The Trinity Review
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Cure for Shell Shock

Stephanie Jutras

Step 1
Poems are strewn all over the desk, but take a step back.
Don’t read them. It’s too soon to look with compassion
upon what you used to be. Your pen will remind you
of the barrel of a gun and all the people who think too much.

Step 2
After a while, words don’t have meaning anymore, but you
keep talking just like everyone else to ease your fear
of the dark. Silence is what you have when you recognize
that you are either entirely or not at all alone.

Step 3
No one will tell you what you need to know, but if you
pretend that everyone is your psychologist, never again
will you have a secret. Birds will fly into you, thinking
you’re just air, and your mind won’t move in circles.

Step 4
They say the blue always finds you, but you can trick it
with disguises. You are a weevil in rice, a bucket of ice.
When you remove yourself, you want nothing and have
all the songs that you need to survive the night.

Step 5
You don’t have to support the causes you used to,
and it’s okay to slip out of permission, go into remission.
Four is the number of freedom and sadness, but you
can count higher than that. You’re only guilty of innocence.
Step 6
The tears don’t come until you speak, so this is your new smile. Everyone will look when the clock comes crashing down again, but the door can stay closed all day. You don’t have to tell me what happened to you, but if I never ask, they’ll ask me why.

Step 7
The prayers of those who hunt you will bring you no healing, but they’re all you’ll ever get if you remain where you are. The old sayings you turn to will betray you, so just eat, sleep, and take your pills, for tomorrow you must live.

On the Floor
Kristen Schnaus
Disappearing Act

Emily Allen

A good magician never reveals his secrets, but everyone knows that the insides of your sleeves are papered with cigarette ash and love letters to girls who no longer exist.

Dead Boyfriend and Stove

Andrea Puentes
Yo-Yo Instructions

Trevor Flynn

(or string theory as applied at the college level)

falling is the game.
you must roll it down like deadlines over days:
calm, bemused, barely sane,

so the tension will do all the work.
snap at the put-off thought, time reeling up,
catch in your hand with a showy smirk.

gently trick gravity into your consuming gyration.
dangle the cosmic nine-point-eight from your middle finger,
and wiggle it condescendingly at creation.

and repeat, sweeping physics around the room.
enroll in omnipotent diversion,
far from your desk and doom.
cyber mascots you shall not quiver

Nikkin Rader

well hello, achooo, blow your mind like you blow a tissue, with these wet issues and dry values that we seem to call the norm; but I was not born here to squirm like you guyz, little ants on this planet that Time squashes like a kiddo or devil goat, slit their throats and watch them suffocate because it demonstrates what happens to you when you think about It. That jackrabbit he hops along singing that slutty lustrous song, grey sunset doth tremble, sluts or butts we want to (s)CREAM, we’re in outer space where the lines don’t embrace the figure (iiines), grr kissy blackpuissie’ that feline, her whiskers were long she was our divine, we lived in a lodging in a semi-welcoming town, me and he, lovers for until ever. My jackrabbit oh how he lapped at my ear, my jackrabbit dear he was my sincere one, my queer. Gaze salted dead tree gaunt sluts do thugs magic rugs take us far to unwind and unbound the spirit, we aren’t delirious this shit’s real, I feel the breeze beneath my palms of terror mountains.

He’s a sly fox, red dead fred, unhappy pair, he my jackrabbit he my one dear. 0.0 I wish the zworld was zideways, a dirty ashtray and wine bottles there lay, life was a whore and he was too; it amused the black woman, but she just fro’d her do’ fosho. ??? No.
i want to slip on a banana peel. someone. trip me. I “ototot” don’t soul drained and the membrane but thaz okay;

THE DEVIL ALIEN WILL GET YOU WHISPER TO YOU IN HIS DEVIL ALIEN VOICE DO NOT REJOICE TO HELL’S REIGN AND GLAMOUR, I STAMOR BUT THAT’Z A SPEECH IMPEDIMENT, WE SHOULDN’T M-M-MAKE FUN FUCK FUN OF OTHERS FOR THINGS THEY CANNOT HELP, LIKE GLASS EYED TONY . shit bologna buh- log- nah.

i’m glad you shee reasons behind the blunt happenings of life goings MAAAN.
Body aches brain fakes and lies.
Keka.
happily fries the eyes owo

wassssshap.

So my jackrabbit and I did things other couples do, just because we’re gay doesn’t mean we’re untrue to being part of humankind, to be the same as all others of the human race, I think that those queer-haters just fear kind grace, because to accept others means to be okay with your own odd self traits, (and we know that you fools can’t love your own face, nor your actions your thoughts, and that’s why you hate anyone else who does not accept that same fate, to lie to yourself and to try to be the
same as everybody else in this place. I’m sorry you’ll never be happy that way, to love yourself and all of mankind, to be truly “okay”.

So fuck your systems of prejudice curiosities, you fools are jousting themselves into a wall as your brains stain them bricks with sticky icks and ice and methamphetamines and necks of redhood and why did you do it? Why did you do it? Why did you slaughter my babyboi my babytoy my slutty fox jackrabbit, I swear to your god I will end it, bend it, twist your minds before I cut them with the same dirty nails that cut into Jesus. Did you know we met when we were ten? I wasn’t gay then, I wasn’t sure then, but by grade nine I knew then that he was the one there who would always care and hold my dear head hair as I do now to his dead head hair and pet him kindly as you folks were blindly sinful to your fellows. We are with you, we saw the end of time when children died, and yet you think you’re better? You are the Nazi to our Jew, why couldn’t you let us be, let it be, let them see with kindness not hate, I must remind myself, but at this point, I don’t think I can restrain myself, I feel like plummeting hammers into your skulls, I don’t think I will but too soon to call. After we’d moved there, they started to realize that we were just two guys sharing a bed, oh dear lord, no vagina in the place means we’re a disgrace and should be replaced and should not could not will not continue. First, the eggings. Then, the tire slashings. After, the burning bottle hurled into the window. You know you burned our cat alive? Her utter cries of utter pain and utter anguish is what alerted us to the foul play, we tried to put her out but she died either way, her horror forever frozen in her kitty face; I don’t even know how to feel when you fuckers went and murdered our child. Fuck the room that you burned, and the tires you have ruined, our baby, our feline, why commit such erroneous acts? I don’t run your kids over as they walk on to school, I don’t bomb the schools nor poison their cafeteria food; baby killing is below the belt, man.

And then the very worst of all doings.

And then they forced on the loss of sanity of love of hope.

And then they had hanged my gay lover, as they had lynched the “colored skins” too, as they had burned the female witches, as they had scorched the innocent Jews, as they had beat the nerdy ones, as they had shot the Indians here, they are why girls go bulimic, they are why humans cry every day.
Gasp sex dwell tall. The homos the gays we go every way into the emptiness of our brains and cry due to the shame that everybody every soul puts upon us in our woeful eyes that never dry to kind rays of sun to the shine bright die light, I am sore from the pain, not the bruises you leave us with but the way that you say we’re not right we’re not natural, we’re not meant to be, we gays and we homos live in blasphemy, damned to burnation damnation in hell’s sweet ways, less vicious than you all these days.

So as I lay here beside my dead fellow, as I cry here nevermore to be blissful, as the sky becomes purple and purple to black, I looked up from the area under the tree that ended his life and surely more than just he, I saw a small figurine walking closer to me. She said:

“I am sorry, truly sorry, that they did this to you both. That’s why me and my girlfriend hide our affection, because they did this last year to our friends Pat and Henry, before to Sam and Jerry, before to Sally and Macy, before to Alfie and Walter, and I am so sorry so sorry you had to come here, you should run now, you should leave now, before they get you next. People like this just regress and react, they will never learn better, they will never crack, they are the pillar of obscene ignorance, they hold true to their prejudice and remove all those who stray from their ways, I implore you to save yourself while you can, explore better places that will let you breathe sanity, escape the profanity of their declarations, and take me and Chelsea with you, take your sheep with you, lead us to salvation, be our Moses, our Harriet Tubman, be the savior of our days,” I stared hard into her soul, trying to figure her sincerity, before realizing she was hardly a teen, so young, so genuine, so naïve yet so aged, this town’s ways engraving insightful depths into her brain.

I pondered, I dwelt, I looked down at my fox jackrabbit’s still face, littered with teardrops and blood drops and drops of no faith, drops of injustice, drops of new age. Be the Coyote of the gays? A life calling, I’d say.

The next day, with my baby in the passenger seat, strapped down to keep him upright and the two girls huddled in the back under a blanket, I drove past the burning city hall, the burning church, the burning haystacks after haystacks, all miracles of their god, I drove away into the morn with a shudder of hope sparking up once more, the fires igniting my own faith. But then, the mob at the bridge that
Earth

Kallie Pfeiffer
led away from this hell, the mob with their ropes and their belts, their torches (yes torches), their angry death calls.

“Come out, you damned sinners, you fucking set a flame our little town. Come out to face what you have found,” a man from the middle (s)creamed, perhaps the mayor himself it did seem.

I laughed and without a hesitation did I slam on the gas pedal, vrooming over his feet and body and skull, along with some others, before their bodies cascaded into the path, built up a speed bump one could not pass, so the rest slammed on the car until the glass did give in, they pulled me out and the girls concealed within, dragged us to their tree, set up their dear ropes, and held us while the girls struggled and cried and revoked.

“Miss Chelsea! Miss Maya! We should have known your queer ways. Daughter of the mayor, daughter of the banker, what shame you must bring! Your mothers will perform this fine deed of be ridding the human race of your wronging.”

And I swear I did witness the trembling mothers come up, they tied the ropes tight, they spat in the faces of the offspring they’d carried, the two girls who held hands in their nooses, their mothers were the ones who pushed them into the black pits of death, and now I have seen the saddest of things, a mommy a baby, as if drowning their kin, but suffocation is the new water, the girls’ bodies swayed with the wind.

I’m sorry so sorry to you girls this day, I did not make it out, I did not save your ways, I failed you as I failed my jackrabbit babe, and now here I fail myself as I sway too, this tree holds the weight of many sorrows, these ropes know the cries of many fellows, these souls made love a fatal ride indeed, but it was worth it, it was worth it, just to be with him those years, an act never regretted, nor forgotten, as their love has been, we will live onward through the memories of the sinners, the lovers, the gays of all time, never fall to majority as the crazed fall to being blind. My death here will be followed as it had followed others’ too, many shall die for their love as they die for their hate, procreate, masturbate, exterminate, it’s all the same. Fuck purpose and hope, you’ll die either way.
Here are My Displays

Grace Yu

My agony my agony
Wonders will never cease
I would have to

Cleave off my arm
My leg my mind
As well as my

Character and the soul
To accomplish what you
Would have wanted me

To do and I
Cannot do what you
Wish for because I

Am not that girl
Any longer for I
Have grown a pair

Bigger than your own.
I have decided to
Outlive, outlearn, outsmart, and

Outgrow your insipid ignorance
For you have ceased
What art I had

in me to create
to wonder to travel
to satisfy your cravings
of never having been
more successful than I
and your jealousy has
eaten away at my
art my life my
music my only way
of letting others know
my pain my sorrow
you have taken that
away from me and
I cannot deal with
You any longer and

I will now escape
Into the night and
Fly fast with Hermes

Run faster than Daphne
Escape from you, Zeus.
Your destruction of Semele

Has only inspired my
Escape as I will
Not disappear like her.
Little Dipper

Mallory Conder

The reaching stars in waning peace die us real,
Revealing if only for a moment the inner view,
not of this world or celestial bodies, but of who.
Who lies behind the vapid shell?
Searching, shaping, shifting,
the world seen through clouded lenses
into perfection for the marred state of man.
The reaching stars in waning peace die us real,
Sprinkling the sky with sugar the heart can feel.

The Christmas Forest

Bethany Dawson
Who?
Cade Bradshaw
Shall We Dance with a Prosthetic?

Matthew Stigler

I have to try it a few times since they changed the lock. I searchingly feel for the grooves. I’m standing, my full weight on it as the first pop clicks. I imagine it could be satisfying, like a joke you mutter that a new friend laughs at. Instead I push harder and wiggle it like I’m trying to balance. Every morning I move through the steps of a dance I choreographed unwittingly.

I can balance though, on my left leg. They look on, the spectators, while I tip over into the asana of dancers pose. “Can you do this? I can because I don’t have a right ankle. I balance always on the left so it’s strong.”

I can dance though, with a complete lack of grace. Swing dance mostly. Moving with a partner and twirling. It’s not a good way to meet guys. Even so, when I dance blues with a flirty girl we share a ball of energy. I can feel it. It is blue and electric. It is warm and we twirl slowly to a jazz band. For a while I made believe that it was right. This is who I can be. A dancer, sharing a ball of warm blue energy. Turning her slowly. This is who I can be.

It is not new. But every day I dance around, finding the perfect spot. Pressing my weight down cautiously. Did it click yet? Can I balance yet? Is the dance over today?
I Lied: I Do Believe in Ghosts

Abigail Loar

What are friends but shadows
to hang on trees in the darkest
moment of the night when the rain falls
hard and all you can stand to do is watch
from the porch, coffee in hand, and hope
that they can find their way.

(hope that they might take you with them)
In positive dread of the journey home, Gordon buttoned his obtrusive, uncooperative coat up to his chin. Things were bad enough on a normal day, but now he felt like crying at the prospect of the walk through the neighborhood that had betrayed him. Before, it had always greeted him as a friend, but now he knew better thanks to Richie Marcus; it was just one big fake smile. Gordon couldn’t believe he hadn’t realized it before. Just by glancing out the classroom window he could see that the neat rows of houses that pointed away from the school had at least a hundred, no, a thousand different hiding places for something to lie in wait, within easy reach of the sidewalk so as to snatch him up without any of the grown-ups noticing.

