

Trillium

2009



Trillium 2009



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Dedication

The staff would like to dedicate the 2009 edition of *Trillium* to Dr. Mónica Peláez, who brought life to the 2007 and 2008 issues of *Trillium*. Dr. Peláez was devoted to both her work and to her students. Her substantial role in the Literature Department is dearly missed, and we wish her luck in her future endeavors.

We would also like to dedicate this issue to those of the Ramapo community who have served and continue to serve our country.



Ashley Fischer



Front and Back Photo Credit: Wesley Roberts

Caitlin Adams

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Tracy Lanzilotti



Corey O'Connell



i am not mistaken

Renee Dwyer

i am not mistaken for anything other than what i am
i come to you empty-handed and ask to be given everything
the sky breaks before you do and closed eyes see clouds
on the horizon it all looks smaller than the palm of your hand
the grainy film of affection burning out right in the middle
right where it gets good, because it always happens like that
and i'll never be able to get my money back. we pay for ever
ything in increments. our bodies will wrinkle like old peaches
and then who will ever say we had anything in common?
this is the ellipsis of our story. we will grow up one day
and not remember any of this. i come to you empty-handed
and i leave empty-handed. we swallow ourselves from the
feet up, and the sky begins to murmur just as it cuts out.

Stir with Milk

Kristen Moledo

I'm beginning to notice the small scars on my face where chicken pox had marked their territory, where my mother had covered my nose in oatmeal as if the bath were hot sand, the sun freckling my cheeks. *Can we eat it?* I clenched my fists, with grainy lumps moving through my fingers asking her to step in so she could feel how wonderful it all was. She sank into the thickness, I wondered how we would ever get out, my mother wasn't a very good swimmer. Our toes touched for awhile before we were fixed in the concrete breakfast we had mixed together. I was pleased to be stuck, if only she had closer.



Danielle Burgio

The Color of Ache

Stephanie Platt

He stood
against the chipped wall
and stared. It was

an homage to her to
stand until he was done,

complete. She was restless, a force,
a hurricane
in the summer. He focused

on her painting in a blue frame,
that hung crooked, void. Empty,
greedy to see her, a kiss on his neck,

wanting her in the dark, in the light,
invisible. Hungry, thirsty,
exhausted for her

but feared if he was done
mourning it would complete
his infatuation with her.

Us

Ryan Sollers

Losing you is as heavy as us.
I carry it in my womb.

On the floor, knees levitating,
my toenails gripping the carpet
like the room was about to flip,
I contemplate my shared existence,
of both our halves put together.

You burning caused me to melt.
I fused into the arms
of other people with us
in the middle as I'm being told by
people in black that
"It's alright."

Inside, the kicking
that tries to reach the pedal of
the past,
that tries to help you kick the
brakes
to avoid the car crash that
killed you.
Or maybe it
was just the reality
breaking
out of me.

Now I'm inconsolable,
stretched,
and made to watch
as it feels like an extension
of us is growing.

No.
It's just me.



Ashley Fischer

The Dead of Winter

James Breckenridge

Oh shit. Oh shit. Who the hell is making that noise? He jumped up from the floor and stood flat against the wall. Leaning to his right, he used his fingers to open the blinds ever so slightly to peer out. He heard the noise, quickly retracted his hand, and once again, stood flat against the wall. His eyes were closed and face was toward the ceiling, gasping to breathe and control his heart rate. He cringed at every noise. It wasn't a bang, really, but rather the painfully sharp sound of bending metal. Finally he screamed, "Who are you? What do you want?" But there was no answer. It was silent.

He looked out the window again. It was the dead of winter and there was not a single sign of life. The four other houses in view, all three-bedroom ranches, sat seemingly untouched; there were no cars in the driveways, no tread marks in the snow. He studied the sidewalk up to his front door and the small piece of property around the house. There was only one set of footprints leading from his car to his door. They must have stepped in my footprints to avoid making anymore. There was definitely something there; he was sure someone was after him.

After what felt like hours, he realized the noise had disappeared. But like any sane person, he knew that if someone or something was after him, he had to protect himself. When he was 22, his wife, rather his ex-wife, had bought him a Sig P-226 Tactical hand gun for his birthday; they were living in Newark at the time, but had moved up north after they climbed the corporate ladder. Despite the lack of need for a gun, he kept it, always under his mattress, always. Dressed only in his boxers, he crawled across the floor on his hands and knees, making a right down the hallway towards the kitchen and the bathroom. He could feel his knees getting rug burn, but couldn't fathom standing up and risking being seen, located, shot or whatever they were after. Once he passed the bathroom, he hooked a right up the stairs and towards the bedroom. After two steps, he froze, and realized that they may be able to see him through the bathroom window. Slowly, he moved back down the stairs, and closed the door. It didn't make much sense, though. All of the blinds were already closed and not a single crack of light was permitted in the house. The lights in the house were off, but that didn't affect him much anymore. It had been three days of this; he did not sleep. The first two days were spent in paralysis, and any movement made went toward the effort of securing the house. The waiting game had begun. He knew that they were patient, and if he wanted to survive, he had to be more patient.

I have to get my gun. He crawled up the steps to the bedroom and towards the bed. Reaching under the mattress he found his gun, but also found something else. It was a picture. Not the kind of family portrait that is all organized, but a do-it-yourself, hold the camera out in front of you, fun-loving picture of him and his wife. It was from three years ago, when they were still in love, when he still trusted her. Back in May '05, he had lost his job, his position was outsourced. Being that he was notified in the middle of the day, he packed up his belongings and headed home. His plan was to put his feet up and wait until his wife got home. But when he pulled in the driveway, his wife's car was already there, along with a pick-up truck. The front door was unlocked and he opened it cautiously. In a curious voice he said, "Hello?" There was no response. He walked around the first floor and went upstairs. As he walked up the stairs, he could hear his wife screaming. Out of panic, he sprinted up the stairs and into the bedroom. What he saw was not a lady in distress, but rather his wife on top of and riding the hick with the pickup. He threw up on the spot and the hick ran out. But this picture was taken before that. This picture was from the good days early on in their marriage.

His wife tried to reconcile with him, but he wanted nothing to do with it. He began to drink heavily. One time, his wife smelled the stale odor of crack coming from the bathroom. When he finished smoking, she was gone. He never found her or spoke to her again. That was three years ago. He ran his finger over her face in the picture and reached in his pocket for his lighter. Holding the lighter just under the picture, he lit it, and it burned slowly as the gloss on the surface melted away. He wanted to cry. He wanted to grieve for the way his life turned out. But no tears came. His heart pounded in his chest but not a single tear came out. Taking the picture to the bathroom sink, he lit a cigarette. Up until this point his adrenaline had been keeping him going, but it was wearing out. His head pounded and his body shook from malnutrition. "Three years. Three fucking years," He said as he leaned his head against the hand with the cigarette; the other hand held the gun. He watched as the gun involuntarily raised and pointed directly at his face. He forced the gun down and walked calmly to the cabinet in the kitchen to reach for his whiskey. When you live alone and have no contact with anyone, there is no need for such formalities as a glass. He took several swigs before putting it down. The gun was resting in his left hand now, and although the whiskey took care of the headache, it did not quiet the chatter in his brain.

What if they can detect me by my body heat? He slid his back along the wall and to the floor. The anxiety was not allowing him to breathe, and finally, only out of fear, did he begin to cry. It wasn't a manly few tears that can be wiped

away. It was a full out fetal position fit that lasted for several minutes. Once the tears dried, he was still panting and out of breath, scared for his life. He knew that whoever was out there did not care about his life. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. He quickly stood up and checked the gun's ammunition. Swiftly, he made his way to the front door, passed it and went into the living room to peek out the window. There were two figures, one significantly smaller than the other standing in front of the door. They seemed to be carrying something. "Shit, this is it." He held the gun close to his side, safety off, ready to aim and fire. Leaving the top chain locked, he opened the door three inches and looked out slowly.

A tall woman with dark red hair, dressed fashionably in snow gear stood holding the hand of a little girl. Both held packages. The little girl was no more than eight years old and had her blonde hair held back in a ponytail and ear muffs covering her ears.

"Hi, Mr. Breckenridge, I'm Stacy and this is my daughter Kayla. We live down the street and were wondering—" He slammed the door shut in their faces. They looked at each other but before either could speak, the door opened again, widely this time. Mr. Breckenridge stood there, forcing a smile on his face.

"I'm sorry, ladies, what did you say you were wondering?"

"We were wondering if you'd like to buy some Girl Scout cookies. We have some really good deals. If you buy five or more of—"

"Please, please, come inside. Let us talk in here. No sense in doing business in the snow." The daughter looked at the mother while the mother examined the man drenched in sweat in front of her. The smile wasn't convincing, but it was possible that he was just doing a workout and was out of breath. They went in.

He closed and locked the door behind them. They could smell his fear, but he couldn't smell theirs. "Mr. Breckenridge, are you ok?" Kayla asked.

The sweat was pouring off of him and he couldn't stand up straight anymore. "I'll be asking the questions here, missy." Stacy took her daughter and held her tightly.

"Sir, we mean no trouble."

"Who do you work for?"

"We're selling Girl Scout cookies. If you don't want to buy them, we should really be on our way."

