

NO. 23

Spring Contest Issue 2002

FUGUE



Amy Eleanor Parker

Ander Monson

and Terrance Hayes

Spring/Summer 2002

FUGUE

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FUGUE

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Letter from the Editor

After two issues, I am in a position to look back upon the last year and not only remember fondly our successes but also look at more issues that need attention as our magazine enters a new and important era. And as a child needs guidance to achieve great success in life, so the staff of *Fugue* continues to cultivate and sustain our fledging publication into a nationally recognized forum for quality work.

As many of you know, the current issue of *Fugue* holds the results from the first ever Spring Contest in Poetry and Fiction. I consider the contest a great success and the quality of submissions set a precedent that we can only hope to surpass in the coming years. Furthermore, the Contest has placed *Fugue* squarely in the path of economic autonomy, an important goal Matt and Mary Ann and I set out to achieve in the deep summer of last year. Every spring *Fugue* will run a contest, and hopefully by next year at this time, we will count the personal essay among the genres we judge.

Putting on a contest is an arduous and difficult process in many ways, not the least of which is the picking of stories and poems that were qualified to appear before the eyes of our judges. From the conception of the contest, to placing ads in *Poets and Writers* and the *AWP Chronicle*, to managing the superb manuscripts that began to appear in great numbers in our office, to the carefully chosen final decisions by the jury boards regarding the set of stories to pass on to Mr. Moody and the stellar poems for Mr. Doty. Mr. Moody and Mr. Doty were gracious and generous in contributing their time for reading, and I wish to take this moment to thank them.

Along with the contest, another phenomenon that happened this year was *Fugue's* appearance at the Associated Writing Program's Annual Conference in New Orleans. Sitting at our table in the very midst of the bookfair, we scattered our name across other journals' tables in the form of book trades, we made contacts with other similarly minded publications, and generally, as Mary Ann succinctly put it, "made a huge splash" in the minds of those attending.

Finally, a word about the issue within. It has been a difficult process, but rewarding because personally, I have learned a great

deal about managing a small magazine in the last year. But aside from these practical difficulties and successes, the theme of this issue seems to be one of death. Many of the stories and poems struggle to make sense of humans' short time on earth. Yet at the risk of sounding sentimental, our little issue of death, so to speak, can only end with something like an aspiration to find meaning among a world politically fragmented and inundated with apathy. I would like to think that the staff of *Fugue*, because of our work in producing a work of quality and sharpness, place ourselves, our readers, and our contributors, directly on a path to solace and stability.

Scott McEachern
Managing Editor

Letter from the Prose Editor

From where I am sitting, *Fugue's* first annual fiction and poetry contest has had some immediate and, I hope, lasting effects upon the magazine. First of all, the sheer volume of fiction submissions sent to *Fugue* went through the roof. Our readers spent many, many hours selecting finalists for Rick Moody to choose from. A happy side effect of the contest, though, was a large stockpile of very strong stories, many of which didn't make it into this issue: we rejected more good stories than ever before. While I don't enjoy having to turn down quality writing, the bounty of great work made the selection process as enjoyable as it was difficult.

My biggest worry at the outset was that the contest would make it harder to put together a cohesive issue. I am confident that this — thanks to the hard work of Scott and my jury board — did not happen. I am amazed by the continuity of these stories, especially between the contest winners and the issue at large. Nearly every story carries the weight of loss. What's more, nearly every story becomes preoccupied with mapping out how loss changes people by taking place *after* the actual story of loss, as if a tape recorder were simply left on, and what we are getting is the real story's aftereffects. Characters become obsessed with radios, commit to sobriety, or refuse to leave their homes for reasons they barely understand, coping with events that we are not fully privy to. The details of loss remain in the background, working as shadow that falls on characters' new routines, some of them successful, some not, some interrupted by new, more pressing circumstances.

While I am happy with the ways in which these stories are similar, I am as proud of the ways in which they differ. If, as I believe they are, these stories are mapping similar territory, none of them are using the same instruments.

Matthew Vadnais
Prose Editor

Letter from the Poetry Editor

There was no turning back once the editorial staff secured judges and placed "call for submissions" ads in *Poets and Writers* and *AWP Chronicle* for our first annual contest issue. Though *Fugue* is ten years old and has done nothing but improve with age, doing something very differently is always a risk. However, we were so incredibly pleased with the quality of submissions we had been getting, from all over the country, and impressed with the sheer volume of submissions, we were quietly sure the contest would frame an even better issue than Number 22, which is, in my opinion, a very fine issue. I am thrilled to report the great success of Number 23, the contest issue. I am certain, after reading, literally, hundreds of poems for this issue, that poetry is stronger than it ever was on this continent.

I believe the contest poems reflect the conversations poetry is having right now. The three placed poems uncover a vividness of language, and most interesting, a knowingness in the voice. These are millennial poems, surely. The winner, Amy Eleanor Parker, has written a poem of such huge, gorgeous grace and sureness of vision, that I knew when I gave "Thomas Edison Films the Electrocutation of an Elephant" to Mark Doty with twenty other extraordinary poems it would capture his attention. Many of the poems from that group of final twenty are published, in this issue, among the three contest poets. I couldn't give them up. I received such a great many exciting, interesting poems. It was very difficult to pare the submissions down from any stage. I am ever grateful to Mark Doty for his generosity of spirit and his willingness to carefully consider your work.

Finally, I chose the poems in this issue as representatives of how I see poets writing right now. I have been deeply interested in what the lyric is doing; there is a kind of new renaissance of the prose poem and of formal concerns; finally, the humor is welcome, and my god, the *language*. Thank you, all of you.

Mary Ann Hudson
Poetry Editor

Untitled No. 1

steep hump spread limpness' streak full shouting's claw
thrip must
glove ramp
bloody lid
ash shrink
bread keener
moat stunt
leap strip
loudly shed
haft loop
drips shed
clog stroke
clock pale housing storms spore sloop clod napper drips

Andrea Drugay

Go Sailing, Delete Us

Maybe her dictum is just a vessel, poor mother
(can help a widow, yes, no?) — her flowers receive courtship, today's
cunning of the language yearns for more and more agony.
Much as my vessels may be dictum for mother,
come with me, I plead you, and we'll conquer, deliver, and give nothing.

