The title Burn is evocative of a magazine started in the 1920's during the Harlem Renaissance, reflecting the principle of representing a new voice. Then, the aim was to expose the ideals of the young African American; and in our position we, in that same vein of inspiration, are attempting to expose the ideals of our collective generation.

FIRE...flaming, burning, searing, and penetrating far beneath the superficial items of the flesh to boil the sluggish blood
FIRE...a cry of conquest in the night. warning those who sleep and revitalizing those who linger in the quiet places dozing.
FIRE...melting steel and iron bars, poking livid tongues between stone apertures and burning wooden opposition with a cackling chuckle of contempt.
FIRE...weaving vivid, hot designs upon an ebony bordered loom and satisfying pagan thirst for beauty unadorned...the flesh is sweet and real...the soul an inward flush of fire...Beauty?...
Flesh on fire-on fire in the furnace of life blazing...
-Excerpt from FIRE!!!

In its conception the idea was to say something new and fresh, to hear out the voiceless. Ignorant to the brutality of that tone were we, the unspoken becoming violent in its silent repression. That is when the idea grew beyond an effort to innovate, and into an effort to cultivate, to consider the unconventional (in its honesty, not its form) as something to be wedded. And so, we tended to those gardens in the hope of giving status to the truth, not life, as it is always subsisting however meagerly in the dirt of existence. Here then is the purpose of Burn Magazine, to develop the improper, untold truth through representation, to nourish the seed of ugly, brutal, defiant BEAUTY that is reality.

Burn Magazine - A Boston University Undergraduate Literary Magazine

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—from Burn, with love—
It's Real
Jonathan Chin

Satan has burned the city down. Ali
I hope where the cold ash you are not
I hold one syllable left in your plot.
Farewell's the evidence. Read it slowly.

What could love do dissolving in hell fire?
I'll be consolled by a small funeral.
In God's Street that angels controlled.
They led me to the earth you were under.

A refugee, O Yaar, comes afterwards.
He heard of a growing Ghazaal untold.
My heart is my former god so I sold
him a lie Shahid. I stole your words.

Each existence will unfold in real time.
Beloved I'll be paroled in real time.

Jonathan Chin,
for Agha Shahid Ali,
taken from his words

for Daniel Hall
what must in bold in real time.
in time.

Cool clwed off like shirts of
real time
would choose: then ?

longing in real time?

The sucked waves of our
real time

him alive so lonely
in the

The things in

Please empty pockets of keys
hell in the

of gold in real time.

again for forlorn.
Salvation was bought but sin time.

The throat of rearview and sliding
of
now unraveled real

the incessant of silk felt
old in re time.

Her heart must be her body's
What lets hands rake the in real time?

Dear Friend, the

in real time.

Agha

Severed Tongued Wife
Alexandra Rosloff

She has come to measure
Her life
In lipstick stained coffee mugs
That leave rings on her table
Worn panties without her initials on the tag
That wander into their laundry
Blind hairs in ringlets on her pillow
Where her straight brow locks sleep
And mysterious charges on her credit card
For jewels she'll never see

Her life is as faded as her quilt on their bed
Littered with its wine stains
Tears and dried mucus
A monotonous cycle
Of sealed lips and silent seats
Bitter smiles, too much knowledge
And a gentle kiss each morning until I got to your bedroom
I wanted to be able to find my way back
like my father always says
mud is better than bread crumbs
strange but true and oddly reassuring

In the morning you
shuffle your hair and straighten your feet
you were always a little disoriented
in the early light
it was too pink and soft for you
and your angular skeleton
it makes you look so out of place
a red dress at a funeral
and you shout a little in the mornings too
as if your throat forgot how to open properly
during the night
and your voice is gravelly
from all those stones I shoved down it
one must have been near your voice box
so you cough grimace and spit out a rock
roughly the size of your trachea
but you never minded my pain
or my mean streak
my pathology never concerned you much
tattoo my eyelids
you say softly
(you must have figured out your throat by now)
I sit up abrutply
I love this game
this truth or dare
seeing how far the other will go
I have many pockered scars from past times

In chronological order I lost blood from:
just above my left shoulder blade
the knuckle of my ring finger
the outer edge of my right eye
and my lip is still slightly swollen
from last week

Uncited
Mary Sullivan

I want to know what you're smoking
because it gives me such a pleasant feeling
like my legs will never have to work again
I don't want to smoke
But I want you to
Because I like the weight of you afterwards
You're heavier
around the edges
and rougher
behind my ear
you never had much trouble finding that spot
and by doing that you mess up my make up
I hope you're not mad that I didn't take
my shoes off
let's be clear about this
you never touched me if I didn't want you to
this sick game we play
this violence we seem to need
to make each other's toes curl

you come back with a needle and a pen and a match
but I can't do it
and you love that I can't
you love the boundaries we cross
and that we don't
Your eyes dilate to black pools
and I fall for it like always

Drive to School

Andy Hoglurd

Iran got up at a quarter past 7 knowing damn well his math homework wasn't done yet. In fact, he hadn't even started it. Such dalliances were typically reserved for the bus ride to school, but, in an unfortunate turn of events, he had been suspended from the bus. His "fucking redneck bus driver" had said he was "causing shit" and requested he not return until he learned his lesson; he had been caught eating candy, which was strictly prohibited, and was quite repentant about it.

Now he resorted to mooching whatever ride he could from available adults. Today Aunt Tanya wasn't going into the hospital until mid morning, so once they both showered and grabbed a snack it was off to school.

That math homework wasn't getting itself done. At this point, if he were to get it done at all, he'd have to cheat off someone who'd done it in homeroom. Desperate times call for desperate measures. Cerrainly wouldn't I've been the first time. Yeah, this bus suspension thing was really fucking with Iran's meticulously planned mornings. No more mid afternoon M&M's—they always get you into trouble.

Iran rolled outta bed and heard the shower was on. Tanya was up, he'd pop in there next. "But first..." Iran slinked over to his desktop computer. He listened for activity from the kitchen—nothing.

Placing his hand on the mouse, he shook the computer awake. There was a folder within a folder under My Documents labeled Iran's. He clicked it as his winamp opened up and began to play some Missy Elliot. Within the private folder lay several ambiguously named movie files: PMLA, HRNF, JLO MNTR. Choosing JLO MNTR. Iran sleepily rubbed his face, then adjusted his pajama bottoms. A nude Jennifer Lopez appeared on screen. Iran clicked OPTION: Repeat Video.

His erection quickly grew.

Ra ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta
ta the question's like that
he's got his thing just right

The typical eighth-grader, Iran enjoyed self pleasure almost as much as he did routine. Jennifer Lopez at 7:30 in the morning fused both pursuits.

Work it. I need a glass of wata
Boy oh boy his good to know ya

The shower water was off. Soon, Iran's private time would surely be cut short. Better finish up.

The door opened too late.
Out walked Aunt Tanya in nothing but a towel. Iran was quick to pinch his thighs, preventing his boner from being noticed. To the precum mark, he left for fate.

Iran acted quickly, but cautiously, clicking away the nude scene and nonchalantly turning down the rap music. Staring at a naked Jennifer Lopez, then seeing his 35-year-old aunt in a towel. Iran could not help but get a few wisps crossed.

"Go on, motherfucker," said Tanya.

"It's had enough you got your ass tossed off the school bus. Meet me by the car in ten minutes.

Of course, Aunt Tanya was much darker than Jennifer Lopez. She had dark chocolate colored skin like an African princess and a very individualistic sense of style. "Fuck Vogue and BET," she said every once in awhile, "I'm not their fucking slave."

