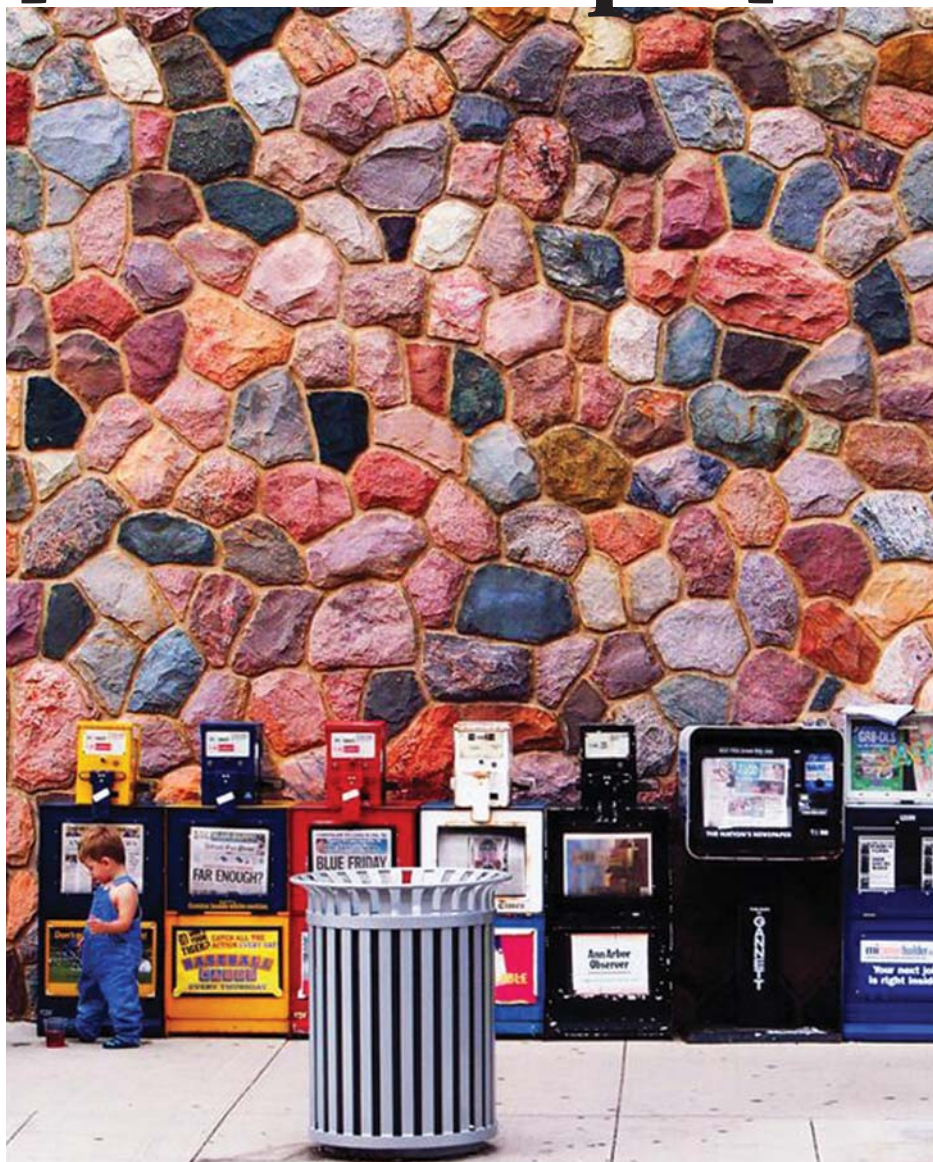


[not so simple]



LHSP Arts & Literary Journal
2006-2007

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Cover Art:
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When we first met the 2006-2007 Lloyd Hall Scholars in late August, we told them that if they started doing what they loved that very day – whether it be music, art, writing, photography, or just about anything else they dreamed of – by the time they graduated, they could make a living doing it.

Eight months later we can see that, given how passionately they threw themselves into their projects, they took us at our word. You are about to enjoy the culmination of eight months of sincere effort by over one hundred students in the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program.

The stories, poems, photos and artwork you will take in represent not only some of the students' best work, but also the students at their best. I believe you'll notice a refreshing lack of self-consciousness in the work here, demonstrating an uncommon self-confidence in their identities as artists. They are not putting you on – they are being themselves. And they are allowing their work to speak for itself, too.

It is a rare treat to see talent – real talent – in its first bud, but that is what you have here. I hope you enjoy their work as much as I have.

John U. Bacon
LHSP Writer-in-Residence
2006-2007

Important implications used all the time.

Use ABAB

DDC

Awesome Agamemnon slowly squints to the sun
And strokes his beautiful, barbaric beard.

If it doesn't rhyme,

It's not worth time.

Throw in a pun or two,

Like the word 'do'

You can do a task or

Do a person

(like have sex)

A paradox is great too.

Just like this:

Don't listen to a word this poem

says

because

It's not a real poem

And it's all true.

Stationed Slop

by Kellen Braddock

The Christmas tree,
strung with deep-fried hanging lights,
stands metallic in February.

The cat trails cake mix, with its well-bred tail.
Flour pollution rises,
causing the animal to cough but,
“Allergies only last until you forfeit to a higher caloric intake.”
Mother says.

Ashless, the fireplace prefers
sitcoms and hair removal ads,
to chopped wood;
a 36 inch flat screen glows on our faces
instead of the run-of-the-mill-flame.

“To the mall, PLEASE?” Baby Sister yelps for a six-dollar smoothie.

Car to
compact shopping to
horizontal escalator,

we are well fed and in no condition to walk.

isolated by song

by Kristin Lo

I flow to the strange beat
of a melody playing only
in my head;
an instrumental version
of reality

I dance to my thoughts,
a rhythm of my creation;
unplanned motions
of the solitary
mind

I sing to lyrics of
formless words;
a song that allows for
no one's voice
but my own

I control one wave
of sound, but
something else,
another tune, plays
along unwanted

I lost the music, the
notes to a piece not yet
memorized,
one soon to be overshadowed
by undertones

I hear a refrain repeated
too many times;
over and over again,
the same message
haunts

The solitary figure moves,
lost among strange melodies
once her own; soon to be forgotten,
she is only a small part
of a greater masterpiece

Fried Gefilte Fish

by Langston Kerman

Somewhere in-between
West-side Detroit
& Cincinnati, Ohio
My grandparents
will get drunk
together
on accident
My mother's mom
will get things started
She'll kick back a couple
shots of Absolut
snuck in her oversized handbag
Light a cigarette with Menorah
candles she found boxed in attic
Throw some catered
bagels & lox on grill
just to show
how much better
everything tastes BBQ'd
She will place a plate
in front of my father
Force him to taste
test chocolate-
dipped Detroit
He'll smile at smoky flavor
Grandma will love him
for being white man
who knows how to savor
Pig's feet & Chitterlings
They will sit and talk
for hours about greens
and crumbled cornbread
Dust collecting in corners
of conversation that somehow
reminds them both
of my mother

Nana will watch
 in horror
 like Holocaust
 she doesn't talk about
 Afraid to speak up
 She will swallow
 enough wine to forget
 not to smile
 Papa will sit
 Quietly down enough
 Jack Daniels to apologize
 to my mother
 for the weeks my father spent
 in a hospital bed
 For refusing to console
 his son in the same room
 as dark flesh
 For believing black
 skin could only scar
 roots and empty trust funds
 He'll reach out to her
 for a hug he never meant
 when sober
 Wrinkled arms shaking
 like teenager
 stretching for liquor cabinet
 My mother will smile
 Politely pat him on his back
 For a moment in his arms
 She will picture her father
 Wish he were here
 to get drunk
 Slam a door
 Yell out something
 awkward and racist
 Just to remember

what father
she never needed
Tears blurring eyes
They will sit together
Each leaning tipsily
like pickled
fish out of water
Passing out on each-
other's shoulders
Closer
than we have ever been

A Puzzle

by Adam Baruch

To be broken
Implies a past of completion
Implies the possibility of redemption
But what if the pieces are scattered
And what if there is no chance of being put back together
And what if And what if And what if
But the only what if that counts
Is what if life is not futile?

Of Penance and Monsters

by Natalie Shields

I saw the sunrise today, so beautiful that I wanted to smash it into a million pieces and rearrange it so that it wouldn't hurt to look at. So instead of breaking the sun, I broke my sister's arm. I didn't want to hurt her, but it was just too damn beautiful.

The beginning of my fifth attempt at a short story sits freshly written in my notebook, begging to be worked on. But no matter how I begin, the stories never progress past the first paragraph, as if the rest is dormant, waiting to awaken.

In truth I am thirteen, the unluckiest of all numbers, a cheerleader at a school of 200 kids grades Pre-K through 12th, my class consisting of 15: 12 girls, three boys. Everyone likes me, but I have three close friends: Sara, Liz, and Chloe. This is the last day of seventh grade. I am all smiles. No homework for three months and no bathroom passes. The taste of freedom hangs low in the air, dropping closer to me like the New Year's Eve Ball with each second. The bell rings and I shoot out of my chair, almost tripping over my own enthusiasm.

"Anne! We're going bowling tonight. My parents have to come, but it's still going to be fun. Cosmic bowling! And then we're having a pot luck at the church." I know it is one of my three friends who is calling me, but I am too wrapped up in thought about going home to see my dad, who has been tied up with business, to care about such a trifle as bowling. "Sure," I throw my words in the general direction of the carbon copy trio, dressed in red plaid skirts and white-collared short sleeved blouses.

I reach home, but as soon as I walk through the door, my spirits drop. My father is carrying two suitcases, chock-full of clothes. He stops and looks at me, his eyes drooping after relaxing what looked like anger.

"Are you going on another trip? Dad, you were already away for two weeks and you promised to take me fishing the day you got back."

"Honey, I—didn't your mother tell you?"

"Tell me what? That you're ditching me to slave away for 'The Man' to get a promotion and a salary increase?"

"No, not exactly. Well, I don't know how to say this, but..."

"Michael!" my mother bursts into the room, cheery-eyed as always. "Why don't we discuss this at dinner? You'll be finished with things by then, right?"

My father winces, his forehead furrowing into a strained expres-

sion. “What’s for dinner?” He forces a smile like the one my mother has on, and it makes me sick, like when I see couples wearing matching outfits. He sets his bags next to the overstuffed couch and turns on the television as if he’s has forgotten the conversation.

“Chicken.” It comes out of nowhere after a minute of silence.

“What was that?” My father snaps back into reality.

My mother’s smile goes at ease, a soldier letting her guard down while the drill sergeant is watching. That’s fifty push-ups and ten sprints around the field, I thought, to pass the time between responses. “We’re having chicken.”

She walks away slowly, carefully choosing her steps and body movements. I notice a little blue mark peeking out from underneath her sleeve, and bite down on my tongue before I ask what happened. I hum and go upstairs, mechanically placing one foot in front of the other in the order I think they should go.

I am in my room, thinking that it is far too cold in here to be June. I go on the Instant Messenger and ask what time we’re going bowling. Seven sharp. Something feels automatic about the way I am typing. Autopilot has taken over. The Captain has turned off the seatbelt sign. Feel free to move about the cabin. I picture myself standing up to get something out of the overhead. Turbulence strikes. I fall.

The bowling alley is a blur of neon, flecks of light, and disco balls. I choke on the thick cigarette smoke in the air: kretek, Ultra Lights, unfiltered knockoffs, each brand just as suffocating as the next. I spot Sara’s parents and they look like they came out of a fucking storybook. All that was missing was the Golden Retriever and yellow curtains. They already had a mini-van and two sunny-faced children. I try to check my anger at the door, but it clings to me like someone else’s gum on the bottom of my shoe. I pick a team (the wrong one, as always, with three under-coordinated monkey boys) and throw my first ball into the other lane. I suck. The second bumps across five lanes to my left. I walk over to get it, and a little girl stares at me in horror, dropping her cheese pizza slice on my white sneakers. I look at my feet, then at my right hand, which she is fixated on. My ring finger is jutted sideways at a 45-degree angle. I can’t feel my body. I faint.

I wake up on a bench, cool towel on my forehead. Sara’s mom’s eyes swell with concern, the kind that says, *I hope her parents don’t sue.* “I called EMS.”

“No,” I said faintly. “I’m okay, really,”

“But, Anne...your finger” she said, pointing at my odd-looking appendage in disgust.

“I just—I just need a shower. That’s what I need. This smoke...it’s so strong.” I stand up and hold onto the wall for support, making my way toward the door. Sara’s mother protests, but I have already disappeared into the carcinogenic fog. I count the faint bulbs of light lining the streets as I “Dawn of the Dead” my way back home, 165 in all.

The house is pin-drop silent when I walk in and I can’t see straight. My hand must have fallen off. Father is sitting on the couch, so still that I wonder if someone had made a wax figure of him while I was gone and placed it there. Movement. No, still here. His eyes are glassy, sullen and fiery all at once. He looks over at me.

“What the hell do you want?”

