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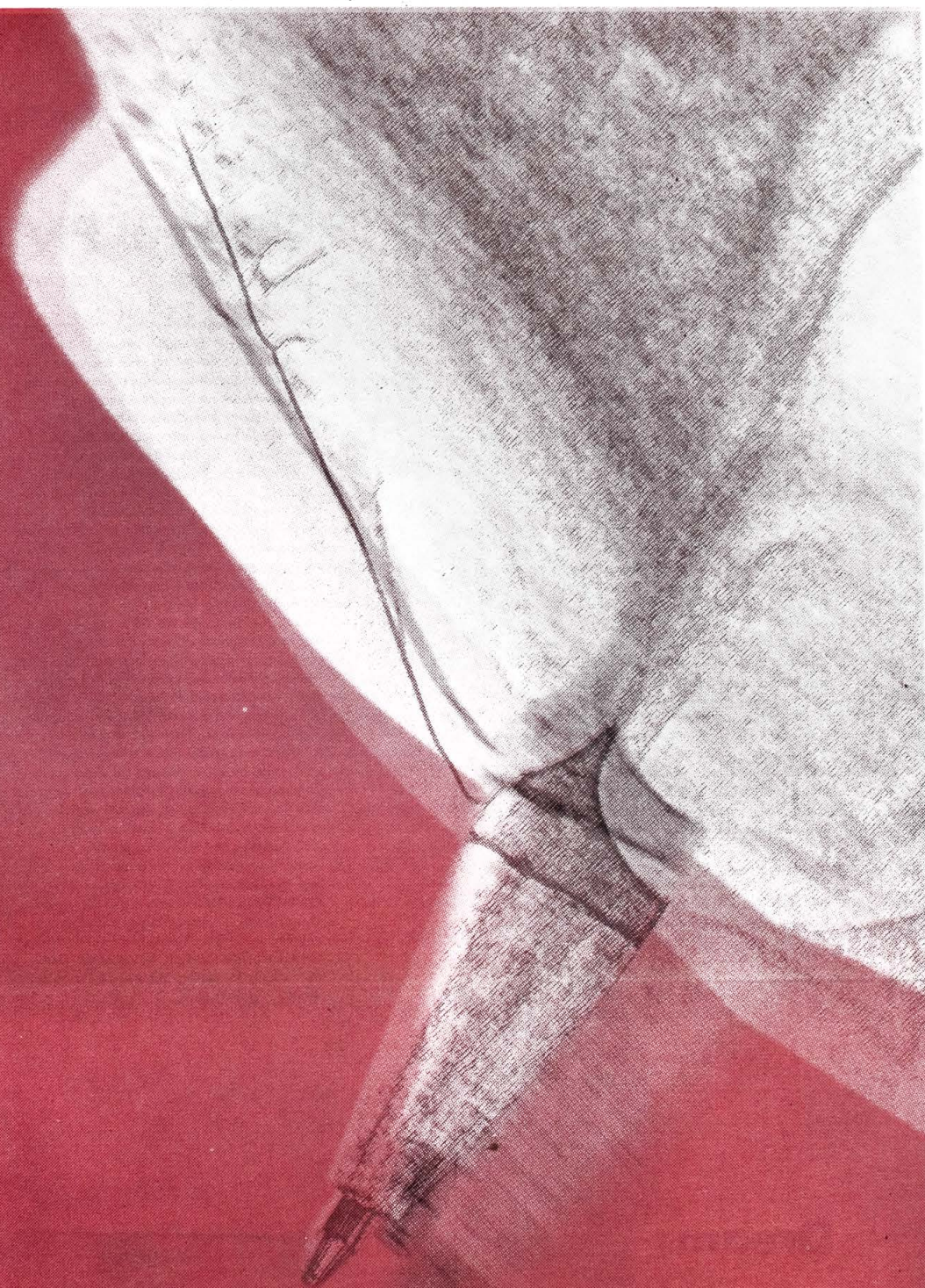


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Fiction Supplement

What is this thing called life

By Chia-Pei Chang

What is this thing, this thing called Life,
that is created at 4:30am on a wondrous night,
that is made up of Stolen Kisses and
Little White Lies?
What is this thing that finds its elation
in terribly ecstatic house music 'til all hours of the morn,
that tingles inescapably with the lust of
skin upon skin, flesh upon flesh,
in the beat and the thrum of music on the misty dance floor?
Can you remember the hum of the crowd,
the dance beat pounding on the floor,
the sweet smell of sweat of half-dressed bodies,
and the taste of lips upon your lips?
This is the Thing.
This is the Thing you have put to sleep for too long,
that trembles at the slightest touch, that knows no patience
however you may dare to teach it.
This is the thing that is Being Alive,
that is the curl of arm about a tight waist,
that is touch and smell and taste and sight and sigh;
this is thing whose absence is agony and emptiness;
this thing, this is sunrise along the Lake,
this is snowfall in the Park,
this is holding hands beneath skyscrapers,
this is fucking under the blankets 'til the morning light.
This is the thing called Life,
and it is made of words, and of art, and of photographs,
and of movies that make us laugh until we cry,
and of songs which make us cry until we have to laugh.
This is Drunken Glory,
this is Friends and a Beer,
this is Old Times, this is New Follies.
There is Life in the world,
and who among us would not weep at five in the morning
because the rest of the world must sleep at this time.
Celebrate Life, always, at any time.

Dreams

By Cassandra Adams

While flipping through the channels on television, I ran across a cartoon in which I thought was very unique. Chalk Zone—that Nickelodeon cartoon, with characters all drawn in chalk, interacting in a chalk drawn world. In their environment, everyday activities went on as normal until, sure enough, that evil force rears its ugly head, converting this chalk town into a discouraging chaos until soon, that huge eraser comes along and wipes it all out. Wouldn't it be great if this could happen for real? No matter how much we try to do the right things in life that evil force always comes along, waiting for the right moment to draw those ever depressing gray clouds over our world. At any given time, those dark fluffy substances tend to follow us like a bad disease, determining to change our colorful life dull and miserable. This chalk world takes me back to the time when Mrs. Reynolds, my sixth grade teacher, assigned a writing project. You know that all famous, "What do I want to be when I grow up" essay we all had to write sometime ago during our life in grade school. Well, where I grew up we didn't have concrete dreams. Being able to survive the streets each day was our dream. Getting through school another week without being tortured or killed was what we considered a blessing. Becoming doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. were only dreams never seriously thought out. Getting a menial job at the local McDonald's to help make ends meet was a

dream.

Frustrated, I pulled out my paper and thought for a long time about careers that would impress Mrs. Reynolds. Then I thought about the question seriously. What would I like to be? How could I use myself to give back to the world? God had given me the gift of life, how could I use it, in return, as a gift back to him? Hours went by, yet I continued to come up with dreams I had absolutely no interest in. Dreams that I felt would make me look good in the eyesight of my teacher. All at once, my mind drifted back to the streets where Big Joe was gunned down the other day. Ty was at Cook County in a coma because his balance was short seven dollars, Linda OD'ed last week, Tiffany got knock-up by James, now he's all up in her girl Sheila's face and Ed stepped out in front of an Amtrak because he just couldn't cope with life anymore. These thoughts flooded my mind endlessly. How do we find a way to overcome the daily odds that conquers us? Then it finally fell upon me and I quickly pieced together a paper revealing the only dream I secretly held close to heart. For the first time in my life I openly revealed how I wanted to become a writer. Like Iyanna Vanzant, Ralph Marston or Susan L. Taylor, I wanted to use my words to make a difference in somebody else's life and within a couple of hours, my paper was revised, proofread and ready for Mrs. Reynolds review. That following Monday she quietly strolled around each desk, passing papers back. Finally, she stopped in front of my desk and I wondered if she could hear my heart striking against my chest, for sure I was about to receive the ultimate failing grade. She slid my paper in front of me and then her face broke into a soothing smile, instantly softening her stern gaze, right before moving on to the next student. Mixed feelings surged through me like tiny bolts of

When Chickens Fly

By Kelly Reiss

Three days ago I was having a root beer at my kitchen table, when I had one of those blackouts the specialist has been telling me about, and I found myself inside one of the cages in my latest business venture, my chicken coop. The noise has been unbearable. When I was their caretaker before my imprisonment, they were never this gleeful. Then only noise was a constant, dull cluck-cluck, with an occasional buck-caw springing forward when I would reach in to grab an egg. Since I have been imprisoned in cage 10E I have heard nothing except rude guffaws mocking my predicament. The vile birds laugh with their whole bellies through razor sharp beaks. It shakes the cages, and sprinkles dirty white feathers, which fall before my eyes like tears.

If I ever get out of this alive, I shall stop my patent application for my design for chicken shelving is poorly suited to contain anything alive. Instead of having cages that opens like a cabinet door, I had designed an "organic" way of keeping my one hundred chickens isolated in individual wire mesh baskets. The entire structure resembles a library card catalog. The self-replenishing viaduct system I have constructed of decorative bamboo on the outside of the unit for food and water is ineffective. I have not had water for a day after I watched the hen next to me build a dam with the small feed pellets blocking my water chute. I have neglected the disposal of chicken and now human waste. I thought I would die from the awful smell. It feels moist, like the smelliest-guy-on-the-block's crotch during a heat wave. I vomited as the first of many plops of feces from the white beasts above me hit my head. I was thankful for the familiar scent. I don't remember what clean smells like.

From my previous perspective of freedom, I thought myself to be a great deal larger than a chicken, but I appear to have neither more nor less room than my neighbors. I have been forced into their posture. My face is smushed up against the front, my arms are pinned to my sides, folded like wings, my legs are tucked under my torso. I feel like I am only a pair of eyes, and this has helped me get through the fact that my long hair, forehead, and the back of my sweatshirt are crust-ed white with droppings.

