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The Lantern

The Lantern

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Editor's Note:

Congratulations to Abigail Munro and Alison Shaffer for their award-winning creative writing. Kudos also to cover artist Ella Lazo, who framed both this school year's issues nicely. My regards go to everyone that is featured in this issue. It is amazing! I know that *The Lantern's* tradition of excellence will continue for years to come. My thanks go out to all the staff, especially my right (and left) hand man, John Ramsey. I hope we continue to have dedicated people working on this magazine in the future. I would also like to thank our advisor, Prof. Valerie Martinez. Good luck to you in the future. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Jon Volkmer for his deep influence and assistance with *The Lantern* and on my time here at Ursinus. I hope that we all leave this college with the pens and the paintbrushes to "create the world" as we live in it.

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JUDGES' NOTES

Prose Winner - "The Process"

Choosing a winner from these fine young writers was challenging. Each author demonstrated effective storytelling techniques, use of language, imagery, metaphor and dialogue. After much deliberation, "The Process" was chosen because of the energetic writing, vivid characters, compelling events, sense of narrator presence and the engaging, intimate voice.

-Sandra Gould Ford, creator of Faraday's Popcorn Factory (published by St. Martin's Press), is an award-winning Author, Photo-Essayist and Quilt Artist who worked in a steel mill while raising two children. While working on her upcoming series of novels, she conducts creativity and wellness workshops. Her goal is to encourage high achievement and healing through the arts.

Poetry Winner - "*rosary apologia*"

From the first reading this poem leapt off the page with a life of its own. Rosary Apologia is a robust meditation on the sacred and the sensual. What makes this poem sing above the others is the poet's use of language, the conceits employed and its underlying musicality. The tryst of the original primordial lover and the call to grace are exquisitely developed in Rosary Apologia. This is fine poem.

(Honorable Mention to - "A Thursday in February")

-Writer Jacqueline Johnson

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**to the automobile owners
of the fine state of new jersey**

Christopher Tereshko

there was this girl
once.

it was a Sunday mourning on her way home
from the early Mass, but it didn't matter because my cabinet is
always

full. i'd had enough.

maybe five or six, in the backseat

while her parents fought over where they'd go for lunch.

definitely not seven, because that's when they start
to attract attention.

still adorable.

not like the whores i meet at the pubs. still adorable.

she noticed me with her green eyes,

(i swear it was green),

across the intersection

for a moment before moving onto the next forgettable
moment of her childhood, as they often do,

and asked her father

why Jesus

had nails in his hands? and if

He needed

a bandaid or a hug.

she was wearing her favorite dress.

i know it was red

because i remember that i pictured her face

crushed against the windshield of their mercedes

and it was red

too like a sponge dripping wine.

i met the girl of my dreams

head on.

i wouldn't be
walking out
after spending a weekend in the cell
like usual. i told the paramedic
i wish
my hands were nailed to the bar.
she said i should
die for them.
what i
done.

i'll drink to that.

8

The Gaps

Ella Lazo



Leaves on my Tongue

Sarah Kauffman

Raking my memory, I found a thing that grows. I realized if I stuff time and tiny objects in a paper bag, it would certainly swell and split, spilling forth memories and leaves. I walked down Lamonía Avenue with paradise lyrics and January air in my head and remembered last night, sitting on the floor of my dorm, eating Caesar Salad from a Tupperware bowl in my lap. There were the obvious details of the memory. Masuyo Pometti sitting across from me with his Caesar Salad, the occasional crunch of a crouton, the sharp shredded cheese lingering in the throat, lettuce leafy and thin on the tongue, almost like perforated paper. But something less obvious about the memory somehow meshed with the winter walk before sunset. Something about it fit the mood...or maybe it was just a craving for Caesar Salad.

The first time I saw Masuyo, I was intrigued. I was a white suburbia girl who saw dark hair and almond-shaped eyes and became immediately attracted to the title 'half-Japanese.' It seemed to me a glorious birthright transcending MacDonalD's, baseball, and funny twangs with haikus, vegetables and rice, and an accent. In one of our short conversations before class he told me his name meant 'to increase the world' in Japanese and that his last name was just an Italian-American ending. The thought of continents colliding into each other in two words amazed the girl who didn't even possess a passport. Something about it stirred my wanderlust and love of anything foreign. With his name, Masuyo Pometti, floating around in my conscious, I made plans for a green folder and plane tickets to the imagined spires and street-painters of Prague, Elba, Istanbul, and the Orkney Islands. I emptied the shoe box under my bed filled with letters from my ex-boyfriend and tied them in a grocery bag at the back of my closet. The box became my travel box filled with maps, tour guides, spare change to be converted into the koruna, euro, lira, pound.

The change clinked inside the cardboard as I kicked the

box further under my bed to clear a place for Masuyo when he came into my dorm room and sat Indian style on the floor, holding his fork, waiting for me to sit and pour my dressing before beginning to eat. My cold chapped lips spread into a smile as I continued down Lamonía Avenue, crossing Glenn Court. Before the Caesar Salad he had always been the ‘nice boy who held the door.’ Someone who made me smile more at strangers. That was the beginning. One of those people that I only talked to for four minutes before class, or on the way to lunch, but they were always a happy four minutes that I wished could last longer.

When he came in, the Caesar Salad dinner wasn’t planned, and neither was the six-hour conversation, but somehow they both happened and they both tasted good. It was the kind of talk where nothing was small. We made maps with our words and eagerly pointed to where we had been, marked where we are, and drew with a pencil where we might want to go. Nothing was edited, not even the humming. That January night became blooming summer grass under my feet and fresh apples in my hands. But I traded the apples for his hands later that evening, fingertips tracing each other’s skin, memorizing the lengths of fingers, the slight bulges of skin, the fingernails. Path of our words made tactile in skin and line.

He left at midnight, hesitant with the hugging, his footprints leaving CDs, inky dots, and notebooks on the carpet. I immediately pulled out CDs and listened to my songs. Constantly switching CDs and skipping to my ‘theme songs.’ Songs about gray, girls almost like me, flying, missing, pretty, champagne, landslides, almost like me, poems, turning around, and not dark yet but getting there, almost like me. I sung along expecting to surprise the singer and seep myself into the lyrics. But it didn’t happen. I sang along, but I wanted to rewrite the lyrics, change a guitar riff, find different keys on the piano. It wasn’t like before, when I didn’t want to edit anything, not even washing the shredded cheese and dressing out of the bowls and handing them wet to Masuyo with the towel. It wasn’t as comfortable. It was like my favorite jeans that I had just

Sarah Kauffman

washed. I had to give them a couple more days of wear, stretch the denim over my knees and hips. Let the denim meet my body again after the suds and spinning of the washer. My body could break denim.

Today, on Lamonía Avenue in January, they seemed to fit. Today, walking and remembering Masuyo, my hips and knees grew comfortable against the expanding, broken-in denim. And a song was in my head, but being there and not in my stereo I could change it, move things around, alter the sound. Or I could just repeat a single line from Ani DiFranco, no music, just voice, “what kind of paradise am I looking for...” over and over. My mind could break records.

He left at midnight, hesitant with the hugging, his footprints leaving CDs, inky dots, and notebooks on the carpet. I stood in front of the mirror looking at my image, playing with my hair. I tried to imagine my hair in different styles; a boy cut perhaps, somewhere else than just below my shoulder blades. Maybe even brushing the bottom of my spine. As my CDs played in the background, I moved my part, tried it down the middle, and over further to the left. I imagined highlights, first blonde and then purple. I smiled at the thought of both streaking my hair.

I turned down the volume to the music I couldn't quite own, returned to the mirror and started picturing piercings. I took a pen and drew a small dot on my right nostril, two dots around my eyebrow, and another on my chin. I decided I liked the dot on my nose the best, especially if it were silver. Then I drew a dot by the corner of my right eye by my temple and loved it. But the thin skin, needles, nearness to my eye voted against the permanence. Masuyo had told me about putting a cigarette butt out on his hand to feel his skin live. I decided I wasn't that tough. I stared at all of the dots, wondering if my face transformed under all of the ink.

Today in the January air, I wrinkle my nose against the cold, numb feeling and wonder what if a silver stud would only increase the wrinkles and the numbness. Masuyo had said that I was

Sarah Kauffman

someone who liked to be different. Last night, I had washed my face, scrubbing away the inky dots, marks of imagined piercings from my skin. I decided the verbal map that lingered in Masuyo's ears was enough. The silver stud was unnecessary.

He left at midnight, hesitant with the hugging, his footprints leaving CDs, dots, and notebooks on the carpet. I grabbed the notebook, flipped through the first six pages, the only ones written on, and opened to a clean sheet. Scribbling ink, disconnected ideas, and fast cursive all came from a hand moving across the page. After seven months of sparse writing, the movement felt good and familiar after seven months and only six pages. In the midst of making music and ink spots on my face, I filled an entire page, and then another. I just kept going. All of it nonsense fitting neither form nor structure. Just free writing, writing free. I had told Masuyo how much I loved writing, and he responded, "Well, then, you should do it." That simple. And I did. I wrote to my ex-boyfriend, my Southern birthplace, Mapplethorpe's Calla Lillies, Jim Henson's frog, and great-grandma's shortbread cookies. I wrote to Masuyo Pometti. Today, walking down Lamonía, I realized I wrote to something else growing, splitting skin while lying in footprints, bursting after three foreign syllables. I wrote to me.

At the bottom of the hill, I approach the short bridge over the shallow stream below. As far as I know, this stream flows without a name. Ever since I found this stream in August, I have considered naming it, but never came across anything appropriate. I stand on the bridge and lean against the cold steel rails while staring at the water, half of it rushing under the bridge, half of it lingering in stagnant pools. On other walks, this is where I turn around and go back to the warmth of a heated room. But today is different. Today I close my eyes and try to listen to the part of the water that waits, that doesn't trip noisily over dirt and rocks, running recklessly down the slight slope. I try to listen to silence, and perhaps in the midst of the broken records and denim, the suds blackened from my inky

Sarah Kauffman

face, and a hot right hand I imagine I actually hear it, subtly growing in the background.

