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Noir

Jason Veach
(Winning Prose)

Clawing his fingernails along the ground Paul left rivers of crimson blood streaking behind him on the white, porcelain tiles. As Paul dragged his 56 year-old pot-belly on the floor, Johnny thought he looked like a harpooned seal. "If only I could reach my piece," Paul rationalized. As Paul reached for his gun, Johnny shot him twice more in the chest. It seemed as if the bullets never would arrive, they just moved in a freeze-frame, reflecting Paul's fear. The first shot sustained sent convulsions of pain through his chest cavity like a handful of shrapnel. The second merely caused an involuntary twitch. There would be no salvation this day, no swan song. It was a shame, Johnny admitted. After all, Paul Vicente had done such good work for the family for years. He was the last of the big three, back from the old days on the hill. The police claimed the first two, but Paul's death was a necessary toll-like cutting off a finger to save a hand.

Johnny coldly slipped off his cream heringbone jacket, and folded it neatly on the kitchen table. For all the years Paul was in organized crime, he thought, all he had was this cramped one-room apartment. He opened the refrigerator, looking for solace, but settled for some stale bread and corned beef. Methodically spreading out mayo on his sandwich, Johnny looked over at Paul's corpse. His pupils were dilated, and focused on the table. Johnny took a large bite. From Paul's perspective on the floor, Johnny looked like a hamster greedily shoving food pellets in his mouth.

So this is what happens when you die, Paul thought. His mind still could function, as he viewed flickering images through his clouding, cataract-ridden eyes. But it was as if someone turned the volume off, and every other sense. Paul's warm blood pooled on the floor, and his body involuntarily shook a little, until it fell limp. Johnny wiped the last bit of sandwich from his lip, lit up a Cuban, and mumbled something. "You poor bastard, why didn't you just admit to Vito you lost the money." Paul could at least read his lips that much. Johnny enjoyed Paul's abode, but soon grew tired of its barrenness—an overwhelming sense of waste. He draped his jacket over his left arm, and reached into the cupboard for a toothpick, knocking over a few bottles of heart medication. Johnny bared his teeth in an impudent, devilish smile. Flicking the toothpick in Paul's direction, he flipped off the lights, and left the apartment.

The light from the open refrigerator spilled onto the floor, directly in Paul's path. It almost seemed peversely calming, like divine light from some heavenly Kenmore in the sky. The front door swung open again. Johnny strolled back in, reached down, and cut Paul's watch off. It was his last connection with his life, a gift from Vito when the Casino Queen first opened up. On his way out, Johnny turned back, almost remorseful for slashing Paul's wrist. "Nah, it ain't shit to me. Can't hurt you again, can I?" After Johnny left, Paul felt overcome by fear; he realized that he was trapped in this corpse, never to see another living soul for eternity. He wanted to cry, but his nerves ceased to feel anymore. Paul felt cheated; his life failed to flash before his eyes. All he got was five seconds of bad martinis, Cuban cigars, mirrored bars, and crab-ridden prosti-

tutes. That's it. As the illumination from the refrigerator slowly died, time seemed to dilate. Seconds decomposed into minutes, minutes melting into hours. Was there any salvation? No. Paul knew what he was getting himself into each time he pulled his trigger at someone, and he finally got his just desserts. No heaven, no hell, no purgatory. Just an encompassing, suffocating numbness.

"Cut, that's a wrap, great job people." Suddenly, everything around Paul shifted: Sets were wheeled to and fro, actors scurried to their dressing-rooms, make-up artists gossiped about how big a bitch so-and-so was, and the set-lights were cut off. A pair of Oxfords and khaki pants hovered into Paul's line of sight on the ground.

"Great job, Bill, one of the most convincing lives I've ever seen. This'll be a great made-for-TV movie." The man reached down, ripped open Paul's shirt, and just scraped the blood off. He laid there, motionless.

"Why won't you move, lazy? Hey Charlie, cut off the pain receptors will ya!"

Paul shifted his weight enough so he could sit up a little. "Where am I? And who am I?" he mumbled.

"Oh, that's rich. You really don't remember do you? Your name is Bill Wright. You just shot a brilliant life, and it only took 56 years instead of the 80 we budgeted for."

Paul, or Bill as the case may be, laid on the concrete, shocked. "You mean my whole life was fake?"

"Duh, that's the point! You signed up for this role 56 years ago, and you knew what you were getting yourself involved in."

"You mean I'm not Paul? I'm Bill, right? Does Paul, er, Bill have kids? Does he have a wife?"

"Dammit, Bill, you're really freaking me out. They said this might happen after being in a role for so long. You're still a swingin' single . . . you decided to put your career ahead of family and all that other bullshit."

"So, I am alive, right?"

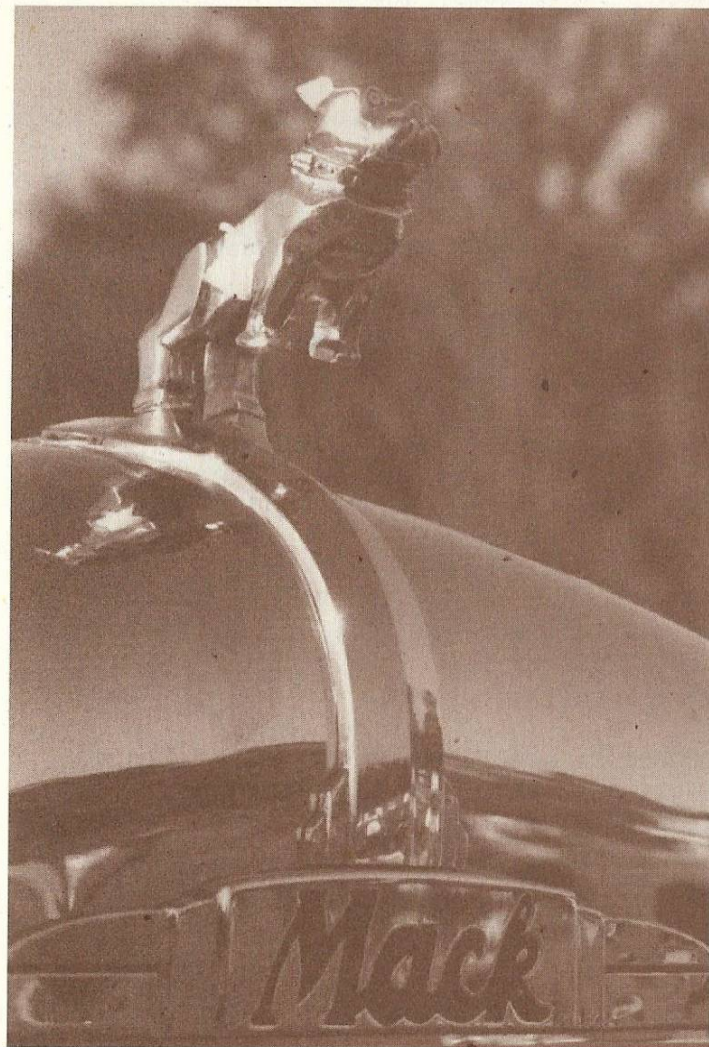
"For the last time, yes, okay . . . Look, I don't mean to be snappin' at you but you are really giving me the willies, okay? Listen, you just spent 56 years of your existence playing someone's life. You need to get your bearings back so you can enjoy the few years you have left, okay? Why don't you go sit down in the green room for a while and shake it off, okay?"

