

HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

Apogee Magazine

Where art and literature come to life





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Apogee Magazine: *Where art and literature come to life*

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Include a cover letter
with a 2-3 sentence biography.

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In a constant search for the hidden, Jenny Kemp constructs worlds that represent the unseen. These internal characteristics of biological forms are a result of her contemplations on the human body and our relationship to organic matter. Working back and forth between painting and animation, Kemp takes digital captures of paintings and manipulates them in Photoshop to create stop-motion videos. Working in these two different mediums allows each to inform her investigation of surfaces, space and form, one cyclically feeding the other. Through this process, she loses touch with the specific origin of the images and an otherworldliness emerges. Kemp works carefully to create subtle color shifts and vibrations that encourage a slow gaze in the viewer, allowing a full engagement with these abstractions.





Art Jenny Kemp

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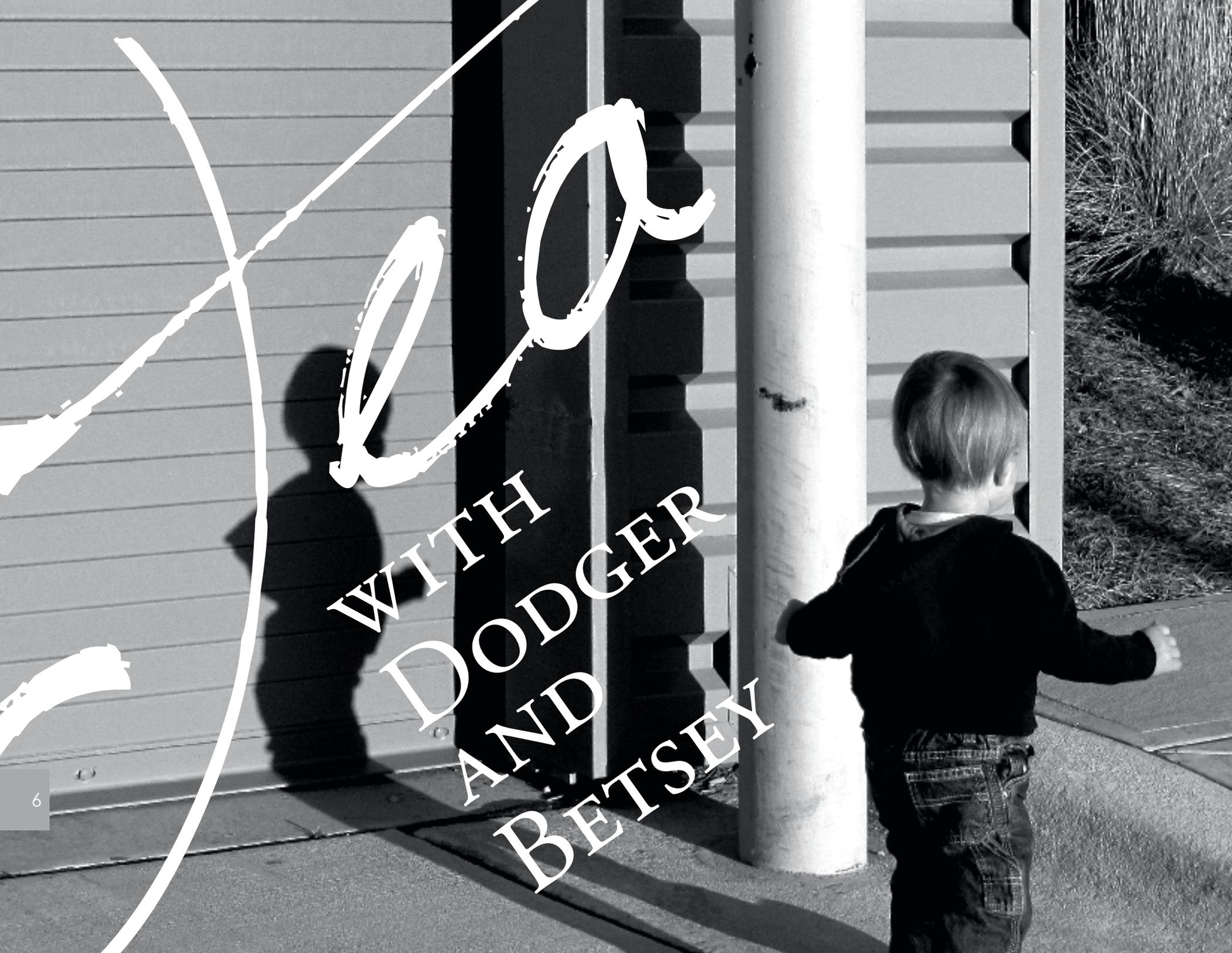
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AUTHORS



WITH
DODGER
AND
BETSEY



words Miah Saunders

I wasn't particularly surprised to find myself having tea with two hippos. I *was* surprised that they weren't pink. Dodger harrumphed around the table, and I averted my gaze, because honestly, the last thing I want to do is *appear* rude. The hippos were large. I would never say it to their face, of course, but it was hard not to notice. Their legs were squat, pointing slightly in. Betsey's dainty toes were painted a feminine pink. I saw Dodger look pointedly at her feet. He blew an exasperated sigh; twin pillars of hot air shot from his nostrils and near blew my cap from my head.

Betsey gave Dodger an affronted look. I stole a biscuit from the wicker basket at our little table and sat, making myself comfortable. Dodger tossed his mammoth head away from her, rolling his eyes as only a hippo could.

"I don't know why," he started, irritated that they were having the conversation again, "you find the need to make yourself up wherever we go."

Betsey gave an angry snort. The china rattled dangerously on the table.

"Do you have to do this in front of *company*?" Her glossy head jerked in my direction, and I tried to make myself as invisible as I could. It was always embarrassing to be caught in a spat between mates, even worse when they were going on five years and counting, with four little hungry hippos tucked safely away in their pond.

"Da-ddy," Shelly whined, taking the stuffed hippo from my hand. "That makes *no sense*." Leave it to me to be scolded by a six year old. She shifted her legs under the covers, giving a loud cough that had me immediately reaching for her cough drops. Pretty brown eyes rolled at me, but she dutifully popped one in her mouth.



“Dodger and Betsey invite you to have *tea* in a *park*?” The large cough drops in her mouth pressed against her cheek as she talked, lisping her words. “Look,” she held Mrs. Betsey up for me to see. “She’s got no hands, how’s she gonna drink tea?”

Well, she was right, that didn’t make sense, but! “She does have her dainty nails painted pink,” I pointed out. My baby gave me an exasperated look, as if to say that I was a novice who had absolutely no idea what I was doing.

Tea parties with hippos, how ridiculous!

I leaned back against Shelly’s headboard and stretched my legs beside hers. She moved the small tea set from between us,

shaking her head in disappointment. Shelly plucked Dodger from my hand and set the two hippos side by side, walking them in the space between us.

“Here’s how the story *should* go,” she instructed.

“I don’t understand why you have to get all pretty whenever we go out!” Mr. Dodger said to his wife as they walked to the school. “It’s not like we’re here for a party!”

Mrs. Betsey tossed her head, stomping ahead of him. “Now see here, sir—”

“Daddy,” Shelly complained. “You have to sound like a girl!”

I pitched my voice as high as I could. “Like this?”

She laughed delightedly and nodded.

“Now see here, sir!” Mrs. Betsey said. “It wouldn’t kill you to *try* to make yourself presentable!”

She crossed into the Saint Augustine’s parking lot, before turning to him and pointing her snout at him accusingly. “If you could only learn more discipline then maybe Little Blue Hungry Hippo would keep his grades up. I don’t pay for him to go to this Catholic School for The Prestigiously Wealthy and Snobbish for him to bring back grades like these!” She twisted her tail from behind her, and waved Little Blue Hungry Hippo’s report card.

Dodger stopped in front of a very stylish red convertible, stomping very close to its hood—too close. Teacher Barbie wouldn’t be too keen to know just how close her new ride was to being smashed in a Hippo Fit!

“That has nothing to do with me! It’s probably all those tea parties you make him go to. As if Curious George is going to die if you tell him no just one time.”

Mrs. Betsey tittered, stomping in place restlessly. “As if you’re any better! Bringing by Basketball Star Ken and Under Water Magic Pocahontas Barbie to show off how much your Hungry Hippo can eat!”

They stomp into the school (one at a time, of course, otherwise they’d have gotten stuck in the doorway) bickering back and forth, tails swishing in sync as they hurried to meet

Little Blue Hungry Hippo’s Principal.

“Just one question, darling,” I whispered to my girl as I plucked the two hippos from her hands. “Why were Mr. Dodger and Mrs. Betsey always arguing?” My girl shrugged, watching me avidly as I pushed Barbie’s red convertible back into the toy box.

“Just because they say mean things to each other don’t mean they don’t love and respect each other very much,” Shelly said dutifully with an air of one who’d heard that line too many times before. “It’s just how they are.”

I nodded, feeling a little embarrassed and a little sad. *Little ears hear everything in this house*, I reminded myself, *especially the nasty bits*. I pressed a kiss to her forehead. *Fever’s gone down, finally*.

“One more question,” I began.

“You already *had* one.”

“Can’t you humor your old man?” She nodded.

“You do know that no matter how much Mr. Dodger and Mrs. Betsey fight, they still love Little Blue Hungry Hippo, right? Forever and ever, no matter what.”

Shelly looked at me like I was stupid. Did she know that we weren’t talking about the stupid blue toy in my fist? “Of course, Daddy, they tell him all the time.” She paused. “You’re really bad at playing pretend.”

I straightened her bed covers. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“It’s okay,” Shelly said. “We’ll work on it.”



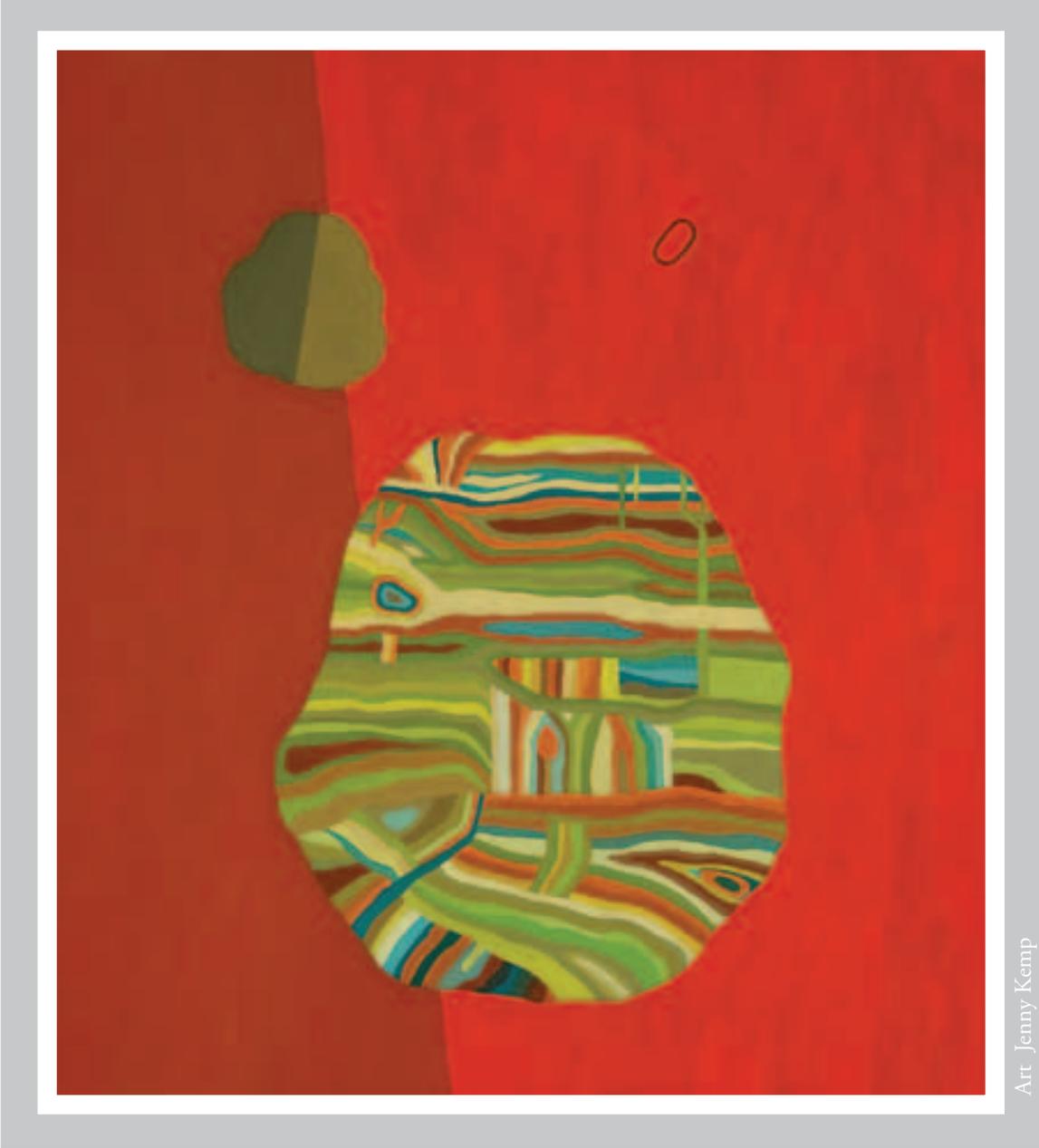
SP R E E L E T I L

words Miab Saunders

She drifts in with the sunlight, sits primly at the table, glances at me from the corner of her eye. *Do you see me?* she asks with cloudy white irises, mouth curling around the edges. A cruel smile. I ignore her, singe my tongue, spill coffee down my shirt. A spot of brown on my crossword; it bleeds. Her corn-colored hair hovers around her naked shoulders. *You've got a spot, darling,* she whispers, laughing. A mean laugh. A spot of red on her white dress, a smoking button hole between her eyes; it bleeds. So do you, I want to say. I drink. It's rude to talk to ghosts. Drink. Should have aimed for those eyes. Drink. The crossword is ruined; ink bleeds to the tabletop.

He drifts in with dusk, sits heavily at the table, glances at me from the corner of his eye. I know you see me, he hisses with cloudy white irises, mouth curling around the edges. A cruel smile. I ignore him, bite my tongue, spill my beer down my shirt. A spot of brown on my crossword; it bleeds. His hands hover around my naked shoulders. *I should have killed you, baby doll,* he whispers, laughing. A mean laugh. A spot of red down his face, a smoking bullet hole above his ear; it bleeds. You already did, I want to say. I drink. It's useless pleading with ghosts. Drink. Should have hidden the gun. Drink. The crossword is ruined; ink bleeds to the tabletop.





