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THE VEHIC SPRING 2005

I AM, BY CALLING, A
DEALER IN WORDS AND
WORDS ARE,
OF COURSE,
THE MOST
POWERFUL DRUG
USED BY MANKIND. NOT
ONLY DO WORDS INFECT,
ERGOTISE, NARCOTISE,
AND PARALYSE, BUT THEY
ENTER INTO AND COLOUR
THE MINUTEST CELLS OF
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AS MADDER MIXED WITH
A STAG'S FOOD AT THE
ZOO COLOURS THE
GROWTH OF THE
ANIMAL'S ANTLERS.
MOREOVER, IN THE CASE
OF THE HUMAN ANIMAL,
THAT ACQUIRED TINT,
OR TAIN, IS
TRANSMISSIBLE...

I AM, BY CALLING, A DEALER IN WORDS; AND WORDS ARE, OF COURSE, THE MOST POWERFUL DRUG USED BY MANKIND. NOT ONLY DO WORDS INFECT, ERGOTISE, NARCOTISE, AND PARALYSE, BUT THEY ENTER INTO AND COLOUR THE MINUTEST CELLS OF THE BRAIN, VERY MUCH AS Madder MIXED WITH A STAG'S FOOD AT THE ZOO COLOURS THE GROWTH OF THE ANIMAL'S ANTLERS. MOREOVER, IN THE CASE OF THE HUMAN ANIMAL, THAT ACQUIRED TINT, OR TAIN, IS TRANSMISSIBLE...

YOUR CALLING SHOULD EXACT THE UTMOST THAT MAN CAN GIVE FULL KNOWLEDGE, EXQUISITE JUDGEMENT, AND SKILL IN THE HIGHEST, TO BE PUT FORTH, NOT AT ANY SELF-CHOSEN MOMENT, BUT DAILY AT THE NEED OF OTHERS? MORE THAN THIS. YOUR DREAD ART DEMANDS THAT INSTANT, IMPERSONAL VISION WHICH IN ONE BREATH, ONE BEAT OF THE PULSE, CAN AUTOMATICALLY DISMISS EVERY PRECONCEIVED IDEA AND IMPRESSION, AND AS AUTOMATICALLY RECOGNISE, ACCEPT, AND OVERCOME WHATEVER OF NEW AND UNSUSPECTED MENACE MAY HAVE SLID INTO THE LIGHT BENEATH YOUR STEADFAST HANDS.

BUT SUCH VIRTUE IS NOT REACHED OR MAINTAINED EXCEPT BY A LIFE'S LABOUR, A LIFE'S SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION. ITS REWARD IS NOT ONLY THE KNOWLEDGE OF MASTERY AND THE GRATITUDE OF THE LAYMAN, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BRING CONTENT. ITS TRUE REWARD IS THE DEARLY PRIZED, BECAUSE UNPURCHASABLE, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ONE'S FELLOW-CRAFTSMEN.

-RUDYARD KIPLING

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THE REMNANTS OF YOU

By: Katy Dwiggins

Jaded in a jar,
My ballet limbs
And tangled wings
Fall hesitantly
Into swirls of your color.

Cold water
In patterned chaos
Surrounds me,
Exuding the immodesty of
Permanence pretended.

Momentum of an unhurried pace
Propels me forward
Toward
A lover who will
Regretfully
Have me.

Clumps of you
Strung around the bedroom floor
Render my hands still
While your picture falls
From the windowsill,
Creating shards
Too sharp
To put back together.

My mistakes stand behind me,
Lingering,
Ready to catch me if I
Take a step back and
Submit to their gravity.
Embraces I wore like a mid-winter coat
Stripped from my back
Down to unwanted nakedness.

Walking barefoot to the car
I drive
as I paint your portrait
On the foggy windshield
With my finger
After exhaling
Heavy breath
On lonely glass.

SUNRISE, EARLY SPRING, WITH CIGARETTE

By: Mario Podeschi

Three ducks and a gopher
lifted the sun today
while I watched, unimpressed
the cigarette smoke in a halo around my spinning head—
the taste of wine and you still fresh on my lips
chapped by the cold.

