



Spring 1999

The Lantern Vol. 66, No. 2, Spring 1999

Oana Nechita
Ursinus College

Monica Stahl
Ursinus College


Jill Gonzales
Ursinus College

Mike Edwards
Ursinus College

Benjamin Jackendoff
Ursinus College

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Nechita, Oana; Stahl, Monica; Gonzales, Jill; Edwards, Mike; Jackendoff, Benjamin; Miller, Leah; Hollinger, Karen; Hodges, Jilda; Rosen, Nathan; Claus, Ashley; Cerrone, Robert; Romeo, Genevieve; Lipschultz, Thomas; Church, Jeffrey; Klein, Gregory; Howard, Tom; Taylor, Corey; Harfman, Carolyn; Gallagher, Daniel; Gerchak, Andrew; Nemphos, Lou; Pidal, Raquel; and Guidry, Paul, "The Lantern Vol. 66, No. 2, Spring 1999" (1999). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 154.
<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/154>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Ursinusiana Collection at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Lantern Literary Magazines by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

Authors

Oana Nechita, Monica Stahl, Jill Gonzales, Mike Edwards, Benjamin Jackendoff, Leah Miller, Karen Hollinger, Jilda Hodges, Nathan Rosen, Ashley Claus, Robert Cerrone, Genevieve Romeo, Thomas Lipschultz, Jeffrey Church, Gregory Klein, Tom Howard, Corey Taylor, Carolyn Harfman, Daniel Gallagher, Andrew Gerchak, Lou Nemphos, Raquel Pidal, and Paul Guidry



THE LANTERN

THE LANTERN

Ursinus College
Volume 66, Number 2
Spring / Summer 1999

Editor: Jennifer Herbst
Visual Arts Editor: Jennifer Zwillling
Layout Editor: Jeff Church
Patron Drive Coordinator: Andy Gerchak
Advisors: Jon Volkmer, Jena Osman
Poetry Judge: Neil Schafer
Cover Art: *Cakehole* by Geoffrey Mills

Staff:

Corey Taylor	Ben Jackendoff
oana nechita	Monica Stahl
Raquel Pidal	Meghan Gualtieri
Genevieve Romeo	Jeff Algayer
Janel Reppert	
Geoffrey Mills	
Janine Soper	
Brian Berg	
Amanda Chiampi	
Adam van der Swaagh	
Dan Gallagher	

Editor's Note:

The Lantern would like to congratulate oana nechita for her prize-winning poem "Dowry." Thank you to Neil Schafer for acting as judge and making the difficult choice. I would also like to congratulate Geoffrey Mills for his winning cover photograph *Cakehole*. Special thanks go to everyone who submitted to this issue. It was a difficult process choosing these works for publication.

A new feature of *The Lantern* is the addition of an online publication. We hope this will help to expand our scope and acquaint the campus with Internet publishing. Special thanks to Jon Volkmer for heading this project. I would also like to thank Jena Osman and Nzadi Keita for additional guidance in the production of this issue.

My gratitude is extended to the entire staff. Without your dedication and hard work, this magazine would not be possible.

Jennifer Herbst

Table of Contents

Contributors' Page	101
Patrons	104

Poetry

Dowry	<i>oana nechita</i>	6
The Ballad of the Lonely Thinker	<i>Monica Stahl</i>	15
Dissipation	<i>Jill Gonzalez</i>	18
Parliament Light	<i>Mike Edwards</i>	28
reflecting hood	<i>Benjamin Jackendoff</i>	29
Tonight	<i>Leah Miller</i>	37
Decree	<i>Karen Hollinger, Jill Gonzalez, Dan Gallagher</i>	39
Not Yet	<i>Carolyn Harfman</i>	51
The Man in the Moon	<i>Jilda Hodges</i>	53
The Sound and / or Fury	<i>Nathan Rosen</i>	63
uh huh	<i>Ashley Claus</i>	64
Watch	<i>Robert Cerrone</i>	74
the futility of a drizzle in a worsening draught	<i>Genevieve Romeo</i>	85
The Answering Machine	<i>Thomas Lipschultz</i>	91

Short Fiction

Felix Culpa	<i>Jeffrey Church</i>	7
kiss off	<i>Gregory Klein</i>	19
Amorous	<i>Tom Howard</i>	31
Summer of the Burning Pizzas	<i>Corey Taylor</i>	42
Life Without Shoelaces	<i>Daniel Gallagher</i>	56
Hermes and Aphrodite	<i>Andrew Gerchak</i>	66
Win! Twins!	<i>Lou Nemphos</i>	76
from 69 Slices of Hell	<i>Raquel Pidal</i>	87
Boardwalk Cowboy	<i>Paul Guidry</i>	92

Table of Contents continued

Visual Arts

Cakehole	<i>Geoffrey Mills</i>	cover
Today	<i>Ben Schuler</i>	14
I Think	<i>Lou Nemphos</i>	17
Love	<i>Jumaah Johnson</i>	30
Janus; Neo-Gothic	<i>Jennifer A. Zwillling</i>	38
Homework	<i>Joel Guidry</i>	41
Henry?	<i>Meghan Gualtieri</i>	52
But for the Cars	<i>Geoffrey Mills</i>	62
Tears	<i>Jennifer A. Zwillling</i>	65
Camden Town 1998	<i>Meghan Gualtieri</i>	75
Hunters	<i>Paul Guidry</i>	86
Duplicity	<i>Jennifer A. Zwillling</i>	90
Charlie in Paris	<i>Meghan Gualtieri</i>	99
You Were Only Waiting	<i>Joe Laskas</i>	100

Judge's Note:

One job of a poem is to create a vision. This vision should be seen by each reader. In "Dowry," the author creates this vision through the use of very real images. The poem reaches out, grabs the reader, and holds on via haunting words and phrases. As if looking through an old family photo album, the reader can not help but feel the pain and struggles of the speaker's words, thoughts, and experiences.

All the poems that were judged were of high quality. However, "Dowry" will "stay with me" for years to come. Congratulations to all!

Neil A. Schafer, '91

B.A. in English, minor in Creative Writing

Penn State Univ. '01

(M.A. in Instructional Leadership)

English and Communications Teacher at Norristown Area High
School

Dowry

oana nechita

I ache the eight abortions
My mother had,
In my small womb and ready breasts
Like two full moons.
The soles of my feet remember
Heavy, hot bleeding in the snows
Of World War I,
My great grandfather marching through Siberia.
My teeth grow on dry holes
In my grandmother's hollow mouth,
Cave of starvation during the great depression.
Under this shirt, my shoulders carry
Decades old blisters
From piles of century old woods
Brought home in zero winters.
I hide breasts of sunshine,
Flowing into nine children,
Hanging over the tin bath tub of soaking laundry,
Drying by the stove baking bread.
I wear the hair falling off my mother's shoulders
When they shaved her head because of lice,
Tiny pearls on black curls.
These hands twisted chickens' necks 60 years ago,
Birds imprisoned in cage of fingers,
Feeding a family.
I sleep my sister's nightmares
A wrinkled man with long sword,
Dark dreams caught in pillowcases.
I drink my father's veins,
Danubes of old wine floating my being.
My fingers write pagan verses blindly,
Chants and magic words whispered
By my great grandmother, the witch,
Over carved candles, burned basil, and holy water
To chase bad spirits out of the house on Sunday.
I am buried under six feet of Romanian ground
My bones root among seeds.

Felix Culpa (“The Fortunate Fall”)

Jeffrey Church

12.25.98

Do you ever really think about death? I do, and it terrifies me. It gnaws on my thoughts, stomach twisting, a deep dread that chases me in my dreams. Not the pain of dying, but of losing me. I think about the gathering abyss under my feet. I think about eternity without thoughts slipping clumsily about. I think about it with the vibrating whirr of my blue Honda Prelude, I think about it chatting with friends, I think about it slouching in a corner, knees locked, arms locked, straining, worrying. Oblivion does not have flames and trident-wielding demons, but I would love for that. I would love for mere persistence.

★ ★ ★

Who gave us this night sky only to tear it away? The guitar’s neck stretches farther and farther before me, racing the endless ceiling. My blue Prelude still whirrs and purrs under me as I sit on the cold hood, knees up, guitar cradled. My fingers move across the fretboard. Improvisation. Chords. A full, dark E minor. Gleeful D. D. D. A. Bright A. C. C. C minor. Right hand whipping the pick up and down like a dragonfly’s wings—maybe not that fast, though. The sullied trees arch their leaveless fingers above and up. Up to where I can’t see, can’t be. A. F. E. Back to E. My left middle finger doesn’t move quick enough, though. Not a very pretty sound. Aaron sits next to me sometimes when we play, helping me out. He’s really good. He plays the chords, I play the scales. I play the chords, he plays the scales. We sing and think.

I stop playing and get out my journal again, thinking of Aaron. Tonight my memories flail in the wind like the notes I play on the guitar.

★ ★ ★

10.7.94

“Hey, c’mon, sing the blues.” It is Aaron’s fourth attempt at getting me to improvise. I give in. Cough. Deepening voice, deep, deeeep, deeeeeeep.

“Alright—here we go.” Downward strokes at a regular rhythm. 12-bar blues. I love it. Aaron is clumsy with the pick, arching over the acoustic guitar. He has only played for a few months now. A few simple, repetitive tunes.

“Um, Um, I got them something, something blues,” I sping. Aaron pauses, anxiously over the first string.

“What was that? Come ON—sing, sing.”

“I don’t have any rhythm.”

“That’s fer sure.”

The pick again flutters up and down, violent but motherly.

“Got caught in English class, ba-bum—Sheeler took the notes away, ba-BA-ba-BA-bum,” Aaron can’t keep up the rhythm—he cracks up—I follow his example.

Mrs. Sheeler. The most dreaded teacher in the 10th grade.

Last Monday Aaron and I were sitting next to each other, listening to her ramble on about Greek and Roman Mythology. Words, words. She talked too much. Why doesn’t she just say Venus was a hottie instead of “Venus was spawned from Cronus’ castrated testicles falling into the ocean.” On second thought, you know what, I don’t think she said that. Oh well. She just said a bunch of words. That’s it. Big deal. I can do that. I got a dictionary—I can piece the words together.

Anyway, Aaron passed me a cartoon he drew. I smothered a laugh. We were studying the story of Venus and Adonis, and he drew a picture entitled “Venus and a Dentist” where the dentist was hanging over this beautiful woman and holding a cup and saying “spit.” Other pictures followed including Gal-in-tea-uh, Sissy-fuss, and the one that got us in trouble, Pig-mail-see-on—a picture of a pig sticking its head out of a letter.

I couldn’t hold it in anymore. I’m even laughing right now, just thinking about it. A little laugh just sneaked out, you know—the kind of laugh like when your preacher accidentally says the “whore forseman of the Apocalypse.” Sheeler just swooped by, gracefully, smoothly, and took the pictures away. I don’t think anybody noticed in the class—she did it with such stealth. Aaron and I just looked at each other and shook our heads, smiling.

Words. Words. I think the only thing that got through to me in that class was Venus, Adonis, Galatea, Sisyphus, and Pygmalion. Just the names, not the stories, mind you.

★

★

★

Such innocence, smiles. I can’t understand why I couldn’t see everything as clear as I do now.

O, I am so arrogant. Clarity—I wish.

Like these words I am using—what are they? They are tactile on the printed page, but when they’re swimming in your mind, what

It's later. I might be up until sunrise, I don't know. I just need to get away sometimes. Thoughts of my ex-girlfriend, Allison. Maybe I can improv a song about her. I know I have a journal entry here, somewhere.

★ ★ ★

9.14.98

"I really like John William Waterhouse—the painter, you know?"

"Yeh." Allison sounded distant over the phone, busy with something. It pissed me off.

"The one on Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* is great." I know Allison doesn't care about this stuff. I'll tell *you* about it, how's that sound? I'm sure you're better with this. Lips curled, frightened. Golden hair forced back like her innocence. Flailing boat keeping her alert, eyes fixed. She is already *half sick of shadows*.

"Uh, huh."

"You ever seen some of the others? Real emotion. I love paintings based on literature. Miranda from *The Tempest*. Ophelia from *Hamlet*."

"No, can't say that I have."

"Why do you call me if you don't want to talk?" The Pre-Raphaelites, melancholy, drooping, quiet. No lover. No love.

"I don't know. You're the one at college—it'd be a higher phone bill for you to call me."

"Allison, listen. We are completely different people—" Eyes to the ground, burrowing. Romantic idealism.

"Yeah, you're conceited and pompous."

"Oh, really, that's why I helped you raise your grades from a 2.0 to a 3.3." Arms dangle helplessly.

"You still have that sneer. Like you're not here."

"I really don't want to talk about this—you still haven't answered my question, Allison, why do you call me?" Miranda peering alone out to the raging sea.

"Because—because, I don't think you like me anymore."

"What? Where'd you get that idea?" Broken, scattered over the bed.

"I don't know—you don't call, you don't write, you don't come home too often."

"I like it here. It's quiet." Ophelia gasping.

"Don't you like me? Why don't you call me?"

"I like to be alone sometimes." Revel in loneliness.

“But when do you want to be with me? Frank, I need you.”

“I’ll—um—I’ll talk to you later—” I’m sorry Allison, broken Allison, Allison who needs people, Allison I can’t understand.

★ ★ ★

Where is my audience for this? Whom do I address now? I have to throw my words somewhere, to someone. Are you listening, paying attention? I don’t know who you are. I only see what’s before me, on the printed page. Nothing but ink and words.

Peering up, I see Orion’s belt. Allison and I used to lie together, looking for it, and other constellations. She always wanted to get back, to parties, to other people. I said I didn’t really know about myself yet, how can I even begin to think about others?

So sometimes I think about what’s in me. Not the muscles and bone and teeth and gastric acid and pancreas and neurons and C-fibers. What’s *really* in me. What moves me and makes me laugh and stabs me with pain and lurks behind my eyes. What retains knowledge but allows thoughts to drip slowly away with time like a rusty faucet. What looks for you but can only find faces, and eyes. What bars me from you, forcing my gaze down. What I am. What I will cease to be.

Improvisation always thrills me under those stars. I’m still not really good at playing the guitar, but I love thumbing my nose at society, with its perfection-or-nothing logic. I’m content. The dark tree fingers help me, swaying with rhythm. I can see lights being turned off down in the city, down in Philadelphia. I keep the notes up, the sharp, piercing notes, stronger than before. It’s late. Very late. I don’t care. I have the most fun now. Chords and scales. Scales and chords. Maybe Aaron is still awake. Just a little bit longer. Stretch this tension within me until it’s taut. Improvisation. Picking notes without form, creating a form, a melody, losing it, never fixed. A good contrast to the loyal night above and within me.

Death has always frightened me, all my life. Nothing in this world swirls in my belly more than this.

But then I look at Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Satan probably has the most resonance for me as a character. The tension he has between good and evil—the risks he takes—death by God, pain in Hell—simply to accomplish his purpose.

Occasionally I have this dream—it is the same every time.

Black and white. An open, treeless plain at night. The moon is full and white. I am naked. The wind blows, the rain falls, battering me. My body is stripped away and I become truly naked, alone, invisible. Triumphant. Expansive. The rain saturates my bare knowledge. Thoughts come ribboning out—sharp and discrete. Quick cuts of consciousness melting together. The moon is full and white. The emptiness and fear and butterflies-in-my-stomach toss me to the ground. The moon is full and white. Falling but confident—these nights on my Honda strumming away with the E chord—confident in solitude—weekends with Aaron throwing poetry at the blank computer screen—confident in purpose. Falling, ever falling. I am full and white.

And then I wake up, smiling.

Today

Ben Schuler



The Ballad of the Lonely Thinker

Monica Stahl

*The rhyme scheme and first line of each stanza are taken from Anne Sexton's "The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator"

**This line altered slightly

The end of the affair is always death.
They tumble through my head
like stones, crumbling at my breath;
these thoughts that, still misled,
bear me like a crutch.
I divorce your touch.

**Finger to finger, this isn't mine,
but yours; your thrill, your trip.
I watch you recline,
lazy cat, satisfied, and I rip
like cloth. I know too much.
I divorce your touch.

Take for instance this night, my love;
Quietly forget my vicious grief.
Rock your body, God above—
Slip into me rapist, thief.
You take too much.
I divorce your touch.

Then my black-eyed rival came.
Lady of perfection, my want-to-be,
my excuse to blame
you for what you feel, you se.
I'm not to be judged.
I divorce your touch.

She takes you the way a woman takes
want, plucks your thoughts like fruit from a tree,
over-ripe, hungry for mouths. She makes
you fall onto me, into me,
your fantasy's crutch.

I divorce your touch.

The boys and girls are one tonight.

Fingers eat and bodies lie.