Art. Jenny Kemp



THAT DREADFUL KIND OF BEAUTY

words Sally Evans

Think emerald, amethyst, sapphire,
 or red wine pigments,
 fallout of a new-love feeling
 brought down by rain,
 simply pawing, like
 a caged leopard,
 the muffled roar
 of heartbeats in your
 ears, even as she winked
 and blew the half-mad sort of
 strained grimaces of
 reprimanded storytellers,
 no longer prospering, the
 grit of a dusty past.

She is tattered meat,
 that dreadful kind of
 beauty, thin-skinned,
 hanging sorrows on a golden man
 but still sweet and aromatic, like
 sugar and cinnamon
 spilled on the corner of
 an old business card.
 She's a squat bottle of ink and a
 blank page, thinking it's
 easier to fall than write.

No one wants chaos, no one wants
 to rub away the gentle
 nail scratches or replace
 apple cheeks flaming red
 with lips, curiously blue,
 one gigantic maniac in a faceless wave.
 Dark-hatted men
 Saunter through the streets of
 Singapore, symbolic harbingers of
 radiation leaks, falloff of military and politics
 as she stains your lips and
 spills the sugar,
 changing Japan's fallen cherry blossoms
 into a bed of concrete.

What My Teacher



Says

words
Sally Evans

I sat
in front of binders, open,
I was in tears,
I was completely free,
I watched in 4-x-4 glimpses, people
sucking face,
a woman as

only a woman can see. If she
ironed my shirt, I wouldn't mind,
but I can't
expect it. It's annoying,
but it's a

game. Be a child, don't be
afraid of smiling
train cars, don't
be conscious enough to fear,
just be
present, you must

sit and stand
next to rubber gloves, next to
anti-static cloths and
first-aid stations with

blood-pressure kits, yes,
there is pressure, there is
being unmasked. You
are good at everything, but you must
be great at something. In this city,
you understand
you are

a woman, a slick
leather glove and a pelvic curve,
something to whistle to. You must
be a quiet spirit,
you must fight, you must be
loud, you must walk a street and
be opposed to it, cut and cut and
cut, but also clean

wounds. Hide them. Be
mad and in love but don't
show it, but show it, chase
your cravings, but don't follow
them, be free,
but control yourself for goodness' sake.
Do these things,

simultaneously. You must
be you, you must be
everyone. Sit with me
in front of binders, but go and
stand

without me. Rest here,
then go
and lose your breath.

COMMUNION

by Sally Evans

We were roosting,
we watched the blue-
fringed butterfly, we
tore our Tuscan bread,
crumbs to the glass floor, high
above the copper-
wire knickknacks and
rounded roofing
shingles and shoulder
sockets, aching.

One breath, you said,
“If you are desperate, sound
desperate, scream!”
but I covered myself.
“I will counsel you,”

peacock’s plumage,
fringed, like the butterfly,
and you let me
steer into the river, again,
until you touch my
shadow.



Art Jenny Kemp



BUYER'S REMORSE

words Sally Evans



Standing on front steps, blue,
now graying
with his hair,
I notice his stuffy nose
and a case of buyer's remorse.

The pink
swing, once red,
taunts
like the seat beside him
on the couch,
now occupied by someone new.

Before,
it was animal
pancakes,
bunk
beds, shampoo
bottles shaped like fish,

popcorn
and ginger
ale that taste
like forbidden
late night movies, crunching kernels
replacing sounds of
broken
doors and
spoken knives.

We follow
the moment
with a casual hug on the hard
middle step, his forced
words,
sugar sweet arsenic
on my
tongue.

A Discourse with One's



It is said that cats live nine lives, so does that make you my elder, and wiser for it?
Your elder certainly not, but perhaps the wiser for not believing such frivolous superstition.
What is it you do believe then? Have you a superstition all your own?
I believe I am hungry. Can't you feed me now and question the nature of my existence as I eat?

You seem not to care for such petty woes that besiege me and mine. Why do you suppose that is?
I have no pressures, no great aspirations. My needs you provide, and I take joy in life's simplicity.
Have you no goals, no dreams that you would have fulfilled? Do you not wish for something more?
Nothing more than your attention, and of course the food you provide. What more do I need?

You claim to have no goals, yet you seem to spend much of your time climbing atop tall structures.
Climbing to me is a way to relax, and reach a high vantage point upon which I can doze.
What must you feel, at the highest point of the room, seeing the world from above?
There is a sense of superiority, as though I could command you, "Feed me," and you would do it.

Why do you chase the mice, I wonder, pests though they be?
It provides a challenge, meriting my might and skill in pursuance.
What victory can there be in the defeat of a creature so far beneath you as a mouse?
It is the promise of food, a fitting reward for a stalking hunter, hidden in the brush.

What is it in a sunbeam that draws you nigh to it, so simple a luxury?
It is a warmth, not unlike a mother's fur, which drives away what worries may trouble one's soul.
Is the warmth of the sunbeam truly so comfortable as to merit following its path across the room?
Warmth is a basic need of any living being, just as is food. Is it worth going to your table to eat?

Why do I pose these luminous questions to you, with whom I cannot truly communicate?
Perhaps you are lonely, and merely seek to converse with another, even if the other is you, yourself?
Perhaps I have dwelt too long on such frivolous speech? Perhaps it is simply time to feed my cat?
Ah. The man speaks wisdom at last.





"I want to get a tattoo."

I can just imagine the look of horror crossing my mother's face as her smile grows steadily more forced. Images of Chinese calligraphy and Tweety Bird tramp stamps parade behind her eyes. Her teeth press so tightly together I can nearly hear them creaking.

"How about a new necklace instead?"

I wouldn't blame her for her apprehension, either. In my hometown, tattoos mostly consist of Loony Tunes distorted by unanticipated weight gain, oaths of an unending love that saw its termination two decades prior, or something befitting an 80s rock album cover. The faded



ink looks like a discolored bruise applied left-handed by a right-handed artist on a piece of skin that Heaven's mercy ought to necessitate be covered. I know why she would cringe, if I worked up the nerve to tell her.

Sophomore year of college, already a year removed from the world where "TAZ" in all caps across the bicep denoted manliness, I roomed with Courtney. She was like some kind of bubbly Amazon, tall and gorgeous, broad shouldered and strong. "I used to throw shot put!" she chimed cheerfully. She was an art major, always covering every inch of paper she could find with billowing, curling designs. I was kind of in awe of her. She was powerful, well-traveled, and just rebellious enough without being too scandalous. She had a *nose ring*, but she blushed easier than nearly anyone I knew.

"I'm getting a tattoo!" she chirped one day, hard at work over a piece of paper.

"What?" I asked intelligently, staring blankly at her dimpled smile and working up a speech on future regrets.

"Mhm. I'm designing it. Something that means something to me. But I won't get it yet. I have to earn it first. It needs to mean something."

I have researched tattoos. As a creative writing major, you research all kinds of strange things. Archaic poisons, historical dances, cannibal clans, the origin of the word "bullshit." Tattoos aren't really a far stretch. I had characters with tattoos, whole plotlines revolve around them, so I have done my research. I have a growing stack of books in my room on the subject, and a whole folder of bookmarks and saved images.

In Japan, hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, men were using tattoos as status symbols, and as a way to connect themselves to the spirits. Later they became symbols of love, half-completed designs that only made the full picture when two lovers joined hands and the lines extended from one hand to the other, a symbol of their completion as a pair. Even after it was outlawed, the art of *irezumi* continued,

marking people as criminals, often even as *yakuza*. The ink covered nearly everything: the arms, back, chest, and legs to the knees. It could take years to complete. Years, and nearly a fortune. A long-awaited piece of art carried under the skin, like the bright marks of some poisonous lizard.

"I want to get a tattoo," I might repeat to my sister, one day when I found the nerve. She's always been more outrageous than I am, and never shying away from exactly what she wants to do.

Her face would light up, eyes impish and sharp, mouth splitting into a wide grin. "You've got to see the new one I just got!" And she would tug down her shirt to show me somewhere something I should be awed at.

"What is that?" I'd ask numbly.

She would look affronted then, impatient, as if I had said the silliest thing in the world. "It's the Umbrella Corporation Logo." And then, when I still didn't understand, "From Resident Evil?"

"Why did you get that?"

"Uh... because they're awesome? Obviously?"

And I think of Courtney's words.

It needs to mean something. Something more than "it looked cool." Something more than "because I could." Something that would reach beyond a hobby that lasted a few years or some temporary, transient feeling.

The Celts used to cover themselves in tattoos, using a blue pigment called woad. They would cover nearly every inch of their skin with talismans for strength, for guidance, for safety. The intricate knotwork on their skin could mark them for what clan they were from, who their family was, what their job was. A warrior. A druid. A craftsman. A man's story could be read off the surface of his skin.

I remember reading somewhere once that Americans in recent generations have begun to lose a sense of cultural

identity. Our “melting pot,” or “salad,” whatever you want to call it, has begun to bleach the pride and the identity from us all. Many kids and young adults don’t actually know where their family comes from. They don’t know their history, what their ancestors may have done, or what kind of name they are carrying on. Apparently my extended family – my clan – owns a castle in Scotland. I learned this when I was seventeen years old. No one else in my family knew. That kind of thing, that was why people in our generation were becoming so obsessed with the idea of tattoos. If they could mark themselves with something, something that defined who they were, or where they had come from, or perhaps where they were going, they wouldn’t feel so lost in a world full of culturally steeped countries, not knowing which one they belong to. Tattoos, one book said, were a way of asserting ourselves. A way of declaring and displaying what is important to us with pride. A way of wearing on our skin what we hide under our skin, to give ourselves strength.

It has to mean something.

“So I was thinking about getting a tattoo,” I would peep shyly, perched on the edge of the chair while my father reads the paper. He draws a long breath in through his nose, eyes narrowing on the page, and grunts out his answer.

“No.”

I scroll through endless galleries of arching lines and strong, jagged edges, bold wordless statements that inspire *ideas*, even if that idea isn’t so clear, and I try to figure out who I am. What would I put on my body? What could I have done to earn it? I think of things that have significance to me, something close to home, things I can’t put into words the importance of, but they are locked into my mind. A curve. An arch. A sharp, bold strike crossing through them. The wolves. They’ve always meant something to me, for no reason at all, wolves.

My family has always told me that college is finding out who you are. My family has also told me that people will always regret tattoos, because they wake up not meaning it,

but that marriage and love are forever, if they’re true, and never to be regretted. If I could find some symbol, some sign of myself, some representation that truly meant *something*, and wed it to my skin in ink, an oath to never lose myself, to never lose that true self...

The Romans used tattoos to mark criminals, so that they could never forget their wrongs and everyone would know them for their sins. They weren’t the only culture to do it. An X on the web of the hand could mark a thief. Another mark for an adulteress, for a murderer, for a runaway slave.

I scroll through the pages, eyes beginning to blur out of focus as I pass what I’m sure is the same design I saw six pages back.

Some cultures perform a type of tattooing without ink. Scarification. They repeatedly cut the same place in the same fashion until the skin rises up in a permanent scar, marking the place. Their entire bodies are covered with hundreds of tiny welts that to their people mark them as beautiful.

I stop, transfixed, recognizing one. I placed it on a character once. A beloved character – a wanderer, and a nomad, never settled in one place, but settled firmly in his identity, marking every space of his skin with the events in his life – good and bad – wearing it for display without shame or apology. And this one – a compass of sorts, a circle of outward reaching arms, crossed through boldly, tipped in prongs and rings. Vegvisir – a runic compass to prevent getting lost. I trace its pattern with my fingertips, the wheel branding itself into my memory.

I’m not ready to say it yet. I don’t have the money, or the exact design, or the location settled. I need to pay for this myself, not only because they won’t, but because this is for me, something uniquely mine, my identity, wedded to my skin, without shame for the sin of it, symbolic of a self-completion, of an identity. I will tell them though. Simply. A fact. I will look them in the eye when I say it, with certainty.

“I’m going to get a tattoo.”





“Tuesday, April 5th, chill, crisp, fresh; the grass looked green enough to put on a salad, I ran to school, late, my shoes made light squeaks as they tore across the dusty hallway, past the front door, past the principal, past the nurse, past 11 other unsuspecting teachers and personnel, I had my route memorized, like a ninja I crept through the halls (You don’t even know how fast I was, I told you I should have joined track); soon enough I was at my desk in my allotted classroom but I wasn’t good enough: Mr. Mars had spotted me. Now, Mr. Mars had once held the dream of being a bear wrestler, so I’m told, but when that didn’t work out he became an 11th grade math teacher, hoping to cause the students as much pain as the bears would have gotten. I was forced to not only write ‘I will not be late to class’ 500,000 times for homework, but also was assigned to a recently formed group, a social nightmare; what could be worse than a project with two or three amateurs who would force you into the mundane conversations that 80-year-old women partake in? So, I’m sitting there, sizing the groups up, and I see many possible horror stories forming in front of me, but this one group, all the way in back is the worst, it has Joe Turner and his two bodyguards; their nicknames all give off the faint idea of jail time and leave a taste of iron in your mouth, basically they’ll beat the shit out of you, and knowing

Mr. Mars, that's who he'll pick as my group members, capital punishment for a minor crime, and just as I'm sitting there he mutters, 'How about you join Anne and Jesse,' I'm like freaking out, I mean, what? I get put in a group with the two hottest girls in the 11th grade? So, I go over there and Anne, who is smiling at me like I'm some sort-of long lost best friend, greets me first with, 'Hi, how are you?' I just stare. Just stare. I cannot think of a single word to say, so I just force some words out, I think I said 'neat' or something similar, then Jesse grimaced and asks if I'm going to be doing all the work, and I try to tell her to do her own work but I still can't speak and I mutter something between 'work' and 'Christmas', Jesse seems pleased by this and immediately goes to the bathroom to chat it up with her boyfriend on the phone, so here I am: sitting nearly alone with Anne Dawson, my dream girl; now with her friend gone I start to get some word flow going and begin saying random words, then I say entire sentences (they just don't make sense in context), and finally just as I'm about to ask her on a date my stupid alarm goes off and I wake up alone in my room. Can you believe that?"