The sun reflects on the dirty pond.
The light catches on empty beer bottles
and I think of our tongues
and how they resemble our cheeks in the dark
and how kissing you is utterly unique
because our tongues know how to embrace
to nuzzle, cuddle, and grope one another.
The lesser kisses
(I ponder as the duck-mates swim in circles)
are not like ours—
they are wet and artificial
Kool-Aide kisses,
sugared water, really
and the other passions have not been made of desire,
no, they are metals
metals beaten out of mutual frustration
and a forlorn acceptance that, yes,
she'll do,
he'll do,
he'll do me
just in case no one else will—
all kisses are the same
except ours.

The morning SUV roars down the street
as close to a cock-a-doodle-doo as you'll get in a college town
as my jeans stretch as my "that" chases the rising sun
while I remember your hands
wandering, like two drunks,
tracing the inferior contours of my body
from face to arms
to hands which you squeeze

to front and back and upper thigh.

And I remember my own hands, too,

one on the cushion near your head

it's thumb bragging to the fingers that he, he is the closest

he is the one nearest to touching you

he is the one that the strands of your brunette hair fall on as you
turn your head.

And my other hand caresses your face

the first caress of my life—

it caresses with pious sincerity

it showers you with my feelings of unworthy

it touches your cheek as one touches a house of cards,

Grandma's vase, a newborn child

not for fear of breaking you

so much as breaking stride.

My "that" chases the sun

as I taste wine and you on my lips

and the cabernet sauvignon has coloured my junior high blushes

in permanent maker, on these lips

these frolicking lips

that sing to ducks and gopher and sun and SUV.

**I'M NOT THE BUTTERFLY,
I'M THE KNIFE**

By: Allison Staulcup

You cut the butterfly
in half
with a butter knife
and apologize
for making it bleed.

You didn't even
know blood could
come from
fluttering wings.

You find the whole
thing appealing
red clashes orange
and the butterfly's
barely breathing.

ACCEPTANCE

By: Heather Lucas

They told me I was too loud.
So I silenced myself,
I did not vote,
Or write,
Or speak out when I was wronged.
I was quiet.

They told me I was “un-lady-like.”
So I played with dolls,
And wore dresses and ribbons,
And played house
And dressed up:
I was “girly.”

They told me I was Ugly.
So I wore make-up,
Bought a new nose,
Wore the right clothes,
Stood taller and straighter,
Yet, I felt smaller.

They told me I was fat.
So I took comfort in a cement throne.
Hovered over the pit for hours,
Until the regret for indulging
Was expelled.
I was Thin.

Now I am a concentration camp victim.
I am judged.
I am sickly.
I am torn and broken.
Held together only by a nutrient tube under hospital observation.
They tell me I am disturbed, and depressed.
They ask how can you do this to YOUR body?
I am never accepted.

WORDS

By: Katy Dwiggins

The brown-rim stain
Of Tea, Earl Grey,
Hovers on my eager tongue
While my words spill out of the pitcher
And down my chin
Like light from the east.
My pink liquid magic tastes rosy,
Feels cozy,
In its fragrant foliage,
Singing something soft.

But my heat,
Those simmering waves
Of audio-transparency
Combust like fierce jazz after sunset,
Searing you skin
Like iron upon flesh.

I pour like rain
While I attempt to remove
This brown-rim stain.
Manna from heavy heaven
My mantra,
My tantra,
Heals all
Like a whirlwind Mother Teresa

THANK YOU

By: A.T. Shoot

I read your words
eat your heart
A starving
cannibal,
I gorge myself
stuffed
swollen
sick
and satisfied—
thank you
for all
you've given.

72 BEATS OF

By: A.T. Shoot

shared silence
the orange glow
of cigarettes
in the dark

I sit at the table,
watch you move
across the room –
your naked body
pale blue
in the streetlight
that shines through
the motel window

the feeling can't
last – never does
but right now
things are good.