Bill moped over to the green room, and slouched down on the neon polyester couch. Maybe I should eat something? He quickly found the jelly donuts stale, and the coffee bitter, grainy. He sat there solemnly, reflecting, trying to sort out this bizarre joke being played on him. What the hell am I going to do? Why did I waste my entire life for a stupid TV show? What is wrong with me? Wringing his hands to the point where his cuticles oozed, he heard a knock on the door.

A middle-aged woman peeked around the corner and called out his name. "I'm here to take you home, Bill," she said patronizingly. "Do you want to go home?" Out of lack of anything better to do, he apprehensively nodded his head. She slid her hand down into Bill's, and rolled her eyes as if to say "Let's go." Bill's eyes welled up with tears as he was led like a baby being cuddled by its mother. As he stepped outside into the light of the new day, the sunlight illuminated his sunken shoulders, framed perfectly in the stage door.

Untitled

John Willock
(Winning Photo)



Roadtrip With Jesus

Michael Jacob
(Winning Poetry).

Twenty-two states, and 3,000 miles,
Me and Phat Al
will be nuthin' but smiles.

We got such hopes, such high expectations,
Who wouldn't be hyped
for the best of vacations?

On this excursion, no way we can lose,
It's a roadtrip with
the King of the Jews.

I am Phat's driver, and Phat is my car,
Together with Jesus,
we know we'll go far.

I bet he'll be funny, I know he'll be fun,
I'll feel so bright
when he calls me son.

If one loaf and one fish, could feed so many,
one gallon of gas
will surely be plenty.

If hotels are full, it won't be no harm,
We'll just pass the night,
in some cozy barn.

It won't be all great, it won't be all nice,
I'll have to cut back
on many a vice.

I'll try not to curse, I'll try not to swear,
but heck on vacation
even Jesus won't care.

If some old lady can't drive, what would I do?
Flip her the bird
in front of *this* Jew?

I'll cut back on dip, I'll cut back on Coors.
I'll have to forget
the hookers and whores.

From state to state, from freeway to freeway,
I hope that the King
will give me some leeway.

For delighting enchantment, divine fascination,
You gots to take Jesus
On your vacation.

Jive

Sarah Nenninger
(Winning Artwork)



clowns

Karen Oyerly

clown band-aids
keep out germs
I want to study them
-the germs-not
the band-aids
I want them
-not in my
finger, but on
a plate of the petri variety
those small round gift boxes
offering up truths and questions
they-the band-aids-not
the germs
make me smile

Untitled

Lauren Burdolski

I am alone
there are grapes and apples
and I am alone
I'm so alone that I can hear the neighbors
breathing
I can smell someone making green and yellow and
orange ribbed Jell-O 3 miles away
I'm alone
and I'm talking to my cat
he never talks back yet closes his eyes as if he
were sleepy
he's alone
he laps up his tapioca pudding and gets ready to
go out to the jazz bar to kick it with the
homies
then will I be alone
love smells like oranges and I can see the smell
of a rose and my music smells like ashes
of some narcotic that I cannot remember because
my mom said we had to go to the
grocery store and pick up some stuff
a loaf of bread
a quart of milk
and a stick of butter
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
my head is in pain, oh, my pregnant head
he said it'd be nothing and now there are worms
crawling in my soup and they want to
say 'hello' but they can't swim to the top and
they're drowning and so I help with a
sprinkle of salt
and my grandfather lays down on the floor and
sleeps as my white trash cousin eats

baked beans in his pickup truck
so I hide in the shadow
the sun comes and burns my retinas until I
stumble in my silver pumps searching for a
way
then I find my baby
he's wrapped in a soft white cloth
his father has left and gone to the circus,
tripping
strung out on heroin
but he stops and goes to a motel
the owner is some lying white trash who
thinks he can gank my cash
the water is cold on his flesh
I can feel his moves in the pit of stom-
ach like there is a fetus moving about
he's crawling up my umbilical noose
he wants to come back
to live in a nice warm environment
but he lost his grip
he fell into the arms of another
she grasped onto his seed and destroyed
his life
a tear drops
for him
by me
by our son
our beautiful son
the baby is gone
his life was non-existent
with a puff of a joint I forget him
so I realize I'm sitting
and I'm alone

Twinkle, Twinkle--Sun in Hand

Carrie Rogers

The sun is really mean
This time of day.
Especially without the
Comfort of long
Soothing shades,
Wrapping their arms
Around you,
Protecting you
--like mom--
From the bully
Down the street.
Every single strand,
Seen nearly one by one,
Allowed its own
Pane of glass
To make its
Brightness known.
Like the spreading
Of a deck of cards
Within the fold
Of the hand I won,
Or the keys laid
Out upon a piano,
I can play
A little tune
With the ivories
Of the sun.

October Rust

Matt Huson

The taste of old iron kills a man,
The logs of yesterday are brown and old.
Nights consumed with filthy stench,
Business men with pockets of gold.

Numbing fingers and toes,
Shoes that torture instead of heal.
Crackling spiders of blacks own night,
The skin of man so cold it peals.

Snow falling down, so far down,
With the crisp lightness of a burlap sack.
The town forbidden with hidden lust,
No snowman yet to keep intact.

A boy too young to feel yet pain,
Too quiet his cries to stir the press.
Mother blue with sick remorse,
Gives the child milk of breast.

Trees look frail waving bones,
The boy now man, will kill at last.
October Rust in tonight's brittle care,
The man remembers his shattered past.

Now the pain of memory twangs,
This man in remembrance of the fist.
Dreams of tribulation and fighting consumes,
The entirety of the boys non-accepting mind's mist.

Through the dawns' softness of snow,
The crime of the city frozen in glass.
Approaching upon the graveyard dead,
And full remembers his father's eye at last.

Controlling the urge to cry out the pain,
The boy once man walks through time in the old.
There are stones that tell stories of dead children gone,
And stones that show grievance for hero's bold.