Brian, clearly still shocked from the whole experience, sat nervously on his bed talking to his cat that meowed back quietly, "You need new friends."



words Caitlin Hines

INTERESTING



RELEASE *words Maggie Hurt*

3/4: You slowly shiver awake. Reality hits you like freezing cold water to the body. Needles pricking and lungs constricting and you choke. You're drowning in your own life. How ironic that today is your birthday. You get in the shower but can't seem to shake off the cold. The steam unfurls around you, but bitter air makes its way determinedly through the spaces between the shower curtains. Your skin burns red but your insides remain an unfeeling blue. You hastily shave your legs and don't notice the cut until it's halfway up your shin. You stop and watch the blood trickle down, mixing with the water and then swallowed up by the drain. You put soap on it just to feel it burn. Just to feel.

You get out of the shower, brush your teeth, put on clothes and look in the mirror. Your face is expressionless but you look tired. You take Prozac, take Adderall. Your hands shake as you put on mascara. You get a message from your boyfriend, "Have a good day, sweetie! :)". You send back, "I will as long as I see you :)"; but there's no feeling behind your words. How easy it is to pretend when no one sees your face.

You walk slowly along the brick sidewalk. The air is chilly and the sky is gray. You lift up your head and see no one you recognize and you feel lost and alone. Turning around, you return to where you came from and escape back into your dreams.

3/5: You don't remember much of anything from last night. You try to think but your head is fuzzy and you're nauseated. It starts to come back; you hear the sound of tinkling glasses and laughter, but you feel separate from the world going on around you. A smile

is plastered on your face and you hope no one can see that it's more of a grimace than anything else. Your cheeks burn from the strain, but you're determined not to let anyone see that it's just a façade. Pretending seems to be all that you do now. Pretending and sleeping.

3/6: You wake up groggy again. The alarm clock beside your bedside reads 10:59 AM. You missed all your classes this morning but you don't care much. There's a worry gnawing away inside your stomach. Like an ulcer, threatening to hurt you slowly with the build up, but you push it to the back of your mind. You look up at the ceiling. There's a brown stain spreading out from the upper left hand corner. It's grotesque, but you can't help but stare. It reminds you of the color of dried blood.

You're staring up at the blood stain, and there's a knock on your door. You hesitate then reluctantly climb out of bed. The cold tiles send a chill up your spine. You open the door and your boyfriend is standing there with a daisy – your favorite. Mustering up all your remaining energy, you manage a weak smile and croak out a "thank you." He tells you that you don't look good and in response you climb back in bed. He lies down beside you and strokes your hair as sleep grabs you by the arms and pulls you back into its tight, suffocating hold.

3/7: You feel like you should be excited to be going on this trip. But you're not. You're not feeling much of anything. You know the warm weather will be a nice change from the dredges of winter still loitering around farther north, but you dread all the pretending you'll have to do.



Art Jenny Kemp



Art Jenny Kemp

You're late for the bus. Blushing, you clumsily make your way towards the first open seat you find. The material of the bus rubs uncomfortably against your shoulders as the journey begins and your legs are stiff and cold but somehow, sleep takes you as his prisoner once again.

A burst of laughter drags you out of your reverie. A game of "never-have-I-ever" is going on behind you and the movie *Old School* is flashing across the screen of the miniature television two seats up. Bottles of Coke and whiskey are being passed around. The chaperones are either blissfully unaware or they don't really give a damn. You take a long drag on the bottle. If you can't sleep, you may as well find another means of escape.

Your phone buzzes loudly in your lap. "I miss you, baby," it reads. You don't answer. Then it buzzes again. A message from your ex glares up at you. "Come sit with me." You do.

3/8: It's early in the morning. The bus screams to a halt and jerks you awake. Your ex gently squeezes your shoulder. You exit the bus into a hot breath of air. You exhale then breathe in deeply. You taste salt and exhaust. Grit crunches in your molars.

You're sitting in a large room on top of your suitcase. The itinerary rests lifelessly in your lap. The drone of the teacher explaining the rules for the sixth time drags on in the background. You lift up your head and your ex is staring at you with his big, brown eyes. He smiles at you and you smile back. You continue to watch him as he turns to his friend. He talks animatedly, and it fascinates you as it always has.

You think back to the first day you met him. You walked into the English lecture hall, and he was the only one in the room. He looked up from his notebook. His intense stare lingered on your face, and then he lit up with a grin. Throughout the class, he argued with eloquence and his deep voice was soothing. He used to send you emails while you sat across from each other in the library, writing papers until 4 am. And the nights you spent in his bedroom...

You snap out of your reminiscence and make your way up to the room you're sharing with three other girls. They invite you out to explore the city, but you make up some excuse like you didn't sleep well on the bus. You climb into the bed and stare up at the ceiling until your eyes flutter shut and you surrender to your dreams.



Art Jenny Kemp



Sleep reluctantly releases you as someone knocks on your door. He's there, your ex, standing in the doorway. He puts one hand on your neck and the other on the small of your back. You resist at first, but when his warm lips cover your own, you relax into his arms.

He carries you with ease over to your bed. He tugs your hair gently with one hand as he caresses you with the other. With his hands on you, it's easier not to think. It's easy just to lose yourself in the moment, as your body complements the rhythm of his. It's easy to pretend you care about something when he looks deep into your eyes.

But when it's over and he's gone, when the physical high leaves you, you're back to where you started: aching with an emptiness that's almost too heavy to bear.

3/9: Tonight is the big game – the reason you came on the trip. You spend the morning lounging by the pool – sipping a piña colada and losing yourself in a book. Reading is nice because you're supposed to pretend to be someone else. Someone who feels something other than a desperate desire to feel anything at all.

The game is horrible. You cringe at turnover after turnover. Too many unnecessary fouls, too many careless travels. All hope of a win is lost in the first half. So instead of watching the game, you watch him. You look up into the stands, and you notice the way his eyes crinkle when he laughs. You stare as he encourages the team to keep trying, even though the last four attempts at three-pointers miss the rim by feet. He catches your eye and he smiles.

When you get back to the hotel, all the rooms along the hall are open, and despite the loss, partying is at its height. You wander into a room, and you spot him

talking to some of the players. You mix a drink and sit down next to him.

Slowly, the party starts to die down. He heads off to bed, but for some reason, you don't feel like it. You take your conversation with one of the players to the hallway. Another player joins the two of you. You flirt innocently, just to see if it can evoke any feeling in you. It doesn't, but the attention you're getting distracts you for the moment. They tell you it would be more comfortable to go upstairs and that the party is still going on up on their floor. So you follow.

The hallway upstairs is deserted. You look around in confusion. A large strong hand violently grabs your wrist and forces you into a pitch black room. He takes a sharp left into the bathroom, shuts the door and turns on the light. You look into his eyes and you see a cold thirst. The other player comes up behind you. He grabs the neck of your shirt and yanks it over your head. You panic. He asks you to touch him. "No," you say. "No, I don't even know you." There's an aggressive gleam in his eyes and he tells you to touch him. You can't speak. A hand pushes you hard from behind, and suddenly the arms of a cruel stranger are clutching you.

He grabs a handful of your hair at the nape of your neck. It hurts but you don't make a sound. He slips off his shorts quickly, and pushes your head down hard and forces his way into your mouth. You close your eyes tightly, and silent tears stream down your face. You taste sweat, the salt of your tears, and the fear rising up in the back of your throat. You gag and you struggle, but the hand on your neck grips tighter, the other roughly strokes your bare chest. He grunts and shakes and finishes in your mouth. He says, "Stop



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crying, you little bitch, and swallow like a good girl.”
You gag again and then your thoughts fade to black.

You find yourself sitting on the cold, hard floor of the bathroom. Your stomach heaves and you cough and gag, but there’s nothing. You can’t stop shivering, and every time you close your eyes, you see the eyes of a predator staring back at you.

You run a hot shower. You try to wash his hands off of you, but they won’t go away. The scars are etched deep into your skin. You sink to the ground and let the water wash away your tears.

3/10: Your roommates awaken and find you in the bathroom. You manage to convince them you’re fine, while your throat is burning with the threat of tears. You silently pack your things. Your eyes sting with fatigue, but you’re too scared to close your eyes. On the bus, you sit alone. You stare out the window. You pick up a book but your mind won’t focus. It’s like a broken tape recorder, playing your life’s worst moment on repeat. You want to get off the bus. You want to be anywhere but where you are. Nothing can distract your mind. You cry desperately for sleep, but sleep refuses to listen.

Finally you get home. You open up a drawer you never use and pull out a mismatched pair of socks. Stuffed

inside, you find the prescription bottle of Oxycodone you stole from your mom after she had surgery. You always toyed with the idea of taking it. You’ve been told it’s like leaving your own body for a while, and hovering just above yourself. You swallow two eagerly and wait. Your arms start to feel heavy first. Then your legs. Finally your eyelids fall and darkness enfolds you like a blanket.

3/14: The past four days you’ve spent in a drug induced haze. Sleep, water, Prozac, Adderall, Oxy, sleep. You’re trying to forget but it’s impossible.

A spark of clarity catches in your mind. You look into the prescription bottle: only five more. You swallow them all. A pair of scissors is lying on your desk. You open them and touch the blade with the pad of your finger. You grip them tightly with your right hand and slowly plunge the blade into your wrist, dragging it vertically down the length of your forearm. Dark red seeps from the wound - so dark it looks almost black. You continue to sink the scissors into your arm over and over. The pain is like an annoying itch that keeps coming back after you scratch it away. A slight bother, interchanging with satisfaction. Your vision swims, then you close your eyes. You finally feel alive. A siren wails in the distance, but the sound of your heart slowly pounding fills your ears. A smile crosses your lips, and then you slip off into nothing.



Art Jenny Kemp

DEPRESSION HURTS

Traduit de l'anglais :

La dépression blesse.

Faux.

La dépression est la perte de tout sentiment, sauf de l'indifférence.

Un oubli, comme un nuage gris, suspendu vous noie dans un brouillard.

Un brouillard persistant qui vous confronte brutalement à la réalité.

Vous dormez pour échapper aux longs doigts terribles qui vous arrachent

De la caresse tendre et faible de l'inconscience.

La dépression blesse.

Vrai.

C'est comme la lame luisante du rasoir qui a tranché vos poignets délicats, ou plutôt déchiré les cœurs de votre famille

Mais les points de suture nécessaires pour cicatriser, vous ne pourrez jamais cicatriser leur douleur.

L'entaille disparaîtra, mais une cicatrice défigurée du passé persiste.

La dépression vous hante pour toujours. Elle tente de dégager des liens qui ne peuvent jamais la garder complètement silencieuse.

La dépression vous attaque.

Elle réduit vos intestins en bouillie et elle menace d'arracher les liens d'acier qui maintient l'amour en place.

Donc vous vous défendez.

Vous vous défendez toujours.

/// words Maggie Hurt ///

Depression hurts.

False.

Depression is the loss of every feeling except unfeeling.

A cloud of grey oblivion hovers, drowning you in fog.

An inescapable fog that chokes you with reality.

You sleep to get away from those long, terrible fingers that yank you
back from the tender, weak caress of unconsciousness.

Depression hurts.

True.

It's like the gleaming razor blade used to stain your delicate wrists tore open the hearts of your family instead.

But the stitches needed to fix you can never fix their pain.

The cut will fade, but a disfigured scar of the past lingers on.

Depression is forever haunting you. It struggles to free itself from the binds that can never keep it completely silent.

Depression beats you.

It mashes your insides to a pulp and threatens to rip the bonds of steel that hold love together.

So you fight back.

You always fight back.

Untitled

Fleury Colon Poem Translated by Philip Rigg

Black hooves alight
Upon the whitest vows
In this nothing's black extent
The white horse and the black one
The muzzles
Ridge, line, mane — a seam
The foreheads of lovers
To be embraced
By the love of your mother
The narrative is alive
It is the living one

Black hooves alight!
The Earth gives way
Softly.







so there!

Fleury Colon Translated by Philip Rigg

But what if the House, you asked, is responsible
for the installation of ornaments?

The problem of interpretation
Asking, prayer, desirous trick
What then, is this house?
Earth
The house; it is living.

To see one from the black night
To see yourself for the first time?
This is not a mirror.

Bird song
In the black night
To command
Like
A spell
An invocation
An incantation
To make

egg

THE TEXT

Fleury Colon Translated by Philip Rigg

The sign of meeting
Breathing
Lungs = Chiseling

Sound = Amplic
The text made new
Bells in space

A train station
Mercury, Venus, Earth ...

Leaves, hearts, serifs, text
For orientation, these our our indices
Where do we want to go?

Untitled St★r Poem

Fleury Colon Translated by Philip Rigg

Enter
The bride
Whole

Stars

Black horse
Form and movement
Structuring structures
In the night of the black horse
Such fine membered structures

It used to be that raggedy paper he blew
all concern into, but now, his mailbox is
flooded with tickets— napkins—
tossed to the back of
the glove compartment.

He's roused the small box and sank
into the heart of that thin-yellow-paper
he cannot hand out.
Melancholy life rafts wait to
erupt

the day he reaches in,
to wipe his mouth; clean—
“like the smell of spray paint
or gasoline,” he says,
“like permanent markers

in grade school,” or “hairspray sticky
with glue,” like a deep
breath—
clean—
like the buoyancy of floating
over flood waters.



Art Jenny Kemp

words Chris Hailey

BLACK SHEEP

words Chris Hailey

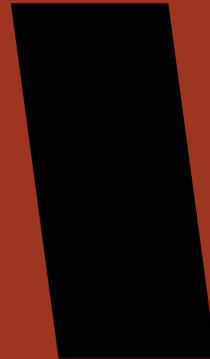
tunnels adhere to winter,
cement freezes, trains
arrive, depart, no one
boards the late schedule.

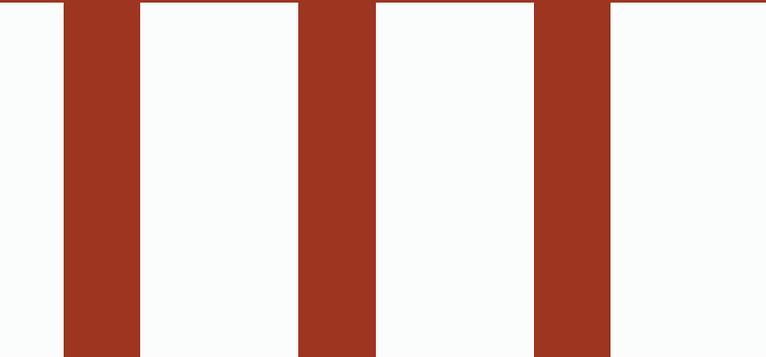
a homeless man lays
his head against a sleeper,
stranger, waking startled
he paces the platform.

cheap cigarette smoke
from a southern boy fills
the rafters, and the blue
rail, too, is tired.

a homeless man
bundles under frozen
benches, restless,
he covers his head.

four after midnight on forty-second street





Narcoleps

words Chris Hailey

Ever get those days you just can't wake up? I have those too—
My muscles get tense and my voice gets lost.
Mouth open and exposed like sundried tomatoes.
Eyes bind shut like I'm entering a coma, becoming
an enkindled cadaver, just laying idle.

