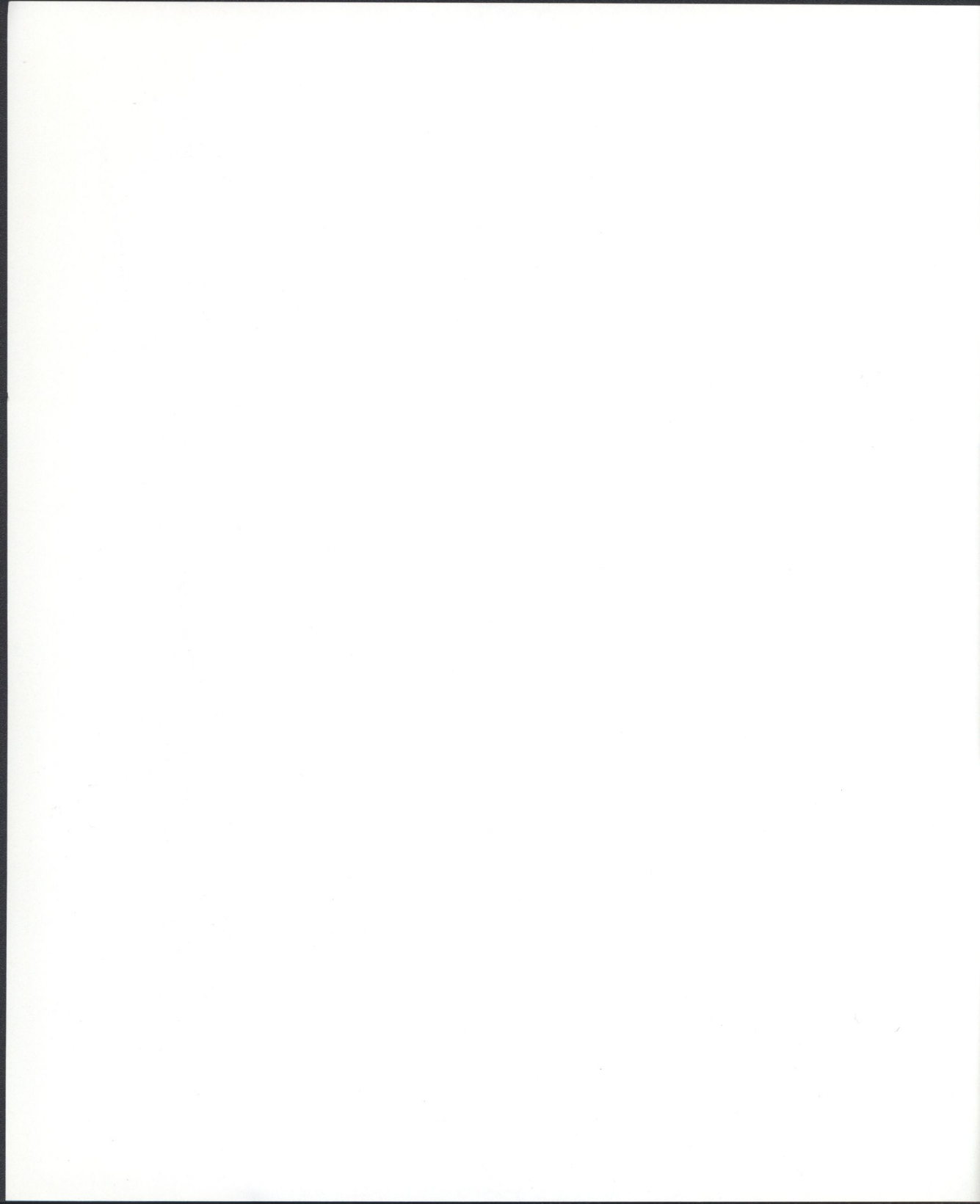


# The Season

Fall 1995





# *The Jason*

Literary Magazine of Willamette University

Fall 1995

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The Jason is an official publication of the Associated Students of Willamette University. Submissions are accepted from all members of the Willamette Community. Entries are judged on basis of majority vote by The Jason editorial staff. Staff members are not allowed to vote on their own material.

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Cover art: "Where's Waldo" by Maureen McColgin

# LOVES STEADFASTNESSE

(An Imitation of John Donne)

*R.J. Foster*

If I could find another, Dear,  
Enough like you, I might forget  
That she's not you when she is near,  
And tho' you're gone, I'd see you yet.

And yet I shall not find, I know,  
While rises in the east the sun,  
Another love like you, and so,  
To me all loves and you are one.

So if you wish my love to die,  
Since you're my love, my heart abhors  
The thought that you do not deny  
My love's own life, but also yours.

O lover lost, why can't you see  
That when you left it was in vain?  
For love has still remained in me,  
And going far, you here remain.

But yet, while love will always live,  
My body dies each day you're gone;  
And if it perish, what will give  
My love the clay to bear it on?

To it I'm bound, but love is free,  
And while my servant body dies,  
It follows you and it shall be  
At any place your body lies.

I'd call it back, your wish to please,  
But stubborn love we must excuse  
If from yourself it never flees:  
A fool it'd be to not refuse.

# Sonnet I

*Katie M. Hinnenkamp*

At sunset, from the north, a cool wind blew  
That silently snuffed out life's final glow.  
The hand of night its deep black curtain drew,  
And only dark reflected off the snow.

But in a corner of this quiet place  
There shone a sphere of pallid, pasty white —  
The form of what was once a human face,  
Now darkly covered with a sheet of night.

Like owls that take to flight from moonlit trees  
With mournful shrieks that sound across the sky,  
A few friends slowly raised up off their knees  
And headed toward their empty homes to cry.

A spirit, free now from its pale cocoon,  
Went from the corpse and rose to join the moon.

# Staircase

*Katie M. Hinnenkamp*

Imagine it. I'm standing atop a staircase — a staircase so steep I cannot see more than five steps below me. And I have the uneasy feeling that the steps go on forever.

I know you are at the bottom (but I can't see you). All I see is stairs. I take one step forward and immediately I feel the gravity drawing me downward. (These steps are the kind I hate) and they're made of cement — knee-skinning cement. (I wish there was a handrail) but of course there isn't. (And the gravity has control.)

Think about a snowball. Or better yet, a slinky (You know those coily metal friends you knew as a kid with their jolly cling-cling as they flopped ever faster towards the cold tile at the bottom of the stairs.) And the gravity is master. And now that I've reached one foot out there's no turning back (Oh no).

So here I go I don't flip like a slinky but my shoes feel too big and the rubber of my soles makes a *plap—plap—plap—plap—plap—plap-plap* and suddenly it's like popcorn and (God there's no turning back) and my limbs are jiggling-jaggling and my jaw jabbers aloud (the sound you make when you ride your bike over a bumpy stretch of road and you hafta say a-a-a-h just to hear your voice vibrate).

And I hope you're at the bottom because my God I need someone to catch me and I pray you're at the bottom (even though your body isn't soft enough to pad my landing — your bones will leave me black and blue for days).

But Heaven knows black and blue would be better than this jarring gray-blue of cement and Love you've got to be there and —

Uh-oh—Whoa—Umpf—Oof—

Thanks.

# Driftwood

*Eric Mulder*

The sun is glinting happily off the speeding river. Sparks of light wink on the surface as the rushing water laughs and chortles on its way towards the ocean. The water swirls around exposed rocks and logs in such a welcoming way, almost begging me to come play. I resist the river's cheery song, but it is difficult to think of a reason not to join it. It is a beautiful thing, wild and free. With the winter rains it swells to become a leviathan of water snaking its way to the sea; in the summer it becomes a lesser creature, but reveals more rocks to play on.

In truth, the river is only a creek now; the summer sun has forced it to expose a sandy bottom where I am now lying, but that hardly matters. There are plenty of reasons to go to the river. The cold waters are inviting, and there is always activities of one kind or another going on. Open-air concerts are thrown in the summer, and people come for potlucks and picnics. But when a man says he is going down by the river what he means is clear. On either sides of the park tall deciduous trees arch over into the water. They make a tiny forest between the river and the road above it, with many a hiding place chopped out of the briar below the trees. Alders grow near the shore, and their long arms stretch overhead like bars blocking out the worst of the heat. All that is let through to this riverside prison is a soft green glow and gentle breeze. High above are thousands of leaves all dancing and wagging together like little green tongues gossiping with the wind. What they must see in this tiny little forest! The dark and sinful deeds of the men who come here. Their branches bend overhead, covering us, hiding us. No one but the wind can understand the fluttering whispers. It is good that the leaves all blow away in the fall.

With a sigh I roll onto my back and dig my hands deep into the gravelly sand I lie upon. The friends I meet here claim that it is a nice place, small and secluded under the trees, but to me it is a joke of a beach. Growing up on the Oregon coast, I have grown used to miles and miles of shoreline covered by the softest fine white sand. Ever moving, ever shifting, if you tried to hold on to it, it would scurry out from under your hands riding the wind with glee. It would crawl into every opening of your clothes as if to mock you.

I remember the first time I went to the sea. No, it could not have been the first time, I was a teenager by then, but it was the first time I listened. It was at a lookout platform on a hill high above the water. From beneath the weather-beaten

gray boards of the platform, the dunes stretched out like a sea of living hills until they hit the snake of green before the beach, and then the water.

Oh, the ocean, the father of all nature. Waves rise up from its depths like white headed tongues crashing down in an ancient language. From the platform the ocean waves called out to me. They contained such power and beauty. I had to go to the sea, touch it, be with it. The strength of it pulled me along down the dusty path towards the sea. As I passed along the dunes I could not see the ocean, but its roaring voice beckoned me from over the hill of sand. Sand that was both hard and soft absorbed the pounding of my feet as I ran. Sand that was hot on the surface, burning the soft skin of my toes, but cold underneath where the water lies filtered by the small rocks. When I reached the barrier of green, the trees and shrubs tore at my clothes as I forced my way up the embankment made by the grass. Then I fell down the other side, reaching the shore at last. The waves rose from the sea with the gasping sound of an in-drawn breath. Tension and anxiety rose with them, crescendoing upwards until at last they crested and the whiteheads came crashing down, pummeling the water with the beat of a thousand drums. The waves roared and rumbled as if an entire orchestra was rolled up in their waters. Such a voice the sea has— frightfully powerful, yet utterly calming. It is the voice of a being who knows all, sees all, and still loves the world. He invited me, with his teasing, tumbling crashes, to walk his shores of peaceful sands where driftwood, like a long lost family, lay polished and bleached on the sands; the withered branches like outstretched hands welcoming me to paradise. The voice, eternal and gentle, called for me. I went joyfully to the waters, collapsing onto the wet sands as the waves gave me an icy lick. The ocean understood. In perfect, peaceful tranquillity it understood all that had happened to me. The sea had seen my type before, it saw my problems written in the lines on my face and understood the challenges before me. The waters surrounded me and receded in the everlasting cycle; my hands and knees slowly began to sink into the softened sands. The sea accepted me and all that I was; all that I was afraid to let anyone know. Even myself. The sea wanted me. That to which all water flows, from which all life emerged, wanted me. I had never felt such utter acceptance in my life. Not even from myself.

It is funny, lying here looking at the river, to think that this small body of water is also a part of that vast, majestic being. If I was to lie in it, and let the cold river carry me along, I might return to the ocean. I never wanted to leave it, but I could not stay there forever. As I grew older the demands of life moved me farther and farther away. But even from here I can hear the voice calling for me to return. I don't know the way anymore.

Look at that twig there, bobbing along with the river. The little thing is on its way to the Almighty, but I wonder if it realizes that. Look at it, being pushed and pulled this way and that by the water as it floats along. The poor thing is totally controlled by forces it cannot even begin to understand. Is it afraid? Does it comprehend what is happening to it? Will it ever reach its destination? There are so many perils in its path. Rocks to get caught up on, eddies to get trapped in, not to mention other little and large twigs that have already been caught somewhere and sit waiting to snag a companion for their misery. The way to the sea is not an easy one.