"Nice cover. Now you have the layout of my house and you're going to go tell your boss. Who do you work for!?" He pointed the gun at Stacy's forehead. Both parties were now trembling in fear.

"Mr. Breckenridge, please, please put the gun down." She stepped in front

of her daughter.

He grabbed Stacy and spun her around to face her daughter. With his arm around her throat and the gun at her temple, he said, "You have until the count of three to tell me who you work for before I blow your fucking brains out."

"Mr. Breckenridge!" Stacy screamed.

"One."

"Honest to God we don't work for anyone!"

"Two."

Kayla ran and grabbed her mother's hand. He kicked her away with his right foot.

"Three."

"The McClouds!" Stacy screamed at the top of her lungs. She was out of breath and crying. The McClouds lived across the street. They were a family of four: mother, father, and two little boys no older than eight. Breckenridge stood there in silence with the gun still to Stacy's head.

"The McClouds?" He said.

She nodded. She didn't work for them, but she didn't want to die.

"George put you up to this? Is he the one who's been spying on me?"

She didn't respond. He dropped her to the ground. She embraced her daughter with hugs and tears. He stormed out of the house, still dressed only in his boxers, and began to sprint across the street, waving the gun in the air. Stacy quickly got to her feet and reached in her pocket for her cell phone to dial 911.

"This is 911, what's your emergency?" The woman's voice on the other end of the phone said.

"Please. Please send the police! I'm at 1408 Amontiado Drive. A man with a gun just tried to kill us. He's across the street now!"

"Ma'am, stay calm. Is the man armed?"

"Yes! I just said he has a gun! He's going to kill them!" She began to cry. "He's going to kill them."

"We're going to send the police right away. Are you hurt?"

"He's going to kill them."

"Ma'am, are you hurt at all?"

"He's gunna fucking kill them!" She screamed.

A gun shot went off from across the street. "Ma'am, was that a gunshot?"

"Oh my God. Oh my God."

"Are you alright?" Another gun shot. "Ma'am are you ok?"

Stacy had put the phone on the ground. Her movements were slow and her eyes did not move from the McCloud's house. Gun shot. Little Billy Mc-

Cloud, the youngest of family, around six years old, came running into the front yard from the back of the house. He didn't run with much emotion, a slight fear maybe, but mostly from instinct. Breckenridge came out the front door, panting with an expression of rage like Stacy had never seen. She swears to this day that she saw the devil inside of him, in his face, his muscles, and in his bones when he did what he did. He ran after little Billy McCloud and shot him in the back, stopping when the child lay motionless on the ground. There were sirens in the distance. He let out a scream, a long, loud scream up to the heavens with his arms outstretched. Stacy watched from across the street as this man, her neighbor, took the gun and pointed it at his head. He pulled the trigger and the blood splattered across the white snow as he fell to the powder. The sirens grew louder, and within seconds there were four cops outside, guns drawn. But they were too late. The McCloud Family was dead. Mr. Breckenridge was dead. Yet, as with every incident, the street soon returned to the silence that we know in the dead of winter. The souls, however, never go silent. They can still be heard after every winter storm, screaming. Then the gunshots. Then back to dead silence.



Kimberly Wardlaw

Immobil

Melissa Adamo

Lemon kissed lips
became smeared lines
never parting, fixated
upturned corners of mouth.

Bright brown eyes
turned, looking like holes
on the middle of a page.

Like a caricature of myself
made to fit over
into some paper frame.

When asked who is there,
people see something completely
different. Everyone sees
only what they want.

My definition fades:
ink bled and blurred my image.

Here I am –somewhere-
stuck by the marker
that made me.

Beauty

Jill Cline

Beauty is what's inside
my mother said
as she sat in front of the mirror
drinking a tonic and
painting her lids a deep blackberry.

Her words would stick with me
like a needle pierced in someone's skin.

I watched her
and saw myself next to her
tracing my red lollipop around my lips.

Santa Spontaneously Combusts

Ryan Sollers

All was meant to be
flawless, the last week of the year.

We at the tree;
hushed anticipation.

What was that that
came down like ice?

(The chimney explodes.)

Red stockings are startled
--they were white last minute.

We stood in ash,
in soot stupor,
our blackened awe.

I wiped a tongue of hair
from my face.

I'm not a believer anymore.



Corey O'Connell

Dead, Yellow

B. Ollila

Was there a crystalline, radiant
Gaze before that hand spoiled your face
And left it in the ruins of those
Throngs of awful yellow?

What color was your hair
Before that ivy border trapped
And set your head among those shades of gray, and
The first thousand or so hasty strokes
That weren't good enough?

When did your mouth bloom,
And start speaking in the tongues
Of a putrid, stagnant color?

Did I see you first,
Or did I speak to you last?

It doesn't mean anything though.
I won't be taking you home with me.



Rob Gamer

o thabile

R. Spina

Her ebony eyes
glazed with poverty
stare into my
emerald hues of privilege.

She leans close and
whispers, “Ke a o rata.”
I break for her,
every shard.

Qwa Qwa swallows
the villagers,
then spits them out
chewed up with
bits and pieces missing.

We sit together
but I won’t trade
lunches with her—
she has mealipop and
my peanut butter and jelly
tastes much better.

I tie my Converse
and she looks at her
bare feet and says,
“Se ke wa mpea molato.”

She wants to hear
tales of America.
She dreams her
mud walls will
one day be sheet rocked.

So I hug her close—
don’t squeeze too hard
because she’s ten
stuck in a toddler body—
and murmur, a stranger.
“I love you, too.”



Brian Reilly



Dmitry Merkulov

Crash

Jill Grimaldi

The tremor gently rocks

maybe breaking the mirror
used, every morning,
to guide your stiff black comb
through tangles of curl

or the tiny china tea-cup,
that hides beneath a blanket
of ancient attic dust;

the carnage isn't much,
but the promise of an earthquake,
still rattles the roots of your hair.

Becoming

Michelle Henry

hair back seat back
compact.
those nights I would ride
we would drive-
hair back seat back.
shut your eyes
running past Edison
I'd be free
shut your eyes.
no.
keep them shut
we're not done yet

you would make an ugly

Renee Dwyer

you would make an ugly flowerpot and i am nothing
but burnished hope and unintelligible transmissions
through swimming pool water. there is no raincheck
for desire. i am severing the umbilical cord of devotion,
but all i've got is the edge of a coin handled by too many
people. so i settled for pulling out my molars because
i was tired of the daily grind. i am as bold as sumatra
coffee this morning and we are driving into the dawn
so you can fly into the sunset. you press a flower petal
into my hand before departing, already wilting.

A Sonnet for the Early Morning Hours

Julianne Candio Sekel

As the midnight moonlight glistens brightly
And the stars twinkle in a pattern form
As you move in closer, hold me tightly
And let me feel heat of your body warm

As the night dwells on and swells in beauty
Beautiful, let me dwell within your heart
Say that your affection is honesty
And that honest you'll stay when we depart

As the sun begins to rise in the east
Rise up, my love, for the day has begun
Night, now memory, is for the mind's feast
Set in the light of the glistening sun

Wait for a moment, sun, delay the day
For this scene of perfection must still stay

Frustration

Gretchen Kaser

Snapping in half the yellow pencil,
poised above the blank sheet of paper.

See also:
giving up.



Heather Lang

Villanelles and A Melodramatic Tina Turner

Angelina Aurelia Rich

Drill out the venom within my chest
Pulverize the rusted rock beneath
Leave nothing left except for breath

Clear the way of everything except
The rivers, that continue to hollow
Drill out the venom within my chest

Refill the caverns with cigarettes
Allow the TNT to scar my stone
Leaving nothing left except for breath

After the clearing let the cave-in come next
Let anything left living be swallowed
Spare them the venom within my chest

Mine inside ribs until nothings left
Abandon the supports to endure alone
Leaving nothing left except for breath

You my love, have been a success
methods heretical and obscene
drilled out the venom within my chest
leaving only one cold breath

Overtime at the Office

Alexandra Miller

Everyone just figured he was working long hours. We'd leave the office and he'd stay. We'd arrive in the morning and he'd be there. Always in the same position, with his head perched up against his hand over the tidy desk that made it seem like he was in a constant state of thought. No one bothered to say hello or goodbye to him. Not even Cheri, the bubbly secretary who got a kick out of killing people with kindness. No, this could not be blamed on her.

Oscar seemed like such a grumpy son-of-a-bitch. If he knocked the Folgers coffee canister of perfectly sharpened pencils off his desk, he'd snap at the sap who tried to help him collect them. "You'll break their tips!" he'd shout like a Latina trying to protect her new acrylic nails.

He was a very red man. His hair, his face, even his dark eyes were crimson marbles. And he had these weird bumps all over his skin that looked like cellulite. According to some know-it-all who used to work here, Oscar got caught in a house fire some years back. We think that's a load of crap, though. It was definitely cellulite. Either that, or his face was about to give birth to a bunch of vermin. A lot of us had a bet going that when they completed the autopsy, the pathologist would come to find he was actually a demon, a gargoyle, or some other creature depicted in Ghostbusters.

