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# Egocentrism Doesn't Become You

*By: Brittany Adams*

Where have you been  
These last three years?  
And why did you leave  
So soon?  
You promised me  
That you'd be there  
For all my  
Milestones.

I have been here,  
For all this time.  
Can't you see me?  
I'm a flash at the  
Edge of your vision.

Left behing to struggle,  
I know that family waits  
Just outside me furthest reach,  
Beyond the hanging tree.

We stand beside you  
And shout advice.  
Can't you hear our voices?  
You shake your head as if  
The noise disturbs your peace.

I can still see you,  
With eyes closed tight,  
Beside our favorite tree.  
Where the scrap of my dress  
And the strip of your shirt  
Still flutter in the breeze.

And I remember the very day we  
First tied our wishes to that tree,  
Uttering those sincerest promises  
We too often lost along the way.

Winter fast approaches.  
I stand still and watch it charge.  
Some days, hoping it will swallow me  
And leave me with the lost;  
Others, dreaming of the time  
Spent warmed by love and anger.

Can't you feel us brush your skin?  
We trail our fingers through your  
Hair—grown long and thicker, now.  
A cloud of loved ones dances  
Just one breath away.  
Why have you forsaken us?

# Fire

*By: Katherine Berryman*



Twilight Fire by William Neil

Lava spewing down,  
Steam rolling across,  
Heat against your face,  
Light, sweltering air coiling through our finger tips,  
Jagged crags piercing the soles of our feet,  
Hearing just the wind whistling in our ears,  
The sweet whiff of fire and stale air,  
But it burns our nostrils.

Just at twilight, a magical time.  
As it drifts away,  
Steam lifts and  
We're left with terra lava  
sliding down the rocks.  
Taking us away.

# An Ode to the Forgotten

By: Alexis Beucler

Grandmother drove me in her rundown Sudan alongside the ocean.

She pointed—

“My sweet darlings... look at your dear Grandfather. Isn’t he beautiful?”

I looked but all I could see was an ocean.

The crystal blue waves glickered with golden licks

From the all powerful glow of the red sun.

The massive ocean looked as though it would gobble the sun with its immensity.

An immensity which gobbles millions of men—

Men in battle, men who cannot swim, men who seek for adventure.

Dear Grandfather,

A man who lived inside the sea.

I imagine him in his little (or big for him) sailor suit and cigar in hand,

Ready to bandage up any member of his crew.

I see him staring out of the peepholes into the civilization of the sea—

Two-hundred year old sea turtles lazily gaze back.

Tension shoots secret bombs at foreign enemies.

The I try to recall him on land,

He is nothing but a grumpy old man worn by the sea.

To Grandmother the ocean is her husband.

To me it’s an immense mystery of sailor’s tails and sprinkled bodies.

To everyone else the ocean may purely just be the ocean.

Before I know it, Grandmother turns away from the water

And through a golden dilapidated gate overgrown with roses.

Rows and rows of stones of every size were scattered before me,

The immensity of this place betook me for the entrance was so small.

Just as before Grandmother spoke:

“Sweet Granddaughter, look at the forgotten.

One day you will sleep for eternity here or dance in the ocean with your grandfather.”

Each solemn grey tombstone was cracked with weeds chocking it.

Then I thought about the bodies—

Bodies trapped in cases that want to be freed—

Free to give their bodies back to Mother Earth.

But instead they are forever forgotten and alone inside of a box.

At least they were showcased to people who *Remember*

And now have passed *Forgotten*.

# *Woman with a Parasol* Ekphrastic

By: Ruhaani Bhula



Woman with a Parasol by Claude Monet

I wish it would,

strokes upon fat strokes  
of dull blues, greens, and yellows  
create enlightenment in her  
heavy gaze, fragile face.

There is a veil  
with each white stroke,  
that covers the death in here eyes.

Each strand of white lace  
distracts from  
the ill,  
depth in here eyes.

The sun shines in the wrong way.  
*Moon et aches.*

The son takes the light, and  
she falls in the shadow.



# An ode—Grey

*By: Nathan Binder*

An ode—  
 Grey  
 Writ in blood—  
 Grey  
 Hot to the touch, passion—  
 grey  
 When the sky is—  
 Grey  
 I feel—  
 Great  
 Grey  
 Gods  
 We are not the—  
 In-between  
 Un-decided  
 We could be the—  
 Red martyrs  
 Yellow insects  
 Blue champions  
 Purple outliers  
 Or gods forbid  
 Orange  
 But  
 Mom, Dad—  
 We're grey.  
 It's not a choce, it's genetics.  
 Maybe I'll—  
 Grow out of it.  
 But no—  
 Grey men have changed the worls  
 A grey man imagined  
 And a grey man killed him  
 A grey woman confessed  
 And it killed her  
 Great  
 Grey  
 Gods

The moral of my odes is this:  
 beauty is twice beauty  
 and what is good is doubly good  
 When you know your color—

Even if it's grey.

---

# Six Word Memoirs

*By: Bobek, Kane, and Saramilao*

A sunny place for shady people.

—Lauren Bobek

The sun descends, books are open.

—James Kane

Something's rotten in Denmark. Hamlet's attitude.