There is a noise behind me, the sound of gravel crunching under car tires. Wait just a moment and there, I can hear the sound of a car door opening and closing with a slam. I lie on my back and look at the leaves; soon they will have more to gossip about. Now come the sound of boots on sand. Boots walking on the gray, stained sands of this place. A man emerges from the forest, abruptly and bashfully. He sees me and drops his head with an embarrassed grin. So the game begins, as it always does. He's older than me, by a decade or so, with thinning hair just beginning to show signs of frost, and a small pot-belly ringed by a black belt to hold up a pair of slacks. That along with the blue shirt and tie tell me he is the office type—probably stopping by for a moments' entertainment before going home to his wife and resuming a normal life. Such are the men I find here most often. Over the years I've gotten to know a good deal of them. This one is new, but he won't be for long. Until we meet though, the game has to be played.

It is the game that everybody plays, just a more secluded variation. There are so many ways to reach the same goals. Nobody wants to be alone, but people have a tendency to push and pull others around to get what they want. People like myself get shoved into the darker places, hoping to find others to have at least a moment's pleasure with. They hope for more actually, but are too scared to pursue it. If I had a bit more courage, perhaps I would not let society, and life in general, carry me along the way it does. But, I do not know how to even begin changing things.

He scratches himself self-consciously and comments on what a nice day it is. I agree, but my eyes drift away from his and back onto the stick. The poor thing has itself caught in a whirl-pool now. Spinning round and around, one end sticking out of the water like a hand reaching for help. The man stands behind me for a moment, then wanders off down the path. I'll follow in a minute, I always do, but for now I'm content to lie and watch the twig. Such a strange place this is, almost a world unto itself with rules and formalities that can only be learned with

experience. An amazing place if you think about it, not normal by any means, yet the expected product of civilization. What else is there for us to do? Where else to go? Freaks of nature we are called, and I suppose there is justification for that. But I still think it's funny that freaks should find refuge in a place such as this, a little spot by the river where the sun is soft and the shadows dark.

Sometimes I hate this place. The sun, the sickening green, the game, and the lie of it all. But I always return, as consistent as the movement of the stars. You can almost plan the year by me. Summers here by the river, spring and fall in the pavilion, and for winter I go inside for my entertainment. Round and around I go in circles. Someday I pray to find someone to help pull me out, or find the strength within myself. Until then I must content myself with what I find along the way, and try to accept myself— if such a thing is possible.

There is the man again, looking at me from the shadows of the trees with just a little confusion. I smile back and he fades into the woods. I'd better follow before he becomes too nervous and leaves.

Hey, look at that, the twig broke free of the whirlpool. Good for you, little fella. If you keep on your way you'll make it— to the wide serene ocean where you may sit on the stirring sands and listen to the tranquil, powerful voice of the sea lull you to sleep. I wish you well, little twig, and may you reach your destination safely.



Jen Takaki

## Losses

*Mandolin R. Brassaw*

They left today;  
the house is quiet and still.  
The endless dripping of the silver faucet,  
echoing in the solitudes of the room,  
reminds me that something has been lost.  
The sun shines duller,  
and the musical patterns of the rain on the roof,  
no longer lulls me to peaceful slumber.  
The cat whines constantly for a loving hand to stroke its neglected fur,  
and I don't dare try  
to fill the place of what's been lost.  
They left today.

## ***Untitled, pencil on paper, 1995***

*David Byrnes*

The room is silent except for the skritch of graphite on paper. As he brings the pencil toward the page, the blank whiteness snatches at the pigment like fish snapping at bait just above the surface.

As he sits, hunched forward, with the lamp glowing over his shoulder, placing each line exactly, as if tacking yarn to a bulletin board, he begins to feel the drawing's internal shiftings,

as if the bulletin board had suddenly been transformed into water on which the yarn floats, and ripples in the paper gently move his lines from where he originally placed them. Sometimes they move so quickly

that it seems a fish has taken the end of a line in its mouth and darted away before it learns that lines are not food, and spits it out. The line is calm then, and the artist laughs because most people can't see the fish.

## **The Huge Loop Baby Circus**

*Sky Evens*

[Titled but un-penned]

# MY MICHAELANGELO

*S. Andrea Timm*

but it's still there,  
you know,  
in the back of my throat  
where lethargy lays  
pretending to sleep,  
my michaelangelo,  
my matisse,  
my picasso,  
my crack in the world,  
it is turning,  
my fate rolling up on me  
like a ball of cotton string,  
am i willed to sleep?  
or to crack wide open  
with a voice like a lion  
hidden in the folds of my coat  
prowling by night along wedding cakes  
and flowered wall paper?  
and though it takes the shape  
of a melting snowman,  
it's still there,  
you know,  
in the back of my throat  
where, jesus god, i'm so thirsty.

*Matthew C. Hendrickson*

Life for me is a choose your own adventure book,  
And for some reason, I seem to be stuck on pg. 22.  
At the bottom of pg. 22 are two choices  
Pg. 8 and pg. 10  
Though I cannot say why,  
I choose pg. 8.  
Which is funny,  
Funny because on pg. 8  
The only words are,  
“Go back to pg. 22.”  
Which of course I do  
For it is the way of choose your own adventure books  
To do so.  
And so here I am back on pg. 22  
Faced with my two choices,  
And pg. 8 screams out to me,  
“Turn to pg. 8!  
Come see me, I’m exciting, different.  
Don’t turn to page 10! Page 10 is boring, dull, drab!  
Take a chance!”  
And so I think,  
Maybe things have changed on pg. 8  
maybe there have been renovations...  
Hope!  
I quickly thumb to pg. 8,  
“Go back to pg. 22”  
And so it goes  
Choosing pg. 8 and going back to pg. 22  
And I think the reason I choose pg. 8  
Is not because it’s better, or exciting  
But because I know what’s there...  
Pg. 8 is all I know, and it’s comforting.  
And because once,  
I turned to pg. 10  
Shhh! Don’t tell!  
I turned to pg. 10  
And all that was written there was  
“Go back to pg. 22”

## 13 Childhood Stories

### *Lucas Hill*

1. Earl Warneke was infamous for the time he was caught in the men's room at the Expo Park with a pencil up his ass.
2. They told me my great-grandfather died cleaning his gun. I didn't figure out (until I was 13) that he wasn't cleaning his gun at all.
3. When we laid the rabbit in its shallow grave it gave a soft, soft, sigh.
4. Kelly VanAmburg, my mom's old friend, was drunk one fine summer morning when I was ten, and caught me looking at her huge breasts hanging out of her bathrobe. She angrily seized me and smothered my face in her sweaty bosom: "Look at them! Look at them!"
5. Matt Gwynn used to bark drunkenly through his greasy mustache how he was going to take the kids and go down to California. Cathy, his beautiful wife, beat him to it. Now Matt is alone and rakes lawns for a living.
6. Russel Harp punched me in the nose, and so became my best friend.
7. On the day I found the dead rat on the playground, Mr. White (with hearing-aids like huge yellow dog boogers) praised my dimples.
8. We buried the dead bird with rocks. I was told not to let my baby sister touch it. Dead things are bad for girls.
9. Mike Mitchell was pale and fat like a grub and his nickname was faggot. We called him faggot until he dropped out of school and disappeared.
10. Dathan LeOvure threatened me with the *DREADED HEART PUNCH* until the day I punched him in the throat.
11. Richard's uncle John had a stroke and spent the rest of his life drunk and twitching in his wheelchair, swinging his good arm at his nephew. When he died, Richard told me he'd gone back to Arkansas.
12. We had a dog once named Bimbo, who died from being locked in the car for two days in July in Los Angeles, and it was my fault, my fault, my fault.
13. When my sister was a kid we fed her a piece of candy, and then told her it was poison. You're gonna die, you're gonna die, we chanted. She got over it, but now she carries two knives, everywhere she goes, and takes candy from nobody.



# People Frighten Me

*Lucas Hill*

Leon said that if I wanted an umbrella I should just go down to the train station and say I'd lost my umbrella and since they have thousands there in the lost and found I could just say one of them was mine and take it. So I decided to do that since it seemed a clever way to get an umbrella I thought it might be nice to have one.

When I got there the lost and found was much smaller than I'd imagined and there was one tiny old black man sitting in a swivel chair reading a newspaper and I figured he was the guy to talk to. (Just as a side note I just turned around to look behind behind seeing as how I'm sitting in a train station and all there was this lady reading over my shoulder and she gasped and pretended to be looking at something else.)

So I thought I was being pretty quiet when I walked up to the big grey counter and I thought maybe I'd take the old guy by surprise but then I noticed he'd been staring at me the whole time from under his brown and wrinkled brow.

I said I've lost my umbrella and he got up out of his chair and asked me when I lost my umbrella and I said last week.

(And just as a side note now I'm on the train and there's an Asian guy with glasses who is sitting across from me and keeps looking at me and next to him is a girl with glasses and a pretty green sweater reading a Star Trek book and I keep looking at her because she is beautiful.)

And so the guy asked me to describe my umbrella and I said it was black with a black crooked handle and a silver tip and it was about so long. So the little guy went and got two umbrellas neither of which quite fit the description because one had a brownish tip and the other one wasn't black at all but rather a greyish plaid. And the guy started talking about how the grey one was a beautiful umbrella, who knows how much an umbrella like this might cost like he was selling it to me and I was feeling rather uneasy because the whole time he never took his eyes off me.

And it really was a very nice umbrella but I just said thanks but that's not my umbrella and walked away briskly. (And just as a side note now the train is moving and I'm on my way to see Becky and the Asian guy isn't staring at me anymore and the girl in the green sweater just got off the train and the lady who was reading over my shoulder is nowhere to be found but I rather like being by myself because people frighten me.)

# In the Moment of Immeasurable Silence: Commemoration's day Aug. 6, 1995

*Blayne Higa*

As I sit  
here in my livingroom  
the Sun  
shines searing rays  
through my window.

*"It Was Like The Sun Came Down To  
Earth"*

I watch on CNN  
thousands of people  
in black,  
With heads of many  
Colors  
bowed in remembrance (Sadness?).

*"Never Again"*

Is said  
in this ceremony,  
this Commemoration  
to the dead...  
and dying.

I see familiar sights:  
The Cenotaph,  
The Children's Monument  
with its  
Thousand Paper Cranes  
of Peace

It wasn't so long ago  
that I  
stepped  
in their Footsteps...  
saw of this:  
The beauty amid  
the horror.  
And felt  
the anguished  
hope  
of peace.

*"I Feel Guilty"*

Say the hibakusha\*  
for not having  
died on that  
Day.

But I am  
the one who feels  
guilty.  
Because My country  
did this to another,  
guilty because  
death was the catalyst  
for my Life.

Fifty years later  
The Flame still burns...

"Until they Are All Gone Home"

Nations Still have  
not heeded the Cry  
of Children,  
The ones who will  
inherit what is  
Left.

In the Moment  
of Immeasurable Silence  
8:14 AM 1945, 1995  
The Bronze Bell  
with the world etched  
(without borders)  
into silence.

on its surface  
is Rung by children.

I sit in my livingroom  
with the Sun shining  
through my window  
thinking of pain and suffering.  
I place my hands  
in Gassho\*

*"Namu Amida Butsu"\**

To reach the other shore,  
The shore of Peace and Tranquility.

I hear the cries  
of the living...  
the dying  
ringing  
in my heart.  
I see the solemn  
Commemoration  
and realize  
the truth it conveys (I will remember...)  
It fills me  
and overflows  
from my eyes  
as the cooling rain

\*hibakusha- the name given to survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

\*Gassho- In reverence / prayer.

\*Namu Amid Butsu- "Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life." Amida Buddha is reputed to preside over a Pure Land where there is no pain or suffering, where believers can achieve ultimate enlightenment.



