The Battering Ram

Woodstock Day School
PO Box 1, Woodstock, NY 12498
Attn: JD Louis
or
email us at thebatteringramwds@gmail.com

Prose: The Battering Ram gives priority to prose that is between one and three pages long. However, we do accept pieces of up six pages in length if they are of exceptional quality.

Poetry: Up to three pieces of poetry will be accepted per submission. The ideal poetry submission is up to three pages long in full.

Artwork & Photography: Submit up to three different pieces of your work.

Please do not send us your originals. We will not return your submissions.
For more information, visit our website at woodstockdayschool.org/batteringram

Cover Art – By Rachel B. Levi
Printing – DiggyPod, Inc.
Logo – Dashiell Hastings-Ward & Hyde Albright

First printing is complimentary to all who are interested in The Battering Ram.

Send all questions, concerns, orders, inquiries, donations, and praises to any of the contact information listed above.

The Battering Ram accepts submissions year round from students in grades seven through twelve. Electronic submissions can be submitted to our email, and submission guidelines can be found at our website.

Fonts used:
Minion Pro by Adobe
Letter Gothic Standard by Adobe
Adobe Garamond Pro by Adobe

Absolutely no portion of this journal may be reproduced or solicited in any form without express permission from the author/artist. All rights belong to the original author/artist of each piece, and all publishing rights belong to the editors of The Battering Ram.

© 2015
Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief  Sophia Foster
Managing Editor  Lily Mones
Design and Production  Maralina Gabriel
Jazmin Kay
Lily Mones
Events and Publicity Coordinators  Nomi Kligler
Layla Michalopoulou
Hazel Dunning
Kaya Nodelman
Treasurer  Siena Howenstein
Prose Editor  Dante Kanter
Poetry Editor  Jazmin Kay
Art Editor  Maralina Gabriel
Hyde Albright
Photography Editor  Nomi Kligler
Editorial Board  Sophia Hover
Siena Howenstein
Dashiell Hastings-Ward
Lula Butler
Faculty Advisor  JD Louis
# Table of Contents

## Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter From the Editor</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slum of the Earth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema Amour</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Pages from Good ol’ American Hodophilia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiss</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Lips</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man in the Moon</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmund's Dragon</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Imminent Death Playlist</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Máni</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dome of the Pentacrest</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flares of Night</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Español Restaurante Dialouge</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brit Milah</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m losing it” last words of Frank Sinatra</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A Mediocre Poem”</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,642 Sneezes Old</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming to the Skin</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducks on a Plane</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortoise</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Tries To Write Poetry And Runs Out Of Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowboys and Liberals</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Silence</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Great Collapse”</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Incurable-</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Generation, That’s a Rap</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinyl Siding</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She, Hermit</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Ben</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 things about me:</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Kid</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOCKO FLOCKO</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Saw No Humanity</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Risk</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily Mones &amp; Sophia Foster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Warren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew J. Salerno</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella Dixon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza Siegel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam Pratt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annabelle Woodward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaya Nodelman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante Kanter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan Fox</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walden Green</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah Santner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina Mauro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan Siegel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layla Michalopoulos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Rauter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomi Kligler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazmin Kay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey Hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larissa Shaughnesssy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Romero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenora Holler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Bassuk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazmin Kay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bast Sorge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoë Van Tieghem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willa Pruitt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diggy Lessard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tino Muchenje</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza Siegel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mistaking the silence for consent, morphing the mute into meaning

oh you snow
All The World Drops Dead
Body Comparison
Shawn
high school theatre
An Open Letter to Humankind

these thoughts are no longer my own

Kitchen Sink
Lady
Baby Slugs
Girl
The Blues
Set
The Berlin Wall
demetia
Fructose Syrup
Passion
Maps
Alter
Planes
Ode to Dagas
Little Shrine Cat
Eye
No Hidden Prizes
Acrylic Painting
Scene
Berlin Wall 2

Art

Ode to Yayoi 7 Rachel B. Levia
Digital Photograph 12 Will Sloane
Water Color Sample 15 Hyde Albright
Sky 16 Harry Lang
Raccoons 18 Hyde Albright
Female Vulgarity 23 Rachel B. Levia
Untitled 28 Oscar Schmolowitz
Planes 33 Malcolm Grover
Plants 34 Hyde Albright

these thoughts are no longer my own 38 Sara Barber
Kitchen Sink 40 Sasha Williams
Lady 42 Mimi Pouget
Baby Slugs 47 Mimi Pouget
Girl 49 Sara Barber
The Blues 52 Hyde Albright
Set 54 Oscar Schmolowitz
The Berlin Wall 59 Hazel Dunning
demetia 61 Sara Barber
Fructose Syrup 63 Hyde Albright
Passion 70 Emma Taylor
Maps 72 Sara Barber
Alter 75 Daisy Magnusson
Planes 77 Harry Lang
Ode to Dagas 78 Sophia Hover
Little Shrine Cat 80 Olivia Ferguson
Eye 86 Sasha Williams
No Hidden Prizes 89 Emma Taylor
Acrylic Painting 91 Will Sloane
Scene 95 Sasha Williams
Berlin Wall 2 100 Hazel Dunning
Welcome to the second issue of Volume 4 of The Battering Ram!

Throughout the semester we have worked hard on this journal and every one on the Battering Ram staff has played their own crucial part. Between bagel Wednesday’s every week, working LitCon, compiling the journal itself and more, it’s been a busy semester. However, we’re incredibly proud of the end result.

The Woodstock Day School is bursting with talent and creativity. However, we believe that what sets our journal apart is the diversity and breadth of the submissions and work we receive from students across the country and around the world.

This semester we were overwhelmed with the quantity and quality of the submissions we received, and as a result this is the longest edition of The Battering Ram that we have seen so far.

As well as soliciting writers and artists for the best work we can get, we have also worked hard to develop and refine our aesthetic and we feel that it has come a long way this year. We’re excited to share with you all the work that we’ve done.

Welcome to our journal, we hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

Sophia Foster
Editor-in-Chief

Lily Mones
Managing Editor
Slum of the Earth

I once met the resident bum
In Liverpool’s classiest slum
Most of his demands
I could understand
But I think he just asked for my thumb

Nebuchadnezzar II
Ode to Yayoi  
Rachel B. Levia
Cinema Amour

Rolling film and dirty projection
And warm grain marred to paragon.

We sit on a bed,
Clothed and calm and close.
We sit silently, static serenity.

Cut shot: slow zoom

We sit on a bed
Electric silhouette between us.
Our skin is hot,
Our eyes dance and drink and howl
And we’re riddled with grins.

Cut shot: to black.

Jack Warren
2.
When I finally got my keys I was disappointed
The endless highways were crowded by commuters
Working hard for their reward at the end of the day
And the back roads had begun to gather dust
Just another romantic notion spent to pay the taxes

3.
When I finally got my keys I was disappointed
The endless highways were crowded by commuters
Working hard for their reward at the end of the day
And the back roads had begun to gather dust
Everyone realized, some people cared, nobody did anything
Just another romantic notion spent to pay the taxes

4.
When I finally got my keys I was disappointed
The endless highways were crowded by commuters
Working hard for their reward at the end of the day
And the back roads had begun to gather dust
Just another romantic notion spent to pay the taxes
Everyone realized
Some people cared
Nobody did anything

12.
The roads connect us, not just as a means of transportation but as a
shared transportation. We all experience the world with nearby yet
distant drivers. They drive with their friends, their family, or maybe
just themselves. Many drive to work, many drive home, some drive
to events, some drive to family, few drive to drive. With the final
victory for profit, the roads became a means to an end.

17.
On the side of the road is an old cabin
Its windows shattered and its paint completely gone
Someone used to live there
Inside of the house are broken beer bottles and crushed aluminum
cans
At least people still visit
32.
On a road in the back of my mind
A heavy fog blankets the landscape
It rolls down from hills and rests in the valley
Where the air smells of manure
And the hum of the engine harmonizes with the singing of cicadas
I roll up the window
41.
The old rusted axle on your equally old and rusted pickup whines
like an old dog that’s seen too much. You don’t realize anymore;
you’re just happy to have a car, even if you don’t have a garage to
put it in. The forest around you feels open and warm, even though
the tall trees block out the sun. The radio plays quietly in the back-
ground. I can’t tell you what you’re listening to; and I can’t tell you
why you’re driving, or where you’re going, or who you travel with. I
can only tell you what I see on the road, the rest is up to you.
53.
They say I have wanderlust
But I don’t particular care about the wandering
It’s who I’ll be with
And who we’ll meet
And where we look at the stars
And stop to sleep
Or the road we drive through the night on
And talk of our lives
Or just sit quietly
Enjoying the sounds of the road
And the music playing in our heads
Or maybe just each other’s company
They also say I fantasize
And I’m impractical and overly romantic
But if you could join me
Why not live romantically and enjoy the road
Hiss

My father was a snake tamer
He wore a flat one two inches in diameter
slung tightly through the loops in his pants like
Christmas lights pushed in too far on the fattest part of the
tree.
It hissed like metal when he strung it on
carefully as glass beads.
Clicking its sharp spaghetti tongue
anointed with venom,
he would tug it through and gulp in air to fit it well on his
body.
He wanted to be as close to the scales and his skin as possible.
When he pulled it off,
it was like a yoyo string around his circular stomach
except I was left reeling and dizzily disoriented.
Friction hissed like skin on wood,
scales on denim.
He taught it to rear up far above his head
and arch its back
like a senile cat and with the flick of a wrist,
it would snap and sink its tongue into my
bare back.
With its head a semicircle around its extended tongue,
it turned my body off and my
brain ignited with poison and
I felt alive.
Soft Lips

You know I rely on you.
When I can’t, I find my own.
You let me down
When you change clothes,
When you don’t have pockets
Or when it’s the Tuft’s brand.

