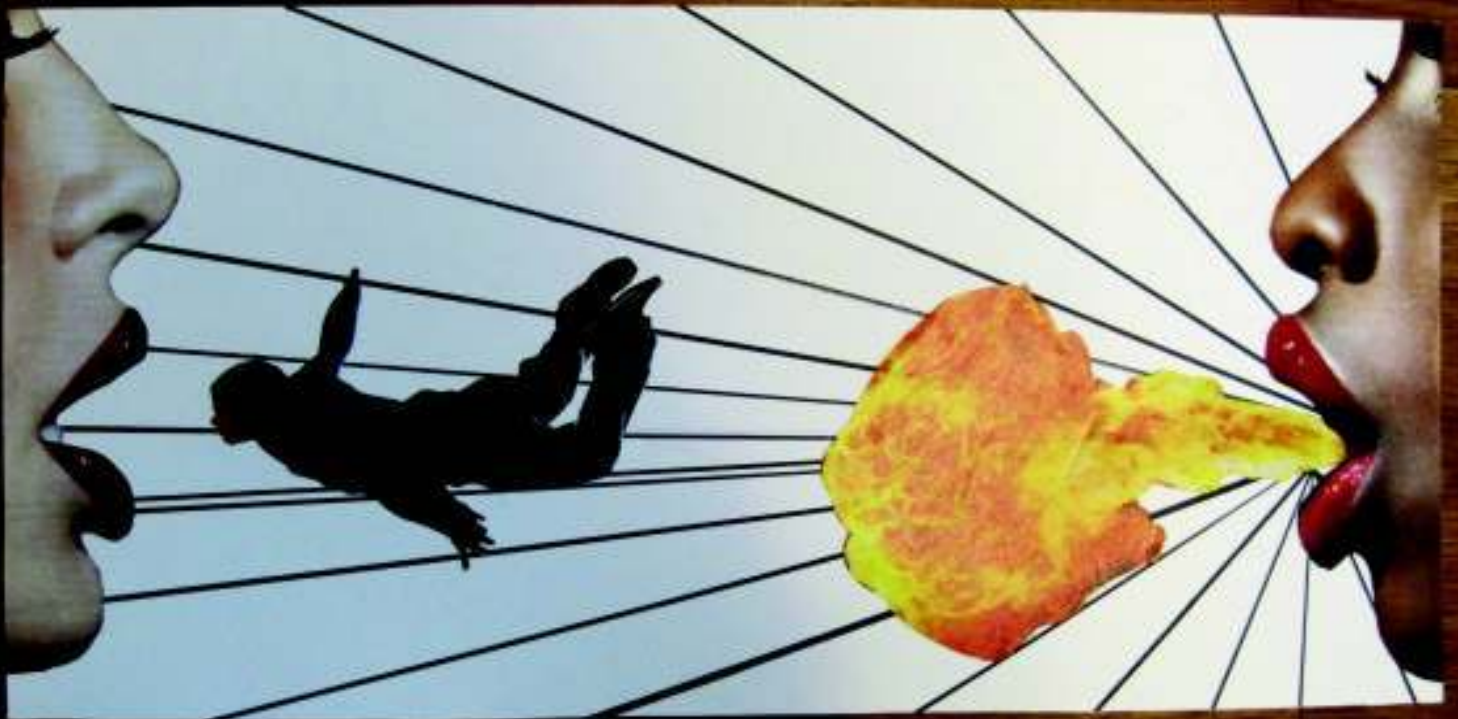


FALL 2010

OUTBREATH

A tufts student publication



Outbreath

Poetry, Short Stories,
Photography, and Art

We Create.

Fall 2010

xxiv

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Editor's Note

It has been quite a whirlwind fall semester. As we sit typing this letter, we both agree that our Outbreath experience thus far has been nothing less than chock full of unexpected discoveries.

We watched rough drafts of poetry and prose transform after workshop sessions and become fantastic components of this issue. We are so pleased with the submissions in the mag—one poem is actually a series of haikus that together form a story, another comes from a text message. Our short stories are rife with humor, drama, and even a little blood lust.

We are excited to announce that students from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts have contributed their work to our magazine for the first time.

And of course, we are endlessly impressed by the amazing spirit and energy of our staff; without them this magazine would not be coming out. They showed up for long reader's meetings, came to layout the magazine bright and early on Halloween Weekend, and always seemed to have a rocking good time.

So, when you peruse this edition of Outbreath, we hope that you keep an open mind, and let yourself be surprised by what you find.

(We would like to add that Outbreath is our attempt to keep the written word alive: poems just don't sing out when you're reading them on a Kindle.)

Peace and Blessings,
Lenora and Charlotte



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Africa in Mass
by Doyle Bley

Lights On

by Jenna Schoen

Why is it that whenever we reach three o'clock you feel the need to noise Nirvana? The void in your soul of Rock and Roll does not need to be filled while one of us is trying to concentrate. Yes, I'm actually doing something. What do you mean Wikipediaing the hometown of Buddha doesn't qualify as valid work? My metaphysical condition is not a concept I'd expect you to comprehend. Ever since that last cup of coffee I'm tripping on artificial ATPs, a state I must exploit since enlightenment never arises sober. Do not put that on, I refuse to watch animated porn. Yes I have to watch what you're watching, my mind is drenched in delirium and must submit

to distraction. I'm well aware of your aversion to the aroma but I'm still going to lace my claws with this lacquer. Why is my stomach still bitching even though we just inhaled those chicken limbs covered in kidney failure and those potatoes dripped in heart disease? I swear the sun is about to sink through the cracks of the black curtain and our perseverance is certainly at stake. Is that a grandmother rhyming in rhythm to the beats of Biggie? You've officially sold your soul to the waste of cyber space. That was not a yawn, I was just stretching my jaw. Now that you've pilfered my pillow you'll need to knead out these knots on my neck. Alright, I think



Childhood
by Ben Vincent

it may be time to release that incandescent radiation, we can watch dawn dissolve the darkness and maybe we'll be snatched from our dreams before she dips down again.

Big Sur

by Craig Dathe

“You’ll write about this one day.” Joel says that sort of thing. The thought had crossed my mind as well, while we were getting out of my car. He was right – I keep a journal, and today’s adventure surely merited an entry – but that’s not what Joel meant, and I knew that. I suppose if we had been stars in a film then what Joel said would have come across as poetic, but in reality it was a little unsettling.

When we live in the moment eternity stretches out around us and gives us tunnel vision, obscuring the timeline that underscores every scene in our lives. But when Joel said that, I could see the edges of the photograph. I could see our adventure, our friendship, our childhoods, as the spectral artifacts they would soon become. At the moment they are still fresh in my mind, but what about a year from now? Or a month, or a week? They’ll just be bits of driftwood washed up on the shore of my memory. I’ll stoop down and turn them over in my hands, their shapes conjuring vague, musty images in my mind’s eye. Nothing more.

Luckily I had gravity to bring me back into the present. Joel and I were slowly stumbling our way down a hillside to the ocean. I loved the way the Pacific crept out of a bank of fog to lap at the cliffs beneath Highway One, but I couldn’t look at the scenery much during our descent. The path was steep, at some places almost vertical, and the ground unreliable. Gravel and stones slipped out from under our shoes. If anyone could have seen us they surely would have looked twice. Both of us were dressed in flannel and jeans and wore packs on our backs. Joel was wearing uncharacteristically bright colors, and his messenger bag was too bulky for the task at hand. I don’t know what he could have been carrying to fill up the whole thing.

We took off our shoes about three-quarters of the way down to make for better traction, and ever-so cautiously slid through the last stretch into the creek below. I was a little

embarrassed at our lackluster climbing skills; we thought of ourselves of as outdoorsy as well as artsy, but neither of us had been backpacking, let alone camping, in four years. Nevertheless we survived the journey, and stood on the beach watching the creek meet the ocean.

We talked about the girls we saw at the lookout when we got out of the car. Two of them had been exceptionally cute, all dolled up in the kinds of skirts and blouses that turned us on. I took some photographs of Joel hopping from rock to rock in the creek, and got a good shot of him juxtaposed against the grand, arched bridge looming over our heads. Joel took some pictures of me as well, but I didn’t think they were as good as mine. I quickly patronized myself for having such a vain thought, and wondered how I could be thinking about Facebook profile pictures at a time like this. Our generation is all about recording the moment, not living it. I put my camera away, determined to play explorer and not historian.

I collected some small stones and a piece of driftwood shaped like an oar from the creek-



Artwork by Julie Kang

Big Sur, continued



Tree Tunnel,
by Lily Carey

bed and dropped them into the breast pocket of my flannel. Joel spent much longer looking for his souvenir, eventually coming up with a stone a little smaller than his head. The way we came was much too steep for our return journey, so we followed the creek the long way, pants rolled up and barefoot like hobbits. Joel lugged his stone all the way back to the car, extolling the virtues of the foliage around us all the while.

When we got back to the car the girls were still there. Joel said that the brown-haired one in the blue skirt was checking me out as I was got into the driver's seat, and both of them waved to us as we pulled away. We laughed and high-fived, and for the next hour I listened to Joel talk about all the girls he had been with during his first year of college. His words were polite and carefully chosen. They offered candid illustrations of each girl's quirks and mannerisms.

This is why Joel is so beautiful. So many people try to pose as the Hopeless Romantic, but Joel lives it. To him every moment is significant. He cocks his head to the side when he talks philosophy, and the words that come out are soaked in his conviction. He makes grand statements about love and life and everything else several times a day, whether anyone is listening or not, and makes them without the slightest hint of irony or intellectual distance. His statements usually don't make much sense on the surface, but don't let that fool you. Joel understands. Truth lies between every syllable, waiting for you to listen close enough and discover it.

The tragedy is that I can't remember anything he said that day word for word. All I can recall is the way his words felt. Did he even say that I would write about our adventure? The photograph is already faded, the driftwood too indistinct for me to discern its form. I sit on the beach in my memories, mourning for what is yet to be lost.

Whitman & Tesla Making Love in Whitman's Village Loft

by Denali Hussin

New York twilight, tangled sheets,
songs of the self, warring currents.

A cigar's smoke hangs lazily
over a bare floor strewn with
crumpled cravats, buttons popped
from hastily shed collared shirts
(and perhaps a garter, languorous and limp).

Whitman, of the masturbatory self-reviews,
is loud in bed (as you might expect),
and likes to quote his own poetry
during love-making
—Beat! Beat
Drums!—

But Tesla
is so quiet that he might not even be there
were it not for his powerful magnetism (which
makes wearing cufflinks a bitch).

These New York lovers
(the Serbian engineer—
the Bowery bh'oy)
Men of genius:
Prophetic,
singers of the body electric,
coiled around each other in prayer,
wrapped in sweat
and America.

Fingernails dig in
Throbs of the heart
Thrusting beneath the clothing

“Be my alternating current—!”
“O Captain! My Captain!”

Together celebrating
the manly love of comrades.



Big Wheel
by Lily Carey

Not a Baptist

by Lenora Smith

Sometimes
the mist comes,
speckling sweatshirts,
slicking strands
of hair, nipping
naked knuckles.

It's rude.

But enduring like
a yellow toothed
uncle
carrying the
pocket sized
second hand
bible with
half
a leather cover.

God flecks
from his mouth,
speckling
my face.
His hands
slicking strands,
"show those
pretty eyes,
put back your hair."
Then
family prayer.

Please,
don't squeeze
my naked knuckles
with your
cold calluses
because
I won't hold
your hand.



Skychair,
by Lily Carey

Sugarloaf

by Sadie Lansdale

Sunset out the back window fades,
you and I not touching,
silent the hour back from Sugarloaf.
Rolling flocks of birds, fields of wheat—
dead sheathes, terse desire—
shiver with the approaching storm.

My teeth flex, I bite back this storm
I'm making; fading
speech feels like disappearing desire,
but your soft flat cheeks have been a blanket
for my kisses, given like sun on winter wheat,
which we couldn't see, atop Sugarloaf.

