

tobeco 2007

literary and artistic journal

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We delightfully thank—

Kiamoto, PAGES, Paul Hambke, Philip Terman, Kevin Stemmler, Amanda Blount, Kelly Grill, the Lowry siblings, Michelle's Café, Deb Lauer, Student Senate, and anyone else who found the courage to love a group as spicy as us!

Notes from the Staff

From the Co-Editors

This year has been all its own; the same can be said for this issue. The staff had some pretty amazing personalities weaved into its members, and I'm quite positive that talk of poultry has the same shaken up effect on all of us by now. In leaving *Tobeco* in exchange for 'the real world,' I am thrilled to know that Ryan will be taking over the reigns. I have faith in the staff's editing abilities and future knitting affections. Thank you for the laughs, and I'll keep my scarf wrapped around my mouth to conceal the most inappropriate of my facial expressions.

Jennifer Hetrick

The pieces in this year's issue of *Tobeco* range to the extremes of fun and seriousness in both the written and visual arts. Our editing sessions at Jen's place were a blast, I thought. When she teaches us all to knit that'll be a hoot. Next year, I'll be *Tobeco's* mama, and I'm honored and pretty damned excited. Big thanks to everyone involved—especially the editing staff and all those who submitted, plus Brenda at PAGES, and our advisor Dr. Smart. "WAR IS OVER IF YOU WANT IT."

Ryan Waterman

From the Editing Staff

The *Tobeco* editing staff has been a great opportunity for me. I enjoyed reading and helping choose the writing and artwork. Thank you to everyone who submitted and I'll be looking forward to viewing your future submissions! Can't wait until next year!

Brittany Mesarick

So many words, so little time. It was a great pleasure of mine to read so many words in so many interesting groupings. Poems, essays, short stories—I devoured them all, and I suggest you, the reader, do the same. You won't be disappointed.

Vance Reed

It has been a wonderful experience being a part of *Tobeco*. Having the chance to read and view all of the literature and artwork was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed working with everyone. All of the submissions were extremely creative and interesting. Each submission held its own personality, and it was a struggle narrowing them down for publication. To everyone who has submitted—thank you and please continue to submit in the future! Every word written and every piece of art is appreciated by vast varieties of minds!

Heather Silvis

I was delighted to be a part of the *Tobeco* editing staff this year. It was a wonderful

experience for a freshman like me. I got to read so many wonderful pieces and view so much beautiful artwork. It is truly a shame that everything can not be included but for those of you who did not make it this year, keep submitting. I am completely in awe of everyone who had enough courage and creativity to submit. Oh...and I love turkeys no matter what anyone else says!!!

Ashley Urik

There were so many excellent submissions this year, and we had to make some tough decisions. Thanks to everyone who submitted and worked on this project, and keep up the good work next year!

Carole Vogel

I remember when I first came to Clarion with no friends and was left to wander aimlessly. I came across a couple old issues of Tobeco and read as I walked. I realized at that moment I should be a part of something like that. A year later, I joined and found it to be a lot of fun. I'm an art major, so dabbling in writing like this is a fun, new experience, and I'm learning something new everyday. I can't wait to learn more by being on this staff!!

Megan Willis

Table of Contents

one:poetry

2	labor of love.....	donna whitton
3	Tequila	Meghan Marshall
4	My Antithesis	Emily Reel
5	Insane	Alexandra Rung
6	Pretty Girls in Pretty Dresses	Amanda Blount
7	a brilliance in three memories	emily fields

fiction

11	The White Knight and the Black Bishop	Zach Ramsey
19	Half Moon	Savannah Barr
23	Pieces of Lily.....	Adrienne Cain
25	Missing Item.....	Vance Reed
27	Soul Hate	Jes Pape
35	Drinking Alone	Savannah Barr

two:poetry

41	Autumn	Jes Pape
42	Hong Kong Oscar in Moscow	Bryce J. Renninger
43	The Pardon	Vance Reed
44	Song Sam-mun's If you should ever ask me	Gerrit van Dyk
45	Hunting Season	Emily Reel
46	UNTITLED.....	Kathy Graham
48	facetious little january	don raynor

nonfiction

- 50 TALKING ABOUT “DOWN THERE” Deborah Burghardt
53 Purpled Aches Jennifer Hetrick

three:poetry

- 56 World and Word Elisabeth Donato
57 grace, a property, shaken up gertie faye
58 this cartography emily fields
60 Envy Amanda Blount
61 A Soldier’s Return Meghan Marshall
62 i received an f in meditation jennifer hetrick

art

- 1 the babies don raynor
9 Inner Beauty Shanna Klingler
10 Gooseneck Lamp Cassy Stranahan
17 Follow Your White Rabbit Jake Yale
18 Free to Fly Jake Yale
22 lumière de lus Casey McGovern
24 Latch Donna Whitton
34 Shattered Eye Megan Willis
39 Jim Shanna Klingler
40 Pretty Leaf Emily Reel
49 Emo Singer 2 Cassy Stranahan
55 Father Megan Willis
59 talons emily fields
63 Garden of Remembrance Jake Yale



one : poetry

the babies

don raynor

labor of love

by donna whitton

i rock to the rhythm
back and forth
breathing, breathing

i feel the end is near
as the sensations
grow closer

closer together they peak
then ebb, dissipate, and
begin again

i feel overwhelmed
as i respond and arch my
body forward

i can feel you
low inside of me
moving slowly

i breath and give in
i feel the final peak as
you slip out

i look into your eyes
and hold you for the first time
my son

Tequila

by Meghan Marshall

Pennylane wore shiny cheap
plastic knee high boots
with the pointed toe and
pencil heel.

Stumbling sandy steps
forty miles from Tijuana.

She wore a stripper's silk skirt,
swishing against pale, thin thighs.

Penny was seducing salvation
in August's torrid sandy
impoverished paradise.

Pacific air, pushed up,
wretched rock cliff faces,
blowing her small frame,
tossing sand to mix with
the blow in her purse.

She'd hold her tequila bottle
tightly, exposing small
white knuckles
clinging to clear fluid
clutching and encasing the
desert water.

Corrupting, coursing, pushing,
spinning the trapped little worm.

She hated and loved the caged
creature, she liked that
her grasp, staggering step
could control his motion and at
bottle's end,
she could swallow his fate.

My Antithesis

by Emily Reel

You are married.

You have three sons.

You have an ear ring and gingivitis.

You smoke and hold a job that is normally given to a revolving door
of minimum wage college students.

I am five years younger than you.

I have ambition and good hygiene.

I will not work this job much longer thanks to you.

You are a pervert.

I am not.

Insane

by Alexandra Rung

Let the blazing sun sweep the land
And scorch me clean.
At least I won't remember
The days that held an air, pristine,
That fell away to dying embers.
I hear the voices in my head reprimand
Me for allowing my life to turn to this,
A pathetic, embarrassing joke of unfound bliss.

So I lift my hand to allow the ghostly
Apparitions to bestow me with a kiss,
The images conjured from a fading memory
That haunts me as a hit and miss.
I mourn the long gone days of glory
That I shied from then, mostly
From fear, a raw explosion of pure emotion
Forever hindering, yet lingering, unwanted devotion.

Doubt and self-consciousness gnaw greedily
At my legs, threatening to knock my
Footing loose. What hold on reality
Can I claim? A ruined shell, now, by
Allowing the victory on technicality
That I am weak, insignificant, hurriedly
Passed from person of importance to next,
And the voices whisper till I'll never be fixed.

Now I've fallen away, in a world my own,
Where the air is stable and the land is blown,
The mountains sway and the grasses groan,
Only I can see it, and I'm thrown away, alone.

Pretty Girls in Pretty Dresses

by Amanda Blount

I am not a doll.
Trapped in a childhood dream.
I see the world in colours.
Not in rosy shades.
I speak my mind, and always in good taste.
I am not a doll.
That can be left on the floor of a dirty room to be tripped upon.
I am not a doll.
But a person all the way.
My eyes see still what others' do not.
I can do as others,
yet thankfully I am still me.
Again
I am not a doll,
of glass or hard plastic.
I am made of living flesh, of bones, blood, and gases.
But I am a doll, sadly, when you look at me.
Release me and a person you shall see...

a brilliance in three memories

by emily fields

for dr. lassowsky

1.

He may have eaten us
by way of his image—

a black & white photo
Dr. Wardlaw so dutifully posted

on the department website.
Upon meeting him, however,

he was a dictionary,
an encyclopedia,

a viola-jokebook.

2.