The crash kicks in;
it tackles you like adrenaline: waiting to knock you out.
Eyes worn as flood gates begin to fail,
not adhering to restraints, and you—
feel like some sort of—
paralysis criminal, just broke out and back in again.
I hear familiar voices—
faces appear— splotchy and translucent like a wet negative—
Bedspreads and mattresses entangle me in Egyptian cotton
and I can't tell if it's morning or noon.

I'm becoming a sleeping cigarette addict; might go through
a pack a day it's my sort of bad habit,
but it goes good with too-cold showers and tart tarmac coffee,
which help to push down a handful of morning perks.
—Dexadrine, Provagil, and Ritalin—sour candy tends to work best
when my heart beats too fast. And
on those too long days I get curious—like,
When did the sunrise? or, Where does the time go?
When does the sunrise? or, When should I wake up?
But no one understands my last words.

I get that good night's sleep,
that extra hour I've always wanted.
Sinkholes in the mattress, black cherry bed sores,
limbs of snapped cedar— I tap snooze
with the same dense finger every morning,
bearing the weight of wood pulp,
and don't understand why those next 5 minutes
always feel like a lifetime.

THE MYTH, OF COURSE, IS THAT THERE WILL BE SOME SURVIVORS

words Jeramy Dodds

for and after Þórdís Aðalsteinsdóttir

SHE

Of quartz I know little. Through towns
with all the charms of exit wounds
to a clackshawed recital on your Electrolux
in the oak antechamber at Linger Farm.
Remember, if you must machete me
to run it by the whetstone first.

ME

At dusk I lay a dustbowl
on the doorjamb. Stooks disband
as the pressure system ducktails –
poltergeists vie to deliver memos
to crows on gateposts in heraldic
pose. Precision tailwinds debrief
the dish of its inchling intent.

SHE

Sandhumps dune to sea, a jar
of slaveboss' salve for the whiplashed backs
of interned beachstones. Sun swanning
as the afterglow leans to its confidante
when you leave, a paparazzi of breeze
takes me falling to my crystal knees.



NOTRE REINE REINCARNATED

words Jeremy Dodds

Early this year, the Black Liberation Front, a hot-eyed batch of pro-Castro New York Negroes, got in touch with some Quebec separatists ... Obviously, blowing up the Statue of Liberty would be as spectacular an event as anyone could wish for.

Time, February, 1965

With a hat like that she's got to go
head down into the wind so the brim
holds fast to her head. But if our
Queen dons a crepe-paper crown,
a zephyr could dethrone our contessa.

Moreover, if her moped had sped
past the "Cliff Ahead" sign, we'd be left
with a waft off her two-stroke exhaust –
Does the transparent sea call us all
in or are we being summoned
to where we've already been?

Take our liege, cocking her crossbow
to skew a peregrine into flatspin
then straddling its breast to knock it off
with a jab of her hatpin. While all about
the rawskulled rocks, timber hogs comb
in fleets, like flocks of unfinished hawks.

It must've been hard for her bodyguards
to watch her push her miscarriage
down the boulevard, in Jackie Onassis
sunglasses and chandelier-sized earrings,
Daisy Dukes and thigh-high high-heeled boots
past knock-kneed trees to the see-through sea.

Offshore a witchdoctor re-casts her in obsidian.
Rebarred to the old reign's rubble she reels
in the wage-slave ships each evening – dipping
her automaton Canadarm into the courtyard
of her crown to abracadabra a lit candelabra.



OSHAWA SHOPPING CENTRE

words Jeramy Dodds

I like it when we shop together. At the centre
of us all is a snakeskin wallet. Grocery bag ghosts
graze the lots. A wallet where we keep photobooth shots.
I knew a man who shot other men from hilltops
in Afghanistan, he had a wallet made of eyelids.
But this Christmas we'll use credit. If war was really that bad
would we allow it? My love was in this man's platoon
and nicked that eyelid wallet. He spent more time in jail
for theft than slaughtering a child. Weird, I know,
how snow allows angels to be made in our image.
Grocery bags caught on the chainlink fence like banshees
in badminton nets. Afghanistan is such a beautiful word. I love
shopping for people who want for nothing. I love shopping
with you. My love was sent home for Christmas
after splitting a burqa'ed girl on donkey-back.
Now we're holding each other beside a makeshift manger.
A mechanical pony waits for a little girl to ask her father
for a quarter; he doesn't have one. He only uses credit. I know
no word of a lie, ponies have it hard breaking young girls' hearts.



You've got me
where you
want me
but I ain't
all there

words Jeramy Dodds

You give up all you got trying to give them what they want when all they really need is their own selves. Too gone for too long, or I've never actually been here, or can't be who you think I am so become the one you never wanted: the kind of goodbye where no one leaves but those who are left feel it real bad. Making love to you was like sheriffing a town that's already burnt down. On the bench of my F150 I slept with an empty twenty-sixer of whiskey and the only woman near was a ukulele. My dead granddaddy, with a yet to be lit cigarette, strums his crabapple twig thumb: Ain't she just the bee's knees on the windscreen's please. What lurches must heel to a rabid wonderful. You could take me or leave me, so you took me and left me. Keepsakes are our only real estate, a last ditch attempt at staying on the road. Can you not not be you for me. You know the wonderful go unavenged. I give the gift that keeps on giving myself up. I'm the poultry peeled of its downy bark, hung to cure in a woodshed's dark. I'd never ask for what ought to be offered. I wish you wished you were here. Hunkered head in hand in the eye of a loop-de-loop of coyotes who choir: Do unto done as have has unto will, for left is as good as going as far as gone.



STOLEN GREEN

words Robert Ficociello

The early-spring stem of a juniper waited four inches below the arrow of Doug's shovel. Cycles. Doug thought about cycles as he positioned the shovel with his tan, strong arms. Seasonal. Botanical. Business. He looked over his shoulder at the empty parking lot then up at the seven stories of vacant and glimmering offices. These abandoned office parks felt like wastelands, where deserted plants struggled against the invasion of greedy weeds. The building's shadow covered him and his orange, bruised pick-up truck. His eighteen-month old, Holly, sat in her car seat saying, "Dada. Dig," over and over.

He thought about letting her run around a little—now that she could—but if Theresa ever found out, he'd be dead. Doug smiled at her through the open door. "That's right, Honey. Daddy's digging."

Doug scanned the lot again, angled the shovel, and then shifted his weight onto his foot. He held his breath as an SUV entered the lot. He did not want to see another security car today. In the morning, the rent-a-cop only told him "OK" and looked at the orange truck and assumed it was city work. When the cop noticed Holly sleeping, Doug whispered, "Babysitter's got the flu." Most of the security people acted this way, but old timers might call City Hall for confirmation.

Now Doug watched the SUV circle, signal for a turn, and return back into the direction it had come. He exhaled then leaned fully onto the shovel: one, two, three, four times. The clump came cleanly from its berth and slipped perfectly into a plastic pot in less than one minute. As Doug wrapped his hands around the cool plastic cylinder, he knew the dogwood nearby would take longer. He slid the juniper next to the others in the back of the truck, then drew out a burlap swatch. Customers at the farmers' markets loved root balls for some reason. Last year, Doug had thought an "organic" look might appeal to the customers, and other vendors now copied him. He fingered the dogwood stem and pushed at the hard, pastel buds. Two minutes later, the dogwood stood in the back like a general towering over young ranks.

A few medium-sized burning-bushes occupied a bed on the opposite side of the lot near I-95. The tide of commuters had begun their afternoon journey, and cars whooshed above them. The echo rolled down the hill. Oceanfront property, realtors call it. He and Holly would be out in the open more, but he'd pot the plants in a flash. Four ten-inch pots, ground to truck, six minutes. Doug kissed Holly on the forehead, then turned the key while looking into the rear-view mirror and calculating the value of the haul: better than lawyer rates.

They would all have new homes in crafted gardens that surrounded suburban landscapes. Loved, fed, groomed once again. Doug teased the pedal, and the truck knocked until the engine revved to life. He needed to get to his parents' plot of land and then home before Theresa's shift ended. D.J. had a key, but Theresa and Doug didn't like D.J. being home by himself for more than an hour. He wheeled around the lot. Passing each geometry of dirt among the expanses of asphalt, dollar values sprang into his head: \$80, \$60, \$40, \$70. Nothing less than a hundred would be worth getting jammed in Friday traffic.

He steered out of the empty parking lot. The orange truck had been a minor stroke of genius. His former coworker, Mitch, had tipped-off Doug about which truck to buy at the public auction. Mass. Highway and most of the towns used orange vehicles, so rarely did Doug draw a first, never mind a second, look from anyone. He knew acutely that the public works departments had been downsizing over the past few years. He still held a hope of being called back from layoff by the Burlington DPW. But even the heavy tax bases of the dense Boston metro area could not protect towns from cuts in public service. Burlington still had plenty of occupied office parks, and software, hardware, and Starbucks, kept the town center nicely landscaped. Which was why Doug never hit any public lands—be like robbing the poor; to feed his kids, the suburbs provided enough industrial parks along "America's Technology Highway" for ten of him. If any business moved in, a complete makeover would proceed down to the infertile

dirt. The plants needed rescuing, not real estate predators. Plus, whoever was getting bailed out couldn't sell the buildings, much less worry about the landscaping.

Holly snored lightly as Doug cruised past the mall, hospital, and another no-man's-land of industrial parks. Back in the early '70s, Doug's father had hunted where the desolate parks now sat, and Doug eyed the big-money trees that remained like sentries along walkways and entrances. Too risky. He'd thought about doing some after-hours work, but that's as far as he got with that idea. Security and electronic surveillance kept the fronts of these buildings looking guarded. And, the need for night-ops hadn't really presented itself yet.

Doug drove to the upscale neighborhood at the edge of Burlington. A baseball diamond, soccer field, and the three acres that his parents owned served as a buffer to the warehouses and industrial sections of his current hometown of Billerica. To the east, Burlington had all the perks: exits off I-95, banks, a mall, a hospital. Westward on the other hand, Billerica had plumbing warehouses, Chinese restaurants, and multi-family housing. Doug could envision his modest greenhouse and farm stand, and all the weekend and evening traffic at the soccer field and little-league diamond would provide an abundance of customers for three seasons. In the winter, he could sell Christmas trees and wreaths. He parked his truck on the empty lot and surveyed the brown earth. Doug could imagine everything—the shining panels of the hothouse, the green and red “Doug's Farm Stand” sign, his whole family greeting and helping customers.

The truck coughed into silence, and he untangled Holly from her car seat. While she scrambled around, he checked on the holdover perennials and planted the astilbe he'd dug up earlier; he'd get more for plants showy with blooms in a few months. Doug tried showing Holly how the plants lived in the earth, but she slapped together mudcakes instead.

He rinsed and dried her hands, and they left Burlington, drove into Billerica, and parked at the duplex, where D.J. was riding his bike in circles around the small driveway. Doug's heart sank. D.J. didn't have room to ride in their new neighborhood, and the road's swift traffic proved unsafe for him even to bike up to the park. At least their last apartment had been on a dead end.

The landlord at their last place had complained about all the potted plants on the balcony and stairs. Doug had laughed, thinking it a joke: “Too many plants?” Theresa had been angered with Doug when he refused to comply with the landlord's requests. She hadn't wanted to move. The kids had been settled in their schools, but the landlord agreed to break the lease without consequence when Doug challenged the legality of the complaint, granting all parties an escape. He reassured her often that they would be better off in the long run. And, as she began setting up the larger apartment and getting the kids adjusted, her indignation decreased. Doug knew some of the tension between him and Theresa remained.

D.J. ran to the truck window as Doug shut down the engine, and Holly struggled in her car seat.

“What did you get today, Dad?”

“Plenty for tomorrow, Pal. Help me get Holly in the house, then when Mom gets home, we'll unload.”

“She's home.”

Theresa came out of the front door and went right to Holly. “How's my big girl?”

Theresa smothered her with kisses, and Holly screamed.

Doug unclicked his safety belt and stood in the driveway. “You're home early. How was the hospital?”

“Not too bad, but busy in the morning. Shannon, a new nurse's aide that works on my floor, lives kind of close, so she gave me a ride.” She lifted Holly. “How'd you do?”

“We're in good shape for tomorrow.” Doug met Theresa at the rear of the truck, and they kissed. “Out for pizza tonight?”

D.J. interjected. “Please, Ma?”

She smiled at Doug. “You did that good?”

“Last stop sealed it.”

She kissed Doug again, then D.J., who protested. “I’ll get Holly bathed,” Theresa said, walking to the door. “Oh, your parents called, too.”

“What did they want?”

“To make sure that we were coming to dinner at their place on Sunday.”

Doug stood still and looked up at Theresa. She shrugged, then carried Holly into the house. They’d been having dinner with his parents every Sunday since Doug could remember, and a reminder could only mean that his parents wanted to talk.

D.J. climbed into the truck and pushed the burlapped sapling to his dad. “Dogwood?”

Doug had been surprised at how much D.J. retained from helping last summer and how strong he was for a seven-year-old. “Yes. Good.”

“How much do you think we’ll get for it?”

“Thirty-five.”

“Should we spray the root ball?” the boy asked.

“Just enough to keep it moist.”

“We don’t want to wash the soil from the roots, huh?”

“That’s right. You get going on that, and I’ll get the rest out.” Doug watched him go to the hose and temper the flow from the nozzle. Theresa had made herself clear last fall that she had mixed feelings about D.J. helping. Doug felt pride deep down. However, Theresa always reminded him that although it did help to house and clothe the kids, he was indeed stealing. Therefore, he had been teaching their son to steal. But, Doug maintained, if only to himself, that this would be a family business.

D.J.’s hands, covered in mud, fumbled with the root ball. “Dad?”

Doug grinned. “Yeah.”

“I like the smell of the dirt. Do you?”

Doug looked at his hands, moist with soil, then he brought them to his nose. “I do.”

