

The York Review

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Digital Photograph, 6x8 inches

Editor's Note

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all my dreams for this edition would have never come true.

-Kaelin Ball



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Karenina in the Country

Emily Deardorff

Here comes November,
the wind blowing on the trees
like a child at her birthday candles.

Here comes morning, dishing
its glob of yolk sun from the
skillet of sky, *Here, eat!*

Here come the bells
of afternoon, tinkling on the
bridle of your fine new mount.

So much beauty in this world
but you're bound to the motif of a train,
hammering forth as thunder,

The black streak of a bull charging towards the
red womb where you suckled into life,
a small sticky grub.

Here comes the hand
of memory to turn
its key of light.

Here come the legs of the mare
blazing trail through knee
high grass, to the place

Where apples dangle in their
sweet sockets and flowers ooze
scents sugary as halved figs.

Oh, how the earth takes hold
your bare shoulder, shaking, *See:*
you can step out of despair

easily as a cotton dress.

Gravitation

Susanne Wolf

electric
eccentric
eclectic
a lightning bolt
in a thunderstorm
the midnight sky
is torn

I have been warned
and sworn
to silence
which very well
can turn
to violence

in the mind
rewind
through space
and time
so sublime
surreal
my fate to steal

a scientific law
secretly scrawled
on a celestial wall
a divine rule
too cruel
to avow
and even more brutal
to disallow

though I have learned
the bond can be burned
and charred
broken
into shards
but the slivers
of glass
cut my wrist
and inflame the pain
to bleed
and then recede

but still
hold on
fast
this separation
can't
last
collapsed
relapsed
perhaps
this clasp
won't
come
undone

whether or not I
wish to abide
I will always
be tied
and reside
at your side

no room for subtraction
I resent this attraction
though stung by your reaction
to find another distraction
no space for new addition
you want a different addiction
though no composed petition
will revoke your admission

the complications multiply
my stress level is far too high
I shouldn't have to clarify
for you know the reason why
the solution to divide
keep your distance, run and hide
depart to the world outside
then come to bring me for the ride

not a long enough vacation
from this labyrinth of sensation
welcomed with some hesitation
with elation
and frustration
can't choose the destination
predestined by gravitation

(Wo)Man Troubles: the male crisis

Hillary Henson

You know it's going to happen. In fact, you can see it coming a mile away and yet you sit there, like an idiot or a masochist, and just let it. On the sidewalk of life, you are the faded pink chewing gum discarded by some throwback of a pedestrian, who doesn't even consciously realize that he is setting a sticky trap for unwary prey, just as his ancestors did millennia ago. She walks in, her shoe descending on your pale, pink existence and BAM! You're in love, and *obGod* there are a thousand reasons why this is the worst thing that has ever (with an infinite number of evers thrown into a pair of straining parentheses) happened to you.

First of all, you're with someone else. You're in a serious relationship; you're engaged; you're married; you're expecting. Maybe you are already raising those 1.5 kids inside a white picket fence. Maybe she is a he, and that raises a whole different set of problems. You're religious; you're spiritual; you're atheist, but moral. You are definitely not convincing yourself. In fact, none of that stuff matters because s/he is flipping golden-reddish-brownish-black hair away from an incredibly attractive forehead. On anyone else this would be a casual gesture, but when s/he does it is a sign from the God(s) you may or may not believe in that you are meant to be together in an entirely pelvic kind of way.

You glance around, wondering if anyone else has noticed that a divinity has entered the room. You'd think there'd have been some kind of notice that you were being visited by the god or goddess of infidelity, but then again, you could've missed the memo. You'd have liked to have brushed your teeth a little longer, actually used the mouthwash instead of only glancing at it. You stare at the (wo)man you've just fallen in love with and suddenly the bad points don't seem so obvious. Instead of a train wreck, your life is actually a fender-bender and maybe this gorgeous, sexy, charmer happens to be a mechanic. You grin nervously as a part of your mind identifies the moderately clever metaphor, and ponders using it as some kind of pick-up line. Nah, too juvenile.

You've got to make a move, because if you don't take a flying leap off of the cliff of faith, someone else is going to get there first. They'll no doubt be fully prepared with a parachute and a minty-fresh smile. No one else could possibly appreciate the sculpted perfection of your dearest love anyway—not like you can. You're special; you're attuned; you are soulmates. Yes, that's it. You are destined to be together. Nothing like previous commitments, previous marriages, previous children, or even previous sexual orientations can stand between you two. It's destiny. You can't fight it because you can't fight what you aren't even sure if you believe in. Secure in the knowledge of your soul-deep connection, you smooth your hair, check your teeth, and move in for the (insert sports reference here).

You're walking, strolling really, perhaps sauntering is the word. You want him/her to see you coming. You want them to see you because then it will be their turn to gaze in stupefied amazement as they slowly realize how gosh-darn, puzzle-piece perfect you are for them. But they are distracted by a loose thread on their cuff. They aren't even looking at you! Thread, *thread* is more important than you at this point! Doubt assails you and you detour, looking casual, making it look natural, like you always intended to walk over to the bulletin board/water fountain/indigestion section of the medicine aisle at Wal-Mart. You are innocently, nonchalantly hyperventilating while the love of your life is grooming him/herself. This is so typical; you can see just where this is heading. You're going to be that guy or girl on that TV show who falls head-over-unreciprocated-heels with the girl or guy who will take five seasons to realize you exist, just before your show gets cancelled due to low ratings. No, you cannot be that guy! That is the guy you rage at. That's the guy that everyone says needs to grow a pair and just tell her how he feels. Please God, if you exist, do not make me that guy!

You turn from your little white, Kaopectate idol to pace frantically (but maintaining a calm façade) and run smack dab into the angelic visage you just happened to be contemplating. Maybe if you knock her over, you can fall on top of him, thereby generating the perfect amount of romantic conflict! This works in the movies all the time.

You poise to spring if he falls, a witty apology already on your lips, but she only stumbles a bit. You sigh in disappointment, almost missing the part where s/he asks you the time. You mutter something about daylight savings and she glides off, taking your heart and hopes with him.

In a gloomy daze you stare after that tantalizing but retreating form and console yourself. It never would have worked out, anyway. It would be Romeo and Juliet/The Battle of Troy/Mulder and Scully all over again. The world is better off with your love unacknowledged and unconsummated. For the good of society, for the sake of justice, freedom, and the American way, you can never reveal your mutual adoration. As you shuffle off back to your four-car sedan and your comfortably padded wife, the weight of the world has never sat more heavily upon your shoulders.

Under the Covers

Tiffany Layport

She lost him under the covers
the night at the party
when the candles were lit
and the voices were loud
hand in hand she followed him
until they fell into the clouds together
the ones from Sears.
The whisper of an angel filled her
heart
and when she came to her
came to her
came to her
senses
and when she awoke
in the morning
her halo was gone
and he was gone
she lost him under the covers.

Photographic Nature

Erica Dunn

I dip the paper gently into the magical fluid,
slowly it works away revealing something,
like firecrackers in the night sky the
picture explodes into existence,
but like a quiet whisper after rain.

It's dark in this tiny room,
and yet I see more comfort bathed in light,
than the outside world has revealed,
I am focusing on the world how I see it,

each picture developed silently tells.
The sand-like details are of a calm world of,
people seeing only shallow depth—the background
blurred, only the object in front in focus—unable,
to find the great depth within arms
ever elusive grasp of passion.

This photo I know is a work in progress,
just like my life,
a little dodging here, a little burning there,
to make it worthwhile, takes effort.
I grab it out of its chemical reaction,
bathe it in water and let it just dry,
hoping to fix the mistakes next time.



DC Arches
Kaitlin Flinchbaugh
Digital Photograph, 6x4 inches

Balance

Tiffany Layport

In the grass
by the bridge
watching a rock
losing its balance
heavy and stern

helplessly, armlessly holding on,
holding the bridge and soil
in place, facing
submersion in the deep,
dark water
falling faster
alone
falling, fast
slapping the surface
in frustration
without reaction

giving up and slowly
floating to the bottom and
laying in shape and form
heavy and stern

but not to be seen again
by the girl
on the blanket
in the grass
by the bridge
watching a rock
losing its balance.

A Shaman's Journey to the Spirit of the Earth

Emily Deardorff

Joe Saenz is on a horse galloping at high pitch. The sun dips behind the Dzil, a mountain range that curves the southernmost spine of the Gila wilderness. Darkness is coming fast as it does in the desert—a heavy black lid that slides over the kettle of the earth. The air is a sea-green dusk. When the last cloth of light is tugged free from the day's line, we must be low to the ground, hunched close to a fire. We must let the earth rest her bright blue eye.