There is guilt
so built by an unsent letter—

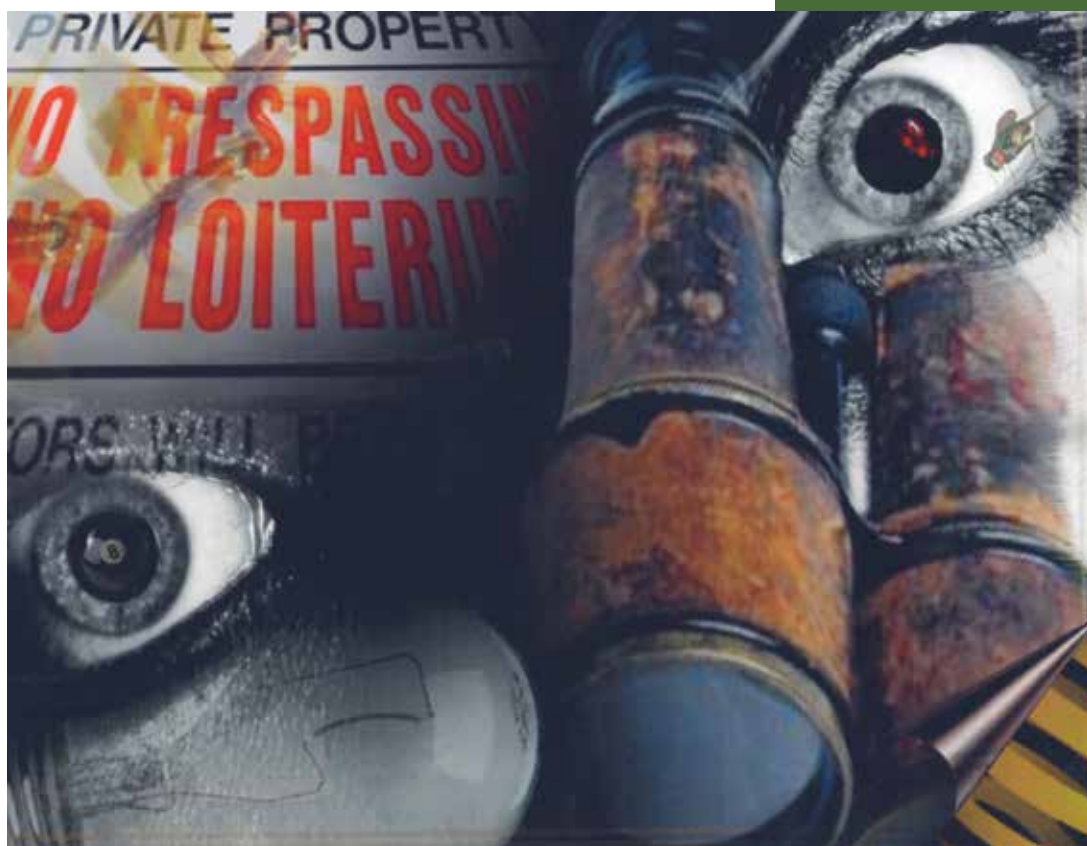
3.

But I will forever cling
to his slip in language

back to the decapitation
he spills. Headless,

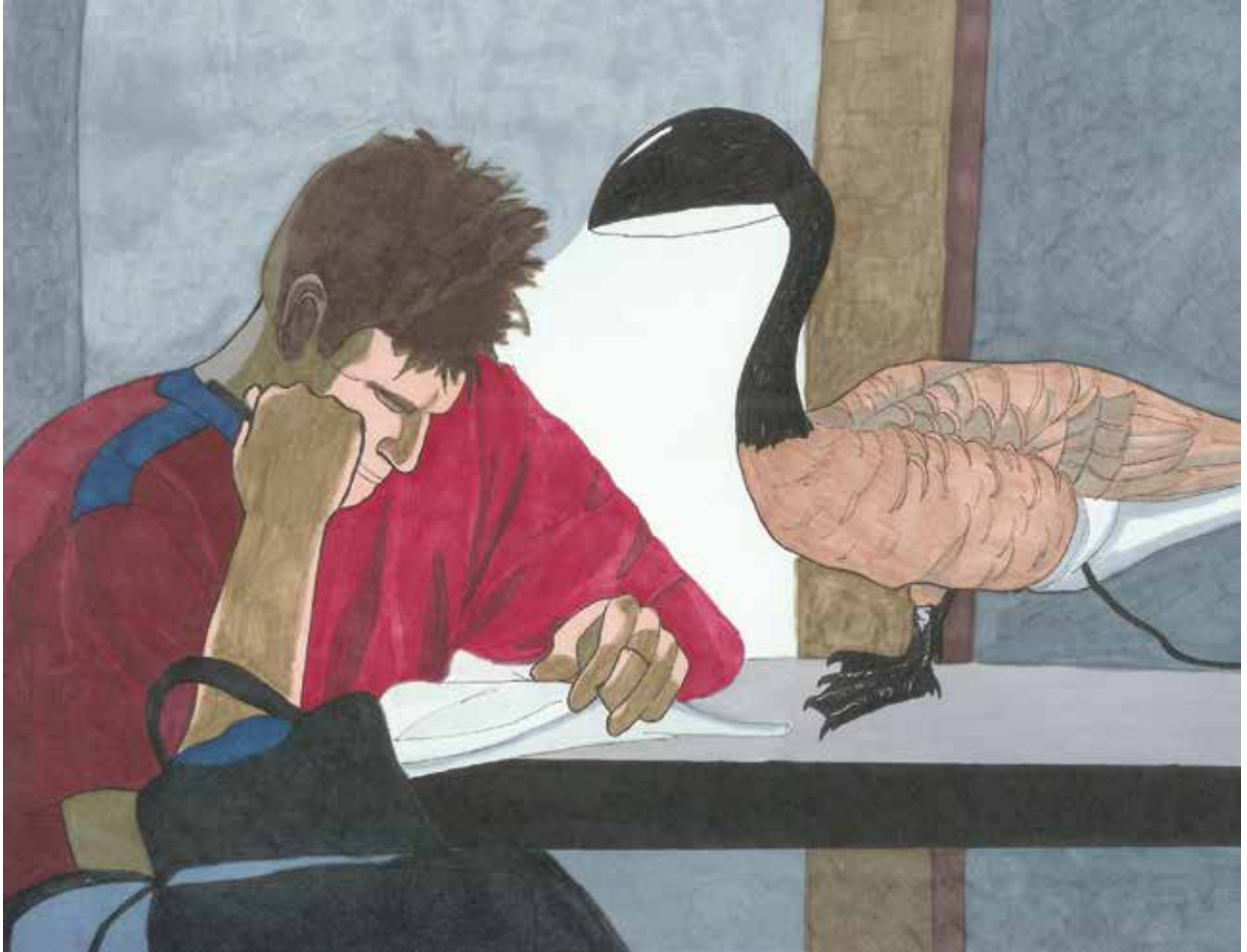
we assume the recapitulation, laugh
as hard children, & play Mozart.

fiction



Inner Beauty

Shanna Klinger



Gooseneck Lamp

Cassy Stranahan

The White Knight and the Black Bishop

by Zach Ramsey

Kill the bishop! The boy thought to himself. He hoped that the old man he was watching would notice the opportunity. *Up two, over one...GET HIM!* The old man, however, moved a rook farther up the side, stopping on the white marble square in the middle row. His opponent, an impetuous middle aged man with a staccato mustache and neatly combed black hair, quickly slid the bishop from harm's way. Several turns passed between them both, back and forth like a heavy invar pendulum—constant and steady, the monotony fostering a tension with every tic as the players tried to corner each other. Move built upon move, each trying to force his adversary to tip his hand. Finally, the old man advanced his queen the length of the board, pushing it within reach of the king, who could have taken her captive if the old man didn't have his own bishop there ready to strike. Aside from the king, none of the other pieces could reach the queen, so the game was over.

Without making eye contact, the middle-aged man stood up and shook the hand of the old man, who was still sitting. The defeated opponent with black hair mumbled his congratulations and then began off across the park lawn, shaking the bits of mowed grass from the bottom of his dress pants when he reached the sidewalk on the other side. He would have jammed his hands angrily into his coat pockets, except it was the middle of a seething August, so he wore no coat. The frustration was understandable, because he had wasted the better half of a Saturday afternoon in the park on a single game of chess that he had not won. A few crows cawed loudly and scattered across the lawn as the man cussed his way past.