Thinking back on it now, we realize it was kind of naïve to even consider making such a bet. There's no way that information would have been released to us. Before the pool about what species of monster Oscar might have been, we had a bet going about what day of the week he might finally change his clothes. While we never knew his last name until the day Cheri sent out an e-mail disclosing the time and place of his wake, (which none of us really had time to go to) we paid attention to more significant details. We figured he was too tired to change his clothes, given the long hours he had been working. And he obviously had no wife to nag him about it. What woman, self-respecting or not, would sleep next to someone like that?

We're not really sure what day he high-tailed it to heaven, or was dragged by his fingernails into the deepest pit of hell, for that matter (which is another bet we almost started until we realized we'd never know the winner until we, ourselves, kicked the bucket). Either way, we know it was some time before Wednesday the sixth. See, it was on Wednesday that Bert made the first crack about Oscar's worn attire. Bert has this thing with ties. He believes no man

should wear the same tie twice in one week. It's tacky and cheap, he says. Normally he wouldn't have taken any notice of Oscar's tie, as he normally didn't take any notice of Oscar. But since they moved the water jug Monday evening to the wall beside Oscar's cubicle, Bert really had no choice but to take a gander when he was feeling a little parched Tuesday morning. It was then that Bert took note of Oscar's bland brown tie. Bert has a thing with the color brown in that it reminds him of shit. Bert also has a thing with shit, but we won't get into that right now.

The following day, Wednesday the sixth, Bert once again made the trip across the office to the water jug. There, while drinking his water out of a small paper cup, Bert peered over at Oscar's tie. He dropped the small paper cup at the sight of the same horrendous brown tie and scurried over to Marv's cubicle to ask for a bottle of water instead. Bert knew Marv had a case of bottled water beneath his desk because Marv is afraid of the germs that corrode the water jug handle.

"Can I have a bottle of water, Marv?" Bert asked.

"No," Marv said.

"Please," Bert pleaded. "Oscar is wearing the same shit brown tie he had on yesterday. It's making me nauseous."

"Who the hell is Oscar?"

"You know, the guy that could pass as Freddy Krueger's older brother."

"Oh, the guy with cellulite on his face. He's got on the same tie again?" Marv's face began to contort.

"Yes! And it's making me want to ralph. Can I please have a bottle of water?"

"Fine," Marv said as he reached below his desk to grab a bottle of water from his hidden case. "But only because I don't want you throwing up by me."

Bert graciously took the bottle of water from Marv and moved back to his cubicle to sit down. He began fidgeting, as he couldn't possibly take his mind off the fact that Oscar was wearing the same brown tie he had worn the day before. After a few games of solid work in trying to beat his record-score in Solitaire, Bert stood up and made his way toward Carl's desk. Carl had already begun eating his lunch, or maybe it was just a mid-morning snack. Bottom line: he was eating. "I'm disgusted," Bert said in a huff as he wiggled his way onto Carl's desk.

"It's peanut butter and banana," Carl said in defense.

"No, I'm not talking about your sandwich. Ooh, can I have a bite? That's my favorite." Bert was already swallowing half the sandwich before Carl could reply. "Is that wheat bread? It's good. Anyway, I am disgusted."

"You just said it was good. How are you going to say it's disgusting now?"

“No, no. It’s Oscar, he’s wearing the same tie he wore yesterday,” Bert snarled.

“That guy still works here?”

“Apparently, and to top it off the tie is...” Bert began having trouble saying the color as the thought of the tie was making him nauseous again. “...brown!” He blurted it out loud enough for half the office to hear. Luckily, it was the side of the office Oscar wasn’t on. Although, now we know that really wouldn’t have made any difference.

“Oh, that is just tacky,” Carl said, finishing the final bites of his sandwich as other people in the office who had heard the commotion made their way over to the desk where he and Bert were seated.

“Is he really wearing the same tie he wore yesterday?” Mae asked, peering her head over the cubicle wall.

“Yeah, and I’ll bet you 20 dollars he wears it tomorrow, too!” Bert



Kimberly Wardlaw

exclaimed as he whipped out his wallet and slapped a twenty on Carl's desk.

Mae rose to Bert's challenge and bet another twenty that Oscar would be wearing that same tie on Friday. A few others jumped in on the eager opportunity to make some money and people wound up claiming days until the following Thursday. Unfortunately, those people really never stood a chance to win, as the stench of Oscar's body tricked us from thinking he had poor hygiene to facing the truth of the matter on Monday.

By Friday, a stink began to rise around the area of the water jug. Oscar didn't seem to notice it, as he appeared to be diligently working without even squinting his eyes from the smell that had everyone else bothered. At first, we figured the stench was due to the overflowing garbage can next to the water jug. However, after a moment of thought, we realized that the can was full of nothing but soggy paper cups. There was no way the offensive waft of air was coming from there. That's when we decided it must have been Oscar. The man had been working so hard, that not only did he forget to alter his outfits from day to day, but he had overlooked showering entirely! This only made us more disgusted by him, and if some of us didn't have a bet to win, someone surely would have confronted Oscar on the issue.

Either way, as we now know, it would not have mattered whether someone had tried to confront the cellulite mess of a man or not that Friday. After all, the bet wound up being called off once we decided it was unfair to consider the fact that the pathologist must have removed Oscar's tie in order to perform an autopsy, since it was not a conscious choice made by Oscar. It's too bad, though. One of us could have won 120 dollars.

Aside from that matter, we left the office on Friday figuring Oscar would go home for the weekend and take a shower long enough to kill the smell he was omitting. However, a few of us were hoping he'd come in wearing the same brown tie on Monday anyway. So that was it. We went home, leaving Oscar hard at work, and came in three days later to find him rotting. It was really quite gross. None of us know how the flies crept into the office, but they managed to find a way. Come to think of it, maybe they were burrowing beneath his skin the whole time. So there was Oscar, looking a little more pink than red, smelling up the place with his dead body. We all ran out of the building once we realized the state of his condition. Cheri must have called the police because they arrived in minutes and carried him out of the office in a black body bag. We all got a good chuckle, though. Oscar's shit brown tie had gotten caught in the zipper of the body bag and was flapping around as they carried him down the stairs. It was as if it was waving goodbye.

Unemployed

Jared Catapano

Magazines hold up
the crooked table
Dishes crusting in the sink
She opens the door
Her glazed eyes
We fuck

It makes me forget

Tonight my granddad's arm chair
My throne
Damned leg rest
Shot
Cheap whiskey
My chalice

Until she's gone again
I don't say a word
There's nothin' to say.



Corey O'Connell

Removed

Stephanie Platt

What if we
only existed in art-
I'd want you
to feel me

in tertiary
colors. Be my
aquamarine
acting out, uncivilized.

A smile lacking joy,
reminding me of
scissors so excuse me
while I slash, stab,

sacrifice you. I would
be full like a rain
cloud, ready to be
spilled

reciting words
that have fallen out
of modern English,
summation.



Rob Gamer

You Ask Me What's Wrong

Angelina Aurelia Rich

The fat bitch you called over
the night we fought
And "stricken with grief"
you fucked her
In our bed
The bed where me and you
put the pieces together
every night
And five months passed
without a word
Every night me
sleeping on her
sweat and dead skin

Bicycle on a Wire

Brian Wiseman

He strung out like a clothesline,
one end tied to your deflated heart,
the other attached to nothing,
pins gripping a thousand guilty
words and nights. He lay on his back,
arms aside for balance, and
he rode back to you,
a bicycle on a wire,
weakened legs trembling,
kicking circles through the air.

Wonderland

R. Spina

While strolling through a common grass
I plummeted down a gaping hole
You know, that Alice is a lying bitch.
The fall was not graceful,

and the authentic artifacts were missing.
I twirled, tumbled, twisted
and I felt like I would puke.
Suddenly I was stopped, a

patch of air caught me and
then I crashed on a kitchen floor.
It was then that I realized,
“Oh crap, I’m in the story.”

The bottle of liquid,
which I thought was rum,
forced me to grow wider
instead of taller.

And the box of candy
that I thought was Xanax,
caused me to flatten
so I slipped under the door!

Eventually I returned to normal size
and decided to find a way home.
Along the way Mock Turtle cornered me,
and told me his depressing tale.

So I slipped him some Prozac
and knew that they would help.
I continued on my journey by foot,
narrowly escaping some retarded twins.

Out of nowhere I heard a scream,
a hit, then a baby cry.
The duchess was at work
beating up her kids.

I rammed my hands in my jeans
in search of my cell phone
and quickly dialed Child Services—
but damn it, I had no service.

Stripes in the tree caught my eye,
and immediately I was pissed.
The Cheshire Cat grinned
and called out that I was nuts.

“Well, I’m not,” I retorted.
“Of course you are,” he laughed,
“You don’t even remember
dying your hair blonde.”

Finally I stumbled upon a trial
where the abusive queen
was yelling herself red—
she really needs anger management.

The White Rabbit read the charges—
for whom, I don’t know—
but all I could think was,
“shit, I am crazy.”



Caitlin Adams

Love's Entomology

Jill Fenske

The buzz of neon,
a smudged window,
the Shady Grove Motel
drew them like flies.

His key, lock snapped
as jarred June bugs
flicked from screen
to concrete step.

Lured by bare
bulbed heat-their
lust the purr of
moth's feathered wings.

Exposed spines
scratch against sheets,
roaches scurry into
darkness. She shudders.