The door opens, and the chickens increase the fervor of their laughter, and feather shaking. It is a man wearing overalls and a gray newsboy cap, which covers all of his countenance except for a chin that runs into his neck due to an open mouth. I hear him open two drawers at the other end of the coop. I see the chickens fly out in a white streak before me. As they near the peak of the sloped roof of the coop, they transform into odd, transparent bodies of goo. Something like a jellyfish or a \$.25 rubber hand. The two birds rise and fall in the air for a moment like cottonwoods, and then whoosh down to the floor with a splat. I watch them spread out over the spilled chicken feed. The man moves down the apparatus and opens the cages two at a time. The room has become silent, but it looks like a symphony as the embryonic bodies float and dissolve. The floor moves and shines as if it were a river of hair gel.

He reaches my cage and the evil hen next to me, and he pulls the cages open, we fly high in tandem toward the ceiling. Suddenly, I hit my head, but she parachutes graceful and sheer to join the others. I have not flown, but only unfolded myself and stood on painfully numb legs.

He takes my hand, and helps me with the small jump to the now dry floor, and the shell of feces falls away. He pulls me to the doorway. I hear a cluck-cluck, and turn my head. My mouth drops open like his when I see all of the cages, including the one I was in, are again filled with the little white monsters.

Outside in the clean, cold air, I cringe at the dull sound seeping from the red planks of the chicken coop.

lightening as I slowly peeped underneath the paper, surprised to see a B+. Not bad, I thought, a satisfied smile emerging upon my face. I was quite giddy for the rest of the day and when I got home and showed mama my B+ she was thrilled.

"Despite the evil forces that floats through our neighborhood," she read aloud to no one in particular, "The drugs, the violence, even the ones who pretends to be our friends, yet they betray us by taking our generosity for granted, I learned to use my words as an eraser to wipe them out. Through my words, good would over-power evil. And just as I seek strength from those who believe in my dream to become a writer, someday others will find encouragement through my words."

Bundle of Joy

By Nicole Chakalis

Peggy never spoke to the girls much, but she stopped talking all together after her fourth daughter was born. Some days went by she didn't say a word. Something was wrong with Donna. She wasn't rosy or plump like the other girls when they were born. Donna was long and skinny, less than five pounds when they brought her home. Her skin was wrinkled, she had no fingernails, and her eyes never opened. There was no celebration for Donna's arrival; no visitors came to see her. There were no gifts of cute, little baby clothes, no new blankets.

Peggy put the baby in Linda's old crib. She didn't put Donna in the lace lined bassinet like she had done with the others, wheeling the white, decorated basket out to the living room so everyone could see the new baby. Peggy set Donna in the crib and sat down in a chair next to the stove, in the doorway between the living room and the kitchen and stayed there.

Peggy stopped getting up in the mornings. Toni and Lee got themselves ready for school. They ate the oatmeal Bob left on the stove and turned the TV on for Linda, who wasn't old enough to go to school yet. Sometime after they left Peggy would get up, her hair in pin curls, and sit in the chair. She would sit there in the same housedress she slept in with an ashtray on her lap. The round ashtray was chrome with two bird's heads coming up out of the middle with their upturned mouths slightly opened in order to hold a cigarette while it burned. But Peggy never used it that way. She would carefully use the beak of the birds to remove the light off the end of her cigarette, and then gently straighten out the butts and line them up on one side of the ashtray to be smoked later.

She would sit there all day, smoking, twisting at her hair, chewing her nails. Sometimes she'd warm a bottle of milk in a pan of hot water for Linda to give to the baby. Linda loved to feed the baby. She would stand next to the crib and slip her arm through the slats and hold the bottle there for her new baby sister.

When Toni and Lee got home from school Peggy

would still be in the chair fiddling with her cigarette butts, the baby still in the crib, and Linda in her underwear, sitting on the living room floor watching TV.

As the days went by Peggy started turning her chair towards the TV in the living room, still next to the stove, still with the ashtray in her lap but now staring at the TV all day long and into the night. Sometimes she got up and adjusted the rabbit ears if the picture jumped up and down too much. She watched the commercials with special intensity, licking her teeth during the Pepsodent commercial; you wonder where the yellow went when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent.

She became extremely interested in a show called Queen for a Day, where a panel of four or five women would tell sad stories of their impoverished lives and the most pathetic, by audience applause, would win home appliances—washers, dryers, refrigerators with freezer compartments.

One day Peggy spoke to Toni when she got home from school.

"Toni?"

"Yeah, Ma."

"Did you ever see the show, Queen for a Day?"

"Yeah, ma." Queen for a Day was on at 1:30 in the afternoon and Toni had only seen it on days she stayed home from school. The show's host was a short man who sat in the middle of the panel wearing a tuxedo. His hair was light and looked dry even on the black and white TV, he had it combed over from a low side part to cover some of his high forehead.

He had a pencil thin mustache across the top of his upper lip. The prizewinner was placed on a throne, a crown placed on her head. She would be wrapped in a velvet cloak and told of her prize. "As queen for a day you will receive an automatic washing machine!"

Toni remembered some of the stories, once there was a young girl from West Virginia, with long blonde hair, who had three small children and a husband who had died in a coal mining accident. One time it was a fat woman with dark permanently waved hair with five kids whose husband was killed while driving a gasoline truck. It exploded in an accident; they never recovered his body. She won a new color TV.

"I should be Queen for a Day, don't you think?"

"Yeah Ma, you should."

US

By Moya M. Thompson

Me and you

I see

Us

I met you

and we laughed

shared a joke

had some coffee...

or was it tea...

No juice!

Over dinner

make it lunch

in that place

we refer to as "Our special place".

You and me

I see

Yes We

sat and talked

a long talk too

under the tree

in the park...

or rather the beach

by the sea.

I listened to you

you made me laugh...

actually giggle

then you listened to me

shared my dreams

That's what I like

About Us

You and I

We agree

most of the time

We see eye to eye

about family and friends

not old girlfriend

but good friend

We argue sometimes

then we say sorry...you first

then me

and start over again

because friends disagree

Sometimes

friends like you and me

You and I

We agree

on celibacy

on intimacy

on ministry

on industry

on traveling the world together one day

So you ask

"Will you marry me?"

I'm surprised

because I didn't know

I wasn't sure

that you felt

what I felt

That you were ready to be

together

for eternity

That's a long time...

FOREVER

But between you and me

That's what it will be.

Vanilla Thickness

By Marcelis D. Wyatt

I dream of deep kisses under waterfalls

Candlelit confrontations and love made during the most violent weather

The sudden blood rush when tongues touch

Beneath a thunderstorm of pleasure constructs a level above lust

Just enough to bless my soul with the beginning and conclusion that poetry IS a woman

And every time I extend for a pen to scribble with a quickness

I tend to fall into this abyss of Vanilla Thickness

I mean, call me complicated, but my conscience can't keep cool

When continuously conjuring calm kissing conversations

From convergence beneath creamy caramel Queen-sized covers

This is worse than contagious

My destination is penetration but I want to contain patience because

With patience comes great things

She is the reason I'm only THINKING and not SAYING

I mean, she don't even have to touch me... her eye contact alone is paralyzing

This Vanilla Vixen who knows these thoughts run wild through the walls of my imagination

But little does she know I'm already one step ahead

See, while she is searching for ways to explore my world,

I have already woven universes into her vision

I have been entranced by caramel elegance and melted my way through chocolate ice

But those type of journeys tend to lead to sudden shifts and aftershocks

I will not let another pretty face penetrate my defenses

I will not give this vanilla thickness easy access to my heart like I installed a revolving door

I will not allow another flavor of the opposite sex to stun every taste bud on my tongue

To the point those 3 words once again are sung

She's the one... she's the one... she's the one

But damn, how else will I ever find out if she's the one?

I dream of deep kisses under waterfalls

Candlelit confrontations and love made during the most violent weather

She is now the focus of my subconscious thoughts

This vanilla thickness hitting all of my switches

I just know her vanilla kisses can stop time

Sometimes I just sit back and visualize each one

As she remains on every corner of my mind like STOP signs

At the same time, shorty is priceless and a Hot Dime

And from the way she's staring at me right now, I'll be damned if she's not mine.

Chinese Calendar

By Noola Chakalis

An old woman walks into the pharmacy. She is old, old enough to be somebody's great-grandmother. She approaches the pharmacy, "IN" window. She approached the window and Nicole said as nice as someone can say something after the one-millionth time you say it, "Can I help you?"

The woman looks her directly in the eye and then looks past her into the pharmacy, looking around like she knows what she is looking for. She points past Nicole to a pharmacist and says, "Can I speak with her?"

Nicole replies, "Sure, Erin consultation at the window."

A few minutes later, Erin approaches the counter and pleasantly says, in her valley girl voice, "Hi ma'am did you need to speak to a pharmacist?"

The woman replies, "Oh, are you a pharmacist?"

Erin says, in a hurried tone, "Yes, ma'am did you need some help?"

The woman says, "Yes, I was wondering if you knew what the animal on the Chinese calendar was this year?"

Erin, "No, I am sorry I don't."

The woman looks puzzled. She says, "Well, aren't you Chinese?"

Erin replies, "No ma'am I am Korean."

The woman, "Were you born there?"

Erin, "Where China or Korea?"

The woman replies, "Either."

Erin, "Korea."

The woman, "So you don't know what the animal on the Chinese calendar is this year?"

Erin replies, "No, I am sorry I don't."

The woman says, "Well how about her?" She points over Erin's shoulder to Hope.

Erin calls Hope over. "Hi young lady, do you happen to know what the animal on the Chinese calendar is this year?"

Hope says very irritably, while she is blushing, "No, ma'am I don't."

The woman again looks very puzzled and says kind of loud, "Well aren't you Chinese?"

Hope replies, "No I am not."

"Oh well then what are you?"

"I am Korean."

"Oh are you related to the pharmacist?"

"No ma'am I am not."

"Were you born there?"

"No."

"Well have you ever been to China?"

"No I haven't."