Hopping out of the low limb of the smooth white birch tree that had provided shade for the table all afternoon, the boy watched the defeated player closely until he had passed out of view on the other side of a fence that circled the park. The old man had begun

putting the pieces away, dropping in each marble warrior one by one so that they clinked with the muffled sound of water dripping into a brass basin somewhere deep beyond the small red velvet bag. Shadows were stretching longer across the park lawn, deepening and pushing the light away from their bodies; nobody else would be coming to play today. All of the other players had already left the park, and although there were no set times, they would be back tomorrow or the next day. There were always people who liked to play chess in the park.

Taking a seat across from the man who always smelled like mint pipe tobacco even though he never smoked, the boy picked up the white knight he had cheered for moments earlier and washed it over with the depths of his blue eyes before shifting them to the old man, who had folded the board and collected all of the pieces except for the one in the boy's hand. The man, not looking at the child, reached for the piece, ready to drop it into the basin with the rest of them, but the boy held the last drip tightly. As he turned it over in his hand, running his hand over the cool smooth marble surface, he felt the sun go behind a cloud, and the shadows darkened.

"Why didn't you take his bishop when you had the chance?" Aiden asked as the man reached for the horse-shaped combatant in his hand. The man turned down the edges of his mouth and stretched his hand again as the boy moved the marble further back on the cracked, uneven tabletop.

"Because I didn't need to," the old man said. "I won without taking it."

"But it was there," Aiden said to the old man.

The man drummed his fingers on the folded chess board for a moment, still not looking at the boy. Several moments passed between them.

"How long have you been watching me?"

"I've been here all day, and I watched you lose to the first guy, and then you beat two people. You know that."

"No," replied the man. "I mean how long."

“About two summers ago, I guess, I started watching. Why?”

The old man shook his head and rested his forearms on the table, adjusting his thick glasses every few seconds. “Why do you come and sit here? Surely you’d rather be shooting rabbits or playing baseball or throwing rocks at cars. That’s what boys do in the summer.”

“I like to watch you play,” Aiden told him. The 12-year-old waited a few moments. “At the beginning I always want you to lose, but by the end I want you to win.” He paused and scratched his stiff and unwashed head of golden hair. “I’ve tried to cheer against you sometimes, but I always end up cheering for you.”

“I’m always the white pieces. Maybe you just like the color.”

“Maybe,” said the boy.

The old man blinked and looked to see where the sun was, and then pulled his pocket watch from his vest; the small hand would be at the seven soon. Looking on curiously, the boy laughed at seeing the reflection bounce wildly off of the man’s glasses and forehead, making him squint and hold it farther away from his face. Then the old man reached for the piece again, and Aiden held it back in his hand and demanded a second time, “Why didn’t you take his bishop?”

The old man looked enervated behind his glasses. “Because then he could have taken a pawn,” he frowned.

“That seems like a good trade for you. A pawn for a bishop.”

“Yes, it would have been a good trade,” said the old man tiredly into his hands.

“Then why didn’t you do it?” asked the boy. “It’s only a pawn, after all. You have to lose pieces sometimes.”

“At that point I wasn’t sure I was going to win, and I didn’t want to give the piece up unless it would help me trap his king. I won without losing the bishop.” The boy looked inquisitively at the aged man, noticing that the sags in his face made him seem sad. The corners of his mouth had been turned down far too often, and it was now the default position, not the vexed scowl

of a lecturing teacher, but the look of constant disappointment. Somehow, the man seemed to shrink and grow farther away, a shriveling figure in a brown and gray sweater vest, spiraling farther away by the minute—by the second. Aiden could not see him any longer, even though the man sat in front of him, his drooping and cheerless eyes looking off toward the direction of the baseball diamond. There was a feeling of remorse for the old man, but he wasn't sure why.

While everything in the park sat still, and the sun moved further down in the sky, they waited quietly for a few minutes together. The boy looked at the old man. "I'm always glad when you win," he relinquished at last. The old man finally laughed slightly.

"So am I," he replied, and then his face straightened. "But why would you care if I win or lose?"

"I don't know, but I do," Aiden told him, and he scratched his head again. "I guess it is because I know you."

"You don't even know my name."

"No, but we've talked a lot. And I've seen you play more than anyone else." He nodded, repeating his answer more surely. "I cheer because I know you."

"Would you cheer for me if I cheated?"

"No," the boy shook his head immediately. "I couldn't cheer for you if you cheated."

"Then it's more important that I play fair than that you know me?" The man paused for a few moments as he looked out across scattered clumps of cut grass, breathing in the sweet green smell, and then asked another question. "Would you cheer for a cheating friend or a truthful enemy?"

"I don't know; I might cheer for you if you played against someone I didn't like. I hope you don't cheat."

"I don't cheat, but why would you want me to win if I did?" the man asked, reaching for the marble horse.

“Because I know you,” the boy said, pulling the horse well out of range of the craggy arm. The old man could see that the boy was not going to give him back the knight, so he calmly lifted the sports page of the newspaper that had been lying beside them, licking his fingers and pretending to smooth the wild gray shrubs around the outside of his head away from his bald top. “Did the Yankees win yesterday?”

“Yes, they did. Are they your team?” the old man asked as if the two had never had the conversation before.

“You always ask me that. And I always tell you they are.”

“Then let me ask you something I haven’t asked you before. Who is the best baseball player?”

“Ever?”

“Yes, the best baseball player ever.”

“Babe Ruth,” they both said at the same time. Aiden looked puzzled as the old man smiled sadly, and then frowned.

Aiden grabbed a hold of the thin, dirty paper, pushing it down low enough to observe the grey eyes that seemed to know he was coming. “How did you know?”

“Because you like the Yankees. If you liked the Giants, you would have said Willie Mays. Boston—Ted Williams. If you liked the Braves you’d have told me Aaron.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I’m not talking about baseball.”

“Yes, you are.”

“Ok, then I’m talking about baseball.”

The wind picked up a little and rustled the leaves of the green branches of the summer birch, which was running out of sunlight to block. The boy walked over to the tree, looking first at the ground, and then at the old man, and finally out over the other tables where nobody was

sitting. Overwhelmed with a feeling of dolefulness for which he could not account, Aiden began to walk away. He paused, turning to the old man.

“I have to go for dinner.” The old man raised his hand to wave goodbye, and Aiden held out the game piece. The old man reached, and the boy yanked it away one last time.

“Why didn’t you take his bishop?” the boy asked.

“Because taking his bishop wouldn’t solve anything; the game is to take the king.”

Forced to be satisfied with that answer, the boy handed the white horse back to the withered hand, and then ran off toward home. The old man dropped the marble soldier into the bag with a solid clink, picked up the board, and rose to his feet to walk home with the sad thoughts of Babe Ruth on his mind. He toddled across the grass, thinking of all of the hitters he had ever seen. Maybe tomorrow or the next day they would talk about Stan Musial or Rogers Hornsby—maybe they would even talk about some pitchers. The man closed the gate to the park behind him and looked out over the fence where he could see most of the park. The sun was pulling down farther still, lengthening the deep cobalt shadows that stretch across the open grass, and a cool wind began to blow despite the earlier heat. Nobody knew what they would talk about tomorrow.



Follow Your White Rabbit

Jake Yale



Free to Fly

Jake Yale

Half Moon

by Savannah Barr

He is doing his best to have a good time and ignore the five empty chairs in the corner. He smiles cordially at the beautiful girls. Some of them are reporters or actual wives, but most were hired for this event. Perhaps they find it their civil duty to drink with these men, to smile their perfect white smiles and hide the wrinkles around their eyes—wrinkles that wouldn't have been there if they were only born a decade earlier, if they hadn't lived through the war. One of the girls is claiming to be a champion dancer. She tells them all she will only jitterbug whoever in their unit dances the best—now, who will it be? “McGarry,” he hears someone tell her. “He's the best.”

He finds himself being reluctantly pulled from his chair and led to the dance floor. She wraps her sticky hand around his as the band starts up a fast number. They begin to dance. Her hips swivel and shake under her dress, causing the skirt to fly up and reveal her blue garter belt. He tries to enjoy dancing with her; she's light on her feet, easy to lift. He picks her up and swings her to his hip. She reacts accordingly. Her feet snapped together like a soldier at attention, she keeps them strait and pointed as she swings through the air to his other hip. Once back on the ground, she pushes away from him, scooting backwards and clapping her hands in time with the music, then slinks her way back into his arms. He spins her around so the two of them are back to back. Again, she's ready, and links her elbow to his; she swings her feet in the air as he leans forward and flips her over his head. Once more, the garter belt comes into view. The men clap, the women laugh. The dance is over.

“You weren't too bad,” she tells him afterward. “But you have this stiffness to you that I didn't like.”