I wait for time to make it right;

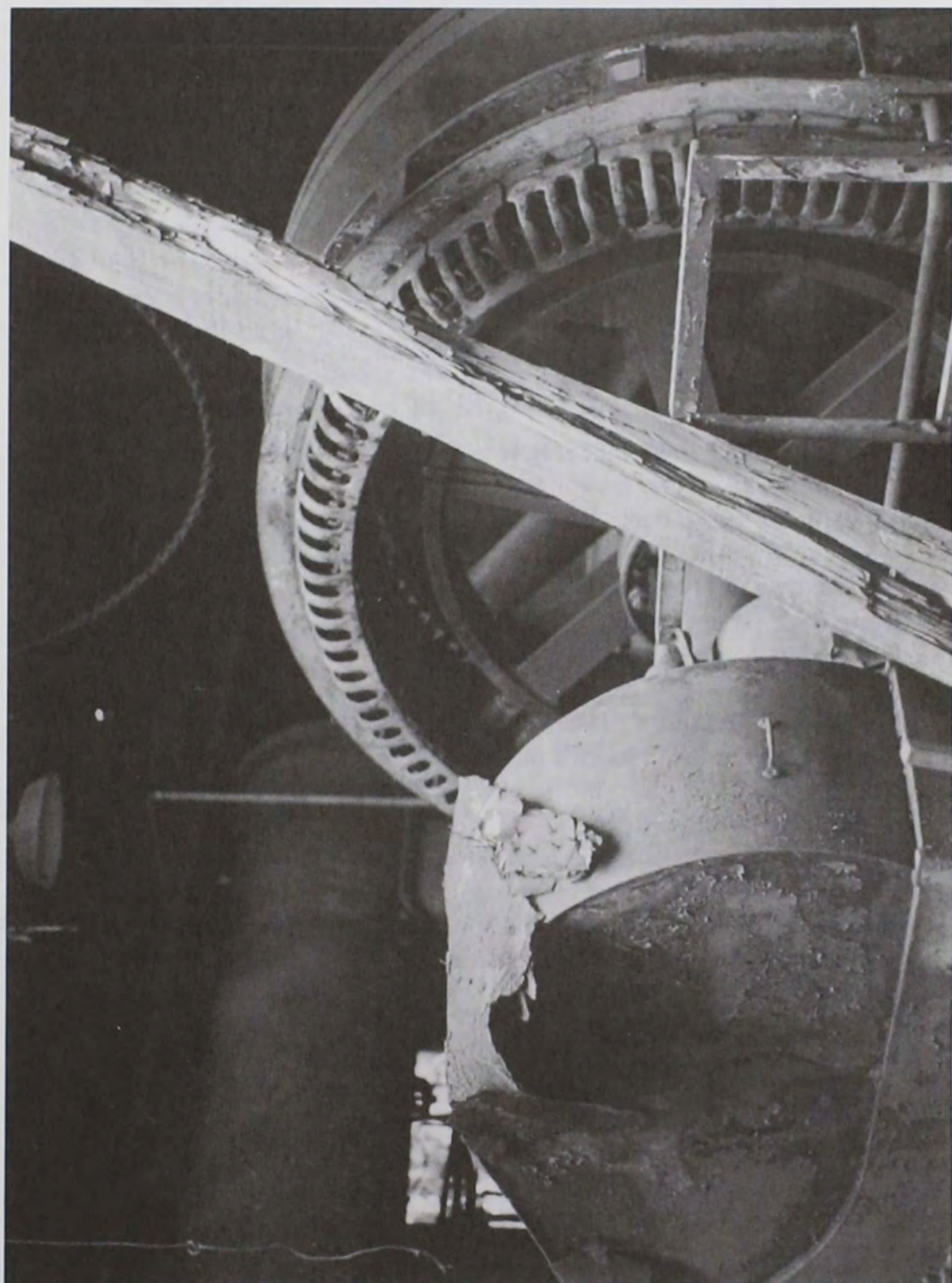
I think, I think; I cry.

You need too much.

I divorce your touch.

I Think

Lou Nemphos



Dissipation

Jill Gonzalez

It's not hard to dissipate
When you have a million things to do
You just sit back and deviate

In your mind you contemplate
About places you've been and people you knew
It's not hard to dissipate

It's like when you meditate
You make yourself anew
You just sit back and deviate

Eventually you may negotiate
But don't start anything new
It's not hard to dissipate

Think about last night and your hot date
Consider the room's milieu
You just sit back and deviate

You are your own magnet
It's what you have going for you
It's not hard to dissipate
You just sit back and deviate via

kiss off

Gregory Klein

ok, clean razor, check. bucket of warm water, check. loser, check. why are you concerned about a clean razor? who gives a fuck if your wrist gets infected, you'll be dead. do it. do it. do it. do it. do it. wait. wait, is it across or up and down. shit. think. if you do it the wrong way it won't work, the blood will coagulate. think. don't mess this up. you mess up everything else, but not this, you're going to do this right. wait. you forgot the note. you gotta to have a note. where the fuck is the god damn stationary. every hotel has fucking stationary, and this fucking Marriot was expensive. WHERE THE FUCK IS THE GOD DAMN....,

oh, there it is, on the desk, where else, you fucking moron. ok, relax, just calm down and do the note. there must be a note. that is the key, a good note. not a letter, not an essay, a note. a good note is key. OK, explain. why are you doing this?

why are you doing this? ahhhh, fuck. you know you had a good reason. what was it? you know you're a waste. you are a waste. to many fucking hours of cartoons and the only thing you got out of it was a limited knowledge of classical music. damn, where did all the time go. time. you wanted to do so much, you had potential, nothing worse than wasted potential, right dad? he did it, what a fucking father you had. he worked forty fucking hours a week while putting himself through college and never complained. dad was a fucking go-getter. grab the world by the balls and never let go, right dad? your problem is you keep on putting everything off until tomorrow. tomorrow. tomorrow you're going to read. you should have read more, but you were too busy. too busy — doing what? where did the time go? tomorrow you're going to start working out. fat ass. tomorrow you're going to get a job. all you had to do was mention your dad's name and you would have gotten a job anywhere. tomorrow you'll be dead. but tomorrow never came. tomorrow never comes. it's always today. it's always this day. it's always the same fucking day man. you know that tomorrow never comes. it's your attitude, not your aptitude that determines your altitude, right dad? you fucking white collar conservative bastard.

whoa, easy, don't go blaming this on pop. that motherfucker would have went to hell and back for you and you know this. he never hit you, he wasn't a drunk or anything. he treats mom great, he

works hard, he's understanding, loving. he was always there for you. when he caught you jerking off he didn't yell, he just got you hand lotion. anything you wanted, you got. a fucking brand new car on your sixteenth birthday. he got your birth-date wrong, but nobody's perfect. him and mom, they are both perfect fucking parents. mom always made sure the maid had dinner for you. you have no reason. no reason to do this.

so.

what.

is that it, is that why? you have no problems, no dilemmas. perfect life, perfect house, perfect family. no troubles. that's what you need. a cause. you need a cause but there is none. you're a warrior in peacetime. a suicidal maniac in heaven. you don't fit. misfit. if only you were black. you would have been one militant motherfucker. you'd hate everyone, every goddamn honkey in the world, fucking bigots. then you'd have an outlet for all this emotion. it's not that you're filled with hate, you're filled with emotion. it could turn into hate or love or anger but you have no outlet for any of those emotions. it's all just building up inside you. it has all just built up inside you. you're going to cut it loose, you have to cut it loose. do it. do it. OK, ready? and.....

wait, the fucking note, shit. Ok , relax, relax here it goes:

Dearest Mother and Father,

For the past 21 years I have caused both you and myself nothing but pain and heartache. I hope you know in your heart that this is all my fault and I do not hold either of you responsible for the large of amount of nothingness that is me. But in my search for a fate better than that of death I found not anything. Please forgive me and please forget me.

Justin

ok.

that works. god, you can't wait, it's finally going to be over. you can finally start forever. are you sure about this? is this just another dramatic cry for attention, like your bed wetting? no, no don't start this again, you're not talking yourself out of this. nothing has ever felt so right before in your life. you have to do this, you need to do this. what have you ever done that amounted to anything. i mean outside of your parents, you have only had two other relationships worth writing home about. there was Suzy, yeah, she's a

lot better off for knowing you. you really cured her happiness. at least now she knows what she *doesn't* want in a boyfriend. you were a real barrel of monkeys with her. she actually forgot about you before she even met you. you don't even know why she had sex with you. you're about as attractive as a fart. and she was always busy tutoring the football team. she was very giving. she even spent time with you. but you'll never forget your first time. you never felt so embarrassed. going at it hard and she goes, "Ahhh, Justin? That's my belly button." when you finally got it right it was pretty disappointing, it was all right but it ain't nothing to moan and scream about. in the movies, the people are all shaking and groaning. and the guys in these movies are coming like god, like Led Zeppelin 4. one time, this guy rips the panties off this girl. yo, come on. the only way panties rip off a girl is if they already got a hole in them. ever since that first time though you've been somewhat obligated to masturbate but it wasn't for fun or anything. jerking off became like going to the bathroom, you didn't like it, you didn't enjoy it or look forward to it, but you just had to get it out of your system. never really got into jerking off before, never were into pleasing yourself, you were too busy, no time. busy doing what? what have you been doing? Suzy left though, you knew she was going to leave the instant you met her. last you heard she was all mixed up in drugs. wish you would have become addicted to drugs, like alcohol or heroin or something. but you were too cynical to be a druggie. "Oh yeah, that really looks like a good time, let's drink 18 beers then throw up all over the place and urinate the bed." never understood the names for these drugs either. ecstasy. special K. what's so special about it, it's fucking cat tranquilizer. and ecstasy. talk about false advertising. you ate acid once. the one guy in the corner explaining to the wall that he is a glass of orange juice and afraid that he might tip over. some mutherfucker with bleach blond hair laughing like his brain is going to implode. you were awake for 49 hours straight because of that shit and didn't see a thing, not one fucking daisy. every time you closed your eyes these fucking demons would fly in your brain heckling like satan on your birthday. you thought you were never going to fall asleep. end up like one of those crazy fuckers whose favorite song is hotel california. but if you would have gotten into drugs AT LEAST then you would have had a limp, a handle, you know, you would have been 'that guy.' you were never 'that guy.' never 'that guy who was always fucked up' or 'that guy who gets all the girls' or 'that guy who is real smart.' the only 'that guy' you ever were was 'that guy with smokes.' motherfuckers were constantly

bumming smokes. going through a pack a day but you'd only smoke about 4 of them. shit. you had to switch to Kool non-filters just so people would stop asking you for one. you don't even like smoking. only started because you figured it would take a good five years off your long life. a bad 5 years. the last five years. shit, the two things you were ever addicted to was nicotine and caffeine. they have no poetic value at all. there ain't no fucking Caffeine Anonymous club out there. motherfuckers sitting around saying, "Yeah man I'd wake up and it would be the first thing I would think about. You all know the drill, two cappuccinos with breakfast, three cups of black coffee before lunch, man I was so strung out I beat my wife senseless for bringing home Sanka one time. It was on sale she said. bitch this shit ain't got no caffeine." yeah that's real poetic, you're such a fucking loser.

damn this shit is a trip. oh yeah. and the other person in your life for more than five minutes besides mom and dad was Doctor Richard Visage, your psychiatrist for two years. what a dick. your parents paid that motherfucker \$150 an hour and all he did was either ask, "How does that make you feel?" or "What do you think that means?" you weren't doing this so you can figure out what that means, if you knew what that meant you wouldn't be here in the first place. you hated those sessions. you hate talking out loud because it never really comes out right. something gets lost between your brain and your mouth, mainly verbs. when ever you talk it's like when you feel something in your stomach and you don't know if your gonna fart or if you have to go to the bathroom but either way you know it's gonna stink. everything you say stinks. but anyway, Dr. Visage, he's the one who got you thinking about suicide. once you started saying all of your so called "problems" out loud you realized how pitiful you were:

"Doctor, nobody understands me, nobody loves me, nobody cares"

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

you have nothing to complain about, nothing to contribute, you're merely producing carbon dioxide. death is a win win situation. either, by some major slip in the computer you get into heaven, and there you find total happiness, or you go to hell and suffer for eternity. yeah, suffering and pain suck but anything is better than nothing, at least then you could hate Satan. it would be good for you to hate something besides yourself for once. ain't saying that there's a god and the church and all. you have about as much use for god as he does for

you. maybe you'll be reincarnated, you could deal with that. they couldn't give you a worse life than this. you'll take anything over this, you'd rather be fucking bacteria like E. coli or something. even E coli has a purpose. OR maybe after this there is nothing. maybe life is like a TV. once you turn it off, it's off, nothing more, nothing less, you just can't turn it back on. maybe. hopefully. shit, wouldn't that be your fucking luck though, they'll probably figure out some way to bring people back from the dead, a cure for death. you would be the first successful patient, waking up from the dead with all these news cameras on you. it would probably take a couple of seconds before you figured out what was going on and then you would just shake your head and whisper "you got to be fucking kidding, I mean, can I get a break here."

HATE LIFE. EVERYTHING THAT LIVES, HATES.

HATE HATE.

WANT NON-LIFE, NON-HATE.

no desire to live. breathing is a chore. you need the only cure there is for the non-terminal disease of life. the panacea that is death is your last hope.

hate all life.

OK. OK. Ok. ok. you're getting off track. you're freaking yourself out with all that dark talk. focus. almost sure you're supposed to cut across the veins. wait, the note, leave it over there on the sink. feel bad for this maid. this is going to be one ugly scene. make sure you don't get any blood on your face or in your hair. keep it clean for the pictures. gets some blood on the walls for effect. when you start to feel death kicking in, lay back on the linoleum in a crucified position, arms spread. tuck your shirt in good, don't want that gut hanging out. sooooo, slice them up, stick them in the bucket of warm water, and we're off to a new and better non-life.

ouch. that kinda hurts. the blood looks pretty cool in the water. here it comes, feeling all light headed, lay back. this better fucking work. SO when does this bright white light going to come.....

What the?

Who the?

oh my god, you're alive. alive. you've never felt so alive. life, you got it, he gave you a second chance, he loves you, somebody loves you, somebody cares. what is this? a hospital. and you even got your

own room. this is great, you got another chance, a chance to do it over, a chance to change things, to do it right. thank god you didn't slice vertically, that was a sign, an act of god, he intervened because you're worth it, life is worth it. someone is coming, it must be the nurse, the beautiful nurse.

"Morning sleepy head. You gave us all quite a little scare there. Things have been pretty rough lately, haven't they? I brought some delicious food from the cafeteria. Make sure you eat all your vegetables."

"Oh thank you, thank you very much."

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you are in good spirits. We don't allow any gloomy Guses' on this ward. Besides, you have to put on a happy face for your visitors."

this must be your parents, you love your parents.

"Justin?"

can it be?

"Hi Justin, how are you doing?"

it is. it's Suzy. she came to see you, she must still love you and you still love her, you always loved her. "Fantastic!"

"When I heard about what happened and all, I rushed right over. We've got to talk."

"That's great, we have a lot of catching up to do."

"Well, I saw the note, everybody pretty much read it since the papers got a hold of it. And I have to tell you I was really upset after I read it."

"You were upset, about the note?"

"Yeah, of course I was. What an awful thing, for the both of us."

"For the both of us?"

"Well, me and you had something together and, well, you did even have the common courtesy to mention me in your note. I mean, what is everyone suppose to think, you being my ex-boyfriend and all. You just go off and kill yourself and don't even mention me."

"Are you serious?"

"Yes I'm serious. I worked so hard at being the person I am today and now everyone is going to think I was some type of bad girlfriend or something and it's all because of you."

"But you *were* a bad girlfriend."

"Was not."

“You fucked half the football team.”

“I told you I was drunk. And don’t go and change the subject. Believe or not this isn’t about you. You’re so selfish. Just because your life is ruined doesn’t mean you have to go and ruin mine.”

“So what do want, an apology or something?”

“No. I don’t want anything from you. I don’t even know why I wasted my time coming down here.”

“Yeah, me either.”

“Oh, what-ever, have a nice life, pig.”

just one more example that god has an enormous over-active sense of humor. what a fucking sucker you are. you thought it was going to be different, nothing changed, nothing ever changes. fuck this, fuck everyone. wait, what do you have here. pain killers. says here you’re supposed to take one a day, there must be about 40 of these pills in here. that shits and giggles nurse is going to get fired for leaving these in here. just keep these for later. oh fuck, here she comes again.

“Hey handsome, did that pretty girl cheer you up? Is she your girlfriend?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

“Well, Mr. Popularity, there’s another visitor here, just for you, my special little patient.”

shit, going to be ma and pop. they’re going to give you a big disgusting hug and kiss and tell you everything is going to be all right. you’re not going to be able to handle all this love.

“Justin? How do you feel?”

“Aaaahh, hi Dr. Visage?”

“Please Justin, call me Richard.”

“But I always called you Dr. Visage?”

“So, tell me what’s going on with yourself.”

“Well, lately I’ve...”

“Because things with me haven’t been going so well. Word is already getting around the psychiatric community and it’s just a matter of time before they shun me. I don’t think you realized what you did to me and my career. I’ve worked very hard to get where I am today.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It isn’t very good for business when one of your old patients

attempts suicide. This could ruin my practice. Did you even think of me when you did this to yourself? You really *are* selfish.”

“Are you crying?”

“You don’t understand, you don’t, selfish bastard.”

“Yeah..... OK..... I have to go to the bathroom, so I’ll see you later.”

everybody’s crazy. that’s what your problem is, you’re too fucking sane. how are you supposed to understand crazy people? they’re crazy because no one understands them. it just sucks that you have to be the only sane one in the world. normality was, is, was your curse. get out of here. leave all these crazy motherfuckers to themselves.

“Justinnnnnnnnnnnnn?”

oh christ, the fucking nurse again.

“Justin, honey, your mother left a voice mail message for you. Just pick up that phone and press star 536.”

might as well.

Hi Justin. How are you? We heard about your little accident and we were just horrified, you really gave us a scare there. We miss you dearly and we are thinking about you constantly. We heard that your health is coming along just fine. We will be by to see you this weekend. We have a very important dinner party with the Hendersons tonight and well, you know how busy Fridays are at the office. So expect us some time Saturday afternoon. And remember, no matter what happens, we love you dearly.

god, they’re so perfect, they love you so much. and you almost made them miss dinner with the Hendersons. everybody’s right, you are selfish. you’ve got two terrific parents and you’re nothing but a disappointment. death is almost too good for you. almost. don’t make them come down here to see you like this. do it. take the bottle of pills. first, a new note must be made, one that sums up all of your feelings to everyone including me. where is a fucking pen and paper. check the desk, asshole. with all these fucking tubes in your arm this going to be a fucking bitch. Mmmmm.... it has to be perfectly worded. I got it:
FUCK EVERYONE!

now that looks perfect on this yellow theme paper. perfect.

I'm just going to take these pills and go to sleep, forever. Forever.
good night.

no. no. no. NOOOOOOOOO! no fucking way. you took
enough pills to kill an elephant. how could you be back in this
fucking hospital again. fuck. who the fuck is that?

oh my god, she has the note.

“Suzy?”

“What the fuck is this supposed to mean?”