—Dean Saramilao

# Brushes With Life

By: Caitlyn Borden

*The hallucinations, the non-existent beings that  
 Consider themselves read, swirl in my head,  
 Screaming, ranting, raving.  
 Desperate to be heard, they have  
 No regard for me, and they make me  
 Crazy, crazy enough to be committed, and  
 Strive to get help, but without  
 Leaving them.  
 In front of this canvas,  
 Vibrant paints in one hand and brush in another,  
 I think  
 Not like the me before this, not the father everyone thought they know, but like the  
 "Crazy, crazy enough to be committed" me.  
 It's his time to shine, and so I sit back and allow him,  
 Along with the hallucinations,  
 To take over and create something beautiful,  
 Because without the art,  
 I am nothing more than a man with schizophrenia.*

*I'm forever drowning in a sea of blue,  
 Breaking the surface for an instant to catch a breath of air  
 Before being dragged back down beyond hope.  
 I gave up a sense of meaning long ago,  
 gave up a feeling of home, and  
 On top of all the names the schoolgirls called me,  
 I figured all I had left to face was death.  
 And when it didn't work the first time, I kept trying.  
 Time after time after time,  
 An eternity of trying to leave Earth  
 And its oceans, but all I'd be left with are  
 Scars.  
 Scars on my heart, on my psyche,  
 Scars winding on my wrist like lace.  
 Before, I had nothing.  
 nothing, and no one.  
 But now I have art.  
 Pictures of me and the ocean,  
 Proving that one day I'll be able to swim all on my own  
 Sans all these doctors.  
 I've learned I have me entire life ahead of me,*

That one day I'll have friends who understand me  
 Instead of stab my back.  
 One day I'll have purpose  
 Where I'll be more than just a teenage girl with depression.  
 I have no feelings, no empathy,  
 Only pride at what I've done.  
 My mother was a tyrant, always in control,  
 Always oppressing my natural wants and needs.  
 With no father, I was the man of the house,  
 The focus of all her attention,  
 The outlet she sought when she had "needs."  
 Her reign ended when I slashed her throat,  
 And it was glorious,  
 But she never disappeared!  
 She kept walking,  
 Stalking me, behind new eyes and new faces,  
 Annoying me and terrifying me to the point where  
 I had to kill her,  
 Again and again and again,  
 To the point where I had to invent new methods of killing,  
 Ways I'm especially proud of.  
 There is no other reason for me to be alive other than to tell my story.  
 Clock's ticking,  
 My execution day is coming,  
 I'm trying to become people like me.  
 I sketch the modes of murder:  
 Slitting throats, decapitation,  
 Dismemberment, suffocation,  
 Drowning, shooting,  
 And my personal favorite, stabbing.  
 Each one shows the life leaving my mother's eyes,  
 Regardless of the eyes being different I think they're all the same  
 Hellish woman who tormented me my whole life.  
 When the government ties me to that chair,  
 Regardless of my diagnosis,  
 I'll have left behind something beautiful.

# Question

*By: Jacqueline Chung*

There is just this one question. There is just this one question.  
Just ONE question.  
It lingers too often.

I would like to ask any person the same question  
This haunts me, pervades me like a festering ant bite that appeared out of  
nowhere,  
The constant scratching at my mind, bleeding for answers,  
Leaving scars as reminders.  
That one question is the menacing acne on each of your faces that manifests  
After every test, after every quiz, after every practice, after every late night  
study sessions, after  
blah, blah, blah  
One after another after another.  
Huge. Red. Spot.  
It makes you want to hide away, cover it up with the excuse “they” call con-  
cealer, or whatever the hell it is for you girls.  
Guys, good luck to you.  
But eventually it will fade away, after all that picking at it,  
Leaving scars as reminders.

Sixteen, high school, striving to speak my outspoken mind,  
But staying silent.  
My mind is like rush hour on I-75.  
The cars are like the questions in my head, way too many to count, but they  
all lead to the same place, or in my mind, the same frustration.

I am Rapunzel, minus the eighty feet of blonde hair.  
Trapped and flustered with the same unease and tension in here eyes,  
Failing to escape her tower.

Maybe it's just me.  
I need to go to a psychiatrist, therapist, or anyone that deals with insanity.  
But they don't know me.  
Or maybe a friend? Or my mother? My father?  
But they don't know me either.  
Or maybe that girl in the glass that copies me every more, every flaw, every  
broken part of me, every lost friendship or trust or respect, every insignificant  
detail of my body that entails me to believe it's misshapen,  
But she says nothing.  
Or maybe just someone who will listen? Or give me advice?  
But they're just curious to know what's wrong with me.

They don't care.

My question is not just a single question.

It's not a metaphor, allusion, any type of figurative language.

It pertains to me, selfish or not, I am so sure every single person has experienced

My feeling of unworthiness, that sense of insecurity, loneliness, hopelessness, that emotional roller coaster screaming "WHO ARE YOU?" fifteen million times with every twist and turn, spiraling out of control as it cycles over and over and over in my mind.

Who am I? Funny you should ask.

I don't really know.

# Surfaces of Knowledge

*By: Alexander Cranford*

The tiles in the school hallways  
Whisper to me of students long graduated.  
The scuffs of loafers sprinting to class  
Or loafers from those dressed to impress

I count the gum stuck to the aging floors.  
Impressed, partially, that it has—  
So tenaciously—outlasted its chewer.  
Who left long ago for products less difficult to digest.

White squares of indeterminate age,  
Paving the pathway to future success of lack thereof.  
For many the nondescript pieces of seemingly invincible material  
Covered in simple swirls, are not interesting enough.

Rorschach would undoubtedly jump at the opportunity  
To delve into the secrets of the grey smudges beneath.  
Entire classes follow his example,  
Boredom unlocks the philosophical side of anyone.

I've raced down these halls just to sit motionless.  
Walked slowly to delay impending doom.  
It's remarkable how the insignificant gain value immeasurable,  
When the end of something habitual is nigh.



# Head in the Clouds

*By: Alexandria Curtwright*

I once deigned to write a poem.  
But my thoughts were like wile birds;  
They flew. . .  
And beat their motley wings  
against poetic restraints  
of rhyme and meter.