I climb over the steel rails and land on the bank covered with decaying leaves and frozen mud. I walk close to the stream, trying to ignore the noises of water trickling down rocks, surging over carved earth. Trying to concentrate on something silent, something stagnant. I bend closer to the stream and consider sticking my finger in the water, but decide my hand is too warm in its glove to plunge into freezing water. I jump to the other bank, where there is a large pool of still water. I lean over and listen. This time, the growing silence is obvious, palpable. Quickly, I throw off my right glove and slide my hand up to my wrist in the water. The hand Masuyo memorized. I feel my skin burn and ache from the cold water and think of Masuyo's skin living under a cigarette butt. The silence shifts, grows. I hear the world expand, increase, with my hand submerged in freezing water. I name the stream Masuyo, the one who knows my hand.

Eventually, I pull my hand from the water. My fingers, like roots absorbing water vying for more height and green veins, wrinkles rough around spots of moisture. Despite the winter season, leaves line my walk, my memory, leaves of paper in my notebook, leaves of lettuce in a Caesar Salad. I dry my hand on my jeans, but refuse to put on my glove. I leave my hand in the cold January; let my fingers feel themselves slowly emerge out of numbing cold. Slowly feel the air around me growing, the gentle budding of a singular winter walk.

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Making Peace

Lauren Denis



Topless

Sarah Napolitan

"Lying in the sun is like having intercourse with god"

—Anne Sexton

When we sat on the beach at Elba and I let the Mediterranean Sea
rouse my nipples—

then I knew what sun was, how it lives in grains of
sand and flashes through drops of ocean

I felt it on me but it was reflected by me, scattering
sequins of shine along the Italian coast sending spastic
butterflies of yield and advance across the waters.

My entire body becomes a sexual lizard on the hot rocks
unable to see myself or fathom how burning a body can become in
sun like this that lays a golden blanket of lava on each individual cell,
multiplying like a virus with a hard-on

When you are alone, eyes closed and topless,
you are always beautiful in the sun
the heat is attracted to you
and you, in turn, to it.

The waves lick my feet like Greek lovers I am aroused and
satisfied all at once

(I emerge sunburned, marked with the blush of
embarrassment because I,
I have copulated with the sun

and I liked it)

The Bread They Mistook For a Kiss

Laura Phillips

That first night they pressed whole tomatoes with their hands. Juice and pulp stuck in the cracks between their fingers. It was sensual, exciting. They had not kissed yet.

Hours later, their anticipation exploded as they kissed over plates of penne putanesca. Her napkin slid to the floor. While she was attempting to be the seductress, inviting him up to his own room, she was petrified inside, a virgin who'd never moved much farther than first base. It felt strange having new hands on her body doing things she knew so little about. She stared at her jeans and clean white shirt, crumpled on his floor, her socks stuffed into her sneakers.

Two years later they are still making dinner together but not kissing over pasta. Kevin was changing careers then, having quit his job as a caterer to become a web design consultant. He's older now, more settled, but still fighting the onset of his late twenties. At 27, he has decided that he is "old" and must fill his life with activities that are more appropriate for college students: late-night parties, happy hour bar crawls, beer pong competitions.

Although Meredith is five years younger than he is, she's going through changes of her own. While he is fighting for the final days of his youth, she is digging her nails in, looking for the stability of a matrimonial future. Kevin's house is full of evidence of Meredith: a sapphire-blue toothbrush next to his, a box of tampons under the sink, garden mint shower gel in the shower, the occasional article of clothing or discarded shoe. This is not an accident; it is part of Meredith's elaborate plan. Her quest has been considerably complicated by a Tuesday evening, when Kevin and Meredith were awakened by a phone call. Kevin's father had lost his job and was about to be evicted from his dingy apartment. The conversation between Meredith and Kevin was short that night. Meredith felt that Jack was often bailed out of these kinds of situations and given no incentive to improve his lifestyle. However, she knew that he

couldn't be thrown out in the street when his family had the ability to help him. Kevin's spare room would be perfect for Jack as he got back on his feet. It was supposed to be temporary, but as month after month passes by, Meredith doubts.

When they started dating, Kev was younger and his disinterest with marriage seemed like a typical phase. As he gets older and the "phase" continues, she feels like she's trying harder and harder to stretch him to reach what she wants, like an extension cord that can't reach the outlet. Dinner is no longer an exercise in infatuation but a struggle for and against conventionality. Perhaps if she had her own apartment, she'd be less inclined this way, but she still sleeps in the bed she slept in when she was 5 years old. You just don't take boyfriends there.

At 6:30, they burst through the door of the house. Jack lies slumped on the sofa transfixed by an old episode of *Cheers*. "What are we doing tonight, guys?" he asks slowly, almost knocking over a shapely bottle of pinot grigio as he lazily props his feet on the coffee table.

Meredith makes a beeline for the kitchen to begin emptying the groceries, while Kevin chats with his father. Five minutes later, she's cleaning broccoli rabe in a colander when Kevin strolls in with the wine bottle.

"I'm guessing he skipped work again today," she says softly, as Kevin salts the pasta water.

"Get off his back, Mer. It's none of your business."

"Yeah, until he starts mooching off of us for food and stuff to do. Why can't he just take care of stuff on his own?"

"Mer, he's not your dad, he's mine. And I can't exactly recall the last time you contributed to dinner."

"I shouldn't have to, Kev. I'm your girlfriend. Besides, I at least help with getting things ready and clean up afterwards. He just sits there waiting to be served."

Jack stumbles into the kitchen to get a glass of wine. He reaches over Meredith's head, and snatches a glass from the cupboard. She winces as he bumps into her. "You want a glass of *Laura Phillips*

wine, too, Meredith? I just got some more from work on Monday.”

“No thanks, Jack. I’m kind of busy getting dinner ready.”

Kevin dumps a box of capellini into boiling water.

“Meredith, knock it off,” he growls, after he is sure his dad has settled back into the living room to watch more TV.

“Kevin, I hate this. Why doesn’t he at least stay out of the way?”

“This is not your house, Mer. Just help me get this ready, OK? Do you want something to drink? I can make you a screwdriv—“

“I don’t want a screwdriver, Kev. I want to have a quiet dinner at home with my boyfriend. But I guess that’s impossible, huh.”

“Keep your voice down, Mer. This is his house, too. Just chill out. Where’s the broccoli rabe?” He’s chopping garlic and sautéing it with olive oil in a shallow pan.

“Make your own broccoli rabe.” She stalks out of the kitchen and through the front door. Jack’s eyes loll open and refocus on the television screen as she slams the door behind her.

She opens her car door with the express desire to get her books and start on her research paper on Anne Sexton, and the gnawing urge to thrust the key into the ignition and tear out of there for good. Her car is a mess. Somehow it had room enough to cart around two kids and their downy golden retriever, Beth, when her parents still owned it, but now it is barely big enough to hold her life in. It is her home, in a sense, until Kevin invites her to share his. The station wagon is packed with books, some she has never even read. A bottle of lukewarm Wawa Iced Tea is nestled in the passenger seat next to a sweatshirt jacket and a stack of notebooks. A hidden stash of gummy bears hibernates under the driver’s seat. When she bought the car from her dad, she told him it would never be messy. She dreamed of washing it weekly at the car wash. Then she found out how much that would cost. It’s been roughly seven months since she washed the car, and it looks like a

Laura Phillips

safari of monkeys has been locked inside it for a few days.

The Collected Poems of Anne Sexton is stuffed under a seat with an ice scraper tucked into page 32. An outline of the paper is shoved between the passenger seat and the gear console. An Anne Sexton biography and Anne Sexton: The Last Summer are wrapped in an American Eagle bag under a rainbow plaid throw blanket on the back seat. She throws all the books into the bag, locks up the car and goes back in.

She walks into the kitchen just as Jack sticks a dirty hand into the broccoli rabe. He pulls a piece up, dripping lemon juice and olive oil all over the stove and down his pale blue shirt and cheap floral tie, before tipping his head back and eating it like a child eating spaghetti. She drops her books on the table and looks at Kevin, who is leaning against the counter, sipping on a can of Amstel Light.

“Is it time to eat now, Kev?”

“Yeah. Help yourself.”

Jack is standing directly in front of the food taking the last gulp of his screwdriver. His straggly mustache is saturated with juice and alcohol. His wine glass sits in the middle of the stove with a swallow of wine still festering in it.

Meredith escapes into the living room, taking the books and spreading them out on the table. Jack comes in with a plate of food in one hand and a fresh glass of pinot grigio splashing in the other. He plops down next to her on the couch and puts his glass on her outline.

“Jack, I’m working on that.”

He looks up in false surprise. “Oh, I’m sorry. I’ll move it.”

Kevin is still in the kitchen when she goes in to get her dinner. Like his father, he’s sampling food directly from the cookware instead of putting it on his plate. This never happened at Meredith’s house. Meredith’s mother caught her eating chili directly from the pot once and threw the entire pot out. The family had McDonald’s for dinner that night.

“Kevin, can you come talk to me?”

Laura Phillips

“Yeah. Shoot.”

“No, not in here. More private. Can we go upstairs?”

“Fine.”

They walk up two flights of stairs to his room. At the top of the first flight is Jack’s room. An old comforter is crumpled at the bottom of the bed and dirty socks lay in balls on the floor. An old desk is hardly recognizable under an avalanche of bills, papers, and newspaper.

Kevin’s room is exactly the same as when they went up together that first night. His college diploma hangs on a wall over a sparse bookcase containing several books by Kerouac, Kesey, and a book she bought for him a few months ago on globalism and its effects on international relations. A fiber-optic lamp is poised on top of the bookcase glowing in waves and sweeps of rainbow colors. Magenta, cerise, tangerine, kiwi, cerulean blue, and a final wash of fuchsia that blends back into magenta to start the cycle again. Sometimes Meredith looks at the light to calm herself. She loses herself in its perfect twists and turns of color until she starts to lose tension and let go. But she doesn’t want to let go tonight.

“Kev, you’ve got to do something about this,” she says as softly as her anger allows.

“What do you want me to do, Mer? He lives here.” Kevin gets up to turn on the stereo to mask the noise.

“I don’t care, Kevin. Did you see that mess? He’s not going to help clean it up. I’m going to have to do it.”

“It’s only fair, Mer. You don’t cook the food. You don’t pay for the food. The least you can do is—“

“I help you, Kev. I get stuff ready. He gets in the way. Why don’t you ask him to clean it up? This is *your* house, not his. Don’t have the balls to stand up to your dad?”

Kevin’s face turns red. “That’s it, Meredith. You have everything given to you here. The most I ask from you is to do the dishes.”

“Yeah, and help prepare and contribute money. You don’t ask him to pay anything. And how would he? He doesn’t go to

Laura Phillips

work or anything.”