Parliament Light

Mike Edwards

He opened the book at random
Mrs. Chapman ran down Cielo screaming
Good-bye, Mr. Grey
He tightened the pressure of his arm
The prophet like the satirist, must reject the saving lie
for those who have not refused the call
the mind and brain are separate entities
The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course
Glaciers and silver suns, fiery skies and pearly seas
Hell is-- other people
“The Tabernacle,” an object found
the mother shouts, grinding out her second cigarette
Lessing died in 1781
Jesus held out his hand
arose at length from the whole company
We do not accuse nature of immorality
It came almost entirely from the Bible
I wonder what they do in there
deducing the remote pairs
it is the cunning of form to veil itself
all love is prostitution

reflecting hood

Benjamin Jackendoff

frayed cable ties
the tattered ligaments
to folding chairs as
the old man falls
down the stairs,
sees how pointless his
past was, and relinquishes
his last rasp
while a tricycle-riding
tike throws his little
bike against a steel
pole and rams his eyes
through the spokes
and i smoke
the dreams i
once had and
choke on the vomit
of a twisted
snake who
winds his constriction
about my
once feeling
husk

Love

Jumaah Johnson



Jumaah
Johnson

Amorous

Tom Howard

He stepped out of the dormitory hallway into the Boston night with a hop and a stride, leaving his friends to the smoky disorder caused by two other students, a bottle of cheap vodka, and a fire extinguisher that had provided some destructive amusement. When he returned early the next morning he would not be the same crude imitation of manhood that he was now. Somehow it had all come so naturally to him as a boy of ten, he thought. The girls had giggled and turned away at his glance, so he cast only sidelong looks at them—silently perceiving the moment, savoring the innocent flirtations. He had been the new kid; the unknown visitor showered with a simple curiosity. He had turned to face the girl at the center of the group, with dark brown curls falling down her cheeks obscuring her blushing eyes, and had broken an intangible boundary set before the other sixth graders by asking her to dance.

Now at nineteen and shivering in the wind Smith was again the outsider, a stranger coolly picking his way through the detritus of drunken vandalism. A mob of gleefully shouting students surrounding a burning dumpster had been the backdrop for his introduction to Boston College the night before. Overturned, uprooted furniture and walls spackled with margarine decorated his friend Craig's dorm this morning, and now he walked through extinguisher-smoke filled and dusted corridors into the open air while Craig crouched in his room waiting for the smoke in the common area to subside. April nights are cold and clear in Boston, but it was hard to focus on the blur of the walkway lamps of upper campus through tired eyes. A huddled shape sat under a lamp smoking a cigarette with the cold shining in her hair, apart from the intricate brick-face of other dorms, and it was then that he saw her for the first time.

Her chestnut hair was long and smooth, falling into the folds of an over-sized corduroy jacket that bundled her small frame against the New England chill. She had flannel pajama pants tucked into loosely tied boots, and trembled ever so slightly in the still air. The smoke from her cigarette rose elegantly in wisps and ringlets above her while she looked out into the darkness. He tied his boots and walked towards her.

She shyly lowered her head in timid expectation after having just glanced at him, waiting for him gentle and willing on the

concrete steps, aloof yet accessible. Her bearing confessed nothing that denied him and nothing that assured him in a way that was irresistible.

"Excuse me," he said, "Think I could bum a smoke?"

"Sure," she replied quietly.

A tingling sensation shot the length of his spine. He didn't smoke. She handed him a cigarette and he fumbled it into the corner of his mouth. Her hands were small and quite delicate.

"D'you mind if I sit down and talk for a little bit?"

"No, have a seat," she said. "Light?"

"Thanks." The concrete curb was low to the ground and cold. He sat close to her. "Oh, my name's Smith."

A smile crossed her lips as they shook hands. "I'm Kate."

He sat and inhaled as his racing mind spoke him silent.

"Smith? Is that your first name?"

He laughed. "Yeah...kinda strange, but it fits me."

"It does. I don't think it would work for most people, but it does for you. I like it."

"Thanks. I was outside and I saw you over here, and, well, I felt like saying hello."

"I saw you too." She hid behind her cigarette. "Last night when the dumpster was on fire. You had on your hat."

"Really?" he said.

"Yup. Do you go here?" she asked politely.

"No." She smiled warmly. "Why, do you?"

"No, I don't either," she said.

"I go to school at American University in DC. I came up for the weekend to visit my friend Craig."

"I'm visiting my friend Jrasah." She pointed at a window above them. "She's up there. Asleep; where I should probably be."

"Not sleeping?"

"I just have bad dreams. Except once I had a dream I was a tiger, and when I ran it felt like I was flying. That was one I never wanted to wake up from. I would live in that dream if I could. But I'm sorry, I don't want to bore you."

"No really, you're not."

"So..." She looked at him. "Where are you from? Where's home?"

"Joysey. New Jersey. You?"

"I'm from Texas," she said, "but I go to school in Cali."

"Really? Where in Texas?"

"Houston...You know Texas?"

“Never been there, yet.”

“Texas is undeniable.” She lit another cigarette, then held the pack towards him. “I’m sorry, would you like another?”

He shrugged and accepted it from her. “Uh, sure.” She lit it for him apologetically.

“I can’t help it. I always chain smoke when I can’t sleep.”

“It’s okay.”

“And it’s nicer when you can smoke away the night with someone else.”

He inhaled again, a bit too deeply, and the nicotine sent him reeling. The world spun around their curb, around her. Her. He searched for words, words that would mean everything right now, words that would freeze time and hold the break of day at a distance. He gave up. Words failed him. His mouth was dry, he wet his lips. The chill was seeping in and the yellow lamps were blurry.

“It’s kind of weird though, isn’t it?” He stumbled the words out. “I mean, like the two people who *don’t* go here meet, and none of the fifteen thousand who actually do go here seem to even know each other?”

“I know, what are the chances?” She moved an inch closer to him and flicked her cigarette.

“Yeah right.” He followed suit, and a long arc of sparks flew out onto the pavement in front of them. He was cold now.

“I’m glad someone came over and talked to me. The people here are so, I don’t know, anti-social. Or unfriendly.”

“Yeah, you say hi to someone and they just give a, give you a weird look or ignore you.” He was shivering. “Bah.”

She laughed at his word. “It’s not like Texas. Or even California. People there say hello to you when you’re just passing when you don’t even know them.”

“Bah.”

“Hmm, bah!”

Her words were soft, floating there gentle and unspoiled beneath the light. They caressed and soothed, undressing every defense he erected, letting it fall to the floor until he was bare before her, unfalsified and in comfort. It was strange and new, improvised and perfect unlike anything. She sat there less than a foot from him, a heart beating and a body breathing to be held and had.

They looked at each other. She too was shivering. He had an idea. “Hey, do you want to go for a walk?” he asked.

Her eyes were wide. “Sure.”

“I just felt like going for a walk and there’s this really cool old, I think abandoned, mansion my friend Craig showed me the other night. It’s not too far.”

“Okay.”

They stood and stretched, shaking off the stillness and the cold. The night pressed close as they moved away from the dorm and its confines into the brief woods enveloping the mansion. Soon, they passed even these and caught a glimpse of the overbearing Victorian building in the blackness. A light glowed from inside.

“Are you sure it’s abandoned?” she asked him.

“Uh... I don’t know. Craig said it was. I wouldn’t worry about it. It’s kind of cool though, isn’t it?”

“It’s beautiful.”

The moon was out in full and its gentle radiance illuminated her face, accentuating it and etching it in his memory. Her hair shimmered in a river of moonlight, her blue eyes sharp, her lips benign. Several yards ahead an overgrown arbor was hanging quietly in the night for them. Smith walked towards it, leading her. They sat down in silent introspection and watched the moon, bracing themselves against the icy air.

For a while they said nothing, but slowly, imperceptibly, they began to open up. The words came. Hours passed with their music, their jokes, their philosophy and their fears between them. Soon they had known each other for a time that the transitory night would never have allowed.

“Do you believe in fate?” he asked.

“I believe in long, wet... no wait. I believe in the small of a woman’s back, the curveball, good scotch. I believe that Oswald acted alone. I believe in opening your presents on Christmas morning, and I believe in long, slow, deep, soft, wet kisses.” She laughed. “That was so bad. It was... oh, what’s-his-face, from Bull Durham?”

“Kevin Costner?”

“No...” she said. “I mean yeah, Kevin Costner.”

“So what does Kate believe in?”

She was quiet for a moment, but she answered softly, “I don’t know. I guess if something’s meant to happen it will happen.”

Something screamed at him to put his arm around her, to hold her close, to kiss her, and to have her for this night. Something else held him back. I want her in my arms, he thought to himself, but not for this night alone. She’s more to me than a one night stand now.

Lost in his own anticipations he didn’t catch everything when

she again quietly spoke. Caught off guard, he asked her what she had said but she simply answered, "Oh... nothing." They were cold and tomorrow was beginning. He leaned in close and as she turned to say something, they kissed.

It was not an awkward kiss, but not a passionate one. It spoke with her voice and his words, tranquil and sweet and sad. His hand found hers and they sat for a while longer as the clouds that had moved in as they talked began to brighten. The morning was calm.

"I think I was imprinted by the sky," she told him as he listened. "And now I can't help it. It's all I want to follow it wherever."

Walking back to their friends' respective dorms as the sun broke over the tree line in grey streaks against the sky, they stopped to exchange addresses and phone numbers on scraps of paper drawn from his wallet. They hugged one more time before saying good-bye. He turned, and walked back to Craig's dorm.

The front door was locked.

"Son of a..."

Was there another door? Smith walked around to the back. No. But there were three windows— which one was Craig's? Let's find out, he thought, and climbed in the middle one. Craig was asleep in the top bunk while his roommate was unmoving below him.

"Craig? Hey, Craig?" Smith whispered. "Craig, wake up man."

"Wha, huh wha?" Craig emerged from beneath a comforter. "Whoa, Smith? God... what time is it?"

"Uh, your clock says seven."

"Seven o'clock? Dude, did you just climb in through the window or somtin'?"

"Yeah, I thought you were gonna prop the front door, bitchface."

"Huh? I did, fool. Someone musta moved it." Craig rubbed his eyes. "I thought it was a dream. I had a dream someone was gonna kill me coming through my window. He had big boots he kicked me in the head with."

"I'm sorry, did I hit you?" Smith looked around the room. "Hey where's that sleeping bag?"

"Oh, it's under the bed."

"Under the bed?"

"Uh, no. No, it's in the closet. Hey where were you all night?"

Smith laughed. "I met a girl."

“Aw yeah, boy! Gimme some lovin’!” Craig held up his fist for Smith to knock knuckles with. “You’re here one night and you get ass, I’m here eight months and, okay well I get ass too, but it took me at least two months.” He yawned. “One night stands are the best though.”

Smith laid out the sleeping bag. “Yeah.”

Years later Smith opened a letter, recognizing the handwriting that had by then become dearly familiar. Another long letter in a line of long letters yellowing in a shoe box, he read it with the usual care. This letter was not long, written in cursive with purple ink on graph paper that crinkled when he held it.

She wrote, you had asked me that night what i said to you under the arbor. what i said was “wouldn’t it be romantic to kiss under the moonlight?” but you didn’t hear me. i guess though if something is meant to happen it will happen. i keep telling myself that even though i know it’s true. maybe someday i won’t be so lonely and i’ll walk on water every chance i get. i miss you. love, cub.

Two small pairs of feet running against the tiled floor outside of his den brought him into the present. He put the letter down on his desk and moved across the carpet towards the doorway.

“Dad! Josh pushed me into the pool!”

“Did not!”

He smiled and walked out into the kitchen, picking his daughter up and brushing her wet hair away with his hand. Her blue eyes looked at him, holding back tears.

“It’s all right, Katie. Someday you’ll walk on water every chance you get.”

Tonight

Leah Miller

The rain is from the west tonight
Clinging to the window from the blue-black sky
It's a night when dreams solidify
Into poems—or indigestion
Or one of those annoying questions
Of fate or love or wrong or right

The moon is in the east tonight
Casting an eternal sliver-gray spell
It's a night when shadows tell
Of lives long lived—and tales untold
Of places and of times of old
With souls that won't give up the fight

The wind is of the north tonight
Singing forlornly through the green-dark trees
It's a night that takes your mind off ease
And pricks your soul without a pause
Or somehow prompts an idiot's cause
And flickers the confusing sight

The mist is from the south tonight
Giving form to the ancient violent-red song
And somehow mixing right and wrong
Then some immortal moment's cry
Rings distant through the newborn sky
And always pulls us to the light

Janus; Neo-Gothic

Jennifer A. Zwillig



Decree

Karen Hollinger, Jill Gonzalez, Daniel Gallagher

The buildings were growing
Drowning in your confusion.
Betty and Joe married for money.
Ever expanding
My certainty (at least I thought).
They bought a big house, one of a kind.
New life. No life.
Holding on with already numb fingers
He goes to work all day so he says.
Memories manipulated,
Poisoned by dream spitting,
But something else is on his mind.
Timelines twisted and turned;
Unveiled to your eyes.
Betty slaves in the kitchen making a casserole.
Have you seen the sun?
What cries; while it cries; who?
“Oh carn I’m out of parsley.”
Human is as human loves.
Fear—dreams—sane—heavy,
She goes to her neighbor’s house to borrow some.
Try to discover it,
Driving it into the skulls of innocent young boys.
What a find he’s with Leslie!
But you could never live it
Not knowing what went wrong.
“Leslie, you slut, that’s my husband!”
Do you miss the ocean?
Who does?
Leslie and Joe look astonished.
I left my soul there.
“It’s not my fault she jumped on me.”
It was stolen by strangers.
Go wrong. Everytime.
“That’s it Joe you will be punished!”
Oh, Doctor. True is good
And pray for lost sheep.

The lawyer is called, she makes the plans.
Where were we taken from?
“I’ll get you and it won’t be funny.”
You lengthened these powers
Just like
Joe is left a loser in the dust.
Anna, Emma. Her soul remains
You,
While Betty gets all of his money.
It will never be night again.

Homework

Joel Guidry



Summer of the Burning Pizzas

Corey Taylor

“You get your Ph.D., how happy you will be/When you get a job at Wendy’s and are honored with employee of the month”

--Barenaked Ladies, “Never is Enough”

Tyler Michaelson pulled his forest green Jeep Wrangler into his spot on the side of the stained white building. He leaned his shaved head back on the headrest as the ocean breeze pierced the August air and whistled through his window. The beach is probably great today, he thought. But he was stuck here, on a Friday, in his own little chunk of hell. The same routine all summer long, day in and day out. For a split second, the college sophomore wished he were dead; at least he would have a valid excuse to take a day off. But this was his last day on the job, so he turned off the engine, took a deep breath, got out of his truck, and started his day like any other.

“Fuck,” he grumbled under his breath. “Let’s get this shit over with.”

The pain in his right shoulder had already started. With tired hazel eyes, Tyler looked up at the sign that read, “Slice of Heaven 1600 Long Beach Boulevard, Beach Haven, New Jersey We Deliver! Open ‘til 4 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays! Call 492-PIES.” A slice of pizza with a tiny halo and a pair of miniature wings was encircled by the words. Anthony was so proud of that goddamn sign. Tyler wished it would fall on his fat head. Dark thoughts were the kind of things that sustained Tyler through his long days of working here. He thought, hey, it’s better than the alternative of quitting and having no income to keep the Wrangler or spend back at school.

As usual, Tyler was the first one there. He took the spare key from under the plant on the massive front deck and opened the rickety door of the pizzeria. He was assaulted by an onslaught of heat that the four ovens had been saving for him all night.

Tyler’s “Absolute Italian” shirt (which he only wore to give Anthony a good laugh) was already drenched with sweat, so he quickly turned on the air conditioning unit. With all the lights out, the place looked deceptively peaceful. The white tile counter reflected the sunlight almost ethereally; the three by three glass pizza case was spotless; the center carousel was stocked with napkins and plastic silverware, all the tables were clean, and the wall murals of James Dean and Marilyn Monroe looked brand new. It was amazing

to Tyler that ungrateful tourists would spoil all of this in about an hour.

“Unbelievable,” he said to himself. “And Anthony wants me to stay year-round.”

He sighed deeply.

Tyler started to get the place ready for Anthony. He had just filled Anthony’s flour and semolina containers and slapped on his apron when Pablo, the short order cook, arrived. Pablo worked about twice the hours that Tyler did and took more shit from Anthony than Tyler could ever dream of, and never said a word about it. If Tyler was Anthony’s bitch, then Pablo was his whipping boy.

“Yo Pablo,” Tyler said.

“Hey,” he said, adjusting his Yankees hat. Pablo then grinned and said in his broken English, “This your last day, man!”

“Sure is.” Tyler smiled halfheartedly.

“Good for you, man. You get the fuck outta here, then I go too!” Pablo said as he started prepping marinara sauce for the day.

“No shit?” Tyler replied. “Where are you headed?”

“Dunno. Not here, though! Anthony’s a fucking asshole, man. I get outta here.”

“Good man.” Tyler smiled and walked up front to sweep out his ovens.

The clock struck 11 and Slice of Heaven was open for business. Anthony was nowhere to be found (a favorite double standard of his), and Tyler had everything ready for him: toppings, flour, a dozen trays of dough, three containers of both sauce and cheese, his favorite peel, and clean ovens. He didn’t dare make a pizza; Anthony didn’t let anyone except his fiancée Caitlin and he make pies, even slice pies. Tyler got out two stuffed pies from the walk-in box and put them up on the rack. Anthony’s royal blue and tan Bronco then sloppily pulled into the lot. “Great,” Tyler said to himself. “Now the fun starts.”

Anthony Bravo, owner of the Slice of Heaven pizzeria, straight out of Brooklyn, barged through the front door of his business, adorned in jean shorts, a purple “Tazmania” shirt, and a pair of black suspenders (all stained). His outfit made Anthony look like one of those weeble-wobbles from back in the day. He was built like a weeble-wobble, too. He was beyond rotund, with a well-trimmed goatee and shiny black hair, and legs that resembled petrified tree trunks. As far as Tyler could tell, he had no neck, just a mass of flesh and fat that quivered when he spoke. Anthony was a land mine: he

didn't bother anyone until they stumbled upon him. To Anthony, burning pizzas was the same as killing an innocent child, and whoever did the deed was a callous murderer.

