



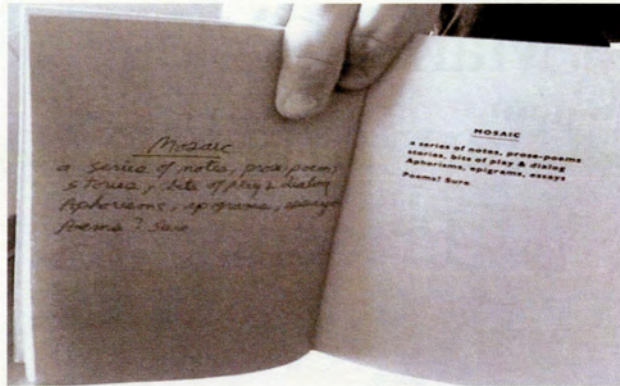


Marist College
Literary Arts Society
Presents:

The Mosaic

Fall 2009 Edition

Fall 2009 Mosaic Staff



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Instruction
by Jessica Sturtevant

This was meant to be an instruction
on the particulars of writing poetry,
but as I sat writing it

 a bird flew past the window
in the pelting rain – bedraggled.
And the world looked so wet and wonderful,
the clouds so immense and absorbing,
and the rain fell with such musical splattering,
that I was lost. And look –
here I am with a rainsong
and no advice. *Ars poetica.*



Brianna Horuchi

Braces
by Marina Cella

mouth full of pearls, strung by a silver bracelet
tectonic plates shift, spelling perfection in the passing of time
roots of coniferous trees, bending molding around a mainframe--
of a perfect arc disappearing into the abyss.

Talkative
by Michael Cresci

I am a talkative man.
Verbose, loquacious, chatty and
overstuffed with things to say.
I'll pontificate on films and books
and music and any little thing.
Yet for all I say I express
 a mere fraction
of what I feel.
When surrounded by intangibles
words won't do this planet justice.

All these people with their
loneliness and love and hate
and petty jealousy.
With their kindness and cruelty
and houses and cars and jewelry.
With their hardcore porn
and "high art"
and their streets filled with
murders and extreme home makeovers.
Abortion debates and tax rebates.
People with pills and needles
and papers and tubes trying to gain some
 small escape.
Christmas morning, puppy love fawning
and idyllic beach trips.

I have no words for all these things
my one skill rendered obsolete.
No words for the nights
that the moon glares bright
and you wonder how it feels,
hanging there left to watch,
left to see, left to hear.

Oh to be that orb and
to observe the
 laughs
the
 screams
the
 groans and moans,

how funny it all must seem.
To not need to speak, to think,
 to breathe;
and to gain some rest for
my existence weary soul.
 To be the moon
And control the tides,
Plus provide a little light.
Oh to reflect the sun
and not need speech,
 to simply be
a pretty sight.

I am America
by Sarah Holmes

An imitation poem of "I am New York City" by Jayne Cortez

i am america
with my soggy-thin bible paper brain
my rotting teeth my
ashtray of lottery tickets and bubblegum
stuck to converse, nike, air force ones
fighting war overseas
finger pointing at supposed haters of freedom
my freedom to expose my legs

look at my tan lines fading

i am america in need of more
artificial sun, hair color, flavoring
i conquer nature by cutting it down
and forgetting that I once was part of it, my birthplace
my pesticide sprayed waves of grain
my bare topped mined purple mountain majesty
these are my riches between my thighs of
sparkling ocean and off-shore drilling
i answer to no one

i am america
of the brand names and gas guzzlers
give me my melting pot of flesh
my marquee of false nipples
my storefront of ED drugs
in my nose of carbon emissions
in my worldblind eyes
in my ear of reality tv bitch fights

i eat twinkies and diet coke
i am america
never change never sleep never budge
my shoes are made in china
corpses grow where my hand reaches
look i shine with cells phones with diamonds
my nickname is "so sue-me"

take my face of botox and rogain
my star spangled banner of whoppers

take my beer can highways
my congested cities and sinuses
and approach me through seaports
approach me through border fences
approach me through my spare tire
my blackened lungs my
nicotine craved pleas approach me
through my online profile
half fiction half documentary
massage me with your analgesic sweat
salute hot blacktops and concrete
of my synthetic plastic skin
face up, knees down, piss
into the clammy insincerity of our handshake

i am america
my faith based friend
my indulgent comrade
legal immigrants
break laws with me



Purple Heart by Kait Smith

It was three o'clock in the morning, and my mother was crying.

Not crying, but sobbing. Almost uncontrollably. She was in her bedroom; I was across the hall in mine. Though both doors were closed, the heavy heaves of her despair were clearly audible. Something terrible had happened.

The phone rang only moments before my mother's tears began. No call at three in the morning comes with good news. I was surprised that my mother even bothered to answer; yet, part of me knew as soon as I woke what this call was about. Kyle.

My older brother, a United States Marine, was deployed in Iraq at the time of the call. Based upon the sound of my mother's sadness, I automatically assumed the worst. He died. An insurgent attack, a mortar outside of his barracks - the causes seemed endless. But all produced the same result: my brother, dead at 21. Merely a quarter of the way through his life and thousands of miles away from home. And I didn't get to tell him I loved him.

When Kyle left for Iraq, I didn't feel much. Father's face turned bright red, eyes swollen from crying. My mother was a wreck, unable to utter much more than a blubber as she sent her only son to war. They were afraid they would never see him again. I wasn't. Nor was I positive that I would see him again. Rather, I kissed him and wished him well. I said "I love you" because it felt fitting for the moment.

Now, months later, he was dead. My mother hadn't said it out loud, but I felt it in my gut. Did I really mean it when I told him, "I love you"? No. I had hated him for too long to truly feel sadness at his deployment. And now, here was my punishment. God sent him to Iraq, and then stole his life. I was paralyzed with guilt, unable to move. My only safety was under my covers, in the darkness of my room. Mother was still crying. A good daughter would have gotten out of bed to see what was wrong. But I wasn't a good daughter. Movement sealed the deal; if I got out of bed to tend to my mother, she would tell me that my only brother was killed. I couldn't face that just yet.

Kyle and I had a rocky relationship right from the start. At our youngest, we fought each other for the parental spotlight. Old home movies show us constantly in competition. We raced at putting puzzles together. We argued over who sang, "Here Comes Peter Cottontail" better. When reading children's books, it was a contest to see who could finish first. I'm sure we found time to just sit and play every once in a while, but those aren't the moments that stick out in my mind. Instead, I remember the attempts to one-up each other. There was never a winner or a loser. We kept going nonetheless.

Our animosity progressed as our hormones started to kick in. Puberty was painful. While I was uncomfortable in my sixth grade skin, my eighth grade brother seemed to own the school. I was jealous. Girls called our house every day asking for Kyle, yet I could barely muster up the courage to say "hello" to a boy. I envied him. And I hated him, too. He picked on me constantly. I was not allowed to sit near him on the bus to or from school; if I sat remotely close to he and his friends, I was bombarded with name calling. He called me gay. Fat. Stupid. Bitch. I didn't have the confidence to retaliate in front of his friends, so I sat there and let him rip on me. At home, I would yell and scream and cry and do my best to try and hurt him back. But his skin was thicker than mine. It always had been, and always will be. Even if he is dead.

By the time I hit high school, I was less of an awkward emotional basket case. I settled into a nice, quiet group of friends. I did exceptionally well in school, and played softball on the school's team. Kyle was the big man on campus. He was captain of the wrestling team, co-captain of the football team, and dating one of the prettiest girls in his class. Every teacher I had in high school saw my last name, pale complexion and dark hair and asked the same question: "Are you Kyle's little sister?" Every single one. They expected that I would be just like him – loud, inappropriate at times, unreliable, and above all, a poor student. But I wasn't. I was quiet, attentive, punctual, and continued my trend of outstanding grades. Teachers told me, "I can't believe you are Kyle Smith's little sister." I couldn't believe it either.

Now that he was dead, though, all of the pain in the past barely measured up to the pain I felt now. I felt ashamed for feeling such pride in high school when teachers recognized how much smarter I was than my brother. I felt guilty for wanting so badly to outshine him for all of those years. I felt regret for not wanting to build a better relationship right from the start. I felt a million things at once, and the emotions were overwhelming. I cried.

Mother was still crying, too. But I could make out some of her words now, which meant she had calmed down a little. I don't know how she was able to have a bit of calm in her body. I was still lying in bed, my only movement being the slight shakes of my shoulders as I wept. A stronger person would have gotten out of bed upon hearing her mother's first sob. My brother would have done that. But I wasn't my brother. I wasn't as strong. I wasn't dead.

My mind raced despite my body's paralysis. The next time I saw my brother, his body would be sealed in a shiny wooden coffin. An American flag would be draped over the top, a gesture that tells the world, "Here lies Kyle Smith. A great American soldier who committed the great American sacrifice." Meanwhile, I couldn't even risk damaging my pride in order to truly love my brother. I should be dead, instead.

In the other room, I heard my mother clear her throat before speaking, "Michael, I just got a phone call from Iraq. Kyle has been shot."

She was on the phone with my father. Though the sound was muffled, understanding her was easier due to the absence of her heavy sobs. She was letting him down easy; I know she could have opened with, "Michael, Kyle is dead." But she didn't. I knew my father would be devastated, so I admired my mother's grace, even in such a moment of despair.

I was finally able to move, but only to flip myself over and bury my head in my pillow. I didn't want my mother to hear my cries. I didn't want her to see my sadness, and I didn't want to see hers. I thought that maybe, just maybe, if I postponed it long enough, this entire night would go away. I would wake up from this nightmare and Kyle would still be alive. And then I heard mother speak again.

"He was shot in the leg. He can't walk, but he's alive."

Splintered Afterthought
by Florencia Lauria

"The texture of memory is never brick or paint"

It's stuck to the carpet
like the leftover glitter from last
New Year's Eve. I can only see it
if I turn my head sixty degrees
and squint. Hard.
It's lingering like an untitled
Word document: unclaimed, unnamed,
and autosaved.

Sometimes before I fall asleep,
7th grade pops up:
the cafeteria cookies,
Mrs. Shogan, and 27-32-37
(right, left, right
and remember to lock
it when you are done).

At home, my old map is still on the wall.
It's covered with red dots
pointing me
nowhere and everywhere
at the same time.



Katie Warren

sketch of a goodbye
by Shelley Doster

tripping over tongues and
handmade bracelets
(you stare over my shoulder at a charcoal memory
its dust courses its way down your face
mapping a chalky trail
disaster: start to finish)
as you push me away with a two-handed shove
with a double meaning loaded behind each guilty palm

Convex
by Kellie Hayden

You invited me to wake up early
to watch the sun rise over the Hudson,
orange purples and then pink blues tumbling
across the tides.

I lay on my stomach and you on your back
watching the world
right side up
and upside down
while the waters rushed
right side up
and then upside down again.

The sticky dew seeped through our summer clothes
dampening my stomach, your back
as you pulled a green blade out of the sod
and held it lightly between your fingertips
so we could watch a dewdrop dripping down
like a tightrope walker balancing on a high wire.

Just before the bead of dew rolled off,
you would flip the blade
right side up
and upside down
watching the water wobble on the edges—
the entire valley curving over and dipping under
this solitary droplet of light.

Untitled
by C. Earnshaw

I claim this day for heaven;
tucked into its cupboard in the calendar year—
a stranger to the morrow—
stalled from the train tracks
and one hundred ninety-eight miles
of goodbye, from the north to nowhere,
with the souvenir of casual yesterday
in the weight of my limbs
like a muse ensnared.

Today, I knew you.

I had never the vantage to see your skin;
clenched to the bone in your cheeks—
your face like the antiquated cream of the moon,
cleft with the smiling honesty of dimples.

Today, I knew you.

I had never the vantage to see your figure's all;
lain with the red of my humor, on the bare of my bed—
a service faster than stretch of road entails
but suited for the sweat.

But the morrow holds fast to the twelve on your timepiece—
shielded from objections with the truth of the hour.

And I am taken,
like the smoke of your cigar in the wind,
tangling with the cloth in the sleeves on my arms,
forging counterfeit clouds, like waifs
in the scheme of February
as I board the train headed through the wood.

The west yields trees like skeletons from the Earth,
rising from frameworks
in the pink of a five o'clock in winter.



Acrostic
by Amanda Mulvihill

Looking outward from my seventh-storey Baker St. perch, I turn the handle, pull
Open the window, with effort, and welcome in the morning air, which seems as though its
Never been polluted – a lie, but a convincing one. Glaring young sunshine
Deceives me, has me thinking everything can be reborn. But all around me, tragically, dwell
Old buildings crumbling, scarred with time or scaffolding that hides architectural cosmetic
surgery,
Not noticing the new eyes, mine and Helios's, that gaze rapturously upon them.

:34:24:Entrada
by Katie Warren

Lean lean white jeans
that bleed to refuse the clean,
wasted washings that set streetdirt
in deep, dark wash seems

too-sweet T-strap peep-toe shoes
criss-crossed prop those lean not-white jeans
against grotesque
graphic Metro walls to await
the train, the L1 home.