“That’s bullshit and you know it. He goes to work.”

“Did he go today? Seems like he spent the whole day getting drunk and watching television.”

“That’s none of your business.”

“Oh, but it is. You expect me to drive over here several times a week and not have an opinion on the people I see?”

“I expect you to be nice. You know, not a bitch.”

“That’s not fair, Kev.”

“You have to try so damn hard to be nice. Doesn’t it worry you a little that you have to try? You can’t just be nice like everyone else? My dad’s nice to you. He’s always trying to do nice things to make you like him.”

“Like what? Setting his glasses on my books? Getting in the way? Monopolizing the nights that I’m here? You don’t know what he’s like when you’re not around. I feel his eyes on me all the time.”

“Oh, come on.”

“It’s true, Kev. All those disgusting little jokes. ‘Women have the power. They own half the money and all the pussy.’ Why do you think I’m wearing this?” she asks, plucking the front of a green fisherman’s sweater. “Any tighter and he’d be staring at my breasts.”

He shrugs. “What would you like to be doing, Mer? Why don’t you pick the activities out for once? You rely on me just as much as he does. You can’t think up things to do on your own either.”

“Yes, I can. I just choose to do things with you.”

“You know, I hate the person you make me into sometimes. I’m never mad until you come around. I don’t raise my voice. I don’t get upset. You come over and everything’s got to be a fucking drama. Got to put on a little show for Meredith. Then you’ll cry and bitch about stuff. I bet you can’t get through a single night without fighting or bitching about something.”

“You don’t change anything, Kevin. It’s always the same

Laura Phillips

stuff. It's not that hard to—"

"It's not that hard, it's not that hard," he mimics, his face inches from hers. "Do you have any idea how much I hate your 'It's not that hard's'? You're so smart, huh, Mer. Got it all figured out. Well, I'm sorry if I'm not as put-together as you. Seems you're doing so well in school and everything. When's that paper due? How much have you done on it? You're too busy coming over here and telling us how to run our lives."

"Get out of my face, Kevin. I hate that." She pushes him back and he trips over a book, falls to the floor, knocking a vase Meredith made for him as a gift to the floor. It seems to hang in the air for a few seconds before it shatters, covering the shabby gray carpet with shards of aqua and lime lacquered clay. He is up immediately, like a Bobo doll in a sociological experiment. His hazel eyes are wild, his face red, his bandana has fallen to the floor to reveal a fuzz of dirty-blond hair.

"That's it, Mer," he says with the calm of the criminally insane. "It's time for you to go."

She struggles against his grip on her shoulders, breaks free, and runs across the room. He walks briskly across the room and picks her up from the bed, a fistful of her green sweater in each hand. "You're done, Meredith. Get your stuff. Go home. You're not welcome here anymore. Get out." He's chasing her down the steps, down past Jack who now lies naked in bed, one more flight and he's looking for her purse. "Get your stuff, Meredith. You're not coming back." He grabs her purse and throws it at her. "OUT!! What are you standing here for?" He sees the books on the table next to him. "Oh, your paper," he mocks. "You'll need these, too, I guess," he yells as he hurls books at her. "You're running out of time, Mer. Get your stuff. You're not coming back."

She crawls around on the floor blindly, trying to grab everything as fast as she can. Her glasses are coated with splatters of tears, drying on the lenses and making it impossible to see. She has an armful and a hold of one of the straps of her purse when he storms up the stairs.

She sits in her car and dumps her books on the passenger seat. It must be almost 10:00. She takes off her glasses to clean them and cry and cry into the steering wheel. She talks to herself and tries to urge herself to put the key in the ignition and drive away, but she can't. Her mouth feels like a hangover morning and her face feels like a funeral. She can't go in and she can't drive away, so she picks up one of the books.

Anne Sexton's Collected Poems. She'd already scooped up every book she could find on Sylvia Plath so she moved on to Anne Sexton. A year ago she was drifting out on her own, making mistakes, getting tossed into therapy briefly and tracing the veins on her wrists with her parents' paring knives. The confessional poetry simultaneously purged and nurtured her behavior. She was shocked that someone else could so eloquently describe her feelings. She was Anne Sexton in "Wanting to Die," explaining that "most days I cannot remember." She was Sylvia Plath asking, "Do I terrify?" Kevin sat through that time, making her beautiful dinners that she could not eat, that she'd throw up a half hour later, and spending many nights on the porch with her while she cried. After a while, he got tired of it, and she learned to contain that part of herself as much as possible.

Tonight she reads "Wanting to Die" all over again, because it feels like last year all over again. She knows it almost entirely by heart. The ending stands out like neon.

Balanced there, suicides sometimes meet,
raging at the fruit, a pumped-up moon,
leaving the bread they mistook for a kiss,

leaving the page of the book carelessly open,
something unsaid, the phone off the hook
and the love, whatever it was, an infection.

She cannot function. She cannot move without everything in place. She puts the book on the seat next to her and takes off

Laura Phillips

her seat belt. She leaves the car and opens the door to Kevin's house quietly. She carries her shoes in her hand and eases up the stairs to Kevin's room. She holds her breath, slides just her toes into her sneakers, and nudges the door open. Kevin is sleeping on the far end of the bed, his face nestled into part of the comforter. She undresses and slides in next to him. He's almost naked, sprawled across the mattress in a pair of worn cotton boxers. He stirs and opens his eyes and she bites her lip, afraid that he'll yell again and push her out of bed. He doesn't make a sound, though, just slides a finger along the inside of the waistband of her white cotton underwear. She feels him growing excited against her thigh and before she knows it, he's on top of her, still silent except for an occasional grunt or gasp. She cannot look at his face with its closed eyes and slightly parted lips. The lamp glows green, rippling blue and ultraviolet. One thread moves a second behind the rest, flashing brilliant yellow alone in a field of violet. She watches that one thread until Kevin is finished and falls asleep.

Lame Foot

John Ramsey

My feet walk
Even after my forced crimes
No purpose to my wanderings—
Some claim I'm for lost;
Sometimes bare;
Often too gilded, but that's when I stroll:

the mixt pot quickly begets
all that which my heart forgets

See.
Need I say more?
Your accuse renders
Sometimes entertains—
Laugh, jeer, abuse;
It's my fault.
—This lame foot!

*rosary apologia**Alison Shaffer*

part i

Each glass bead is a metaphor
for prayer, a drop of God blue-green,
the ocean's only color
that never freezes, only drifts
with the weight of white ice,
Hail Mary, wrapped in water.
Grace has silver fingers
that bend around to beckon—
glass pulled into glass, my hands
pulled into my hands—and counting
link by link the decades, drops
of God, fall into the air and ripple
like a lullaby, or like a child
singing to the waters
from a fragile, beaded shore.

part ii

An atheist who loved me once told me and my heavy heart that I
had too much God in me—saturated, not even the rain soaked in—
and that was why I was unfaithful to men—that was why I loved so
much—full veins, clear water thicker than blood—not even the rain
soaked in.

part iii

I was a crowd
 all to myself, kneeling
 with drops of God, pulled into my
 hands, Grace with silver fingers bent.

The thicker the fabric, the more stiff
 and starch the heavy cloak—black
 on white—the more I felt my body
 compact, female and sweating beneath
 them, in a shell, far away—
 like background music, or internal
 monologue.

part iv

The prop department rosary: an orange string of plastic—as if I
 were a Mardi Gras stripper: breasts shining forth, o goddess of
 God! do not hide your light eyes under a dark veil of water, tears,
 lift them—put up your hands—empty—and pray like a grasping,
 groping for the Holy

Mother—blessed are you among women—but without pockets in
 this habit, and hands so busy with the ocean, blue-green of God, I
 hang them useless ‘round my collared neck.

part v

A large man was speaking to whom I had no business listening—but
 nonetheless.

Alison Shaffer

Call me forward, a crowd all to myself, and teach me how to hide
the gaudy beads in my humble fingers, from the television
cameras—voice shaking—breaking

part vi

them, snapping from my neck
and crying—water thicker
than blood—until my body
is drenched in sweaty tears of heavy habit
and screams the final note of glass
pulled into glass, beaded into
beaten, melting into blue-green
salt and breath, on my lips—
render to God what is God's
—drops of decades
in solitude, pray with silver
fingers—and not
even the rain soaked in.

part vii

In the dressing room: a white
slip dress is all I own—rend
for God what is God's—I blush
for a moment, the shadow of black
silk pressed between pale skin
and the short, cream gossamer
of gown—but creation is beautiful,
blue-green glass, gentle flow
of wrists wrapped in water—
and Grace, with silver
fingers, rests.

Alison Shaffer

The Photographer's Shadow

susannah fisher



The Process

Abigail Munro

It was in me, I think, from the beginning.

If I liked anything, if it made me feel good, I wanted more. I wanted it all. I wanted everything. If I didn't have it, I'd get the shakes, where my hands and heart refused to stay still. They thrummed together like strings were wired across them, being plucked every time I took a breath. And I would say, when I felt this, "I need a drink."

But my alcoholism isn't what I want to write about. I have meetings now, where I share these things. There is an incredible diversity among the people there. Housewives who feel trapped, business women who feel lonely, people who never got laid in high school, people who got laid too much. And through some incredible coincidence, I can identify with each and every one of them.

There is a step—which I am not on yet, but there are others who are—where you must apologize and atone for the wrong things you have done during your long stint as an alcoholic. I think there should be a step where you seek revenge—revenge on those who misled you and took advantage of you while you were in the grips of this "disease." All the people who stole your money, or cheated on you, or hit you. All the people who made you miserable. You should be able to call them up and say, "Hello, remember me? I'm going through a recovery process and I just wanted to say that I blame you for the insecurities I had that led me to drinking. I hold you responsible for all my former self-loathing. Thank you, have a nice day." And perhaps people who get those calls will be prompted to do something about it—maybe all those horrible people will feel guilty and reform themselves and eventually get to the atonement step and call you back.

My sponsor wasn't thrilled at the idea. He said, "This process is about forgiveness and healing, not revenge." I think I resent this process.