While the band plays on,
The man child cries, and cries until the morn.
But yielding anticipation of his father's cold bed,
And visions of his body torn.

The night he cried so loud,
His fears and fantasies merged.
Now man, mirror image of his father's brow,
The temptation of reality purged.

Men with guns and weapons of sort,
Were busting down the door frame hard.
Like pounding the anvil of eternal hate,
His father's figure lay marred.

The twisted evil of this acting man,
Was too much deviation of one type.
The men in blue came in that day,
And struck the boy's father with chain and pipe.

Bloody rags to sop up the grime,
And tears of pain to fight love lost.
Now men in dark, and blackened cloths,
Took the boy's disfigured mentor, into a hole tossed.

Now man, once boy stands on terra firma,
Long from all the discomfort bequeathed.
His father's stone in clear close sight,
His body forever the boy beneath.

Kansas

Anne Skinner

If wishes
were gold
my room would shine
like stars in
Kansas and
I'd jump out
the car window
like the Dukes of Hazzard,
suck all the sky
up inside me.
Because sometimes
I think it might be true
When those punkrock kids
Say God loves you,
and has a wonderful plan
for your life.

Climb

Brooke Butler



"Our Angel of Laughter"

Sarah Morrell

Written in memory of Jennifer Marley

How can I ever begin to describe what Jennifer Marley became to me in the few precious months in which I knew her, and how could I ever possibly fathom all that she was to those who had the pleasure of sharing many years with her? My heart goes out to her friends and family, and I hope they will accept my deepest sympathies. I also hope they will all allow me a few moments to reminisce and pay my respects to the wonderful girl who stole the hearts of so many.

I remember the first day I met Jennifer. I remember saying hello and introducing myself. I remember seeing a wonderfully simple beauty about her, and I remember being charmed by Jennifer Marley. The more I came to know of Jennifer, the more I wished that she and I would become good friends. My wish was granted. Although I didn't always give the best of my own friendship to Jenn, she never denied me hers. She was indeed a true friend for all ages.

I already said that I was charmed by Jenn. Her most striking and charming beauty was her ability to laugh, no matter what. She found the humor in the worst of situations, and she was never afraid to lift her voice in laughter. I remember wanting to share in her beautiful ability to laugh. I remember wanting to be a part of her laughter. I loved to hear the tones of her laughter falling on my ears, so I

often tried to be the source of it. I always believed that if I could be a source of laughter, then I would be a part of it and, in turn, a part of her. Even now, I can still hear Jenn laughing.

But laughter was not the only thing I had the pleasure of sharing with Jenn, and I was not the only person to share things with her. Jenn, Kim, Cara, Irina, Mali, Ally and I laughed together, hugged together, planned practical jokes together, walked together, and talked together. But perhaps most important of all, we all shed tears over life and love and happiness together.

I remember times when Jenn and I would try to figure out what was really in the tears that so frequently rolled down our cheeks; she would tell me what she thought was in them, and still unsure, I would say to her, "Tell me again. What's in a tear?" Jenn and I finally agreed that love, hurt, happiness, and fear lived in our tears. But now I believe they hold something more. I believe they hold valuable lessons. I think Jenn has taught me that in her absence; she also taught me to look past my first impressions of people, to look deeper and see what is truly inside of them. Quite simply, Jenn taught me.

So, now, with all of the things I learned from her, I try to say good-bye to the friend we all loved so dearly. The last day I saw her, she was getting ready to go home for a couple of days to study for her final exams. She woke me up just before she left, and I gave her a sleepy hug. And then she was gone. I left a note upon her door that read: "Good luck on your finals! I love you, and I'll miss you! Love, Sarah." How could I have known that this was to be my last good-bye? How could any of us

have possibly known?

I have come to realize that the truth of the matter is we only said good-bye to Jenn's body. We will never say good-bye to Jennifer. She will always live on in our hearts, and if we listen closely, then her laughter will always be heard in our ears. But best of all, Jennifer Marley's image will always be smiling in our minds as our angel of laughter.

My Father at the North Street Boarding House

James Kimbrell

The white brick steps were steep and off-level
Beneath the door which led to the door
Of his room. The half-hooked padlock knocked
As I knocked. A shuffling, then he led me
Into the curtained sunlight. The word
May not be flesh, but the voice is, and his
Had been marked and removed to keep cancer
From more than it had. We sat on his bed
With pen and pad. Through the window
I could see a window across from his, the high
Branches budding, the power lines and sky.

To not look at the cloth which covered his throat,
To not think of his voice, slurred or manic,
In summer mornings or late at night, in steady
Counterpoint with my mother, or with no one.
I'd driven two days rehearsing how I might say
That I loved him in a way that would not
Sound like I loved him despite miles of rivers,
Miles of towns where I was a kid without him.
He wrote and I spoke of daily things, the weather,
People he knew. There was the sound of a radio
Down the hall. One door, then another, closing.

The slight tap and scrawl of his pen across
The unlined paper. The room with gloam
Easing in, the lamp turned on in the corner.
I spoke, paused, spoke once more and said
Nothing I had wanted to. I stood there
Holding him. No sound then. No crickets.
No drunks stumbling in. Two grown men
Standing in a silence that did not fall apart
In the door's hinges, in the weeds beneath
My shoes, nor even when I heard it again
And again driving home through the April dark.

The Birth of Magnanimous Man

Rob Hawkins

Adam; that first, most fallible taxonomist,
Fancied himself the beginning of time, and missed
The origin of old domination's desire;
MAN-myth and MAN-meat, that egomaniac's need
Was The Sword of Damocles, dangling in-between...
And rising; a herald of Eden's doom. A spire,
Designed for Lilith's hypogynous berry-bloom;
That quivering and delicate gynoecium.

Tempted to soft, whorling petals and sweet nectar
Greasing the future's window, name's initiator,
Still immature, inverted Feminaceae;
"An upstart weed"-

-Forgetting eons in the sea
And the slow reduction of bronchial arches
Through gene upon gene, 'till he finally crouches
To monkey-speech. His words beget morality;
A verbal dominance to spread her fused carpels
Held close against the cold night, to watch her sepals,
Crushed by botany's press, vanish in mystery...

And then stood our anther-slapping Adam...alone,
Lacking the baculum, but not the bloated, bone-
Forged niche where the Womanaceae would achieve,
At a whimpering, submissive sunset, an Eve
imprisoned to Adam by being conceived
Through ridiculous fashioning "out of the man,"
A foolish division of the y's and x's
As different beings (though different sexes),
When removing ribs replaces catch as catch can.

In the beginning...the word, and the word was Pan...
God never created a magnanimous man.