At : (colon) 34 the rumble comes,
the reverb runs, a click-clack
creative attack of
mass and steal the city back.

At : (colon) 24 the stale breeze begins
to turn the tunnel,
not stench like New York's
grumpy Subway but old and
bright as Barcelona heartbeat.

The : (colon) 24 air lifts
grown out straight mane
to flighty fling out the
siesta-time sparse-packed station.

Lean jeans uncross and
blue shoes daintily dance up to
the platform peak
tiptoe chic
as digitals blink
ENTRADA
ENTRADA
in case you
missed the massive rushing
of the city's darkwash seams
and the arriving train, the L1 home.



Rhythmic Rant
by Sarah Holmes

Here is an order of stupidity and mediocrity
with a heap of indulgences on the side
chicken wings and salty fries
thick bacon upon turkey upon ham upon beef
fast cars and diamond rings that are slowly
but spontaneously (which doesn't mean immediately,
scientifically speaking) turning into graphite
and were mined by minors
in a country many probably can't place on a map
but who cares about that?

As long as we've got our purified water
shipped over salty oceans, miles and gallons
of oil, pulled up from countries in another part
of the world map, where the names aren't familiar
to anyone. And nobody cares what they're called
as long as our cars still drive fast
and we don't have to pay that much for the speed
that rush, to get everywhere, and to taste
what you think is healthy and high-class
yet purity doesn't mean it's good for you
pious bishops in Brazil say it's okay to kill
a 9-year-old girl raped by her step father
just so the twin fetuses can come to term
because "every life is precious"
and distilled water would wipe
out your electrolytes

but that's okay because we've got Gatorade
to fill you up on those busy days
when you sit on your ass and watch reality TV
maybe check a few emails, Facebook, Twitter
and type up some reports
report on numbers and figures that stopped meaning
anything, and you can't figure out if they should
since you've forgotten anything you ever learned
in statistics at least, and probably history
and biology as well. Evolution's just a theory
as are atoms and gravity
who needs them anyway? Science won't save you
never mind medicine and agriculture
advancement that feeds our hungry mouths
and cleans our water so the tap is safe
creating plastics, vaccinations, building houses
and the polyester blend in your
designer threads, synthetics for your Nike treads
sewn by children who won't get the chance
to ever learn about everything you forget.

Two Eggs Broken Over White Toast
by Jennifer Sommer

Stark blue eyes
pierce me
over broken eggs -
sunshine yellow yolks
run away
and are sopped up
by two pieces of white toast,
now stained yellow.

Our whole world
stained yellow.
My neck,
scarlet letter,
bruised purple.

The result of kissing
that painfully beautiful Jewish boy
in that club in Montreal

last night
when the sky opened up
and the world cried
because we've ripped
at each other
since the day we met:

I've flirted with other boys
and you've held hands
with red headed women
who were charmed
by your accent,
your foreignness.

Sarah gives me
the bread basket,
forcing my hand.
I offer it to you,
limply,
but you refuse
to break bread with me.

Instead you continue
to stare at me in horror,
a dumbfounded look
upon your face.

I know we're done.
We're no longer friends.

Everything's run away;
"we've cracked
too many eggs
and never got an omelet"
you say, throwing a dirty twenty
on the table.

The yellow yolk seeps in.
My world caves in
and for a moment I miss you.



Truth
by Jessica Sturtevant

Truth lives in boxes painted like stories
not even Pandora can open.
We, stragglers of Earth,
can only see through their walls
by following the shifting pattern
of translucent cracks and scraps
marred on their sides
by that silent roar of quake
whose shattering epicenter
lies at the heart of a gently beating poem.



Telepath on the 4 Train
by Tahara Roberts

The Lady
sitting across from me
stares.
Can she tell that I'm *this* close to
throwing my manners
onto the tracks?
Is it rude to stare back?

Her lips tighten with disapproval.
Her pencil-thin eyebrows rise
so high up, I swear they disappeared in her hair.
And I can't help but wonder:
Is she reading my mind right now?
Think dirty thoughts.
Thinking dirty thoughts!
Dirty thoughts have been thought!

Her eyes advert.
And I smirk,
believing that I've won the
staring contest.
"Next stop Franklin Ave"
How many stops do I have until-
"One more stop 'til Utica Ave"
says the Lady,
without any hesitation.

It takes me a while
to notice
she is talking
to the man
standing near her seat.



Untitled
by Amanda Mulvihill

We retreat into our separate worlds;
the last thread of conversation lingers in the air,
the only thing tying us together –
and only then, if he still can hear its resounding tone.
Without that thread, what connects us?
For that matter, what separates us?
In the silence, we unravel.

Free Fall
by **Christa Strobino**

Snap. Snap. It's the same sound a branch makes when broken in a half, the way handcuffs sound when clicked together, the fate of my bones if I lost anymore weight. It's the sound that commands me, ties me, and binds me.

Today's agenda reads: Tuesday, October 3, 2007 -- Read pages 115-200 in abnormal psych. Do problems 1-18, evens, in statistics. Burn at least 500 calories today, fat-ass. Volunteer work from 4 to 6 p.m. As I finish each task, I put a satisfying check next to each. Pressing the pencil hard against the paper, leaving an indentation on my middle finger, leaving proof that I still exist.

60 calories for the Light N' Fit Vanilla Yogurt. 25 calories for the quarter of banana. A splash of skim milk in the coffee... we'll say 25 calories too, just in case. Protein shake, 200 calories, that's lunch. For dinner we have three slices of deli cut turkey... 60 calories and a large salad, no more than 150 calories and only vinegar as the dressing. I add these numbers up once, twice, ten times throughout the day. I add them while I'm on my daily five mile run; I add them in class, in my fucking sleep. Carry the fives, add the 0's. Oh how I love the number 0. Sometimes I add 200 calories to each daily calculation. Sometimes I think that maybe the nutrition facts lie to me, they want me to get fat. Sometimes I'm only ten pounds away from perfect.

I'm always ten pounds away from perfect.

My parents barely notice my body dwindling away, spinning fast and out of control into the oblivion. They praise me. They brag to the rest of the family and to their friends about how disciplined I am, how I don't give into the craving.

"You really look great and I am very proud of your commitment to eating healthy. When we were shopping in Target you were dressed so cute and really looked great! Keep up the great work," my step-mom stated in an email. August 31, 2007. I was 5'0", 105 lbs.

"She wants her shrimp cooked without any butter or oil. Same with her vegetables. No potatoes." My dad always ordered for me at restaurants.

"How's the rabbit food? I don't know how you do it," my aunt would say. I would think to myself, neither do I.

"Want some ice cream? Oh, I forgot, you can't get fat again," my sister would tell me, even when I was 90 lbs.

"Christa, you look great!" my uncle said when he lifted up my sweater at Christmas time, revealing my protruding ribs to the entire family.

I remember reading somewhere that if you don't eat something for two weeks, you lose any craving for that food. I only craved my family's oven roasted praise; their delectable, silk, bitter applause; their savory, warm commendation to my continuous dedication to "health."

Nevermind that my taste buds could no longer tell the difference between cardboard and Cheerios, or that my skin became rough and covered with hair, like the skin of a kiwi. I would look at the commercials of the children dying of starvation in Africa. Call 1-800-ADOPTION. Donate a dollar a day to keep these children's bones hidden beneath the folds of their skin and build layers of fat. I used to think to myself, if only I could donate a pound to each child. God, I used to be jealous of these poor children; instead of praying for them, I prayed to be them.

Before I became obsessed about the way my hips drew commas in the air, before I even know what a calorie meant, my true obsession lay with God. At six years old, I would

lay on my back with my head surrounded by beanie babies on my bed. I would stare at my glow-in-the-dark stars until the comets disappeared into the night and the sharp points of the stars rounded off until they were faded fluorescent specks of light. God and I mused together, contemplated the complications of the world. Like, why did Jen and Mary decide to ignore me today and why did Sean swallow a marble and why weren't Mommy and Pat perfectly happy together anymore? God did not always have the time to answer my questions. See, he was a very important man. He would try to calm my fears and lull me to sleep with his gentle whisper and melodic rhythm. Ease me into sleep the way the Seine flows its beauty to anyone who nears their banks.

One would like to think that no matter how prideful one may be that they can still be vulnerable to God. I could never allow myself to admit to anyone, especially God, my fears and fuck-ups. I wrote to him in my Jesus Journals. Clocking hours of volunteer work, peace rallies, and any good deed. What if God witnessing me doing these things wasn't enough? What if he wasn't paying attention? I needed to record these things, just in case of the "what if's."

To this day it still embarrasses me to go through my "Jesus Journals" where I proclaimed how in love I was with God. The journals serve as a constant reminder of who I used to be: a 14 year old Jesus-loving freak. One night I told him that I didn't need anybody else, that all I needed was his love and I'd be okay. How many newly adolescents need an absolute, something to justify how alone they feel? Sometimes I wish I could forget about those moments that I spent alone in my room at night trying to find something to believe in, something that held some type of truth, something worth trying to be perfect for. In high school, I would walk around the halls with my nose in the air and my Bible close to my chest. I knew the other kids stared, but I did not care because I would pretend that they didn't matter because I had God. It took me awhile to figure out that God wasn't the person who could fill me up. I was 15 and realized I lost a part of myself. I no longer knew how to satisfy the insatiable hunger; I could barely figure out what my body even needed. Does that part of you, the part that you lose, ever fill up again? How long can you pretend to be whole, to be strong, when you're weak, when you're hollow?

Maybe if I shrunk my body, physically made myself smaller, there would be less space to fill, less reason to be sad. Once I came to this realization I felt my life get back on track; I now had a purpose.

After awhile I found a new journal to write in: my calorie counting journal. Now I needed to prove to myself that I could be the ideal, the girl everyone envied. I prided myself on my self-discipline and dedication. Every hour I went without eating I considered a victory, a celebration. Every extra mile I ran, I immediately would call my father and he, in turn, would say how proud he is of me. I would bask in his praise for a few moments, until I found another reason to hide and walk in and out of my own shadows.

At 20 years old I was found by a policeman in the middle of the night. He took my wrists and clicked them into the handcuffs. I thought to myself how lucky I was to now have layers of my skin and fat protecting all fifteen bones in my wrist. It's not something I'm proud of, but I found myself days, weeks, months after the fact not needing to spend hours in a Church or running on a treadmill for miles. Instead I wrote.

I handed the bouncer my I.D. He gave it the twice over and that's when I knew I was fucked. I didn't let the anxiety come across my face though. I kept it cool, but inside I was screaming.

"This isn't you," said the broad shouldered man with a blow out.

"Yeah it is, who else would it be, sir?" I replied.

"Ay Bobby, get over here and look at this chick's I.D. I don't think it's her."

Bobby took my I.D. and gave it the same once-over that the broad shouldered man did. He looked back at me and then back at the I.D. He shook his head as he handed back to broad shouldered man.

"Nah, that ain't her," Bobby said.

"Listen kid, we know this isn't you, just admit it so we don't cause any problems," said the bouncer.

"Yeah you're right, it's not me. I'm sorry," I admitted.

Next thing I knew Bobby ripped me from the line and threw me to some man with a shiny badge, shiny head, and shiny hand-cuffs. Officer Willie took me in for false identification. He handcuffed me and threw me in the cop car and drove me to the police station. He asked me a series of questions that I found ridiculous. Like, if I had any tattoos or piercings and where. Would my sentence be harsher if I had my nipple pierced? Would a tattoo give him more evidence that I am indeed a bad kid?

I sat in the station and watched the second hand on the clock take hours to go around its circle. I became suddenly and intensely aware of the fact that I was bounded and tied to these handcuffs. I thought about what it meant to actually be trapped or only to feel it. Although completely at somebody else's will, a prisoner of war, I realized how free I became. Yes, I sat there trapped and handcuffed, but no longer did I feel trapped in my own mind, trapped to my mission to be perfect.

After hours of paper work Willie gave me a white board with my name on it and the case file. "State your name, age, height, and weight, please." At least he said "please."

"Christa Strobino, age 20. I'm five foot nothing and I weigh 120 pounds."

I smiled as he took my mug shot.



Florencia Lauria

Fleeting Equilibrium
by Amanda Mulvihill

A quiet thing:
chalk dust falls, ironic product of erasure, delicate, floating,
reluctant, grasping the board with silent fingernails,
holding my attention on its gentle descent,
drawing the ordinary differential equations out of focus
more than the A.M. o'clock already has.
I watch as friction exceeds gravity, if only momentarily:
a balancing act.

A foul shot:
fans' arms raise in praise and devotion to the Basketball God who surely exists
or perhaps just in hopes that the motion, collectively
will create enough buoyancy in the air to make a difference.
The ball lingers there, teetering on the rim
and the entire gym is held, like our breath, in suspense.
I take all this in – am I the only one? – before the tilt, swoosh, release:
a fleeting equilibrium.