"Well does anybody else know the animal on the Chinese calendar?"

"I am sorry ma'am I don't think so."

The woman turns like she has given up and is going to leave and she notices Audrey out of the corner of her eye. She points over and says, "Can I speak to her?"

Nicole says tiredly, "Audrey you are needed at the 'in' window."

Audrey says as passing by, "Sure in a moment."

When Audrey returns she walks pleasantly up to the window, "Is there a problem, ma'am?"

The woman replies, "No, why would you think there is a problem?"

Audrey explains, "Well I am the manager and usually the call me over to take care of a problem."

"Oh no, I was just wondering if you know what the animal is on the Chinese calendar this year?"

"No, I am sorry ma'am but I don't."

"Well, aren't you Chinese?"

"No ma'am I am Phillipino."

"Oh, were you born there?"

"Yes, I was."

"Oh, have you ever been to China?"

"Yes, when I was a child but I don't remember"

"Oh, so you don't know what the animal is this year"

on the calendar?"

"No."

"Do you know if anybody else knows?"

"I'll see."

Audrey walks away and leaves Nicole standing there with this crazy woman. Then the phone rings and Nicole leans behind the partition so the woman can't hear her conversation.

"Hey, Nicole can you come back here and check these calculations," Bernard says without identifying himself.

Nicole answers, "I can't I have a patient in the window."

"Alright, I'll come up there."

"Maybe you shouldn't this lady is kind of weird."

"Don't worry about it; I have been working here a long time." Bernard says cheerily.

As soon as Bernard comes around the corner, the woman shouts, "Can you come here sir?"

Bernard approaches, "Can I help you?"

"Yes, do you happen to know what the animal is on the Chinese calendar this year?"

Bernard replies sarcastically, "No, do you?"

"Well, I think it is very rude to answer a question with a question. If I knew I wouldn't be asking you?"

"Well, why would I know?"

"Aren't you Chinese?"

"No, ma'am I am Phillipino."

"Oh, are you related to the manager?"

"No, are you?"

"Well you are awfully rude; you act like my question is weird."

"Well this is a pharmacy why don't you try to the library or Chinatown?"

The woman stormed off and Nicole said, "Thanks Bernard, I thought she would never leave."

"Oh, don't worry about it, she does this every year."

CTA-All the Way!

By Meg Ritter

All right all y'all living in Chicago, know what's the greatest asset this city has to offer? No, I'm not talking about the numerous museums, or the crazy restaurant/bar scene, the theatre district, the lakefront, Chicago Symphony Hall or those two baseball teams. And I'm certainly not talking about Navy Pier. Hell, I'm not even talking about the hotdogs.

Nope, I'm talking about the best, most taken for granted aspect of what this city has to offer, day in and day out, rain or shine, sleet or snow, hailstorm and high wind- it surges forward, plunges ahead, forges on- 365 _ days of the year. And although it comes with bells and whistles, horns and wheels and announcements to boot- it's still waiting for its much-needed glorification and appreciation from the general Chicago land public. Everyday it passes you by, but its not too late, everyday you have the renewed opportunity to hop on for a ride. Not much else in life, you can say that about!

Now, if you're poor listen up. I'm talking "roman noodles and ice water is a nutritious meal"-poor, "stealing napkins and ketchup packets from fast food joints to save money"-poor. Not, "homeless shelters are better than the street to rest your head at night"-poor. For those of you who're the first two kinds of poor, you better believe it, the CTA is the best bang you're ever gonna get for your buck. If the last scenario is your lot in life, maybe the CTA shouldn't be of your utmost concern.

Want to go on vacation but don't have the dough to foot the bill? Don't fret. Take the CTA instead. You can go to as many as ten or twelve different corners of the world and hear just as many languages spoken, depending on what part of town you go to, and how much you pay attention. For only \$1.80 or \$2.00 for a transfer card, any destination in the city is yours to conquer, Chinatown, Little Italy, Ukrainian Village, Greektown, as well as countless ethnic and culturally diverse neighborhoods. Considering that it costs you at least \$1.50 before a cab even pulls away from the curb- this is a full blown, crazy-ass, steal. When I was new to the city, a rookie rider on the CTA, before I even understood how to insert a fare card, the number one, unanimously agreed upon, unspoken rule strictly followed by 95% of all urban commuters became blatant... NEVER make eye contact. Of course, as all rules are meant to be, sometimes this one too is broken. After all we are only human. We all look and pretend not to. Its okay, I do it too.

What of all these people on the bus or train? The ones that step on our feet, poke elbows into our shoulder blades and whom we have backpack to backpack bumping battles? They stand and sit inches from us, some even breath against our faces, yet we pretend not to notice them and they pretend not to notice us. But damn are they interesting! People watching isn't reserved solely for the elderly parked on front porch stoops. Anyone can do it, even you and I, if we do it right. Where DO all these people come from? Where're they all going? Take note of them without them noticing. They're artistic inspiration in the flesh. Yup, yet another astonishingly awesome perk provided by the CTA, dirt-cheap inspiration- hell they even throw in a free ride.

Randomness, diversity, constant change... whether it's the sights out the window or the crowd around you, it's fuel for your imagination, regardless if you're a painter, a sculptor, a musician, a writer, or merely an observer and lover of life.

Some country folk may believe that we urbanites don't know what it's like to survive the harsh great outdoors. Let it be known, we're as hearty as any rural dwellers, especially if you're a frequent CTA rider in the middle of one of this city's award winning winters. Just walking to the bus stop is a feat unto itself; braving that infamous wind, (so sharp it draws tears that spill and freeze across your chapped cheeks) while simultaneously sidestepping snow strewn, ice slick sidewalks.

Once on the bus or train, more often than not, it'll drive off while you're still bounding down the aisle, looking for a seat. Good luck. When standing is the only option, cause all the seats are taken, and you're hanging onto one of those germ infested metal poles, balancing becomes your most imperative motor skill.

When the bus driver hauls ass into traffic the second your U-Pass goes in, when he slams the brakes or pumps the gas spasmodically, don't get mad. Instead, picture all the sports you'll soon master with your newfound balancing abilities. You're well on your way to becoming a pro on surf, skate and snowboards, as well as skis.

Even in the summertime, being car less in the city has its athletic assets. Why go to the gym? A trip to the grocery store is usually sufficient. Carrying your groceries three to seven blocks and up a couple flights of stairs to your apartment is sure to make muscles out of your twig arms. That goes for carrying laundry to the laundry mat too (for some reason clean laundry always seems lighter).

For all those sprints up el track steps and down city blocks, chasing that blessed bus or train, your endurance level and speed have greatly increased. Credit the CTA.

Commuting by bus or train not only gets you where you need to go, but while you're going you can study for a science test, read a goofy new novel, catch up on the news by flipping thorough a paper, or write in your journal (although the bumpiness and the occasional nosey stranger's over-your-shoulder stare can be pretty nerve-racking). All of which cannot so easily be accomplished when you're the one behind the wheel. In a country that values efficiency above many things- you will feel the utmost satisfaction in knowing that you are accomplishing at least two things at once. Way to go!

Or do absolutely nothing at all. For a society that's constantly complaining about having too much to do, not enough hours in that day to get it all done, never enough idle time to relax, riding the CTA offers the great alternative-Boredom. Yes you read it right- BOREDOM; the opportunity to do nothing can really have its perks.

You can sit back and let someone else dodge the pedestrians and crabby cabbies. You can sit back and let someone else race the yellow lights and battle the drivers who block the whole street, feebly attempting to parallel park, and the asswholes in the SUVs. At first it may be difficult to give up the control of being in the driver's seat, navigating your way through chaotic city traffic, but believe me- very soon you'll appreciate and recognize riding on the CTA for what it really is, liberation.

Soon, the people of Chicago will unite in one voice. Our roar will rise above the rumble of the train, the honking of horns. "CTA! ALL THE WAY!" We will chant its long overdue praise. "CTA-ALL THE WAY!" Believe me its gonna happen.

21st Century Humanology

By Analee Kasudia

more juice for the fire
more butter for the bread
more wax for the candle
more life to the dead.

let the unconscious
run wild through the rain.
let the flowers shed their color
mark their territory by stain.

paint yourself a different color
to please this brainwashed social culture.

strike your fist against your neighbor.
begin an unwanted war
to verify your supposed labor.

step up to the podium.
start the pandemonium.

attract the bees with honey;
confetti the room with money.

"Steve"

By Denise O'Neal

Steve is standing in line of about thirty waiting to read for a part in a movie he has no idea about. Hearing about the open casting call on the alternative radio station he listens to. Feeling a bit suffocated by the many beautiful faces crowded in the hallway just outside the auditorium he feels he has just as good a chance as the others. The casting director hands out the script. Steve is an attractive guy with beautiful skin, hazel eyes and a killer smile he hides under a beautiful thick head of brown hair. Having had only two sexual encounters in his life, Steve is at a point where he is tired of living this ordinary existence as an accountant. He feels this will bring him out of his shell whatever part he may play.

"Steve Bartram", says the director.

He nervously makes his way to the stage dropping his briefcase and fumbling with the script.

"I can't be nervous. This is my chance to do something spectacular. If I don't do this now I never will. I would hate to continue this ordinary existence. I can't remain ordinary."

To his horror and dismay, he flips through the pages and realizes just exactly what he'll have to read and if he gets the part what he'll have to do.

"Mr. Bartram are you ready?" The soft feminine voice shakes him from his momentary shock.

"Yes I'm ready."

He starts to read with a nervous voice.

"Now shut up and drop to your mother fucking knees. Now wrap those juicy lips around my cock and go to work."

"Mr. Bartram, you think you could say it with a little more confidence, a little more force?"

"Sure!"

So with more confidence and force he delivers his lines.

"Shut up and drop to your mother fucking knees. Now wrap those juicy lips around my cock and go to work!"

"Mr. Bartram can you be back tomorrow at 10:00 am?"

"Definitely."