Always the left side,
Between the black ink pen
And recycled notepaper.
It took me a while to figure out.

I slide my hand in your pockets
After eating lime chips and salsa,
In the middle of dinner,
Coming home from games,
Since I stopped carrying
It in my skinny jeans,
(It’d wear out the fabric),
Before I hop out the car to dance class,
Or when you do the dishes.

Always rolled down,
It gets me every time.
I’m used to mine that
I don’t twist back up.

You always say
“On m’attaque”¹
Each time you feel me dig
Through your pockets.
I never run out, since I have a
Supply of yours and mine.

“Papa, t’as du produit à l’èvres?”²

¹ “I’m being attacked.”
² “Dad, do you have any Chapstick?”
Water Color Sample
Hyde Albright
you are the man in the moon
crouched in the craters
like you curl
inside the hollows
of my
bones

I can barely remember
a time when my
marrow was made of anything
but
you—
if I wasn’t so certain it was
you holding my hands steady
and my
skeleton
in
place
then I might finally
find a cell in my
body not consumed
by you

but still you’ve
taken shelter under my skin
and you’ve become my
stars and my fingertips and
I love you in spite of the
shadows you’ve brushed
under the mat
and the loose floorboards you’ve
overturned
I’d like to think you
love my dusty wings and
inky tongue;
how I can’t help but
stain the words I try to write
with the kind of
blue-black sadness that makes
doors creak and
youth pale
but many moons have passed
since
I’ve seen that
crescent light in my own eyes and
and I cannot expect you to
wane away
with me
Raccoons
Hyde Albright
Edmund’s Dragon
Liam Pratt

blushed, bazed
breath poor and speech unable
pleasure vines strive to be interessed more opulent
heave my heart untender
gorge my bosom my sometime dragon
tender balm of glib and oily art
unchaste i’th’heat
goddess bound in lusty stealth
wind me into him
scourged, cracked villain of mine
under the dragon’s tail
I am rough and lecherous
The Imminent Death Playlist
Annabelle Woodward

For when your plane starts shaking- a collection of songs that would be ok to blast in your headphones as you plummeted towards the earth.

I: Stumbleine, Smashing Pumpkins, 1995

You emerge from the Regal Cinemas with your hands shoved into the wide pockets of Dad's old Barbour jacket, letting it wing out at your sides. In the heavy fog, the towering parking lot lights look like dandelions, encompassed in soft halos of light. A cell tower blinks in the distance. You picture yourself like this, alone on the slick curb of a deserted parking lot, the jacket protecting you. Like this could become your identity.

(2) You remember that time when you were eight, mucking the stable in that same misty light you always imagined would hover over slick city sidewalks. Your puffy red coat, your breath hanging frozen in the air. You began to sing,

*Silver Bells. Silver Bells.* To the gangly chestnut school horse with the sweat stains that wept from her sides, tossing the damp straw and manure into a wheelbarrow. You didn’t see the older girl turning the corner, stopping in front of the chestnut’s stall,

“Are you singing?” she chuckled. You stared at her blankly, trying to muster up some excuse. “Just turn the lights out when you’re done.” You listened to the heels of her boots clacking down the aisle. And you hated her forever. And you hated yourself for doing something so stupid.

Nowadays it’s almost like you need a prescription to go outside, a school project to justify being alone. Sit on a bench by the football field and someone is bound to tap you on the shoulder, “What are
You doing?"

I’m sitting on a bench, butt out.

II: The Pretender, Jackson Browne, 1976

Last year, Christmas became your image of him in that wreath stand. You see him in his hat with the grey flaps that pulled snug over his ears, the gusts of icy wind whisking across his cheeks, the lights strung up on the cashier shed. The way he pulled at the fingers of his work gloves to respond to your texts. And the way the lights would reflect in his eyes. The deep, husky voice of a seventeen year old boy and the red rimmed eyes of a child.

(2) You came home one weekend and found him in his basement. Half of the couch cushions slid on the floor, keeling over in laughter at the profundity of a seven minute OxiClean infomercial.

“It cleans the floors!” he said, pointing to the TV. You nodded.

“And shines them too!”

(3) You pull your knees to your chest and rest your white sneakers on his dashboard, wondering if he sees you just like he once saw Alice. You hum to the radio in the silences.

(4) You can see yourself being an alcoholic,

“Really?”

But like a classy one, the kind that wears sleek power suits and keeps a flask hidden in her desk.

“Like, actually?”

Absolutely. You say it with confidence, arching your back out to stretch. He laughs in disbelief.
“I mean, hey, pick your poison, right?”
Of course, he doesn’t know that if you could just have a swig of anything you’d already be on top of him, peeling off your shirt - another cheap party trick.

Alcohol has always given you the last word, the ultimate punchline,

“I was drunk.”

The next morning you would say it wasn’t you, but it was. It totally was.

**III: Wish You Were Here, Pink Floyd, 1975**

You use your new license to go to the midnight showing of an obscure cult film at the Byrd Theater downtown. One of those celebrated, run down theaters where chunks of foam protrude from the chairs and brown toilet paper is plastered to the concrete bathroom floor. The dreadlocked woman behind the counter’s eye roll is practically a ticket of admission.

The kind of place hipsters are always claiming to love, generously donating their Saturday afternoons to help renovate. A few groups of loud VCU kids saunter in, claiming whole rows in the black. They prop up their feet, a beer bottle in one hand and a cigarette in the other. You decide on a seat in the middle where the chair foam is relatively intact, arrange your purse on your lap, pull out your Twizzlers.

Before the film starts, the lights dim and an organ begins to rise from the stage, along with a man in a grey suit. The man’s fingers fly across the keyboard, head jerking to various songs from the Phantom of the Opera. Five minutes later the man nods to the crowd and makes his exit, sinking into the stage with the rest of his organ. The hipsters whoop and holler, screaming “Deeep!” and “Play that funky music, white dude!” This is all part of the experience, part of
what makes the two dollar admission really worth it.

Halfway through you decide the movie is overrated, even though the hipsters in the back will almost certainly walk out professing its profundity no matter what they see on screen. You find yourself wondering about this middle aged organ player. The fact that he's at a crappy theater like this at midnight probably means he doesn't have a family back in the suburbs. Once he's descended into the depths of the building he probably doesn't waste much time. You imagine his feet quick down the building stairs, through the narrow passageways that speak of sharp corners, damp pavement and dreadlocked young people leaning against the brick walls, waving joints between their fingers. Coffee cans collecting leaks.

He grunts to acknowledge them and spills out into the alleyway, kicking a beer can and lighting a cigarette, eager to retreat into the cynicism that allows him to hover above them all. He slides into his Subaru, keys the ignition. The GPS lights up and the radio comes alive, a gravelly voice clears its throat,

So you think you can tell?

He hops on I-95 and mouths the words all the way home, to an apartment complex where he lives alone. The keys jangling at the door, the clacking of cabinets, the stirs of late evening coffee. He is the only one who hears the sounds of his own existence.

IV: If it Makes You Happy, Sheryl Crow, 1996

You imagine yourself in some crappy student housing apartment. Choppy dirty blonde hair, black worn in sneakers, skinny jeans and a half-buttoned flannel. In the kitchen, Jake has pasta on the stove, and you lean against the radiator laughing so hard that the beer bottle in your hand clings to what shows of your bare stomach. A washboard stomach, because college has made you poor and you love that.
There’s a certain romance in poverty, in scraping half the cream cheese off your bagels, in cellophane-wrapped leftovers sitting in the far corners of your refrigerator. You love it the way your parents said you never would. You want people to fall in love with how carelessly you swing your backpack over one shoulder. The way you sit cross legged on a bench in Washington Square Park, dissecting a sentence that thinks too highly of itself. You want your apartment to be littered with empty beer cans, your jeans to find themselves puddled on the floor after long days at work. You want a bare mattress on the ground for sex and collapsing on, exhausted. The whoosh of passing cars, the hum of the refrigerator.

You love being awake in those early hours, when you can look down on that empty sidewalk and watch the stray dogs crawl out of the woodwork, stumbling home from nightclubs or the library, having falling asleep on their textbooks. You wonder about those people.

How long will you be an (unoriginal) idealist?

Until you can’t afford it.

V: A Long December, Counting Crows, 1996

Cheers to 2015. To a future of potential alcoholism, certain poverty, and the eventual acceptance of that poverty! Throughout this foreign apartment complex you hear people counting down to their televisions, children preparing to go ballistic when the clock strikes midnight.

10, 9, 8. Think of all those people freezing in Times Square. Once the ball drops they’ll spill off onto the side streets, old friends and new friends, leaning on one another as they brisk the crowded sidewalks and catch trains back to Connecticut.

7, 6, 5. Think of your best friend throwing up in the toilet at her grandmother’s New Year’s party. A run in her tights, calling you and
asking if it’s ok to chase depression meds with vodka. No, you tell her. It wasn’t ok last year, either. Straighten up - walk into the living room where all the adults stand chatting, clutching lipstick-rimmed champagne glasses. Be the beloved, walking, breathing college application they want you to be, fulfill your destiny! When they ask where you’re looking: Harvard! When they ask what you’ll study: Medieval Lesbian Calligraphy! Pick the vomit from your hair, leave the impression: What a nice young lady!