Now I know and can alter and be so,
now see I'm empty, the sunrise has been given in rose.
Me, I'm nodding, can alter, can rescind my seeing,
or be the last in mother's cavalcade, taking my own.

Poor came the roses, bushes, and the flame
under our passage to the house
(I lost many — tell home they know to end my scent, to eat it),
came imitating our lost races, but oh, tears, ah.

Come with me, I heard in echoes on the albums we know,
maybe her dictum is just a vessel, poor mother.
Ignoring delays god, voices ascend,
on a morning day, lose the key, my cool mother.

Fallen

When she sleeps
she undreams water,
violet green and moss

She cannot be unbeautiful
although her hands are ribbon —
tied and crossed

When she was old,
her white dress fell unlaced
and chill bare flesh

returned her young and colorless
to buffalo and mountainside,
her ginger sunset pale so late

so late, so sleep and holy
floating cautions peace
against the dark, dark night

She is not here, she walks through halos
saved by golden halos, ripples on the water
surround her body, halos

She is not saved, she is not strong, in sleep,
so late, so peace and pale, undreaming lavender
and falling scents, uncrossed, untied and bound

She white and old, now young, now unbelieving,
answer words her whiteness pales her halo loosens
pale and loosened, fallen petals float inside.

Dead Fathers

I see images of dying fathers, wasting, bony, touched by dementia. This is your father, maybe, from what you've told me, or some other father, from a book. But it is not my father dying.

My father is half-shaven, collapsed across a bed, clutching or not clutching his spent heart. He is full-bodied, big, and lucid till his heart explodes.

I have no time to prepare for him dying, the small comfort of your father's dementia.

My sister calls me. Her lover is leaving for California. "Santa Barbara," she says. I turn down the television. She once had a lover in Santa Barbara. I understand the irony, she knows, as no one else would. She had never told anyone else how the lover almost died — heroin — and my little sister, a baby really, waiting for the ambulance. Barely twenty years old, waiting for the ambulance. Not just waiting. Resuscitating.

She is crying over the phone. I turn the television down to a whisper. She had sworn me to secrecy. No one was to know — not our parents, not my wife. I have never spoken a word of this, not even again to my sister. I have been alone with this secret, and it has sometimes seemed a stone weighing me down. Not even my secret, really, yet it reminds me at times of how alone I can be.

She left her lover, then we all forgot his name.

And then our father died. She wants to visit his grave. It's her therapist's idea. She has never, since the funeral, been able to go there.

I visit regularly. I feel guilty about the marker. "CPO." A free

marker from the Navy for my father's wartime tours. WW2. Korea. But the rank is wrong on the marker, my mistake in the requesting paperwork. I tell myself I'll get him a better, non-military marker someday. When I have the money. It's been a dozen years.

My sister doesn't know how to find the grave.

"I can't remember," I say, "the name of the section. 'Sycamore,' maybe, or 'Larch.' I don't know. I just go to it."

I can't go with her that day. I've a son, four months old. His mother's at work. Our marriage is broken. I have a class to teach in a few hours. It's too complicated to go. I'm crying, as I hold my son. "Larch, I think," I say.

My sister is grieving over the phone. "Santa Barbara," she repeats.

I can't tell her that my marriage is broken. There are tears on my son's scalp, and down his cheeks.

My sister is crying.

On television, in endless rerun, Magnum retreats from the 4th of July. None of his friends know why. Every year. They think it might have something to do with his wartime tour. Dead comrades. Or his dead wife. The secrecy grieves them. It seems a withdrawal from intimacy. It angers them.

I turn up the volume. I don't know why. I am distracted. My sister is crying. I listen to the ocean in a conch shell, watch the world through a matrix of television dots. California.

Hawaii. Magnum goes out into the ocean, and loses his way, his para-ski, his way home. He is treading water, praying for rescue.

But no one knows he is lost.

I have, for longer than my father's been dead, as part of a career that is part this and part that, worked with three blind men. For four years, long ago, I lived with them. My father knew them. My father knew their dog as a puppy, stinking up the house. They

loved that dog because it was ordinary. They each had their own seeing-eye dog. But this dog was just an ordinary dog – untrained, stinking up the house – and they shared it in ordinary fashion.

It's July 2 as my sister calls, as Magnum treads water. On July 4th the dog would be 14, but in January the dog died. Someone else, someone new in the blind men's lives, drove Cindy to the vet to die. My sister is also named Cindy. In January my son wasn't born yet, but my marriage was broken. No one knew this, not even my wife.

The blind men comforted me. Cindy was old, they said.

Magnum has flashbacks. He remembers his father. Sweet things from early childhood, confidences from later childhood. Camping. Boating. Baseball. I remember my father's hairy arms. How I kept secret from him for months my first marriage's breaking up.

"I thought you'd be disappointed in me," I said.

"I would never be disappointed in you," he said. "I only feel sad for the pain you must be feeling."

I wanted him to wrap his hairy arms around me, but he didn't.

There is this picture in my mind of your father in the bushes outside your house. He and your mother are separated, not yet divorced. She has custody of the children. He misses you. He is mentally ill. He hides in the bushes and imagines you doing your homework, or getting ready for bed. He is weeping. Your mother tells you he is crazy, a liar. You picture his hairy forearms lifting you, laughing, skyward, or spanking you, crying. He pictures you doing homework you never do. But no one knows you never do it.

You go to bed. You picture on the ceiling the ice rink he made you of the backyard at another house, another time, when his mania made gardens and ice rinks and made the ceiling let in stars.

You have a dream. You have always had this dream, from the time of the bushes, or before. A bear is chasing you. A bear is

chasing you. A bear is chasing you.

Why didn't the teachers ever send home a note? "Sherry doesn't do her homework." Your sister thinks all you ever got was A's. It isn't true.

There is something you will never remember about your father. You've retrieved a doll you had when you were little. You're amazed at the missing fingers and the broken-off toes. You can't imagine abusing your doll this way. Maybe it was your little sister abused the doll. You tell me: doesn't she look like you, your doll?

Two days later, you have a dream. You approach your old house. Your mother is with you, your sister is with you, your doll is with you. "Wait here," you tell them, while you go inside. There is something in there you could never approach before.

Why now?

Dead fathers, why now?