"We would like to get some shots of you on camera."

Steve walks out of the audition with his head held high and an aura of confidence he's never had before.

The next day Steve arrives at his practice camera shoot.

"Good morning Steve."

"Morning."

"Kelly is going to take you back to hair and make up and we'll see you in a half hour."

"Great."

Kelly takes Steve back to hair and make up.

"You are absolutely gorgeous," Kelly says.

"Thanks."

"I bet you have tons of women wanting to get in your pants."

"Not exactly."

"That's because you're hiding under that head of hair."

When you walk out in front of that camera they won't recognize you."

Kelly goes to work cutting Steve's hair into a cool trendy hair cut. Getting rid of stray hairs from under his eyebrows and adding a little makeup just for camera purposes.

"You're all done. If I weren't in a serious relationship I'd like to blow you myself."

Steve blushes. He looks in the mirror and doesn't recognize himself. He is truly amazed. He never realized how good looking he is.

He walks out to the casting director and he looks at him and can't believe it's the same person.

"Steve I knew you were the one I was looking for. Go take your place right in front of that camera over there."

"Here."

"Right there. Blake, come take your position."

So in walks this tall slender guy with dirty blond hair, green eyes and a body to die for.

"Ok Steve say the lines just like you did in the audition."

"You're kidding right?"

"About what?"

"He's a guy."

"Yeah, so?"

Steve delivers his lines.

As part of the scene Blake actually has to give Steve a blow job. Steve is adamant against it at first but if this is what it takes for him to not be ordinary he'll do it. Blake looks deeply into Steve's eyes and begins to suck him like a hungry homo. Steve becomes more relaxed, goes with it and has an orgasm like none other he's had before.

After about a half hour the casting director calls in the next actor to do the same scene with Steve.

"Vanessa take your position."

So, again, Steve delivers his lines. Vanessa delivers her lines and then proceeds to give Steve a blow job. With all the sucking and licking he can't get hard.

"Steve what's wrong?" The casting director asks.

"Nothing! She's ordinary. Blake was spectacular. I want spectacular."

A Weary Machine

By Nolan Chessman

Seep in by way of Appalachia.
Trains carve through rock
roaring and unheard
like creatures between mattress and floor.
These thing,
they do not exist.
And yet they haunt the south,
wrench somersaults over wilted men
like coal-boulders sporting thick clumsy limbs.

They greet and crush them
—politely—
and then get on with dying.

In the stinking mouth of
West Virginia,
men become ghosts.
Their gruff voices lather the walls in a
cryptic scrawl that is shattered and abducted
before resonating through the stark tunnels.
They have tried, but singing cannot
pry their dismembering jaws.

Sweet Mandolin Chords,
these caves will rot beneath your warbling melodies.
It is better to starve,
to crumble chucking rocks

than to let the soot flit in
to draw pictures on your insides,
thrilling and prognostic,
deep in the rutted permanence
of misery
and of nothing.

The hands of coal miners are rarely noticed.
Nose, brow and mouth,
crumpled and folded.
Nihongo origami: paper bones
are a tired commodity.

the preacher-boy
preaches all night.
The tireless equality of man sleeps
because the land is warm; its belly heaping
(has already been picked over).

Leave it alone to think
and decompose.

Tumbling Down

By Danielle R. Smith

Caitlin lived a fairly simple life. She went to a small college a few hours away from the city. Also from her newly married mother and perfect brother. She had many acquaintances, but only three real friends.

But Caitlin had a small problem. Since she was a young girl, she had a terrible case of weak knees. First noticed when she was in the sandbox and asked a young boy to play on the swings with her. After refusing her, she later discovered the boy with the pretty girl from her neighborhood, on the swings no less.

Since then Caitlin has been cursed with weak knees. Whenever she was nervous, scared, or in any way, emotionally off balance, she would tremble and grow weak in the knees. Causing herself to become klutzy and cause chaos all around her.

Over the years, she has found ways to hide her curse. She never asked for more than expected. Accepted first offers of schools, jobs, even boyfriends. She was involved with her close guy friend in high school, though she only found him moderately attractive. Never seeing things to their full potential, Caitlin lived a life of contempt. Reaching for more than what was offered only landed her face down in the ground, literally.

One day, after her monthly lunch with her parents and brother, all of whom insisted she do something with her life, she stumbled upon a theater. Where as a child, she used to watch part time actors perform. Not knowing exactly what enticed her to go, she soon found herself inside.

Everyone inside was dressed for a dinner party. Women wore long flowing dresses. The men wore suits and hats. She suddenly felt underdressed in her blue jeans and white, long sleeved t-shirt. Standing in the back so as not to be noticed, Caitlin watched the performers. Picking up a program someone had thrown to the floor, she realized she had come during the final minutes.

His eyes were green. Or at least she thought from the distance she was standing from. A sharp pain struck her in the chest as she watched the tall, brown haired man on stage. Something told her that up close, his eyes were bright green emeralds. Caitlin felt her legs start to tremble. She sat on the floor, not minding all the stares from people around her.

You'll never meet him, Caitlin told herself over and over again. She said anything she could to keep herself calm. The show was over and everyone was greeting each other and the actors. She could see him through a small gap in the crowd. His smile broke her heart as her shaking legs told her what she had feared for the last ten minutes.

When Caitlin found herself saying, "I love you", she thought it was only in her head. Little did she know that one of the other actors had overheard her. Patricia, looking from the unknown girl on the floor, to where her eyes were directed, she pieced together what was happening. Walking up to Grant, she told him what she had overheard and directed his attention to Caitlin.

Caitlin was frozen in her spot on the floor as Grant looked right at her. Despite shaking knees, Caitlin tried to pick herself up and move past the crowd. She didn't want him to catch her and hand her over to the police. Not only was she there without an invitation, but she could be put away for stalking and being mentally unstable. But once again, Caitlin's nerves got the better of her.

Unknown to the crowd standing behind her, Caitlin bumped into them, spilling their drinks all down the front of her shirt. Stumbling backwards trying to regain her balance, Caitlin tried to excuse herself. Hitting the table with a row of food, Caitlin flipped over, taking the food with her. Spread out on the floor with the liquid on her shirt that was now becoming sticky, and cheese wedges in her hair, Caitlin tried to leave quietly.

Everyone around ignored her, figuring she was some waitress that was just starting out on the job. Trying to stand only made it harder for her, so Caitlin ended up moving around on her knees. Fumbling around in the aisles, she almost bumped into someone's legs when she looked up and noticed they belonged to Grant. He was looking around frantically and Caitlin overheard his conversation with a man standing next to him.

"Have you seen a girl come by here, with long brown hair and jeans?" Grant asked the man.

"No, but all the help looks the same around here." He responded, looking bored.

Turning in the opposite direction, Caitlin scurried between aisles until she was at the exit. She didn't want him to find her and get herself in trouble. Looking back at Grant, Caitlin saw that he had given up his search for the mystery girl. She left the theater, food stains all over and a program clutched in her hand.

In a few days, Caitlin was back to her usual self. As normal as someone with her setbacks could be. She decided to go downtown for her last minute holiday shopping. She needed a way to get her mind off of the week's events. Caitlin found a department store with a smaller crowd than the others. As she waited in line on the escalator, some familiar faces joined her.

"...And no one could believe the mess she made of the theatre." Patricia belated to her two companions, Amanda, a young socialite and Grant, from above Caitlin's head.

"Security never found her?" Amanda asked, flipping her chin length strawbery blond hair, with a look of confusion.

"Well, apparently, they did a head count and she wasn't even supposed to be there." Caitlin turned around slightly to get a glimpse of who was talking. There were a few people between them, but it didn't stop her knees from kicking in. She already felt them start to lose balance.

"So, there's no one who knows who she is," Grant sounded like an upset detective.

"It doesn't really matter, she didn't belong there anyway." Patricia finished, wanting to change the subject.

Caitlin clutched onto the rail as it came to the bottom floor. She needed to get out of the store before one of them spotted her. She didn't want to think what could

have happened when she ran out of the theatre. They might really think she was some sort of stalker. But at the moment, Caitlin felt as she were about to faint. Finding a chair near the dressing room, Caitlin sat with her head in her hands. But Patricia and Amanda soon joined her.

"Poor Grant." Caitlin heard Patricia saying by a rack of clothes. "I can't believe he spent hours after the show trying to find her." Caitlin leaned back in her chair to get a better listen.

"What was he going to do when he found her?" Amanda asked.

"Actually..." But Caitlin didn't hear the rest. Her leg jerked up, tripping a woman carrying a pile of clothes. As the woman fell, she knocked into the rack where Patricia was browsing. Other patrons in the store came to see who had caused the wreck. Caitlin got up and tried to push her way past the people pointing and talking. She ran right into Patricia in her attempt to escape. She was greeted with a look of wonder.

"Don't I know you?" She asked with a look of contemplation as she scanned the room for Grant.

"Excuse me." Caitlin tried to move past her. When she was safe outside, heading towards the train, she noticed in the window Patricia pointing out the door and frantically talking to Grant. One second later he was leaving the store and heading right towards Caitlin.

Despite shaking legs and a pounding heart, Caitlin practically ran the two blocks to the subway. Hearing Grant behind her trying to catch up, Caitlin ran faster. She stumbled a few times, knocking into people along the way and as she ran to the subway. Caitlin was rushing to get on any train that was still in the station. Jumping on as the doors closed, she clutched the pole to keep herself standing straight.

Slightly hunched over to catch her breath and partially cause of her weak knees, that were trembling twice as persistent as they've ever done before. Hidden behind a tall man, she saw Grant get to the platform looking around as the train rolled out of the station.

Caitlin was safe, but she couldn't help from crying on her bed that night. And every night that followed that week. She didn't want this curse. What would happen later when she was an older woman? She would have to lock herself up and never try to be truly happy. She didn't want to settle anymore.