4, 3, 2. In the kitchen stands a woman cradling a baby to her chest, patting the child’s back, hushhh. She reaches from the child and grabs a cracker from a nearby plate, loads it with crab dip and devours it. When that baby is 16, you’ll be 32. Hopefully - Sitting at one of those rooftop garden parties, champagne glass in hand. You’re thighs flattened against the brick of some fashionable Brooklyn low rise, high heels dangling over the street. Probably – a telephone nestled in the crook of your neck,

“It’s not that I’m not interested in a new microwave it’s just -” An apartment full of Ikea furniture you’ve neglected to assemble, “Happy New Year!” texts flowing in from people that you should probably remember to call, people who are all probably married and have monogrammed bath towels hanging in their guest bedrooms.

2031 and your shit is still completely and utterly not together – and by 2031, you think there would be some kind of app for that.
Máni

Monday morning in Norwegian soil.
“Hey,” she said to me, trying to be a pig.
“Hi.”
Norway’s a nice place. Pretty. But nice and pretty don’t mean good.
Nice is nice and pretty is pretty but good sometimes isn’t good.
Good is sometimes bad.
Confusing.
She had cinnamon hair and sandpaper skin. Copper eyes and lips
like a deflating tire.
Simple and quaint and nice houses filled the skyline and she and
the ocean filled my eyes.
We’re not in Norway.
Eagles in my ears and pebbles on my tongue.
Crawl back home, little one. Don’t lose your hat.
The birds wouldn’t like it.
I’ve felt the rough patch of skin on your forearm, the acne on your back like brail, the hair you grow on your legs in winter.

I’ve twisted it into tiny mountains with my thumb and forefinger.

On some blue saturday; the giant of the Iowa sky (90 degrees Fahrenheit) winked his bright eyes at our bodies

Laid down on a smooth roll of hill, we let the stops loose from our throats.

Your pulse comes strongest from the tendons in your neck.

When I touch my finger to them you roll your head back and the tendons go taught

the pulse drawn closer to the skin.

Everything smelled like dirt and the bog was branded bright orange by our tiny sun, rising out into the bruised-grey New York sky.

We yawn together: your shoulder to my rib, your hip to her elbow, her shin to his wrist, his skull to his collarbone.

Our hollow early morning talks echo out to the bank across the still water,

and we learn that at five in the morning there’s no such thing as
lying.

I feel the warmth under your skin and the toughness of your muscle
you’re raw meat, all the way through.
The Flares of Night
Ethan Fox

It didn’t matter what he did because he was still involved. Only after, at daybreak, the piles of young men, women, and children came to haunt him: when the survivors returned to the city. Major Bell gave the order: “Pile ‘em up, doesn’t matter how. Just get them out of the way.”

It was Paul Webber’s job to stack; to carry out the order. He didn’t question: he just threw body upon body in the alley. It was tiring work for him; he’d never really seen a dead person before, nor did he know the term genocide. Purging was the word he knew, and he never applied it to the events of the night until he moved to America.

Another body: a man, no more than twenty, eyes open in silent pain. Another body: a fat man, eyes closed, three bullets in his chest, one through his head. Another – an old man. Another – A scrawny boy. Another, another, another…

The bodies in the side street reached the height of Webber’s chest, and he couldn’t keep them from spilling onto the street. And then he was ordered to wait for more orders. Webber intruded upon a vacant house and sat down, listening to the sounds on the street. A woman’s voice came from the door. It was in another language, but she was in despair and her voice was coarse with worry and fright. She approached Webber, speaking, gesturing. She was right up against him, frantically gesturing and pleading in her foreign language. The woman made Webber uneasy so he shouted to shut up, but it didn’t work.

Another body.

Major Bell found Webber still in the kitchen smoking a cigar, the woman sprawled across the floor. “Soldier,” the Major barked. “New orders.”

Webber crushed the half-finished smoke under his boot. The orders were simple, wait for the flares to converge on, and kill, the remaining civilians. There was no logic to this, except for the logic that went through Webber’s head: the people were the rebels and must
be punished. The sky was dark, and the stars were clearly visible. Webber tried to locate the two constellations he knew. There was Orion's Belt, but he couldn't find the big dipper, which meant he couldn't locate the North Star. Webber was still searching when the first flare went up. At first, it was a small number. The flares rose up and burned down. After a few seconds the flares seemed to outnumber the stars, and the whole city was illuminated in a ghostly-warm light. The shadows stirred as the flares sank and hit the ground, building small puffs of sand.

A flare landed down the street to his right, so Webber went to it. Before he got there, two soldiers hurried around the corner, into the house on the right (from Webber's perspective). He heard the screaming of a young child, the laughter of the soldiers, and counted seven shots.

The soldiers emerged and walked casually by Webber, as if nothing had happened; as if he weren't there at all. Webber paced towards the house, afraid of what he'd find. A few feet away, a familiar whistling sounded a missile.

Instinct took over: Webber spun away from the house, dropped flat on the ground, and covered his head. The house behind him was obliterated. Debris pelted the ground around him, targeting his bare hands. Webber got up, dust cascading down his uniform. There was no more house: that was certain. Webber swallowed, and took a step towards the rubble. A piece of wall came loose and tumbled down, and with it, a loose hand that flopped carelessly to the ground, and started to leak the rest of its blood. And then he saw the face of the child with black pigtails in the rubble, a bullet hole through her eye.

Webber panicked, vomited dinner, and ran. He didn't know where he was running, he just ran. Gunfire up ahead. Webber didn't even slow, but out of the corner of his eye he saw a soldier spinning in circles yelling and shooting at the sky at nothing. There was a louder shot, and the constant rattle came to an abrupt halt. Webber kept running.

Eventually, he found a dark place without flares; without other people. He could hear shouts, screams, and shots in the distance. He
collapsed and started to rock back and forth, his arms pressing his knees into his chest. His mouth let out a low moaning sound and his eyes tore apart the endless darkness.

Hours passed, and the sun gently rose. Webber started to walk aimlessly around until he found himself, around mid morning, facing the entrance to the city. There was a crowd of women and children: dusty, defeated, and disoriented. Soldiers were herding them out of the city, when a red Mercedes streaked to the gate.

A man with a megaphone got out; “You are to stop the shooting,” his voice carried across the city. “All citizens, return to your homes!” He got back into his car and drove off. There was silence for a long time, before the soldiers continued to walk out, and the survivors back in.

The survivors lumbered in a downtrodden manner. The majority of the survivors were women who started wailing and moaning, crying out in despair. It was in foreign language, but Webber could tell what they meant from the tone of their voices, and the tears in their face.

Where are we supposed to go? There are no more houses: they’ve been destroyed. My husband! What have we done to deserve this? My daughter! Son! You’ve killed my son! What are we supposed to do?

And Webber didn’t know what else to do except for stand there with a morose look in his eye and watch the survivors saunter back in. So he watched them… and he watched them… and he watched them…
Planes
Malcolm Grover
Español Restaurant Dialogue

Walden Green

*Cm: Camarero
Sra: Señora Sombrero
Sr: Señor Sombrero*

Cm: Hola, y buenas tardes.

Sr: Camarero! Una mesa para dos, por favor.

Sra: Camarero, escucha. Señor Sombrero tiene un corazón mal. El quiere mucha sal, pero no es bueno para su salud. No le de al señor comida con mucha sal, por favor.

Cm: Sí, sí.

Sr: ¿Camarero, que es el especial?

Cm: Hay pescado en salsa con mantequilla y ajo o el rosbif con uvas y manzanas.

Sr: Uno de los dos, por favor.

Sra: Camarero! Juan, mi amor, ¿Por Que no los huevos o la ensalada?, tu sabes que tu tienes un Corazón malo!

Sr: Si mi rosbif, a mi me gusta comer tu…

Sra: Juan! Camarero, cancelar ese orden!

Cm: Pero, El Señor dice…

Sr: … Y las uvas con manzanas, la fajita para o dos, pero para uno. ¿Tiene pan y mantequilla con sal?

Sra: Gerente! Gerente!
Gerente: ¿Si Señora?

Sra: Ah, gerente, gracias. El camarero debe ser despedido

Gerente: ¿Pero Señora, Por Que?

Sra: El dio sal a mi marido!
  ¿Mi Marido?! Mi MARIDO?!
  !!!!! MI MARIDO !!!!!

Señor Sombrero vuelva al cielo. Allí se puede comer tanta sal como quiere…

Señora Sombrero demanda el restaurante, pero esta muy triste…

El camarero esta despedido…

~ Fin ~
Brit Milah

In that last letter you sent me,
You told me about the Bible you found in Alaska,
And how you had found something
That loved you inside of it.
You told me that
You wished I was more like
My namesake,
Elijah the prophet, Eliyahu
Eliyahu, who brought up the dead in Ahab,
Eliyahu, who sent fear quivering into the hearts of that idol god
Baal,
Eliyahu, who sat in an empty chair at ten million circumcisions
including my own,
Eliyahu, that harbinger of eschaton,
Eliyahu who is welcome at every lamb stained door,

Oh Elijah the Tishbite!
Elijah the trumpeter of the messiah,
Elijah angel of the covenant,
Elijah as the archangel sandalphon,
Elijah pronouncer of riddles, exaltations, and maledictions,
Elijah of the Carmelites!

So here I am,
Pleading to you for the answers,
I could not tell myself,
I am always my worst critic,
I have no mirrors;
I broke the last one when you left,
Tell me,
What else can I do to be
worthy of my name?
Would you rather I had been a prophet,
When we sat on the ancient
Spilled coffee burial grounds,
On the bank of the Colorado river
And talked about the mistaken meanings of most blessings,
How sons and daughters
Have no choice but to disappoint?