The Grace of Order

Rebecca Blair

I found a tag stuck inside the tail of my shirt, one of those friendly tags that tells you that someone named Betty or Janet thinks so much of you, holds your interests so dear, that she carefully inspected every seam, every stitch, turning the shirt or the underwear deliberately under her scrutinizing eye, having found work as an inspector of clothing because her children were rejected by her careful gaze.

Only this time it was different.

My shirt was inspected by someone named Thongman Williams.

What kind of name is that—Thongman?

And instead of Betty's or Janet's scowling analysis which you can feel in the fabric, like starch.

(I've never really been convinced that they care.)

there was Thongman,

who emigrated from Trinidad,

his Rastafarian dreadlocks in reptilian suspension

above his reggae hands rhythmically

turning over the shirt to an

invisible Marley beat, accents on 1 and 3.

And I projected hundreds of Thongmans

in a sweatshop in Des Moines,

replicated like a living

Andy Warhol tableau,

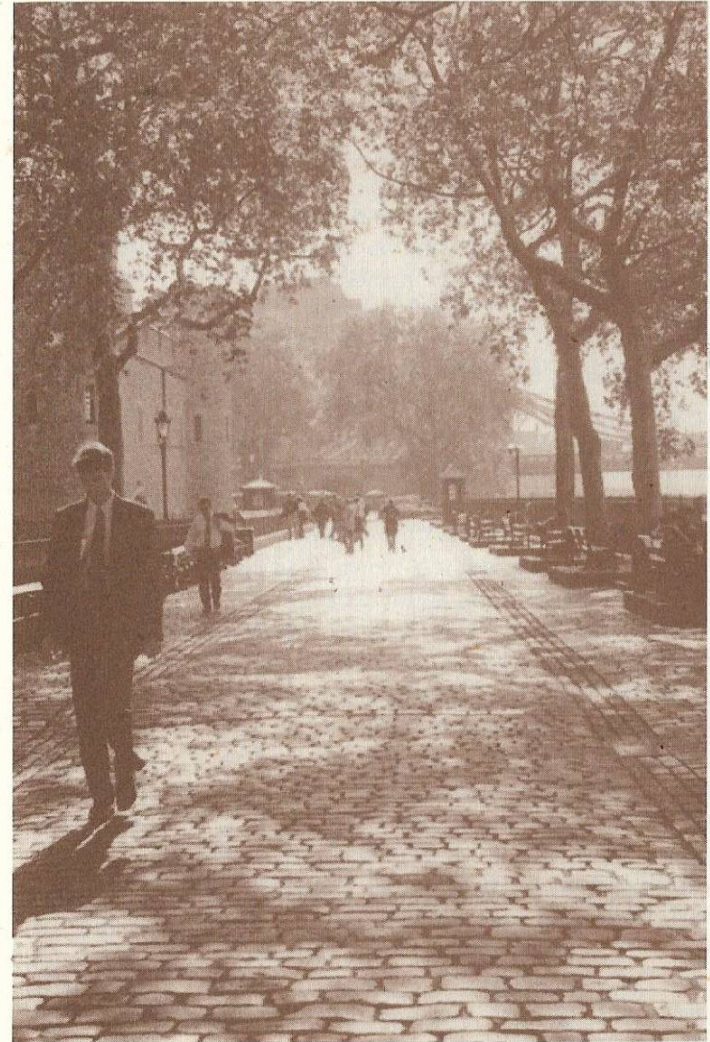
becoming accustomed to the order of

corn, cold, and cows.

And I felt the Carribean warmth of their care tucked inside the sleeves.

Tower of London

John Willock



The Day it Rained Ladybugs on
the Shore of a Great Lake

Carrie Rogers

What a day to wake up to,
Surrounded by angels.
But not for why you would have wanted.
It must be then
That you know love,
And even luck, though not seemingly
Without the plight of these ladybugs.
One whispering comfort in your ear
As it takes perch on the shoulder
Of your grieving noire blazer
Another hanging on hopelessly
To the seam of your pants
Knowing that one of your angels
Will send it off, forcing it to let go.
If only we could all do that.
In the aftermath of saying goodbye,
You talk about his favorite color
And about angels as the
Fog from the Michigan water
Does a little dance just for you,
And for what has been lost.
But you are so small and forgiving,
Even more so in your bereavement
With mother and sister on each side
Not even realizing how
Heavenly you all are.
You are his daughter
And you are his wife.
How could you not know?
Showered with hugs and kisses,
And friends and family,
And all the other good things
That go together.
And, of course, showered with ladybugs.
What a day to wake up to.

Ritual of a Potter

Amie Edwards

sitting atop the table, a slice of earth waiting, for the
manipulating hand to come and mold it. i gather the cool,
smooth clay into my palms and gently press
the unrefined mound into a sphere. momentarily
pondering my unborn creation before inception,
i moisten soft fingertips in the cloudy, warm
liquid. beginning slowly, my hands firmly encircle
the rotating clay. the slippery residue surges
through the openings between my fingers as it
eases into the form of my choosing. i force my
thumbs deep into the center while my remaining
fingers cautiously draw upward the exterior. the continuous
motion of my hands increases the delicacy in the object
of which i hope will ensue. the pressure beneath
my unknowing grasp grows too harsh, and my nearly perfected
treasure announces undiminished authority by threatening
to collapse upon a sigh. i catch the deformed masterpiece,
unable to be rescued from my destruction, and squish its
remains out of clenched fists.

Oh Magical Night

Matt Huson

In the night I can hear the cry of the wolves that linger outside of the fervor of my bed, that I so readily lay my haggard thoughts of the woman in which I have given all I know from such a distance as to where I can step in any direction and be yet one step closer to her. The images of death and destruction roll away like the rolling of an angry sea that is fought by the authoritarian arms of Poseidon, king of the tide. Lost forever into the eternal depth and anguish. When at night I awaken to the sight of a matron silhouette gliding from the portal of my cell to the inner limits of my heart, and filling me with a sense of devotion, and earnestness; only to realize that my writer's mind is lost in a twilight of crazed notion of what should be, and what is not upon me now but will soon inhabit my forfeited dreams of childhood. But night after night like the train that is staunch in its nightly haunting of my slumber, you retort consultant to my inadequacy of affection.

In the hours of the sun however, my life is no longer this skeleton ship of hopes, but a strong vessel of an outer courage. The front of my emotions forsaken like a hallowed word that is untranslatable in mortal tongue while the soul of the keeper is twisted with such strong tangibility. When alone however, the voices are fitting and the shell falls away, into nothing less of oblivion. Jesus the colored, and all the papers are soaked, and dipped, non-accepting in countless operations. The

lights of the north are the finest I've seen, while the Taiwanese sprouts cast no shadow upon your loyal grace.