We gather sticks. Each parched branch snaps like a dried chicken bone, and we stack the pieces into the fire pit like the fatter halves of wishes. Joe strikes a match, holds it steadily to the pile. The flame catches and casts a copper patina on his Apache features—sharp cheekbones, deep-set eyes, stoic chin. A lock of black, glossy hair falls free from behind his ear. He tucks it back in silence, his lips holding tightly to one another as if they bar a secret. Nearby, the horses lift their heads and snort. “Easy, Red Hawk,” Joe says, the timbre a deep, soothing hush. He outstretches his hand to the Appaloosa, and the horse extends his neck in return, seeking out his fingers with the hound of his velvet muzzle. “Easy.”

In the Southwestern night, the stars hang like tears on a dark, not-quite-human face. I roll out my camping pad, my bag. The ground is still warm from the day's bare sun, holding heat like iron. But a chill is settling in. Sarah dons her headlamp. “I'll be back,” she whispers, observing Joe's pensive frame by the fire. She vanishes into the night's gaping mouth.

Eric pulls a Camel from the pocket of his flannel shirt and leans close to the fire, holding the white stick at a tongue of flame until it catches. Joe watches him closely, inaudibly. “Smoke?” Eric asks, reaching into his pocket for another cigarette.

“No, thanks,” Joe replies, eyes still fixed on the cigarette as Eric draws smoke from its belly. He blows a ring into the air and the three of us

watch as it dilates. “You know, that’s a bad habit.”

Eric and I exchange glances. “Uh, not to be rude, but isn’t tobacco a big part of tradition for you?” Embarrassed at my friend’s candor, I tuck my face into the dark shoulder of night, away from the blonde light the fire throws. Joe unlocks his gaze. He sighs deeply, fully, looking towards the horses as if to relay some tacit message. Their black eyes hold tiny reflections of flame like crystal balls.

“See, this is what many fail to understand. You, tobacco, America—for you, it’s personal habit. You abuse. That’s why it kills so many of you,” Joe picks up a nearby stick and prods the embers of the fire. A flurry of sparks swirl upward like brief spirits and vanishes. “For us, it’s sacred. It’s ritual. You join with the plant. With the earth.”

Eric cradles the half-burned Camel in his fingers, eying it with a blend of curiosity and guilt. “These things you cannot understand, do not feel badly,” Joe says, leaning towards him, his voice steady, patient.

The Gila wilderness around us buzzes with the mystical energy of a desert night. On the westerly ridge, a coyote sends his thin, sinewy howl towards the moon’s bald face. The horses prick their ears, the sense of flight eddying across each muscle. Overhead, the stars sharpen the contrast of darkness and light, their networks growing wider and wider like an aerial mirror of the outlying cities switching on their lights. Silver City, New Mexico is somewhere to the east—it hovers in a sulfuric cloud beyond the sharp spine of the Dzil. Joe’s home—rather, the modern space he occupies—is somewhere on the outskirts, abutting the city and the reservation. At the end of the dusty lane leading to his trailer, a sign reading “Wolf Horse Outfitters” hangs dully. His only avenue into the land of his people, the ancient, sacred tracts of his spirit, is as a tour guide. He must accept sweaty money from wayfaring tourists as a provincial key into the barred world of his ancestors.

And he does so with an incalculable calm. The horses snort and paw at the red earth as the coyote’s wail rises up again. Their bodies

are strong. Their muscled necks bear a power that could easily break free of the hitching post. But they do not bolt. Wildness is in their eyes: they eye Joe, pleading. He pulls himself up from the ground and takes several full, even strides toward them, holding out his arms as in greeting. He eases his large hand around Red Hawk's long face, rubbing the tender spot right behind his ear, as if to say, *no need to run. There's nowhere to go.*

A rustling emerges from the shadows—Sarah, with a bundle of sticks and the rotting arms of stunted Juniper. Her long auburn hair is peppered with burs. “Ha, ha, not gonna be cold tonight!” She trots towards the pit, balancing the load in one arm like a trophy while throwing tinder onto the fire with the other.

“Easy, now,” Joe says, glancing over from Red Hawk, whose head now hangs low with a conceded calm. “You can make a big fire and stand far back, or keep it small and huddle close.”

--

Dawn in the desert does not creep as it does in temperate regions. Its arrival is abrupt and raw: the sun does not stretch out her body or rub her eyes, but unties the earth from the moorings of night with robust resolve. Like a bandit. I shake myself from my sleeping bag. A small tail of smoke curls up from the fire pit, the embers still smoldering in the hot center. Joe is already at the horses, cinching girths and loading packs. All around the long bodies of saguaros tower in the lion-colored light like a gathering of pagans in praise of their sun god.

“Where we riding today, Joe?” I ask, tying a yellow bandana around my unruly, matted brown hair.

“To the canyon, just a few miles, then we’ll be heading out. We’re due for a good monsoon. Don’t want to get you guys stuck in one.” Red Hawk tosses his head up as Joe cinches the girth another notch.

I study the sky and its seamless, concave blue. The prospect of a storm to my untrained eye seems unlikely, but I do not doubt Joe’s

observation for an instant. As he works around Red Hawk's lithe frame, he keeps one steady, leathery hand on him, his touch a supple medium that makes the interface between the human and animal realm as receiving as waves. His feet touch the ground with the same energy, the same exchange that crackles with and unites life. I extend my hand to Kissy, my grey mount. She flares her nostrils, taking in the complex universe of my scent (lemon deodorant, coconut lotion, sweat), and sneezes. Joe laughs, the first laugh I've heard from him yet. It comes deep from his belly, a sincere rumbling that gathers and frays into a thousand weightless particles. He shakes his head, a smile curling at the edges of his mouth like birch bark.

The swift gaits of the horses tug at a horizon that comes infinitely forward, like a magician pulling scarves from his mouth. When the canyon at last spikes into view, it's like the Greek temples that travelers see long before they actually get there. My legs ache, rubbed raw against the thick leather jockeys of my saddle. Joe stays several lengths ahead, his body in rhythm with Red Hawk's rocking lope. Eric and Sarah trail behind—their mounts zigzag every chance they get to gobble on the sparse clumps of brush. "Almost there," Joe yells back, slowing Red Hawk to a broken trot.

The horses pick their way carefully down a rocky bank. A dried river bed snakes into the mouth of the gorge, and the high rock walls quiver with red against the austere blue sky. The clapping of hooves reverberates down the narrow rock throat, like we're knocking on a great door. Joe is silent. His eyes are two dark pools, smooth as lakes. Red Hawk keeps his ears pricked back, waiting for his rider's command. We round a gentle bend and Joe halts. "Here," he says softly.

We dismount, secure the reins to the saddle's horn. Joe lets Red Hawk saunter off towards shade, seeking out a chance pool of water in the parched river bed. He is silent. He walks towards the canyon wall, running his hand along a deep seam. His fingers

nearly vanish against the red rock, the colors marrying like extensions of one another. “Here,” he says again, but quieter, as if the word is meant for someone else.

I squint in the sunlight, lingering a few feet behind Joe. I feel intrusive, like I’m entering some sacred room of which I have no right to occupy. “Here,” Joe says again, reaching for my hand, welcoming me in. Against the wall, I decipher now a petroglyph engraved into the surface. It’s the outline of a hand. “In the afterlife, we have no need for physical things.” He presses my small hand against it. “That’s why, when you pass from this world to the next, we only trace the edge. We are all sacred. We join with the earth.”

*Birthcode:
Answer After Living*

My birth had a question encrypted:

Month of the year
10th
Most Common Word: **Was**

Day of above month
8th
Most Common Word: **It**

Year Anno Domini
1988th
Most Common Word: **Fun**

?

—Paul Harne

The Deep (*Ars poetica*)

Ashley Reid

Beautiful lies reflecting on the surface
Hideous truths lurking in the depths beneath
Flowing like silk into oblivion
Altering its pace for nothing.

Changing course so suddenly
Reaching depths far beneath our feeble expectations
Or floating just above coherence.

Full of reflections and shadows
Capable of drowning even the most attuned
Capable of saving even the most misled.

The flat calm hiding the war below it
The brazen hunters
The vulnerable prey
The renewed birth
The inevitable death

We only see what our eyes crave

So calm it soothes the soul
But so violent it shakes belief

Rushing with power
Overtaking us all
The sweet foam decorating heaven
The cerulean waves give glimpses of hell.



Camp

Barry Hott

Digital Photograph, 36x24 inches

Here's to Us: The Millennial Generation

Michelle Pease

I pray for the
Sirens of our youth,
singing with
lust and greed,
so their definition of home
extends beyond the
fortress of crumpled sheets
and red Dixie cups.
So love means more than
I think I love you,

Good night.

Treacherous Waters

Josh Olewiler

Sand between my toes.
Staring. Longing. Anxiously awaiting
The embrace of the tide.