Iran was lighter skinned, looking like he was middle eastern, even though he had absolutely to blood in him whatsoever that tied him to an Arabic ethnicity. He was biracl and that, mixed with his sometimes hapless and argumentative beliefs, sometimes led his fellow classmates to dub him a "terrorist-in-training." Iran resented this, not only because he was half black (and, in his words, "blacks don't do shit like that") but also because he was considered himself religious. Unlike most of his classmates, Iran actually attended church frequently too. He didn't go every week, as he didn't always have a ride, but wasn't a mechanical Christian, nor was he the warped kind that ate alone at lunch.

Grabbing a few dollars out of the "Anyone" money jar for lunch, Iran made a mad dash out the front door, nearly forgetting his backpack in the process. His hair was still wet from his shower but Aunt Tanya was out in the car waiting and he didn't even keep her waiting. She was strong-willed, never afraid to drive off and leave someone at a specific destination if they disrespected her as to make her wait. Iran flew out of the apartment complex doors as she began honking.

"You lucky... the second honk, I would've turned off the car and gone upstairs back to bed," missed Tanya, wearing a tight green shirt and jeans. "I could get another two hours of sleep, you know."

"Yeah, I know. My bad," said Iran sincerely, putting the belongings in his backpack together.

"No, it's okay. I gotta few errands to run anyway." Tanya gave Iran a look as he carefully arranged his textbooks and smiled, "Get all your homework done?"

Iran looked up in surprise, then looked out of the window. "Yeah," he coolly replied.

"Bullshit. You played video games until past midnight. I heard you..."

Iran laughed and looked down at himself.

"Naw. all done."

"Okay, what'd you have?"

Assignments. classes.

Not missing a beat, Iran answered:


"Alright alright," laughed Tanya.

"Fine. You remembered the work, doesn't mean you've done it. You win this round. I guess. Bastard."

Iran put on the radio and turned it to HOT 99.5. It was the Hot Morning MESS with Mark and Kris. Their sidekick, the incorrigible rascal Teapot Tim, was moaning about one of life's idiosyncrasies.

Tanya scowled.

"Ugh, not this," she complained. "I heard this crap at work a few weeks ago. Shit was nasty. They were talking about the size of this guy's dick, devoting like an hour of their shit to it. I thought I was gonna hurl, for real."

Iran perked up hearing Kris Gamble's sensuous, chuckle voice. She was definitely a milf.

"Oh shit! I saw this lady. You hear the one talking?" said Iran excitedly.

"Yeah? Where?" asked Tanya, turning onto 137 Laurel Bowie Road.

That one concert me and Ravi went to during the summer. They were giving away prizes and tickets and stuff."

"Cool. Did you win anything?"
“No,” Iran softly responded. “They had age limits, I think. Shit, shit like that.”

“Ah, I see.”

Iran sighed and looked out the window. Bowie was laid out in such a funny way. Within blocks of one another, the dirtiest, creepiest apartment complexes known to man, real hellholes, then, a freshly built home, sitting on a majestic, grass covered hill, butterflies—something a broker might’ve just moved into, on top of buying his twin daughters matching Porsches.

The sweet nothing’s of Kris Gamble faded away. Eminem had a new tune out, something from his new movie. It was pretty catchy, with a beat that attracted the attention of both Tanya and Iran.

Tanya slammed on her breaks.

“God damn this traffic. Fucking people… going to their jobs,” she complained. “We need another road to relieve some of this beltway traffic and something.”

Iran took out a bag of Tropical Skittles he had in his backpack. Tanya glanced over at him.

“Uh, what is that?”

“Skittles.”

“You didn’t eat breakfast?”

“How could I, with you rushing me like you do?”

“Yeah, okay. Hit me up with some Skittles then.”

Iran went into the bag, pulling out a few pinks. Tanya looked displeased.

“What do you think this is?” she complained. “I don’t want pink. You know I go blue or I go home.”

Iran nodded in agreement and pulled out a few that were blue.

Kris Gamble made a joke about the national security advisory levy for the day, but neither Iran or Tanya heard it. It could’ve been blue. Or pink.

Tanya pulled in to the parking lot of Benjamin Tasker Middle School. The buses, more or less, already had departed. Kids mingled out in front of the school, they wouldn’t be allowed in for another couple of minutes.

“Who is Benjamin Tasker?” asked Iran, curious.

“Psst, I got no clue.”

Tanya pulled the car right in front of the school, put on the brake, then hit the unlock button.

“Did I mention I think we gotta half day today?” smiled Iran.

“Get out. Have a good day.”

Iran sucked his teeth, smiled again, then grabbed his backpack.

“You got lunch money, man?”

“Yeah, I got money.”

Iran got out of the car and slammed the door. Tanya paused to make sure he got where he was going.

Iran looked to his far left and saw a few friends snickering, reminding themselves of how he, that badass, had lost busing privileges. To his front right, the thick double doors, was that fine piece of ass Ashley. She was looking good today and was especially fine, considering she barely had tits yet. Iran laughed to himself and tossed his backpack to the ground haphazardly.

Suddenly, a crack of thunder. Iran fell to the pavement. It felt like a thunderbolt had hit him in the chest.

He looked up to his right. Ashley was laughing. The loud crack had startled many of the other kids away.

Iran figured pretty quickly he had been shot. He looked down, seeing a hole in his shirt. Blood was beginning to leak out.

He looked toward the school road. He could see his aunt was still parked there. She had seen him fall.

“I’ve been shot,” called Iran to his aunt, almost not believing it himself. The burning was more intense now.

Tanya stared at him from her rolled down window. He was full of shit.

“Come here and walk over then,” said Tanya, half-interested.

Iran did as he was told. Getting up, he felt a little light headed, but not too bad. Kids and school administrators were beginning to run around like chickens with their heads cut off.

Iran approached the car. He muttered something.

Tanya gave him a once over, then saw the blood trailing out his side.

“Get in,” she said sternly.

She hit the gas and drove like hell. Dialing 911, she casually asked Iran about the Wizards when was their first game, was he excited about Michael Jordan?

Tanya drove with grace while talking to the 911 operator like a pro. She would be the one to deliver her nephew to the hospital, there wasn’t any other way. No, she couldn’t remember what her cell phone number was no, she didn’t divulge the kind of car she had. No one was coming to get her. There wasn’t time.

“You aren’t going to die… Iran. You are not going to die.”

Iran didn’t look too good. He was getting more and more pale. He painfully squirmed in his seat. What could’ve caused this, who would’ve done this?

“Roll down window.”

Breathe out of the window. Soak in some good air, Iran.

Kelly Clarkson chimed in:

I wonder how I ever make it through a day
How did I settle for the world in shades of gray
When you go in circles all the scenery looks the same
And you don’t know why

They were almost to the hospital.

“Aunt Tanya?”

“Iran, save your energy, dammit.”

“Aunt… I love you.”

Tanya looked over to him. She placed her hand affectionately on his knee, before returning it to the steering wheel.

“I love you too, sweetie. Chill, though, k? Almost there…”

Tanya pulled up to the PG County Hospital and watched helplessly as Iran was swiftly carted off to an unknown location. Though she herself was a registered nurse, she never quite knew the sort of anguish and uncertainty family members went through until she experienced it firsthand while in the waiting room, quietly recuperating. Soon, other family members, doctors and policemen were at her beckon call. Suffice to say, the incongruities and dissatisfactions of previous days were no match for the outer limits of that drive to school and the twilight hours that led up to the capture of Iran’s attackers.

The House of Absence

Chase Brandon Quinn

When I open the secret doors away to his roaming, I pray that he shall pass quietly, tread with light foot, not to disturb the anxious silence, being the melancholy emptiness of these secret chambers, cavernous halls.
The quick-paced staccato jerk and shift like jostled box. He comes, placing furred hands upon hidden walls, clutching with a wanton violence at the permeable dark.

Dust rises - that sil sifting -
silent veil -
volcanic ash.

Dear GOD.

What should lie in the heart of this house?
He will make his way for a quiet time,
rustling unimposing beasts to ineffectual life,
lumbering silently from corridor to secret alcove,
unmoved but for their hungry eyes,
succumbing always to that base appetite.