Rainy Day Blues
by Heather Staats

It's been raining today.
I can tell because the pavement can't keep a secret-
the cement underneath the fire engine red Mustang and the shady blue 80s van is a lighter
shade of gray than the darker sea of black that is the surrounding parking lot.
Maybe I would have caught some of the storm
if these "fire-resistant," beige, gag-me curtains hadn't obstructed my vision.
Maybe they were trying to do me a favor.
They see how down I've been-
maybe they figure the rain would just make me cry more.
They're probably right.
I shouldn't complain.

Concave
by Kellie Hayden

Together, we tilt over the mudbowl at the edge of the woods
toes sinking into the ooze watching
as small ripples interrupt the otherwise still rainwater.
Without warning
you plunge your hand into the puddle
bringing up a green tadpole.
Want to hold it?

I shake my head but
you reach to cup my hand
and slide the slimy creature into my palm.
I shriek when it makes contact
tossing it back into the basin where it lands with a plop.

So you chase me instead,
flicking rain off of your fingertips onto my dress
until we collapse on the grass,
lying just long enough to let the wet air settle
upon our brown skin.

Then we're up again, dancing
you pull me close in apology,
our laughter mixing with the humidity,
enclosing us,
shaking the mountains until,
unable to contain it,
they cave in.



Carolyn Rivas

Moonlit Lawns
by Amy Wheeler

Of course there would be a strawberry-lipped, under-the-apple-tree rendezvous

When we are out alone in my backyard's Milky Way night,
wandering and wading
through the trails that are your imagination,
if we trip and fall, is it the root's fault?

You tell me of your lofty plans for us –
canoes and Cape Cod and canoodling,
and when I make you laugh,
you squirt lemonade tears.

If heliocentric, then the moon.
Our egoistic sixteen-year-old selves
whisper only of sleeping bags and cotton candy ice-cream and
my mom's homemade cake-like brownies.

If wet grass,
If nightmares,
If crab apples,
then bliss.

My toes get ticklish as the stars trickle away
and you shut your eyes and say – *Listen, Ame,*
can you hear the flowers snoring?
And I think, *you know me.*



Greta Kollmann

Takeoff from Dublin
by Katie Warren

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee
And the Irish cows graze and remember that
Blessed art thou amongst women
Oh, Mother Earth has given them lush grass.
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
The cloud-mountains rise to meet
Holy Mary
The rising plane and
Mother of God
As passengers grip their chair arms and
Pray for us sinners,
The weak and weary travelers,
Now,
On this sun-soaked Irish morning,
And at the hour of our death,
Aloft,
Amen.



Where I Belong Became Clear
by Molly Mihalcik

On the first abrupt curve of Royal and St. Louis, a woman shakes a cap full of coins. Delicately placing the hat on the ground she braces her torso in preparation. An operatic wail emerges from her parting, rotten grin and her eyes roll to white. Such noise reverberates through the wet French Quarter in a slow lurch. That same sultry wash comes in regular drifts here—it's heard in the huffs of a legless trumpet player, smelt as an oyster's tired shell meets with flame. It replaces air.

Lured on the premise of a city fueled by perspiration and vice, travelers often lose their way home and find themselves stuck here, moored by soul. This accidental migration sums to a populous of listless hustlers, creators, and gentlemen who spend time slowly. An unevenly side-walked St. Charles offers both the majestic and the ramshackle within a matter of two streetcar stops. Squealing in sync with the weeping cicadas, the car jolts along. What once was wind laps my face through the window in hot licks.

I visit my friend, Harriet, in the summer.

After spreading mulch in City Park, I sit wide-legged on the hardwood of Harriet's small garden district apartment. I knowingly let the day's poison oak oils sit atop my skin. The black mangrove's sweet itch overtakes my flesh and sifts through my pores, leaving a flush in its wake. Then, as the rash's small red bumps come to rise, New Orleans choose me.



The Watchman
by Kayla Gabriele

His arms slide through the sleeves of his tweed jacket involuntarily,
They know the drill.
He lightly places his brown fedora on his thin gray strands
He never leaves the house without it
He doesn't want the world to see how old he is.
It doesn't cover his face.
Center Street is a ten minute walk-
long enough.
His bench is in front of Mom and Pop's Ice Cream and Hot Dogs
across the street from Mr. Jones' Chinese Restaurant.
Everyone loves Mr. Jones,
he makes the best fried noodles around.
It's a small town.

He sees his bench, vacant as always.
Everyone knows who it's for.
It's a small town.
He adjusts his pants and sits down,
exhaling his existence into the air.
He produces his pipe from his inner left pocket.
It's a beautiful pipe,
Hand carved by his grandfather
Nothing obnoxious, but enough to make it striking.
His grandfather smoked it, as did his father
He lights it up and breathes in their stories.
His time, too, has passed.

The kids start to come to life
Riding their new Schwinn.
Bicycles aren't classic anymore.
They stare at his pipe.
They've only seen men smoke pipes in the movies.
It's a small town.

The sun positions itself high in the sky,
Center Street has awakened.
A father hands his daughter a chocolate ice cream cone.
An ice cream cone is a child's paintbrush, her face the canvas
She paints some of the most beautiful pictures with these tools.
The housewives walk by,
Each with a story about some poor kid's mistake that all the others already know,
Highlighting how that will never be her kid, even though it is.
It's a small town.

Young and old, they all pass by the observer on the bench,
Living lifetimes in the moment they are in his eyes.
He smiles and brings his pipe to his mouth.

Life expires with the sunlight.

Mr. Jones's sign begins to read "Mr. Jo_es,"
he never has fixed that "n,"

It doesn't matter.

He puts his pipe in his left inner pocket-

Some things are comfortable staying in the same place.

He rises, chips of wood from the old bench attach to his pants-

Another piece of the world he takes with him.

He inhales deeply and crosses the street.

Mr. Jones also makes decent egg rolls.

It's a small town.

He shuts the front door on the world,

places his tweed jacket and fedora on the end table.

He lays his thin gray strands on his pillow

and hears children laugh.

He contentedly closes his eyes with the thought of
the girl with the ice cream cone and

Mr. Jones's broken "n."

It's a small town.



Robert Peterpaul

Nuclear unit.
by Katie Warren

"A major challenge in all nuclear [families] is to ensure that a significant fraction of the fuel is consumed before [it] destroys itself." -Encyclopedia, nuclear bomb

We are the fusion/fission complex
With lost keys at every hour,
Too much free time for extra spicy
Cooking experiments that end
With scalding peppers and far-wafting smells
That draw neighbors near.
Our apartment is the pulsing, moving core,
All electrons zing in and out - come in hungry,
Leave full (laughter-grilled chicken).

We are the transplanted nuclear family.
We swipe into our white picket fence daily,
And the only bicycles being ridden
Are 3am 'adopted' Bicing bikes in stretching hallways.
There are kids here growing up/down,
And we feed starving souls with friends.

Take turns in the two-parent portion of the equation
And someone always spinning
Something - slide three DJ's in
The nuke like we do
And you're bound to.

We all tilt back with our eyes closed
to watch the explosion:
after dinner satisfaction,
lick ice creams,
salt rims,
tequila bottle backlash.

The lights of Barcelona flare
And we're out.

Untitled
by Shelley Doster

I don't believe it's the water,
Capricious and indifferent, that frightens you
But the thought of going under
With nothing to cling to.
Don't tip the boat
I can't save you if I'm drowning by your side.
Everything hangs in a precarious balance
Between what you want and the tide.
But the tide is always stronger
Than your desires by far,
Changing not for fervent wishes
Upon a distant star.



Katie Warren

Our Siren Song
by Isabel Cajulis

The song that forces boys—
not yet men, to drop
their best lines, to leap
overboard with their best
moves. They always want
to know our secrets.

The song all women know,
because we've all used it.
Inherent yet artfully developed
every Friday night.

Do you want to know our secret?

If I tell you, promise me
it won't leave your lips.
And I'll *promise* you
tonight you won't fall.

*I don't do this all the time,
I rarely dress in short skirts,
I never have these sharply rimmed cat eyes,
My hair is usually out of place.
I'm innocent, I swear.*

If you take me with you,
I'll show you the real me.
I can be whatever you want.
Buy me a drink. Take me home.
Only you will know our secret,
I promise. Finally, you'll have the key
to all women. *I promise*.

They're captured
by our mystery. A sensual
innocence. A powerful
weakness.
The click click of our stilettos
lure them in,
but it's our song that shatters.



Amy Wheeler

Disappearing Act at the Apollo by Amanda Mulvihill

In the shrill just-after-dawn hour we awoke, the three of us, embarking on a Wicked-ticket mission. The eagerness of the cerulean blue sky – at least, that's what Crayola called the color – startled us, and so did the chill in the air that seemed to spite the sun and the just-before-summer season. But this is London, we laughed, and the mildness shouldn't surprise us anymore. Bakerloo two stops to Oxford Circus to Victoria two stops, we were experts at the underground by then, and we shortly arrived at the Apollo Theatre, armed against the weather with layered jumpers and a blanket that boldly showcased the Hogwarts coat-of-arms, ready to settle down to wait for the end of the 9:59 minute when the box office opened and we could capture our front row seats for that night's performance.

Coming upon the front steps of the theater it became clear to us that we were not the only ambitious ticket pursuers; snugly wrapped in sleeping bags lay those who had arrived before us, presumably the night before, smugly sleeping in their comfortable front-of-the-line positions. Acknowledging their superior Wicked-commitment, we sidestepped and sat under scaffolding to the left, simultaneously too tired and too excited to snooze.

Huddled under our blanket and bundled up in our sweatshirts, we watched the city yawn and stretch awake and shake off the sleep we had already forsaken. Commuters began increasing in frequency, hurrying past our post toward the hub of transportation that is Victoria Station. Whether by tube, bus, or train, workers arrived and left the jobs that were not necessarily what they had always dreamed, but that put the pounds in their pockets regardless. Untucked button-down shirts and trainers carrying high heels and briefcases cradling coffee passed by without a glance toward us or our sleeping bag companions. The visual relationship was a single-sided one, and we wondered, the three of us, if we would become those owners of cubicled-careers one day. Who knows, we shrugged, with the way this job market is today; at the rate we're going, we can only hope to obtain some sort of paid occupation.

As the sun rose higher, vivifying the already clear sky and creating magnificent reflections on the upper glass of double decker coaches, those ahead of us in line started to stir from their secure cocooned slumber. It was then that we noticed their bare feet beneath the sleeping bag covers, and it was by the heightening light of the sun that we curiously noted the jacket hung hanger hung door handle of the theatre, that we calmly counted the one-to-one ratio of the sleeping bodies to suitcases.

The first of them rose at about seven, and we searched for an answer while trying not to pry into the personal affairs we were hesitant to accept. We watched out of the corners of our eyes – communicating our inquisitions and observations in silent whispers, holding our breath, not believing the obvious answers about our theatre-entrance company – as he went about a morning routine, made up of familiar actions, that was to us unrecognizable due to the change in setting. He dressed, unhooking the blazer from its handle, and rolled his sleeping bag, tucking it and the secret of where he had slept the night safely inside his suitcase. Adjusting his tie without a glance back at us or those he had left, he joined the other suits that speckled the metropolis, that would eventually swarm the City and then disappear into elevated architecturally aesthetic offices, pulling his small, inconspicuous suitcase behind him – a private reminder of where he had been and where he would go.

Our willing ignorance was lifted then, and our adventure seemed vain, our Harry Potter

blanket insolent. We were humbled to encounter so closely the homeless, newly destitute, we guessed, by the Credit Crunch – which was regrettably not a brand of cereal – though the anonymity of the city allowed for any sort of back story to account for their lack of place to live. Homeless. What must it have been like to understand the reality of this word? Did its actuality occur when they were packing their few belongings into a suitcase that would serve as closet? When they were searching for the front stoop that would be their bedroom? London was their living room. Perhaps it still had not hit them.

One by one they yawned, stretched, and disappeared into the world, like the chim-chim-chimney sweeps of Mary Poppins vanish into the darkness of the park at night, except these people – and that’s what they were – vanished into broad daylight. Society absorbed them, swallowed them, concealed them and their laden suitcases from all but our witnessing, wiser eyes. (Even Londoners, the three of us, could be surprised.) And just in case some trace was left behind, the steps were swept, and their secret was kept solely in our memories as other Wicked-ticket seekers arrived early enough for the night’s performance, but too late for the disappearing act featured outside the theatre, free to the public every morning in the blatant light just after dawn.



Does This Feel Like a Moment?
by Michael Cresci

Why does the word *abyss*
Inspire nothing but dread
as if by some unspoken decree,
endless nothing could only mean
doom?

I feel, laying in the grass and sun,
by the water and a beautiful freckled girl,
and hipsters with their cloves
and slightly changed leaves,
bathed in guitar chords, like I'm falling
into a golden abyss.

Nothing at all happening beyond
just moments, and this and that.
A serene plummet.
An intangible fall.

Abyss.

The forlorn word must feel maligned
or at least misrepresented as it's become
synonymous with the hot fires of hell
and deep depression
but never a lone figure staring at
the ineffable horizon pondering
some kind of fickle infinity.

