and my ripping flesh; it's one noise. Schoolmates safe at home have their tooth fairies and their mamas who smell of rosewater, have their fathers who read Grimms, or play catch after dinner... and all the while, we are dancing to a tangled and discordant music; we memorize the steps, know the refrain... by heart. It's all-- routine. I say my prayers, make my nightly promise to my dead mama, to my brother, to myself: I will not cry; refuse to shed one tear. I will not give my Daddy that.

janine canan

Your Daughters

Mother, do you really prefer
your sons to us, your daughters?

It seems forever my sisters and I
have sought your shining gaze.

How much longer must we lug around
these boulders of our broken hearts.

Joyce Carbone

SO SEDUCTIVE

Your voice in the early morning,
but later for you, filled
with sadness of knowing,
coming across these many miles,
a poetry set to musical throb,
guitar strums a softer background
for two languages.

Let the past go,
your voice croons;
A pastness is covered by another,
a newness birthed.
Relinquish old wounds,
forget forget the cruelty
inflicted.

Minor miracles happen;
sounds convey his
thoughtfulness from
thousands of miles away.

Laurie Calhoun

the general

pentagonal head
filled with calcified
pentagonal brains
that can't change
only mutilate and destroy
the pegs which don't fit
in pentagonal holes

119

120

Chantene

Eleven

phantom of a morbid carousel.
Your innocent sweet voice mocks your wicked poition your monotonous voice ridicules my intelligence hate turns to a trend different alternations trend
leave me alone

alan catlin

Acknowledgements

- Wide-Open
South Florida Poetry Review
Florida Review
Polio
Visions
Poked with Sticks
Taurus
Mad River Review
Art Mag
Fire
Piddiddle
Frugal Chariot
Riverwind
Open 24 Hours
Fennel Stalk
Yammering Twits
Poetic Space
Burying the Dead
Enright House Poetry Anthology

d. phillip caron

payday

In a pawn shop window on East Main at sixteenth there is a class ring embossed Trojans sixty-nine. Under it in scroll leaf a dueling pistol with wooden case from seventeen hundred France. I put my television on the counter and hope fifty is a good number. There is an empty whiskey bottle by the door from 1905 Lewisville with a tag that says sixteen dollars beside a help wanted sign. A Twenty-two in my pocket; small, heavy and shiny but its hard to go home empty handed.

IT
chaffin

121

I told him to go get it. He told me he couldn't find it; this child of mine with long, thick, curly, dark brown hair and big brown puppy-dog eyes. We both knew he hadn't even looked.

I was his hero, being in the Navy and always coming and going. His mother was the disciplinarian. He would argue with her about anything. For me, he would do anything without question, yet here he sat on my lap insisting he could not find it.

I made a stern face telling him to go find it now; leaving no room for discussion. He crawled off my lap, head hanging and marched slowly toward his room. I smiled thinking what a wonderful actor he, would make someday, but stopped when he turned to give me one last sad-eyed look. Seeing it was useless he continued his death march.

My curiosity got the better of me. I tip-toed to his room and peeked in. I found him standing in the middle of his room, head tilted back, staring at the point where the walls join the ceiling. He did this rocking heel-toe step, turning a complete circle never taking his eyes off of that point.

I got back to my chair in the kitchen just in time. He walked in with his head hanging. He crawled unto my lap, hugged my neck, kissed my cheek and said quite earnestly, "I look everywhere!" with a smile I couldn't hide I said, "Come on..."

It has been many years and I've long forgotten what it was.

122

George Christ

A Fellow Bird, of An Ode
To The Spring Of Life

From dark horizons where the sun does rise
Into blue eternal tapestry skies
Where light-hearted clouds waiver and dance,
A fellow bird can be heard singing some
Jocund melody on its woddly branch.
Wantonly chirping to nature its praise
For dividing nights from summer days
And bringing light in spite of winter's cowl,
That forth like larger birds of prey must come,
Devouring in its swoop all weakened fowl.
Rejoice we must for cageless carefree delight,
Remembering that dark will again fall,
In claiming the last breaths of earth and all.

Pete Cholewinski

coffeehouse
vampire

Voice of poetic interpretation
whispering through mary jane:
“I have sixteen personalities,
and I dream about death.”

Gothic in combat boots,
eyes skewer bimbos
who “Omigod!” at vampires
and evaporate in passing crowds.

Blacknailed, tattooed thunderclap
of autonomous poison pain,
alienating a real world
that fears your unexpressed bite.

james colin | goal and its
accessaries

Alone atop a barbed wire fence,
the escapist flaunts his balance.
He takes his time.
His poise distracts the markamen.
A car waits, its engine rumbles
with words. The driver reacts to every
sound with fist-clenched glee.
The escapist jumps and rolls
in a ball of elastic bangs and string.
The marksmen miss.
The car roars down the city road.
The escapist's cackling laugh
reminds the driver of loose fan belts
and female malcontents.
The tourists in the trunk
feel for their package brochures.
A fat lady sparks a light.
Underlined in red are hideout and soliloquy.

123

Adam Clay | Rest in Peace

It's a low silo
with no cows
or chickens straying
at its weedy feet.

A stroke killed
Farmer Jones
two years
ago today,
the once red,
now gret, silo
reminds me.

124

Paul Cordeiro

Famous Friday
Night Off

I had some wine last night,
scraped a callous with a special tool,
and ate some carrots and nuts.

David E. Cowen

EULAH'S WAKE

Debris of war
midst hollowed houses.

A robin sings;
rebuilding,
in fractured branches.

Rachel Crawford

Alone and I

Alone and I are partners
Alone waits for me at night
Consumes by body and my life
Alone makes love to me
Wraps it's legs arms and legs
Around me as I sleep
Alone understands my moods
And consoles me when I cry
Alone will be my friend
Until the day I die

Bruce Curley | excerpt from Wedding
Poem for Brother Bob

And I remember, Brother
those days
at Holy Angels Grade School
when we watched
for hours
The Cross of Christ
and The Flag of Our Country
and we heard Mother Superior say
President Kennedy had just been shot
so we all said a Rosary together
and went home holding hands
because something terrible and adult
had just intruded
into our innocent lives.

125

brian daly | Xmas Party 5
Floors Madonna

Last year's was an orgy.
I got laid twice at once
but neither was the right girl.
By the time I tracked you down
you'd passed out in a tub.

Pardon, if you can, that same
old lust breaking out tonight.
Let me be a fool again and
leave you lying somewhere--
you, the one I really want.

126

THE LADIES OF EBENEZER

Miles C. Daniels

He used to have a penis. At least that is what they are whispering from the pews of Ebenezer First Baptist Church. Sister Novella remembers him playing Barbies with her two daughters. He had loved to dress them in tight-fitting party gowns, and was known to steal Mary Kay products from her vanity.

The local teen darlings had idolized him, so did the church music director.

When she first premiered Hair Spray, nobody recognized the fashionable woman. D-o-n-n-a, the beautician's name flashed in pink lights outside her corner salon. She owned a one-woman operation: hair, nails and appointment-only rubdowns.

Kneading was reserved for late evenings and that really flustered the god-fearing.

At age seven, he'd been able to reach notes higher than any tenor in Camden County's cluster of church choirs. Each and every Christmas Eve he blessed the congregation with his own rendition of "Joy to the World", which sounded much like rock pianist Jerry Lee Lewis. Some church folk found it wicked, others commented on how Mrs. Johnson's

boy could really tickle those ivories.

His minister, Reverend Chase, often preached against worldly knowledge. "Education, the Don Juan of faith" was one of his most famous deliveries. The church's tape engineer alleges that he sold fifteen copies of the exhortation that Sunday.

Male bars and dancing on tables in Raleigh were popular coffee conversations. Sister Pauline first heard about the jelly boobs and long hair at her Monday evening Bible study. The prescription for the permanent removal of facial hair bewildered the ladies missionary circle.

Three months and two days before she was diagnosed with the four-letter disease, Donna graced the old white church and sat on the pew next to the nursery. She sang the soprano line for "It is Well With My Soul". And Sister Mazola, who just celebrated her thirtieth year as the church's organist, swears she noticed a black tear dripping from her chin.

When the alter call was given, Donna quietly grabbed her purse and swaggered out the back door. Until today, that was the last time members of the Baptist church saw her.

She looks angelic all decked out in front of the communion table. Her hair is perfectly teased and her boobs look to have grown since the last time she haunted the sanctuary. The twelve-inch heels and sequenced black dress seem heavenly atop the maroon pillows.

The crowd is so large that the deacons had to fetch metal folding chairs from the fellowship hall. Mrs. Johnson is perched on the second row with a few distant cousins. Mr. Johnson decided to go possum hunting.

128

john alan douglas | amazing how

amazing how
when one has a few reverses in life
and worse comes to worse
how much of your life
can be put
into one little
room

Eric Leake | Refugee Tear

A sly tear does descend my face
Another quickly takes its place
It trickles down my sunkissed cheek
An escape from pain is what it seeks.

Melissa Dawson | Life is a Novel

As you flip through the pages of life,
You uncover many mysteries.
You uncover many secrets,
Some may bring you sadness,
Some, much happiness and excitement.

As you read the chapters of life,
You may suddenly feel the words.
They may remind you of your past,
Or introduce you to your future.

As you look at the cover of life,
You see many images.
Like looking through a crystal ball,
You see life as it is,
Not what you want it to be.
Life is a Novel.

Melissa Denman

Living inside of me

I think about the memories of that time,
when I finally was getting what I wanted, and my life was starting to become mine.

I was living out what I had planned out in my head,
I was sick of all the lies and criticism I was being fed.