I THINK WE HANG OUT TOO MUCH

By: Allison Staulcup

sing for me, please,
a little out of key.

show who you are
with faded t-shirts
and dusty eyes.

tell me what it's like to
be this plain. keep it tall.
make up a dance that we
both can run away from.

stop the conversation
to tell me what you
really mean to say
before you speak and work
that knot out of your back.

show up at the party and
park against the wall. make
eye contact in my direction
but don't say anything. let me
compliment your shoes and
maybe wear them everyday.

make swearing a hobby and
staring an addiction. spotlight
me with the moon. stay away
when the clouds let go of the rain.
stop my head from swirling and
make it all safe. hit me with the
stars. grab my lips with yours.

playing ring around the rosy
kids who won't remember your
name. fold your body to look real
cool. fall into the movie, become
that handsome lead. cry about
things never said. pick up that
broom and sweep me a way. throw
me off the road. sing to me off key.

STORAGE

By: A.T. Shoot

Worry comes in mailboxes
Hope in theatres
Sadness kept in wells
Nervousness hums in powerlines

Guilt hides in dresser drawers
Regret covered by sheets and dust in attics
Rage is kept in holsters
Comfort flaps on clotheslines

Curiosity is tucked into books
Hatred in your top shirt pocket
Certainty is lost in piles of laundry
Lust gets slipped under the mattress

Wonder is kept in crayon boxes
Jealousy on windowsills
Pride kept on mantles
Greed folded in wallets

Happiness is parceled out in saltshakers
And sugar packets
Loneliness in bottles
But love,
Love grows in acres and acres
Of throbbing green fields.

PLUM PERFECT

By: Katy Dwiggin

Pale perfect purple
The rust in these veins
But I am not a pretty girl.

At least I'm wearing
clean underwear.

LAST MINUTE

By: Meghan Morales

Dry scratchy eyes
strain to focus
blurred by buzzing light
escaping off the screen

Sneaking all around me
distractions plot my doom
empty acidic irritation
nags viciously at my stomach
while bitter cold coffee aftertaste
leaves stains across my tongue

Ordered space captured in chaos
"to do" list fallen on the floor
its well intended guidance
another waste of time

Soon my body will collapse
kept alive on caffeinated life support
hours passing me by
transition out of night
normal rays of hope
create uneven panicked breaths

LAST MONDAY'S SUMMERSAULT

By: Kelly Richards

Harvey is stuck in a cheap hotel.
Green pin striped curtains
brush the floor as if they were
sheets of sandpaper trying to chase away the shine.
Next door, a young couple is singing
"Summer Nights." Probably practicing for the
Karaoke contest in the lounge tonight.

He thinks about Lois Ann.
Three states away, she
sits at her desk and watches the
pencil holder wobble at a twitch of
her foot, like a top tired of spinning.
Slits of moonlight from the stop sign window
sing to her as they brush the
shadows out of her eyes.

Last Monday Harvey slapped Lois.
The red handprint on her face
ties itself to Harvey's finger.
Across the street, the sleeping sky
wears a pin striped suit
the county fair's
spotlights gave him.

Back home
three states away, Lois Ann
doesn't want to put up with
Harvey's light, so
she stands up to
close the curtains with
last Monday's summersault
rolling out of her mind.

A PEACEFUL MOMENT

BY: Staci Luce

Just a moment of rest and peace. A relaxing after-meal smoke. Time to not consciously be focused on the past, the present, or the future of anyone or anything. I believe this state of mind is what's referred to as "comfortably numb." No focus. No worries. Everything held at bay for just this moment of solitude.

Peace is not something that comes easily to soldiers in a war zone. Constant vigilance and attention to detail is required for survival. Moments like these are far and few between. Always is the thought that something is going to happen when we, at last, let our guard down, so we don't. The subconscious though, it never rests. Even in sleep, ever vigilant, trained in its own way, just like the soldier it belongs to. To respond to anything perceived as a threat, a living, breathing weapon. Locked and loaded. Ever poised like a snake, ready to strike at a threat before my wakeful mind even realizes what's happened.