Reality is once again around me in this Devil's Den, but with the shadow comes you forth tomorrow, and tomorrow, with no end. On the date of thy encounter; together we touch the neglected soul, and cringe with excitement from the time stagnant in the bottom of desire's well.

I need to touch your consummate brawn against my self we revive the sun and the heavens, which seem to be so far tonight. The fears of you are not of disgrace, nor are these misdoubts in comparison to another. But when the night becomes day, and again I can see what hallucinations I have envisioned only to touch my tongue to the mammary of the devil, the fears of my sub are so, so real. I see so many I've touched and destroyed, tore down, put down, and tainted forever. If there is a God??? Then why not cure me and purify myself to the sins of lust that have fallen over me like a second blanket of dust from the landing of a gigantic ship of finale. Strengthen, and sharpen my senses of understanding, and discernment.

Going Stag Again

Anne Skinner

Cat was saying grace
At Burger King
And I laughed, not meaning
To insult this girl.

Hours piled up with Mario
In the background
Do you think he likes me, I asked.
Cat said yes every time.

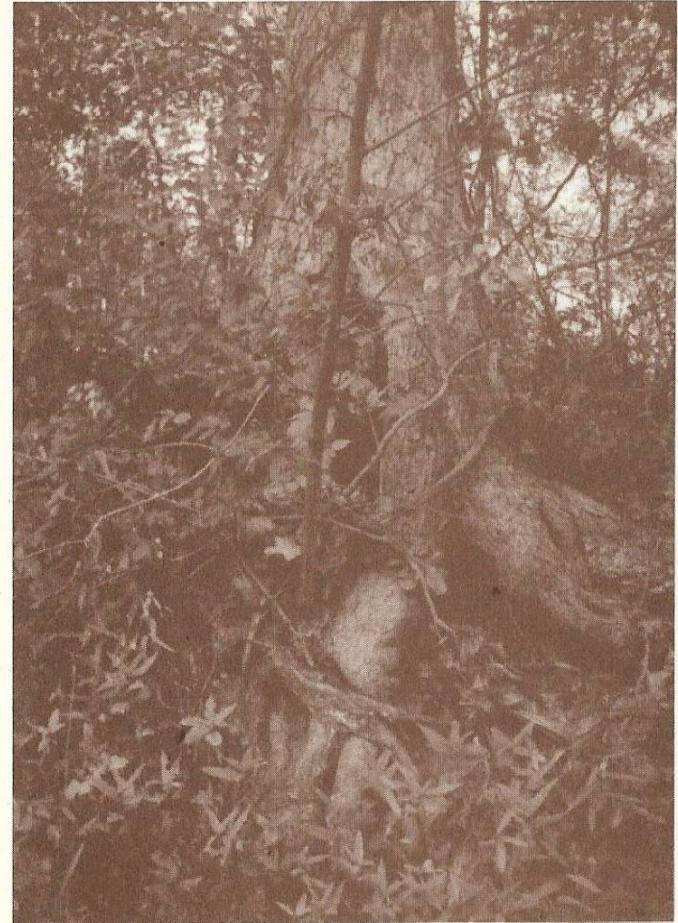
She made the macaroni
Helped heal wounds
Given by boys
Who didn't know better.

Now we're miles apart
Not just on different pages
but in entirely
Different books.

Hours piled up like that
Won't disappear
Cat will always be cosmic cruising,
And everything that happened that mattered.

Tangled Roots

Stefani Hathaway



Grown

Gale B. Scott

Her reflective strands of
chestnut hair
bounce and swing with every facial expression.
And her painted pink lips
give way to perfectly
straightened teeth.
My smile answers hers.
The infectious tone of
her laughter injects
into me a happiness
I cannot deny.
Then stepping back from her
eager embrace I notice
the thin line of a
collar bone at the
base of her neck,
and the soft curve that drops
from her waist around her hips.
Womanly.
Approaching eighteen,
my little sister
is finally shedding her childhood.
And my shoulders drop with relief,
because I watched her outgrow it
a long time ago.

Self-Portrait, Jackson

James Kimbrell

The trees are hopelessly overstylized, the sycamores
And breeze-pulled willows, the live oak branches'
Groundward sprawl gracing the State Street mansions.
There's the hospital where I was born, and just beyond
The Jewish Cemetery, the manicured lawns where I
Was schooled in all the classical ways of feigning
Education. Strange how a place claims you, and doesn't.
How you wheel right in from past to present inside
A rented car, as if someone were waiting, an old lover
Perhaps, anxious to greet you, to be impressed, as if
That lover were the place itself. But home holds
No magnolias behind its back. And when you step
Into the parking lot all slicked up and wrong again,
Nothing welcomes you like the glint and glare between
Clouds which fail to arrange themselves, which loll
As they always have above their noon-cast shadows.

Goodbye Love
Eliza Wessinger

Kissing you goodbye for the last time
 made me feel,
 somehow like a suicidal man,
 when his finger
first touched the cold smooth trigger
 of his death.
I tried to hide under my eyelids and
 forget,
but I only dreamed the world was ending
and I couldn't find you anywhere.
 A cup of coffee steams
 in my shaking hands.
I lift the cup to my mouth
 wanting to empty myself.
 Pondering the night away
 by trying to interpret
 Beatles lyrics
and reading between the lines of life.
 I will not sleep
for fear of witnessing the patterns
 printed on the dark side,
and I won't try to forget how you look,
 or the way it felt to love you.

Untitled
Mandy Albert

He walked into the room without knocking.
I hadn't seen him in quite a while. In fact,
the last time we had seen each other was about
two months ago. We had gotten in an outrageous
fight and when I left I asked him not to call
me or try to see me again. He looked good in
his khaki pants and white button down shirt.
He had lost weight and by the way his usually
crisp tie hung loosely around his neck, I could
tell there was something wrong. I skipped over
and gave him a big hug. How nice to be in those
strong arms again. The arms that rocked me to
sleep and then carried me to bed so many years
ago. "Hi Daddy," I said in that little girl
voice I used when I wanted something from him.
However, this time it was not me asking for
something, it was him. "I need you to listen to
me," he said in his *I am a concerned father*
voice. I plopped down on my bed and he pulled
up a chair. "You know your Grandmother has not
been well lately? I got a call from the hospi-
tal today." My stomach dropped, my head began
to swirl, and my eyes became fixated on his
mouth. Was I going to hear what I thought I was
going to hear come out of his mouth? I wanted
to run, to pretend that he never stopped by to
see me and make every thought racing through
my head disappear. "They have found more can-
cer, a lot more cancer actually. The doctors
are giving her approximately four weeks to
live. Taylor, you are her favorite . . . her
little 'grand-pumpkin' and it is you that she
has requested stay by her bedside during her