Desire tightened,
long legs bowed
his mate enticed by
cricket's low hum.

Lurid hunger
close to her skin,
mosquito's wine,
seeking fresh blood.

This orchestra
of segmented bodies
sound and legged fury.
Insect crescendos

The night exhales.

Cold blooded
she lay still,
wondering.



Crysta Jarczyński



Crysta Jarczyński

Trillium 2009

memory with its tin-sharp edges

Renee Dwyer

memory with its tin-sharp edges threatens tetanus
a flashback: the world was about to end and you
were still trying to prove yourself right about the
reverse spin of the heart. a counter-clockwise
motion that brings spots to my eyes and creates
a false nimbus around your head, an imposter with
a needle full of ash behind your back, as the sun
expands and turns the color of an open wound.



Krysta Daniels

i will put teabags on his eyes

Renee Dwyer

i will put teabags on his eyes
bleed them brown
eclipsing seafoam
stir them with a spoon
tidal pools edged with porcelain

the city weighs on my hands
brass pendulums
swinging over two teacups
and the day slants heavily

all we want
is a tripped twist of a kiss
but he is miserly in his affections

a car skids
we value life more
the brighter the eyes shine

in a suburban town
someone will fall into the sunlight
and be done with it

the smell of toast and tea
and something salt-sharp is in the air

the teabags are floating in the water
blooming clouds of sepia
and the salt leaves its stains
on our clothes

A-List

Ilysse Ratner

He promised he'd make Sloppy Joes for dinner. He promised that night I would be doing homework and hear the chopped meat sizzling. Every few minutes, my brother or I would wander into the kitchen to see if dinner was almost ready. The English Muffins we used as buns don't hold Sloppy Joe meat very well, so with every bite we took, there was a promise that warm juice would drip down the sides of our mouths. After we cleaned our house of make-shift buns, we'd just eat the meat with forks until it was all gone. We loved when he promised Sloppy Joe night. My father promised we'd watch *Father of the Bride* on Sunday. From the time I was allowed to use the stove, I would promise to wake up early on Sunday mornings, and make pancakes. If I cooked, my dad promised to clean up the mess. After we ate, I'd climb into my parents' bed and put my head on my father's round oversized belly. He promised to give me this pillow. We would laugh at Martin Short's accent as "Franc the wedding planner" and the bride walking down the aisle with lace adorned sneakers. I sat up during these parts. His baritone laugh was recognizable anywhere, and his stomach promised to echo that laugh. Removing my head from his belly protected my eardrums. Every time we watched *Father of the Bride*, he promised that one day, he would walk me down the aisle. He promised to take me shopping after school. We walked into the stores as I chose from piles of freshly folded clothes. The salesgirls always smiled as he pampered me with new dresses, shirts, and shoes. He promised to be at my high school graduation. He had been at my brother's two years earlier, and if he promised my brother something, he would promise me something equally as good - if not better. It didn't matter that he was healthy for Josh's graduation. I was his princess, and he promised me the world.

My father never made a promise he could not keep. He never promised to quit smoking because he knew it would be too difficult. He promised Disney World and pizza and a new television and new paint for my room. But he never promised to get healthy. Every time the dial on the oxygen tank had to be turned up a liter, the promises slowed down. When he took me to the mall for our monthly shopping dates, the faces of the salesgirls changed. The adoring smiles I once saw were replaced with a slightly cocked heads, half-pity smiles, and curious eyes wondering why a sixteen-year old was pushing her father in a wheelchair. "Why was this man without a strand of gray hair hooked up to an oxygen tank? Why was his daughter piling clothes on his lap as if he were a disposable shopping cart she would get rid of once he signed the credit card slip?"

He stopped promising Sloppy Joes. In fact, he stopped cooking altogether. We missed his chicken parm and his meatloaf and flank steak. Instead, he promised to pick up the phone and order take-out every night. Mondays were Chinese, Tuesdays were Italian, Wednesdays were Greek because I had SAT practice Wednesday nights and hated Greek food. My parents went to Greece on their honeymoon, so when my brother was in college and I was prepping for the exam, he promised my mom Greek night. The delivery boys promised to be at our front door at 7:00 on their given nights.

We didn't watch *Father of the Bride* anymore. I once told him that I would be pushing his wheelchair down the aisle at my wedding, instead of having him walk me down. He slightly chuckled and we promised to never watch the movie again. It was too painful. The idea that he would still be in a wheelchair. The idea that he wouldn't be there at all. I couldn't think of graduation or prom without my father, nonetheless my wedding. And he couldn't promise that he would be there. I didn't expect that promise. No promises could be made with regards to his health.

It was an exhausting weekend at the hospital. On Friday, his left lung collapsed, so they inflated it. On Saturday, his right lung collapsed, and they inflated it. Sunday night, the doctors told us they were going to transfer him to a different hospital in the morning. Then they told us the news we had waited to hear for three years, "Mike is the next person on the waiting list for a transplant." We knew the waiting was almost over. We wouldn't have to jump every time the phone rang anymore. We could move the packed suitcase away from the front door. I would finally be able to sit in class without constantly staring at my cell phone waiting for "the call."

Visiting hours ended, but I wasn't ready to leave. I walked my mom and brother to the car and went back to room 502. The IV drip's tapping was like clockwork, every second. The Irish nurse came in and out of the room to check his blood pressure and remind me that visiting hours were over. I moved my chair closer to his bed. As if overnight, his hair was grayer, his red-toned face was barely pink, and his pudgy cheeks now just looked like skin hanging off his cheekbones.

My chair couldn't get close enough to the bed. I climbed into the hospital bed with him and put my hand on his round belly, which wasn't round anymore and wasn't a pillow. He said the words I hadn't heard in so long. "I promise. I promise I'm not going anywhere."

The Sound of a Heart Breaking

Stephanie Platt

I could hear it,
something terrible,

ugly. It popped, cracked
snapped, a piece broke

off, landing somewhere
then crumbled, falling

to her dirty floor. The kind that had
secrets on top

with dust blended in
that hadn't been swept in weeks,

in months,
since her heart had been whole

again.

It was twisted, aching, throbbing

from the drop and begging
to be picked back up, to be held,

to be cared for.

It had been cracked

before with tape placed over it
to hold the pieces together

but we both knew the binding,
glue

wouldn't last forever.

She said she couldn't

help but to feel worthless
but I couldn't hear her.

The sound was too loud
to talk over it.



Brian Reilly

Love

Joel Romeo

My toe dives slowly through
The soap cloud
Finding its warm liquid filling
--thick and heavy
Hugging me
My pores become drunk
As my skin adapts
To this welcome warmth
The desire to stay comes

The sound of worn magazines

Mommy sits near,
On the toilet so she can see
Reading her pages

My fingers like matured fruit
From an aquatic adventure

I look up—she smiles
Smiling back, I dip
Into another fantasy

The Runners

Melissa Adamo

We are runners in a race,
propelling bodies in circles,

constantly gasping for oxygen
and continually battling time.

We never stray off the track.
We know nothing else:

these lines, this concrete,
the breaths we take.

The other athletes blur,
becoming shapeless and pointless.

This race is ours;
we finish at the starting line.



Stephan S. Dalal

Intuition

Stephanie Platt

Lately, I had been uncommunicative in bed. I gave no indication that he gave me any pleasure and I really didn't care if he enjoyed himself or not anymore. I would lay there, motionless. Sometimes I stared in his eyes but not in a romantic way. Just one to let him know that he had done something to aggravate me. When he asked what was wrong, I would reply with a curt, 'nothing.' I could only hope that he got the hint sooner than later.

Stanley retired from teaching last June and my hours as a nurse are random. Some weeks I work all night shifts some I work all day. Some weeks it's mixed; I hate those weeks. This is one of those weeks. My hours were more random when I was younger; I'm surprised he didn't find some young hussy back then. "Sweetie, I'm going out fishing with the guys." Yeah, I bet you are. Upon arrival he would say, "Didn't catch a damn thing." Yeah, I bet you didn't.

I had been suspicious of him recently. He would give short answers when I asked questions, had missing receipts, and charges on the credit card that he didn't show concern for. I saw him with two women, different times. They both wore dark business suits and were really sharp looking. I admired their tailored jackets, dark stockings, and matching pumps. I actually wanted the suit that in five minutes was going to be lying in a clump on the floor, next to a squeaky mattress with that slut nibbling on my Stanley's ear. He was wasting that Viagra on her.

There were times I would daydream about when Stan and I were first married. We were so in love and couldn't stand to be away from each other for too long. He would always come up behind me when I was making dinner and wrap his arms around my waist and whisper something sweet, not necessarily sexy, in my ear. I remember one time he whispered that I was the most beautiful woman in the world and I believed him. Looking back, I was gullible. I'd like to think by now I've grown out of my gullibility, especially with the latest occurrences that are now putting a hiccup in my marriage.

In my darkest moments, my thought process was blurry. I knew something had to be done about this situation, and my husband's new playmates, but I didn't know what. I had full access to the medicine closet at work and I knew I had the ability to add a poison to his meal that would kill him within minutes. I couldn't live with him continuously lying to me but I knew that if I confronted him about his infidelities, he would deny them.