Earlier, when we parked below Sugarloaf,
you couldn't read my mind but the sky spoke storm.
Would you take me where the mountain melts to wheat?
Laugh until the last sun faded?
Would you pull out a blanket
checkered red with worn desire?

It was cold. My breath froze with the desire
to take back my sugared oath,
push you from my blanket
to see if you would storm
for me, if you'd crawl back 'til you faded
into me and trace my back again with winter wheat.

New in our love, crushing wheat
and making bread together, a desire
sweet with cinnamon that never fades,
or seemed never to fade; that first winter, we baked a
sugarloaf
huddled warm against the distant storm.
Snow fell thinly, hardly a blanket.

Three summers ago, underneath a bursting blanket,
your hair like reddening wheat
our thoughts so far from storm,

our untried unshakeable faith in the triumph of desire—
all my dreams were of sugarloafing
with you, and staying 'til evening faded.

I'm thinking still of Sugarloaf but shivering with storm.
You betray no red desire, suddenly guarded and blank.



Crystal Tears,
by Lily Carey

Photo Spread



Left: Artwork by Lily Carey



Artwork by Anna Furman



Artwork by Ben Vincent

Photo Spread



Top: Artwork by
Jenna Schoen

Right: Artwork by
Lily Carey



Conflagration

by Hillary Fens

Unborn child goodbye and i am sorry because you are cell of he and cell of i combined. destroy this construct, the light and life of an impulse unchecked.

i put others out in keeping you so I submit to putting you out instead, a lit candle to flit and flicker on withering wick no more. you are my one-celled two-celled growing problem: in the heat of love or lust, you, a conflagration.



Artwork by Jordan Bentley Ricks

The Prompt

by Tom Nikiper

It is often said that
Psychotherapy is “a planned,
Emotionally charged, confiding
Interaction between
A trained, socially sanctioned healer
And a sufferer.”

Choose one of the
Works below and,
In a swell organized four-part,
Design an experiment
That explains the
Contribution of
Psychotherapy
To the work as a whole.
Some things you might
Want to consider including
Are operational definitions,
Labeled cadence types,
And an examination of
Poetic and rhetorical devices used.

Avoid mere plot summary,
Or the use of rests.
Follow strict
Seventeenth and eighteenth
Conventions concerning
Voice leading.



Pelican Bros
by Lenora Smith

Rock 'n Roll

By Erik Leupp

One day in June I overdosed on The Rolling Stones.
I couldn't help it. The beat of the drum and
the speed of the sound were morphine to my growing pains.
At the hospital, the doctors, pumped the music out
of my veins through dialysis.

The same day a girl made unprotected love to a David Bowie
record.
It gave her an Audibly Transmitted Disease,
a rash that grew brighter and redder
with each vinyl revolution.

And that night a boy went for a joy ride with Jefferson Air-
plane.
He drove across state borders and split caution tape in two.
Cop cars with tyrannous sirens chased him for miles
But he never went deaf.

It's 10 PM, do you know where your children are?



Poem

by Linda Le

In an afternoon coffee cup
On an illegal cd
Under your European soda shaped car freshener:

We asked each other why and why
How it was that my mother grew old, lost her hair, lost
The sunflower she held in all those pictures
How life ends before ending
What it meant that my ex best friend from fifth grade
Lost her virginity
What time does
Tragic things like this.

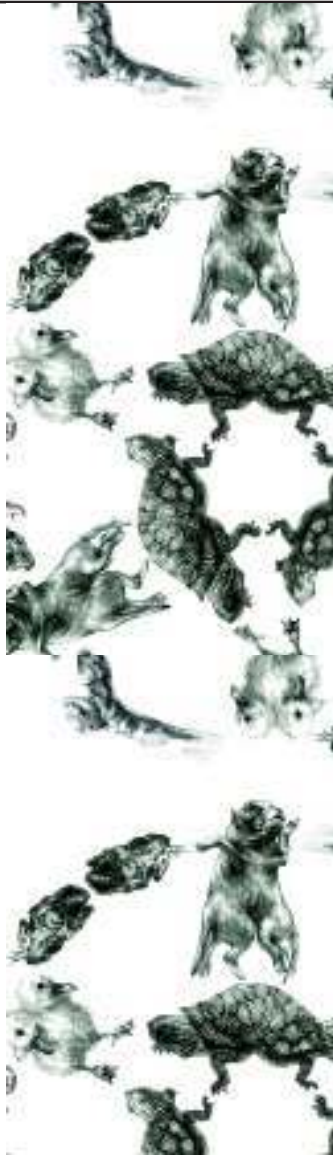
We knew how to fix it: the way children do,
The way adults should.
Putting your hands on my shoulder
Ice cream on a park bench
Rolling down the window on a hot ride home from school
Starting the car on a late night parking lot,

Awake, asleep, alive

You tell me again about
A long time ago
How you
Waking up from a dreamy thing--
All the water your body cried out

A long time later
When I called, you didn't answer
When you called, I didn't answer
By now I know
You've grown into your awkward legs
And mine have only become shakier with time
We forgot each other

Eventually the hands let go,
The window rolls up.



Artwork by Julie Kang

Car Car

by Charlotte Mostertz

In august I thought about
how much I had
missed your car.
The beige interior,
the beige exterior.
The radio,
fuzzily humming along
as we sang
all the way through high school;
the water bottles
thrown haphazardly
on the floor. I missed the
way the dappled sunlight hits the
passenger seat,
and being able to
come over and cry
in your car. I missed listening
to you as you drove us, anywhere.

And anywhere was Newport:
we parked in a field
and walked to the show
and sang all day and
all night, except when
we lied down, letting the wind
wash over us and blow
off the dust of
intellectual platitudes,
letting the ocean soften
the walls we built to protect
the relics of girls we had once been.
But they're too high to topple now,
a quiet has come over us,
even as we slip back into old habits,
listening
To the old sounds
and song: "we're different
but the same."

the car is cleaner since we
don't use it as much;
it still has traces of
our voices and our dreams strewn about.

Filth

By Brandon Archambault

He felt the vomit-inducing sweat of the basement air crowding into his nostrils; he felt the warm flicks of her saliva and the nasty Natty Light on her breath; he felt a mixture of slut spittle and the bodily fluids of at least seventy other men congealing on his face.

In a near panic he shoved her off of him, with a high pitched half-giggle-half-squeal of shock as an impossibly wet breast squished against his left palm, and he ran, clambering, tripping up the staircase against the descending mob in utter, sober revulsion.

He burst through the door of the frat half-keeling from the exertion of writhing his way through the uncouth and unwashed masses that had blocked his escape. He sucked in the February air with the long, wheezing gulps of a half-drowned man bursting to the surface, then nearly fell face-forward as he shambled down the steps, grabbing the rail with his already-dirtied left hand to right himself. He made it halfway to the sidewalk before he felt the need to stop and focus on purging his lungs of the foetid air from that stank and concrete hell.

He expired, slowly, eyes closed, hands on his knees, bent over. He opened his eyes, slowly, on the second exhale. He was certain people were staring at him, so he assured himself that they weren't there. He was going to be calm now. He was going to breathe, gently; he would close his eyes; he would block out the sound entering his ears; and he would be very, very calm.

He had been dragged there by good-for-nothing friends who either wanted him to get laid or to chloroform him, blindfold him, strip him bare and leave his limp body in a pile of naked women with no choice but to feel his way back out. In the depth of his soul, he believed they were well intentioned. They were misguided, twisted, impossibly perverse souls, but they were well intentioned just the same.

He shook his head, half to clear his thoughts, and half because shaking his head was an OCD tic, which he firmly

believed released dopamine that could realign his brain chemistry to a configuration of more manageable anxiety. He unthinkingly wiped his forearm against his brow and with a muffled gasp stopped mid-motion, and then equally unthinkingly violently scrubbed his forearm against the vest he'd put on just for the night's "occasion". Recollecting that people were actually probably staring at him, however hard he tried to ignore them, he stopped. Fighting so hard to keep from looking in either direction that his right eye started twitching, he straightened his vest, tightened his scarlet tie, and started walking, trying to forget that now the bottom fringes of the vest and the knot of the tie were now just as dirty as his breast-sweat soaked left hand. (He could still feel where her nipple had connected with the webbing between his ring and middle fingers. He had no idea how long it would take to wash that off.)

Ignoring the glistening swath of silt that now gilt his vest (borrowed), he tried to consider the pros of the night. None came to mind, so as he dragged his sopping shoes up the hill to his dorm, he wondered which parts his friends would call "upshots". (The lower-left corner of his mouth began to twitch with every step, horrified as he was by the mysterious liquids that eeked out of his shoes with every step.)

On the one hand, his palm definitely connected with boob. Which was a life first. On the other, he was holding his arm stiff and askew at twenty-five degrees southeast from the shoulder pivot to ensure said hand wouldn't even come close to his dark-blue emo-chic jeans. Which meant that it would be hard to get the keys out of his left back pocket. So, on the one hand, he had crossed some threshold that he was probably supposed to have accomplished in the ninth grade. On the other, the skin on his left arm felt as if it were writhing from a hundred worms humping in unholy unison – a visual that came to him with much too much alacrity – and, to top it off, he was now locked out of his room. (He would never reach into his pocket to acquire his keys. He would have to cleanse

Filth, continued



Reaching for Warmth
by Will Vaughn

them afterwards, and feared that, were he to accidentally wet the electric fob attached to the keychain, some horrible, freak consequences – electrocution, maybe – might ensue).

At each step, the nauseating confluence of liquids in his shoes drooled out onto the still-wet pavement, which had turned black as much from the rain as the night, now a million little onyx islands in a sea of pure heaven-water. Such rainwater was one of the few things he found to be absolutely, thrillingly clean in this filthy, wretched world. He was finding that he certainly preferred it to many people. Especially that girl from a few minutes ago.

He considered the girl in no more than three seconds. Blonde, white t-shirt, clearly (clearly) no bra. So-so face. Shiny pink hot pants with something degrading (i.e. “hott stuf”) screen-printed in

white on the back (he had looked but not admired). She had apparently (not that he would know, he had never been drunk, nor around many drunk people) pre-gamed hard enough such that she would find it sensible to stagger over to the thin and nerve-shot guy with tight clothes whose wavy black hair was stuck to his forehead in a most unflattering manner.

He was also the single immobile man in the room – the rest were moving in ways that he could not bear to describe to himself. She approached, to his utter incomprehension, laid a hand on his left shoulder, and slurred with something approximating a smile, “Y’wanna DANsss?”, before burying her face, all red and sweaty, in his very unimpressive chest and giggling like she was still thirteen and innocent. (He noted with judgment entirely unbecoming of him that, in this world of sex and more sex, thirteen-year-olds were likely anything but innocent). A tight, lithe, 5’3” body of horny-enough-to-slay-him-on-the-dance-floor West Coast woman (at least, she had been really tan). She was every stereotypical thing that the feminists

Filth, continued

had fought so hard against, right down to her – he just remembered – almost perfectly symmetrical pair of breasts. (He wondered whether that had meant they were fake. He could not recall if her breast had felt fake, and in fact, had no idea how post-op might compare to pre-op, nor whether it would have been less disconcerting to feel. It seemed to him, however, to be quite natural.)

This thought prompted him, now power-walking up the hill for reasons he only vaguely understood, mostly to do with trying to minimize time in which people were likely to see him walking like a semi-paralytic, to consider the fact that she probably hadn't been wearing any underwear, either. Given the context, such an obstacle to her obvious goals wouldn't have made sense.

This thought quickly led to another, and he crunched his eyes tight repeatedly, an entirely useless tic he used when trying to forget something, as if the interiors of his eyelids could wipe clean this sudden vision of the two of them in flagrante delicto on the dance floor. Everything about that thought was dirty. He, in fact, mentally compared the filthiness of such an act to that of a public restroom. Suddenly a new and filthier vision flooded his mind and his eyes bulged desperately against their anchors.