So what revenge can an out of work alcoholic writer take

when all she can do is apologize and forgive? I've been pondering this for weeks, starting a story then trashing it for not being mean enough, or not getting the angry hate filled message across. I think AA has diminished my hating abilities. Hate was almost as comforting as alcohol to me. I could hate a single person, hate them more and more, enjoying the hot feeling in my temple whenever I told a friend, "God I hate that person." Somehow, I expected that hate to fly from me, like a lightning bolt from a storm cloud, and hit the person in the chest, knocking them down. And they would say, "She hates me? I am so incredibly sorry for whatever I did!" It never happened that way, of course. My only hope is that I write a book that becomes incredibly famous, based on the awfulness of their character. And they read the book because the New York Times gave it a favorable review. From what I have submitted to my editor, I know this is not likely to happen. So this is the best I can do.

Jon Haddock is bad in bed.

Pete Johnson is an abusive asshole.

Kate Capshaw is a horrible actress who ruined *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

Right there is the essence of all my writing, all my drinking, all my hate. A boy from summer camp who couldn't control his cock, a drunk electrician with large fists, a girl who was more attractive than me, and a truly terrible actress. I mean, really, she got the part by boinking the director. While watching that movie, my hands started shaking, my heart pumping, and I said, "I need a drink."

So here is what I am writing about: an abusive boyfriend, who unfortunately is a horrible lay, and his slutty girlfriend who drank too much. She wants to act, but much to her despair, she is a horrible actress. Discouraged, she turns even more to drinking, infecting herself with the disease of alcoholism. Sounds intriguing, doesn't it?

I am relatively sure there are at least one thousand novels with the same plot, same characters, and same two endings—the *Abigail Munro*

happy one, or the sad one. I am generally a fan of the bittersweet ending. She leaves him, but is still struggling with her drinking problem. Somewhere in life, I think I was taught that there are no happy endings. And look how well I've turned out.

The beaten Oldsmobile began shaking as she stepped harder on the accelerator. Wind blew in through cracks in the windows, creating a loud roaring sound. It was a welcome distraction from what was streaming through her head: indiscernible curse words and insults directed at herself, at Pat, at the driver in front of her. Glancing at the fuel gauge, she decided that she'd take the next exit, no matter what city or town it led to. Even if she had to live out of the back of the car, she would stay there, until the terrible fear and the uneasiness constricting her throat subsided. It could be weeks, or even years before she would consider venturing back for the rest of her things.

I had to spend a night teetering on the backseat of a Toyota Turcel once, curled in the fetal position and shivering like a lost puppy. The next morning when I stood outside and stretched, my back cracked eight times in a row. American cars, I've found, are much roomier. I'm much kinder to my characters than I am to myself.

"Hello," the small, bloated woman began hesitantly, "My name is Anna and I'm an alcoholic."

"Hello Anna."

Fidgeting, she pushed a hand through her tangled hair. It had been two days since she last washed it, unable to afford shampoo. After the meeting, she intended to stop by CVS and buy a travel size bottle—hopefully, the two in one brand. She had found a dollar in change when she shook out her jeans pockets. "So...what do I say now?"

The group's mediator, or head alcoholic, smiled encouragingly. "Just tell us how you got here."

"You mean here here, or to this point?"

"To this point."

"Oh," Anna said. "Ok." She paused to gather the memories in the appropriate order, until she had identified the beginning. "I was with Pat for six years," she started.

You may think, upon reading this that I am recounting my first meeting. This is not the case. My first meeting I was too timid to speak. I went home that night and made myself a gin and, well, gin. My second meeting was somewhat better...I didn't have any gin left over to drink afterwards. My third meeting I actually talked about my mother. It took at least six meetings before I mentioned Pete.

Pat's hulking form darkened the doorway to the bedroom.
"What the fuck are you reading?"

"A script," she answered in a defensive voice. Unconsciously, she pulled her legs to her chest and brought her elbows in to her side. He grunted, and approached, lying down on his side of the bed.

"Well put it down, it's time for me now."

Anna sighed, dog-earing the page she was on and resting the script on the bedside table. She was tired, but she knew there was no use refusing. It wouldn't last long anyway. Soon he was mumbling in her ear, "How do you like that baby, huh? Yeah, you like that. Oh yeah." Slightly less than sixty seconds later he was done, rolling off her and snoring loudly, his hair a sweaty mass atop his leathery head. She was relieved he was asleep so soon. She didn't feel like pretending tonight, like stroking his ego. She was relieved to pick up the script and open it to the page she had been on.

I don't know why women are compelled to be nice, even after bad sex. My first time with Jon Haddock I wanted to say, "That's it? Wow, that's disappointing." But I didn't. In fact, I didn't even have to say anything. He was gone, throwing the condom into the bushes and running through the woods to his cabin, where his friends had been calling for him. Consequently, leaving me bare-assed on an uncomfortable pile of prickles, leaves, and sticks. Poetically speaking, I can say I was deflowered in a bed of thorns. Anyway, back to Anna and Pat.

"Pat, hun, would you mind picking up some milk while you're out?"

Pat, already opening the front door, his keys in his hand,

Abigail Munro

turned stormily. "Why don't you get it yourself? You should do something other than fucking sitting around thinking you can act."

"Asshole," Anna muttered to herself, but still loud enough for Pat to hear. A cloudy look of rage swept over his hard features, and with his bear-like hand, he slapped her hard. She fell to the floor, knocking her head against the linoleum. Pat stomped out the door, slamming it hard, rattling every nerve in her body. Soundlessly, she pulled herself back to her feet. With an unsteady hand she reached into the cupboard, withdrawing a near empty bottle of Jack Daniels. She tried drinking it from the bottle, but sputtered as it burned her throat. She then selected the least dirty of the glasses from the sink and emptied the bottle into it. Sliding back down to the floor, she sipped it slowly until it was gone. Then, she stretched out on the floor and fell asleep. When she awoke in the morning, half her face had swelled overnight, threatening to swallow her whole.

On my sixth meeting, when I finally mentioned the abusive asshole I dated for three years, a young girl approached me. She had been hit for the first time by her boyfriend, and she wasn't sure to leave him or stay. I asked her how hard he hit. She never asked for my advice again, and I don't blame her. After three years of being battered, I hadn't left the relationship—I had been dumped. I think when I get to the apology step, I'll find that young girl and say I'm sorry. I'm sorry I couldn't be of any help.

Pat found her watching Lifetime on the couch, her feet on the coffee table, her head slumped to the side. He saw the bruise rippling out from her eyes, like a blue-black sea. "Baby, I'm sorry," he said. "Want me to make you feel better?"

"No, I'm really tired," she answered. "Maybe later."

"I'm not gonna be around later," he grunted.

"Well then, later later, I'm not in the mood."

Angrily, he pulled her by her hair so she was standing, then gripping her arm like a vise, he pulled her toward the bedroom, with her protesting feebly until he threw her down on the mattress. She closed her eyes, feeling the vibrations of the mattress, of Pat, and of those in her veins, whirring at intense speeds. She thought, "I need a drink."

Alias*Sarah Kauffman*

unwrap me in leafy August
pull veins out of leaves
line them on my skin
trail mark body's blood
breathe in air and Lydia flows

feed me a pomegranate and Lydia spills
cracking open vanilla beans to live scent
smell my words and you will think of
elegant spring girls in windy blue dresses

massage my scent until muscles liquefy
become puddles on floor
Lydia wets ankles in my former tension perfume

cut Deborah Kerr, Lydia is Fiji beaches
mango love breaks waves and imprints wet sand
take me further up the island with sunglasses and long skirts
roll me in linen to write poems and grow tropical flowers

everything will emerge from my curving eye lashes
in slow movement to my forehead
Lydia is my iris again
focus of intimate portraits
with beautiful cello strings tied around romance

spread me in Savannah among the magnolias
my mind will arch into poetry
climbing the tree in my skull
root dig me deeper to New Orleans
I will bathe in Louis Armstrong and lemonade

rub the jazz in my skin
scrub off the remains of any other place
because Lydia seeps into cities with a nod

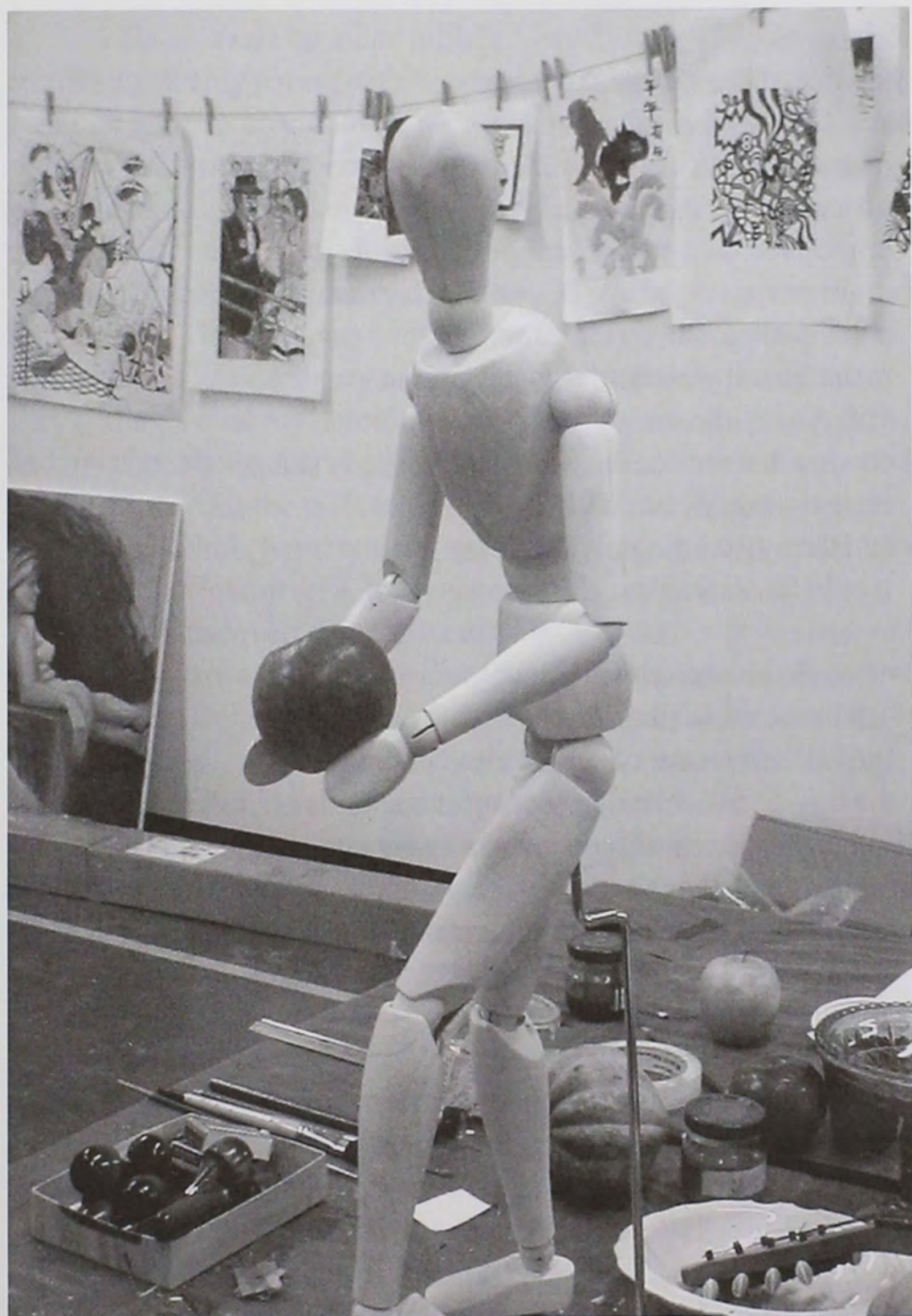
mend your nets and catch me in my arabesque
flow me like sea water down your back
mermaid Lydia swims down shoulder blades
free style hand down spine
flip me under and I smell human again
Lydia sneaks close to human anatomy with a smile
dangerously closes like water pressure between legs
until you pulse into this poem