You tell me you will always see my wife in my son. This fills me with despair. My life is bleak. Things which should fill me with joy, don't. I weep with my son in my arms. You weep, I weep, when we are in each other's arms. Dead fathers. I lift my son, my hairy forearms skyward.

My mother tells me secrets, tells me things now that I've an infant son that I didn't know. When I was an infant my father spent weekdays and nights in Norfolk. The Navy. The Korean War. Not a CPO, a Chief Bosun's Mate. I knew some of this.

What I didn't know was that my mother was working. The B&O. During days I was kept by a Russian woman. On Sunday afternoons my father would go to get Mrs. Young and take her to our house before he left for Norfolk. On Friday evenings he would come home, and return her to her house.

What kind of a Russian name is Young? I don't remember her, my secret, second mother, leaving as my father came home,

coming as my father went away.

When I picture my father dying, half-shaven, chest hair spilling over the top of his T-shirt, I see his thick, hairy forearms clutching steering wheels, clutching his heart, lifting me goodbye as he left for Norfolk.

Magnum remembers his father teaching him to tread water. Just a few more, just a few more. His father embraces him — a new world's record he tells his son. Magnum is treading water, treading water, just a few more, praying for rescue, though no one knows he is lost. He never tells anyone where he goes on the 4th of July, or why. It's personal, private, a secret.

In your dream you approach your old house. Your bony, dementia-starved father dances in his deathbed. You are sad, frightened, lost. He is a vision from Dachau or Auschwitz — both perpetrator and victim — a skeleton with hairy arms spanking you, clutching at you. You yearn to embrace him. The dream ends.

You wake crying, remembering his death, the bushes, the homework no one knew you never did. Why your father's dance terrifies you is a secret, even to you.

You wake. I am covered in your tears.

Despite his secrecy, they know, Magnum's friends, where he is. Somehow, where he is. Covered in his tears, they know. They find him, treading water, treading water. His father had promised, his father had promised. On the 4th, for the 4th, he'd be home. It was WW2, or Korea. He doesn't come home.

After his death, we found secret caches of my father's life. Letters he'd saved, dreams he'd written down but never told anyone, candy bars secreted because of his diabetes — eaten privately, we imagined, alone — a list of the money I owed him for which he'd never asked.

They were not such terrible secrets. We wouldn't have be-

grudged him the candy bars. I had not forgotten what I owed him.

We were only sorry for the pain he must've been feeling.

Now I am sorry that my father never got to meet my son. I wonder will I get diabetes, will my son get diabetes, will our hearts burst —

Will we ever stop crying?

My therapist suggests that what I need is closure. I told her this dream. We are all together — you, me, my son, my wife, your family, my wife's family, my family. In some big house somewhere to the north. Vermont, maybe, New Hampshire. I am 700 miles from home. Everyone is getting along, but me. I can't get along with anyone. My friend Tom comes to the house and asks me what's wrong with me, why am I so sour? I have no answers, only anger, sadness.

I take my son by the hand, and we walk off through the snow, homeward, 700 miles away. We walk away. He is too small to walk, but in my dream, hand in hand with me, he walks.

My therapist suggests that what I need is closure. I tell my wife that it's over. She cries. I feel tiny. The walls of the house close in around me. I feel closed-in, not closure, like my skin might burst. I call my sister, tell her that my marriage is over. She cries. "It's okay," I say, "it's okay."

"I know," she says, "I know."

It is summer. No snow in the graveyard. Over the grass my son and I go. He is in my arms. "Larch," not "Sycamore," we come to my father's grave. There is no need to change the marker. I may never have the money. There is no need.

I lift my son up high, in my hairy arms, toward the sky. I tell my father that my marriage is broken. I laugh, like I'm a crazy man standing there, my son lifted toward the high, open sky.

In a secret place my wife and I conceived our son.

The night before, or the night after, you and I made love. I

couldn't tell you what I'd done. When I knew of the baby growing, I couldn't tell you that either. It was too terrible a secret. If I told you, you'd be disappointed in me, you'd leave me.

The baby cries in the nursery you and I have made him in our new home.

Covered in your tears, I think of Mrs. Young's arms around me, her tears for a Russia left behind. You hear the baby crying before I do — my son, not yours. You go to him.

Magnum's friends pull him, hairy-chested, from the water. You bring my son to our bed. "A bear was chasing him," you say, and you place him in my hairy arms, then lie beside us. He nestles between us, an arm on you, a leg on me. Mrs. Young pulls Magnum from the water. She is not his father — he will forget her — but she loves him.

I feel us cradled in Mrs. Young's arms, in our fathers' arms. "Tell me all your secrets," you say.

I don't know where to begin, what I will remember, what forget, what lies of my own I believe myself, what secrets are solitary, impenetrable stones.

Eye Exam

She sits in the chair, in amber light. Her eyes are full of liquid from the drops. On the other side of the apparatus sits the doctor. She can feel him breathing, and his knees. "Did you ever look at the sun?" he asks. "When you were a child? Maybe at an eclipse?" It's her first time seeing him. When she says "no" and asks why he asked, he says, "There's a scar on your eye. It's a typical burn scar from looking at the sun. It doesn't affect your sight." She is nearsighted, and many doctors have looked at her eyes, but none has ever told her of this scar. Now she confesses that a few nights before, at the house of a friend, an amateur astronomer, she looked at the moon through a telescope. That was another first time seeing — those mountains, seas, and craters. When she raised her head a silver beam streamed from the eyepiece, so bright, she mentions, warily. The doctor says, "Oh, this isn't from looking at the moon." On the wall of his office hang photographs taken in New Guinea: the doctor and a tribal chief, both of them with their faces painted. He goes each year with a group, doing eye operations free of charge. In New Guinea, he says, he restored the sight of a man so old, and blind so long, the first white man he ever saw was the one who cut the cataracts from his eyes.

Oliver Rice

On the Explication of Maps

Suppose along this coastline,
these running vagaries,
these coves and bights —
suppose along these capes and bayous
there were no conceits,
no silhouettes of a protagonist curled in sleep,

kneeling to drink from a mountain stream,

shrinking, hand upheld,
as if to delay the truth.

Suppose among this island chain,
these little continents,
there were no similitudes of a Roman nose,

an arm strewing seeds,

a mouth half open, as if to call out
to the nearest available person.