Tyler feared, tolerated, and served this man faithfully as a summertime employee could over the past three years. Why he did so was a question Tyler could never quite answer.

"Did you turn the air on, Tyler?" Anthony's accent was unnoticeable in his calm state.

"Yes, Anthony. I'm the only one up front until dinnertime."

"Why did you turn it on?"

"Oh, probably because it's about a hundred degrees out, and the ovens aren't making it any cooler, so I used my better judgement to turn it on."

"Well shut it off and open all the windows. Where's Pablo?"

Tyler choked back the urge to scream. "In the back."

Anthony handed Tyler four quarters. "Go get my papers before you open the windows. Hey, you're sure this is your last day today?"

Tyler smiled devilishly. "I'm absolutely sure."

"Well, good, that means you can stay until four."

"Cool, you mean four this afternoon, right?"

"No, four this morning. It'll be one last chance for you to earn some cash before you leave."

"You must be kidding me."

Anthony shook his head. "I'll be right here with you, too."

"I got plans, Anthony! This is bullshit! Getting in your last licks, huh?"

"Last licks? You'd better get used to shit like this if you want to be my manager next year, Tyler. I'm expanding and I need you, college boy."

Tyler hated it when Anthony called him that. "This is my summer job, man, not my damn life!"

"Go get my papers," Anthony said as he walked back to where Pablo was.

Tyler stormed out of the pizzeria, still wearing his apron. He cursed aloud for being such a pushover. He made his way two blocks down through the heat and daytime Long Beach Island crowd to get *The New York Daily News* and *The New York Post*. It was no use arguing with Anthony. Tyler thought about how much this day was going to suck: he had already worked fifty hours in the last five days; this was a final slap in the face to work eighteen hours today.

Anthony wasn't a bad guy, but he had done this to Tyler innumerable times during the past three years. Anthony attempted to justify it by saying that the same things were done to him when he worked ovens.

"That's what you get when you're my best worker," he would always say.

But Anthony had really been piling it on this summer, to the point that Tyler had no social life left. He would get up, brave beach traffic for a half-hour, work all day, go home, shower, and go to bed exhausted, only to repeat the process for five or six days in a row, and maybe have a day off every week. The thing that really killed Tyler was that he didn't even want to come back, but now he was screwed. Now the offer was on the table, peering Tyler in the eyes. The offer stood at eight-fifty an hour, two days off a week guaranteed, and the managerial position at his new year-round mainland restaurant opening next summer. The only stipulations were that Tyler would have to sacrifice his month off in the winter to help lug all the equipment in, plan out menus, hire new blood, and sign next summer away to Anthony Bravo's entrepreneurial whims. With my luck, Tyler thought, I'll end up just like him if I become manager. The continuous stream of orders and insults that Anthony barked at Tyler echoed in his skull. "Get me ziti for a pie! Drop some chicken fingers! Spin that pie in the back! What the fuck are you doing, Tyler? No, it's not broken; your head is broken! That pie had better not be burnt!" Tyler took a deep breath and curiously explored the scars he had earned this summer from when he burnt himself on the ovens. He wondered if they were worth it, or if anything in this business was actually worth it. It'll only get worse if I don't get out now, Tyler thought. Tyler returned to Slice of Heaven just as Anthony had got done complaining about Pablo.

"Fucking lazy Mexican," Tyler heard Anthony mumble.

"Hey, can I get paid tonight?" Tyler asked as he tossed Anthony's papers on the counter.

"Depends on how the day goes."

"Oh, Anthony, you make money hand over fist. You should be able to pay lowly old me." He curled his lips into a smile.

Anthony cut Tyler a nasty look. "Yeah, I make money hand over fist, Tyler. I'm the richest pizza man alive. Don't let anyone tell you different."

"You do! You have to empty the register at least ten times a day! You pull out huge wads of cash. Man, you don't even pay me what you should be payin' me, you overwork me, and you owe me a

bonus!”

“I shouldn’t even give you a bonus. I’ll be paying you more than I pay myself come next summer.”

Tyler could feel his ears get hot. “Anthony, you had better give me that bonus. Who says I’m going to even be here next summer, or even this winter over break?”

“What are you gonna do, Tyler?”

“I just want to get out of here, be better than I am now. I don’t want to be...”

“Be what?” Anthony retorted. “Be stuck here? What’s your major, college boy?”

“English.”

“English?”

“Yeah, English.”

“What the fuck are you gonna do with an English major?”

“Anything I want to do.” Tyler was getting really pissed.

“Yeah, good answer, pal. Look at me! I can talk English just fine and I’ve never been to no fucking college. How much does college cost your family a year?”

“Enough to be worth it,” said Tyler.

“I’ll tell you something,” Anthony said. “How about you quit school, come work for me in my new restaurant year-round, I’ll pay you an even ten dollars an hour, and let you in on 10 per cent of my annual profits as a bonus. Is your English major worth it now, college boy?”

Anthony just upped the ante. “Can I get this in writing, or are you just sweet-talking me, Anthony?”

“You know me, Tyler.”

“Yeah, I do,” he replied. And that was what really bothered Tyler. “So, are you gonna pay me or what?”

“We’ll see how the day goes.”

“Well then at least let me go early.”

No reply.

“Who’s coming in tonight, Anthony?”

“Jason and Caitlin.”

“You can afford it. They can handle the rush.”

“We’ll see...English major.”

“Great.”

The afternoon came and went, passing slowly like molasses over ice cream. Nothing out of the ordinary happened: Anthony and Tyler did pies while Pablo took care of short orders and sandwiches.

Lunch was pretty big; Anthony had to count out the register twice, and Tyler made ten bucks in tips working the ovens at the price a of two news burns and a layer of pizza dust on his forearms. Maybe Anthony had a point, Tyler thought. The all-nighters, perpetual tiredness, and worries of college life seemed far away from Slice of Heaven. Anthony had stirred up emotions that Tyler had not felt since he first went to school. What if college isn't worth it? Why spend \$25,000 a year on an education that I'll be paying back the rest of my life? What if I can't get a job? Why not just drop out now and start making the big bucks? My parents didn't go to school; they had me instead and they can afford to send me away to school. And Anthony rakes in the dough. Why waste my time with school? These thoughts bothered Tyler all afternoon until help arrived.

Caitlin and Jason came at 4:30 sharp for the dinner and late night shift. At his fiancée's arrival, Anthony did what he usually did: disappeared in the back to read his papers and stuff his face while she made pies, only to reappear to bark orders at Tyler and Jason as they worked the front line. Jason, clad in his usual Nike black mesh shorts and red Oklahoma University tee shirt, greeted Tyler with a nod.

"What's up, Jay?"

"Not much...glad to be here like always."

"Yeah, me too," Tyler replied. He felt so bad for Jay; Jay would be Anthony's new best employee if he left.

"This is your last day, right?"

"Yup, for now anyway."

"Lucky bitch," Jay said as he gave Tyler a playful punch in the arm. "And what do you mean 'for now'?"

"He wants me to be manager of the restaurant over on the mainland next summer...pretty juicy offer."

"What, you don't want to go to school anymore?" Tyler did not reply to Jason's question. "Ah, there's gotta be a catch," he continued. "There's always a catch with Anthony."

"No kidding. He's making me stay all night tonight."

"Until four?"

"Uh-huh."

"What?"

"Yeah, that was pretty much my reaction too."

"Dude, fuck that!" Jay said. "If I were you, I'd take the money that he owes you out of the register now and then get out of here and never come back."

"I know, but it's my last night. How bad could it be?"

“That doesn’t matter! Why do you feel like you owe him for something? You know he’s gonna pull that shit with you next year if you...”

They hushed their conversation as Anthony lumbered up from the back, where he had just devoured a pepperoni cheesesteak, evidenced by the orange grease on his chin.

“Jay, go get me three trays of dough, and have Tyler help you.”

“Sure,” Jay said. “Hey, who’s making pies tonight, Anthony?”

“Caitlin at seven. I’m going to Atlantic City.”

Tyler froze. “What? I thought you were staying until four!”

“I was, but an old friend called and invited me to go out to dinner and then gamble at the Taj. You’re in charge of the place at seven, Tyler.”

“I don’t want to be in charge, Anthony! You gonna pay me tonight if I do this?”

“No. Come back tomorrow morning.”

“Oh my God,” Tyler quietly said and he covered his face with his hands and trudged into the back.

Dinner hit a half-hour later, and Slice of Heaven was packed, even for a Friday. Anthony and Pablo’s order boards were filled to overflowing, and both ovens were full as Tyler spun pies and Jason did slices and the register. There was a mob of tourists in the restaurant, clamoring to form a line and get their food. Caitlin was conveniently nowhere to be found when they needed help, and it didn’t look like Anthony was going to go to Atlantic City before seven. Orders for pizzas just kept coming and coming, with no end in sight. The orders conveniently tapered off at about quarter to seven, much to the chagrin of Tyler.

The last order was for seven large, plain pizzas for a 7 p.m. pickup. The last two pies were ready to come out of the bottom oven at 6:50 p.m. With the familiar pain in his right shoulder, Tyler opened the oven door and carefully took out the pie with the peel.

“What do you think, Jay—is it done?” he asked, pointing to the pie.

“Yup. That’s definitely a done one.”

As Tyler put the pizza into a box and grabbed a slicer, Anthony walked over from the register, wad of cash in hand. “That pie’s not done, Tyler. Put it back in for two minutes.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure.”

“Okay. Whatever you say.”

Two minutes later rolled around. "Damn it Tyler, I said that pie isn't done yet! Keep the oven closed or it'll never cook, college boy."

"Anthony, look at it," Tyler said, as he lifted up the edge of the crust and exposed the bottom. "It's done; I can tell."

"It is done, Anthony," Jay added.

"Tyler, put that goddamn pie back now, or you and Jay are both fired!" Anthony screamed in his Brooklyn accent, paying no attention to the small legion of customers seated in the dining room. Tyler put the pie back as Anthony walked back to count his earnings.

Again, two minutes later, the same scenario. "Tyler, what did I say?"

"What is wrong with you, Anthony? The damn pizza is burnt now! I'm cutting the thing."

Anthony walked over to Tyler and grabbed the slicer out of his hand, throwing it on the ground. "You can't serve this!"

"Why not?"

"It's burnt!"

"What?"

"I said the fucking thing is burnt!"

"But you told me two times that it wasn't done yet, so I..."

"Tyler, just be quiet, dude," Jason said.

"Well, now it's burnt, college boy! When these people come to pick up their pies, I'll have to explain to them that my head oven person is a complete moron and it'll be another fifteen minutes for their pies. I can't keep putting up with shit like this, Tyler. Use your head! I have to get out of here in five minutes, and..."

Tyler took the scalding hot pizza into his bare hands and threw it in the garbage.

Everyone stood still, like images etched in stained glass, as the thud of the pizza hitting the plastic garbage can faded. Then, taking Anthony's favorite peel, he smashed it on the side of the oven, no more than a few feet from Anthony's head. Wooden shrapnel flew everywhere.

"What the fuck are you doing to me?" Tyler screamed. "Do you like to make me suffer like this, in this goddamn slave pit?"

"Settle down, Tyler! What's your problem?"

"My problem? Jesus, you are a fat fucking idiot!" he said as tears welled up in his eyes. "Look at what you have made me into! I'm not a moron; I'm far worse than that! I'm just like you now, like a clone! Are you happy, Anthony? I SAID ARE YOU FUCKING

HAPPY?!”

Silence pervaded the room. Jay approached Tyler to try and settle him down, but he threw his apron onto the ground and ran into the back.

Tyler walked back up front, as everyone was going about his or her business like nothing happened. There was no more pain in Tyler's right shoulder. Anthony approached him.

“You need to go home now,” Anthony said. Tyler wondered if he was firing him or not. “When do you get back from school? I want to know when you can come in.”

Tyler shook his head, ignoring Anthony. There was his answer.

As he made his way out the front door, Tyler heard the “caching” of the cash register. He turned around to see Anthony counting his bills.

“Do you want to get paid, college boy?” he asked Tyler.

He hesitated. Tyler noticed tiny puffs of black smoke coming from the oven where the last pizza was. He laughed to himself and nodded.

Tyler walked to the counter and took the mound of money Anthony gave him. He didn't bother counting it; he didn't care anymore. “By the way, Anthony,” he whispered, “you're letting a pizza burn. Moron.”

It was exactly 7 o' clock.

Not Yet

Carolyn Harfman

I stare,
studying the wrinkles that form
along your mouth when you say
I'm sorry

Words cradle, hands explore
displacing warm clothes leaving my silhouette
open to the silky outline of your skin

The pheremonal odor of stale beer and cigarettes
become the backdrop for current events

The equalizer dimly lights the room,
throwing streams of green and red onto naked bodies

The CD changes
Silence ensues and motions cease,
except for the twitchings found in your dreams

Reflection fills the void realizing
the randomness is not random at all

We have been here before and will be again

Henry?

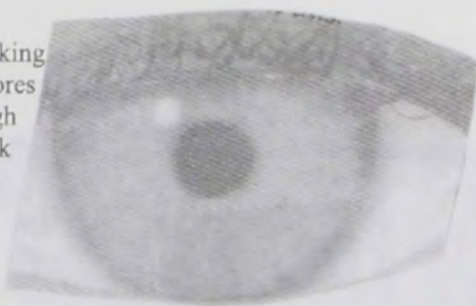
Meghan Gualtieri



The Man in the Moon

Ilda Hodøes

the eye, looking
it's stare bores
through
through lashes as dark
the eyes
wide and gaping
whose boat is sucked



out at me each night
a bowling-ball-sized hole
my abdomen
and thick as black yarn
stare
like mouths of fisherman
into the sea

the hands are cold and frail trailing down,
encircling my warm pale neck
so pale, indeed, that it will soon vanish
into the snowy back drop from lack of heat



ALL
HE LIKES
ALL
HE DREAMS FOR
Two

Pale
Lovers
Become one

Red—red as the lonely rhododendron peeking from
beneath the foot of snow

And orange more shocking to the eyes than
the neon lights shining in a dark alley

A place he yearns to be

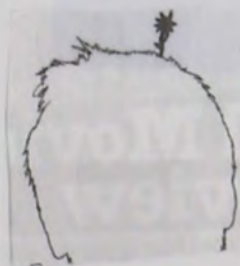


And they will meet

Watching as the arching, aqua waters beckon to touch him
Ebbing and flowing by his sole command
One day the land will open with a roar
Louder than one-thousand planes taking to the air together

see the red

too far to



no matter how high

ever be reached

his heart
is the most bittersweet
as each lonely day passes
shed with his tears



shade of green
bright drops of garnet blood

hiding their being
painting their faces
he sees me as no different
clowns and porcelain dolls which we call elegance
the pain still seeps through
like 15-degree night air through a broken window.



Watching, falling at the feet of simple beauty

LOVE

We all want it, few get it
Each day the closest he gets

helping it grow
even at night
branches grow, extending toward the sky,
(like baby crawling reaching for his bottle on an end table)
while it sleeps, caresses the ever-dying leaves
with a radiant glowing grin



WEEPING
invisible
tears

soon

will



the moon

turn blue

created for his pleasure
their beauty enough to cure the blind
colored by the iodine in his tears,



for longing to touch them,
feel the smoothness of their wings
so like a brand new silver bracelet

spilling
the mold
for
covering
with



slowly releasing
which shaped him
millions of years
the world
continual incandescence

though you'll never know me
and never see me

this is me
and how I see

THE
MAN
ON
THE
MOON



Life Without Shoelaces

Daniel Gallagher

Most of the people inside wore ordinary clothes. That was one thing that set Brian apart. After tearing t-shirt after t-shirt to pieces in fits of unexplained rage, he had been relegated to a hospital gown. Perhaps he was just symbolically rebelling against the overall constrictive nature of the place. Perhaps he wanted everyone to see the cross shaved into his thick mat of chest hair. In any case, he exemplified the term "does not work well with others," as was evident from his subsequent remanding to solitary.

The other patients could see him on the monitor in the nurse's station occasionally. They weren't supposed to watch, but Greg and Dar would inevitable catch a glimpse while waiting at the front door for a glorious smoke break to be called.

"Can I bum a Cowboy Killer?" Dar would ask Greg, holding up his pants with his left hand. He always wore those extra big jeans and, still being on precautionary status, he didn't have a belt. Greg wasn't supposed to be smoking. In fact, he wasn't even supposed to be in the adult ward, being only fifteen, but he religiously attended smoke breaks and hoped no one would catch the misfiled paper work that kept him out of the juvenile ward.

Besides their other problems, Dar and Greg were disgusting nicotine addicts. They would beg security for smoke breaks, vehemently arguing that the customary eight to ten a day weren't enough. They would smoke in silence, not wasting any breath in conversation, and hoping they could smoke two in the time other patients smoked one. Margie, the middle-aged housewife with clinical depression, would try to convince them to quit in between taking drags of her Capris and saying how much Greg reminded her of her dead son.

"I know I say it all the time, but you're like his spitting image Greg," she would say between coughing fits. "Just like the last day I saw him." She always whispered the last part, and looked at something in the distance, something only she could see. It made Greg feel almost guilty, and he wondered why. But then again, she was a little crazy.

Andy the Cokehead was possibly the only one who enjoyed smoke breaks more. He would scream out "Choke break!" and rush for the outside. Then again, he had more chemical addictions than

you could count on two hands. He talked to everybody like they were his best friend, including the social workers and security guards. Of course, he'd been to the clinic more often than most people go to the dentist. Andy the Cokehead was full of sage, nonsensical advice, like, "Always smoke down to the filter, man. That's where they hide the heroin," or, "If you're gonna do lines in a restaurant, make sure there aren't any cops around, man. They hate that kinda stuff." Everybody ignored Andy the Cokehead.

Brian used to come out for smoke breaks sometimes, as an opportunity to preach his paranoia in the open air. His privileges were revoked when he tried to make a break. Nobody really understood his attempt. Dar chalked it up to Brian being an idiot. "I mean, Jesus, this place has gotta be at least ten acres, and the next major road ain't for like, miles past the gates. Where the fuck was he gonna go?" It wasn't a very well thought out plan. But then again Brian was crazy.