I wasn't ready.
I feared it.
What would become of me?
Where would it take me?
Would anyone be there to help me
If the waters became too deep,
Or would I drown?

Finally, a wave came rushing toward me.
I pushed my fears aside and stepped into its foaming edge,
But it was not meant for me.
It teased as it gently caressed my toes.

In my heart I longed for more.
I chased after it
But was too late.
Back to the sea it rushed.
Never to return.
So I waited
Sinking deeper into the sand.

Another wave came crashing onto the surf.
Its roar was loud but I showed no fear.
I rushed toward it, and it took me,
Releasing my feet from the stubborn hold of the sand.
Suddenly, water surrounded me.
With every passing moment
I found myself drifting farther from those desolate sands.
I felt at home. At peace. Complete.
I closed my eyes, not caring where the tide would take me.
I floated on its surface dipping up and down and up and down
Having no sense of thought or time,
A blissful eternity.

But the sea was cruel.
Set me adrift
Until it pounded my face back onto the shore.
There I lay in agony. In confusion.
Alone and hopeless.
The tides came and went as before.
I pursued a few, but none were meant for me.
All taunting. All deceiving.

I finally abandoned my hopeless endeavor and found myself
Content to walk along the shores
Looking at the sand and the unexpected treasures therein.
I collected the beautiful shells.
I felt the sun's warmth fill my heart.
But I still longed to be at sea.

A new wave came for me.
Joyously embraced,
It carried me further out than I'd ever gone before.
But this tide was unlike the others.
It was too eager to have me.
While my heart longed to remain with the tide,
It violently thrashed me about
And pulled me under.
Drowning me.
Ripping the shells from my hands.
Choking me.
Desperately struggling to contain me.
I swam back to the shore

Sand between my toes.
Staring. Longing. Hoping for something more.



First Time Visit

Theresa Harman

Digital Photograph, 4x6 inches

Pursuits of the Heart

Steven Valenti

The spring semester of Roger's senior year is one of great change. Not because he's nearing the end of his academic career, but because a surprise awakening, an unforeseen occurrence that forever changes his life awaits him. Roger's not your typical college student.

At thirty-seven, Roger found himself unemployed after eighteen years of service with American Airlines, where he was employed as a flight attendant. During his first year of unemployment, Roger took time to rediscover himself. He hiked the Appalachian Trail, volunteered as an elementary school reading tutor, and took painting classes while living off the 401k money he had so diligently saved. This, before deciding to enter college, something he hadn't done in his younger days but always wished he had. Despite reservations of being surrounded by a younger generation, Roger steps out of his comfort zone and enrolls.

To Roger's amazement, students of both sexes quickly gravitate to him. Some declaring they're gay, straight, or bisexual, and of course, there are some who aren't sure one way or the other. He enjoys how freely these young adults speak to him about sex, drugs, and life, and how they respect him for his life experiences. Oftentimes making him feel like a teacher himself as he answers their many probing questions.

Roger lives alone in an apartment close to the campus. Having relocated from Miami, Florida back to his hometown of York, Pennsylvania after losing his job, he's not put forth much of an effort to make friends. And although he's made friends at school, these aren't people he can hang out with. This is one area where he does not mesh with the younger crowd. At this point in life, Roger's looking for something more than partying and socializing; he's looking for love.

Roger's unmistakably handsome. He's tall, standing at 6'2", with piercing gray-blue eyes that stand out against his clear olive skin and dark-blond hair, along with a contagious smile and a friendly, fun-loving personality.

Despite that, Roger's lonely. He's tried Internet dating. Meeting guys on-line via a myriad of chat rooms hasn't worked, especially after a series of encounters in which he met guys who weren't who they said they were, or who were already involved in relationships, only interested in a quick lay. Thus prompting Roger to move on and try something else.

Roger tried frequenting the local gay bars, but found them reeking of drama and negativity, quickly moving him out of the bar scene. With no social outlets, Roger puts his thoughts of finding love on hold, filling his spare time with studying and painting. Putting the idea of meeting that special someone, a partner with whom to share his completeness with deep inside the recesses of his mind.

Having awakened later than he wanted, Roger's running behind schedule. Checking his watch, while briskly walking toward Campbell Hall, he has four minutes left before the start of class. *Shit! I'll barely make it*, he thinks, picking up his pace.

Entering, Roger quickly scans the classroom, deciding to take one of the few empty seats left, a desk directly across from the professor's. As roll call begins, he surveys the room looking for familiar faces. Recognizing two among the crowd, he flashes them a welcoming smile. As he's about to swing his eyes toward the professor, who's standing in front of the classroom, Roger notices him. Sitting to his left, in the last row of desks that line the windows, sits, in Roger's mind, one of the cutest guys he's ever laid eyes on.

Sean's a twenty-one year old junior. He lives off campus, belongs to a fraternity, and spends his free time partying when he's not working at the campus bookstore or studying. Although he's not fond of getting drunk or stoned, he does it to fit in. Like most young adults, Sean's still in the midst of trying to find himself. In spite of a major revelation which took place last semester, when he messed around with a few of his frat brothers after having gotten wasted. At first he blew it off as experimenting. But that all changed during a one-on-one sexual encounter with Zach, a co-worker, when Sean was totally sober

and fully aware. It was at that moment he knew for sure he was gay, because it all felt so right, so natural, so loving. A realization he's still uncomfortable with but knows is true.

Mentally mature for his age, Sean's shy in a boyish way, but that doesn't prevent him from making friends. He's easily likable and pleasant to look at, with large brown puppy-dog eyes and insanelly kissable lips. All of which immediately captures Roger's attention.

Damn he's cute, Roger thinks, as a wave of attraction overwhelms him. Trying to look away, there's a force of nature which calls on him to continue his gazing. *He's too young and most likely straight*. But, despite his thoughts, Roger couldn't pull his eyes away. Until, he hears a gravelly male voice calling out his name. "Uh... here!" Roger responds, rotating his head forward.

Although Roger continues looking straight ahead, there's still an instinct within to look back toward this nameless guy. What feels like minutes but are only seconds, Roger gives into his impulse simultaneously as the professor calls out, "Sean Ryder." "Here!" he utters. *So that's his name. Sean and Roger. Roger and Sean*, are the names repeating themselves in Roger's mind as he chuckles to himself.

Sean, doodling on his notebook, listens to the professor rattle on about the upcoming semester. Feeling someone's eyes burning through him, he searches the classroom. *Who's staring at me?* Starting in the rear, his eyes dart about, but no one seems to be looking in his direction. Then, slowly moving them toward the front of the classroom, his eyes lock with Roger's. *Who is he? Do I know him*, Sean questions?

Jesus, thinks Roger, *he's looking right at me. What'll I do?* Despite their thoughts, they continue staring at one another until it becomes painfully uncomfortable, both diverting their glances in different directions as if their eyes had never met.

From this point on Tuesdays and Thursdays are never quite the same, for either Roger or Sean. As that once uncomfortable stare quickly

turns into a game of flirtation which transpires throughout every class period, with neither one of them ever speaking.

Things rapidly change, however, when midway through the semester the professor announces a class project in which he's assigning students to work in pairs. Roger's mind begins to wonder, *Could I be lucky enough to work with Sean? Then what?* While Sean's thinking is much the same.

As the professor calls out student names, Roger and Sean anxiously await to hear who they'll be partnered with. As fate would have it their wishes come true. Having class time to meet and work out preliminary plans for their projects, the students begin gathering with their newly assigned partners. Roger noticing that Sean was motionless, stuffs his belongings into his knapsack before heading toward Sean's desk. The closer he gets, the more Roger's body shakes, as if his legs are made of Jell-O.

Sean, out of the corners of his eyes, nervously watches as Roger begins walking his way. *What'll I say?* As he approaches all Sean can think to do is to offer him a sweaty handshake while introducing himself.

Seating next to one another, there's a brief awkwardness in the air. Sensing this, Roger engages Sean in small talk, easing the discomfort between them before discussing their project. By the end of class, with each of them feeling more comfortable, they make arrangements to meet the following afternoon.

Patiently waiting inside the library's bustling lobby, Roger's thoughts turn to Sean. *He's more than a pretty face, he's genuine.* But Roger's concern is in the age difference. *I'm going on forty-two and he's twenty-one. Does age matter? I get the feeling he likes me as much as I like him.* And Roger was right Sean did.

Much like Roger, Sean's worries were also fixated on the age difference. His mind telling him there's no way Roger could possibly be interested in a twinkie such as himself, one so inexperienced at sex and romance. It's this type of thinking that holds Sean back. Thoughts which totally

negate the endless smiles Roger constantly flashed in his direction, as well as those now staring him in the face.