forward lurching and pull me out of page
with inspiration lines on my hands
turn page and Lydia is sea urchin on script
I blow bubbles in the water of drama
Lydia returns the favor and
decorates the spectacle with intricacies

tomorrow Lydia's voice will form beautiful daisies
playing on stage for red hair and mid length skirts
lathered up in latin and ingenuity
but I fold with bouquets and proper ceremony
an August package sent back to the trees
Lydia breaks the green and ignites chlorophyll poems

Bowling for Oranges

Shane Borer



so luscious*susannah fisher*

so luscious

the sleep of this chamber golden.

candle flames dance

in polished dark cherry reflections.

waxy wisps of cinnamon

apples and the spice of pumpkin pie.

our warm nest the shade of a perfect butternut squash,

unblemished, still on the vine

in the frost-tinged fields of late autumn.

i drift down, into our cozy cocoon

knowing that outside the wind howls bitterly sharp,

our ears would burn with the chill

and the moist linings of our noses

would freeze stiff & quick.

but we

lay folded in each other's limbs

deep under the feather-down

threaded the color of oranges and caramel,

the meringue-white dog snoring at our ankles.

listening to the whistling winds shake the trees

after-harvest lullaby

grating brittle branches, twig upon twig.

much i have to be thankful for

in this golden cornucopia

feasting upon

luscious sleep.

Home is Where the Hershey's is

Deidre Delpino

There is *no* chocolate milk in Japan. None. There is something deeply wrong with a country that carries strawberry Nesquik in every convenience store but has refused admission to its older, wiser brother chocolate. The Japanese have celery-flavored gum, mint soda, and canned coffee here but absolutely *no* chocolate milk. Turns out the whole lot of them are pretty much lactose intolerant. Nothing but strawberry Nesquik and soy milk since I arrived here. Three months without English, without Lucky Charms, and without my sole source of comfort after a bad day has been very grating. I miss my home, my language, my family, my friends, and my chocolate milk.

But I miss the milk most. Being away from home (no matter how far or for how long) is always difficult. College, of course, taught me this lesson well. I was never really homesick or unhappy, but the day I discovered the “chocolate milk” label on the milk dispenser I felt just a little more comfortable in this new, unfamiliar environment. Being pre-mixed milk, it wasn't quite the same, but it made the place feel a little more like home. And that homey feeling is something I lack here in Japan. It is something I miss very deeply.

It's easy enough to remember the joys of childhood now that I'm so far away from them. And it's strange how vividly I recall the details of our kitchen (long since remodeled) as it was when I was six. And now that I feel so very far away I find the memories are more vivid than ever. When I journey back to my home and to my kitchen I am six again and doing what I do best. I am mixing a glass of my World Famous (or so I thought at the time – and don't even *think* to tell me otherwise unless you want a world of trouble, thankyouverymuch) Chocolate Milk.

... I step up onto the small, pink plastic elephant stool so I can see over the counter top. A tall, crystal-clear glass patiently awaits me. A spoon rests faithfully by its side. The milk carton I hold

is smooth, heavy and cool in my hands. I want to delay this next step a little because it is my favorite, but I *know* such a pause could ruin *everything*. Excitedly, I give the milk a vigorous shake before opening it. There is a faint ripping sound when the diamond-shaped spout opens up. I smell the fresh milk – it's like a breath of air-conditioner coldness on a stiflingly hot summer day. Removing the clear plastic cap from the smooth brown bottle causes it to make a quiet popping sound followed by a small clatter as the flying cap hits the floor somewhere across the room.

No time to chase down the rogue cap just now – there's too much to be done. Now, slowly, carefully, I tilt the milk carton towards the glass. It feels like it takes forever but I can't afford to rush. Slowly, *slowly*. And suddenly, almost magically, the glass goes from empty to nearly full, and I lift the carton up sharply. My heart is still racing, and I wiggle my bare toes against the grippy surface of the elephant stool to help relieve the anxiety. I gently press the tip of the diamond-spout, and it closes with a tiny *fwup!*

I turn my attention back to the glass. It sits, still patient, waiting to accomplish its greater purpose in life. I am more than happy to help it along its way as I feel the comfortable weight of the bottle of Hershey's chocolate syrup (no other will do) in my hands. I invert the bottle completely over the center of the glass and, with one firm yet gentle squeeze, free just the right amount of syrup from the bottle. It flows in a perfectly straight line for a few moments before becoming a slow drizzle and finally an indecisive drip. I turn the bottle back over and place it on the counter.

The long, slender ice-tea spoon *plinks* and *clanks* gently against the inside of the glass. I begin to stir (always clockwise) as the syrup merges with the perfectly white milk until it feels as though I am stirring liquid silk in a tall glass. Only Hershey's syrup can bring this kind of satisfaction. I'd experimented with powder mixes some time back, but they had never been to my liking. The contrast between the powder and syrup was too great; there was nothing pleasing about ending up with a glass of perfectly good chocolate milk, spoiled by floating islands of undissolved chocolate powder.

Deidre Delpino

After a proper stir, the spoon continues to turn gently around the rim of the glass when I remove my hand. It is best to pick the glass up and walk to the living room with it while the spoon is still going. I sit myself down on the worn beige loveseat where I can sink comfortably into the cushions. I pick up the spoon slowly, carefully and...

Slurp!

I breathe a pleasant sigh. My recipe is perfect again (as if there were truly any doubt in my mind). *Slurp*. A perfect balance of cool, refreshing whole milk (*slurp*) and the sweetness of rich Hershey's syrup (*slurp*). Best consumed with a spoon. *Slurp*. *Slurp*. *Sluuuuuuuuuurp*.

I hear my mother's voice come bouncing down the hall from the dining room, "For Pete's sake, Deeg! Just drink it like a reasonable person!"

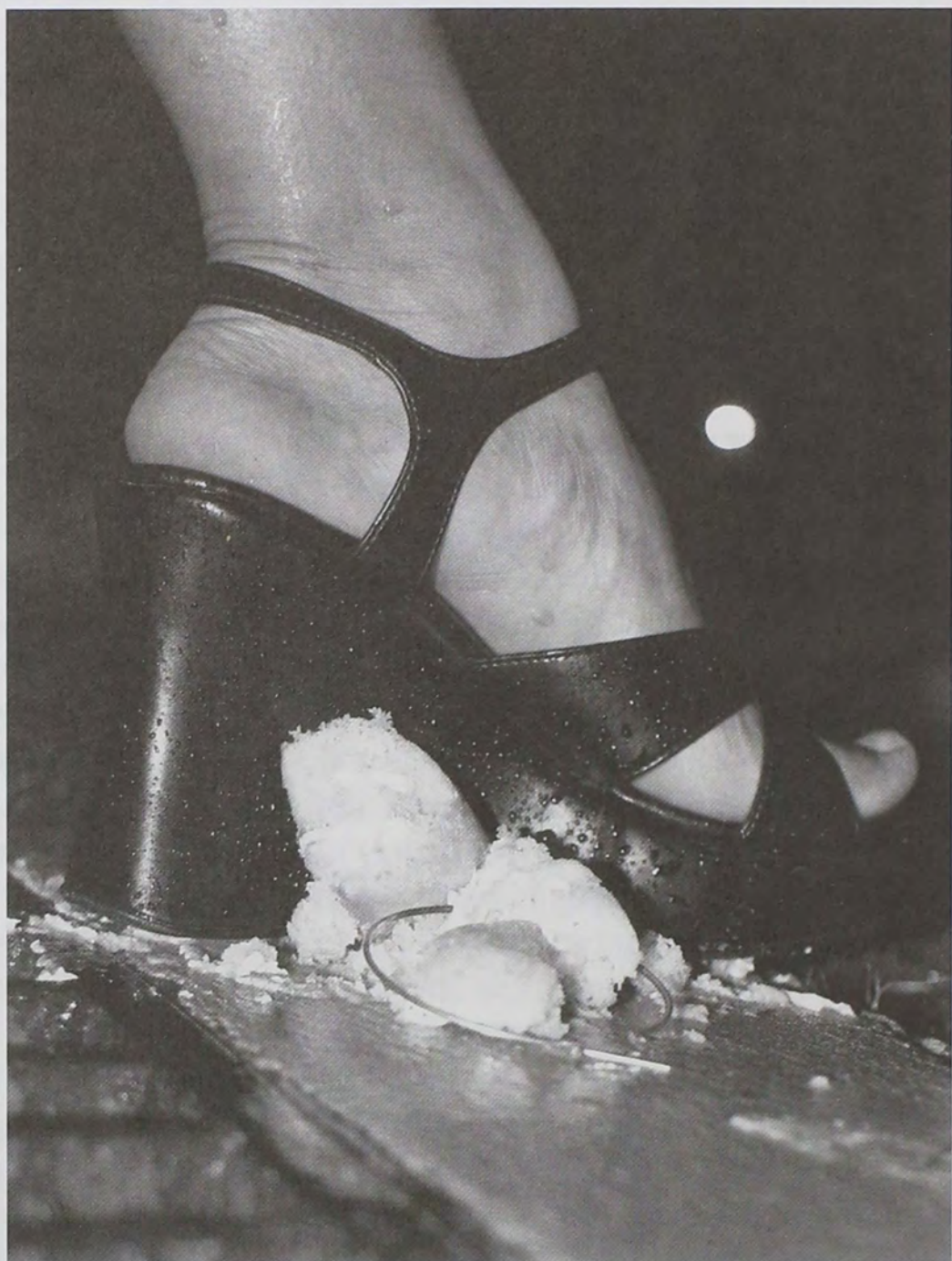
Slurp. "Hey, Mom," *Slurp*. "Who's (*slurp*) Pete?" *Slurp*.