Fruitlessly, I tried to coax them  
Into returning to their prison.  
But these wild things were averred  
By its iron bars,  
And its dank and spotted windows,  
Which were my eyes.  
(They did not let any light in.)

—and they drew even further  
into a chimerical Eden.

They roam freely, now.  
Along the vast and sun-lit horizons  
Of my wandering psyche;  
Renderers of idle hands.  
(Not unlike wings themselves  
with their perpetual trembling.)

Save those rare moments  
when they perch  
Here, in my yearning bosom  
On ephemeral dawns of inspiration.

She sells seashells by the seashore  
I'm a Slithery Snake.  
Can you hear all these S's I'm saying?  
Because I can,  
These are a Lisper's woes.

Everyone hates it  
Even I, who lives with it everyday.  
For even the creator of the word “Lisp” hated us,  
For they remind us of our “Disability” whenever we explain what is wrong  
with our speech.

Whatever I say will never be clean and crisp,  
And I'll be haunted for eternity to always have to repeat myself when people  
can't understand me

But I've come to a realization, so what if I can't talk like you  
And whatever I say is muffled and skewed,  
I am just the same as you, actually no I'm better,  
Because I have overcome the speech classes, harassment, mockery, and  
unkindness towards me.

I can now say “Screw you, Lisp, I’ll talk my own way!”  
The right way, the way god intended.  
With the screwed up S’s and Ch’s, with the sound as if a broken clock was  
going off.  
Because you know in my eyes, I’m not the one with the impediment, you and  
everyone else are.  
Because I can sch my S’s and sch my Ch’s, and you can’t.

I have the gift to torment those I hate.  
I can spit on them with the slightest of list, and blame it on it.  
I can mess up reading a words's pronunciation, and go "Damn, it's all the  
lisps's fault."

So I guess this isn't a Lisper's Woes.

It's a realization.

A Lisper's realization, that everything's okay, and I'm better than all of you.

# I'm Listening (Perhaps That's the Problem)

By: Katrina Enoch

shut up.

just

shut

up.

She assigns twenty pages of homework

As if she was clever.

(She's too enthusiastic about this.)

Twenty pages of Literature, perhaps?

"Oh, you should be able to do that!"

I write yet another assignment in my planner.

(I'd rather watch *The Golden Girls*.)

Fifty derivatives are to be calculated

By the work of magical chemicals

Within my brain.

(Synaptic gaps and neurotransmitters!)

Redox reactions are to be balanced.

(The joys of OILRIG.)

Who was Jefferson's Secretary of State?

(Just put Johnson. It's a common political name.

Perhaps he won't notice.)

Question word, est-ce que, subject, verb.

Question word, Johnson, the limit as the redox approaches a state...

Quick! Mount Saint Helens has erupted!

The brain is now mush!

No! I am not Einstein, nor was meant to be!

In the room women come and go, talking of Michelangelo.

(Remember, twenty pages of Lit.)

shut up.

just

shut

up.

"The exam grades were not impressive."

The sorrow felt by my teacher does not touch me.

I pride myself with the shield of a 98.

I show my mother, giddy as a schoolgirl,

"Mommy, mommy! I got a 98 on my exam!"

"Your sister got an 80 on her College Algebra exam! Isn't that great?"

"Did I mention it was on my Calculus exam?"

"A 98, you say? That could have been a hundred. Why can't you be like your sister?"

"Katrina, I have something to show you,"

Beckons my father, I know exactly what it's concerning.

"Dad, I really am not interested in petrol—"

"Princeton has a highly recommended Petroleum Engineering program.

They make seventy grand straight out of college.

What would you do with film?"

shut up.

just

shut

up.

I cannot organize my thoughts to be cohesive.

Quick! Who is the father of modern chemistry?

No! I shall not stand for this! There aren't enough hours in a day!

I study for several hours a night, and attempt whatever homework I can complete

With hopes that I will not drool upon the page!

Club meetings occur everyday

For an hour at least.

Add the ridiculous amount of time my mother

Wastes before getting in the car to pick me up.

(I really need a car.)

"In New York, you couldn't get your license until you were eighteen."

"What relevance does that have, mom?"

"Well, the same goes for you."

shut up.

just

shut

up.

It's eleven already?

If so, I'll finish the rest during lunch,

For it is time for the highlight of my day...

Sleep: My only escape, if only for a few hours.

However,  
I cannot sleep.  
I toss, turn, and grumble here and there.  
(It's got to be one in the morning. That leaves me with five hours left to sleep.)  
I open my eyes to confirm my suspicion.

Voilà!

I find my homework next to my pillow,  
My mother clutching my sister's College Algebra test,  
My father with an Exxon Mobile sign,  
My teachers with slashed papers,  
(Their pens are knives.)  
I see Einstein, T.S. Eliot, Betty White,  
Antoine Lavoisier, and James Madison,  
Have all gathered together,  
Piled upon my bed.

"What are you all doing here?"  
I scream.  
My thoughts collide into each other  
Faster than gas particles inside a balloon.

"Hush, Katrina," they say,  
"We're trying to sleep."

# *Untitled*

*By: Brittany Gervasi*

Whatever, Grandma, I don't even care!  
 He annoys me, he eats my candy.  
 He steals all Mommy and Daddy's attention.  
 He's stupid, mean and stupid.  
 Everyone focuses on Ty this, Ty that.  
 Tyler, Tyler, Tyler  
 What about me?  
 I'm cute too!  
 My friends even colored pictured and cards for him just 'cuz his face turned all  
 funny and he talks weird  
 He feels kinda icky, but he'll get over it.  
 We would be better off without him anyways.