Mother of God, suppose across this hinterland,
these foothills and prairies,
there were no intimations of a mother waking,

a candidate seizing victory,

a missing person driving through the night
in pursuit of his tribulation.

Darren Kerr

Le voyage dans la lune

I let you take me up, convinced you'd lied;
A moon is only dust, unfeeling rock.
You break our orbit, wheeling like a hawk
That's sighted prey. Dissolve. Cut to: Nightside.
The frame is filled with white — your ship's airlock —
And then a slow zoom out. Out of sun's sight, you guide;
I follow, tethered, in your steps and, weightless, walk.

Sarah Dickerson

The Clock Would Drop

*Time sped up and flew around the bend.
Never knowing when,
The clock would drop and the walls would cave in...*

– Brandon Dickerson

This is the dream:

My mother finishes washing the last dish. I wake, and step into the living room, and watch her. She works in the tiny kitchen of our summer cottage, rubbing her wet hands on the apron tied around her waist. I feel groggy. Muddled. I need some coffee. I make my way to the kitchen but can barely push myself forward. My feet feel like lead as I drag them, one in front of the other, struggling toward the coffee pot. Mom is busy wiping off the counter tops, paying no attention to my progress. When finally I make it to the refrigerator, I pull out a gallon of milk and fill my coffee cup with it.

That's not right. I turn to empty it into the sink. Lumps of green mold pour out with the thick white liquid. Mom turns with her hands on her hips and glares at me. I rinse the cup again and again, but each time I dump it, milk pours out and goes down the drain while globs of mold remain in the sink and get stuck in the strainer basket. My mother snatches the cup from me and grabs the pot of coffee, then fills my cup and hands it back.

“For God’s sakes, Sarah! What’s wrong with you?”

I feel so foolish. I take the cup from her. It is now brimming with gray, ashy clay-like mud. I carry my mud-filled cup to the deck where my father and sister are sitting in the one place warmed by sunlight. Neither are speaking; they are both looking out over the cliff at the bay.

The lake is its beautiful morning blue, a deeper blue than any

other time of day, and the air is cool and damp. I set my cup on the railing and look down into the ravine where the small foot bridge crosses to the path down to the beach.

My brother, Brandy, still lies there, partly covered with wet dead leaves from last fall and surrounded by newly sprouted green ferns. I stare down at him, examining his features. He looks perfect but evenly gray. Like an unglazed clay sculpture.

I shift my stare from my brother to my father, Dad's gaze still fixed on the sun-speckled surface of the lake.

"Shouldn't we get rid of him now?" I say to him.

"Oh," he awakens from his trance. "You think so?"

I walk back into the cottage to get a garbage bag. I don't care what anyone thinks anymore. Enough is enough.

But Brandy is standing in the kitchen next to my mother. She stands by the stove cooking the ground beef that we didn't have a chance to grill the night before — or was it the year before? He stands with his knees bending awkwardly inward, locked in place, dressed in dirty blue jeans and a leather jacket. Mom gives the beef a quick stir and turns the burner off. She hurries out the back door to take the clothes off the line and Brandy follows close behind her. I am holding my newborn baby in my arms.

"Look." I call out to him. "Look. See? It's my baby — Emily. Brandy? See her?" He nods, smiling approvingly as he follows my mother out the door. I watch them in the backyard, Brandy standing quietly beside my mother, stepping down the length of the clothes-line with her as she deftly removes the pins and tosses both the dried laundry and the clothes-pins into the basket.

I rush back to the deck and lean over the railing. He's still there. I see Bethy brushing the dead leaves off of him. He isn't clay-like anymore, but looks asleep. He wears nothing but swimming shorts, his dark hair soaked and flattened against his scalp, his eyes partly open. Bethy lifts one of his arms over her shoulder and wraps her other arm around his slippery waist. grunting, she pulls him up off the ground. His head flops against her cheek and falls onto her shoulder face first. She turns her face away

from his and stops for a moment holding her breath. She pushes his head away from hers and stubbornly drags his dead weight out of the ravine. "I'll take care of him," she says, heading around the cottage to the driveway. "I'll take him home."

In early June of 1971, we are at our cottage on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay. Just as we are every summer. It is before the neighbor kids arrive for the summer, before the lake warms up for swimming. We are stuck with each other — my oldest brothers Travis and Lindy with Brandy, and Bethy with me. My sister and I sleep in the main cottage with our parents, and my brothers in the single-room, A-frame cottage out back. Bethy and I are rarely allowed in the little cottage. Our brothers tell us to go away, go play in the traffic. Bored and lonely, we have only each other, and we sit on the beach watching sand spiders, picking up handfuls of sand to bury them and watch them escape.

Sometimes, if Travis and Lindy won't play with Brandy, then Brandy will play with Bethy and me. Most of the time he teases us and tells dirty jokes. He pretends to crack eggs on our heads or shows us how to carve our initials into our skin with a safety pin. Sometimes he lets us take puffs off his cigarette.

This time, he announces himself by throwing a garter snake over the cliff. It lands belly up beside Bethy and quickly flips upright in panic, wiggling frantically and slithering in the sand.

Bethy screams, runs to the steps off the beach, and begins to cry. I leap to my feet and see Brandy standing on the cliff, pointing at us and holding his belly in mock, spoken laughter. "Bah! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it away! Take it away!" Bethy cries in fear on the steps. Brandy comes down to the beach, and passing Bethy he says, "Don't be silly. It won't hurt you." He goes after the snake and grabs it, and holding it in his hands he carries it toward her on the steps.

"See? It won't hurt you," he holds its head up close to her face.

She screams again, louder. "Get it away!"

Brandy sits in the sand, holding the snake loosely, and I sit down beside him. He looks back at Bethy still shivering in fear on the steps. "Look. I'll even put it down my shirt. You'll see. It won't hurt me." He pulls out his collar and sticks the snake inside. We watch as it crawls out from under his shirt and into his lap.

"See?" he says to Bethy. She comes off the steps, curious and suspicious, and sits in the sand beside us to take a closer look.

"I can even put it down my pants," he says, standing and pulling the waist of his pants away from his belly and dropping the snake in. He jiggles and dances around on the sand, and we laugh, both of us saying "geez!" and "ew!" and "yuck!" until it appears at his ankle and crawls out onto the sand.