Gordon, for as long as he could remember, had been nervous regarding the Boogeyman. Who wouldn’t be? The tall rail of a man with his big hat who would slide out of the cracked closet door to grab you with his claws, stuff you into his burlap sack, and then retreat back into the closet before any parents could save you. But Gordon had known that as long as a light was on, even a sad little nightlight, the Boogeyman wouldn’t come slinking out between clothes hangers or climbing out of your dreams. The Boogeyman didn’t like the light, and he never left people’s houses. At least, Gordon had known all that before one grinning Richie Marcus had shattered his confidence with the revelation that the Boogeyman, if he really wanted to, could walk around outside and didn’t mind the light in the least.

“Are you stupid or something?” sneered Richie Marcus during recess as he scowled from his perch high on the monkey bars, drawing his arms about himself like the wings of a roosting buzzard.

“No,” Gordon had mumbled.

“Of course he can go wherever he wants! Didja think he’d really be scared of the light? I saw something pull a kid into some bushes once, and he never came back out. Who do you think did that?”

“You’re a liar.” Still, Gordon hadn’t managed to keep himself from eyeing the woods that backed the school and part of the neighborhood.

The buzzard above him had noticed his eyes and clucked, “That’s what you think. He’s out there. I’ll bet he likes those woods.”

Gordon, mouth dry, had only been able to repeat, with a little less conviction, “You’re a liar.”

Of course Gordon knew that Richie Marcus wasn’t really lying, and now he
knew that when school ended in five minutes and he had to walk home alone the Boogeyman, brown burlap sack in hand, would be waiting in the bushes. Gordon wanted to ask Mrs. Simmons to call his mom so he could ride home with her, but he knew that neither his teacher nor his mother would believe him. When you grew up, you had to forget about the things out there that wanted to eat kids; that or the Boogeyman hadn’t been around when the grown-ups were kids themselves. Some things children understood better than adults.

The minutes passed in slow agony as Mrs. Simmons told the students to pack their things and get ready to leave. Richie Marcus caught Gordon’s eye in the midst of the milling children, grinned, winked, stabbed a thumb toward the window and the woods that lay beyond.

Eventually, the bell shrieked and everyone flooded out of the room in excitement, all except poor Gordon, who dragged his feet and fought back tears until he looked up to find himself all alone in the hallway as the rest of the school hastily filed out. He still couldn’t think of the doomed march home without his stomach and heart switching places. As he neared the end of the enormous hallway, his ounce of courage failed him and he ducked into the restroom.

Even his heavy coat meant to ward off November could not stop his bones from freezing as he stood shivering in the bathroom. How far away was home? Three blocks? Ten? It couldn’t be less than a hundred, and waiting in every patch of darkness was the bearded, crooked Boogeyman. The Boogeyman would catch him and drag him back to wherever he lived, or maybe he would waste no time and just start eating him there, just out of sight of the school and safety. Or would he do something even worse? Was there anything worse?

By now, the boy was shaking so hard that he had to grip the sink to keep himself standing. By now, his teeth chattered so that he knew that the Boogeyman could hear them like an inviting dinner bell. Through all the claustrophobia and choking fear, Gordon realized that he was furious. How could Richie Marcus have told him everything? Now that he knew the Boogeyman, the Boogeyman would know him! Gordon briefly hoped that the Boogeyman would get Richie Marcus, doom Richie like Richie had doomed him; then a wave of guilt washed over him for wishing that on anyone, even Richie Marcus. Finally, Gordon realized he had to leave his temporary sanctuary before it started to get dark. The white-washed, silent restroom listened to him trudge back into the hall.

As he reached the glass doors, he put a small hand on the wall to steady himself.
He knew he should keep moving while he had the momentum, but the sight of the street and the woods froze him. He knew the doors would lock electronically if he stepped outside and let them close, which only made him more reluctant to move. Drifting of its own will, his foot took an unconscious step backwards. Then the realization grabbed him that there was no reason the Boogeyman couldn’t have gotten inside. He was no safer inside the school than out. In a panic, he recalled the way the air had pulsed the vent in the bathroom. How, maybe, it had breathed. The suddenly unfriendly school screamed its silence. The universe had become one dark room with the Boogeyman waiting on the other side of the door.

Two sharp honks broke Gordon’s thoughts. In surprise, he looked outside to find a stylish red convertible with the top down waiting at the curb of the circle drive. A man, handsome in a rough sort of way, wearing jeans, sunglasses, and a white t-shirt stepped out of the driver’s seat and waved. When Gordon looked around to see what the man was waving at, the man nodded at him and kept waving. Hesitantly, he opened the door wide enough to wedge the left half of his body through it, and then poked his head out and gazed at the man.

Crossing in front of his red convertible before stopping on the passenger side, the man announced, “I’m here to pick you up. Your mom called me and asked me to come get you.” He had a firm but soothing voice which allowed Gordon to forget, for a moment, that the Boogeyman was probably watching him at that very moment. It did not, however, stop Gordon from correcting the man with the obvious.

“I don’t know you.”

The man gave a hearty laugh. “Of course you do, champ! I’m your Uncle Todd!”

“Uncle Todd? I don’t remember you.”

“Well, that makes sense. The last time I visited, you had to have been only two or three, buddy. How you’ve grown!” Uncle Todd flashed a big, bright smile. “How old are you now? Seven? Eight?”

“Eight and a half,” Gordon corrected proudly.

“Eight and a half! Well, I’m in town for the weekend, so we’ll get to catch up and do things for grown-up, eight and a half year old boys, then.”

Gordon liked the man, if only because he knew that the Boogeyman wouldn’t dare try to catch him while a grown-up was around. Still, though, it was strange. “My parents didn’t say anything about anyone visiting us this weekend.”

Uncle Todd’s winning smile never wavered. “Well, it was supposed to be a surprise, kiddo. But when your mom saw that it was going to rain and was stuck at


work, she asked if I’d give you a ride home.”

“Oh. All right.” He still didn’t move, remaining only half outside the school door.

After a moment of static smiling, Uncle Todd beckoned. “Well, let’s get going, slugger!” He sounded excited about everything that came out of his mouth, which hadn’t stopped smiling once since he stepped out of the red convertible he leaned against. To Gordon, it was all too sudden, too strange that this relative he’d never seen or heard of would suddenly emerge, and his parents had told him never to talk to strangers. But was Uncle Todd really a stranger? He’d said that Gordon just didn’t remember him because he was too young, and there was truly nothing Gordon remembered from when he was two. The heavy promise of rain clogged Gordon’s nostrils while he thought he heard the footsteps of the Boogeyman behind him; suddenly itching to move but unsure what to do, he stayed put.

Ever present smile still adorning his face, Uncle Todd repeated, “Let’s get going, slugger.” The suggestion sounded almost exactly the same as the first time Uncle Todd had pronounced it, loud and jovial. The only difference was that the slightest
strain had crept into the voice so that Uncle Todd seemed like he was in a hurry he
didn't want anyone to know about. Maybe he was cold. Gordon still couldn't decide
why the man would wear just a t-shirt and drive around with the top of the car
down in November. It didn't make any sense.

“What’s wrong?” asked Uncle Todd.

Gordon wanted to say “nothing,” but the words “I’m scared” dropped from his
lips instead.

Uncle Todd laughed, although Gordon didn't see why it was funny, and said,
“There's nothing to be scared of, bud.” A long silence. “Nothing at all.”

Gordon's head whipped about when he really did hear footsteps behind him.
He nearly darted through the door, but then he recognized one of the fifth grade
teachers walking past before she opened the door to the library and disappeared.

“What was that?” asked Uncle Todd.

“Just a teacher,” responded Gordon when he finally felt it was safe to stop
looking over his shoulder. The man leaning against the convertible stiffened and
pushed himself off. Now that Gordon looked at him closely, he didn't seem nearly so
relaxed as when he'd first seen him. His smile was still as wide as ever, but it looked
tight. Gordon wished Uncle Todd would take off his sunglasses so he could see his
eyes.

A third time, Uncle Todd suggested, “Let's get going, nephew.”

Gordon began to feel feverish, uncomfortable, hot and cold all at once. “No,” he
mouthed because he couldn't quite get his voice to work. How he wished the man
would stop smiling for a moment.

Uncle Todd looked like he wanted to relax but some pent-up energy wouldn't
allow it. “It's going to rain soon,” he reminded Gordon.

“Take off your sunglasses,” Gordon whimpered.

“What?”

“Take off your sunglasses!”

“Okay. Okay.” Uncle Todd held up his hands to placate the boy before slowly
reaching his hands toward his face. Off went the glasses. For a brief instant, Gordon
thought he caught a glimpse of boredom and lifelessness in the brown eyes, but it
was gone in an instant if it had ever been there at all. Uncle Todd's eyes smiled along
with his mouth. “Let's go, champ,” he implored. He began to list off scenarios, all of
which he sounded completely uninterested in. “We'll go see a movie. We'll go to the
zoo with your parents, have ice cream, play catch with your dad, stay up late, visit
the park, go to a museum, eat at your favorite restaurant, drive around all day with
the top down.” His face was all white, smiling teeth. “Now come on and get in the car. Your mom wouldn’t want you home late. And you wouldn’t want to walk home through the rain, all alone, would you?”

“No,” Gordon agreed. He still didn’t want to go with Uncle Todd. But walking home alone – he knew how that would end: being stuffed in a burlap sack, dragged away, and torn to shreds by the dark, hunching Boogeyman.

“You’re my very favorite nephew. Did you know that?” asked the man still standing by the convertible, shivering from the cold or excitement or his own buzzing, caged energy.

“Maybe I’ll just call my mom to –”

“No!” A snarl tore from grimacing lips for a fraction of a second before the smile creaked back into the face. “Don’t bother your mom. She’s working. And you’ll hurt my feelings. You’re my favorite nephew, remember? And we can have so much fun together.”

Gordon didn’t want to hurt the man’s feelings, but he was almost as scared of him as of the Boogeyman. Weakness flowed through his muscles when the thought struck him. “You aren’t the Boogeyman, are you?” He felt ridiculous for even asking, but he just had to know.

Uncle Todd howled with laughter for far too long. “No,” he finally exclaimed. “Of course not!” When he saw the look in Gordon’s eyes, he continued, “But I think I saw him on the way here.”

Gordon’s breath caught in his throat. Could it be possible? “You’ve seen him?”

“Oh, yes,” the smile said earnestly. “And he looked mean. But he won’t bother you while I’m around. He doesn’t like grown-ups.”

After another long silence, Gordon finally relented. “Okay.”

“Good,” exclaimed Uncle Todd, putting his sunglasses back on. “That’s good.” Easing his body through the gap, Gordon held the school door open for another moment before finally letting it go. The door shut and the automatic lock answered. Click.

Autumn filled Gordon’s lungs and clogged his pores as he walked toward the car. The horizon had just begun to devour the sun behind the pall of clouds that strangled the sky. The world was descending into grayscale and leaving only a few splashes of red leaves to keep color alive. Gordon felt wholly outside of himself as he walked, like his life no longer belonged to him.

Uncle Todd’s voice leaked out of the air somewhere ahead of him. “We’re going to have so much fun, you and I.”
Rocky River Bed and Shell

John Dean Domingue
Tribute to Cesar Vallejo: When I Die

Pablo Tarquino

I will die like a purring sigh
On the freezing hand of death
It'll be a handsome, silent day
When I rise to pass away

Mute birds, aloft in the air
Will stare and wonder why
I stand stock still on a broken hill
Not uttering a cry

I'll tip and see the world upturned
I'll feel the pulsing Sun
And in my fall I'll kiss the ground
Without a breath or sound

My head will split
Replete with thoughts
And spill in waves of blood
They were my treasure once alive
Now they seep into the mud

There I'll lie and there I'll die
Where light permeates all
My face is still: Perfectly blank
I'm empty like a doll
Alabaster Soldier

Paul Cuclis

I remember:
How his skin was as pure and white as alabaster, back when we first met.
So young and fresh,
he did not have a single battle scar.
“He don’t gotta chance” we thought,
all considering the rough times ahead.

I remember:
How he proved us wrong, in that first desperate charge
as bombs fell violently, a deafening roar
to shake the ground beneath my feet.
Spraying skyward the mud and fetid water,
a storm of dark rain stinging the eyes,
and tearing the wind from lungs,
to leave us gagging on the harsh fumes.
I was terrified, thinking it would be too much,
But when I turned back, he was right behind me,
taking it all in,
inspiring that last push
to Victory.

I remember:
How we celebrated, breaking out the hidden stash of Jim Beam.
He drank deeply the golden liquid that night.
Dizzy and nauseous,
I wrapped my arm around him for support,
and in that muggy haze of drunken stupor, I
confessed,
“Nearly shat myself in that first mad rush man,
I didn’t think I was going to make it.”
I laughed and wretched violently,
“You saved my ass back there, Y’know?”
He flushed, but didn’t say anything.
He just cooed a long “shhhhh”,
to send me into a deep and peaceful slumber.
I should have seen the change in him,
but I was too drunk to notice,
too drunk to care

I remember:
How his skin used to be as white and pure as alabaster,
back when he was fresh and new.
But after six months of the ceaseless torment,
six months of saving us, time and again,
his skin became stained and yellowed sickly,
with scars aplenty:
Those crusting brown scabs
cracking in the dryness.
It became difficult for us to be near,
that war-torn form.
And though he had saved us countless times,
we were secretly disgusted by him.