Silence. But it's a tense sort of silence. The kind of silence that means I may look up to find her looming over me. But not this time. This time I can slurp in peace. I always imagined the slurping really got to her because the chocolate milk was something I could do all by myself and that she had no control over.

Looking back now I realize it must be because I always left the milk and open syrup bottle sitting on the counter. Goodness only knows where the cap must have gotten to each time. But it was always there when I came back, ready to become the perfect glass of chocolate milk any time I needed it.

Love is Like a Twinkie

Ella Lazo



dec 12 02

Kate Chapman

a time remembered
an image burned
a voice a face a touch

an understanding

eleventen

a sheet a vessel a premonition 'it's him it's him'
the voice left a mouth full of sea-filled rain
the face lost the feel of porchsand under moon
the touch : a squeeze meant to release all the fireflies from
noontime : takes its place in
my memory

dismember my thoughts to reach the real
fold my fingers to feel a time a grief a love unreachable to the stars
that never stood by

Climbing

Katy Diana

I. Turning into Stone

Fire-tipped fingers
cap raw-reaching palms
quaking with stress.
Knuckles and joints squeeze violently
bones like earthquakes at a fault.
Lava spews from erupting blood blisters –
cooling to black, igneous scabs.
Muscles burst under scraped-screaming skin.
The tension hardens
to obsidian limbs.

II. Hand Rituals

Chalk addiction
clenches ripe palms,
clamps that swing: hold to hold.

At half-summit risk
calcified blood gyrates,
the panting pulse swells sores,
and sweet, peeled skin
leaves only claws.

After –
they sting, hot in cactus mittens.
Try to shake their hold and
release knots and knuckles,
quenching air and coolness.

III. Separated Competition

Like a childhood game of twister

minus gravity,

My spine

challenges the mold
of my body

and contorted strategy

leaves denim legs behind.

My waist

is suspended in the air

and twists

freely

without the distraction of ribs.

My hips are held in harness,

reminiscent of the ground.

Sometimes

I think

my body parts

reach

the summit

at

different

times.

46

One Way

susannah fisher



Rock the Boat

Stephen Corrado

Anthony works for a carpenter, saving his pennies for someday. His father Leo wears a suit to work. He says, "Son, work hard for an education." But working too hard can give you a heart attack-ack-ack-ACK.

Leo Buena drives an 86' Buick Skylark and works as a bookkeeper for Axelson and Johnson. Axelson and Johnson is a bankrupt fishery in Cape May. Leo has worked there for fifteen years. Anthony tells his dad that the Skylark is the biggest piece of shit hoopty on the block.

Leo has been in America for twenty years. His English is still lousy. At home Leo speaks to Anthony in Catalanian. Anthony responds in English. Leo has one English phrase that he loves: "JesusAchRRRist a Anthony"

"Calm down Leo." The last time Anthony called Leo "Dad" was six years ago when he was twelve. Leo took Anthony to the old country. Anthony watched Charles Barkley and the Dream Team in Barcelona. "Thanks Dad." But Leo can't dribble a basketball. Now Anthony and Leo's relationship is cold and flat like a flounder. Anthony never wants his father to answer the phone.

"Hi is Anthony home?"

"Noo, I sinkso go do da movies or somsing. Maybe go shopping with dee mother, I dunno."

"OK, thanks, Mr. Buena."

Leo Buena is not handy. He doesn't even own a toolbox. Anthony thinks that Leo is a toolbox. Leo can't ride in a boat without Dramamine. *Quan el barco se mueve espone mal de estamago.*

Elmer is Anthony's boss. He wears Dickies to work. He has callused hands that hold Newports. Elmer is from Green Creek (pronounced Crick), and everyone in Cape May County knows

that there ain't nothing slicker than a Cricker. Today Elmer and Anthony are framing a roof on a one-story spec home on Route 47. It is 102 degrees Fahrenheit so Elmer calls it quits at noon. He is fifty years old and figures it isn't worth a heart attack-ack-ack-ACK. He wants to go fishing anyway.

"Don't worry, I'll give you full day's pay." Elmer says.

"You can come fishing with me if you want."

"Maybe, when are you going?"

"After lunch."

Anthony goes home to make a sandwich. Mrs. Buena is home from Court House Pharmacy. The bottle of Prozac reads: Buena, Leo. Take (1) tablet twice a day. Anthony says, "I knew Leo was crazy". Anthony takes two Advil with a can of coke.

The last time Anthony went fishing was on Thanksgiving with Uncle Robby. Leo and his brother-in-law Robby both own the boat, but Leo has never set foot on it. *Porque quan el barco se mueve espone mal de estamago*. Robby is a bay-man like his father was before. "Ya haven't got your sea-legs yet boy!" It was cold and the ocean was rough. Anthony puked off the side of the boat. Uncle Robby did not see. Anthony couldn't eat his turkey because the table was bobbing up and down on the waves in the dinning room floor. To top it off, Anthony hadn't caught a thing. Skunked. Uncle Robby ate three helpings of turkey. Someday he would probably die from a heart attack-ack-ack-ACK.

Elmer pulls up to the Buena residence in his bronze Dodge Ram. Anthony is sitting on the front porch.

"You coming or what?"

"Yeah, I'll come." Anthony said.

It is hot and the ocean is calm. Anthony watches the Cape May Lighthouse shrink. Five miles out and the sonar shows a lot of fish so Elmer decides to mooch there. Mooching is drifting and waiting for a bite. Anthony has no patience mooching. Elmer can mooch all day. "This is the life, ain't it Tony?" Anthony says, "Yeah it is."

An hour passes. Elmer catches two flounders, but neither

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are keepers. Anthony catches a keeper. What a thrill. He leans over the side of the boat. The boat makes him seasick. Elmer sees. "Have a cigarette, your nerves are bad." Anthony declines. Cigarettes make his head hurt.

Elmer juices it back to the dock. "Keep your eyes on the horizon." Anthony sits on the bow with the wind in his face, watching the lighthouse grow. When the boat goes fast he feels ok. If only you could fish at twenty knots. Elmer says at least he caught a flounder. "You can take it home and show your mom," he said. Anthony takes the fish home.

Mrs. Buena is impressed with the fish. She kisses Anthony's cheek. "You must take after my side of the family." The flounder will be fried for dinner. The last time Mrs. Buena went on a boat was on her honeymoon with Leo. Leo got seasick when they sailed off the coast of Ibiza.

Leo comes home from work and takes off his tie. He eats his cheese, drinks his wine and watches the World Cup on the tube. A glass of wine a day can help prevent a heart attack-ack-ack-ACK.

The fresh flounder and black beans are delicious. Anthony's appetite is gone. "Anthony caught this today," Mrs. Buena says, "Maybe one of our sons took after the nautical side of the family." Leo is not impressed. Anthony hates the way Leo always eats with a crust of bread in his left hand. This is America, damn it. Ring, Ring.

"Elooh"

"Hi Mr. Buena. This is Chris. Is Anthony there?"

"Won secon."

"Hello?"

"Yo Ant, want to go out for a beer?"

Anthony said no. The boat had made him sick.

"Aww, come on don't be a girl!"

"Ok, I guess I'll have a beer."

Anthony walks to the Bellevue Tavern. No one checks for ID at the door. Chris is already bellied up to the bar. He says,
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“Get this man a Bud!” Anthony says Bud gives him mud. “Give me a lager instead,” Anthony says.

Anthony gets drunk. He kneels over the toilet. The beer makes him seasick. Maybe he should stick to sipping wine like his father.

Anthony keeps the door to his bedroom closed. When he comes home it is open. He keeps a bong in his closet. It is out on his dresser. “What a wuss.” Anthony says. Anthony sleeps on his stomach. “*Buena*” in gothic letters is tattooed across his back. The next morning Anthony wakes up. Leo is standing over him, staring at his son’s tattoo. “So proud of you name, eh big man?” The bong still sits on the dresser. Leo says, “What de hell is this sheet man?” Anthony puts his face into his pillow. Leo says, “Oh, big tattoo man can go do bar now. You eighteen man! What de ell is this sheet you leave a de work early to make a de fishing?”

Anthony says calm down Leo. “Elmer said we could take the afternoon off!” “JesusAchRRRist a Anthony!”

Mrs. Buena busts in she says, “What’s that noise?”

“Leo’s mad cause I went fishing.”

“Get ready for work, Buster! Before you give your father a heart attack.” Ack-Ack-Ack.

Mrs. Buena closes Anthony’s bedroom door. Anthony puts on his Barcelona Dragons T-shirt. He loses his balance as he pulls on his work jeans. He falls into his dresser. Old skunked bong water spills all over the sheets. *Quan el barco se mueve espone mal de estamago.*

Leo is sitting in the Skylark. He turns the key. Nothing. One more time... nothing. He should have traded in his Buick for a Cadillac-Ack-Ack-Ack. “JesusAchRRRist!”

Mrs. Buena says, “Anthony go give your father a jump.”

“Christ Mom, can’t you do it? I gotta go.” Elmer wanted to get an early start so they could finish the roof before it got so damn hot.

Mrs. Buena says, “Go do it.” Anthony pushes the screen door. Leo is waiting for him in the driveway. The hood of the

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Skylark is up. "This car is de lemon, man!"

"No Leo, *you're* the fucking lemon. *You* left the lights on!" Anthony's temperature is rising. "You see that switch next to the steering wheel? That's called headlights."

"You no talk a you father like dis!" Leo says, "Sheet, if you no drunk last night you could make a de lights off." But Leo should never argue with a crazy man-an-an-AN.

Anthony's heart speeds up. He is shouting, but he does not know where the words are coming from. He spits wicked Catalan verbs. Anthony's tongue becomes forked; it lashes like a snake's. Adrenaline pumps through his blood stream. He puffs up to twice his normal size. He has never felt so strong. Anthony is a dragon.