"See?"

Sometimes when things get really dull, he'll entertain us by contorting his skewed body into strange positions, placing one leg behind his head, or extending his elbows and knees so far in the wrong direction it looks as though they were put on backward. The weirdest thing is the way he can jitter his eyeballs. He puts his face up close to mine and stares. With every muscle in his face still, his blue eyes jitter into a blur. It freaks me out every time.

Brandy's body is weird. He is tall and skinny with an elongated torso, his legs strangely short in comparison, and crooked. His shirts can't be tucked into the waist of his pants, and his pants are too long for his short crooked legs. His face is too long and his mouth too small. And in the middle of his long narrow chest is a deep crater-like hole — a caved-in sternum. When he lies in the sand on his back, Bethy and I fill the hole with water from a plastic toy bucket.

External examination: Body length: 74 inches; Weight: estimated 200 lbs; Hair: long black scalp hair; Skin: unremarkable. Group circular and semicircular defibrillator paddle application

sites are clustered around the left areolar area.

Just like the television show. One of them yells: "Clear!" and then you hear an explosive, jolting thud. They check for a heart-beat, then do it again. "Clear!"

Rigor Mortis: present; Head: symmetric; Eyes: Corneal donation has been carried out as requested.

They removed his glittering blue eyeballs, cut them out of his head. We get a thank you note. *Facies: symmetric; Nose: unremarkable; Neck: unremarkable; Chest: slight pectus excavation.*

Slight, my ass; we filled it with water.

Internal examination: Liver: weight 2600 grams; Spleen: 300 grams; Pancreas: 250 grams; Testes right: sperm present, descended bilaterally. The right testes is removed and sampled.

I wince.

Brain: 1510 grams. Cerebrum, right and left hemispheres: Maintenance of normal cortical ribbon with unremarkable white matter beneath brain. Sampled brain: unremarkable.

I heard once that they neatly slice the scalp under the hairline and stretch it all the way back so they can saw off the top of the skull. That way, they can put the brain back in, stick the top of the skull back on, and pull the scalp back in place. You'd never know.

Stomach: intact viscous containing an estimated liter of partly masticated food content, part of which looks to be of fruit appearance.

I don't remember him eating fruit that day. We drank whisky slushes.

Heart: left ventricular myocardium is site of subendocardial scar deposits which are not accompanied by necrosis Sampled aorta bears evident recent hemorrhage on adventitial surface which is partly hyalinized Elastic stain reveals diminished and irregular elastic fibers.

What?

Final Anatomic Diagnosis: Dissecting aneurysm thoracic aorta with rupture, pericardial hemorrhage and tamponade. Left ventricular myocardial hypertrophy and scar deposits. Fatty infiltra-

tion of liver.

They write this up in a foreign language. Later, we understand. He went off like a time bomb, programmed to die prematurely. It is Marfan's Syndrome — a rare genetic defect that caused his connective tissues to weaken, his ligaments to become loose and stretchy. They think Abe Lincoln had it. Paganini too.

The real danger was hidden. The walls of his aorta, the main artery leaving the heart weakened and frayed until it ripped like worn fabric — it was inevitable. He was gone within a heartbeat, maybe two, the doctors say. It could have happened at any time.

He is a funny looking baby, strangely skinny and long with a deep little crater in his tiny chest. My mother affectionately calls him her *little war orphan*. She tells us, thirty-five years later, that he wasn't put together right. We knew that.

Pediatricians are concerned about his chest; afraid it will obstruct the functioning of his heart or lungs. They keep an eye on him for a little while. One of them warns my parents that he may have problems with it one day. Another says he is fine, there is no need to worry. So they don't.

Mom tells us that Brandy used to play alone for hours on end, rarely needing her attention. By the time he is speaking it is a language my mother can't understand, a language all his own. My parents listen to their frustrated son as he tries to explain—who knows what — himself, the world, what's up with the dog across the street. As he grows older, the neighborhood children tease him because he is odd, a kid with a constant runny nose which he forever wipes on his sleeves. His school teacher thinks he's retarded and he never listens in class. By third grade Mom tells Brandy to simply smile, look up, at least pretend to pay attention to his teacher like his older brother Travis does. He comes home a week later and tells Mom "But if I do that, then I really can't understand what she's saying."

An elementary lab school teacher at the university spots Brandy's intelligence. They test his I.Q. and suggest he attend a

school for gifted children. He'll have a difficult time in a regular school, they explain. Most of his teachers will not understand him and other children will tease him for being an oddball. He may suffer until he was old enough to understand and accept that he is different. The nearest school is in Detroit, and my parents can not afford to send him.

As he enters junior high school many of his days are spent in the principal's office. He sets off the fire alarms, smokes in the bathroom, skips school constantly. He does as he pleases and not what he's told. I see him walk to school one day, barefoot and wearing slacks designed after the American flag with stars on his butt and red and white stripes down his legs. He is not rebellious, just oblivious to mundane concerns like shoes.

By the time he is in the eighth grade the school system is fed up, and because Brandy refuses to participate in detention, they make him do janitorial work. They give him a broom. He looks at it, leans it against the wall, and walks out the school's doors.

"You have to do something about him," the principal tells my parents.

"No. You have to do something about him," they respond. Nevertheless, my parents are losing their minds. When he comes home from school that day, my mother is yelling at him upstairs in the house. I hear a scuffle and Brandy is crying. She is so frustrated she is kicking him, missing his butt and bruising his crooked legs.

Brandy drops out of high school in the tenth grade. Two years later he announces he is going to Hollywood to find his fame and fortune as a rock-n-roll star. My older brothers Travis and Lindy join him a year later, and they all form a rock and roll band they call "Mr. Wilson."

I've always thought of my brothers as a trio, all of them born eighteen months apart. There are a lot of pictures of them — the three of them sitting or standing according to height and age, sleeping in beds in a row, eating on one side of the dinner table, playing together on the beach. Later, they all play the guitar, and

like the Beatles, they all grow their hair, then mustaches, then beard. Then they all shave and get hair cuts again.

Still, Brandy was odd, the odd third-born son. Someone we knew, somehow, was never meant to be.