As I drift in and out of sleep, grass
tickling the back of my neck I think
this place cannot really exist,
a spot without conflict or context.

Just a massive cruise ship on the river,
and basketball courts, and poets
comparing intangible feeling to trains and
cigarettes
and a surprisingly nice public bathroom
and an overabundance of corduroy.
The sun hides behind colliding clouds,
less an orb and more a sort of
burst

shouting at the vast expanse of space
"I'm here! I'm here! I'm here!"

And here I and you and they and we are
in an abyss,

some kind of something or nothing.
This golden plummet feels like home.
Home, the place that there's no place like.
The place that, once found, makes you want
to
dance and drink and love and sing.
The place makes you want to shout at the sky
(In the foolish hope it will notice you):
"I'm here! I'm here!"
I'm here.

Craft Table
by Sarah Holmes

Electric, geometric, bluebirds fly from fingers
Paper folds into white angular cranes, green tree frogs
Menageries of cellophane canaries, loose-leaf loons
Miniature safaris with lemon-colored lions
Chasing after Sharpie-striped zebras and antelope
Landscapes of waxy trees, fluffy white bushes
Sparkling with solid dew that covers everything
Gemstones and fallen stars litter the makeshift Serengeti
Variegated vines weave through bars of the aviary
Braided with twine and glittering fuzzy snakes
Craft table exhibition, a zoological kaleidoscope



Kait Smith



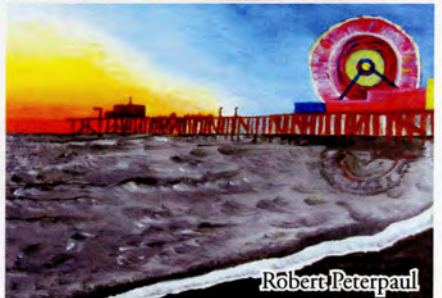
Jenny Weigand



Doug Townsend



Megan Shannon



Robert Peterpaul



Amanda Mulvihill



Megan Shannon



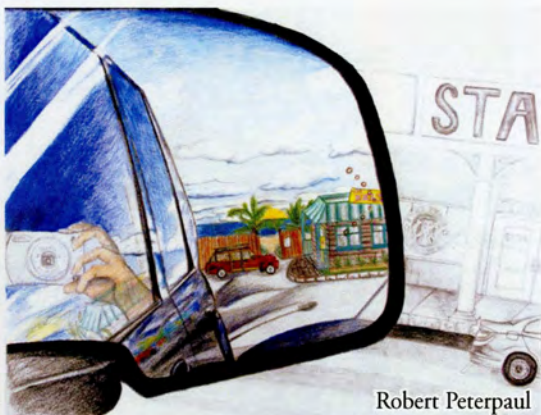
Whitney Viola



Jenny Weigand



Amanda Wilson



Robert Peterpaul



Florencia Lauria

Trails
by Shelley Doster

The rocks are slick
With the frozen tears of winter
The snow
 packed down
With the weight of the road
More oft traveled
And the burden of boots
Eager to explore
But not enough to forge their own path

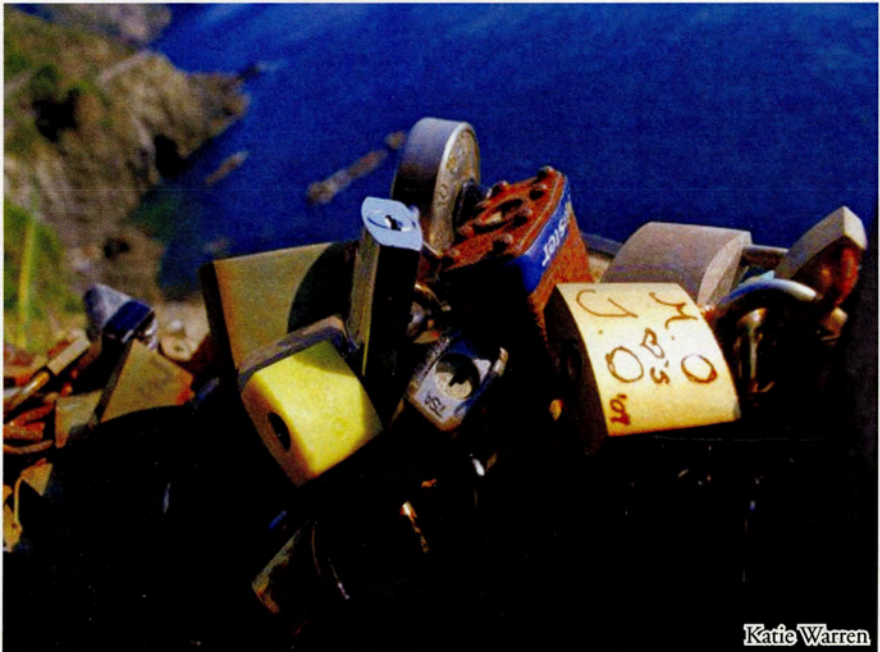
I find it easier
To start a new trail:
There is more traction here
A better place for my footing
A shorter distance to fall



Doug Townsend

august
by Kellie Hayden

it is the time when friendship bracelet pillars
support skinny wrists which support open palms
to the sky that I like most.
when grass-stained knees mean independence
rather than innuendo & when we dance
under a firefly chandelier in bathing suit ball gowns
until the almost-melodic murmurs from the terrace
calm down & the air begins to chill,
signaling september.



Katie Warren



Amy Wheeler



Carolyn Rivas



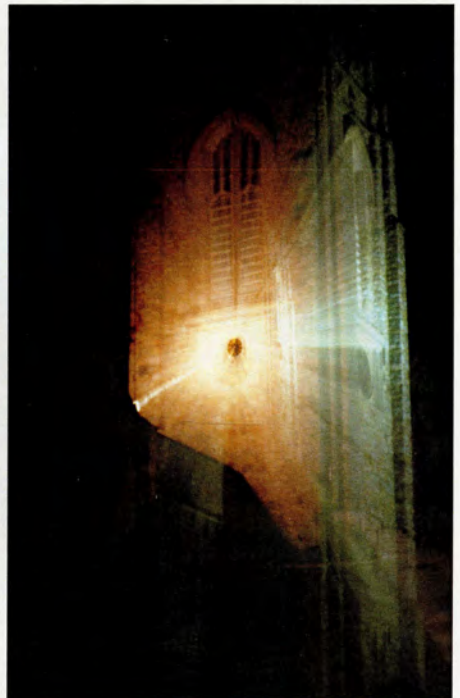
Amanda Mulvihill



Doug Townsend



Katie Warren



Violets

by Michelle Faber

There will be an argument.

The heat of the bath water turns my body pinky-red like raw tuna as I sit back in a haze of steam. Tonight, there will be an argument.

Bubbles crackle as I robotically move my arms in and out of the water like a broken bird, trying to get used to the immense temperature. It is almost too much; there is a suffocating quality that forces me to gasp for fresh air every so often when I realize, once again, where I am.

I got home. *I am* home. But how? That man was there, I remember that much.

"Are you Mrs. Dobarbarie?" I could taste the stale ashes from the two packs of cigarettes he had smoked earlier that day before I even turned around. He looked to be about my age, mid-thirties maybe, with a face worn like a snail's shell and eyes placid, staring at some invisible beauty mark on the corner of my forehead.

Slip under. My face burns fire but I need the feeling, that uncomfortable pain pricking into each pore like the children's toy that molds shapes with silver pins.

"Yes?" I said awkwardly and picked out bananas with a faint green tint to them, the way John likes.

He stared at my forehead. "Just so ya know," he said, "your husband's fucking my wife." Tonight.

But where's the car? No recollection. How I got here, where I came from, filling the tub. Violets wisp through my nostrils and I can almost taste their bitter sweetness as the bubbles gently pop. No recollection. Just that dreadful man.

Drip drip drip to my thoughts, slow but coming back to me now. Coming back slow, but coming.

"You look different tonight," I said. John had an air about him that I had never noticed before. I felt as if he were a schoolboy with the silly grin he tried to mask under blushing cheeks.

"How so?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "Just different. Happy."

"Well of course I'm happy silly girl, I'm with you," he said and leaned down to kiss my forehead. I smelt his aftershave. He had shaved.

Yes, there is going to be an argument tonight for sure, one that he will never forget.

The water has dropped below the drain now, and I skillfully toggle the nozzle with my big toe until a steaming stream flows out once again, replenishing my lukewarm bath to its fiery beginning. It no longer hurts; my skin looks sunburned and pruned but I enjoy the feeling.

Tonight he will come home. In exactly two hours and three minutes, at five thirty-five, he will walk through the kitchen door, hang his keys on the hook, but they will fall off, as usual, and he will let out a familiar grunt and put them on more carefully the second time. He will come upstairs to the bedroom where I will be reading the newspaper. He will ask, how was your day? and I will tell him fine as usual, not giving much detail but enough if he asks, which he won't. Is chicken okay? I ask—yes, of course, you know I love anything you cook. Yes, I know you do. What about mashed potatoes? If that's what you would like, I can do that. Yes, he'll say, I would love them tonight.

I'll go downstairs while he watches television and smash them as carefully and effortlessly as Julia Child, paying close attention to every scrap of skin that might just sneak its way through. I will make them perfect, with margarine instead of butter spread, whole milk instead of skim. I'll even throw in some garlic, just for extra flavor. A nice chardonnay will fit perfectly with the grilled chicken I will watch, making sure it is not undercooked, nor over. We will eat by candlelight tonight. What's the occasion? he'll ask, and I will simply say it's for him, like always. He will smile while those brilliant white teeth stare at me, mock me. They know that it is neither my spit nor his solely that blankets them.

Drip drip what? What are you saying? *Do something.* I will, but what? I can't think. I want to hurt him. Hurt him so bad. *Then do it.*

I imagine I am in a field of violets now, surrounded by the aroma so much so that it gets caught in my throat and I choke. I can't breathe; I am dying, I can feel it, they strangle me around the neck like some invisible noose.

Noose. Noose? What do you mean, noose? *What do you think I mean?* Well I am certainly not going to go that far, that's for sure. The smell of these bubbles is just too strong, that's all.

Yes, the bubbles, that's what I said! Jesus how did I get here?

So you are going to cook him a lovely dinner? Yes. *And then what?* And then confront him. *About her?* Yes. *And then what?* And then—

The car is in the garage. Running. Windows closed. *Why?* Because I heard that it was a nice way. Calm. Like if you were floating in water, enjoying the day, and a rush of sunlight flows down upon you from behind a cloud and you feel warm and refreshed and vibrant. That's what I heard.

I'll have to stop it before John gets home. Can't have him worrying about me in that way. Don't want him thinking that he had that effect on me, if even for a moment. But I wouldn't have done it anyway. *No?* No, of course not! I just wanted to feel... *loopy?* Yes, that's it. Loopy. As soon as I started to cough I came up here and started the bath. Chose violets.

No no no, I suppose you are right. Why make him the dinner? I should just confront him when he gets home. *Or make him the dinner.* Well which one then? *Make him a special dinner. With special ingredients.* Sour. A sour taste. *Uh-hum.* If I can mask it, if I can just put enough in.

Will he taste it? *Mix a bit into the chicken marinade.* He won't even taste it.

Tonight he will come home. In exactly one hour and twenty-seven minutes, at five thirty-five, he will walk through the kitchen door, hang his keys on the hook, but they will fall off, as usual, and he will let out a familiar grunt and put them on more carefully the second time. He will come upstairs to the bedroom where I will be reading the newspaper. He will ask, How was your day? and I will tell him fine as usual, not giving much detail but enough if he asks, which he won't. Is chicken okay? I ask—yes, of course, you know I love anything you cook. Yes, I know you do. What about mashed potatoes? If that's what you would like, I can do that. Yes, he'll say, I would love them tonight.

I'll go downstairs while he watches television and—but I don't have a lemon. *Yes you do.* I would never bring a lemon into this house, what with John's allergy. *You have a lemon. Think.* No, I can't. I can't think.

"What do you mean?" I asked. He just stared at me.

"I mean that your husband and my wife are fuck-ing," he said crudely, fingering through the crimson grapes until he found a satisfactory bunch.

"L... I don't..."

"I recognized you. That's all there is. I just thought you'd wanna know. I sure as hell did."
And he walked away.

Why did you pick it up? You did pick it up, didn't you, right at that moment?
My hairs stand straight, even in the warmth of the water. I did. I did pick it up, that's right. *Go get it.*

I rise slowly, letting the water beads cascade off my pruned body. I step out and grab a towel and cover my face like a hospital mask. As I start for the door I see my reflection in the hallway mirror. It's sexy, even after age. But there is something about my body tonight, something powerful and carnal that makes me smile through my mask. I have command tonight.

I crack open the garage door and stick my fingers through, making sure to keep my face away. My fingers reach nervously until they feel the smooth button of the garage door and press. The door lifts lazily, letting out the deathly smog trapped inside the room.