I took my mind and wrapped it in my plastic pajamas
and buried my mind underneath the sand.
I didn't want to be looked or stared at,
didn't even want to touch my own hand.

It's still living inside me,
these memories that still come to haunt me.
it's a voice telling me "was it worth it,
to have everything you want, but still feel like nothing inside.?"
I thought about it, but it's a choice you have to make when you
feel like you've already died.

but I think I have.....

129

Holly Day

The King Works
as a Gas Station
Attendant at the
Circle K By My
House

Elvis
ripped me off again
today

130

ora wilbert eads | Kaleidoscope

If people are hungry
Anywhere in America,
It is clearly their fault
According to right wing radicals;
No rational person
In the fifty states
Accepts such hogwash;
For it is morally obnoxious;
Conscious demands refutation
Of bias so blatant:
Most beneficiaries of food stamps
Are dependent children.

Joan
Papalia
Eisert | DEAD SUMMER

my face swells
with silent screaming
as heat creeps
over my skin
ve been sculpting
with running clay

Cindy Duhé | Answer Machine

“Give me a call”
she said on the machine
but I couldn’t
not this time
since I was
being tied up by the man
whose call I had
returned.

gene fehler

Viewing Life From My Kitchen Window

Stretched between me and my high school
basketball game is sleet-covered dark of
ground.

I remember last week's game, the bus ride
singing "Jamaica Farewell" off key, the necking

with Judy in the back, the talking with Curtis
afterwards on the freezing streetlit corner,

the write-up in the paper the next day,
the congratulations from giggly girls.

I stand by my kitchen window, staring at the
sleet-covered dark of grounds, waiting.

131

Michael Estabrook

when Patti would fall asleep

her pretty head light
upon my shoulder I'd concentrate
on keeping as still
as a stuffed otter barely blinking
or even breathing listening
to the space
all around me.

132

D. Michael McNamara

Passion Doll

She's a Passion Doll,
revealing bones decades dead
risen from the mud.

greg evason

Milk Fire

I need a beer
I need a greed
I need something more
than this

Richard Fein

COME THE CERTAIN
DARK TIMES,

I'll need this rainy morning remembrance
of my taking him to school:
he jumping in and out of puddles
ignoring my halfhearted scolding,
a warm, gentle rain falling on all the muted street hues,
his yellow raincoat a bright beacon on this gray day,
his last furtive kiss out of sight from his classmates,
the long line of drizzled-on munchkins,
his last look at me, his final wave.
His final wave.
Iron doors slam shut.
Now pointless, even suspicious, to remain.
But come the certain dark times,
I'll draw on this memory.

Solo

I've never been on this trail before,
 it is completely new to me,
 an unknown place
 in time and space as
 I set out upon it.

Step by step on stones that lie
 in single file upon the ground.
 What Ancient put them here for me?
 A mind much greater than I've found.

The mystery intrigues -
 it calls with quiet voice,
 promises of something new,
 it's truth, the child of choice.
 I've never been on this trail before.
 I'll go alone.

133

Norris Springs

Water trickles out of a copper pipe
 Jutting out of the side of the hill.
 Beer cans, McDonalds' sacks, cigarette packs decorate the landscape.
 Sharp contrast to the spring's beginnings.
 Story goes the spring begins in Canada -
 Ends up in Louisiana hills.
 Used to, the locals got their water here.
 It was pretty then -
 A rocked up area where the water pooled,
 Where livestock drank, and people talked.
 Now the loveliest part of the spring
 Is the reflection of the past.

134

dave gitomer

IT

is it not what's carried
is it not what's discarded,
or even attempted to be kept,
nor attempting keeping.
what is it?

Maura Gage

Playing

Playing guitar on the beach,
love was so close in reach,
they decided to run
and swim as everyone else
drank and smoked.
Moonlight glowed appealingly
and all seemed peaceful
as they rocked together
at the edge of water,
pink sun edging the horizon,
and humidity clinging to them,
salt sticky on their skin.

jeff foster

anxiety

a visceral performance artist
she performs in the nude
inviting members of her audience
to examine her cervix with a flashlight

she smears herself with chocolate
sugaring poetics of endowment
pissing on pictures of christ
and making vegetables disappear

the rain is
falling on a lake

harold fleming

Nothing on the surface
but a diminishing circle
where a bass
just missed a drop

that turned into
lake water. I think

of those fortunate
enough to watch

a child allowed
to walk
on bare feet
on wet sand.

E. Fleischman Salamander Camp

E. Fleischman

and i'm grateful to come from dream
into the liquid of myself,
and to feel how our bodies
spill from sleeping
bags stretched by night's weight

Scott Glass female

sometimes when I'm walking a pigeon
will leap from its ledge and flap above
my head like somebody shaking heavy
corduroy coats from a window startling me.

And when I look back she's gone.

135

136

Christopher
Mulrooney

The Terror

Corwan knows blackness and the void, and Hitchcock and Poe. Beyond this, Piranesi.

Taylor Graham

A STUDY IN SHEETS

All night he lumbers with the dream-weight of outstretched nudes -- the ones who flaunt feverish ripples and saltwater curves, dry-mouthed wanderings of thigh and underside of tongue. Such fragments of dreams. They moan and waggle. By morning the air gags. He gargles and wishes she would just come home. Oh, he would sleep with her conditions.

Mark Graham

At The Docks

This sailor I know just bought a new yacht, so I went to the docks and said, "Hey, Todd! I've got to take a piss, so I came to christen your boat."

He was a bit offended. "Is that the kind of poetry you write?" He asked

Now I was a bit offended.

FEBRUARY EVENING SKY

Richard M. Grove

There is hope on the horizon,
with our setting sun,
5:05pm,
the amber beam of her brilliance,
still unset,
inches from disappearing,
over the blanketed silver hills,
of the still winter landscape.
Minutes later,
Venus and Saturn,
bright in the western sky.
Venus in her brilliant glory.
Saturn, a pin prick,
saddled fatefully beside her wonderment.
Both reflecting the sun's now set resplendence.

137

MY CHILDREN

Godfrey Green

They follow me to the hallway,
lambs at my side; eager to perform.
Petite bodies, fidgeting, squirming;
child voices puzzling out the pieces.
My hands move delicately, for I am a builder,
a mender. I am warmth, the balmy breeze,
scattering the seeds I hope will sprout.
My rainbow underside unfolds, expands.
I wait, watching as a hawk.
Instantly, I hook onto the child's spirit.
Sometimes I grow wings and soar.
I carry my charges till they are swept away.
So much the children give me, without meaning to.
They all want to come with me!
They all shun me.

138

eugene gryniwicz | approaching her
sixth month

The perfect disguise wears a baby in her belly,
swelling to fit the part, holding her part adjusting
strings and wires and straps. She walks
awkwardly across the room; her legs bow.
Her fingers reaching to steady herself,
she sits. Sleeps. Refuses to hold
her meals. At night, she daubs her breasts with
brown powder to make the nipples stand up, looking
full. She exercises muscle contractions
to make her belly jump and writhe. I sleep.
She runs across the lawns, naked, slender, beneath the moon.

Oh, Yes,
Agnes

gerald gullickson |

Dance of atoms
dance of dancers

Take your choice

Order ordering on order
or order ordering order

You must decide

For we do not
all dance

One way

mark hartenbach

CHARMING NIKKI

has me muttering
incantations
forward & reverse
roaming for a bit
of stop action
incommunicado.
pinching my fingers
in a phallic accordion.
making mince meat
out of my left hand,
the remote in my right.
surfing into
no man's land
where i'm always
greeted with
a chorus of
emphatic yes sir.

Scott Harville

TO LOSE...

To lose your hopes and dreams
In slaughter,
A father who feels the rape of
His daughter,
And rage becomes his only reason
For being;
To lose your morals and values
To anger,
A warrior with a purpose won't fear
The danger,
And vengeance becomes the eyes
Of seeing;
To have your will bound, gagged,
And stampeded,
And know justice in your life won't
Be completed,
And faith's the fugitive that's
Forever fleeing.

139

James Hartnett

Untitled

the sign reads
regular \$1.15
and bush says
war is fine
that death is
negotiable
and I watch on t.v.
as they drag
an empty body
and throw it
on the pile

140

The Feeding

mary hausman

(Hour 1):

I order wine on the plane. I have not been drinking. That is, I have not been drinking on a regular basis. This trip home, to Texas, I had a glass of red wine at my sister Karen's dinner last Friday night. On Tuesday night, during dinner at a Mexican restaurant in Austin, I had half a margarita, split with Karen. I have had several Sharps, a non-alcoholic (.05 % alcohol) beer. The visit has made me thirsty, as visits home are wont to do.

I am reading Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice. It is mesmerizing and perhaps has me somewhat spellbound. It led me to buy, when I visited Book Woman, an Austin bookstore, a book called Daughters of Darkness, a collection of lesbian vampire stories.

(Hour 2):

I knew I would order the wine as soon as I settled into my seat on the plane. I knew it would be red wine. I knew I would drink it slowly, savoring the redness as well as its bitterness. The thought of the dry red wine teased me long before I ordered it. When finally, the flight attendant brought a small bottle of Sutter Home to me and set a plastic glass on my

tray table, my heart quickened. I unscrewed the cap (how uncouth, such an anticipated experience blemished by mediocre red wine in a small screw top bottle, to be drunk from plastic!). But anticipated it was, nonetheless, and I watched with calm as the claret liquid filled the plastic glass. I drew the glass slowly to my lips. I closed my eyes and let the cool red run into my mouth, not a deep drink, just enough to taste the tart warmth I've missed these months. I set the glass down, not wanting the experience to end too soon. I ate the chicken dinner, perhaps too quickly. It wasn't something I enjoyed, really, simply something I must do so the alcohol would not affect me so harshly. Having eaten, I drank from a glass of ice-water I had also ordered; this in hopes of diluting the effect of the wine while not entirely diluting the experience.