Mr. Wilson plays together for ten years, always hoping for that big break. At the same time, Brandy catches up, gets his GED, earns a bachelor's degree in philosophy at UCLA. I still have a photo of him with scraggly long black hair, proudly wearing his cap and gown. He looks terrible.

After he graduates, he doesn't know what to do. Just once, he puts on a suit for a job interview and gets a haircut.

"I hope you didn't tell him to clean his fingernails," I tell my mother.

"Oh my God, I had to," she replies. "He never would have thought of it on his own."

And he wouldn't have. He didn't get the job and delivered pizzas instead.

In August 1992 we join together at the cottage on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay, just as we do every summer. Everyone except Travis, who shuns these family get-togethers. This is the fourth day of our vacation — Thursday, and we are at Ken and Sandy's house on nearby lake Bellaire. Brandy cheated at golf yesterday. He kept sticking his ball up on a tee no matter where it landed. I said, "You're not supposed to do that. It's cheating." He said, "Bah! Who cares?"

Typical.

Ken is our cousin, and every year he and Sandy have everyone over for the day. I am four and a half months pregnant and lying on my back in the grass talking with Bethy, my hand shielding my eyes from the sun. It is quiet by the lake; a gentle breeze glides across the surface, rippling the otherwise flat calm of the blue water. Puffy clouds float overhead below blue sky — perfect for waterskiing. Aunt Jane and Uncle Warren are talking to Mom and Dad up on the patio, and my husband David is playing with

Esther on the bit of artificial beach a few feet away. I am glad he is keeping her occupied.

“Hey!” A pack of cigarettes drops from above me and lands next to my head, held up on blades of grass.

“Jesus, you scared me!” Brandy plops down next to his cigarettes, pulls one from the pack, and lights it.

“Ken’s getting ready,” he says. “Are you gonna ski?”

“No,” I awkwardly pull myself up into a sitting position. “Doctors say I’m not supposed to take on activities I’m not used to.”

“That’s ridiculous.” He blows smoke carelessly into the warm air. I suddenly want to smoke. He thinks everything is ridiculous. He leaps up off the ground and I see him looking over the edge of the lawn where it hangs over the shore line. “Man! Look at the snakes!”

I look over and see water snakes, two of them — three of them, slithering along the top of the water, disappearing under the bank where the lawn ends abruptly, and reappearing again. I hope Esther won’t see them, and I know now that Bethy won’t ski. She hates snakes.

“I am NOT going into that water!” Bethy remarks, as I knew she would. She sips on a whisky slush. Sandy makes a whole pitcher of them when we get together.

“Well that’s just ridiculous!” says Brandy. Everything’s ridiculous.

He takes off his shirt, and then his shoes and socks and leaves them next to his cigarettes on the lawn. I can see the deep indentation in between the two small nipples of his bare chest. His knees are cocked strangely backward. He’s always been that way. He’s getting heavy now though; he’s gained a bunch of weight working at Dominos in L.A. He and Bethy flew back together. Lindy and Rose and their kids came on their own.

David comes over with Esther and leaves her with me, and Brandy and David wade out to the boat. Lindy goes too, and so does my step-son Thomas and the rest of the kids. One by one, Lindy lifts the children into the boat. I stand up and take Esther’s

hand. We head up to the patio to join the relatives, and Bethy follows.

David is first. The boat idles as Ken hollers instructions to David and designates Lindy and Brandy as spotters. "Ready?" he yells and David, with his head back in the water and his skis up in the air, nods. We watch as the boat speeds off down to the far end of the lake with David successfully in tow.

"Charlotte?" I hear Sandy sing from within the house. "You want a whisky slush?"

"God no, I'd fall off the deck," says Mom.

"You're not drinking, Sarah?" asks Aunt Jane.

"I'd better not."

"They're good," Bethy says and slurps on her drink. She takes a seat in a white plastic patio chair and props her feet on another in front of her. I think she's on her third. Rose sits next to her holding a pair of binoculars. Esther hand-feeds Uncle Warren potato chips. He opens his big mouth to accept each one from her little hand and then grins stupidly.

"Ha!" cries Rose.

"What?" I say.

"He can't get up on the skis," she is looking through the binoculars and laughing.

"Who?"

"Brandy, he keeps falling down."

And then it is quiet. The boat drifts silently at the other end of the lake.

Aunt Jane and Mom are talking and I hear Rose speak again. "There's something wrong down there."

"They probably gave up on him," says Mom. "He's too klutzy to get up on those skis." She laughs and Aunt Jane smiles. The boat remains floating at the far end of the lake. We wonder what could be holding them up.

Time passes, and finally, the boat heads back. No one is skiing.

"I guess they did give up," I say to Dad.

Now the boat is speeding toward shore, full throttle, the tow rope left in the water. It is bouncing and skimming crazily along the surface, showing no signs of slowing even as it approaches. How odd. Ken is going to slam the boat into the shore. Everyone's arms are waving and crossing wildly over their heads.

The engine cuts, and the boat continues to skid motorlessly toward the shore. I see arms still waving, and a distant sound of the children crying.

And then a sudden, screaming shout:

"CALL 911! NOW!"

It echoes loudly over the flat blue water and across the lawn.

We remain motionless on the patio. The few puffy clouds suspended in the air above us seem to stop drifting along. I can still see what a beautiful day it is – sunny, blue sky; the lake calm, quiet. I hear the children crying.

Someone repeats:

"CALL 911!"

The boat's motors scrape the rocky bottom of the lake and make a dull crunching sound. Sandy turns suddenly and, ripping the sliding screen door off its frame, runs inside. Sobs erupt from behind me and grow into arrhythmic wailing. Loud mournful crying pierces the silence that just a moment earlier surrounded me. "Oh my God!" Mom cries out, sobs catching in her throat. "Oh my God, he's dead!" She repeats it. "He's dead, isn't he?" I've never heard anything like it before in my life.

Who? What?

Bethy kicks the chair in front of her out of the way and goes to Mom. "It's okay, it's okay. They can jump start him. They do it all the time. It's okay."

Jump start him. Children are lifted one by one out of the boat, including Thomas, and walk toward the shore.

Jump start him? I stand. Dad rushes across the lawn and into the shallow water, flinging his arms in the air. "Oh my God!" The cries of the children mix with the horrible noise my mother is making and all I can hear is "It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." It's

Bethy's, and she has her arms around Mom's heaving shoulders. I grab Esther to protect her. From what? She straddles my swollen belly, and I carry her inside to the kitchen.