As Roger watches Sean ascend the stairs through the glass double doors, a feeling of sexual energy overcomes him, forcing him to place his knapsack over his groin. *Is this love or is it lust?* Roger's not sure at the moment.

Busily working on their project, there's an underlying current of energy that keeps bringing them together. Although they both attempt to ignore it or fight it, it just keeps happening. An inexplicable force of nature which drives people to unite, with what seems like accidental touching or simultaneously reaching for the same object, is exactly what keeps occurring between them.

Putting the finishing touches on their project, Sean blurts, "I'm hungry."

"How about coming back to my place for dinner," Rogers spouts without thinking.

"Uh, sure, why not?"

Gathering their belongings, they wonder where this and the events of the day might be heading.

Inside Roger's apartment Sean's nervousness increases with the realization they're alone.

"Have a seat," Roger says, motioning toward a plush overstuffed sofa. "Would you care for a glass of Merlot?"

"Sounds good," utters Sean, not knowing what it would taste like, but hoping the alcohol would settle his nerves.

"Make yourself at home. I'll be right back with your wine."

Enjoying the Merlot, Sean could feel a warmth flowing through his

mind and body with each sip of which he takes in rapid succession. Relaxing, he actively participates in the conversation taking place as Roger busily prepares dinner in the neighboring kitchen. The more he drinks, the more his mind fixates on Roger's alluring voice which seems to be floating through the air. *He's so nice, not to mention handsome,* Sean reflects as he mentally undresses Roger.

His mind swarming, Sean lifts himself from the sofa. Placing his empty wine glass on the coffee table, he heads toward the kitchen.

"Thought, perhaps, you'd like some company while you're cooking," Sean says, startling Roger.

"Sure, I just wanted you to be comfortable that's all."

"Actually," Sean hesitates, "The truth is...I...I'd much prefer being closer to you."

An awkward silence hangs in the air. *Now's my chance,* Sean thinks, as he rushes toward Roger, standing backside at the stove stirring something in a saucepan. Grabbing his waistline from behind, Sean places his lips next to Roger's ear, whispering, "You're incredibly sexy."

Reflexively, Roger turns his head, bringing himself face-to-face with Sean. Releasing the spoon, he cups Sean's cheeks, pulling him forward until their lips meet. Their bodies merging, Roger feels Sean's maleness pressing hard against his groin, causing a surge of sexual energy to race throughout his body.

Standing in the middle of the kitchen engaged in deep kissing, passion overtakes them. Roger gradually leading Sean toward the living room as they furiously strip one another, never once disengaging from the other's lips.

And thus, are the beginnings of what turns out to be a beautiful, loving, long-term relationship. Roger and Sean showing the world that what really matters, in the end, is love.

Hunger, My Hackneyed Lover

Emily Deardorff

At last, it's Christmas,
a day-long furlough from
our breakneck speed
which we spend in bed,
reveling at each other's ability
to stow away scraps of warmth
from a ravenous world,
stuff it down into each love pocket
like the apple my horse is keen to
sense. Outside,
the furnace gnaws away at a
cord of wood, trying to keep pace
with our human heat.

Cynical Seuss

Hillary Henson

The first thing you'll notice
As you start to grow
Are the millions of things
You never can know
And the trillions of things
You never can be
And the firm limitations
Placed on you and me.
'Cause try as you might
You can never become
A lake or a whisper,
Or grape bubble gum
And you'll never quite learn
All the things you don't know
Like the right in the wrong

Or the 'yes' in the 'no.'
And I may as well tell you
You can't learn the name,
Of everything in
the world —Just the same—
You might learn the stars
Coast your way though mathematics
And even make 'A's in
Space aerodynamics,
But there'll always be things

You never may say
Were mastered by you
Or might be someday.
Knowledge eludes you
At times in your life
And you must be prepared
For the world is quite rife
With things you can't do
And things you can't be
And not a few things
That you can't even see!
And I know that they know
That we know that they know
Of the millions of places
We never can go;
Like the side of the world
Where the sun doesn't set,
Or the moon-base on Pluto—
(It isn't built yet.)
Or the world where the moon
Really is made of cheese
Or the opposites world
Where the skies are the seas.
So don't sit there dreaming
Of those far-off shores
You can't just go wanting
What never was yours.
You've got to accept
That some things can't be
For all of the reasons,
You clearly can see...
So when you succeed

It'll be all the sweeter
For you've gone the distance
And run every meter.
With your head in the here
And your heart in the now
Your mind on the truth
And your feet on the ground.
You won't let them tell you
(‘cause you know it's not true)
That the only thing stopping
Your ‘doing’ is you.
For this ‘anything’
Which they say you can be
Is not for the likes
Of the ‘you’ and the ‘me.’
‘Cause we're oh-so-much smarter
Than people who think
That miracles happen
With a nod and a wink.
‘Cause we're wiser and braver
And right-er than they,
Who think that the Romans
Built Rome in a day.
Who think they can ‘be’
The dark or the light
But we know it just isn't possible
—Right?



Nap Time

Theresa Harman

Digital Photograph, 4x6 inches

The Creator

Robin Martin

He painted the zebras' stripes
And stretched the giraffe's neck long.
On the leopards, He flung spots.
He pinned eight tentacles to the octopus.
The Sculptor then began His greatest work of all.
From a formless blob of clay,
He stripped away the excess
Until a figure of unprecedented beauty emerged.
The winged onlookers gasped as the features came into focus.
On man were the fingerprints of the Master.

Beaten, Not Broken

Tiffany Layport

In the quiet of the walls
overlapping boundaries of whispers
kept and tamed
shadows in the dark
condensed breath
hand in own hand
behind glossy eyes

The Man in the Red and Black Plaid

Adam Richman

She sits cross-legged with her laptop on the couch in the dorm lobby. The stubborn wind squeezes through the nearly-closed window, raising goose bumps on Angelica's exposed, tan arms. Her white college tee shirt hangs loosely on her small frame, all the way down to her oversized sweatpants.

Scrolling up and down pages of typed notes, her eyebrows crinkle as she sees the words but doesn't read them. Her endless chocolate eyes cling to the screen, but her mind focuses on the man in the corner. Red and black plaid stretches across his broad chest. The soles of his work boots are packed with traces of mud, and his light brown hair is cut close to his scalp. Even though he holds a book, and occasionally turns the pages, his military scowl remains locked on her.

She scans the lobby for someone else, someone who would defend her just in case the man tried anything. But aside from the occasional student coming and going, Angelica is alone with the man.

He looks too old to go here, Angelica thinks, judging by the growing forehead and deepening laugh lines. The laugh lines baffle her. It looks like the man's face has never seen a smile, let alone cracked one for itself.

She shuts her computer and starts back up to her room. Cursing herself even before she does it, she spins around to look at him. He is looking down at the book. But she felt his pale eyes on her. She just knows it.

* * *

“Maybe you were just imagining it.”

Angelica sighs forcefully. “No way. I know what I saw, Devin. I won’t be able to sleep alone.” She sprawls out face-down on her pink and brown bed and, propped up on her elbows, opens her laptop. As it boots up, she twirls a thin auburn strand between two fingers.

“Look,” Devin explains. “I just don’t think it would be a good idea. We’re still sorting everything out.” Devin’s hazel eyes gaze at the movie posters on the white cinderblock wall. His full lips part when he speaks, revealing a straight row of whiter-than-white teeth. Rapidly tapping his toe, he jams his hands into his pockets. “And besides, you have nothing to worry about.”

Angelica breathes deeply and looks at the ceiling.

“Please. I’m just asking for one night.”

Devin jingles the change in his pocket. “Well, we are trying to be friends...”

“Yeah?” The corners of Angelica’s mouth turn slowly.

“And I guess this is what friends do...” he concedes, brushing her hair from her face.

She leaps up off the bed and into his arms. “Thank you so much! You’re the best!”

* * *

Angelica struts out the door of Nelson Hall, her sunset dress dancing with the breeze. The sun shines bright over the campus, and the first spring flowers begin to populate the oaks and birches. Everywhere

she goes, people are smiling. Teachers, students, staff. The trees even seem to smile. Even the finches' lips appear to part and bare their pearly whites.

She glides up the steps to the library and marches to her spot, the secluded overhang above the entrance. The vast orange chair consumes her as she opens her laptop.

Ugh, she thinks, more notes. She loves the weather, but she hates finals.

Just then, the doorknob squeaks as it turns. Angelica looks up, but no one comes in. The door jerks back and forth in the doorjamb, still not opening. Oh well, Angelica thinks. Not my problem if someone doesn't know how to open a door.

She plugs her headphones into her computer and hooks them around her ears.

BAM! BAM! BAM! Angelica jumps up as someone raps on the door. Hesitating, she creeps across the carpeted floor. Closer, now. Closer. Closer.