I remember:
How we left him to rot,
when the semester finally ended,
and summer beckoned us away.
How I entered my dorm room one last time
to look at him, pityingly,
that poor, brave Alabaster Soldier;
my comrade, my brother, my friend.
And I said with tears in my eye,
“Thank God, I never
have to use this toilet again.”
A Skyscape
Elisa Reyna
Junk House on Green

Matthew Stieb

Mom lost it when she found out a methadone clinic was moving in down the street. Said it’s a burden on her family. For the safety of her children, let alone herself. Not the kind of people we want to bring into our community. Couldn’t even think of selling the house now, in this market. For me, it wasn’t really an issue. I don’t like junkies, but let them be. Sure, they’ll shuffle around the neighborhood a bit, maybe even a mugging or two. But as a whole, nothing on our street’s gonna change. The clinic might even help people. Get them off on the right foot, maybe even on the right path. Besides, Mom has misdiagnosed the problem. The junk house on Green Street is the real concern.

Big, beautiful, two-story, 19th Century estate home. Don’t know how junkies got such a house, even if it is falling apart. Paint, once white, now shares the color of their yellowy, jaundiced skin. Bad graffiti, mostly junky names, covers the back like cheap tattoos. Vine, running all up and down the side like veins, varicose and large. A front porch, upholstered daily with a variety of bodily fluids. Lawn: grey, covered in broken glass, rubber bands, needles too rusted to use.

Kids who live there are wild. I heard a story a few months back about a cop pulling up to the junk house. Said he was looking for a guy about a stolen car. Junky answering the door said she never heard of him. The cop knows she’s lying, but as he’s leaving, he hears the sound of a body hitting pavement from a two-story window. The cop walks over, checks him out. Chips of bone, hot and white, splinter out of his ankle. Blood everywhere. But Junky’s still trying to walk away on it, barely feels the pain. Flashes a grim smile, asks the cop nicely if there’s anything he can do for him. The cop’s frozen stiff, about to vomit from the sight. Junky assumes he doesn’t need anything and keeps going. The cop gathers his breath, walks over, asks his questions and leaves. Turns out he was just looking for info on the carjacking, thought Junky knew about it. I don’t know if any of it’s true. Only a story I heard before meetings started.

I’d been at home for about a year now. At first it was an ideal place to recover. Free lodging, my own bed. My mother’s cooking. At meetings, they said to find a place where you’re comfortable. Where you could relax. Where you wouldn’t be tempted.

I lost my job to it. I felt the warmth wrap around my body until I felt again.
Until waves of light and sound passed over me, clouding everything I ever wanted. Until she ripped me from my nothingness. She saved me and I could not forgive her for it. After several meetings, I absolved her and she me. I learned the beauty of a close relationship with my mother and the tragedy of losing it. She says she gave up on me when I gave up on myself. Now we can’t even be in the house at the same time. She’s got a count on the days until I’m out on my own. A deadline marked in red on the calendar. April 18th: one year of my being home.

I was making progress. After a short detox at Brockton, meetings kept me in check. I went Monday and Wednesday nights, different centers, to heal as quickly as possible. I made friends. Jesse, thirty-something sales clerk at Talbots. Emily, a lawyer who once specialized in liquor licensing. Jonny, father of sons Kyle and Kevin. I came to trust these people with my secrets. I recovered with them, saw their progress pass mine. They left, all moved on in some way. I stayed, stuck in the borderlands of lives prior and present. All that’s been keeping me sane is the pickup basketball at the old high school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We play until the janitors kick us out. I’ve tried other places, church and rec leagues, but they’ve meant nothing to me. I’d play for a while, until all became mechanic. No fluidity, no improvisation. The strictness of classical music without any of the beauty.

She bought me new shoes, red and white Jordans, just like the old poster on my wall. Told me to get out of the house, even if you’re just going to the gym. Go every night, make some friends around town. She cried when she found out I quit going on the other days. Hated me staying at home looking at the television, staring at books I’ll never finish.

The first Tuesday of March, I left early to guarantee a spot in the first game. I walked outside to her car and felt the cold that shrivels up your marrow, shaking me awake. Too cold to think. The car struggled to start, puttering for a moment before turning over. I shivered on the stiff leather waiting for the car to heat up. I backed it up, hearing the crunch of tires on snow and drove off.

The gym doors were barely held open by an old sneaker in an attempt to keep the heat in. Not that it mattered. The gym’s insulation was horrid. In the summer, the walls sweat beads of hot, humid water. Now, they kept the heat on just enough to keep the pipes from freezing. I kicked my sneakers against the walls of the foyer to remove the dirty, blackened snow and entered the gym. The sour smell of sweat. Clothes from men in their 30s, 40s, 50s thrown carelessly along the walls. Coughing, cursing and the squeaking of shoes filled the air.

The earliest of the games were just beginning. Men ran the court in sweatshirts
and shorts to keep warm. I walked to an unoccupied corner and began to undress. Shorts under jeans like some superhero costume. Stretching, I felt the pain in my knees of games lost long ago. I threw my shoes on in haste to get in the next. I walked on to the court, blowing hot air on my hands to rush blood to them. An older man wearing a pair of fingerless gloves, announced the rules. Games to nine, by one's. No two's, Call your own fouls. Fifteen minute max. Winners stay on.

We ran and I felt my blood flow smoothly for the first time in four days. My mind went empty, thinking only of what was necessary. Which foot to jump off. Where to set picks. Who I could trust with the ball.

Then, some Junky stumbled in nervously. Itched his arms as some blind illness scratched at him from deep inside. I thought he was just getting out of the cold, wouldn't bother us. Don't worry about him, someone said and checked the ball in. We played and it was good.

An hour past and Junky was still sitting on the floor. Pulled off his coarse, blue jean jacket and threw it on the floor. A hypodermic, long and unclean, and the lighter to disinfect it, fell across the floor. He scrambled to pick them up.

His sneakers were blackened with mud. Old layers, black and dry, molded into the patterns of the sole. Colder, newer muck sludged on top. He kicked them against the bleachers to work out the filth, but only the new coating came out, leaving mud stains on the benches. Filthy knee-high white socks covered his ankles, the left all mangled to hell. Still, an outline of strength leftover in them. His gym shorts were ripped to shreds, holes large enough to see tracks above the knee. The waistband of the shorts was falling out, as if it had been removed and reinserted countless times.

Junky wore an ancient Celtics jersey, away, thirty-three. The green mesh freckled dark with spots of dried blood. Track marks splotched up and down his arms like cities on a road map. So many collapsed veins meant he probably shot up in creative places. High up on the inner leg where it meets the groin. In between his toes. His face hollowed from years of a life not meant for humans. Cotton-mouthed, gaping open like a catfish gutted. The skin was taut and leathery, as if being pulled from behind. Hair receding, some curls left in it.

Junky got up and walked slowly to the court. A player on my team had left and there was a spot. The man with the gloves checked the ball and we began to play. I passed it to him and he moved gracefully along the hardwood. Ten feet past half court, he pulled up for a shot. I expected the ball to land short because of his twiggy arms. But Junky scored, sending him into euphoria.
Italia
Kristen Schnaus
It was all beautiful. The leather, the tarry black rubber of the ball melted down, shot into his skin, back out again, and into the hoop. Hustling all over the floor, diving on the ball. Squirming on the ground with it in a state of ecstasy. I could see the ball flow from us, into his veins, whirl around and out and flush through the hoop. Seamless. We began to feed him, set picks and let him work through us. Enabled him to move with unexpected elegance and precision. If he went to college, he must have played. Only once, when he came down hard on the left ankle, did he seem human.

We won, the man with the cutoff gloves lost.
“Run it back. Same teams.”
I replied, “No man. Winners stay, losers wait.”
I disagreed with him, but wasn’t going to fight over it. The remaining players not in the gym couldn’t run with us. A congregation of the old, young, fat, weak.
We played until the janitors flickered the lights. Five minutes to get out. No exceptions. I began to leave, but Junky walked up to me.
“Hey man, c-can I get a ride? I walked here and hell’s freezing outside.” Long pauses between his words. Gravel in his voice, gap in his teeth.
“Yea. Wait here and I’ll meet you up front.” I was afraid if he walked out with me he’d jump me and take the car. Sell it to suit his needs.
I pulled the car around. He got in and the silence cut through the cold air. After a moment, I said
“Where you headed.” It wasn’t a question, I knew the answer.
“1874 Green. A couple streets down off-”
“I know where it is.”
At the first red light, he took off his jacket. I saw his arms again in the faded light. An abscess, self drained, hung on the inside of his right bicep like some ugly flower at its withering point. The sickly yellow-green of old bruises.
Bursitis swelled up his right elbow to the size of a golf ball. Scars everywhere, no tattoos.
He sat there all squirrely, his legs shaking on their own.
I asked him, “Where’d you learn to shoot like that?”
“Full ride at Temple, played a few years in Lithuania.”
I looked at him when he said it. He spoke with his eyes, the only life remaining in his face.
He bit down, hard, on the back of his hand, until the skin began to bleed a bit.
Blood was trickling onto the seat.

“Quit biting your hand. Blood’s getting on the car.”

“Sorry.”

“You’re itching. I know the feeling. You’re cold. Head’s rotting. Can’t think.”

“How you know? What do you do?”

“Not enough.”

I changed the subject.

“Where you from?”

Long pause. “Somewhere around here.”

“How long you been on junk?”

“Uhh.. seventeen years. Since I was twenty.” That put him five years ahead of me in school. Almost half his life on junk.

“Hey man, you wanna come to a-”

He knew what was coming and changed the subject.

“Where’d you do time. Walpole, Dedham?”

“Didn’t do time, got out clean.” He laughed.

“Look at you. Lucky man.”

He was right. I didn’t deserve it. Hot meals nightly. A mother who still loved me. I shouldn’t have been there but I was and felt the need to do something. “You want a ride next week?”

“Sure. Thanks.”

“I’ll see you twenty minutes to eight.”

We got to the house and he got out without saying another word. I looked at the house a last time before leaving. In the weak light, I saw a body sprawled out on the porch, nursing a feeling that had left my body, but hung in my head and veins. A phantom sweetness that will never leave me. I lingered for a moment and went home.

By Thursday, the snow began to melt. It coagulated with the sand and salt on the roads, making for a slushy, watery mud. I went out into the world. Windy. Big canvas colored boots on, sneakers in hand. Kicked them on the car door. In the relative warmth, the engine turned over easier. I drove off, hearing the sloshing tires on the road. A man walking his dog on the sidewalk. An early sign of spring.

I pulled up to the junk house and turned the car off. Half expecting him to come out in some comic routine, wholly expecting nothing. Weak light seeping out the upstairs window. I could not go in, so I waited. Ten minutes to Eight, I left.

At the old high school, I parked and tried to go inside. No sneaker to hold
the door open. But cars in the lot. No way they weren’t there, we even played on Christmas. I walked along the building, looking for the window the janitors left unlocked in case the wind slammed the door shut. It was there, some four feet off the ground. I squirmed in, leaving some mud on the windowsill. Shut the window and walked down the hallway. I stopped at the trophy display to see the picture from our state championship. Looking hard at the frame, I could see my own reflection in the glass. Pupils dilated like big, black saucers. Bad haircut, but I still had the same face. Softer from fewer years of wear. In the picture above mine, I saw him smiling in the back row. Gap toothed even then. Arms wiry, but strong. Good looking kid. An effigy of his old self now. His name was listed in the plaque below. The letters etched in bronze faded into memory. Earl “Bird” Something.

I heard the high squeak of sneakers and the dull sound of a dribbling ball and moved on. We played and it was good. Although I expected him to show up halfway through. He didn’t.

At a pause I asked the man in the fingerless gloves, “Where’s that Junky?”

“Dude in green? We haven’t seen him in about year before Tuesday. Comes and goes I guess.”

On Saturday, his body was found in a convenient store bathroom. Police report read: Male, white, overdosed in bathroom of a 7/11. Clothing: Celtics Jersey, Away, Thirty-three. Gym shorts, black. White sneakers.

I went to the store Tuesday on the way to the old high school. I got the clerk who found him. Young kid, he didn’t need to see that. He saw Junky enter the bathroom hurriedly, practically running. After thirty minutes or so, the kid checked on him. He knocked, no response. The kid entered, saw his body laying on the cold linoleum, his arm wrapped off with the string from his shorts. Eyes empty. The same clothes as when I left him.

I said to the kid, “I’m sorry. You didn’t need to see that.”

“Hey it’s not your fault.”

“I don’t know. Might be.”