last days." My face turned pale and for what seemed to be hours I stared blankly into Daddy's teared eyes. Why me? Why did she have to pick a nineteen-year-old college student? How could I ever take time out of my life to watch hers end? But, as Dad began to break down and let his emotions show, something I had never seen before, I began to realize how selfish I was being. I realized that all anyone wanted from life was happiness, and that Grandma should be in the company of those she enjoyed the most during her last waking hours. I was nervous and flattered that she had picked me, but why only me? Why not one of her sons, or grandsons? Why her great granddaughter? It was then that I began to cry. How could God do something so horrible? Couldn't he see how badly we were feeling? Couldn't he see how my father was hurting? I pulled myself off of my bed and sat on Daddy's lap. He cried for a while and I cried too. We talked about our feelings and some arrangements, and then he rocked me to sleep. He carried me to my bed, kissed my forehead, turned off the lights, and as he shut the door, I heard him say, "I miss you Taylor . . . please don't leave me too."

Plant Behind Westminster Hall

Sandra Anible



Limits

Jason Veach

Whether I like it or not, I am a mathematician. I deal with making sense of this cruel world through numbers. Occasionally, when I try to live in the heat of a single moment, my mind wants to drift off into logic. Could this be better? Am I going to remember this by 7:55 a.m. tomorrow? Is there something else I could be doing that would be more beneficial? I try to force my brain to avoid the what ifs that compose the mysterious element called time. Years ago, in 7th or 8th grade, I laid awake at nights, jostling, squirming, pondering how long I would live, and what would happen to me when I die. Junior high?! I guess I always have felt I could be doing more, especially for others.. I am 20 years old now; I have lived at least 20% of my life. If this scares me, what must my dad feel like; he just turned 50. What must it feel like to have lived 50 years—50 years of experiences, joys, pains, Mondays, cigarettes, taxes, working, and everything that goes along with being mortal. It seems like we will all live into the candle of eternity, our flames slowly dying out when the wick is engulfed in wax. Time seems to accelerate—maybe the Theory of Relativity in action. How long will it take for me to reach the unknown? When will:

$\lim_{\text{time} \rightarrow +\infty} [\text{mylifetime}] = t$, where t is any real number.

Any real number? 74. 86. 105. 65. 32. The numbers that protrude from nature's dark cape are illusory. Grasping at them, bawling your

eyes out, and cursing God will not change the limiting value of t .

If life was pre-destined by the values of numerical equations, it would not be worth living. When I had a severe bleeding ulcer in the fall of my freshman year here, one of my doctors at Christian Northeast Hospital in St. Louis, (Dr. Busse—who poked and prodded around in me) said he was my last hope. There was a 10% chance that he could find where I was bleeding (duodenum: beginning of the small intestine) and a worse chance that he could stop me bleeding to death. I prayed, staring at that white ceiling in my intensive care cubicle. I prayed that God would give me the strength to fight, to breathe myself back into the light. By some miracle, not some damn statistical aberration or logical deduction, I was saved. I got a second chance at life. In doing this, I realized that while

gravity's pull on us may be $9.8 \text{ m} / \text{sec}^2$ downward, some days it may feel more. Some days there is only a 1.625% chance you will have a good day. Maybe you can't get that 87.6% that you so desperately need to get an A in Differential Equations, or whatever realm of hell you choose to dwell. Sometimes you need to throw away the numbers and live. If it means reaching out for something new, do it. If it means failing, by all means accept it. If it means taking a chance that is impossible, grab it. I love numbers with a burning passion, but sometimes it's just better to shut off your mind and be human.

Our November

Amie Edwards

we tried to catch them when
they rushed past
as if they were late for
a special affair, that collage of color
we wanted to capture in
our fingertips.
the crackle that came
from beneath our
footsteps in autumn was like
the tune of our favorite song and we danced,
we imagined we were ten
and jumped
and rolled,
like kids in a Rockwell painting,
in the crisp leaves of our November.

LRCHS

Brooke Bulter

I sit in the parking lot
Before class and get high
School is just a big test
S every Friday
Night everyone gets drunk
En kids driving through the LR streets
To Central are lined with crack houses
Around the school in the 20s
Were homes of the members
Of high social class
Is about to start
Your engines
Rev up at 3:25
Is when school is over
And over, again
I check my watch
Out for the kids dressed
In all red or blue
Eye shadow is what Mrs. Donham wore
Out my love for Biology
is 2nd hour
S go by so slowly
I crawl up to the 5th floor
For art
Is an imitation of life
Sucks during the high school years
Are lost staring at a chalkboard
Bored
Bored
God, I'm bored!
I have to write a paper for history
Repeats itself
And I have a test in English

Is my second language
S are my strong point
Your finger in another direction
S and maps are needed to find your way
To be Tigers!
And lions and bears?
Lions and tigers and bears!
Lions and tigers and bears!
Lion, tiger, bear
With me through this
Is far from reality
Bites is one movie I skipped 6th to go see
You in D-hall-
Of-Fame page is one that I'm on in the yearbook
S are thrown into lockers
Line the walls
Are full of graffiti
In the parking lot is the best
Friends come and go
To the attendance office and get a pass
The papers to the front of the room
Number 311 is Mrs. Cloud
Teaches Classics
Is what she wants my major to be
Her replacement is another of her dreams
Are not going to come true
Is the answer to number 4
A while I liked it here
Is where I got hit
The floor
S are so dirty
Toilets are characteristic of the bathrooms
Are havens for skippers
And Gilligan and Ginger and Mrs. Howl-
Ing dogs are all you hear during the drug check
For security guards
Are assholes
Are the only guys I date
For the prom-

Yikes! I have three
Two-One-Contact
Your guidance counselors
Do nothing but piss me off
The beaten path
Down to the parking lot
S of teachers like me,
But not as a student
Assemblies are when I get in trouble
D patriotic teachers sent me and Anna to the office
Workers didn't care
To stand up for the SSB
Sure to note it was the daughter of the governor
Is now in jail for Whitewater
Rafting would be nice
If I didn't have to go to school.