After that night, life tastes rich  
 Like vanilla ice cream, his favorite.  
 We raced motor bikes on virtual gravel roads until the horizon swallowed the  
 sun.  
 Our blanket forts, fully equipped with Sega controllers, frosting cans, pills—  
 We were unstoppable! Set for life!  
 Conquerors of carpet between beds and dressers. Underwear our armor,  
 inedible food, food neighbors brought as "gifts" (surely to weaken our defenses)  
 as our weapons,  
 Ready for battle, we knew we could take on whatever dared to attack.  
 But, cancer doesn't like to be challenged.

Mom and Dad cradled Tyler out of All Kiddies not even seven days after he  
 found his way in.  
 Little Monster crawled from room to room heading straight towards a Fischer-  
 Price table  
 Ruined my sun catcher he did, just as he ruined everything for me;  
 Dumping truckloads of glitter over the white and crimson.  
 Of course, nobody cared that he murdered my dragonfly.  
 Just me, Problem Number One.  
 Though they never misconstrued Perfect Child, Child Number Two,  
 as anything less than splendid.  
 Only I knew him as the brat who still got bedtime stories.  
 My old bedtime stories.

I pleaded for someone to wake me if it happened.  
 Not once did thoughts ever wander into my thick skull that it could even  
 transpire.  
 Especially not to him.

7:09 A.M.

I only said, “Oh, okay... Um... I’m going to my room now, bye bye, Ty. I love you.”

My biggest nuisance. My accomplice in crime. My groupie. My protégé. Gone.

Compassion finally broke the dam.

They came without restraint as they shook my small frame, salt stung my cheeks

as they looked to form puddles of regret on a people pair of footsy pajamas.

Karma, why did you pick now for revenge?

His transcendence to Heaven transformed my life into Hell.



# Pictures

*By: Kendra Jones*

“ONLY five more minutes,” Will thought. “Then I’m out of this Hell-hole.”

As a paper plane whizzed by his head he decided to tune back into his history teacher’s tangent. Something about Romans, like he cared. He scanned the room and noticed everybody’s dull faces. It was Friday after all. He looked out the window and began to tune his teacher out again. A cool draft entered into the room bringing about thoughts of how autumn was approaching fast. He was jolted back into reality with the harsh sound of the dismissal bell. He leaped out of his seat not bothering to hear the homework assignment. He wasn’t going to do it over the weekend anyway. No point in wasting any more time in this prison, he reasoned.

After making his way through congested halls, he finally reached outside. He bounded down the steps and was embraced by a cool breeze. These are the days he enjoyed when he had to walk home. As he walked along on the sidewalk, a gentle wind enveloped him carrying leaves and a piece of paper. He eagerly followed it until it got caught in a chain link fence. He plucked it from where it laid and turned it over to reveal the most stunning girl he had ever seen with her perfect smile and eyes shining like she had a big secret. She was holding up two fingers, the Peace sign, in the cutest way possible. Forget Savannah from last year, whom he was totally infatuated with. This girl was out of this world and he had to find her. No. Had to have her.

That night, he laid in bed, thoughts thrashed around his head like a ship caught in a storm. All for that girl. When he had finally reached the eye of the storm, all thoughts ceased and the ship was safe, he heard tapping on his window. Hesitant but unrelenting. Making sure he wasn’t in a comatose state he waited for a minute. When it continued he decided to get up and open the blinds. It took him a minute to realize who was there, standing behind his window. It was that girl. The girl from the picture! He gasped at the simplicity of her beauty. Underneath the full moon her eyes shone brighter than the Sun; her hair paler than a ghost. She was pure poetry. His thoughts were interrupted by the softest of giggles. He focused back on her in time to see that she was gesturing for him to follow her. He silently slipped out of this window and walked, aimlessly, following her into the woods across the street. He was halfway across the street when bright lights slammed him back into reality. A horn honked, and like a startled deer, he looked at the car in front of him. Incoherent to the profanities being shouted at him, he sullenly walked back to his house wondering why he was out in the street in the first place.

For the rest of the weekend there were no incidents with the girl. No awakening in the middle of streets. No... nothing. Just him staring endlessly at the girl in the photo. By Monday morning he was a wreck, suffering from insomnia from fantasizing about a girl he wasn’t even sure existed. He looked

hopefully around his school and asked his friends, even shows them her photo. All his attempts proved fruitless. He was slowly going insane, slipping away from reality by this mysterious siren. All friends lost contact; he grew distant from family. By next Monday night, he was a different person. His body, soul, and will to live were dedicated to this girl. And on Wednesday night, as he lay down in bed for another night of no sleep, he heard tapping on his window, persistent and urgent. He sprang out of bed, rushed to the window, and ripped open the blinds. And there she was, his muse. His siren. His love. She let out a giggle and beckoned for him. He followed without hesitation, crossed the street and into the woods all underneath the dark sky.

---

For the next week, search parties combed the woods to find Will before officials declared him missing. Everyone wondered what drove him to disappear, but they all agreed that his mental state had been declining over the past few weeks. The next day at the end of school, students held a vigil for Will outside and prayed for his safe return. As everyone left one by one, a boy named Chad decided to stay behind. he wanted his good-bye to be in private without the accompaniment of the entire student body. As he walked over to the vigil, a nice autumn breeze went by, and along with it a piece of paper. It landed at the base of Chad's feet. He stooped down, picked it up, and turned it over. And to his surprise he saw the most attractive girl in the entire world with her flawless smile and stunning eyes. And oddly enough, she was holding up three fingers...

# The Evolution of Man

*By: Kristina Kanaan*

I am here, waiting.  
Time that is so beautiful and infinite,  
Time that is finite and replaceable.  
Speak to me in mediums in which I cannot hear.  
make me feel your reality.