I tried so hard to be a good wife. I only wanted to please him and he

obviously wanted someone else to please him. What did I do wrong? Did I not kiss him enough? Did I not tell him I loved him enough? At our wedding, did my vows appear weak and now he's realized I did not live up to my wifely standards?

Some nights it gets quiet at the nurses' station. The night shifts are dull and endless. The occasional patient will give us a hard time because he's thirsty and can't drink or can't fall asleep because his roommate is snoring too loudly. On the off times, I'll read a magazine or take a walk around the hospital to get my blood moving, but last night I brought pink nail polish with me. I hadn't had my nails done in years and whenever I took the time to do a nice job with them, they were always chipped the next day. I gave up about eight years ago with keeping my nails neat. I waited until the last hour of my shift to apply it. About 4 a.m. is really dead, so with an infomercial on in the background, I carefully applied the polish, stroke by stroke, until the nail was covered in an illusive pink that would stop traffic if need be. I screwed on the cap, threw it in my bag, and blew on my nails until they were glossy and perfect. That was the most satisfaction I had gotten in a long time.

I woke up the next morning next to a snoring Stan feeling optimistic and rejuvenated which I hadn't felt since this whole thing started. I put make-up on and wore my finest scrubs that had flowers on them. I looked cute and felt attractive which I hadn't felt in quite some time now. I was starting to look at things differently. I thought that maybe I hadn't lost my feminine flare and that Stanley was just...being a man. I had a friend at the hospital, Dr. Glen Stewart. He started at the hospital in the mid 1970's around the time I had been transferred there from my old hospital a few towns over. His kids and my kids practically grew up together and he and Stanley had frequently gone out to play golf. Glen and I would usually grab lunch once a week and catch up on family stuff, talking about anything except work. He wasn't necessarily handsome. His teeth were a little crooked and stained from all the coffee he drinks during the day. He had a mole on his cheek that he had removed about five years ago, but I could never take my focus off the scar that had remained. His marriage wasn't perfect either; his third wife was an alcoholic and his children resented both him and her for it. A few days ago, he came up to the nurses' station examining a chart.

"Glen," I asked, "how was vacation?"

He looked up from the light blue chart that had bent corners from all the abuse it had taken.

"Oh, it was great. Went to Aruba, stayed at the hotel we usually do. Good weather for the most part, it rained one day. Nice scrubs by the way. Very spring-like. They new?"

I smiled and nodded, letting him get back to the notes that he was jotting

down. After he was done, he shut the chart and tapped on the desk while he walked away.

“Lunch later?” he asked, turning around to look at me.

“Yeah,” I said, giving a thumbs-up before watching him walk away in the awkward manner that he usually did. I am ashamed to admit that I followed him, a few steps behind, turning at every corridor he went down.

“Glen,” I shouted, wanting to get his attention before someone else did. He turned around and suddenly I froze.

“Yes?”

“Can you follow me for a second? I want your opinion on something.”

He walked behind me into an examination room where he stood at the counter, still staring down at the chart he had been studying. I wondered why his first marriage had failed. Though we had been good friends for years, he never gave me a clear answer as to why it ended. Whenever it was brought up, which was rarely, he would reply with, “It just didn’t work out.” It must have worked for some time, he had two children with her and celebrated birthdays and anniversaries with her. He must have loved her at some point but I wondered when his loving stopped. When we had met, he had just gotten married to his second wife. That marriage lasted ten months before he quietly referred to her as a whore during one of our lunch breaks. He moved to a local hotel until she had found a place to stay. She ended up moving in with the boyfriend that she had been with throughout half of the marriage.

“What is it you wanted me to look at?”

I had removed my shirt while he was looking at the chart and stood there in my bra that was less than flattering but served its purpose.

“Am I beautiful?”

His eyes met with mine before he scanned down the rest of my body at my heart shaped necklace then my bleached bra then at my stomach which hasn’t seen a sit-up in decades but didn’t show signs of fat, only loose and wrinkled skin from sun bathing since I was a teenager.

“Do you think I’m beautiful?”

“Syl...” he started to say. He cleared his throat, darted his eyes all around the room, probably looking for the door, then rushed out the room, his white coat almost getting caught when the door slammed behind him. I sat on the table and cried. I must have been in there for an hour. I tried to go back to work but I was too distracted. I took frequent trips to the bathroom because I felt nauseous about the whole ordeal. I had just wanted someone to tell me that I was still pretty, that I was attractive. I wanted someone to hold me and kiss my forehead and say, “It’ll be alright”.

I walked out of the hospital without anyone knowing where I was going. I sat in my car thinking about places I could go to sit, to think. There was no place I wanted to be and there was no place I wanted to go. I had come to a complete standstill in my life. Stanley was creating a new life and in doing so, he was suffocating mine whether he knew it or not. I was numb, absolutely numb. I started the car and drove.

I went to the liquor store and bought a bottle of vodka, some whiskey, and a whole bunch of other stuff that I can't remember.

"Having a party?" a voice asked from behind me. I turned around and saw an old friend, Judy. We had been members of the PTA and always stuck close to each other during our children's lives. My son had even dated her daughter and when they broke up, there were no hard feelings between us. Judy was a nice woman but she was the type that always had drama in her life, new husbands and boyfriends. Nothing seemed to be too stable with her. We hadn't seen each other since she had moved halfway up the state with her latest fling about fifteen years ago.

"Ha, no. Just stocking up, I guess you'd say. You're back in town?"

"For now. Rodney didn't work out." We hugged that fake hug that people do when they promise to get together but never follow through, and I left.

Today is a Thursday. This morning, I heard Stan's truck rumbling in the driveway and he was missing from his pillow. I questioned whether he was just leaving or just returning. I heard the front door slam and I went around to the kitchen to find a note on the table. "Gone to the store. Call the cell." Rage built up and I threw on my junkiest pair of gardening sweatpants and got in the car. I called and he answered in only a few rings. "Hey, where are you?"

"I'm at the store."

"Which one?"

"Um, the one off Route 40. I had to help a fishing buddy with something first so I thought I would just hit this one."

I could hear his thoughts jumping around and as he said that, I passed a large white building with multiple condominiums occupying it and his truck in one of the parking spaces. "Are you at the store right now?"

"Yes, is something wrong? You sound anxious." I was about to hang up without replying when I heard a woman's soft voice mumble something incomprehensible and then I heard his voice fade away and say, "That's a good price."

I felt sick driving back to the house where we lived and had created our lives. I sat on the corner of the bed and cried so hard that it started to hurt. I looked at how a dirt stain on the knee of my left leg looked like a heart torn in

two. How appropriate. I then noticed I wasn't wearing a bra. No wonder my husband didn't want me anymore. My boobs became a victim of gravity, God knows when, and he wanted someone with perky ones that hadn't fed his children. I don't blame him anymore, I was becoming a mess. I heard his truck rumble into the driveway and I tried to wipe away stray tears on my face. He walked into the room and noticed my face looking flushed and I could tell that he knew I had been crying. He sat on the bed next to me to hold and comfort me. Everything became clear when I smelled her sweet cravings on him.

"I have something to tell you, and I'm afraid you already know" he started out, "I know you saw the truck outside of the condo building, I saw you too. I'm sorry for lying but I can tell you..."

"I don't want to hear it Stanley!" I tried to scream but my voice was cracking. When we were first married, Stan had bought a gun for our protection. We weren't living in the safest of areas and he felt it would be a good idea to have one 'just in case.' I hadn't thought about it in years and I doubt the kids ever knew we had one. I had found it right before he came home and hit it under the mattress. I pointed it at him.

The phone rang and startled me. Neither of us picked it up, neither of us moved from our spots. I let the answering machine pick up and Stan's voice came on, sweet and gentle. "Sylvia and Stan aren't here right now. Please leave a message and we'll return your call."

"Stan! It's Linda..." I broke down. I didn't think I would. I cried again, this time so hard and so loudly that I couldn't even hear the message. I lowered the gun and Stan tried to calm me down but I kept trying to struggle my way out of his strong hold.

"What has gotten into you?" He spoke loudly over my wailing. He kissed me on the cheek and let me sit alone on our bed while he went to the other room to listen to the rest of the message. I heard it. "I wanted to call the house phone and congratulate you and Sylvia on the new condo! The Klausterman's are accepting your offer on the third one we looked at today. I'll be in touch with you tomorrow."

My eyes widened and I felt the blood rush further from my face. I straightened my posture and looked over to Stan's wallet that was on his dresser. In it tucked behind his credit cards was a business card with a brunette about 30 years old on it. "Realtor Linda Rodriguez" I read off it.

Stan slowly walked back into the room, cautious that I still had the gun in my hand probably. I saw in his face that he was terrified. An overwhelming sense of guilt came over me. I was guilty about and for everything but I couldn't even express that to him. I had almost cheated on him and almost killed him for

nothing. My stomach was twisted and I felt light-headed. We stood there, emotionally exhausted, and stared at each other. He started to take a step forward when the phone rang again. We both cried, quietly. My sobs were muffled in his chest as he rubbed my back. We let the machine pick up again because we couldn't talk.

“Stan! It's Judy. I know you've been busy house shopping for you and uh, Syl but when are we going to go for drinks like you promised?”

Our tears abruptly stopped.