He frowns slightly. He's never been called stiff in his life. She sees that she's hurt his ego and tries to amend.

“Don’t worry,” she says. “You just got back. You need to loosen up a bit is all, and you’d be a really good dancer again.”

“Again,” he thinks, realizing that she’s assuming he used to be a good dancer and it was the war that made this stiffness. Perhaps he has an injury, something that will bother him when he’s an old man and let him know when it’s about to rain. Shrapnel, perhaps. Yeah, that’s it, shrapnel from an explosion of some form. Maybe late one night while he was on watch, he was too busy reading letters from his mother to stay alert, and the next thing you know—KABOOM! Shrapnel for all!

Of course, there is no injury. The war left him unscathed. The five empty chairs at the table in the corner were set up to remind him of how lucky he is. Their unit of 40 had come back as a unit of 35. One empty chair for each lost man, so that the dead could be included in their celebration. He felt sick the first time he saw it. “This is how we make up for living,” he thought. “This is how we reconcile celebrating being alive when they died. We give them chairs and let them join in our festivities.”

He leaves the girl to her own devices. He can’t stand being around her any longer; she’s too full of life. He goes back to his scotch. He tries to enjoy the band, to enjoy the taste of his alcohol, but his eyes keep wandering back to the empty table. He decides to go out into the garden for a breath of fresh air. He finds that the commander is outside as well, gazing up at the stars.

The stars are out in the millions tonight. The moon is huge, a clear white half circle in the sky, half light, half darkness. No matter how full the moon appears, there is always another side that the light isn’t touching—a darkness present. It silently follows the light for all of eternity like an evil twin or the memory of a dead comrade.

“Beautiful night, isn’t it, soldier?” says the commander. “The heavens are a testament to the glory of God. Makes a man feel a bit humbled, doesn’t it?”

“Yes sir,” he says because he believes in the commander. The commander who is never out of plans, never short on ideas. His friends in other units would write him letters complaining about their lackadaisical commanders, and he would thank God his unit’s commander wasn’t like that. His unit’s commander could guide them through any battle. He finds himself wishing the older man would tell him what to do now that the war is over. He searches the commander’s face for answers, but all he sees is the insufferable weight of five empty chairs in the man’s eyes. Sighing, he trudges back inside, back to his table and his scotch.

He recalls their faces and their mannerisms, remembers their names: Elbony, Hulls, Gronney, Burdick, and Smith. He drank with these men, brushed his teeth with them, pissed next to them at the latrine. He was there when they died, in the same far away countries. He faced the same dangers with exactly the same mortality. What was it that separated him from them, what marked him as a survivor and them as casualties? Was he smarter, quicker? Did he pray more than they did? Did he have more people at home waiting for his return? At some point in his life, did he perhaps do one more good deed than they had done, attend church one more Sunday than they had? Did he deserve to be alive?

He takes a long drink of scotch and remembers hunting ducks as a child with his father. They would sit on the banks of the marsh for hours, waiting for the ducks to come. And when they did come it was in entire flocks, all landing down at once. His father would pick off one or two, never the biggest or the closest ducks, just whichever ones caught his eye first. Even as a child, it had bothered him how there seemed to be no formula, no reason for which ducks lived and which ducks died.

“Perhaps that’s all that wars are,” he thinks, “nothing more than a random selection of death.”

He is only 23, but for the first time in his life, he feels old. The guilt of living is making him age at an accelerated rate; tonight he is ancient. McGarry refills his scotch glass slowly, watching the amber liquid flow over the ice cubes. Standing up, he carries his chair over to the sacred table and takes a seat with his old comrades. He toasts to the five empty chairs.



lumière de lus

Casey McGovern

Pieces of Lily

by Adrienne Cain

These are the hands of Lily: fine-boned and pale with the nails painted as red and arresting as the dot of an exclamation point. These hands are so delicate, so feminine and soft that it would be nearly impossible to imagine them curling around a trigger and pulling back. Mr. Black never saw it coming. The finger curled, the bullet whooshed out with the silencer, and the world went dark.

These are the feet of Lily: as fine looking as her hands and still crammed in their red patent shoes with red exclamation point toenails that mirror her fingers. They are moving quickly – but not too quickly – through the lobby of the hotel. They do not tremble; they do not trip as she passes confidently through the main door and into the night.

This is the hair of Lily: dark brown – the peroxide blond was a cover and always reminded her of a naughty secretary on the mahogany desk of her boss – and was pinned up in a smart bun at the back of her head. The blond wig now lies in an anonymous bathroom trashcan three blocks west of the hotel; she is now east by three blocks.

These are the eyes of Lily: blue to some, perhaps, or green, or even some indefinable color like warm honey or a poetic sunset. Someone might describe them to the police sketch artist as “soulful” or “intense” and raise his hands up in confusion when probed on their color, shape, and size. If the picture emerged, it would do so grudgingly and awkwardly. You could hold the picture up beside her face and see no resemblance.

These are the lips of Lily: coral colored and stripped of the garish candy apple red lipstick—drawn outside the natural line—that distorted their appearance in the security cameras. These lips will lie, will coerce, will play, and will guarantee safety for a while with their complex webs. They will pout as she flirts with this or that boyfriend about where she was or wasn’t this night. The lips will be silent if anything goes wrong.

Nothing will go wrong.



Latch

Donna Whitton

Missing Item

by Vance Reed

Without asking, the woman behind the cash register handed Jonathan a sucker. Her hair was gray and curly, and when she smiled, the corners of her eyelids tightened. She always smiled like this and patted him on the head whenever Jonathan went to the grocery store with his mother. Every time he thanked the old woman only after he was prompted to by his mother. He didn't realize until told so by a friend in his class that not everybody got candy from the grocery store lady. In fact, it seemed that only he did.

On this day as they were going through the check out line, Jonathan's mother realized that she had forgotten an item on her list after she had half of her cart unloaded already.

"Do you mind if I leave Jon here with you for ten seconds while I grab something?" asked his mother.

"Of course not, he's perfectly safe here with me," the old woman responded.

Jonathan's mother left quickly to find the missing item. After a few moments, he realized that the woman was staring at him quite intently, and she looked as though she was about to cry. Remembering how his mother had comforted him when he had fallen down and hurt his knee the other day, Jonathan put his hand on the cashier's hand and said, "There, there, nothing to cry about."

At hearing this, she started to cry more heavily. He felt the need to ask her what was the matter.

"Oh nothing, really," she answered, then added, "I just never noticed before how much you look like your mother." Just then his mother emerged from one of the isles with the missing item. The cashier quickly wiped her eyes and acted as though nothing had happened, though her eyes were noticeably red.

He looked at his mother's long blond hair and remembered how often he had heard people say that his brothers looked just like her. He shook his own curly brown locks and realized that comment had never been made about himself. Maybe he looked like his dad. *You look like your mother*, the old woman had said. Maybe she was just confused. He didn't think of it again.

Soul Hate

by Jes Pape

Ever rent a random movie? Ever eject it right after you pop it in because as soon as you hear the cheesy music rolling at the beginning credits, you know it's gonna suck? Well that's how I felt about this Jameson fellow that started working at our company. Trendy little sleazebag Harvard jackass with his feet up on the desk and his top shirt button undone so we all had to walk around nauseated at the sight of his Brillo-pad sternum. Even his chest hair looked like it was trying to crawl out of his shirt and escape. Saunters around in his expensive European suits, always with that smug grin on his face. The second he swaggered in with his black genuine leather Gucci loafers, flashing those big bleached teeth, I wanted to tell him to kiss my Dockers-clad ass.

He had this ear-grating little corporate laugh, like he cultivated it to be pleasant, genuine, but not intimidating. I saw through it though; it was just as ostentatious and pretentious as he was. Always shaking people's hands and then not remembering their names two minutes later. His briefcase is all perfectly organized with little post-it notes sticking to things, written in his stupid blue engraved pen. I just *knew* he did that to look superior to everybody else—"Look at me, assholes, I'm better than you because I have a coffee mug to match each of my Regis Philbin ties!"

And this was just the first day I met him.

I have never felt so much hatred toward anything, animal, mineral, or vegetable, in my entire life. I'm not an angry person. I don't judge, I'm a democrat, and hell, back in college I used to be the secretary of the ACLU. But by the third day of being in this guy's vicinity, I was having homicidal fantasies. I pictured beat-down scenes from *Fight Club*, *Rocky*, *Boondock Saints*, all with me serving him his own ass on the knuckles of my bloody fist. It got so realistic that I would start sweating, grinding my teeth while I stared at his condescending little smirk

from across the conference table. My hands balled into fists so tight that they ached with my longing to dig my fingers into that shiny black hair and wipe his grin off on the carpet, along with the rest of his face. In order to prevent this, I had to leave the room at least once an hour, more if I was sitting close to the prick.