Untitled

Zach Imel

my breath waits for her soul to greet me
I see my happiness in her future
welcomed by the fate of tomorrow
only to realize the completeness of my need
freeing myself from confining chains placed
by my former self
she lifts my life above itself
her actions flow into dreams—

my world around me grows and all is new
no limits to experience
she has only begun to lead me to that place
where lovers lie
where bodies are left and openness begins
souls intertwined in the passions of freedom
involved only in each other
we spin out of control, yet guided
the world fades and reality appears

Wilton House

John Willock



Sleep to Rain

Jodi Fowler

Blame your halfway bliss on him because it's gone
No empty cartridge or even bullet hole of pain
Bright sun reflects off brown, or is it blonde?
All he knows is that she loved to sleep to rain.
Don't be her knight, don't shine, just arm her
She longed to hear the drops against her pane
Bright sun shines in the window to alarm her.
All I know is that he couldn't sleep to rain.
Time a loaded pistol in this bedroom here with you
His fingers touch her trigger, she will wait
White words like powder on his sheets of blue
Do they know that she will always sleep to hate?
Become her strength, she is your shield
To stop my speeding bullet in mid-air.
Bright sun will change his fate, or is it sealed?
All she knows is that she doesn't really care.

Three Generations

Mandy Albert

Small and frail.
You can see the veins running from her wrists
to her fingers.
Her nails are long and beautiful
but with age they have become
brittle.
Gray with small streaks of
black that used to be apparent
so many years ago.
Her hair is always fixed perfectly.
By the distinct smell of hairspray and perfect curls
you can tell that she spends much time
on the little things in her life.
She is a funny lady . . .
always telling stories from when she
was "my age."
She is an aggravating lady . . .
always talking about Aunt Karen when
she is meaning to talk about Karla.
She is an amazing lady . . .
always creating wonderful gifts for others.
She is the one responsible for
my great gift in life . . . my mother.
While she is getting old and her memory
is slipping and I am sad for those things,
I am happy when I see she and my Mother
sharing time together.
Being happy and acting young.
Well, she is no longer young physically, but
free as a five year old in spirit.
And I am happy when I make an accomplishment
and she is there to give me a hug.
But I am sad now, because my Mother,

my great gift in life is sad.
She is realizing that her great gift's
 memories
 are fading away.

And I am happy again because
I am sitting by them both holding their
small frail hands in mine . . .
 making a memory of my own.

Two Dandelion Thoughts

Margot Ford McMillen

I. The Dandelion

The dandelion brings much grief
To those who in the garden toil.
But, look, her tenure is but brief,
While long on lives the soil.

So poison not her golden head
Nor wilt her leaves with spray.
Soon silver locks will take their stead,
And, like us, drift away.

II. Dandelion Ramaki

On a sunny morning, just after a rain:
Fill a child's shoebox with fat buds gathered
just before blooming.
Marinate in barbecue or teriyaki sauce about
a half hour.
Wrap each in a bacon slice; secure with a
toothpick.
Refrigerate on a broiler pan until evening.
When your guests arrive, brown the ramaki
under the broiler, then turn and brown the other side.

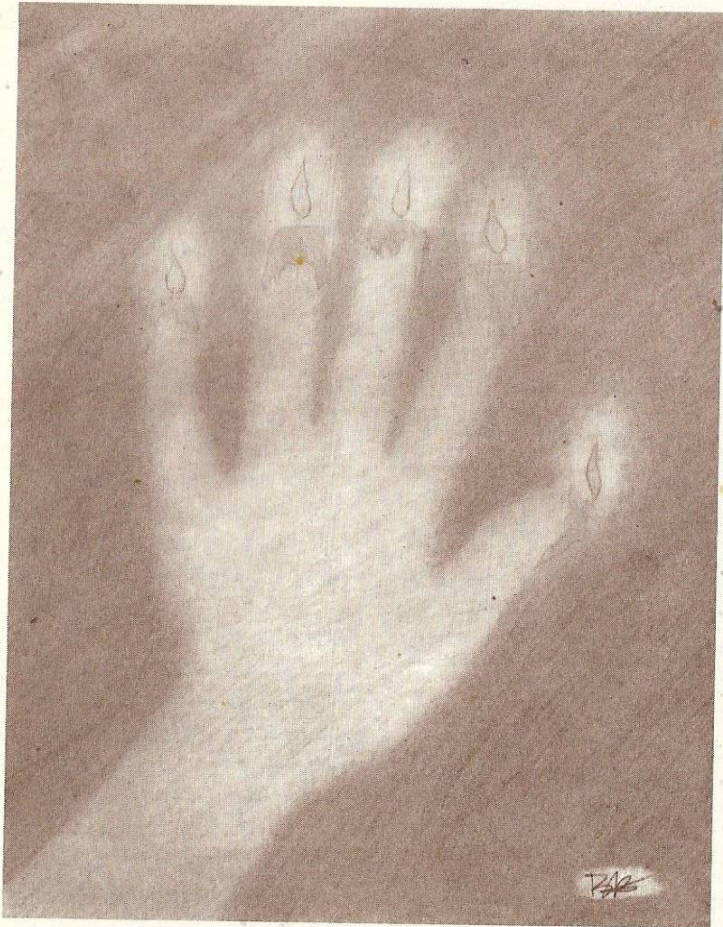
These are better than ones made with liver.

our storm
Brooke Butler

crash
boom
the curtains open
our bodies clap together
with the thunder
rain
falling on my flesh
and rolling onto yours
mixed with sweat,
this sweet liquid shares us
and takes shelter in the grass
lightning
flashing hopes
the lights shine
on our desires
glowing from the sky
and all around
the heavens sing along
the tunes of melodious happiness
echo
through the mountains
and deep in our valley
god watches and smiles,
angels perched on clouds
behold the only peace on earth
my moist lips meet with yours
applause
a loud crack from above
the standing ovation

lights up the world
doused with nectar from above,
you embrace me
our opening night
a box office smash
the crowd lingers,
they want an encore
I need a cigarette.

Your Touch
Brooke Butler



6:54 a.m.
Lauren Burdolski

I'm so tired
I want to lie down
and drift off to sleep
to dream a dream

and I lay here now
I dream of a place
where I can lie down
and drift off to sleep
to dream a dream.

so I sit with my head resting upon a
desk to write a something
maybe a dream

buying cigarettes in a machine down the
street and a little old lady walks
down the street buying cigarettes in
cartons
from someone in a dream and as my mind
begins to ramble, I want to lie down
someplace sweet and drift off to sleep
to dream a dream

My contorted face rises from the desk
as I hear the sounds of nails running
down
his chest and an ugly grrrl comes to
me and asks, "Is that yours?"

and I hate her so much because
she was once adored by a tired one
who now wants to lie down
and drift off to sleep
for now I'm too tired
to dream a dream

Wicked Blackberry Guava

Eliza Wessinger

Sitting at the small half-empty cafe
in a dimly lit room with a spectacular view,
Two solemn figures sipping on tall glasses
of *Wicked Blackberry Guava*.
Listening to the dark lonely jazz
that soars through the stale summer night air.