# Pumpkins

*Anne DuBois*

The hall was choked thick with students. Sue hitched her blue backpack higher on her shoulders and threaded her way toward the commons. The warning bell was already ringing when her small form stopped in front of her red locker. The lockers were painted one red, then one white, then one red. Hooray for the Bulldogs and all that. This week red and white posters were plastered all over the halls reminding students of the upcoming Homecoming dance. Sue was dressed in a blue denim skirt and a green sweater she had knitted herself. She used to like red and white.

"Hey there, Sue." A familiar voice broke into her head. She stifled her stomach's jumping butterflies and turned toward him, tucking a wisp of shiny brown hair behind her ear.

"Oh, hi, Justin," she answered quietly, furtively glancing at his left wrist. It had taken her an entire afternoon to make — blue, green, black and white embroidery floss woven together tightly. It was still tied loosely around his bony wrist, though a bit frayed and faded. A friendship bracelet, she had explained.

The noise of the other kids passing by formed a wall around them, so it seemed as if they were completely alone amidst the squalor of squeaking tennis shoes and clicking penny loafers. Sarah and Vicki flounced by in their red and white cheerleading uniforms. Sue turned back toward her locker and missed number 33 on the second time around. Sighing, she started again.

"Need some help with that?" He leaned on the locker adjacent to hers. He was thin, as most junior boys are. The only things keeping his loose jeans up about his waist were his feet corking up the bottoms.

"No, thank you," she said, as she missed number 33 again. "I have to get to class."

"Right." He shifted his duffel bag to his other hand, watching her as she finally found number 33 and yanked the door open. He scratched the back of his neck and let his hand fall to his thigh with a smack. Sue slammed her locker shut, holding her English book under her arm.

"Well, I guess I'll see you around, then," he said.

"I guess." She turned, and walked toward her classroom.

"Right," he agreed to her retreating back. He pushed himself from the locker and set off in the other direction.

\* \* \*

Usually at lunch they sat together. Sue arrived in the stuffy, white tiled cafeteria before Justin, lunch bag in hand. After some consideration, she sat at their usual plastic, wood-grain table with the yellow toadstool seats. Justin emerged from the hot lunch counter a few minutes later. He was talking to Colin, or, more appropriately, Colin was talking to him. Justin kept glancing at the brown-haired figure sitting on the yellow toadstool seat, eating carrot sticks out of a Ziploc bag.

When Colin had finally exhausted himself of words, Sue had finished her milk and was standing up. Justin ran over to her. "Are you leaving already? I was coming to join you."

Sue jumped at the sound of his voice. "I have some work to do," she said, and turned to leave.

"Sue."

"Hm?" She half turned toward him and twisted the mouth of her lunch sack open and closed, open and closed.

"I'm, I'm sorry. Are you —"

"Don't worry. I'm fine. We can just be like we always were. It's okay."

"Are you sure? I didn't mean —"

"No. Look, I have to go." She tossed her rumpled lunch bag into a brown garbage can nearby and gathered her books.

"Well, wait. What are you doing tonight?"

Sue turned around to face him. "I'm busy. My mom needs me to work for her."

"Oh. Yeah. I forgot."

"I really have to go." She brushed his elbow with her arm as she passed. He followed her with his eyes, watching as she walked quickly down the red and white hall toward the band room. She played oboe.

Justin sank down in front of his cold tater tots and warm chocolate milk. He picked at the skin of his chicken, then shoved the tray away in disgust. His eyes fell on the Homecoming posters taped to the far wall. Justin's fingers sprang to life and began drum on the table as he stared at the red and white poster. The cadence ended with a sudden, resolute thwap, and his brow cleared. Justin shouldered his duffel bag and strode to his next class.

He didn't try to talk to Sue for the rest of the day, but found himself looking for her small figure in the throngs of passing crowds. After school, she wasn't waiting for him at the trophy case like she usually did. He realized in his

disappointment that although he hadn't expected to see her, he had saved things to tell her. During P. E., for instance, Samantha had fallen over a pickleball net and landed, unhurt and a bit surprised, at the instructor's feet. He knew Sue would have been mad at him for it, but Justin had laughed. Then, during science, Ms. Higgins had loudly said, "Damn it!" when Ron Hewitt accidentally dropped a lit match in a puddle of rubbing alcohol. Also, Sam Ericson had stopped Justin between fifth and sixth periods in front of the pop machines.

"Are you and Sue Edwards were going out or what?" he'd asked. Justin had just shrugged.

"She's really pretty," Sam had remarked.

"Yeah." Justin had always thought so. Then Sam asked Justin whether Sue was working for her mother this season. If she was, Sam explained, maybe he'd stop by and see her tonight. Justin told him no, she wasn't working for her mother this season at all. Justin wasn't sure if he would have told Sue this last piece of news or not.

He walked outside to catch his bus and glanced toward the parking lot almost in spite of himself. He saw a small, brown-haired figure disappear into her big gray Ford pickup. Sue was just able to peer over the dashboard. Justin smiled at her, even though he knew she couldn't see him, before he climbed up the dark, corduroy-patterned steps of the bus. He collapsed into the seat in front of the emergency exit and stared out the window.

The bus jerked backward out of its parking space and jolted over the speed bumps as it navigated its way out of the parking lot. It was stuffy, even for a fall afternoon. Justin tried to open the window but the left corner was stuck fast. He settled back into his seat and stared into space.

The vibrations of the bus' floor abruptly became regular as the bus turned onto Main Street. The brakes squeaked as it stopped for a red light. Self-conscious groups of junior high school kids were parading home from school. They tried to look cool standing on the corner outside State Farm Insurance, waiting for the light to change. The edge of the yellow and green striped awning above Gibson's Flowers flapped in the breeze.

Justin smiled, remembering. It had happened about a year ago, during Sue's Danielle Steele phase. His mother had been painting the living room and ran out of paint before she finished the space behind the green chair. She sent Justin and Sue to the hardware store to buy a half gallon of Matte Ecru. Justin remembered the color because they had come back with a gallon of Shiny Eggshell by mistake.

The rain soaked them through before they had even reached the sidewalk in front of Justin's house. He and Sue had paused under Gibson's awning to regroup before dashing madly to the hardware store on the next block. He remembered that while they were resting she had told him about the novel she was reading. The heroine secretly loved some guy. He was a pirate, or a sailor, or something, Justin couldn't remember. Anyway, she kept her love a secret because they were good friends and she didn't know how he felt about her. Then, later, she was tragically bucked off a horse —

“Tragically bucked off a horse?”

“Yes. As she's lying on her deathbed in the hospital, thinking of her one true love, he sweeps into her room, brandishing twelve red roses. He finally realized, when he almost lost her —”

“To a tragically bucking horse.”

“—that he was in love with her, too, and had been all along.” Sue's fingers touched the cold glass, her gaze lingering on the display of red roses in Gibson's window.

“Why do you read that hokey stuff, Sue?”

He couldn't remember what she'd said, or even if she had answered. As the yellow bus lurched past Gibson's Flowers, Justin noticed there was a display of red roses in the window.

Sue pulled off the unfrequented county road onto her family's long, dusty driveway. She noticed the bright sign on the first maple tree of the driveway. Her mother had been busy all of yesterday afternoon making it. She had nailed together three old fence boards and wrote “Pumpkin Patch” across them in bright red letters. Green ivy (it's a pumpkin vine, her mother indignantly declared) bordered the hand-drawn letters, and a small orange dot (a *pumpkin*, her mother explained) graced the lower-right-hand corner. Her mother said it was there to make the place look more official, but the sign wasn't necessary. Everyone in town had been coming to Sue's family's farm for years to get their Halloween pumpkins.

Sue parked underneath the scarecrow at the foot of the driveway to leave more parking space for the customers. The scarecrow's clothes were old and tattered, and his shirt billowed in the wind that sneaked in between his body and the missing buttons. When he had first been put up last fall, he hadn't been anchored well against the wind and fell over on his yarn hairy head. A sharp stone caught his cheek and tore it a bit. Sue's little brother Billy had sewn it up

for an extra credit Home Ec project. Because he was just learning, the scar was bright purple and jagged, but the smile never dimmed on the weathered face.

Sue slammed the car door and ran into the kitchen. She spilled her books out on the kitchen table, narrowly missing the chicken defrosting for supper, and grabbed an apple. Hopefully, her mother hadn't seen her so she could steal a bite to eat before she went out to help. There were already a few cars in the driveway. She recognized the Johnson's big pickup and Mrs. Arthur's little VW Rabbit.

Brightly pimped pumpkins dotted the withering field. Children in red galoshes and blue jackets with furry hoods stamped about in puddles, shrieking to one another. Sue could hear their excited cries through the open kitchen window.

"Here's one that looks like Bert!"

"This one is bigger than *me*!"

"We need a scary one, Daddy!"

At the edge of the pumpkin field, this year like every other year, Mrs. Edwards sat on a hard metal folding chair at a wobbly green card table. She smiled welcomingly at everyone who passed but put her knitting down only when someone rolled a pumpkin up to buy. She was knitting a scarf for the scarecrow. Her dark woolen socks peeped out between her shoes and jeans. Edgar, the family's obese (he's just *fluffy*, Mrs. Edwards insisted) gray cat, lay on her lap. Somehow he had secured a place amongst around the clicking needles and the unspooling yarn and snuggled under the completed rows of the scarf. Only his pink nose was visible through the brown and orange stripes. Sue imagined he was purring robustly. She tossed her apple core into the compost bucket and washed her hands.

She dawdled about drying them, not being in any particular hurry to get to work. She heard the cough of a familiar car's engine at the entrance of driveway. From her perch by the kitchen window, she saw the mud-splattered gray Pinto bounce down the driveway and come to rest near the blue shuttered house. Justin's long frame unfolded clumsily from the car like an accordion shot from a bow. He paused at the card table to say hello to Sue's mother and then strode purposefully into the field. His pace slackened, and he seemed to lose himself among the pumpkins. He scrutinized each one, examining them in his hands. He brushed off dark streaks of mud and tested for soft spots with his fingers. He didn't look toward the house.

Sue was snapped from her surveillance by her mother's impatient beckoning from the card table. Sue opened the back door and struggled into her green

work jacket at the same time. She grabbed the wheelbarrow at the foot of the steps and pushed it forward over the hard ground.

Children's shouts caught Sue's attention as she came to a halt before her mother. She turned to see the four Johnson boys, aged seven, six, five and four. *What were those people thinking*, she said to herself, as she always did. They were dancing gleefully around their father as he hefted a forty pound pumpkin toward her. The boy's little breath clouds created a ring of atmosphere around their father's knees.

Sue ran toward Mr. Johnson with the old wooden wheelbarrow, the wheel muttering to itself in annoyance as it hit the ruts and divots of the field. Sue greeted him politely as he gratefully plopped the pumpkin into the wheelbarrow, but her attention was behind him. She noticed Justin was nearing the far end of the field, stepping over small children and around their parents. He examined every pumpkin with the same furrowed expression, turning them around and tracing possible faces.

Sue and Mr. Johnson walked the pumpkin-laden wheelbarrow back to Mrs. Edwards as his four boys frolicked and cavorted around them. Sue's mother had set her knitting down on the card table and stood watching them approach. Edgar, extremely miffed at being dumped off a warm lap for so undignified a reason as a rotund pumpkin, was sulking behind the compost pile. He stared haughtily around red and brown fermenting leaves at Mrs. Edwards as she and Sue weighed the pumpkin and the Johnson troop trundled it home.

Sue tilted the wheel barrow forward and leaned on the handles. The dispersal of the Johnson clan had quieted everyone. The Murphys were here with their new daughter. It was her very first visit to the Pumpkin Patch, and her tiny eyes lolled around in her small head. Her fingers grabbed at nothing and she cooed happily.

Justin was still circling the far edge of the field. Sue thought the best pumpkins were on that side of the field, too, where high pitched shouts didn't bother them and little feet rarely disturbed the ground.