Keys turn off. I glance over to the passenger's seat. There sits only one object.
Tonight, there will be an argument.

Just a few minutes now. Just a few. Everything is set. *You sure?* Yes, I'm sure. You can't taste it, I'm sure. Can't smell it, see it, but he will feel it and I will watch. I'll just watch as he feels it. *But then what will you do?* Just wait a bit, five, ten minutes maybe. And then I'll call. I'll call and they will come and I'll cry and cry and swear I don't know what happened, that we were just eating a lovely dinner together and he fell over, started to swell and choke. I tried to give him CPR but nothing happened. He must have choked!

And someone will rub my back gently as another EMT tries to revive him, but it won't work because I waited too long, just the right amount of time. And then the nice EMT will lean towards me and say, Was your husband allergic to anything that you know of? And I will say no, he never told me if he was, I can't think of a thing. And he will say, Because this was definitely an allergic reaction; your husband died of acute asphyxiation. And I will cry harder now, but not too hard because I have to seem like I am in shock, if I cry too hard too soon they won't believe me. And I will say, No, I can't believe he never told me that he was allergic to anything! Maybe he didn't know? *No, stay in the present.* What? *Don't say 'he did' or 'he was', say 'he is'.* Oh, yes, good thinking, of course. So I will say, I can't believe this, he isn't allergic to anything!

And there is no proof. There is no proof that I knew this.

And that will be that. Everything will go perfect. I know. For once the monotony of our lives will pay off and everything will go perfect.

The door. I hear the garage door. This is it now, everything is set. *It will work.* It's flawless. Nothing can go wrong now. He is home. He will walk through the kitchen door, hang his keys on the hook, but they will fall off, as usual, and he will let out a familiar grunt and put them on more carefully the second time. He will come upstairs to the bedroom where I will be reading the newspaper and his nose will fill with the beautiful sent of violets, of faithfulness, of everything that he is not but my nose will be swimming with a sour smell, a smell that will waft in and out of my senses forever.

I hear the door creak open. My heart stops. The keys do not fall today.

“Can we go back now?”
by Florencia Lauria

It smells like oranges and cigarette butts.
And flamenco follows us everywhere we go,
Because instead of talking, the *Sevillanos* sing
And (if we are quiet) in Parque Maria Luisa
We can see the peacocks walking by.

The streets intersect in circles:
Virgen de la Victoria, Virgen de Lujan,
Virgen del Valle, Virgen de Montserrat.
And there are 2 Supersols and 12 Peking Bazaars.

We are new to the city, the house, and the ham;
But Ana and Enrique have done this 23 times.
It takes them 3 weeks to learn our names
(And only 2 hours to forget them)

On Thursdays we eat chickpeas.
Enrique hums the American National Anthem
(Some girl named “Lees” taught it to him last fall)
And sometimes Ana offers Cola Cao

And there are no Mondays, only *Lunes*
And in Sevilla, the milk never goes bad
And when it’s time for us to go, we cry.
We, too, will become a transient memory,
The “*buena gente*” that used to live on the 2nd floor.



You've Got Me
by Amy Wheeler

I'm writing these words for you
Even though you'll never see them -

Too raw
Too real
Too revealing.

But these feelings from my heart
Are printed across my forehead
Screaming out to you -

You have me.

Whether you want me,
Or not
Whether you need me,
Or not

You have me.

You have the power to hurt me
Love me
Ruin me -
for every other man.

You've got your hands
Wrapped so firmly around my heart
Grasping me so tightly
That it feels like without that grasp,
My heart

Would stop.
Beating.

Whether you want me,
Or not
Whether you need me,
Or not

You have me.

If you could read these words
You'd tell me I'm being melodramatic
In that calm, quiet voice I love.

But I know I am -
Of course I am.
I'm helplessly and hopelessly in love -
Melodrama is mandatory.

If you could read my forehead
You would know
That you
Hold|me|together.

With your deep brown eyes
That stare into mine
With your powerful words
That have burrowed into me.

Whether you want me,
Or not
Whether you need me,
Or not

You have me.

And you would know
That with every hint of disinterest -
A denied kiss
A forgotten phone call
An unreturned, "I love you,"
My heart breaks.

You have me
Like no one else has ever had me
And I'm petrified
That if you turn your back to me
One more time
While we struggle to fall asleep
You may never turn back.

Even then,
You would still
Have me.

Fairy Tale
by Kyle Swan

*To tell you the truth, in my work, love is always in opposition to the elements.
It creates dilemmas. It brings in suffering. We can't live with it, and we can't live without it.
You'll rarely find a happy ending in my work.*
- Krzysztof Kieslowski, Polish film-maker.

Ah, my dear readers, welcome to fiction land. Behold, a fatalistic story, given to you in the spirit of the fiction, and of course, for my sincere adoration of you, my audience. Ergo, I proffer the very best of the tale, stylistic mastery defunct but with full candor, that you will know exactly how it happened, at the very least. I swear to you, my friends, that this is all true, exactly as it happened, one afternoon in February, many years before.

About five years ago, I bought a sandwich at a deli. I was headed to work and needed to grab something quick so I stopped there. The meat was spoiled or something, and by the time I got to work my stomach was churning and percolating, and then, without further warning, I vomited all over the showroom floor. They sent me home. It was the most significant sandwich I had ever eaten, but that will emerge momentarily. It's the sequence that fascinates me. This all occurred in the pre-cell phone ubiquity era, so I drove home with a window down, the radio off, thinking about going straight to bed without calling my wife. I felt awful and resisted the urge to swallow because of what I was certain would be a violent response. Periodically, I would decelerate and pull over, but the waves of nausea would pass, and I would continue on my way.

I have always considered myself a strongly principled man. I find it easier to negotiate the world with a pre-established system of rigid values. Someone once criticized me for being formulaic and calculating. I misconstrued the effrontery as flattery.

A few months after I was married, my wife and I were out with friends one night. Everyone was laughing and joking, and then there was a brief lull in conversation, so I random interjected, "I would commit a crime of passion." I was speaking jocularly from my pulpit of rigorous principles in a time when I still believed in that sort of magic, and it sparked a lengthy conversation in which I ignorantly debated the severe rage I would suffer were I ever to discover my wife in a compromising situation. I said all manners of recourse would be righteous in the wake of such gross perfidy and spoke recklessly, a bit drunk, saying that I "would assail my assailant," "would certainly castigate the malefactor," that "there would be a full reckoning," *ad nauseam*. I said I would judge him ruthlessly and decisively for his transgressions, but of course, this was back when I was a young man, full of bravado and such. Most laughed at my fervor, and my wife and I shared tender looks from across the table because we were young, lucky in love, and it was a warm autumn night. Besides, I was newly wedded, and the possibility had not entered my matrimonial consciousness. I suppose that is the brilliance of review.

I guess the story doesn't really begin with the sandwich. It begins with me. The wartime atrocities of the Middle East had exacted a heavy toll on me, and when I was discharged some time before, I left most of my friends behind and tried to return to a hometown that, after four years, had forgotten about me. I tried to leave the painful memories behind, too, but they traveled with me, and so when I arrived back in middle America, I was friendless, jobless, and full of pain. Because of this, I spent most of my free time in solitary activities, reading, writing, fishing, and backpacking. On weekends, I would drive a few hours to wilderness areas, hike deep

into the woods, marveling at the sights, walking past the memories of guys like Paul Casiano (KIA, Kabul), Nicholas Brown (KIA, outside of Baghdad), SSG. Figueroa, (maimed), Mark Templeton (discharged due to PTSD), trying to outlast the odds that were against me. I would stand on various precipices, beneath outcrops, gazing out into wide valleys, and for those moments, I would think that perhaps the world was beautiful and wonderful after all.

Then night would fall, and I would pitch my tent, start a fire, write wistful letters or a note or two in my journal, and fall asleep, feeling very much alone. As it happened, I was friendless, but I felt quite unique in this position, and I knew that I could hardly impose those trips on anyone, to plunge headlong into the wilderness trying to escape what yesterday represented, and as I lay there those nights, I longed for a companion, someone who could reach across the ever-widening gap I felt between me and the rest of the world. That was a pretty long summer, to be honest, but it ended and I enrolled in school, found a job, made a few friends, went on a few dates, and began laughing cautiously.

I met Carrie some time after all of this happened. The world had largely settled. The war in Iraq had ended. The Obama administration had brokered a loose peace in the Middle East, and I remember watching the news and thinking that there wasn't a whole lot going on. As for me, I was getting things right, feeling better about everything, and I was thinking more about the future and less about the past. Carrie's penchant for recreation was striking. She had a zeal for life and pleasure that I may have known when I was just a boy but had long since forgotten, and I knew from the day I met her that I wanted that in my life. I fell in love swiftly and decisively, poured my energy into her seduction, and after a year or so of dating, I proposed. She said yes, and I wish to God I could say the rest was history.

Being married was awesome. We laughed, ate, and drank our beautiful love story, the past faded even further, and I could sense myself changing. I was no longer the wary reactionary, was settling into my new role as husband, and I don't think I had ever been happier in my life.

The abortion changed everything.

She found out she was pregnant and a wave of panic coursed through our relationship; we both shuddered at the notion of parenthood, and I reacted poorly. I denied my ability to be a father, ranting about how terribly suited for it I was. I cited the abuses I had suffered from my indiscriminate father, reached back to a past nearly forgotten, and, fairly terrified, stormed out of the house that night, into the rain, to walk and clear my head. This was not the future I had envisioned, and I was having a bit of difficulty processing it. Carrie had reacted in accordance with my own reaction, had tried to call me back, and it all started falling apart in how I had reacted to her because I was an idiot of a man. When I came home, she was asleep, and I felt awful about my reaction but I lay next to her in bed that night quietly, reflecting on what was next, trying not to wake her.

In the morning, she was a bit distant, and she said, "I'm going to get an abortion."

I was opposed to the idea, and after I had regained composure and thought clearly about parenthood, I realized it wouldn't be so bad. I had tried to discourage her from the abortion, but she had her reasons, and I didn't realize how much my reaction had affected her. I had been supportive, drove her, sat in the waiting room, acted like everything was back to normal when we got home, but it wasn't. Nothing was. She couldn't have sex for a bit afterward which is why we didn't notice failing intimacy because the symptoms were prescribed, but as weeks turned into months, we started to notice, and it was all very different now. She watched television a lot,

stopped going to the gym, worked more and more, and drank earlier in the evening.

I was too self-absorbed to understand what she felt, still don't really, and so we would fight most nights of the week, and when it became unbearable, I would go out and walk, thinking and being away from her. I was angry and frustrated by what was occurring between us. I would walk most nights because I felt like the two of us together in that apartment was making both of us sick, infecting us with sadness. When I went out into the cool night air, I could feel my head clearing, and I would feel just alright. She would be asleep in bed when I would come back in, and I always came back feeling a lot better. I always wanted to wake her up, try to bridge the chasm between us, share a sweet kiss like we used to in good days, and lay there. But how could I, such a coward of a husband and still begrudging my own feelings? So I would slide into bed, trying not to make a sound. Once or twice, I even cried myself to sleep, the pain was so great. Oh it hurt, it hurt.

Somehow, in all of that, we found some peace, and things cooled off. Once or twice a week we would have a tedious quarrel that would gradually consume more and more of our lives, and things would escalate until I would go out and walk, but when I came back, she would be in bed, and I would be feeling much better. Things were not great, maybe, but they weren't terrible either, and when they did get bad, I thought mostly of my old friends and how much worse it could be.

It was long after that fun night with friends that I bought the sandwich that changed everything. I drove home, let myself in quietly, and walked to the bedroom to discover my wife in bed with this guy, someone she had introduced me to a week or so before. It is difficult for me to describe things as they happened next because they defy reasonable possibilities. It seemed that time stopped for a moment or two, everything perfectly silent, the three of us frozen in place, uncertain of the next step.

I think now of the booby-trapped weapons cache that claimed Nick Brown. After the echoing of the explosion stopped, everything was static. It was as though the computer was rebooting or re-loading the frame, me trying to process what I had suddenly walked into, and then with an audible whoosh, sound returned, time began anew. This was strikingly similar.

Suddenly I was shouting, *whoa, whoa*, and flapping my arms a bit but still unable to move. After a few moments of that, I began pacing feverishly back and forth at the foot of the bed, still waving my arms, shouting, "Get out, get out, get out," but I don't really know who I was addressing. They continued to remain completely motionless, neither one of them knowing quite what to do. The illicit sex was dictated by an instinctual playbook, but in the intervening moments following infidelity's discovery, no one quite knows what the fuck they're supposed to do. Eventually they split, and the guy moved out of the room very slowly, his back sliding against the wall, using my pillow to shield himself and regain some privacy, and I felt a sudden flash of anger, thinking about the embroidered pillowcase my aunt had given us as a wedding gift being perverted in this way. I had stopped pacing once he had stepped out of the bed, and once he was out of the room, my wife came over to me, trying feebly to comfort me, and I vomited all over her legs. I collapsed to the ground, ignoring her, sobbing in the puddle around me, and after a minute, she left the room, too. I lay there, heaving violently, listening to their voices from the other room, and finally, they left together and I passed out.