I apologized again, bought some water and drove to the old high school.
Ode to an American Pastime

Johnson Hagood

come to me,
a totem of my culture
a convergence of historical influence
a culinary artifact of human nature

speak to me of British colonialism
speak to me of Harper’s Magazine
1866, “morning noon and night”
speak to me of the ancients
first cooking their food with oils

this should be Buffalo milk
this should at least be spun and cut
“low-moisture” is a term
I do not wish applied to my food
so scientific and rough
it bruises my gastric sensibilities

speak to me of food services industry
the military-industrial complex

and industrial agriculture,
an oxymoron if I ever heard one
describe, if you can
(and I think you can)
a people defined
by the desire to have.
the cholesterol and saturated lipids
needed to sustain a man for a month
I will consume ten times over in a day
a joke, really, a prank played on us
by evolution and our excessive cleverness

come, O Mozzarella stick
speak to me of days past
tell me, if you can,
how you came to be

Ceci n’est pas une mozzarella stick
Floodlight and Rotisserie Chicken

Andrea Puentes
Death has a four-point-ohh fuck it

Trevor Flynn

Jack took me at knife-point to breakfast. I make it sound edgy but it really wasn’t, it was just Jack having taken three doses of his meds at once after not sleeping for two days. I had been trying to decide what poem to talk about in class on Wednesday; a simple thing, but I wanted to read the whole damn anthology. It seemed I should take the whole night to make a decision. I still wanted everything, but Jack especially wanted breakfast. So we walked down and out with our hoodies on and the cold night air always smells like firewood, why is that? He had a Harry Potter audiotaape in his car and we were in the Forbidden Forest on our way to the breakfast place. Hagrid was acting suspicious. He had put the knife away after I agreed to go, after that he was calm, if still wanting to salute the world. He wanted it to be like we were high and heading into Vegas with all the significance and glory of Hunter S. Thomson. When the first place was closed we just went to the other one and Jack parked on the other side of usual, and when we went in the place was near-empty and the staff was jacking around talking about bad Will Ferrell movies. Our waitress cooked our food, she was sweet and I looked at her ass when she moved away just for the hell of it--I don’t usually do this. I knew it was my fault, it was because I hadn’t called Jack’s bluff. He wouldn’t have stabbed me and I could still be at home with some semblance of concentration and microwave dinners. I sighed and threw the cream into my coffee. Jack loved me and he said so, all the time. I’ve started missing people, though; it’s always the cold. There was something about the way Jack pushed the fork around his plate and we saw our futures in the grease, so I started feeling poetic. I said, “Jack, I think the coffee is getting to me.” He didn’t even hear me. We gave a toast to death and ate our toast and we talked about why I hated the third Toy Story movie and he thought it was an epic treatise on mortality. We were college students, after all.
The Bunnies
Katrina Lichtenberg
Interweave
Rachel Matthews
Scratching

Emily Allen

The television says hottest summer since 1983, and suddenly anytime I am driving anywhere, the backs of my knees shoot little marbles of sweat down my calves.

Funny what you don’t notice until someone points it out.

Casey Anthony is a name I never needed to hear, and July, measuring its days out over and over me, doesn’t care. Even with its feverish hand across my mouth I try to quietly applaud myself for how little I know about why she has this whole hissing country rising to its feet, barefoot on hot concrete.

but can only think of the concrete hot and approaching fast that met the head of the man who was reaching out over the railing to catch a baseball for his son, who I am hoping did not see the footage replayed in the following days. The footage they aired as a reminder of what can happen when you want something just a little too much.

If the TV stopped, I would lie on my back and scratch my bug bites and eventually forget that people die —not as a general rule, but even on days when the sky is so stridently blue and unlatched.

And we just can’t seem to find enough clothes to take off to feel okay in this heat.
Whale Song

Stephanie Jutras

I suspected that there were only so many ways to start a sentence, so I set out to exhaust them. But every five minutes, I clammed up and wondered, *If I leave sand under my tongue, will a pearl form in time?* When I tried it out, I realized that I had something to say, that pearls were not a worthy cause for stagnation. *This,* I declared, *is where yellow is made.*

I write the infinity sign on my wrist as I make my way to the port. All along the sidewalk, surrealists meditate on the color blue. The man on the corner is a pole. The old lady beside him speaks her native language, *Me da angustia.* *Me da angustia.* This is the color of assumption.

In times past, I sent empty envelopes without any stamps. I heard the snores of sleeping ghosts. Only they could tell me the truth, so I dropped my pen and washed my hands. Everything was yellow and blue.

At the port, I sit and twirl my pen. It has a third eye, and it tells me that God is a whale, the Supreme Baleen, the Big Beluga. The lady from the corner follows me. We turn around and bow to the lit-up “don’t walk” sign. We bow to the thing that won’t rot. *Sobres sin sellos,* the old lady says. She holds up blank envelopes. She won’t get anywhere without red lipstick.
I became an apostate apostle while walking foreign streets. The taxi driver laughed at me when I asked him to take me away. Be careful if you’re going to Africa. Be quiet if you’re going to France. The man on the white train was smiling too much. They don’t do that if you take the bus.

Giants with spears stab at the ocean, trying to pluck us from our boat. When their minister lies, he speaks his native language. He blames us for his sins, but the Fall is what happens each morning when you wake up expecting to be evil. The old lady jumps overboard. She wants to know if there’s an afterlife. Me da angustia. Me da angustia. It causes her anguish not to know. The giants fish her out of the sea. The algae are greener than envy or love.
Fantasmas dormidos, the old lady says, as we lie in bunks beneath the deck. *We are sleeping ghosts, and no one hears our snoring. No one reads our letters.* The giants’ minister comes to read us bedtime stories. He is on his way to Barcelona. He will marry people. He will bury people. It’s not a religion if nobody dies. He is new to Spain, his teeth tombstone gray.

La Fe was a street that did not cross Calle Silencio, and the man who was a pole used to carry his cross between Pascal’s Wager and Occam’s Razor. *Un acto de caridad,* he begged. *A few little coins for milk.* I spent those days in medieval cathedrals. Speak heresy there, and you’re blessed with gold coins.

There are no whales in these waters. The giants have seen to that. *It causes me anguish,* the old lady says. *Me da angustia. Me da angustia.* The wheel of life holds a thousand gospels, and she tells me she’ll live forever. *There are many names for God,* she says, *but we’re all named me inside our heads.* Whales see more than black and white.
Humanity
Mallory Conder

He buries teeth in flesh, severing bone sinew blood.
Beady eyes darting directions. Swallow the flesh whole.
An entire race expands: Listen breath listen breathe.

There will always be teeth.
There will always be flesh.
There will always be greed.

Twin Towers of Meat
Andrea Puente
The Ides of March
Trevor Flynn

were beautiful in Rome too, I’m sure.
where blood filled in the sidewalk-cracks,
and “honey let’s paint the town”
rang with laughs at points of daggers.

Shakespeare could be dramatic
so I’m taking that license too.
slipping down the crimson steps away from
you my Brutus, my courage, my shy crying cat,

I’m aching and taking your name back.
my lips snarling at the corners of a harmonica,
knowing the blues are not enough to fill a rose
---to kill the color and mock its cause.

“I am Cinna the poet” one of them said,
he and his songs dyed red.
Process

Matthew Stigler

The flails we hold are handmade: the leather is torn from the hides of the meekest cattle, the limb it wraps around is from a tree that fell when not an ear could hear its timber, and the stone spikes are water formed stalactites concealing layered ages of silt and stone. We name them “knowledge,” “criticism,” “pride,” “work.” We scourge ourselves and tear into the flesh and I cringe with each lift of my arm in preparation for another round. We apprentices are less scarred, our blood comes easier, but we quit sooner.

I end tonight with the knowledge that I will be examined tomorrow. Have I bled enough? Will I be accepted and learn to scourge with greater effect? Will I have the chance to turn my flesh into the strokes of a painter? Here a leaf, a tree, a bonnet, a sheep, the crashing wave on baked sand. They might make me a corporeal sculptor, depleting myself until I am marble.

I don’t clot like I used to, the platelets are becoming less common, but I know I should bite into my flesh again and edit my body more. Instead I have collapsed. The warm scarlet fluid pooling around my chest lulls me to sleep.
Iris

Elisa Reyna
In Bali

Emily Allen

The girl will be in Bali when her brother Max shoots himself. He will drive out for a few hours from their house in Petaluma, a small northern California town that, given its relative obscurity, can impressively boast as the filming location for such American classics as Scream and Flubber, and after parking at a rest stop and walking into the forest, will stand in front of an oak tree, put a small, cold pistol in his mouth and end his life.

She will be studying abroad in New Zealand, and in the break between semesters will go to Indonesia for a month before her flight home to California. Travelling alone and on a frugal budget, she will not learn of his death until three days after it happens when she finally has internet access. She will have just come from Flores, an Indonesian city so named by the Portuguese who settled there. Having found Bali too commercial and touristy, she will be sad to leave Flores, where time is slowed down to match the balmy, thick air and old women on the street smile at her from faces that are creased and tan.

In Bali, between a restaurant and a hotel sits a warnet—the general name for Indonesian internet cafes—with concrete walls and a concrete floor. Escaping the humidity, she will enter the building around four o’clock in the afternoon, and her sweaty skin will prickle under the cool blast of air conditioning. This warnet is owned by a young man, maybe a few years older than her, and his sister. The young man will remember the girl from four weeks earlier, when she argued with him about the internet price he was charging. They will smile at each other as she sits down in front of one of the black Dell computers that line the wall. The only other person in the store will be another man, possibly American, sitting two computers away to her left, and when she begins to cry his facial features will arrange themselves into an expression entirely new to her-- a bewildered tension between guarded politeness and sympathy.

Before this exchange, she will log into Facebook, trying to ignore the tinge of guilt it usually elicits. When she first left for New Zealand, she deleted her account that she already had, severing ties with all of her friends back home in Petaluma and from school. She had wanted to feel completely apart. Despite this, after her first semester abroad, she found that she needed a way to stay in touch with the new people she was meeting, and made a new account for her new life. Her friends at home don’t know, and they will not find out unless she tells them, but she feels
guilty nonetheless as she thinks of them. However, this guilt will subside as she directs her attention to her original reason for logging in, the Scottish boy she met back in Dunedin, who was at least 6’2 or 6’3, who in her memory has become more and more attractive since they parted, and who, when she was in one of her moods, had once asked her, his eyes unfenced and brown, “Have you ever let yourself be totally, actually happy?”

A few minutes later she will log out of Facebook. She will find the email from her mother saying to call her, and she will know why because of the email from her friend that she opens before that, the one that will say “I just heard about Max and I am so, so sorry.” In the following days and weeks there will be many other emails like it, but it will occupy a unique position as the first, and it will also be remembered as the only one that actually says his name.

Hanging Keys
Katrina Lichtenberg
I Couldn’t Draw You

Elisa Reyna

I couldn’t draw you,
I couldn’t.

The perfect features of your face,
The slowly curving lines
Of your throat
I feared to distort.

The sweet contours of your neck
Begged to be touched
By human hands,
Not cold lead.

How sinful to defile
The golden radiance of your flesh,
To imprison your soul
In a frame.

My hand trembled,
Pencil in hand
Horrid vague lines
Invaded my blank page.

I erased them.

What has the world become
When the artist can no longer paint
A beauty before her?
This being that silences brushes,
Halts pens and pencils mid-line.

I couldn’t,
I couldn’t draw you.
I will define grace when I discover it

Abigail Loar

You withdraw from yourself.
“I know,” I respond. “It’s a defense mechanism.”

An expert on the works of the famous French theorist Michel Foucault, Paul Rabinow summarizes the crux of Foucault’s argument as follows: “to detach oneself from oneself – such a distance enables motion.” I should not be surprised that Foucault resonates with me, for I have spent the last nine years of my life trying to live in motion. I learned that the world does not wait for us to remember to walk again when we are thrust to the ground. And so now I move always in a thousand directions, shattering hard into my many walls to feel present. I don’t know how to live beyond this momentum; I’ve always looked to my scars and bruises for identity.

Michel Foucault himself represents a significant shift in social theory. He is emblematic of the transition from a classical theory that focuses on an innate Enlightenment “Man” existing outside of the scope of history and society into a more contemporary theory that divorces itself from any such conception of innate man. Instead, contemporary theory sees identity as being inextricably linked to the context of any historical moment. It examines the process by which humans become subjects in the world and essentially reduces identity to a collection of social constructs. Gender, sexuality, religion — we are creatures consumed with categorizing our world into either this or that. We forget that building fences always leaves somebody on the other side, and so in our attempt to organize the world, we have only managed to splinter it.

I am female. (social construct)
I am heterosexual. (social construct)
I am Christian. (social construct)

But still — I am. I am. I am. I think we are all just struggling to finish that sentence. Although the weight of his work has the capacity to destroy the worlds we live in, Foucault did not fracture my identity; he simply showed me the pieces of my life that were already at odds with one another.

I lost God a long time ago.
On the evening of November 23, 2011, I attended church for the first time in longer than I’d like to admit. It felt like as good a time as any to begin to reconcile my relationship with God. I feel like Him and I stand on opposite sides of a door, and sometimes it is hard to tell who is not letting the other in.

Almost four years ago to the day, I closed my eyes and let go of the wheel on an icy road because I was so afraid of what might happen next. I still fall asleep with too much on my mind. I am not sure if I am trying to grasp sanity or stability, but it is a hard line to walk between disappointment and dissatisfaction - something like steering a freight train through the thick black fog of night. There is that momentum again, the force I cannot constrain. Too many mornings I wake up in the wrong place and pretend it somehow makes sense. I’ve come to know madness as a pocket with a hole, and I’ve come to know the world as maddening. I handle my own burdens by shouldering others’. I pray that this will make me a better mother one day. I would be lying to say that I could manage it all. I lie a lot. I scour the page day after day for identity, but deep down I think I’m searching for the courage to be honest.