With a jolt of panic he realized he had turned the corner to his dorm without so much as considering the fact that someone might be there, ready to notice the gawking, hobbling maniac with pasty skin and sweaty brow tromping up the hill, arm held rigid with fist clenched (he did not remember clenching his fist, but his well-trimmed nails were pressed so hard into his palm he feared he might draw blood). He didn't even know what a person walking in this manner could seem like, besides in desperate need of a lock-up.

The road, though, was empty. He sighed, relieved, and, with a shudder so involuntary that his entire head twitched

a bit (he did not recall that particular twitch being part of his usual repertoire), soon discovered that his fist relaxed concurrently with his sigh and the open palm was now resting against his flank. His left flank, which she had definitely been humping when he pushed her away.

He whimpered then, and audibly. He was locked outside his dorm, his head hurt from the strain of concentrating on keeping his dirtied limbs away from his torso, which had in fact, failed; he lacked any precedent for washing such filth from a vest, or a tie, and he was going to have to stand there outside the door until somebody came down because God only knew he couldn't touch his phone and he sure as hell wasn't touching the keys unless he ran into a whole lot of hand saniti-

He actually stopped walking and found himself rooted to the spot when he had that minor revelation. He tasted the word in his mouth; he sketched out the contours of it with his tongue. He mouthed it, gently. And then he said it outloud. "Hand sanitizer." God's gift to the hopelessly germ-o-phobic and clinically OCD. Imbued with the power to purify his keys. Lovingly stationed at every corner and in every bathroom. Perfect, perfect, perfect.

Only his deeply ingrained sense of propriety and social anxiety kept him from skipping to his dorm (because, he felt, if he did, it would be then that someone would choose to walk outside, likely in a group, just to ensure his absurdity was public spectacle). Nevertheless, he now found himself with hope. He could get inside, he could take a shower, he could forget this ever happened, his friends hadn't been in the basement with him when he squealed, it had been loud in there so no one probably heard him squeal anyway, and he could go on with life knowing that if he ever wanted to touch a boob again he knew exactly what to expect and could mentally prepare for the act. Finally, things were looking up.

The Source

by Jake Seiden

In a twisted tunnel beneath the Earth's fevered flesh there stood a boy, still as the desert on a windless night. Though he knew that he should be moving, following the winding passages to his work at the bottom of the Source, he was reluctant to do so. It was not because of fear or hate or a need to cause mischief that he was avoiding his tasks. It was just that he felt disinclined to leave the tunnel right then, seeing how overpowering the muddy walls seemed in the dullness of the light. So, although there was work to do, the boy merely stood, wrapped on all sides by the damp airs of the underground passage, imagining-as boys are like to do-that all the world was caught in this same, lingering stillness.

He knew that if he waited too long someone would find him dallying there. He'd been recently punished for mumbling about his opposition to a particular task. The worker that had overheard him reported the incident, and the memory of the whip snaking bloodily across his back caused him to shiver. Thus in a cautious mind, he dragged himself away from the stillness and down the dimly lit tunnels that spread like arteries through the Earth's dry corpse.

Up above, where the air was thick with heat and dust, the cursed sun must have been at its apex, for the tunnels were bustling with the people that called the Source their home. On his descent, the boy passed cooks clad in stained aprons, soldiers who fingered their glistening guns,

giggling children and grim-faced workers. The boy hurried through this part. The others made him uncomfortable. All of them, the young and the old, looked at him with a sort of weary confusion; brows raised, eyes untrusting, as if in looking upon his face they had expected to see something and were surprised not to find it there.

Few ever had business in the Source's lowest chambers so as the boy descended he encountered less people and received fewer confused looks. When the path finally emptied of people, the boy started dragging his hands across the walls. It was a game he played sometimes. He'd smile if his knuckles caught upon some protruding stone, or if his shuffling stride knocked loose some pebble on the floor. There was no one here to watch him stop and suck the blood from the back of his hand, or crouch and see how cool the pebble felt upon his palm. It was a childish game, and though he knew that he was too old for such things, it comforted him. So what if the others thought him childish? He at least knew that he was not so young as most of them seemed to think; he'd been in his twelfth year when he'd been sent to the Source to work three years ago.

Somewhat amused by the workers' tendency to underestimate his age, the boy had spent a fair amount of time contemplating what exactly it was about his features that spoke so eloquently of youth. He'd decided that his skinny frame was too common in these barren times to

be the culprit, and was of the opinion that it was the smallness of his mouth and his large brown eyes that made others think him young. In truth the others thought little of his physical appearance and believed him immature because of the manner with which he went about his tasks. He never started anything without being told to do so, and always worked with empty eyes and heavy feet. Those that found humor in such a thing joked that if the war were to end tomorrow-in their favor, God willing!-and the boy's mother were to come to take him home again, he'd ask for permission before leaving with her.

It was freezing in the Source's lowest tunnels. Such an environment was vital, of course, to the preservation of the corpses. The very reason they had to be moved down into these depths was the excessive heat of the outside world. Out upon the dusty soil, exposed to the sun's vicious rays, they wept fluids and foul smells. But down here, beyond the reach of the sun, the seemingly endless bodies could be committed to the Earth with great speed and minimal effort. It truly was an effective organization.

Eventually the boy came into his assigned tunnel. His task here was not very difficult. He had only to watch the corpses as they were transported by the slow-moving tread from the delivery site to the storage cave, guarding them from rats and freeing those bodies that snagged on the moving mechanism so that they

The Source, continued

did not block the flow of the rest. He sat near the tread and wrapped his skinny arms around his knees, thankful for his scrappy leather jacket. It was bright in this tunnel; a large number of lights were strung along its length so those that stood watch could effectively do their job. The mechanism groaned loud and gentle as it shouldered its burdens. The boy had always feared the tread's sonorous sound, luring as a lullaby, for he believed in his heart that if he were to fall asleep the corpses would rise off the rubber tread, gather around his sleeping form, and take turns sipping at his blood. A silly idea perhaps, a child's fear that should have fallen from prominence long ago, but the boy was unwilling to let it go.

In order to ward off that dangerous weariness, the boy thought about the tunnels. The Source had been built into a natural honeycomb of caverns beneath the sunburnt Earth. Thus there were a number of aimless tendrils twisting off the main passages. Most of them led only deeper into the world's molten core. But there were a few, smartly marked by those brave enough to explore their lengths, that led to great spawning caves, hidden rooms, and even one that wound its way all the way up to where the sun shone down without mercy. Though the boy knew the whereabouts of the latter, he never thought about using it to leave the Source. Life was hard there, true, but there was something almost comfortable about the place, something that held onto him so that he did not have the spirit

to pull away. So, in his mind he walked the lengths of those tunnels, all but the one that wound its way up and out of the caves, and his imagination populated them with monstrous creatures and magnificent treasures.

About an hour into his watch, as the boy stood to stretch his legs, something among the streaming corpses caught the light and sparkled alluringly. Still caught up in the excitement of his imaginings, the boy approached the tread. When his eyes found it out amidst the shifting masses of flesh, a shiver, which had nothing to do with the cold, rippled across his skin.

For that which glinted beneath the harsh white lights was the white sclera of a corpse's open eye.

A mouse sees a morsel of food upon the ground of its home. Hungry, starved, it scurries forward to claim this prize, completely mindless of the trap that has been set to catch it until it snaps down across its back. Somewhere deep inside the rodent, beneath the crushing force of the trap's metal, a bone cracks irrevocably and makes an awful sound. So it was with the boy, ensnared by the blank stare of that single, staring eye. Trembling, he took a step back, and paused again in horror!

One of the corpses was moving. The boy's wide eyes spread to their fullest extent. The muscle between them twitched maddeningly.

Flailing weakly with thin arms, tossing its head from side to side, the corpse turned gently upon the black rubber of the tread. Its animation caused it to fall

to the floor, and above the smack of flesh upon stone the boy registered a grunt of pain. Slowly, trembling, the corpse pushed itself to its knees. When its face turned towards the boy its eyes caught the light and gleamed. But it was not the same empty stare as the haunting eye he'd seen before. Life flashed behind those two blue pupils, and the boy forgot his fear.

The girl was dressed in a ragged, dirty smock. Her face was smeared with filth, and her blond hair stuck out like straw from her oval head. But despite her worn appearance, the boy saw that there was something amazing about the girl, something he couldn't quite define. It was as if she was the keeper of some universal secret, one that intimately involved the boy, but had not the words to reveal it to him. Looking at her, the boy was overcome with an overwhelming desire to grab her by her cheeks and pull her face close to his own, not relinquishing his desperate hold until he understood the secret that danced behind her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked, dazed.

He knew he should be running; sprinting down the secret tunnels to the Source's bustling core, screaming to everyone he passed that one of the corpses was alive. Instead, he answered simply.

"The Source."

The boy watched the play of emotions across the girl's face with great interest. Her eyes opened wide and her skin's pallor bleached even whiter. With admiral quickness, the girl regained control of her

The Source, continued

face and turned serious eyes upon the boy.

“I shouldn’t be here. Only the dead come here.”

The boy nodded, but the girl didn’t seem to notice. She had turned away and was mumbling to herself. “Why can’t I remember how I got here...Why can’t I remember...” her words stumbled to a stop and she said, to no one in particular, “My name is Spirit.”

The boy giggled, surprised by the unusual name and the force with which she asserted the simple statement to herself. It was the wrong thing to do. Spirit turned to him with a fiery glare. He withered beneath its heat until she stomped its intensity to ashes. Suddenly, she was smiling.

“Now that you have my name, I’ll have yours.”



Little People
by Doyle Bleys

The boy was hesitant. Reluctant. But then he looked into her unblinking eyes and upon her ferocious smile.

“Socor,” he offered, softly. He said nothing more.

Spirit nodded in acknowledgement, and Socor thought she understood the value of the gift he had imparted to her. The two stood and were silent. The mechanism groaned gently beside them as the corpses streamed forward, filling the winding tunnel with its lulling song. Finally, Spirit gave voice to that which she was inevitably to ask. Socor knew the question before it fell from her lips. Indeed he knew the question before it had even formed within the darkness of her mind. The asking was as inexorable as the rising of the sun.

“How do I get out of here, Socor?”

The words bubbled out of his mouth before he realized that he had an answer.

“There is a path.” And then, hoping to dissuade her, to infect her with some of his caution, “But the other boys think it haunted. No one...” He didn’t finish. Her face was set, and he knew there would be no deterring her. He bit into the inside of his lip and began to shuffle down the tunnel, following the flowing corpses. He could hear Spirit’s crisp, purposeful stride over the scraping sound of

The Source, continued

his own tired feet.

Even if the atmosphere of the Source's lowest tunnels was one of gentle warmth, those that walked through them would still shiver with goose-pimpled flesh. The blinding white lights strung from end to end, the ceaseless groaning of the tread, the empty corpses with their reaching arms and eyes; together these things formed a mood eerie enough to cause a fearful tingling in the stomach of even the most courageous of men. The boy and the girl walked the tunnel's length in silence; one was full of fear, and the other merely disinclined, especially to chatter. After some time Spirit and Socor came upon a path that shot off from their current tunnel like a branch from a tree. It seemed no different from any of the other dark, damp tunnels they had passed. Without a word, pausing only to pull a small flashlight from his pocket, Socor angled himself to diverge upon this path. Spirit followed.

Ten steps down the path and it began to slope upwards. A burning built in Socor's and Spirit's thighs, a silent crescendo of sensation. When enough distance had been put between the two travelers and the sinister river of corpses, when the girl's fear no longer weighed so heavily upon her tongue, Spirit began to speak. Her speech was animated, full of inflection and energy. Listening to her was a delight, Socor decided. He spoke little in the time that followed, preferring her light words to his measured, heavy tone. Eventually, though, she questioned him about the Source. For some reason,

though he had not been afraid while walking among the twisted corpses, he felt fear then.

"Where does the water come from?" she asked, face oddly blank.