Would you rather I had been a prophet
When we wandered
In the core of the forest after dusk
Among the azalea marijuana daze
Reading poetry to each other
From little black journals, and little black phones,
Which shined hieroglyphics at the stars they pretended to be?

Would you rather I had been a prophet
When we lay faces down in the graveyard,
Trying to imagine what it felt like to decompose,
And we heard a crow calling and we called right back and
You said you swore it sounded just like your father,
Who died all those years ago?

Would you rather I had been a prophet
When we stumbled on that cluster of ragged homeless,
In a short cut alley way through the midnight of San Francisco,
When my sweat went cold
At the sight of a needle dipping deep
Into that woman’s salt water stained veins,
Would you rather I had been a prophet then?

So here I am,
Lying under the juniper trees of Mount Horeb
Listening for your voice in the wind,
Pleading to you for the recognition,
That I am worth the weights
I hang on the syllables of my introduction,
I’m trying to ask you,
Would you change my name?
“I'm losing it”
last words of Frank Sinatra

Hair tangled on stiff sheets
Tasting stale breath as the sun fights with
A world still longing for darkness
Abandoned blankets in piles on floors
Bare legs and cold hands
Tossing and turning, refusing to believe
Muscles creaking, skin stretching
The peeling paint on the walls
Springs stabbing through thin fabric
Buried faces and missing socks
Wake up! Wake up! You’re missing the ending

Sabrina Mauro
“A Mediocre Poem”

i am
trying to write
like
e.e cummings
but

the only
difference
is
e.e
cummings is good at poetry
but i am not

poetry is cool and i like it hey
this looks like a boot maybe its like one of
those poems like that apple you know that

Ethan Siegel

Photo: these are no longer my own thoughts

Sara Barber
Kitchen Sink
Sasha Williams
Alright, so here’s the thing. It’s late. Or maybe it isn’t, I don’t remember. It always feels late when it’s cloudy and you’re tired, doesn’t it? Either way, I am tired and it’s cloudy and maybe raining so I’m not sure if any of this is going to make any sense at all, but let’s give this a try. No disclaimers, right? Anyway, today I sat down and realized that writing is hard. Like, really hard. Except for when it isn’t. What I’m trying to say is, coming up with brilliant ideas is usually difficult but sometimes it just comes to you like a sneeze. And maybe that’s how we should live our lives; instead of marking our age by years why don’t we mark it by that? Brilliant ideas, and sneezes. Today I’m 8,642 sneezes and 0 brilliant ideas old. Or maybe I’m not, I lost count. But that’s not the point. Remember the moment when you realized the alphabet could be written in any order at all, or that time when Pluto became not a planet anymore? That little burst of panic inside of you is the same one I get when I try to write something “good.” Anyway, today I sat down to do just that and realized that “good” writing doesn’t exist. Good is when you eat something just because you’re bored, or when your parents ask you how your day was at school. How can you possibly describe writing like that? How can you possibly describe that little feeling that you get when you turn a page and can’t imagine what’s going to happen next, or when your heart leaps in the middle of a poem as “good?” So today when I sat down to write something “good” I sneezed and realized that that’s impossible.
Lady
Mimi Pouget
42
“Swimming to the Skin”
Julian Rauter

Once,
when you have carried a great weight for a long time,
you will walkabout to the end of the city
where the silty brown shore reigns in the sea of sand that is the yolk
of the brown Earth.
You will pull on all your laces and regard the sands’ lip,
your head pushing down your feet centimeters below sea level in
the wet ground
your wild aboriginal nudity cold and awake, hairs on end,
and before you plunge you will feel like the humble black-and-red
beetle engorged with dawn
light
after the storm.
My children, you will have a great everything rush from the round-
ed corners of your skull,
the tips of your eyes will point and flash out,
your electric skin spurting jerky, going limp,
so that when your calves meet the sand you forget to remember.
You will be born backwards, delving through the soft that is below
the crust and your ankles
twist the canal between legs
a new bloody old wriggling life absorbed back into the biotic exper-
iment on a ball of dirt
which is really just ground up stars
Oh, my children, the mud will flow into your ears and your hair
will go white as it falls out,
your beard will tangle with twigs that you touch with your ankle
and disintegrate, and you will
swallow them
as your skin grows looser,
the roots will become powder, the civilizations will churn backward
through the layers you have
walked upon.
There will be, after a while, a heartbeat. The pulses of a thousand thousand little servants, worker ants and moles and dirt’s seasoned burrowers, having the last of the meals that will be of them and each other into the big God bang to kill and be killed, you will lose all of your senses but touch your skin wrinkles and disintegrates You are swimming down the cold is become hot, your pure nakedness cocooned upon your own flesh, layers peeling ground hard, you pant but do not breathe any longer, you take your air from that which has come before, from the skin below the layers, the skin is below, you feel her pulsing, it is a call she speaks: “The life is to give” “My life” you will claw and wriggle past the first stones ever sharpened bleeding oxide deposits into the fossil record she speaks: “You are the one who I am, but not the one, for you are part of all” “I am all” “we” “this is we” you are panting now, through your pores, a rasping grating painful detached, stones and ancient war machines scratching, you know then: they swim to the skin when they feel they are no longer a part of all she speaks: “some of my children come back to me sooner than others” “some thrust themselves back, others bring themselves back, others let themselves be carried back” My children, the final movement is the hardest, when you come to
the parts above the skin that
you have walked on most, where the one before you walked.
she speaks:
“I am mother. I am father”
“I am she because she is mother. I am father because mother is not
mother without father, so
father is part of mother”
You will feel scraped, torn, sharpened, but a pulsing.
she is dropping you pulling you downwards, for she is all and you
know that gravity is mother.
Some say the skin is located fifty leagues down, my children, others
say a million.
the pulsing is there and it is mother and mother is father and moth-
er is all and mother is that
which you are from and therefore you are from all.
the pulse, the skin: yours
plunging you crest and emerge in the dimly lit region between the
mud and the skin,
That is not what you are not, it is.
you speak:
“you are my twin, mother, and you have taken the dragon’s eyes to
make the Sun and the Moon,”
“you are my turtle, mother, and you have taken the dirt upon your
back to grow the Earth,”
“you are my Eden, mother, and you have given the snake as you
have given me: All.”
You touch the skin and never harm again
Because another is no longer.
All is you, is mother, is all, is you, is mother
is the skin: yours
Ducks on a Plane
My airplane was filled up with ducks
They must have been brought with a truck
I wish that they’d known
They could fly on their own
As it was I was shit out of luck

Tortoise
The tortoise lay flat on his back
His shell inexorably cracked
He might not have seemed
To be living the dream
But this tortoise was kind of a quack
Baby Slugs
Mimi Pouget
Girl Tries To Write Poetry
And Runs Out Of Ideas
Nomi Kligler

A half empty truth,
burnt, tinged crimson,
and swallowed whole.

An eternal inability
to pursue deeper minutes
in the maze.

An elegantly drunk
and in lust
sweet 16 princess.

A compilation of bodies,
sculpted in the oven,
and smeared away.

An indie movie
of a love story,
hindered by mismatched gears.

An exhibit
of a golden palm,
inanimate, and pure.

Right: Girl
Sara Barber
COWBOYS AND LIBERALS

Jazmin Kay

YOU
said we would go to West
you, dressed in a corduroy button down, jeans stained with rust
we would talk with our mouths slightly sideways
and floss between the cracks with hay and sweet corn
we would sit on a wide porch,
and watch the broads go by- sugar taffy hair poofed up so high a
bug could get caught in and never see the light of day again
broads with hot pink tank tops, bejeweled riding boots
listen to the music we heard the night before at the honky-tonk
we would ride hot muddy trucks and
we would talk about hot muddy trucks
change from red-wine to Bud Light

LOOK
here is a man
the man,
in white leather, a dark green bandana around his neck, stationed
on a mighty brown stallion
its legs propelling wildly up through the air
one thumb around a rifle
the other wrapped around a swirling lasso
a Hallmark saturated sun bursting behind his bobbing head
creating a trail you could follow west towards the Mexican border
with your primetime comedy smile and crunchy sprayed pony tail

but HERE you are- you, hopeless liberal
and you know, I know, we know
you can't go beyond the paper you have been printed on
RADIO SILENCE
Casey Hall

The bullet scrapes your teeth, but you do not bite down. “Accident.”
Ever since, the mesmerist is the teacher, running on fumes and rumors and the prison recreation program that runs every other Tuesday. “Tragic.”
They said this, words that sounded like old truth, step to the side to avoid this mess he’s made on the floor.
He taught you how to set fires, how to separate skin from bone and how to put the paper to sleep so it wouldn’t cry when you cut it. 1951 has come and gone, but you are still stuck in the wisps of its second-hand smoke.
These words are the anti-sadness.
The Blues
Hyde Albright
“The Great Collapse”  
(inspired by Kurt Vonnegut’s “Slaughterhouse Five”)  
Larissa Shaughnessy

Maybe the strange truth  
is that the universe  
owes us less than we believe it may.  
Perhaps we exist to suffer,  
and kill one another,  
and never be told why.

Isn’t it quite possible  
that as we pioneer a rough and rocky draft  
there is one who reads the final copy?  
All things at once  
or nothing at all.  
Everything moving so fast  
it appears still, silent.  
Peaceful.