Who is this? My father never speaks to me like this. Then the smell hits me. Whiskey, thick and undiluted. I walk around him, hoping that maybe he will think he is just dreaming.

In my room, I pop my finger back into place after convincing myself that it is either the hospital (which involves waking up Benzodiazepine-Coma Mom or Father Lush and is not an option) or doing it myself. It snaps back in nicely, but there is still no feeling in my entire body. Now I am anxious and tired, in need of sleep, so I walk down to my mother’s bathroom and grab the Klonopin, knowing it will calm my mind enough to help with sleep. The bottle is missing, though, and I settle for sleeping pills: the recommended two, and one for good luck. I lay in my bed, soft circles of nothingness trailing up my arms and tingling at my toes. I think, “is this what Alice felt as she fell down the rabbit hole?” and close my eyes to sleep.

Every night that summer, I took the same self-prescribed dosage along with occasional tranquilizers for an extra treat that I had taken from my mother’s bedroom. She never noticed. Every day was another semi-lucid dream. Bottled bliss, I called it. It’s a good thing that I was so out of it every day. I didn’t notice that my parents played me like I was a hot potato. Don’t get stuck with Anna when the music stops or you’ll get custody. But the music did stop, and my father got caught with the responsibility burning through his hands.

The school I returned to in the fall was very different, like the house of mirrors. My “friends” acted as though they barely recognized me. I was clean without access to the drugs anymore because I lived with my dad, but still everything seemed fuzzy. I was in the ladies room when I

overheard Madeleine Pierce say the words that set the tone for the rest of my year.

“Yeah, her parents divorced. It’s a sin, you know. Now she’s living with her boozehound father since her mother had a nervous breakdown and got thrown in the nuthouse upstate. I knew she was a weird bird. No wonder my parents never wanted me to stay over there.” She fixed her lipstick and stuck out her lips, checking to make sure that everything on the outside looked perfect. I didn’t move from the stall until an hour later, when I was sure that I had control over my hands. Otherwise I would have dug my nails into her pretty, pretentious face.

That day, when I went home, I took out the sewing needles. No, I didn’t have a creative streak going on. I heated the needles with a lighter to sterilize them. The first poke stung a little. Then I began to think, the deeper the better. I felt a new lightness, better than any anti-anxiety pill ever gave me. I started making little red dot patterns on my hips, somewhere no one would look. I saw it as pointillism, an art form. Soon, I did it every day. Then twice a day. Eventually, I started piercing my skin during lunch and bathroom breaks in school. I kept thumbtacks in my backpack so that I could make punctures in the middle of class.

At home I started mouthing off just so my father would smack me. Any pain was better than consciousness of thought. I purposely banged into things, stubbing my toes, shins, anything and everything. Then I discovered the magic of razorblades. I was lost after that.

Sometimes, I wanted for all of them to see what they had done to me—the way I became their own personalized Frankenstein. It’s alive. Now stab it down with a pitchfork. But despite my hope that someone would intervene, no one did. Not even when Sara walked in on me cutting during lunch in the eraser room.

“Oh,” she said, as if she had just found out that cheerleading practice was moved to Monday. Her left eyebrow arched deviously, lips pursed in a tight smile holding back a verbal response. She turned and clicked her way across the floor in her new clogs, each foot pivoting slightly with renewed energy. I started laughing hysterically, which progressed into heaves and burning tears. Oh. So natural it killed me.

Of course, Sara used this new information as ammo against me, the fallen cheerleading captain. Everyone acted as though I had leprosy, avoiding me at all costs.

“Jesus loved even lepers,” I said under my breath, a little too loudly once when “they” teased me about my scars.

“Well, Jesus never met you, did he?” These words repeated themselves even after the fact, spilling over into my current thoughts and corrupting the files like a virus.

One day after school, I was sitting on the park bench near the playground, waiting for an act of God to happen and take me from this earth. A girl who looked about my age walked over to me. Her hair was chestnut brown with red highlights and fell just below her shoulders. Her eyes were unusually green, like alien orbs, matching her chipped Urban Decay fingernail polish.

“Hi, I’m Jane,” she said after a moment. “Mind if I sit down?”

“Sure,” I replied, clearing my bag from the bench. “I’m Anne.”

“I know,” she answered blandly, pulling a cigarette from her right knee sock. “Want one?” I shook my head. “More for me. Anyway, I just got here today and I noticed something about the people here.”

“What’s that?” I asked, perturbed that she was smoking anywhere near me.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Her arms shot up into the air and rested on her head, crossed at the elbows to make sure she didn’t drop ash on herself. “They’re all assholes!”

After a few puffs on her cigarette, she scratched her lip with her thumb and said, as the smoke shot out from her mouth, “And I’ve only been here one day. I think I need to form an alliance.”

I perked up a little more. “Meaning?”

She took the last drag from her cigarette and flicked it to the side, smiling as the smoke flowed from between her lips. She took a swig of the Cherry Pepsi in my hand. “You’ll just have to find out, won’t you?”

Over the next few weeks, Jane and I grew closer. One day, she found my “coping kit” tucked inside my backpack while looking for some Swedish Fish. “What the hell is this?”

“Umm...that’s nothing. Just school supplies.” I snatched the kit back from her, like it was My Precious and someone was trying to take it from me.

“No, no, no. I saw the movie *Secretary* and I know what you do with that. You hurt yourself.” She pulled up my sleeves and her face went blank in shock. “I didn’t think it would be this bad. Oh my God, Anne. You need help.”

“I—I know.” I couldn’t say anything else. My knees shook and I started to lose balance.

Jane pulled me to her, patting my back as I shivered and took in

sharp gasps of air between sobs. She moved back slightly and grabbed my face with both hands, eyes intensely probing into my own, her hurt so close to the surface that I could almost touch it. “You don’t want to die, I know you don’t.”

And I realized, she was right. I looked back to every time I had cut, remembering that each time, I couldn’t go deep enough to bleed myself away completely. I stopped cutting immediately, but continued to use needles for a few weeks more, gradually decreasing the frequency. Jane routinely checked for punctures on my arms, and each time she found one, she cleaned and Neosporin-ed it, placing neon Band-Aids with sad faces penned on over each wound. It took six weeks of Jane’s encouragement and unconditional support for me to make an appointment with a psychiatrist. Although I was skeptical about going, I knew that I had to do something to help myself. The doctor’s name was Julia Stark, and she had an Austrian accent. I didn’t tell her about the self-mutilation, but instead expressed my concerns about how I felt deeply depressed, about my “friends” and the hell I was put through. Eventually I spilled most things onto the table. She was understanding, but nowhere as perceptive as Jane.

“What’s the diagnosis, A?”

“Well, Dr. Stark says that I have Dysthymia.”

“Congratulations. A four-syllable illness! So are you cured yet?”

“No. She’s starting me on Prozac today.”

“This one moves fast. She prescribed already? But it’s only the first date!”

Slowly but surely, I began to feel the positive effects of the Prozac, although it did make me very irritable at times.

“Geez, A! You’re acting like a pregnant woman! All I said is that Orlando Bloom is overrated and you took a swing at me!”

“You’re right. I’m sorry for being this way. He is a little overrated,” I replied after realizing how moody I had been. “I’ll see if Dr. Stark can do anything about this.”

A week later, on Boat Night, my father walked into the living room and sat down on the opposing side from me.

“Time for a parley, Father?” I said.

“Well, Anne, I have some bad news,”

My throat closed for a second, but then I shook it off, comforting myself with, “You’re marrying that woman you’ve been dating for the past two months? Whatsername...Lola? And she’s a showgirl?” I rolled my eyes. My father swallowed his pride and redirected his thoughts. “We will pick

up on that later. But that's not why I wanted to talk to you,"

"Gee, Dad. I thought you wanted to spend some quality father-daughter time with me, complete with a heartfelt chat and a pony ride to boot!"

"Anne, I wish you would just listen to me. Save the witty remarks for Jane. We have to move upstate. I have a job offer up there that pays much more than what I am making now. We're moving mid-August. I'm sorry. I know you and Jane get along so well, honey."

"Don't call me honey! She is my only friend! And I can't just leave her to fend for herself at that shitty academy. Those piranhas will eat her alive, Dad."

"Anne, I don't know what to tell you. But we have to move. I can't afford this house anymore and I sure as hell can't afford to send you to that 'shitty academy' you hold so near and dear."

I slowly stood up and made my way toward the door. "I'm going over to tell her right now. I don't want to put this off."

The doorbell rang in four progressive notes. E C D B. Jane came to the door.

"What's up? You're not going to boat night, are you? All it offers is drunken churchgoers, Barry Manilow records and boxed wine. Tacky. And don't even get me started on the--" she cut off. "Something is wrong. You look sad."

"Let's take a walk, okay?" I looked at the doormat, kicking imaginary dirt from the forest green converse that were either mine or Jane's. I couldn't remember.

She grabbed two shawls, handing one to me and draping the other over her own shoulders. Jane walked silently, waiting for me to tell her. "It sure is cold for June," I said, trying to ease my way into the uneasy conversation.

"Cut the shit. Since when do we ever talk about the weather? This isn't teatime at the Grand Hotel. Nix the small talk!"

I drew a quick breath and exhaled. "Okay, but if I'm gonna do this, I need a cigarette."

"Oh, man. This must be terminal."

I told her the news and she took it a lot better than I had expected. We spent even more time together after that, almost inseparable until the day of the move, when I saw her grow smaller and smaller in the reflection of the rear view mirror.

Although I missed Jane, I began to like public school more and

more. As was expected, there were assholes there, just like at the academy. But here it was more sporadic, and no one even thought to judge me for having divorced parents and a monthly appointment at the shrink's office. I kept in touch with Jane. Every night I called her to see how she was doing. Every night, the same reply: I'll manage. I couldn't help but sense the grieving undertones in her voice. I could just imagine the things "they" were doing to her. The Christian Boys touching her with their blameless hands Here, There, Everywhere while she stood pinned against the wall in anguish. I saw flashes of The Christian Girls, their faces blurred in ugly blotches, lips moving double-time, cutting into her with every "slut" and "whore." Sometimes during the day, my heart would beat irregularly and ache, as if tiny needles were puncturing it. Old wounds began to flare up more and more, and I knew something was wrong. Jane barely uttered more than a few words the last time I spoke with her. I heard her breathing, shallow and quick, on the other end of the line.

"Jane? Are you cutting?" I waited, the silence so encompassing that I had to fight to keep above it.

"Oh, Anne—" Jane sobbed. And the phone clicked down.

She saw the sunrise today. It was so beautiful it had to be smashed into a million pieces and rearranged so it wouldn't hurt to look at. But instead of breaking the sun, she broke her skin, over and over again, until no sign of beauty was left. In the end, what she destroyed became something in itself.

"If the body is a temple," she said, "I want to burn it down."

And she did.

portraits you painted

by Christina Hamati

where were you these summer days
wasted away in a beach house somewhere?
and i'm just a girl with a bathing suit on
dangling her legs from the edge of the dock
keeping my eye on the shore's silhouette
willing a sailboat to puncture the skyline
of pink and orange and yellow sorbet
and there is the sunset floating
and dragging its feet on the water on water
as if to tell me it's taking you down
to the bottom of the lake until the next day
and i'm an array of portraits you painted
sun hat pulled down to the bridge of my nose
my soul's agitated since you've gone away
and my heart's been whimpering drowned out by the waves
my feet draw the ripples that get bigger and bigger
until they graze the shore where you sit
detached from the world as we know it today
in your hand a paper cup with a few drops of wine

Replacement

by Kristine Barnes

They had been married for forty years,
together for forty-three.

The last was oppressive,
haunted by her chemotherapy
and her auburn hair
coming out in chunks,
his turning gray.

God, he loved her satin, auburn hair.

But now her brush sits in a plastic bag
prepared for charity
alongside her other possessions.

She would have wanted that.

He knows this; he loved her selfless heart.

But mostly, he cannot bear to see
her things
lying around the house,
waiting.

Now their Labrador,

Daisy, is his best friend,

his soul mate,

the one he pours his troubles into.

The dog doesn't beg for scraps anymore;

she eats at the dinner table,

sitting, with paws resting on the cloth,

a striking resemblance to the elegance of woman.

Nor is she reserved

to the cold tile floor of the kitchen;

she sleeps with the satin fur of her head

brushing along his skin,

and sometimes he even mistakes her body heat,

the sense that someone is there,

for his wife.

.....

It's cruel how his new bond attempts
to rival his marriage;
or at least he convinces himself,
that she, like so many other things,
was so easy to replace.

But his gray hair concedes the truth;
it, too, is beginning to fall out.