Hundreds of years ago, when the activities of man had chewed a hundred holes in the Earth's protective atmosphere, the benign sun turned malignant. Beating down with merciless rays, it sucked the moisture from the world. The air became dry and sandy, the lakes and rivers turned to dust; even the mighty, infinite oceans retreated from its onslaught. As the precious watery resource dwindled, mankind grew anxious. That was when the first skirmishes began, and it was not long after that they exploded into wars. The fighting was fierce, for those that lost would surely die, and through it all the sun shone down with killing rays. The bodies piled up, and began to melt beneath the heavy heat. It was a disgusting sight, but there was no time to bury them. Thus an expedition was established, the Source was formed, and the corpses were transported into cool, preserving darkness. Those involved in the expedition must have found a source of water in those twisting, underground caves, for soon after its establishment, the Source began to export water to the highest bidder.

And so, "underwater streams. Hidden from the sun," was his quick, ignorant response. In a sense he was halfway right.

It was then that the sloped path opened into a shallow, abandoned cave. A

soft warm light spread across the uneven ground, though neither Socor nor Spirit could determine its source. Confused, the two fell into a reflective silence. A moment later they split—Spirit to the left and Socor to the right—and moved along the rim of the cave, searching for a new tunnel.

A thin layer of moss covered the walls that Socor scanned. Discomforted by the empty cave, he retreated into his old habit and let his knuckles drag against the walls as he continued his hunt. At the very moment he found the continuation of their tunnel, a whisper from the other side of the cave stung his ears. Spirit's tone was such that his stomach knotted with anxiety. He spun and saw Spirit's form lying prone before the wall of the cave. He moved with uncharacteristic speed.

When he had first entered the cave he had assumed that it was walled on all sides. As he approached Spirit, however, he saw that one side of the cave ended in a cliff that overlooked a much larger cave. Remembering how Spirit had called to him in a whisper, he slowed his frantic step and lowered himself gently beside her. He was rewarded with a slight, exciting smile. The two turned together to peer over the rocky edge.

Socor had to squint his eyes against the onslaught of light. There were a very large number of floodlights set up around the cave's perimeter, filling every crack and crevice with revealing light. His ears, too, were oppressed by sound. The workers below grunted and moaned, machinery clicked and slurped, and the lights gave off an unnatural buzzing, like a

The Source, continued

hoard of insects. And beneath the din the slow-moving tread groaned and sang. The air here, unlike the air everywhere else in the underground complex, was dry. Socor licked at his lips and was surprised to find them chapped. Beside him Spirit moaned and Socor forced his eyelids open.

Once his eyes became accustomed to the light, his mind began to work through the confusion that was playing out in the cave below. Like a river splitting into distributaries, the slow-moving tread broke into a number of sections that extended through the center of the cave and continued out of sight. At the tread's breaking point, a few workers were busy at work regulating the flow of corpses so that no single tread accumulated more bodies than another. More workers were placed along the lengths of the small, long treads. All of them held two odd instruments, one in each hand. Half were the shape of a mask, half were like half-circles. The exteriors of both tools—the sides that the workers held onto—were smooth and glossy, a sort of plastic, and their interiors were all filled with unnaturally thick blond hairs. Wires fell from the end of each of these instruments to the floor, where they ran like arteries to a tunnel on the farthest side of the cave.

The corpses flowed along the treads like water down so many streams. When a corpse came within reach, a worker would reach out with both hands, catching the corpse's face in the mask-like instrument, its crotch in the other. As if the body and instrument were two magnets of the same charge, they seemed to resist contact. The workers had to force the machinery into place. At its touch, the corpses would shudder, as if they were not corpses at all but the living bodies of struggling men, women, children. Then, with a horrible slowness, the corpses would start to shrivel. It began in their legs, so that the muscles became more pronounced, the bones more defined. Then the bellies would prune, like a child's fingers after they've been in the water for too long. Then the arms. Then the neck. So it was until the corpses had been completely drained of water. Like grapes dehydrated into raisins.

The horror of it all held Spirit and Socor captive for some time.

When the two finally slipped away from the gruesome scene, they did so in a silence more complete and thick than any that had fallen before. Spirit followed Socor as he led her down the tunnel he had found only a few minutes earlier. Neither looked back at that most macabre cave where water was pumped from the dead bodies of men to wet the thirsty throat of humanity.

When Socor realized that he could not hear the echo of Spirit's footsteps beneath his own, he stopped and turned around. She was sitting on the moist ground some distance away. Something about her seemed diminished. He lowered himself to the ground beside her, close enough that their shoulders brushed. The two sat. Neither knew exactly what to feel.

But then Spirit spoke suddenly, her beautiful voice ringing with resolve, shattering the silence that hung like glass between them. "Let's go."

Simply said, but the sound of her voice invigorated Socor. He took off down the path with an uncharacteristic energy. The tunnel ended in a door. It hung open, and through that threshold Socor could see the stars, caught as they were in the sky pregnant with heat and twilight. It was the first time he had seen the sky since he had been sent to the Source, years ago, and he found himself paralyzed before it. Spirit, however, did not waste a moment. She pushed past Socor without a thought and flew to the door, feet light with relief. As his mind registered her action a complex emotion overcame him.

That would have been the end, had Spirit not stopped at the door's threshold. She didn't know what stopped her, but something hung heavily about her, and her feet seemed to be rooted to the ground. For the first time in a long time, she knew what it was to be still. She spent a moment in consideration. Then, slowly, she turned her neck to look back at the damp tunnel and the one who stood within it. But he wasn't standing where she had left him. No, he was running towards the door, towards her, stepping lightly and with infinite grace.

Good Soup

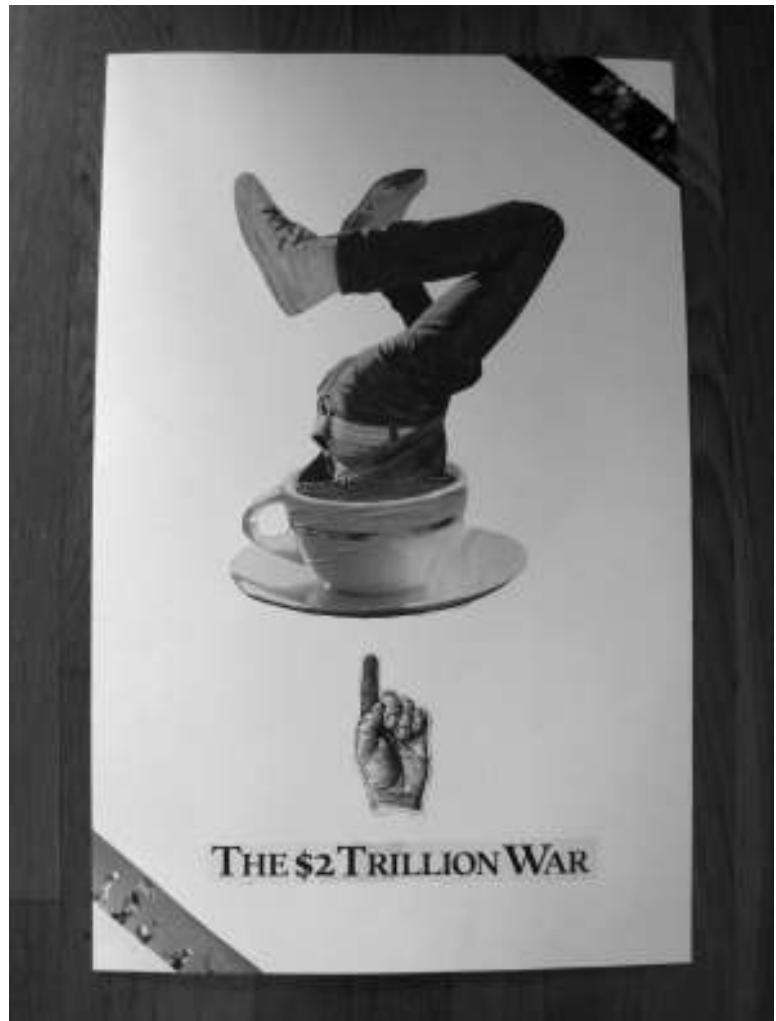
by Sadie Lansdale

My mother:
cable-strong, palm-thin, Carolina-beautiful;
whip-sharp, too, with ice-white teeth and thread-blue eyes,
calculated herself
straight out of high school,
out of her father's house,
and later, out of the
porch-loving, palmetto-lined South.

My father:
tactful in his black suit
and always on time,
loved her—I imagine—
from the start.
Dad reads boring biographies—
John Adams, Lincoln's Melancholy—
hates food that's orange,
and makes good soup.

My mother: Hammurabi of our house.
My father: the silent puppeteer.

They made me so carefully,
but a child is like a poem—
you never know if it will speak
arias, azaleas or asps.



Artwork by Erik Leupp

Paternity

by Craig Dathe

When Susan gets home she hisses me for printing out the directions. Jimmy has a school project, she says, tearing up the printout. Don't take that away from him. He probably understands computers better than you do, my daughter Ashley says, one earbud snaking down her neck and the other hanging limp on her chest. It is the first time she has spoken to me in three days.

Jimmy comes bounding into the room, a chocolate and peanut butter sandwich in his hand and on his face, and sits down at the computer. Susan beams and I cringe. She gives me a dead-eye and I leave the room to finish packing up the car.

Twenty minutes into the drive my back is numb from Jimmy kicking the back of my seat. I follow Jimmy's directions to the letter without protest. The end destination says somewhere in Quebec. We are supposed to be going camping in Yosemite. I expect someone to notice that we were heading in the wrong direction before long, but they don't. So I keep driving. My back isn't the only thing that is numb.

I try to ask Ashley about school and but she doesn't answer. I can see her sneering in the rearview mirror. I mutter something about discipline under my breath and Susan mutters something about chauvinist pigs under hers, without looking up from her cell phone. I ask if anyone is hungry and Jimmy starts screaming about ice cream. I pull off the freeway when I see a sign for 31 Flavors just so I can hear myself think again. As we get out of the car Susan patronizes me for indulging Jimmy all the time. Last time I mentioned discipline I was a chauvinist pig, I reply. She gives me the Look. The Look doesn't scare me anymore though, because she hasn't slept with me in months anyways. I pay for the ice cream and sit on a different bench than the rest of them.

They are all texting over their ice cream, including Jimmy. Jimmy is six years old. There is now double-choco-swirl all over his hands, face and cell phone. I decide that I'm going to look on the bright side of things. At least my car has brown interior, I think to myself. No one will notice the stains. I consider mentioning something about the directions but eat another spoonful of almond fudge instead. I wonder what Quebec is like this time of year.

Whistle Pig

by Denali Hussin

It was an unseasonably warm Wednesday in September when Lucille heard the noise from the basement again.

She put down the pot she was scouring, and listened. The noise came again, a high, thin, wail. And a scuffling on the steps. Slowly, the pot in one gnarled hand, she made her way to the basement door. Carefully she pressed one ear to the wood. There was no mistaking it.

“Whistle Pig,” she said, her voice hoarse in her own ears, rusty from unuse, “Whistle Pig. It’s only been a month, so just hush up. You got no reason to be wailin’ at me.”