Sandy stutters into the telephone. "We need an ambulance...he's not breathing and...." She looks out of the kitchen window. "And he has no heart beat."

No heart beat. With Esther still on my belly I look out too, and see Ken in the boat pushing. Ken is pushing and dipping below the rim of the boat: one, two, three, and then dipping and then pushing: one, two, three.

No heart beat? My legs wobble, and the kitchen turns on its side, uprights, tips the other way. Esther slips from my arms. I focus on the image outside the window, the boat, and Ken pushing still, and Dad in the boat with him bent over, looking down.

"They're working on him now," Sandy talks on the phone. "Please...."

"Mommy?" It is my daughter, and I shift focus, blankly looking at her inquiring face. "Mommy," I hear her say. My own mother's wailing noises in the living room are growing louder. I never heard such a thing.

"Mommy?" I see her, my daughter next to me, but she is far away.

"It's okay," Bethy is saying. "They're taking care of it. Ken knows what he's doing."

"Mommy?"

I have to go. I make my way to the bathroom and struggle, my hands shaking, to pull off my shorts, and before I sit my bowels begin to empty and run into the toilet. My heart thuds and I feel myself suck in air and then hold it. I hear Dad yelling "Brandy!" Other voices join his. I hear Lindy's, and then David's: "Brandy!" Their voices echo in the silence of the motionless afternoon.

And I sit on the toilet, holding on for dear life to my hard belly. I pull sheets of toilet paper from the roll and wad them up. The bathroom tilts, then rocks, and to stop it, I focus on the wad in my hands.

I get up off the toilet and go back into the kitchen.

“Mommy, I want some pop.”

Esther wants pop. Red pop. I find some on the kitchen counter and pour a paper cup full.

I hand it to her and usher her into the living room. Bethy has moved Mom inside and has given her a glass of water.

We sit.

Finally. The sound of helicopter can be heard growing louder, thundering overhead. I step outside. The rhythmic pounding as it nears vibrates the house and shakes the ground. It produces a powerful wind that ripples the still water of the lake and flattens the grass as it lands in the yard. It is almighty. The windy enormity of its presence and the words “Life Flight’ spread across its body offers reassurance and relief. Just like television.

The rescue team leaps out. “We can’t work on him in there! Get him out of the boat! Get the kids inside!” I turn away. Then look. They have lifted him, lifeless, out of the boat and put him on a stretcher. I hear shouts and the thud of the defibrillator paddles. The helicopter’s propeller whirls and chirps quietly nearby. After the third jolt of the paddles, the rescue team scoops up the stretcher, slides it into the helicopter, and one by one, they jump in behind it.

The helicopter’s engine grows loud and shrill, and the propeller revolves into a blurry circle blowing wind into our stunned faces. It lifts off the lawn and swings rapidly around just above the rippling lake, simultaneously climbing higher and speeding south.

Little time elapses after my parents and Bethy and Lindy leave for the hospital thirty miles away. Painfully little time, maybe fifteen minutes, since the helicopter took off. A sheriff from Antrim County calls, and David answers the phone. His voice quavers. “Okay... okay... yes... thank you for calling...thank you.” He hangs up, and turns to us. “He’s dead.”

He is dead. We cry and hug each other appropriately. Esther spills her red pop on the carpet.

We decide to leave and go back to the cottage to wait for the

others. Aunt Jane hands me the package of ground beef Mom brought for the burgers. I hand it off to Rose, and go down toward the shore to pick up his things — his shoes and T-shirt, his pack of cigarettes. I light one and smoke, my heart stubbornly beating in my chest, and I stare across the still water of the lake. A few boaters are out there; motors buzzing softly along the surface of the water in the distance. The late afternoon is dead peaceful.

I feel blank, empty of feelings except for physical ones. My belly is heavy and pushed against my knotted stomach, though I forget, for moments at a time, that I'm pregnant. The cigarettes are giving me a headache. I experience an overwhelming fatigue laced with aimless energy, like I need to get up and move around, but when I do, I need to sit down and rest.

It begins to grow dark. As the sun sets over the bay, they pull into the driveway — Mom, Dad, Bethy, Lindy. One by one, four car doors open, then close, and they walk separately and quietly through the back yard and around the cottage to the front deck.

“Are you all right?” I ask my father.

He erupts in tears and holds onto me. “Oh shit!” he cries. “Shit. Shit. Shit!”

David and Rose move in and out of the kitchen, taking care of the kids, taking care of us. David makes toast with peanut butter for my parents. Mom takes small bites, sips a glass of milk. She is slouched over and sounds stuffed up. Lindy sits in a chair beside Mom and Dad. Bethy sits next to me on steps leading to the foot bridge, her head down, her elbows on her knees.

“Did he pay you back for golf yesterday?” I ask her.

She chuckles softly. A sob catches in her throat. She stares at the ground and Dad pulls Brandy's wallet out of his shirt pocket and hands the money in it to Bethy. She waves it off, but he insists. I wonder at what point he got Brandy's wallet.

“What are you gonna do with it?” I ask. All the details matter.

“Throw it out. We don't need it,” Dad says.

We sit. It is so careless of Brandy to be absent during this

trauma. He's always been so careless; it used to piss everyone off. This is his fault and he is being unfair. Typical.

On Friday, Travis arrives from Los Angeles. Lindy and David go to Elk Rapids to make cremation arrangements. According to my parents' wishes, there will be no funeral, no disposal of remains. There will be an autopsy today.

When they return, Lindy comes out on the deck and tosses a billing statement on the table. "The funeral director offered to take the ashes and put them in the bay Saturday. Says he does it all the time for people."

Mom stands up and groans, then marches into the cottage. Lindy looks around.

"What else could I do?" he says. "He said if we didn't pick them up, he'd have to shelve 'em. I figured it was better than sticking them on a shelf."

I look down at the billing statement. "Transportation from Munson Medical Center to the American Crematory in Gaylord: \$400. Crematory requires container. Corrugated pine box: \$400. Crematory's fee: \$1000."