Entitlement

by Alex Marston

I am the child of history, and I am entitled,
for I am the grandson of the baby boom,
the kid brother of Generation X,
and I have read it in the history books and seen it on the movie screens.
My generation will have a revolution, and we will fight,
and we will win all sorts of things,
like rights for all, liberty and justice for the disenchanting and ostracized,
and second third and seventh chances
like permission to dismiss ambition, for motivation's overrated
when inheritance replaces creative wheels
like music free and streaming, unrestrained not bothered by the pesky little
artist with breadcrumbs on the street
like Nike Gap and Abercrombie from Hong Kong kids, sweatshops
Pakistani with pounds of rice and potatoes, stock foods
bought cheap for the nickels and dimes we leave
on the pavement
like men and women not married to each other but one another until
no laws abide and anarchy rides high, until the needle
between your thighs becomes a natural feeling
like democracy for all, over all, all over, though it once admitted slaves,
though it once destroyed the ways of men with rights,
though it once elected Hitler
like McCarthyism or communism or conservatism or whateverism we feel
like fighting for with a grassroots campaign and internet
communication requiring lots of passion but
rarely any action
like no cavities, like Ritalin, like Caesar salads with vegan dressing and
croutons toasted to a delectable crunch
like Freedom Of Speech, but not if you insult the Mexicans or
Dominicans or the American God, who designed Our Flag
Himself to reign supreme over liberty and justice for all, except
the Creole whores drowning in His saliva

like the power to decide, to decide who gets welfare, to decide whose
 actions are affirmed, to decide the draft numbers, who goes
 to the sand, to the stand, who goes to the noose, televised on
 Al Gore's brainchild
 like a game of checkers, demanding "King me" like the Heavenly
 Seamstress sitting in a throne atop a pile of bones
 like government taps and wireless taps and free-flowing taps
 of information and Samuel Adams, like the washed-up
 Falstaff of a nation, reeling from successes of the
 night before
 like a good taste in our mouths, vanilla extract
 like the time to sit in fields, threading blades of grass between our thumbs
 and blowing to make sounds until the recess bells call us
 back to school
 like puppy-dog love and no worries
 like the security provided by M-15s at posts with barbed wire,
 bloodhounds, watchtowers, and Kennedy's red button
 to Russia in his briefcase at his side
 like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which includes 5% tax,
 batteries sold separately, our souls stand separately, marching
 to many beats that drown the goals we take for granted.
 These things are mine, for they were won for me by the greatest
 generation,
 the one that solved sexism and disease,
 cured racism and poverty,
 and left America in its will.
 The one that paved the road less taken, adding toll booths and exit ramps.
 I will have it.
 I will be famous.
 I will do everything that I wilt have, even with the swiftness of putting on.
 I am permitted.
 I am entitled.

The Decomposition of a Mouse

by Kellen Braddock

“Death is no more than moulded clay,” Peale says while
we watch malignant canyons grow across new areas.

Fur balls tangle with regional feathers, dust and skin cells
and accelerate away from the stationary remnants:
Cartilage bones, fickle like baby hair.

The process is quick,
lit with an invisible force,
smokeless scentless.
The creature liquifies. Flat on the dirt, this scientific process
comes to a clean end.

“Do most people fantasize about decay?”
Peale asks, as we drift in and out of sleep.

Fractured Fairy Tale

by Sheri Jankelovitz

Lilly felt uncomfortable. Her dress seemed to cling to her in all the wrong places. It was a beautiful dress really; red and silky, and it tied around her neck leaving her sleeveless and freezing. Her mother had insisted she wear it with no shawl or coat, despite the frigid November weather.

“Come on honey, how can you expect to find a boy when you’re all covered up?” Her mother said, flashing a harried smile as she had slipped on her ridiculously high heels.

Lilly didn’t feel much like finding herself a boy now, in fact she wasn’t even sure that true love existed. After all, how could she think that way now? Not after the “family meeting” that Lilly always suspected was coming, and yet at the same time doubted that it could ever happen to her family.

“We’re getting a divorce. It has nothing to do with you kids.” Her father had said. He avoided looking at her mother the entire time and Lilly noticed that they sat as far away from each other on the couch as possible. When had this happened? When had her parents stopped wanting to even sit next to each other? Lilly had gone numb at that point and the rest of the conversation was a blur. She remembers her father patting her brother Jacob’s hand.

Not surprising, Jacob had always been her father’s favorite. But then, Jacob was everyone’s favorite. He was going to Northwestern next year, on a scholarship no less. Perfect Jacob and his perfect life. He didn’t seem at all affected by the news of their parent’s divorce. Why in fact, he had gone out that night. On a date with some girl, what was her name again? Lauren, Maureen, what did it even matter anymore? She wouldn’t last long anyway, they never did.

Lilly had never even been on a date with a boy, but she didn’t mind. Why go to all this trouble just to endure hours of awkward silences with, oh the horror, a high school boy? High school boys were so beneath her. Not one of them could think past their next big football game or math test. Lilly felt lost around them. It was as if an invisible hand appeared, clamping down around her mouth every time she was around them. What would she ever talk to them about anyway? So she didn’t even bother. What did it matter that other girls her age were already light years ahead of her? She was only 17; she had her entire life in front of her

to have her heart broken.

“Where are we going to live?” Noah had asked her father and mother.

That was Noah for you. Despite being young, only 13 years old, he had the most level head of anyone in his family, Lilly included. Lilly sometimes wondered how he was going to survive high school once he got there. He was rather small for his age, and frail looking. The problem was he cared too much. He cared too much about others, and in high school you just couldn't afford to.

Right now he was nervously pulling on the collar of the brand new suit his mother had bought for him. They were on their way to Scott Neuman's wedding. The Neumans had been close family friends with Lilly's family since before Lilly was born. This wedding was something her mother had been looking forward to for weeks. However, now the event was more of a battleground than a wedding. Her father was going to be there as well. Lilly couldn't believe he was going but she figured he was doing it to spite her mother. Playing “chicken” in a way; seeing which one backed down first. She'd be surprised if her parents were able to be in the same room without blood being shed.

They had both been living in the same house ever since the announcement but both were sure to never be in the same place at the same time. It was like living in a home with ghosts. Lately Lilly had been eating dinner alone, too tired of trying to coordinate with her parents. As she sat and ate her food by herself she would wonder how it got so far. When did a happy marriage become an unhappy one? Was there an actual moment that she could have noticed? If so, maybe she could have stopped things from happening, maybe they would still be eating as a family.

“You'll live with both of us of course.” her mother had said. Then she saw the look on her children's faces. “Well, not really with both of us. I mean we'll both be in two separate places but you'll be with each of us equally...” she trailed off here and nervously gazed out the window. Lilly could feel tears welling up in her eyes but she blinked them away. She wanted to be mature, plus she felt as if crying would only prove just how weak this family was. She refused to believe they would never be a “family” again. Now she would have to have two families, two houses. Does this mean there would be a new family? Would her father or mother get married? Lilly put her head between her hands and continued to blink back her tears, as if letting them fall would mean this was all real and not some horrible dream. Her dark brown hair had fallen into her eyes; she

hated when that happened. She didn't bother moving it out of the way, not wanting to see her parents' faces or the faces of her brothers. Her parents didn't notice. Her parents never really noticed Lilly; she was too good at blending into the background. Faintly in the distance she could hear her father comforting Noah who was crying silent tears.

"Spazz, we're leaving now." Jacob was standing next to her, also nervously pulling at his collar. Her father had gone ahead to the ceremony, leaving her mother and the kids back at home. He was no doubt making sure that they wouldn't possibly end up sitting together.

Lilly shoved Jacob and in the process almost tripped over her brand new high-heeled shoes. Stupid shoes, what was the point? She was already gangly and awkward as it was; nothing like strapping heeled towers to her feet to add to the effect.

Tottering into the synagogue Lilly saw him. Why was he here? Boys like him didn't go to things like this. Too cool, and too cool for her that's for sure. Her first impulse was to run away but there was nowhere to go. Though Lilly detested high school boys, Aaron Gold was something else entirely. Lilly could tell he was different, or at least she hoped he was. She had often found herself dozing off in class thinking of those piercing blue eyes. Lilly's daydreams were often about running into him somewhere outside of school. She would strike up a conversation and he would be entranced by her witty personality and intelligence. Not to mention the fact that she would look heart-breakingly beautiful. Not like this. Not when she felt glaringly awkward. Why did she choose a red dress? She would never blend into the background in this. What was she thinking? Her mother grabbed her arm and steered her towards the back of the room. Closer to him. Lilly couldn't tell if the knot in her stomach was due to fear or nervousness. She glanced at her mother and saw her casting furtive gazes around the room. No doubt looking for Lilly's father. She was staking out her territory.

Jacob hadn't cried at all throughout the entire family meeting. It was as if he had turned to stone. His eyes just stared straight ahead, right through her mother as if she wasn't even in there. Instinctively he moved closer to his father, creating a chasm between himself and his mother.

"Now, we know that this will be hard on you. But your father and I want you to know that despite this, we both still love you. We will never stop loving you." Lilly's mother looked over at Lilly for support but Lilly was avoiding her gaze. Her mother sighed and straightened her skirt.

"Leah." Lilly's mother straightened up suddenly and looked at

Lilly's father at the mention of her own name. She looked as dazed as Lilly felt, as if she herself couldn't believe what was transpiring.

"Daniel, I think maybe we should find out what the children think."

But no, he was in the front row. Not looking back, no doubt on purpose. He didn't want to let Lilly's mother know that he even acknowledged the fact that she was in the same room. It was all so pathetic. Her parents had turned into high schoolers, playing stupid mind games. Lilly sighed, a little too loudly. Aaron and his parents all turned around to look in the direction of the sigh. She froze, her eyes widening in fear. Aaron caught her eye and raised his hand in what appeared to be a wave. Almost without knowing what she was doing she raised her own hand in recognition. He smiled and her heart jumped into her throat. She raised her lips in what she hoped was a smile back. He turned around and she was finally able to breathe again. Stupid Lilly, stupid.

Noah was sniffing next to her. Was he crying again? She wouldn't have been surprised. Ever since her parents had dropped the bomb on them about this divorce Noah had been a wreck. She couldn't remember the last time she had heard him speak more than two full sentences. He was going to get eaten alive in high school she decided. He was far too sensitive for his own good. It was a shame really; there was a true lack of sensitive men left in the world. But she supposed that's how it was, bad things happening to good people and what not. Look at her parents.

Were they though? Lilly thought back to the last few Thanksgivings and other such "family" holidays in her household. Hadn't her father always seemed just a little too tense, mother a little too perky? She hadn't noticed at the time. She hadn't wanted to.

Scott Neuman was gazing at his bride, love practically sparkling in his eyes. Lilly felt sick. This was all a lie. How sad, only seventeen years old and already cynical about love.

Lilly's father turned his gaze towards Noah.

"Noah, how are you? Do you have anything to say?" Noah's hazel eyes were watery now. He merely shook his head. Unable to speak, or maybe just unwilling to. Lilly's father turned towards Jacob. Of course Jacob would speak. Jacob, the favorite son, the prodigal son.

"I just don't understand. Why?" Jacob looked at his parents, pleadingly. The tension in the room seemed to increase. Lilly couldn't stand it. The question was out there. Why? Why did it come to this?

Jacob was nudging her. Lilly had spaced out and the ceremony

was over. She stood up and smoothed down her dress, which had bunched up during the ceremony. She tried to walk with as much confidence as she could possibly muster out into the lobby. The rest of the guests were mingling there, waiting for the reception to begin. Lilly gravitated towards her mother who was standing with a woman whom Lilly only knew as Betty. A dangerous choice on her mother's part, Betty was notorious for having the biggest mouth in the county.

"How's your husband?" said Betty, smiling and revealing a large lipstick stain on her front tooth.

"Well, honey it isn't just one thing that started this." Lilly's mother tried to sound comforting but failed miserably due to the slight catch in her voice. "Your father and I were having difficulties for a while now."

"Actually, we're in the middle of a divorce." The prying smile dropped off Betty's face so fast Lilly was afraid she'd pulled a facial muscle.

"We're just both very unhappy." At this, Lilly's father stirred from his side of the couch.

"Now, that's not really fair, Leah." He looked at Lilly's mother for the first time that night. His eyes were blazing.

"Oh my dear, I'm so sorry to hear this. If there's anything you need, anything at all..." Her voice trailed off as the doors opened up. The reception was beginning. Lilly found the card, which read Lilly Rosen, Table 9.

Oh no. He was there. Aaron was sitting at table 9 already, self-consciously tearing a napkin into tiny pieces. When Lilly approached he looked up and she could have sworn there was something that flickered in his eyes. What was it? Recognition most likely; kids their age tended to form strong bonds with others of the same age in these types of situations.

"Lilly." He said her name as if he meant to say something else afterwards. But he just swallowed nervously. "There's a seat next to me that's open. You can sit there if you want."

"Oh, yeah okay." Lilly sat down next to him. She hoped he didn't notice how clammy her hands had gotten. Her mouth felt like cotton and she tried to swallow the feeling away.

Jacob and Noah were already seated at the same table and both smirked at her. Jacob leaned forward and opened his mouth, ready to make fun of her for being "in love" with a boy but Lilly silenced him with a look. He leaned back grumpily and looked around, most likely for their father.

"Dad's at table 6." Noah could also tell that's what Jacob

was doing.

“Which table is Mom at?” Jacob asked.