Silence, save for some rustling. Lucille rolled out her stooped shoulders and made her way back to the sink, leaving the water running on high so that the gush and burble of the faucet drowned out any noise from the cellar.

~~~~~

That night, lying in bed with her old pink afghan pulled up to her chin despite the warm night, she heard it again. “That you, Reb?” she whispered. Then she remembered the old grey cat had been gone since the summer, and wouldn’t be scratching on her door, asking to be let in. She remembered the desperate scabble of his claws against the basement door. Poor old Reb.

The four fingers on her right hand tightened on the bedclothes. She wouldn’t have time to wait for a traveling salesman or a Jehovah’s Witness. Now the howl came again, and the house shook. Lucille squeezed her eyes shut. The pinky finger of her left hand, missing these five years, began, as it inexplicably did at times, to itch. There was a quick fix. A solution that would buy time, even if it was an impermanent peace. Pulling on her old housecoat, Lucille fumbled her feet into her slippers. She made her way downstairs, clutching the rail for support. The kitchen was dark, the refrigerator humming slightly. Light glinted on the cleaver, shining and clean in the dish drainer. Below her feet, the Whistle Pig howled.

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She woke to a quiet house, and an afghan soaked with blood. She didn’t even have the energy to wash it with soap and clean water, and just stuffed it in the bottom of her hamper. She ate her grits and hardboiled egg with a shaking hand, her



Artwork by Julie Kang

Whistle Pig, continued

other curled and bandaged in her lap.

"That ought to bide you, Whistle Pig," she murmured.
"Lord, give me rest for a time."

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But after a week, Lucille was woken again in the night by noise from the cellar. This time it was a low, building growl. She began to get desperate. No one stopped by to visit her anymore. People who traveled door to door were becoming scarce these days. And she hadn't seen a stray dog loitering about in months. She had no choice.

"Living flesh, living flesh," she mumbled over and over to herself as she shuffled about her house, forgetting to water her plants, or whether it was time to make breakfast or dinner. The only utensil she bothered to wash was the cleaver. When she ran out of gauze, she started tearing old sheets up for bandages. She began to wonder if she was merely making the Whistle Pig voracious. By Friday the middle finger of her left hand was gone too, and she was beginning to get desperate. She was constantly lightheaded from blood loss.

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Stephy Taylor peered down at her clipboard. It made her feel like she was doing something important, like when her mother pored over taxes and the account book. She hitched her Brownie Merit Badge Sash over her shoulder and frowned at the list she'd had her mother type up for her. She liked lists. It was so satisfying and adult to cross things off. She drew a bold line through "Telephone Manners". She'd had a very polite conversation with her father's secretary the previous afternoon when her mother had let her answer the phone. She tucked the pen under the clipboard's clip, and stuck the whole thing under her arm. Her mother had even allowed her to walk by herself around the block. That's how important

this was. She walked up the path to the door of number twenty nine, trying not to skip, but giving a little half-hop of excitement. She rang the doorbell. Silence. She rang it again. No one came, but there was definitely a car in the garage, so dusty and old that it looked like it hadn't been used in ages. Stephy straightened her back determinedly and hammered on the door. After a pregnant pause, it opened. An old woman, not that much taller than Stephy herself, peered out, blinking rapidly, as if the light hurt her eyes. She was wrapped in a grey housecoat, even though it was three in the afternoon.

"Good afternoon, ma'am, how d'ye do," said Stephy, speaking rapidly. "My name is Stephanie Taylor and I'm a Brownie in Troop 560 Morningdale. I'm working on my Assisting the Elderly badge and would love to help out in any way I can." At this point the script in her head ran out, and she craned her neck around the woman's shoulder, looking into her house for inspiration. "I can help you with cleaning, like doing the dishes, or cooking, if you don't have TV Dinners, or even then, I guess, and then," her eyes lit up at the sudden thought, "I could also earn my House Work and Baking badges!" She beamed and looked back up at the woman. As she did, she realized that the woman's left hand was wrapped in a wad of bandages, dark with blood. Either she only had a thumb and index finger, or else they were the only ones sticking out of the bandage. Stephy stared a second, then volunteered, "I haven't gotten to first aid yet, but..." she trailed off. The old woman seemed to find her voice at last.

"Do you want some lemonade?" she asked, her voice surprisingly soft.

"Sure!" Stephy said. "And then I could assist you maybe?"

"Yes, yes," murmured the woman, her dull eyes turned eager. "Please, please come in."

As Stephy stepped over the threshold she cocked her head at the sound. "Our furnace is busted too," she confided. "I never go into our basement because it's so rumbly." The door closed behind her.

Thursday's Inexorable Thirst For Joy

by Charlotte Mostertz

She said that she
had bubbles of
happiness inside her,
bursting every so often. happiness is
to her, like having champagne
pulsing
inside of her veins
instead of blood. golden
and effervescent, carbonated.

So am I to believe:
that joy, in all of its intoxication
is like the 7 dollar bottle we finished last night
between us? we gripped the neck,
loosely and nonchalantly, we tipped
back our own necks, opened our
mouths, letting
happiness slide down so easy and
become us. fuck searching for harmony
on a Thursday night.



Andre's cheap
Enlightenment.
And the
champagne bubbles are
popping
like laughter inside me
and now
i'm laughing, too.

Artwork by Julie Kang



Fine Dining
by Lenora Smith

The Meditations of a Poet/Prophet

by Melissa Roberts

Every moment of her life represented part of a search for enlightenment; Clarissa considered herself a Buddhist. This was her mantra:

“Why bother being alive if you don’t try to squeeze the meaning out of every second?”

Clarissa repeated the mantra to herself, as she sat in front of a glowing HP Notebook screen to transcribe every little thought that passed through her head.

Dear Diary:

“today, I think I must have gotten so high, I could touch the meaning of life. And it was so beautiful... like getting too close to a flame,”

A brilliant simile, she patted herself on the back for that one. Clarissa studied her SoHo studio apartment and sipped her coffee (black, no frilly cream or sugar). The new cerulean trim she just painted really tied the whole place together, she decided. Though it was small, she had decorated the space charmingly, with exotic-looking tapestries made in china and a glass bong -- so bohemian, she declared it.

After composing a few more sentences about the marijuana she had smoked earlier, Clarissa decided that that was enough for one day, and retired to her fire escape for a cigarette. This was the best part about the apartment -- aside from its location in the most

artistic and exciting New York neighborhood -- the view. Even though she inhabited a space at the back of the building, facing several other monuments of concrete, she could see directly into the rooms across from her. Clarissa couldn’t help but look -- and in her opinion, if people were going to be shy about it, they should close their blinds once in awhile.

Her favorite couple was going at it again: Julia and Leon. She watched as Julia’s mouth rounded into a perfect circle. She was definitely pissed off at Leon. Leon had come home with several women who were not Julia in the past month; maybe this time Julia had finally had enough of it. Oh, to be young and in love, she lamented. Now it seemed the couple had reconciled; they were cuddling together on the couch. Clarissa rushed back to her computer to record it all. She secretly loved these happy endings, even though she objected on principle to such foolish optimism.

Wait, was there something to that? Maybe she could use it in her writing. Clarissa was feeling so “in touch with the world,” she decided to bring her laptop out onto the fire escape. There she spent the night on her iron seat, hugging her personal computer and watching the couple make love. Or at least she imagined that’s what happened after they did, finally, decide to close the blinds.

My Pencil

by Michael Restiano

My pencil is pretty long,
And undoubtedly very strong.
Reloadable,
Reusable.
Definitely not flimsy at all.
It's penetrated quite a few things
And gotten to the bottom of a great many mysteries.
And with experience my pencil does teach me,
How to get better
But still keep it all together.
Because although my pencil never waivers,
And never cracks under pressure,
I worry about myself,
Because being a writer just wears you out.



Artwork by
Joseph A. Ha

Graffiti

by Lenora Smith

The day after we moved into this apartment complex, I sat on our porch while my mom cursed her way through making dinner. She doesn't like me to see her get pissed off, so I pretend not to hear her a lot. Anyway, I was sitting outside and I watched the old dude who lives here come back from one of his afternoon walks.

When I saw him, my first thought was that he had probably been in a war. Old men always talk about wars. At least they do in the movies. He moved with bizarre dignity, his shoulders hunched and a black plastic trash bag hanging over his shoulder. His liver-spotted forehead huddled over his angry-Santa eyebrows and he stuck his head out like a turtle, jutting his chin and nose at the courtyard. He glanced at me and scowled, then turned to his storage box by his front door. It was really a glorified Tupperware container: plastic, white and grey, maybe big enough to hold a scrunched up body. I wouldn't have given him or his box much more notice than that, but when he unlocked it, he pulled out lace and ribbons and paints and put them on the ground next to him.

I got up and walked over to the basketball hoop, grabbing the pole and letting gravity pull me down as I swung around it. While I dangled, the old man opened his trash bag and pulled out dozens of cans, a decapitated Barbie doll, and two rusted Hot Wheels cars.

"Hey, sir?" I surprised myself by calling out to the man. He jumped and glanced around. I waved. "Sir? I was just wondering—"

"I can't hear you!" The old man squawked over his shoulder. "If you have to talk, come here to do it."

I slowly shuffled over to the man, staring at my shoes. I always look at my shoes when I walk up to people I don't know. "Sir," I said when I thought he could hear me. "I was just wondering what you're doing with that stuff."

"What, this junk?" The man picked up one of his many cans and waved it at me. "Selling it."

"Oh. Well. I guess I meant the ribbons and busted toys and stuff."

The man huffed and dropped the



Bus Stop
Lily Carey

Graffiti, continued

can back into his storage box. He continued emptying his bag of cans and toys until I thought he had forgotten about me. I turned to walk back to my porch when he barked, “busted!”

“What?” I turned back to the man, who was sitting back on his knees holding a doll head in his palm.

“This stuff isn’t busted. It just needs some appreciation.”

“Huh? I’m sorry, I don’t understand.”

“I save these toys.” He put the head carefully with the rest of the dolls at the bottom of the box and pulled out a shiny purple Hot Wheel with the name “Michael” inscribed on the roof. “This guy looked just like my newcomers when I saved him.”

“Who is Michael?” I was still staring at the Hot Wheel.

“What?”

“Michael. The name on the car. Who is he?”

The old man put the car back in the box and slammed the lid. “No one.”

Tonight, as I crouched by the old dude’s living room window, I could see the bottoms of light colored blue jeans and mismatched socks. I felt pretty awkward about my ass. My new friends all wear their pants a couple sizes too big and all the guys in my grade seem to frown heavily on the use of belts. My plaid boxers were visible to anyone who might wander into my apartment courtyard at 10:30 on this Wednesday night. The old man I was scouting for believed in belts, probably. Behind me, the air hissed with wet spurts and several impatient rattles. One of my cronies snorted as he cracked the can of spray paint and went back to his mural. I looked over my shoulder to see what the fuss was about.