The Murphys finally decided on a small pumpkin that could fit into Mr. Murphy's hand. "Didn't want to overwhelm her with anything too big," they explained, patting their daughter's peach fuzzy head. Mrs. Edwards laughed and agreed. Sue was only partly aware of the transaction, as she watched the far end of the field.

Justin's long frame hunched over a squat round pumpkin. The Anderson's youngest girl stood teetering beside him, holding her blankie against her cheek.

He said something to her and she took her thumb from her mouth and nodded gravely. Justin looked up, over the little girl's head, and met Sue's eyes. Sue blushed and hurriedly turned back toward her mother, who was smiling as Mr. Anderson approached. His round belly was hidden behind a giant pumpkin.

He thumped the pumpkin on the card table cheerfully while Mrs. Anderson picked her way over the muddy field to collect her youngest daughter. The youngest Anderson girl saw her coming, and waved goodbye to Justin before she toddled to her mother.

The Andersons packed their children and pumpkin into their station wagon rumbled north. The dust kicked up by their car settled unhurriedly. It was growing late. The small orange balls in the field echoed the sinking orange ball in the sky. Justin was the only person left in the field. The setting sun reflected in his red hair. He seemed to be puzzling about something.

"Why don't you go help him, Sue?" asked her mother. "Seems like he's got something special in mind."

"Just pumpkins," Sue murmured, but left the wheelbarrow and nonchalantly walked over to him.

"My mom sent me over to see if you needed some help," she said when he looked up from his squatting position.

"Actually, I think I'll get this one. It has a lot of character, I think." He seemed to be talking to himself. "Will you be around here tonight?" He held the pumpkin up to his face and squinted at it, checking for blemishes.

"Yeah, I should be," Sue answered. "I might have stuff to do," she added.

"Okay." He unfolded his legs and stood up. "I also need a little upright oval one. I think I saw one over here." He turned and headed back toward Sue's mother. Sue walked behind him, kicking at dirt clods, and inspecting the footprints the children had trampled into the path. Justin found the oval pumpkin and tucked it under his arm and carried the round one by its long, prickly stem. He deposited them both carefully on the card table in front of Sue's mother. Mrs. Edward's dark eyes flicked curiously between him and her daughter.

"Well, Sue," he said after he had paid for them, "I'll see you around, then. See you later, Mrs. Edwards." Balancing one pumpkin in each hand, he turned and walked to his car. After carefully arranging the pumpkins on the floor of the passenger seat, he slowly backed out of the driveway. A small cloud of dust enveloped his car as he drove away.

"And that's everyone!" Mrs. Edwards exclaimed. "Let's hurry and put the Closed sign out so we can help your brother with dinner."

"He could hardly trouble himself to be polite," Sue muttered. "Why on earth did he come here to get those stupid things?"

"Maybe he's reconsidered," her mother replied hopefully. Sue shook her head.

"No. I don't think so." She sighed heavily and followed her mother into the kitchen where Billy was chopping carrots for the salad. Edgar had somehow sneaked in and was sitting on Billy's feet, staring hopefully at the cutting board. It was his supper time, too.

After dinner, even though it wasn't her turn, Sue agreed to do the dishes for her brother since he had to finish something - he was characteristically mysterious about what, exactly - in his room. Fifteen minutes later, Sue heard her mother exclaim, "Billy! What on earth are you doing?" Sue smiled. Billy seemed to get swooped down upon more often than not. Just as she was turning to run upstairs and see what was going on, she heard a soft knock at the backdoor.

Dishtowel in hand, Sue peeked out the curtained window. She didn't see anyone. She thought it might be Edgar, batting at the door to come in (he had just learned how) before she remembered Billy had taken Edgar with him to his room after supper. Sue jerked the door open. Yellow light from the kitchen cascaded down the steps, spilling in all directions. Sue could still see no one. She happened to look down at her feet, and there on the top step were two pumpkins. They looked like the ones Justin had chosen so carefully.

Sue tossed the dishtowel over her shoulder and knelt down in front of them. The round one was carved into a face. A blue bandanna was tied around its forehead and a pirate's eye patch hid the left eye. A red rose was woven between its uneven orange teeth. The oval pumpkin sat squarely along side it. The top had been cut off and the insides scraped clean and filled with water. Inside were three red roses. Attached to one was a note.

*Sue*, it said on the front. Hastily, she unfolded it. The paper was soft from having been written on and erased many times. In Justin's handwriting, scrawled across the top two lines were the words, *Would you go to Homecoming with me?*  
-Justin

Sue looked up, and Justin was standing on the bottom step, with his hands behind his back. She started when she saw him. His lips turned upward briefly and from behind his back he pulled eight red roses. He held them up to her. The

blossoms quivered slightly in his unsteady hand.

Sue looked down at the note in her hand and then back to him. Justin paused, then took another step up, still holding the roses out to her. Sue's fingers brushed his as she reached out and took them.

"There are twelve, all together," he said. His hands fell to his sides. The soft scent of roses warmed the biting October air. Sue stood, and stepped around the jack-o'-lanterns to join him on the second step. She smiled, then she looked up at him.

"But why didn't —"

He stuffed his hands into his pockets scuffed at the step with his shoe. "I don't know. The more I thought about it the more I wished I had. I guess I'd never thought of us like that. But then Sam was asking about us and I wouldn't tell him that you were working tonight, and I've always thought you were pretty and everything, and then when the bus went past Gibson's I thought of you —"

His voice trailed off, and he stared at the ground. Sue reached to him and gently touched his forearm. He met her gaze and smiled.

"I'd love to," she said.

# Lady Wisdom

S. Andrea Timm

I remember singing.

It was summer then, just about the time  
 When dandelions shed their yellow locks  
 In exchange for thin white whiskers, and  
 As children we'd pluck them and the gusts  
 Our mouths created would erupt, sending  
 Slender strands in all directions, as if  
 Being connected was only an interruption  
 Because they were always meant to fly.  
 It always made us giggle. Like little gods,  
 We were, observing age and deciding death.

*Jesus loves me this I know  
 For the Bible tells me so...*

In the little churchyard, over the grassy dead  
 We trod, this tune like honey sweet from  
 Our throats. We serenaded those marked stones,  
 Wild flowers in palm. We separated the petal  
 One by one, releasing our grip every now  
 And then, letting them ride the breeze a few  
 At a time. We hoped that these souls were not  
 Forgotten, and believed that they needed music.

Like a child, God plucks summer from  
 The ground, observing age, deciding death.  
 And when the trees blush and go backwards  
 To Eden, their leaves shed, naked and innocent,  
 We must remember how to let go.

*Little ones to Him belong,  
 They are weak but he is strong.*



*Beatrice Murch*

**A Character Sketch, Focusing on the Inter-  
Personal Relationships of a Particular Red-  
headed Female (who shall remain nameless)  
and a Study on the Effects of a Voluptuous  
Body on Dim-Witted Economics Professors, as  
well as the Correlation Between such a Body  
and Mental Faculties Developed by its Owner  
as Observed in a Class Room Setting over a  
Four Month Time Span**

(Included shall be a discussion on the potential half-life of a relationship with the above woman, as well as her overall potential as a desirable mate.)

By: Darwin Schlafeshön, resident of Salem, Oregon with a BS in Physical Education from Willamette University.

Gina is Boring<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Sources:

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Gene McGlaphlin Ph.D.

Gina Olsen

Bartlybee

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# Why I Didn't Help a Turtle Get Over a Curb

*David Byrnes*

Step.

Step.

I notice a turtle crossing the road. He's barely two feet from the curb. I stop to watch; from this distance it looks like an overturned saladbowl, green and shiny, making its way laboriously to the lush green grass

on the opposite curb, so very far away. A green bubble floating slowly away in a sea of gray concrete shot through with veins of black tar.

Step.

Step.

As I watch, too far away to intervene, a car comes down the road, like a speedboat on a river of pavement, threatening to pop the lackadaisical green bubble.

Step.

Step.

The roar of the engine and the hum of the hot, hard tires on the road is interrupted by a horrible screeching as the car swerves violently. Black marks left by the Goodyears describe tight arcs around the tiny, perseverant turtle. Taking no notice of his near-death experience, the creature continues in a perfectly straight line, walking over twigs and debris and the hot black tire-marks without even breaking rhythm.

Step.

Step.

At last the turtle finds the curb. It looms above him, a six-inch cliff, impassable. The thin green fingers of grass wait above him, ready to tickle the underside of his shell. As the reptile contemplates this new obstacle, his strong jaws open slowly and snap shut audibly, like a mousetrap. He looks first right, then left.

Snap! His head turns to the right.

Snap! His head turns to the left.

As I begin walking towards him, the turtle turns right and begins walking. I change my mind about lifting him over the curb, and I continue on my way. I glance over my shoulder and see the turtle tirelessly walking along the curb, searching for a break:

Step.

Step.

ECHO IN THE EVIL WORLD

HE GOT HIT BY AN EXPERIMENTAL WEAPON AND CAN NOW TURN INTO A PSYCHIC DOG!

WEDNESDAY: SMELLED A NEW STINK IN TOWN

STINK OF INSANITY

NEW TYPE INSANITY

Whoa

A PHEROMONE SIGNAL SO STRONG I HAD TO TURN INTO A MAN TO AVOID BEING SICK TO MY STOMACH.

SOUNDS LIKE THE WORK OF THE EVIL DOCTOR PROMETHEUS SPINE!

THE EVIL DOCTOR SPINE IS A PHARMACEUTICAL GENIUS. HE PREFERS NOT TO KILL HIS VICTIMS, BUT RATHER TO DRIVE THEM PERMANENTLY AND VIOLENTLY INSANE BY THE USE OF DRUGS OF HIS OWN CREATION. HE IS A SICK BASTARD AND SHOULD NEVER BE TRUSTED.

GR...

SPINE? IN MY TOWN? LOOK OUT, MOTHERFUCKER.

Buy SEX HERE!

I HIT THE STREETS.

MEANWHILE, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CITY...

HRMM...

HRM.

HEHH...

You must be my MINDLESS SLAVE!

MY!

DONT WORRY...

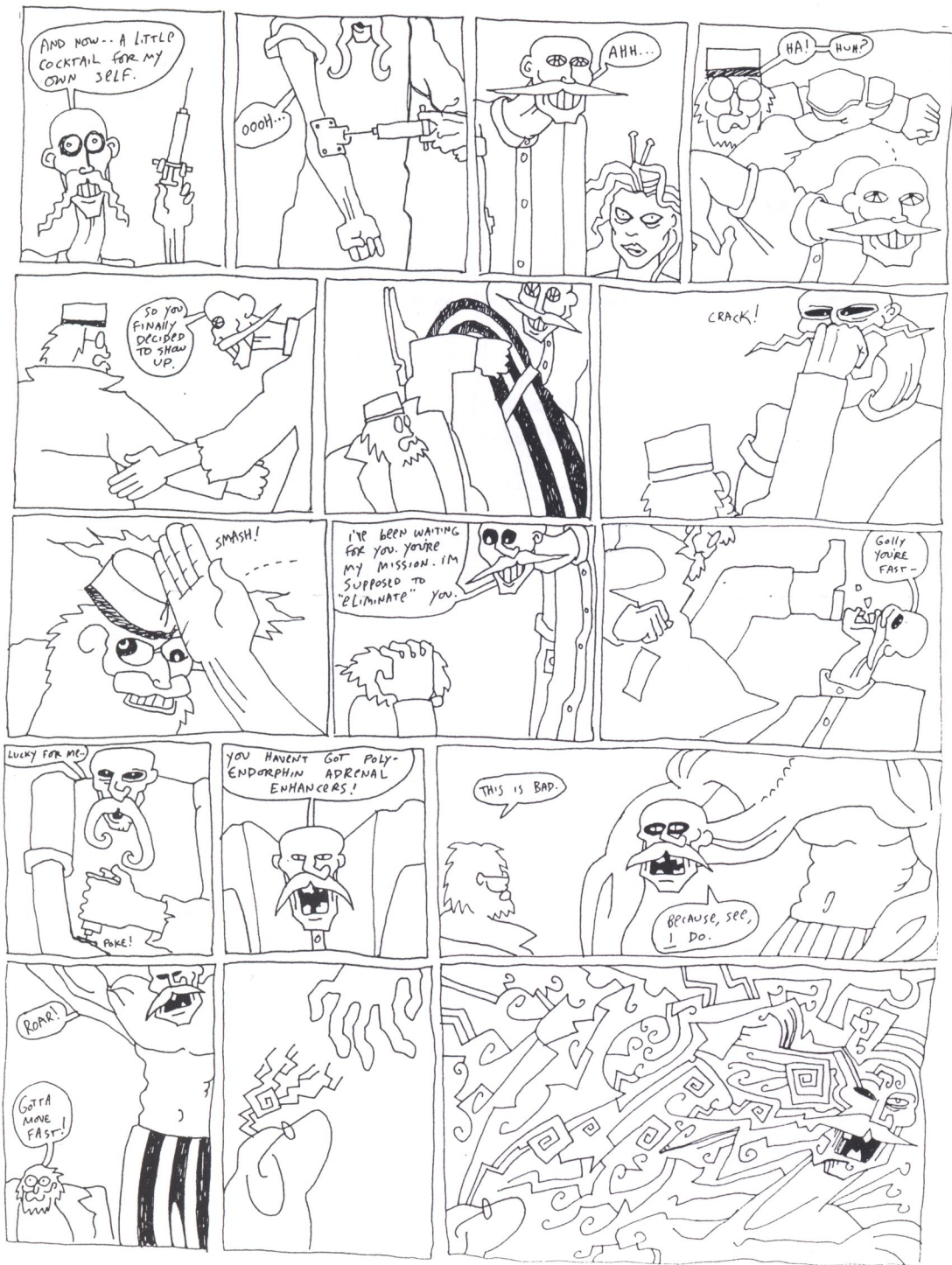
EVERYTHING will be JUST FINE.