“Table 6.” Noah said. The three siblings looked at each other and both were thinking the same thing. This had disaster written all over it. Lilly couldn’t believe she had to worry about this. Here she was, seated next to the guy of her dreams. She had dreamed about this moment for so long, knew exactly what she was going to say, and how she would act. But then it happened. The divorce. Now she had nothing but divorce on her mind. True love was a sham. She remembered when she was seven and had seen Snow White with her mother. She remembers asking her mother if she would one day find a prince and her mother had smiled and told her of course, of course she would find a prince of her own one day. What a lie.

The band had been playing music now for quite some time. Lilly was unaware of how much time had passed. She only knew that, much to her utter amazement, she had managed to talk with Aaron this entire time. Even more amazing, he had continued to talk to her. She hadn’t said anything stupid, hadn’t spilled anything on herself and, she hoped, had nothing in her teeth.

The band began to play a song Lilly faintly recognized. Suddenly she knew where it was from. Her parents had loved this song. She had caught them dancing to it, both silently holding each other in the darkened living room after the kids were supposed to be in bed. The looks on both of their faces were so serene. So at peace that no words needed to be spoken.

Lilly glanced over at her parents who were both trying so hard not to look at each other she’s surprised their necks didn’t snap. Aaron cleared his throat next to her and she turned her attention back to him.

“Would you like to dance?” What was this? Was Aaron Gold nervous? He was certainly looking the part and Lilly felt herself gaining hope. No, no, watch it Lilly. Don’t look too deeply into it. She could only nod, afraid if she opened her mouth that nothing would even come out. They stood up and Lilly couldn’t help but notice that he was so much taller than her.

“What is that supposed to mean Daniel?” Lilly’s mother looked straight back at him, her eyes blazing as well.

“You know damn well what that means. Some of us were actually willing to work at this marriage. Don’t try and make yourself look better in front of the kids. They’re smarter than that.”

Lilly squeezed her eyes shut so tightly she felt that they would pop out of her face.

“That’s ridiculous, Daniel. You’re behaving like a child. Grow up.” Lilly’s mother snapped. Daniel’s head snapped back as if he had been slapped. He slowly turned and looked at his three children.

“You want to know the real reason your mother and I are getting a divorce? Go ahead, ask her.”

Lilly felt Aaron’s hands circling around her waist, snapping her back to reality. She could hardly breathe. She had been dreaming of such a moment for as long as she could remember. Her mind flashed back to the moment she saw her parents dancing. She could imagine the feeling of peace that they must have been feeling at the time.

The three children looked to their mother. Noah, with pleading in his eyes, Jacob, with hate in his, and Lilly, with a vacant stare. At that point she had felt as if she had floated out of her body and was watching from above. This couldn’t be happening. Lilly’s mother cleared her throat.

“All right, you children are old enough to know.” Lilly’s mother looked as if she would rather the ground had swallowed her up at the moment. “I was unfaithful.” She turned her eyes towards her husband. “There, Daniel, are you happy now?”

No, this wasn’t happening. Unfaithful. The very word itself was horrible.

“You look beautiful.”

Lilly blinked suddenly. Did she hear right? She looked up at Aaron and saw he was looking straight at her. She wasn’t sure if she had actually heard him speak, or was just recalling something her father had said long ago.

Out of the corner of her eye she could see both of her parents watching her. But they weren’t really watching her. They were staring at each other in a way she had never seen before. It was hate. They hated each other. All of a sudden the tears couldn’t be held back anymore. One slid out of her right eye and down her face.

“Lilly, are you all right? Was it something I said?” Aaron looked panicked. Lilly realized suddenly how crazy she must look to him. She tried to speak but was too afraid she would begin to sob right there on the dance floor.

“I’ll take you outside Lilly. Come on, let’s go.” She followed him off the dance floor. He led her to a door located on the outskirts of the room. Soon she found herself shivering in the brisk air that smelled of

winter. She was sorry she hadn't brought a shawl. She sat down on the curb and put her head in her hands. Aaron sat down next to her, unsure of what to do. He finally settled on placing a hand on her shoulder, as if to let her know that someone was there.

"I'm so sorry, Aaron. I'm so sorry. It's my parents --"

"I know." She looked at him. He knew? But, how? He noticed her confusion.

"My mother is friends with your mother. She told us everything. I'm so sorry, Lilly." She was? Since when? Was this more of her mother's secret life? Lilly realized she really didn't know the woman she had lived with for 17 years.

"It's my friend Ryan. You know Ryan, don't you?" Lilly's mother looked at her children. Of course they knew Ryan. Lilly was aware of him hanging around the house occasionally but had never thought anything of it. Her head was spinning. She couldn't comprehend what her mother was saying. This was wrong. This was all wrong.

"NO!"

Lilly's entire family looked at Lilly, as if seeing her for the first time. She had a wild look in her eyes.

"No! How could you? How could you?" Lilly was hysterical. But for some reason, she wasn't crying. The tears just wouldn't come. She was shaking and she had to get out of there. Had to get out of that room.

Aaron sat with her while she continued to cry. She had ruined any chance she could ever have with Aaron but what did it matter? It would all end eventually, hadn't she been proven right with her parents? She thought they loved each other, truly loved each other. After a while her tears began to slow. She took a deep breath.

"You probably think I'm crazy." She wiped her face with the back of her hand. She must have looked like such a mess.

"Lilly, I don't think you're crazy. You're--" He trailed off here. She was suddenly aware of how close they were sitting to each other and how silent it was outside. She felt as if they were the only two people in the world.

"Yes?" Lilly asked. He didn't say anything, just continued to look at her. He leaned closer to her. He kissed her and she felt as if her heart might explode.

Lilly lay facedown on her bed. She could hear her mother come into her room and stand behind her. Lilly could hear her mother clearing her throat.

“I don’t want to talk.” Lilly’s voice was muffled due to the pillow over her face.

“Lilly, please.” Lilly looked up at that moment. Her mother had never talked to her in this way. So fragile, so vulnerable.

“Lilly, what I did was wrong. I’m not going to deny that. But your father --” She stopped and cleared her throat. She was unsure of whether she should tell her daughter the next thing, Lilly could tell. She looked at Lilly and straightened her shoulders.

“Your father wasn’t loving me the way I needed to be loved,” she finally said simply. Lilly scoffed at this.

“Love? Love doesn’t exist, mom.” Lilly spit out the last word like it was poison. “If true love really existed, you and dad would still be together.”

Lilly’s mother smiled sadly. She reached out and stroked her daughter’s hair.

“Oh Lilly, of course true love exists. Never ever doubt that.”

“We should go back inside,” Lilly said softly. She had no idea how long they had been out there and she wouldn’t have minded if she never left this place, this time, this moment. But she knew that eventually their parents would wonder where they were.

“You’re right.” Aaron stood up. “Maybe you and I can go see a movie or something this weekend. You know, if you want.” He smiled at her nervously.

“I’d love to.” Lilly smiled back at him.

Back in the reception hall, Lilly’s mother was staring at the dance floor, watching the newly married couple waltz. Her eyes were barely focused on them; perhaps focused on another time, another place. Lilly saw her father glance over at his wife. Ex-wife, his ex-wife. The words still felt new and strange to Lilly, but no longer harsh or unnerving.

It was odd to see them. The couple who had fallen out of love. It was as if the young couple was waltzing next to the past. Or perhaps, the future. Lilly no longer knew.

“Lilly? What’s wrong?” Lilly had failed to notice her mother standing beside her. Lilly had never noticed how tired she looked. She wanted to tell her mother about what had happened outside, but all that could wait until tomorrow.

“Nothing. Let’s just go home.”

venom

by Kristin Lo

sharp nails scratch your
acidic voice into my head
where you hiss
poisonous words into my mind
all the time those sounds
burn into my skin like venom
spreading through my system until
even my tears burn permanent trails
down my cheek

Cheap thrills

by Elizabeth Plotkin

I borrowed my friend's shirt the other night.
It was black and long and sheer and tight
And my friends said I looked sexy.
I had on eye makeup and skinny jeans
You might have seen me that night.
I wear a pink plastic barrette in my hair
to parties, when I'm in the
mood for dancing or being silly.
Sometimes I wear my mom's old jazzercise turquoise spandex
but I'm pretty sure you haven't seen those.
Those only make an appearance when we play records in our room
and dance to the Archies.
I'll wear my hair in two braids
like at camp and color wars and lip syncs and bonfires.
Or up on my head like we did in sixth grade.

Sometimes I think about wearing nothing
All day
Just naked
Buck-naked
Goose bumps
hairs on end
every little curve, scar, mole, birthmark visible

It'd be cold, but liberating.

And only if we were all in on the plan.

LHSP is pleased to announce the winners of the first annual Caldwell Poetry Awards. Established in 2006 through a gift of Jeanne and Will M. Caldwell to the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, this prize is awarded to first- and second-year students of the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program. This year, the prize was divided into the following categories: Recitation, for the best oral presentations of both original and interpretive work; and Written, for the most outstanding poems.

We had nearly 80 poetry submissions; from that group, seven students received Caldwell Poetry Awards, with another six receiving Honorable Mentions. All of the winners (as well as many of the non-winners) are included in the journal.

LHSP would like to thank Jeanne and Will Caldwell for their generosity in bringing poetry to LS&A, and to our program. The Caldwells have a particular interest in public speaking and the oral interpretation of poetry, which inspired us to include the recognition of students who excel in performing their work, demonstrating the transformative power of the spoken word. Along with these awards, LHSP sponsored a number of poetry readings, workshops, and activities this year, culminating in our student poetry reading at the end of the year.

We would also like to thank our poetry judges: Dargie Anderson, Katie Hartsock, Lizzie Hutton, Matt Kelley, Megan Levad, Carrie Luke, Karyna McGlynn, Alex Ralph, and Veronica Vergoth.

A special thanks to Megan Levad, whose ideas about poetry have been a welcome addition to LHSP this year.

Carol Tell
Faculty Director

Learning Grandma at 64

by Langston Kerman

Lesson 1:

My grandmother
never learned
to drive
Figured
if she cusses

Uncle Mike
enough
he'll take her
wherever
she needs to go

Every ride is the same
He passes out
bad lectures
like assistant
coach

Tells her
how grateful
she should be
while over
charging

for gas
She reminds him
He ain't shit
Sometimes
he believes her

Lesson 2:

Grandma's baseball bat fountains semi-husband's head
like half twisted sprinkler, for coming home liquor-logged,
Mom says the "tramp" earned it: layed down with crazy

Lesson 3:

Uncle Mike

taught Andrew
how to owe
money

He borrows

two stacks
from Grandma
then dodges phone
calls like operator
on bathroom

break

No one
mentions
last person

that didn't pay

got beaten empty
bar stool

sober

Bloodied

like sponge bath
with scissors

Grandma starts

leaving threats

Unanswered
phone calls

We all get

nervous

Send warnings
Don't want things

to get

too crazy

Final Lesson:

I drive 5 hours
from Detroit
Grandma passenger side

Cranks up Tupac
Talking my ear crooked In-between stories
about rolling blunts Shots of “vokka”
& a dude named Bigfoot
who wants to stomp treasure
out my cousin’s chest She tells me
she loves me

I turn, smile, & realize
I’ve never believed
anyone more

Their Story

by Tahkyra Terrell

“Your eyes are so beautiful!”
I politely smile and shyly say: Thanks.
I really say ‘If you only knew the
stipulation behind the beauty.’
See sapphire retinas
blaze and incinerate
the stigmas and
attempts to constitute my
identity,
integrity,
what I should say,
do, think,
comprise and compromise
in my life!
Indigo corneas
have seen the
effects of the
rattle and clanks
of the chains on the
ankles of generations past
and the last of trees that
bore Billie Holiday’s Fruit.

Have dilated and weakened
at the presence of light
and its attempt
to annihilate
self-degradation,
dehumanization,
passed down from their
to our generation.

Mahogany catalysts
that crystallize viruses
impedin'
communities and the ongoing
inhumanity committed
against one another.
Spreadin' like wildfire.
Replicatin' in the
cells of lives that once
had childlike
tendencies,
gestures, and innocence.

Pearl pupils that
were once a pupil in the
beatin' of drums by
tribes of Diaspora's,
the ancestors that whispered
through hurricanes,
typhoons,
tornadoes,
and twisters so that
their pain would
never again be twisted.

.....

And these incandescent stars
witness the loss
of connection
and intimacy,
and the illegitimacy
of technology's
replacement
for a hug,
kiss,
Of voices that caress
the spirit when the flesh
is wounded
or a simple touch.
And much of it is
lost in translation
and caught up
in manipulations
from the mass media
presentations of life.