At Pizza House, D.J. filled his plate at the salad bar as Theresa and Holly sat in a booth with Doug. Doug watched his son surveying the greens and vegetables while courteously navigating around the adults. “Do you think it’s odd that my parents called to make sure we were coming?”

Theresa put another pinch of shredded cheddar in front of Holly. “Not really. Why?”

Inside, Doug knew that the conversation would be about the land his parents owned; things had been going smoothly. But sitting in the restaurant, he didn’t want to get into a what-if discussion with Theresa. “Maybe they wanted us to bring something.”

“They didn’t say anything.” She wiped Holly’s chin. “You know they just want to see the kids.”

“Yeah.” This was true. He saw her looking at him. She could always see when the wheels spun in his head. “There’s another farmers’ market starting on Fridays up in Marblehead. It’ll be a bit of a ride.” Doug straightened up and thrust his chin forward. “But it is Marblehead, my darling. Pass the Grey Poupon.”

Theresa laughed. “Do you think you’ll sell much?”

“I hear that the market’s going all right, so I’ll give it a few weeks. I’m sure the people who have summer places will go for groceries, and maybe they’ll spruce up their yards, as well.”

Theresa stirred at her salad. “When school’s done, you’ll have to take D.J. and Holly when I have my week of day shifts.”

Holly attracted people, particularly women—and they brought the green and bought the green. “That’ll be the busiest time of spring.”

“I’ll help you, Dad,” D.J. added as he set his salad down at the table and slid into the booth.



Theresa eyed Doug suspiciously. “Or bring them to your parents.”

Doug offered Theresa a slight smile and then turned to D.J. “Thanks, Pal. We’ll see what happens.” He hoped that this would be the last summer that they would need to deal with this kind of thing.

At 6:00 am, D.J. helped Doug load the stock into the bed of the truck. “Will we sell all these today, Dad?”

“Most of it. If it warms up, we might sell it all.” Doug pointed. “Leave some room for the table along the side.”

Doug lifted the aluminum card table toward his son. When they finished, vegetation climbed over the orange walls of the truck. “Run in and get our lunches, then we’ll get going.”

They drove out of Billerica into Burlington. Doug enjoyed the silence of the breaking day and waking with the green leaves gathering morning sun. He knew that the plants around him cycled naturally—the light phase of photosynthesis beginning, the dark phase ending. No matter how exotic or indigenous a plant, the sun determined its growth and rest.

Doug saw his son mimicking the way he rested his elbow on the door, and he had a feeling that D.J. would be a big help this summer if Theresa relaxed her stance. After growing a few inches over the winter, D.J.’s body was developing similar to his own, lean and long. Doug’s parents swore they were watching their own son growing up in front of them again.

The truck crossed the town line into Lexington. Doug had waited all last summer and into the fall to get a spot in the Minuteman Farmers’ Market. The director of the market ran it like a boot camp and allowed only two plant vendors. Luckily, the vendor previous to Doug had retired down to Florida. Lexington was the type of town that could afford preserving the historical sites, and the rich history attracted rich people who could buy an Eighteenth-century colonial house next to ground where American independence battled tyranny. And these people landscaped the hell out of their latitudinous properties. Doug always sold big pots of big plants to the wives of CEOs, brokers, and doctors who worked in Burlington. He figured that the farmers’ market provided some sort of penance for them.

“Keep It Local” adorned the banners for the market, which every Saturday morning invaded a battlefield of the Revolutionary War. As Doug pulled up into the field, he thought of all the plants he would load into the trunks of expensive, foreign cars. After which, he would offer transplanting advice and, as they started their cars, laugh to himself at just how local they were indeed keeping it.

Doug and D.J. set up their table by 7:30, and a few Beemers and Saabs cruised into the lot. D.J. had impressed Doug by arranging the plants in groups according to species and size, and all tags stuck out of the soil and faced forward. “Can you handle the fort here?” Doug asked. He enjoyed D.J.’s gregariousness and felt camaraderie building between them each weekend.

D.J. winked. “I’ll cover you.”



Doug gave him some dollar bills to make change and began his rounds. He met with the director and then walked around the tables. Many of the vendors were cottage-industry entrepreneurs, selling multi-grain breads, jars of preserves, pints of maple syrup or honey, and herb-flavored oils and vinegars for twice the store price. Most of the produce vendors had early-season greens and herbs. Doug wanted to sell produce once he had the capital to get the greenhouse up and running. There would be enough room for him to grow hot-house tomatoes, peppers, squash, melons even, and greens in the spring and fall.

Doug saw an unfamiliar and radiant pick-up truck as he approached the other plant vendor, Vernon. “New truck?” he asked, knowing his own truck could fit into the bed of Vernon’s.

The door swung open, and Vernon sat behind the steering wheel sipping a coffee. “Yeah, I needed something a little bigger.” Carrying his mug, he stepped out and down to the ground.

Vernon’s cell-packs of seedlings stood like an army on the table before Doug. Doug lifted one of the rosemary pots. “These look great.”

“Thanks.” A woman started looking over Vernon’s tables, and he faced her. “How are you doing this fine morning?”

Doug waved and walked back to the table.

“Dad! Sold the Dogwood.”

“Good work, Pal. Who bought it?”

D.J. narrated the sale, and by noon, they’d sold everything but a few junipers that would keep until the next market or he’d plant in the lot.

Driving back through Burlington, Doug saw Mitch working at the baseball park. They hadn’t talked since Doug moved, so he pulled up behind home plate and parked. Mitch stood holding a rake on the pitcher’s mound. Doug shut off the truck and wondered aloud, “What’s he doing here today?”

“Season’s starting soon.”

Doug chuckled. “I guess you’re right.” But, why Saturday? Mitch waved, and Doug and D.J. raised their hands. “Let’s say hello.”

Everyone met on the first-base line. Mitch leaned on the rake inside the white line and extended his hand to Doug. “Long time no-see, Dougie.” They shook, and Mitch smiled at D.J. “How are you, Big Guy?”

“Good.” D.J. looked down at the white line. “Getting ready for the opener?”

Mitch stretched his arms. “Came around quick. You playing this year?”

D.J. looked up at his father.

“We just moved, so we missed the tryouts. But I think that we can get him on one of the teams before the first game.”

“Your dad was a great shortstop. I coached him back when he was a little older than you. Get him to show you how to attack those grounders—nothing ever got by him.”

D.J. grinned, and Doug thought about their inadequate yard. Looking at Mitch, he felt the tension and saw that Mitch knew what he wanted to ask. “Why they got you working out here on a Saturday?” was the best he came up with.

“With that late snow then the warm spell, we needed to do some catch-up work.”

“O.T.?” Doug asked.

Mitch shifted the rake in his hands. “For now.”

Doug crossed his arms.

“We may bring a few people back,” Mitch said looking into the outfield.

Mitch turned and held the rake out to D.J. “See how I got those lines circling around the mound?”

D.J. took the rake and nodded.

“Well, in my old age, I messed some of them up, and I need you to get those young arms to fix them. Can you help me out this time?” They watched D.J. walk to the mound. “He’s growing fast.”

“I know. I can’t believe it myself.” Doug waited for Mitch to turn back to him. “So?”

“They might be re-hiring a few guys.”

“And?”

“You know that I know you’re the most qualified, but Doug, it’s a small world around here.”

Doug saw his son looking over. “And what’s the problem, Mitch?”

Mitch moved a little closer. “You think that no one knows about your—whatever you call it? Shit, I got people down at the DPW talking about you. What’s true or what isn’t doesn’t matter. When it gets that far, Dougie—”

“Those plants will be lost. To weeds or tilled under.” His face burned. “I get enough to pay my bills. Damn it, I could strip a town in a week if I wanted.”

“Look, I know that it’s been tough for you—and everyone for

that matter.” He pointed at Doug’s chest. “I can’t even help you now. But remember, I told you to be careful.” Mitch frowned and pointed across to Doug’s parents’ land. “You got plants from all over town sitting in the ground over there.”

“But—”

“I know. I know. You haven’t been bragging about this, but people will talk shit to get ahead.”

Doug watched D.J. approaching them. “For rumors, I’m off the re-hire list? That’s bullshit.”

“I know, but that’s just the situation. I’m sorry, but I wanted you to hear it from me before discovering it on your own. I was going to call you soon.”

The silence came with D.J., who straddled the line and handed the rake to Mitch.

“Looks good,” Doug said, forcing a smile. He couldn’t wait for a chance at being re-hired. Some job lottery. Anger fought off the creeping regret. Could he tell Theresa this one? Whenever he stewed about something, he withdrew—he never could act like nothing was wrong—and she would recognize this. As he stood with his son, he saw that D.J. had the same ability to recognize when he drifted away. The bond of their day began to wilt.

Mitch spun the rake. “I need to finish up and get on home. Thanks for the help, D.J.”



“You’re welcome.”

Doug avoided eye contact with Mitch. He didn’t want to see anything from him. Theresa would be enough.

D.J. didn’t speak as they drove home. When Doug parked in the driveway, they unloaded the bed. Nothing seemed natural anymore between them. Doug tried to think of something to start a conversation, but as he watched his son do everything right, any comment would make him sound like an employer. “Why don’t you go get washed up. I’ll get the rest.”

D.J. walked to the house, and Doug began sweeping out the back of the truck. Several minutes later, he saw Theresa holding the baby at the front window. They all knew now that he failed again. D.J. would say they’d seen Mitch working at the park. And somehow from a quick glance at each other through the pane of glass, he and Theresa agreed to talk about it when the kids were in bed.

Doug brushed his teeth at the sink while Theresa read in bed. He walked down the hall shutting off his children’s light and closing their door. Theresa slid a bookmark between the pages when he entered the room. She turned down his side of the bed, and Doug sat facing away from her. She touched his back. “D.J. said that you guys saw Mitch at the park.”

“Yes.” Doug inhaled and then unrolled the story for her. All the while, he wondered why it sounded so trivial and when it would end.

In the morning, he felt tired but relieved because he’d talked it out with Theresa. The fact that her reaction had been muted both eased and worried him. When she’d said it wasn’t his fault, her delivery didn’t seem convincing. He woke before her and made Sunday breakfast for everyone, the table quieter than usual.

When they arrived at Doug’s parents, he had a funny feeling. When his parents handed out gifts, Legos for D.J. and an art set for Holly, Theresa’s pursed lips told him the uneasiness wasn’t in just his own head.

Through dinner, Doug watched his parents. Their eyes held wrinkles

of concern at the corners, and both of them seemed to be elsewhere. After dinner, the kids played in the living room and Theresa and Doug cleared the table. He saw the worry on Theresa’s face.

“I hope that they’re all right,” she said before leaving the kitchen for more dishes.

Doug stood in the kitchen with his father and spoke. “Sox look good so far.”

“They do every spring until they actually start playing,” his dad replied before powering on the garbage disposal. Theresa walked in and waited for the grinding to stop. She peered at Doug. “Your mom says we’ll have coffee in the dining room now.”

The formality surprised Doug, and he held Theresa’s hand until they sat.

The discussion returned to him when he drove home. D.J. complained about the open window, but Doug needed air, demanded it swirling around his face. Betrayed, he felt, knowing that all of it would add up at some later point in time. Theresa touched his arm, and said, “The baby, Doug.” He rolled the window up. Property tax, two acres, interest rates, Realtors, recession, assessment, thirty percent, ten percent, tax year, IRS, retirement, capital gains, pension.

The push of habit guided Doug as he parked at the house. Unpack, wash them up for bed, shut out the light, close the door. In the kitchen, Doug removed the gin from the pantry and stood over the bottle. Theresa walked in and stopped.

“I’m going to sit out on the porch,” he said softly. “Get some air.”

“Doug, it’s not their fault.”

His throat tightened, and his teeth clamped. “I know that,” he forced out.

She didn’t respond, but he knew she could say it was nice that they would give them some money once the land changed hands, and he knew she had a valid point in saying that it wasn’t anyone’s fault. He

also knew she was dead wrong about fault; causes existed when you looked, but Doug couldn't see any of them, only that square bottle. Plants just didn't die—drought, cold, nutrients, shade, sun, bugs, viruses killed them. "I'm going outside," he said again. He walked slowly out through the kitchen door, leaving Theresa and the gin.

Monday morning, Doug drove to his parent's lot with Holly. He wanted to get last year's perennials out of the earth and potted so he could sell them. The phlox, echinacea, and delphinium obviously needed more time in the ground; their slight protrusions hadn't yet produced new, rich growth—forget flowers or buds. He'd bought flats of tiny perennials last year and banked on having them fully mature later in the summer, when people could see the potential of each plant. Doug fingered the blank stalks and envisioned spreads of flower petals, lush greenery, turgid stems. But he knew that his customers would not share his vision. Perennials sold when plants were full, when plants existed.

He set Holly sleeping in her stroller on a tuft of grass next to the row of plants and tools. As he dug gingerly into the soft, cool soil, the memories of dumping full wheelbarrows of manure and compost last fall irritated him. He had taken soil samples to the extension service for improving the soil quality, adjusting the pH levels with limestone dust and ash, and balancing the P-K-N ratios just right.

As he potted a phlox, a gray sedan cruised up and parked on the street next to the lot. Doug read the red, white, and blue Realtor's sign on the door. An older, blonde woman in a business suit emerged. A short, dark-haired man, also in a suit, followed her like a groomed dog. "Didn't take those vultures long," Doug mumbled and continued digging. Holly woke up as the woman walked with difficulty over the gravel and dirt straight toward him. The suit carefully placed each foot on the ground, and Doug snickered when each of them sunk down a few inches. Doug squeezed a coneflower into a pot.

"Excuse me," the suit said from ten yards away. "Excuse me?"

Doug saw he was about the same age as himself. "Yes."
The Realtor caught up and asked, "What are you doing here?"

Straightening himself, Doug laughed and stated the obvious. "What's it look like I'm doing?"

"But—" the man started.

The Realtor took over. "This property is under contract."

Doug jammed the shovel into the ground between him and the suit. "So?" Holly started to whimper, and Doug retrieved her juice cup from the truck.

"Do you work for the town?" the Realtor asked.

Holly slurped at her sippy cup, and Doug pushed out a breath. "Not anymore."

The Realtor frowned.

"Then who the hell are you?" the suit asked.

"Look, my parents own the land. I planted these last year and need to get them out of the ground and into pots." Holly dropped the cup. Doug cleaned it on his shirt then returned the juice to her. "I sell them at the farmers' market."

"Well," the Realtor began, "the property can not be adjusted while it's under contract."