In 2000, a preacher’s daughter tells me that I am to go to Hell because I haven’t been baptized. This is the first day I have ever contemplated God as vengeful or unjust. This same year I am given the sexual education talk at school. The boys and girls are put into separate classrooms. It doesn’t matter – we all talk during recess. They show us videos, talk about all of the “private” areas. My best friend at the time looks at me with disgust in her eyes and whispers in my ear, “Did they say we bleed?” It isn’t until the afternoon that they finally allow for questions. When can we start wearing bras? When should we shave our legs? When will we get boobs? Periods? I don’t remember any of the answers, nor do I remember caring. Something heavier weighed on my heart. They call for one last question and I raise my hand. The action is completely involuntary, and I’m not quite sure where the question comes from. Why can’t some people have babies? “Many reasons,” they explain, but assure me not to worry. They say it is uncommon.

According to the CDC, nearly 10 percent of the American female population age 15-44 is infertile. That is 6.1 million women. I wonder if my trust issues are with God only.

Although September 17, 2002 preceded the recorded autumnal equinox by 5 days, it for me remains the date that the nights grew longer. That evening, as I return home from an errand with my brother I am told to join my parents in the
family room. They need to talk to me alone. I follow the only trail of light in the house and sit down with them. I remember my heartbeat as distracting, thudding hard against my eardrums, and having to concentrate especially hard to listen to what my parents have to say. My mother has been crying, and so my father begins. The words do not flow from the mouth of my father, though, they rather expel from some professional voice deep within. I am speaking to Dr. Loar. I am to see a doctor soon, a specialist, and so it is time I know. His words are not registering, but deep down I understand. I interrupt to ask if I can still have children. I try carefully to pose it as a question, but it’s hard to fake the inflection in my voice. The words echo back into my ears, finally hushed as my heart goes quiet. I can feel their remorse in the silence. It has been two years since my question in class, and I think I’ve always known. I suddenly feel much older, and I can taste the emptiness in my mouth. Strange the way the world can be destroyed in a single evening on the couch. In the darkest hours of that night, as I lied marooned in my consciousness while the rest of the world slept, I lost Him for the first time.

Proverbs 20:24 reads: “A man’s steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?” I have tried to find solace in this in the subsequent years as I yearn to rebuild my relationship, but I know the real foundation of the wall that stands between Him and I. I do not fear that He has an explanation for my situation. I fear that I will never be able to forgive Him for it. I am told recently that predestination is one thing and choice another. That while it is God who determines our fate, it is human beings who choose to deal with their situations, and ultimately God holds them accountable for the latter. This doesn’t seem fair. What would He say to me?

Female (femal’)
Noun
1. a member of the sex that produces ova or bears young
2. a woman or girl
(in the fleeting strength of a whisper she asks if she is only half-female)
Can He explain to me why I still dream of tiny fingers? I saw a pregnant woman the other day and she made me want children in my life. My hand went straight to my stomach, and for a breath I forgot the shapes I cannot take. Remembering the emptiness I carry is like being lost in the blackest night in a foreign land. It will always be a disorienting sort of devastation.
The Mythology of Stars I
Caitlin Taylor
First Sight
Catherine Norman

i lay
down
down in the cool
cool green grass and
stare
at my one
my only
sun

it is rising
He is rising

up and over this valley of shadows
where i reside

He has come to teach me,
teach me how to see
see past the tendrils of darkness
that clog my vision

i normally hide in them,
these shadows,
taking no notice
of their existence

theyareme
iamthem
that is all that matters

but not today.
not to Him

He is peeking out,rays shining forth.
i am cowering,
fear shaking these bones.

the light has never touched me
Until now
Until this step

i close my eyes,
feeling it run all over me
delicious

i lose track
of that slippery element, time
lost in that sunshine

soon, soon
i open my eyes and
finally see what he sees,
what they all see
what i am

i scream and scream and scream
burning with the knowledge that can
never
be
unknown
Outward Gaze
Rachel Matthews
cry baby
Nikkin Rader

George:
Gods don’t even think hell looked like this but then again the other worlds ain’t
got shit on us. We go eat sluts and rub their butts and come out hoping all dope’s
free and wine can be turned into water because we’re antichrist, duh. I think
you’re awful purdy and I may cop a feel as I push you to the pavement and hope
it splits that purdy blonde ‘cuz red always made yellow look more like the sun.
But blondes, I know why not I have this fetish, maybe I be semi-nazi semi-
swedish, or some fucking Barbie pedophile who stalks toy stores with a jerking
coat pocket in the princess aisle. Either way they always scream the purdiest
and I swear I hear angels in their cries. The lies they will spray is but bliss to my
dick, please I won’t tell please I’ll do anything. I just want you to know how
purdy you are and to be honored with placement on my wall. I have the finest of
blonde hairs in all of America tacked to my wall, wads, braids, strands, clumps,
I think toads are for licking and lips are for sucking but you know that too. So
I leave ‘em and squeeze my nuts blue for some time ‘cuz blondes are dogs in a
pen waiting to be put to sleep. We all just need a little help to get through the
insomnia of life to find the sleep. I just help them sleep better.

Anne:
Creepers slept in Madison Park with their laces untied and their shit in their
pants and when I pass by I always have the urge to spit on them. I don’t know
why, but I feel like it’s the least I can do, I can offer them some liquid sustenance
or some shit. My spit is worth more than change. Spit is rain of the gods that
make seeds open and the green comes out and it makes god angry so he shines
the sun hotter so it fries up and browns and yellows and bruises and the seed
is just like any other rock now infertile with fidelity and loyalty to the system
because it thinks nature is right. Nature is king of killing. So I bent over this
chap with chapped lips and I delicately maneuvered a nice bubbly wad of mouth-
cum into the trembling gape of his slumbering lips. I smiled. Sometimes it feels
better than sex.
George:
Paint with red red red red red red red red red red red red red red red red red, I like to be blue balled when handling them dead, these blondes are now blue skinned and orange haired with rogue, and I vogue vow slow down and crow on roofs of sin, I vow this red paint will lessen them from blue to clear because once all the life juice is out of the body the soul is free and the pigment disappears and the body becomes the air. I know. I know. Red red red. I believe the cranium works best when you deprive it of sleep because then you really think and blink to reality because that's when the children are louder and the hairs stand up because the soul is permeating from you and connects to the molecules of every little particular particle nearby and then you are one whole and that deep hole is nice for the squeezing and seizing and slumping and humping because the cold dead always felt better.

Anne:
Paint with blue, purple, green, yellow, blue, purple, green, yellow, blue, purple, green, yellow, fellow, mellow, bellow me out and timbers me fall and stretching to call and trying to doll to find you to touch you to hold you to kiss you my face is now blissful for you are to sickle to fickle to dickle and pickle my ears, I find joy in your tears and I cum to your leers, I fight til the night is black and blue from the sores and I lie to the gods because life was a whore to neatness and fakeness and pretty girls and guys that lie in bed cry in bed and whisper their sweet lies, they play in bed stay in bed and do not ever cry, they bit that lead ate that head with metal toys of the dead. I cannot help trying to get taller these days too, I stretch them legs break them bones as skinny asian girls do, I hump that frog bite that dog's ear to show him who's boss, this hoe's got the hose that's spraying prostitutes down the clymedia, I said kid yea let's hit the blow and s'go down to the river where the children bury their pets and lets dig up the cats and dogs and make a tea party for the lost souls and drowned Indians in the ponds nearby when our daddy's daddy's daddy was trying to secure his good ol' red white and blue land of the eagle and sluts of the brave that bend over to the tanks and take it up the fountain of truth. Blue, purple, green, yellow, you good sir hello; I. Want. You. More than We do.

George:
The gray of the day came again and it hung in the rosemary and the cross of our fathers and forefathers and godfathers and we think damn we need more of them and less pussy because bitches always be whinin’. Why can't a braud just chill out
and stop screaming for once? I really don’t think she can hear me anymore with that
mildew mold in her ears and maggots in her eyes and scars on her thighs and the
sky was still gray. When she was around it was blue but the world went gray since.
And each blonde makes it a little brighter for a moment, their sun with red and gold
makes me wanna gag the president and marry off his children to the gremlins that
live under sixth street. I could spray all day I ain’t afraid I’m the fucking tomcat
that got into your garden, your house, your attic, your cunt and made the dogs turn
into dead lice on dead mice in London. I like to read these bed time stories before
I dream because then the gods talk to me. Good night momma. Good night Jesus.
Good night Annie.

Anne:
Fuck these dreams and hopes and schemes and faggots lit on fire in our mouths
puffing because sticks are for witches and stones are for bones on crosses. I mean
come on, it was a fucking Sunday, and I couldn’t stay out all night. But I loved the
street lamps. Street lamps and mossy soggy trees. I feel fine and I think the horses
feel fine. I only shot their ankles. And they stopped naying now. I think they’re
fine. I love these street lamps.

George:
I want to implode in these hauntings I love these dreams of creams and lemons and
limes and fluorescent tastes that tickle the inside of my cheeks with their cancer
and quick agement. I feel the cherry and the grape of the blunt but I feel the sickly
trigger of honesty when it twitches from the eye sockets to the mouth pockets that
drop licks and kicks to the hearts and groins because their words are too much. I feel
them tight butts and latch onto cuts in the pelvis and slivers on the ankles because
their knee high socks are too moist. Rejoice they will call and hail hoist up them
drawers and your worm is inside where he bites and he cries and its gray still this
day. Too tall and too grave.

Anne:
They don’t stop but I feel the beat they don’t stop but I feel the beat and the cretins
of the slutty night are out, strutting their legs and panties in a clod up their twats
because they ain’t fancy they just playas that like to hump any tree that moves
because we tree hug and the slugs are listening in the creek because what else have
they got to do in your bed of flowers that are gray and gold and teal because of the
rain. It doesn’t rain here anymore but that’s okay it used to always rain away rain all day in my old mind, I like them girls though with their legs and panties but I don’t really care to be all up on them all up e’er’day in that universitay. Milky way go away into nothingness, being stardust no less makes us cringe when a star dies, it’s our mother and she knew better. She knew more than father because he just kept on running along, endlessly ticking while the freckles kept kissing our faces because mother loved us so. We woed when she died though but father kept on going, time never stops, but the universe implodes once upon a time. I hate you girls with no legs and no panties, it’s all about the legs and panties, mother, didn’t you know? I am all legs and panties. These grannies even know what’s up, all fucking hitchin’ up their britches ‘n’ shyt. Shit. I wanted new drugs, these ones get old and the bones know them too well so the magic doesn’t set sail to the mind, unleashing the toxic
chemicals of love and beauty and colors of the mental and the horrors of the cripple come out because of good times and bad nights. I need a new drug to push into my skull because the thoughts and memories are creeping up again. We cannot have that we mustn’t. We shan’t. Fuck that shit, repression for tha blessin’ and Jesus knew too. I called Harry and he sent out his man with the goods, the new goods, and an hour later I had the needle between my toes and the woes were evaporated and the chills settled in their place. Shake shake pulse shake. Feel the heart? It doesn’t want to move so it thumps slowly and tries to roll down the hill where Jack pushed Jill because it’s gunna jump on Jill and make her feel his girth, Jack hits his smack and Jill’s on the pill so babyhood ain’t no problem. We rob them and crawl in their bosoms where their souls reside because we like to suck them with bendy straws and these empty walls are no longer cold but warm with the happiness of the world. Baby I feel the breath of the sun more when it’s night and the stars don’t shine no more in the city because the windows are barred and the police lights never dim out. It always looks like Christmas here with the flashing troll la la and fa la la merry days and baby jesus and happy times to you and jews have eight candles that make for a nice light in the night to sanctified glory and inner dwellings. I want to thank the angels when I hear the sirens because it’s them screeching with eager to see the demise of humankind. I think they would eventually learn to like the rapings, because what else is there in life besides that and the same gray peeling wall? Good morning world it’s the day before tomorrow but it won’t be for too much longer. I grew taller in the night I think and I stretch the phalanges on the bedsheet and wonder about the grass. Grass was green but in the city it’s black and we hack on it more to add to the misery and muck. I do love the city though because everything glows and is bright and can make you forget.

George:
Hail mary mother of god the lord is with ye and I want to climb into your skirt and breathe you in and never awaken to this gray. I love when the dawn hasn’t come yet but the night is almost gone and the stars are lost and fading away and screaming because they want to shine a little bit longer, they want to be seen by everyone for just a moment more, but the sun doesn’t care and empowers us devils. Tell me your name and you give me your soul and I can hold the stars against you and we will be married by the end of the night if you just say you will hold me. Oh sissie Annie I want to squeeze your neck shut and watch your eyes bulge out and pop into a hue that drowns the gray away and brings the rain upon our failures. I was out on
the road when I passed two dead horses with their ankles blown off and I smelled her. Annie was near, the purdiest of all. Finally father has made our paths meet, the timing gave an erection to the moon because it wanted to bathe the sweet land of our youth and spoiled vegetables in the gardens of eden because bitches always be eating the apple that held the worm of real life that squirmed in your mouth because these minutes these hours these drinks and these winters these streets and these people are all just asexual worms wriggling in your oral vicinity clinging to your teeth and burrowing into your tonsils and making you spew shit up on a mic like you know how it goes and have something real to say because we all know your worms your words mean nothing. You are full of earth shit and the dirt is falling from your lips, pink and brown like the womb our lord and savior came from. Are babies like zombies, crawling climbing out of the moist dark hole from their graves because death is life is death is dead horses and dead girls and purdy heads and sweet sissie Annie and I was running and I was coming and I was almost to god then because the lord knows where we will all go and where we will all woe and crow until we go toe up and know the alley cats and the stray children that dig in the heaps of puss and old lettuce looking for some love at the bottom of an empty cereal box. I’m coming.