“Keep on the lookout, Nipples!” The Leader of my new pack grumbled at me and I turned abruptly towards the window. I hate middle school. The first day of classes, I walked into English and gave the teacher my schedule to sign off on. She put me in the back of the room and promptly forgot about me. As I awkwardly shuffled between peoples’ elbows, Pack Leader sneered at me from his seat against the

wall. “Cold, Nipples?” I looked down in time to realize I was in the midst of an unfortunate side effect of puberty. When I shuffled to my seat, I leaned my new English textbook on its side to hide my torso. After that, even though I made several fashion and academic choices to win over the Leader and his gang, the nickname stuck.

The socks I was observing made decided efforts toward the living room.

“Guys,” I whispered urgently. “He’s coming toward me.”

“Can he see you?” Leader hissed.

“Well, I don’t think so. But maybe try not to crack the cans so much?”

Patrick, the red-haired, heavily freckled Enforcer Number One, snickered and leaned over to his fellow muralist. “Hey, Eric. I think Nipples is scared.”

Eric, Enforcer Number Two, shook his blond hair out of his face and bit his lip, ignoring Patrick’s comment.

“Just keep watching,” Leader said, still intent on his assault. The locked plastic box they were redecorating had been on his mind for a couple of weeks, ever since the old guy chased us away from it after school. We’d been leaning against the side of his house, passing a cigarette around. I was wondering when everybody would notice that on my turns, I only held the cigarette for a few seconds before handing it back. The old dude yelled from across the courtyard as he approached, “Hey, get away from there!” Leader stared at the old man in a threatening way before popping the cigarette into his mouth and shoving off, kicking a bush as he stalked away. The goons followed suit. The old guy shuffled up to his box after we left, carrying his plastic trash bag full of cans. That’s when leader hatched his idea.

The socks walked right up to my face and then out of my vision. Through the window, I heard the eardrum-piercing shriek of the old TV being turned on. My Science teacher told us that adults couldn’t hear things that high.

The socks padded across the mustard shag to the stained, three-legged coffee table. The fourth end was held up with a

Graffiti, continued



Artwork by Julie Kang

stack of newspapers. A pockmarked white hand carefully set down a glass of water.

“Dude, that’s badass.” One of the mindless minions praised Leader’s handy work. If I had to guess, I’d say an engorged, spray painted penis can only look badass so many times. Perhaps our chief had a talent for making them particularly veiny.

The socks ambled back to the kitchen.

The Three Musketeers were whispering behind me. “Put some over there” and “yeah, that’s fucking sweet” was the soundtrack to their delinquency. I started feeling awkward

about more things than just my pants. This old, pale dude lives alone across from me. All his painstakingly collected possessions are locked in a plastic box that we’re vandalizing. For what? He told us to get away from it? I’d tell us to get away from it too.

The socks walked back toward me and turned left at the coffee table. The man I was stalking sat down on his sagging blue couch with a microwave dinner, his pinched attention locked on the TV. We sat there for a few minutes in companionable silence until he reached down to take a sip from his water. The moment he looked away from his television his eyes targeted me through the window.

We weren’t companions anymore.

“Hey!” He began the process of standing up. We all heard him scream. I couldn’t move. “Hey!” He yelled again and I saw his socks lumbering towards the front door. My cohorts cried expletives of several shades as they dropped their weapons and scrambled into the darkness. The door squeaked open and slammed against the wooden siding of the apartment.

I launched away from my perch, finally, and made my own gangling retreat across the courtyard. “You little bastards!” The old man was out of breath from his excitement, or from the few feet his socks had traveled. I couldn’t tell. At my porch, I stopped and turned back to watch the old man. He crouched down to his plastic box and wiped his hand across the wet graffiti, his palm smearing the penis down and making it absurdly larger, though less veiny. Then his shoulders sagged like his blue couch. And his silence made my chest ache.

Without warning me, my feet walked down the steps of my porch and back across the courtyard. Before I could ask them what this was about, I was crouching next to the slumped old man.

“I’m sorry,” my mouth said. I agreed with it. The old dude looked up at me, all hanging cheeks and drooping eyes and a half open mouth. “Please,” I said. My mouth agreed with me. “Please, can I help you repaint it?”

Familial Cycle

by Hillary Fens

grimace over gritted teeth —
ingrained in our minds as the grain on photographs,
the study of purported strength, playful dominance:
the flex of your arms in the flux of youth,
plucked; dogear this day.

you grew as a weed,
strong thin-limbed.
ribs on ribs, rings on trees;
a cage, another year another age.

I look to him, over coffee
in my kitchen, to toss out,
playfully and honestly,
earnestly, unabashedly,
“I believe your son is having sex”

He smiles, my inclination
to point out with interest
the salacious
undiminished,
though the years’ve passed.

I am the same person.

Ours of hours and hours together
sex together, a son together;
the comfort of continuity.



Deserter

by Ashley Suarez

You sip, sigh
and bristle - lick the chapped
corner of your mouth
and arch your back
backwards,
away from me - unnatural.

I’m whispering in fists, bared arms,
bare feet, and dead air driving
a forked tongue forward

Here we are,
a memory on mute,
the kitchen light is dim,
sink dripping, and you’re
cringing - a
pinched, dry cactus of a man.

And if only I had folded,
pushed my parched anger
aside - sighed
and relented

then I might not be here now,
sucking ice cubes, iced
shoulders and puckered lips,
watching the time tick in
an empty kitchen, and
thirstily avoiding
this old desert of a bed.

And Go For a Swim

by Alex Polyakov

When I told you that
I could no longer feel
The warmth of the world
You lent me your hands
And when I could
No longer see light
You gave me your eyes
And as fear took over our lives
Your courage was enough
Too keep both of us standing

And now as we sit
On the shores of an indefinite future
Looking out at the horizon -
In our eyes
Equal parts apprehension and hope
The seagulls overhead fill the
Empty skies with the laughter
For which they've been longing

Let me take your hand
And try to return the favor
As we wade in together



Volga Morning
Lily Carey

Elegy

by Sadie Lansdale

I. The Day After Christmas

Drove to your house. Forgot my gloves.
My hands were cold and chapped.
I sat on the couch with the cat hair.
You stayed in the big red chair.
The potent scent of pine turned light to steam.

II. What I Made for Dinner the Night After You Left

Sugar snap peas, barely cooked and sassy.
Carrots thinly sliced,
peeled and long like fall,
raw and bright,
tasting of August.
Almonds then,
slivered and roasted
full like your fireplace.
I crunch my teeth together
but the nut stops gnash,
crash of smooth on smooth
scrape of white on white.
Red bowl, olive oil, lemon juice—tastes that
last, pepper. Fresh ground and sharp:
kiss turns to bite.

III. Your Bed

In my mind it grew roots when we slept there,
Carved cold bedposts woke up, remembering,
and hummily tendrilled down.
I'll kiss the ground to ward off stillness
of the most unbearable kind,
where the dirt tastes like pepper and smells like pine.

IV. Deer

Not the tail of a deer disappearing
and half-ruined prints in the snow,
but the life itself standing
200 pounds in its own cloven steps,
breath and flex,
holding itself in the ground
until March cracks the pond
and it scampers.

Quest for Camelot

by Andrew Padgett

From the plane window
The ocean somehow looked like
Sun-dried leather skin

But hey, you as well
Were a bit deceiving when
Observed from afar

That's why my grandma
Makes me take two backward steps
When photographing

She can't bear the thought
Of a zoom lens exposing
Her shameful wrinkles

And all looks better
When you overlook the flawed
Details, forget them

I'd have loved to share
This luxury with you, dear,
Instead I know you

You are an empty
Shell of a human being
Make love to me now

Los Jovenes en el Pueblo

by Emma Shakarshy

Over the door, the bell sings and a string
of hormones rush inside,
smelling of supermarket sangria and the night's breath.
The whispers of their flamenco dresses
spoil the surprise.

Festival means boys can dress like girls and abuela will look
the other way.

The boys roll their hips like they roll their r's,
like they know a secret.
Like Spanish señoritas, they slink clink drink,
weaving between barstools
with arms like snakes, snapping air castanets.
One chico's wig falls off. Dark curls adorn the bar,
mixing with cigarette ash and spilled cerveza.

The señoritas' señoritas flit around like hummingbirds,
pouting their lips and showing their slips
and working the natural curve of their hips,
applying an extra coat of femininity to their glossy mouths
so that no one questions who the true ladies are.

Outside, the girls from the church youth group inspect
the scene through the window, counting up the sins
on their fingers and wondering what Jesus would do.
One girl explodes in a cloud of caramelos, breaking the fat
silence,
throwing her arms in the air and spinning like her mother
told her not to.
The rest catch on, infected with the need to create
something louder than God.
Six more candy fireworks burst
and the children swarm and buzz,
biting at their feet.

Mañana the town goes back
to its half-shut eyelid self
but for now the boys
are shedding their skin
and the childrens' pockets
are ripe with sugarfruit
and the town is watching,
eyes damp with dreams.



Goodbye to Korea

by Ju-Hyun Park

When I wake,
I will miss your distant horns sounding off in the calm.
When I sleep,
I will miss your lavender night.

I will miss your clear days when
mountains hang over buildings like a memory
and wind peels back the clouds and
the air turns frigid as the world lies
naked on its back.

I will miss your deaf-mutes selling hot-dduk
and your blind and legless begging in subways and main streets
with their music that always threads
something buried forty-something years ago to the surface.

Your old women selling flowers
and hesitant sticks of gum.

Your trash collectors yoked
to rusted frames and shards of cardboard.

I will miss seeing a small boy wandering
six blocks from home and knowing
he'll be alright.

Your restaurants with
clammy tables and plastic stools,
with propane gas fires and four-dollar meat.
The damp sweetness of July,
and the silent freeze of December.

Your students standing
in rows in subways and
the open street with
their pressed navy suits and

Goodbye to Korea, continued

skirts that furl across girls'
knees
like paper fans.

I will miss fresh vegetables being sold on sidewalks,
lines of dried fish hanging on the road
and beer sold from carts.

Your quiet teens
and your quiet thirty-somethings.
Your old men and women
with voices like clanging bronze
on hot summer days.

I will miss your teahouses,
your alleys,
your PC's and
DVD's and karaokes.
I will miss your crimson neon crosses,
humming through the night like hymns of the unknown.

I will miss your sunsets of saffron and fire.
I will miss your days of jaundiced wind and clouded sky.

I will miss your mountains,
with their fresh springs and buzzing trees
with the thousand poems etched into their rock
—bold, steadfast and reticent,
as they pull the sun into their wombs at twilight
and hold the world in quiet.

The rolling coo of your summer doves.
The electric pulse of cicadas in July.
And the slice of moon piercing your starless night.



Natalie in the Ice
by Doyle Bley

Permesso

by Charlotte Mostertz

Heat stroke in
the sunrise of the
ancients,
reflected in the
perfect water that still
flows out of the aqueducts
like a song. Perfect
despite the ruin and the
sink holes
the whistles and
cries of adoration
crowing from
the endlessly hopeful
and young
smiling
beguiling faces
of the boys
who inherit the twin thrones
of Michelangelo and Ovid,

the Catholic chants emanating
from the churches built on Peter's
bones,
the Hebrew chants emanating
from the Ghetto, scattered
in poppies and ritual, all
covering temples of dead
emperors in beautiful grime,
in age, in lonely;
Their bronze
beams ripped out
and pillaged,
rendering them hollow,
porous and bereft—
Vacated,
written about and
whispered in
The history books,
And now a home for Rome's
stray cats.



Photo by Charlotte Mostertz

Timelines