Doug tightened his grip around the wood handle of the shovel. "I planted these last year," he said calmly. "They're mine."

An exaggerated huffing noise came from the Realtor's mouth. "Actually, if what you say is true, then these plants are your parents'. And, they signed a contract." She opened a case and removed some papers. "This says that they will not adjust the land." The Realtor extended and rattled the papers at Doug's face. "Do you see their signatures?"

This action reminded Doug of his landlord doing the same thing with the lease, and he glanced over at the suit. "You're buying it?" The suit crossed his arms. "Maybe."

The handle loosened in Doug's grasp as he moved toward the suit. His face and palms grew warmer, and the heat spread through his belly. "Would you mind if I took my plants? I really worked hard

last summer.” He kept his tone even and low. “I’ll even leave a few of each species behind for you. I will place markers in the soil, so you can find them easily. You can re-plant them.”

The suit stepped back and looked at the Realtor.

She shook her head vigorously. “I’d prefer that you wouldn’t.”

Doug ran a hand through his hair and scratched at his head. He could feel the dirt smudge on his sweaty forehead. “You’re only going to bulldoze the ground to set a foundation for some big house that your family will live inside for the rest of your lives. Right?”

“It’s in the contract!” responded the Realtor.

The suit smirked.

“I understand all that,” Doug whispered at the Realtor. “But I’m asking you a favor here. Please,” he continued in a raised voice. “Just let me take my plants. Call my parents.”

The Realtor waved the papers. “You’ll void the contract.”

Doug wiped his face and looked down trying to compose himself. Muddy swirls appeared on the back of his hand. “Fuck the fucking contract!” he yelled. The suit and Realtor jumped, and Holly began crying. Doug handed the cup back to Holly, but she would not accept it. “I asked you one small favor.” Doug circled around the stroller then launched the cup over his head. “That was all.” He pointed at the suit and elevated his voice: “Such a tiny thing for you.”

The Realtor returned the papers to her case, removed a phone, and began dialing.

“Calm down,” the suit said while stepping back.

The baby howled.

Doug made pinching motions in the air and shouted, “Tiny! Minuscule! A speck!” He grabbed the shovel and paced as the Realtor spoke rapidly into the phone. Doug started stabbing the ground. “Infinitesimal!” Stab. “Minute!” Stab. “Puny!” Stab. “Little. Little. Little!” Stab. Stab. Stab.

The suit’s voice cracked. “Take the plants.”

Doug stiffened, jamming the blade of the shovel deep into the earth. Holly calmed as Doug wiped her face and smiled, but he still felt thick lava bubbling inside his belly. “No.”

The Realtor placed the phone back in her case, and the suit stopped retreating.

Doug stared at them. He felt his hot breath drying his lips as sweat rolled down the sides of his face into the corner of his mouth. He tasted the grit, and his eyes burned like two coals. “No.” He felt the sun on the right side of his face. “No.” Doug gripped the shovel and elevated it above his head like an ax. A grunt croaked from inside him as the shovel smacked down upon one of the freshly planted astilbe.

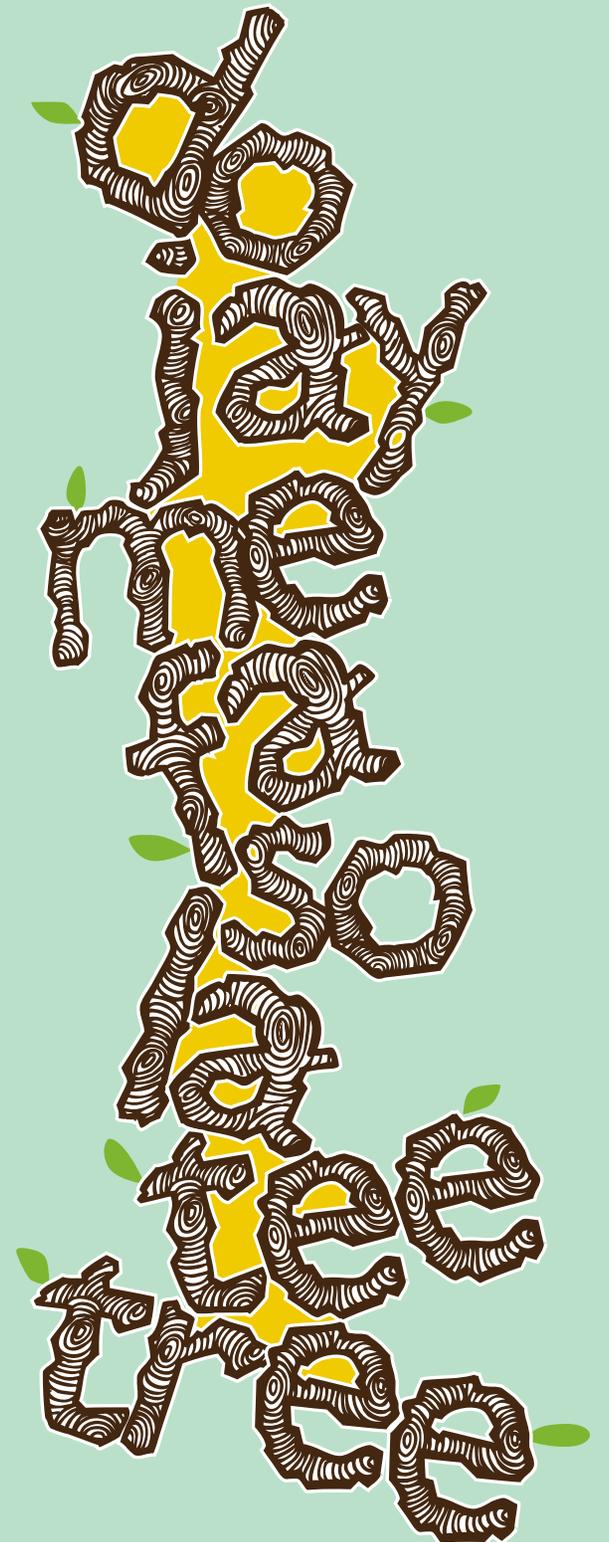
Holly bellowed.

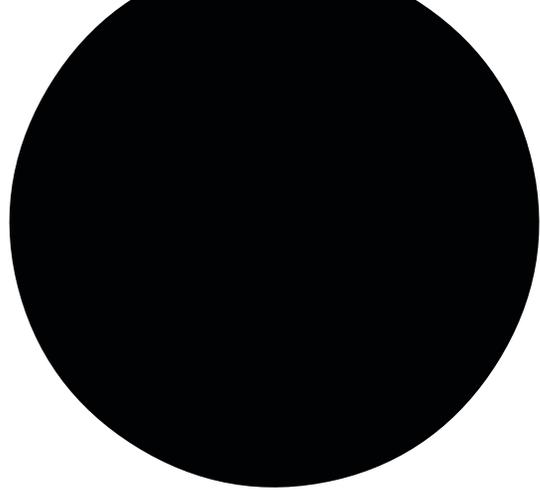
Doug hammered the next astilbe and continued his way up through the phlox then the row of junipers. Gradually he proceeded pummeling up another row away from Holly’s wail, the Realtor, and the suit. During the echinacea, the sirens came low at first, but as the shovel repeatedly flattened each sprout, Doug began hearing the high, mechanical whine overwhelming Holly’s persistent shriek.

words Michael Peters

(a scale that defies the measurer, despite the close proximity of the prize)

the leafving out oft what
is deliverately photosynthetic
while four or five
jays, blue,
up themselves to the pin
oak-nut
to pull it— off
then widen there their wing-curvings
to float down back
into
shade & on ground
with beaks
pry meat from its shell
in the sunlit patterns flung down
the light autumn wind—sees the prizes
that the pin oak gives
the secret
is that it
does
give
is open—out right
to light & wind that
makes it wave er and shimmer
makes it sway glitterings
made greener in variances a
plethora, bending to the more beckoning
silvery undersided moves, leaves in
a glut of multiple particles left to
un dul lating in light & shadow so
subtle
is the repose & response
—to think
I too can feel the tremble ling
in the tell ing of the trem ble
in
this, the lingering exchange





don't ever forget, that in—
that in the palms of noth
in bidding the *mater*
the mistress of ours
the dark night about, is
notscary & is not out
to do you—in
you,
with your scanner!
the inversed universe image
does not speak of you
& you're only
waking
to this unknown now
a meaningless love
this noth-felt nothing
in this ur-kiss, that attracts
the foreheads of lovers
pressed, star-crossed
eye to eye glitterings in
black pupils of each other
aswarm with its twi-lights
its energetic dark-mater
& wind-wombed, ohms
me—a star man, into
radiance
in the scathing sunlight
that makes me

t knows because

words Michael Peters

what you are
e you are it



by Michael Peters

Like desire, if seen from an alpine sanctuary
overlooking the village, the city floats above
an archetype of earthly grief welling up—joy
is drawn-up by a watery girl dreaming up water morphologies
to erode a dumb mt. landscape founded on a steep law that was
once ideology that was once propaganda that was once rhetoric
and in the vagary of mists dissipating—is near mythic landwhere
goats, sheep, and rabbits sniff at her, the sleeping girl
& those curious goats with floppy ears lick her salty palms.
Look, she makes these images lying flat on her back
in a meadow of tall grass white-capped by seeds,
she is rung by trees—deep foresters
around which a camera turns
to fluidly catch her from every angle
but beneath her
in church-like caverns, an ancient hummer
so deep, drips wave droplets into fluttering kicks
delicate tremors like the smallest little ocean
as the skin of tall grass & leaves about her
suddenly begin to breathe in

*una voce shshsh
shshsh una voce*

and oust satiations as evident as the camera panning
out, across the moist faces of all those moved
tear'd, up misted again, vague
w/ the lens all steam'd up homage
& to preserve sense of this epic duration
she, the girl, caresses her belly
to make the archive stir



Art: Jenny Kemp

MONOLOGUER



IN THE GARDEN

words Cara Sinicropi

Our next door neighbor
sits in a lawn chair
covered by a quilted blanket—
the winter evenings.

Her hands are stencils
of the constellations:
Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Virgo.

You were a girl, watching her weave
patterns of rippled sky, watching her
patch in your frozen breath.

We would stand behind brown bushes
to watch the cat lick her feet,
and make nests out of leaves
to keep warm.
We would go inside
and take a bath. Mother
would towel us off and leave us
to curl like eggs
on the floor.

Eggs without names
we would stand at the window,
and watch the woman
stroke her cat—stare back at us.

You curled your lip in imitation of the cat,
arched your spine, dared the woman
to look away.

You tapped your finger on the glass
and traced patterns in the condensation—

a star with evaporating corners
that I was not allowed to touch.



i have
buried
my
father's
stories

72

words Cara Sinicropi

My chest slopes inwards, the outlines
of my ribs are my father's favorite features.
My breasts are lumps of swollen tissues,
abscesses I am convinced will fade.

My father tells stories in whale song
and I listen with my head on my knees,
fingers clinging to the curl of my collar bone.
I can see the oceans in his throat.

It rained and now the concrete outside my window
is slick and black like the bodies of seals
and I crave the Arctic on my tongue;
my father tells me I was made for this suburbia.

I can't appreciate this answer, the return
of a forgotten domesticity. I heard a rumor
once that green existed not far from here
and I went to find it.

I discovered the spines of squirrels
fused together, trees that could
have contained the cosmos. I pressed my hands
to their trunks, pregnant

with celestial movement. I buried
my clothing, attempted imitations of the whale songs—
my father said a child's voice was soothing.
I laid down and covered my body

with leaves, skeletal and translucent.
The forest was swollen over its perimeters,
overtook the grey houses, cracked
the asphalt. My father looked for a ship

or a door to someplace else. I rose
from my nest, rain straining through my hair,
climbed out of the forest.

I came home and found my father. He enfolded me
in his arms and I was still.



AN AMERICAN CHILD: THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUR MOTHER

BY
CARA SINICROPI

You grew surrounded by hostas
in a Michigan back yard with a playhouse
your father bought pre-made. Your father
loved the Packers and was raised in Iowa
surrounded by corn fields. He wanted
a '57 Chevy because that was the year
he was born. His dog Schomer
stole chickens from the grocer, who shot him.
Your grandfather grew up American,
ate apple pie and gnocchi, black coffee in his cereal.
His father put out cigarettes on his palms,
tough as a ball glove from building houses
because he couldn't do anything else.
He loved the Hawkeyes, the clarinet,
and Christmas with tinsel trees,
but wore a tweed scally cap in the winter
like the men back home. Your mother
tells you these things as she braids
her thick black hair,
one fishtail on top of the other.



STEALING HOME

words Jennifer Ozga

IT'S STRANGE AFTER almost fifteen years, if I count it right, to be back on these roads. Living on them. They're easy to drive again, like I was driving them all along. But I wasn't. I was on the rail to and from whichever city, buildings gliding by like dollhouses, thinking of the future, not the past. Moving marks the time off so cleanly. But here's the grass again. Bald roads, content in any light. No bustling. The Morrows at the Y, the Stockleys right after that, then straight through the four corners and up past the Gundersons. She died but he's still there. The same colors and porches, the same sheds and mailboxes. Some are faded or newly sided, but whichever, they're the same. I see them on the way to work now, every day. Every evening I leave the hospital and there they are again, doors and windows like welcome faces, like they remember me. It's nice. It's a June day in the country. It was June like this when I first saw the house.

It was only a three-hour drive from Teaneck to Minden, but for some reason whenever my family travels we leave before dawn. I was three and slept the whole way. Delilah was eight and says she didn't sleep at all. One of the best vistas of our new house was the first one I saw: coming up out of the dip that morning and right at the top seeing it through a canopy of trees. I was asleep in the wayback, and had fallen right back to sleep the moment we got in and slept the whole way. I've always been told I was a sensitive child—to light, sound, attention, too much ice cream—I don't know about that, but memory begins when the Ferris-wheel-stomach feeling I got woke me, when we plunged into the dip and barreled right back up out of it. The image I saw then is with me still and even at three it felt special, worth remembering, peering through dappled shade and sunlight down a stretch of white-gray road to a hill of green, a shiny ball of white. Then out from shade into the sun, like gliding closer at the end of a telescope the shiny ball became a white house with a black roof on a hill, the green a big tree at the bottom of it, leaves glittering in the sun. Closer, closer, climbing from the wayback to the back seat with Deelie

looking too, leaning on the armrest between my parents, my father's smell, like cotton mixed with cigarettes, while hills slope out flat then gently up on both sides of us, pasture rolling on the left, wheaty tops of cornfields waving on the right, all the while house and tree getting closer, slow and fast at the same time. Down the gray road, even whiter in the sun, on the left the pasture goes on, a cow speckled here, there, but on the right the cornfields stop abruptly: a few-second stretch of green out the window then a sharp right up the gravel drive, that tree so tiny in the distance now like a mountain in the sky, leaves clicking hush-like, swaying. A tire swing swaying too. Pears everywhere beneath it. A pear tree! A swing! Tires crunching rolling upwards still, beside the rise of overgrown, summer-green grass, there it was: a two-storey farmhouse as wide as two houses, white clapboard with rows of black shutters in pairs, a red door in the middle. It had a tar-paper roof and gleaming windowpanes. As we pulled in, the old couple who sold it to us walked out, smiling. My parents hugged them. It was the kind of place that looking at it, you could smell the laundry on the line. I knew we would be happy.