Yes, these eyes may be beautiful.
Do you hear the story they tell?

polaroid

by Christina Hamati

somebody took this snapshot of us,
sitting on the steps outside
you're laughing at me because i'm wearing my sunhat
and reading my book
and with my elbow i spilled the lemonade
but it looks alright
a reminder of what we had was sweet
next to the world that we had yet to meet
and written beneath:
"what do we mean with these words that we say
laced with sarcasm and love and radio songs?"
sometimes i slept alone with the sheets
that kept your scent captive,
holding it hostage from the night before
i used to turn on my side to see the moon on the lake
i used to let down the curtains but i don't anymore
i play the piano sometimes since you're gone
making up melodies and singing along
picking up chords and dropping them down
arranging them for you in bouquets of song
i call you sometimes when i know you're not there
just to hear the recording on the end of the line
i go to bed at midnight but i'm still up at four
so i creep to the window and open it wide
i breathe in the scent of the inky black air,
leaning out over the patio to see if you're there
i whisper to you, the words float on the wind
do they go some place you are?
or some place you've been?

Hospital Bed

by Kristine Barnes

She relishes their last moment,
a teenage girl with her grandma,
squished between a cold metal bar
and a heat register in the wall,
grasping a frail hand with French tips that
barely

squeezes

back.

A hospital bed is obtrusive.

An old man getting older appears in the doorway
the cement of his face begins to run, making
the wrinkles around his pale eyes
more chiseled, more defined,
but compassion is there
underneath the agony.

His head nears his wife's;
their faces form a heart.
The girl is pushed aside,
out of the way,
but not disregarded,
so the moment can have space to expand,
fill the room like a gas.

A hospital bed is obtrusive.

The man concentrates on his wife's
fragile, fading figure
as though she will disappear
if he doesn't look hard enough.

I love you, Jimmy! his wife says fiercely
I love you too, he answers.
I said I love you, Jimmy!
Don't you forget!
She's hollering.
She's in hysterics.
He would never forget.



Jordan Klein
[untitled painting]
painting



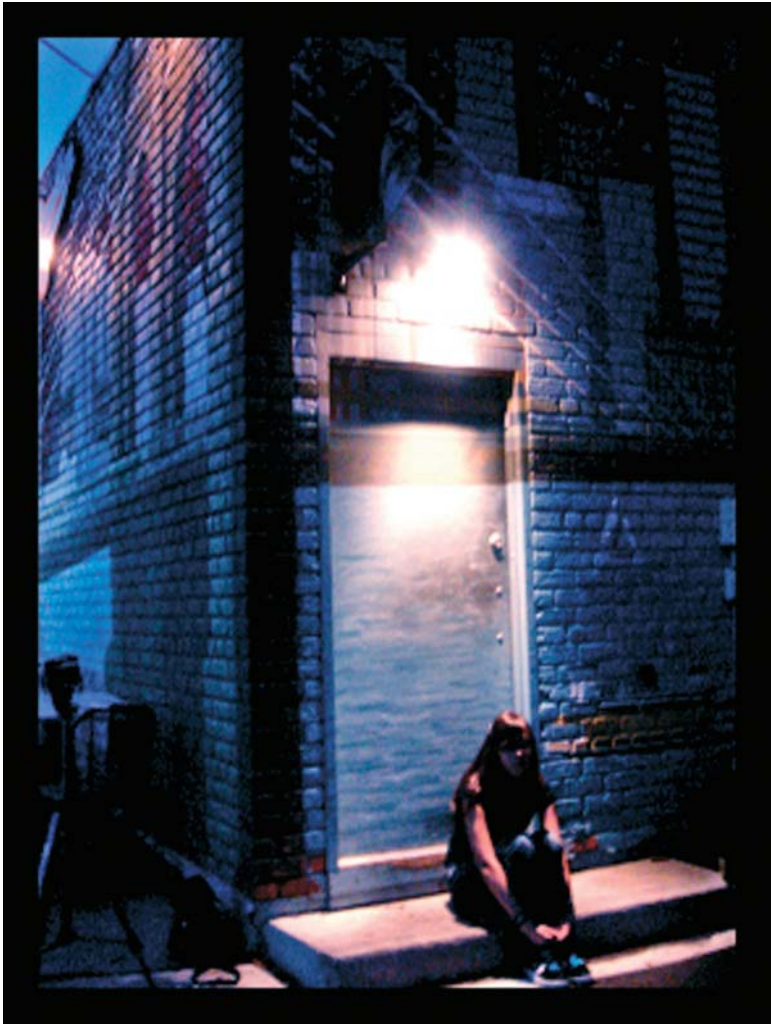
Langston Kerman
[untitled painting]
painting



Ellen Wu
[Prisms 1]
photograph



Ellen Wu
[Prisms 2]
photograph



Ellen Wu
[Prisms 3]
photograph



Ellen Wu
[Prisms 6]
photograph



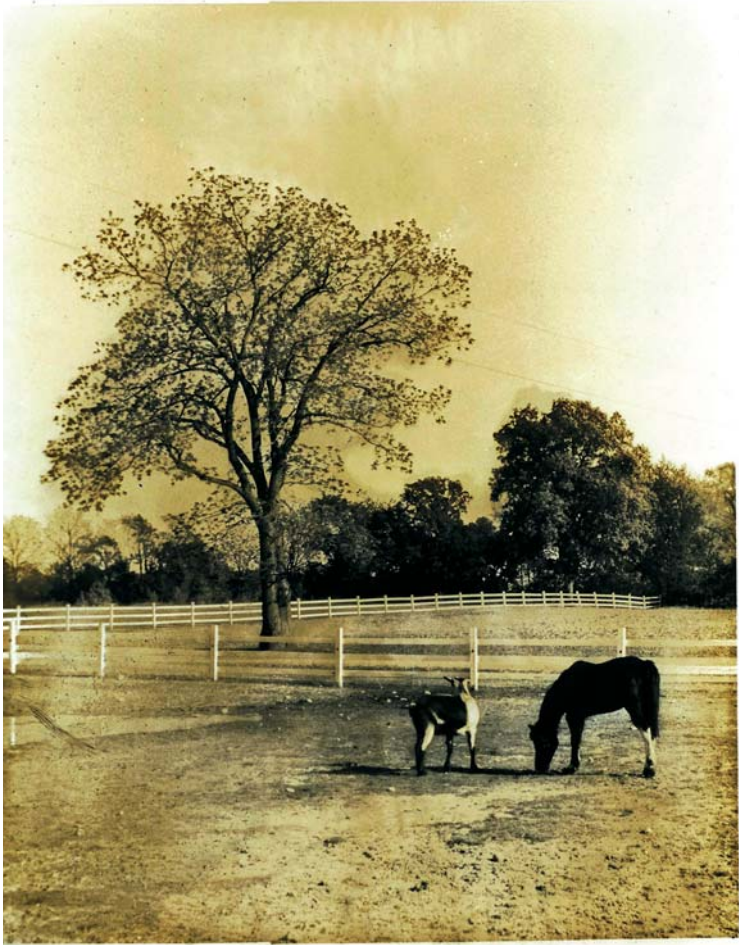
Carl Jones-Schropshire
[untitled painting]
painting



Jaclyn Tate
[untitled drawing]
drawing



Jae Jun Hong
[Night of the Museum]
photograph



Rob Migrin
[Horses]
photograph



Maria Svidler
[untitled painting]
painting



Jaclyn Tate
[untitled drawing]
drawing



Tani Shtull-Leber
[untitled collage]
collage



Felix Chan
[Contrast]
photograph



Jordan Klein
[untitled drawing]
drawing



Felix Chan
[Through Windows]
photograph



Walter Lin
[Section 26]
photograph



Felix Chan
[Child]
photograph

























Dream Plane 3: Endless Fall

by Alex Erikson

I awake to a dream plane
In a city I do not recognize
Falling from an unfamiliar
Building of brick and steel

I fall and do not know why
For seemingly endless time
I watch windows fly by
And suddenly become aware of the ground

At first I am not scared
As cushy pillows of clouds
Softly caress my back
And whisper to me sweetly

But when the clouds suddenly stop
And the ground more quickly ensues
I realize my dreamy impending fate
I see the ground rushing but cannot and
do not stop

Then I hit and awake
To a more worldly plane
Heart racing and body intact
I wonder if I have died

But alas I am whole
And in a plane somewhere
Between sleep and wakedness
Twitching uncontrollably

Butter

by Jenna Sakwa

The cold yellow cubes are neatly stacked, resembling
a solid brick wall
capable of completely blocking the blood from flowing
through my body.
Whipped
the yellow substance effortlessly spreads upon charred toast
coating my arteries with a thick layer of cholesterol.
Processed into sticks,
precisely measured into a half cup for culinary purposes
lined with wax paper
Stamped into four petal flowers,
neatly arranged on a glass dish
ruining my appetite
I reach for the knife.

Thunderstruck

by Alex Marston

You turn it up. "I'm on a highway to hell," scream the speakers. She's looking out the window, turned away. You think she's tracing the raindrops down the glass, but she could be watching the schoolchildren run home under their umbrellas; either way, she's not speaking.

You wave to the crossing guard, like every other day. It's okay.

It's not okay. You ignore the parking lot on the left as you drive past the school, your foot slamming down against the pedal as if it were a bug on the sidewalk.

You're four years old again. "Can I touch it, Mommy?" "Sure." SPLAT!
The bug is dead.

You're surrounded by pavement, three hundred and sixty degrees around. You remember dreaming when you were little, before you could drive, of getting behind the wheel. This is how it felt; you have no control because you were never taught what to do.

The road you drive down everyday becomes a stranger, it twists where it was always straight, it falls where there was a hill, the yellow line is fuzzy and indistinct.

The rain is coming down like never before but if you drive faster you might reach the eye of the hurricane: serenity, but you're not there yet so you race and you race and you can't see where you're going because the rain is coming down like never before.

She's still looking out the window. Without turning she asks if she can open the sunroof.

"It's raining," you hear yourself say.

"I thought you liked the rain?"

"My leather seats don't."

Suddenly your seatbelt disappears and she stands up and you're ten feet away. Her face is framed perfectly by the crystals.

Winter?

She is pale and cold and her lips quiver. She has never looked more beautiful. It hurts to watch; it stings your face like a thousand needles. They're pricking everywhere--in your eyes, on your lips, through your shoes and onto your toes, wedging between the nails and the skin, the skin that has never been exposed, not since you were a fetus, not since you were an egg, not since you were a sperm, the nail, nail, nail--and you have to look away. You have to look away.

You see your car behind you, falling away, and you don't know where it will land.

You're four years old again. You spit off the bridge down into the rushing rapids and you follow the saliva forever as it falls and falls and gravity should have taken it by now but it's still in the air frozen in time but you blink and your saliva gets lost in the white foam and you can only assume that it has been washed downstream.

You are frozen in time, in the air, as you remember sitting in the closet of your hotel room at the beach, eating pasta out of a plastic bowl. You remember flipping through the dictionary, randomly finding the word "libidinous" and writing down the definition (adj. lustful, lascivious) because you have never heard the word before.

Use it in a sentence.

Libidinous, she.

A full sentence.

She is.

She is no longer turned away. She is looking right into your eyes, but you cannot return the favor. She frowns as she falls.

Winter.

You realize you cannot be frozen in time forever. Your first instinct is to use your hands to break your fall, but you realize that, at this speed, they won't do a thing. Instead, you use them to cover your mouth. They'll need your dental records to identify you.

“She was a fast machine.”

It's okay. You're moving so fast you won't feel a thing.

Ice Cream

by Brittany Turner

“How many bags are left?” my dad asked no one in particular.

“Five I think?” Brett shouted.

“Alright, get out the bungee cords, those are going on the roof.”

“At least our bags are already in the car,” Brooke whispers in my ear. “I think it is going to start snowing soon.”

As Mom, Dad, and Brett (the only boy in the family) pack the car up, I start picking out movies to watch on the way up north to our second home in Gaylord, Michigan. Cliffhanger is always a family favorite; Brenna (the youngest) picks out 101 Dalmatians—typical. Breanne (the fourth youngest) and Brooke (the oldest) start making seven turkey, lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise sandwiches that will be eaten as soon as we hit the expressway—even though it’s only ten minutes after we leave the house.

I sit in the back as usual, the duffel bag taking up all my leg space, which is fine because my legs aren’t that long anyway. I love being stuffed in the car with all the pillows, blankets, and bags surrounding me. Our Dalmatian, Pepper, finds a nook in the corner and lays her head on my shoulder. My dad finally starts the car and we pull out of our driveway only four and half hours after our goal of 10:00 A.M. I think it’s a family record considering we usually end up leaving the day after we had originally planned.

As my dad turns on his Abbot and Costello tape, I get comfortable with my feet up on the seat in front of me and lay my head against the window. Brooke starts complaining that my feet smell and Dad yells at me take my feet down. He starts picking up speed and settles into a nice cruise as the excitement of the week ahead begins to set in. Brett boasts that he’s going to snowboard instead of ski—he thinks he’s so cool—and Brooke asks dad if she can drive the snowmobile by herself for the first time. I close my eyes and listen to the familiar sounds of their voices and begin to taste the fried chicken dinner that’s waiting for us.