Anne:
I linger the finger on the wing of a dead bird and chirp along with its last song that rings on in the wind. This earth carries the dead souls in the wind and that’s where babies actually come from, when a soul decides to stay in the body it was passing through. A baby. A dead baby. It wasn’t a baby yet, a human half-tadpole half-frog, it was just a coat hanger away from misery but luckily I saved it the trouble. We weren’t sorry though because shit has to go when it ain’t wanted, dumpster babies are the same things as bad eggs, spoiled goods too rotten to keep, I knew the devil was inside that child the day it first moved. Bad baby bad egg bad hen bad sin win win win I live it dies and nobody cries because our eyes are in a drought. We come in and go out in the world so fast as it is, the baby ain’t missin’ shit. The wind went through me but I killed that soul. Resurrection is for the weak. Street lamps rape the sidewalks with a flickering yellow that tells of lost souls and winter nights when I was the sidewalk and he the lamp. I love street lamps. I love their anger. The moon was dim tonight and the street lamp was radiant. A golden savior for the flock, come lead your sheep over the edge and into the falling the fallen the fall. I sat on the bench where I spat part of my soul into that hobo’s face-hole and I wondered if
another star would fall tonight. It was time for a funeral.
George:
I saw the sun on a bench under the street lamp. I saw god there too, with his cowboy hat and socks and sandals. The wind cried along with the cats in heat and I smiled. I was the shadow of the tree over her breast and scarred clavicle. I breathed my lust on her neck and blew hatred in her ears. I sang hymns of dead slaves and blues of burnt jews and I was a bird in her window and a butter in her fly that was unzipped and torn panties and forgotten afternoons with a smothering pillow and a plate full of cookies still warm from the cunt cooked at bitch degrees fahrenheit beneath a moody Monday numb ways and dumb sprays of the tongue still this jabber slugs on and I tickled the throat of her sanity.

Anne:
Gods don’t even think hell looked like this but then again the other worlds ain’t got shit on us. We go eat sluts and rub their butts and come out hoping all dope’s free and wine can be turned into water because we’re antichrist, duh.

**Passion of a Body Builder**

*Leon Dacbert*
It Feels Like Jackson Pollock’s Number 8

Abigail Loar

I know two selves -
vivacity and dissatisfaction.
I forge my way. Lose it again.
It’s like watching the freight trains at dawn.
Sometimes you just have to ease into the destruction.
Write a soliloquy for the right side, the left side, the suicide,
and smatter it all in paint.

He wasn’t afraid to destroy the image
because the painting had a life of its own.
Something about maintaining contact,
no mention of control.
Know thyself. Touch feet to earth.
I still forget the difference.

I can feel Number 8 on my eyes. The torment
of chaos uninvited. Rub my memories along the canvas
and feel the rockiness. That September gray
when I first lost the magic. But as I look a little closer,
feel a little deeper.
The blind man in love with the dancer.
The seven footprints circling a center.
Spider lilies and the holy cross.
A summer without a child, the fragility of both.
The romance in the lower right. The forgiveness.
I still forget the difference,
but I see it all.

I weave feathers into my hair
in case I ever need to let go.
Cypress leaves and river bed

John Dean Domingue
A dragonfly landed on my chest,
its body like fine royal linen
Eyes the color of my heartbeat

It examined me,
scrutinizing the folds of my skin
soaked with sweat.
It appraised me
as if my chest was the shore
of some new continent
I thought of Columbus,
His hard stare as he looked over
those first natives,
his gaze searching for weakness.

We met in that moment,
eye to prismatic eye
and I thought of you.

I shuddered, shaking it off
In a full-body twitch.

Dragonfly
Jake Muncy
Come here and lay thee down to rest
As vision fades to tunnel, bright
The ground turns cloudy 'neath thy feet
To feathery wisps of soft and light.

A figure comes that casts no shadow,
Its face obscured by draping hood
Kneels at your side with loving gladness
To rob you has no human could.

Gently shifts your dirt-clogged body
So that you more neatly lie
Stops a moment and beholds you
With a proud, possessive eye

Round your neck there hangs a collar
That you never knew was there
Dogtags dangle, rusty, on it
From the war 'twixt foul and fair.

He reaches down to seize these emblems
Yanking hard to break the chain
Now 'cross your breast he drapes a banner
So you blaze bright; he bears your name.

The years have dealt him many names
Though none communicate his light
He is Pluto, Hell, and Hades
Adonai, Grim Reaper in White.

Come unto me, for I bring rest
For those who lose their life to me.
from Decaydence
Amalya Haver, Andrea Puentes, Rachel Matthews, and Kristen Schnaus
Writing is easy. You assure yourself of this once more. You just have to sit down and put your hands on a keyboard and suddenly words appear on the page. At least, you think that’s how it works. That’s how it worked last time, so why not again?

You sit down and open a fresh page on the computer. Man, there’s more white on a blank page than you remember. But you’ve been writing since you were in middle school and your parents and friends always told you how good you were, so you know you’ll write out another one just fine. And it will be brilliant.

You size up the page for five minutes and play with the font sizes, especially for your title. Is it unprofessional to make your title larger than everything else on your story? You think your creative writing professor might have told you this but can’t quite remember because it’s 12:30 a.m. You tell yourself that you should start earlier in the future. Briefly, you consider just starting your new story in the morning, but resolve not to – you want to get at least five pages done before bed.

This work that’s bouncing around your head has only vague shape at the moment, but you know it will be profound and will say something original and enlightening about the human condition. It will have characters that are likable, but also very flawed and relatable; people will compare John to their fun, dopey uncles and emit side-splitting laughs when they read this story. It will be a novella; something between a short story and a novel and you will give it an experimental, innovative writing style characterized by a rhyme scheme that ends every paragraph and by Capitalization of powerful values or forces, like Love or Hope or Despair or Nature or Nothing. It will have varied sentence structure to keep things interesting. It will have exclamation points for emphasis! It will contain smart words like “idiosyncratic” and “phantasmagorical.”

You know these are all great ideas because your favorite book used them. You think you’ll call your story something snappy, preferably half of a common phrase, maybe like “An Apple a Day.” Suddenly, you realize you’ve been thinking about your story and not writing it, nor have you been for the past ten minutes. However, it would be a horrible shame to waste all this brainstorming. You open up another page, type in what you’ve been mulling over (complete with cool bullet points) and save it as “Apple a Day notes.” You realize that you forgot the word “An” at the
beginning of the document and failed to Capitalize “notes,” but just try to ignore these things. You will end up changing the document name later as a result of your horrible, perfectionist habits that you fear are evolving into OCD, or obsessive compulsive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder. But for the time being, you just close “Apple a Day notes,” already feeling that pang in the stomach over the naming error, and resolve to focus on “An Apple a Day” so that you can reach your four-page quota before bed.

Cracking your knuckles, you allow your fingers to hover over the keyboard. Suddenly, you realize you are very hungry. Knowing anything you write will be utter drivel unless you stop this nagging feeling of starvation, you get up to go to the fridge and quiet your growing stomach. First, though, you open “Apple a Day notes” in order to bullet in “drivel” and “nagging Feeling of starvation.”

When you get back from eating your sandwich, a half-full bottle of ginger-ale in your hand, you glare at “Apple a Day notes” and manage to close it without changing the file name. This instills a newfound sense of pride in you for combating your neuroses. Satisfied, you lean in to begin typing once again, ready to get your three pages for the night. However, you stop when you realize that you have trouble writing happy. The story is supposed to begin happily, get rocky for a little while, and end happily. But you are a writer, a maker of great art! Surely, you can overcome this hurdle and produce a fantastic, inspirational masterpiece of hope and joy!

After fifteen minutes of playing mine sweeper, you are no closer to completing the first sentence of your work, let alone a happy one. You briefly consider whether or not you have a fatal writing defect. Decide that anything is possible, but some things are simply not probable. Afterwards, look at a piece of your friend’s writing. Your friend likes writing, but is not planning on pursuing it as a career. However, there is that one thing that you read of your friend’s that was happy, uplifting, and well-written (not as good as yours, of course). Read it over to see if you can get any ideas, and type them into “Apple a Day notes” as you go along.

As you peruse the story, you do indeed get many ideas about how to write something happy and uplifting. Unfortunately, slowly the fact dawns on you that you will feel you are committing plagiarism if you so much as use any of the words that your friend used, eliminating such gems as “smile,” “went,” “she,” “he,” “I,” and “the.” In addition, begin to feel that your last piece, despite being much longer and more time consuming to write than your friend’s, is inferior in just about every way. You feel utterly impotent. Drink half a liter of ginger-ale in some misguided attempt to make yourself feel better. Wonder if your writing was better back in middle and
high school when you varied your sentence structure without even thinking about it, when your prose was more purple, and when you stuck to two things: description and violence. Consider whether you’ve been emulating Hemingway too much without realizing it.

It’s 1:45 a.m. You still haven’t written any of the two pages necessary before bed. You change the file name of “Apple a Day notes” to “An Apple a Day Notes.” Somehow, this only makes everything worse. You wonder if you’re a one-trick pony whose one-trick isn’t even very good. Briefly, resent people who write easily and well and then feel awful about resenting them. Realize that you would do absolutely no good in a zombie apocalypse and probably just get yourself, or maybe someone else, killed. This flushes a good deal of planning down the drain. Go into the bathroom and, once there, stare at yourself in the mirror. Feel like you’re doing all the wrong things with your life. This thought in turn, leaves you thinking that you never consider deeper meanings and important truths of life anymore in favor of the surface stream of sensations and experiences. Mull over whether or not you were a better human being in middle school. Decide you’re being overdramatic. Pray and determine that you need to really stay more focused on God and your moral obligations. Continue to believe that you are a horrible person who, in addition to failing to consider anything deeper than the surface level of life and being unable to love you neighbor very well, cannot write sentences that even make sense.

Feeling exhausted, head back to the patiently waiting computer to write that one page. Red letters reading 2:20 a.m. glare at you from across the room, leaving you to try to ignore them. Blearily wish for more ginger ale. Maybe you’re an addict. Tell yourself to man up and stop being self-pitying. Check Facebook to see if anyone has posted on your wall to ask you how you are, if any cute girls have proclaimed their undying love for you, or if anyone has made mention of how charming and witty you are. Encounter disappointment.

Make up a dozen first sentences, but decide each and every one is unsatisfactory. They are tried and found wanting. They are the chaff, not the wheat. They –

Tell yourself to stop making bad analogies and to write that half a page. No more excuses. After nearly falling asleep on the keyboard, excuse yourself for the night after writing that first sentence.

It’s not a very good first sentence; you are unhappy with it and think that it fits a horror story better than “An Apple a Day.” In your sleep-deprived, 2:45 a.m. mind, mull over the thought that maybe “An Apple a Day” isn’t what it is supposed to be. Decide to put off your inspirational, powerful, money-making story that
will cement your name in literary history for a little while longer. Decide to write a horror story (or at least something depressing), in the meantime, because writing those kinds of stories makes you happy.
one night

Trevor Flynn

poured on but would not flow
wrinkled every rooftop
came between and would not go
but it was only one night

broke up time without goodbye
laughed at love with show
spoke in rhymes that wouldn’t lie
but it was only one night

liked no other but its own
bit and slid and hit its head on clouds
cried when the stars left it alone
because it was only one night

who slept without the dew
chased down every candle-bearer
made a servant of the moon
rode dusty wings on fragile air
and threaded foul flowers all through its hair
Pyre

Johnson Hagood

slowly.
the light on the horizon disappears
and I forever leave behind
the cinders of the home I built
still pulling its long and painful
splinters from my bleeding palms
walking on battered feet,
weary legs

I do not turn back any longer
the contours of the fire
still seared into my eyes
flames that once reached to Heaven
belching up from the depths of Hell
a monolithic dancing tribute
to the fuel we gathered

so carefully and tenderly
did I construct my funeral pyre
only to climb down
dazed and barely alive

I believe you had the sense
to find your own way down
but I do not care to see
where your journeys take you

as I stumble down the highway
headlights approach
and I am illuminated
the light cleanses me
and I am made new
when she was very lucky

she would cease to exist
The Girl I Could Not Help

Stephanie Jutras

Upon waking, I briefly wondered if she had gone into hiding and the light behind her pillow was all that remained as the sheets trailed off her bed.

Her messes were compact but profound. A Pisa of papers tottered on her desk, and she might even have been to blame. She was the girl I could not help.

I found her sleeping on the sofa, and I didn’t know whether to smile or walk away. She used to think her dreams were there to keep her out of trouble.

Sometimes I look in the mirror and see her face reflected in my pupils. I almost make a fool of myself by speaking, but my voice is only good for lullabies.

There was sadness behind her smile as she played her toothbrush like a flute, and she said all the lights looked green if she moved her sunglasses the right way.

Ants were invading the kitchen again. I tried to yell at her, but she laughed like she did when I sang along with the radio. Your voice, she said, is not made for that.
The girl I could not help was the kind of girl who watched battles rage between the wind and nothing. Her favorite songs were the ones she did not know the meanings of.

She attributed her ADD to her artistic temperament. My creative juices are not from concentrate. She skipped church every week and sang songs of orchids and bears.

She hasn’t changed, but she is not herself now. I can only whisper and hum because she wakes up if you cry. The girl on the sofa is weeping, the girl in the pew is a dream, and everyone looks normal while they’re sleeping.
Today I Walked to Work

Paul Cuclis

Today I walked to work
for the first time.
Did they stare at me? I wondered.
Did they stare at the Gueilo? at the Waiguo ren? at the Foreigner?