Weary, bone-tired and battle-worn from days and nights without number of constant work and little sleep, my subconscious allows me to rest. Endless days in the scorching sun, feeling as though the very sun that nourishes my home with crops of corn and wheat turns this place into a living Hell and literally fries my mind and body. The smell of sweat that endlessly permeates every piece of my uniform. Boots that have walked more miles than I know through this Hell and Earth smell of wet leather, sweaty feet and Army issued talcum powder. Fresh sweat, even at rest, trickles down my face, neck, back, and chest.

I think of what the next minute or hour or day might bring; what explosions, gunfire or protests at the gates. People who don't want us here, don't believe we're here to free them, only to enslave them for ourselves and take their oil, gather to yell profanities we don't understand. They throw rocks and spit at us every chance they get.

We soldiers understand why they're skeptical. I've wondered many times what we're doing here myself. I've seen people killed senselessly. We have laws in our country preventing animals from the same treatment their women are openly given here. There are children in the streets, dirty and starving. I wish I could protect them. Of course that's impossible, but my service here will end the generations of abuses these innocent people have

endured. The same children I seen now in the streets will grow up with a different future than their parents...if they survive.

My own children come to mind. I try not to think about them or my wife. I miss her most at night when it's dark and quiet, when I would normally have her sleeping peacefully at my side. My children just down the hall, safely tucked in their beds, dreaming of all the fun things they'll do tomorrow; not whether they'll live through another day of fear and hunger.

I receive letters from the often. My wife writes that everything's okay, that she misses me and prays for my safe return. My daughter writes short letters and sends me cards made of construction paper, while my son sends me stick-figure drawings of our family. I'm always in them, even though I'm not there, and all of us are smiling.

My children tell me they're proud of me because I'm a hero. I certainly don't feel like a hero. I feel like an old, tired, janitor in a giant kitty litter pan, trying to clean up fifty years of someone else's shit.

A lot of people back home don't believe we belong here. In the beginning there was much unrest and speculation in the military ranks over whether this would be another Vietnam. Not because we feared losing, but because we feared being openly hated when we came home. Believe or don't believe why we're here, but try to understand that we're only following orders; just like the Vietnam vets did. We see and do things we may never talk about except to another veteran, and sometimes not even then. There are images, sounds, smells and the taste of blood in the air that will be a part of our dreams for the rest of our lives. We deserve the respect of our fellow Americans for our sacrifices, regardless of how they feel about our country's invasion of Iraq.

More recently I have been told that there is yellow, camouflage and stars and stripes ribbons on a lot of cars back home. I feel certain that this means big welcome homes for those of us who make it home. For those who don't, I pray there is a God in Heaven that will take all pain and memory of this place from them, so that they may find peace.

I can't wait to get home myself, to kiss my wife and children. I need to put my arms around them and know that it's real, not just a dream whose ghosts will vanish with the morning sun.

THE SAVIOR

By: Katy Dwiggin

The hallow of voices rings
Echoing through my brain,
Leaving me deflated and flat.
I am delicate, for a change,
With shallow sockets for lonely eyes
Trying to balance on top
Of your tight rope agenda

My dirty nails make
My blisters swell
And I feel like phlegm
Moving up from the throat
To the mouth.
His embrace,
Cosmetic and medicated,
Rests on my shoulders
Like bulbous balloons
Weighted down by a harness
Of octopus arms.

This melodramatic mindset of mine
Bleeds into the sidewalk
Lying broken and rooted.
With a fever in my face
And a vacuous hiss on my lips
I assume the proper posture
For an unholy bath.
The tongue melts,
The lungs slit,
And light bulbs of virtue
Flicker in the distant, green pasture.

ISLANDS

By: Danielle Hooke

This is not worth writing in a diary
Last night I couldn't believe what had come over me
Because I had said
For many months
That indifference would not ruin me
But I cannot decipher
That look you threw at me
Do you want to break my finger?
Or do you have something to say to me

I've filled pages
None of it makes any sense though
Don't know how to use commas
And where the hell does a semi-colon go
Between two independent clauses
Is that what we are?
Two islands on the open ocean
And fear is the punctuation
That divides us

UNWANTED CHILD

By: Katy Dwiggin

The brown sack waits between
her legs for the score
while the needle is slow to settle,
momentary as a sound.

Phallic abrasions
and menstrual restraints
of wilted lovers
become this stir-upped confessional.