Her head pops up off the floor like a prairie dog's out of the ground. Wincing, she swings the door open.

No one. Just a few students click-clacking on computers, noses in books. Angelica takes a step toward the room and feels something squishy between her toes. Mud. Her eyes follow the muddy footprints all the way to the stairwell. She gathers her things and follows the steps.

Her heart thumps hard in her chest. Stop! she commands herself. Stop! But her body refuses. After a few steps, her adrenaline high conquers her mind. The tracks wind down the stairs and weave between tables and chairs before darting straight out the front door. Down the steps and along the sidewalk, Angelica traces the

footprints until, without warning, they disappear.

Where is he? Angelica's gaze shoots around the campus. Behind one of those trees. Or maybe mixed in with that group of people. Or maybe right behind—

“Hi,” the man in the red and black plaid utters, his voice a quiet yet booming bass.

Angelica slowly turns around, her eyes level with the breast pocket buttons on the man's shirt. Even in the spring, he wears long sleeves.

“Hi,” she whispers. Her heart thumps so hard in her chest that it may bust its way out straight through her ribs. She watches his hand move toward his jeans pocket.

He smiles an awkward, brown-toothed smile. “I have something for you,” he drawls. He reaches in. Farther. Farther.

“AHHH!” Angelica shrieks and lurches back. She runs and the man runs after her.

“Miss, wait!” He grabs her shoulder and stops her. She drops her jaw to scream, but the man muffles it with a strong, dirty, calloused hand over her mouth. “Miss, I'm sorry to bother you.” He pulls from his pocket a long, shiny, black...pen. “You left this in the lobby last night.”

Angelica's looks back and forth at the man and the pen. “Th-thanks,” she mumbles. The man gives her the pen, and, for just a moment, their hands touch. He stares straight into her eyes and licks his rotting teeth.

“You're very welcome,” he chuckles.

She slumps away down the sidewalk and feels his gaze burning a hole through her. She looks back, and, this time, the man doesn't bother to turn away. He stands tall and straight, watches her go and licks his teeth.

* * *

“But he’s not even a student! Isn’t that trespassing?” Angelica huffs.

The receptionist at the college security office frowns. Her strawberry blonde curls bounce around her plump face as she shakes her head. “Miss, we can’t know that for sure unless you give us his name. Until then, we can’t do anything.”

A fire ignites in Angelica’s cheeks as she pouts and pushes a single tear out of one eye. “But...”

“I’m sorry, miss. There’s just nothing we can do,” the receptionist says, peering over her tortoiseshell horn-rimmed glasses.

Angelica stomps out of the building, and Devin follows behind her. They slump down the steps and along the lily-lined sidewalk toward the dorm.

“That’s okay, I don’t need them,” Angelica sneers. “I can take care of myself.”

“Oh yeah?” Devin raises an eyebrow. “How are you going to—“

Angelica yanks a stun gun out of her purse. “Think that creeper can stand up to 50,000 volts pumping through his disgusting lump of a body?”

“Angelica...” Devin halts sharply.

“I doubt it,” she continues. “Next time he tries something, I’ll be ready.”

Devin shakes his head. “But he hasn’t even tried anything yet,” he protests. “Where did you get that thing?”

Angelica walks briskly. “But he will, first chance he gets. You don’t

understand.” She turns to look at Devin, and her eyes soften. “You didn’t see the look on his face.”

* * *

Kachunk. Kachunk. Kachunk. Kachunk. The laundry room across campus rumbles from its clumsy machines. The fluorescent lights expose each tiny flaw in the frontloading washers and dryers.

Angelica’s black tank top clings close to her small frame just above her bright running shorts. If she stares at the revolving clothes long enough, she feels like she too is spinning, turning onto herself head over foot until her parts become so mixed that they can’t be distinguished.

This clock must be broken, she thinks. But she checks her cell phone and the time is right: 2:33 a.m. The music pumping out of her earbuds speeds the second hand up nearly to a brisk crawl.

Propped up against a wall of mostly vacant washers, Angelica lets the rocking laundry room slowly draw her to sleep. The dryers utter sweet lullabies as her clothes dance along.

Her eyelids droop. Her mind flashes back and forth between the laundry room and a warm beach, ripe with salty air and sizzling sand. Machines grumble. Seagulls caw. Blinding fluorescent lights. Hot ocean sun.

BUZZZZ. The shore shrinks away as the laundry room rushes forward. Dirty white tiles and the smell of detergent and dirty clothes. She takes a breath before unloading the dryer and folding her clothes. When she finishes, she slings her purse onto her shoulder and pulls up her hamper.

BUZZZZ. Her phone this time. She flips it open and pushes a button to view a text message from Devin: “hey babe, hope ur alright. want me to walk u home? xo Devin.” A warm smile slowly melts her face. Her eyes awaken as she bites her bottom lip. She drops her hamper and hoists herself up on a dryer and sends a message back.

A bit later, a knock on the door. Leaving her purse on the dryer, Angelica slides down and glides to the front of the room. “Hey,” she smiles, her hand outstretching toward the knob, “I thought you’d never—“

As she turns the knob, the man in the red and black plaid slams the door open. Sweat courses through his closely cut hair and down his contorted face. His bloodshot eyes are locked on Angelica. Jaw dropped, lungs clenched, she scurries for the door, but the man slams it shut with one muddy boot. She scans the room for a window and finds only one. She sprints for it, dropping her cell phone on the cracked linoleum tiles. She leaps up to the window, but the man lunges forward and drags her to the floor.

“I remember the first time I saw you,” he snickers.

She throws a right hook at his face, but he blocks. The man cracks her across the face with the back of his greasy hand. She winces. With his other hand, he pins down Angelica by her shoulder.

“You were the most beautiful woman on God’s green earth,” his bass rumbles from deep within his throat.

She spits in his face and boots him in the ribs, sending him rolling across the floor. The man stands right up, and Angelica turns to the window once more. Sweating, she tries to unlock it.

On the floor, her phone vibrates. “almost there babe xo Devin.”

“Sweetheart, I didn’t wanna have to hurt you,” he drawls.

He charges at her and slams her body against the wall. She crumples to the floor. The man drags Angelica across the floor by her shirt. His long, yellow nails slice a hole in the back. Picking her up by her waist and restraining her arms, the man lifts Angelica onto a dryer and tears off her neon shorts.

“No!!” she shrieks. “No!!” The back of his calloused hand strikes her cheek once again. As the man unzips his fly and reaches into his pants, Devin bursts through the door and raises his hands slowly to his face.

The man turns around and pulls his hand from his dirty jeans. “I don’t believe I invited anyone else to this party,” the man spits. Devin’s eyes dart around, and then he tugs the fire extinguisher off the wall. He raises it over his head, but the man kicks Devin in the gut, knocking him down and leaving a muddy shoeprint across his black shirt. The man scoops Devin off the floor and drops him.

“Ahh!!” Devin yelps, claspng his shin. The man winds up and kicks the same shin. Blood runs from Devin’s forehead and arm.

Angelica pulls the stun gun out of her purse. The man rocks back to kick Devin once more. Angelica jumps off the dryer and thrusts 50,000 volts into the small of the man’s back. He collapses and starts writhing on the floor. His short hair stands on end, and his eyes roll back until they’re only white. Angelica releases the button and the writhing ceases.

“Oh my god, Devin, are you okay?” Pulling up her shorts, she rushes to his side. He looks up at her and she holds his head.

“I will be,” he chokes. He drops his head in her lap and melts into tears. “I thought you were gonna...I thought I was gonna...”

“Me too,” Angelica nods. “But it’s okay now. It’s going to be okay.” A thin stream of tears runs down her red cheek. “Let’s get the hell out of here,” she quivers.

She helps Devin to his feet and together they hobble out the door and down the hall to a payphone. Devin bites his lip with each step. Angelica’s slender fingers brush the hair from his face.

Back in the laundry room, the man in the red and black plaid opens his eyes.