"I couldn't get to sleep last night with that crazy fucker screamin'. You'd think they could sound proof solitary or somethin'," said Dar.

"I know man, it was enough to drive ya nuts," Greg replied. They shared a little smile as they walked past the door labeled "Sherman Psychiatric Clinic". Security was escorting Brian out of the room at the end of the hallway. It was the only room with a locking door, the only single. No other patient in the clinic had ever seen it from inside, except through the security cam which Greg watched whenever the daytime entertainment on TV proved less than stimulating. It was simply this enigmatic veiled threat to keep patients in line. It worked. For the most part.

Brian was heavily sedated. His eyes were half rolled back into his shaved head. His arms hung limp at his sides in his hospital gown, thick, powerful arms now rendered useless by the drugs. The two large security guards gingerly held his elbows, guiding him into the small kitchen in the ward, where a cold plate of silver dollar pancakes and bacon waited for him.

"Man, what's happenin' to that kid?" Greg asked no one in particular. He and Dar walked in to the lounge where the patients on precaution spent nearly all their day. Until a patient was moved up to "stable" he or she was confined to the lounge, kitchen, or a bedroom. Greg and Dar dreamed of being stable, of going to the Manor for hot meals, of wearing belts and shoelaces again. In the meanwhile they watched the Olympics on the seventeen-inch screen TV in the lounge

surrounded by catatonic schizophrenics and bipolars.

"Yeah man, that kid is messed up," Dar said. "He seemed cool enough when we got here. I mean, I used to not mind talking to him. It's like the longer he stays here the worse he gets, like he's regressing." There was a thoughtful silence. Or maybe just a silence. It was hard to say really what people were thinking, if at all.

"Damn, dude." Greg laughed. "Keep talking like that and you'll be working here some day. Regressing and shit."

"Well if I did, I'd let people wear fucking shoelaces at least. Damn that drives me nuts."

"Yeah, me too." Greg lifted up his pant leg to look at his laceless black boots. He stroked the eight days worth of stubble on his face, wishing he could shave without supervision. The thought of someone accompanying him to the bathroom, watching him shave, made him less than comfortable. But the shoe laces thing probably was one of the most aggravating aspects of clinic life. Every step was an exercise in balance. Greg's feet were constantly pulling out of his boots, making him feel unstable, out of touch. And there was the issue of feeling untrustworthy. It was an insult in a way, not to mention a handicap.

Greg stood up abruptly to go to his room, suddenly feeling a need to get away. Brian was in the hallway, on one of the three pay phones. He pulled Greg aside urgently, seeming to snap out of his sedation.

"Greg, you gotta help me out," he whispered. His eyes wouldn't stop roving up and down the hallway. "Look, I'm on the phone with my uncle, my uncle who works in the Pentagon." Greg could hear the dial tone humming accusingly at Brian. Brian thought there were bugs everywhere, recording every conversation. The phone was tapped, there were cameras all over. His eyes practically leaped out of his head, his skin was too tight to contain his body. The harried whispers in which he spoke could not convey the full urgency of his thoughts.

Looking around in a paranoid fervor, Brian continued, "He's breaking me outta this hell-hole. If you help me, I can get you out too." He had a nervous smile, completely focused on Greg. Meanwhile, Greg tried to look away and started towards his room. "Look man," Greg replied, "I only got another couple days here anyway. I don't think I need to break out." He took a step away, his face contorted uncomfortably. It was that sort of look a person has when they turn down a date with a really nice ugly person.

"Is this about that shirt of yours I ripped?" Brian asked frantically. "Look, I'm sorry man, I just, I... well, you know, sometimes stuff just happens and you don't know what you're doin'." Brian took a strong hold of Greg's arm, and Greg saw the cross cut into his arm and the blood under his fingernails. That was what landed him in solitary the night before. Brian's wrists were black and blue from a night spent in restraints.

It wasn't so much that Greg was scared as he was uncomfortable. He pitied Brian, but didn't know how to show it. "I...I don't know man. I mean--"

"I got it all worked out. See this little piece of banister here?" Brian pointed to two and a half-foot piece of wooden handrail attached to the wall. "I've been working it loose since yesterday. You just be my hostage, I'll hold this across your throat. I mean, I won't really hurt you or anything, and then once they let me outside you can either go back or come with me. Whatta ya say? Huh?" Brian let go of Greg's arm as one of the social workers walked by.

"Brian, did you get your meds yet today?" she asked.

"Uh..." he stalled, "Um, no I didn't."

"Follow me," she said tiredly. She had been working for past eight hours, and had another four before her shift was over. The slump in her step and sighs interjected into her conversation were enough to tell Greg that she didn't feel like dealing with Brian either. "Jesus," Greg muttered under his breath, "What next." Brian turned and shot Greg a knowing look from down the hall. "God, this place is fuckin' nuts." He went into his room to pick up the *Reader's Digest* condensed novel he had been leafing through (something about French spies in Algeria) and wondered why he was in this place with these people who were obviously out of their minds. He wasn't that bad. Was he?

He stepped back into the hallway and there was Brian again. Brian's eyes darted all over the hallway, and then began to whisper again. "Well? Do ya wanna do it?" he asked, almost threatening. Greg had seen the remains of his fits; the shreds of shirts, the self-inflicted injury. He wanted to help in a way. But the thought of being someone's hostage was almost stomach turning. "I can't do it man. It's just not in me. I'm sorry. It's nothing against you, I just--" "I'm tellin' you it's foolproof. My uncle's a powerful guy. He can help us."

His eyes were desperate. Greg was having trouble comprehending just how desperate. Everybody wanted to get out,

but escaping was just out of the question. "Look, psychiatrists are often gullible people. They want to heal patients, and a self-proclaimed healed patient makes a happy psychiatrist, regardless of the truth," Greg said. There was a pause as Brian possibly considered this nugget of advice.

"No, I gotta get out," said Brian, shaking his head.

"I'm sorry, man. I can't." Greg replied. Brian looked long and hard, in what seemed to be disbelief.

"It's cool. Don't worry about it," he said in even tones. Then he walked away.

"Thank God," said Greg as he walked back to the lounge. He cracked his book and sat calmly reading for roughly fifteen seconds before a harsh roar tore through the ward.

"You motherfuckeeeeeerrrrrs!" Brian screamed, racing down the hall brandishing his piece of handrail. "Let me the fuck out! Now you dirty sons of bitches. I'll fuckin' kill ya. All a ya!" Spit sprayed from his mouth like a rabid animal.

Some of the less stable patients in the lounge began to cry and wail, curling into fetal positions and covering their ears. Greg and Dar ran to the lounge entrance and watched Brian waving the handrail at the two security guards and three social workers blocking the doors. They couldn't hear any of the psychobabble over Brian's screams though. He was spastic, and angry, and a strong, violent young man. It was as if he could taste his imminent freedom, looking through the glass doors to the gorgeous March day outside. He was high on his own power and psychosis. He was crushed as ten more extremely large security guards appeared at the door, instantly immobilizing him and liberating him of his weapon.

The social workers crowded the patients back into the lounge and began to calm people down. "What is wrong with kid?" Dar asked. "What'd he do to get in here, kill somebody?"

"Brian's checked himself in, man," replied Andy the Cokehead. "I heard one of the social workers talkin' about it. Once he got in and began to act like a psycho, his family asked to have him remanded here until the docs saw fit for his release. He could have gone home weeks ago if not for the escape attempts. Man, that guy's fuckin' wacky." Dar and Greg stared in disbelief. Andy had actually said something useful.

"You mean to tell me," said Greg, "If he didn't want to leave so bad, he could go home?" Andy shook his head yes, as if that were the most logical idea conceivable.

"Fuckin' trippy man, ain't it?" Andy said, and turned away.

"Damn, this is a nutty place," said Dar, as he walked across the room and out of his shoes.

But for the Cars

Geoffrey Mills



The Sound and/or Fury

Nathan Rosen

When the wheel of karma stops turning,
When fate suddenly fails to go round,
It's the end of the world as we know it,
And you hear a peculiar sound.
There's an over-balanced washing machine,
And a songbird inside a gold cage,
With a hint of barbershop harmony
And a crinkly newspaper page.
You can hear a ringing telephone,
And a klaxon blaring a warning
Of Klingons on the starboard bow
In that jingle-jangle morning.
The call of a wolf, of a swan, of a moose,
Of a mournful humpback whale,
An extremely upset little pussycat
With a rocking-chair leg on its tail.
The break of day, the crack of dawn,
The slam of an antique trunk.
This is the way the world ends:
Not with a bang, but with a
 WobblywobblywobblekabwoingVWEEEgristlegristle...
 kerplunk.

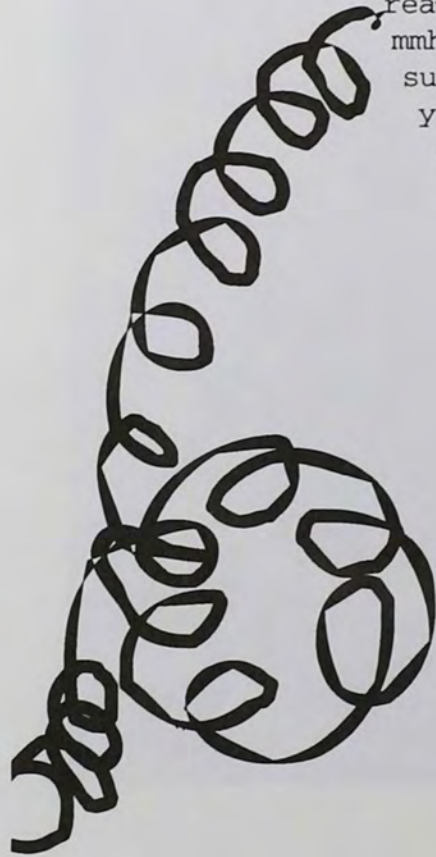
uh huh

Ashley Claus

uh huhu
 huh hyeahuhohu
 yeahuhuhuhuhOrea
 yehsureeallyyeahuh
 righuhrightmmmm huhuhuh
 sure right yeahmmmmmm
 what o yeahhuh huhmmmmmm
 mmmhmmmm yeahrightrea
 eallyright surmmmmhe
 righhuhmmmmoyea
 hmmmreoh alyethgi
 ro surehuhuh
 yeahuhreallyyeahmmmm
 mmmhmmmmmmohhokoy
 eahriokrea righmmmm
 mmmhmmrighmmmmht o
 kohhgir yeah mmmmm
 yeahmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
 hmmmuhhuhuhmmmmuh hu
 surright really ok
 eally Ok O yeah
 surthat the rightuhuh
 reallyeahhuhowokyeah
 mmmhmmmmoh okmmmmmmmmmye
 surethat's good really
 yeahhuhuh huhoh okmmmmmmmm
 surerightyeah oh really
 right yeahhuhuhuhuhuhuhuh
 whathgiright ok o yeahuh
 mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
 righthon reallyeah
 sureallyeally
 hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

PLEASE CALL ME
 WHO'S CALLING
 HELLO

NICE HEAT IN NIGHT
 THANKS FOR CALL SEFYA
 COOL



Tears

Jennifer A. Zwillling



Hermes and Aphrodite

Andrew Gerchak

The sun forgot to rise the day I died. I fought sleep all night just so I could see it climb over the horizon. A crisp pack of *Marlboro Lights* and I waited up on the limestone ridge behind the high school for the best possible view. I kissed each lung killer in anticipation of dawn opening her eye. A faint metallic sensation infiltrated my nose and crawled down to the back of my throat where it built and maintained an outpost. Once the breeze in this town was so thick with zinc that it dusted clothes left overnight on the wash line. That's what Mother and Dad said anyway. Before my time. Business unboomed and most of the factory residue vanished from the air along with the green from the ground. The Company built this town, nourished it, poisoned it, and destroyed it. They exhausted the soil, twisted the water and gave the EPA a purpose, a haunting spirit to exorcise. A town that burned out for its own good.

I heard crows over my left shoulder. On scraggly branches of a lifeless tree they squawked impatiently at the gray soup of clouds. The rays never made it through the shroud. A little kiss of morning was all I wanted. Something memorable for the last sunrise of Stephen Dorothy Krebs.

My parents did a wonderful job of crippling my childhood. Some kids hated revealing their middle name to others, but I was afraid. I learned at an early age that the fists of young boys had an affinity for those who could be labeled "Sissy." And the girls failed to melt despite my obvious sensitive nature. It was a well-known fact Guys named Dorothy simply didn't push girls around. I begged to drop the middle name and chewed my tongue when Mother refused. Even if she hadn't forbidden it, I probably never would have gone through with it. I didn't have it in me to throw away what was left of my sister. My twin. The same reason I didn't get the operation.

Mom said she could feel it, a boy and a girl. Dad splashed the house pink and blue and kept his drawer stocked with cigars dressed "It's A Boy!" and "It's A Girl!" They were ready for the perfect family, ready for their Stephen and his little league games and their Dorothy and her dance recitals.

On my birthday, the floor dropped out of their goody-gumdrop world. Dad told me the story when I was six. Seventeen hours in labor and mother refused drugs. Her mind was

sharp as she witnessed it. First, she squeezed out the one who would have been Dorothy. The infant girl fell into the world a corpse. Mother's body refused to release the lost child, and their cord twisted around my weak throat. I was born strangled between Mother and my dead sister. The doctor who saved me said he'd never seen anything like it.

They had to sedate Mother. She attacked the nurse who took the lifeless baby from the room. Labor didn't even slow her down. They mixed enough juice into her blood to satisfy the cravings of an opium den full of failing artists.

Mother climbed out of the stupor the next day with a new set of memories. She was pregnant with twins, but through some sort of miracle, they were both born into one body.

My condition reinforced her delirium. I left the womb with a little from column A, and a little from column B. Hermaphrodite. Some preferred the term "intersexuals." But instead of crying, Mother was convinced I was the little boy and the little girl she wanted, packaged neatly into one bag of skin. She slapped both labels on me, but at least Dad talked her into having Stephen as my first name.

Growing up was rather confusing, to say the least. A constant compromise. Dad did his best to reinforce the lumberjack side, throwing football and baseball, and taking me to monster truck rallies and pro wrestling events whenever they were in the area, but it was tough to be macho when Mother tied pink ribbons in my hair and taught me how to apply eyeliner every time Dad was punching his time card at The Company.

Once he came home early—some sort of hippie environmentalists caused some problems at The Plant—and he found his little champ modeling the Little Bo Peep look. Dad never confronted Mother. He was afraid that she might remember what really happened in the delivery room. He didn't want to shatter her illusions or her happiness.

I loved Mother. I hated her for twisting me. I loved Dad. I hated him for not saving me from her. I hated my life, my existence. I loved the fuel it gave me.

No one to talk to, no outlet or vent, and then Mother bought me my first set of paints. She wanted me to paint floral arrangements. I was twelve. Never had any lessons, but the colors always flowed where I wanted them. It all made sense to me on canvas. They only saw abstract splashes, but I saw a lonely child struggling for an identity.

I would paint in the dark after Mother tucked me in. In the morning, I'd shuffle over to my desk and see another creation. Magic? Miracles? It didn't matter. A year after I started painting, the doctor showed me a filmstrip and told me I was sterile. Neither my He nor my She worked.

I played with my brushes all the time. I painted my way through rage, self-pity and confusion. I painted my way out of my house, out of my town. A scholarship to art school. I painted my way through Mother's fatal appetite for sleeping pills the first Thursday after I moved out. Thursdays were when we did our toenails. I painted my way through Dad's collapse. He ran off to Alaska to find The Spirit of The Grizzly two years after Mother went to bed. The rest of his note said he should have known, he should have stopped her. I painted my way through years of scattered relationships born to fail because removing my pants was out of the question. Just something I didn't want to explain to junk girls who believed all there was to life was dating an artist and a needle between the toes. They pretended to care about me and my work, and I pretended to care when they dumped me or when the police asked me to identify a body.

Two girls knew the truth about me, and I loved them both. The first was Emily, a Philippino girl from my high school. I knew she cared a lot about me, and we did what we could, but without penetration I knew she wouldn't stay much longer after the novelty faded. I constructed quite the fortress after Emily took on both captains of the wrestling team at once.

My third year at art school, Faith crashed through the granite walls. She was a year older than I was. A chemistry major at a miniature liberal arts college close to my school. I first saw her when I presented a painting of mine for an exhibit on her campus. I spent the next six days mixing paints, trying to concoct the exact shade of red of her hair.

I fell in love with her the first time she tried to explain Collision Frequency Theory to me. She stayed past the secrets. Even when they weren't secrets anymore. Faith spent the night with her fingers across my chest and her hair wrapped around my ear. In all the times we fell asleep beside each other, she never once stole the covers.

She loved me and I couldn't understand what that really meant. After a few months, I hired a man to do those things that I couldn't give her. She smacked me in the face, cried, and walked out.

I couldn't get a refund so I sent him to my professors' apartment across the street.

Five years without seeing her and I finally found the right color for her hair. I wanted to use it to paint the sunrise the day I died.

Faking my death was easy. I orchestrated a boating accident and an explosion on the lake about nine miles from the high school. The paper said the police gave up searching for my body after three days. Everyone else had disappeared and the only way to find them was to vanish, too.

I arrived at the funeral as my nonexistent Sunday school friend, Lola. For once, Mother's beauty lessons proved useful outside of Halloween.

Dad was there with a broad-shouldered bearded man. They stood with their hands in each other's pockets. Not the Grizzly Spirit I expected. I guess having me around played with his ideas on sexuality. The lumberjack kept Dad calm throughout the services. He convinced Dad and everyone else that I was a troubled soul, and now I could finally rest.

Emily was engulfed in the arms of Roberto, a minor league baseball player from the Dominican. They were living together in California. She invented lots of stories about our high school sweetheart days and cried as everyone hugged her and told her to call if she ever needed to talk.

Faith never made it to my funeral. I spent the day in the cemetery, feigning grief and waiting. As the sun began to set, she crossed the damp grass and stood on my fresh earth.