Scandalous secretions and
tissue debris are removed
with a refining finesse,
drying her out.

There's a deepness in the sky
as she exits from Eden
slightly wicked,
with her watery truth.

It could have spewed
from the lips of a heretic
as Christ and his saints slept
among her secret purpose.

Gritting her teeth like
a drill to the pavement
she sees her womb lying
crumpled in the wastebasket.

MY PAIN OR YOURS

By: Allison Staulcup

You won't let me listen
to love songs anymore,
because it only reminds me
of things I've never had
and you're tired of pretending
to listen when the room grows quiet
and we're not talking about you.

The nodding of your head
has become habit like the dog
in the back window of your car
and you wonder when someone
will tell me I'm beautiful
so I will shut up about it.

You know I can't see far
enough to reach and it kills me,
but I'm not allowed to write
about death anymore.
You try to plant concrete
goals in my mind
you give me the string
to hold onto as the balloon
floats off into the sky.

I beg for hours to go faster
as to maybe get to the point
where I'd be happier.
You shoot the clock
To end it, but no one can tell
if it's to put me out of
my pain or yours

TIMMY

By: Kelly Richards

“Mommy, I have to go to the bathroom.” Timmy whispers to me.

I drag myself up from the plastic couch in the tiny hospital room. As I move around the various machines and monitors, everything blends in as a vision of white. The walls are white with nothing to decorate them; the floor is white though tracks run along it from the wheels of the traveling machines. The machines themselves are all placed on white metal stands. One wrong move and I'll wake the whole hospital gong of fighting metal cars.

It's been three days since I've gotten any sleep. The plastic coated couch is short, thin, and hard. It crackles every time I turn. Sometimes I wish I could curl up with my son on the mattress of his hospital bed, but there is barely any room. Even more I wish I could go home to my own warm bed. But tonight it's my husband's turn for that. Gerry deserves it.

On his third night here I came to relieve him. He placed his fingers on the dark crescents under his eyes as he rose and hung his arms on my shoulders. His thick red hair clung to his head, matted from sleeping on the plastic couch. He wore his Star Trek Experience T-shirt he bought when we took the whole family to California last year. The shirt lied crooked on his shoulders and was wrinkled; a big crease ran down the center.

My own clothes are just the same now. My silk blouse looks as if I pulled it out of the bottom of a suitcase and threw it on. The jacket to my navy pants suit is going to have to be dry-cleaned. I shouldn't have come straight from work. Dr. Kwan keeps telling us it's alright to go home at night and get some rest, but I can't leave Timmy all by himself at night. Gerry and I make sure at least one of us stays with him every night.

I walk to the side of my son's bed and whisper as I let out a sigh. “Okay honey, give me your hands.” I pull him to a sitting position and give him a big hug as I lift him out of bed. His brown eyes appear black against his pale skin. He licks his chapped lips, almost as white as his cheeks. His bare feet hit the floor, and his shoulders collapse with a sudden shiver. I run the palms of my hands up and down his arms. Not much meat on them. My thumb can reach my index finger around his biceps. “Better?” My finger lifts his chin to look in his dark eyes.

“Uh, huh.” He buries his nose in his chest again.

Last year Tim had his ninth birthday party. Gerry and I took him to his favorite place, Great America. Ever since I forced him on a roller coaster at age six, he hasn't been able to stay off them. Even I won't go on some of the ones he goes on. If only he would have reacted the same way when I forced him to eat green beans. We went on every roller coaster in the park. It took us the whole day, and this time Tim was forcing me on all the coasters.

"Come on Mommy!" Timmy grabbed my hand and pulled me through the gates to the American Eagle.

"I don't know honey. This one has a really big drop."

"Mommy... this roller coaster is older than you! It's nothing." He held his head high and looked straight into my eyes. "Don't be scared Mommy."

How could I resist that? On the coaster Timmy smiled with his mouth wide open and the whites of his eyes took on the wind. His hands were up in the air. I looked at my own hands, one strangling the safety bar, the other crushing Gerry's knee cap.

Gerry walked with a limp for the rest of the day, but he never complained.