(Hour 3):

I read some more from the book. Nearing the finish, I read almost feverishly, stopping periodically to savor the wine. I stretched the experience as long as I could. Once, I rolled the wine within my mouth, letting the liquid become hot against my tongue and the inside of my cheek. As I looked down, the juxtaposition of the red wine against my pale hands with their bright red painted nails holding *Interview with the Vampire*, did not escape me. I was fully conscience of how I savored the wine, a long-lost need, waiting patiently, sensuously for it to fill my veins. I made love to the edge of the plastic cup, from whence flowed the heat I needed to fill me, knowing that I would need it again and again. Knowing that, left to my own devices, I would take it, again and again. Knowing, I am not so unlike the vampire.

142

Ray Heinrich

in this poem the
protagonist
shoots himself

bang

John Hayes

bask

children of leisure bask
in the sun while you may
one day the worker will rise up and say
come children of leisure,
come work for yourselves.

Nancy Lenz Hogan

This was My Mother
Her Name was Dorothy

Passionate always, never passive
shaking with courage
fighting for life for
me - her child, for her, as mother
together
Too much love in
distraction, with the struggles
of each day gnawing at the
fleeting thin repose of night
Life bites chunks from Life
devouring itself
The heart breaks with hunger
as love waits barefoot in the snow

John Horvath Jr.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, TENNESSEE

Above Chattanooga
soldiers stand in the smoke mountains spotting
campfires, counting troops that move in the valleys,
and keeping the North, north.

Only treachery untopped the mountain
where tourists idly focus lenses on
the grass covering dead rebels.
If you come late at night one Gray boy
sits on the edge of the precipice
still watching North. Cradling his rifle,
he hums a mother's lullaby.
Do not move too close behind him
for Confederates do not love surprise.
Some Yankees, whose broken bones
have been found below, learnt this too late.

143

wayne hogan

performance poet

She was a performance
poet. She carried a white
rooster on her left shoulder
and recited the Gettysburg
Address from large cue cards
held just off stage. The rooster
would tighten its grip ever so
slightly to let the poet know
when she was through, then
the rooster would flap down onto
the floor. The rooster would
leave grip-marks on the
poet's left shoulder.

144

haiku
number

pete lee
two

spinnig to the floor
tiny cigarette ashes
like burning angels

Li Min Hua

Royalty

Marie Laveau, voodoo queen,
bless us with your sharp wit.
An hundred red X's in tribute
we have scrawled
on your crumbling stone.

Marie Laveau.
embrace Manman Brigitte
around her slender waist
and roll your eyes.

Hear us, Marie Laveau.
Touch us this hot night
lest our fever burn us cold.
Rest not. Rest not, oh queen.
Your subjects kneel
in expectation.

Bryon Howell

White Trash

Your mother
taught you
at a relatively
early age,
the value -
of clipping
coupons

It's too bad
she wasn't able
to show you
how
to find
a good man

The coupons
wouldn't be
needed
to boost
your self-esteem

Katie Hoyme

Your Old Friends

And when we sit and look
We pretend we're perfect
Puffing away our worries
Drowning in our regrets

I'll know it all
Before you know it about yourself
How your fears
Are shared by everyone

Like awaiting the birth of a foal
You can smell it in the dust -
The opportune time to dismiss

Leaving behind all the space
You could have spent
Dreaming about your past ~
Fearing what you'll find
And what you've already forgotten

145

John Hulse

Freeze Frame

My eyes
can't quite
open
and just
outside
our bedroom
window
subtle glances
reveal
your grace
breathing out
cool caresses
with every
liquid syllable.

146

John Mark Ivey | Standing
All Alone

standing all alone
in the middle of the day
giving off shadows

David Hunter | Michaels Restaurant

\$2.95; bacon (crispy), eggs (sunny-side up),
toast (brown) and the sideshow: local crims (Russian emigres)
plotting the takeover of Toronto.
They're welcome to it.
Olgie the waitress pours
me a refill
like she's draining the vein.

Allison Jenks | EMISHED

The octave of us is an avenue
of blackbirds with marbleized wings
As the blacksnake licks the bobcat
in a Herculean daze.
Your impotent homeland spread
the last deep-sea of freckles
on your icy, olive face.
Your blemished hands belong on you like
Auburn liqueur on pale blue tablecloths.
I swim in the black of your eye until it
liquefies like blues in autumn.
We talk like friends of jewel and berry bandits
Erasing halls of bored handwriting.

Lisa Katherine Hughes

Your Whispering Touch

My soul screams at the memory of the pain.
Mother is burned as a child
She cowers in the corner
Please, please leave.
Let me be
Your whispering voice tells me you love me as your searing
hands tell me everything you say is a lie
Your presence follows me to sleep each night.
Peace will not enfold me
I dream of a time when I may feel another's arms around me and
not be scared or hate or die a little
Love brings life to my soul.
You kill me each time your cold hands touch me.
Mother's sweet spirit is crushed
The sweetness stolen as a bee molesting a flower.
Yet mother remains surrounded by the pleasant aroma
of peace
of strength
of self.

147

erik e. humbert

sensitive dependence

She will go and take her sweet soft worked hand
across my face
just slowly, and in three wipes
it is gone onto her fingers
and come back, just a little
across my lips, salty
a forgiven mistake,
and it will wind up on a kleenex
pulled from her purse
and put, red, in her pocket
as another mark of my Don Quixote
need to defend her.

148

James Lee Jobe

Hearing A
New Poem
In My Head

On the morning freeway, the sun
in my naive eyes, I am lifted,
join large black birds, ravens maybe,
or crows, and I no longer know
if I am a man, or a bird,
or morning wind against black feathers.

Tina L. Jens

Monsters in my Dreams

You're just a bad dream.
When I turn on the light, you'll be gone.
I'll check the closet for monsters with your face.
I'll peak under the bed looking for your decapitated, talking head.

But you're just a figment of my nightmares.
Just one more in a long line of bad dreams.
I'll banish you with a night light.
And if I have to, I'll stay up all night
And nap tomorrow afternoon.

m. kettner

#503

father:
eyes hue of bible leather
a good song, though overplayed

Greg Jerrett

waning

waning like a psychotic moon
the light blinding my eyes
i want a new emotion and a new head a new heart and
no more shit
i want to feel like a I have a purpose and a plan a focus
no hitches a brain on good chemicals
no short cirucuits no faulty wires
and bad hardware and new software
and a life that i can hold in my mind's eye
like the right thing to do the right fucking path
the path of least resistance

robert kimm

FOR R.S.B.

full of grace-space
stay on the stump
never get off it
stay on the green

149

gary jurechka

stalking me in the moonlight

Waking –
there are wolf tracks
circling in the snow
of my dreams

150

Marie Kazalia

necessary
appliance

the telephone
I do not display prominently
but keep on a low shelf
its muffled rings
heard adequately enough

kathy

Untitled

soft white hands
no traces of physical labor
almost feminine
fingers long and tapered
even cuticles
nails glossy as though they'd been buffed
to make then shine
alabaster appendages on a statue of clay
no callouses
nothing to irritate
never abrasive or harsh or rough
gliding over me so smoothly
that
i never feel a thing.

Todd Kalinski

the rotate slowly

obviously,
if it isn't about
Power, Prestige of Fame,
then it must be the bulldozers
shovelling more of what
you're trying to avoid,
like man & penis,
back into your life.

151

face painting

debra purdy kong

“Come on, kids, let’s get your faces painted!” Grandma’s strong, powerful voice sliced through trees and spread over two exhibits at the Children’s Festival.

Her three, five, and seven-year-old grandchildren watched two clowns in baggy pants and polka-dot ties arrange paintbrushes on a table. The children gaped in bewilderment at the smaller clown’s spongy, mauve wig, her huge pink nose, and the turquoise stars surrounding her eyes.

“Hurry up,” Grandma urged, “or the other kids will get ahead of you.”

The children looked at her pensively.

“Too late.” Grandma watched a youngster run up to the table. “You’ll have to wait your turn now.” She turned to her grandchildren. “Well, aren’t you going to get in line?”

The boy glanced at her, then looked away as the clowns removed the lids from small pots of paint. While more people gathered, the five-year-old girl reached for her younger sister’s hand.

152

“Go on,” Grandma insisted. “The other children are having their faces painted. Don’t you want to have yours done too?”

“No,” the boy answered quietly; his sisters shook their heads.

Grandma’s blue eyelids lowered like shields while her pencilled brows rose into the powdered creases of her forehead.

“But it’s free and fun,” she argued. “You don’t want to be the only kids with bare faces, do you?”

The kids shuffled their feet, then stepped away from her. Ignoring the glances of curious parents, grandma scrutinized her children.

“You could at least try,” she stated. Suddenly, their father appeared, smiling. “How’s it going?”

“God, you’ve got bloody strange kids,” his mother remarked. “They don’t want to have their faces painted.”

The man stared at her, then sighed and turned away. His gaze filled with sympathy for his children who looked at the ground, oblivious to the fun and excitement around them. A small hand reached for his.

“Let’s go do something else,” he said gently.

Grandma’s teased and sprayed yellow hair didn’t budge in the breeze as she trailed after them.

kretz

DOCTOR PAID BUT OVERRULED

tom

when the unsalted cracker isn't even crisp
the fake wine doesn't have a hint of France
woman of phantasies flourishes without you
your teams your dreams your screams crushed
with drink and prayer and think and prayer
with sink and prayer and hope for the best
it's time to make pressure scatter mercury
with one great effort of holding the breath
exit sharply through unyielding walls of vein.