What followed was mostly trivial: I had purchased and eaten a five dollar sandwich that led to an unspeakable revelation. Once I overcame the food poisoning, my wife and I sat down to determine how we would proceed. She insisted that she did not want to end our marriage,

but she continued to communicate with that guy, and I realized quickly that I could not live in that fairy tale. In the days that followed, I suffered anxiety and vicious rage, and my self-esteem plummeted as I remembered the conversation I had those months earlier about being the sort of man who would commit a crime of passion. I felt impotent in my grief and inaction. In short, I wanted blood.

She moved to her parents', and I stayed in our home, trying to work but mostly drinking cheap whiskey, eating frozen pizzas, watching television, ruminating on what had happened. For all of the suddenness, a pattern began forming in my mind. I understood how this tragedy had happened, and I was pretty sure that in spite of it all, I had some culpability. That was pretty upsetting, especially late at night when the drunk had come on full while I imagined Carrie with her new boyfriend who I was certain was better than me at most things.

It was six weeks later that I was walking out of the post office when I saw him across the street, walking with his father. I sprinted across the street, walked fifty paces behind them, plotting my next move. I walked for a bit and thought I could strike him in the knee, incapacitating him and then I would pummel his father while he watched, explaining calmly why this was happening, why your son was evil and such, and then I would give him a few sound kicks to the ribs and make a quick exit.

I didn't, though, turned sharply, and raced back to my car, walking fast and then running and then sprinting, past the peering eyes, outrunning the throes of a severe panic attack. My heart racing, my fingers tingling, gasping for breath, about to collapse as I climbed into my car that day and drove home as fast as I could. Someone told me once that they held me in high esteem because I had not attacked him. I had challenged them, asking how they could respect me for my cowardice during a moment of weakness. I'm not sure what either of us meant.

I called my estranged wife, and we worked it out, feebly at first, me trying to sort out my feelings of betrayal and mistrust and anger, and her, well, I think she was trying to work out how she could've wound up in this sort of jackpot. My suspicions were correct: her new boyfriend was better than me at most things, the sensitive type with a long list of successes who was able to respond to her needs and feelings. We worked it out, though, so there's your happy ending.



Michelle Faber

Nearly There, Going Nowhere
by Olivia McMahon

Distance puts an end—
So final, so lasting, so definite—
To countless things,
Good things.
And the distance we conquered at first—
With late night rendezvous,
Trekking up and down
The Garden State Parkway and Route 9—
Was in vain.
No midnight mobilization could amend
What blunders I stumbled my way through.
Those excuses I made,
And by the time I was finished,
It was too late for me to leave on those roads
Those pot-holed bumpy roads that always lead to a better
destination.
Inconsequential
Are the number of times I've driven them
With you not as my goal.
Petty
Are the people that reside there
That don't live down that right hand turn.
When I drive these roads,
I think of you.



Amy Wheeler

The World Without Makeup: Found Haikus
by Michael Cresci

Only By The Night

Turn on the bright lights
between the dim and the dark.
Sleep through the static.

An Ode to Music

Living the good life
with Bon Iver in my ear.
Close to proof of God.



Aching For An Epiphany

I'm still here hoping
the world is more than concrete.
I'm still so tired.

Really About The Speaker

Pop smoked Marlboros.
From these mortal reminders
the cantata mutes.

Graceful Lasagna
by Nick Sweeney

I never saw a piece of lasagna fly in the air so gracefully before. I don't think anyone actually did, at least until that moment. Wait. Maybe they just witnessed history. The fight would go down in school rumor history as the Waterloo of food fights. The Mount Everest of food fights. The kind that students talk about for years. Mom would kill me. That was if yesterday's mystery meat didn't first. I didn't know which was worse.

"Watch out!" Cole said to me, ducking behind the metal tray, four other freshman gathered around under a table, defending themselves with backpacks. This was war. I saw Gail Coppola fall down under a hail of grayish colored mashed potatoes. Her attackers were the freshmen girls she had made fun of earlier in the year. Karma.

"Mackey, do want lasagna on you?" he screamed. It wasn't the type of scream that meant he was scared, it was just meant to get my attention. The entire lunchroom was in ruins. People running and hiding, the leftovers from last week thrown up and down, I saw Mr. Shelby, the young and hip beach going tech teacher who all the girls loved and also the junior varsity tennis team coach, run in front of that old crow Mrs. Jacobs. He was hit by a rainbow of colored food, including half an apple. Chivalry was not dead after all. Maybe I would try out for the team this year.

I smiled.

Someone dragged me to the greasy ground. It was Cole. My friend, my comrade in arms. He was dripping red from his chest, hit by a full container of poorly made, mass produced fruit juice. He smiled back. Now, this was fun. This was worth remembering.

"And you wore a white shirt today." I looked at him as we witnessed a girl running to escape the disaster and slipping into a group of other girls. It looked like a strike in bowling. We shared one quick laugh.

"Figures," we both said in unison.

The metal trays were now around us, like the shields of the ancient Greeks. We were fighting the Persians. Or in this case, it was every kid for themselves. A massive food free-for-all. And for those who didn't have friends, well, they found each other. Funny how people meet.

It was picture day. Thank the Lord I didn't have a drop on me. Mom would kill me for real. I don't mean my reputation; I mean six feet under, permanent grounding. At least I wouldn't have to worry about the history test coming up.

"Oh man!" The sounds of the food banging against our homemade shields was becoming louder, more frequent. I think I overheard someone reciting a line from Shakespeare. Something about going into a breach or something. "Into the breach dear friends," I think. Mr. Kirk would enjoy that, especially after he caught half his honors class cheating and not reading the plays, and seeing them cry about how hard life was for them. I thought this to myself as I saw Patty McDough, the leader of the honors class group, get beamed by a sandwich.

"There wasn't any meat loaf today right?" A brown solid object grazed the ceiling, hitting a homecoming sign on its decent.

"No, Goose Seaver probably brought it in," Cole responded. Seaver always brown bagged his lunch. This was a donation to the beautiful scene in front of us. Wack. The shields held on for a few moments longer. While we might have new football jerseys every year, I'm glad we didn't spend any money on buying plastic and environmental trays. Those would have been useless right then.

"Where is that idiot?" I said as we looked around. Blurs. That's all we saw. Blurs and processed food. It was almost comical. I stress the almost.

That was until Dean Sanders came in, flanked by his vanguard of janitors, bulky gym teachers, and the two security officers our school rented out. Like on cue, we stopped. It went dead quiet. Cole had the courage to throw the last piece, a snowball looking mound of lasagna and sandwich across the lunch, a failed effort of hitting anything of usefulness.

My heart raced around my chest as we all awaited certain doom. How do you deal with a lunch room of sloppy and disgusting looking students? The detention room regulars would have a wake-up call when they saw their new guests. Looking at Cole, we knew that we would be in for a treat when we got home to see our moms. That poor white shirt he was wearing now looked like a piece of art that belonged on someone's wall. Maybe after our years of detention were over, I would buy it from him.

I could tell that Dean Sanders was yelling, but I couldn't hear it. It was like being deaf after a loud barrage of sounds. Gail Coppola was crying. Mr. Shelby was giving a small smirk to his students, a sign that he was a veteran of a food fight or two. For a moment, we felt like the border between childhood and adulthood disappeared.

I stopped. And then I thought about my mom, I thought about how she thought I was never going to rise up to the expectations of my brother, how I never was going to escape that shadow, I thought about being the B average student. And then I thought how I went and started this stupid food fight. At least I'll be remembered for something.



Amanda Wilson

Things To Say Tomorrow
by Brian McMillan

Thank you for the long days on tire swings
the days of drawing and coloring things.
The small grilled cheese sandwiches you always made,
the board games played.

Thank you for buying me toys and joys,
the sweets and stories that stick.
Years go by but the tears never dry.
It took a long time at first, to cry.

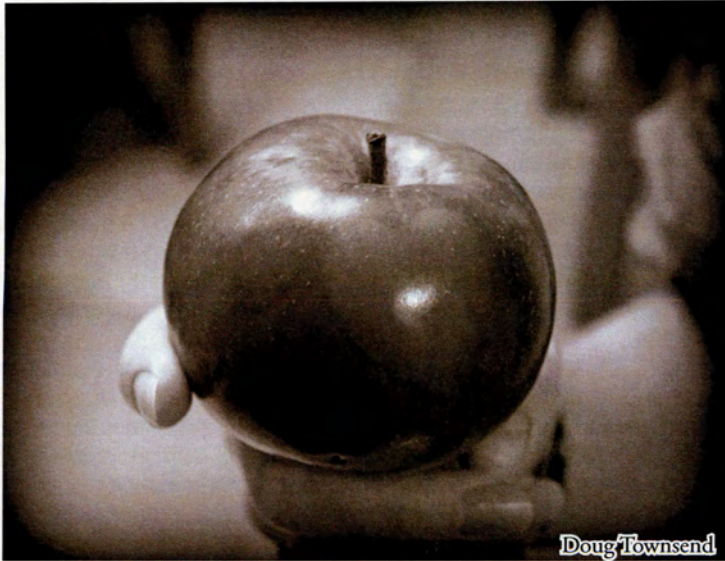
Thank you for the hugs and kisses,
they were gross and sloppy, but
the love you left in them wasn't.
I miss playing pool and watching tennis.

Thank you for all the cookies,
you only let me have 1 every time I came over.
Mom says you had a sweet-tooth.
She would know.

Thank you.
I'll never forget the brake pedal is on the left.
I'll never forget Discovery Zone.
I'll never forget when the Carnival was in town.

Thank you for all the memories.
I didn't mean to hit you in the head,
sorry I was scared of the tubes.
I wish I visited the hospital more.

Thanks again for being the best,
it's been said before, I know, but
You're all I ever knew and all I will ever remember.



Anger
by Kelly Mangerino

Anger is a funny thing
A funny thing that needs a string
For off the string you'd surely see
That it would attack most readily.
Anger is my shady friend
The shady friend to whom I bend
And when I bend I break my soul
Then devour others with no control.
Anger is the price to pay
The price I pay when I lose my way
And when I'm lost my mind does crack
Then oncoming things I will attack.
Anger, Anger go away
Show me mercy as you may
Leave my spirit for a time
Don't let me commit another crime.

Standby
by Thomas Krulikowski

I watched it all.
I watched it through my sighs.
I watched all the pain and hurt,
I saw it with my eyes.
I watched them with raw emotion -
No sense of social consciousness,
No need for connection.

I wish I watched it with them,
I wish I didn't just watch.
I wish I lived their life.
Not mine, not mine.
I only watch life.



Tonsil Hockey
by Michael Cresci

1. I'm pretty sure kissing has ruined everything. When I say everything I don't mean within simply my life but *everything* as in every single thing. The first human kiss, according to the Bible, belonged to Adam and Eve. Logic would dictate that their desire to play pelvic pinochle must have started with kissing. Furthermore, Adam's decision to eat the apple was undoubtedly a ploy to impress, and eventually kiss, Eve -- no more complicated than a man buying a woman a drink in a bar. Basically desire *knew* us, in the Biblical sense. It would explain a lot of the crap our species has had to deal with: crime, disease, war, etc. All the eventual result of two sets of lips touching. We're at the point where God is going to appear in the sky and say, "What am I supposed to do to fix all this, you selfish jerks?" And everyone will look up in open-mouthed shock, like turkeys drowning in their own stupidity during a rain storm, and know we haven't earned the right to argue. Every problem we have exists because Adam and Eve were curious to see if braces really do get stuck together.

2. In 2005, having gone fifteen years without kissing a girl, I spent most days convinced another day without experiencing a lip lock may result in me dying alone. I often wish I could go back and warn myself about women, but if Hollywood has taught me anything it is this: **Don't mess with time travel.** Point is, life is never so easy as before the delicate touch of another's lips convince a guy that kissing is the body's première novelty and should be the end result of knowing any female. Everyone assumes that sex is the only thing guys care about. The truth is that sex is filled with complications and precautions that kissing is beautifully free from. Kissing is a hello and a goodbye. A beginning and punctuation all at once. It lingers long after it is over and it can express anything and everything. Of course at fifteen years old, hidden under a blanket in the corner of a basement full of friends, she more experienced than I, which exponentially increased my dread, none of this seemed to matter. *Scream* was playing on the TV and the cluttered junk that filled the storage area of the basement now seemed somehow insidious. All I could think of were panicked questions. When do you open your mouth? What do you move? How the hell can the tongue possibly get involved in all this? Our faces leaning together under that blanket inching toward the mouths as if going too fast would cause the wheels to fall off. Then as we came in for the final stretch Murphy enacted his law and I did exactly what one would expect. I missed.