Anthony attacks his father. Hands are thrown. Anthony catches his dad with a left hook. Blood and spit fly from Leo's mouth. Mrs. Buena is shrieking. She scrambles, and then reaches to pull her son off her husband. The look on Mrs. Buena's face temporarily slays the dragon. Anthony is back. No wait, the dragon again. Mrs. Buena stands between the two. Leo is speechless. He is disheveled, but not badly injured. He stares blankly at his son.

Anthony turns and walks toward the front door. He says, "I'm moving out". Anthony's chest heaves as he goes to his room. The fight has made him seasick. He locks his door. He lies down on his stomach on his filthy sheets. "*Buena*" in gothic letters is tattooed across his back. *Quan el barco se mueve espone mal de estamago.*

On Susannah in the Morning*Andrew E. Petersen*

delineation of these hours
is a danger in eyes
i know
that's why i speak in Braille sometimes
feeling the jeans over knees in my spine
there is no simile

there is . . . ation in her motions
respiration, levitation
and i am pulling swords from stones
plucking poems from the Pool of Siloam

i meet Lazarus in the street
for a tea and some words
on a peaceful sleep
he says waking is a feeling
i agree
for Susannah in the morning
there is no simile

the room glows red
in a snoring quiet static
still it sits right like italics

and i can't put boring similes
on Susannah in the morning

Statistics

Sarah Napolitan

That year I had statistics and I learned how to place
everything under the parenthetical labyrinth of distribution.
I cut off the chicken fat and put it into parts.
I separated and organized and sat with my legs crossed. There
were many lines in my art.

At a time when moon was picked off trees and incense came
through the garden
you and I waded through unshapely organisms of marshes,
brambly bushes of woods and made our way through suspended
fireworks of dandelions (more intricate than this all was your one
hand in mine)
we lay crumpled and stretched under subtle orange trees of lust
my legs dangled from the branches blood rushing gold
you ran your fingers along the exposure of the roots
there were no lines in your art.

Remembering this now as I cut off the chicken fat.
And put it into parts.

The Splitting

Melanie Scriptunas

Melinda's father abandoned Joyce and her four-year-old daughter for reasons that would never be discussed. Joyce never mentioned him, and Melinda never inquired into the matter of the missing sperm-donor. He did have the decency to leave them the house, a sizable brick construction with a sharp roofline and windows that gaped like silent screaming mouths over the cornfields. He also left the dog, a short sandy mutt named Murphy, for whom Joyce made custom-fit sweaters and leggings.

Joyce was a stout little lady with pepper-colored hair cut in a short style that made her seem older than she was. She wore seasonally inspired sweatshirts and vests. She played bingo at the fire hall every Saturday night and brought Murphy along for show. She bought country crap at craft shows and displayed it around the house. She bore an unrealistic optimism.

Melinda dropped out of school near the end of her junior year—as soon as she hit seventeen. School sucked. She still rode the bus; she sat alone in the front seat so she didn't have to walk past other people. Nobody spoke to her in the hallways. Someone had written SLUT on her locker in deep red lipstick, and that was the last straw. Besides, her grades suffered beyond repair.

Joyce did not express the full extent of her disappointment for fear of marring her daughter's self-esteem. When Melinda dropped out of school, her mother mildly suggested that she get a summer job—"Perhaps at Bennie's farmer's market down at Floral Run, or at Ollie's Discount Outlet off of Route 30," she offered. But no, none of that would do, Melinda said, and when she told her mother about the lump in her breast, Joyce felt guilty for having ever pressured her to work. After all, she was so young, the poor thing, to have to deal with such issues.

A senior named Dirk first discovered the lump in Melinda's breast while feeling her up at a drive in theater. Melinda was

excited that he had decided to go on a date with her. He had come on to her in an abandoned stairwell on her last day of school, licking his lips and proclaiming her assets as he sized up her frame. He had an intriguing persistence in his eyes, and so that night Melinda found herself on her first “date.”

Melinda only had one beer, but nevertheless a pile of empty Red Dog cans was accumulating in the back of Dirk’s red Ford pickup. Melinda thought it was passion that made him press her down to the rubbery floor of the truck bed, but really he just didn’t want Sandy Johnson, the head of the cheerleading squad, to see him getting it on with such a low life.

Dirk was working Melinda’s breast with his palm and slurping at her throat and ears. He had his eyes closed, as if he were imagining himself with someone else. Melinda played opossum. She wondered about the correlation between love and sex. If she let him have his way with her body now, would he be more inclined to love her, to want her, in the future?

Dirk’s groping slowed and came to an abrupt stop. “Ew, what’s this hard thing in your tit?”

“What, huh?” Melinda pretended to be shaken from some blissful stupor.

Dirk rolled off of her and propped himself on his elbow. He peered over the edge of the truck bed and caught a glimpse of Sandy and her friends in the white Volkswagen parked next to them. “Uh, listen, I’m not too interested in this movie; how ‘bout I take you on home?” He pulled his cap down over his eyes and put his arm around Melinda’s shoulders to prevent her from turning towards the girls as she sat up, and also to shadow his face in her figure.

Dirk cracked open another beer and sped Melinda home over twisted back roads in the dark. Melinda rested her head on the window and watched the tall weeds and telephone poles speed by in the side mirror. A car far behind them came over a hill, illuminating the silver silhouette of a naked woman. She danced on a chain that dangled from Dirk’s rearview. The car behind them

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turned and threw darkness inside the cab.

Melinda rubbed two fingers around in a meditative circle, feeling deep into her left breast. Dirk stopped on the road instead of pulling into the driveway. He downed the last swig of beer and crunched the can in his hand. "Okay, see ya' later," he said, tossing the empty can at Melinda's feet. He belched.

Melinda shuffled through a pile of cans at her feet and freed herself from the musty truck cab. Murphy had run out to the mailbox. He growled and yapped as Dirk pulled away, blowing his exhaust smoke into Melinda's face.

"Oh, dear," said Melinda's mother later that evening. "I feel it. You had better get that checked out."

And so she did. The surgeon was a fat bow-legged man with a comb-over and a twitchy mustache that spiked out over his lip. He parted the buttons of her hospital top and said, "Hands on your hips." Then he squeezed her breast with his chubby fingers as if he were checking the firmness of a piece of fruit in the supermarket. Melinda couldn't help but think that hers were the nicest, firmest pair of breasts he had fondled all day. All the women in the waiting room looked like they were over sixty.

The doctor told her it was probably a harmless tumor, a fibroid adenoma, which is common among young women. She could have it removed through a simple procedure done with a local anesthetic, or she could let it go and come back periodically to make sure nothing had changed—but the only way to know for certain that it was benign was to get it taken out. Joyce consulted with her circle of bingo-going friends and they voted unanimously for Melinda to have it removed, for "peace of mind," they said.

Melinda did not like the thought of having her breast cut open, but she felt pressured to go through with the procedure. She did not know how to make a decision regarding her own body; it was much easier to leave the matter in someone else's hands. She went under the knife in the beginning of July.

A numb body is never numb enough to ignore the tug of stubby hands and long, sturdy instruments; the twist and snip of cold

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metal wrenching away tissue; the stretching taut of the skin that encloses the nurturing power of womanhood.

It was cold on the table where Melinda lay trembling, swathed in blue paper—all but her left breast. She saw nothing but the steady white knuckles of the nurse supporting the sheet of blue above her neck and face. The incision was made—the surgeon said so. Her insides must have been fascinating, for the nurse kept letting the paper fall down over her face, suffocating her. A steady stream of thin liquid rolled down the curve of her open breast and settled in the crease of her armpit.

“Is that blood?”

“Oh, a little. But mostly Novocain,” the surgeon replied. His bulge of stomach hung heavy on her forearm, encasing her hand in nettles, but she dared not move, lest he slip and slice off her nipple. “What kind of music do you like?”

“I don’t care,” Melinda gasped, as flames engulfed her freezing body—it was the panic of being open that inflicted such a paradox. “Am I closed yet?”

“I’m starting to stitch you up now—give us some music in here!”

Melinda felt like a piece of raw meat on a scale. A rush of sweat mingled with the overwhelming stench of Beta dine, plugging her nose and throat. She thought of it as the scent of her leaking, open breast. “Hungry Eyes” came blasting over the radio, and the surgeon began to hum. She could see him in her mind, eyes bugged behind his bifocals, hands poised like some delighted Fraggles delving into a turnip mine.

Melinda had been ambivalent about the procedure, but after the surgeon sewed her shut and showed her the olive-sized tumor that suckled the yellow-pink tissue of her breast, she felt as if some unwelcome alien had been expunged from her body. The nurses encased her torso in a hospital blue tank top with Velcro enclosures. She wondered if she took it off if the weight of her breast would burst open the seam.

When they got home, Joyce brought her a glass of iced
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orange spice tea and started making tacos in the kitchen. Melinda popped a Percocet and stretched out on the sticky sea-green plastic of the chaise lounge in their overgrown lawn. She looked out over the rolling expanse of knee-high corn until her gaze settled back on her own body. She considered the amount of mass that had been removed from her left breast. Would it be visibly smaller than the right? Would she look deformed? At least she still had nice legs.

A couple of weeks later, the Steri-strips peeled away from Melinda's wound, and by the middle of August she was pretty much healed. She wondered what it was that made him call again. It was late one Tuesday evening. Melinda was sitting in the old porcelain bathtub, rubbing a soapy yellow washcloth around the purple stripe on the underside of her breast. Her thin, blonde wet hair was plastered to her back. A piece of it wrapped into her armpit and tickled. Joyce tapped lightly on the bathroom door and then entered without waiting for a response.

"Ooops, sorry, dear!" she said, shielding her eyes with an ineffective hand. She tried to sneak a subtle peek at her daughter's breast to see how it was healing. She waltzed over to the tub, covering the receiver with her palm. "It's a boy!" she sung, handing Melinda the cordless phone.

"Hello?"

Joyce still stood there. What was she waiting for?

"Melinda? Hi. I, uh . . ."

"Mom!" Melinda scolded in a loud whisper. "What are you doing?"

"Oh, right." Joyce left the room, closing the door carefully behind her.

" . . . was wondering what you were up to tonight. My pops is at the bar and I was . . . I mean . . . you should come over."

"I don't know, Dirk . . ."

"Aw, c'mon, Melinda." He dropped his voice to a near whisper. "I'll make it worth your while," he tempted.

"Well . . ."