I didn't know what the hell to do. I couldn't go through everyday with my trigger finger twitching. I couldn't talk to my boss about it because he doesn't think very highly of me ever since the Christmas Party where I got a little too friendly with his secretary, an incident mostly caused by the insane potency of the eggnog. So, after going home to my bayside apartment one night and pummeling the hell out of one of the nice throw pillows from Mom, I hauled out the yellow pages.

Still panting with sweat dripping off of my forehead and onto the pages, I flipped through the P's looking for "PSYCHIATRISTS." Chicago is big enough, so I figured I had a fairly good shot at finding somebody with a solution to this problem, which I avidly hoped involved the arcane torture of Jameson. What I didn't count on were the different types of psychiatrists. You know that they have them for *animals* nowadays?

None of the shrink varieties sounded like the kind of help I needed thus far. Sex therapy? I wish. Existential psychiatry? No problem with existence; I hate Jameson, therefore I am. Eating disorder specialist? I like my Easy Mac enough not to make myself puke it up, thank you very much.

Finally, I come across this Dr. Horace from the Chicago Institute of Pathological Obsession. After dragging out the dictionary to find out what the hell the psychobabble title meant, I decided that he was my best shot. I mean, my hate had become an obsession, and it was pathological, which Webster defined as:

"Of, relating to, or manifesting behavior that is habitual, maladaptive, and compulsive."

So I called and made an appointment for Tuesday, told them it was an emergency.

Tuesday couldn't come soon enough. That Monday morning I was on coffee duty, which

I don't mind because everybody else makes it way too weak. I was pouring some for myself in a Styrofoam cup when the little pissant came in to fill his brushed stainless steel mug. I stopped dead with the pot of Maxwell House Dark Roast in my kung-fu grip. His coffee mugs all have all this black dented grippy crap on the handle and bottom so you don't spill it and burn yourself. Hot coffee can burn very badly if it soaks into your clothing. If you can't remove the fabric quickly, it'll just keep burning your skin...

"The joe smells great," he said as he walked up to me, flashing that phony megawatt smile. I felt red-hot rage to rival the steaming coffee in my hand.

"Here, have some," I hissed through gritted teeth as I gestured with the pot a little too quickly. He thanked me and smiled that vile little grin and held out that horrible anal-probe-looking mug. I stood there, wrist twitching to hurl the scalding liquid in his face. It would be like Father Karras throwing Holy Water on Reagan in *The Exorcist*, times ten.

No, No, *Ghandi*. Had to be *Ghandi*. Then I realized I couldn't be either.

"Excuse me, just remembered something..." I murmured looking at the floor as I slammed the pot back on the burner and bolted out, sloshing my own coffee in a burning slop on my hand.

"You alright?" I heard him call after me as I power-walked down the hall toward my office. I slammed the door shut. Like I'd like to slam it while holding his head against the frame. A hard, unmerciful, skull-shattering slam, loud and solid. I gathered my coat and briefcase. There was no way I could've stayed at work that day; I would've left in a paddy wagon with Jameson's expensive dental work embedded in my hands.

Tuesday found me in the Dr. Horace's office, slouching in his deceptively comfy-looking chair. The whole office was like that – a "look but don't touch" sort of atmosphere with light blue walls and ugly maroon curtains spattered with huge white lilies. It looked more like the inside of a bank than somewhere you would spill your guts about wanting to kill your coworker.

Dr. Horace was a small, trim man who probably listened to polka in his spare time and looked like a member of the backgammon club. His little silver glasses kept trying to dive off the tip of his nose, and his thin gray eyebrows, in combination with the glasses, gave his face an old bullfrog look.

“So, why do you think that you have so much hostility toward Jameson?” he asked, sitting perfectly still. It unnerved me. People should twitch; everybody twitches.

“He’s such a...prick. He just acts like he’s so much better than everybody else.” I said as I ignored the atmosphere of the room screaming ‘no’ and picked up one of those squishy stress ball things that was on his desk. It was in the shape of an apple and had some ad for a local produce market on it. I squished.

“Yes, but what gives you that impression about him? For instance, have there been any interactions between you two where he said or did something that specifically caused you to form this image of him?” He said, leaning back in his chair a bit.

“Interactions? I have to avoid interactions so I don’t go apeshit on the idiot,” I said.

This is how approximately 40 minutes of the session went. Why the hell was I paying \$75 an hour for this? I tried to tell him that I just HATED the guy, pure and simple. I don’t know why, and I don’t give a rat’s ass. All I want to know is how to hate him a little less so I wouldn’t be seated before a jury within the next couple of months. He said something about needing to find the cause before you treat the symptoms, but I know the cause. It’s the pompous shit-bag that is Jameson. It’s his essence. He’s my “soul hate.”

“Look, just tell me what I can do to avoid killing the guy. I have to be back at work tomorrow, and you haven’t told me anything I can do,” I eventually said, thinking of the check I wrote. I could’ve used that money to buy a new DVD player, since mine kicked off last week after refusing to spit out my *Clockwork Orange* DVD.

“Well, we still need to find the source of all this, so make another appointment with my

secretary before you leave for next week. In the meantime, I'm going to lend you one of my books. I'll mark the pages that I want you to read. There are anger management techniques in it that you may find useful." He plucked a book from the six-foot tall shelf behind his desk.

Let me just say, that book was full of shit. Counting to ten didn't help; I just felt like I was on a homicidal episode of *Sesame Street*. Confront Jameson and talk about what made me upset? I can't come within three yards of the guy because *he* is what makes me upset. Breathing deeply only resulted in trying to suppress a gag when I filled my lungs with his rancid overpriced cologne from *Macy's*.

It was Friday again, and I was back where I started. I didn't even have any more crappy advice to try to follow. Then things went from bad to worse. We had a conference, and Jameson was presenting.

There he stood, up front in his shiny little tie tack with that hideously fake smile, saying things like "Well, that's a good idea, but this might work better because..." and "You're right, and I appreciate your input, so maybe we can compromise by...."

This asswipe has read every "How to Be Successful" book he could find on Amazon.com and is standing up there talking to everybody like we're a fucking kindergarten class. I'm grinding my teeth again, and cracking my knuckles in my lap. I grip the arms of my chair like I'll rip right through it. The blood is pounding in my ears, and it's all I can do not to jump on the table, sprint to the end, leap off and tackle him to the floor as I stab him repeatedly with that asinine blue engraved pen he keeps gesturing with. All of my being is trying to morph into a mixture of The Incredible Hulk and Jack the Ripper in *From Hell*.

"Okay, I think we can break for lunch here," Jameson said, glancing at that enormous Rolex on his hairy, veiny wrist. "Would anyone like to join me for sushi at the Japanese steakhouse?"

I shove my papers into my briefcase, crumpling them, ripping some. I lock my jaw to suppress a scream, and glue my eyes to the carpet as I stomp out with a death grip on the

handle. That prick would like sushi, disgusting raw slimy fish twisted up with seaweed and shreds of bamboo. I want to follow him there and impale his throat with a chopstick. I want to slam his face on the hibachi grill. I want to thrust the sushi knife up into his ribcage and twist while screaming “*Sianara, shithead!*”

I dash into the cloakroom for my jacket and get the hell out. I go to the small deli on the corner, my usual lunchtime retreat, and order a Rueben sandwich with extra pickles, potato chips, and a large Coke. I’m scarfing it down so fast that I choke on a handful of the greasy chips and make a rather silly spectacle of myself, turning into a sputtering chewed-food volcano for about two solid minutes. I have no idea why I’m eating so fast; I’m certainly in no hurry to get back into that stuffy room with Jameson in all his pig-headed glory.

I contemplate how I can sit through the rest of the meeting as I use one of those moist towelettes to wipe my chip-spray from my sleeve. As I wipe the fabric, I realize that the suit jacket I grabbed isn’t mine. Who the hell’s is it? It’s obviously pretty pricey; European cut, tailored to broader shoulders than mine, charcoal gray with pinstripes...

Holy shit.

Holy *fucking* shit.

Just for confirmation, I take it off and look at the label. Armani.

Jameson, it’s Jameson’s fucking jacket.

I stare at it, not moving, half a mouthful of chips still in my cheek. I swallow. I stare some more. It’s in excellent condition, looks like it has been freshly dry-cleaned. The fabric is smooth and starched, not a wrinkle to be found, not even around the inner elbows where jackets always bunch up.