I stepped from behind an ornate obelisk and introduced myself. She said Stephen never mentioned a friend named Lola. I told her we lost touch after I moved out of Pennsylvania. Faith shook. When she started breathing again, she told me why she loved the dearly departed, how he was all she ever wanted. Not perfect, just perfect for her. Then she kicked the tombstone and cursed him for running away when she needed him.

I kissed her on her forehead before I walked away. Problems of a forgotten life. The lipstick that I left behind matched her hair. I anticipated the morning. Lola would paint her first sunrise.

The rental car took me into town. I passed the ungreen mountain, The Plant, and The Company's Environmental Concerns office and to the yellow awning on Main Street. *Billy's*. The ice

cream parlor welcomed me with a dish mint chocolate chip every summer morning after swimming lessons and whenever Dad took me along to the hardware store.

A teenage couple watched Lola stroll through the door and into 1957. Billy, his skin falling from his face and his vanilla white hair retreating to the back of his scalp, rested a glass of water on the counter for me. He worked there since Benjamin Franklin discovered electricity, providing frozen happiness to children and equally excited adults. Ice cream ate through the age barrier, reducing all of Billy's patrons to their juvenile instincts.

"And what can I get you, pretty lady?" Billy sounded like the gun-slinging hero from a black and white western.

"Mint chocolate chip—single dip—dish." I crawled through the wall of comics opposite the bar as I waited for my order. *Bloodstone* and *Kill Your Parents* were shutout by *Archie*, *Donald Duck* and similar titles.

The front door jingled behind me. "Lola?" Faith breezed over the pale yellow tiles, to the seat beside me. Her defiant red hair swirled above the shoulders of her coal jacket. Billy pushed the ice cream across the counter. I plunged a spoon into my treat as Faith ordered a mint chocolate chip in a cone. We enjoyed our desserts behind a dialogue of sharing memories of Stephen.

"I miss him already," she said. "I know it sounds nuts, but I keep thinking I see him."

I nodded sympathetically.

"In fact..." She smiled. "I think...I see him now." Licking her cone, she speared my shin with her heel. "Did you really think five years and a dress would let you slip by me?" I gag on my spoon and she continued. "Explanation definitely needed on this one, Krebs." I squirmed. "You know what?" she said. "I don't care why or even how. I need to show you something."

"Where are we going?" I asked while paying the bill.

"What do you care? You're dead," she chirped. "It's not like you have any pressing engagements or anything."

An hour drive and we reached Faith's apartment. A red brick building across from a flower shop. We climbed the cat and potpourri scented staircase. She was silent during our ascension. Even her eyes avoided me. Quite the shame, considering all the time I spent on my makeup this morning. My face, an entirely different canvas, but still used to help me make sense of what's going on.

Apartment 201. Fog impeded sunlight glowed through the part in the light blue curtains. The living room was plain, almost sterile. No carpet, a black swivel chair, green futon in front of the television, and a black trunk squeezed in the middle serving as a coffee table. An empty fish tank slept in the corner.

I complimented her decorative tastes but she only laughed. "Stuff that made it through college with me," she said. On top of the trunk/table rest several hardback editions of Kurt Vonnegut novels led by *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

"Mrs. Dean, from the first floor, gave me some fish," Faith said. "They died after a week."

So it goes.

She brought me a beer from the small kitchen off to the right then disappeared down the hallway. A round Hispanic woman walked out of one of the rooms after a conversation with Faith. "I'll see you tomorrow Elsie, and thanks again," said Faith.

Faith returned as the last of the drink falls on my tongue. She shoved a bundle of clothes into my lap.

Comfortable in my dress, but she demanded I change. "I'm not talking to you until you get out of those clothes," she said.

"Just because I'm wearing a dress?"

"No, because you're pretending to be a female and I'm not going to encourage your delusions."

"In case you didn't notice, sweetheart," I sneered, "I'm outside the normal gender barriers."

She tugged her bottom lip between her thumb and ring finger and flashed me her teeth. Faith exhaled her frustration and sat next to me on the futon. "I've been doing some reading. Intersexuals. We studied it at school, but just the physics involved. I wanted more," she said. "I've even subscribed online to the *Hermaphrodites with Attitude* newsletter."

"Sudden interest in research?" I peeled the label from my bottle.

Faith's hand exploded across my face. "Sorry," she lied. "I learned a lot reading that information. Personal essays of intersexuals and their friends and family, editorials and what not." She sounded so grown-up.

"Yeah, I'm sure you figured it all out."

She pushed her fingers through her hair and rolled her eyes. "Listen, just because you were born with both sets of genitals, doesn't mean you can just switch from Boy to Girl when things get

complicated.”

“Neither one works, so what’s stopping me?”

“You’ve been acting out the male role for all your life...”

“...Except when Mother played Dress-up.”

“Point taken,” she said. “I know most intersexuals have the whole ‘gender is a societal construction’ theory, so you’ve been playing the Boy for too long to switch now.”

“Is that your professional opinion?” I asked.

“If you mean as a doctor, I don’t have one.” She rose from the futon and leaned against the television, her back to me. “I had to leave med. school. Took a year off, but I don’t know if I can go back.”

“What happened?” I stepped to her and touched her hand.

She led me into her room and pointed to the far side of the bed. A white mesh playpen, filled with red, yellow, and blue plastic toys was pushed up against the wall. Spun inside a blanket, pacifier in mouth, a baby, just chubby enough to be adorable was sleeping inside the crib.

“Yes. Mine,” she explained. The father, a classmate named George, ran off after the child was born. The clothes in my hand were George’s before he fled. I asked no more questions about George. Faith lifted the baby out of the playpen. She unwound the blanket and the diaper. “Look familiar?” she said. An infantile penis and vagina were squeezed between the baby’s round legs. Miniature versions of my own unique genitals.

“So that’s why you’ve been reading so much.”

“I also read about the Hijras in southern Asia,” she said as she rewrapped the baby. “People born with...unusual sexual... deformities...They think it’s a sign from God, that they’re His chosen ones...”

“I already heard all their bullshit,” I said. “They go around singing and dancing to people with babies.”

“They’re blessing infants and married couples in hope of ensuring their fertility.”

I smiled. “You sound like a damn text book.”

“Just shut up and humor me. I spent a lot of time on the Internet to get this information,” she said. “When they found an infant who was also...different...they would ask the parents if the child could go live with them at their retreat. Sometimes the parents even gave their babies up. It was believed that only a Hijra could raise intersexual children so that they knew their place in His plan.” She paused, then handed me the child. “This is Chris. I needed a name

that could go both ways.”

I surrounded Chris with my chest and forearms. Faith’s fingers rested on my wrist as she swallowed. “Chris needs a father,” she says. “Someone who knows all about growing up being different. Someone I know. Someone I trust. I need you to be a man.”

The lumps in the futon plagued my back. Faith offered me half of the bed, but I needed time to think. Time away from Faith, from Chris. I pulled my microcassette recorder out from my purse and ramble on about the newest twists to my life. I played these confessions and complaints when I painted. It helped me remember the confusion precisely, so I could bleed it onto the canvas.

Chris’ crying interrupted my talk session. The mattress squeaked and I heard the muffled sounds of motherhood. Chris cried his-herself to sleep, and Faith did the same. I looked down at the dress that I fell asleep in. George’s clothes were folded on the floor.

I sneaked into the bedroom just as the second crying fit started. Glad I changed. It was easier to move quietly in jeans and a T-shirt than in that damn dress. “Shhhh, baby,” I whispered as I lift Chris to my chest. “I know, it’s all pretty mixed up.” Chris’ crying ceased as we leave the bedroom together. I kicked the dress on the floor out of my way as I floated the window in the living room. I split the curtains while humming Disney themes into Chris’ ear. “I could end it, if you want me to. Save you a lifetime of problems and a fortune in psychiatric bills,” I said.

My reflection watches me from Chris’ eyes.

“No,” I said. “It wasn’t my privates that caused my problems. It was how Mother and Dad responded to it.” Chris smiled. “I’m sure with proper parenting I would have turned into a Productive Member of Society.” I laughed. “If mother wouldn’t have sent me to school in a dress I probably would have turned out just fine, too.”

The fog outside rolled away, running from the faint glow growing beneath the horizon. “I don’t know, kiddo.” I said. “What do you think about me sticking around?” Chris responded with drool and a giggle. The sunrise chased away doubt, and Stephen Dorothy Krebs returned from the dead.

Watch

Robert Cerrone

Divorce,
The final time
To discard this nuisance
And fix it so I can again
Tell time

Camden Town 1998

Meghan Gualtieri



Win! Twins!

Lou Nemphos

“We’ll get ‘em next time, Willie.”

My dad puts his hand on my shoulders and I begin to feel better. Anyway, Mrs. Loukota brought my favorite, Cheetos, and bright green bug juice for me. I run over and take my Dixie cup and Cheetos and sit in the dirt.

“Willie! You’re getting you’re pants dirty!” Mom yells. “Now I have to wash the uniform for your game tomorrow!”

“Come on Mom! Not in front of the guys!”

Mom kneels beside me and tries to brush the dirt of my blue and red pants. She is wearing her big sunglasses. She looks like a giant fly.

“And look at your fingers. They are covered in orange cheese! Honestly.” Mom licks her finger and I try to squirm away, but she has me in a headlock like Hillybilly Jim.

“Not the spit wash mom!” That’s grody!” I yell.

She rubs her dirty finger all over my face and hands wiping off all the cheese. Rats. I was saving that for later. I throw my cup and wrapper on the ground and I see my friend Brian Cowan. He is on the Orioles. They beat us twice already. One game only went two innings. Stupid ten run rule. We play Brian’s team tomorrow in our last game.

“Did you guys win?” Brian says

“That’s none of your B-I-business.”

“Ha. Ha, Ha. You’re going to lose all your games and then they’re going to arrest your dad.”

“Shut up! We’ve still got one more game left. My dad says we can’t lose forever. The odds are in our favor. We’re gonna’ kick your butts tomorrow.”

“We haven’t lost all season. We’re going to beat your heineys.”

What a nerd. He just said heineys.

“Shut up, diarrhea head.” We both laugh. Then I start to kick dirt on him. A hand grabs my shoulder and I’m spun around. It’s mom. She’s mad.

“Stop that! And don’t say shut up. It’s not nice.”

“Don’t forget about my party next weekend at Radnor Rolls,” I say. “I want a Hillbilly Jim or a Darth Vader.” My birthday is July sixth. I am going to be six.

I say good-bye to Brian and mom walks me to the car. I wave at my teammate Kevin Mengel, but he doesn't notice. He's too busy chewing on his glove. She lays down a towel on the seat because it's really hot, and because she doesn't want to get the car dirty.

"Le-Mans," I say.

"Yes dear. This is a Le Mans."

I walk around to the back of the car. "X-P-G 4-8-7. You've got a friend in Penn-syl-va-ni-a."

"Very good dear."

I can read.

"Come on dad! We're going to miss Dukes of Hazard!" Dad is still picking up the bats that are scattered all over the field. I wonder if he will find the one I put in the trash can.

"That's funny. I'm missing one of the bats," he says, scratching his head.

"Dad! Dad! Dukes of Hazard! Dukes of Hazard!"

He jogs over and puts his hand on my head. "All right, let's go."

"Do it first Dad. Come on. Please!"

"Listen Willie. I told you I'm never doing that again. My head still hurts from the last time I tried it."

"Please!"

"No. That's it. We normal human beings get in the car by means of a door."

Dad is being no fun. The General Lee, Bo and Luke Duke's car doesn't have any doors, so they slide in through the window. It's so cool. Dad's tried once, but he hit his head. He chickens out and uses the door. We drive home.

Dukes of Hazard was awesome! That Bosshog is such a turd! I want a dog like Flash, but mom's allergic to dogs, so I have a hermit crab named Hermie.

I take off my Minnesota Twins uniform so Mom can wash it for tomorrow's big game and change into my Twins sweat suit. Mom says I'm her little athlete and she says you can tell how good a player is by how dirty his uniform is. I spend most of my time sliding around in the dirt and grass, so I must be great. Mom says if we don't win tomorrow, there is always next year.

We are 0-12. Dad says we are not bad, we don't get the breaks, whatever that means. He says if Mike McVaugh would stop crying and Kevin Mengel would take his glove out of his mouth, then we would really have a chance.

I change into my Minnesota Twins feety-pajamas and Dad tucks me in.

“Are we ever going to win?” I ask.

He just stares at me. “Come on now Willie, you know winning isn’t all that important. All that matters is that you’re having fun.”

“Brian says if we don’t we tomorrow, you’re going to jail.”

“Yeah, Brian also said that *Return of the Jedi* was a bad movie. Now who are you going to believe?”

Dad’s right. Brian doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

“Remember the time we went to Baltimore and we saw the Twins,” I say.

“That sure was fun Willie. Maybe we’ll go again next year. Let’s gets some sleep now.” Dad gets up to leave.

“And remember how we stayed at their hotel and we met the players. The pictures of me and Steve Lombardozzi and Tom Brunasky and Frank Viola.”

“Yes Willie, but aren’t you tired?” Dad yawns and sits back down.

“And remember how we ate breakfast with Frank Viola and his family?”

“Yes Willie, but Frank wasn’t at our table, he was sitting across the restaurant.”

“But we still ate with him. Remember he had a daughter my age, but I didn’t like her because girls have cooties.”

Dad laughs. “One day you’ll like girls, and one day we’ll talk about it, but now it’s time to hit the sack.”

“And the game, remember the game we went to. You got me the program and the pennant and the jumbo pretzel with the mustard and the Twins lost when Freddy Lynn hit that three run homer in the ninth. Everyone was yelling, ‘FREDDY, FREDDY!’ and I was yelling, ‘BOO!’”

“I remember Willie. Good night.”

“Don’t forget my Darth Vader night light dad.” He plugs it in, kisses me on the forehead and closes the door. Dad says we’re a lot like the real Minnesota Twins. They’re in last place too.

Dad wakes me up and hits me on the head with my Twins pillow. I put on my freshly washed uniform. It looks too clean. I go outside and slide around in the grass in the front yard. Dad’s in the garage looking for the bat I hid and mom’s filling up the cooler with grape Kool-Aid.

"Oh My God," she yells. "What did you do? I just washed your uniform." We get into the car and drive to the field and the Orioles are already there. There are undefeated. I wave at my best friend Craig Kielinski. He plays first base for the Orioles and his older brother, Kyle is on my team. Craig comes over and we talk about Garbage Pail Kids. He tells me his dad took him to the Village Mart yesterday and got him five packs. He says he only needs "Jay Decay" for the whole set.

"Do you have any doubles of "Adam Bomb?" I ask excitedly. "Adam Bomb" is the only one I need to complete the set.

"I don't know. Let me check."

"Make sure you check when you get home.

"What time are we going swimming?"

"Did I tell you that I got the Jabba the Hut palace with the trap door? It's so cool."

"No way," Craig says. "Neat."

"Yeah. I dropped a lot of my sister's earrings down there. The rest I crammed in Rancor's mouth."

"Cool."

"Neat."

"Yeah."

"We could play with that and you can come over and watch MTV. I just got it on Tuesday. There was this great video by Duran Duran called 'Hungry like the Wolf' where this guy gets real mad and flips over a whole table of food because he gets scared by this jungle woman."

"Cool."

"Yeah." Craig and I can talk about anything.

"We can go swimming and then you can come over."

"Okay."

Kyle comes over and gives Craig a nougee and Craig cries like a baby so Kyle then gives him an Indian burn. Kyle and I laugh. Kyle might not be good at baseball, but he is the best at giving Indian burns.

"Craig! Come over here," Mr. Cowan yells. Mr. Cowan is Brian's dad and coaches the Orioles. He always grabs his pee-pee. My dad says that he's fixing his jock strap, but I just think he has itchy nards.

I go over to my mom and look in the scorebook and see my number 38, batting tenth. I wanted number 34 because that's Kirby Puckett's number, but they gave me number 38. A pitcher for the

Twins, Joe Johnson wears that number. He doesn't play much. My dad says he must be hurt or something.

Mom reaches into her pocket and gives me pack of my favorite gum, blueberry Hubba Bubba. Thanks Mom! She tries to hug me, but I wiggle away.

"Mom! The guys will see." She calls me her little slugger and wishes me luck, but I'm not paying attention. I have to pee. I walk over to the school, Caley Elementary, but the janitor, Harry Nelligan is standing in front of the door. He tells me I'm not allowed inside with my cleats. I circle the school, looking for another way in, but I can't find one, so I pee behind some bushes. I get some on my shoes, and they are untied, so I go back over to my mom. I don't want to touch my own pee, so I ask her to tie my shoes.

"Honestly Willie, You're almost seven years old. You can tie your own shoes." Ha, Ha, Ha. Mom touched my pee.

Dad calls us over for the big pep rally. He looks nervous, like he has to go to the bathroom.

"All right, Minnesota Twins," dad says. "Now I know we've had a rough season and we've lost a lot of close ones. Well... Heh, Heh, come to think of it we lost all of them."

Mike McVaugh starts to cry.

"But remember, the most important thing is to have fun. It's not whether you win or lose it's how you play the game. And remember, good things come to those who wait. And we've waited all year, so this victory will be the sweetest! We are going to kick some Oriole butt!"

My dad is so cool. He just said butt.

"WHO ARE WE?!"

About half the team weakly says, "Minnesota Twins." I yawn.

"COME ON. I CAN'T HEAR YOU! WHO ARE WE?!"

"Minnesota Twins." Louder this time.

"ONE MORE TIME!"

"MINNESOTA TWINS!" we all yell except for Kevin Mengel. He's too busy chewing on his glove.

"AND WHAT DO THE TWINS DO?"

"WIN!" we scream.

"Now let's get those hands in here."

I look at my dad. He gives me a wink.

"WINTWINS!" we all yell. I am fired up.

The game begins and I'm standing in center field. Our star player, Robbie Raymond isn't playing today because he stepped on a

shell at the beach and hurt his foot. The game has just started, but already I am bored. I entertain myself by trying to catch wishers and swatting gnats. A big cloud of them are now circling my head and I run around to avoid them. Uh-oh, that ball was almost hit to me.