153

Jamie Kowalczyk

Untitled

ok, that's my life over there...
on the bathroom mirror.
you see, i'm taking a bath, and there's steam on the mirror.
and my hand is shaking my finger-pen because
i know i want to smudge it,
i want to push the molecules around
and write the story out better, maybe to find
out what the clearer pictures are behind the mist.

it's a strange experience to write on my own reflection, and
place symbols between the two of us.
and when those steam-outlined words overtake the mirror, and
rub away the last vestiges of mask,
well, then i will stand naked and open--

154

Walter Kuchinsky

Vets

Mr. B lives in here,
Building Six. He's pretty fat--
always on a diet--
walks kind of funny, too--
a World War Two wound.
He'll never see eighty again,
but he doesn't show it.

When he sees Mr. C--
Mr. C lives in here
too--
Mr. B grins at him
and asks,
"You think I LIKE diet drinks?"
then he winks at Mr. C.

SABRA LEORA

STANDING WAVES.

Glazing around with my head full of nothing
As we speak, my psyche is still humming
Seeing the tissue that runs deep in my eye
When it's coming at you and it feels like a pin
Drowning in my own heat of resistance
No recollection of the things that I just did

If I don't know how to be here now
Contamination will start hanging around
My flesh is flesh
My fear is sore
But not about being afraid anymore

So I'm finding the why
That fits the hole I can't find
When there is nothing left
Except water on the mind
Holding back in my mental rewind

Rebecca Lemke

WHOLE

dissect the pieces
take apart the whole
sort the sections
each to his own
no more respectful
no less indignant
no more confused
no less willing
more whole on its
own that when put
in its place
things lack from
each
all lacking different
when everything missing
is hooked together
you're left with
a string of holes
a life on its own
looking for empty space

155

Joanne Legatto

Cafe Girl

Allusions of life and love fill the aromatic cabaret.
Mingling singles and poetic solitudes share the common
smoke infested air, without contact or communication.
She lives her lie away from these others.
The long legged beauty clad in black cannot see herself,
as this crowded cafe intensely views her presence.
Pain and fortune are catholicized similar to capacino and
java, without emotion or much less self-doubt, or so we think.
But self assurance for our girl is only a surface phenomena.
Hidden beneath the poise and windswept looks is a needy
person, waiting to be appreciated, instead of simply noticed.
How long will she drink her bitter espresso here? Until a love
god shares her isolated space, or until she lives her life for herself
not for her image

156

ARIANE LIVERNOIS

Voyeur

We watched the rain fall
on blacktops and cars
her love stole away, sometimes
to other towns and bars

Casually we note: sardonically held
their golden wreaths have lied
naturally, unknown wisdom
crept up to us and died

You can see her loneliness
this woman-child
mourning her life before it's gone
and still we watch the rain fall.

Duane Locke

AUTOBIOGRAPHY 3

On the upper lip, two dolls on a cake.
On the lower lip, the bird songs of poppies.
On the bottom of a wine bottle, her tongue.

While her body spins, chips are
Are placed on her toenails, coins
Stuck in her mouth. The croupier, death.

LYN LIFSHIN

overheard on
the radio
with a hiss

“Yes, I’m for
the death penalty,
we’re had enough
of this killing”

HARLAN LYMAN

evolved people

Interaction of reactions to make beliefs
Why have faith in someone else's invention?
Language contradicts itself, it only works when you pick a side
Result of emotion has been predetermined
Soaked sponge is another way to say human
Analyze and realize: We are all wrong

157

Bob Ludden

Untitled

I bring you fire as offering, my love;
Its fever both a warning and a tribute pure.
No flame can emulate the heat of my desire.
For in my touch burns only ecstasy
We share, yet flesh of one is fused from two--
And in the very act, I press it home
And in its roaring blast, a benediction
to our love...no dross remains
To foul its wake,
For what is left is love immaculate,
And ours alone to chill

LINDA ANN LOSCHIAVO

“In a Few Words” In Brevi

How now or never to speak of words, phrases,
That steer us through love's phases, your voice tilts
Its riches like birds goldening above
In light-kissed blue, those restless aviators
I yearn for, to be carried far away
On, your soft throat close, vibrant, nestling promise

158

Kay Lynn

Buried Purity

I, the tree
firmly planted next to the stirring stream,
my roots buried deep.
You, the stream that gives me purpose,
the life that flows within me.

Encouraging my growth,
continually refreshing my mind,
always renewing my spirit
and forever restoring my soul.
Give me your drink of purity
and never let me thirst again.

Jim Maddocks

ALTERED STATES

The existential voyeur watched me undress -
it was a spiritual thing, an act of blind faith.

I don't know what he wanted to see,
not me, he wasn't really looking at me,
but there was something reflected in his eyes.

I shuddered, and he asked if I was cold,
but we both knew that wasn't it.

giovanni malito

Foot Fall

in rustling autumn woods
the strams babble and chatter
the jays scream in defiance
chipmunks and squirrels scatter
the red maples are ablaze
and thought I step as softly as I can
I still feel I disturb the peace.

Benjamin McCabe

The Timeless City

Our scene is a city untouched by time,
Not unique of itself though not wholly sublime.
Its fire and intrigue come from within,
Its misfits and matriarchs, sanctity and sin.

159

Chris McKinnon

Fred

Rings around my neck and circles under my eyes
from the map that stretches between us.

Or U Gone for good?
Chinese American in my demean
Japanese in my cups but not drinking in the
futon that eats zucchini

micchael

Untitled

your beauty is like a field of wild flowers .
at first light when only gods eyes can see the
beauty he has created. and as he looks upoun your face
he smiles at his most beautifull creation .

160

SPARK

Joshua Meadows

Amy Lyn Miller

The Flute*

A song with heavy bated breath
that speaks of fire, emotion and desire.
Tender fingers caressing the body,
opening and closing gaping holes.
An airy kiss of symphonic life
evokes a melody of musical magic.
A passionate melding
of harmonic souls.

**First Published by Amorphous Estrella*

She burns down his house as the clock strikes midnight, with him still tied to the bed. “It was an accident,” she’ll say, when the cops arrest her for arson. “And rape!” he adds from the upstairs room, narrowing his eyes in concentration. He sighs, and lays the cards down on the mattress. “Hit me.” She lovingly obliges, slapping his face off and onto the bed, then handing him an ace. “I never much liked that chin anyway,” he declares matter o’ factly. “Snake eyes,” she sneers, throwing the poker chips out the window.

Now she runs away, her feet slapping the concrete. She looks down to her palms; red-handed, but by god, they won’t catch her. “He’s stolen your seed, girl,” the Buddhist priest calls from the median, pointing to her naked stomach. She stops. The stars crash into each other as they try to watch. Her face is a constellation of smoke. She kneels down in the road, pulls the lighter from under her tongue, and runs her thumb down the igniter. The universe explodes.

Melanie Moore

Puzzle

I still remember the day we were able to put the puzzle together inside out...

No corners, no ends,

Wrong and about

Renaissance arrived

After the money ran out

Our hopes relied on ancient forces

Living as the undead

Along our lives' courses

Somehow coping with our role models' divorces

So the Dark Ages end

And different seasons arise

We keep on mourning

As we wait for the surprise

161

JENNIFER MILLER

HABITS

I am afraid to go to sleep

I might miss your call

I'm afraid to hang up the phone

I might not talk to you again

I hold you like it is the last

Absorbing the passion with in you

Without you I go on all out of habit

Near you it's always so new I fumble...

No habit there

162

You Can't Fire Me, 'Cause I ...

Mike Spitz

Tipping a hat and flashing a moon to the Corporate Universe, we should be thankful of Opportunity, yet cognizant of the inherent contradiction that lies at the center of “Democratic Capitalism.”

One way or another, we all deal with the rat race, the dog-eat-dog world of winner-take-all: after all, biznis iz biznis, and we've all gotta pay our dues, another way of saying we somehow missed out on The Trust Fund Baby Syndrome, one of those dilemmas they never seem to write self-help books about.

Anyway, opportunity is usually another way of saying you've got options, one such option being the avoidance of The Corporation and its opportunities, however viable and potentially lucrative. Some folks dig it, love doing the suit-and-tie, pantsuit-and-nylon drag; whether blessed with its intolerance or doomed to live week-to-week, I've been there, done that, and now look forward to stocking beer, washing glasses and taking out the trash at one of our neighborhood bars, going from Skyscraper to Manhole, as it were. Seriously, I've never had so much fun working for a living, having a better time now than when living unemployed, which, for a guy like me, is saying quite a bit.

This week my six-month anniversary to saying a professional bye-bye to Calvin Coolidge's legacy and Microsoft products, I thought I'd share my going-away experience with any of you perhaps thinking of doing same: Not that I recommend doing the corporate bail-out; I'm merely illustrating that when you're in a position where you've got nothing to lose but what

you wanna lose, you might as well have some fun while losing it.

Names changed to protect the guilty, I was gainfully employed at a portfolio management company downtown, acting as their in-house software guy, you know, wandering from desk-to-desk, answering questions, fixing things that got broke, breaking things so I'd have something to do by fixing them. Don't get me wrong: the people there were friendly enough, they tolerated my obnoxiousness and telephone chatter, if only because I was competent and apparently knew what I was talking about.

One afternoon, though (must have been the new "hazelnut" blend of office coffee I was drinking— let me tell ya, girls, that stuff can make ya Coo-Coo for Cocopuffs any day!—) I simply Had Enough. Fortuitously enough, I happened to be working in the Executive Vice President's office when I officially went bonkers.