An abandoned coffee shop sits by my apartment.
SPR coffee it says in white lettering, on a logo; round, black, and green.
A Starbucks lawsuit pending, perhaps?
Maybe it’s called copyright infringement in America,
but not here in Beijing, where different rules apply.
Here, it is just a coincidence.

A small child squats on the sidewalk.
Is she playing a game? Watching the ants crawl by?
No, she is urinating through the slit in her bubblegum pink shorts.
Mom waits patiently nearby, foot a’tapping, like she’s walking the dog.
Embarrassed, disgusted, I look away, but then again,
it must be a lot cheaper than diapers.

A fruit stand sets up, displaying alien things,
some furry red, others, mysterious black spheres that look like shot-put balls.
My nose wrinkles at the horrid smell, like rotted trash, emitted from something yellow and spiky.
But the vendor doesn’t seem to notice as he presents his wares with a wave of his hands.
Why was one of his pinky fingernails over an inch long?
The riddle was solved when he used it to pick his nose, very efficiently.

A brown and red blob lays discarded to one side,  
next to it is a bucket of multicolored bills.  
It was a man, burned all over, his hands melted into stumps like a wax figurines’.  
Terrible dark eyes stare, knowing something I never want to know.  
Don’t look back, don’t drop in a bill. Remember that article that said it’s bad to give  
them money.  
Just keep walking, please don’t let him see me. And it was I who felt ugly and  
shamed.

A man sits, knife in hand, protecting his watermelons with a sinister glare.  
His shirt is rolled up like a slutty teen girl’s, except that the roll rests on his mas-sive,  
naked pot-belly.  
An old man peddles by on his bicycle, toting a jangling cart.  
He opens its side doors like a traveling salesman,  
showing a compartment bursting with sharp, rusty tools.  
What could they be for? Do I really want to know?

Today I walked to work,  
I brought my camera this time.  
Would I see something new?  
Would I see something qiguai, something youyisi, something weird?

Terry sat alone at one of the coffee shop tables,  
he came from Belgium years ago, and had bought the abandoned SPR for a dream  
called Beer Mania,  
a place where anyone could sample gourmet beers from all over the world.  
Trashed by renovations, customers stayed away,  
but I liked to sit in one of its old chairs in the afternoon, and listen to his friends  
argue and joke in French,  
as I sipped politely at the horribly sweet mix drink he had so proudly named Little  
Terry.

Spongebob giggles Chinese characters in a speech bubble.
The cartoon jumps side to side from his perch on the backpack, as the little boy runs to catch up with father, who looks on affectionally. My picture caught him midair, in a limbo of frozen delight as he races against the wind.
It could have been a picture of any boy in the world, I realized, it could have been a picture of me.

The fruit vendor waved hello; his left hand’s digging tool hardly noticed. I bought the red furry ones, they were sweet and juicy like pears after I peeled off their bitter, hairy skins.
A deaf girl sits cross-legged, writing on the stone walkway a long narrow script with a piece of chalk. Her characters, uniform, precise, fluid, and beautiful. She screamed awkwardly when I took a picture, forming an X with her hands.
Dui bu qi, I’m sorry. I let her watch me delete it, and she forgave my sin with her smile.

The man with the burns sits, cooling in the shade. Intelligent dark eyes greet me, and I try not to look away. I wouldn’t dare stop to take his picture, but I drop a few pale bills. Xiexie, he thanks me warmly, his voice young, deep, and lovely. Bu ke qi, your welcome, and the words released in me the cold sweat of unexpected joy. And it felt as if I was the one being given something.

Ni hao! Hails the portly watermelon seller, his midriff as naked and large as ever. He demands that I sit and enjoy a slice of one of his juicy watermelons. The corners of his eyes crinkle with pleasure when he tells me how terrible my Chinese is, but he reassures me that if I practice I will be able to have a real conversation in two years. The old bicycle repairman peddles by, toting his tool shed behind. He grins and opens his cart to show me the new treasures he’s found on the side of the road.
Today I walked to work,  
for the last time.  
What will it be like to go back? I wondered.  
What will it be like to hui jia, to hui meiguo, to go home?  

Beer Mania sits proudly by my apartment,  
its shelves filled with 200 types of the finest beers in the world.  
Its sign sporting a new, and fully original logo to replace the Starbucks ripoff.  
On opening day, hundreds came to see to the Beijing Beetles perform.  
After the show, their Ringo Star and Terry couldn’t help laughing,  
when the drunken John Christobel decided to teach me how to speak with a  
“proper” Texas accent.  

Little hands draw all the support they need from the soft pads of a mother’s loving palms,  
as the toddler attempts his first, frail steps.  
Hen shuai, Very handsome, I say, and the toddler stared up,  
unable to comprehend my enormous nose, and strangely round eyes.  
Nali, Nali, says the young mother, humbly denying the compliment, as is the custom,  
but I saw her pride in the flush of her cheeks, and in the averted gaze that roamed away from mine.  

Li Chen stands by his fruit stand, he is waiting for me.  
Kan zhege! Look at this! he says, and he shows me his new Pink Lady apples,  
imported from the West.  
But the stall’s fuzzy lychees, mangostiens, and purple dragon fruits now look just as normal as an apple.  
The smell of the spiky yellow durian no longer makes me sick.  
“I saw a waiguoren, a foreigner rub an apple on his shirt before eating it!”, gossips Li Chen, appalled.  
“How unsanitary!” he exclaims, as he uses his elongated pinky fingernail to pick his nose once more.  

I see Jin Wei in the shade by the street corner.  
His burns no longer seem so unseemly, his dark eyes are kind.
I give him one of the pork dumplings I bought for breakfast,  
and he shows me the scrolls of elegant calligraphy that he had written with his foot.  
I take a picture of him next to his art,  
and he smiles a row of perfect, white teeth.

My friend Wang Jie sits lazily by his watermelons.  
It is hot, and we both roll up our shirts and expose our pot-bellies to the sun, his  
awesome belly dwarfing mine shamelessly.  
The old bicycle repair man peddles by, clutching a beaten up hockey stick and  
offering no explanation.  
Wang Jie and I watch him pass, before talking about art. I ask his friends about their  
opinions,  
but Wang Jie explains that his friends drink too much beer to have opinions, and we  
laugh until I tell him I’m leaving.  
He becomes serious, and he reminds me about my promise to return in two years,  
so we could have a real conversation.

I no longer walk to work,  
No one stares at me now.  
Will they miss me? I wonder.  
Will they miss their goumer, their pengyou, their friend?

I hope so.
Decaydence
Amalya Haver, Andrea Puentes, Rachel Matthews, Kristen Schnaus, and Taylor Dolan
curated by John Eric Bicknell
Snow White Wakes Up

Mallory Conder

His mouth was a weight
His mouth was
A magnet, Silence wrapped its
Slender arms around the two.

Winding through the dappled darkness
Of the patterned forest, gaps in the trees.
Silence flexes its fingers, tightens

She throws it in reverse, back
over the bridge, out of the scenic view. parking lot asphalt
cold, flat dead their meeting spot

spot their flat dead cold meeting,
asphalt parking lot, ick.
Over this scene, the bridge it out
She throws it back, in reverse

Flexing fingers tighten, silence.
Gaps of patterns in forest trees,
Dappled darkness winds through

In the car, around two slender arms
Silence clings, a magnet,
Was his mouth-wait.
His mouth was.
The Trees the Winter Painted Black

Samuel Jensen

When Hawk Donalds was five years old, her mother died. Her death was a loud death, one that took place behind closed doors, and behind the stern gaze of Hawk’s father’s glacier eyes. Hawk was relegated to the rug by the fireplace and charged with playing quietly, and she did so, trying hard not to listen to the screams and the heavy thumping of boots, the calls for hot water. She wanted desperately to help, though with what she was not quite sure, but even then she knew she was too small. Too small to heat the water hanging in the fireplace. Too small to boil the bloody rags.

Her father had ordered the midwives to hide those rags when they carried them out so that Hawk wouldn’t see, but she saw anyway. They spilled from the frantic women’s arms, bright red and dangerous, just as her brother spilled from Hawk’s mother that night. His screams pierced the cold winter air. The screams of Hawk’s mother weakly subsided.

The midwives and the doctor left with quick apologies and quicker feet, their heads bowed and their shoulders taut, as if they expected a beating. The crunch of their boots soon was gone, and the silence of the winter crept in in its place. That night, Hawk slept in her father’s arms, beneath the great bush of a beard that had grown that winter, despite her mother’s playful objections.

Hawk only saw her mother once before father covered her brown face for the last time. His sharp eyes softened as he did so; Hawk saw that too. She could tell that he thought her just as beautiful as the day he had stolen her from her father’s low house. Hawk Donalds disagreed, though she lacked the words to say so. Hawk Donalds thought she looked dead.

Wolf Donalds grew up with his hand encased in his sister’s. He was a gentle boy, doe-eyed like his mother had been, with hair as black as the raven’s feathers that
Hawk sometimes knotted into her hair. Hawk’s hair was the color of dirty fox fur, just a sliver of a shade dirtier than her father’s.

To Wolf, that color was his banner. He followed Hawk everywhere: around the house as she did chores, into the stable when she had to shovel out Pine-Tree Runner’s stall or milk the old cow that her mother had not lived long enough to name. Everywhere. Even when Hawk got tired of him and screamed to make him go away, he followed her. With tears flooding from his eyes and saliva dropping from his foothill chin, he followed her.

Their father was away for much of that time, between when Wolf learned to walk and when he learned to speak; hunting up in the snow-capped mountains or building down in the town when game became scarce. When he returned it was late at night, and his eyes were dark and his lips were in a grim, quiet line. His words were short. Terse. Sometimes, waiting for him in the quiet glow of the fire, with Wolf snoring in her lap, Hawk would forget what his voice sounded like. Those were the worst nights.

…

When Wolf was three years old, they held a funeral for Hawk’s mother. They had held one before, back when Wolf was still but a unmolded ball of flesh in a sling on his father’s chest; one with men and women from town and a Christian priest who spoke too much and said too little. But this funeral was different. A handful of dark-eyed men and sturdy women came down the mountain one day, people with strong jaws and skin darker than Hawk’s. She knew them by the tanned skins they wore, the pelts on their shoulders. Her mother’s people. Suddenly Hawk remembered being very small, clinging to her mother’s knees while she embraced and talked with such people. She remembered running in and out of their squat earthen houses, following a little naked boy who would not tell her his name.

But she remembered none of these who assembled quietly outside the house. She quietly sent Wolf around back, to get their father. Then one of the women spoke Navajo to her. She answered easily. Under her father’s orders, Hawk spoke only Navajo around Wolf, while father spoke only English. So that the boy would learn both, he said.

Hawk’s father had been chopping firewood before the dark clouds in the west could get to it. He came out with Wolf in the crook of his arm, looking tense, uncomfortable. He bequeathed the boy to Hawk and she took him dutifully out
of the way, to stand under the trees by the house. She tuned her ears carefully and listened.

They talked for a long time, in Navajo, father and one of the dark-eyed men. Hawk’s father could speak it, but she could tell he didn’t like to. He scraped his tongue against his teeth while the man asked about Hawk’s mother. Father gave short answers that didn’t say much while the rest of the men and women looked on with eyes sharp with mistrust.

When her father told the man that her mother had died in the house, the man yelled at him. Her father stayed quiet under his beard, his jaw clenched. You shouldn’t of let her die in the house, the man was saying. You should have taken her away to die. Two women scurried into Hawk’s cabin before Hawk’s father could say anything, pulling braids of herbs from their belts. They took them and burned them, walking from room to room. Hawk could smell it even from where she stood.

Then, like a flock of crows, the men and women gathered together around Hawk’s mother’s grave, forming a crescent of flesh and bone. Hawk’s father glared at their backs, then grabbed Wolf’s hand and took him into the house. He did not grab Hawk’s hand. She remained outside, alone. Soon she went and stood with the rest. They opened their crescent without a word, and they stood without a word. There was no praying, not even singing. Just silence. They let the wind speak for them.

And then they were gone. Hawk’s father did not come out of the house to see them off.

That night, the wind howled.

Hawk’s mother had named him Wolf, but years passed and his fangs seemed reluctant to sprout. He was a quiet creature, one who liked to watch his cold mountain world with welling eyes rather than take part in it. He was gentle and kind, too kind even, in Hawk’s mind. He would cry and cry for hours whenever she or her father would sit behind the house and gut the game they brought home. Wolf himself would not hunt.

In lieu of arrows and knives then, for Wolf there were words. Hawk’s father took him into his room one day and for hours they sat together, reading from the old Bible always lying on father’s bed stand. He said nothing to Hawk, did not invite her in, and she minded it not. She remembered when her Father had tried to read that thing to her, her on his lap, and him on the old stump that sprouted mushrooms from its bark in the spring. She remembered how angry he had become
when he caught her watching the kestrels roosting in the tall pines, how he had yelled. How her mother had born her back to the house in her warm, dark arms.

For if Wolf grew up quiet, Hawk grew up loud. She lived for running and leaping amongst the crags like a sure-footed goat, for climbing the mountain and feeling the cool New Mexican wind toss her hair savagely about. For these transgressions, Hawk grew up with constant scars on her pale legs and tears in her thick trousers, which her father sewed for her after she had fought out of enough dresses. For all her transgressions, she grew up with her father’s disapproving look cascading over her shoulders.

Hawk retreated to the snows and pretended not to notice.