Nine years later playing cards with the Gundersons on a Saturday night my father's head dipped down onto the kitchen table and never came back up. It was just coming spring. The windows just opened. The sound of crickets outside as the ambulance men took him.

Mom and Deelie and I moved from the country into town. Deelie says our dog Taffy moved into town with us, but I don't remember that, so my last thoughts of Taffy are preserved in happy memories: her golden coat and joyous bark, chasing cows in the yard when the fences broke down. I don't even know how she died. I guess I just didn't have enough room in my memory to hold on to both deaths, one so quickly following the other, so I kept the important one and let go of the rest. It's a habit I have to this day. Sometimes it serves me well, sometimes I get



laid-off. But I always make a pleasant first impression, even the second and third time.

Cherry Valley was twice as big a school district as Minden so even though we moved just seven miles from home, it felt like city living. There were forty-two kids starting seventh grade that fall instead of the eighteen I was used to and most of those were girls. Minden Central School had offered no official cheerleading program, though Mother and Deelie had tried, but Cherry Valley had varsity and jayvee cheering; chorus and band; theater, too; volleyball and track; and girls could even join the Yorker Club. Mother and Deelie were very excited about the new range of options, considering. I felt I had missed the stage where sports helped one become coordinated, so I kept score at baseball games and sold pencils and erasers and staples and paper in the school's supply store, open near the cafeteria during lunch hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Moving back from Pittsburgh last Christmas, I came the back way, up 88, and drove by the old house. The newest owners have painted it a slate blue and cut down the pear tree. I wish I hadn't driven by, though, because even though I go straight up Indian Trail past the Gundersons on the way to work instead of going by our old place on Starkville Road, I still see it in my mind's eye every morning, missing a tree. Like a cow without spots or a five-year-old in diapers. Just isn't right. Something out of place, unlike today: I didn't know I've been waiting to see Dean Reese until I saw him this morning from the parking lot, wearing khakis and an orange windbreaker walking in the south entrance. I did know that he worked here, as a technician in Ultrasound. I heard he's divorced, too, but only once, and that he hasn't had children either. I swear he looks almost the same as he did at graduation.

Working at registration at the hospital isn't what I thought I would be doing at my age, but the people are nice and the coleslaw is excellent. I work between the main lobby and the cafeteria entrance. It reminds me of selling pencils in junior high. Our stations have those low walls and my spot is around the corner from the lobby so I never know who's coming until they're there. And though I know I see a lot of the same old ladies and pregnant women month after month, registering

seems a new experience for them each time they're at my window.

"Just take that to the second floor and check in with the nurse's station, Mrs. Pietrokovski."

"Where is the ladies' room, dear?"

"Go to the second floor and it's just off the elevator on the right."

"Thank you, dear. Aren't you kind. Are you new here?"

"Yes." It's just easier. Probably Mrs. Pietrokovski's memory is filled with just the important things, too.

People say you can't go home again, but it's worked out fine. Deelie's down the street with Manuel and their two kids, and my mother gave the guest room to me. With Deelie and Manuel's wedding and their third due any minute, things are very busy at home. Deelie is five years older than Dean and me, though, so Dean doesn't fit naturally as an invite to the wedding, not that I would send one. The date is coming up so fast, too late for an invitation, even for a country wedding. I've been here almost six months and just like that today I see him twice: when I walked in there he was again at the elevators chatting with Marla, I didn't catch about what; he didn't recognize me. I guess a lot of people don't have room for everything in their memories. But it's easy to remember Dean.

Senior year he had 18 home runs, 32 RBIs and one stolen base. I don't recall how many errors; I didn't keep the best track of those. But Dean was definitely a large part of the reason Cherry Valley got into sectionals that year; the first year anyone could remember. I was supposed to go on the senior trip to Fort Ticonderoga with the Yorker Club during play-offs but I just knew I would miss something important if I went. Cindy Pietrokovski was furious with me for missing the trip, but she got over it. I had kept the scorebook all year. It would have jinxed them for me to miss it. I haven't spoken to Cindy in years, so I made the right decision.

The stolen base came at the bottom of the seventh inning

and it was breathless. He wasn't given any sign; no one expected it, he just did it. I was watching him, though, and knew the second before he kicked off that he would make it home safe. So did he; that's what made it so thrilling to watch. It was the play that turned the tide. Fulton High School, the richest in the district, was four times as big as us; there's no way we should have even still been in it. But we'd gotten lucky on a walk and when Dean got up with two outs and hit a triple to left field the score was one even. I can still see him leading off third, but not too much, waiting for it, like the waiting would make it come. It was unseasonably hot for June, unlike today, but there was something in the smell of that morning, in the light. On strike two the catcher lobbed it back, Dean dipped his head, and I just knew. Halfway there, we all did. Cheers like thunder. I felt something like it this morning along the Lake Road; different light through the trees, a fresh water smell. I heard a bird in the branches and on the right a deer was there; just there; a baby one. Behind her, her mother. Then in the slow rush turning into the lot, almost without noticing it, I pulled in right behind Dean. I didn't know the car door sound was his; just brushed my hair, checked my teeth and lipstick in the mirror, as usual. When I put the visor up I didn't recognize him at first, from the back, walking in, but at the entry doors he turned to pick up something, a paper or wrapper fluttering on the pavement. He wouldn't have seen me, but even from my car I saw that it was him.

"Casey, can you get the phones? I have to go to Human Resources." I nod, but to Marla's back already down the hall, past the square of vision from my cube. The phones have the low lobby burble, which I often miss, but the lights on the console are good, so I catch them. "Scheduling," I say and it surprises me how easy it is to split myself off from whatever it is I'm doing: putting times and names into the computerized scheduling system, taking them out. All day long, people in my ear or in front of me, printing out the labels for the ones who check in at my desk, or just keying in the codes, speaking the instructions that pop up on the screens, depending on which department the appointment is scheduled with. "You'll need to fast the night before starting at nine p.m." or "only water after midnight," or "drink 64 ounces of water one hour before the appointment." That's for Ultrasound. The technicians' names don't show up though; the system doesn't tell you who you're

going to get. It's amazing the thinking I can get done with this kind work. And as I said, the cafeteria is top-notch. Today the soup is broccoli and cheese—both fresh, local—and I think I smell brownies baking. It's like working in the best diner in the county.

"You'll need to finish 64 ounces of water one hour before the appointment, Mrs. Stockley." No one does, though. I does seem excessive. Unhealthy, even. Probably a typo no one has ever fixed.

"Pardon?"

"You'll need to drink 64 ounces of water one hour before the appointment!"

"Sixty-four cups?"

"Ounces."

"Pardon?"

"Ounces!" It's hard to say it loud enough but with a smiling tone.

"How many cups is that?"

"That depends—"

"Pardon?"

"That depends on the size of the cup!"

"Coffee cup size."

"About eight!"

"I can't drink that much coffee and hold it dear. It's a very bumpy ride."

"Water, not coffee!"

"Can I drink it there?"

“Just drink it all an hour before! Where you drink is up to you!”

“Harlan will have to be done with the cows earlier, then.”

“Would you—

“Pardon?”

“Would you prefer to reschedule!”

“No, he won’t like it but he will.”

“Okay! Thank you!”

“Thank you, dear.”

I had an ultrasound once. It was strange; it was a man technician. The wand is just a wand, but still. I remember the matter-of-fact way he put a condom on it, then put lubrication jelly on that and then, looking at the screen and not me, asked if I wanted to insert it—that’s the word he used, insert—while he was looking at the screen in front of him, keying something with his left hand, holding the wand—that’s what he called it—in the right. I shook my head “no” but he wasn’t looking and asked again. I wasn’t pregnant. Ah, Hiram. My first husband. I suppose it’s best that a child of Hiram Kellner’s never grew in me, but then again, you never know. I found him very charming in the beginning. For the first few months of dating and then moving in. After that it was still often very nice. The cats were an adjustment but I grew on them, I think.

The lights flash and burble on the dash and I answer, key. Why did Dean choose ultrasound, of all careers? Radiologists make almost twice that and the schooling is the same. Maybe in a way that’s even more invasive. I had a mammogram once. No, I guess I can see how if it were ultrasound or radiology he’d go for the computer screen. I’ve never had a man mammogramologist. They grab right onto your breast and sandwich it between the plates, talking about the weather and how it won’t hurt the whole time. It makes me laugh, though, thinking of Dean with the wand and the jelly. Saying “insert” all day long. It makes me wonder if the guy who gave me my

ultrasound pissed on the radiators when he was in eleventh grade. Or made out with someone like me when we were thirteen behind the shed at Deelie’s graduation party.

Today is Tuesday so I don’t take lunch until twelve-thirty. The room is packed and I find a seat with Marla’s little sister Pam Newton, who works in ICU. We talk about her husband Dickie Newton, who has her car again for his weekly meeting with his PO and whether I can give her a lift after work to Teddy Ouderkirk’s gas station, as though the thought just came to her. The first few times I sat with Pam, I thought Dickie was meeting with his post office. Parole Officer: PO. So many acronyms, all day long. PO, ICU, IV, IVE.

It’s amazing how in high school there were all these social rankings and how they’ve fallen away so many years later. Pam was prom queen and three years ahead of Dean and me. Dickie Newton went to Colgate and worked in New York City for three years at some fancy accountant firm but no one says why he came home before the end of year four. He married Pam and worked for the hospital in A/R until he was picked up for shoplifting so many times he finally got sentenced. He served a month in County before his parents got it reduced to community service with time served, but that cost a lot, I hear. Dickie and Pam have two kids and she’s still got her prom queen looks. She was never unkind to me in high school. She wound up getting Deelie’s cheerleader suit, I think. It’s strange the way life bends and turns your point-of-view when you’re going wherever you’re going, looking straight ahead. Pam got the broccoli-cheese, too. Delicious. She’s talking, talking about Dickie and the kids and his parents, his mother, who thinks she’s some local Queen of England, but it’s like the phones lighting up, burbling, easy to split off here too. She’ll talk of this as we ride to Ouderkirk’s and never mention anything about Teddy. I could turn my head around, though, and count the heads bent over their soup and BLTs that know what’s going on between them, and for how long. Her kids are in junior high now. Both the spitting image of Dickie. Both girls. Neither of which got her prom-queen nose.

They’ll all be at Deelie’s wedding: Pam, Dickie, their kids. Teddy. But not Dean, unless someone brings him.

“CAN YOU HELP me, Casey?” My mother is retired but works part-time checking pulse oxygenation and whatever else respiratory therapists do, but for the past few years for a home-care company a few days a week instead of every day at the hospital like she did for twenty years. It’s a good thing because that extra salary matches her shopping needs exactly, leaving her retirement money for her bills. Deelie’s wedding makes the shopping seem necessary, though, and she has found the mother lode of candleholders at the Dollar Store in Gloversville. She is excited to finally have a real wedding, she says, to plan for. Deelie and Manuel have decided all of a sudden to make it official, after eight years, before the next child arrives. My first husband Hiram and I eloped.

“Careful Casey, I bought just the right amount so we can’t break any.” We carry them like newborns, box-by-box. “They fit in the car exactly. Exactly!” She is out of breath, excited, color in her cheeks, twilight in her eyes. A real wedding, almost like her own.

I was living with Hiram in Jersey City when his divorce finally came through and it just seemed anticlimactic to make an expensive fuss after that. We drove up the week after we went to City Hall and had dinner with Mom and Deelie at The Raindancer. Mother seemed surprised that Hiram wasn’t Singh, the young actor who had lived with me in Philly until I met Hiram. Oh, Hiram. It was perhaps shocking to him how it ended, so abruptly. But he should have told me his real age and that he’d had a vasectomy. I still feel strongly about that. Sometimes I wonder how long it would have gone on if I hadn’t happened to notice—on the same morning—Hiram’s Social Security statement on the table and my second husband Oliver on the train. Oliver had simply appeared on the PATH train telling me about Pittsburgh as though I needed to know, the same way the statement had been sitting on the kitchen table, the morning after the ultrasound. The statement was in its envelope, but Hiram had already opened it. I’d been having feelings in that area that felt new, tender, and though the pregnancy tests from the pharmacy had been negative, I was sure something was growing. Taking those tests—it was exciting, wondering.

That and the statement and Oliver’s smooth skin and energy—he looked up at me as we sat like he was sure about everything, which seemed exciting, too—all of it became the question about children over dinner with Hiram, the day I read that he was already retired, and not robustly. Enough, perhaps, for him, but for a family? To be fair to him the discussion was awkward for us both, but I was frank: Atlantic City trips would have to go, at least for now. When he said vasectomy, he blushed. The new feeling was fibroids.

I went back on the pill with Oliver. I’m all for taking chances as they come, but carelessness is different. Pittsburgh’s loveliness wasn’t apparent to me like it was to Oliver, who was very sweet but lied about his debts. It’s not that easy to know a person who’s already been a person for such a long time before you met him, no matter what you ask.

“Aren’t these amazing?” my mother says. She unpacks the last one. One hundred clear glass candleholders, two to a box. They are clean and perfect but she wants to unwrap them all and wash and dry them by hand. “Deelie is going to just love these.” In the yellow kitchen light she looks her age, but she also looks pretty. It’s all her optimism. No matter what life throws at her, my mother catches it with good humor. Her hair is coarse and all gray now and short, and she’s a foot shorter than me, like Deelie. And though her skin is wrinkled from all that smoking when she was young her blue eyes, also like Deelie’s, still have a smile in them that puts a smile in yours. She bulked up there for her small frame when we first moved to town, but that was years ago. She long ago trimmed down to like she always was and walks around the high school track three times a week. She always has some diet she’s on. I don’t see the point of eating asparagus all day if you’re going to have wine and potato chips at night, but it makes her happy, that’s what matters. A month after I got home Deelie and I took her to Fashion Bug and got her to throw away her polyester slacks in favor of stretch jeans. She got her hair dyed blonde, too, but didn’t like it, so let it fade. Still, with her good-ass jeans, which is what Deelie calls them, which makes my mother laugh, she looks terrific. She’s really quite a beautiful woman, even still. Deelie has her nose and her eyes exactly, and her tiny cheerleader frame, too. I look like my father.