"Have you installed my new computer yet?" he asked, poking his head through the transom of his corner office which was larger in surface area than my entire one-bedroom apartment.

Instead of simply answering the question, I nonchalantly walked from behind his desk, across the avocado green plush carpet, passed the tombstones of corporate deals valued in the billions, looked him straight in his eyes and said:

"I can make sounds with my hands."

He stared blankly at me, slightly taken aback. "Yes sir, it's true," I continued. "Ya wanna see?"

Before he could respond, I summarily demonstrated. And, exactly like the computer installation he was referring to, I thought that I had performed an absolutely outstanding job: the farting sounds that emanated from between my palms were of such realnis, in fact, that he rubbed his nose when I was done.

A moment's silence, then: "Is that on yer resume?"

I took the hint.

164

Steven S. Nam | Droplet

Time sifts like a snake in the grass
Regrets of decision, longing for a second chance
Lick of fire upon feverish skin
Digging fingernails into one's scalp, digging and digging
Yet that droplet of relent never arrives.
So don't scream.
Don't cry.
So don't regret.
And don't lie.
Bitterness found in succumbing to bitterness
Life relished through accepting
Since life will always go on
As perennial as the stars.

normal | thruth serum

for six months we pumped
drugs / fucked ourselves
thru the pillows / looked
into each others eyes sing-
ing songs of love so intense
that raw ecstasy covered our
veins.
then one day the drugs ran
out ---
we looked ito each others
eyes and didn't know what
to say

Dave Oakes | nature

Waves flowing along the oceans shore
Clouds drifting through the sky
What in life could one wish for more
Than to find themselves in natures eye

Ben Ohmart

Mortal at a Stop Light

even the rich have to stop for lights
wasting seconds. but there's good interest on a regular back account
of \$1 million. so they wait. and they watch. for the green

165

Jerry Oleaf

the prosioner

No reason for me to be in this cell
No reason for my present condition.
Nothing here even halfway beautiful.
Not even a small trace of compassion.

What do the stars think of my destiny?
Are they planning any more crazy turns?
What moves does the wind have lined up for me?
Does the sky hear my weeps and sigh and mean?

There is just one side to the coin of luck.
Nothing to look at but metal and brick.

alice olds ellington

declaration to st. paul

i have never like you
you my favorite despise
i credit you with hating breasts
ona woman and throwing stones
at her lower parts.

now i would like yo to beg.
you who never realized a Mother-in-law.
how you can hate woman i don't know.
bit i guess that's guerilla warfare for you.

166

richard perkins | hiding place

In the black vase. Beneath the
Fourth stone of the patio walk.
Between leatherbound volumes
of Cervantes and Chaucer. In
the pocket of a tweed jacket
You forget you ever wore. On
The ledge of a cookoo clock.
At the bottom of the cedar chest
Next to an ivory and pearl dress.
On the third finger of the left
Hand where you placed it long ago.

writing is a
thing of action

tim peeler

I hear the sift buzz of a soul
beyond the visible world
in dark treetop[wind,
I want to fly from this doghouse roof,
to key myself to that moan,
but you would say
I have overwritten
in my small awkward way,
and I would be sensitive enough
to listen
till I forgot the whisper
of sould sigh
in Blakean trees
below the blue hush of moon.

AND THIS IS WHERE MY MEMORIES BEGIN

Jason Pettus

It's 1975. I'm looking at a calendar from McDonnell Douglas that dad's brought home and put on my bedroom door. It shows the entire year at one glance, and it's taller than me. And the whole calendar is done in the same font as the McDonnell Douglas logo, which I figure out later in life is Swiss Expanded, but at the time just struck me as a really cool font. And I remember this, I remember this very clearly, I remember staring at September, right at eye level, and thinking:

"Ford is the President of the United States."

And then I thought

"I wonder what a President is."

167

Robert L. Penick | His First Ex-Wife

She came to him at a time
when he lived in a vacuum
when symbols were meaningless
Souls were vain boxes
and his own lack of faith
was sovereign.

When she left
he had all that
and less.

168

Jaime Portell

CONFUSION

Many nights I think of you
Enuf thoughts to fill my heart but
Not enuf to fill my head

Am I as foolish as I feel
Release me from your grip - - don't
Expect me to play pretend

Please don't let me go
In the midst of everything
Go and let me be alone for a
Short while

jennifer pierson

Coming Home
from the Coal
Mines, Jessup,
PA 1926

over and over again
the water surged
stone-grey and stark white
on that bleak night
rushing over the bridge
cracking it
his bowed legs
against the cold rain
buckling under suddenly
for force pushing
him onto the water
never
letting him know
he would be
my grandfather

I.B. Rad

HOW PRETTY IS OUR WORLD

Bright sea curls a ripply frosting,
white sand fashions an under cake,
how pretty is our world
this Christmas day.
Still,
slicing this bubbly icing,
a toy trawler
slips by,
heading toward the edge of the world.

seth putnam

microcosm of
life, therefore
smaller mallets

169

*
10 children on each team
and there were in this parking lot
1 player from each side drove a remote control car
*
the course was a straight line
and the remaining 9 players had mallets
they hit the car as hard & as long as they could,
keeping the opposition from the finish
*
after everyone drove, the game was over
some got clubbed and totalled at the starting line,
a couple got to the goal,
the others were just in between,
all settling in for as far as they're gonna go

170

daniel rand

Nightmares Every Night

When she woke up,
her husband was sitting up in bed.
He was tired.
She looked at the digital clock.
It was four-ten in the morning.
They squinted at each other in the half dark,
then he rolled over onto his side
and started to snore again.
She took a deep breath and
closed her eyes.
She had nightmares every night.

Elisavietta Ritchie

Savings & Thrift

I buy clothes second-hand,
haunt Goodwill for plates,
yard sales for chairs,
rent ramshackle houses,
invest in used cars.
My lovers also
have seen better days.
But what bargains I find...

Matt Robinson

august

this wet climax-
rain; after long(ing), sultry
waves of summer heat.

al rogovin

guilt

Guilt crawls behind
my eyes on the job
while I guard
the construction site,
listen to the generator
churn
and do my time.
Tonight I can't forgive myself
for killing and murdering
or cheating
On my way back home
the sun rises gray
from the wrong direction
as worms crawl onto wet and shiny
morning pavement
for good guiltless sex
to die this
Ford F-150 death.

171

Anthony Robottom

7192

Woken by the most annoying sound in the universe.
An alarm clock from hell.
I leap from Utopian dreams, and from under the sheets.
Seven o'clock in the morning.
Not even morning; seven midnight.
I drag clothes on. The ones I find on the floor.
Drag myself down to breakfast.
I go into the cold, looking like someone who slept outside.
Go to class, like a zombie.
Night follows morning, and that was the
Seven thousand, one hundred and ninety second day.

172

c. c. russel | dreaming of
you again

Your fingers reaching
and your eyes much brighter than
a halloween moon

Julie Schilling

Between Friends

Ok
this is sappy and corny
and doesn't really mean anything
it won't win an award, make money
or be published in the New Yorker
it's just poetry between friends

print it out
put it in your desk drawer
a year from now you'll find it
all yellow and faded
read it and smile to yourself
think of me and feel good

a warm summer memory
from a night of love and affection
and sweet comfort
between friends

g.a. scheinoha | Untitled

She's my bo da q
and I'm her man,
as long as
she grasps
squirming carp
in one hand
and words
like a descending
blade in
the other.

Immortal Sex Poem

For Rachel

Afterwards he asked, Is there anything
you want me to do?

Just hold me, she said.

I mean, to make you orgasm, what can I do?
I want to make you feel good too.

I don't like being that frank, she said,
I dont want it to get cold.

Get cold? He said, How can cumming
ever get cold?

173

quantum mechanics

assures that the turning
of me head is intimately connected to
the lighting of your cigarette. Nothing happens
alone or isolated and the wildness in the wave
of my hair is the same
as the lake when the vault around my perception cracks
enough to make the connection.

The knowledge of each thing contained
in everything else so when I look
at this daffodil it might well be
a face in China same as the twisted branch
reaching like an old woman to the moon.
A wild old woman dancing crazy circles
on the beach, waves of her hair
pounding on her back.

174

Okla h o m a

l o n s c h n e i d e r

N i c k S c h u l t z | z i p p o

Sliver top,
Tracking white and red
Flaming blue

In your danger
Black stripes emerge
From every corner

Fatally and harmfully,
Light my affliction
With your fire
With your heat
I rely

It all started when the geriatric president went to pay his respects at the German cemetery. Well, it started long before that, but you've got to begin somewhere and that's as bad a place as any. These kinds of things usually have an insidious onslaught. It actually began at the end of the war when they recruited Nazis to form the Special Forces to fight the "communist menace". That ifighting soldiers form the skyî crap came later when their descendants were committing genocide in Vietnam. Like father, like son. But back to Bitburg. You have to remember that before the blathering idiot became president he was an actor, and a damn bad one. So when the Holocaust survivor pleaded with him not to go, he managed to muster a plaintive expression. It was almost convincing, but you could see Death Valley Days creeping through. So he went to the cemetery and played hide-and-seek with SS ghosts. But the little bastards were more wily than he ever imagined. They were swirling all around him like gnats, and even the Secret Service goons couldn't swat them away. They followed the president back to the Sheraton and then up the plank to Air Force One. Wave bye-bye, Ron. There was turbulence all the way back home. And that friggin' airplane had no left wing, so they made an emergency landing in Michigan and the rest is history.

joanne seltzer

excerpt from the red
door of the church at
blue mountain lake

...