by Ashley Wood

I like to imagine that
if you sawed through me
like a magician's assistant,
right in half,
and dragged my feet away,
leaving that empty
space, awkwardly pressing
between hips and ribs,

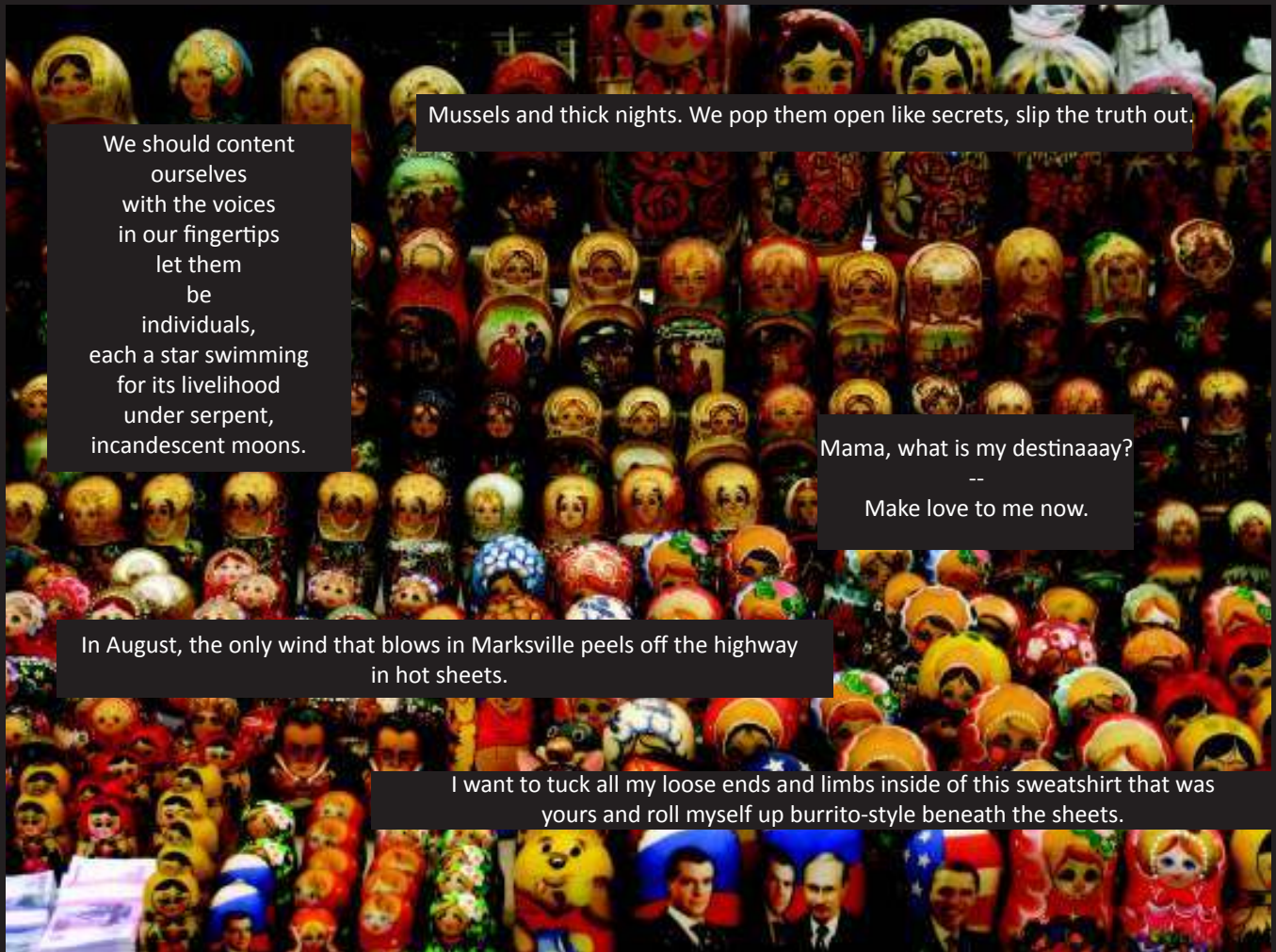
that,
if the boxes turned and faced,
(as you always,
in horror, wished they would)
the view revealed of my severed
halves would have more
in common with a chopped oak tree,
than a human being,

and how romantic it would seem,
if each passing year
had written itself into the folds of my
skin peels, tallied my bones
like a chalkboard,
and all those memories that had
slipped away
as easy as the breeze on a bicycle
to school,
had really just been playing
hide and seek

and were all still living,
marked and proving
that I was once 5 years old
and fearless, 13 and foolish,
and the years in between existed,
each one, alive
inside me.



CHOP SHOP



We should content
ourselves
with the voices
in our fingertips
let them
be
individuals,
each a star swimming
for its livelihood
under serpent,
incandescent moons.

Mussels and thick nights. We pop them open like secrets, slip the truth out.

Mama, what is my destinaaay?
--
Make love to me now.

In August, the only wind that blows in Marksville peels off the highway
in hot sheets.

I want to tuck all my loose ends and limbs inside of this sweatshirt that was
yours and roll myself up burrito-style beneath the sheets.

Doll Face
by Lily Carey

Harper's Ferry

by Denali Hussin

They never say, go to Harper's Ferry,
where the slate walls stand,
and the bridges like wooden dancers spread their skirts
over the swift, clear Shenandoah,
and the railroad roars silent from the blasted cliff face,
and the ghosts walk the narrow streets.

They never say, climb the hill,
for the view is beautiful,
and the stones are alive.



Nanuink
by Rashad Davis

They never say, sit atop the walls by the river
and listen to it breathe.
Pad through the tunnels where the mill used to stand;
they hold the ghosts of dry waters—
Listen to them
gush

Here,
they say, the war began.
Here,
they say, John Brown failed.
Died as the foolish dieth

They say,
he never freed a single slave (but eleven)
and the first shot his men fired
entered the heart of a freed slave
(now remembered in rock
by the Daughters of the Confederacy
and their cats).

John Brown, mouldering in
his roiling grave,
hanged a saint.

Madman or martyr
Apparently insane

Here
I hear
him scorn
his son who lay
with a bullet in his gut
groaning for his father
as the marines rattled the little shed
and Lt. Col. Robert Lee shook his eloquent head.
Misguided, wild—

Harper's Ferry, continued

John Brown saw ten of his children die before him,
but it was for his country he grieved.
The negro problem, he wept.

Wracked in sin
He hoped to save it by
bathing it in holy blood
that ran in tongues through the clear
Shenandoah.

Those waters held the face of a dead man
for many days after (they threw rocks at it
and laughed)
Ye liberators—!

And the gentle genius of the woods,
now gone, alas, with his flute
sang your praises, my madman,
with his panpipe,
and his pacifist heart beat fast for you.
It would be in vain to kill him...

We see their pikes
their guns
the powder house
and his words
and then we walk up the
hill to the church
like a lovely, ruined mother
dressed in dark cobbles,
and the grey sky is so beautiful
that it aches.

Harper's Ferry
has power beyond its history.
From the roaring train,
to sprawling river,
to yawning hillsides.

Shenandoah.

Then, and not till then, we will take our revenge

They never tell you,
but I will,
that Harper's Ferry
is beautiful.



Ptah
by Rashad Davis

Photo Spread

by Doyle Bley



An Evening in Mission Hill



Julia Entrance



Lily and her Love



Abandoned Memories



The Engineer and his Muse

Message Received On: October 17 3:45pm

Brandon Archambault



Bitch Please
by Lenora Smith

Faceplant, on the stairs,
latte in my hair, my eyes, my face.
Glasses flying off. Croissant, on the floor.
Toenail cracked and knuckle bleeding.

Me and Hotung are through.



I Can Haz Laser Eyes
by Lily Carey

Art Spread : Left by Rashad Davis, Right by Lenora Smith



Apology

by Lenora Smith

Do you remember
when I said,
“that top makes you look pregnant.”
I was 7;
you were 11.
And I remember
how your paunchy face
crumpled, your
wavy brown-red-gold hair
(that I always envied) trailed
down your left shoulder,
obscuring the size and
price tag
of the offending blouse.

I wasn't sorry,
because right after that
you punched me, and
we used the shirt
to stop my nosebleed.

I remember
when you said,
“I have cancer.”
I was 17;
you were 21.
Words like Sick
and Hospital
didn't factor into your face.
You were so fat
and pale
with fierce brown eyebrows,
thick, greasy dark hair
and a shining
unwashed forehead.
You might remember

how I crumpled. How
I couldn't breathe
and my left leg kept trembling.
How when I hugged you,
I kept thinking that your breath
smelled like vomit
and how sorry I was
that I made fun of your blouse.



Phaedra Splits

by Rachel Stern

Phaedra is eleven years old with huge smog colored eyes and a penchant for shirts with rhinestones. Her twin Tony enjoys (or at least feels a compulsion for) picking off the rhinestones one by one and calmly gluing them to the wall behind their bead, leaving behind a few spots of glue residue, a pale outline of palm tree or smiley face that once graced Phaedra's shirt. It's not the only way in which Tony torments Phaedra- unlike the archetypal twins, Tony and Phaedra share no special bond or psychic connection. Even when their mother, a pale skinny woman with eyes like Phaedra's, is present, Tony persists in hurting his twin, grabbing her pinky and bending it back, flicking her forehead too hard, pinching the soft skin on her thigh until the dark blood blossoms beneath Phaedra's pale epidermis. If their mother protests, Tony will reach up and slap her thin arms, only eleven and already practicing the famed art of female abuse.

As fraternal twins, there is no particular reason for Phaedra and Tony to get along, no special genetic propensity towards friendship or intimacy. They have developed from the fertilization of two separate eggs by two competing sperm and therefore have two differing sets of genetic information, the chosen combinations of 64 trillion potential zygotes. But despite this lack of a shared gamete from a genetic standpoint Phaedra and Tony are more alike than different. Along with the rest of mankind, 99.9% of their nucleotide sequences are identical. The significance of a shared gamete is thus limited to that last 0.1%, a tiny speck of variation within a great field of genetic sameness.

When Phaedra was hospitalized with a smashed elbow, Tony was completely blameless. Phaedra, seduced by a gleaming polyester leotard, had undertaken to audition for a friend's self-assembled cheerleading team. Phaedra knew she could make the team; after all she had been privately practicing her splits since she was nine and had mastered the technique, down to throwing her upper half forward so that her lips were smashed against her knobby knee in a pathetic gesture of surrender and triumph.

When Nancy, Phaedra's friend, a hulking twelve year old with thrusting breast buds, told Phaedra that if she wanted to make the team she would have to demonstrate a double -back-over-hand-stand-flip-stand, Phaedra jumped and twisted and arched and ended up in the Emergency Room with two hysterical mothers. Through the pain, which had already caused her to vomit twice, Phaedra saw Tony watching her sheepishly, overwhelmed by the odd shape of Phaedra's jumbled humeral and ulnar bones as well as by the great destruction of the bodies in the waiting room that he, with all his prodding and pinching, had never been able to achieve. He squirmed and sulked and wandered back and forth through the hospital corridor, purposely losing his way now and then. Once he thought he wanted to vomit as well and stooped over a garbage can but it wouldn't seem to come up and the spaghetti sandwich remained in his stomach like a cardboard box.

"On a scale from one to ten, how bad is the pain sweetheart?" asked the nurse when it was finally Phaedra's turn.



Artwork, by Julie Kang

Phaedra Splits, continued

“A d-d-d-definitely a nine, almost t-t-ten” said Phaedra emphatically with her characteristic stutter. The pain was bitter and dry like plain cocoa powder which she had once secretly tasted while waiting for the hot chocolate to be ready. For the last hour and a half she had barely thought about Tony- she felt for once, completely autonomous. If the nurse had asked, “On a scale from one to ten, how different do you feel?” Phaedra would have answered eight and a half, because she was a very careful girl and avoided exaggeration.

The doctor gently examined Phaedra and proclaimed an elbow dislocation and compound fraction. The surgery, he told Phaedra’s fading mother, would have to wait until the following morning.

“It’s a complicated break and the pediatric orthopedist won’t be in until tomorrow. You do want her to get the best care possible; this is an injury that could have very bad repercussions if not treated properly.”

The mother stared in astonishment at her daughter’s elbow which appeared to be poised to slide right into her palm.

“I’ll give her a sling so that it doesn’t move and some pills for the pain. I know it must hurt eh? You are being very brave.”

That night Phaedra’s mother lay next to her in the large bed the twins shared and Tony slept on their mother’s couch in the living room. Although she had initially refused the pills because she wasn’t ready to give up the pain, it eventually became unbearable. She had a mental image of her broken arm gently detaching itself at the glenohumeral joint and floating down the dark hallway to the bathroom where her mother had left the remaining pills. The swollen fingers would grope at the painkillers, gather them up, and carry them back to the bedroom, releasing them next into Phaedra’s waiting mouth. When the arm failed to return from its midnight journey and the unshakeable pain persisted, Phaedra dragged herself out of bed and padded to the bathroom where two pills and a glass of water waited on the sink counter. On the second shelf, nestled in aluminum packaging, were a few more white pills. For a moment, Phaedra hesitated, trying to figure out how to use

one hand to simultaneously place the pills in her mouth and deluge them with water.

“I got it,” said Tony, suddenly appearing after hours of lonely sleeplessness. But instead of taking the pills off the counter he reached up and took the package of extra pills off the upper shelf, tearing it open and carefully dividing the pills into two piles.

Normally Phaedra would be terrified, her heart would pound and her mouth would go dry. She would back out of the room and run back into bed with her mother, leaping through the dark hallway. But tonight was different- the glow of the pain was keeping the world sparkling and clean, and she was, for the first time, aware of her body as a fortress composed of butterfly wing walls, collapsable and wavering, but walls nonetheless. She felt herself pulled towards Tony, towards an experience that might test the limits of these walls or the magnitude of the spiderweb of cracks and spaces that penetrated them.

So the twins sat on the floor with the glass of water and the two piles of pills between them. Tony held up the water for Phaedra before gulping down the pills himself. Afterwards they lay down on the bathroom floor side by side with their shoulders just touching. And their two completely different central nervous systems reacted similarly to the sudden influx of opioids, flooding the pleasure regions of their young brains with dopamine and causing them to experience a feeling that neither one knew was called euphoria. What they did know was how pleasant it felt to sense the coolness of the floor seeping into their skin as they stared up at the lovely brown spiraling water stains on the bathroom ceiling.

A few days later, Phaedra’s humerus bone was back where it belonged and the memory of the pain had almost completely disappeared. She wore a cast for a few weeks but soon even the white plaster faded into her faintly freckled arms and she no longer recognized it as a separate part of her being. It wasn’t until many years later, when Phaedra’s hands were swollen with advanced arthritis, and Tony had died of AIDS at a surprisingly young age that she remembered the night before her operation. And how, as they lay on the bathroom floor, she had used a small pair of scissors from the bathroom cabinet to cut the space between Tony’s thumb and pointer and then watched the blood seep out slowly, filling the fault lines of his skin.

Irreconcilable Differences

by Erik Leupp

Make a carbon copy of your matrimony
and paper dolls to play husband and wife.