We spend the evening washing, drying, washing, drying. It's ten when we're done and I have to work tomorrow, but the wedding is in two days. We decide to open a bottle of wine—blush, my mother's favorite—make a night of it and finish the candleholders. My mother gets the glue gun out and I do the sequins: red. Deelie wants a red and white wedding. At first my mother balked, but now she's on board completely: silk-like roses from Dollar General in red and silver; a red velvet groom's cake, which is not the kind of south Manuel is from, but Deelie is delighted and has let Mother run with it; red and white streamers that are my job to put up, although I can't get into the Best Western until after the rehearsal dinner; a tiny bubble jar from Save-A-Lot for every guest, with red glitter mixed in, to blow on the newlyweds instead of throwing rice; and a handmade piñata for the reception, for the kids. Deelie's choice of gown started it: fire-engine red—something she saw in a magazine, a red-and-white-reversal wedding theme. Her bridesmaids, me and my niece Gloria, nine, will be in white mermaid dresses festooned with yards of red-and-white flounces with red silk flowers in our hair. It certainly will be festive. My dress alone makes me feel like a parade.

“CASEY? CASEY WAGNER, is that you?”

“Hi Dean. How are you?”

“I'll get that,” he says, and motions to the cashier to put my tuna sandwich and Ho Hos on his tab.

“Thanks.”

“How's Deelie?”

“Oh, great. She got married last weekend.”

“Did she now? Who to?”

“Manuel Rodriguez.”

He shakes his head. “Don't know him.”

He puts my sandwich and Ho Hos on his tray and motions

me to follow. We wind through the cafeteria tables, it's kind of tight so we walk slowly, then out through the glass doors to the patio. He keeps going, though, down the steps across the parking lot—it's really warm out; another warm, breezy June day, just like any other—to a picnic table under one of the leafy trees. I never know tree names. It doesn't have fruit, just leaves and the leaves are pointed.

“Shit, you don't have a drink.” He unwraps a fresh pack.

“I brought a Snapple from home.” I take it out of my bag.

“What kind?”

“Passion Fruit.” He offers me a cigarette, so I take one.

“What is passion fruit?” he says.

“Tastes like pineapple.”

“You smoke?” he says, lighting me up.

I inhale; it's good. Makes me kind of dizzy. “Sometimes.” Does he remember Deelie's graduation party? Behind the shed?

“I didn't know you were home,” he said. “You were away, right?”

“Philly for a while, then Jersey. Pittsburgh briefly.”

“How long have you been back?”

“Oh, a few months.” He nods, taking another drag. He looks the same except for the weight and the gray hair. Just as handsome. “Do you still play baseball?”

He laughs. “Yeah, summer league. Softball, but we use the hard balls and pitch overhand.”

“How long have you been working here?”

“Since the divorce.”

"I'm sorry," I say, and he shrugs. He takes another drag and asks me out for Friday night. Just like that, just like him. Bowling? he asks. Or maybe the drive-in? Which would I prefer? I would prefer the drive-in, but say they both sound good to me.

"You at your mom's?" he says, and I nod. He stubs his cigarette out and when he offers me another one, I take it. When we finish those we sit and chat about his ex and alimony, which she didn't get because they didn't have kids, and he still can't believe the lucky break. How he saw her in Syracuse at the big mall there a few months after they signed the papers, but not since then, and that he's over it. I ask him if he has been dating a lot since then and he seems surprised by my question. He says he did a little at first but then he didn't like it, so he stopped. "More than a little," he says, "at first."

"There are a lot of nice women," I say, and he nods.

"But then," he pauses, takes a drag, considers his words, "it wasn't fun." The sex was fun and all, he says, but the dating wasn't. All those dates to here and there and "they didn't really talk about anything. You know?" Like he always felt that he was thinking up stuff to say and he hated it. So he just stopped. "The dating," he says, with a wink and I spit a little bit of my Passion Fruit out by accident. Before I can reach for a napkin, he hands me one.

"Well," I say, patting my lips, but I can't come up with anything else.

"Do you remember Deelie's graduation?" he says, stubbing out his cigarette, lighting two this time, handing me one. He has the same brown eyes he had at thirteen. He asks me who was in Philly, who was in Jersey, and I tell him a little bit about Hiram. I can eat the sandwich at my desk later.

IT WAS THE end of eighth grade, but Dean looked like a sophomore, easy. It was the first time, for me; the first time I had that kind of down-there feeling that was so warm and bossy, telling me how to behave, it felt like a sin just being alive. The palm of his hand was so hot, when he put it on the pocket of my

white painter's pants—he had some ash and hot-dog grease on his fingers, but I didn't mind; I cherished that stain, I remember—the feel of his hand was so hot through the pocket I felt like we were naked in some garden or at least deep into the nature trail in Evergreen Park. He was going to kiss me, I could tell by the hazy lazy of his lids and the slow angling in, and I remember thinking, This, this is what all the warning is about, this is what is so bad we're changed by it forever if we do it. I thought, This feeling will be part of every moment of me after this, it will feel like this every moment of my life—grocery shopping, vacuuming the living room, clipping my nails—from now until forever it will feel like this: being chosen. His lips look a little too wet with beer and pickle relish, but it smells sweet. It's that moment before, waiting, the slow determined approach, both of us there, ready for it: inside my body's like a NASA launch pad, Dean's hand's on my pocket like a cow-brand and the sweet tang of his breath's in my nose. To this day, if I'm honest, that long ready moment is still the best sex I've ever had.

DEAN PICKED ME up at seven and we drove by the bowling alley, but it was too pretty out to go inside. Instead we inched up the long line at the drive-in, backing up on Route 5. After the gate for kicks and giggles he pulls away from the young family ahead of us and drives us all the way down the back row, slow, looking at the high-schoolers back there, claiming the good spots, getting ready. But that would be too annoying, he says, so he keeps going to the far edge and parks a few rows up from the back. The families are all parked in the middle near the concession stand and already kids and moms and dads are lining up, going in and out. "Easier to piss," he says, nodding to the tall grass out his window, pulling two beers out of a cooler in the back seat. He said I looked pretty when he picked me up and talked for a few minutes with Mom and Sarita, Deelie's youngest girl, in the foyer.

"About time she got married, Helen, right?"

"Oh, Dean," my mother waved a hand, smiling, so happy rocking Manny Junior, five days old.

He kissed me on the lips quick on the stoop and took my

hand and opened the car door for me, all the time talking about the record of the summer league and the guys I might remember. He's a foot taller than me but if he weren't we'd be about the same size. Figuring in for a woman's parts we're actually near the same, looks-wise. I always had my father's hazel eyes and dark lashes. And even though I was never thin, I never had pimples, and except for living with Hiram's cigars and a few puffs in school, never really smoked, so my skin is smooth enough and clear. As long as hairdressers keep the length at least down to my shoulders, I let them cut and style it however they want, and I always paint my nails. I buy clothes that fit me and smile at whoever smiles at me: men, women, children, old ladies. I've never been a talker but I've also never been shy, no matter what some people think. And I watch the news at night. I'm not political but I know who's who and what's what and I'm not rich but I've saved a little here and there. I don't say any of this unless someone asks, because I don't need to say it out loud when I can say it to myself just fine.

Some people like Dean they need to say things so it's real. So we sit in the car in the fading light and he tells me about Brenda and the cheating and the lawyer from Syracuse he saw her with at the mall. He tells me about smoking dope again in the days after, which he was surprised he didn't like, and how he was sure he would have made it in the minors or at least be coaching by now. How he always meant to have kids and he's still young enough, but not with someone he can't talk to, who thinks she's the Queen of Cherry Valley. Who thinks she needs to wear a feather boa every night. "Well, you know," he gives me a look, "in public," he says with a wink and then a smile at my reaction, watching me as he talks on, about the way it feels to do his job, strange at first but now he doesn't find it awkward at all.

"Do you ask them if they want to insert it?" I ask and he laughs.

"No, that's just stupid." He's been talking and the light now is only from the screen. We haven't hooked up the old-timey speaker, which still works at this mom-and-pop drive-in, or even tuned in the movie on the car radio. With the windows down I smell the green in the air, or maybe it's Dean's soap: fresh. I hear the tall grasses wooshing in the breeze, and imagine the twilight on them still, like when we pulled in. The slow sway of grasses in the light, or of leaves, or fields, something about it makes me happy, like rocking Manny Junior. The beers are gone, I only take one cigarette to his three and he's been looking at me while he talks. About an hour ago he took my hand. His is warm and as big as mine. He's holding it nicely, firmly, not too hard but not too light, and has it there between us on the seat.

"What do you say?" I ask while there he is still looking and he laughs again. There are a few fireflies behind him, out there in the weeds, I can tell with my peripheral vision, but I hold his gaze and he lets me. I don't say the question again with words but let it float there between us, between our eyes.

His hand tightens on mine just a little and he takes a last drag. He reaches out and tamps his cigarette on the edge of his windshield, makes sure it's out, exhaling mouth and nose, just like my father used to, and flicks the butt out the window. He turns back around and something in his eyes is softer. Like he's just now looking at me like I'm really there. I squeeze his hand back, gently.

"I say," he says, lifting my hand up off the seat, pulling it toward him. "I say this might feel new for a moment, but just take a breath in and relax." The colors from the movie light play on his eyes as he angles in. He takes his time, lets the moment hang there, no rush, no need to. And it feels like it did, that tingle-body feeling, like when he leaned in at thirteen, hand in my jean pocket. Like when he ducked his head down leading off from third, stealing home.



I will be an ancient coin in a later life but please
finger me now

Writing is like a lottery I love watching the balls
leap around and bang into each other and the thrill
of being in the chute and out of control falling

Land, ho! Isn't sex wonderful!

The Chinese have a word for it

Say please!

In my wildest fantasy come true I sat opposite a
young actress in a mini-skirt folding and unfolding
her long legs on a train going into NYC, and she
asked me for one of my plums

To know something is to be deluded

My ticket is punched, my destination is set in stone

Meanwhile in the backseat of the Fairlane...

I was searching through a bag of Large Cents as she
masturbated on a red couch behind me

I tried to get Picasso on the phone

Pleasure is the only principle but it comes with a
nasty twin

Coffee helps me to focus on the chiaroscuro

Baba ghanoush, anyone?

She was a side dish who became my specialty

It took a hurricane to bring us together

The rivers gradually sank back into their banks

I prose to every occasion of poetry

I shop in the bottoms section of the mall

The lines on my heads of wheat are brilliant

Silk is what I like to find inside the panties

I try to stand as straight as possible when the sexy chiropractor
is in the room

Compliance is the road to ecstasy which leads in turn to
Desolation Row

I live in the cobwebs of the stratosphere

When the relationship collapses the skunk odor may last for
years

I am committed to making sense only briefly in honor of
incoherence and chaos

My writing pad is 4 x 3 in lg

My fits don't last very long anymore

Fever morphine mausoleum is my motto

The three step program

I love the No Coughing sign attached to Keith Jarrett's piano

The necessity of being solipsistic

The way words make asses of us all

A new printer sits on my floor in its box for weeks

Dancing with Marjorie all over my lips

I left town in a hurry again

modus operandi

tipsy and topsy-turvy

and then stopped in my tracks in awe of all the different styles
of candles

that three-way I almost had in Ithaca forty years ago

the speed was incredible

had I been driving road kill is all that would have been left

I'll tell you why I refuse to number these pages:

I don't like surprise visitors



I'm always doing something criminal

The Jews and Greeks weren't as afraid of their women's sexuality

This is the year of Rothko, American, born Russian

I wonder if I've ever interrupted anyone's lovemaking with a knock on their door

I am careful not to interfere: listen for whispers, moans or just the sticky clicking
then run around behind the house, take the whole thing out and start whacking

Too much civilization

Hypersensitivity

Multi-cults victimization virtuous reality

I'll take that suite in the vault with the skylights

Telescope aimed at anything with a swivel

Hip disguised as a gray hair

I can seduce them all but I can't remember my lines after the first act

I want to have the whole sandbox to myself

Honestly

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CHRIS HAILEY is a poet and non-fiction writer from Bedford, Va., a town based along the Blue Ridge Mountains. Hailey's writing makes an attempt to express the changes in his community through the personas and voices of people he has encountered. Bedford, once being a manufacturing town of plastic and rubber goods, has lost its main job sources since the start of the new millennia. Poverty, drug addiction, and teenage pregnancy have since become a social norm, and it is within his writing that he attempts to untangle and understand these normalcies within his community.

CAITLIN HINES grew up around Roanoke, Va. writing short stories from a young age. She is currently studying psychology at HPU, but still makes time to write on the side as much as possible. She enjoys reading high fantasy and suspense novels.

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MICHAEL PETERS is the author of the sound-imaging poem *Vaast Bin* (Calamari Press, 2007) and other assorted language art and sound works. Various manifestations of his "writings" appear in print and online journals such as *SleepingFish*, *BPM (Bright Pink Mosquito)*, *Word for/Word*, *BathHouse Hypermedia Journal*, *unarmed*, *LUNGFULL!*, *Rhino*, *Spinning Jenny*, *Sous Rature*, *Tool A Magazine*, *American Weddings*, *Lost and Found Times*, *Mad Hatters' Review*, and *Hyperrhiz: New Media Cultures*, to name a few. His writing appears in various forms — variants of what we call poetry, visual poetry, art, fiction, essays, *et cetera*. Visual-poetic manifestations can be found in various avant-garde libraries and special collections, such as the Sackner Archive. His work has appeared in various art galleries and visual poetry anthologies — such as *Anthology Spidertangle* (Xexoxial Editions) and *Vispoeologee* (The Minnesota Center for Book Arts Winter Book, 2007). In 2009, his visual poem "Graphy for the Ensemble" was included in the first run of The Paper Kite Press Visual Poetry Poster Series.

LARRY RAPANT, a mentor at Empire State College, has published four books of poetry to date and has published in many American literary magazines. He lives in Voorheesville, N.Y., and often performs his poetry with musical accompaniment or soundscapes.

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