We pull into Frankenmuth and let Pepper out of the car to stretch her legs. Brett and I are engrossed in a game of “got you last” as Mom goes in and gets a table. We all order the same thing: fried chicken breast with mashed potatoes—except for Dad who makes it difficult and orders the legs—well done—because he loves dark meat. We finish up with the homemade, old-fashioned vanilla ice cream and then pile back into the

van. Breanne and Brenna start fighting about who is sitting where and Brooke claims she called shotgun before Brett. I'm still in the back. Finally on the road again, Dad begins a good old game of geography starting with "Alabama," followed by Brooke's familiar reply, "Arizona." I try to keep up with them but soon I run out of "y" responses—I really only know Yugoslavia and Ypsilanti—and drift off to sleep.

My eyes open slightly and I can barely make out the familiar sign of our neighborhood, Michewaye. We drag ourselves inside the cottage after five long hours cramped up in the car. I go upstairs to the room I share with Brooke and climb into bed without unpacking a thing. Sleep comes easily and I'm glad—that means tomorrow will come that much sooner.

I wake up to find Mom cooking eggs and Brett already dressed in his snowsuit. We spend the next five days skiing and snowboarding and playing in the snow; snowball fights are customary along with snow forts and snowmen being created, destroyed, and recreated everyday. Pepper runs around and sometimes blends in with the pure white snow. We go to our favorite tiny diner at least twice during the week, which always takes a while because they never have a table that seats seven. Dad teaches me how to drive the snowmobile and we all go sledding every night. The week begins to come to an end; the snow gets thicker and prettier and we spend the holiday break together, as a family. Us kids always put on a play at the end of the week for Mom and Dad, recreating the crazy ski wipeout and funny events of the week followed by snuggling up on the big red couch to watch a movie together before bed; and then, somehow the week is over.

As we drive home, everyone drifts to sleep and it's just me in the front seat with Dad. I stay awake so that he doesn't get bored and we talk about everything. I tell him how I want to be just like him and he tells me that that's fine but he's not perfect. I tell him I know—but deep down I know that he really is, flawless. I look behind me and see the content, sleeping faces of my big family; nothing has ever been so ideal.

We haven't been up north as a whole family since that last time, six years ago. When they got divorced, the annual road trips came to an end. Brooke went off to college, soon followed by Brett. Things changed and I was left to be the oldest for a while.

Last year, I went back—to the cottage—with Dad for a few days. Breanne and Brenna came along too. We went skiing and snowmobiling, and went to our favorite diner, Diana's. It was odd though; we didn't have to wait for a table to be made up for us. The skiing seemed a lot easier than I had remembered and the snowmobiling was a bit boring. I spent the

week in a room by myself. We put Pepper to sleep about three years ago so there wasn't the usual barking when we came back to the cottage after a long day of skiing. Nothing looked different, but everything had definitely changed.

As we drove the five hours home we stopped at Frankenmuth for dinner, just like we used to. Breanne ordered a salad because she didn't want to eat fatty, fried food and Brenna decided on chicken fingers. After dinner we slipped back into the car. Twenty minutes later Breanne and Brenna fell asleep with their full tummies; it was just my dad and I again, driving through the dark, still night.

"That was different," I finally broke the silence.

"What do you mean?" he asked me.

"We didn't get any ice cream."

Upon waking
by Natalie Shields

Smoky-lime daylight
stabs through the window:
a forcible entry.

Euphoric and numb,
I let the patterned harshness
of scoffing sun
overtake,
have its way,
like some cruel,
smiling clown that crashes
children's parties.

Float, tread,
keep your head
above goodnight,
while such wicked
and whimsical nightmares
drown below.

Best stick with reality.
The ground never fails
to catch a fall.

With mom, age 35, sitting at the kitchen table

by Lindsay Canvasser

Stop fucking looking at me like that.
She stared at me with cold eyes,
dark as my chipped finger nail polish.

I knew she wanted to cry.
I knew she wanted to pray.
I knew she was mad I made the exact same mistake,
sixteen years old.

I didn't care.
It was my choice to have sex. I wanted to.
I didn't want to use a condom.

Why does she care.

She didn't care when I took off for a week and went to visit my
boyfriend at college.
She didn't care that I cut class.
She didn't care that I lived my life however I liked.

This was our first conversation in months.
Not that we talked or anything.

I had just come home from high school
and found my mother sitting at the kitchen table
glaring at the yellow cardboard box:
E-P-T obnoxiously large, bright, red.

So now she wanted to suddenly hold me close
and cradle me in her arms as if I were still her baby.
I wasn't.

I was the one who would soon cradle that small baby.
I was the one who had made the mistakes.
I was the one who now had to live with it.

I won't be the mother she is,
so drunk in the early hours of the morning
that she cannot take me to school.

Spending her \$7.40 she made an hour
on presents for her many boyfriends
instead of birthday presents.

I will finally find my salvation.
I will be the mother I never had,

at age sixteen.

Tracks (Conversations with My Mother After You Left)

by Langston Kerman

1.

My mother tells me

I was born

with a big ass blue

birth mark

on my left

butt cheek

Pale navy stain

Marking my skin

busted pen cap

She swears

plenty of babies have them

Perfectly normal

She says

It faded a couple

months later

Disappeared

like playground legends

skinned knees

under band-aids

and alcohol

I never believe her

Laugh embarrassed

every time

she tells

my night sky

secret

Ashamed of marks

I can't see

2.

I could never put
into words
how much I miss
your father

Man I never met
OD'd in L car
before your love was more
than loose teeth and apple sauce

Lapped city twice
without anyone
noticing one less
heart-beat

under railway screeches
You chuckle awkward
when you tell half
his story

Rub your face
searching
for wounds
that were never open

Swear if he were here
he'd swell my lips
like menstrual
makeup

& I wonder
If that's all it would take
for you to see
through bruises

Back 2 1.
Some people
are born
black and blue
Mom explains

Dark scars
don't only
come from closed
fists & heavy palms

We're all born
with tracks
in our skin
Swollen and tender

like bloody lips
& forgotten bodies
World spinning
blind circles

like limp limbs
flailing heavy
against seat back
Skin smeared plastic
in windowsill
Lifeless weight shifting
Missing heart beats

Faded wounds
Permanent like goodbye-
kisses or empty bottles
on a subway car

window shopping

by Christina Hamati

he works at a marina in the summer
 I used to watch him sometimes,
 taut brown limbs picking up things
 and tying up boats

I'd tiptoe down spiderwebbed stairs
 I'd seat myself down at the edge of an empty boat dock
 I'd dangle my legs and draw
 pictures in the water with my toes.
 I imitate the image of the sun
 sinking in the west,
 my imagination plays little tricks on me
 the world swirls in neon colors,
 pinks, oranges, and more subtle violets
 I pick drying flower in purple hues
 they tell me that the fall is going to
 fall on me soon

I watch the boardwalk empty at
 the end of August, the dockhands
 help to pour the tourists into giant ferries
 that will take them back across the lake
 to bigger airports, so they can fly away

and one would think that the sepia toned trees
 in mid-September would wither and curl,
 at the slightest touch of cold,
 but no, they illuminate the street,
 and he sees me finally
 gives me something like a ring
 that fits like Christmas lights twirled on the fingertips
 of branches, just like little-girl curls

I'm always a little girl in the winter time
he holds my hand and we go window shopping
rabbit fur scarves softer than anything
slender suede boots that go up to my knees
my impractical pea coat makes for shivering
and he offers me his coat and I shake my head no,
but we go down to the pier anyway.

it is colder there and we freeze dry ourselves
to green painted iron benches
gold-plated with the names of those who die here every year
he smiles at the snowflakes
that settle between my eyelashes
he assumes that I'm hard to impress.
opens up the passenger door of his rusty red truck
letting me in I pull the window crank
and we drive with windows down,
our voices lift above the chilling air
in warm white puffs of breath
to wrap the night up like a gift,
in ribbons of christmas carol melodies

he's so simple in a faded football shirt
and a light blue corduroy jacket
that his father let him have.
I look at him sideways
we are halted at a stoplight in the face of the red
I beg him please to let me drive
and he resists me as coldly as a snowdrift on the sidewalk
while I pout and he melts a little bit
and then we switch
I laugh inside my head at his white jointed knuckles
that cling to the door handle as if he might jump out.

my big, brick house stands a constant in the snow
inside, I stir a pot of milk over the stove
he pours in too much chocolate and wrings his hands and waits
while I sip it less than slowly.

I smile and he relaxes, drinks his whole mug in a minute
 I watch the world outside the window silently
 I hope the flurry turns into
 a blizzard so he'll have to stay the night

he wanders into the garage,
 retrieves a pink plastic sled
 pulls me by the wrist out the back door and we sail
 down the hill
 at the bottom I just lay there
 on my back in the twinkling blue snow

my eyes are closed
 but I feel his face above me
 I watch the round of my belly rise and fall
 like the waves beneath the ice
 a gust of wind escapes his lips
 as he draws his fingertips along my little girl curls:
 "if I could, I'd buy you the world."
 my eyes smart when they open he doesn't understand
 I'm window shopping girl and I'd rather have his hand.

Insomnia

by Danielle Smit

I

A murderous beast inside myself
Chewing, chewing at my mind.
Venom seeps out and collects there.
 Why did I?
 What did they think?
 It doth murder sleep
Murder, Murder, Most Foul indeed.
 Loneliness in the night
The beating of the clock and fright.
 Fright that clears the mind
And continues its expansion of time
 Gnaw.
 A restless turn,
 A hearty burn
 In the chest.
Tonight there will be no rest.

II

A blue pill: a small dose of relief.
The anchoring of the mind against
The headboard, dozing, dizzy, disturbed, destructive
 Tonight I rest
 As does my body
Unresolved, unclenching, undisturbed

III

A blue worthless pill
Across my counter does spill.
Three nights since, I have not found
Room for me on the celestial ground.
Wretched, wrecked, wronged ashore,
My mind the time has tore.
Nothing more to do or say,
Just await the oncoming day.
helpless.

Expectations

by Erica Zviklin

Two fingers on the steering wheel
my knee crunched close to the dashboard
fingers stuck comfortably in tangled hair
spitting out incoherent, fragmented
half thoughts, hardly sentences
I have no idea where I am or
how I got here I'm just
wasting my time
with superfluous,
convoluted, extravagantly
unnecessary syllables, too busy
making mountains out of molehills
counting my chickens before they hatch
searching for needles in haystacks.
we all just want to impress, to express
the same old things
in new and wonderful ways.

Someone once said that love
is not romance, but fear of loss,
fear of abandonment.
Then what are we doing?

My expectations are high
simple words speak volumes
I don't need similes or metaphors
to make you understand
I prefer the minimalist approach
simple, effortless, unembellished
just say it, say that you love me
or that you don't
or that you don't know anything
don't say I changed your life
or worse, ask me how I feel
I don't want that bullshit

What if what we don't like about others
is really what we don't like about ourselves, and
what if truth is just what is not false, and
what if love is just a fabrication?

Maybe we are all looking into the
rear view mirror, where objects
are closer than they appear, believing
a past that never seems to be remembered
correctly, and as much as we attempt to fit
our sharp-edged puzzle pieces
together, some things just don't work.
But you don't force it, you accept it
and you don't ruminate too much
about the happily-ever-after
ending.

Goodbye, Goodnight

by Ellen Wu

The night had settled in and brought with it a heavy rain and thick, white fog that destroyed any notion of fog coming in on “little cat feet.” Driving through such an impetuous storm would have intimidated even the stoutest of heart, and in fact, the big, burly, brick wall of a man behind the wheel was trying to hide his nervousness behind a façade of useless grumbling and swearing at the damn weather. This was a tactic he had perfected over the years. His wife, sitting beside him, clenched the armrest as if she were hanging on for dear life. Tears welled up in her eyes as she cast a worried glance at her young daughter in the backseat. She often cried at times like this, when things didn’t go the way they were supposed to. Her favorite things to cry about were things she had no control over. That dangerous, rainy night was a prime candidate. Her daughter, however, provided a stark contrast to her maudlin mother.

She was in a deep slumber; her delicate head rested against the door handle because she wasn’t yet tall enough to rest it on the window pane. Her small hand was curled in a loose fist around her seatbelt, which was pulled on tightly by her overprotective mother. The pattern of her pink plaid dress rose and fell with each deep breath she took, as if her sleep was in sync with the pit-pat of the rain and the rhythm of the windshield wipers. The ends of her lips curled slightly upwards; it seemed as if whatever occupied her dreams was something familiar and friendly. Amid the sounds of the car’s mechanical hum, her mother’s choked sniffs and her father’s incomprehensible growling, Sorina was a beacon of peace.

She was a small girl – almost too small for her age. The children in school teased her because it looked as if she should still be in kindergarten instead of the first grade, which was an oddity all on its own because she had started school a year later than most children, making her a punch line for many a cruel joke. She was made fun of constantly for her name as well, as it was an unusual one. She didn’t mind; she liked her name. Both of her parents called her “Sorrie” for short, and when she would run out of the room every time they started fighting, her parents called out her nickname after her and it would sound like they were apologising to one another. Sorina didn’t play pretend often, but she liked to believe they were.