A fraction of an unfathomable second  
is all we are granted,  
or condemned,  
to watch The Great Unfolding;  
alternately titled  
The Great Collapse.
Set
Oscar Schmolowitz
—Incurable—
Sebastian Romero

The car parks outside a house;
a song about nothing
voices itself under the sound
of two humans.
I touch your bottom lip
with my uninvited finger:
the dusty scent of smoke
impregnated in my skin.
Your incurable blue eyes
stare at my nails
as if evading,
as if broken.
A collection of pavement lights,
a silhouetted silence,
a silver shadow of a night,
a crystallising affection.
Traded continents, for soil;
galaxies, for stardust.
My Generation, That’s a Rap
Lenora Holler

we all want to be gifted
want the spirits of each person who passes by to be lifted
there’s a monkey on your back, guy
it’s all those lies built up, came back to surprise you
there’s white faced robots in black suits
fake wives, front lawns, and backyards
mediocre lives, they’ve got it backwards

the children don’t even realize how much they’ve got to lose
no imagination, no new creations
aimless fear from ear to ear
we’ve told you not to touch that
you were warned once before
run away wolf, before the pigs come
they’re gonna blow down your door

imagine swimming through the floors
walking on water, and cooling off by the fire
we got up when we were tired
everyone would fall in love with a liar

to the fathers whose daughters are uninspired
you’re the one who gave in when she asked for an iPhone
now she can’t leave that damn thing alone
Vinyl Siding

In my little white shirt - I pass the time like a fly on the wall of some corner discount gas station office. There are clouds in the sky and sun on the horizon and the streets are wet with winter castings. The shadows reach towards the west and little kitchen lamps turn on to dull the grey. Opposite the station - in a lot - in the grass, I’ve buried my heart. You will not find it there but come winter, when the ground freezes, I'll build a fire over it, and read poetry. We will tell stories but I won't. I'll wait for the heat to reach down and warm my heart, and think of you.

Joe Bassuk
The Berlin Wall
Hazel Dunning
Jazmin Kay

She, Hermit

Gapping bedsores, rusted like an old hatchet
Skin bitter, raw, a tangerine pith
The shaven wallpaper, spotting blue

Kids
Balancing on the balls of their smelly feet, jumping on shivering shoulders
Perching their dirt-infused nails over the window
To witness a sliver of the
Old waxen, withering lady

Making “get well soon” cards
Elmer’s Glue sealed and Crayola kissed eulogies
Even after the local doctor with the long face declared
she was never sick
Her door stuffed shut, her mailbox oozing
They still exclaim
“Oh the poor withering widow!”

Body still
Lips like string cheese, teeth infested with mildew and uncomfortable silence
Sagging like a wet dishtowel
Sinking slowly into that calico-crusted divan

A piece of human cud

Right: dementia
Sara Barber
About Ben
Bast Sorge

There is snow seeping into the cracks
of the rooftops over Chicago
and a boy with pink cheeks and brown eyes
is looking at you from across the room

your father told you that you never listened
that your ears were never meant for greatness
much like the rest of you

there is smoke in the air
and amber liquid nothing like water in your lungs
and the boy with pink cheeks is whispering
softly
into the folds of your jacket

and he says
“write me something beautiful”
and you do
in the margins between his ribs
and the canvas of his hips

with the ink you pull out of him
and using your tongue as your fountain pen
you inscribe into his skin poetry
that you will never speak aloud.

there is sweat prickling on your forehead
while the heat of the city suffocates you
and a boy with pink cheeks and brown eyes
is lying in your bed

and you say
“tell me a story”
and he does
with words that do not belong to him

your father tells you that you never listen
it cuts through you like a knife.

there is water in the tub in your bathroom
still slightly warm and still drying on the tile floor
and the boy with pink cheeks is stealing you an ending
that has you rapturous in your attentions

your father told you that you never listened
that you were never worth more than what you heard

there are tears in your eyes
that drip down your chin
and a boy with pink cheeks and brown eyes
wipes them away.
15 things about me:
Zoë Van Tieghem

(these are thoughts and thoughts don’t have capital letters - i am not important enough in my own head to warrant the title of Proper Noun)

1. i was sitting on the subway and i found myself staring at the person across from me, wondering what it would be like to be elbow deep in their chest cavity without any latex between my hand and their beating heart. i imagined it would be something like holding someone’s clammy hand. i had to get off at the next stop.

2. i still have an innate instinct to panic when i lose someone in a grocery store.

3. one time my mother looked at me and said “you have to be ready to leave everything in an instant” and then went back to cooking and it still comes into my mind every time i feel content.

4. whenever a car pulls up next to me the number 25 flashes itself in front of my face and smirks, because i have a 25 percent chance of being raped in my lifetime.

5. tomorrow, if i get through the day, i plan to paint my toenails hot pink and then watch how they look underwater.

6. i remember when hunger felt bad, so i learned that if you lie on your stomach, its walls will touch, tricking it into thinking it’s full.

7. at one point in my life i knew how to say “gag me with a spoon” in latin. i wish i still did.

8. sometimes i wonder if my class notes would taste different depending on the subject.
9. your tears have different chemical composition depending on why you’re crying. i wish i had a microscope so i didn’t have to ask you why you’re crying.

10. i spend a lot of time in the middle of the night trying to think actively and inactively at the same time. i spend a lot of time in the middle of the day trying to look straight ahead without actually looking at anything at all.

11. all it takes is for someone to tilt their head the wrong way for me to second guess everything i’ve done that day.

12. i had a dream the other night that I was putting makeup on a mask that i was going to wear. it was my face exactly. with a steady smile.

13. you don’t need to wait for disaster to be nice to yourself, but i do.

14. i pretend not to be looking for you in the hallways. i pretend not to know you’ll never be there.

15. my great aunt told me that there’s a very small blind spot in everyone’s peripheral vision, so i used to stand just to the side of my mother to do things i wasn’t supposed to. the best place to hide things is in plain sight.
When I eventually got to the senior wing, I could see Lucy already waiting there, sitting in front of my locker with a lengthy book open in her lap and her earbuds in. As I approached, she didn’t notice me, too zoned in to her pre-class meditative routine. Or at least what she called her pre-class meditative routine, which wasn’t actually meditation at all, it was literally just reading and listening to music. She had some other slightly bullshit qualities to her personality as well.

I stood right next to her for a solid ten seconds before I came to terms with the fact that she wasn’t going to look up, so I gently kicked her in the shin. She gave a startled gasp and jerked her head up, pulling her earbuds out of her ears.

“Jesus, Em, you scared the crap out of me,” she said. This was unlikely, seeing as we went through this routine pretty much every morning, so she should be used to me startling her out of her zone by now. Her over-dramatization of things was another one of her slightly bullshit personality traits.

Lucy stood up and out of the way so I could get to my locker, dog-earring and closing her book in the process. I glanced over at the title, and saw the words The Stand adorning the cover. Typical. Lucy was into Stephen King on a level that was almost disturbing.

“So do you need a ride to Cole’s thing this weekend?” she asked as I pulled my stats notebook out of my locker for first period. Math at eight in the morning was always a struggle.

“No, I probably won’t end up going,” I replied. Lucy’s reaction was exactly as I’d expected it to be.

“What?!” she cried, almost dropping her beloved Stephen King novel. “We’ve been planning to go, like, ever since he told.”

“I know, I know,” I sighed, not knowing what else to say. I knew I was being a crappy friend by backing out now. The slam poetry competition was really important to Cole and he’d been plan-
ning for it and stressing about it for more than a month. But I didn’t want to have to explain that ever since my mom started having to pay for my drivers’ ed, we had even less extra spending cash than usual, and I wouldn’t have the money for the ticket, which would cost fifteen dollars. Which was bullshit, honestly, for a slam poetry competition, but what are you going to do.

I had to come up with some excuse to tell Lucy, though, so I just said, “My aunt and uncle are coming for the weekend with my cousins and my mom wants me to be there the whole time.”

Lucy fell against the row of lockers and heaved a dramatic sigh. Another dramatic habit she had.

“Well, what am I supposed to tell Cole?!” she almost wailed. “Nothing,” I snapped, mildly exasperated by this point. “I can talk to him myself.”

I slammed my locker door and headed in the direction of my class.

As I was walking, I turned around and called back, “See you at lunch,” to Lucy.

She appeared not to hear me, too distraught over my announcement that I wouldn’t be going to Cole’s thing. I turned back around and kept moving.

On my way to first period, I saw Christian in the hall to my left. He was putting his books into his locker while eating a granola bar. I moved to the right side of the hallway, hoping he wouldn’t see me. I didn’t feel up to it this morning. Unfortunately, he did see me when he closed his locker and turned to walk in the direction I was heading from.

“Emma, wait up!” he called when I made no indication of having seen him or that I was going to stop walking.

Great, I thought. Just what I need. I turned around and acted like I hadn’t noticed him before.

“Hey Christian,” I said, pretending to brighten upon seeing him.

I waited for him to run through the sea of people across the hallway to where I saw standing. Once he approached, I could smell his signature cologne and see right into his dark brown eyes.

“What’s up?” he said, semi-breathless and smiling.
“Just Monday morning,” I replied, trying not to make eye contact but remain seemingly conversationally competent.

He laughed and I felt a pang in my stomach. “So are you excited for the poetry thing this weekend? Cole’s really nervous apparently, so he’s gonna need all the support we can give him.”

Goddammit.

“Actually it turns out I can’t go. I have family coming this weekend and my mom’s making me be there the whole time,” I said in what I hoped passed as a regrettable tone.

Christian’s face fell.

“Shit man, that sucks,” he said. “Have you told Cole yet?”