Mounting stairs, the click of his hard soul strikes the hollow air, sound clattering up the hidden walls like black beetles.

How long will he wander here?
Each new door submits to the force of his impenetrable hands,
giving way like children to lies.

Now upon the book shelves, in the secret study,
unable to decipher their encrypted text,
dease deteriorating their pages-
All to him is dust to dust....

A Lonely Time
Jonathan Seitz

It's been four in the morning for the last three nights straight. It's winter and it's cold out but I still go for a walk. There's nothing better to do, the writing stopped weeks ago. There are stories, but nothing worth writing.

At this time of night everyone is a story. The man who asks me for a scotch with a vacant look in his eye, who walks off on his own with just a thank you that I'm not even sure he'll hear; he's just seen something he wasn't supposed to see. He probably walked in on his girl with another guy. Now he's out thinking about what to do and smoking because he can't come up with anything. His cigarette wasn't his first and it won't be his last. I'll see him on the news someday. The deranged husband who kills his wife then turns the weapon on himself.

It's not a new story by any means, but it is a story. It's all I’ve got left. Vulgar little anecdotes about people I've never technically that have no support aside from my deranged imagination.

I come up with other people's stories because I don't have my own. Night after night I wander and read the people who pass by, but I doubt that they ever read anything from me. I don't know what they could...

I pass the all night diner, and gaze upon the veritable library within. The couple in booth with no interest in their food; a pair of lovers running away from unrequited parents. The love woman at the bar with too much makeup; a hooker who's just been fucked like she could never imagine and wishing she hadn't been. The old man with his gut crammed into the corner booth; he's lost it all on a bad bet and this is all he can afford now.

I never see the ends of these stories. I just get the briefest glimpse at a random page before it's taken away. I wouldn't want to hear it anyway. From what I can see, the whole thing just isn't worth the commitment.

I round the block and turn to a new page. He's a young man walking what has to be his girlfriend's dog. There's been a fight. The boy's brisk pace tells me. A minor domestic - the kind that just got worse as the night got longer. The dog can barely keep up with him as he walks off wherever rage is there. I smell, I imagine I smell. The liquor on his breath as he passes. He'll be back home in the next fifteen minutes. The girl will forgive him and they'll go to bed and wake up happy.

Bullshit. The guy sleeps on his couch and gets the boot the next morning. No one deserves a happy ending. Anything that seems the one is just irony that nobody really gets.

It's getting colder as the clock slowly ticked into the bottom of the hour. I step into the convenience store to buy another pack of coffee. I'm pinned behind the counter by a blank face. I can't read Arabic. Ha ha.

The guy considering the selection of malt liquor, though, he's a real winner. After I leave he hunches up to buy the booze and pulls a gun. "Tell me everything in the register!" he screams at the hapless clerk, who's only too happy to oblige. He gets the money and turns to run but leaves the drinks. By the time he's back around he's facing a different gun barrel. There's a flash and the smell of gunpowder and blood as brains splatter the rows of Little Debbie's. Like I said, no one deserves a happy ending.

The streets are never silent, even this late at night. There's the far off sound of cars on the freeway and the stragglers that pass on the road beside me. There's the sound of the few animals brave enough to live in this city rooting through the trash and the constant whine of the air conditioners and televisions and stereo in the apartments above. There's the dull thump of my cigarette packing followed by the click of the lighter and the sound of me breathing out a lurgous of smoke.

There's never any pure silence, and I like it that way.

I pass a stooop and see a man sitting alone. His clothes tell me that he's not homeless. He's outside his own home, and visions of the underage rape victim upstairs just start to filter into my mind before he speaks.

"Hey buddy, can you spare a cigarette?"

"Sure."

I give him the cigarette and hold out my lighter but he waves it away and pulls out one of his own.

I want to walk away, but something keeps me here. He sighs while looking into the distance, then looks at me again.

"Long night?"

"Somewhat. I was supposed to meet someone but they never showed up."

"Girl?"

"I wish. Old college buddy's in town and wanted to get some food. I work late so I told him I'd meet him and head to the diner a couple blocks away."

"Yeah, I know the one. It's not a bad place, and this late there's always some interesting characters in there."

"Yeah. Anyways, I'm giving the guy another five minutes then I'm giving up."

"Good idea. I've got to run though. Good luck with your friend."

"Yeah. Thanks again for the cigarette."

"Don't mention it."

I walk away feeling lost for the first time tonight, and I stop in front of a broad store window to look at myself in the...
reflection. Who was I? I'm a worn out writer
scrapping by on newspaper work that could see
a story in every person, but couldn't write a
decent one. My novel had failed, and the last
time I had something published was months
ago in a low rate magazine that barely
paid enough for me to eat for the week.

As I stared at myself the noise disap-
peared. It was there one second, then gone it
next. Only gone just barely long enough to
notice, but it was long enough for me to read
my own story. Some people are just fucked up.
I realized.

I'm one of them.

The clock rounds the hour as I walk through
my door and head to the computer to
start writing. It's not fur any more, and I
don't think it ever will be again.

---

Rain - Underscored by Pink Floyd

Andrew M. Kelly

I had set out earlier today,
to the riverside, to a bench,
but now, I set out in
thunder and lightning.

My earlier walks had concluded
only in a lack of conclusion.
The rain is light and so is my spirit.

I walk along without my hood
and let my face and hair get wet.
I walk with no particular destination in mind,
but not without purpose.

I reach the bridge that passes over the tulip
I watch the stoplights change
and the cars pass beneath me.

And my direction becomes a liquid idea,
draining away into a hot potion,
a gurgling puzzle of the familiar.

I breathe it in and wait for
the lightning that doesn't come.

I walk on, the light changes as I step into the street.

I stand and contemplate using the phone.

It's wet and I'm afraid to damage it.

I imagine shock and electrocution
as I remove my headphones
and feel my damp face.

This is good music for rain.

I call her and she answers.

I ask what building she's in:

She tells me she's working.

I tell her I will. She's busy
watching TV with some guys.

She asks if I'm right outside.

I tell her I am. She's quiet.

She tells me I should be working.

I tell her I will. She's busy
watching TV with some guys.

She asks if I'm right outside.

I tell her I am. She's quiet.

She asks if I'm right outside.

I tell her I am. She0s quiet.

She invites me up, I gaze at the building.

I decline. I offer half my coat
if she'll leave there, with me, now.

She declines. It's past midnight.

I will continue on in enjoyed solitude.

Taking comfort in my imagined
what might have been,
sharing my raincoat,
taking just above the fall of rain.

I brush away my fantasy
from the building
she's in and walk on.

I stop and stare into a pizza shop.

It seems dark but still warm
in the glow of its neon signs.

I see a face reflected in darkness.

I smile and the wet hair in my face moves.

I'm reminded of its coolness.

I turn and walk on.

past the bright seven-eleven
and back up toward the bridge.

Wish you were here plays.
I'm reminded again of her.
I stop again to observe the steam
from a light shining up at a tree.
in the courtyard of another residence.
The steam curls up and seems
alien in an environment rich in water.

The vocals come in on the song
I'm singing aloud before I have a chance to
notice or restrain myself.
I decide I don't care.

The streets are near empty and
I'll never see these people again.

I cross the street
and there are no cars.
I walk along the sidewalk
and there are no people.
I cross another street
and there are no cars.

I see a man walking
in the opposite direction.
He seems hurried and
my casual walk in the rain is
made to feel more unusual.
I see a woman walking
in the opposite direction.
She seems to have adopted
a casual gait along the sidewalk.
I meet her wide eyes that seems to
observe the surroundings as much as I.