It's now the third inning and I just grounded out. Dad threw me a bad pitch, but I swung at it anyway. I hit the ball about four feet and I almost beat out the throw, except I ran with the bat. Dad tells me I'll run faster if I drop the bat.

We are only losing by two runs. Only two of our games this year have lasted a full six innings. Normally we only play two or three because of the ten run rule. There are some other differences between midgets baseball and real baseball. The coach of your team pitches, so for my team, it's my dad. One time Kyle hit my dad in the head with a line drive. He fell down and grabbed his head. His hat went flying in the air. It was really funny.

My uniform doesn't look dirty enough, so I roll around in the dirt next to the field. Now I look like a real baseball player. I take out the pack of blueberry Hubba Bubba from my back pocket. I take out a piece. Fat Darren Hardell, our third baseman sees me and asks me for a piece. I am afraid of Darren because our shortstop Drew Holloway told me Darren ate his younger sister. I have never seen her, so I give Darren a piece. I try to unwrap the gum, but it mostly sticks to the paper and to my fingers. I go over and try to wipe it on my mom's dress, but my hands are still sticky. I go back out onto the field. Please, please, please, don't hit it to me.

It's now the fifth inning and we are losing four to two. I'm standing in center field, waving at my older sister Jeanne. Earlier in the inning, I almost caught a ball. Kevin Layton hit a high pop to me and I got under it, but I was afraid it was going to hit me so I covered my head and moved out of the way. I picked the ball up real fast and threw it in. Kevin only got a double. The reason I missed the ball is because my hat is too big for my head and I couldn't see. Mom says that all the great baseball players have small heads, so I must be really good.

It's now the bottom of the 6th inning. We are losing five to three, but we are rallying. We all are wearing our hats inside out, our rally caps. Drew Holloway got a single. Darren McGavin popped out. Ernie Churchville got an infield hit and his dad cheered really loud. His dad wears this big neck brace. He is funny looking. Bobby Fausman got a single. Someone put their gum on Kevin Mengel's hat. We laugh. The gum is blue like mine, but this is one of the greatest

pranks ever. If only I could take credit for it.

The bases are loaded and I bat soon. I'm praying to God for a double play. Mike McVaugh just struck out and now he's crying. Kyle's up. I'm on deck. My dad is really pitching well. Kyle hits a ball right to Warner Reese, but it goes through his legs!! "E-6, E-6," I yell. Drew Holloway scores and gives me five as he crosses home plate. I take a few more swings and I look to the sky praying it will rain or at least thunder. Mom says that God is always watching, but he hides behind the clouds. When it's not cloudy, Mom says he hides behind the sun. I wonder where he goes at night. I put the batting helmet on my head, but it's all sweaty and it's too big. I try to take the batting donut off, but it's stuck. I walk up to the plate hoping no one will notice.

Darn, the fat umpire Mr. Thompson notices and tells me to take it off. When he's not umpiring, he works at Guy's Shoe World at the mall. They have a little door that kids can walk through and every time I get shoes I get a pretzel rod.

"I can't get it off," I yell. My dad comes and helps me.

"Dad, I'm afraid. I don't want to get out. Everyone will hate me."

"No, no, Willie, they're not going to hate you," Dad says. "Just pretend it's practice. You can do it. I know you can." He puts a dime on the ground. "Plant your foot. And remember drop the bat when you hit the ball."

"Thanks dad, you're the greatest."

Dad can't get the batting donut off either so he tells me to use another bat. I get another bat and slowly walk up to the plate. It feels like the whole world is staring at me. I look over at my mom, she smiles and waves. Jeanne gives me the thumbs up. Mr. Cowan is scratching his balls.

I look at the dime and I plant my foot on it. I get into my stance, but I can't see. The helmet covers my eyes. I step out and fix my helmet and then step back in. I look at my dad and he winks. I feel okay now. He throws me the first pitch and it goes over my head. I swing anyway. The crowd "Oooooohhs." I hear a "you suck" from the Orioles bench, but I couldn't tell if it was Mike Conover or Kevin Johns. No matter, neither of them will come to my roller skating swim party at Radnor Rolls next week. I ready myself for the next pitch, and my heart's beating really fast.

My dad throws me the next pitch and this time it comes right down the middle of the plate. I make contact, drop the bat and run as

fast as I can. I turn to see where the ball went and at first I don't see it so I think I hit it real far, but then I see it's in foul territory, right near home plate. The catcher, Jeff Ziegler has it lined up in his sights. Looks like the game is going to be over. He's pacing around behind the plate when suddenly he trips over my bat. He falls to the ground and the ball lands right next to him. Mr. Cowan takes his hand off his wee-wee and runs out to see if Jeff is okay. I pick up the bat and start taking practice swings. Dad says that since there's no stealing in midgets baseball, the worst player on the team is the catcher. Chad Eposto is the catcher on our team and he stinks. Jeff's okay and everyone claps. The count is 0 and 2. The bases are loaded. There are two outs. We are losing five to four. I want to go swimming.

I settle in and get ready. Dad winds up and throws. The ball's inside and I try to get out of the way, but the ball plinks off my helmet. I flail around like I've been shot and fall to the ground. My head hurts. Dad rushes over. I get up and run to first base. We're tied. I'm a hero. I smile at Craig when I get to first base.

"I can't wait to go swimming," I say.

"Can we play Missile Command at your house when I come over?"

"Sure, but you have to use the chewed up joystick."

I turn to see my dad, Mr. Cowan, and Mr. Thompson talking. Dad slowly walks over to me.

"Willie, Mr. Thompson says that you've got to bat again," Dad explains. "You don't get a free base. He thinks I hit you on purpose so we could win."

"Did you?" I cry.

He kneels down next to me and puts his hand on my shoulder. "No way. Because now you're going to hit a home run. "We're going to win, not tie and we're all going to carry you off on our shoulders."

I walk halfway down the first base line and yell "Fat lard" at Mr. Thompson. He tells me if I do it again he's going to throw me out of the game. See if I go to Guy's Shoe World anymore. I pick up the bat and steady myself. I look at my team and they're lined up against the fence, their fingers through the holes. I take a few swings. Dad mouths to me, "Choke up," and I do. It's all come down to this. Dad pitches and the ball comes right over the plate. I see it, swing and miss. The game's over. We lose. We have gone defeated.

I start to cry and the sweat running down my face mixes with the tears and burns my eyes. My dad comes over and picks me up.

“We’ll get ‘em next time,” he says.

This time I don’t believe him. Then he tells me that we can go to the Village Mart to get some Garbage Pail Kids. Dad always knows the right thing to say. He even promises to try the Dukes of Hazzard thing when we get to the car. I see Mrs. McGavin with chocolate cupcakes and cans of Pepsi for snack. We might be the worst team, but we have the best snacks. Mrs. Cowan is getting ready to hand out crackers. Ha, Ha, Ha, I run over towards the snacks, but Dad says we have to lineup and shake hands first. I walk over and give the Orioles fives and someone yells “You suck!” and this time I’m pretty sure it’s Mike Conover. He gets real mad when he sees that I’m laughing at him.

“You lost. What’s so funny?” he asks.

“Nothing,” I say. “I just licked my palm.”

the futility of a drizzle in a worsening draught

Genevieve Romeo

The rain falls lightly
mists the sky
fills it with grey

can't cup it in your hand
to let it quench you;
just a dampening spray

my face is moistened
shines now, wetly
the end of another day.

Hunters

Paul Guidry



from 69 Slices of Hell

Raquel Pidal

[The following scene is an excerpt from the one act play *69 Slices of Hell*. In this scene, we see Trick, the typical American burn-out, go in for a job interview, a job he found out about after a chance encounter with the best friend of his youth, John. Nervous before the interview because he has never worked anywhere but McDonald's, Trick takes some speed and becomes extremely loquacious, quite unlike his usual, monosyllabic self.]

Scene Quarante-huit (48): Trick's Triumphant Entry into the American Work Force.

(Before the lights go up, THE VOICE is heard speaking from offstage.)

VOICE: Patrick Thompson!

(Lights up, spotlight on Trick, who is seated in a chair center stage. He is slouched slightly forward at the very start of the scene, but straightens up quickly right before he starts speaking, sporadically interspersing hand gestures. Most of this monologue should be spoken quickly, in a rapid-fire assault on the "interviewer" [audience] unless otherwise specified.)

TRICK: So, like, how are ya? How am I anyway? Likes, I'm fine, man, fine, thanks for asking, you know. A little bit here, *(puts out right hand, palm up)* a little bit there, *(puts out left hand, palm up)* and always in between, *(moves both hands up and down, like a swaying balance)* always, always. Moving here, moving there, but always moving, you know? Never stop till the sweet beat drops ya. And what have I been doing with my life lately? Well, to tell you the truth, I haven't really been employed lately, not what you would consider "technical" *(makes quotation marks with his fingers)* employment. *(puts his hands palms down on his thighs)* By technical, you know what I mean. You know, the usual ho-hum, nine-to-five, hi honey I'm home kind of job. No, I've been doing more of the kinda *(rolls shoulders back and does the "smooth" motion with his hands)* laid back kinda employment. You know. *(his speech slows somewhat)* One coooooool hepcat. Gettin' back to what's real, just real laid back, in the streets kinda deal. Goin' here, goin' there, checking everything out, making sure the scene is oooooookay. And,

you know, I've done my fair share checking out the social scene, but hells, who wouldn't right? Yeah, that's how you gotta take things, you know, likes, just kinda sit back, let life take its course, and you go with its flow. Not up to me to say what that flow is. Not really up to anyone to say what that flow is, right? Nah. *(his speech gradually starts to speed up again)* Just take what life gives ya, make the best of it, take the money and run, you know? That's how it's been for me the past few years, with my employment life and all I mean. Kinda up in the air, you know? Not really in any one place for any length of time, just kinda all over the place all at once. *(he leans back slightly in his chair, but his speech continues at its quick pace)* Up one day, down the next. Never really knowing what's gonna happen to ya, that's how I like to live, you know? Living life *dangerously*, on the edge, with a twist, never certain what lurks behind that closet door, under that bed you're still spooked to look under like when you were a little kid and you made your mom do it for ya. But you *do* it now, anyway, even though something might jump out and bite ya on the nose because you know that if you don't do it, who will? *(points a finger accusingly)* No one, that's who, cause no one does anything for anyone else anymore unless there's some personal gain in it for themselves. Take me, for instance. Why do I want this job? To better humanity? No. To better the company? No. To better myself? Bingo! Why does anyone ever take any job? For themselves. For the money. And if they say any other reason, then they're lying. Brown-nosing. Trying to look noble or something. Well, I'm here to tell ya that nobility means nothing to me. It's all about the benjamins. Moola. Cash. Make something of this wasted life – make money. We all need money to get by in this world, right? Likes, black market, free market, world market, can't have any of those without some sizeable cash flow. You know, a little exchange of plata, greenbacks, dough. I support the American economy. Yeah, this hepcat seated here before you is just another American consumer, consume-consume-consuming. Food, clothes, alcohol, illegal drugs, plasticware, six packs of Hanes underwear, CD's, maybe a hot watch every now and again, tickets to the movies, Valium, products foreign and domestic, cigarettes and more infrequently a lighter, an occasional call to my mother. We are all members of this big shopping mall called the World, we're all engaged in free trade, free love, free choice, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free cable access if you know how to hook it up right, free concerts in Central Park, a free ride on the bus if you play your cards right. For all I know, I could end up driving a taxi around the city until the day I die. Who knows? We

don't. We can't, we aren't in charge, no matter how much we think we may be. Crazy, man, happening every day, but shit, isn't it crazy how this world works, dog eat dog? And where do all the cats fit in? Where do the hepcats fit in, who don't do nothin' to nobody, aren't out looking to start any trouble, just wanna get by in life, maybe have a little fun, a coupla drinks at the local bar, maybe get some nice chickies every now and again, just ride life in one, long, smooth wave, sittin' back and listening to the music. How exactly do I explain that to you, to anyone, that all there really is to do in life is just sit back, relax, and be? Just take it as it comes to ya, open up your pores and just take it all in, soak it up like a sponge. Yeah, man, like a sponge, suck it all up (*purses his lips and makes a sucking noise*) like it's through a straw or somethin'. Make something outta nothing, it's what I've been doing my whole life. And why do I really want this job? Well, right now, see, it's like, I have nothing, right? And I'd like to have something I can call my own, like a job. You know: "My job is" whatever and ever. And of course the money is an incentive too. Which is why I'd like to come and work for you fine people. (*pauses and leans slightly forward*) What's that? What do I have to offer your company? What's the name of your company? ABC Publishing? So what you do basically is like publishing and shit, editing, publicity, advertising, distributing, that sorta gig? Right, I gotcha, I see now. The light hath been granted unto me. Mine eyes hath been opened and I said "I see." I see. What I have to offer you. You, as in ABC Publishing, not you yourself personally. What I have to offer to the company as a whole. Me, myself, personally, to offer to the whole of you – you as in the whole company, not just you. Right. Me. Okay. (*Trick leans back, puts his fingertips together, bows his head slightly, brings his hands to his lips, and pauses for several moments in concentration. The moment extends into a longer period of approximately one to two minutes, to show that Trick is indeed concentrating all his mental abilities towards answering the interviewer. Finally, when he does think of something, he puts his hands back on his lap and leans forward.*) I'm always on time.

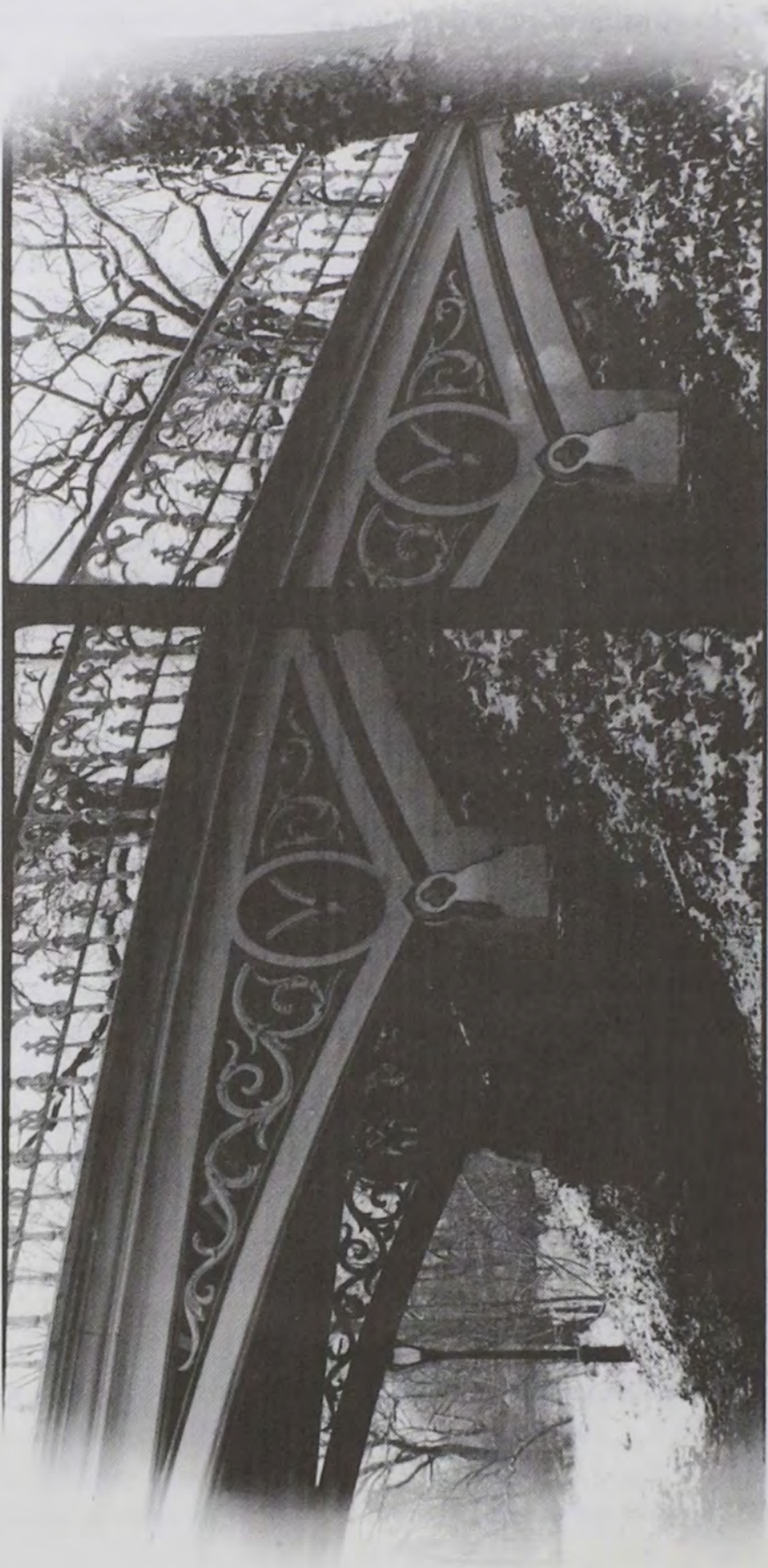
VOICE: Thank you, Mr. Thompson, for your time today. It was a most... *interesting* interview.

TRICK: (*Stands and leans forward, speaking eagerly*) So – do I get the job?

(*Black out.*)

Duplicity

Jennifer A. Zwilling



The Answering Machine

Thomas Lipschultz

rusuban-denwa

de-n-wa shi-te,
ru-su da-t-ta ke-do,
a-sa ma-de ni
ka-e-te ku-ru no ne?
ki-mi to wa-ka-ru ne?

The Answering Machine

I called and
you weren't home, but
by morning
you'll return, right?
I know you, don't I?

留守番電話

電話して、
留守だったけど、
朝までには
かえて来るのね?
君と分かるね?