There are still tiny little spots of chip-spit. I place the moist towelette on the table, and rub them into the fabric with my thumb. It smears on the fine material and works into the weave. I dab my finger in some sauerkraut drippings from my plate and rub that onto the cuff. Then I squirt a tiny bit of mustard on my index finger and dab just a pea-sized amount next to the

sauerkraut drippings. Now there's a moist, murky, yellowish smudge the size of a quarter on the sleeve, and I'm grinning like hobo with a hundred dollar bill. I call into the office on my cell, tell them that I had an allergic reaction to some shellfish, throw the jacket on, and drive home with the windows down.

Once in the door, I drop my briefcase in the hall and dash to the bathroom. I stand there for about twenty minutes, staring at myself in his jacket with the mustard stain on the cuff. I button it. I unbutton it. I button it again. Its color and fit clash with my navy Dockers like Walt Disney and George A. Romero. My smile is about to split my face in half.

In the kitchen, I take the bottle of Jack Daniels from the cupboard and pour it in a glass over ice, watching my pinstriped cuff stir it briefly. When some of it drips onto my fingers and the white Formica counter, I wipe it off with my new Armani napkin.

In the living room, I shuffle out of my pants, loosen my tie, and pop *Full Metal Jacket* into the VCR. I sit back in my beige easy chair with my glass, toasting to anything at all.



Shattered Eye

Megan Willis

Drinking Alone

by Savannah Barr

It's the middle of June and I'm sitting in a daze, in this bar down on Bustleton and Loney. There are these big beads of sweat slinking down my back and forming a puddle on the bar stool. I've just turned 19, but I've been getting served in bars like this since I was old enough to drive a car, old enough to beat back on my old man after years of his fist on my face. Anyways, I'm back from college on summer break. I signed up for this English course held in the summer, the kind you have to submit a paper to get into, real exclusive and all. I had to write a story to get in. So I spent months working on this piece about a kid and his girlfriend. The professor sent it back with this little note that said, "Nobody reads sappy love stories anymore." That's it, that's all it said. No "please elaborate more on this" or "I would like see this character developed more" just short and simple. Way to boost a kid's self-esteem, right?

So I find myself drinking alone here in this bar, noticing these little things, like the way places like this always smell of vomit and alcohol, and the citrus polish they use on the mahogany, and of sex somewhere in one of the back corners. I glance at the tense, tired faces staring at their drinks and smoking their Winstons and feel completely isolated on my barstool. I can't bring myself to start socializing. I don't feel like ogling the bartender, even though she's a decent looking blonde chick. You see, I've met her kind before, just like I've met every person in here tonight. After a while, every new bar you walk into feels just like the one you passed out in the night before.

So anyway, I'm sitting there making love to my old sweetheart Jack, feeling very sorry for myself because I don't see my future as the next T. C. Boyle going so brightly, if you know what I mean. Then the door opens, and this woman comes in wearing a red dress.

It's long and slinky, made out of something that shimmers in the dark bar. And the thing is, it's got this slit in the side of it that goes all the way from her hip to her heel. Not only does

she have this dress on, but a fur coat and ruby earrings and sapphire necklaces and I don't know what all else, but basically she's glittering like a Christmas tree. There's this yellow diamond on her finger that must have cost more than my tuition and my house combined. *It's a wonder this chick wasn't mugged on the way down here*, I think.

She takes a minute, takes a look around, like trying to decide if she's in the right place or not. Then she slinks her way through the heat, taking the seat next to me at the bar.

"Hello young man," she says as she pulls out a pack of Marlboros and lights one up, "I'm Victoria. And who might you be?"

I look around because this lady can't possibly be talking to me, right? I'm this kid and she's this rich old lady, like 45 or so. When I can't find anyone within earshot, I figure she wants directions or something.

"My name is Lenny, ma'am."

She laughs at the word "ma'am," a deep throated loud laugh like she doesn't give a damn who hears her, she'll never be seeing these people again anyways. She gets this odd little smile on her face and leans in close so that I can feel her hot breath on my cheeks, seeing the white powder on her nostrils. In this calm voice she tells me, "Well Leonard, I've just chopped up my husband with a kitchen knife. So what do you say you order this old girl a drink?"

I respond with a weak laugh. I figure she's either joking or too strung out to realize what she's saying, but either way, she's not somebody I particularly feel like hanging around with when I'm trying to drink to get drunk.

"This isn't a joke, Leonard. Right now he's lying in my kitchen in a pool of blood where the maid, who he's been fucking for the last six months, will find him in the morning. That is, if the neighbors haven't already been woken by all the noise. I prefer my White Russian with extra cream, by the way."

"Oh I um...right. Two White Russians with extra cream," I tell the bartender, regardless of the fact that I've never heard of a White Russian in my life. She sets them down before us. I

watch Victoria lift one and take a long, slow drink, closing her eyes, trying to really appreciate the taste. When she sets it down, she leaves a red smudge where her lips touched the glass, as if to prove to me she exists.

“Are you a virgin, Leonard?”

I raise my eyebrows. “I can’t say that I am, Victoria.”

“Oh, well that’s too bad. I was thinking I would enjoy making love to you tonight if you were. But perhaps that’s a bad idea, might make you an accomplice, you know.”

I sigh. I’m clearly going to have to play along if I’m ever going to be able to enjoy my alcohol in peace. “So, what’s she look like,” I ask. “The maid I mean.”

Her blue eyes gaze sadly down at the floor. With a sigh she says, “That’s what it always comes down to, isn’t it? Always about the looks. So you work out, you eat right, you get surgery that makes your ass smaller and your breasts bigger and your arms more toned. You turn 48 and you vow to stop caring about what other people think. But do you know what I did after I killed him, Leonard? I washed my hands and zipped myself into my nicest red dress. I did my makeup, found my old fur coat. I put on every piece of jewelry I own. Because I don’t mind people thinking I’m a murderer, but when my picture is on the front page of the paper tomorrow morning, I just couldn’t bear it if they said I was ugly.”

I sip my drink so I don’t have to respond right away. I want to ask her why the hell she’s bothering me with all of this shit, but she looks so sad and lonely, I can’t bring myself to do it. I remember my sister, how she would spend hours teasing her blonde hair in the morning. I can hear my father telling her, “Angie, you better make yourself look good because you’re the stupidest bitch I’ve ever had the misfortune to meet. If you go anywhere in life, it’s certainly going to be with your cunt and not your brains.”

The other people in the bar, dark people in their dark clothes, all of them begin fading into the night. They become the background music. I could be drinking with anyone in the whole city tonight, but here I am sitting with this crazy lady, the brightest thing in the room. Maybe

all the other people are some sort of dream, like a black and white TV show. Maybe she's the first real person I've talked to all summer.

I tell her, "My sister, she was the same way. She married this lawyer right out of high school, I guess she was really unhappy too."

"How did she die?"

And, it seems completely natural that Victoria should know my sister is dead, scripted, pre-written. Prescribed. "Heroin overdose." I whisper, voice sounding hollow and far away.

When she pulls back the sleeves of her dress and shows me the angry red slashes the needle made in her arm, I'm not surprised. Nor am I surprised when Victoria leans over and kisses me full on the mouth, her tongue sliding in between my lips. She tastes like vodka and blood.

"That's why I had to do it, Leonard." She says with her face still up close against mine. "I had to get him before he got me."

Giving me one more look-over, she stands up to leave.

"You're the only other person in this bar as lost as I am," she says. "But just because you're lost, doesn't mean you have to drink alone." She pulls off her diamond ring and lays it on my lap. I stare at it for a minute, watch how it shines in the darkness of the bar. When she leaves, it will be the only real thing left.

"Is he the only one you've ever killed?" I ask.

She smiles and says, "He's the only one I've ever needed to."

With that, she slips out the door and into the steamy city night, fading away in the glow of the streetlights. I sit there, finishing my drink, turning the ring over and over in my hand, watching the way the diamond distorts the light.



Jim

Shanna Klinger



Pretty Leaf

Emily Reel

Autumn

by Jes Pape

When my sister-in-law was pregnant for the fourth time
she had terrible morning sickness – all day. She said,
*It must be a boy this time, because only a man
can make me feel this sick,* and we laughed on the phone.
But the last one from her womb
didn't last long outside. Nobody speaks
of it anymore, of the two months of hand-wringing
anxiety over the hospital incubator. We try to forget how
a tiny casket can hold so large an event
and how the pure white carnations
took forever to turn brown.