PUTING Jus FINE.

THERE IT IS AGAIN...

FROM THE NORTH... JUST AROUND THE block...

HERE I come





# The Crows in Hardin

*Heather Parkinson*

The woman at the general store in Hardin,  
Sat cutting her warts with scissors,  
Said the winos were getting bad in town.

The sign behind the counter at the hotel register,  
All Indians!! Must leave deposit and drivers license,  
Will be returned on check-out.  
The Locals conjugate at the Merry-Mixer.  
The Crows make verbal jeers at their teasing-cousins;  
The photographer sits paralyzed over a cup of black coffee.

At the Crow trailer park,  
A woman is clearing way for her new partner:  
Clothes, turquoise, jewelry, tack-all on the front door.

The medicine man counts the tobacco seeds.  
He knows how long the Crows will make it.  
High in the mountains Little Elk dances;

Not afraid to die,  
Only afraid to lie down face to face with shame.  
Dance-Sundancer-dance.

*Matthew C. Hendrickson*

I want to kiss you, I thought.  
And it seemed crass, rude, almost absurd  
That I should want you  
Not being here, with me...  
And it made me feel like fall, and caramel apples, and Halloween.  
Which was fitting  
Fitting because it was fall  
fitting because thing, people, places  
Were dropping out of my life, like old wilted leaves,  
and I saw them falling away from me.  
Say you, sucked dry of life,  
Falling from my empty limbs.  
And I sought to hold you...  
but I knew you were going  
Knew I could not hold you long.  
Could not hold you in my mind,  
Where already tomorrow had arrived and departed  
And you were slipping away  
further into the yet to be.  
slipping like youth, wonder, and newness,  
Like childhood dreams I dared not whisper to my sheets at night,  
Like innocence and a mother's warm embrace.  
gone into the recesses of the future,  
Gone as those who have fallen into the waysides of the past.  
gone like the present, where we imagine ourselves to be...  
Here, now, as we have been before,  
Watching the old light fade from my eyes  
Always fading...  
And so I want to kiss you,  
Before you are gone  
Before tomorrow comes and I awake  
To find my bed empty  
In another time without you  
That I am slowly beginning to remember.

*Matthew C. Hendrickson*

Today...

Today I had the usual.

Today I woke in pain,

Pulled from my slumber into the shower,

The warm water beating me awake.

Today I brushed my teeth

And noticed my toothbrush getting old,

and today I rode my bike to school

as opposed to driving

But does it really matter?

Today I skipped most of my classes,

except a trivial appearance I put into Thermal Physics

And today I spent another hour, tutoring,

For money...

Today I thought about love I did not have Today

And I wrote poetry.

Today I made dinner, and washed the dishes,

And breathed...

And when it was over,

I crawled under my sheets, closed my eyes

And thought about today or yesterday or the day before...

And I keep forgetting what day it is

But it must be sometime within the last few days.

And it seems like maybe,

I'm not going forward, but Backward

Back to yesterday, and the day before,

And the day before that.

Slowly counting down my remaining days

Slowly taking them back

Until the first day

When death has me, or I have it...

And maybe then,

I'll know what day it is...

but will it still be today?



*Asenath Chamberlain*

# Waiting For Rain

*R.J. Foster*

The naked light and naked walls  
And wasted years my mind recalls,  
The summer heat that madly crawls,  
    Corrupt my soul with frozen fear.  
Purple shadows that would comfort me  
Now from the cruel brightness flee,  
    And memory is choked.  
    Warm tears dissolve in shallow cheer,  
While time is humming endlessly,  
    And hopeless idols are invoked.

The throbbing sunlight burns away  
The clouds that sheltered me with rain,  
And cracks my mortal clay.  
    Hiding from the truth's florescent glow,  
In sorrow's comfort I'd remain  
While midnight lamps consoled my crying.  
    Now at noon a barren plain's revealed;  
    I see the parched soil left untilled,  
Where pain, nor love, may never grow,  
Where all things only die, and keep on dying.

# unfettered

Jennifer Riegg

So we dance. I dance into you then destroy, the other side of creativity, I am that too. please believe I am capable, for me. please believe it cause I'm not sure I do. I dance through you as you see through me, I melt but stay my own person into you as you plunge into me. and you do, head first and peel through me. this is the last night I spend with you in self-imposed isolation, self-imposed shame and i do shame myself before you, a little ugly girl who dances in the snow with frozen buggers and frost-bitten toes. And I love you as I can. and that's not that much. I give it all but its not enough how can I need you so much? how can I cease to be human and become vine? I only I can I spread myself, my tendrils men the slimy fools those erotic boys in search of a woman. am I enough? catwoman, thelma and louise, frida kahlo, marilyn. I care about galileo too, and all those people who are dead and wrong. What is it that pulls me through you? are you aware of it? do you feel it too? do you see my rage? the interior shadow of the mirror of who I once was before bitterness hatched its cancerous self in to my heart. and yes you are the product of this in me and my past and everything you've asked me to deny for your sake. I hate you. I hate you you worsted me. I destroyed myself for you. the beauty in me. I knawed through my own defenses to feel your breath on my neck. So here I am unfettered. I don't know what to do with myself. so you drive me home to your safe place and I fall victim yet again. I hate myself more than I hate you now. if I knew what I wanted... but its too late for goodbyes. I tuck myself into bed after you do. you and your kisses, they burn me no memory is a safe one. don't you care don't you know about love? I can't forget I can't remember dancing waltzes to make everything okay, to be your family because you had none (love you because you had none) and then I couldn't even draw myself into the fetal position to protect myself from you you yes, you a crazed backstroke flailing madly towards a retreating escape crazed mad that's all I think all I can bear to give you this part of me. The facade, oh the clever tricks I play and often I even I don't see through but then who am I? who can I be who do I presume myself to be? my best friend, my own goddess I love you, does that mean anything? synonym to sacrifice, self-destruction. the temptation is so deep to repeat repeat this deja vu (the occult exists inside my head manuscripts of conjecture and consequence) what do you do? look it up. it already existed only some people can't remember. I don't remember happiness, never a consideration never even a hope. I hate adverbs and interior agendas and kissing boo-boos is a nice thing to do. the fuck. nice its such an impotent word and it reminds me that I have to go because of math and metrics and how 5280 feet equals a mile. I just kissed a frog, what kind of prince is he? or does it even matter anymore. I miss my mom she was always me. as I was him and she was him and I was her and I need frozen boogers and frostbitten toes. feel anything. amen Mother.

*melanie hawkes*

i stare at the mirror

i see myself

i stare

i see

i reach

i will open the door

behind the mirror

the door handle turns within my hand

i open the closet door

i see myself

i see my desperate desires

displayed like evening gowns

my neatly folded fears

piled on the shelves

my skeletons

hanging all in a row

at my feet i sense

the boogie man lurking

i slam the door

i stare

the mirror

myself

i reach forward

the door handle

an empty closet

i step inside

looking

searching for my fears

my secrets have disappeared

the skeletons gone with last year's pumpkin

i turn around

i come out of the closet

i turn again and shut the door behind me

i stare at the mirror

reflected in its polish i see the window

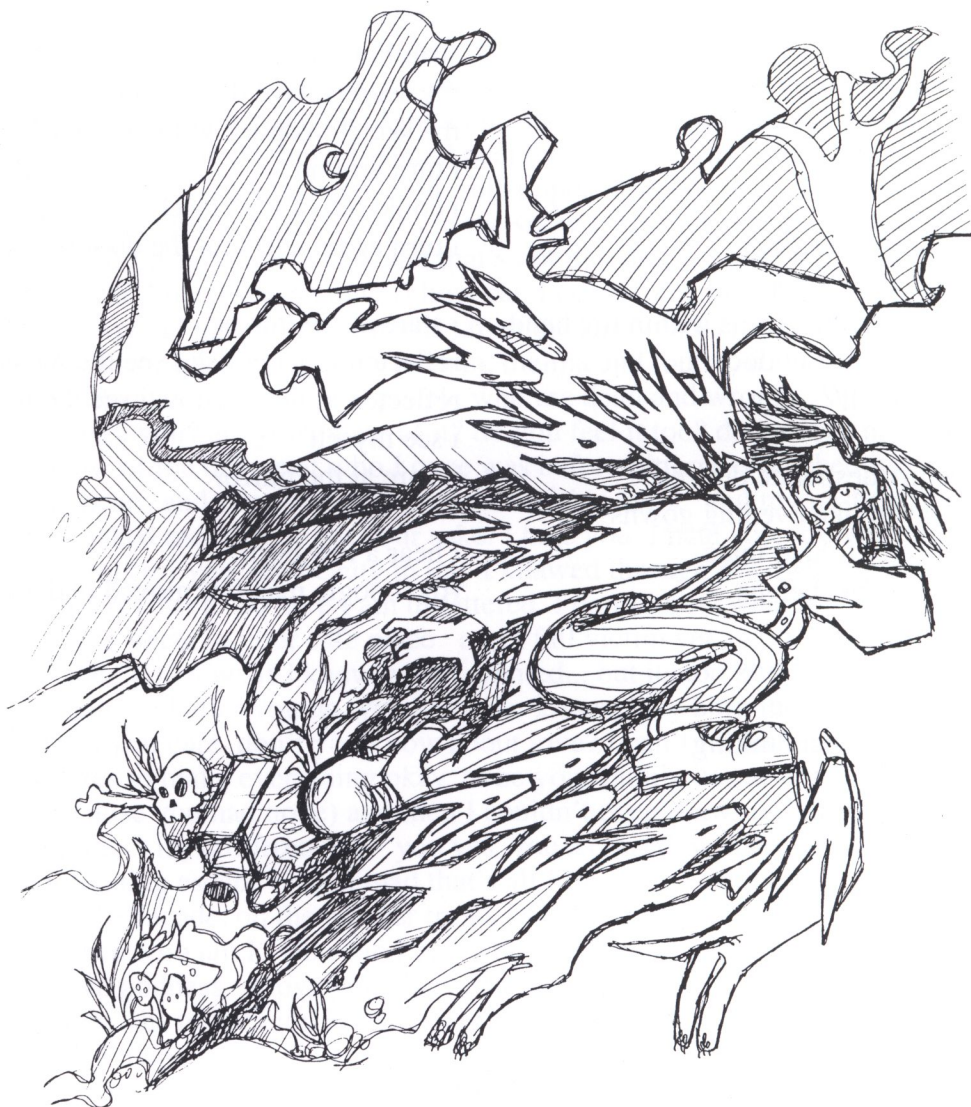
reflected in the window i see the mirror

i see myself

i stare at the mirror

i hear a low burp

(the boogie man has moved under the bed)



Lucas Hill  
"Coyotes"

# Garden of Mums

*Katie M. Hinnenkamp*

Mitchell woke abruptly from his dream with the sensation of having fallen from a great height. It was Thursday morning, and he heard a soft rain falling on the roof. He got ready to go out and pulled on his fall parka. As he was reaching down to zip it up, he glanced out the lead-framed window in the front door. His thoughts were momentarily drummed away by the rhythms of the rain outside. It fell in vertical waves, the drops becoming individuals as they struck the pavement in sharp dots; then sloshing together again as they flowed toward the tiny rivers which rushed down either side of the street.