Her features were fragile; her skin was so light that it was hard to say what colour it actually was. Long black hair fell sporadically around

her face because neither she nor her mother had the time or desire to braid it into pigtails, which was the way most girls wore their hair in her class. She had a pair of stunning clover green eyes, but that wasn't why people stared her in the eye so often; her blinks were unnaturally long, as if she was trying hard to take a photograph of whomever she was looking at by the sole power of her eyes. Sorina never spoke unless spoken to – something she had picked up on after being told to shut up so many times by her father when she was a toddler. She wasn't afraid of him. She wasn't afraid of anything, or anyone. Very little upset her; she spoke in a calm, quiet voice and rarely raised her voice over anything. Teachers always referred to her as the “soft-spoken, well-mannered, complacent” child in class, which made her mother glow with pride every time she read her report card. Sorina was untroubled, yet not emotionless. She had a favorite subject, a preferred color of crayon, and was filled with excitement every day at noon when her teacher announced that it was naptime.

Sleep was something Sorina loved, and something she almost cherished, even if she didn't fully understand what the word meant yet. She loved sleep not because she was lazy. She never wanted to sleep because she felt tired. Sleep was an activity for her, just like jump rope, softball, and playing house were activities for her classmates. She viewed it as something enjoyable – something to look forward to. She was in her bed more often than anywhere else. She didn't get up early on Saturday mornings to watch cartoons like the other children; she didn't whine and complain when her mother told her to put away her coloring pens and hop in the bathtub because Sorina knew what would come after her bath. She would return to the magical, the phantasmagorical, the ethereal. She would return to her dreamland. Truth be told, Sorina would already be half asleep when her mother gently pulled her pens from her clutch, and she never needed any help falling asleep. The shelf above her bed, filled with Mother Goose rhymes and bedtime stories, were never used because she never needed any lulling. Sorina embraced sleep like an aged, yet loved, teddy bear.

The car lurched to a stop outside of the small house. Her father put the car in park, unbuckled his seat belt, got out of the car and slammed the door shut with great vigour, as if the persistent rain's sole purpose that night was to make him mad. Her mother winced at the door slam and glanced at her daughter again; concerned that that awful din would wake and scare Sorina. It did not. Sorina slumbered on. That night, the entire family went out to dinner with her father's business

manager – he cringed at the idea of bringing his family at first, but his secretary convinced him that it'd be good for publicity – and Sorina's mother reasoned that the dinner must have worn the little girl out. She quietly got out of the car and opened the door Sorina was leaning against, and as the door opened, Sorina fell slightly outside of the car, and still she did not wake. Her mother shook her slightly to stir her because she had not yet taken a bath or brushed her teeth, and only then did she finally take in one last breath of sleep and open her eyes.

Of course, her mother worried about her sleep habits as well. One of the only glitches on Sorina's report cards was the constant complaint of her falling asleep during class. What was strange was that Sorina fell asleep sporadically. She didn't have a least favourite subject; none of them seemed to bore her at all. One day she would fall asleep during arithmetic, and the next, she would do problems on the blackboard with great liveliness. And it wasn't as if she didn't get enough sleep at home, which is what the teacher implied during a parent-teacher conference. No, Sorina slept more than ten hours a night, falling asleep at nine o'clock sharp and waking up just a little before eight every morning. Her mother, getting more and more worried every time she saw the same comment on Sorina's report cards, decided it was time for her to get tested for narcolepsy. She hoped that her little girl didn't have such a condition; her husband wouldn't be pleased at all with the diagnosis and would view it as just another burden that he had to deal with. He would then start yelling...and, well, she hated it when her husband yelled.

Sorina's narcolepsy tests came back negative, and instead of alleviating her mother's worry, it fuelled it even more. Why was she falling asleep so often, then, if she didn't have it? Surely so much sleep wasn't healthy. The doctors proved that theory wrong as well. According to their tests, there was nothing physically wrong with Sorina. She wasn't depressed, her muscles weren't underdeveloped, and she wasn't malnourished. She was a perfectly healthy little girl; there was nothing to explain why she slept so often, and so deeply, and they couldn't put an end to it. After several rounds of stern scolding, pleading, and questioning, Sorina's parents watched as her mysterious sleep habits continued. Her father, frustrated that his yelling once again had no effect on the seven year old, decided it was time to scare it out of her by threatening to slap her on the wrist with a ruler every time she fell asleep when she wasn't supposed to. He could never bring himself to follow through on this plan. Every time he approached her with the plastic ruler and asked her to extend her arm,

Sorina did so without protest. She would not look away, wince, or show any sign of tension, and her calm demeanour mollified him every single time. It was almost disturbing how Sorina would sit there, blinking at him, showing no sign of fear. Angry at being defeated by a mere seven year old girl, her father would throw the ruler aside and mumble about not having time to “deal with such nonsense.” Her mother, on the other hand, tried a more psychological approach. She dragged Sorina to countless child physicians and psychologists and would dissolve into hysterics when each doctor came to the same conclusion as the neurologist they had previously visited. There was actually a time when the adults in her life talked to Sorina instead of about her. Her mother played the psychologists’ role and asked her why she slept so often. Sorina responded with an innocent smile and simply said, “I don’t just go to sleep, mommy. I go home.” Confused, her mother decided not to pursue this subject anymore. After a while, both her parents gave up. No more threats of corporal punishment, no more visits to the doctor. They merely resigned to waking Sorina every time she fell asleep because that’s all they could do, but gradually, although her mother wanted to believe nothing of the sort was happening, it became harder and harder to shake Sorina out of her slumber.

It was as if Sorina was caught between two worlds – the conscious and the unconscious, the world she was obligated to be a part of and the world she longed to be a part of. In the conscious world, she didn’t have many friends; when the other children weren’t ridiculing her, they would resort to pretending she didn’t exist. The way Sorina stared at whomever was in front of her, the way she would fall asleep at random without anyone noticing, even the way she moved – as if she floated instead of walked – gave off a celestial feel about her. Her classmates found her presence unsettling. Sorina got near perfect grades in school, but when her mother praised her for them, she would merely shrug as if it were no big accomplishment. When awake, Sorina would draw, read, or watch television, but she did these activities with an air of hollowness and apathy. Although she never complained or expressed bitterness about the classmates who alienated her, Sorina knew that the only time she felt that she truly belonged was when she could close her eyes and drift off to sleep.

Sorina’s “home” was one she had built up by herself ever since she was an infant. Most people never remember anything from their infancy, but Sorina remembered her dreams vividly. When she was a baby, her dreams always occurred in a simple meadow, one big enough to engulf even the ocean. As she grew older, she would add more and more detail:

a tiny, picturesque cottage, a forest that emanated a golden glow, whether the sun was actually out or not. On the eve of her fifth birthday, she fell asleep and there was a tiny stream added to her dreamland, complete with an elegant wooden bridge, as if it were an early birthday present. In her dreams, the sky was usually blue, but Sorina could make it whatever colour she wanted. Once, when Sorina fell asleep while her teacher was teaching the class about the order of the rainbow, her sky, accordingly, slowly changed from one colour to the next – red to orange, orange to yellow, yellow to green, and so on. In her dreams, the air always smelled of two of Sorina's favourite scents – lavender and peppermint. In her dreams, she met the Queen of Hearts, conversed with mermaids, and danced with swans. She was a princess, a lion, a sorceress. She hopped on clouds, caught colours, and thwarted the unknown. In her dreams, autumn melted into spring, and it always snowed in the summertime, when the cold flakes provided welcome relief from the heat. In her dreams, her best friend was the Sandman because she could never befriend him in the conscious world, for she would fall asleep before she even got a glance at him. Sorina never described her dreamland to anyone else, not because she wanted to keep it a secret, but because she felt that it was distinctly her own.

It was during another rainy day when Sorina's mother got the panicked call from her teacher, saying that she had better come down to the school straight away. The details of the teacher's urgency weren't exchanged over the phone, so Sorina's mother had no idea what had happened and drove to the school in a horrified daze, and burst into the classroom sobbing without reserve. The teacher sat her down and said that she tried everything she could, but no matter what she did, Sorina just wouldn't wake. Her mother looked frantically around the room, and immediately saw her porcelain daughter, curled up in a tight little ball on a bean bag chair in the corner of the classroom. During free time, when all the other children were reading, since it was too cold and wet to go outside, Sorina had quietly made her way to the chair and fell asleep instantly; nobody had noticed her there until free time was almost over, and a classmate of hers expressed his indignation over Sorina's nap. The children weren't allowed to sleep during free time. Tearfully, Sorina's mother stroked her face gently and whispered for her to please wake up.

She heard her mother's plea, but she was awake. Awake as she'd ever been. Sorina was busy climbing her favourite tree next to her small cottage. She felt her mother shaking her, tapping her face, and in her dreamland, the tree shook slightly and Sorina laughed as if she were on

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an amusement park ride. She was aware of the bits and pieces of worried conversation between her teacher and her mother, and it translated to a couple heavy, thunderstorm-looking clouds in Sorina's grapefruit-pink sky. She heard the sounds of the siren given off by the ambulance as the sounds of a couple dodo birds frolicking in her meadow below. She translated the buzzing of the paramedic's walkie-talkies as a swarm of colourful bees circling happily from flower to flower. "She still has a pulse," they said. "She's in a coma," they said. "Push two milligrams of epinephrine," they said. Sorina heard all of this through the mouths of Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

Sorina wasn't sure when exactly her heart stopped beating, and she didn't care. She had gotten out of the tree and was laying in the meadows with the Sandman next to her, counting how many shooting stars had gone by in her pink sky. They were up to fifty-eight when Sorina saw the first burst of lightning – when the paramedics were trying to shock her heart back into rhythm with the defibrillator. There were three lightning strikes altogether, and then...silence. She knew she wasn't alive anymore, and true to her consistent demeanour, she didn't let it bother her. After all, the lightning had stopped, and she had her best friend next to her. She had her cottage, her meadow, and her forest. Too long did the adults try to keep her from where she belonged. Too often was she longing for her home, her real home. Too many times she had to stay in the conscious world and deal with things she didn't care about or understand. There was nothing for Sorina to be worried about. Not now. Not anymore.

After considerable persuasion, her mother finally allowed an autopsy to be performed on her daughter. The doctors swayed her – didn't she want to know why her daughter had died in her sleep, after all? The autopsy report revealed as little as if one hadn't taken place at all. Careful examination of Sorina's organs told the coroners nothing; they were all in perfect condition and it seemed that Sorina was still in perfect health, except for the fact that her heart merely stopped beating. The coroners were deeply confused; they had never had a case like this before. There was nothing seemingly wrong with her, they had said. It didn't even look like Sorina was dead, for she still had a slight smile on her face, which was also odd, because muscles were supposed to relax after a certain time had passed.

Sorina's funeral was a small and quiet affair; it was over in one short hour. Her coffin was made of mahogany and had intricate silver flowers around the border that shone as the bright sunlight of that autumn afternoon hit it at just the right angle. The inside of the coffin was lined

with white and Sorina looked more like a porcelain doll than she ever did, laying in the softness of the coffin, as if she were a Christmas present that came in a fancy box instead of a little girl whose life ended without warning one Thursday afternoon. Her mother had stood by her coffin in a stupor for fifteen minutes before her husband gently led her away from it. She didn't shed a single tear. Sorina looked so peaceful that it almost seemed a shame to cry over her death. The doctors were right, her mother thought. Sorina didn't look as if she were dead. She looked as if she were sleeping for all of eternity.

Right at my Heels

by Jessica Switch

I remember your footsteps
Echoing in chaos, ringing riots in my ears
Each step, right at my heels
I hated it when you followed me.

I remember your voice
Rambling, whining for attention
Each word, right at my heels
I hated it when you repeated me.

I remember your clothes
Taunting me slyly, ready to pounce
Each outfit, right at my heels
I hated it when you copied me.

I remember your knock
Soft and uninvited, anticipating failure
Each sound,

Echoing in chaos
Ringing riots in my ear
Rambling
Whining for attention
Taunting me slyly
Ready to pounce
Soft and uninvited
Anticipating failure.

I remember the silence

Fragile,

Broken,

Defeated.

Each second, slipping
I hated it when you left me.

Do you remember your footsteps, Whitley?
They used to be
Right at my heels.

Another Day, Another Day Lost

by Jae Jun Hong

Another day,
I go back to Dubai,
Childhood,
Memories,
Home,
Changed,
I want belonging,
I feel the four months not present,
I meet friends not changed,
I keep not thinking of Dubai,
Another day lost.

Another day,
I come back to Ann Arbor,
Revitalized,
Fresh,
Adrenaline,
Purpose,
I want to become a better person,
I am ambitious,
I want a job,
I plan things,
Another day lost.

Another day,
I am in my Mathematics class,
Numbers,
Uncomfortable,
Disturbed,
Geeks,
I cannot understand,
I feel out of place,
I hate calculus,
I want to learn,
Another day lost.

Another day,
I am at the financial district,
Busy,
Suits,
Business,
Competitive,
I want to work here,
I want to be successful,
I cannot do ties,
I am not ready,
Another day lost.