Despite the problems her curse had caused the last week, she didn't mind it some of the time. She almost liked her heart pounding. It made her feel alive, that maybe things would be all right one day. She even took to taking out the program she found, and flip to his picture. She would wish that the photos were in color so the mystery in her head over his eyes would be solved.

Even at times when she wasn't looking at his picture, she felt her heart pound. Walking to class or having lunch in the quad, she thought about him and the pounding and shakes would start. She only wished that the person occupying those thoughts didn't think she was crazy.

Wanting to cheer her up, Liz and Laura, her roommate and neighbor, took her to a party in their dorm house. Only to humor them, Caitlin went, and planned to not have a good time. Despite the storm that raged outside, it didn't stop the party inside. Caitlin stayed away from the large crowds of college kids that weren't going to be able to go home for the break because they would have a hangover. She decided she would stay for another few minutes before going up to hide in her room.

After hearing the same song for the third time, Caitlin decided she had enough. On her way to her room, she was caught in a corner waiting for a group of partygoers to pass by. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the entrance to the building, and a rain soaked man asking a few people something. It took Caitlin half a moment to realize it was Grant, soaking wet, and looking around, for her.

The trembling had already begun, and Caitlin tried to hold herself up on the wall. As he moved closer, her breathing began to pick up as she frantically looked for somewhere to hide. After knocking into a few people along the way, Caitlin stumbled into someone's dorm room.

Shutting the door behind her, she half fainted to the floor. She was now trapped. Any minute, he would find her and hand her over to authorities, or campus police. And if that didn't happen, everyone would know about her problem. She could never live it down. Holding onto her legs, trying to stop them from shaking, she looked around for someplace to hide.

The window in the corner of the room made for her last escape. She could go outside, and hide out in the library until she could come back. Tomorrow she would leave for break, and wouldn't need to worry about anyone tracking her down.

Stumbling across the room, slipping on the portable rug, she forcefully pulled the window open. Figuring she would be fine jumping from the first floor, she pulled her legs out and fell. Landing sideways in a pile of mud that had formed during the storm, she was soaking wet and covered in mud. It didn't matter that she twisted her ankle in the fall and was dirty; she was safe.

Trying to move fast, she half limped, half ran towards the library. Being dark and rainy, she couldn't see ahead of her as she turned the corner past the neighboring dorm house. Bumping into someone coming from across the walkway, she tried to excuse herself. But the person had a small grip on her arm. With her hurt ankle she couldn't really defend herself, but tried to struggle free anyway.

"Would you stop doing that?" The man sounded out of breath.

"Stop what, you're holding onto me." Caitlin almost fell from her weak knees, but the man repositioned himself so she wouldn't fall. Heart pounding, she looked up and saw she was facing Grant.

"Would you stop running, it's getting hard to keep up with you." Grant was still holding onto her, while her knees tried to push her over. "You make it hard for someone to meet you."

Caitlin didn't know what to do at that point. With her knees shaking and heart pounding, she wanted to let herself fall on the ground from the pressure. But he held her up, not wanting to let go. She forced her knees to stay still; her heart wouldn't listen. However, as Grant smiled that smile she had admired for the past few weeks, she didn't care that her heart kept pounding. All she could do was smile as she looked into his eyes and saw that they were bright blue. She wasn't disappointed because for the first time, her knees stopped shaking as Caitlin found her balance.

From the Book: Hollow Prismacation II Lithium Shadowum

Post-It Memories

By Nolan Chessman

For my brother
Goldie pulled her like a kite
over that Ohio sidewalk.

She scuttled, puppet arms flapping,
knees pounding together upon
the taut skin of the earth.

Squirrels flung themselves into trees,
catapulted by the dog's low, reaching voice.

Michaela's screeched to a flopping stop
as the chase ended beneath the
groaning bells of the cathedral.

Blood seeped through her white tights
for air. And she cried, holding up the tatters.

We watched her hurt and drip like a sponge—
trickle out into the street.

I wanted to tell him
I didn't have any memories.
Nothing sentimental. Nothing even important.

I only remembered things like this:
images of extraordinary mishap.

Embarrassment—incidentally,
like the time I tried slinging myself fifteen feet
from dock to bank over a manmade lake in Pennsylvania.

Something reached out and grabbed me, I'd insisted.
IT, reeling me into the soup with the Bologna Fish
for whom we had spent the entire afternoon hunting,

using marshmallow-stick poles, frayed shoe laces and safety
pins.
(We caught eleven and later felt like monsters.)

I sent him these memories; I listed them in no particular
order.
I prefaced them with excuses. How I couldn't seem to recall
much that didn't involve riding in a car,

or chucking rocks at the frozen pond in Grandma's backyard,
intently, in order to free the ducks
who had been carelessly swept under.
Like so many other things

I wondered why Michaela
hadn't just let go.
Therapy Sketch
By Nolan Chessman

The driver said,
You be travelin' circles today, hunph?

And I smiled, remembering her face
as I pulled myself onto the bus
and let inertia take me,
sweep me
—orange peels piled low with coarse grounds heaps—
into an empty seat halfway in.

I could never draw a perfectly circular circle.

I try.
But the bus bumps elbows with the earth,
so instead I look out,
isolating myself from the other passengers,
boxed and carried carelessly—
no say in the matter.
They don't care,
so long as they arrive.

Today I am a circle,
I decide.
One who droops
a little from his lower left side,
who overlaps, slightly, at the point
from which he embarked
and then finally
hobbles off
meeting nothing but would-be
spiraling space.

But he does not succumb.
Daunted, he simply ceases to exist,
draws in air
and vows never to let it out again.

However, though, full of holes
the air slowly begins to spill,
leaving him,
lingering,
allowing itself to come and go.

Marigold's Gift

By Jermaine Martel Boyd

Covalent sentiment collecting bowls within, a mor-
bid acknowledgement. More gothic entering cerebra follow-
ing. Few doors fold marigold, more gardens breed a serpents
home. The horns of poor angels, the winged bat just dangles.

Lets celebrate the mangled.
Enduring all the ribbons the pouch that all inhibit. These
cells have congregated the jury has finally made it.
A passion fruit for heaven, the ripples partly breathless.
Today breaking boundaries tomorrow retains a cloud ring.
Four cupids discarding letters, reciting heartless murmurs.
If shallow beings could see a wondering eye can be.
Fill the rim with grim discussions. Reaper leave it far behind.
Teach, free, clever
Reach me havoc
Breach the wall of gifted and damnation. While spelling out
the lost forest of time.
Spores float, pollen hopes, before immense found here.
Condense and drop, fusion stops, because a feather's there.
Wind description, morning visions between the dew and dust.
Holds envisions and transmissions before the rain and rust.
Silver liquid forms their eyes perception closing in. Metallic
prelude filling up the two orbs I know this marigold sent.

I Followed Lucy Out Onto the Dance Floor

By Nolan Chessman

She stepped down off of Ethiopia on a teetering smile.
It was gaping, dumb and beautiful. I tried
putting her back. But she kicked and unhinged—
went limp in my arms.

Her dust clung to me. I felt
bricked over. A crawl space she
crawled into me on ivory fragments,
splintering on the wooden interior.
She felt sketched and embarrassed. Segmented.
She went red in the dark.

I thought about how dusty my
own bones must be (were they
not covered up by skin and sleepy
coffee stains; jukebox songs and
everything else).

Lucy laughed, feeling sorry. Only I
couldn't hear her. I just watched
her face, rattling under the flickering lights.

We both quickly tired of wrenching
our bodies to the half beats of
broken sounds. We fizzled
out: two incompatible circuits,
surging out onto the street.

The bowling alley brooded alone
on the avenue like a gravestone
circumscribed by freeway traffic.
We are all just heavy sand,
Lucy said, partially intact,
slowly pulling out the smoke
from her cigarette.

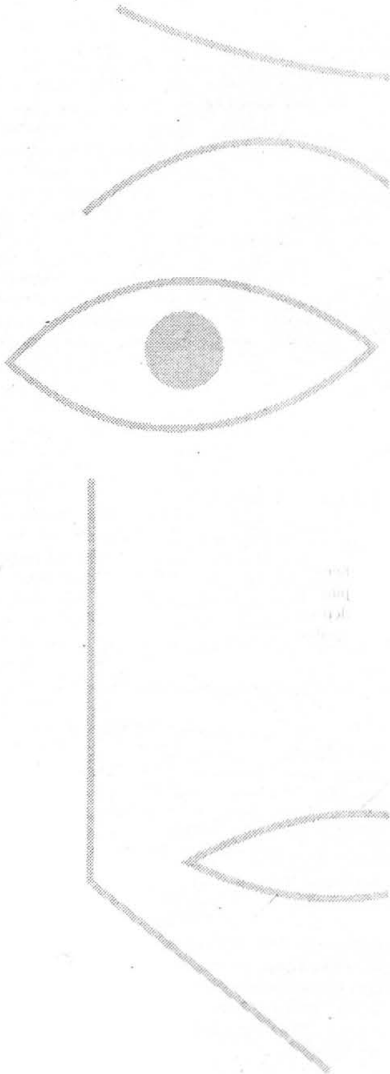
Her sunken cheeks were like murky seas,
and I wanted to hold her tiny
frame up to the street lamps.
I wanted to shake her back to life.
Post-It Memories

Singing Dragonfly

By Jermaine Martel Boyd

From the First Book: Hollow Prismacation

Buried upon yesterday, mind is for you.
Flying through a cloudy day smelling the
Morning dew.
Tears of a fallen angel falling into my
Eye.
Helps me see into your bedroom window, like
Watching to sunrise.
Millions of dreams swirl through your lips
Expecting drinks of starlight sips.
Your words of happiness fill my rhymes
Screaming, thinking,
Feeling the power that is locked inside my
Spine.
Overcome by the obvious myself
My soul or just one taste of you is all my
Revelation.
Difficult is what I see as it
Becomes harder to fly down and kiss you
Through the dragonfly breeze.
I'm still praying as the fire comes down.
I'm still thinking as you begin me to my
Knees.
I'm still holding you in my arms singing
You note only god sees.
I'm still looking into your soul dreaming
About tomorrow.
Starting the fire so I can burn all your
Sorrow.
Please hear me feel what I have to say. I'm
Singing I'm dreaming
I'm breathing I'm screaming. Free me it's
Time that I live today.