Laura V. Arias

Trillium 2009

Driving through a Red Light

Angie Bolivar

Cuts of glass tangled in my hair,
Noise of sirens drawing near

I open my eyes, cautiously, and
I can see- we're locked

Between pockets pumped with air
Strapped and stiffened in our seats

This morning I was going to leave him,
But this crash holds us

Tomorrow, again
The sharp edges will wash out of my scalp
My aches will turn tender, dark, round.



Dmitry Merkulov

Origami

Melissa Adamo

You know me like your favorite book,
open and laying flat on its spine.

Paper trees grow from it,
rooted to the page in ink blots
from old stories of unfamiliar people.

We sprinkle water over,
but drops crumple and morph
the tree, roots, the whole book.

Now damp like a newspaper,
littered in the street
during thunder showers
with some blurred headline
no one remembers.

A tree grew from soil,
housing dead bodies.
The leaves went through life
of green, red, brown, void.
Chopped down to create
some art, laughing at its form.

Cold Passion

Jill C. Fenske

You snuck glances while classmates read "Where the Wild Things Are."
It felt wasteful; indulgent,
time thrown away like illustrations
ripped from that useless Children=
Bible your grandmother gave you.

Pagan sabbath you muttered
under your 10 year old breath
when the Catholic boy next door
complained about attending Mass
on Sundays. Hard words that no
boy would come up with on his own.

The chunky wooden blocks and battered
fire truck that you loved best, he took
behind the barn and made you watch
as your childhood burned.

In playful hands they're devils yarn.

Your sister jumped when he yelled
about some inconsequential cup
of coffee, mug drying on the drain
board. "Like you wanted to kill me"
she'd
said. "If God wanted me to kill you" he
growled "you=d already be dead".

Today he is quiet, sits on a wheelchair
looks at nothing, recognizes no one:
not you, your mother or the aides who
spoon whirled food into his mouth,
change soiled sheets.

Holy tyrant, righteous bastard,
razor-edged father, icy and hard as the
winter window through which he stares.
Your eyes sting with regret, his
mind melts just as your heart was
finally beginning to grow cold.



Heather Lang

Jolene

Ashley Tobin

It's 3:12 p.m. Almost 3:15. Just three more minutes and she will be waltzing into my life again. She does it every afternoon, via drive-thru.

She's beautiful.

"Jimmy, what the fuck are you doing over there? Get the damn Box o' Joe bags you lazy piece of shit."

Thanks, Dan.

Dan is my manager, and he is not at all bitter that after six years of college working for a degree in communications, he is making a name for himself in the donut retail industry.

I run and get the bag of cups and sugar packets, returning to my station just in time to see her grey-blue 1988 Volvo wagon pull up to the microphone.

"Good morning! I would like a medium coffee with a little bit of cream and thirteen packets of Splenda!" She practically screams at the computer, completely unaware of the quality of our headset system. I love the way she screams.

She is three cars away, then two. The car at my window now is 1996 Jeep Cherokee Country, black with silver trim. Inside is a large twenty-something, waiting on a sausage and cream cheese bagel. I want to tell her that she's gross, that cream cheese and sausage should never be together on one sandwich, but I don't, and she eagerly snatches her bag and drives away.

Finally, she is here. The nametag she wears on her top says Jolene, and she has the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. They are green, with little specks of gold. They are like the sea, and I want to jump into them so bad it hurts. Her eyes smile, even when she scowls. Her hair is the color of sand, and is all tied up in one of those crazy knot things girls do. She is wearing a green business suit, the kind with the skirt and lacy thing under the jacket, and she fills it in all the right places. It kills me.

"Hi," I say as I lean out the window. "That will be one seventy-five."

She hands me a large amount of change, something that would have driven me into a frenzy of rage were she anyone else in the world. I don't waste time counting her nickels, dimes and pennies as I blindly toss them into the cash register, seizing her coffee from the counter before anyone tries to steal my glory and deliver her beverage them self.

"Here ya go, pretty eyes, I hope it's delicious," I say, but she is gone in a flash, replaced by the hefty old hag who comes in her stained gray bathrobe every morning to order "one Boston Crème for senior."



Rob Gamer

I take her dollar with one hand and hand her a dime with the other. I find myself thinking what I think about sixty percent of our customers...like this bitch needs a donut.

The next person to drive through is a cop. The girl taking orders is giggling hysterically because even after six months of peddling pastries here at Dunkin, she still finds it hilarious when cops buy donuts, filling their age-old stereotype. Girls are so stupid. I need a woman, like Jolene.

Jolene wouldn't laugh at cops. Jolene would appreciate what they do for the community. She has one of those stickers on her window, the kind with the letters PBA that let cops know you're cool with them or something. If I had a job like that, Jolene would respect me.

I don't, however. I am twenty-three years old, and I am wasting my life away at Dunkin D's. This is a temporary situation, mind you. I was going to school, but cash got a little tight. And apparently, it's kind of rough securing impressive employment with half a college education and a work resume that reads "Burger King through high school." So after about thirty unsuccessful interviews for occupations that don't involve separating frozen egg patties, I was finally hired here. At Dunkin.

"What, Jimmy, are you fuckin' daydreaming? Get the mop and clean up this Dunkachino. When you're done, you can change this garbage." Poor Dan. Dan with his greasy hair and pimples, his spare tire drooping over his belt.

I don't want to become Dan. I need to get out of here.

I consider quitting this instant, taking the bull by the horns and whatnot, but then I realize that if I do, I'd most likely never see Jolene again. Silly as it sounds, it is quite the conundrum. This girl is the one. She is the one I am going to marry. I can't lose her now. I will stick it out another week. I will introduce myself and ask her out.

Today, I shower twice. I wear my best khakis, a pair of Dockers in the back of my closet, and press my black uniform polo shirt.

I brush, Listerine, and floss, and I am on my way to work.

It takes forever for three o'clock to come. I can't even handle it. All I can think about is what I will say.

"Hi," I practice as I fill my change counting machine. "Hey. How's it going?" "I'm Jimmy, and I've been noticing you." Noticing you? "Hi, I'm Jim."

"Who the hell are you taking to, kid?" sneers Dan, skulking in the corner by the freezer. He is fulfilling his managerial duties by taking the afternoon temperatures, and he seems to be in a particularly sour mood today.

"No one, Dan," I reply, kicking myself for drawing attention to my

Trillium 2009

existence. Now he will have me scrubbing the bathrooms, or doing something equally messy that could have a negative effect on my good pants.

3:12 p.m. rolls around, and I rush to the drive-thru window. “Jose, take a break,” I urge, putting the headset on just in time to hear, “thirteen Splenda!”

I hang out the window as she drives up, grinning at her and holding out her coffee.

“Hey,” I say. “I’m Jim. How are you?”

“Fine, thanks Tim,” she replies, looking up at me with those big green eyes. She thrusts a handful of change onto the counter beside me, grabbing her beverage and driving out of my sight in practically one motion.

This is good. I can tell this is going really good, I realize later, as I put the chairs over the tables at closing time. She already knows my name. Or at least the sound of my name. By the end of week, she will know that we belong together.

I am giddy as I leave; I can hardly wait to find out what comes next. Jolene and I will be together, I will look for a better job. Maybe I will go back to school. I have saved enough money for a few semesters at least after a year at the drive-thru window. A year of seeing those ridiculously life-changing eyes. Maybe I will look into the police academy. Or the army. We could be like a military family; just like that teenaged father and his dad were on *Seventh Heaven*.

I don’t watch *Seventh Heaven*, by the way. My sister does. I mean, if she’s watching it, I might sit in the living room with her. Mary Camden is so hot.

My train of thought travels through the seasons of *Seventh Heaven*, and then throughout the rest of Jessica Biel’s career. Was she in *Cabin Fever*? No, that was the *Texas Chainsaw* remake. Jeez, *Cabin Fever*, that movie was the worst. What were they thinking? I wonder what Jolene thought about it. I wonder if she was scared. I want to watch it with her, and I want to hold her hand when she is frightened. The image of us snuggling up to rotting flesh on HBO consumes my thoughts for the remainder of the evening.

It is Wednesday now. Dan has done everything in his power to make me hate life. I think he picks on me because he sees himself in me, himself ten years ago when he had hopes and dreams. When he thought he had a future.

I still have a future, and I refuse to make the same mistakes. When he throws a dishrag at me and tells me that I know what to do with it, I bite my lip.

When he tells the customer that received the wrong coffee not to mind me, that I’m a little slow, I don’t remind him that it was he who prepared the beverage.

I want to quit. I want to punch him, I want to break things, and I want to quit. But I don’t. I am calmed by the clock that reads 2:57 p.m. Just eighteen more minutes.

It is then that Dan grunts, “Jimmy, you stupid shit. Why are there no chocolate milks in the drive-thru fridge? It’s your fucking job to fill this fridge with bottled drinks every morning, what the fuck am I paying you for?” Dan, you don’t pay me, Gary, the store owner, does. He continues, “I don’t even know why I hire you fuckin’ kids anyway, you’re so useless—“

“Dan,” I interject, “Do you think it’s necessary to be so rude? I think you can get your point across in another way.” I say this calmly, but I want to put my fist through his throat.

“I can get my point across with my foot in your ass. Who do you think you are, huh?”