I walk up the hill and a song plays.
My stride and the song are in sync.
This is no usual contrivance to
synchronize myself with the song.
It simply happens.
I cross the street.
and I don't look for cars this time.
A large truck appears as I step
to the opposite sidewalk.
I didn't hear it coming.
It does not strike me down.
I stay in sync.
Things fall into place
and I notice that fact.
I realize I feel like a goon now. I compose these lines as I walk in my head. I'll record them later, and I'll order them. As I walk I jump around in my mind, adding to that had happened, expanding the words describing the past as the size of that past expands even as I try to record what has past. I become aware that I should retain the lines in my head. So I might write them later.

I am more careful now. I attempt to keep this mood. The album ends and my mind is left to focus on these lines strung together with images that will allow me to remember them.

I stay calm. I don't rush back to my room. I do not want to lose this. I hastily have the last link in this chain set off a mess of forgetfulness and to stir the past I've worked to express and expand in my mind.

I see two men bringing cases of cans inside. They carry them with one arm. They use the handicap door. I curse their sloth aloud. After some delay I reach my room to find my shoes and sit down here. I write this down, and I wonder what she'd think of this, of what I think of what she'd think of. I stop thinking like that. In a circle like my walk was.

The Accident

Thomas Simmons

One night a man and a woman who believed they were very much in love stepped out of their apartment to go get some food at a local diner. It was a dark and chilly night, so they held each other in their arms and walked on the sidewalk that took them to the main road in town. The woman nestled her head into the space between the man's cheek bone and shoulder; he didn't mind because the white hat she wore kept his neck warm. So they remained in that position, very comfortable and satisfied.

As they came closer to the intersecting road, the man and woman saw lights flickering in the distance, and both at the same time wondered what was going on. When they got there, a crowd of people were in a semi-circle surrounding something they couldn't see. The man and woman saw the cop cars and the red flares warning people to stay away, but they could not see what they were supposed to stay away from. The woman asked another man near them what had happened.

"Some kid was on his bike," he said. "He got hit by a truck."

"Oh, my God. Is he alright?"

"It didn't look good. They're putting him on the gurney right now, I think."

"Oh, my God. I can't believe it. When did this happen?"

"I'd say about fifteen minutes ago. The cops got here pretty fast, fortunately. But I don't know if it'll be any help."

"Oh, my God." She blinked twice and her mouth remained open. "Thank you."

"No problem," the man replied. Then he turned around.

The diner was warm inside. They got a seat by the window so they could see the road where the cars passed by. When the waitress approached them to ask what they wanted, they ordered a cup of coffee. The bright white lights were why they liked going there at night; they gave refuge from the dark, which was lonely and sad.

When the waitress came back with the two cups of coffee, she asked them if they were sure they didn't want anything else. Maybe a dessert? They looked at the woman.

"No," said the woman. "We're fine. Thanks."

The waitress closed up her little writing pad and walked away, and the man took a sip of his coffee. The woman put milk and sugar in hers.

"Are you sure you don't want anything to eat?" the man asked. "You said you were hungry when we first left."

"I know, honey. Her eyes refused to meet his."

"Then, why don't you want anything?"

"I don't know. I guess I'm just not hungry anymore."

She took a sip of her coffee and maneuvered her eyes over to the deep, dark road outside without looking at him.

"Do you think he's alright?"

"I think so. The ambulance arrived pretty fast and they didn't seem to act too panicked or anything. I wouldn't worry about it too much."

"I know I shouldn't," she said, finally looking at him, "but it's just so terrible." He grunted. "I know what you mean."

"I mean, why do such bad things have to happen? A kid, for chrissakes. It just doesn't seem fair."

"It isn't.

"I know. It's just that kind of shit leaves me so unsettled."

Each cup of coffee had only been touched once. The man excused himself to go to the bathroom. All the other tables were unoccupied except for one where five boys sat and talked loudly.

"Holy shit, man, you are so shit."

"Shut the fuck up."

"You look like a fucking chunk. We should call you Rob Li Kim or something like that."

All the boys at the table laughed, and the man watched them as he walked to the back, smiling, but they never made eye contact. When he came back out, one of the boys was asking the waitress whether or not they could get some honey mustard while the others ate silently. He wondered what they had done that night.

The woman had not moved since he had gone to the bathroom, except now her face was in her hands. The man sat back down across from her.

"Are you alright?"

She took her hands away from her face, sniffed her nose, and sighed. "I don't know," she said in a soft voice.

"Should we go?"

"Do you think we should?"

"It's up to you."

"Yeah. I think we should go."

"Alright."

They put money down on the table and walked down the same sidewalk they had walked up to get there. When they passed by the scene of the accident, there was no evidence of any sort of tragedy or disaster happening only an hour ago. It looked like a normal road - black asphalt and yellow lines and cars drove over the spot the boy had lain without knowing a thing about what had happened.

Back at the apartment, they undressed without speaking and got into bed. The man tried to caress the woman's arm, but she did not respond, so he turned his back to her and fell asleep. When the woman was sure he was no longer awake, she got out of bed and turned on the television, looking for a news broadcast.
Catch This
Amber Olson

A detectable laugh tingles the skin when the shrills echo from the larynx.
The vibration rises like a tidal wave and plummets down on the shore.
Love floats above and smiles flood an air full of humor.
A quirky illness persuades people to catch the germs and symptoms.
A familiar giggle revives the body sending blood through the tunnels.
Every sense slithers and every nerve bounces around ecstatically.
A delicious sound fanfully frosts the ears, the skin, and the tummy.

Void in the Sand
Jonathan Chin

Headlines have me convinced
that I'm the only body
in a city of bullets.
Their days are supersonic
yet I am limited by my biology.
I try to teach them to sleep,
to sit in their chambers
and contemplate non-deterministic design.
But it's useless using metaphors
for metal .44's because they
just howl as they blow holes
through your malleable soul.

We're playing Tic-Tac-Toe
with countries we don't own
while our cities
are made from grindstones
and the blood from my feet
congeals like mercury
from the twisted metal I inhaled
from towers that fell
from a September
that was still shining silver in the street
as if I'd walk home on the stars
in step with the bombs from a televised war.

There's a survival kit built into my skin;
my eyes are signal mirrors with a high polish;
my voice a borrowed ambulance.
That people often confuse for normal speech
because every time I call for reforms
all they hear are poems.
Their ears are genetically engineered
to face forward, so they can choose
what they want to hear.
Their eyes are too close together,
able to make out the survival kit
in my skin beyond its color.

I sleep through the day,
trading opportunities of greatness
for dreams chained to charm bracelets
because they can make me feel weightless
even with steel plates
hugging the sides of my rib cage.
I wrap them up every day
before heading out
into this city
of loose shrapnel and ricochets.

I am a plastic man without a mould:
scienced and dip of pulp
shaped by hands that left
fingerprint textures pressed
across my body.
I tell them:
'Everyone's signed the same way'
because when God put me on this Earth,
he lifted me by my arm pits
and the force of his fingers
left grooves in my body
that grew to be ribs.
But all they see
are rifling grooves
running along their full metal jackets.
And even though my plastic skin
makes me transparent to prejudice.
I'm not transparent to bullet holes.

In another life
I was a wind-up toy
that someone wound up
and threw into a world
that was already running down
so now
I turn Transformer robots over
in my hands like they were Rubik's Cubes,
reaffirming that guns
can bend if you want them to;
that rockets can be the rockets on spaceships
if they're aimed at the moon.

The White Room
Alex Taylor

The ceiling crumbled a little above him; it's once white and perfect façade deteriorating a little more with each passing day. The primed cabinets cast an unnatural shine under the fluorescent tube light. The white, counter had been sanded down in some spots. A grimy mix of dust and dirt shaded the linoleum floor. Jimmy called it the white room. It room had sat untouched for thirteen months, 1 week, and three days. Yes, he counted.