The End of the Evil Gummy Bear Industry

By Adam Natali

Goopy ran. He wasn't like the other gummy bears. Instead of being comprised of a head, a belly, stumpy little arms, and stumpy little legs, Goopy was more of a head with two four foot long legs that resembled gummy worms. With his, what some might call deformity, he was at least a foot and a half taller than his brethren. But what some people might call a deformity, others might call a gift. It was this precise gift that saved Goopy's life that fateful day, and brought a cruel and evil empire to an end.

Forget what you saw on Mr. Rogers that one time when he took you into a gummy bear factory, and everyone was smiling while little gummy bears were rolling off the assembly line. It was all a hoax (don't blame Mr. Rogers, he didn't know). Gummy bears aren't made in factories; they're hunted and thrown into giant ovens where they are shrunk into small bite size pieces.

There's no need for gummy bear hunters to use guns and at least put these poor creatures out of their misery before they're shrunk alive. That would draw too much attention. All the hunters are equipped with are nets and a cage. With stumpy little legs, gummy bears don't run very fast. That's why those same hunters didn't know what to do when they saw Goopy. Goopy's legs carried him over great distances faster than an Olympic runner. They carried him all the way to a sport shop at a nearby country club.

That's where he met Robbie Rusak, an aspiring journalism student. Robbie didn't know why a four foot tall, misshapen gummy bear had run into his shop, but he knew a good story when he saw one. He grabbed the store's security videotape for photographic evidence (and to erase the parts where he stole money from the register) and drove Goopy back to his parent's basement where he was staying for summer vacation.

"So can you talk?" Robbie asked.

"Yes."
"What's your name?"
"Goopy, what's yours?"
Goopy liked this game. He was having so much fun he almost forgot his recent ordeal. Robbie helped him remember though.
"What were you running from?"

Goopy told him all about the gummy bear mating season, and how all the other gummy bears teased him about his legs, and after Robbie rolled his eyes, Goopy skipped to the part about the ambush and being chased across a golf course.

"So gummy bears aren't made? They're hunted and shrunk into bite-sized pieces! That's great! What a story!" But Goopy never realized that he was being hunted so he could be eaten. This scared him very much, so he decided to run again. Times were tough for a little while. He got a job at a toy store as a window display.

But then Robbie's expose hit the papers, and Goopy was an instant celebrity. Some lady named Cher invited him to some really long, live broadcast commercial called the Grammy's.

Robbie wasn't having as much luck though. The only story he could come up with after the Goopy one was about the overcrowding of the elevators at his college. He was called into the news editor's office.

"We need something controversial," the editor said. "What ever happened to those other bears Goopy was with the day he was caught?"

"I guess they were shrunk and eaten," Robbie said. "That's great!" said the editor. "Local Hero Leaves Friends for Dead."

"But Goopy saved millions of lives and brought an evil empire to its knees."

"I'll raise your pay 5 cents a word."

"I'll do it."

Goopy didn't have many friends after that. A reliable source close to Cher's hairdresser said that Goopy was an alcoholic.

One day Goopy was sitting by a pond. A butterfly with one big yellow wing and one small yellow wing landed on his arm.

"Windy day, huh?" Goopy asked.

"Yes, quite," the butterfly said.

"You can rest on my arm as long as you'd like."

"Thank you, you're very kind. Some butterflies are mean to me because my wings aren't the same size."

"That's ridiculous," Goopy said. "You are a very beautiful butterfly."

"You're sweet," the butterfly said.

Goopy didn't know if she said that because she was licking his arm, but he appreciated the compliment anyways.

Fat Story

By Allyson Dykhuizen

I would just love to be fat again. When I'm watching TV late at night, when I wake up at four in the morning and can't get back to sleep, when I'm at a restaurant with my fat friends, or even with my skinny friends. When I'm anywhere with my niece who can eat anything and stay Laura Finn Boyle thin. Actually when I'm with Samantha I feel like I'm still fat because I am by no means Laura Finn Boyle thin. I'm more Kate Winslet thin: curvy still, not big, but not sick anorexic looking.

My fat friends are all jealous and amazed, asking how I did it and why I did it. They are very sweet, asking if I'm glad that I'm thin now and asking if men ask me out, or whistle at me on the street. They do whistle now and I smile at them. I know I should be offended, but not being sexually harassed is definitely worse than being sexually harassed. My fat friends would give anything to be sexually harassed.

My skinny friends are relieved; telling me not how great I look, but how healthy I look, and how unbelievably happy I must be now. Then they smile and continue eating their salads with vinaigrette dressing on the side. I look down and am surprised to see that I, too, am eating salad with vinaigrette dressing on the side. My fat friends are now calling me one of their skinny friends, talking about me with a tone of sarcasm and disgust, like I use to talk about my skinny friends, as they order a chicken sandwich and fries with a bowl of soup, never adding a salad because who would order a salad with you could get steak fries?

Then it's 11:30 at night and I ache fore Oreos broken up over vanilla ice cream, but I haven't eaten after seven in eight months. I haven't eaten Oreos in eight months. And in the morning I realize

how unhappy I am. I was in a shop in St. Louis when I was still fat, and there was a compact that had a skinny woman on it looking in the mirror that said "That piece of cake doesn't taste nearly as good as it feels like being thin." But I liked me before I weighed 135 pounds at 5'9". I am happier ordering dessert with my laughing friends than ordering a salad with my skinny friends. I like my happy friends more than my angry friends. Is it something about food that makes people happy? Because all of these women are professionals, they teach and are lawyers and work in offices. But there is a tangible difference between a night out with each group. Conversation is different; there's a different atmosphere, and nothing seems to separate these women except for their weights. It must be the food.

But I was fat, I did lose sixty-five pounds, but maybe sixty-five was too much. I look at myself and I don't see me, but maybe I would if I gained twenty back. 155 at 5'9"? I do feel like I look good, though. I do look so much better than I have ever looked before. It feels good to get whistled at and to get the cute bras instead of the Just My Size bras with the plus size models on the packages and the gel insert sleeve-like straps.

So I make a plan, 7:45 AM, no make-up, pre-shower, that I will start eating again until I recognize myself. And I go to the store, still no make-up, pre-shower, and buy a fat bag of double stuffed Oreos and non-fat ice cream, go back home and eat a fat bowl of Oreos broken up over five scoops and for the rest of the day I'm happier than I've been in eight months. I vow to start every morning with a bowl of ice cream.

The best part of this is definitely ordering a burger with steak fries and a sundae while out with my skinny friends and watching their disapproving faces as they judge the waitress and the group of women across the restaurant. I get up to go to the bathroom just to let them have a chance to judge me. Then I go out with my fat friends and share good stories over good food.

Dick's Global Travel

By Allison S.

"Are you looking to take the ship or the train? On the ship there's a formal dinner, each night so pack your shiniest suit if you're going there. On the train there are gallons of gin. And sharky gentlemen with cigars. Let me tell you, heh, those cigars are not for smoking." Dick raised and dropped his eyebrows twice. "So if you'll be in the company of a lady, I suggest you take the ship. The crowd there's a little, well stiff. Upper crust, East coast, hoity-toity. And the ship will run you a good week's elbow grease more..."

"¿Qué? Yo no comprendo."

Dick leaned over his cluttered desk and cupped his hands in a tunnel around his mouth. His brown derby hat fell over one eye. "Oh I see, signor-o. You're with the mob. Well, I assure you. They do serve lasagna on the ship."

"What are you saying? I want plane tickets to Buenos Aires. Can you help me find tickets for me and my wife?" Francisco asked Dick in Spanish.

"Signor-o, I'm quite sorry. I'm afraid I don't speak Sicilian. You're going to have to come back another evening with one of your English speaking associates."

"No. Yo hablo Espanol, senor. Es-pan-ish."

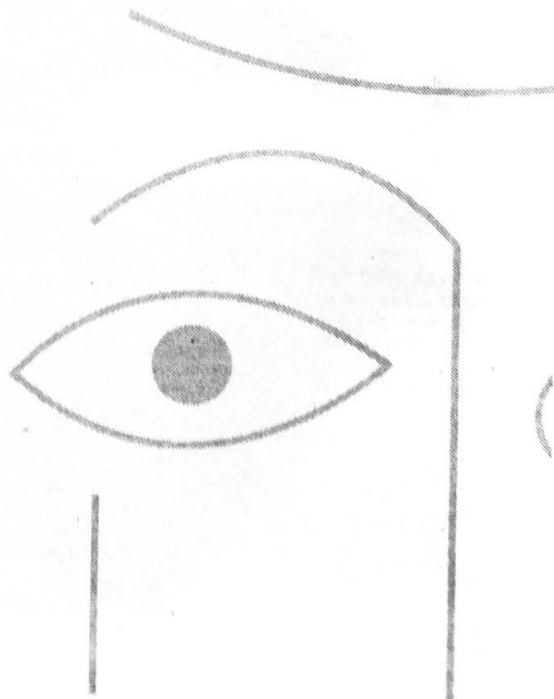
Dick blinked then pried open his concrete colored eyes and elasticized his lips with every vowel, "English-o. Me a-speak-o English-o, signor-o."

Francisco sighed and replied in Spanish, "I need plane tickets to Buenos Aires. The airport would charge me too much." He extended both arms parallel to his neck and pushed air through his two front teeth. "Fwssshhh...pline. Err-o-pline." Francisco attempted to explain in English, while posed as a cross, rocking right to left.

Dick propelled himself from his leather chair and to his feet. He linked his palms as if concealing a captured firefly, "No, signor-o! Please don't order a hit! I'll help you! Don't send your men after me!"