Maybe Dirk was just having a bad day the last time he saw her. Maybe he really wanted to make it up to her. Everyone deserves a second chance, right? Besides, Melinda was getting lonely—cooped up in that house all the time with her mother.

Dirk took her to the trailer court where he lived with his father. It was just at the bottom of the hill, about five minutes away by car. Melinda didn't get to see much of what it looked like inside, because as soon as he opened the door, Dirk pulled her in and switched off the lights.

"What are you doing?" she said, as he pressed her against the wall with his body.

"Shhh. Don't talk," he said, slithering his tongue into her mouth. Her head was pinned to the wall; he was kissing her with such force. She couldn't breathe, but when she tried to turn her head away Dirk clapped his hand against her cheek and pushed her face back into his.

"C'mon, Melinda," he moaned into her ear. He moved her over to a futon against the far wall and laid her down. She tried to pull her legs up to push him away, but he suppressed her with his hips.

"Dirk!" She squirmed. "Stop!"

He smirked. "Mmmm, you're a feisty little thing, aren't you?" He parted her legs with his knees and unbuckled his belt. He slid his hands up her shirt, holding her arms down with his elbows.

"Ouch!" she screeched, as he kneaded her breast with one hand and pulled her shorts and panties down with the other. "Stop it, that hurts!" He muffled her pleas with his mouth. She feared he would reopen her freshly healed wound. She hit him, but it only seemed to turn him on more.

"But it's a good kind of hurt, isn't it?" The weight of his body forced penetration. The way he touched her was cold and familiar. It was the same feeling she had on the operating table when the surgeon forked through her insides like a plate of spaghetti. Melinda did not have the strength to fight him, and so she
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lay there and waited for it to be over. Maybe the kids at school were right. Maybe Melinda really was a slut.

Dirk fell asleep inside of her. His heavy body crushed her chest and her lower parts felt numb. She freed herself from beneath him, and did not feel the full extent of the pain between her legs until he slipped from inside of her. She was a cavity, a hollow rotted log. She pulled up her underwear and shorts and slid out the door. She walked the whole way home, out of the wooded valley into the great expanse of corn.

She never said anything to her mother. When she walked in the door, Joyce smiled and said, "So? What did you do?"

"Nothing."

"Oh. Well who was that young—"

"It was nobody, Mom. It was nothing."

Melinda took a shower. The consideration of her daughter's bath just a few hours earlier hovered in Joyce's head for but a brief moment before it was shooed away like a fruit fly.

Weeks later Melinda went to the surgeon for a follow up. It was he that informed her and her mother that the tumor was benign, but that she was pregnant. Melinda sickened at the festering seed inside her, but she hadn't the heart to tell her mother how much she hated the thing that fed off her body.

For Joyce, the news of Melinda's pregnancy was a Godsend. It wasn't a job, and it certainly wasn't college, but it was *something*. It gave her life new purpose.

"Who's the lucky Daddy?" she asked. "Maybe we could name it after him. But we'd have to make it a girl's name, of course."

Melinda's face tightened and her gut turned. "I don't know."

Joyce didn't delve any deeper into the matter. She had raised Melinda on her own; women did it all the time. Everything would be just fine.

At four months Melinda had an ultrasound. The doctor couldn't tell much from the picture, but he said that everything

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seemed okay.

As Melinda began to swell, so did Joyce's sense of pride. Besides setting up the Christmas display, she set to work on painting the guest room a pale pink. She got a Noah's ark trim to put around the top of the walls. She found a used crib at a yard sale for fifteen dollars. She bought bottles and onesies far in advance. Joyce just knew it would be a girl.

Melinda hibernated the entire winter. She spent many of her days in her room, staring blankly at the television or the walls. Sometimes she locked the door, drew the blinds, stripped off her clothes, and stood observing herself in the full-length mirror. Her breasts were beginning to bulge and sag. The purple scar stretched with the rest of her breast instead of diminishing to a razor thin white line as the surgeon predicted. Her stomach protruded to an unusual size; the doctor said it must be a really big baby. Melinda felt the creature multiply at a tremendous speed, but she never felt it kick.

"Mom. Something's wrong," Melinda said in her seventh month. They were sitting at the kitchen table eating lunch. A late light snow was falling on the fallow fields.

"What do you mean, dear?" There was a sympathetic, disbelieving chuckle in her speech. Joyce put her hand on Melinda's shoulder.

Melinda took a long time to answer. She dropped one hand to her belly and the other, still holding a peanut butter and pickle sandwich, to her side. She watched the wet snow beginning to accumulate on the ledge of the window.

"The baby," she said blankly, "it doesn't move." Murphy started eating the sandwich out of her hand, but she didn't seem to notice.

"Oh, honey, I'm sure it will be fine. That just means she'll be an agreeable baby. You should feel fortunate." She smiled, rubbed her daughter's back, and began to eat again, but Melinda continued staring out the window.

"I want another ultrasound."

Joyce set her ham and cheese croissant down on the white
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plate. “Honey, the doctor said everything looked okay when you went to see him in January.” She picked up her sandwich again, but before she resumed eating she repeated, “I’m sure everything will be fine.”

After lunch, Joyce sat at the table making up invitations for the baby shower. She would invite all her bingo friends. Was there anyone Melinda wanted to invite? “No.”

At her next check up, Melinda told the doctor that she wanted another ultrasound, but he made it clear to her and her mother that it would cost about one thousand dollars to do so. Joyce didn’t have that kind of money.

Melinda went into labor on her birthday—May thirteenth—at four forty-one in the morning. The expanded bulge consumed her; she was weak with the need to expunge the still bulk of matter. Joyce rushed her to the Ridgeway Hospital in her white ford escort, where Melinda’s water broke. She alone offered her hand as a stress ball as Melinda pushed out the plaguing affliction. The head poked out, and the doctor received it well, but then the baby got stuck at the shoulders. The doctors couldn’t understand why.

The nurse put her knees up on the bed and pushed forcefully on Melinda’s stomach. Melinda expanded—she was spread open in an epiphany of pain. The baby gave and the feet popped out. The doctor pulled—Melinda exploded again—the nurse pushed down and out on her belly. Melinda thought she would become unconscious.

The baby straddled a pulsing parasite nearly equal to it in size. The tumor was attached to the baby’s tailbone. The doctor’s face gravened. “Go get help!”

Joyce ceased to exist in reality at that moment.

The baby’s tailbone was the bridge through which the thing—the “Sacroccocygeal Teratoma,” a dull, ill-formed appendage—shared her blood vessels and suckled her life. Its size was tremendous. The birth should have been done by C-section. Melinda had to be sewn shut.

On the “Life Lion,” a helicopter that lifted her and Joyce

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and the baby to Hershey Medical Center, Melinda was in oblivion. Although she didn't realize it, she had already begun to heal. She continued to sleep through most of her baby's ten-hour surgery. When she awakened, Renee was split from the tumor. She was attached to a series of pulsing machines. Joyce was right—it was a girl.

A Thursday in February*John Ramsey*

on a green bed
 rocking wine-dark
 feeling
tossing jeweled cases
& coining ancient songs
earnest to interject a favorite crooning
 a nasal voice stuck in puberty
 aching to achieve the Western Dream
 caught in the rites of alcohol & opiates

she gave a waning laugh
 the whole bed shaking
 haunting me
 a contempting rock

she calmed
 as a youth entered &
 tantalized
 tree-hung compliments
 & flatter crowing

O! rapturous bird wrap
these silken gossamers
in dreams of fabled limbs

the youth melted with time
& alone described
happiness & a wanton trance
thoughtless slipped silently
tortured by murmuring lips
Her lips
Her rapture

green cotton wrapped smug
to conquer weak indecision
& verbose allusions of lust

our words fight crisp air
hanging like original sin
that no one provokes
rigid goodbyes
no remorse

66

Snow Mistress

susannah fisher



Breaking Blue*Alison Shaffer*

Sometimes at the end of autumn,
I strip my body and lay it down.
There I watch it, growing colder,
sleeping beneath an empty tree.
Its skin turns a cloud-gray white,
then clears in evening to the fragile
color of porcelain sky. Quick black

cracks trace the shadows of branches
on its chest and outstretched arms,
its skin, thin blue and splitting
in veined patterns, stiff, like a breaking
sheet of ice. The heart, singular, thin
and red, clings, trembles—the air moves.
My body creaks. Sometimes

at the autumn's end, I lay my body down.
And the wind licks around my limbs
and my heart shivers, a splinter moon
that rises into winter, growing darker,
on my breast. The sky, heavier and breaking
blue, passes over, presses closer,
and falls through.

Contributors...

Shane Borer...believes that the world is a fine place, and worth fighting for. Well... maybe just the second part.

Steve Corrado...can dunk from the foul-line with two hands.

Kate Chapman...wishes to swim in a purple ocean.

Deidre Delpino... is a psych/English double major, part-time gamer, and aspiring Bunny Fairy. She has nothing particularly witty to say right now.

Lauren Denis...is a senior psych major...rugby player...just call me Sally-Short-Fuse!...and i think it's time for some dodgeball.

Katy Diana ... enjoys bubbles, stars, and sushi and would like to note that being eaten by Biology classes is not her preferred method of torture.

susannah fisher...licks her fingers in nice resturants and has been caught double-dipping in the salsa bowl of life.

Sarah Kauffman...has been devouring Caesar Salad, Lydia, and even the sunshine that lays on the ground. Morning, words full and flowery, and dark eyes turn on her shoulder and inspire a pilot pen into flight.

Ella Lazo...bounces to the beat of the reggea world. And she has an affinity for twinkies.

Abigail Munro...“chowda’ ...bubbla’ ...grinda’ ...always a rhode islanda”

Sarah Napolitan...likes stuff. She thinks stuff is great, she likes to talk about stuff. THINGS, however, are not so cool. Discuss.

Andrew E. Petersen...is leaving college for the first time in his life very soon. May God have mercy on his poor soul. Thank You.

Laura Phillips...would like to remain anonymous.

John Ramsey...stumbles like a poet lost in dreams; he pours his heart out in stupendous schemes....Create *unceasing novelties*:
Venute a tous nous debaucher.

Melanie Scriptunas...just figured out what the hell was going on.

Alison Shaffer...sleeps with her fists clenched and wakes up with bruises in her palms. "Dona nobis pacem."

Christopher Tereshko...wouldn't be nearly as good a poet if he was ever sober or had a girlfriend..."It is pointless to slash my wrists. My hands would fall off. And then what hope would I have?" - Mark Strand...He will always be salty.

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