…

When Wolf almost died the first time, he was seven. First it was a quiet dry cough that would issue from behind his little balled fist while he studied. It grew, and there were two coughs. And then three. And then the coughs turned wet. He lost the ability to breath, and then to walk. He grew weak and feverish; bed-ridden.

Ceaselessly, Hawk’s father watched over him, his rough fingers nervously
interlaced. He made broth seasoned with the herbs that struggled through the early winter snows, but Wolf did not improve. Everything they forced past his sweating lips went through his body too fast or came back up. His skin sunk to drape over his bones.

Money then was short. Doctors were fonder of their purses than their wives in the winter. Work disappeared when the snows came, and to search down in town was pointless. Hawk hunted every day just to keep herself and her brother and her father fed. She shot deer laden with shaggy winter coats, and dug through snow drifts to reach rabbits sleeping in damp holes warm from their body heat. She broke their necks while they slept.

It was during one of these hunts, with her father and Wolf waiting at home, when Hawk almost died the first time. She was an hour from the cabin, two rabbits slung over her shoulder, when she heard it; the sound of heavy paws sifting ferociously through the snow. Hawk knew that sound.

Panicked, she ran. She ran to the nearest pine and shot up it like a squirrel, to the tip where the air was icy. Crows cawed at her hostilely before taking wing, but she paid them no mind; her bright eyes were locked on the Black Bear clawing at the base of the trunk. It circled, looking for a path up, but the pine was much too slender for the creature’s quarter-ton.

Hawk gave the bear an hour to leave. Night was falling. If she remained for much longer than that she would freeze to death, this she knew. She began to shiver, but still the bear grunted at her from below. Hawk could discern two cubs sitting quietly in the brush, waiting.

Finally, regretfully, she strung her yew bow and drew it to her chin. She sighted down her black arrow, aimed for the haunch, so that she might scare the thing away. Careful, careful.

She released. The angle was wrong. The wood warped with the force of the mountain winds, frantically fighting. Buzzing, it disappeared.

Hawk held her breath, at first in disappointment, but then in disbelief. For a few staggering steps, the bear circled. Strange grunts issued from its maw, as if it were confused. Finally, almost peacefully, it slumped to the snow, and was still.

It was another hour before Hawk worked up the courage to climb down. Her black arrow jutted from where the bear’s eye should have been. The cubs were gone.

But Hawk was as trapped as she had been up in the tree. The bear’s hide was fine. If Hawk were to sell it in town, to some rich merchant who fancied it for his bedroom floor, they could hire a doctor. Her gaze flickered in the direction of the
cabin, then to the dead thing fast cooling at her feet. She bit her lip. She shook. It was dangerously cold. But beneath her brow Hawk’s eyes hardened, and she pulled her long knife from its sheath.

It took her two hours to skin it, with shaking fingers and breath that froze halfway up her throat. But she did it. She unclothed her would-be killer and left it pink and bloody to freeze in the night.

When she returned, cheeks flushed with triumph, her father sat quietly over Wolf. The boy gasped quietly in his sleep. Hawk’s father’s boots were by the fire, warm and dry, and his shoulders were much the same. When he glanced up, his eyes were soft and drowsy, his look vacant. Outside, the moon reached above the trees.

They sold the bear skin two days later, to a fat rich man with blank eyes full of mirth and nothing else. The medicine the doctor gave them smelled worse than it looked. Wolf fought it, but Hawk’s father fought harder and slowly the boy recovered. First enough to sit up and read the Bible, then to eat more than broth. He was walking again in a week. Hawk’s father’s eyes shined with relief.

To the cold, Hawk lost two toes and the outer flesh of her left ear. From the moment the doctor sawed off the blackened flesh, she felt forever off balance.

Even though Wolf returned to health as the spring came, he was never truly the same. The illness dogged his heels like a leech, or a hovering shadow. His breath remained short and his arms remained weak. He could no longer follow Hawk around as she slid down hills and stood atop snow drifts, flitting about in the warming air. Over time, even walking across the house became a chore, and riding to town an impossibility. Hawk would watch him while she scraped the mud from her boots at the end of the day as he crept about like a man under the crush of age, clutching at his chest as if to keep it from bursting.

Her father watched him too, his moustache creased with worry. The talk of a seminary in Colorado, which had before so eagerly leaped from his lips, faded. When Wolf turned fourteen in the open air of summer the talk came back, but so did the fever. Only narrowly did Wolf survive it.

Time passed. The house became a quiet place, a place of piled books and windows shuttered to bar the light from hurting Wolf’s eyes. The boy became a ghost, haunting his narrow bed next to Hawk’s and roaming the path to the chamber pot. He dared not brave the journey to the outhouse.

Hawk herself became a pilgrim, flitting from one place to another, climbing trees to sit and wait for game under the brooding skies, straying farther and farther
from the cabin. She would volunteer to cut the firewood, and to hunt whenever she could convince her father to stay home. Anything to be away, and away she often was.

Soon speaking became something strange for her. Words became nods and gestures, furtive glances towards the door or to the wood pile by their small stove when the fire was dying. Hawk feared to give her father cause to open his mouth; he always said too much or said the wrong thing. Instead, there was silence. It nestled in beside the darkness and the dusty books, right alongside the acrid smell of the chamber pot.

Out on the mountain though, it was different. Out there, Hawk sang, old songs, in Navajo. She sang from the rocks and from the crooks of trees, straddling branches while she took eggs from nests left unattended. In the spaces between songs she hunted, low and quiet. There was not always game draped over her shoulder when she returned unwillingly to her father’s house in the evenings, but there was often enough.

And while Hawk killed and sang, she grew into a woman. She became tall and tough with muscle, a creature of angles and rough skin. Her hair she let grow until it became fire in the wind.

By her side Wolf grew into a man, though still he had no fangs. They shared
secrets, and spoke softly together when Hawk's father wasn't around. She watched over him, and he, in his own small way, watched over her. When their father was around, they spoke in whispers.

The winter that turned Hawk nineteen roared unrelentingly down the mountainside. Its winds rattled the house down to its roots, shaking the walls with howling claws. The road into town became impassible, blocked with snow and slippery with ice. Father tried many times, but returned disappointed. Neither could Hawk hunt. She only had to feel the iciness of the window to know that she would freeze before she could get three miles under her boots, probably less.

The pantry swiftly emptied, and when it did they were forced to eat the cow they had bought only half a year before – their chickens froze to death on their own. For this, Hawk was quietly grateful. Some nights, Hawk's father was forced to start a fire out in the little stable and tend it until dawn so that their ancient horse would not freeze. Those nights, Hawk would gaze sleeplessly out the black windows to the stable blazingly lit, but more often to the dark woods; the tall trees winter had painted black, and the hidden expanses carved between them. Beneath her hand, Wolf's craven chest would shudder.

Those were the worst nights.

When Hawk Donalds was nineteen years old, her brother died. The winter had ended fitfully, and spring was fitfully reborn. Grass sprung up out of the cold, dead soil, and herbs raised their heads, ready to be gathered.

But Wolf remained sunken and suffocating in his mire of blankets. He said that he smelled spring, but he could not strap it to his legs. It was the fever. His fever, come again once more. The doctor came of his own accord, smelling profits in the herbs heaping out of Hawk's father's cart. He came and nodded and gave her father the medicine.

But it did not work. Wolf healed not. His muscles turned to fat, and his face turned to bone. He remained like a prisoner in shackles of flesh, in their little house of panicked silence, their little monastery seeped in rapture lore. Quiet rasping filled the cracks in the walls.

And then one day it stopped. It was the first thing Hawk noticed when she stepped inside, slipping her slender quiver from her back: the absence of it. Her father stood in the doorway. Hawk stopped where she stood. Together they were silent, and no wind was there to fill the gulf. Hawk could see. She could see
the covered form in the darkened room beyond her father’s brown shape, the
impression of a nose and brow beneath a woolen sheet. But she could see most the
dull, frightened way her father’s eyes huddled beneath his brow, and that told her
everything. Herbs, strung from the ceiling, ruffled in the draft. In the stove, the fire
had gone out.

Hawk only cried a little. The rest of her grief had been strung up over days,
years, and slowly, it had dulled.

Time passed, and not a word was said. Hawk hunted under the sun as she had
always done, returning to cook the creatures whose lives she had taken that day. Her
father remained in the dark, sitting in the room where he had died. It was too quiet
in there, now. The world was now too quiet.

Hawk’s father buried Wolf beside his mother, under pine boughs heavy
with crows. He did not wait for Hawk. She simply returned on day to find two
headstones instead of one, and without a sound she stood where she had stood all
those years ago and let the wind speak for her. She did not mind it.

Days passed. Months. Hawk spent longer and longer hunting the woods, taking
advantage of the warm spring dusks. Soon she spent days at a time up in the crags or
down in the ridges south of the mountains. She hid in caves what kills she could not
carry.

Her father spent those days in the dark of the cabin, wandered aimlessly about
their clearing following the house’s shadow, or sitting beside Hawk’s brother’s bed,
as if he lay there still. They spoke not a word, and made not a gesture. They noticed
each other less and less.

And finally, the day came that Hawk laced her well-fitted boots, filled her old
pack, and left that clearing in the cleft of the mountain. The sun was golden and
dirty on her shoulders as she clambered over the rocks now worn from her own
boots and hands. It melted on her slender back like a fawn’s spots.

She only looked back once, standing atop a rock that jutted from the
mountainside. Her father was down there, upon the frozen circle of churned earth
that surrounded their house, a black speck. Just a speck, but she could tell that
he too looked up at her. Hawk did not wave, and neither did he. If he did not
understand this, he was lost.

She stood for a moment, watching, then turned and leaped down behind the
rock, and was gone.
Dandelion Prayers

Paul Cuclis

Amidst a desert garden of dead and dying
an oasis of green sprouting
a messy clump of hair.
Proud and yellowed hands stretch out
with palms open, presented to the sky,
they catch the sun to steal its color
and make it their own.

Insects, loyal friends, are drawn to the light
of these mini-suns,
visiting with purpose, to be sustained
by the golden residue,
vomited sunshine, from when
these faithful flowers
engorged
too frequently
in prayer towards their God.
you can see the ghosts on the floor

Taylor Dolan
To M.

Abigail Loar

I write hallelujah on my body
and hang my silhouettes by the window,
or by the adobe trees we paint white every Sunday,
whichever comes first.
I still plant coffee beans in the floorboards.
(I think this is what an apology feels like)
*If you write it, I won’t just read it.*
Tell me about the red. The ledge.
The sparrow’s ribcage hymn.
You said it was a resurrection and all I can think is:
let’s build book shelves in the dining room.
Hum lullabies at noon. Abandon your walls
and tell a stranger your secret.
If I ask you, blow the candles out
and eat cactus with every meal.
It feels good to laugh again.
Don’t you remember?
The still frames of a birth beneath the willow.
The three crosses above your headboard.
I read angels are love in motion.
Hoping for haven, or heaven,
for later. Waiting for the lemon hands
to remind you what a life weighs -
something like gratitude.
What I mean to say is that
*I’ll write back.*
Summer Insurgency

Jake Muncy

We rode downtown
Into the far reaches of our fantasies,
Skateboards clawing at hills,
Wheels slicing sidewalks like knives

We were basking in the brightness
Breathing in holiness
And dreaming to be legends
Heroes in our skater shoes and cheap hoodies
Defying the heat to stop us
Or the world to hold us down

We ran through parks
With our shirts off, our voices high
Laughing and fighting as the falling sun
Burned streaks of warpaint into our cheeks
We were determined to break everything
Rebuild it all
Preaching that anarchy was truth
And rebellion was creation

We were heroes and avengers
Righteous as our missing fathers
Strong as the protectors we were never given
Bold and unprepared
Fighting the summer wars
With what weapons as we could find:
Dirty fingernails, bruised knees and black eyes
Songs of our new world, still in the making
Betrayed innocence and honest mouths
that kissed like brands of fire
in the fading light
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To Our Readers,

We would like to thank all of the truly inspiring members of the Trinity Community who have continued to contribute not only time and effort, but also creativity and inspiration for this year's publication. A sincere thanks is extended to our staff who have continually dedicated themselves to the promotion and production of the *Trinity Review* in 2012. We cannot profess our gratitude enough for their innovative ideas and hard work.

Our faculty advisors, Professor Andrew Porter, Dr. Michael Soto, and Dr. Claudia Stokes have been invaluable resources offering guidance, support, and assistance. We would also like to acknowledge our liaisons, Dr. Jennifer Henderson of the Communication Department and Dr. Patricia Simonite of the Art Department for contributing to the multi genre content of this publication. Their assistance has allowed us to create a collection of work that stems from a convergence of art forms.

Additionally, we would like to give our deepest thanks to Jesse Martinez and Sarai Santos of the English Department office, who keep this magazine functioning. Without their dedication, this collection of work would not be possible. Thanks as well to Dr. and Mrs. Fischer for graciously welcoming our staff and published artists in to their home for our annual release party.

The Association of Student Representatives has helped us fund our Open Mic nights, as well as provided the means for us to raise the number of copies we are able to print. Thanks to them for contributing generously.

Finally, we would like to thank Matt Stigler, for once again volunteering to take on the tedious task of receiving and organizing the submissions in order to ensure the anonymity of our voting process. This process allows for the objective selection of our published pieces, which contributes to the professional standard of this publication.

We thoroughly enjoyed creating the 2012 edition of the *Trinity Review* and are pleased to circulate the most issues of an annual copy to date.

Yours,

Mallory Conder & Natalie Brown
Co-Editors, 2011-2012