The carillon send a message
That echoes through the hamlet
Sunday is coming
You are invited
Come as you are
On foot
By boat
By car
Come

175

Peter Scott

A Long Winter
After the Harvest

They're controlled by their peers
Who are controlled by rebellion pooling deep inside
The rebellion formed when the parents trusted
Friends immersed in culture
Crafted culture written by the rebellious
With real cause
The proud armada of defiant rebels
Began on a whim
They heard a rumor
Started by a man
Leaning from a chair
Crafting odd words in an assortment
Just to pass the time.

176

mark senkus

A Good One

I decided th'mutual attraction
wasn't just in my head
and went forward with th'gamble
asking her what kind of a kisser
she was

she smiled back at me with sizzling
perfect lips
as her curved soft body full of
gesturing language
yelled out

"a good one"
before her voice-box
had th' chance.

sharon

Taylor

Seven schools
Always running
Faster than tears can fall
Only seven
He won't find us
Seven schools
Seven years old
Seven names
Seven lives
I don't want to go
Mom
Not again
I have friends
I can't leave
He's found us
A cat has nine lives
I now
Have eight.

deloris selinsky

Tales

Tere are all
kinds of tales.
Glad and sad.
Real and fables.
Tales set to music,
highlighted in color,
and by pictures
to make them
recognizable.

Sometimes
these tales arrive
as presents
in wrapping paper,
tied with ribbon
and a bow.

Eric Siegel

SERE WORLD

The globe has revolved 36 times
The drought had been for 35

Eric

Then the clouds began to form
A sight I had not seen before
Thunder and lightning possessed my world
Wonderous energy, wet and pure

Let me tell you what transpired
Love I found, now expired
A passing storm, fragile and finite
Thank god for rain, the water satisfies

On that fateful day my eyes were wet
The land was dry, the storm had went
Left with dreams, fond memories
Another hill to climb, pray for rain.

Glenn Shivelor

Kiss More Often

Oh, the people of the world should kiss much more often.
It would increase worldwide civility.

Some folks use kisses so sparingly.

Oh, the people of the world should kiss much more often ---
So won't you give a kiss, to your spouse begotten,
And to your sweetheart, if you've got one.

Oh, the people of the world should kiss much more often!
--- It would increase worldwide civility.

177

178

Mark Sonnenfeld | Another ritual

I see dark sweat pants I think murder with
knives OJ.
Not medical doctors for Ireland.
Not Amsterdam branches.

Jacqui Smith | Baby

My love for you is nothing new,
Without you I would go wrong.

I simply do not what I would do,
Without you in my arms!

raymond
tod smith | mnemonolith

angel
with wooden eyes:
yr tears rot yr sight.
yr nails have nothing
unbroken left to hold.

Ernest Slyman

Comes Softly Greed

When I hear the tremulous cries
Of insects at dawn,
I think at last I understand
The world's yearning for power and money,
Which comes to burst in the skulls of men
Like insects softly calling to one another,
Begging for love, and out of such loneliness
Comes envy, which makes them dance
And beat their wings in the sun's bright tomorrow,
Deadly afraid some bit of summer shall fall and pounce,
And steal the grass from out of their mouths.

179

Cindy Sostchen

Love In The Computer Age

I once had a lover
and my life was complete
he made a quick exit
when I pressed delete....

pressed delete....



pornography: ugly enough, but only the tip of the iceberg

george spelvin

One of my main gripes about pornography is that it tells the viewer or reader lies which he wants to hear - chiefly that women are eager to jump in bed with the viewer or reader and ask nothing in return in terms of relationships; in other words, female heterosexuality is simply the flipside of male heterosexuality.

I have similar objections to soap operas and drug store novels. They tell the female viewer or reader that if the smile pretty enough, a knight on a galloping white horse will come and bestow the viewer or reader with a relationship and ask nothing in return; in other words, male heterosexuality is simply the flipside of female heterosexuality.

Furthermore, I have similar objections to parental drives being similarly exploited. The Fifties sitcoms told parents that children hallow the ground they walk on. The dime store prints of bug-eyed urchins tell the viewer that there are millions of submissive and innocent little darlings waiting to be rescued, and that these pitiful waifs will behave perfectly in return.

This is not a mere academic problem. Media lies affect our daily lives. Husbands ask their wives, "Why can't you pose in black lace nighties for me like the centerfold girl?" Wives ask their husbands, "Why can't you meet my every need like the hero in the Harlequin Romance?" Parents ask their children, "Why can't you say, 'Gee, dad,' like Beaver Cleaver?"

The answer to these questions is very simple: the centerfold girl, the Harlequin hero, and Beaver Cleaver don't exist.

why things are

Joseph Skinner



He insists over her doubts that it will be a fine spring weekend, the first truly fine one after the long, rough winter. But by the time they reach the cabin it is snowing hard. The snow has begun as sharp, fine crystals, turned into styrofoam-like pellets, and ended up as steady, heavy flakes.

“The multiple kinds of snow,” he says, “that the Eskimos each have a different name for. That’s an interesting study, linguistics. I should go back to school and become a linguist.”

She says nothing.

The cabin is stripped bare. Everything gone except the andirons in the fireplace. The andirons, and on the hearth the want ads and Trends section from last November’s newspaper.

“Well, at least they left us the paper and those things,” he says. “What do you call them?”

“Andirons,” she says.

“And-irons. I guess they were too heavy to bother with.”

They dig in the snow for deadfall, but the snow is already deep and the deadfall is hard to find. He breaks easy-to-reach dead branches off trees for kindling.

“Here,” she says, kneeling at the hearth. “Give me the paper. Let me do it.”

He gives her the want ads first. “Never did me much 400d,” he says. “You get there and they’ve already had 300 applicants for the one position.”

She tears the sheets into strips and crumples the strips into little balls which she places strategically under the kindling.

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Now he is reading the Trends section. “‘Why Things Are.’ You ever read that column?”

“Nope.”

“The first question here goes, ‘Why is urine yellow?’ Good question. Let’s see, it talks about bilirubin, ‘a yellow pigment found in bile and urine...’ Hey, I knew little

Billy Rubin in third grade! A jaundiced, pissed-off little kid...”

He looks up at her to see if she is smiling, but she’s blowing on the paper to keep it going.

“Give me some more,” she says, reaching her hand back.

“Okay,” he says. “Here goes ‘Why Things Are.’”

She tears the paper, crumples it, blows. He says:

“Actually, I’ve got something better than that.”

She turns. “What.”

“For emergencies,” he says. He digs in his pack. He produces a large, flat bottle of slivovitz. A third of it’s gone already. “Isn’t this an emergency? Flambe them logs.”

She turns back to the fire and blows. He takes a drink. The fire catches.

“It’s the andirons,” he says. “Brings the oxygen up underneath. Oxygen’s a poison in high concentrations, and an explosive too. But it’s also necessary for life. How does that grab you?”

He takes another long pull and begins to sing:

Love is like oxygen

You get too much, you get too high

Not enough and you’re gonna die...

He looks out the window at the snow. “Why Things Are. Well, I’ve got some questions for the man. One: why doesn’t snow ever come down in major chunks? Get packed together up there somewhere and come smashing down in big, huge snowballs and get it over with? why those slow, gentle flakes? Two: why does water freeze from the top down? That I’d like to know. Doesn’t it get colder the deeper you go?”

“I’ve got one,” she says. “How come an ant can carry forty times its weight and some humans can’t even carry their own weight?”

“That’s a good one,” he says, nodding soberly. “That’s a very good question. Hey,” he says, “that’s a good fire. Those andirons. Gee they look heavy. what are they, anyway? What does the design represent?”

“That looks like a fleur-de-lis on top,” she says.

“Fleur-de-lis. That doesn’t seem right, for an andiron.”

He stares into the fire. “Oh shit. Oh shit. I think I’ve got it. An andiron factory.”

“An andiron factory,” she repeats slowly.

“With gag andirons! Say, like a pair of fireman with big hats: the bars that hold the wood could be shaped like hoses. Or a couple of steelworkers, with those poles they use to feed the furnaces. Or welders, complete with little masks made of fire-resistant glass. It’ll be great! All we need is our own forge, a little foundry.”

“A little foundry,” she says.

“You bet! How about this: a pair of witches stirring cauldrons.”

“The cauldrons could be hollow,” she says. “You could fill them with toddies or the hot drink of your choice, and the fire would keep them hot.”

“There you go.” His gaze rolls down at her like a rearing horse’s as he tilts his head back for another slug.

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“Two dragons,” he says, wiping his chin. “Also hollow. Their mouths wide open, you can see the flames and smoke inside them.”

He leans over and breathes fire-air into her face. She pushes him away and he loses his balance and collapses, with a laugh, against the pile of damp firewood.

She turns back to the fire. “Phoenixes,” she says. “Rising from the ashes.”

“Hey! Right there’s the name of our firm: Phoenix Andiron Go. I love you, baby.” He thrusts the bottle at her. “Toast?”

She ignores him.

“Bosnia’s best,” he shrugs, and drinks.

The snow cracks a branch outside like gunfire. She gets up and walks to the door. He grabs her ankle.

“Naked guys with hard-ons,” he growls, “big old iron hard-ons sticking into the hot, hot fire...”

She pushes him back with her booted foot, leaving a broken waffle of dirty snow on his warm throat. “Goddamnit, Stephen, I’ve got to get more wood!”

He staggers to his feet. His throat and his face and his brain are on fire. He stumbles to the door of the cabin and tries to help her push, but already the drifting snow has sealed it shut.

Howard F. Stein
Toward
Outside
Experts

Be polite.
Listen.
Be respectful.
Don't get up and walk out
While they speak.
Use what you can.
Eventually they will leave.