Jimmy looked over the tools that had made their way from the shed and into the kitchen. A belt sander lay next to the toaster oven. A step ladder propped up against the stove. The floor was covered in paint, a shredded tarp, buckets of primer and spackle. The white room is probably no bigger than the shed, he thought. But somehow they had managed to fit an antique dining table in the corner. It belonged to his great grandmother. One of the chairs was now being used to rest a paint tray. The roller was stuck in the solid mass of hardened primer. Some of the paint had
dripped down the leg of the chair.
The noise of his father rummaging through
cabinets broke Jimmy's concentration.

"There's no food in there," he thought.
"There's never any food in there."

His father set down a box of crackers and a
jar of peanut butter next to a hammer on the
counter top. Jimmy watched him search the
refrigerator. Condiments filled the door of the
otherwise empty appliance. His father reached
for a jar of jelly and went back to the counter:
"Can you get me a plate, son?" his father
asked rather casually as if the two weren't
standing in the middle of another of his fail-
ures.

"Is that your dinner?" he responded.
His father stared hard at the box of crackers
and paused before responding: "PB and J on
 crackers... They're good."

"Yeah, I would know, it's the only food in this
house."

Jimmy regretted his words before finishing
them. His father had been the same the sec-
ond divorce. Jimmy knew he wouldn't be.

"Why do you have to be like that? Listen, I
just want to take my food and watch TV. I
work hard, you know. I try."

Jimmy tried to find the words. An apology. A
thank you, anything. He remained silent. He
didn't look at this father anymore, but
scanned the room again. The hammer, the belt
sander, the paint cans. Thirteen months, 1
week, and three days. He studied his reflection
in the shine of the toaster, the white room's
imperfections behind him.

"Shh. I didn't mean it like that," he finally
mumbled back.

"I'm going to watch Andy Griffith."

Jimmy was alone in the white room again.

Pretty, Pretty Things

Elizabeth Moser

There are times
When I want
to fish out your eyelashes
and use them as earrings.
Hang them like bells or
christmas balls or
baubles around my neck,
the polished stones of your teeth,
shining like precious.

I could.

So easily,
weave a net of your hair
and tie the rude ropes
across your vast, expression-
less
plane of face,
dice and cross again,
those lips I'd never touch.

Your fingernails, my guitar picks,
cartilage, the firm ridge of your nose,
paper weight or straightedge,
knuckles serve as game dice
poker chips, bingo dot, Jenga block.

Eat You Up
Whole or Not
Raw or Soft
Brewing, broiling toe stuw
napkin
wasteful carriage
of a silent crutch armed.

I'm insulted by your elbows
so, to door-stops they go.
Polished bones and alabaster complexion
are my tools.
the trade is, I'd say
that Defense we choose
Bone bleached barricades
Our mind. traitor in prison.
Our heart jailed behind a

steel-rimmed rib cage
What Is Out Must Stay In

And Youth,
knocking on my door, my sin.

Those lips
it is those lips I miss
the sweet hibiscus-jasmine mix
of summer.

Watch me watch lips
My silent reminder
behind the cross-cross strands of hair
braids I bind tight
keeps you, the longing out
and me in.

The America I'll never know

Andrew M. Kelly

She was a girl from the place
that seemed more American then anywhere I'd
ever heard of. She was from a long line of
food driving, beer drinking, laborers who
scraped by and worked themselves into early
graves clutching packs of Marlboro. She had
a look in her eyes that carried generations of
struggle, struggle that seemed to yield only
enough for one more push. Life seemed to
carry with it an inevitability, that she was just
going through the motions, acting her part.
She was falling deeper into it with each pass-
ing day. She had parents who loved her just
difficult to point out when she was a disapp-
ontment but who were generally too
aborted in acting their parts to notice any-
thing. She had a boyfriend who was a waste
and when he wasn't wasted and who'd stick
around only long enough to get her pregnant.
In all she had a resilience bred into her; she
was close to death but still alive, so far from
living she seemed to be dying a bit more
everyday. She was middle aged at 18 and her
life felt like a slow and crushing inevitability
that she was both unaware of and powerless
to stop.

This feels like the America I can
never know; that I can hardly
see and will never truly visit even if I travel
there. This is the layer beneath the plastic
flags and the patriotic bumper stickers. This
goes beyond the realm of politics and eco-
nomics. Those things seem only effects of the
sort of unending decay. The people seem
to live in a way that appears to me to be more
straight forward. Things seem to be expected,
and they happen. There is no rebellion in
youth because there is no alternative and no
concept of one. This seems more alien to
me than almost anything else I can imagine.
In my mind even the land and the sky look
different. These people are descended from
pioneers, the ones who found their promised
land, claimed their piece of the American
dream. Their descendants perhaps still hold
to the dreams of their ancestors. They have
arrived at their destination and can no longer
see beyond the horizon.

Autobiography, Romance, and
Hallucination

Mariya Campbell

Except as an exercise of imagination,
inner realm that both attracts and confounds them.

Rebels indulge in anarchy. Revolutionaries stake out a personal plot that defies, and possibly redefines, social institutions. Madmen shirk absurdities from their street-corner perches. Poets select outlandish themes or work in new meters, with a strange vocabulary. Musicians stretch the envelope of possibility, using new sounds, new instruments, or mixing one or the other in new ways. Indeed, the new seems to be a trademark of romantics. They urgently try on new clothes, new personalities, and new modes of behavior. The constants of any romantic's life are turbulence and insatiable energy. The match between the life and the works varies, but the fervent effort remains consistently evident: break through the known to engage the unknown. Extend the boundaries of the human realm. Live more! Live new!

Born to fit the molds that society presents, raised in the growing realization that one's dissatisfaction lies not with one's self but with the society which denies that self, and determined to find that self somewhere regardless how impossible or seemingly insane the quest, the true romantic finally sinks into Self, finding there a secret bond or balm, a spiritual pool in which all wounds are healed, all the arogant is soothed, and the world becomes a surreal reflection of that other world in which the newly found self finds its place. If the outside cannot be changed to fit the romantic's inner image of self, then the only other alternative is to change the self. Not satisfied with marriage, and very skeptical of systems, and too grounded to be insane, and too intelligent to desire anarchy, and too convinced of the wisdom of moderation to become addicted unto death, the true romantic abandons, not the journey, but the self. The surest way to such transcendence—and be forewarned: this way subverts all others—is to dream.

"It was then that I was tempted to go to God, that I might demand account on my incomplete existence. There was only one single step to take. At the place where I stood, the hillside was cut away like a cliff, with the sea groaning at its foot, blue and pure. There was no more than a moment to suffer. Oh how terrible the dazzlement of that thought? Two times I threw myself forward, and I do not know what power flung me back, still alive. onto the grass which I kissed. No, my God, you have not created me for eternal suffering. I do not wish to outrage you with my own death. But give me the strength, give me the energy, give me above all the resolution which helps some to power. some to fame. and some to love."

-Gerard de Nerval

Add a little

Kurt J. Lindboom-Broberg

The sky turned grey -
Again.
Sunlight on the other side -
I sat and stared
'Till darkness spared
My mind a better time.
I sat awake in bed with rain
Pouring over windows;
Scattered thoughts
Among raindrops
Turned green, yellow, red.

Now black to pink
Turn pink to blue;
Slow yellow rises - heavy hue;
Open eyes make colors fade -
It all again turns grey.

My Awakening

Ryan Zanoni

Inspired by the film Vanilla Sky

Woke up on a sidewalk one morning
When the sky looked like a Monet painting.
She helped me up and smiled.
I donned my mask and walked with her
While we talked about the big things and the little things.
The air tasted sweet, like Vanilla.
We made perfect love and she asked, Is this a Dream?
Absolutely, I said.
Later, she peeled off the mask.
And cried as she kissed me
For everything
In its right place.

But she changed into someone
I had wanted to forget.
Someone who drove me to wear a mask
Who was you?
I asked.
They all said I killed her.
It's a nightmare, I screamed.
Finally, I met a man who told me everything.
And then I woke up.
But she wasn't there.
And never would be.
The Girl who Never Listened

Elizabeth Moser

...and did you hear the news?" she asked, while teasing with her silken sash and her straw hat. a twittering bird about the nest. "He's come today, with a whole band of his fine crew: jugglers and clowns, terrible beasts, and he a Magic Man himself! Cybil? Cybil! Are you deaf?"