Francisco also stood. He tugged his beard, shook his head and turned for the door.

Dick howled, "Signor-o! No!"



Playing House

By Jenny Seay

Billy Herzog was the first boy I ever wanted to marry. With his springy blond curls, mischief-brimmed blue eyes, and shoulder-swinging swagger, he was by far the best-looking boy in our entire second grade class.

And he was smart, too. Teachers pursed their lips at his wisecracks, but he got away with them most of the time, because he could play Around the World better than almost anybody, and his hand was the first to shoot up when asked to write addition and subtraction problems on the blackboard. I would watch him stride to the front of the class, head propped up on my fist, while around me kids doodled swirls in their notebooks or on their desktops. In Cicero, school wasn't supposed to be something you paid attention to, but with Billy lighting up the classroom it was hard not to. The more I followed the moving piece of chalk between his fingers, the less I'd watch the hands on the ticking clock above the doorway. And the more I'd remember I had already written and solved the calculations in my writing tablet. Math problems were easy back then, and besides, getting it done early meant not having anything to lug home except my metal Muppet Show lunchbox with matching thermos rattling around inside.

No homework also meant Billy was allowed to come over with his younger brother Michael, and finding excuses to have his curls within a finger's reach was my reason for living.

"You wanna play?" I'd whisper as he left the blackboard and passed my desk. He would nod or give me a thumbs up. I'd feel my heart quicken, and willed the red hand on the clock to swirl faster - hoping it would push the large black hand toward the six and the short one toward the two.

When the bell finally sounded, I'd trip over my feet scrambling back to my hook in the coatroom, while Billy stood next to his desk, tapping his fingers on the wooden top. "Let's go," he'd say.

We would meet Michael, a paler, skinnier, first-grade Billy replica down the hall before bounding down the stairs

toward the sunlight that peeked at us through the rectangular glass windows of McKinley School's front entrance.

"Hey Mike," Billy tapped his brother on the shoulder once we were past the glare of the yellow-jacketed crossing guard.

"What?"

"There's a new club I know you wanna join."

"What club?"

"The Bush Club." Billy wrapped his arms around Michael's waist, laughing at his brother's flails as they both careened into a row of bushes meant to stop kids from trampling the neatly trimmed lawn behind it.

Michael's skinny frame hardly cracked a few branches, but we took off running nonetheless in case the owner of the house had seen our horseplay.

"My house?" I asked.

"OK," Billy said.

He didn't know it, but his answer made my insides warm.

The deal with us was always that the resident of the playing location had the privilege of choosing playtime activities. At Billy and Michael's it was always war, or guns, or Nintendo - none of which I minded much - aside from the fact that being the only girl relegated me to playing the hostage in war or guns, or being the onlooker as Billy button-mashed his way past Super Mario's enemies. I was ready to take a more active role in our relationship.

For weeks I'd been beating my forehead trying to find ways to kiss him without being one of the silly smoochy icky girls I hated so much from school, and with the boys now playing on my turf it looked like I was about to have the perfect opportunity.

"So what are we gonna play?" Billy asked after the book bags had been hung up and the PB&Js had been devoured.

"Guns!" Michael shouted. He had discovered my new set of AK squirt guns; battery powered to make realistic rat-a-tat-tat noises, and was at the kitchen sink filling one of them up.

"These shoot like eight hundred feet."

"No they don't. And I don't wanna play guns. I wanna play...HOUSE."

Michael stuck out his tongue, blowing a long wet raspberry.

I waited for Billy to do the same, but instead he smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Sure."

With that one word I was one step closer to carrying out my smooching plan.

To Do Nothing

By Chia-Pei Chang

One of the centerpieces of the philosophy of Taoism is wu wei: loosely translated, it means "without doing." Taken as a commandment, it means Do Nothing. Some Western thinkers, those who are unfamiliar with the paradoxes of Eastern thought, might shake their heads here. This is one of the pillars of Taoist philosophy? Do nothing? Indeed, there are myths of ancient Taoist mystics who would sit by the river, meditating without eating, breathing without sleeping, and thereby achieving enlightenment. These stories seem no more real than Aesop's fox who pouts at the grapes out of reach. How can anyone do nothing? It is impossible to do nothing, absolutely nothing, even for a second, let alone for years. A man who does nothing but stand perfectly still is still doing something - he's standing perfectly still. Or if he sits instead of stands, then that is the word we'll use to describe his action: sitting. And if he tries to do one and then the other quickly, before we can utter the name of his action, well then, that, too, is most clearly NOT doing nothing.

And yet, still, despite this logical way of thinking, one can do nothing. For the man who stands when he is tired of walking, who sits when his feet ache from standing, who lays down to sleep when he can no longer sit, and who rises when it is morning (by whatever standard of morning he keeps, be it dawn or noon), he does nothing. There is no substance to his actions; he only moves with the current of time, flowing along with its course. Yes, he still does nothing even if after he rises, he showers and shaves, and dresses himself in the clothes he ought to wear, and goes to the catch the train to take him to his job that sends him a paycheck which he deposits only to withdraw it again to pay his rent, his electric bill, his credit cards, and his grocery tab. He does nothing when he meets a girl at a costume party on Halloween and they hold plastic cups full of watery beer and he shyly charms her with his teasings and his persistence and he buttons up his finest maroon shirt as he nervously prepares for their first date. This, too, is doing nothing. It is nothing as they laugh together over plates of spaghetti or chase each other through the dew-laden forest on a spring camping trip. It is nothing when he telephones her late at night from his couch, she on her couch, and they talk endlessly, easily. (What do they tell their friends who ask what they talked about? Of course: nothing.) Some say that it should be something as she walks down the aisle holding the flowers which they agonized over choosing, that it should be something as a bead of sweat tickles his neck where his bowtie is tied a bit too tightly while parents and friends and co-workers and unrecognized relatives gaze on in breathless anticipation. Surely this is a great something. But even in this - when he murmurs to his loved one from the depth of his soul the words, "Truly, I do" - this, too, is no more than the beating of his heart. It is nothing. He still does nothing as he writes his songs and quits his job to sing the words that buzz in his head - for what is more natural than that? It is

nothing for him to wipe down the granite counter after a summer's evening of guests and grilled bratwurst and Coronas and barbecue sauce.

It is nothing to take the suits to the dry cleaners, to haggle with the mechanic over the price of Honda Civic brake pads, to darn socks with his wife during a Chicago snowstorm, to watch late-night movies on cable, and to blow out candles on anniversary cakes. This is the passage of time, the rotation of the earth about its axis. It is nothing.

But doing nothing does not mean that there is always joy and good fruits hanging invitingly low from the boughs. No, even through the tense conferences with his doctor who uses obscure phrases and polysyllabic words loudly - too loudly, he thinks - even through the pain and bouts of late night vomiting as his body fights the disease and the drugs simultaneously, even through this, he does nothing but swim through the stream of life like a river trout riding the water.

And when his first son, in a fit of childish rage, throws a blue-speckled plate through the bay window in the dining room and he howls in fury at him and slaps the boy across the cheek and orders him grounded for the week and can only be consoled by the cooing of his unflappable wife - still this is nothing. It is nothing through the years as glittering globes drop in Times Square and he scribbles out mistaken dates on his checks and summers pass until he finally gets the rider mower he's always wanted and so, he decides, why shouldn't he also have the snowblower and finally his wife says Why don't we move somewhere where they don't even HAVE snow and they drive cross-country, only this crossing is north to south not east to west and his wife smiles at this delicious individuality even as both their boys play in the backseat dressed in clothes from the Gap for Kids.

Even the dramatic moments that ought to fill his memoirs - the time his youngest son as a towering teen-ager threatened to slap him back, the bail posted for the same son just a few weeks later, the burial of a distant and unforgiving father - these things are not spoken of in the years that pass.

They are not hidden; they are simply left in the past. When his son the writer asks him why he doesn't talk about these things, he only shrugs. We already know what he thinks.

And he lays on his back in bed listening to his grown boys bustling in the house, both of them back from their respective grad schools - law and medical respectively - as they prepare for his 60th birthday bash, and his skin tingles with the sense of his wife's blood coursing through her veins, and his ears can somehow hear the easy breathing of his sons downstairs, and his mind reaches out to touch the spirits of deceased parents and grandparents and even his unborn grandchildren. Here perhaps the Grand Thinkers would call this something like Enlightenment, that he has become one with the world, with his family, with himself. But he, in doing nothing, simply thinks to himself that he is happy. And he lies in bed, letting his sons prepare the party, feeling the warmth of his wife's body, and he does nothing.

This is the heart of wu wei, to live life as it is given to you, with pain and with heartache, with joy and with laughter, without doing. There is no promise of enlightenment, or of greater insight, or even of peace of mind. There is only the promise that this is life.

(Imagine That!)

By Holly L. Smith.

This day was on a pagan holiday, which was Valentines Day. Suddenly this particular block called Erie town; suddenly the street lights had just started crashing into each other, with glass covering all over the streets. Everything had just went to being pitch black.

So everyone started coming out there houses to try to see what was going on outdoors because this incident has never happen before around this town. So the people in Erie Town were very shocked. The only people that did not come out of their house are the people that lived in the Red and Black painted house, which were the colors of the Devil.

This house call the ForGhost was almost in the since of you the seeing the movie the House of Dead. There was a smell of all over the house.

Imagine That

By Holly L. Smith

There was this table just sitting in the kitchen with a written letter from someone stating that this person been killing people and skinning the whole person's body to a corpse and leaving just the eyeballs of the person full of blood just dripping all over the house.

There was a sixteen-year-old boy, at these people's house and he is hanging with his older friends. The young boy was sitting in the table with two older women and two older men. The sixteen-year old boy was very naïve and did not really know what type of things is going on in this house.

So the young boy had went in the other room, to play on the Playstation 2, while in the meantime his friends was thinking about stirring and keeping up some more devil meant.