Boardwalk Cowboy

Paul Guidry

The house behind my cousin's property always seemed less a home than an abandoned landmark. The only evidence that led us to believe that anyone ever set foot in the dilapidated two-story farmhouse was the occasional fresh coat of white paint and the ever-presence of three magnificent horses. Never saw the people, always saw the horses. For the most part, the horses ran free in a fair sized enclosure of hay and wild grass surrounded by a barbed wire and wood post fence. Across from the pen was another, slightly larger enclosure with a circular dirt track, for running the horses I suppose. But then again we never actually saw anybody run the horses either. Between the pen and the track ran a long dirt and loose stone driveway that connected the paved world of Center Avenue to the anachronism of the farmhouse.

Just about every Friday, my brother Joel and I would plead with our mother to spend the weekend at our cousin Jason's house. Sometimes Jason stayed at our house, but not often. Why should he have? He had all the amenities an eight-year old could ask for, an in-ground swimming pool, endless supply of junk food, limited parental supervision, and the Playboy Channel. Most nights were spent gorging on Jolly Ranchers and smut, most days playing "guns" or football or "cutting through yards," a game devised for the sole purpose of aggravating Jason's neighbors.

Not a day went by, however, that we didn't visit the horses. They would poke their snouts through the barbed wire just enough for us to pet them and feed them wild grass. I'm not sure we were supposed to be doing that, but that probably wouldn't have mattered either way. Two of the horses were full-grown. Dark brown, sleek and muscular. We usually didn't bother with those two, however. Our focus was on a young stallion. We knew the horse was young because it was smaller than the other two, and we knew it was a male because, well, it's hard to overlook something like that. We called him "Pony Boy," after the character in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, as he was blonde and we weren't that creative.

At the time, *The Outsiders* was the favorite movie amongst all the cousins, Jason being the youngest of the four boys. I suspect, however, that Jason and I were the only ones who had actually read, much less knew, that it was a book. We emulated *The Outsiders*, with

Jason's older brother, Matt, serving as the streetwise Dallas Winston, and the rest of the characters filtering down to the rest of us. The only problem I had with the arrangement was that I was the only one with blonde hair. Jason and his brothers embodied every Italian trait imaginable, and even my twin brother had been blessed with hazel eyes and brown hair. This meant that the role of wimpy Outsider, the Outsider who memorizes Robert Frost poetry and gets his ass kicked in the rumble, was reserved for me. It always seemed strange, though, how the horse was revered for the same thing for which I was taunted. Regardless, it was comforting, almost empowering, to have something in common with the stallion that the others didn't.

As we grew older, the weekend trips to Jason's house became less and less frequent. Maybe it was because we got our own swimming pool, or maybe it was because high school somehow stratified Joel, Jason, and me into different circles. The only time we actually socialized with each other outside of a common lunch period or classroom was when we visited Jason at his parents' beach house in Ocean City, New Jersey. My mother loved the shore, so the beach house became a second home to us during our high school summers. A kind of weekend at Jason's revisited. Unfortunately, I soon learned that summer fun equaled spending, so I had to take a job landscaping. My visits to the beach house assumed the frequency of those to the house on Center Ave.

On a rare appearance in Ocean City, I brought my best friend, Pete. Pete and I had only known each other a short time but had forged an inseparable alliance due to a shared ostracism. I was the 100 pound weakling who had wasted half his life trying to be a jock, and Pete was the 300 pound megalith who spent half his life trying not to. John Steinbeck himself could not have envisioned more physically opposite companions. Appearance, however, was where the deviations ended. Pete and I shared a mentality so similar, yet so distinct, that we could not help being friends.

This particular evening, I had convinced Pete to accompany me to a Temptation's concert in Atlantic City. Earlier that summer, I had introduced him to my fascination with Motown music, a sentiment that soon infected Pete, as well. Very few people would have been willing to even listen to the Temps, let alone go to a concert, but I knew I could count on Pete, especially since this would be our last summer to hang out before we split for college.

When we walked into the auditorium at Bally's Hotel and Casino, it was as if a record had skipped. Couples ranging in age from

early forties to late sixties watched Pete and me be led in by a waitress. Some of them checked their tickets to make sure they were in the right theatre. We were seated across from a black couple in about their mid fifties, who did an immediate double take at the sight of us. Then the woman said, "You guys like the Temps, huh?"

"My favorite group," I said. "Never seen them live, though."

"Oh, I have," the woman said. "They're fantastic."

After suffering through an opening comedian, the crowd welcomed the Temps. Just as the woman said: "fantastic." I felt jilted that I hadn't been born forty years ago, to see the Temps at full strength. People jumped from their seats at the low-lit tables tiered just beneath ours and danced in the black vinyl booths directly behind. We sang along with the woman at our table and shouted requests as the room flooded with a gentle haze of smoke from unseen cigarettes.

The whole ride back to the Ocean City beach house, we blared the Temptations from the tape deck of Pete's white Chrysler Fifth Avenue, a chariot we simply referred to as the "Fifth Ave." After a twenty minute car ride and horrible renditions of "Can't Get Next to You" and "Ain't To Proud To Beg," we pulled into the driveway. What neither Pete nor I realized, however, was that just as our night was winding down, Joel's and Jason's was just getting started. Up the deck stairs to the second floor of the three-story beach house, the music was pulsating.

The living room looked like a public service commercial. Underage drinking, smoking, teen age boys floundering all over teen age girls and vice versa, and on the small coffee table, a heap of empty cans and bags of Doritos that suggested that we had just walked in during prime time. After the night I had, I was in no mood for a party, not that I was much of a drinker or socialite, anyway. So, I took a leak, Pete grabbed a large plastic mug filled with iced tea, and out the door we went.

We walked no more than two blocks when we were stopped by the local police. Without getting out of their car, they asked Pete what was in the mug. He said iced tea. They said O.K. and just sped off. We were surprised and grateful that they took our word for it, without any hassle, but we decided to abandon the streets. "How about the boardwalk," I said.

"Whatever."

At three A.M., the boardwalk was usually like a great wind tunnel and cold as hell. We didn't actually walk very far before Pete

insisted that we make use of one of the thousands of now empty wood and iron benches. From where we sat, we could see the far off lights of Atlantic City, sparking fresh memories from earlier that night. Our debate over which was the Temps best song was slowly washed out, as the sound of the invisible surf crashing into the shoreline rolled up the boardwalk and bounced off the stores like thunder. For a while, we just listened. Then, the conversation turned a bit more serious. Funny how something so soothing and hypnotic can draw emotion out of you, whether you want it to or not.

“You’re my best friend, Paulie,” Pete said. And that was the pull that unraveled the sweater. He told me about how his mom’s boyfriend, Bob, was in the hospital for heart failure and they weren’t sure if he would pull through. Pete told me how he had to sneak in just to see Bob because he wasn’t “family.” It wasn’t so much that he knew Bob all that well or even liked him. Pete just wanted something stable for his mother. And for himself I suspected, but I knew better than to force that issue.

Pete told me about why he never had a good relationship with his dad. How they almost had it out one night and how his dad refused to help Pete pay for college. Pete told me how he disliked his younger sister, and that he was glad she lived with their father. I don’t remember actually saying much of anything, just a lot of “uh-huhs” and “I know what you means.” I didn’t mind, though. Pete was genuine. His life was admittedly more chaotic than mine, so I didn’t mind helping out whenever I could. After a while, Pete’s reverie flowed out with the tide and the thunder washed over us again.

A squad car rolled down the boardwalk, one of the most bizarre things I had ever seen. Like a mirage, the car rolled through the slight veil of the sea mist. After the car faded into the distance, another surreal encounter. Five young men, probably about our age, came running down the boardwalk from the same direction as the car. No, running isn’t quite right. Skulking. I wasn’t sure if I had ever seen anyone skulk before, but I knew it couldn’t look very much different from what I was witnessing. The young men, each wearing torn jeans, boots and hockey jerseys, glided from one side of the boardwalk to the other, eating remnants of food that the gulls had missed and drinking from misplaced or forgotten cups of soda or lemonade. It was like watching a program about the hyena on the Discovery Channel.

Despite the unappealing menu of the boardwalk scavengers, Pete and I were reminded that we had not eaten in almost eight

hours, no doubt a record for Pete. We sat for a while, watching the orange pink glow of the rising sun slice a definite line between sea and sky. It was like watching creation. Then, when we could no longer ignore our stomachs, we headed into town.

Empty. Every sidewalk, every intersection, every storefront, empty. It was as if time had stopped for the rest of the world. Pete and I began running up and down the middles of streets, lying down and shouting. Then, we had gunfights at major intersections, High Noon in Ocean City. The town was our playground. We ran behind parked cars and between buildings, ambushing each other. A worse blood bath, Dodge City had never seen. For hours, we were Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday, guns blazing, blowing smoke from our muzzles or taking one on the wing and collapsing in the street.

Despite the creeping light, neither of us noticed the onset of morning until we caught the scent of a nearby bakery. All thoughts of quick draw and sharp shooting vanished, and we followed our noses like cartoon characters being enticed by an aromatic hand off a cooling pie on a window sill.

We found the bakery. We found several bakeries. Locked, one after another. The scent of bacon, eggs and cinnamon taunted us block after block. At last, we found a small restaurant that offered an all you can eat breakfast buffet for three-fifty and opened at eight o'clock. I checked my watch anxiously. Six-thirty? My stomach couldn't handle an hour and a half wait, so I knew Pete's couldn't. And the search resumed.

As we turned a corner, we saw a large pink building that seemed like a remnant of earlier mirages. "The Chatterbox," open twenty-four hours. How we missed this colossal pink eye-sore was beyond either of us, but rather than question an apparent miracle, we went in through the chrome and glass double doors.

We were seated in a booth beside a muraled wall depicting The Chatterbox in times gone by. Girls wearing poodle skirts flirting with guys in varsity sweaters, a soda jerk dispensing chocolate malteds, a man in a one buttoned suit. The only problem was that the mural was terrible. Disproportionate heads, eyes seeming to slide off of faces, hands with six or seven fingers, legs impossibly contorted. The mural, coupled with our hunger and sleep deprivation, sent us into fits of hysteria, laughing a too loud laugh for seven A.M. Our attention then turned to the patrons, who found themselves as much at the mercy of our private joke, as we pointed and giggled.

I don't remember the last time I had eaten that much: pancakes, bacon, eggs, toast. You name it, we ate it. Or, to be exact, we choked it down between laughter and gasps for air. When our waitress brought the check, she gave us a nervous "Th-thanks for c-coming." Pete said that she probably thought we were drunk, and that made us howl even louder.

The piercing white glow of sunlight reflecting off buildings, cars, and even the sidewalk stunned me as we stepped out of The Chatterbox. "Hey, watch it," someone yelled as he sped by on his bike. I turned just in time to avoid a woman with a twin stroller and a kid with a giant inflatable lobster. The streets that just a few hours ago belonged to us were now flooded with people ebbing to and from the beach. Cars crammed the once deserted intersections. It was as if our A.M. showdowns had never even existed.

Standing still was impossible and moving was even harder, but after a while our legs started working and we headed back toward the beach house. Aside from the mess and some well-earned hangovers, the house and its occupants sustained minimal damage. Pete had to get back home. He worked later that afternoon and wanted a chance to see his mom and maybe visit Bob. And I had to begin cleaning up to ensure the festivities remained undetectable. So, Pete and I exchanged a hug and a handshake and told each other that we would hang out again as soon as we straightened out our work schedules. Pete took off in the Fifth Ave. and I climbed the deck stairs to the second floor, wondering where my aunt and uncle kept their heavy-duty trash bags.

Pete and I never did seem to straighten out our work schedules. We saw each other once in a while, but mostly in passing. Conversations limited to questions about work or school. Autumn separated us even further. Pete became engrossed in his classes and new friends, and me in mine. Phone numbers exchanged in August were forgotten by September.

A year later, my family and I were making a trip to Jason's house on Center Ave. It was Jason's birthday, early October, not that cold yet. Maybe even warm enough to catch a glimpse of the horses in their pen. That thought was erased, however, as soon as we crested the hill that led to Center Ave. Even from a quarter mile away, I could see that it was gone, all of it. The farmhouse, the track, the pen, and the horses. Where the gravel and dirt driveway once divided the track and pen, asphalt wound its way through a development of pre-fab tract houses.

In that instant I was once again standing outside The Chatterbox, the sunlight gleaming off the aluminum siding like it was off the cars and buildings. Blinding, confusing. I felt the same trepidation as I had during the long walk back to the beach house, leaving behind my A.M. gunfights. Before I knew it, we were in the driveway, out of the car, and I was holding a plate covered with aluminum foil that my mother had handed me. My family walked inside, as I straggled behind.

I walked down to the edge of my cousin's property, once ambiguous in the tangles of weeds, now definite in chain link fencing. I stood for a long time, staring at where the track and farmhouse should have been. Where the horses should have been. But no ghosts from the past would reveal themselves, no matter how long I stared or how much I wanted to see. I heard the screen door to the patio slam and remembered my family inside. After a while, my legs started working and I headed back toward the house.

Charlie in Paris

Meghan Gualtieri



You Were Only Waiting

Joe Laskas



CONTRIBUTORS

Corey Taylor is a sophomore English major, and his advice to other fellow writers is to keep on writing because it is eventually going to pay off. Writing has both intrinsic and extrinsic awards.

Jeff Church is a sophomore English and Philosophy double major. Thus, he plans to live on the streets, scrounging for paper on which to scrawl his complaints of life, society, and economics. Jeff is a lively, good-natured guy who likes to read, write, and play the acoustic guitar (he's not good at any of those activities, but he likes to try).

Jill Gonzalez is a sophomore Spanish major. She likes to visit exotic places and torture the natives.

Gregory Klein is a senior Sociology major and basketball star until injuring his knee this season. He has some serious words of advice for all students. "Cherish your virginity. You only get it once, maybe twice in a lifetime."

Carolyn Harfman is a senior Communication Arts major with a History minor. She likes to write poetry in her spare time, and "thanks to everyone in Sturgis for making my Senior year a great one. I love you all!"

Nathan Rosen is a freshmen Communication Arts major of Wookiee heritage. He spent his youth rooting for Gargamel to stomp on those blasted Smurfs.

Nathan S. Rosen
likes to write bizarre haiku
in the third person.

Andrew Gerchak is a junior English Major with a Creative Writing minor. He enjoys dislocating his shoulders during wrestling season and writing stories that his mother should never read.

Robert Cerrone is a senior Computer Science major. His interests include playing guitar and nude horseback riding. Rob would like to thank his mom for the man that he has grown up to be.

CONTRIBUTORS^{CONTINUED}

Lou Nemphos is a senior Communication Arts major. He enjoys writing stories about childhood to make up for the fact that he was raised by rabid wolves. In addition to his writing, Lou is the star of *The Dede & Lou Show* and hopes to overthrow Leno, Letterman, and that snide Conan guy.

Thomas Lipschultz is a sophomore English major and a mighty fine dancer. However, he prefers to think of himself as a pumpkin with wings.

Paul Guidry is a senior English major. If *The Transformers* would ever fight *The GoBots*, he's convinced that Optimus Prime would smash Leader-1 since Prime is made of metal, while Leader-1 is made of plastic. However, he believes that *The A-Team* would beat them both.

Leah Miller is a freshman Psychology major. She enjoys all things from fairies, midnight epiphanies, to other holes of normalcy.

Mike Edwards is a junior Psychology and English double major. This is the first time that Mike has submitted and had his writing published in a literary magazine.

Genevieve Romeo is a freshman pursuing a major in English—her motto is “Behold the power of Cheese!”

Thomas Howard, a third year History major, has one thing to say: “Tommy the cat had many stories to tell, but it was a rare occasion as this that he did.”

Benjamin Jackendoff is in his first year at Ursinus College. Besides studying English, he is performing his poetry at the Literary Society and working as a DJ. His motto is, “Live fast, die young.”

Ashley Claus is a third year English major, and she enjoys combining art and language. This is her first attempt at poetry.

Monica Stahl is a freshman English major. Her favorite authors are Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.

CONTRIBUTORS^{CONTINUED 2}

Jilda Hodges is in her third year studying Psychology. "Man on the Moon" is Jilda's last poem in Dr. Osman's poetry course.

oana nechita is a native of Romania. She is in her third year studying Philosophy and Creative Writing. The main source of inspiration in her poetry is her homeland.

Raquel Pidal is a freshman English major and believes that the world was made round so that everyone can have center stage.

Daniel Gallagher is a sophomore English major, and his favorite quote is: "It's not the strength of the wind, it's the set of the sail."

PATRONS

Bill & Libby Akin	Charles Jamison
Daniel W. Aldridge III	Peter Jessup
A.C. Allen	Houghton Kane
Blanche Allen	Richard King
Alumni Office	Jan Lange
Juan Ramon de Arana	Judith Levy
Beth Bailey	Joyce Lionarons
Nick Berry	Joshua Liss
The Brothers of Chi Rho Psi	Tony Lobo
Douglas Cameron	Annette Lucas
Chris Celucci	Debbie Malone
Cathy Chambliss	Jane McLaughlin
Mona Chylack	Jeff Nelson
Hugh Clark	Deborah Nolan
Robert and Maricia Clouser	Frances Novack
Lori and Paul Cramer	Jim Noveral
Jeanine Czubaroff	Eric Ordway
Robert R. Davidson	P.F. Perreten
Ellen Dawley	Sonja Pettinghill
Robert Dawley	Andrew Price
Richard G. DiFelicianantonio	Bill Racich
Carol Dole	Kenneth Richardson
Ross Doughty	Bruce Rideout
Shirley Eaton	Kristen Sabol
Lynne Edwards	Hudson Scattergood
Eileen England	Ken Schaeffer
Del Engstrom	Patricia Schroeder
Keith Esch	John Shuck
Mary Fields	Jim Sidie
Judith Fryer	The Sisters of Kappa Delta Kappa
Holly Gaede	Peter Small
Kate Goddard	Paul Stern
Wendy Greenberg	John Strassburger
Winfield Guilmette	Martha Takats
Melissa Hardin	Linda Thiel
Dallett Hemphill	Victor Tortorelli
Joyce Henry	Jon Volkmer
Ron Hess	Sally Widman
Illeana Ionascu	Eric Williamsen

Ursinus College Literary Magazine