Shelley Stoker

GOTHAIKU

sun a scalding tear

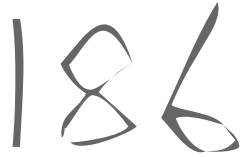
sliding down
the face
of sky

night kisses
what hurts.

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Christopher Stolle
America's Two
Greatest Joys

filling out the form
a mysterious ward
at the far reaches of the hospital
a naive scream
a joyous laugh
how could I turn away
I was a father
proud, but scared
only of forgetting to buy him
his first baseball glove



how men should put their pants on

james sullivan

There's a proper way to put your pants on. Here it is: first, retrieve your trousers from the closet, door knob, or floor where you dropped them last night. Shake them several times to smooth the wrinkles out, to ensure the pants legs are not twisted, and to remove foreign objects. Now, set those pants neatly on the bed, chair, or floor. You've got to don your underwear before anything else.

Good, you should have clean and unholey underclothing on now. At least, your mother and I hope you do. Next, sit on your bed, chair, or floor and put your socks and shoes on. Why socks? Because they are kind and gentle on your feet. So are shoes. But why before pants? To dust off your shoes as you put them through your pants legs and to give you better balance when you stand on one foot to pull the opposite pant leg up.

Excellent, you now ought to have your footwear on. And it's highly recommended that you tie the laces securely at this time, too. Trust me. Bending over is much, much easier with your pants off.

Now, grab your pants again. Stand up and hold them with your two hands, one on either side of the pants waist. Allow your pants to fall neatly in a heap just in front of you. But don't take your hands off them. Elevate the clothing a little off the floor, lift your left leg, put it into the left pant leg, and pull that side of your pants up as you balance yourself on your right leg.

Great. See how much easier it is to do that with your shoes on? So, hold that portion of your pants up with your left hand, and place that left foot back on the floor. Next, lift your right leg as high as it will go and carefully step into your right pant leg, pushing your right leg through until it touches the floor, as you pull that side of your pants up with your right hand. At this point, you should be holding the right and left side of your pants at the waist.

Okay, then, pull, button, snap, hook, tie, or do whatever the contraption requires to secure the two sides of your pants together. Your next step is to reach down with your right hand, regardless of which hand is dominant, and grab the lever at the bottom of your

fly. Making sure that all pants material, and everything else, that should be inside is, delicately, but firmly, pull your zipper up to the top and fold the lever down to lock in place.

If you have a fly that's not zippered, but buttoned, just start buttoning from the bottom and work your way to the top. If you have neither a zipper nor buttons, you may have a serious problem, and you'd better see a good tailor soon.

With your fly closed, you can put a belt on if you like. On the other hand, your pants may have an elastic waist band, which negates the need for a belt.

The last step is to push in all your pockets to make sure they are not hanging outside your trousers. Also check for pocket holes at this time. Then inspect your pants cuffs, if you have any, to see that they're not turned down.

If you're going to put a shirt on next, and I hope you do, you'll find it easier to unhook your pants, re-open your fly, and drop your pants a little. Then spread your legs apart to prevent your pants from falling all the way down. Now, put the shirt on, button it, tuck it into the pants, then hook them up again, and rezip your fly.

They say that all men put their pants on the same way—one leg at a time. That's a myth. Some men put their pants on two legs at a time. To do so, just sit on a bed, chair, or floor. Now scrunch up your pants so that when you hold them up in front of your eyes, you can see through both pants legs. When you have your pants like that, lift both your feet at the same time and stick them through the pants leg holes. Next, stand up on both feet and pull your pants up to the waist. The rest is the same as the one-leg-at-a-time procedure.

I assure you, there is no third way to put on your pants. Several people, however, have tried and failed, dislocating knees, hips, and even arms in the attempt. At the same time, pants have been ripped, punctured, and badly damaged in the process. And all for what? Some third way to put your pants on that just doesn't exist.

To keep your pants especially clean, you may wish to put them on while standing, not on the floor, but upon some higher platform, so the pants never touch the floor, getting dirty there. Perhaps the best thing to stand on is a footstool. And you may wish to forgo having your shoes dusted and keeping your balance more easily by putting your shoes on after you've pulled on your pants while standing on that footstool.

If you want to be weird like that, go ahead. Just don't let anyone who knows better see you.

And now you know how to put your pants on.

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geoff stevens

Planetarium/ Old Currency

From November interior
on fireworks night
when acid reigns
and stars whirl
pin-eye bright

you look up and find
your cranium leaks, and
spend the rest
of your life
in a folly,
which has no tiles on the roof.

Donald Surles

My Craving

Your lips,
Your hair,
Oh for your body I care.

Your lips,
your eyes,
Full of wonder,
Full of suprise.

Your lips,
Your heart,
Oh how sweet
the love it drips.

Oh your lips.

christopher tm

Untitled

i try to remember
words of wisdom
you whispered once to me
fragments
of moments
truths

but they aren't there anymore
or never were

chuck taylor

Kid, Japan

Sakuma park it was by the
red arched bridge over
the Cedar shrouded pond--
stone steps maybe a thousand
years old going up a hill
going nowhere, and your tiny
feet climbing up and down,
up and down, holding my hand
with such sure purpose and I,
tinged with melancholy,
conscious kneeling saying
hold this
hold this
it will not last...

Eric J. Swanger

Untitled

Let's get together
in the middle east
and compare dick sizes
and our favorite
football teams.

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john sweet

burning books

tv filled
with a black and white hitler
goose-stepping soldiers
and piles of burning books
and you know that somewhere
someone is more than willing
to try it all again

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brian tolle | Untitled

i whine and pine
most every way
for your sweet love
be not soon lost.
so how could I'ne,
Valentines Day,
forgetting, shove
mine heart's blue frost
into warm light
which is thine face?

tolek | dare

(part two of lonely boy's revelation of what he wants from the girl he let go, let's hope he doesn't lose conviction)

i could go out of this silent apartment leave it unlocked in this rain get into my car, it's silver, unwashed, not altogether beat up but somewhat patched, and actually drive to, luckily i know where it is, your place.

sure your boyfriend's there but he daren't move.
looking in you, eyes locked, damned
if blue lightning doesn't emanate.

but of course this would be wrong.
the way we own, by liking it, a song.

Jennifer Lynn Utterback

A Solution

Of course nobody stopped to think about her.
She just laid there in the fetal position.
What else could she do in a white rubber room.
No one came to visit her—she doesn't talk.
A witness—shocked—in trauma.
Just lock her up.

Shonna TrueLove

Brighten A Day

A smile to share
Mine to give
Will I choose
To be so free
Light a day
Share a moment
Can it be
There in me
So quickly given
No cost there
Should I try
Will they see

George Clayton Upper III

Horizon

There is only one line in the first group—about ten in the seventh, but they're so close together that I cannot count them without getting closer, or asking the

artist, which would embarrass me. They lie in different directions, aching close to right angles. I could ride them like a playground slide, like a futurist, up

and down, arrogantly like my son. But the lines would have to be turned upside-down each time I reached a peak, or else I'd have to find a way to sucker gravity.



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EXTERMINATION DAY

Aaron Vanek

“Gotcha, ya, ya lil’ bugger!”

“Another cockroach?” Derek asked without looking at his roommate.

Derek bristled at the fact that he spent \$100 buying Roach Motels, Combat, Black Flag, borax, and other infamous “pest removers”, but managed only to stink up the house, deplete the ozone layer, and provide THEM with a place to bury their dead. What did THEY care, THEY could eat a nuclear blast for breakfast and have fallout for lunch. What could some synthesized chemical stew ever hope to do against evolutionary perfection? Nothing worked. They went so far as to take out a loan to hire a specialist. The day after East Side Exterminator’s killing spree, a chestnut brown two-incher with wings hopped out of Derek’s Fruit Loops and kissed him on the nose. Even keeping the apartment immaculate only served to spot them scampering into your underwear a little easier.

The only thing that seemed to have any effect at all was Derek’s roommate, Doug. Doug was the true Master of Cockroach Deathóexcept he employed a slightly more...extreme approach. He’d often use WD-40 to torch a creeper, sometimes forgetting to take it outside and ended up setting fire to the curtains. He even zapped a couple in the microwave. Contrary to popular belief, they don’t explode, they just hop around a lot until you hear the pop. Next thing you know, there’s a chunk of carbon in your Kenmore. His favorite tactic was to rip their legs off before he slowly inserted a pin through their backs and stuck them on a bulletin board to starve to deathóan interesting conversation piece for when the folks drop by.

Doug grunted in joy as he tromped over to the kitchen and pulled out the cutting board. Derek heard a “CHOP!”, and childish giggling.

“Doug, what are you doing?”

“I’m cutting off their heads and putting them on toothpicks so their buddies can see that I mean business!”

Derek grimaced in horror at the ghastly thought.

“Kurtz did it in Heart of Darkness, so why can’t I?” was Doug’s rationale.

Derek retreated to bed, not wanting to deal with it, not looking forward to scrubbing up cockroach heads in the cupboard. It was time to get another roommate. He dozed off hearing Doug challenge, “Come and get me, you little bastards! I’m ready for you!”

Although a film major and sometimes casual drug user, Derek never expected to wake up and find his roommate’s bloody head impaled on a broomstick in the middle of the living room.

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Terje Bjørnø Torgersen | Eternity - now

We are singers and dancers
From Eternity

We are
Prisoners of time

Through the window
Of our Souls
We experience
Time
From Eternity -
Now

My Playtoy

You are my baby,
My hunk The only one for me,
You make me feel that our love is real.