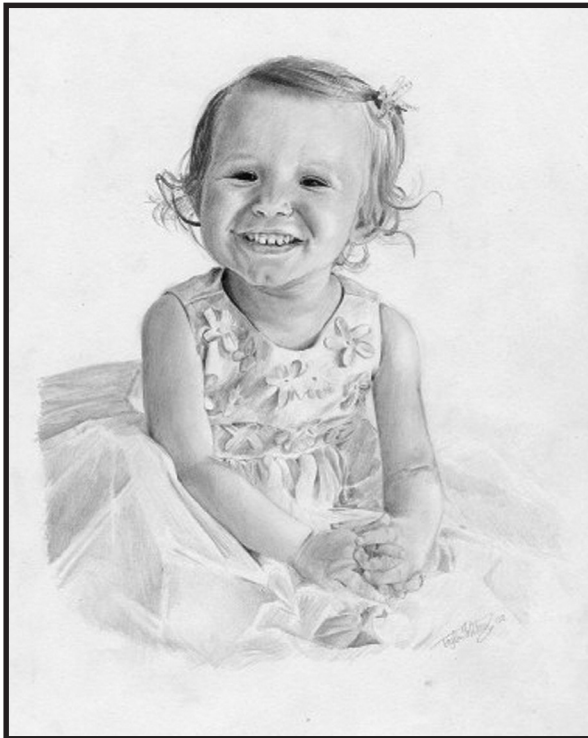
Trip the Light Fantastic

Susanne Wolf

An instrumental monument
Posed in a halo of luminosity
Shimmering by studio film smoke

Painting fiery red life
Sculpting graceful blue rhythm
Freely fusing a purple aesthetic

A kinesthetic work of art
Draws a solid concrete break
Upon a dusty wood planked floor



Dragonfly Curls

Taylor Whitney

Pencil, 8.5x11 inches

In the Hopes of Reliving Fiction

Heather Smith

When I was young
And read about rainforests
I could feel
The muggy heat
And hear
The sounds of birds.

When I was young
And read about an injury
I could see
The hero curled up
In the corner of my room
Begging for death
And my heart
Went out to him.

When I was young
And read about spaceships
I could take a go-cart
Or a cardboard box
And make my own.

Now, the words on a page
Seem to be just words.
My mind is focused
On my real life.

So don't ask me
To turn sticks into swords
Because that magic
Is lost to me.

I'm sorry, Imagination.

I wish that for a moment
I could play house or Indians
With my older cousin
Like we did way back when.
But now I'm too busy
Playing house
With another.

But every once in a while
When I lay in the hammock
That my grandparents left me
Concealed
By the trees,
I get that feeling again.

I get the feeling that
There is such thing as magic:
That glint in the sky
Must be a Jedi.
That butterfly
Is a fairy in disguise.
And I am a princess—
Or anything.

Island of Horses

Emily Deardorff

Those are dunes you're not
to climb

and a vowel to not pronounce, the mouth
surrounding "o" in "love" that you're always inserting

you into, as if phonetically. I died and rose again,
rose after rose pressed to my chest and

a bud of water blooms, each petal
a sprout of metal from my sand skin, an army of spring, you're still

roaming the coast, measuring
each footprint as if measurements could save us

Now, we're too far gone for that. It's wade
and wave and it's going to

come whether you want or not to rinse my mark
to animal hooves, you can tread or

like a child tagged It in a children's game
still wander the pastures calling

Where are you? Where are you? Here,
the sun on my new four legs. The clouds

congregate on the horizon, as if
to give rise the thousand-head herd

that came for me.

Shanghai

Josh Olewiler

An excerpt from *The Henshaw Expeditions*, a fictional novel

Though the cellular phone was pressed tight against her straining ear, meagerly protected from the drenching downpour by her vibrant red hair, Fiona Grace was unable to hear anything over the sound of water crashing against cold pavement and the incessant blaring of car horns as she weaved her way through the gridlocked street. All she could make out was the word ‘problem.’

“I’m on my way,” she replied.

As she hung up the phone and stuffed it into the tight pockets of her designer jeans, Miss Grace couldn’t help but worry. What was wrong? Was it her fault? What would happen to her if she had made a serious mistake? She was with a different crowd nowadays, and not a very forgiving one at that. The Woods estate had shown her the fun, exciting side of adventure. Now she could see the fear and insecurity that comes from taking risks. More than anything she understood danger.

Clumsily proving the tragic irony of her last name, Fiona slipped and fell, scuffing her palms and knees on the sidewalk. She glared at the puddle that had caused the incident as if it had done so intentionally. As if it had betrayed her. Then again, perhaps it was merely taking vengeance for the sharp stab of her high heels. She could understand that.

Attempting to appear casual as she rose to her feet and continued down the street, Fiona’s mind was overtaken by a single thought: *What am I doing here?* Upon reaching her destination, a small bakery on a desolate, dimly lit side street, she stared into the window and found the answer to her question.

A dark figure sat waiting for her at a table for two. Black silks concealed all but his hands, which rested under the table, and his dark blue, penetrating eyes. No one else was in the room—at least no one that could be seen. Fiona was as intimidated as one would expect to be in the presence of an assassin, but was not afraid. She knew him better than anyone. She knew about the two small scars on his neck. She knew how they got there. She knew who was to blame.

But she also knew who he worked for, and so she entered the room with hesitation. The glass door silenced the roar of the street as it closed behind her. The lack of noise disturbed Fiona's worrisome mind. She did not find her usual comfort in the unwavering gaze of the man's deep blue eyes. He didn't move – didn't even seem to breathe. He appeared to be as much of a statue as the ten-foot golden Buddha in the corner of the room. While lowering herself into the adjacent seat, she closed her eyes and made one last mental effort to calm herself. Then their eyes met.

“You need to leave.”

Confirming her fears, his words cut through her. She could feel her pulse quickening.

“Why?” she murmured, having trouble catching her breath.

“It's only a matter of time before Rex gets here.”

“What the hell makes you think he's going to come here of all places?” Fiona snapped defensively. It was not until after her words were spoken that she became aware of her tone. She then made an effort to speak more calmly. “He just searched Beijing and some monasteries in Tibet three weeks ago. I highly doubt he'll be back here any time soon.”

“Hold out your hand.”

“Why?”

He didn't respond—and she knew it was a pointless question—so she hesitantly placed her hand in the middle of the table, palm up, staring right into his eyes, sincerely hoping she wouldn't find a knife in it a moment later. Slowly, he raised his fist toward her and placed it in her hand. Fiona could feel his fingers spread apart as he released a small item before sliding his hand back under the table. She sighed in relief when she discovered that she was holding a fortune cookie.

“What's this for?”

“Open it.”

“Why do you have to be so cryptic all the time?”

“Open it.”

Fiona rolled her eyes at his silly habits and unwrapped an item she had seen many times over the past month, which she had spent operating this small store by herself. How was she to know that fortune cookies are not commonly served in the traditional restaurants of China and Taiwan? She should have done more research before opening the bakery but was unmotivated. She felt certain to fail from the start; in fact, she was proud of herself for having lasted this long.

It had been a poor decision to give this responsibility to her in the first place. Her Chinese cuisine, like all her other cooking, was absolutely atrocious. At least this kept business to a minimum, which gave her more time to go shopping with the money she was given to buy ingredients. Maybe that's why she was in trouble. Maybe he knew she had been spending so much time out on the town that she was starting to forget what was hidden in the kitchen.

His eyes were still locked on her. Had he even blinked since she walked in? As she flashed him a smirk and cracked open the

cookie, she made a mental note to herself never to challenge him to a staring contest. Her grin fled the room with what was left of her security as she read the slip of paper that had been concealed within the tiny dessert.

Help! I'm being held prisoner in a Chinese bakery.

The startled Miss Grace looked back up at the man's cold, angry eyes as he leaned in toward her.

“She is NOT pleased.”



Orb Tree

Ethan Gallardo

Graphite, 6x9 inches



Maize Blaze

Steven Hoenstine

Digital Photograph, 5.5x7 inches

Bon Hiver

Emily Deardorff

Drifting white,
the sound of
each day as it's crushed
underfoot.

I'll not sit waiting
for an afterlife I don't believe in—

cleave forward instead
into this driving wind and snow,
into my living will, waiting
to be signed.

Humbert's Lament

Ashley Reid

Haunted by the prospect of sin and corruption
I watch her like a lion about to pounce
Her lithe limbs, extending from her body like newly sprung stems.
Her soft skin like rose petals, taunting my parched, cracked lips.
Constantly I stare; I stalk, longing to drown inside her youth.

Brown curls and torn blue jeans
Scraped knees and bruised thighs
Dirty fingernails and defiant whines
Engulf me like a fire that cannot be extinguished.

The little wolf in children's clothing
The Delilah that will be the death of me
The beauty to my insatiable beast
My sweet little Electra. My charming little whore.

She knows exactly what she does to me.
She knows I am her prisoner with each vulgar smirk,
Each seemingly innocent bat of an eyelash.
She is my merciless torment. She is my hottest temptation.
She is my richest indulgence and my purest salvation.
How I wish she were simply...

mine.

The Sophistication of Summer

Nicole Widger

Cosmopolitans
clanking at happy hour
in humid night air



Happy Accident #3

Jake Vogrich

Digital Photograph, 6x11 inches



Carousel

Kaitlin Flinchbaugh

Digital Photograph, 4x6 inches

Waiting for My Fairy Godmother

Kaelin Ball

All my life I've been a fan of—no, more like obsessed with—romantic books, movies, and storylines on my favorite television shows. The idea that each character has a perfect, divine love, fit for the ages has always captured me. That is the way I want my own love to be. I know in my classic hopeless romantic style it will come to pass. It probably is naïve when those with a skeptical nature look upon my love philosophy, but in my heart of hearts, I know my Prince Charming, my Darcy, my-whatever-you-want-to-call-him is out there. He's destined for me. Me alone.