The boy was laughing and screaming and enjoying himself because he was playing this game called (Auto Theft 3). Which is like a movie within a video game. It is basically mapped out like they are between an army and a gangster video because operates by a lot of pistols in this video game.

Now, while the young boy was still playing the video game, his good friends was sitting in their kitchen; all of them sitting in diagonal in their chairs.

All four them had gotten out of their chairs, and they started drawing some demonic scenery on the floor that symbolizes the devil's

bounty.

These people were up under the devil's spell and they lived and worshipped him all their lives ever since they were kids. These people keep on draw this symbol every time they are getting ready to kill any suspect.

Now they sat back in there chairs diagonal and then they began to move their chairs closer to each other. Then they pull their chairs up three spaces toward the satanic symbolic symbol.

They began to start grabbing each other's hands real tight and then they chanted, chanted, and chanted until this big gigantic ball of fire rose up out of the symbol. While the ball of fire had risen, and then there was a face of a person, which was the Devil.

So all of their eyes had turned blood shot red and they were saying to the Devil: Hell to the Master of Destruction.

So the more these four people said: (Hell To the Master of Destruction, everyone's glass in their houses that stayed on this block called Erie Town had shattered into a lot of pieces. Then everyone in the town started screaming and running outside and they ran into a surprised hurricane that was spinning the neighbor's glass from their houses into blood particles. It was a blood, eyeball, and glass hurricane that had swept threw the neighbor and killed about twenty-five people in Erie Town. After they did this then the Devil told his children servant's well done. They told him: (Hell to the Master of Destruction).

The master of destruction finally had went back into his portable symbol, and then those people changed back to normal, like nothing has fucking happen at all. Then all four of the people went back to the room where there little sixteen-year-old buddy was playing the game.

So they were checking on him to see if he was ok, and they told him that he could stay in the house by himself and continue to play the game because they had to go outside and take care of some personal business.

So the young boy was continually playing the game and his friends went outside to see who was alive and dead because there was a big tornado going on.

When those people went outside they had seen the ones that were dead and they had gotten their butcher knives and started carving the heads and the bodies of those people. Once they had finished doing that, they had left the bloody eyeballs outside of all those people they found dead or alive and wrapped the rest of their body parts into plastic bags.

Now they are on their way home and they entered their house and went down in the basement and started the barbecue grill and staked and cooked the rest of the cut up body parts. After those two men and women finished cooking those body parts, they had started pulling out plates and they served each other dead bodies and ate them.

The more dead bodies that they have eaten, the more power they could give to their master to conquer this whole town and make people serve him and eat dead bodies, too.

The little boy was looking around the house and snooping to try to find his friends and he went in the kitchen and their was a satanic symbolic symbol that the young boy noticed and as he looked and looked and looked, he touched the symbol, and then a big of fire jump out of the symbol and say to him very loud: this is the house of the devil and the dead.

So the young screamed and ran until he reached the door, but one of his friends heard him and caught him before he could get out the door. He seemed one of friends with blood shot eyes and the young boy screamed, kicked the guy in the balls and busted into the front door.

Once the young boy had found out what type of house this was he never came back and he told his family what was going on, too. Now the young boy had arrived to his house and the friends went outside to look for him to kill him and skin him alive; so that they could get his soul and eat him and give more power to their master.

Finally after the young boy told his family that he heard his friends chanting, and had seen blood shot eyes, and a satanic symbol on the kitchen floor, the family move to Jehovah Town.

They moved so that their son can get counseling and live a better life, so that he won't run into psycho people like that again.

Those people had just arrived to the boys house and when they got in their they did not find the boy and his family, it was just an empty house and they began to start drawing the satanic symbol their and they were chanting again, so that they could talk to their master and they could find more people to kill to get into their souls.

The young boy is very devastated now, but he lives in a new town now and he is getting counseling for the things that he has seen. His family is worried about him because he really did not know these people were living like this and their son is really messed up mentally.

This just goes to show you, that you have to watch what type of people that you are around because you never no what kind of lives people live behind closed doors.

TRUTH

By Adrienne Manson

What is truth?

The component of a mirror that reflects the image that it sees.

Truth for you isn't necessarily truth for me.* Your sense of reasoning is what determines truth for you. We look upon the same subject - which you determine to be flawless - but I determine flaws.

Where is the compromise when we examine truth? Truth knows no compromise: it expresses an image of ones own understanding. Truth mimics the impressions set upon it - it imitates the voices once heard before. Truth knows no barrier for it releases freedom from guilt and shame. It acts as an extinguisher when souls are set a fire by lies.

Truth captures power as its partner to bring illumination and sight to darkness where there was no light. Truth rides upon its horse as it conquers fears of the unknown. When truth is captured it prevails in battles, wars of the heart to bring fulfillment in the minds of people who have known no other way.

Truth uncovers intentions of deceit to bring honesty to those who were lost.

Truth the soul's signet to satisfy the blind.

Truth the resuscitator of the deceased where there was no life. The antidote that's needed to rebuild the destruction of the walls of Babylon. Truth can heal a nation from a disease where there was no democracy.

Truth, the royal diadem in a universe where the currency has a voice to compete with all that is good and righteous.

Truth created in the heart of man transforming itself as a double-edged sword cutting asunder the evil from the good.

Truth has the authority to silence the mouth of the avenger when it spurs to bring corruption upon the heads of our children when direction and correction is sought.

Truth wears a shield to combat venom that threatens the integrity of one nation that is under God.

Truth, the buckler that upholds the righteous when turmoil persist to distract and subvert a need to survive.

Truth, the only remedy that has the component to relieve ills of any Achilles heel of a generation of young people who call themselves X.

Simile and Irony

By Katelyn Stanek

Ask the late Elvera Schroeder what she thought of black olives, and her famous response would be jarring: AThey taste like cemeteries,@ my great-grandmother would gripe. Great-grandma's morbid description did little to deter my six-year-old curiosity. After all, my cuisine consisted of dishes with names like Aants on a log@ and Aworms in a cup.@ AVegetable (or was it a fruit?) in a graveyard@ was significantly more interesting and no less appealing than anything else I'd consumed over the years. So it was there, in the Holiday Inn ballroom rented out for my aunt's wedding, that I first tasted a black olive.

I've since come to understand Great-grandma's interpretation of the taste, although I don't agree with her disparaging tone. A black olive is a lot like a cemetery, dark and woody. The outer rind is watery and cool and brassy, with an acidic nectar and a mahogany sensation. A bite through its thin

skin reveals the flavors of the earth. It has a mellow metallic tang and the faint taste of polished granite infused within its velvet pillow flesh. The black olive's delicate wet concrete taste can be savored only momentarily, as further chewing reveals a salty musk and the flavors of acorns and tree bark within the gray meat.

The saline juices are sharp and oily, a murky mix of butter and minerals wrapped in silk sheets. A hint of freshly mowed grass and dried oregano gives the juices a sleepy sensation that can burn the throat if consumed too often. Drink the juices on their own and the taste of copper shines through. Drink them with the olives and it's a flavor more similar to plant roots.

Stanek 2

A black olive is mustier than its counterparts, with the muted essence of rich soil and light sand lacing its aftertaste. Its tough clay-colored pit tastes just as it looks. In a moment, the tastes are almost gone, with grayish brine and nickle the only flavors remaining.

Unlike the green olive, which is a strong, sour, brackish combination of the outlandish and the overpowering, the black olive is reserved, quiet, contemplative and unassuming. It is not, like its green brother, the color of life, but rather is symbolic of deathB of resignation, of peace, of repose, of cemetery.

ies.

Great-grandma was known for irreverent sayings and descriptions; she called snow Awhite shit,@ and so one can imagine the Christmas parties. But her poetic depiction of the black olive was on my mind the day she was lowered into the ground, several days after my ninth birthday party. I could not help but admire the irony of it all as I ate my aunt's infamous Afuneral salad@: a combination of romaine lettuce, walnuts, carrots and black olives.

fatal dance

by r.c. paraskiv

tighten tears
deformed faces
fog and fears
engulfed.
soared kites
fallen dreams
whiten nights
devoured.
hectic terror
blooded sands
screams of horror
lethal hands
dusted.
sound of war
trumpets sing
washed in tar
deadly wind
sunk.

Dancing in the Dark

By Sarah Cupp

Sunrise:
the glowing sphere
shines Light-

impenetrable to our inner worlds.

we wander
in the glaring Sun
with Shadows

dancing in our souls.
Slits
By Sarah Cupp

The fissure is Slit-ing.
Cracking. Separating. Unraveling.
This transformation sounds like church bells and fire alarms.
Smells like babies and sick old women
Tastes like regret
It's tangible like new clay.
And moldable like new minds.

The fissure is sliding. Each side going farther from the other. The movement creates a rift that I no longer care to pass.

I watch objectively as my inner self is torn in half.
One part will integrate with my soft new skin.

The other. The other will find an older sicker

the Calming

by julius flynn

1-2

cars pass Division & Larabee
whistling exhaustion
through the feint (wind) sound
released unconsciously by nite
breathing over the click chimed when the light
turned
from yellow
to red, she awaited clothed in
black sneakas red laces white jeans
hugging her
ankles
squeezing her baby fat
that worked
it's way under her
red tank top
tapping her foot making the bow bounce
laced at the top of the tongue,
keeping the warmth of urge
festering in her veins, appeared
within her
chattered clinched teeth blackened
from irregular brushing, waiting for
baked goods that become her
souple sanitarium
of satisfaction conveniently
purchased packaged
with a used needle, two blocks
from the police station-unconcerned
of her dope sickness
nearly itching her face off,
while the city pretends
to sleep...

body to inhabit in. it clogs my pores it makes my skin crawl: I itch. No choice but to leave it behind—Yes! This is survival of the fittest kind.

Slow—ly

She slips away. I watch her linger, wanting wishing loving hoping to stay

I let her loose

She travels a distance, then through a slit

sinks away.

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