I know there are rules about all this. I know there are rules about safe and hostility-free work environments. I know that somewhere it is written that a manager is not authorized to talk to you like you’re the fat kid in *Full Metal Jacket*.

However, I do not know where it is written, and I don’t know who to talk to to take care of it. I don’t even know where to start. I certainly can’t afford a lawsuit, or even a consultation with a lawyer. I do the next best thing.

“You know who I am, Dan? I’m a guy who doesn’t work for you anymore,” I say, throwing down my headset.

Walking out the door, I am hit with a myriad of emotions. The ecstasy that was caused by my moment of liberation is replaced almost instantly with remorse. I am unemployed. I am unemployed, which is bad, but I am not a slave to munchkins and lattes, which is good! But now I will not see Jolene. Possibly ever again.

This is fucking awful.

She is my world. She is my reason for waking up in the morning, and she has driven out of my life for good in that beat up grey-blue Volvo of hers.

NO. No, she has not.

I get in my car and wait.

It is now 3:12 p.m., and she will be here in three minutes. She will order her medium coffee, with the thirteen packets of Splenda. Maybe she will get to the counter, and Jose will be working. Maybe Dan will be there, now obligated to do counter work since he is short a man on this shift.

Maybe she will wonder where I am.

She pulls up; I can hear her scream at the computer. I pull around the drive-thru and wait. She drives off, and I follow. I will find out where she works, and I will meet her there. I will say, “Hi, how are you? Fancy seeing you here. Usually I see you at my place of employment! Dunkin Donuts. Remember me? Jim?”

And I know she will say, “Oh yes! Jim! You weren’t at work there today,

what happened?” and we will talk, and she will love me.

She drives for about twenty minutes, and pulls into a residential area. She stops and gets out of her car, walking into 125 Glen Avenue. I realize now that she was coming home from work, and that I had followed her to her own house. I can't very well knock on her door, so I drive away. Perhaps tomorrow she will go someplace else.

The past six days have been the same. After work, Jolene comes to Dunkin', where I wait in the parking lot and follow her home. It may sound strange, but I am just waiting for the right opportunity to meet her. I keep thinking that maybe she will go to the supermarket after work, or the mall. She has to go somewhere, sometime. If only I knew where she worked. That shiny gold nametag is so vague. No company name. Nothing. I wonder if she gets her pay vouchers in the mail. Any indication of an outside life. It is noon, and she is at work now. If I were to go to her house, she wouldn't even know I was there. I could run to the mailbox, check inside, and run back out. Just to know. Besides, she is the woman I am going to marry, which makes her my future wife, which is practically my wife, which means I am basically entitled to be in her mailbox.

Yes. That is what I will do. I get in my car and drive. I have memorized the route to her house by now, and get there in fifteen minutes. Her mailbox is empty, and my heart sinks. Maybe there is something inside her house. If I am careful not to touch anything, I can just go in and look for a minute.

The door is locked, but the key is under the “Happy Halloween!” mat on her doorstep. It is July, and I fall more in love than ever. As convenient as this is, however, once I move out of my parents' house and into 125 Glen Avenue, there will be no more mats with keys under them. Anyone can walk into the house; it's not safe. It's a good thing I was the one to find it and not some crazy stalker.

Her décor is very normal, very Rockwell-esque. I am searching the drawers in the kitchen for paperwork that might let me know where she works when I hear keys in the door. Did I leave it unlocked? I run upstairs, into the first room I see. It is her bedroom. There is little room to hide, but she does have long heavy drapes that I can make do with until I find time to make a break for it. I feel I resemble a cartoon character from any program I've watched as a child, my feet are sticking out from under the curtains, fooling myself that I am invisible more than I'm fooling my pursuer. I hear footsteps on the stairs. Jolene. She comes into the bedroom, but luckily takes no notice of my lime green Chuck Taylors.

She takes off her jacket, and then skirt. She rolls her stockings off her legs, and slides on these little shorts. She has nothing else on but that flimsy lace thing that hides nothing.

I can hardly stand still.

“It’s so dark in here!” she sighs to herself, and heads for the window. Heads for me. Before I know it, the drapes are pulled back, and I am revealed.

“Ohmygod, I’m sooo sorry Jolene, I can explain, don’t call the cops,” I start, but she is...grinning.

“You’ve been stalking me,” she says. “Nice work. Kind of sloppy, but you did okay.”

I am so confused.

“You’re Tim, right?”

“Jim, yes.”

“From Dunkin Donuts?”

“Yes.”

“I have to admit, at first I wasn’t interested, I kind of thought you were a dork. But this...this is hot.”

What?

“I’ve always fantasized about being stalked, having a man take control.” She goes to a drawer on her nightstand, and pulls out a leather whip and real handcuffs, forcing them into my hand.

“What do you want me to do with these?” I ask, completely taken aback by the last two minutes.

“You want me, right?” she asked. “You think I am stupid enough to leave a key under that mat? This is 2008. I left it there for you. Now pretend you’re choking me.”

And that’s when it dawns on me. Women are fucking nuts.

I look into those big emerald saucer eyes one last time, and I get the hell out of there.



Zariel Grullon



Brittany Carroll

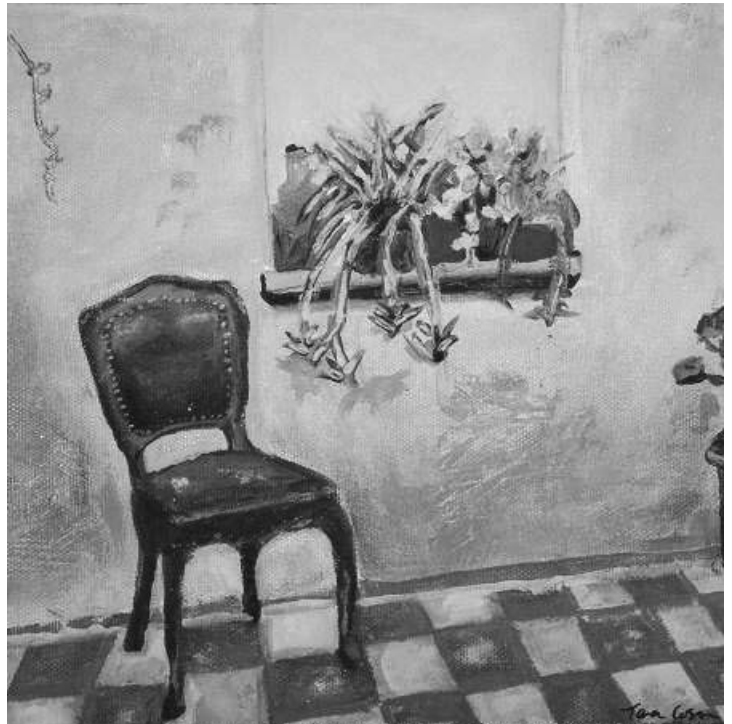
bed dusty

Angela Lucas

unused
unloved
how is it that a bed can get
dusty
while one person
sleeps in it,
while a
full bed
sees no
layer of dust?

the aching heart
dies
as the dust
slowly fills the lungs.
a tomb
holding only one soul.
we become numb
allow the dust to
suffocate our misery.
this lonely bed
aches
from disuse.
we go numb,
forgetting
there are other
lonely beds
that could be
pushed together,
creating something new.

instead we choose the dust.
we give up hope
and let our
lungs fill
as we lay
in bed
we let the death
bury
what at one time was
the hope
that brightened our room.
the heart stops
as the dust settles
inches thick.



Tara Coston

Mixed Message

Ryan Sollers

She never smiles
when putting on makeup.
It's made up, and we
make out
what we see on
the stale TV screen.

It's hard to comb through
the people we walk past, they are
used napkins on tables
crumpled with crusts and peels.

On a cold wet sidewalk,
both of us slice through
the men and women
who look like dolphins
tangled in netting: so focused.

And what are they supposed to say
when we've come to save them?

Thank god—
You're too late.

Mo(u)rning

Jill Grimaldi

There is something to be taken away
from this;
the mud beneath my feet,
and the rain on the faces of family
gathered
to mourn a deceased that is not my
own.

It's probably not as profound as it
seems,
but the laughter that breaks through
clouded faces
once the coffin is closed and the dirt
thumps below
rings louder than church bells ever
could.

Nothing more may come of this,
yet each footstep is a falling into faith,
each breath a prayer,
each moment
eternity.



Corey O'Connell

The Neighbors

Brian Wiseman

You could smell him coming before you knew he was there. That distinctive cherry tobacco he stuffed in his pipe warned the whole neighborhood. At block parties, he'd tell the neighbors about his tour in Korea and the guns he had in his basement. No one really listened to his mad mutterings, humoring his wandering eyes. When I was a kid, he used to slowly pace on his toes up and down the street in front of our house. My friend Pete and I would play basketball on the plastic hoop buried in the front of my yard and he would come by with his safari hat and black socks and Velcro sneakers and stammer stories of how Dr. J signed his basketball. He always brought it, one of those old ABA balls, the patriotic kind. It was almost completely deflated and worn from years of use, but he still played with it. He would trace his finger around the signature, stitched into the leather by some factory worker in South Dakota, and tell us how he could remember the black pen The Doctor used for this prescription. From Pete's bedroom, we had a clear view of the park behind his house and we would watch the old man slowly saunter, pipe in mouth, until he got to the hoops at the end. He'd spend hours shooting hook shots and between-the-leg heaves from half court and we'd watch him chase down the dead ball that hit the ground without a bounce.