Yet when evening was dimly fast she grabbed her skirts and leapt the fence, and did not stop her quickened pace til on the hill saw a parade of elephants? Of bears and brutes? Or wolves howling up at the moon? Fairy, phoenix of golden plumes beside them, lions, tigers and.

"Say there!" spoke the Magic Man in tattered cloak with crop in hand, leading a lonely caravan: an old horse and a pack on wheels. "It looks as if a little mouse has wandered far, and if I'm right, we head the same way to the town. I'll take you there, now, if you'd like.

So she stepped up, beside him she sat and underneath his funny hat a sprawl a gypsy's earing there, a fine long mane of golden hair, and sparkling blue his youthful eyes, gold strings and rings, mirrors and things; she breathed the spice of love in deep and he spoke to her, soft and sweet:

"I come from far lands, lady fair, where towns like these are just a myth, where princes ride on elephants, and peacocks trill and dance and speak. And the sun races o'er the sky and pulls the moon on silver strings to dip into the hissing sea, born youthful in the morn again."

"We speak only in riddles there, and as to make the ladies blush pull brilliant plumes and silver coins from ears and sleeves and love. you ask? It's much the same, but every gent and every dame in love for life, until the sleepy Darkness comes and puts our diamond-eyes to rest."

And so he won her heart, the girl who never listened, listened well to honeyed words and sweetened things. Hailing before the town ahead, they spread themselves upon the grass. But paling green, the jealous moon, gazed at the lovers from her height. Her poisoned temper called them Cursed.

So when the golden sun arose, she woke to find him absent, rutts of wagon wheels now filled with dew. She threw herself upon her hate, sending him suffering, cursing Fate until beside her she did find a golden earring left behind from him, whose jealous moonbeams stole away.

Jumping with No Safety Net

Jennifer Lansford

We stood altogether, huddled, clasping hands and arms and elbows, heads bent onto each other's shoulders, shivering and holding back tears. We were one unit, one member mass. I tried not to think; I tried to concentrate simply on keeping my legs from shaking, nothing else, just stabilizing my legs. If I could plant my feet then I wouldn't fall down and take my friends, whose digging fingers stung my sides and arms, down with me. Everyone must have had the same idea because as we leaned onto each other we tried to balance our weight onto our own bases, creating this awkward swaying effect.

Nick stood as a central mast and we anchored ourselves around him. Katie and I clutched each other's arms and Nick's waist on his left side, while Sarah and Chad clung to him on the right. Corey of course stood with his family at the front of the hall.

"The memorial service was beautiful!" That is what everyone says. But honestly, how could it be? How can a funeral for a 20 year old be described as anything other than terrible and heartrending? He was a schoolmate. He was our best friend's brother. He had committed suicide one night in his dorm.

When I had heard the news of Guy's death I'd just walked into class. My friend pulled me aside and told me. I looked around and the room seemed really big, and then so small it was suffocating, almost at the same time. I just walked right out of the room, past the teacher and the other students and into the hallway. No one tried to stop me. Immediately as I walked into the hallway I saw my friends Sarah and Katie and the ground against a wall a couple doors down. As soon as I reached them I collapsed, tears already streaming. Sarah put her arm around me, a familiar gesture. We had both been through several similar minor dramas and difficulties over the past year and there was a security with confiding in each other. I shifted so I was facing her.

"What happened?" I asked, wiping my eyes on my sleeve.

"It happened last night. He hung himself out his window at school. He tied sheets together..."

"This doesn't seem real. It can't be real." I said. In an instant my world changed. Death existed, not in far away instances like a great-grandfather or a great-aunt twice removed, but in my immediate realm of perception. Death was meant for the sick and the old. Guy was neither. He had passion and vitality; he was a soccer star and a musician. I wondered what would possess a kid with so much potential to quit, to decidedly give up living. Then it hit me. Guy was bi-polar. I turned my attention toward Katie, slumped beside Sarah, her face in her hands.

"Oh Katie, are you okay?" I asked. Katie's disorder was well known in our clique, her moody temperament was something we came to acknowledge and quickly accept. I never really considered the grave repercussions that could come due to her manic-depressive personality. She made the disorder seem just an everyday thing, like diabetes or asthma. To consider such terrible possibilities was frightening.

"Yeah. I just can't believe it. I can't even imagine how Corey must feel right now, and his parents. Oh, Corey..." Katie tried to compose herself and pushed away the hair that had fallen into her face. I reached over and squeezed her shoulder. I hoped she knew we would always be there for her. All she was concerned about at that moment, though, was how Corey was taking it. We all were.
Just weeks before Guy's death, I had slept over Corey's house along with some of our friends.

Guy came home from college for the weekend, and we all sat around in the living room. Corey set himself up in front of the piano and began to play Weezer, and then he took cue by grabbing his guitar and strumming along with the tune.

"Play Radiohead!" said Sarah, interrupting the song by grabbing Corey's hands from the keys.

"Karma Police." Nick and I chimed in. It wasn't really necessary to specify. The same songs were always played, and we sang along by heart.

Corey flicked his shaggy bangs out of his face and smiled. He loved being the center of attention.

"Do you know the keys for that?" he asked his brother.

"Let's see." Guy's confident character made it easy for people to gravitate towards him: he was a trait both brothers shared. Guy strummed a couple notes, and then dove into the intro. Corey, satisfied, said, "That night Guy let my friend and me sleep in his bed and he crashed on the couch. In the morning he said 'I'm going to lose it. I've been here too long.'"

I just couldn't understand how someone who I had just seen less than a week earlier could be gone forever. For a few nights after I heard, I had nightmares. I could see his body swinging when I closed my eyes. I truly felt ill. It wasn't until the memorial service that I got a new perspective.

It was Corey's turn to speak. He faced the group of mourners, all gathered there to commemorate his brother. Corey, always so self-assured, sometimes to the point of egotism, tried to appear posed as he stood in front of the crowd. But when he spoke, the emotion was too much. As tears began to roll down his cheeks, my eyes also welled and overflowed, sharing in his pain I shared and shared.

He spoke of his brother's life, their relationship. He spoke of a conversation he had had with his brother one night, speaking of life and death about six months prior to his passing.

"I asked Guy what he thought about death. He paused for a moment and said, 'I think what really matters is how you live your life. If you care about other people and do good things, then death shouldn't scare you. It's just another beginning. I've cared about a lot of people in my life, and I feel good about that.'"

What kind of "new beginning" death held was anyone's guess. Corey's family wasn't a part of anyone's religious community, and there was no priest, rabbi, or minister present.

Actually, none of my friends or I were religiously dedicated. Just a group of agnostics and atheists. Corey was one of the leading voices in our clique who preached against the evils of institutionalized religion. He was too logical and analytical a thinker. But in that moment I hoped Corey pictured his brother somewhere better.

I think maybe Guy was right; death is really only a checkpoint on the way to greater things to come. You don't need to believe in God to believe in eternity. Guy would live on in memories, of course. I think most of all the elements that embodied his personality and his character would live on in Corey, in the nature of the characteristics and beliefs they shared.

Corey had decided to come back to school the next day, despite the terrible judgment of everyone else. It was as if he just wanted things to get back to normal and somehow, going through his normal routine would make it easier. I guess the first day back had been kind of rough because when I spotted him in the auditorium after school all I had to do was look at him to see through the tough and composed act he was putting on. We walked toward another and fell into each other's arms. We stood there without words for a long time. Finally Corey whispered, "Thank you." into my ear, while I just nodded and tried to smile. I should have thanked him. What inspired me was his courage. Despite every vulnerability and fear, he got up and faced the day. He still had his life to live. Corey may never have known it, but he encouraged me.