Center wheel, dial, second hand, face.  
Build a clock evolving from the sun,  
feel the sun full below the horizon and into oblivion.  
Precious time must be kept in calculated manners.  
Time, given to be wasted,  
expires like milk without a proper burial.  
The second hand stops ticking,  
and you do nothing.  
I am still here wasting.

A force not to be reckoned with.  
an entity gone untouched, unprovoked.

Today, I call you out.  
dared, you coward, do your worst!  
Remind me why you control my life and my death.  
Why you control the split seconds that send mothers to graves,  
and second chance children with seconds left to spare.  
Why you greedily hold onto time, giving Shakespearean star-crossed lovers  
years too little.

Stop hiding behind shiny glass faces and golden frame,  
you are nothing until I am proved wrong.  
Make me feel you.  
Make me regret every cursing your name,  
Make me bleed the springs that wind your clock.

Make me fear you again.

Live time.  
Bleed blood of seconds,  
sleep in pools of it, with countless spent hours.  
Time is left wasting, until the body is drained of it.  
Feel every second of every minute pass by,  
like the rush of a frenzy.  
Everyone is running to make the time last.

As I wait, every pore bleeds out the blood of time,  
with a rhythmic ticking sounds as it hits infinite soul floor.  
Tick tock, drip drip, tick tock.  
Woozy and waiting a little too long.  
Time's up.  
I am no longer waiting.

---

# Ode to a Longboard

*By: Michael Keller*

Crafted miles away,  
fell into my unworthy hands.  
Bamboo created a royal aura,  
The smooth lavender wheels spin.  
My feet were peasants until  
The gracious board accepted them.  
We soared down the road like a bird in the open air,  
Floating whichever way the wind blows.  
Together we rule our kingdom,  
Escaping reality.  
We become an artist,  
The road our canvas.  
The picture painted for all to see.  
My spaceship taking us,  
To our own planet.  
Far away but still at home.

# Ode to Coffee

*By: Calee King*

Drink the stress away,  
With the intoxicating smell lingering for a while, won't you stay?  
Listening to the sound that's...  
Dripping, dripping, dripping.  
With the power to extract the fatigue from my fragile body  
I can feel my spirit strengthening second by second.  
But the serenity is only temporary,  
And like a time bomb ticking away  
I eventually explode into an abundance of energy,  
A spontaneous burst of flame.  
Bouncing off the walls,  
Unable to sleep,  
I am indestructible, accomplishing tasks at an unnatural speed.  
With this addicting legal drug  
I am Superman (or woman, that is),  
Flying through my homework,  
My eyes glued open with uncanny alertness.  
It is the very key to my existence,  
The reason I am able to complete my abundant schedule;  
For without coffee I would be a mere mortal,  
Unable to overcome my lethargy,  
My kryptonite.

# Ode to Hunting

*By: Carl Krondahl*

From the origins of man,  
It lays at its most archaic  
From Bows, to Muzzleloaders,  
To High power rifles and shotguns.  
Some find it a disgrace,  
Others find it majestic and relaxing  
This taboo religion in some societies  
Is found home in the backwoods of the world  
From big ol' bucks to snapping gators,  
And from mean grizzlies to the smallest of birds.  
Most who take interest in this taboo activity  
Are often that of the farms and hills in America.  
From those who drive old pickups to those who drive new ones  
Some drive cars others drive semis  
Some play the Banjo, others can't.  
This taboo religion is one of the South and the Hills.  
All know how to ruff it  
Whether it be building a fire or getting food,  
They know how to survive and build their own bed,  
They don't buy unnecessary things like fancy clothes,  
They just use what they got and take what they get,  
They know what's right and what's wrong,  
And whether it's a Matthew's bow, traditional Muzzleloader,  
Remington shotgun, or Winchester rifle.  
It don't matter where you're from  
If you try it once, you're hooked.  
The food is good eatin' and  
As my granddaddy always said, "Invest in shotgun and rifle rounds,"  
And when food prices go up, ya gotta find ya own.

# Ode to Dreams

*By: Philip Kubiszyn*

Rich in grime and filth,  
a child grasps doubloons and pearls  
whilst thrusting his sword—  
a gut-wrenching roar.  
Island breezes drag stench  
like scallywags to a decrepit chest.  
Lame is the heart of Black Beard,  
bound by golden rope,  
struck with envy at emeralds  
from victorious plunder

There sits a man, red leather embraces his frame  
as he caresses his lover's curves,  
invigorating adrenaline fuels his passion.  
A cloak of elegant jet  
accelerates his lust,  
overwhelms beauty.  
Unsullied Italian rose,  
devoid of thorns of imperfections,  
handled by tender touch  
in his Ferrari of jet.

There rests an elder,  
perched upon a mountain,  
his very soul floating in the sun's domain.  
He watches majestic doves flutter by,  
his tranquil wife grinning  
as she admires her husband's awe  
with tear filled oceans of blue.  
The elder looks down into the valley  
and observes a man with his Italian lover.  
He looks to the sea and observes a young boy  
soiled with riches and dirt.  
Darkness falls.  
That which can never last  
slowly slips away.  
But darkness never hinders the elder,  
his soul still floating in the sun's domain,  
able to embrace his wife at last.



# November

*By: Savannah Law*

Our love is made of  
sand & soot  
and gritty things  
like industrial sunsets  
on glass bottle  
beaches  
and subtleties—  
whiskey tumblers  
with lipstick  
stains,  
mentholated ashes forming  
death pyres  
in your Prada pumps—  
and of soft  
feathery malignancies  
like shooting stars  
and the dust of bones—  
of things one cannot  
place upon  
a finger,  
like strobe light  
memories of  
sober hands  
with a drunken guise  
and a girl with a  
waiting  
smile.