3. The Poughkeepsie train station was as cold as October would allow during the goodbye kiss. I carried her pink suitcase down the stairs to the platform despite all her protests, then we waited anxiously for the train to come. Tension hung between us from a recent fight and all the uncertainty of our future together seemed to lie on the yet unseen northbound train. The fight had been one of many from recent weeks and train station goodbyes had become a staple of the stop and go romance I was striving to destroy myself with. The impending goodbye kiss seemed to loom in the distance and there was no way to tell if it would serve as a period or a comma. Gusts of wind kept causing both our hair to go in every direction and I was made to regret my lack of a jacket. She continued to try to find warmth within her gray Abercrombie zip-up. As we sat, mostly in silence, the train pulled in. We stood up and looked at each other for what felt like forever. We leaned in for a brief kiss. She tasted, as always, like blueberry

chapstick and hair. Her hair always found its way to my mouth. This was a combination I had grown to love. A taste that I convinced myself I needed. A few feet away far more stable lips, belonging to a far more stable couple, made contact. The girl wiped tears away as her boyfriend boarded the train. They both talked excitedly of his return. We, on the other hand, had no idea if we'd see each other in a few weeks or a year. As we kissed I was reminded that as long as she kept kissing me I'd keep tricking myself into trying to fix the unfixable. As we separated I tried to think of what I could say to make everything okay. Before I could, the conductor yelled "all aboard." Then she was gone and only the taste remained. But it was fading fast.

4. All four of us were making out on the beat up red couch. Two on one end and two on the other. We were surrounded by posters of Broadway musicals and the television adjacent to the couch was on, but ignored. The volume was practically off because general silence was needed to listen for approaching parents. On the other side of the TV was exercise equipment which seemed to be seldom used. The layout of the basement seemed important at the time. Everything seemed important at the time.

Unlike Meatloaf, we weren't "barely seventeen" and we were all fully dressed. We *were* very much sixteen. We flaunted that proudly. We treated our age with the same undeserved pride that a Hummer owner treats his ludicrous vehicle. The noises of the other couple seemed easy to ignore and the only concern was a parent walking down. Oh the terror that a creak of the staircase could cause! It was more real than any nightmare. But it was worth it for the soft stroke of another face; the subtle, and thrilling, invasion by someone else's skin. It all outweighed the uncomfortable knowledge that the exact same thing was happening two feet away. Not to mention the unease when a couple would take a break to whisper silly sweet nothings (the kind you're baffled you ever said years later). Then a creak at the top of the stairs would spark goose bumps and panicked separation, as if one of us had revealed we were contagious, and it would remind us we were living on the edge.

5. Being the oldest child, my mother and I had a shared dread during my early years. Neither of us could fathom me going to school and being apart. Worse than just separation, it would ruin our all important ritual: watching soap operas and responding to the "twists" with shock. The people on the show kissed in a most peculiar way. Not the simple joy-filled kisses my mom planted on my cheek but some sort of terrifying open mouthed affair in which the tongues battled for control. It was mesmerizing and seemed like a level of intimacy only love could merit. And these people sure said "I love you" a lot. They would even say it to one person then go say it to another, resulting in a gasp from my mother. That night she was tucking me into bed and kissed my forehead, emanating that kind of love which is so unconditional it confuses you, and I wanted nothing more than to return her adoration. She stuck her cheek out for kiss and I obliged her wordless request with the most loving lick a cheek has ever received.

Click, Clique, Click
by Kelsea Burch

Drip Drip Drip
Beads of sweat dripping down your faces
I'm not as athletic as you
So, click, clique, click

Ring Ring Ring
Your phones always ringing off the hook
I'm not as popular as you
So, click, clique, click

Chug Chug Chug
Every night chugging booze and brews
I don't party as much as you
So, click, clique, click

Tap Tap Tap
This season's heels tapping as you strut
I'm not as fashionable as you
So, click, clique, click

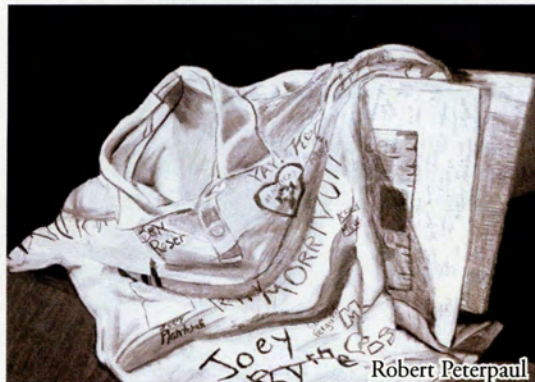
Clap Clap Clap
Audiences always clapping for more
I'm not as creative as you
So, click, clique, click

Slide Slide Slide
Credit cards sliding through registers
I'm not as wealthy as you
So, click, clique, click

Flip Flip Flip
Pages of books always flipping
I'm not as smart as you
So, click, clique, click

... ..

I guess I'll never quite fit



when we were young
by Marina Cella

When did it become too late to realize
that all this time has passed by
and there's nothing now to show
but scraps of paper in the closet
and memories that fade
like a photograph left in the sun for too long

When the revving of the car in the driveway
would send me to hide under the bed
only for the hundredth time
while an earthquake shakes the kitchen

a fire in the furnace
gathering metal forks and plastic knives
anything that's yours or mine
will be gone

we better hide because they're looking for us
and I'll stay here until I fall asleep
until all that's seen is boots heading toward the bed
and I'm back where I started
watching t.v at the kitchen table

There's days where I'll be doing nothing at all and it will hit me
like something that's been gone for all these years
the smell of Dial hand soap in preschool
back then you used it to wash the paint off your hands after finger-painting
it meant nothing then
but now it comes back and brings thoughts long forgotten
makes you remember how, when
makes you forget
why

Why everything used to seem
different, simple
When tying your shoes was the hardest thing you had to do.



I Grew on Garfield Avenue
by Molly Mihalcik

At eight, my mother made me stand in darkness,
my nubby feet aligned with grout,
young tissue against cold,
bathroom floor to cure growing pains.

At twenty, sitting on a toilet in your home,
I know the ache
rushing through my meaty calves,
siphoning alongside still marrow, a stream
weeping from toe to tile. Under you
I became buxom.
You helped me relearn the simplicity of bodies.

Memories in My Pocket
by Jennifer Sommer

*For my college friends;
thank you for giving me a new family and home.*

The stars smile at us,
crooked teeth in the night sky.
My heart breaks
thinking of our unsaid goodbyes.

We move closer,
arms interlinked.
Dozens of hands
holding onto each other
in the darkness
through the cold
adventures of our lives;
desperate to cling to
these moments.

Snapshots of our lives together:
milkshakes and sweet potato fries,
crossing railroad tracks near midnight,
grass stained knees and muddy clothes,
the world spinning above our heads,
time lost in between popcorn kernels and the click of the VCR,
crayon rendered "family photos,"
and conversations that lasted until
time swung back into single digits.

So I'll move a little closer,
cherish these last few moments
as though I've stolen them from God.
Like old photographs
I'll carry them with me
until I return home.

Snow Day
by James Napoli

As I gaze out at the white void,
All I see are Technicolor visions
That swirl amongst the banks and drifts
In hues of purple and green.

They are apparitions from a past
Nearly forgotten by human minds.
A past of color and warmth,
New beginnings and perfumed air.

But, with a start, my thoughts are broken
By the bitter draft seeping in through
Cracks of frosted glass.



Paris, alone.
by Chris Ceballos

When you are alone in Paris you eat McDonalds. You don't sit alone in a café for lunch. The Big Mac tastes just the same and the only difference is the mayonnaise they give you for the French fries (or pommes frites). I did it because it was cheap and I was a broke student traveler and I did it because I didn't need a lot of French to order. And I did it just to say that I did it while I was waiting for the bus from the airport.

My first night alone in Paris I was happy just to have found the metro station. After entering it from the city outskirts, where the airport bus had dropped me, I stood completely still. The metro was a long, dark labyrinth and it was falling apart. The tiling was glazed a foggy, faded green and the white caulk was dark and dirty. Standing in the musty air was a lit-up metro map that all the other backpackers seemed to migrate towards, like a bug zapper. Except when they touched it they didn't get zapped, they got hit with illuminated confusion. I whipped out my moleskine and looked for the metro stop near the Aloha Hostel. Volantaires. I couldn't find what line it was on. It didn't exist. I just stood there. I didn't want to ask anybody because my French was an embarrassing bastardization. My backpack was getting heavy and I knew the general direction so I just hopped on the first train cart I saw going that way, assuming I'd see a directional map in one of them.

From there, I spent the next hour getting my bearings. The cart shook, whistled, rattled and rolled all night, merging with the mechanical angel voice *La station suivante est...* I was shoulder to shoulder with The French: beautiful girls in high rising boots and low stretching coats, young professionals in European suits, the expected elders with berets or tan trench coats, everyone in between... I looked at the metro map above the cart doors that swished and slammed. Volantaires was on the green line. I hopped it. I rode it.

Later, at the Aloha Hostel check in desk: *Oh, that sucks*. She actually said it, the American girl working reception. She was pale and slender and was reading a Parisian tabloid. She had fine, stringy blonde hair and when she looked up from it she told me *that sucks* when I checked in alone. She laughed, it was a joke. She was friendly. We made small talk as I handed her my passport.

Everyone else I know is in a different place for spring break.

Spring break? Where are you studying?

Madrid.

Very nice.

And what are you doing here?

She looked down first before looking up at me.

Dunno. Graduated last spring, didn't know what I wanted to do.

Well, working at a hostel doesn't seem too demanding. And you get to live in Paris.

That's nice I guess, but the hostel sucks.

I guess everything sucked then. I told her I'd see her around as I was staying for four days. She told me her name was Danielle and that I should go to the Eiffel Tower because it shimmers for ten minutes at the top of every hour. I said thank you but didn't like having her pity, unless maybe I deserved it. I hadn't thought of "Paris, alone" as some grand pathetic gesture. I just wanted to travel.

I was in a four person room so it was going to be awkward right from the start. The Aloha Hostel looked just as *As seen on TV!* as it sounded. Every wall was a different neon-orange,

pink, green, and it was obvious that such loud colors were designed to muffle the quiet, antiquity of a building falling apart. I walked up the narrow spiral staircase to the second floor. It was green. I slid my key card into room 204. I heard the muffled click from inside the lock. I opened it.

The room had two sets of bunk beds and a mirror. On one bunk were two girls talking. We acknowledged each other with smiles. They looked young. Both had short, dark hair and wore dark, punk t-shirts and jeans. One was taller and more slender than the other. Eventually I realized they were speaking German. I claimed the lone top bunk and took the opportunity to call Sara and Jose Antonio back in Spain.

Later that night I hopped the metro to the Eiffel Tower. When I got there it was already lit. I sat on a bench in the park underneath it. There was a young woman next to me a couple of benches down. She was by herself. She had a red dress on underneath a white overcoat. Danielle was right: for ten minutes at the top of every hour the tower shimmered.

The next morning I had the hostel's complimentary breakfast of baguette and bug juice. It was cloudy, but dry. At breakfast, the two German girls from my room called me over to their table. They said hello.

How did you know I spoke English?

We didn't. The taller one said. But that's the language anyone can speak.

Yeah. The shorter one said. We thought you were Spanish.

I'm studying in Spain, but I'm from the States.

They got excited.

We want to go to New York someday.

But right now we can only go in Europe. We're too young.

What brings you to Paris? I asked.

Vacations from college.

Same.

You are by yourself?

Yes. I bite my baguette.

That's....

The taller one turned to the shorter one and mumbled frustrated German.

What's that word... when something is good?

That's cool? I offered.

Yes! That's cool.

I said goodbye to them. As I left the Aloha Hostel for the day, I noticed Danielle was not at the desk. I guessed she worked nights. I wanted to tell her that my roommates thought it was cool, not sucky, that I was alone.

Later that day, as I tried to go to Notre Dame, it started to pour. Real heavy stuff. After only a minute of it I was already pretty soaked. I didn't have an umbrella with me and even if I did, the Aloha was a ways away. Luckily on the street there were plenty of *Alimentations* that sold fruit, and milk and little items. I ran into the first one I saw. There was a kindly-looking old man wandering around with his hands behind his back. There was no one else there. *Bonjour monsieur*, I said and he *rebonjoured* me. I started looking around but could not find an umbrella. It was me and the man. I was an obvious soaked foreigner, frantic. I finally turned around to him and opened my mouth to ask for an umbrella. It was only when I began addressing him that I realized I didn't know how to say umbrella. Shit. I thought in Spanish, *paragua*. There was a good chance it was something close to that, but pronouncing the Spanish word with a French accent

didn't do it. I started laughing at myself. The old man, though still kindly, looked completely lost. I hoped that the fact that I was soaking wet could help him understand. I then did a funny dance where I made a half circle over my head and then pointed outside to the rain. He laughed. Ah! He went behind his counter and handed me a cheapo umbrella, saying, *Parapluie!*

I took it with me to the streets. However, by the time I reached Notre Dame a bird had already shit on it and the wind coming off the Seine had inverted it. My jeans were heavy and damp and my socks started to get wet. The cathedral was impressive and majestic but I just wanted to get inside. I went the free admission route and walked around the altar. I observed the statues along the outside, each station depicting icons sadly and triumphantly. The lights were low. I heard the wind still whipping outside by the doors. I sat down in one of the chairs facing the altar. It was warm and dry and I was in no rush. I spent an hour sitting and left only when I was about to fall asleep.