Hong Kong Oscar in Moscow

by Bryce J. Renninger

Hong Kong Oscar!
Oscar Hong Kong!
Asks carrot top – Helsinki? Leningrad?
Cigarette?
Fidgets.

Buys bottle of Vodka
is drunk.
Lights candle, smokes cigarette, lights magazine cutout of biracial couple, burns in ashtray –
Burns Cigarette package

People in Crowd: (whisper) Homeless Man
Oscar: Hong Kong! Oscar! (to Russian Lesbians): like your hat
RL: (laughs)
Oscar: Hong Kong! (hands up) Oscar! Oscar Hong Kong!
Philippe: Philippe! France!

The Pardon

by Vance Reed

Walking down Forbes, looking for a bar that'll
take my friend's fake i.d., the corner peeling off.

The third bar, the bouncer remembers him, and
lets us in. He gets himself a cheap beer

and a whiskey sour for me, and he tells me
how Dostoyevsky had a trick played on him,

the guards of his prison waiting 'til he was in front
of the firing squad before they told him he was

pardoned. I ask him if maybe people like us read
Dostoyevsky so we can discuss it among ourselves

and feel smart. He grins, finishes his drink. The bar
closes and we part ways. Two days later there will

be a story in the paper of a man robbing people at
gunpoint on the street I'm walking down, but for now

I'm oblivious. The security guard recognizes me as I
walk back into the hospital and doesn't ask to see

my wristband. I go to the room where I'm staying,
it looks like a hotel room, they're only letting me stay

here because my son is dying. I think about him,
the fluid that won't leave his body, the valve on his

heart that won't close, the ventilator that's keeping
him alive and destroying his lungs at the same time,

and I wonder when he'll get his pardon.

Song Sam-mun's If you should ever ask me

translated from Korean by Gerrit van Dyk

If you should ever ask me

What I wish to be after I die

Just this: a tall and vibrant pine

On the highest peak in the Pongnae Mountains.

Me, the only thing green

When all the world is covered in snow.

이 몸이	죽어	가서	무엇이	될꼬	하니
봉래산	제일봉에		낙락장송	되어	있어
백설이	만건곤할		제 독야	청청하리라	

Hunting Season

by Emily Reel

I stand
trapped by hamburger buns and fried chicken.
Imprisoned
by mashed potatoes and pasta salad.
There is no escape,
no where to run.
You know this.
The only thing I can do,
my only defense,
is to watch warily, like a doe during hunting season
waiting for the hunter to shoot from above
and take her quiet dignity.
Why does the deer have no say in the matter?
Instead of from above, you come from behind.
I flinch
involuntarily when you place your heavy hands on me.
Your words clang heavily in my head.
Words that I wish to hear only from my lover on still nights.
Please let me graze somewhere else.

UNTITLED

by Kathy Graham

Night after night
All winter
They sat at the kitchen table
Playing Scrabble.

Summer evenings
Dad in his brown chair
Just inside the front door
Listening to Bob Prince announce the Pirates' games.
Mother on the front porch
Swinging on the glider
Watching the night steal over the front lawn
Lightning bugs glimmering around the pin-oak tree.

We'd play Hide 'n Go Seek or Kick the Can
Until it was time for bed
"Goodnight, sweet dreams, God bless you," I'd say
Even if I was angry
Couldn't break the ritual (what if they died in the night and I hadn't said it?)
"Don't let the bed bugs bite," they would say
Tucking us in.

Years later
It would be Mexican Dominoes
At another kitchen table
In another house, smaller
All the children grown and gone.
An accumulation of years

Of making ends meet
Of lunches packed, groceries bought, days worked at the Dairy,
Of grass cut, clothes washed, new carpet laid,
Of tears dried, vacations taken, cars paid for, week by week, month by month
Birthday parties and weddings and funerals
Marking out time with the placement of tiles on the table

Sixty-five years of cares, joys, love.

Mom couldn't breathe at the end
Dad couldn't think straight
He could remember though, sing old songs:
"Bring me some sauerkraut, don't leave ze veenies out..."

"I wish I could do it all again,"
He said before he died
Clear about that at least in his dementia
I wish I could do it all again.

And Mother, in the nursing home, resigned
Not sure about anything—
"Dad's gone, isn't he?"

We called her from his hospital room
Held the phone up to his ear
So he could hear her words of comfort
The last words she'd ever say to him.
Over the telephone they were.
After sixty-five years of sharing the same bed.

And she, gone four months later,
Not even a phone call to ease her last moments

Just a tombstone now to mark these lives
He, a war hero, Joseph A. Kress, World War II, Purple Heart
She, Margaret Estelle Kress, Beloved Wife and Mother
Both born in 1918, the stone reads,
Both died in 2004.

facetious little january

by don raynor

my broken second floor
window overlooks the snow

covered backyard, garnished
with a greasestained paper plate

and a rusty white van ... life is good.



Emo Singer 2

Cassy Stranahan

TALKING ABOUT “DOWN THERE”

by Deborah Burghardt

V is for Victory! V is for Valentine! V is for Vagina!

“Stop!” McKenna cried into an ear so close to her mouth she could have bitten it. Matt ignored the request and pressed his sweaty body harder into hers. “No!” McKenna sobbed. She dug her nails into his sides in a futile attempt to push him away. “Oh yeah, you want me,” he hissed.

McKenna barely moved as the warm water washed over her shoulders. Her spirit lay in shreds on the shower floor. Matt had trashed her like an empty pop can: bent in half and smashed flat with size 11 Nikes. He had treated her like she had no name, no voice, no dreams. Squeezing her eyes shut, McKenna blocked out the images that invaded her mind. *I'll never tell anyone about this horrible night, she vowed. I'll act like it never happened.*

In 1998 a woman, violated as a girl by her father, refused to be silent. After interviewing hundreds of women and girls about their vagina-stories, Eve Ensler started talking about “down there.” She said the word “vagina” 128 times in a single performance of *The Vagina Monologues*. She said “vagina” over and over for McKenna and every woman and girl in the world. Eve Ensler and that one word ignited a worldwide movement called V-Day to end battering, raping, and mutilating.

This year every state in the U.S. and 81 countries held 2,700 V-Day events. In eight years time, communities of Vagina Warriors working together have raised \$30,000,000 to end any kind of spirit-breaking violence. For my part, I advise college students who perform *The Vagina Monologues* as part of V-Day's College Campaign Program. When students in my classes attend, I ask them to write about the show. Although they are never quite sure what to expect at first, they tell me repeatedly how a course assignment turned into an “amazing” experience.

Anesu wrote, “The only story I ever heard about a vagina was in biology, so I was wondering to myself, ‘*What more can you say about a vagina?*’” Before the performance Luanne admitted, “I squirmed in my seat as I read my program.” Her squirming and other students’ resistance can result from stereotypes they hold about feminism, a movement for equality of the sexes. At the end of the show Luanne reflected, “I wholeheartedly expected to be surrounded by a bunch of hyper feminist[s] in the throes of a celebration of female genitalia. However, I must admit that this was the most eye-opening experience I have ever had in my college career.”

The Vagina Monologues is considered a feminist production because it was created to empower women. People wrongly assume that this goal must be achieved at the expense of men. Luanne argued with this idea. “I quickly learned that this play was not about man-hating or extreme feminism, but it was about being female and openly accepting what makes women different from men.”

According to Erica, “This event can help women all over the world to feel comfortable in their own skin.” Samantha agreed: “I thought there was something wrong with me...I no longer feel ashamed about my body...I can be proud of how my body looks, feels and responds.”

Some students come to recognize that women have a lot in common. Like Jennifer, they describe feelings of connection: “I don’t feel alone anymore...this experience made me want to work harder to achieve anything I want; not just for myself, but for all women.” Sarah had a similar reaction: “The sense of community among sister ‘vaginas’ allows us to be bold and convey our message that we are strong, passionate, humorous, lovely women...*The Vagina Monologues* delivered me into a state of awe for women in regard to our abilities and rights.”

In some cases, this “sense of community” exceeds the U.S. borders. Rebekah wrote, “I did not know that the issues surrounding vaginas affect all women of all ages all around the world.” Jackie also focused on international issues: “I realize how women in third world countries are being treated, how young girls are being raped by family members or friends...being shy about such a powerful topic is not needed.”

Hearing vagina-stories also helps students understand the cost of violence. Heather observed, “Choosing one’s destiny is very difficult, especially when the world throws things at you such as rape, [genital] mutilation, violence, and torture.” Aly saw how courage could prevail, even in such devastating situations:

Even though horrible things have happened, these women came out strong survivors instead of the victim. It taught me to view my own experiences as not something that happened to me and now I am the victim, but acknowledge that it happened and strive to be a survivor.