# You Dita Von Tease Me

*By: Chelsi Mackin*

Doll, you've got me balled up,  
Why you've got the hose running and the ink blot running amuck?  
You must be off in that fuzzy world of women again,  
By Golly, those cherry red lips really do rev my engine,  
And those symmetrical arches raised high above your surprised expression  
I'm sorry I startled you, Baby,  
But your glossy locks drive me crazy,  
That cigarette smile coaxes open my pack of Lucky Strijes,  
Exhaling each puff to the sky,  
I saw you in the stars tonight.  
The angels tried to tack up a celestial portrait,  
But the beauty mark wasn't quite right and the hips were too sharp.

# The Slug

*By: Mouzel Manugas*

I watch you slither  
In your transparent slime.  
You slide so slowly.  
I scrutinize every motion  
Of your muscular foot  
On the pavement.

I grow envious.  
Living second by second,  
You don't even gaze  
Ahead at the stick  
Blocking your path until  
It touches your feelers.

Guided by instinct  
You finally reach a  
Pile of dead leaves.  
There you lie,  
On the target you  
Tirelessly inched to reach.  
Living only a slick  
Glossy line behind.

# Among the Heaps

*By: Nicole Manugas*

Incandescence, candoluminescence,  
the lime light which shines on you and I  
reveals our lazy afternoons spent daydreaming,  
smoking, sitting, drinking heaps  
of uselesss beings.

Inert, idle, feckless piles of trash  
with hands and legs and hearts made of  
discarded soda cans, worn out old shoes,  
and Tuesday's left overs from around the world

Symbols of scum, and dirt, and pointless existences.  
We project beauty in our unmoving, lazy ways;  
in our carefree frozen forms,  
in the outline of our lighthearted silhouettes.  
Back to back, you and I,  
with the wine that never leaves my cup,  
and the smoke suspended in the air.

---

# Isolation

*By: Jerad McMickle*

Turtle doves cast shadows over a lakebed.

A school of otters form a solidified squeak

as they send streaks of white across the

light blue river floor.

Bird talons twitch from the delight that accompanies the freedom to be

able to drop and pluck greedy fish

who stagnate in the shallow waters.

Small footprints shimmer from fresh dew

indented by chipmunks stalking hazelnuts.

Their carefree desire to follow nature

brings memories of the thoughts of man.

I stand alone with the two

inquisitive eyes of desire.

# What's Important?

*By: Jon Morgan*

You say I'm quiet and I need to talk more.

What for?

Do you want to hear more about me?

What I've been through?

It's not important.

When I was two

I was less active than the untouched toys in my crib,  
But the pediatrician said, "He's fine, come back in a week if you're REALLY worried."

"Something's wrong with my son," my mom urged.

Scans showed nothing, except white blood cells far off the charts

So they gave me a spinal tap, but I didn't cry,

Unlike when I kicked and screamed over a sponge bath moments later.

A shot everyday for a week.

Relearning to crawl, relearning to walk, relearning to talk.

Eight years of speech therapy,

A lifetime of readjusting, dealing with the irritations of hearing aids.

But I was just two, these are mere stories to me.

They're not important.

And when I was seven,

A bulge grew on my neck,

Again they said I was fine, nothing to worry about.

It swelled to twice its size,

Waking me in the middle of the night, sharp pains running down my neck.

The next morning, I was paler than the wrist bands the nurses put on my arm.

Diagnosed with Stage 1 Lymphoblastic Lymphoma.

Prescribed too many pills to swallow:

A steroid a day,

an appetite pill each day,

seven yellow pills every week,

a big gel pill once a week too,

But worst was the Prednisone each and every day.

I couldn't swallow them, so I had to chew

And taste that awful taste,

A taste that overpowered anything we tried to hide it with,

A taste that couldn't be scrubbed out with toothpaste,

A taste that I had to taste again if I couldn't stand it and threw it up,

A taste that taught me how to swallow,

So I no longer had to suffer from it.

These pills helped me to grow to twice my size,  
 And the chemo stole my bright, blond hair.  
 Bald and big and lacking energy to throw a ball or walk up stairs.  
 Forced to wear a white mask in public,  
 Appointments every week for years,  
 But I was just seven, these are vague memories for me.  
 They're not important.

When I was sixteen,  
 There was a pain that caused me to vomit everything I ate and drank,  
 But the doctors said I was fine, Stomach Flu.  
 The meds didn't help.  
 Still hunched over in pain,  
 We went in for scans three times,  
 All inclusive.  
 They signed me up for exploratory surgery,  
 And shoved a tube up my nose and down my throat,  
 Causing me to gag and vomit all over myself.  
 A ruptured appendix this time.  
 I woke up from my surgery  
 With a catheter, an IV in my arm, the tube up my nose, and bulb off my side.  
 Bed ridden, too sore to walk.  
 Unable to eat during the week of Thanksgiving.  
 After some rest they removed the tubes, and went to remove the bulb:  
 "Will it hurt?"  
 "Yes."  
 It was a strange and unusual pain, a cord yanked from my side.  
 I returned to a large pile of make-up work and mid-terms.  
 But I'm okay,  
 It's wasn't important.

Four scars are all that remain,  
 The one on my neck, two on my chest, and one down by my stomach.  
 But I'm fine,  
 It's not important.  
 I'm not the only one who sat up all night, wondering if her son would be  
 alright.  
 I'm not the one who retired early to help her grandson get to the hospital  
 every week.  
 I'm not the anonymous who paid some random sickly family's electric bill.  
 I'm not the one who went door to door and shop to shop raising money for a  
 fellow classmate.  
 I'm not the one who setup a fund raiser, raising thousands of dollars for a  
 neighborhood kid.  
 They're the inspirations.  
 They're the ones who are important to me.