Give them names like Peggy and John
and let your little children play with them
while you and your spouse argue
about bruises and emotional genocide.

Feel free to crucify each other's hearts
or drop atomic bombs on each other's minds,
as mushroom clouds ascend from your heads,
incinerating your home and the last 20 years of your lives.

But don't burn down Peggy and John,
your little children need them, just to know that
love is not just another lie.



The Case of Henry Marcus

by Jake Seiden

The courtroom was unlike anything Henry Marcus had ever seen. It was small and long and so cramped that he found himself fidgeting in discomfort. The walls seemed to be formed of smooth panels of some dark glazed wood, and the floor was covered in a sleek maroon carpet. When he turned his eyes up, he could see only complete, obliterating darkness, but somehow he knew that if he were to extend one of his arms above his head his fingertips would reach the ceiling.

There were others in the room with him. He could hear them murmuring in the shadowed hall before him. And if he squinted, he could make out two tables a few feet before him, one to his left and one to his right. At the latter, a rather rotund man was dragging a sullied handkerchief across his forehead, catching the perspiration as it dripped down from beneath his thinning blond hair. He knew immediately that the strange, fat man in the worn tweed suit was his lawyer, his defense.

Which meant that the crisp, thin man stretched out luxuriously on the chair behind the left-hand table was the prosecutor. Henry's quick eyes took in the man's sharp dark suit and deep red tie. Their gazes met, and through the room's gloomy atmosphere the prosecuting lawyer

winked at him. Henry turned back to his defending lawyer. He registered the slight quivering of the man's jowls, the way his lips were drawn thin as a length of string. Something dreadful dug its claws into the tender lining of his stomach.

The abrupt reverberation of a gavel shook the room to silence. Henry looked to his right, retracing the path of the echoing sound. There was a podium there that, impossibly, continued up into the endless darkness above his head. It was where a judge might sit in a normal courtroom, but search as he might he could find no evidence of a gavel, nor of any life at all, posed on top of that shadowed pillar.

When the silence was complete, when all evidence of the gavel's sound had been eaten by the darkness, Henry's defense rose to speak. Standing somewhat unsteadily upon his thick legs, constantly dabbing at his perspiring forehead, the fleshy man made his way over to the stand behind which Henry sat. He straightened his papers on the wooden rail between them with two quick taps, and shot Henry a meaningful glance with his big, kindly eyes. Then, straightening his suit jacket with a flick of his shoulders, he turned his back to Henry and took a step forward so that he stood midway

between his table and Henry's stand.

"Mr. Marcus," he began, turning again to look directly at Henry, "Why didst thou commit the act of fratricide?"

Suddenly, he remembered everything, all of it: the heat of the flesh beneath his fingers, the strength building in his arms, the wild thrashing of the figure beneath him, the room, his life, his childhood...He even, in a vague and funny way, found that he was familiar with this dank, strait room.

Henry filled his lungs with a heavy breath and tasted on his tongue the earthy smell that fouled the courtroom's air. Sitting as straight and still as possible, he moved his numb lips to form the familiar words.

"I had every reason in the world to do what I did. My brother was an evil man. Ask our father, ask his wife, ask him. It was no secret. He had two beautiful children, who he paid no attention to. He was an adulterer. I walked in on him myself, more than once. He was always too charming; always manipulating the men and women he entered into business with. He lied to them, cheated them out of money, stabbed them in the back when they weren't looking. He was completely unscrupulous. He swindled me out of my inheritance, going so

The Case of Henry Marcus, continued

far as to bribe a scribe to change my father's last will and testament. And no matter what evil he committed, luck stayed on his side. I told his children about his business. They didn't believe me. I even told his wife, the most beautiful woman I've ever known, about his lack of loyalty. She nodded, told me she had been aware all along, and that she didn't care. It was too much. He was like a cancer upon the race of man. Indestructible. Incurable. I couldn't stand it anymore. I couldn't stand to watch him deliberately hurt another person. So I killed him. Was my action really so unjust?"

As his confession filled the still air of the courtroom the warm light pulsed, pushing the shadows back with something like glory. Where the shadows had hung, Henry could now make out rows of benches. An audience had gathered there. They were shaped like humans, of a variety of sizes, yet none of them had features on their faces. They looked without eyes, heard without ears, and were murmuring without mouths. But Henry was neither surprised nor afraid. The clawed thing that clung so desperately

to his stomach had loosened its hold. Relief, like the heat of the sun on a chill day, fell upon Henry. The rotund lawyer nodded encouragingly before backing into his seat behind the rightmost table.

That was when the prosecuting lawyer, the sharp man dressed in his dark suit, took to his feet. Before he approached the stand, he exchanged a glance with Henry's defense, and more passed between their silent stares than Henry could follow. The flabby man dragged his handkerchief across his face. The other keenly addressed the room.

"He who speaketh here can only speak the truth. Such is the nature of this place. That which hath already been said rang with the tones of truth, and that which follows shall also." At this he paused and directed his piercing eyes upon the person of Henry Marcus. "Mr. Marcus, why didst thou commit the act of fratricide?"

Henry knew that it wasn't the same question he had been asked before. No new memories were made available to him; the same ones that had filled his head a few minutes

before still simmered in his mind. But now, he saw each in a different, more truthful light. His lower lip began to tremble, and something stabbed into his stomach.

"I was jealous. Of who he was. Of what he had. Of everything he got away with."

And there it was. A truth, like all those revealed before. But, in a sense, this single truth rendered all of the others false. As Henry relived his envy, a new creature came upon him, the shadow of envy, its constant dogging companion: shame.

The faceless ones grew dangerously silent.

The soft one dragged his handkerchief across his face.

The sharp one smiled a terrible smile.

Henry Marcus hung his head in shame.

And the illuminating light that had come so recently to the dark courtroom was swallowed again by darkness. And, as neither lawyer failed to notice, the shadows were slightly thicker than they had been before.

Cradle Love

by Ju-Hyun Park

I.

Maybe someday
When I die
And you follow me into the ground
Our hearts will trickle down
Through all the multitudinous cracks
Through the ancient aquifers in infinite pause
To the vast lung of the ocean

And we will hang in a torpid sea
With the moon shining over us
And the sound of lonesome birds

Where we will breathe at once
And our hearts will beat at the same time
And I will be with you.

II.

our flagella kick kick sputtering
like old engines burning
and the skin of your legs around my back
is warm and it pulls at mine squeezes
me out to swim in you

let me lay suspended
in the smell of your neck
the soft of your scalp
the warm of your mouth
(little dents furrowed in my shoulder)

this is cradle love
I blanket you and you
rock steady on well-oiled heels
I am the bars and board
and you the bow and bed

this is our love
my chest is bare without

your head on it
my mouth is dry without
your kiss in it

III.

how the silence rounds
its o's in thick ohms and gongs through us
how the intervals stretch and point
to needle and thread and
patch us into a pocket

how you pick at the strings
like they've burrowed into you and built colonies
how you let them fall limp all around you
and toss back that long brown
petal hair and bloom

how I lay onshore alone
no more undersea floating for me.
no vast lung of ocean to hang in.

no more new sea in you
to swim upriver
no, the moon flickers out and the tides freeze

come back for me,
you pretty white-topped waves,
haul me back into the water
and reset the moonlight,
let it shine again

but no,
no more light, or touch, or sound
just the brimming black and
weightless nothing

no more cradle love.

About Our Authors

Brandon Archambault can buy you tickets to that thing you love, knows all the words to your favorite song, and thinks you're pretty without any makeup on.

Craig Dathe is a Tufts freshman. He intends to major in English, as long as the Others don't get to him first. One day he'll remember what it was he was doing.

Hillary Fens identifies with Kyoka's Ideal: "a put-together, organized, hardworking, reasonable, nurturing, intelligent Tufts mother by day; a passionate, wild, dangerous Tufts temptress by night" (Charles Inouye).


Denali Hussin is a senior english major, looking forward to graduating and making an easy \$450,000 a year. While not yachting or pheasant hunting, she enjoys vacations on Martha's Vineyard and sampling fine wines with the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Sadie Lansdale is a junior double-majoring in English and Comparative Theories of Basket-weaving. She enjoys running in the forest, Indian food, feminism, and resisting the Man.

Linda Le is a junior who conducts research in poetry and dabbles in creative biology. She can also parle some français and will be studying abroad in Paris next semester. Things to pack include: candy, her guinea pig, and everything written by Craig Thompson.

Erik Leupp is a Junior English major who gets his inspiration from Youtube videos, Lolcats and The National Enquirer.

Charlotte Mostertz fancies herself to be the love child of Alexander Hamilton and Luna Lovegood, if it were physically possible. Her ultimate dream is to prove to the world that being a double major in History and English is in fact going to put her on the fast track to baller status after college



Tom Nikiper is a sophomore, born and raised in the wild, untamed suburbs of northern New Jersey, majoring in major-selection-evasion methodology. When not acting on his extreme delusions of authorship, he enjoys consuming copious amounts of rock 'n' roll music and Dave's Fresh sandwiches. Tom prides

About Our Authors

himself on using 100% natural white meat in the production of his pieces.

Andrew Padgett gave up brains for lent.

Ju-Hyun Park was born and raised in the Bay Area, California. He is a 17 year old freshman and spent his high school years in Seoul, South Korea, a place he now calls home. He writes poetry, plays, and short stories and occasionally does photography.

Alex Polyakov brushes his teeth with a bottle of Jack. As well, his milkshake brings all the boys to the yard. He could teach you, but he'd have to charge.

Andrew Reisman has already written down your entire life, including reading this bio. Hello.

Michael Restiano is a freshman who probably wants to be an English major with a double major in something and a minor in some other thing. He enjoys family, friends, literature, indecisiveness, art, enjambment, and prays to the Gods of Stephen King and Captain Morgan.

Melissa Roberts is an aspiring thinker.

Jenna Schoen is a freshman majoring in english who does indeed give an eff about an oxford comma.

Jake Seiden had a number of amazing and unnatural abilities as a young boy; he could converse with machines, make hair spontaneously sprout from his ears, and watch the movie "Airbud" without crying. Sadly, none of these abilities survived puberty and presently he is just as boring as everyone else.

Emma Shakarshy is a million miles away. She has turned into a Spanish tortilla and sometimes forgets easy English words like breathmint and handbook.

Lenora Smith is a pistol packin mama.

Rachel Stern is a sophomore with an uncanny ability to imitate a pterodactyl call.

Ashley Suarez is a Junior majoring in English and minoring in film studies. She is particularly fond of costume design, dark comedies, and Russian literature.

Alison Williams is a freshman most likely majoring in English. She enjoys correcting people's grammar, making profound statements, playing Bananagrams, surfing in Nicaragua, and defending herself against jokes about Florida.

V
O
L
U
M
E

X
X
I
V



ALMOND BEVERAGE

Recycle