“No,” I sighed, leaning against the row of lockers next to me. “I’ll have to talk to him at lunch today. I don’t have any classes with him before then.”

“Well I’m sure he’ll understand,” Christian said. “Anyway, I gotta go, don’t want to be late for O’Brien’s class.”

He clapped me on the shoulder and took off down the hallway in the other direction, turning around briefly to wave goodbye to me as he turned the corner. I waved back, but not before he couldn’t see me anymore.

I stood in the hallway, staring after him even though he was long gone. The warning bell rang, and I was suddenly completely unmotivated to go anywhere or do anything. After a few seconds of standing in the middle of a sea of people rushing to get to class, I slowly made my way to room 149 for stats, all the way in the other side of the school. Mr. Benson would undoubtedly yell at me for being for the third time in the last weeks, but I couldn’t bring myself to care.

The first half of the day passed by in a sleep-deprived blur. Mr. Benson was mad at me as expected, I fell asleep in the library during study hall and Mrs. Hall woke me up before kicking me out, I don’t even remember what I worked on in art class, and I definitely failed a test in history. By fifth period, I was more than grateful to get to lunch.

Then I actually got to the cafeteria, saw Cole sitting at his usual spot at our table, and wasn’t so relieved to be eating anymore.
I made my way over to the table anyway, and took a seat. Lucy and our other friend Elena were already there, too.

Cole smiled when he looked up and saw me, showing off his adorable slightly gap-toothed smile.

“Hey, Emma,” he said. “I haven’t seen you all day!”

I forced a smile and replied, “Hey, Cole,” while taking the money my mom gave me this morning out of my wallet. Time to brave the cafeteria food of LBJ High School. And yes, my high school is named after Lyndon B. Johnson.

I got into the lunch line, and returned to the table five minutes later with a turkey sandwich, an apple, jello, and chocolate milk. It’s hard to screw up those things too bad, so I was mildly hopeful this meal wouldn’t kill me. Christian had arrived at the table, as had his girlfriend Lizzie. As I approached, I saw that he had his hand on her thigh in that casual, affectionate way. I sat down, not making any eye contact, and was about to dig in to my aggressively mediocre food when I decided I should probably just get it over with now and tell Cole I wasn’t coming to his slam poetry thing. I put my sandwich down and turned toward my friend, who was in the process of finishing off his quinoa salad. The kid was the fastest eater I knew, hands down.

“Hey, Cole,” I said.

“Mm?” he replied while chewing, glancing up at me.

“So it turns out I have family coming up this weekend and my mom wants me to be there the whole time, so I can’t come to your competition thing.”

Cole’s face fell as I said this, but as soon as I finished, he said automatically, “Don’t worry about it, Lucy, it’s fine. I mean if you have family coming and your mom won’t let you go, I understand.”

He smiled at me before turning away, getting up, and going to throw out his trash.

I looked down at my tray, picked up my turkey sandwich, and tried not to grimace as I took a bite. It tasted fine, but my appetite had been lost.
JOCKO FLOCKO
Diggy Lessard

He’s a rockin’ space chimp rollin’
Through the stars no one can hold him
Down
...
She said he’s the only man for her
Nobody else can have her
...
In Dearing Memory of Jocko Flocko
...
The Champion
...
#91
Background: Passion

Emma Taylor

71
Her thick tightly curled hair was like a raven’s wing as it sat contently on the top of her head. Her dark animated eyes framed by short lived lashes that were dark and chestnut in color. They held sheer innocence and amorousness despite the skeevy setting that surrounded her. The woman, nearly 7 months pregnant, takes her first step onto the bus and takes a deep breath as she searches frantically for two open seats. With her rounded figure there is no way that she can possibly fit into one seat. Her eyes scan the bus like radars.

She’s overwhelmed with relief as she finds a seat near the back of the bus. After she’s well settled in, the bus is suddenly hushed into a deafening silence. Dark brown boots clog their way onto the bus. Hair, the color of sand drapes down the creature’s shoulders and its melanin deficient skin seems to cry for attention for all eyes were locked upon it.
It takes a moment for the audience to realize that this was no demon, though he may as well as been. What stood before them was a man with melanin placed irregularly across his arms and the sides of his face. The dark spots, juxtaposed against his pale skin looks like a wrong answer someone tried to erase but couldn't quite get the job done. His pleading red eyes portray a deep sadness as he takes his first step down the aisle. Single passengers place their bags on the seats beside them as an attempt to prevent this sickly brute from sitting down. To have been cursed with corpse like skin and crimson eyes is a curse placed on those only who have been involved in blasphemous sorcery and debauchery in their past lives.

The man's eyes draw sadder as he makes his way down the bus, one by one, person by person, being denied accessibility to a public seat. This man finally reaches the plump woman, she smiles at him and makes her way towards the window seat.

“God bless you” the man says to her, “I pray that your child isn't born albino like I am. I wouldn't wish this burden on anyone, not even the man I despise the most.”

Two months later, I came screaming into this world with an adequate amount of melanin; and though the world around me knew not of the nature of goodwill, I was born into a family love.

***

I met misdemean when I was three years old. He was six feet tall and meandered his way through life like the careless villain he aspired to be. As I sat on the outside seat of the bus, without warning, he swiped my mother’s wallet out of my grasp and flashed through the doors of the automobile like a ghost.

***

I was surrounded by cold blooded marauders when I experienced my second crime against humanity. An elderly man with limbs that swayed like noodles on chopsticks was carried onto the bus by his family. Upon departure, I noticed his family waving and cheering in jubilation. As the attendees began their round to collect the bus fair, we had already entered the heart of the dessert.

As they became aware of the fact that the old man did not have the adequate amount of money to pay the fare, they stopped
the bus and left him for the birds.

Turning to my mother, I asked “What are they doing to him?”

My mother sighed and said “He couldn’t afford the fare”

It was that moment that I sobered up from the childhood ignorance that had hazed up my perspective of how the world was.

I realized then that as much as we’d like to believe that we live in a pure and lucid reality that is bristling with amorous and undefiled beings; as we approach the world in the autumn of her inglorious and peace ridden life, we must realize that there is still war going on and the innocent lives of people are swept right from underneath their feet; And possibly, my worst discovery that day was that as much as we’d like to stop all pain and suffering in this world,

It is impossible.

Because man is genetically dispositioned to care only for himself and his wellbeing. LOVE is something that we must be shown and taught otherwise, we could live all our lives without ever have knowing it at all.

I saw humans that day, but I saw no humanity.

And I cried.

To this day that memory is stuck in my mind like the scar is to my chest. Over and over again it plays –like a broken record or a gyre of forgotten elevator music artists. The poor old man was murdered right before my very eyes.
Alter
Daisy Magnusson
Flight Risk

when I was
younger I
woke up in cars and felt
like I was hurtling through
outer space;
too fast, too scared to
breathe,
I grasped my collapsing lungs like
paralysis was a game

now I cling to your
hollow laughter and try to forget
the flame
flicker
lick
of your fingertips

I am a
flight risk,
nostalgic for
Sunday comics and
suspension of disbelief

I used to be afraid of
neon hotel signs and
late-night car
shadows flying across
star-strewn walls,
dark cities,
passing each midnight alone

I think there's
much more
to fear
now
mistaking the silence for consent, morphing the mute into meaning

Sara Barber

1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
And knowing this, when I sit in class and try to focus
On the symbols being swiped across the whiteboard
My attention is swayed another way. My body
Attempts to forget how his small fingers,
Charred with entitlement, crept across my thighs,
His face is trapped inside my mind. I can’t
get the tattoo of his greedy expression removed
from my chest, he wouldn’t stop touching my
Breasts, and afterwards, I was blamed,
Shamed, called a slut, compared to litter being
Carelessly tossed out of a moving vehicle.
His parents referred to me as trash but
Didn't consider who taught their son that women’s
Bodies belong to anyone but who resides inside them.

1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
But I’m still trained to arch my back when I sit in class,
Like monarchs flutter their wings when they head south
For winter, maybe I’ll consider coming back if it gets
Warmer but I’m afraid my wings are breaking with
His pins stapling them down to the corkboard.

1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
But it still took me four years to write this poem,
Five to get it right, I’m still trying to make this right.
Though everything feels like it’s been left when
My friends don’t have control of the bodies they’ve
Been trapped within, this shouldn’t feel like a trap.

1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
And there’s still so much silence. I was silent when
He felt warranted to put his hands where they did not
Belong. I was silent afterwards, when his touch had
Branded my skin and incinerated self-loathing into
My fingerprints. There is so much silence, and we
Victims are still wilting like beautiful flowers that have
Been stolen from our fields of innocence, we can’t
Grow if our lifeline has been deprived, when we
Don’t speak up because we are afraid of being
Put down. And I have bruises on my body from
Beating myself up, trying to forget what I cannot.
I want to mend my mutilated wings and slouch in class
If I choose to. I will choose to speak up about how
1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
Because I don’t want any more wings to be stapled down,
Or any more roots being pulled from the ground.
Little Shrine Cat
Olivia Ferguson
oh you snow
Violet Reid

oh you snow
you make me pretty mad sometimes
your cold wet flakes feel like dandruff against my skin
after I play in you, you make my socks wet and my toes like raisins
it hurts me
that's why you make me mad
And All The World Drops Dead
Hazel Dunning

Some man taps me on the knee. “Do you have the time?” He asks. I pull out my phone. “4:03,” I tell him. He nods a thank you and stands up, gripping the metal handle above his head. When the doors open he jumps off with a cluster of other people. The doors shut. Across the aisle a woman is reading Pride and Prejudice on her kindle. Next to her a man plays World of Warcraft. In front of me two children look out the window and whisper to each other, their tired mother goes back and forth between watching them and reading a magazine. An older man's head lolls to the side as he tries desperately to stay awake. A couple stands together, holding coffees and laughing. They lean in and kiss. I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

“One medium latte please.”
“Venti?” asks the barista.
“Yes.”
“And your name please?”
“Gracie,” I say running a hand through my hair. “Or just Grace I guess.”
“Okay, that will be $4.05 please.” I reach my hand into my pocket, pull out a ten dollar bill and smooth it out before handing it to her. She hands me my change and I move over to wait for my coffee.