Another day,
I go visit New York,
Urban,
Trendy,
Money,
Big city life,
I lose track of time,
I want to buy an apartment here,
I cannot cope with the fast pace,
I want to go back home,
Another day lost.

Another day,
I revisit Bradenton,
Passion,
Golf,
My future,
Potential,
I want to improve,
I want to become the best,
I want to be a golfer,
I am uncertain of my future,
Another day lost.

Another day,
 I am at the nightclub,
 Girls,
 Drinks,
 Loud,
 Lust,
 I want to meet my love,
 I am searching through the dance floor,
 They are occupied,
 I am disappointed,
 Another day lost.

Another day,
 I miss my mother,
 Love,
 Unconditional,
 Nostalgia,
 Regret,
 I want to know if she is happy,
 I cannot change my past,
 She is waiting for me,
 I want to be a better son,
 Another day lost.

Another day,
 I think of my first love,
 Fate,
 Hope,
 Desire,
 Obsession,
 I miss her everyday,
 I want to call her,
 I am still in love,
 She does not know,
 Another day lost.

Another day,
I am struggling,
Confused,
Heartbroken,
Frustrated,
Homesick,
I want love,
I feel dead,
I need help,
I have found God,
Another day lost.
But,
Another day of hope.

Jerusalem

by Erica Zviklin

A Woman

knits delicately, fingers trembling
 peering through fine glasses
 soft wrinkles hug her eyes, unveiling
 Depth, pain, wisdom.
 And beneath the corners of narrow pink lips
 a suppressed smile

A Soldier

gazes at nothing, absorbs everything
 obedient in that olive uniform
 remarkably tall in those muddy boots
 sharp green eyes
 Expectant, expected, silent.
 Her rifle speaks for her

A Father

teases his son's unkempt curls, leans
 with slippery complex words, but the boy
 Listens, understands, smiles.
 Imagines what it will be like
 when he is a man like his father, wonders
 if he will ever be a man like his father

I watch

as dusk drains color from old doors
 and late afternoon shadows
 blur the sharp edges of
 Ignorance, intolerance, hate.
 I suddenly feel the beauty
 of Jerusalem stone

It is night, dead in the middle of
 of rush hour and we are
 driving, my eyes heavy
 with the weight of the day
 thinking I haven't seen this
 many stars in a long time and
 even impatient horns fail
 to disrupt my
 complacent mind.

A sound too loud shakes
 the ground and sends my blood
 rushing head
 spinning and the car trembles
 What the hell just happened?
 But words aren't coming
 and something inside me
 plunges to my stomach
 and words are spiraling from
 my father's mouth
 but I hear only one:
 Bomb
 How can one word be
 so potent?
 It seems to echo
 through my body
 and I try to think, try to
 swallow
 but my mouth is dry
 so is my mind
 Maybe I can swallow
 this moment
 Maybe I can swallow

Minutes later
a surreal cloak of silence;
a silent cloud of smoke.
Faceless bodies sprawled on
the ground, people staggering
from their cars, eyes wide,
whispering questions
because they find solace in asking.
Twelve injured, two dead.
or at least that's what
they said later,
our eyes glued to the television.
Numbers
I don't even know who they are,
who they were. It was too dark
and I couldn't see and there are
too many questions.

We drive.
Everything is okay, now.
My mother's voice is calm,
rational.
Meaningless mother-talk. I stare
through the car window
at a face I hardly recognize
through my tears,
so I close my eyes
hoping to disappear.
Hoping

Ever Lasting Echo

by Maria Svidler

Your echo
It turned rusty over time and rain
It's darker now than ever
And haunts my every closed-eye moment

Not just your voice
Or penetrating words
But the aura you gave off
And the after taste that followed it
And the black stains on the pillow that followed it
And the tire marks on my life.

You were more than a presence
You are an ever lasting guiding scar.

Sugar High

by Natalie Shields

Mouth
on
mouth:
a delicious
t
w
i
s
t
of give
and take.

Sickly sweet,
to counteract the acid-lick
and stick
of those black cherry warheads
you devoured.

“You’re giving me a toothache,”
you said, sucking
sweetened lint from
hungry fingers.

It makes me sick,
how those words stream out
like hot honey,
that viscous bee spit concoction,
and evaporate upon leaving
the miasmatic furnace
of your mouth.

Hurried, hushed,
we exchange flavors:
a tour de force
of taste-testing skill,
pinned against each other
in the dim flicker-fast light
of the deserted lot.

Forsaken senses
awaken at length.
Smell reacts first
with the quickness of memory.
It warns,
pinpoints the distinct aromatics
of gasoline.

Candy-drunk eyes
lull open. "We should go."
You growl and relent,
cut your losses
and take me home.

In the mirror, under
harsh incandescence,
I count the sugar-bites on my neck.
One, two, ten.
Hungry little parasite!

Nausea overcomes me,
and I don't know whether
it's the savage leech-marks
or the saccharin.

I settle for Cracker Jack
car-cramped trysts.

Is it you I crave
or the lemon drops?

The Things I've Learned at The University of Michigan

by Langston Kerman

1.
I will not blame the spoiled-
milk frat boys for missing
affirmative action
I will however
discover a pet-peeve
for shaking hands
with white guys
Awkward dap attempts
to make me feel comfortable
Palms fumbling crooked
Searching for lost soul
like Grim Reaper
in a morgue

2.
Without spray cans
People can still make
a powerful point
of protesting
the raised pinky
constructs of our fathers

Dorm hall bathrooms
are an excellent example of this
theory at work

Toilet stalls graff'd
brown smears of mother's
un-flushed rebellion
We will wallow
in thick custard remainder
of someone else's turned stomach

3.
Hip Hop will be a great tool
for sparking conversation
with the kid from Long Island
at the end of the hall
We will spend 3 hours talking
about how vivid
Nas' lyrics paint the hood

He will admit he's never
been to any ghetto
But can spit by verse
how shitty it is
He will come back
drunk every night
for same conversation

We will talk him
through his hangover
A year later
He will blame a black man
for his rejected Business
School application
Vote Yes on Proposal 2

with Tupac in his head-phones
Eventually I will see him
on the diag, or in a dining hall
& we will pick up
same conversation
as if stumbling nights
had never gone sober

4.

Standing in line
outside ballot box
For the first time
I will know what it's like to be

My mother

Fresh from west-side Detroit
1987 waiting and pregnant
as downtown Chicago bus stops
Watching cars speed past

knowing they will
never slow down
January wind massaging
swollen feet jittery and raw

For the first time
I feel her tremble
like an awkward
hand shake in the dark

Stepping on Worms

by Jessica Vosgerchian

As I walk to the bus, little inescapable beads of wet join in a layer on my face. I squint my eyes against the spray, and my already colorless surroundings blur into a single shade of gray. I hate the rain, its wanton invasiveness, and in resistance, I dress inappropriately. This morning I've opted for ragged jeans, now caught under my heels and dragging through puddles; leather loafers, now soaked through, and staining my socks; and a sweatshirt, now moist and clinging. The only reasonable attribute of the outfit is a hood on the sweatshirt that, if nothing for my peripheral vision, is at least doing something for my hair. Wet to the skin, I march on. And, bowing my head against the rain, I list the day's errands I can't afford to neglect.

I have to renew my birth control, today, definitely—Meaning a trip to the ATM, the Chase one on S. University—Then to that new pharmacy on the other side of town, somewhere on the other side of town—Professor Kramer's office hours are today—I need to have more than a paragraph of his paper written. Plus, didn't I say I was going to—My forward-march is interrupted by the small frame and big umbrella of a girl in a hurry. In an attempt to correct the encounter, I maneuver right toward the sidewalk's edge, and the girl continues quick, purposeful steps in the opposite direction.

Through the rubber sole of my shoe, I can feel the cement give way to mush. Lifting my foot, I see the faint pink line of a worm give way to splatter.

I stepped on a worm—Huh.

Before walking on, I stare a little. It makes sense, it's raining, but when was the last time anyone has stepped on a worm? It seems as if the eradication of tuberculosis and worm carcasses are accepted conditions of modern life. People no longer find fuzzy caterpillars on oak trees either, or get stung by bees, or scrape their knees. The world is changed. I've read away hours under oak trees, never to come across a caterpillar. Working under a tree, I request distraction. I scrutinize all passers-by, look up for every rustle of a squirrel, I investigate every inch, and I think I would have noticed the spiky black hairs and spots of a caterpillar if presented to me.

No, caterpillars on oak trees don't appear to anyone over 10 years old. The caterpillars and worm armies belong to childhood as unicorns and elf colonies never could. I lost the ability to see those things as I aged,

and my skin no longer turns to dark, raised scales when I fall. I still fall, though, coming home with uncouth bruises and cuts—"party wounds," gotten during the week's allotted play time. Both kinds of injuries are an accidental interruption of playtime fun; it seems the difference lies in how they happened. I scraped my knees when I was out looking at the world, when I was climbing oak trees and running down sidewalks. In recent years, I've been more concerned with how the world looks at me, and I go out and get party wounds. And so it seems puberty takes more than flat chests and hairless peckers, after a certain age, knees don't scrape. And masses of zombie worms aren't interested in you.

I remember, though, when they were. As a child, sidewalks in the rain were wiggling, festering graveyards. Invertebrate undead emerged from the lush green lawns of the neighborhood, and with their last bouts of energy, they wanted me. Walking to the bus stop on a wet day meant a terrifying game of hopscotch. I would stare at the ground for frozen moments, calculating my move to the next clear square foot with precision and strategy. But on other days the bus sat idling, I was still houses away, and there was no time to think. My breath held, my eyes closed, and running—all I could do was pretend that the softness I felt under the corners of my feet was leaves or mud, another stomachable sort of organic matter.

Those days I could feel terror in my stomach. The malicious ickiness of worms sent shivers through my skinny body; I'd feel really scared. I'd really feel something. And I don't know how many times I've felt like that since, so wholly and in my stomach. I've certainly been afraid. Right now, I'm afraid my birth control hasn't worked—but the fear is muted. I know all will probably be all right, that sperm isn't out for me like worms once were. Plus, in the worst-case scenario, reason tells me there are steps in place to cope. Fear is just dogging and irksome now; it picks all day at my brain, rather than exploding for a second in my gut. It keeps me awake some nights; it can be awful. But it no longer incites the flight-or-fight response that spurred me to defend myself when it was me against the worms. Instead, I wait passively for the fear I carry to be realized, knowing that either it will be or it won't be, that careful, strategic steps don't much make a difference. Though, fear isn't my only feeling to be harassed by reason. Emotions, happiness and sadness alike swim docilely in my head, and neglect to manifest themselves in my bowels or bloodstream. While sensations, identified and duly processed, await their protocol response. I now know that, in the weight and length of life, hardly an incident is as bad or as good as it seems. Now I'm 18 years old, wet, and rational, and all

I want to be is eight and ecstatic about something.

I march on, head bowed and eyes squinted. But then the rain heeds a little, and I'm allowed a picture of my surroundings. I keep my head down to make the best shelter of my hood, but now I can see the sidewalk perfectly. The sidewalk's not much to look at, but I accept it as a distraction. I decipher its details—cracks that are larger than others and off color rocks—when, suddenly, light pink, flattened piles appear to me. The worms are everywhere. Wide-eyed and disbelieving, I have to stop and look around. Why haven't I noticed such carnage for years? I examine the oozing pus of one especially gruesome casualty, and my lip rises in disgust. I move to walk on, but I can't shake my consciousness of the worms—term papers, sperm, and Professor Kramer are erased from my mind. I find myself searching out clear spots to place my feet. My stride loses all rhythm, becomes sporadic and far-fetched, and I must look ridiculous from behind. It's barely even raining anymore, but I'm not about to raise my eyes. I won't step on a worm because it's gross, and that's all the reason I need. But approaching the street, I glance up to gauge the distance of the bus stop, and I see the Commuter Northbound round the corner. The worms are everywhere, but the bus is going to beat me to the stop, and I'm still houses away...

Do you remember?

by Elyse Oberland

(this is our song)
here we sit
as a sweet arpeggio of tears runs down my face
ironically paired with our duet of giggles
see the stars? The faces of old
that bellow in deep baritones
The pews form chords
each person here a single, beautiful note
And this is our own song
written in the spirit and language of our youth
but performed with an aged tone
Conversation in a sharp key
no flatness surrounding these organ pipes
Major emotions
and memories
Minor tears
and smiles
Tombs of past lyrics,
even alters of dead pitch
Rarely reading the tenor of each other's eyes
but constantly playing our mouth and ear instruments

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These constant rhythms we've created
syncopated stories
and even measure upon measure of rests
in which we simply gaze at this place
our symphony hall
our concert auditorium
that slightly echoes with our singing
trembling the crucifix
and the scales of aisles
the prayers
even the sinners (like us?)
and we're filled with the capturing voice
of this ancient place
thank (God)
you're here with me.
To write this master piece with me.
To help me and see through me
I could not write this song alone,
create this work of art, a cherished memory
For you will never forget a melody.

Simple

by Tani Shtull-Leber

Simple

I want

To live

Not so simple

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