He started coming to our door in the middle of the night ten years after we'd all grown. He'd call the house, leaving messages, asking to visit my mother, who, at first and sympathetically, granted these stints to the old man in the few minutes she spent reading her romance novels on the front porch. He'd come every day he saw her car in the driveway until she started reading books in the back. Then his visits became unpredictable. She told him she'd call when she could to talk but this didn't hinder him. On my father's birthday, he sat on our front steps at three in the morning. Dad went down from his room and heard him talking to someone. "I know there's a good one of you in there somewhere. I met one of you pretty girls in Fair Lawn the other day." When my father opened the door, Mike was standing at the bottom of the stairs pointing at the pack of cigarettes he'd stuffed with empty butts.

"Mike, what the hell are you doin' out here?"

"I wanna talk to Karen."

"She told you before, Mike, she doesn't want to see you. It's three in the morning. Go talk to your wife."

"But I got problems."

"We all got problems, Mike. Go home."

He picked up his pack and walked home through the spotlight streetlamps weaving down the street. My father said the sunglasses he was wearing only had one lens.

He began to scare my mother when she was watching television and smelled his tobacco. She saw his profile in the window with one hand on his wooden pipe and the other shielding his eyes from the sun. The police were called and they escorted him back home. My mother called his wife that day. Josie was always a thin lady with a thinner voice. To me, even the sounding of her name denoted the same crisp snapping noise a cracker would make. “Josie, it’s Karen. Mike came by again today. We told him not to come anymore.”

“Oh, I’m sorry Karen. He just wants to talk to you, that’s all.”

“But Josie, I don’t want to talk to him. He’s coming by unannounced every day and he’s scaring the children and me. Jim doesn’t like it either.”

“Oh, but Karen, he just needs someone to talk to.”

“You talk to him then. We’ve called the police every day for the past two weeks. Next time they’re gonna put him away.”

“Oh that’s not really necessary, Karen. He’s no harm. He just needs someone to talk to.”

“Good bye Josie.”

The next day, the police picked him up at our door and drove him to the County Psych Center. He was out two days later, after getting beat up by his roommate, and was back on our doorstep the day after that.

I saw my mother sitting on the couch one afternoon, staring out the window and down the street at Mike’s house. “Mom,” I said, “how’s it goin’ with your boyfriend?” These little jokes usually got laughs. She looked at me with the eyes of a victim, pleading with mine to treat the situation gently.

“He came around this morning. Before I went to work.”

“Yea, what happened?”

“Well, I walked out the front door and I saw him walking down the street. It’s funny. He only comes when your father is gone. I guess he can see that his car is gone.” She stopped talking and looked out the window again, down the green street. I followed her eyes and saw the old man washing his car in the driveway. Occasionally, he’d poke his head up over the car and look down at our house. I thought of my mother and how terrifying it must be to see a dark figure in the daylight.

“So he came down this morning?”

“Yea.”

“What did he say?”

“Well, I was walking out to the van and he’s walking down the block at me

and I can tell he's coming to talk to me. I said 'Hi Mike, I gotta go to work.' And he's still walking at me. And he's getting closer to the house. And I say 'I'm leaving now Mike, have a good day.' And I get in the van and he walks right up behind it and stands there, staring in through the rear window. So, I pull out my phone and open the door and he says 'Hi Karen. How are you?' as if I had never said a word to him." She stopped talking again, looking out at the now empty driveway down the street. She looked out the other windows, craning her neck to catch any clues.

"And he says hi."

"Yea, he says 'Hi Karen' and I say 'I gotta go to work Mike. You're in the way. I can't pull out.' He looked at me like I was breaking an appointment and says 'But I wanted to talk to you Karen. I've been thinking about a lot of things.'"

"Has he said that before?"

"He says it every time! He's always got something to tell me and when I let him, he starts rambling about his war stories, and his guns and it starts getting scary. I tried to listen and give him the benefit, but it always degrades into him stumbling over his words. So I say 'Go home Mike. I told you I have to leave.' I still have my phone in my hand so I call the police and they dispatch a car in the neighborhood to come by. As I'm talking to the officer on the phone, he comes around from the back and stands right next to my window. Immediately, I lock the doors. He starts peeking in the window like he can't see in. I mean the windows aren't tinted. But then he spots me and knocks on the glass as if it's the first time I've seen him in twenty-five years. He shouts 'Karen' just loud enough to get my attention. I don't say anything to him. I'm not sure I could really move I was so scared."

I sat motionless, listening to the story. "So the police came?"

"Yea, they came while he was tapping on the window and grabbed his arms behind his back. I got out to talk to the police but they told me he'd be back again and there was nothing they could really do. As I drove to work, I could see his head peeking out of the bay windows of his house."

When my father got home from work, he asked if I'd seen Mike at all. "No, but Mom saw him this morning before she went to work. She said she called the police, but all they did was walk him back to his house and smile as they drove away."

"When does she come home?"

"I'm not too sure, but it must be soon. Dad, she's getting scared. I hate seeing her like this."

My father was leaning against the kitchen counter, staring into the street as I spoke. His eyes remained steadfast on the road until a long, rusted car

paused in front of the house before continuing. “That’s him. I’m going down there.”

“You want me to come with you?”

“If you want. I’m going to talk calm. Pointless to yell at him.” Within seconds of walking to Mike’s house, my father had lost his cool. He stood at the end of his black paved driveway with arms crossed, as the old man slowly opened his door and slowly walked to his porch. It was hard to tell if he even saw us. “What did I tell you Mike?”

“What do you want?” the words drooled from his lips.

“I told you not to come back to the house anymore. You’re sitting on the steps, looking in the windows, smoking your damn cigarettes. You could burn my damn house down.” At the sound of the screams, Mike’s neighbors emerged from their backyard. Their faces twisted at the scene, knowing full well that the old man was not straight. In the bay windows, Josie walked by vacuuming. She saw us standing on the sidewalk and waved happily, then, looking down again, went on vacuuming.

“I want to see Karen,” said the old man.

“I told you she doesn’t want to see you,” my father said, inching his way up the drive. “You could burn my damn house down! You come onto my property again, I don’t care if your 90 years old, I’m gonna kick your ass.”

“Well, you’re on my property now,” he spat, “Shoe’s on the other foot, huh.” Knowing he made sense, my father walked backwards, his eyes never moving from the old man’s, while sirens echoed through the winding suburban streets.

“You think you’re a smart ass too. You try this shit again and I’m gonna come for you. They put you away before and they’ll do it again.”

“Denver,” he choked out.

“What?” asked my father.

“Send me to Denver. I’ll take Karen there.” My father’s retreating footsteps abruptly ended and advanced towards the old man with the speed of a soldier. I tried grabbing him by the shoulders, but it was too late. His arms shook free from my hands as he charged the serene old man on the steps. I felt something solid blow past me as I stood in wonder at the moment. Blue and red lights flashed off the house, illuminating the block with their glow. A speckled police officer tackled my father before he reached the front steps, landing solidly on the dead, yellowed lawn preceding the door. I watched as they put him in handcuffs and led him to the car, shielding his head from the roof. I stood on the sidewalk and stared at Mike, whose expression never changed until the police cars went away and the neighbors went inside and my mother pulled her van into our driveway.

Scrapped

Kristen Moledo

The morning I told my mother
we cried together on leather
couches, splashing burgundy dye
on my fingertips.

Under her fingernails I saw
the shavings she had dug
up- the skin from furniture-

leaving the arm to look
as if a dog had sniffed out a treat
where she couldn't get it.

She claims to have always known
because I dirtied my bare knees
with grass on football fields instead
of getting rug burns in dark base-
ments.

When she begged me not to cut
my hair, I told her not to
worry- curly hair wouldn't look
good short but maybe
I'd start wearing flannel.

Andrea Drive

Angelina Aurelia Rich

A street of deceit and perversion.
Surrounded by the aroma of lilacs.
I can't help but love that house,
But could only visit once.

It wanted to lure me in
Push me down,
Until I was nine again
Hiding in those bushes.

That hopeful house
Would help me rewrite the past.
If not for that tortuous smell
That keeps me nine forever.

Yet, when he asks me,
"What's your favorite flower?"
In some fluke of painful irony,
I respond genuinely, "Lilacs."

Geology

Emma McLaughlin

A fissure opened up and
We are all falling in.
I don't think anyone remembers when it
Started-

Just some cracks:
On the wall going
To the ceiling,

Some in the
windows,

More and more below our feet.
We stomped on them,
Danced
On them,

Punched angry holes in the wall and
sent
Hammers through glass.

I watched a red haired girl smash
Her 40 ounce on a rock
In a desperate attempt to drink it,
And fail,
Broken glass grabbing at her
lips.

I saw the most beautiful boy
Smile through an acid glow as he
Set fire to a flag in the backyard.

Now he bares his
Teeth through heroin haze,
Two stints in rehab,

Learning truth is
Worse than
Lies.

I worry about our feet.
They are sinking,
everything looms higher
Than it used to.

My friend's house already sunk
Under,
And no one has any answers.



Kimberly Wardlaw



Rob Gamer