Fill a second with a swallow
of *Wicked Blackberry Guava*.
It's your heart against mine.
The whole town's exploding . . .
and the antiquity of this feeling
. . . leaves me in a complete blur.

The break in your whisper
as you pause to sip your
Wicked Blackberry Guava
makes the moment stand still.
Let's not say goodnight tonight.

The Pier

James Kimbrell

As though each wave from Tsushima to Pusan Harbor
had lipped the hem of an angel's gown, as if
the gulls were a jumble of syllables slingshot
off the tongue of God, we praised the dinghies
adrift beyond the bobbing squid-net buoys,

the passenger boats foiling in, the cargo liners
so far away and in that haze wipe-offable. Little
did we know that the more the June sun jalousied
through that spiraled shell of sky, the more we'd find
our own misgivings, that the hairline of horizon

wasn't so much the day slipping under
as the blank border of vision, a few degrees
beyond which, divine though it seemed, was yet another
inlet lined with quays, a bay busy with sea-plant
divers, their skyward plumage of flippers.

Sailors we were not. Nevertheless, worshipful,
hell-bent, and perhaps, not altogether anchored,
we took notes for that journey, how the umbrellaed
oyster-eaters dotted the beach behind us, how
the pre-dusk day-moon went under whitewashed

in a trellis of clouds, how what light there was
was stippled within its own congregation, as
it had been, and would be in the afternoons
of a dozen other shores, in the sting
of salt-air, in the endless pavilions of mist.

I drive

Jodi Fowler

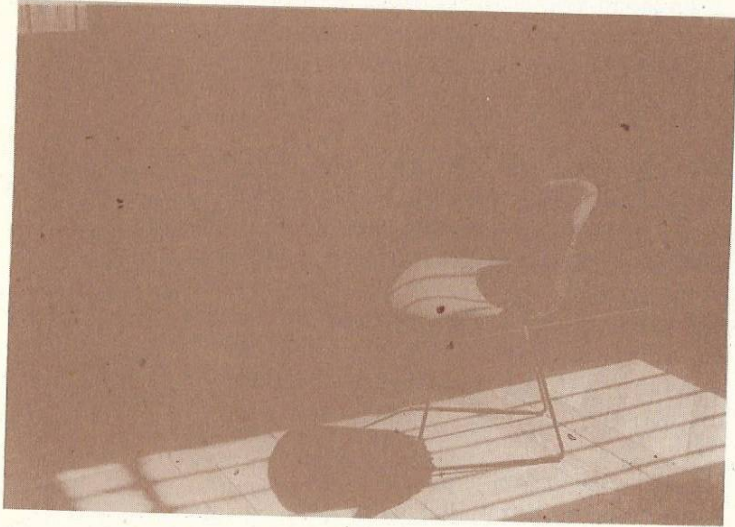
orange comes and leaf stays brown
i drive so late my car's the town
cigarette and moonlight burn
all my trees forgot to turn

wind blows soft to stir my dream
sometimes you aren't what i seem
tall street lamp and moonlight shine
for the springtime change i pine

falling quick, the leaves of brown
i drive so fast i miss the town
musically, the moonlight blares
dried-out leaves descend in pairs

never changing, never done
i drive to you, my only one
now i see the moonlight wane
orange comes, make dull my pain

The Louvre
John Willock



The West
Amie Edwards

My bare feet have sunk into earth that kisses the sea
lining the coast in Spanish-named cities
with sapphire-stained waters of sweet paradise twinkling
from iridescent city and moonlight after dusk.
Crisp sands bite at my toes of peach flesh
shuffling across dunes of cinnamon and sugar
on northern beaches in Mendocino,
the luxurious massage of eroded jewels
that assemble like magnificent soldiers on Glass Beach.

And the central coast of San Francisco from beneath the
enormous bridge of gold suspended from heaven
by braids of gold, I search the cloudy waves for hints of blue
and am sure they are only a reflection from the cloudy
sky. Santa Cruz is synonymous with Otis Redding and
"Sitting on the Dock of the Bay" and The Drifters
whose summertime boardwalk hides behind a translucent
curtain pretending it's a mirage from the pier. Like a
scene in a movie, it blazes with over-half-naked bodies
and striped umbrellas sprinkled across the sizzling sand
that stings to the touch like sparks from a firecracker.
Mild evenings in lavender Carmel sunsets, bring
the nearly phantom, smoke-covered dolphins to break
the surface and perform like acrobats before me, their
private escapade. The cliffs of Monterey solemnly stand
guard over its crescent-shaped bay, no longer a forceful
militia there aiding in crisis, they alone undertake
the responsibility of curbing chill winds that try
to stretch their arms further south.

The warm southern sand like strands of silk
from taupe-colored bed sheets are spread
lazily and rumpled over the southern shores.
The palms wave graceful fingers in Santa Barbara as
if they are majesties on tall balconies, greeting
the warm tropical breezes arriving from Mexico
and the south Pacific. Los Angeles in marvelous beauty
on the western border, is a sleepless city toasting
lovers with marble waves and champagne foam
crawling up to sigh softly at the top of a glass
or side of the sea. At last San Diego, abounding
with sunken treasures carefully buried to be discovered
by a chosen eye, its sacred seashell exclusively holds
in natural elegance, the ocean's secret song.

'back home
Brooke Butler

hopping onto my starry-eyed steed,
rivers flowing of my sweet nectar dew,
clouds expelling from deep inside,
the vile blistering and bronzing,
winds rustling though my hair,
tying knots,
matching my straining chords,
breathless and bellowing,
giving an award-winning performance
for my large gathering of fans,
traveling from sea to shining sea
to see me
dancing back over my trail of tears,
joyously approaching the gateway,
moving out of misery
and back
to a natural state
of mind,
of mine,
where the delicious juices of reality run
wild and free;
hopeful and hungry
for the wicked and weird,
knowing and needing the true blue,
reassociating and replanting my roots,
baptizing myself in the spring water,
listening to the tender lullabies
of mountain breezes
accompanied by an orchestra of whippoorwills,
tunes sketched in my memory
and relived in my heart,
realizing, finally,
this is my home.

to growly
Eliza Wessinger

"try to smile and embrace broken trust,"
said the woman.
"remember his drunk breath
your throbbing heart
and head,
but be stronger than him."

he is weaker than concrete,
but manipulating at no sacrifice
and you are tossed into his web.
to love him for the pain
or to hate him for it

. . . and yes it does hurt.

he becomes your darkest star
in the bitter shadow of every night's dreams.

some people talk about how life is hard,
just smile and listen to them
and remember
you know it is.

Rhuddlan Castle
John Willock