# America Youth

*By: Corey Palermo*

If I knew the center of my universe  
I would stand there and recite poetry to my children,  
In the hopes that my verse would traverse the lockers  
Of granite and lead, perpetrated by a collective sense of  
Nationalist, Foundationalist, Indoctrinationism

The kind of relentless corporational conformitism  
Best befitting halls of cubicles—  
God's free-spirited attempt at a façade of free will

If my universe had a center, then I would be called Father  
And My children would not be lost to a pitiable piety  
Of a superficially religious society.

But I am not the Father, not am I the Son.  
I am the shadow of a neo-platonic shadow  
Set by a desecrated Holy Ghost

I am less than His shadow.  
I am a pebble, shaped by earth and cleaved by  
Dense minerals.

I feel green. . .

I am the stone-cold secular emerald at the back of the room.  
If "Brains" is the mind's product, I come before it,  
Demanding rubies from a reality of triviality  
In a room lined with coal.

Onyx is my closest semblance  
To a mutually-cleaved resemblance  
To a history—of being cleaved by coal

Watch us as we watch zirconium at the front of the room,  
The symbolic emulation of a popular degradation of spirit—  
A mundane sociological destruction of metaphysics,  
Sold down through the generations of rocks to the highest bidder.

Yes, we are the semi-precious stones in a red-white-and-blue non-spiritual room  
Lined with coal, and infected by a non-prospective consensus to an evangelical  
disease.  
We not our cleaved hands in a desperate attempt to stay-asleep.



Onyx, the victim of an all-loving hatred,  
Sent to the back of the class because he cannot be left behind  
He's tied behind to the rugged rucksack tied to the crooked back  
Of an emerald.  
They tie him tightly so he won't drop out.

We are the semi-precious stones  
Lost in a realm of mineral mines, lined with mines,  
Rejected by the diamonds of this day.  
We are the broken ceramic place below the Tea Party's table—  
Watch us as we drink gallons of pyrite,  
Victims of a semi-contrite executive conglomerate of stone-cleavers.

Watch us watch diamonds turn to coal before the closed eyes—  
The products of a blemished embezzlement of a  
Mine-riddled-mine-rid-of-mines shaft,  
Filled to the tip with semi-precious stones, and empty of pyrite—  
Drank by US, by a futureless future of gems—  
The clones of a zirconium lifestyle.

# Ode to My Paper

*By: Devon Ritter*

I had bought  
A pack of paper,  
Down at the local store.  
I had kept it neatly tucked away,  
A favorite childhood plaything;  
As if to protect my dead tree,  
And protect it like a treasure,  
Containing the finest gold and jewels.  
But as one day should have it,  
I needed a piece of my treasure.  
I tore it carefully at the sticky plastic,  
A surgeon operating.  
The crackling and tearing as if flesh being removed from the body.  
As I looked at the paper.  
This internal working of the body,  
I took the first, crisp piece out.  
Ideas swirled in my mind,  
A surgeon with a thousand ways to complete his procedure.  
Perhaps this will be the birth place  
Of a story  
Of a drawing  
Of a school assignment  
Of sheer boredom.  
Or perhaps it will be a place of death.  
A failed attempt that will result in the early retirement of this precious paper.  
Or of writer's block,  
And the sheet will forever remain in a comatose state,  
Waiting to be resuscitated.

As I gently set the sheet down,  
A sharp pain. A papercut.  
The tree's last revenge.  
And I wonder, how something as fragile as paper,  
Could leave such a small, painful wound.  
I begin to see a woodcutter,  
Making tiny little wounds on a tree.  
Slowly, slowly, until it crashes down.  
Will that be me? Little wounds,  
Slowly, slowly, until I collapse?

I look at my result.  
This piece that I stitched together with love and care,

That I nursed and nurtured through its course.  
Like a surgeon, I step away from the table,  
Satisfied with my work.  
And on I go to the next sheet of paper.  
My next treasure piece,  
My next patient for the surgeon's table.  
Ready for the cold edge of my pencil,  
My knife.

## *Untitled Slam! Poem*

*By: Nicole Payne*

Sometimes I feel that life is one big hippie train,  
colors everywhere,  
my feet jumping through the dry air like jackrabbits,  
arms flinging around each other, with warm affectionate antennae.  
Our hippie train keeps “coo-coo-cachooing,” wah-hooing, massively growing  
and there’s old Johnny in the way back,  
beating down on his sandy drum  
BUM BUM BUM!

It takes me back, yeah, back to the days  
when we trudged through the desert heat  
in search of just a bite to eat,  
on our New Days journey across America.  
Back Beat Bearfoot kept on smoking, smoking, puffing, toking  
that good stuff,  
keeping everyone calm and ready,  
even when our paranoia spoke, oh so loud,  
into our faces,  
HELLO THERE AGAIN! JUST BACK TO SCARE YOU!  
Even when the brown bears knocked over our tent,  
even when our brain cells went  
KA-POOSH! Out of our heads  
and my lovie kept singing,  
and my lovie kept singing,  
“Never turn around because you ain’t turning back. . .”