A couple months later, the weather was changing signs of summer. Our group, instinctively, headed down to the reservoir and past the cabin located about a half mile behind Katie's house.

We all stood together, huddled, shivering slightly against the cool night air. A line of us: Nick, me, Corey, Sarah, Chad, and Katie. At the edge of a dock on top of a pump house, my toes felt for the edge, the water below ready to break my fall.

"Jump!" yelled Corey.

In an instant we hurled ourselves off the edge, our grins released and we went flying through the air, becoming engulfed by the night and then crashing into the water. In those seconds I was submerged. My heart beat with the fury of someone running from a lion. My arms and legs flailed, kicking my way to the surface. As I emerged I looked around at the bobbing heads and smiling faces of my friends all gasping for that first breath of air as we reached the surface.

Ashes

Kurt J. Lindboom-Broberg

Here...

Among the ashes left from burning dreams, I see myself in flashes a shadow in between...

It's getting cold now...

A darkness grows...

The flames are going dim...

These flashes now remember how it was to just give in...

Now bound to lives within the flame I fight today again to remember all these dreams as I throw another in...
My Hero

Jonathan Seitz

He was a young boy who hated to write.
His teacher gave him poor grades on his work so he gave it up.
He worked on math instead.

Then he was a young man who loved to read.
He read in school and on the train and in his bed before he slept.
He carried a book or paper or magazine in his coat pocket every day.

When college came, he still loved to read.
But he still hated to write.
So he studied business.

Suddenly he was man and away from teachers.
He read more and thought about writing.
So he tried.

He brewed a pot of coffee.
He sat awake for hours every night and tapped at the keyboard.
After a week he looked at what he wrote and hated it.

Next time he bought a carton of cigarettes before he wrote.
The words flowed more smoothly but he still wasn’t happy.
He thought again about the books he read.

This time he had scotch and whiskey and rum.
He wrote for hours and hours and loved what he saw on the screen.
He had found his muse.

He spent the next day in bed.
Then he read the words clearly and pushed delete until they were gone.
The empty bottles shattered against the wall.

He smoked everything he could find until he burned his throat and lungs.
He pushed chemicals into his nose and veins and brain until he bled.
He couldn’t remember anything after that.

Weeks later he cried at what was written.
He spent what was left on a nickel revolver.
He loaded it and made his last attempt.

He couldn’t write like a hero but he was damn sure he could die like one.

Chug-a-lug

Sarah Ip

So I’ll sing myself to sweet bliss
For the cork and chug-a-lug
Down...
Where you missed a spot
Down...
Where you’ve crushed a block
Cheeled into cherubs
Without the glow of God
Where did you come from
Stained with other run amok
And I struggle to breathe
Beneath the capitated titan
Of your subterranean immersion
Queued awake snorting lividly
Be thou my Savior
Even now, amidst the quake
A doubting heart, captivating cloud
Treading toward your rushing streams

"Don’t go chasing waterfalls"
But if we never tried
We’d just be another Jackie or Jet until
The fifteenth century
And we can’t act, can’t sing, can’t
Even smile without a crooked lip
Spouting out spoonfuls of horrendous English
A loyal Poo-Poo Fodleto be petted
Rewarded with a treat
For being good, well stuff it -
I won’t willingly chain myself
To that limited fate
Where the foreign student gets
To be the joke of the day
Or will you have a slice of buttered nest bread
With that, dear sir
Would you like another helping of pretentious
Designer stew
Or perhaps you’d enjoy xed backstabbings cream
With a closed off, condescending cherry

To top it all off
For wearing his tie wrong
For singing a weird song
For spewing a strange tongue
As he awkwardly bobs his overdue haircut head.

The Romantic in Everyone

Nadav Lipkin

"Can I ask you something?" she whispered in my ear. She ran her finger across my lap and clasped it through one of my belt loops. I leaned against the gear shift until it hurt so I could hear her. "Do you remember the time when..."

Your mother caught us touching each other in your guest room.
"...we saw that wedding ceremony in the park?" I smiled.

"You want it to be us one day?" She jerked a little and shook her head.
"I don’t know... I just always thought that was sweet."

And I always thought that the sweet smell of your sweat would never stop making me swoon for you. I suppose I was right.

I moved away, unbuckled my seatbelt, and stepped out of the car. She swiftly did the same. I threw off my sweatshirt onto the hood and sat down on it. She got next to me and put her hands in mine. For that brief moment, there was nothing but perfect calm. The world stopped turning for us. The stars ceased their sparkle. As soon as the wind brushed her shimmering bangs from her eyes, she said "I love you."

"We kissed."

And it was a good one too. I asked her if she wanted to get into the back seat.
"But it’s so nice out here. I love the view."

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That's why I drove us up there. This place was always sacred to me. On most nights, it was just a place on the hill for stoners to escape the wrath of police surveillance. But I always knew that one day, the love of my life and I would sit on the hood of my car staring out onto the town lights gleaming below us from that very place.

None of my previous girlfriends would have appreciated it. This time, it was different.

For the first time in my life, I had more than just a body next to mine. It was a good feeling, like how God must have felt at the moment he created Adam. Behold. Another.

I believe that it's because of moments like these that people keep on living at all. Every once in a while, you just get lucky like that.

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**Untitled**

Mary Sullivan

Open. Open. Open. Goddammit!

I say to your chest cavity
not your eyes
so you can close them again and sleep
I will revive you soon enough
So, back to your chest cavity
which I have been pounding on for the last twenty minutes
to no avail
I should probably just go get the 9 iron

but that might crack your sternum and puncture some vitality
or some vital organs
like the heart
or you ballooning lungs
and then you wouldn't just be in cardiac arrest
but you would also be wanting air
and I won't provide CPR
that's against my principles
against our little 4 in the morning promise
not even touch your lips
with mine again
But your hair is tied back today
so if you spare a band we may make a tourniquet
and if you'll just turn a bit you won't choke

And I can't even call the police because
there are no 9s or 1s
on your phone anymore
because of our domestic dispute days
with the 9 iron
but I'm much more responsible now, it isn't my fault
this time goddammit!

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**On David Bowie**

**Christine Judge**

"To live is the rarest thing in the world—most people simply exist. That is all."

-Oscar Wilde

I have heard David Bowie's music constantly since I was a child—back when he was no more than an indistinct artist with a decent song that was on the Boston oldies station occasionally. It wasn't until later, in my infected years, that my mind singled out his music from the rest of the cacophony and found that took up airtime. Slowly, I found myself in an entirely new world—that of glam rock. It is a part of music history that is often overlooked, but its influence was immense. Like punk rock brought on the glory days of garage rebellion, there was the first teen rebel—the sexual rebel, the child of the revolution, the glam rocker. That coarse, unrefined and to break rank undoubtedly came from the repercussions of glam. Before the Sex Pistols granted Queen Elizabeth, Iggy Pop was lightening and fascinating the prior generation.

What I understand about glam—and what everyone must, in order to grasp the concept—is that one must embrace the profundity of the封闭. appreciate that depth is only a series of layers. If one does not feel the need to be "authentic" or "true" to some vague ideal or tradition, then one can be free. This is what glam rock represents to me, and that realization has made a significant impact. I see this most often in the music of David Bowie. Who knows what he was thinking when he decided to shave off his eye brows and don a kimono and leotard, but that was him. He compromised for no one, and his music reflects that. It was enough for a

younger version of myself, upon hearing "Rock 'n Roll Suicide," to wake up from my self pity, extend a hand skyward and mouth the words. "He knows."

Dramatic, yes—but true to me. In such a rush of emotions, decisions, and turmoil, an album like Diamond Dogs or Ziggy Stardust is an oasis of understanding. I know many people must say to David, "Oh, that song, that's about me! Really, can you read my mind?" I understand that feeling because that is the way it seems. It is a feeling of being aware of someone's else's empathy: it hits you so hard, and is so surprising—who would have thought that anyone, let alone a world famous musician, felt as conflicted and conflicted as I? It was enough to make me love myself again.