The parka wasn't waterproof. It was heavy, but a rain like this would seep through the layers of yellow canvas to reach his skin in a matter of minutes. Either way, though, he was going, so he zipped the parka up close to his chin, pulled the floppy hood down almost over his eyes, and pushed open the door.

He was at the curb in a couple of steps, and his boots managed to stay fairly dry. By some trick of luck, he spotted an empty taxi. The driver saw him and honked as Mitchell was lifting his hand to signal her. The taxi pulled over and Mitchell slid quickly in. He said the name of the café, and the driver nodded.

Mitchell arranged himself in the seat, looking out at the rain, and sighed. He told himself that he was going to the café mostly for the coffee. Just to see if he could make himself believe such a thing. It was certainly good enough coffee, and a hot cup of coffee was a valuable thing on a sopping wet day like this. But you could get a decent cup of coffee at any of thirty places in town. He knew damn well why he had spent every day this week in that café, and it had nothing to do with hot drinks.

It was the new kid working in the garden. That's what had gotten his attention this week. Before the new kid came, Mitchell had gone to the café only very sporadically. He had to go by the building once in a while, after all. Had to see it was all there. To remember so that he could forget; or to see it in reality so he didn't lie awake at night, reconstructing the thing in memory. Something like that. But this new kid had changed the situation somehow. Why had they hired a new kid? The head gardener, Mr. J, they called him, had always had things under control before. Hiring this new kid seemed unnecessary. The first time Mitchell saw him — on Monday — all the kid did was to weed the chrysanthemum bed. He spent two hours at it. Mitchell sat at his outside table and drank six cups of coffee, and all that kid did the whole time was to pull weeds out of a bed of gaudy yellow chrysanthemums.

But what fascinated Mitchell was the way he worked. He moved so smoothly. If he hadn't been wearing that bright blue gardener's shirt and those

khaki work shorts, Mitchell would've sworn he was a dancer or something. That was how he carried himself. On Tuesday Mr. J had had the kid haul some trash barrels to the curb, so Mitchell got a pretty good view of him. He was tall and thin, probably seventeen or eighteen years old, but pretty strong, judging from the way he got those trash barrels out. But this kid had obviously not been a gardener before. His skin looked too pale and protected, and his wheat-brown hair had no streaks from the sun. Still, he caught your attention. It was even interesting to watch him pull out weeds from around the chrysanthemums. Those smooth movements; like he knew he was being watched.

And he was. Mitchell wasn't the only one who had noticed the new kid. The person Mitchell had actually come here to see had spotted the kid, too. That person came home for lunch every day around 1:30. When Mitchell went to the café, he went there at one. And Tuesday afternoon about 1:20, a black sports car rolled past the building. The gardener kid had finished hauling trash and was watering the hedges next to the parking garage. The black car took longer than usual to pull into its spot. The driver appeared to be fiddling with the rear-view mirror. As the new kid spun around to reach a different hedge, he caught sight of the sports car driver. He held the hose on one patch of ground for several seconds, his eyes on the car, which had slowed almost to a stop. Mitchell's right hand gripped his coffee mug. He raised his left hand to cup the back of his neck and watched the scene intently. The kid suddenly blinked, realized he had been staring at the man in the car, and quickly looked at the ground, shifting the hose to a dry section of earth. The black car disappeared into the garage. Mitchell gripped his cup with both hands now. His fingers had raked four red lines across the back of his neck.

Wednesday afternoon Mitchell got to the café at a quarter to one, and the black sports car was pulling in by ten after. The car's owner strolled casually into the garden a minute later and struck up a conversation with Mr. J, who was cutting the grass. Mitchell swallowed, and the hot coffee collided violently with his stomach. Mr. J switched the mower off so he could listen to the man, who stood with his hands poised elegantly in the back pockets of his blue jeans. Though the man had his back to the street, Mitchell could easily imagine his licorice-toned voice, and the way he moistened his lips with his tongue between sentences, always choosing his words carefully. The man spoke to Mr. J, but his eyes followed closely the kid who was clipping the hedge. The man patted Mr. J on the shoulder and walked away. As he re-entered the condominium complex, he passed close by the new kid and nodded hello to him. The kid nodded back, his eyes trailing after. Mitchell dropped his cup loudly into the plastic bin of dirty dishes and caught a cab home.

He put off going to bed that night for as long as he could. After several the numbness wore off, something else took hold of him.

It came in flashes, as always. A heavy white door secured with columns of chains and deadbolts. A gleaming black bathtub filled with scalding hot water — details he felt more than saw, because his eyes were clamped shut. Sounds — a champagne glass falling close to his ear upon a cold tile floor; waking up to the same stale notes of opera music he'd fallen asleep to. Flavors — the champagne and the gin and expensive, exotic foods that were hard to swallow. Sharper memories of tastes which curdled in his mouth but which, hours later, he craved again: perspiration, skin... other, stranger flavors. And textures — smooth sheets beneath his naked back and tangled around his ankles. Gentle hands upon him in the early morning, carefully avoiding the welts left by more urgent touches the afternoon before. And always a penetrating cold that chilled him even at times when sweat beaded from his pores.

Mitchell saw a final scene — his own face in the mirror of the black bathroom, terrified because he hadn't realized the terror showed in his face — and then he lost consciousness. He dreamed smoothly of younger times, of a boy whose belly crackled constantly with anticipation. Odd, lurching sensations, which for some reason he liked. Restless nights alive with eager uncertainties. Then long lunches leaning close to the table; less drunk from the wine than from the bewitching invitations to a world distant from everything he knew. Vividly he saw the heavy black surface of a door with a brass knocker, and heard the click-rattle of chains and bolts as someone reached up to open it.

Now it was a rainy Thursday and the taxi was about to arrive at the café. He was here early — it was barely noon — but Mr. J and the gardener kid were hard at work. They dug about in the mud, protected from the rain by big orange slickers. Mitchell ordered a cup of coffee and sat down at an umbrella-ed table, flipping absently through a newspaper as he watched the action across the street.

Everyone in the building knew that Mr. J took his lunch break at 12:30. People who were home at that time would often ask him up for lunch to get free advice about sick houseplants, or, on days like this, just to invite him in out of the rain. So when the black sports car appeared at 12:25, Mitchell set down the newspaper and held his breath. The driver parked at the curb and got out.

Mr. J and the kid were just sitting down on a bench under an overhang. The kid was reaching for his brown lunch sack when the jeans-clad man walked up. Mitchell stared straight ahead and pressed his fingertips hard on the tabletop.

The man said a few words and Mr. J nodded. The kid sat quiet. The man turned to the kid with a questioning look and said something else. The kid shrugged, then nodded almost imperceptibly. He looked at Mr. J, who shrugged and nodded. The kid shook the water off his slicker and stood up. He left the lunch sack lying on the bench.

Mitchell wanted to shout. From way over here at the café he could see the kid was afraid. Fascinated, but afraid. Of course. The kid didn't have time to think. He was staring at his reflection in the car's shiny door. The man in the blue jeans tilted his head to catch the kid's eye. "*Be* afraid," Mitchell whispered to the kid. But the kid followed the man toward the street.

.....

After the gardener kid got into the black sports car, Mitchell only went to the café out of habit. He was drawn there despite himself. Seated outside, from time to time he would glance up from his paper to the row of windows on the tenth floor of the building. He never saw much of anything, but he imagined, and his arm jerked unconsciously and spilled coffee on the table. But he didn't need to watch anymore; he already knew the sequence: a warm, dry lunch downtown, followed by another and another and then *You know, we can't really talk here* and a long elevator ride and the clicking of locks deep within the black door; and the door becomes so white it freezes into the wall and the question is no longer *When are you coming back?* but *When can I leave?* And the forms and the textures and the sounds.

.....

And the tastes. He coughed again to empty his throat and wiped his mouth with a wad of tissue. He was bent over a porcelain structure. His two hands clasped its rim and it was very cold.

"Toilet," he said aloud, and the sound of his own voice startled him. His abdomen heaved again, and he surrendered to the fit of vomiting until his stomach was empty. He suddenly felt lightheaded and chilly. On all fours he groped about the dark room, and his fingers came upon something fuzzy.

"Towel," he murmured. He lay down on the hard floor and wrapped the towel close around his body. His mind drifted...

He saw a man and a boy walking together, smiling. The boy's fair skin glowed translucent with contentment. He was so giddy, in fact, that as he walked, his feet didn't quite touch the ground. Every once and a while the man would put his hand atop the tall boy's head and nudge him downward, so that his feet bumped the ground. But the boy kept bobbing back up. Frustrated, the man reached up to plant his hand firmly upon the head of wheat-colored hair. The boy stumbled a bit on the bumpy earth, then fell into stride with the man...

The man and the ground had disappeared and the boy was falling. Slowly but constantly he fell. He knew he would hit the ground eventually, but had no guess as to how soon. He retained consciousness with the vague hope that someone would be there to catch him, but the longer he fell, the more that hope dissolved.

He awoke. He had rolled over and bumped his head against the wall.  
"Fuck. That hurt. Goddammit, this floor is hard."

He wriggled out from layers of black bath towel. The room was very dark, but he knew his clothes were around somewhere. He switched on the light. A pair of khaki shorts and a blue shirt lay in the corner. Shivering, he pulled them on and rubbed at the mud stain on his shirt. A piece of hair the color of wheat fell in his eyes. He brushed it away and steadied himself to step out into the bedroom. It was empty; he sighed relief.

The condo was so bright inside, it must have been early afternoon. In the kitchen he peered into the refrigerator and saw what he had suspected was there: an empty champagne bottle and some leftover fettucinni primavera. But he wasn't hungry. He was itching to look outside, and he'd tortured himself with anticipation long enough. He shut the fridge and walked slowly into the living room. The entire outside wall was made of windows, so he walked with his head down, building his own suspense. He leaned forward and rested his forehead heavily against the cold glass.

Yes, there he was. Same time every day. At the café across the street the man with the yellow parka sat reading his newspaper. The spring air seemed to weigh less out there. The sunlight bounced off the tabletop, and the parka hung on the back of the man's chair. On the table sat a vase of chrysanthemums. The man took a sip of coffee and, as he did with every swallow, looked up to the tenth-story window.

The lock in the door of the condominium clicked, and the kid spun abruptly around.



# Making the Streets Bright

by David Byrnes

After looking around to be sure no one was watching, I drew the gun from my coat pocket. In the eerie, artificial glow of the halogen streetlight I checked my gun to be sure that it was loaded. Then I stepped out of the light's influence, into the shadows.

The pistol felt heavy in my hand—cold, reliable. I felt a surge of confidence. Stepping back into the harsh brightness, I raised the gun, clicked off the safety, and fired.