Looking at the ground.

I rummage through my purse for my house key. I pull it out and jam it into the door. I take off my coat and drop it on a chair with my purse. The house is dark and quiet. Finally quiet, finally alone. I flip the light switch on and go into the kitchen. A bottle of wine sits waiting for me on the counter; I must have left it out last night. I grab a glass from the cabinet and pour myself some wine. I turn on the news, it’s all about the weather and some drug problem upstate. There’s also something about a murder. I finish my drink and lean my head back, it’s grown dark outside.
The ascending sunbeams mark the day’s decrease.

I wander into the grocery store. My cart becomes full of useless food that I know I will never eat while living alone. I get in line in the checkout lane and grab a pack of gum from the rack. I start loading my groceries onto the conveyor belt. Some cute guy catches my eye and I get distracted.

“Ma’am? Are you ready to pay?”

“Oh yes, sorry.” I hand the cashier my credit card and she starts packing my items into bags. Once she finishes I grab the handles and start outside to my car.

Aisles full of husbands.

The wine is on the counter again. I pour myself a large glass. The reporter on television is talking about a murder. Some man was killed near the grocery store. I fear that I will agonize over it and the fact that there is a murderer in the area so I turn it off. I set my glass down on the table and try to stay awake until it gets dark. Take my dream, take my mind.

I drive into town and stop at the park. There is a bench that I like to sit at, it overlooks the duck pond and is a good place for people watching. I sit awhile and then I see my neighbor walking past. “Mrs. Cornelia!” I yell as I hurry towards her. She is dressed in running shorts and a sports bra. “Oh hello, I haven’t seen you in a while, how have you been?”

“I’ve been good,” I answer.

“Keeping busy?”

“Of course, how about you?”

“I’m great, I’ve taken up running. In fact I should get along now, Julia is leaving in a few hours, she’s doing some community service in California this summer!”

“Oh wow, I’ll let you get along then, have a good day!” She waves as she runs off.

The daughter goes to camp.

Red wine is on the counter again. I don’t remember putting it there or even buying red wine. Nevertheless, I pour myself a glass and sit down on the couch. I grab a blanket, the house is rather chilly tonight. The blanket isn’t warm enough so I set my glass down on the table and get up to make a fire. Firewood is stacked
outside my back door in a neat little pile, I grab a load and place it in the fireplace. There’s no newspaper in the house so I check outside. Sure enough the daily paper sits on my doorstep. I bring it inside and start to rip it up for the fire when I notice an article, the title reads “Man Dead on Chestnut St.” Chestnut St., that’s my street. And the picture that goes with the article is a picture of my neighbor’s husband, the one who was sending his daughter off to California. I throw the whole newspaper into the fire and return to the couch. I sip my red wine. So red it nearly looks like blood. There’s a pitter-patter on the roof.

Outside the rain walks.

I return to the park and sit on the bench. A vendor passes and I buy myself a coke. It seems that hours pass by and still I sit on the bench. My coke is gone and I find myself thirsty. I walked to the park today instead of driving. This morning seems very long ago. I throw my empty bottle out and make a decision. I begin to run. I run in the same direction that Mrs. Cornelia ran yesterday. I only run a few yards before I slow down and start to walk. I arrive home shortly with a red face and a cramp in my side. I collapse into a cool shower.

I walk through where they ran.

The counter is red. My bottle sits there. Unopened. I look in the cabinet. There is no food left somehow. The cupboards are empty, as if nothing was ever there at all. I grab the wine and rush out to the car. I start it but don’t move out of the driveway. I rummage around in the center console and pull out a bottle opener. The drink helps me breathe and before I notice it’s half empty. The grocery store is about to close but I hurry through the aisles and grab milk and eggs and some snacks. I load my bags into the back of my car and walk to the park with the wine. The bench is away from all of the park lights but I manage to find it. I think I’ll stay there awhile. We people be darker than blue.

I pull on jeans and a sweater and grab my wallet and phone. Lucy’s has the best food in town and some nights they have happy hour. I get there at 5:30 and order a glass of wine. The waitress is pretty yet deflated. She’s someone who was meant to be important but got stuck, and doesn’t know how to leave. I ask her for a
salad with a side of fries. She nods her head and retreats. A young couple sits in the booth across from me. They share a milkshake and whisper sweet things to each other that won’t matter in twenty years. Someday they’ll realize it doesn’t last. I zone out listening to everyone’s lives happening around me, the noise never stops. My eyes morph from focused to unfocused.

Look into the lightbulb.

I sit up in bed and rub my eyes. My face feels stiff and tired. My eyes are dry and bleary. Coffee waits for me downstairs and I run outside to grab the newspaper as I wait for it to brew. The cover reveals yet another death. Two people were killed this time. A young couple. The article says they were found missing their hearts. My head pounds, my body aches. I feel sick. The buzzer goes off, signaling that my coffee is ready. I pour myself a mug. The coffee is very dark. My first sip tastes metallic and a bit salty.

But oh heart, heart, heart.

I wake up on the couch; dazed and confused. It is pitch black outside but the lights are still on in my house. I trudge into the bathroom and splash some water on my face. I look into the mirror and notice the stain on my shirt. A bright crimson liquid is splattered across me. I look like I’ve been shot. I lift it to my nose. Wine. I must have spilled it. In the kitchen I find another mess. It looks like a war has taken place. The floor is blood-red. The counter as well. My bottle sits untouched.

The ant has made itself illustrious for,

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.
Body Comparison
Zoë Van Tieghem

The human skin
replenishes itself
every 27 days.
I don't like it when
you haven't touched me.
When I'm with you
I find that
I let my eyebrows
“live”
because you don't really care
what I look like.
You taught me to see rings
on planets
instead of stretch marks
on my hips.
Galaxies
instead of the bruises on my knees.
lines, veins on leaves
instead of the ceases on my hands that
a palm reader
once told me
were from worry.
My scars are
trenches
made from earthquakes.
1 is too few
and 1,000 is too many
but I don’t need any
when you’re around
and I understand that when there’s nothing left
except empty space
that there’s nothing I can
break
but I kind of like the excitement
of having to be careful
so things won’t shatter.

The world
has left you
bruised
raw
and wounded,
and you aren’t at peace
with your body
yet you still want
to survive
me.

Show me my own.
You practice being resilient
every day
and I want you
to teach me everything
you know.

Eye
Sasha Williams
Shawn
Will Cullen

Shawn, the gravekeeper’s son
helps his father work.
Shawn, the grave keeper’s son
is a good boy
  everyone in town likes him.
Shawn, shawn, the gravekeepers son
was regarded as rather dull.

Shawn would do silly things and was scared by the smallest of shadows.

Shawn, Shawn, the gravekeeper’s son
helps his father work.
Shawn, the dull boy
hears his father complaining.

Shawn, Shawn, Shawn, the dull boy
knows business is slow.
Thats ok, because Shawn, Shawn,
  the dull boy
  the gravekeepers son
  helps his father work.
No Hidden Prizes
Emma Taylor
It begins with one, two and three sitting around one of those plastic tables, the kind with that terrible texture. The kind that’s almost impossible to write on, especially if you’re using a pencil. The room smells like fresh paint and microwaves, like the food that spatters on the sides and is left to an eternity of re-heating until it’s burnt into nothingness. The floor is cement. Outside my brain everything is normal. The voices seem to escalate and decrease in waves, as if I, number two, am spinning on my own axis, separate from earth’s.

A sarcastic comment is made by the tall girl who sits to my right, number one, followed by how much she’d like to get out of this place. She’s announced that this is her last year annually since the fifth grade. A small laugh escapes the girl next to me on the left, three. I turn my head.

She immediately wipes the smile off her face and wraps her arms around herself. She’s forgotten again that she’s not supposed to be smiling. She reprimands herself and looks at the floor. If she doesn’t say anything, look at anyone, or show any sign of happiness, maybe someone will ask what’s wrong. She runs her hands over the cut on her forearm that has just recently scabbed over. Desperately wanting someone to notice. Everyone does, but no one wants to see.

They advert their eyes and assume their regular positions and dialogue. She sees me staring but doesn’t look at me. I try to dangle the memories of elementary school friendship in front of her, so maybe she’ll meet my eyes. It doesn’t work.

The noise still comes in waves. The fluorescent lighting seems to flicker along with it. It should be snowing, I think. It’s easy to pretend it is with nothing but three little baby-blue-happy-pills in your stomach, swimming around making my brain smile and my stomach lining grow wrestling muscles. My cuticles are lunch and I wonder what would happen if I ate my whole hand. Ew,
that’s weird. She still won’t look at me.
Number one takes note of the face I’m making and waves her hand
in front of me, waking me from a trance.

Four years old on a swing set. Barefoot. I ask her, for probably
the thousandth time… *If you could have one wish, what would it
be?*

*I wish I could fly.* She responds.