"Why are you walking funny Daddy?" Timmy asked.

Gerry palmed the top of Timmy's head and smiled down at him. "I'm walking funny because your mom is the strongest mom in the world and she doesn't even know it." He looked over at me and grinned. "You're going to be super strong just like your mom when you grow up."

"I want to be strong like you Daddy!" Timmy grabbed Gerry's hand. "Girls are sissies!"

"I'll show you a sissy!" I lifted Timmy up by the waist and pried him off Gerry.

The next day Gerry noticed a big lump on Timmy's neck. We didn't think anything of it at first. He probably got whacked by a kid at school, Gerry said. But I was still worried, because it wasn't bruise or red.

"Ger, will you please just take him to the hospital to get it checked out." I stood in front of his desk in the den.

He leaned back in his chair. "Look Jilly, you're getting yourself all worried for nothing. Kids get bumps and bruises all the time."

I looked down and fiddled with a piece of dead skin on my thumb. "I know you're probably right, but what's the harm in just checking?"

side of Timmy. He reached over and grabbed my hand without taking his eyes off the TV set. The three of us sat like that for the rest of the night.

During Timmy's treatment Gerry and I didn't see much of each other. When I slept on the plastic couch, he slept at home, and when he slept at the hospital I slept in our fluffy king size bed. We made sure we were both at the hospital every night to have dinner with Timmy, but then all our attention was focused on Timmy.

"Mommy watch!" Timmy pulled the bottom of his Batman T-shirt up to his neck. "Daddy, look!" He sucked in his belly and you could see his whole rib cage. "I'm a skeleton!"

I couldn't say anything. I just plastered a smile on my face and fiddled with my spaghetti. Gerry leaned over and started counting the ribs with Timmy. I guess it was better to keep him smiling.

Now Timmy's in the final stages of treatment. Dr Kwan is confident that he will be okay. I have the most confidence of anyone. I wish some of my confidence would rub off on Timmy. In a way I think it has. Just last night, he told me he wants to go back to Great America next year for his birthday. I told him we would. I know we will.

I stretch out my knees on the resisting plastic couch. I roll over to get some sleep, but the door opens and I see a triangle of light on the wall next to me. I roll over again and sit up, ready to greet the nurse.

"Jilly?"

I strain to see the shadow in the doorway even though I know it's Gerry from his voice.

"Hey Hun," I whisper. "Close the door. He's sleeping."

Gerry slips around the edge of the door and gently closes it behind him. He creeps over to the couch and slowly sits down on the opposite end.

I turn to face him. "What are you doing here?"

"I couldn't sleep." He looks at his hands dangling between his knees.

I never slept when I was at home either. Even though our bed is more comfortable than the couch, being in Timmy's presence is more restful than being alone at home. I'm almost glad Gerry seems to feel the same way. It's reassuring in a way.

I look over at Timmy. "I can't sleep at home either."

Gerry moves closer to me on the couch. "Do you think we could ask the nurse to bring in an extra cot?" He puts his hand on my knee.

I let out a little giggle remembering what I did to his knee last year. But then I realize I also have a nervous feeling running from my stomach to my chest.

"Mommy, I'm thirsty." Timmy turns, his cheeks are relaxed and his lip pouts a bit. He smiles when he sees his father is there too.

Gerry takes his hand off my knee, stands up and walks over to Timmy bedside. "Hey kiddo."

I stand up to answer him. "Sure thing, honey. Then you have to go back to sleep, okay?" Timmy nods, and I go into the small bathroom to get a cup of water.

I put a paper cup under the faucet and let the water overflow onto my hand. The coolness soothes the nervous feeling in my chest and stomach and I stand there letting the water run over my hand until it feels numb. I'm happy Gerry decided to stay at the hospital tonight. I stare at my cold hand and realize that maybe it's not only Timmy's presence I miss when I'm in bed at home. It's Gerry too.

After I give Timmy the cup of water, I put my hand into Gerry's and he makes the numbness tingle with warmth.

BIOGRAPHIES

KATY DWIGGINS- ENGLISH MAJOR

MARIO PODESCHI- ENGLISH MAJOR

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