I know that David Bowie is not the messiah (despite what he would have you believe). His work simply opened me up to a new world of looking at myself—helped me to see that perhaps the world would have a place for me after all; maybe people were not so far removed from one another as they seemed. The strength to see this ultimately came from me, but I credit Mr. Bowie and the rest of the glam universe with helping me along the way, like a voice that whispered in my ear (with a charming Birmingham accent). "Oh no love, you're not alone!"
I Cry For You, My Mother

Kerry Miller

You are my mother and I am your daughter and I cry for you. I cry for the woman you must have been, but who I have never seen. Never met, or just never remembered. Your daughter watches you grimace and press your lips together in the thin line that your body is quickly copying. I see your sad face and I watch you paint yourself happy. My mother is warm and caring, but only for a moment before she is drawn back into the feelings that she cannot bear. She believes she is not loved. I cry for the hardest conversation I have ever had to have, the conversation that told you that I loved you, if you had been listening. Your daughter cries because her love is not enough. I cry to let you go, to let me go. Your daughter cries for you, and she cries for herself and she cries for her future daughter. I cry for the hopelessness that you have taught me, Mother, and for the sadness that we cannot ever overcome.

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Untitled

Katie Orwoll

Our image is of Your likeness
our bodies of the earth
of one another, of his rib.
We are innocent until our first breath
from there we are constantly dirty
fighting to cleanse ourselves of her sin.

I'm alone in my bed, cold again.
The air is warm, the blankets thick.
but the ice is in my breast, my eyes.
There is fire in my mouth,
flames lick my lips and my breath burns
the hate of millions of years on my words.

I read each page as though it were truth
my mind like a sponge
soaking in every lie the Book contains.
They say you wrote this for me
for Him I am going to live it all
but not believe a word.

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Vir Heroicus Sublimis

David Delmar-Sentes

The rose petal that bled when she tacked it to the wall leaned over and asked her if the house was, in fact, collapsing.

She was still thinking about the movie listings and ads that she had clipped out and paper clipped back into the same page in the newspaper when she opened the half door (the John Malcoch door) and stuck inside. Left foot, head and shoulders, right foot, hand. She wondered if she ever made any noise. In the absolute. If she did, she couldn't hear it, and if she couldn't hear it, neither could he; so she thought about the sound of newsprint folding. The smell of the ink, the colors it made when it burned. Green sometimes.

Her fingers were white from clutching the box, and they were getting cold. Which was peculiar in a corridor that lacked a temperature. There were little folds in the paperboard around her thumb and she felt good to know that she had influenced even the smallest of things, because the floor was not reflective and her weight on it was negligible. She glanced at her shoes just to see the canvas that she could feel through her socks. She liked the way her laces felt when she kicked them. And she kicked them. Her free hand still smelled like newsprint and she kept it in her pocket far away from the long white box and rubbed nickels and quarters against her fingertips because the ridges on the sides of the quarter matched her fingerprint snugly.
Nickels had some other cosmic purpose if only to be quarters, and that was fine. Not everything should have ridges. And there were no lights in the corridor but it was lit okay.

There were just enough doors in it though, because what is a corridor. The numbers were all on the far corner of the frames like page numbers that could rust, and she read them judiciously. One after another, and in order. Thirty-eight and then thirty nine. Forty. It was all the same color, numbers, the doors, the frames. Walls and the floor. The ceiling had been replaced one day.

It was easy to think of the doors like pages in a magazine but she tried not to because it distracted her. She thought of the box and wondered how he would take it; what he would say and whether or not he would notice the tiny folds that her fingers had made as she carried it here, and would he think that it was part of the gift. Would they give away the fact she's been thinking about him the whole way and did it look like something that had been through a corridor of only one single color.

She recognized his door and pushed her way inside with her free hand without taking it out of the pocket or dropping the quarter. She didn’t see him right away. She saw the walls that seemed whiter since the last time she’d seen him years ago, and the rose petals that were all the same color, deep crimson, each one tucked up to the wall, deliberately spaced and overwhelming the entire room like a blanket that was beautiful but shouldn’t be. There was no furniture at all that she could see; there were rose petals with their tips barely touching the floorboards, the ceiling, spanning across all four walls and making the room pulsate with a sincerity akin to the slashing of paintings. It was regular. Calculated and terrifying in its methodical color and making all four walls the same and equally far from her; she wouldn’t touch them because she was afraid they might flinch and consume her. Or at least tell her gently that not all walls had page numbers, which she knew.

She closed the box with her free hand.

There were more rose petals on the wall behind her and on the door, and as she turned to see them closer she wondered how they would feel on her skin, and whether or not sex was also just an issue of thimbles or is it only roses and unexpected postcards that can go up on the wall.

He was right there in the center of the room, sitting cross-legged on the floor and watching her. When he saw that she was done with the wall he nodded slowly and closed his eyes to look more like a painting than a tired man, but that didn’t fool her. As she stepped in towards him, the lighting changed and she could see for certain that his lipstick matched the color of the rose petals and that he had smeared red dye all over his body. He had draped a red trench coat over his shoulders, which gathered on the floor around him.

He didn’t bow his head but she could feel him doing so; and she could study his design while his eyes were closed.

She remembered the gift. It felt heavy on her arm. She hadn’t moved it from her hand, so as to groove the creases from her fingers into the paperboard and make it look worn. She took a step forward and placed it noiselessly on the floor between them when he opened his eyes so that he could watch her move. Without her fingers, the folds seemed out of place, but they both knew that the gift belonged on the wall now. He smiled at her vaguely and nodded.

He stood up and turned his back to her so that he was facing the wall opposite the door and approached it solemnly, with his hands behind his back in the coat and his body hair slick with red dye. Matted to his skin and quivering with his old muscles. After a pause, he turned back around without facing her but rather keeping his head down inince he owed to arbitrary memories and scattered images he judged he would mused over it and mused over the concept of symmetry in old men and about the significance he used to give to thunderstorms and power outages. He could feel the oil on his foot through the calluses of the other.

(That was something he would miss, he knew.)

He nodded at her when he felt he was ready. To be a petal.

She lowered herself to a knee and opened the long white box that she’d brought. She retrieved the tack and carried it with two hands to where he stood in the room and she showed it to him. It was the length of his arm span and heavy. When he saw it he nodded again and she brushed the grey hair of hair from his face to give him time to change his mind. There were expressions of life that don’t involve death, she thought. And kissed him lightly on the forehead in a desperate example but he had stopped watching her when his coat hit the wall. He was waiting. He shut his eyes tighter and felt the tack penetrate the wall through his ribs and was sure if it was his own final breathing or hers, struggling against the weight of the tack, his bones, the wall behind him and he heard it all as a single noise in the quietest house. He thought he heard the beams collapsing and ripping through the ceiling without quite hitting the floor. The walls bending with the added weight of his body and the entire structure hanging inches above its own shadow, suspended by cables and waiting for him to comfortably in its poisoned womb before crying in and destroying him. He thought he saw the rose petals thrown off their thimbles and fly sickly into the room and clutter the floor, or steep through the rifts in the ceiling where the beams had broken in and thought they were butterflies. He thought he heard the door shatter into splinters and open his room out to the corridor. His room of rose petals.

She left a few minutes later. And when she did, she closed the door gently and ran her fingers along the bare hallway to see if she could feel it. With her free hand, the one that wasn’t on the wall, she fingered the quarter and slipped the nickel between her fingers, and finally the numbers on the doors had winded down. She stepped out the John Malcoovich door, and could he see the creases in the box that I left him, from his place on the wall?

"Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man, or life; we are making it out of our selves..."  
-Barnett Newman, 1948 (Three years before the completion of his painting, Vir Heroicus Sublimis)