One of the things that continues to fan the flames for my romantic idealism is that it is the only dream in the world that I have with more than a slim chance of coming true. Living with a physical difference has always caused me to question whether I will ever experience my eternal love. I'm always uncertainly yearning for that emotional thing that will embrace my soul—hoping to fill that emotionally dry well of love that I've been longing for ever since I was old enough to have a childhood crush.

For far too long, and on so many days, I allow the world to persuade me that I'll end up like the Phantom of the Opera: abandoned, unloved, self-pitying and viewing all happy couples with contempt, and at extremes with murderous rage. The world has always made it seem an impossibility that someone could ever love someone like me. The only thing that revives my faith in my “fairytale ending” is the unceasing knowledge that at the end of the day my heart, soul and giving nature greatly outweigh the “fake” happiness that irresistibly beautiful people oozing with sex appeal sometimes have.

Yes, I admit to memorizing all the lines spoken by both hero and heroine in all my favorite romantic movies that I've ever watched; but it has always been as a defense mechanism. A defense mechanism for survival. A veiled attempt to not let the loneliness and fear of romantic rejection set in. Those movies and books that I've held onto for so long, and still hold onto, may have caused my life to be led with rose-colored glasses, but considering the intense amounts of physical and emotional pain I've had to withstand, it's a fair trade off.

I admit that I do not represent every person who has a physical disorder, nor do I have everyone's romantic ideals, but I do know that everyone who has a “disability” or “disease” has developed some type of safety net. Mine is just unashamedly romantic.

Every time I watch *Pride and Prejudice* I remember that love is not perfect. When reading *Jane Eyre* I know I want to find someone who'll love me no matter what devastation or physical deteriorations may come. *Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus* inspires me to believe that I will find someone who'll love me as I am, even when it's not convenient, easy or accepted. I want to find someone who expands my horizons. *P.S. I Love You* spurs me on to not despair and reminds me that when I finally find that true love, to cherish it, embrace it, and appreciate it every day. *Love Actually* should always remind us of the beautiful gift that love is and that it always abounds. *Beauty and the Beast* is the mirror image of my quest for love. One day, I truly believe, that I will find my Belle; a man who'll love me unselfishly and unconditionally despite appearances and possible stand-offish behavior. If he just so happens to be as visually appealing as Belle was, that would be more than fine by me.

I keep hoping that the Beatles are right that "all you need is love" and that my version of *Moulin Rouge* doesn't end in a tragic death. I know that enduring, perfect, consuming love is out there, and I'm going to get my *Sex and the City* ending. As Carrie Bradshaw says, "I'm looking for love. Real love. Ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can't-live-without-each-other love"— and I'm not settling for less. But this world's perceptions of what beauty is and what a perfect couple should look like are inescapable and damaging to anyone's hopes. Most of my fantasies won't come true, but I will be loved relentlessly, intimately, and divinely. All I know and believe to the core of my being is that my prince will come, but my fairy godmother is currently delayed.

Futile Devotion

Ashley Reid

Sing me a song, sweet and soothing.
Lend me a lullaby, lenient and lovely.
Make the monsters disappear.

Let me breathe your absent breath
as I close my eyes
and dream of you beside me.

Bring me peace if only for a minute
with your soul laying next to mine
as your warm fingers stroke my hair
and “I love you” lingers in thin air

The lips that ache for yours are spent in prayer,

Make him whole. Please Lord. Let there be a way.

Alone in silence I utter the words--
Each is for you.
Cloaked in darkness, I imagine you here
and should discern it's the only reality I'll ever know

Hope clings to me like dried blood on a closed wound.
Each tear rips it open.
I'll sing you a requiem. I'll sing you to heaven.

And no one will hear it but me.

Particulate

Steven Hoenstine

I cannot breathe.

Sitting in a cramped office no bigger than a minivan, my lungs scream for relief. But breathing is not part of the routine. Customers waiting to return expired groceries are glaring in at me, impatiently. Tomato sauce and broken glass all over aisle five. *Sir, it seems that I've lost my purse.* New cashier needs a bathroom break. Does anyone know the product code for asparagus? My boss screaming at me from her cash register, frantically. *Cleanup-in-aisle-five-please—cleanup-in-aisle-five.* Children crying to their mothers, or is that the telephone shrieking? Where are the baggers? And how did we run out of shopping carts? *4080—asparagus is 4080.*

Later—after customers and coworkers were long gone and after locking the store safe and the store doors and after falling into the driver's seat of my cranky old car—I exhaled. I saw myself as I was—a boy unsuccessfully chasing elusive certainties and necessary passions. A teenager caught in an endless eddy of formulaic days and drab familiarity. I could breathe through the stress of work and college. I could breathe through angry customers and soap-opera drama and a broken carburetor. I could not, however, breathe through the *routine*. I needed adventure, and I needed something to care about—something worthy of my full breath. I needed out.

And so I left.

--

At first, I knew I'd made a mistake. As the flight attendant opened the door of my 767, hot and heavy African wind poured into the plane's antiseptic cabin and into my sterile nostrils. The wet night air seemed to hold tightly to every morsel of oxygen as my blood fought to absorb its life-giving essence. I walked across the rain-soaked tarmac, past muscled soldiers holding automatic weapons, and gasped desperately for breath. I piled into a waiting jeep, ready for respite, but no. The

driver streaked down the roads, darting in and out of oncoming traffic in order to pass slower, saner drivers. We reached our destination, the Ubuntu Refugee Camp, and I was immediately overwhelmed by strangers asking for money and food. I was disoriented and intimidated and scared, but I was happy. This was the adventure I'd been searching for.

--

Ubuntu is a patchwork sarong of people, perspectives, and possibilities. While the fabric of the camp is of mud and tin, and the weave of community spirit is as strong as silk, the obscure existence of this place is as delicate as a single stitch. These people lead a confusing and contradictory existence. The camp is, for me, a paradox of permanence and transience—defining what it means to live in refuge.

Walking through Ubuntu is a storming of the senses. The torrid sun beats down, relentless. I lose my mental map, blurred by colors, sounds, and smells, overflowing. Vibrant *Kente* clothing snags my eyes. My ears reach for pounding, unseen drums and my nose for eclectic aromas—dead fish and beaded sweat and raindrop air. The camp's dusty paths are cluttered with the countless footprints of purposeful routine. So deep in the flow and flux of narrow lanes, alleyways, and open drains, bewildered by the intimacy of open doors and outside living, I feel like I am walking through homes, not simply passing through the narrow spaces between them.

And though people mingle about at all hours, and though children run and shout and play, and though the camp exhales feelings of relief and joy, I sense immediately a dark cold. These people are refugees for a reason. And I would soon learn that the suffering of a refugee does not cease, even after refuge is realized.

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The aid supplies arrive every week.

In morning's dark, early hours, a patchwork convoy of hulking dump

trucks and groaning flatbeds depart from the capital. The convoy usually arrives at Ubuntu's broken gatehouse before the sun reaches the top of the sky. Waiting refugees form orderly lines, identification cards in hand. Workers distribute cups of rice. Nurses and physicians hand out thick white pills and amber vials of fluid after cursory checks of bottle labels and prescriptions.

One quarter of the camp's 40,000 souls are completely dependent on these weekly supply convoys. With no family, no money, and bodies ravaged by disease and starvation, these refugees do not live their lives so much as they simply survive, convoy-to-convoy, day-to-day, hour-to-hour. Most are so void of spirit that they do not even bother to plead with Westerners for a small handout—in stark contrast to the camp's healthier, wealthier refugees, who hound constantly.

This man does not hound me. He does not call out to me, or reach for a handshake, or attempt to intimidate. He just smiles. He smiles to me every morning, as I pass him on my way to the market. He smiles again, as I walk home. He could eye the chickens in my hand, or my sling of onions and peppers, or the money in my pocket. But he does not. He glances up at me, from his usual seat on the edge of the dirt path, and shoots me that smile. His face, dominated by bulbous brown eyes and thickset lips, unfolds into an aggressive grin. It's all teeth and gums, raised eyebrows, stretched skin.

So accustomed to his daily smiles, I was surprised one morning to find his regular spot empty. I thought about him as I elbowed through the crowded market and negotiated with mulish vendors. I was homesick for him. I missed his enormous white teeth and his reassuring demeanor. I missed the comfort of my morning routine—of which he had become an important part.

Just breathe. Everything will be fine. He is fine. He will be back.