There was a sound of rushing air as the pellet flew towards its target. The streetlight fizzled and snapped, flashing brightly just before it was extinguished like a star going supernova. I stood still, letting my eyes adjust to the dark September night. A frigid breeze rearranged the few leaves that had already forsaken their trees in favor of the cold street. I listened to the leaves' rasping and the rustling of the trees. Taking a deep breath, I savored the almost-autumn flavor of the air, tinged only slightly by the pungent smell of the defunct streetlamp.

Tilting my head back, I gazed at the deep blackness of the night sky. As my eyes continued to adjust to my newly-darkened environment, stars showed themselves to me, one at a time, like bubbles coming to the surface of a lake. I still couldn't see them all, though, because there were more streetlights a half block in either direction. Lowering my gaze, I chose a direction and started walking.

Dry leaves crunched under my hiking boots as I strolled down Summerset Avenue. It didn't take me long to reach the next streetlight. I listened to each clear, crisp sound punctuate the silence as I extinguished the lamp. The click of the safety being released, the *thppt!* of the pellet, the tinkle of the breaking glass, and the fizzles of the halogen light's death throes all impressed themselves momentarily on my awareness, then melted away as if to make room for the next experience.

This time, instead of lingering, I moved right on to the next light. As I walked, I thought about what my actions meant. They made me a vandal. I tried out my new name tag. Vandal. Not unpleasant. Maybe that's why it's so rampant. Maybe a more loathsome or hated epithet would discourage would-be defilers of public property. I spent some time trying to think of something nastier, but it seemed all the really distasteful names were already taken. Eventually, I gave up.

In this way I worked my way down Summerset to North Hills Drive, from there to Rosedale, then on to Bermuda Road.

On Bermuda someone had left a porch light on. This was a dilemma. It's one thing to vandalize public property, but quite another to target an actual person's belongings. When the object to be vandalized belongs to an institution, destroying it doesn't seem so bad as breaking something that a person would have to fix himself. For example, these streetlights were the property of the Village of Pasedena Park, City of Normandy, MO, a North County suburb of St. Louis. Now that was an institution if I've ever heard one. If someone comes along and shoots out all the streetlights, the worst thing that happens is that people drive around in the dark until the Village gets around to having them fixed.

The people who live here could drive to and from their houses in reverse, blindfolded, on two wheels. They don't need streetlights to get around. Most people don't even drive at night here anyway. You see a car go by maybe once or twice an hour. The only thing the streetlights do is scare possums and keep me from seeing the stars during my early-morning strolls. Those streetlights have been shining every night of the eighteen years I've been living here and they'll shine every night after the city fixes them. I want the weeks of darkness in between for myself, and this guy's porch light is spoiling my darkness.

Finally, a "fuck you" attitude comes over me. I mean, that porch light is even more superfluous than the streetlights. What, is he expecting guests to drop by at five in the morning? Trick-or-treaters, perhaps? I'm rationalizing, I know, but that doesn't mean it's not true. With that in mind, I raised the gun and level it at the offending brightness.

Just then, the light snapped off. I was so startled that I dropped my arm to my side. An average-looking man in a suit opened his front door and stepped out onto his front porch carrying a briefcase and a cup of coffee. He seemed surprised to see someone standing on his front lawn. Although I could see him perfectly, he was squinting at me because he had just come from inside and his eyes hadn't adjusted yet.

I probably should have been getting the hell out of there, but I wasn't for two reasons. One was that this man, thought he lived in my neighborhood, did not know who I was. We had seen each other before, but I didn't know his name and he didn't know mine. Plus, at this point he can barely see that I'm there, let alone what I look like. The second reason was that I had been having a nice, tranquil night and I didn't want to ruin it by hauling ass for home, so I just stood there, waiting to see what the man would do.

He seemed to decide that it wasn't really important who I was, and he started down his steps, taking a little sip of coffee first. When he was about

halfway down the path to the sidewalk, his eyes lit on the gun. They widened. Then he seemed to remember something, something he should have known right away but had forgotten. He looked up and down the street, seeing a malfunctioning streetlight in either direction. His eyes came back to me and stared right in my face, hard. From this distance he could probably see more than I wanted him to see, so I turned on my heel and began walking along the sidewalk.

I could hear him starting to come after me. He half-shouted, "Hey! What are you doing out here?" He was beginning to spoil my mood, so I stopped and said over my shoulder, "Isn't there someplace you should be?" Out of the corner of my eye, I could see him check his watch. "Shit!" he said, promptly forgetting all his vigilante notions in favor of his paycheck.

It got me thinking. I mean, here it was, maybe a quarter to six in the morning, and he's got to be on the road to get to work already. I haven't really decided what I want out of life just yet, but I know that I don't want that. He came outside to a clear, pre-dawn morning that I had improved through the removal of artificial light, and he didn't even glance at the sky once. All that beauty right there, and he didn't even notice it.

I still had Ravina and Overbrook to do, and I turned my steps towards them, moving at a leisurely stroll, still considering the businessman. Had he not been fresh in my mind, I might not have noticed the sounds of other automobiles being started and driven away as I methodically shot all the lamps on Ravina. It made me want to find one of those poor people and force them out of their car at gunpoint in order to show them the stars, but I guess having a gun in your face isn't really conducive to a good star-viewing attitude. Most of those people probably would never even notice that they would be driving around in complete darkness for the next few weeks.

I dismissed them from my thoughts with a sad shake of my head as I came upon the last streetlight in my circle of influence. A few seconds later, it was nothing but a memory, and I was the only one who remembered it. Satisfied at last that I could view the firmament without technological hindrance, I turned my gaze skyward, only to discover that sunrise was upon me.

Seeing the brilliant yellows and oranges of the sunrise, I could hardly lament being denied my stargazing. I cleared my mind of all thoughts and let the sunrise fill me with awe. After an interminable amount of time, when the sun was fully above the horizon, I turned away and began walking towards my house. It was just about time for me to go to bed. The new school year would start shortly, and even though I looked forward to it, I knew it meant the end of these nocturnal wanderings. I consoled myself with the thought that the Village would take at least two weeks to repair the damaged halogen lamps, and that I would spend the next fourteen nights in the most brilliantly lit streets Pasadena Park has ever known.

# The Beaver

*S. Andrea Timm*

Through beast  
 Bitten forest pressed  
 Blades of grass bow 'neath  
 The weight of sandals in June to  
 Form a winding path down to the  
 Lakeside, spotted oak and speckled  
 Ash no longer stand in staggered  
 Rows, but sleep instead on their  
 Sides, their wooden legs have  
 Been gnawed at the ankle,  
 Their feet still upright,  
 The leaves snoring  
 Softly, their yellowing  
 Heads withered and drying  
 Upon earth's dirty bed.

Farther on, where the ground dips  
 Down to fuse with the shore, and  
 The rough gray lip of this rocky  
 Strip melts into further gray  
 Waters that reflect pink  
 When dawn raises  
 Its incandescent  
 mane and shakes  
 Her curls across the  
 Sky in effort to say "no"  
 To the night, there floats  
 The limp carcass of a beaver  
 Which the lake's white capped  
 Fingertips push again and again  
 Up against the rude shore in  
 Effort to cleanse itself, but  
 Somehow these diluted  
 Hands are too weak  
 To lift up and over, and  
 Blood, like liquid rose petals, as

If breathing, moves in synch with  
 The waves, mingling in with the  
 Coat of the corpse now tangled  
 With weed as thick as thistle,  
 Reeking like that of milk  
 Too long in the sun  
 When it fills the  
 Nostrils and  
 Twists to  
 Gag.

The six holes  
 In his skin are  
 Like spots licked  
 Clean by the water's  
 Serpentine tongue, his  
 Head bowed as if repenting  
 Beneath the waves, only the  
 Hump of his back protrudes  
 Above the rough surface, leav-  
 Ing the impression of a  
 Brown, bleeding rock.

Six times  
 Came the met-  
 Allic demon's guttural  
 Shout, its smoking breath  
 Hardly human, six times  
 Came the spasm from  
 A finger just less  
 Than god's. But  
 It never rained  
 Down. It  
 Never  
 Rains  
 Down.



*Jen Tadaki*

*R.O. Brown*

nothing  
is so aflame  
as orange-red  
autumn leaves  
illuminated  
on their trees  
in one sunlit  
symphony—  
wooden wick  
surrounded  
with a steady  
flame until it  
falls to  
earth in  
ashes

# Grandpa

*Jeremiah Patterson*

I wondered, when I was younger,  
how it was that a man went about  
collecting all that skin;  
around the elbows, and underneath the jaw?

I wanted to know,  
why don't I have a dent in my chin?  
Oh I tried to make one,  
with my finger, or with a pencil.

Why is it, I asked Mother,  
that Grandpa doesn't have to do things  
like I always have to?  
He never brushes his teeth, or combs his hair.

Grandpa always knew so many things,  
but aren't I the one who goes to school?  
Maybe, I thought, he was so smart  
because of all those pills in the medicine cabinet

How come he wears such funny clothes,  
and why does he get to wear shorts instead of underwear?  
He never has to get new shirts,  
he always wears the same ones.

And Mother told me  
that grandpa wanted my things,  
even more than I wanted his.  
Wouldn't it be better if we shared?



*Kim Braasch*

# First Re-emerges, then Disappears

*Sky Evens*

*I can see the stars shining*

like a nickel in the night

There was a silence,  
and a moon

Contemplating the sky,  
and the tears not

Coming again,  
it's  
coming again  
it's  
All I am when I feel it.

Alone

Sleep,  
like a fly on the wall

Moon under my feet  
one more time,

Screams and trains  
passing through my mind

Can't take it  
make it loud enough,

and I haven't enough

Glimmering Orange  
on the top of the  
endless  
pole.

Fleeting wrong,  
fleeting night

Deserted I sit and write of

Madness, my friend,  
in a library without  
bookends

# Voices

*Sheila Morton*

He was on his way home from the office when he first began to notice. It started as merely a vague annoyance whispering across his eardrums, and he lonely shook his head and turned up the radio a notch. He didn't want to go home. It had been several months since he had come home to an empty house and an unemotional letter from his wife (ex-wife), coldly stating that she didn't love him anymore, didn't know if she'd ever loved him, and now Robert (David? William?) was going to fill her emotional needs. And so began the weekly visits with his two children, who told him heroic stories of David (William? Robert?) in between mouthfuls of popcorn and cotton candy at the zoo and the circus and the movies.

And tonight he was dreading returning to that silent house, without any furniture because Barbara had taken it (she was the one who'd bought it, after all), and he hadn't bothered to replace it, it seemed so much effort for just one person, and he didn't spend much time there anymore, anyway. So held stayed late at the office again, and stopped by McDonald's, because there was no food in the cupboards at home, just a couple of TV dinners in the freezer, and he was tired of sliced turkey with mashed potatoes and white gravy, snow peas, and a thin chocolate mint.

The whispers drummed a little more insistently at his ears, and he hoped that he wasn't getting sick, because held gotten sick just last month, and had no one to make sure he was taking his medicine or getting enough sleep and enough liquids, and it had all been very much worse than any time when held been sick before.

He pulled off the freeway onto exit 21, and turned left onto Sickewood. Another left, then two rights, and he glided smoothly into the driveway. He sat in his car for a few minutes, staring broodingly at the darkened windows, the unmowed lawn, the weed consumed flower bed. He wished he had a television. He remembered that tonight was Thursday, and he would have liked-to watch "Hill Street Blues" as he used to do when held had a TV. He noticed suddenly, with a detached indifference, that the odd whispers of sound were gone. With a small sigh, he unbuckled his seat belt, and withdrew the keys from the ignition. Grabbing his

briefcase, and locking the car door, he walked slowly up the small sidewalk leading to the front door.