Back at the Aloha Hostel I ate dinner. It was a dried baguette with chorizo. I read a little in the common area. I brought East of Eden with me because I missed the States a bit and wanted some hard sense of Americana. I saw the German girls in passing; they were going out to eat.

You are the other loner, they said.

What do you mean?

The other girl in our room, she is Dutch, she is by herself too.

I haven't seen her yet.

Yeah, she's been out all day.

You guys off to dinner?

Yes.

Okay. I'll see you later then.

Danielle was at work now. I put down Steinbeck and approached her.

How was your first night in Paris?

Good. Went to the Eiffel Tower.

Cool.

So what's it like living here as an ex-pat?

It's pretty cool. It was hard at first. I was alone and knew no one for a while.

And now?

Much better. There are a lot of Americans here.

A group of three backpackers came in with all their stuff. I said goodbye to Danielle so she could get to work and check them in. I decided to go back to the room, hoping to meet and talk with the lone Dutch girl. She was not there, just her stuff on the bunk.

Later that night I went back to the Eiffel Tower. I bought a bottle of 1Euro wine and took it with me to the benches in the park underneath. I drank almost the whole thing by myself, solo. Maybe that was a better word. What if I had said *checking in solo* to Danielle my first night? I thought about the solo Dutch girl. I hoped to see her tomorrow. And the Germans, they were nice. I drank more of the wine. From 9:00-9:10 the tower shimmered. Then again from 10:00-10:10. I stayed there until it became just a phosphorescent triangle, blurred above me.



Mademoiselle
by C. Earnshaw

And she was
kissing the cigarette between her lips—
the dollar store Lolita
(bang, bang for your buck)
with the fringe
over them big brown eyes
in the rain by the 7-11
open 24/7 like she

was Ms. Legs
and the pageant queen in '05,
and now she's sold on
selling herself like a soft drink
(suck, suck, swallow)
in the dark.

Apparition
by Chris Prozora

The Fates sing in unison
Invoking an apparition
I am sprawled across Destiny's livid dune
Gazing at the daunting sky
Your immortal vision
The morbid tears you cry
The flame of my heart's intention
Is smothered by your merciless monsoon

I knew we did not belong together
Doubt was drowned by the Wind's serenade of harmony
But the Seas of Sorrow swept away the sands on its grave
Where we were bound by holy matrimony
But when our love could not be saved
You did not have to leave me forever

Under the Tree of our Horror
My bare feet feel your lingering shadow
My soul dangles by the thread you hold
The grove grows long in the mist where I deplore
Below the shroud you endow with poignant pain
I am alone in the burning rain
Yet I am still freezing cold

I silently lay on my bed
Where my fantasies were born
Where my wistful whispers
Are stifled by the regretful words I said
Please leave me forlorn
And end this anguish I have incurred

My door is closed
My windows are sealed
No light
Of the sun or moon
Wanders into my perdition
All that remains
Is your ghastly apparition

Don't you understand?
I wanted nothing more in this world
Than to love you

But my desperate desire
My deserved destitution
Dismembered me from you

Your beautiful face
Engraved on my tainted prison
You chant those wretched words
I try not to listen
My ears are closed, but my soul is exposed
To your cruel vindications
Your sadistic elation
Every night you slice into my nightmares
You reel them in with invisible thread
Trapping my hope in your sinister snare
You want me to lose my breath
And my life that I will not bequeath

My footprints seem to fade on the wintry ground
The Fates are synchronized in their enticing sound
The requiem that has compelled me to travel this icy path
Has led me to the forest of your spiteful wrath
In its bleeding, venomous heart I give my valediction
Once and for all to your vengeful apparition
It is time for my redemption
My salvation



With or Without
by Liz Jasko

Four years and you're still here...
And still in control.
The pictures were burned and calls were stopped,
But your face and your voice...
I haven't forgotten.

I still see those eyes--indifferent, unreal...
Your sharp cheek bones and jaw of steel...
Those muscles--your strength--
That seemed to grow as I got to know the real you after time...
And of course your hands--ice pale and rough--
But forever red in my mind.

I still hear your voice--its tone, its pitch...
How it changed when you would call me "baby" or "bitch."
Your declarations of love echo in my head,
Along with every "promise" and broken word you said.

I can't count the lies or the fights or the tears,
But I remember every incident, and I still feel the fear.
I can't recall how many times I apologized,
But I do know what all the sorrys made me realize.

I still feel your power crushing my wrists,
And how your guilt trips and rage left me no way to resist.
I remember every threat, every push, every hit,
All the yelling and begging, all the tantrums and fits.
I'm haunted by the sins you made me let you commit.

You still own me:
My body, my soul.
With or without, because of you, I'm still alone.

I'm Trapped in the Prison of My Mind
by Heather Staats

Somebody help me!
I can't find my way out!
Surrounded by gray matter, synapses, and thoughts
this place is suffocating me-

I need an escape route;
some open sanctuary of calm,

away from this storm that follows my every step,
this migraine of conflict which drives me to tears.
There has to be a way.

So I'll dream
and write.
Cry
and kick the living shit out of this...

...thing that chases me in circles day and night.

Because there has to be a way out.



Famously Blue
by Stephanie Grossman

The sett involves you, a murderer of the heart
And me, the romance victim,
You say you love me, a euphemism for "I want to break you"
And throughout this I breathe in every word,
But reality strikes when you are intimate
Without me,
I think I knew, your signs were clear
But denial was my entire mindset,
How can someone state he adores you and not be true?
The truth, I was completely conned, you've completely won,
Because I am still caught in your jet stream
And my wings won't fly me out,
I realize I should be disgusted,
That I need to stop secretly viewing you from afar,
But oh, the rush I receive, the blue lust,
Creates a beautiful and terrible scene
That will surely entertain them.



Amy Wheeler

The Room by Kelly Gallucci

"I said nothing and that means nothing!"

Jackson McGuff slammed the dark wood door to his study and let out a wild aggravated huff as he marched further into the room, his cane unsteady, as if shaking with an anger all its own. He loved Martha, he truly did – she had always been the only one for him. But god damn it that woman did not know when to stop questioning!

"What do you do in there, Jackie?" she would ask. "Why won't you tell me?"

He had told that woman every detail about himself for the past fifty-nine years; no question of hers had ever gone unanswered. She wanted to know what type of underwear he preferred, he told her. She wanted to know why he no longer spoke to his brother, he told her. She wanted to know if he thought Grace Kelly was prettier than she was, he told her... well, sort of at least. Either way, her questions were always answered. So when it came to this room, this eight foot by ten foot mecca of solidarity, he felt every bit justified in keeping his little secret safe. It wasn't as though he were surfing porn or chatting to another woman online, oh no, it was nothing scandalous like that.

Jackson shrugged off his overcoat and released his cane, which he had jokingly dubbed his third leg, hanging both on the back of an extra chair. He waddled over to his desk, pulling his pants up and cursing under his breath about how his shabby suspenders were no longer doing their job. He made a note to tell Martha to buy him some new ones the next time she was out. After taking a seat, his hand found the computer mouse and he opened up a document titled "Raquel." He scrolled down a few pages and finally found where he had left off. "Ah yes," he muttered vaguely, reaching into his mouth and pulling his teeth out. For whatever reason, he hated to write with his teeth in, so he plopped them down into the glass of water beside his computer.

Fingers found familiar keys and soon Jackson was in his element. In all his years of baseball, football, the police academy and marriage – nothing felt more natural to him than when he was writing. The only experience comparable was probably when he and Chuck finally caught Snaggletooth Stan, but even that single day seemed to pale in comparison to the hours upon hours he could spend in front of his Mac.

There had been a time, a few years ago, when Jackson had tried to tell Martha about his passion. "What do you think of writing?" he asked one day.

"Like authors and stuff?" she had responded. "I like 'em I guess... do you wanna be a writer, Jackie? Oh, your cop stories would make the greatest books – murder mysteries and stakeouts, you could be like...um...who's that writer who does that? Um... I don't know, but you could be like him."

The conversation hadn't exactly gone in the direction he had planned it to and so Jackson stopped trying after that. Sure, his memoirs might make a pretty interesting book, but he wasn't into writing for publication. He did it for himself and he had already lived his own life, so he saw no point in retelling it. No, what Jackson liked to write about was a little bit different.

As his hands touched the silk of her blouse, a rosy red coloured her cheeks and her breath quickened... He typed, smiling a toothless grin as the black lettering appeared across the white screen.

That's right, Jackson McGuff, the Irish-Italian ex-cop, former resident of the Bronx

and macho-man extraordinaire, wrote romance novels. It was smut, it was fluff, he would be mocked into submission should any of his old buddies find out. And so Jackson kept it to himself. He was on his third story, this time between Raquel and Joaquin, two Spanish lovers attempting to escape from the vicious and wicked dictator that was Joaquin's uncle.

Suddenly, just as Raquel was about to confess her love to Joaquin, Martha called from the other side of the door, "Jackie! Jackson, you in there? Is your hearing aid on? Jackie, Adele is on the phone, she and Frank want to know when we're heading down to Florida."

Jackson sighed and stopped typing. Of course, just as these two lovers were about to finally consummate their forbidden relationship, he was interrupted. "Hang on, hang on!" he called, saving the document quickly and then shutting down the computer. His writing would have to wait for another day.



Untitled
by James Napoli

There were thieves in the night,
And you came too.
But I didn't care; it was already yours
To take.

Precipitation and Expectations by Michael Cresci

The uneasy rain of an oddly stormy June
plagues the street outside.
The *pit pat pit pat pit pat*
of water on concrete once served as peaceful
ambient noise but has transformed into a
mood altering annoyance.

The forecast promises that nature has no intention
of changing its ways for at least another week.
Not that 2009 was especially promising
but its summer has become meteorologically disappointing.

Instead of the sun, thick black clouds
wandering aimlessly, unsure of themselves.
Instead of prosperity, hordes of economists
toting "THE END IS NIGH" signs.
Instead of outdoor activities, movie
theaters playing high in budget
low in quality "blockbusters."
Instead of beach umbrellas, regular
old black umbrellas with the rain beading up
and dripping off in thin lines effectively ruining shoes.
Fixed elections in Iran and inconvenient puddles in
New Jersey.

But a sunny day sneaks in between it all.
Riding in a Jeep Grand Cherokee
down the Garden State Parkway outrunning
the rain.
And trying to outrun everything:
apathy and age,
The first time we realized our parents were human.
The first time we went to a funeral and realized we'd die.
The first time we got our hearts broken.
The first time getting what we usually wanted
wasn't enough.
Trying to outrun precipitation and expectations
and all they bring down with them.

Driving in a jeep screaming the lyrics
to an album, any album, and trying
to outrun the feeling that everything was done before
we even got the chance to start.

All Fades Away
by David Cohen

Three days 'til world's end.
To those I don't care to see,
I weakly wave my hand.
Not much time remains,
So on them,
Not much time is spent.
I turn before seeing the call returned.
No more time can go to waste.

Two days 'til world's end.
I thank those who gave the most,
Bringing me to this end.
What I received, I never repaid.
To leave behind the shame,
I quickly walked away.
Taking advantage in every turn,
For such manipulation,
For hidden treason,
These deserved more.

Last day before world's end.
For those causing pain,
Never again to be seen,
The goodbye lingered,
With time never seeming to pass.
Pools of joy were filled by pools of sorrow.
Lights of merriment filled by dungeons of pain.
People of today fled from tomorrow,
Only wishing to escape.
No person wished to let go,
But the earth would not stop its turn.
So little time did the last day seem to last.

The day of the world's end.
Time stood still for a moment,
But soon continued to pass.
The people did not see where they were,
Or what would take place.
Ignorant smiles spread on their faces,
Caught in a moment of fiction.
The end was as swift as an eagle,
Leaving no time to look back.
In the end, all fades away.



Brianna Horiuchi

I don't know yet when to
stop.



What I see is the truth

The truth is variable

The Fall 2009 Literary Arts Society E-Board



Julia Stamberger, Amy Wheeler, Florencia Lauria, Amanda Mulvihill,
Jennifer Sommer, Robin Miniter, Kelly Gallucci

Hours Spent Constructing the Mosaic: 25
Committee Members: 14.5
LAsTops: 1
Number of Written Submissions: 112
Times We Pressed CTRL+S: 927
Bagel Bites Eaten: 9
Times We Said "Well, we have to include the walrus!": 63
Number of Times We Called Flor and Amanda: 5
Minutes Spent Laughing: 5,982
Number of Times Amy Punched Jen in the Shoulder: 1
New InDesign Tricks Learned: 4
Nude Photos: 1 (can you find it?)
Times We Were Surprisingly Ahead of Schedule: 82
Hanging out with Friends while Creating the Best Mosaic Yet: priceless.

Love,
Your Editors-in-Chief,
Amy Wheeler and Jennifer Sommer