I already know the answer. I almost say it with her. I wonder
if she still wishes she could spread her wings and really get way
from here, once and for all. But if she really got the chance I don’t
think she would, not yet. I think we were all pretending to be ready
for things we weren’t.
The dressing room is a ten-by-ten sweatbox, tucked behind the theatre like a rushed postscript. Tonight it’s swollen with girls who will squint into the grimy triptych of mirrors and try to summon up something more substantial than our soft-edged suburban selves. We are just shy of seventeen, three years older than Juliet was but still painfully adolescent – the most blood we’ve ever seen is in the red-and-white carnations of nosebleed Kleenex or staining the sanitized, candy-colored fluorescence of discarded tampon wrappers.

After curtain call, we're slow to peel off our adopted identities; loose stockings and safety-pinned skirts slough off like fruit rinds. We trade our sparkling inventory of heroines back for the mundane, forced to slip back into earthly roles, but sometimes we can keep vestiges of sanctity – the swatches of eyeliner we won’t scrub off, the viscid fake blood still pooled beneath our fingertips. We leave school behind and pile into each others’ scruffy sedans to drive with the windows down in winter, cranking up the tinny speakers so that basslines spill into the street like wanton heartbeats.

None of us know whose house this is. The party threatens to be dull until someone, in the crux of juvenile cliché, unlocks Pandora’s box – (portrayed in this and every production by the absentee parents’ liquor cabinet.) Even here, we are consummate performers. The football team might throw ragers, but we have rituals – more than a bunch of kids wasting our youth in a rich boy’s basement,
we're a goddamn *bacchanal*. The Greek myth of Trophonius says that those who the gods love die young, and we're hungry for divine affection.

This is the closest we'll ever get to transcendence. We're good churchgoing girls who'll overdose on our prescriptions of sin for one night; we talk grand and breathily about how we'll all leave this town one day even though we know that most of us won't. The warm flush in our throats lets us pretend we're nascent stars – or are we supernovas waning into slow-burn death? It doesn't matter. We've made peace with our teenage myopia. Let's worry about absolution another day. Tonight, we'll dole out cheap kisses and ersatz *i-love-yous*. None of us could tell you a thing concerning the cosmogony of high school heartbreak.

We were looking for something holy, but we'd settle for this alcohol-soaked apotheosis. In the kitchen, Lady Macbeth is downing vodka cranberries and she's the most beautiful girl in the world – lips incarnadine, face alight with the afterglow of booze and unbridled ambition. Her hands are sticky and gummed pink with spilled drinks, but she won't notice it until morning.

2010

No one ever goes to the eighth-grade dances. They're held on dingy, profane ground – wilted streamers veil the cafeteria chairs, and the boys keep leaving bruises on our glitter-painted toes.
I have recurring nightmares where I am a girl in twelfth-century Provence. My parents, upon my pronounced refusal to marry, will decide to ship me off to a nunnery but I always barricade myself in my bedroom and cry hard enough to wake myself up. I still wince whenever I see a convent.

We are wannabe soothsayers, practicing augury in pastel strip malls. Our idea of adulthood is giving out pseudonyms at Starbucks.

Most of us will splinter off into different high schools. In three years, I’ll no longer wear glasses. That girl from sixth-period science will end up hanging herself from the railroad bridge.

At night, I strand wishes onto the stars threading the slim necklace of sky and write romance novels in my head.

In my mind, we are still the embryonic goddesses of the parking lot, resplendent in plastic bracelets and dollar-store lip gloss, waiting for our mothers’ minivans to come take us home.
Scene
Sasha Williams
An Open Letter to Humankind
Chase Spearance

We are those who dwell in the darkness, those who no one notices but for a disgusted glance to one of our number huddled in an alley, or to another so high off music and bright colors it seems she will never come down, or to a third dressed in scraps and flaunting her curves and her glinting teeth on street corners at your city’s darkest hour. You don’t care for us. No one does. That’s how it’s been since the cities crawled in.

The Fae used to be respected, included, recognized at least. Feared, maybe, and for good reason. Hardly ever trusted unless you wanted to wake up cold and alone and naked, not only of your clothing but of all your worldly possessions and of everything you ever thought you had the right to feel.

But that was when you people believed in us.

Now, we’ve been reduced to animated baby faces atop flower petals in books made for little girls, to please them, not scare them. We’re nothing but a concept brought out at playtime with cloth wings and body glitter made out of plastic and pain that will never be experienced by the one upon whose face it rests.

Those little girls will grow up wanting to be us, but what they don’t know is that we are exactly what their parents don’t want them to become. Go to bed early, eat breakfast every day, little one, or you won’t be able to concentrate, won’t get good grades in your useless brainless lessons, won’t be successful when you grow up. You’ll end up a waif in an alley or crouched shivering in an abandoned house with 6 other people who are all doing something that is to some degree illegal or unsavoury, and most of them are pixies eager to eat of your flesh when they’ve finished with their latest distraction.

The rate of unsolved missing persons cases in the United

96
States is very close to the loss rate of herd animals taken by large predators on the savannah. Did you know that, little children? Do you think all the so-called large predators here in your beloved New York City are simply horrible men in dark coats? Well, some of them are, but under those dark coats hides scaly skin and claws and sharp-toothed smiles tinged with blood.

Sometimes groups of stupid teenagers decide they’re going to explore abandoned tunnels and they never come back up because they’ve mistakenly wandered into a too-bright but too-dim room where the music is too loud but you can’t hear the words and where one of us who is figuratively floating dances with her eyes and throat and lungs filled to the brim with color and sound and uncanny light and you are just another soda can to be drained and crumpled on the questionably stained floor.

Years and years ago she might have ushered in the winter’s frost but with all the soot and electricity and gasoline it tastes of now she is sick practically to death and will do anything to keep herself warm.

The one who is slumped in the darkness clothed in rags hardly even fits in with us, let alone you. Under the orders of the one who breathed life into him he could have built civilizations and lifted kings once upon a time, but now he is lucky to find a sympathetic face turned towards his forlorn one, simply because he is hewn from clay and his tears are muddy dribbles out of pebble eyes that do less than nothing to attract sympathy from pretty girls with orders to give and bread and diamonds to give away.

And the one who sways at 2 am for a chance to taste gold again, though nothing is made of gold these days, she lived out her prime kicking her legs into the sea, crooning through the mist to ships with tattered sails until the weathered sailors threw themselves overboard to offer their soft necks and their clinking pockets, but since the sea is nearly acid to her now where she could reach it, she stands here instead and goes home to sleep in a bathtub when
the scorching sun comes up and threatens to push the thick air into her skin.

And I? Why, I am the most fallen of all. Angels and demons do not exist, at least not in the same sense that you know of them, human, but if I could have fallen from heaven to hell, it would have been less painful than the natural order of your terrible concrete and smog and radiation pushing into my lungs and scraping its way beneath my fingernails. I am the closest you will find to what those little girls are dreaming of, but also the furthest away. So long ago, longer than you can fathom based upon your limited lifespans, all you tiny pinpricks of electric light under a sky of choking stars, I might indeed have surrounded myself in dresses sewn from the forest’s prime selection of greeneries. I might have danced through the dappled sunlight, laughing, flitting from the trees to the forest floor with the ease that you employ stepping from grimy platform into speeding metal death machine.

Now I sleep inside layers of wards daubed over the walls and across the door of my basement apartment but every day when I wake up I feel that it is not enough because instead of spirits and demons doing their damnedest to crawl in through the woodwork, I have your criminals who are somehow so much worse, because they don’t care who they hurt. I have your smoke and your fire and your chemicals and I have your disgusting heavy feelings that seem always to be so sickeningly, shamelessly unwarranted.

The seemingly sole advantage of the here and now for us is how superior we really are to all of you, though you don’t know it. We can do things you’d never even dream of because they would scare you too much. We can see how your city moves, did you know? It’s like seeing an aerial view in overlay all the time, but one so comprehensive that it might as well run straight from the veins in my fingers. If your city’s veins are its streets, are you and your superfluous metal boxes the blood?

What sort of blood disease do you suppose you have infect-
ed it with, with your exhaust clouds and hour-long traffic jams?

It is really more easily likened to a coral reef or a colony of fungi than to a living body with blood and organs and shallow breaths but if your city was, indeed, a great animal, how could it breathe when you have isolated its sources of oxygen to potted plants and tiny pockets of what you hope will come across as oases when really even if, sitting in the center, you cannot hear the outside air’s burdensome cacophony, you can still feel the pull of chemical dust through your lungs?

Well, you can’t. We can.

And it’s still killing you more quickly than it’s killing us.

Humankind, you are ruining it, and I am not even sure what it is any more.

When it was the forest, you chopped it away. When it was the starry night sky, you choked its light with the byproducts of your own. When it was simply nature as a concept, you stabbed signs into it and called it a national park and now when it is just us, the Fae who you once so feared, us and those other, less definable creatures living on the ever-warping borders between our world and yours, just trying to live, you seem determined to stop us even if you don’t know your actions’ reasoning or consequences.

And I can’t stop this. We beings of magic, even if we banded together all for one, probably could not stop this, and if we could, we could not reverse its dreadful progress.

So all I ask of you, humankind, is one thing.

Next time you travel to the country at your leisure, look up at the stars.

Next time you venture into one of your city’s so-called
parks, those optimistic oases, look around at the lonely trees, straining for more than what you have allowed them.

Next time you are alone and the sun is nearly rising, turn off every light, every appliance, every unnatural thing in your expensive brownstone and sit in your meager backyard, listening to what little you can hear of the bugs and the plants and the soil.

Sit there, humankind, and listen, and think about what you’ve done.
Special Thanks To


We truly appreciate your help and support!