Sometimes I feel that like is one big orgy;  
creatures copulating,  
eight at a time.  
enjoying the simple pleasures,  
indulging in the sinful stuff  
that they call bad.  
But we don’t care, we are just glad  
to be open and tested  
out on each other.  
And the very hair man stepped on a tack,  
screamed out “GAHH!”  
While he was doing strange things in the back  
of a caress-loving woman with hardcore curves,  
directing everyone in the right direction.  
And I was there,  
right next to my love,  
but we were just watching;

didn't want to take the risk  
of catching a crab  
or groping a bad muffin.  
So we dropped acid  
and let the music enter us  
and my lovie kept singing,  
and my lovie kept singing,  
"Never turn around because you ain't turning back. . ."

Sometimes I feel that life is a labyrinth,  
confusing me and using me  
to make a fool out of myself,  
just the way I did when I grabbed your mother's rear as she bent over the  
counter because I  
thought she was my girlfriend.  
And then I turn down a wrong path,  
somewhere in the mysterious labyrinth,  
thinking I am going to die  
because I am alone  
and I dream for a second of my hippie friends,  
how they took care of me,  
held me in their arms at night, telling me of their sentimental secrets,  
being together and feeling like it was never going to end  
and it flashed before me  
and I cry, scream, and panic.  
It's a bad trip, man, it's bad!  
AM I GONNA DIE?!

"Yes, you are,"  
says the cockroach clinging to me foot.  
I'm all alone.  
No one to comfort me.  
No one to save me.  
I had them back then,  
but I took a wrong turn, it was a dumbass move.  
Shoulda stuck with them. . .  
Dead.  
and my lovie kept singing,  
and my lovie kept singing,  
"Never turn around because you ain't turning back. . ."

# Ode to Bubbles

*By: Brittany Reid*

Iridescent bubbles leave the wand as if by magic;  
the offspring of Iris and the sun,  
gleaming.  
Eyes that glint with the secrecy of the message they carry  
for the slippery eyes of the gods alone.

Floating towards the heavens like souls  
that slip away as feet skid on soapy floors,  
as small children slither down a slip n' slide  
ignoring the rocks and twigs that pierce them.  
Ascending, though their fate is cloudy,  
polluted with their sins and the uncertainty of forgiveness.  
Nevertheless their beauty is unmarred,  
as they are made clean  
by that which makes them rebel against gravity's constraints.

They drift skywards  
until they are lost in the expanse.  
Those below are left to marvel  
at the messengers that know so much  
and are about to learn the answer to man's most prevalent question.  
Whether they reach their destination is uncertain.  
Perhaps they never do;  
perhaps they burst.

**20/20**

*By: Olga Saniukovich*

# Hyperbole Love Letter

*By: Aurora Siira*

DEAR Waldo,  
I would be telling you this in person, but since you've left me with the predicament of having to find you, you leave me no other choice than writing you this letter. Oh Waldo, I have no idea where to begin. Maybe it's best that I start from page one. You first caught my eye with your cute red and white striped shirt and hat, and those adorable glasses that suit your face perfectly. How could anyone not miss that? Your dream of hiking across the world dazzled me, and I always looked forward to your postcards, and I didn't mind helping you look for your lost hiking gear either. It was like an epic scavenger hunt with you, with all the new obscure items to search for. However, now it just seems as if you're trying to hide from me all the time; whenever we go out, I end up losing you in the crowd, no matter if it's the beach or an amusement park. I don't understand anymore. I just get so frustrated constantly searching for you. So I've decided that it's finally come to the point for me to put the book down. It's over Waldo; I no longer desire to know where you are. I've reached the end of my list. You should find yourself.

Sincerely, your lost love



# Sensationalism

*By: Shree Sundaresh*

Uncomfortably wedged  
 behind the **Decaying Carcass**  
 of a **Homicide**,  
 hastily hidden  
 within the shadows  
 of the **Nefarious Villain**  
 brought to light,  
 the grey letters of a trite article  
 sit soundlessly within the crease  
 of the newspaper,  
 slumped over with the weight of the  
**Atrocities**,  
**Dehumanization**,  
 and  
**Barbarity**  
 plaguing the world surrounding it.

Never to tell its humble story about how **Murder**

# Needs Proper Lighting

*By: Alyssa Thorne*

Another face.  
Another name.  
Another organ smug venging off heat.  
Other than that?  
Nothing.  
Nada.,  
Zp,  
Zlch.  
Same classes since kindergarten?  
Doesn't matter.  
Lived down the street our relatives?  
Unimportant.  
You still don't remember me.  
'm inconsequential.  
nsgnf cant.  
nvsble.

Am see through?  
Like a ghost?  
A phantom?  
No,  
Those show whispers.  
Hints of existence.  
Where are mine?  
You don't know.

Can no one take the time,  
Or make the effort?  
Try,  
To see.

A human being.  
More than just wind.  
Or matter floating in space.

Existent.  
Definite.

Individual.

# The Last Good Thing about This Part of Town

*By: Jack Vann*

# Shadows

*By: John Wang-Hu*

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# Somewhere Else

*By: Holly Weinrauch*

Up high with you,  
Above mountains  
(Although we knew there would not be any).

I still wanted to see your face,  
When we were soaring atop  
Houses and lakes and pretty little girls with blushing balloons.  
I wanted that one chance with you,  
To see everything that we should have.

You said that we could get there early and be awestruck  
When the primary colors combusted against the pink atmosphere  
And sit in dew covered grass  
And ardently wait our turn.

But you went up before me,  
And I really don't mind  
I was never fond of heights anyway.

# Blah, Blah, Blah

*By: Nabeel Zafrullah*

The identical words follow each other forever,  
Like a boy follows his friend,  
Like a girl follows Hannah Montana,  
Like the moon follows the sunset;

Contingency of the same leads to boredom,  
So why follow a person like “blah following ‘blah’?”  
Be different,  
Like the stripes on every zebra,  
Like every person’s fingerprint.