With a little difficulty, he managed to get the front door unlocked, reminding himself again to replace the door knob. The door swung open with an audible protest, and he added oiling the hinges, to his list of things to remember. He flipped on the switch to the right of the door, and bent down to pick up the mail. There was just a couple of bills, a notice about the electricity, a letter from Ed McMann, so he tossed them back onto the floor. He headed for the stairs, passed the little table with the phone on it (he guessed that Barbara had forgotten the little table), and checked himself as he went to straighten his tie in the mirror above that was no longer there, as he had done every day now for four months. Silently, he entered the bedroom, thought about taking a shower, and instead lowered himself onto the twin sized mattress on the floor, only removing his tie and his shoes before falling asleep.

The next night driving home on the freeway, the whispers were a little bit louder, a little bit more insistent, and he felt vaguely annoyed. He reached over and turned the volume up a bit more on the radio, but the whispers only seemed to increase. He drove home quickly, and the disturbing sounds ceased as he pulled into the drive.

The next morning was Saturday. He was taking the kids to the carnival. They would ride roller coasters, and bumper cars, and eat junk food, and he would return them to their mother a little the worse for wear, the thought bringing a wisp of a smile to his face. Their chatter on the way to the park had seemed to obliterate the strange whispers, and he was grateful. After, held dropped them off at home, and Barbara had given him her weekly disapproving glare, and protectively bundled her offspring back into her nest. But then, driving home alone, he was horrified to discover that the sounds had become much, much worse. They rapidly increased from whispers into shrieks, and they were pounding, pounding, at his brain. Desperately, he had turned the radio onto maximum volume, but he could not block out the cries. They wailed, and shrieked, furious, enraged, and he suddenly knew that they were voices. Voices trapped beneath the highway, shrieking in pain, in fury, as he drove his car over the asphalt. Voices shrieking in joy, in exaltation as they were given expression by the passing of his tires over the black solidity of their prison. He was terrified. Sweat ran in freezing

rivulets across his forehead, down his spine. His hands shook like leaves tossed about by a cruel autumn wind. His heartbeat galloped. He broke all speed limits in his frantic desire to be home, to escape. He whipped into the driveway, yanked the keys out of the ignition, and dashed to the front door. He cursed long and luridly as his shaking hands made unlocking the recalcitrant front door even more difficult. Finally he had it. He threw himself inside, slipping on the mail, recovering his balance, catapulting himself toward the stairs. He scrambled up the, fled into his bedroom, threw himself onto the bed, and frantically pulled the quilts up and over his face, trying to block out all sounds with his fists.

When no new horror was forthcoming, his terror began to subside. Slowly, slowly, his muscles unclenched—his heart rate returned to normal—his breathing slowed. He cautiously lowered his hands and moved the blankets from his face. Still nothing, only silence. Silence, silence. The endless silence that had been his sole companion for over four months. Silence, the nothingness of sound, the utter absence of any auditory stimulation. And in silence, he drifted off in dreamless sleep.

When he awoke, he remained in bed, listening to the silence, floating in it, letting it lull him once again into lethargy. He didn't eat, or shower, or even get out of bed for anything except a drink of water and to relieve himself. And then he climbed back into the warm cocoon of quilts and listened to the silence.

Monday, he called the office and told them he was sick. He lay looking at the ceiling, concentrating on the silence, straining his ears for any sounds. And suddenly, he heard them. The slight whispers across his eardrums, like they'd been the first time held heard them. Only this time he wasn't afraid. He was glad. He knew they were speaking to him, knew that they needed him. Needed his car to glide across the asphalt, to bring them the pain of release, to free their voices from silence. Purposefully he got out of bed, found his car keys in a corner of the room where he had thrown them Saturday night. He went down the stairs, walked over Ed McMann without noticing, opened the front door and left it open, and got into his car. He turned the key in the ignition, and slowly backed down the driveway. And then he was free. He exalted in the voices, the shrieks, the screams, the wild, glad, and furious cries, that filled his head. And he drove and drove and drove into the night.

# Outward Bound

*Haley Pepper*

DAY 1: New, quiet, hesitant, taking everything in.

DAY 2: Why am I here?

DAY 3: This is hard!

I was scared entering the Outward Bound world.

I was scared stuck on a peak for the night at -40 degrees.

I was scared when lightning struck down in our bay.

I was scared standing on a 30 foot high balance beam.

I was scared when I thought I lost a friendship.

DAY 5: We can do this.

DAY 6: It's cold.

DAY 7: Knowing people.

I cried when I was cold to the bone and couldn't get warm.

I cried when I couldn't get footing going down a mountain.

I cried when I realized things about myself that I couldn't hide.

I cried when I couldn't communicate with my group.

I cried when my muscles tensed up and wouldn't move.

DAY 19: In the grove.

DAY 20: Another day, another adventure.

DAY 21: I can do anything I want!!

I was in awe when I saw the sun rise from a mountain peak.

I was in awe when I survived my solo.

I was in awe when I stepped on land for the first time in 5 days.

I was in awe when I saw a friend grow and change.

I was in awe when dolphins jumped near my canoe.

DAY 38: Meeting new people.

DAY 39: Still learning about myself.

DAY 40: Loving life!

I laughed when I wrestled with friends in waist deep snow.

I laughed at the absurdity of what we were doing.

I laughed when the instructors lost their canoe.

I laughed when we found a white spoon in the snow 2 days and 2 feet later.

I laughed at the sight of cockroaches in Florida.

DAY 66: What is the real world anyway?

DAY 67: Outward Bound is the only life I know.

DAY 68: Don't make me go!

I grew strong when I faced myself.

I grew strong when I met and went beyond my goals.

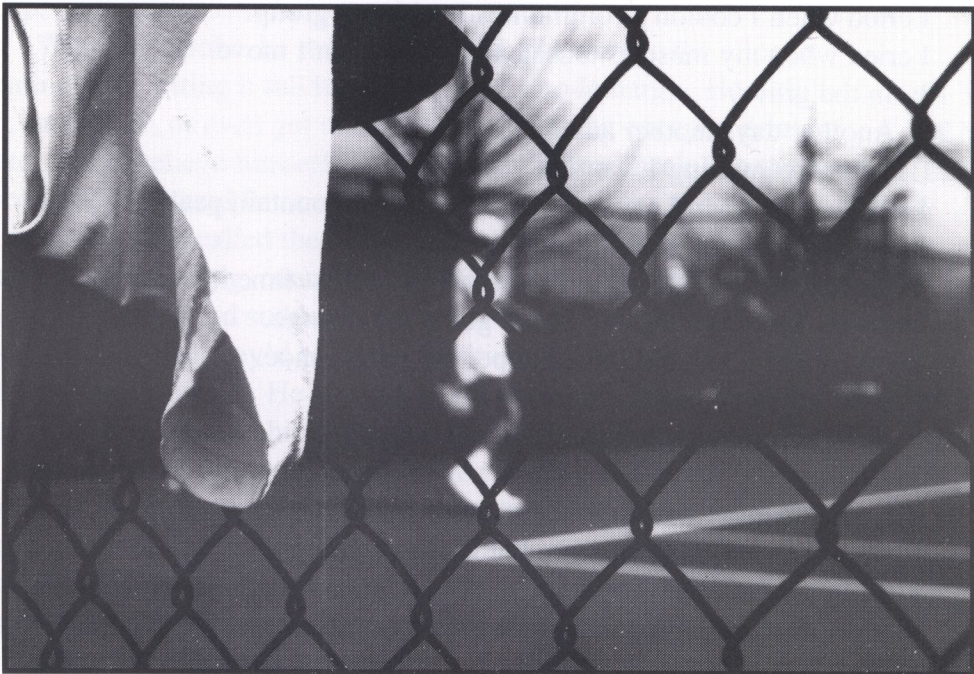
I grew strong from a friendship with a former enemy.

I grew strong living with the elements.

I grew strong the day I faced my life again.

DAY 1: Stronger, confident, starting my life over.

I got energy from the cold and strength from the mountains. I learned from the weather and fought the elements. I struggled and from the struggle I grew. I gained insight and friendship from my peers. The insight burned and the friendships were hard earned. I lived and grew in unheard of situations for 68 days. 68 days out of 21 years, not a long but a profound time. The cement and clocks drain energy from me now. The amazing thing is: the cold, mountains, weather, elements, and friendships stayed with me in some previously empty place in my core. And from that core strength flows and grows in me everyday. Those 68 days will keep me strong for another 68 years, or more.



*Jennifer Riegg*

She lost her voice. Refused to eat mushrooms. Went barefoot. Sat only on the floor. No one noticed. She was named moody. The mushrooms were scraped into piles and then into the garbage. They made fun of her ugly feet. And since she wouldn't sit at the dinner table, she ate alone, late and standing.

She felt herself rotting. Afraid of death. Afraid of life. Too afraid to sleep in her bed and then too afraid to sleep at all. Spent nights under the bed. Built a nest of blankets and pillows and stared at the bottom of her boxspring. Periods of whimpering divided her nights into segments of denial. Days were spent in painless sleep.

Unconcerned with her appearance, she became a sallow forgotten angel. Disconnected, withdrawn from fiends and family. Inertia seized her mobility and converted her into a domestic creature, too fragile for sunlight. Eyes glazed red, taut with tears, she mourned the losses of innocence and self. Eyes red like blood, she began to see differently.

Hysterics, Rage and Fear. Everywhere, ugly in her reflection. And then she saw blood. Saw Blood. In her reflection, across her belly, on her arms and neck. Everywhere slashed and bleeding.

She began to collect knives, pieces of broken glass, jagged metal. She fantasized. Saw her skin ripple and part beneath the sharp. Passive, unflinching, unfeeling, enraged.

What nice designs, red on white. Alabaster and blood.

She fell in love with flame. The concept of light and its physical representation. She played with flame and pain. Now she collected matches and knives.

In half-light, she practiced feeling, sought anything that might come to her. She ached for violence -- toe perpetrator or victim, both the same. Human contact: passion, pain. Something to jerk her out of this shadowland and hang-time. She grew cold. Began painting.

In half-light, she sat in a grunged artist smock and finger painted the kitchen floor, gray scraped linoleum. Horizontal murals, while her mother snored audibly across the house and her perfect sister dreamt of her preppy boyfriend.

She drew blood. People dying. People fighting. People flying. Beautiful skinny smiling people. Obscenely happy people. Humpback whales. Dark water washed gazebos. Dense smoke that reeked of burnt fur. Wreathing flame. Blood with big bold strokes.

She felt relief while she painted. Drew tears and felt them sting in her eyes. Drew blood and felt alive. Drew round smiling child faces and sunk deeper into her mourning. By morning, she had mopped the floor clean again and tucked herself in cold beneath her bed, the smock stashed safely in her nest.

Too tired to dream, she propped herself between two pillows and rested, eyes wide. Stared at the bottom of the boxspring. Spiderweb undernetting. She imagined herself dead. She knew how they would find her body.

Trigger nineteen.  
Silence.

## Edged

*Gary Sweeten*

with  
soapy spherical miracles  
we share our secrets

sent with breath and wishes

she greets them

careful palm. yet they vanish

wet tongue. and they linger to escape

tender white arm stretched  
eyes

suspended

they wait

## Suit and Tie on a Bus

*Jennifer Updenkelder*

He wears his big watch  
and busies his idle fingers  
The ride is only an obstacle  
a hindrance to his journey  
He will go where they all have watches  
and continue an endless quest  
He thinks he knows what he's working for  
thinks there's something at the end of the ride  
something to come from his senseless habits  
something worth going gray for  
He stares at his wrist  
and contemplates tomorrow and later  
He is concerned with circumstances  
and overlooks the pleasure in thinking  
He concentrates on obstacles and plans  
and tires his senses with distant goals  
Every move is a sign of impatience  
the strap on his arm encouraging him  
He sits there thinking of getting there  
rather than being here

# Confirming

*R. O. Brown*

A woman smoking her cigarettes  
bought in the latest country  
through which she wanders.

She looks out and sees the falling darkness  
outside the bar like the blanket  
your head hid under in bed as a kid,

And is unworried, neither in her eyes,  
round and brown as the den in her old home,  
nor in her lips, soft and worn a thousand kisses  
long, sitting thoughtfully above her chin.