Thus, Aly promoted the show as not for women only. “It encouraged men to view women as people rather than objects of lust and possessions that can be used for their convenience. Each woman has a mind and a soul that is beautiful.”

After the show, numbers of my students leave impressed by the activism that surrounded them. Heather described the impact it had on her: “Watching women take a stand, I felt a sense of calmness and peace.” Ali is another example:

Often times I sit back and wait for other people to change the system when it should be me who steps up and takes action. I also need to view myself as a woman of power instead of just a woman who lets life pass her by.

In this article, the word “vagina” appears only fifteen times. There is more work to be done. Imagine joining with people all around the world to give the admission price to stop the violence against girls and women. Imagine standing on a stage to read vagina-stories. Imagine telling your own story and talking about “down there.”

To learn more about the V-Day movement and locate where *The Vagina Monologues* are being performed, visit www.vday.org. Watch the V-DAY UNTIL THE VIOLENCE STOPS video to see how Eve Ensler and her Vagina Warriors are changing the world!

Purpled Aches

by Jennifer Hetrick

Once the boys are back from the car with a set of clothing in a plastic grocery bag, Tammy pulls the tiger t-shirt out, holding it up by the shoulders of the fabric. She lays it neatly over our mother's body, which is already in the costume of hospital bedsheets. Shifting the cotton sleeves around to get the right look, Tammy works her last adjustment, the tiger's paws resting on our mother's belly. A fleece hat is next, and we do not lift her head, so it sits atop her scalp as if she was a doll stuck in a box—all of us anxious for her to be dressed in clothes we might recognise. We want to see her stepping out of her car, waddling over to us at our family owned & established garden centre, smiling, shaking her fist and chanting that she is a survivor and that she has brought us some fudgesicles. Extra short stretch pants follow to fit her extra short legs puffed with fat, her five foot stature hiding from us in this place that never was her home.

“She looks like a snowman,” I say once the outfit is finalised.

Tammy peers as at me wide-eyed and yells, “Mom heard that! You better watch what you do now; she's going to be able to watch you *all* the time now, Jenny!”

Everyone in the room laughs. I don't. My face is hot, twisting, and swollen.

My voice is weak and wet with tears that have been pushing out for the past few hours. I curl my face towards its middle, crying out the words, “Well, she does!” As everyone continues laughing at my half-joke, offering arms to my trembling shoulders, I notice something my siblings do not want me to notice. I am almost twenty-one years old, but I will always be the baby of the family in the eyes of this room, and even if I should somehow grow up, visions of my mother will always be stained a heavy purple. Setting her clothing over her body has lifted up the blankets warming her icy hands—each finger turning from creamy lavender to a scorching and lifeless plum hue. She will not use these tips and prints to test fruits for their

ripeness in Freed's produce aisle, wrapping a twisty-tie around a blurry and crinkling plastic bag, locking in each bit of tree-made flavour. If she taught me how to check for fruit that is soon ready to eat, I do not remember the rules she gave me. I will feel helpless in grocery stores as summer approaches, as I crave a centerpiece basket of nectarines, grapes, grapefruits, but mostly bittersweet plums.

*

In the most unlikely of worlds, fire is not quintessentially of reds, oranges, and yellows trailing down to some fierce blinking of blue melting to white, but a colour scheme of thick-stretching purples and baby-bottom soft lavenders. Each stem of heat is a billowing blanket of warmth and comfort moving through late April blooms of Eastern Redbuds. We will rip twigs and branches off for ourselves and keep to the road of life that is shoving us forward still in sadness that quilts itself just behind our eyes, even though soon our actions will make every tiny flower fall away from us, the season itself repeating the pattern we've perpetuated—a death we'll want to call premature. But that will be what it is despite our selfish craving to control the meaning built behind our lives, and in spring, the bursting colour so contradicting to the rest of the green-set brown landscape around us starts out in the name of *Cercis canadensis*. We will be reminded of rebirth. We will better know that all we love eventually returns to the humble ground of earth to sprout again, whether or not we are familiar with its newest forms, and the gentle push of palest purple is always spelling this out—if we could just move our eyes upward to its many mapped resting places.



Father

Megan Willis

World and Word

by *Elisabeth Donato*

Word is World without the L
Aile - wing
It makes the World soar
And elevates it.

Could it be that,
By clipping its wing,
The Word
Obliterates the World's levity?

Word is World without the L
Elle - She
The quintessentially female
Principle which gives
Life to the World.

Could it be that,
By removing its *Elle*,
The Word
Takes its life from the World?

Words are the burdensome
Ballast
Which the World must jettison
To reach a higher sphere
And reclaim the life it has lost.

The Word is also God
Who created the World
By giving it L
Aile and *Elle* -
Levity and Life.

Note: the French homophones
aile and *elle* respectively mean
“wing” and “she” in English.

grace, a property, shaken up

by gertie faye

you paid fifty dollars on ebay
for an authentic&framed photo
of elvis

with a boner. it was in a box
in the attic, soiled with grey
from years

ago, when

your landlord caught
the house on fire

while trying
to fix the roof.

this cartography

by emily fields

we are all teapot atheists.

—richard dawkins

There is some shape born
in beasts, like trees—we

are pumped through by
blood, a mess

of organised lines. A main flow
begins heartwise, branching

into veiny hands (now blue
with effort, by way of ebony

fingerboards, stressed and
sweated). Is it mere coincidence

that riverbeds, when wet,
appear in similar form—that

creeks fall water into streams,
into rivers? That same bulk

begins as trunk, spanning wide
fingers of bark; limbs

of a thicker form—leaves shrink
this trend and smaller vessels

descend. As cells parade
breathing warmth in bodies,

phloem is dirty tree-blood
(a carrier), and Sylvia left two

deaths at my door today. She mews,
inspecting her more recent kill:

a male cardinal. His feathers, too,
grow in Nature's form—

do we discount God as lazy
in creation, or assume this map

proves evolution in full?



talons

emily fields

Envy

by Amanda Blount

All I see are turkeys,
white
brown.
They are moving,
lost
confused.
They do not know of
food
money.
Just that they must move,
now
never.

A Soldier's Return

by Meghan Marshall

He came home in fatigues
a late night in March
chill, crisp, windless.

His heavy shined shoes pairingly
stole the chipped, warped
creaking boards of
the basement stairs.

Turning the corner,
stepping into the living room
shiny black leather
steel tipped boots dripped
clinging snow onto the worn
blue carpet, shoes just
recently stained of
dust and mud.

That same sweet smile
proclaimed, "I'm home!"
grinning ear to ear
exposing frosted red dimples
high on each cheek.

We got a case that night.
Molson's.
Before he went to war,
he always drank Molson's,
he drank them slow, steady.
Amber fluid this night waved
violently into this throat
succeeding and receding
behind brown glass.

After those first few gulps
I was shocked when he
pulled his hat from his brow.

Exposing man's eyes, war's eyes
previously shadowed by his
stately brim.
Eyes begging to be seduced by
the bubbly beverage.

Friends, drink, this moment
was the opposite of coarse
winds,
bright bombs, harsh suns,
endless convoys and
the stench of rotting urban
death.

I was witnessing a singular
sample
of soldier's spirit splitting, and
splintering apart.
Crumbling like the ancient
secrets buried in the desert.

Essence exhausted appearing
as exposed steel wire
in deteriorating concrete.
The veins of destructed cities,
soldiers, Baghdad, Iraq.

Bleeding onto sand-pressed
streets
is blood that can't be
washed off the hands.
Can't be drained from the mind.

Crimson that now
darkens this soldier's baby
blues.

i received an f in meditation

by jennifer hetrick

his sportsjacket a cousin to straw, he flails
chalk in walking speech, *not clinging, not
condemned*. he trails on. (she) freudian
soup followed by a buddhist salad (is)
light on the leafy greens, the mindfulness
(gone), he says, will unleash (my mother)
our fierce anger, allowing it to dissipate
(she is buried) to bare attention. professor
claims this is what will repair our anxiousness
(in coral-like ash), our swarming, swelling
selves, serving the mind-platter. this is psycho-
(of her favourite) analytic discussion, students
voicing grandiose wisdom, grand bullshit
(colour) itching ankles, and class (the last tone)
should have let out (her wrinkled fingers)
an hour before (her death) it started (i swallowed
inches). asian philosophy (beyond) as a course
distracts cells, this cortex (her life) is shot (like
her jaw) and dragging inside above the neck.



Garden of Remembrance

Jake Yale