As I walk back to my house, carrying the day's food, I was enormously relieved to see him sitting in his usual spot, smiling. To my surprise, he was clutching a bag of rice and a package of Plumpynut, a food made

specifically for use as emergency aid. I exhaled, and then stopped to offer him my hand and my name.

“Em Bromsky,” he said. “Amer-ee-caan?”

His accent was French.

I nodded and he grinned.

“Ah Jouje Boosh! Britnee Spee-aars!”

Bromsky fled across Africa after rebels raided his war-torn home. He navigated the surreal landscape of a teeming civil war. Suffocating heat and humidity that makes even the coldest killers sweat. Hellish checkpoints manned by crazed child-soldiers toting Kalashnikovs and clad in neon spandex. Bromsky crossed hundreds of miles of brutal landscape before settling at Obeah, a tiny refugee camp just out of harm’s way. But he heard stories about Ubuntu. It was a refugee city, he was told. It offered jobs and schools and opportunity.

Bromsky walked almost 200 miles to reach Ubuntu, but had nothing when he arrived. The camp’s refugees shunned Bromsky, for he was from a different land, a different tribe, a different war. Bromsky was an outcast among outcasts, the most forgotten of the most forgotten. He slept all around, ate whatever he could find—whatever he could steal. His siblings were missing or dead. His children were dead. Their mother—missing for years—was probably dead. Bromsky slinked around the camp, drawing looks from no one. Like his family, Bromsky existed only as a ghost.

To keep his long, frail body from starving, Bromsky relied on the food aid. That morning, he waited patiently for his weekly handout before returning to his usual spot along the camp’s main dirt thoroughfare. Everything was fine—I had missed him simply because he had gone to get food, like me.

In my first weeks at Ubuntu, I would sit atop *Holiday Brotherhood*, a dilapidated restaurant of cracked cement and rusted rebar, and watch as the aid convoy rumbled towards the camp, meandering down the low-lying road, weaving between rolling hills. Massive clouds of dirt and sand would rise-up from under the relentless tires, engulfing the trucks but signaling to the refugees that the weekly cavalry was about to arrive. The convoy was regular. It was comforting. It was routine. Until my fourth week in the camp. On my fourth week, the billowing cloud never came.

The rumors began, of course. Natives attacked the convoy—dozens dead—rice is sitting in the road, free for the taking! No—it was the police—they demanded a hefty bribe this time—the drivers could not pay! Ah no, listen—it was the politicians—the aid funding is gone—the trucks never even made it on to the road. *Ki! Koom noe!* Go! Kill them!

But those with a stake in the ordeal—those waiting submissively, rice cups in hand—simply vanished. They faded away, into the camp's furious background, as unseen as the ghosts they would soon become.

Bromsky was gone. I started asking around, but nobody even knew who he was. I had stronger relationships with other refugees, but Bromsky's absence suffocated me. The grinding particulate of the convoy's absent cloud poured into my mouth, clogging my chest. I wanted so badly to breathe, but no. On my fourth week, there would be no breathing. No exuberant inhales. No exhales of exhaustion or relief. On my fourth week, there would be only death.

My friend Younis explained, but his familiar baritone lacked its usually soothing repose.

“Yesss, ‘dis weel ‘appen frum time ta’ time.”

Perhaps once each month, the weekly aid would never reach the camp. There would be no riots, no distress—for starving men only

grow weaker. As Younis told me, the coming week would bring bodies. Dozens of bodies. Bodies crumpled in the sewage drains; bodies foaming in the heat; bodies as hosts to scurrying rodents, ribcaged dogs, and aggressive roosters. The coming week would bring paralyzing shock—the startling horror of rounding a corner and stumbling upon a crass assembly of feasting birds. The scorching sun would boil the stench, infusing the air with gag. The nighttime winds would flush the gag from the camp’s low valleys, but pour in the looming ethereal—chilled ghosts hungry no longer for food, but recall.

On my fifth week—seven days since I’d last seen Bromsky—I waited with Younis, scanning the horizon for the convoy’s cloud. It finally came, and I was overwhelmed with relief, for the bodies would stop. But what I had been hoping for most of all remained elusive; the convoy brought food and medicine, but it did not bring Bromsky back into my routine.

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My old life was a routine. Suffocating routine. Aimless routine. I resented it, and fled to Africa in search of purpose and adventure, in search of anti-routine. But I’d found myself clinging to routine’s familiar curves, its comforting warmth. I needed something constant—something to pull me through the resounding highs and awful lows of Ubuntu life. Amid the camp’s deadening respirations, inhaling hope and exhaling death, I needed Bromsky more than ever. And that was before I learned what was to come.

The following month brought yet another absent convoy. I was filled with memory of festering, unbreathable air; filled with memory of the chills that would infiltrate my mosquito net and nightmare my exhausted bones; filled with hot, tight dread in the bottom of my belly.

Younis tried to calm me: “Dey ‘av ah plaan.”

The camp council was concerned about the bodies. Like Bromsky, those who needed the aid to survive were also, usually, totally alone. No family. No friends. Their bodies would go uncollected. The

council worried about the spread of disease—through the sewage channels, through the air, even through the food supply. When you're hungry, chickens are chickens, even after they've pecked away at your old neighbor.

The elders unveiled a new plan, to much fanfare. They would use private funding from local aid organizations to pay the refugees for removing the bodies. Anyone could get paid by simply dropping-off a body at the front of the camp, where it would be loaded onto a truck with the others and taken away for disposal. The council had good intentions, but their plan failed immediately. Like Ubuntu's nightly winds, the new plan replaced one misery with another. The bodies were finally gone, but, out of the void, came evil.

Night always brought terrifying sounds. Children and wives receiving unbearable beatings. Wild dogs fighting over scraps of food. Unseen creatures, breathing heavily just over the tall grass. But with the implementation of the council's new plan, I learned a new sound: the sound of murder. The free-flowing dollars triggered a raging headspring that fed the bottomless depths of the camp's angry basin of bodies. Greed and evil, overflowing the banks.

Lying in my bed each night, I learned to hear the difference between a beating and a murder: the reaction. Impact followed by whimpering is a beating. Impact followed by shrieking is murder. No resistance—that's a beating. A struggle, a fight—that's murder. I hate that I know the differences. I hate that I remember each attack. And I hate that I adapted to the new routine.

At first—exhale was the problem. My muscles would attack my bones, pinning me to my foam pad, my bed's wooden planks slicing through the mat and splintering my soaked skin. *Just breathe.* My brow would crumble, clamping my eyes shut. Glistening, stone-faced soldiers with AKs would march out, protecting my cheeks from my own boiling tears: *You there, halt! You there, breathe!*

But I adjusted. I grew familiar—intimate, even—with the sights and

sounds and smells of greed and death and murder. At once, I shunned routine's tedium but embraced its comfort. I clinged to it for survival, and I did, indeed, survive.

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Self-righteous Westerners return from the Dark Continent thumping a bleeding heart and pushing a guilt-trip. Local Hero Makes Good In Africa. Returns From War-Torn Nation. Overcomes Horrifying Disease and Hunger. *Please, sir, bestow on us your wisdom.*

I am not one of those people. I returned home full of questions and contradictions. At first, it was easy to place my faith in humans. A life spent for others is a life well-spent. People are a simple but powerful passion—one I was certain deserved my full breath. But Ubuntu's chilled shades changed my mind. They revealed to me our bottom: our inner animals—fomenting horror; and our lost boys—cowering in rotting corners, eyes groping for comfort and lips pleading for breath. We possess the capacity for great evil and, consequently, the capacity for great suffering. We construct walls of soothing routine in order to cope. We look to the beautiful familiar so our eyes can ignore the discouraging ugly. We can breathe only when the air is breathable.

Bromsky died that first week. His frail body could not endure more hunger. His was one of those limp bodies, awkwardly hanging over a sewage ditch, flies at his dead eyes and dried saliva at the corners of his mouth. Or Bromsky simply walked away, off to find the next camp. He recognized Ubuntu's dormant evil and escaped before it awoke and devoured him.

Or it did devour him. He was a giddy killer in the night, pocketing ruin and cash. He smiles at his victim as she takes a final gasp, and moves close to her ear, his hot exhale on her cheeks.

“Don't worry,” he whispers, with wild eyes. “Someday our air will be breathable again.”



Transition

Ethan Gallardo

Pen and Ink, 6x9 inches

The Incurable Humanist

Emily Deardorff

One day

the unfolding God mind will exhaust. The din
of this earth

will hush

as a hand around a bell and

what lived and let

live will draw each shutter in, knowing what lives

must let loss that even the sap

held in the jaw of each tree

must swallow. Such rancor

for retreat, but hear, on the hill West of here—

the steady pitch it will keep, the tender tuck of
laundry back into drawers and the last voice singing

Some days

the only way out

is in.