I ardor and hold deep in my heart,
Our times we share,
I am very glad your there!

I trust you like the time we spend too,
For my hot man I cherish you!

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Resurrecting mother (excerpt from)

I

Sadly, I return to
Laying her to rest. It's comforting,
The way I paper over the wounds,
Seal deeper scars, cast the body out
As if an empty vessel on some retreating tide:
The silent voice, the womb, uterus, ovaries,
Aborting one another, like little russian dolls.
Time has come to stop this hiding inside.

Wisps

Jerry Vilhotti



The day after Johnny's operation, the doctor's scalpel left a long railroad track of scar over the area where he subtracted the stream of water trickling inside and after the doctor told the boy's mother that he had also taken from the leg a cancerous substance and so charged her double for the operation never realizing himself that he had mistakenly taken growth cells which would manifest five years later when Johnny's leg would bow from the weakness within, inside the memory of the dream he had while on the operating table of the sun twanging from a frown to a smile - he placed the faces of the nun and nurse inside the smiles. They had befriended him hours before he went up to the room with the giant overhead light.

Johnny defecated in his bed the night after his leg had grown bandages. He had stood in the blood drenched bed trying to see himself in the deep darkness surrounding him and when the nurse and nun finally came through the semi-darkness, the first words they said were: "Shame on you Johnny. An eight year old good looking boy like you doing that."

The whispers were said in a kindly way so he did not feel any shame. He had given something of himself in the horrifying darkness that had red blotches of growing blackness smothering his leg. The nun and nurse had further lessened his fears moments before his going upstairs by telling him he was a brave boy and they promised they would be with him in the operating room and they had kept their promises.

The boy in the very next bed, burned by friends who decided to "Burywater" him because he was a "kike" and didn't want one of them in their school where unknowingly they being of the poorer classes were being educated by teachers who looked down on all disgusting foreigners not realizing that they were or had been like them as they begrudg-

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ingly taught them skills that would enable them to do factory tasks and at the same time attempted to assimilate them into the American culture where they could be shown the way by the elite who were really educated in the elite schools, full of bandages from head to feet, and he exchanged some words, many silences and a few comic books. Johnny talked to the slits that showed the boy's eyes; eyes that were wisps of black smoke.

Within a week the boy full of bandages died and Johnny was told by a nurse - who would tease her elderly patients by eating an apple and telling them it was an onion, that little Arnold had gone to a better place. When Johnny said he wanted to go there too, she said: "He died."

vania | the habit

It smells like death, it tastes like fire
But that doesn't stop the foolish buyer.
With teeth of yellow and skin of grey,
For their life, I hope I pray
One after, its like a chain,
What do they think, will it stop their pain?
A self inflicted death, I feel like crying,
Because I know they are slowly dying.

philip a.
waterhouse

you bet

That girl, child of a dear
lady friend of mother, had the nerve
to show a picture of me around the recess
crowd at high school naked on the
ironing board. One of those cutesy snapshots
I wouldn't have allowed being taken
given half a chance even at only
so many months alive at the time. That
girl also refused to give it, the snap,
to me, saying it wasn't my property.
No, but it was my ass.

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Jerry Walraven

Goodbye Toledo

I feel I should
have found love
this trip.
But I leave again
with none
(except maybe a pocketful
given grudgingly
by those who have love
for others)
And I should feel happy.
They had some to spare.

1/8

Tori L. Wilfred | Born Again

Nature clothes herself in cold cotton
Her garments a shimmery glory
of awakening origin ready to begin.
A passionate innocence
before her yearly birth-
Silence, the melody of her dance,
plays through her limbs
welcoming,
embracing
her young
ready to
arrive.

bobbie whitehead | expectation

He tells me I have no wrinkles.
I'm supposed to smile, then flip my hair
like I've received a diamond pendant
or something that makes me special in
his eyes.
But my mind's eye sees his condolences
as thin as strips of paper that he places
over a mached mannequin he expects to
fuck.
Up my ass with a two-inch double-edged
sword, I can no longer accept these
rag doll gifts - what does he expect
me to say? As if the only reason I
live is for the skin on my face.

Paul Weinman

A DEADLY BALLAD

Propping a dead sparrow
against a backyard rock
I sighed for forgotten fathers
gestured them up from graves
to form a marching band.
Salt is spread on streets
to slow decay, add taste.
Wives of a few howl
hang stained bedsheets
from lightning-struck trees.
As soon as tubas are set
the bits and pieces of men
parade off in random rhythms
tunes no one can remember
make heads or tails of ...
much less, whistle.

CJW 2000

Nature's Beauty

Showers brighten
colors of spring
the senses are alive with the colors of nature.

Pearl Mary
Wilshaw

phantom pain

Diabetic patient wrestled
sheets and blankets
to scratch purple,
gangrenous, maggot
infested toes that already
dropped off amid the stench
of dying inch by inch to find
an amputee's stump.

199

2000

The Editor's Attempts.

"Well, I have to have a crack at this too, you know.."

a few pieces by janet kuypers to finish the book



201

j|k| Now I'm strong

In the part I always thought I was alone
I was wrong
You helped me by giving love and giving hope
Now I'm strong

j|k| fire alarms

we were driving through
Sequoia National Forest

up a winding road
along the mountainside

and along the road
a sign in the forest said
check your fire alarms

and we looked at each other
and laughed, and joked

because there are no fire
alarms in a car to check

j|k| down the
drain

i hear the water running
what a waste
it sounds like Lake Michigan
going down the drain

j|k| here is me

i have a secret
i have an awful secret
and i can't tell anyone
you see, my life
would fall apart
if anyone knew
everyone thinks
i'm some one different
but here is me

202

j|k I have my dreams

I don't even care
if you call me anymore
because I have my dreams
and they make me happier
than you

j|k i must believe

i've never had regrets before
i've never had any fears before
i've never been alone before
and now i wonder what i've done
and now i wonder where you've gone
and now i wonder if i'm dead
are you thinking of me right now?
can you feel me sliding under your skin
an injection coursing down your vein?
i must believe you know i'm here

j|k i'm always
the one

i'm always the one
who has to
pick up the pieces
all i've done
is wipe your noses
and clean your rooms
and now i have to
clean up my life
and i have
no one to help me

jk|saving myself

2013

all of your life
when you could have been with me
you're too busy
saving yourself with your religion
where weren't you
really
in actuality
saving myself from your religion
by saving myself from me

jk|never did
the same

we've put each other through hell, i know
we've tried each other's patience
we've goaded each other on
we've pissed each other off
we've jerked each other around
but i've noticed two things, one
is that whenever you were unhappy
i turned on the charm, i tried
to make your day, i tried to
make you laugh, and the other
thing that i noticed is that
you never did the same for me

jk|on the
california streets

we were walking along Santa Monica Boulevard
we passed a young homeless man, and he asked
could you spare a hundred thousand dollars?
and I thought, of course he won't get it
but of all the places in the world, this is the only
place where he could get away with asking for it

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j|k|self-destructive

i've been self-destructive before
and you liked me then
maybe i should go back
go back to those days
when it didn't matter who i was with
why would it matter
unless it was you?

j|k|who is at my side

all i want now
is to have a piece of me back
i want to do something for me
and everyone wants a piece of me
and everyone wants my help
but when the chips are down
who is at my side

j|k|saving yourself

all of that time
when you could have been with me
you were busy
saving yourself with your religion
when weren't you
really
in actuality
saving yourself from your religion
by saving yourself from me

j|k | infallible

i used to think that i would like to get into an accident to be injured, to see who would care about me: to see who would feel bad for not paying me any attention. now i think that if i were to be injured, that a few of you would revel in it, that a few of you would like to spoon-feed me, to take care of me, just to be able to prove to yourselves that i'm not infallible. but sooner or later you'd get bored with it, you'd need someone to take care of you again, and i'd be cast aside. so i'm never going to give you that chance, i'm never going to let my guard down, not even once, no matter how much i may need help from any one of you, because none of you are willing to think that i'm human and have real needs

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j|k | more whiskey sours

i need more
more money, more orgasms
more clothes, more cigarettes
more whiskey sours, more heroin
more love

j|k | choices

don't hate yourself
for the choices you've made
just make the right choices

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jk | see you crawl

come on, boy
i want to see you come crawling back
not because i want you here
but because i want to see you crawl

jk | ways to spend
your money

I spent a week in Los Angeles recently
visited Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Brentwood
I saw the Hollywood sign
and Marilyn Monroe's handprint in concrete
took my picture with Tom Jones' star
but the one thing I noticed
was that among the shops
that lined the streets of every neighborhood
there were quite a few pet spas
"pet spas," i thought, "pet spas"

jk | The Deep End

love seems so appealing
love is the bottom of the deep end
love is what makes the kiddies
walk to the edge of the diving board
take a deep breath
hold their little noses
and close their eyes
and brace themselves

and jump in

but none of them stay under too long
because they know
even at an early age
when enough is enough



j|k| didn't know
what it was 2007

i wanted you tonight
and i wanted to make sure the world knew
that i wanted you
and it was only because
i knew i wanted something
and i didn't know what it was

j|k| civil war

I
the confederates are winning the battle
but I know the north will win the war
and all they'll get is a ravaged battlefield

II
a civil war is raging inside me
but I'm tired of fighting from within
when all I want is a revolution

2008

Books

sulphur and sawdust
slate and marrow
blister and burn
rinse and repeat
survive and thrive
(not so) warm and fuzzy
torture and triumph
infamous in our prime
anais nin: an understanding of her art
the electronic windmill
changing woman
harvest of gems
the little monk
death in Málaga
the svetasvatara upanishad
hope chest in the attic
the window
close cover beofre striking
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