On Saturday, Mom gathers Brandy's stuff, including an old tennis bag, and gives them to Dad. He takes it all out back to the burning barrel, and I watch from a distance as Travis and Lindy and Dad stand quietly while the flames consume my brother's belongings.

I wonder if ashes float and disperse on the surface of water or if they sink and settle to the bottom. I wade out into the water. The bottom is rocky until I'm in up to my waist and then I can feel the texture of the rippled, sandy bottom. The lake is freezing. I hold a bottle of shampoo in one hand and a bar of Ivory soap in the other, but it is too early in the summer to tolerate going all the way in. By the middle of June, I can manage a quick dunk, lather my hair, and make another quick dunk to rinse. In July it warms up and makes bathing easier, and by August it's

perfect for swimming and riding waves on inflatable rafts.

I know Brandy is out there somewhere, or everywhere. He was thrown in at the end of last summer. I thought about the lake last fall when I was home, and how it must have grown colder, and again in January and February when it would have silently frozen over with huge mountains of icy, rocky snow piling up as far as you can see across the bay. It was as though we left him behind, alone in the water, after the cottage had been closed down for the season and we'd all gone home.

I've never been certain where my brother went or where I was supposed to put him. He waded out to the boat and that was the last I ever saw of him. If not in the ground, if not somewhere in heaven, where was I going put my brother now that he was dead?

Grand Traverse Bay is big, though it's only a small cove carved into the northwest corner of the lower peninsula. Our cottage sits on the shore at the mouth of the bay, where it opens up into Lake Michigan and connects with all the other Great Lakes that wrap around the state. They divide the U. S. from Canada until they dwindle down and out into the St. Lawrence Seaway and leak into the Atlantic. All those oceans cover three-quarters of the earth. Everybody knows that. So where is Brandy?

I throw the shampoo and soap back on shore and I look up at the cliff. I imagine Brandy there, dressed in faded blue jeans and a leather jacket, holding a snake and laughing: "Bah! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Don't be silly! Just dive in!" My legs are numb, and before I have time to think about it, I plunge into the icy water.

The Cook and the Cashier

The cook's answer is to remarry the cashier. This time they'd do it in the spring, maybe June. The cook slides his soda can from one end of his dining room table to the other. He's still in his whites, slouching in the chair, planning the wedding. Outdoors. How could he go wrong with a wedding set on a manicured lawn, marigolds and lilacs budding at every turn, the cook in a gazebo waiting for his blushing cashier to step into the sunshine.

A whiff of cold air slaps the cook and he squints at what's before him. The cashier, is standing at the front door with it wide open in the dead of winter talking to Stephi. He rubs his eyes, but it's all still there. Figures. Now that the cook has the answer, the cashier is busy at the front door acting like the cold air doesn't exist.

"Fran, you two talk all night at work," the cook yells from the table. The cook, the cashier and Stephi all work at the same restaurant, but the cashier and Stephi work out front; the cook is in the back. The cook pushes the chair off the floor, balancing on two legs. "Tonight's my anniversary."

"Don't you mean *our* anniversary?" the cashier asks.

They have to be cold standing outside. Stephi will break first because the cook knows how relentlessly his cashier can hold out. The cook has his jacket on and he's shivering. That's why this time the wedding will be in the Spring; no one is happy when they're shivering. The cook has all the answers tonight. The reception will be outside too. He can almost hear the toe-tapping, finger-snapping music from the five-piece band.

"Hey, I'm getting frostbite over here," the cook says. He drains the last of the soda and shakes the can for more. It's a good night for a beer. It has been six months, but there's really no reason

not to have one. "Either in or out, ladies."

The cashier leans against the front door and turns her head to the cook. "Don't you have something to clean?" she asks.

The cook laughs it off. This morning he cleaned almost the whole place before work. Half the battle in celebrating is being in the right environment. Their big celebration plans consisted of the cook making spaghetti after work. It's all the cashier wanted. She didn't want gifts this year since they've celebrated anniversaries before and money isn't a luxury, but the cook tucked something away in the closet anyway. When the cook and the cashier first started having anniversaries, there was even less money than now, and they both had still wanted gifts, and even sex. Why should this anniversary be any different? Spaghetti, gifts, and sex.

"I've got a marriage to celebrate," the cook says.

The cashier takes out a cigarette, twirls it between her fingers. The cook laughs again; she's been smoking all day, why should it matter now? Stephi's voice floats through the room, but the cashier is blocking the cook's view of the doorway. Stephi works the food line at the restaurant. When the cashier is busy out front, Stephi will go into the kitchen and talk to the cook in the back. They're all good friends, the cook, the cashier, and Stephi, but the cook only wants to share his idea with his cashier. Renewing your vows. He'll tell the cashier happy couples do it all the time.

The cashier puffs on her cigarette.

"For God's sake," the cook says, watching the cashier exhale smoke. It'll have to get ugly for the cashier to give up cigarettes. "I'm going to freeze to death."

The cook knocks over the dining room chair trying to get up. He walks into the kitchen without picking up the chair. The spot where the cook rammed his fist into the kitchen wall always catches his eye.

The front door slams shut. The cook is halfway inside the fridge clearing space to find the beer or wine coolers he knows aren't there. Not even champagne. The cook rubs his finger over the spot on the wall. The cook's story was he hit the wall because

he was drunk. He had been to the bar beforehand, then on top of the usual drinking with the cashier — it wasn't so much the fight, is how the tale goes, but the conditions. The cashier had said, fine, then we both won't drink. She said it was the perfect answer.

"I don't know why things happen to me," Stephi says.

The cook turns to the living room where Stephi is standing, sniffing and shivering with the cashier standing next to her.

"Why, God?" Stephi says. "What have I done so wrong?"

Stephi's twisting the cross on her necklace back and forth. The cashier flips back her long dark hair and holds Stephi's elbow like she's handicapped as they settle into the couch. The cook picks up the dining room chair with two hands and shoves it into the table, shaking the plastic flower arrangement.

"You're screwing the boss," the cook says and takes off his jacket.

The cashier hits his leg as the cook passes to hang his jacket. Stephi's mascara is smeared under her eyes. The cook has never seen Stephi upset enough that it jeopardizes her face.

"And your point?" the cashier says. "The boss isn't even *the* boss, he's an assistant manager. And he's not married."

The cook knocks into the coffee table and shakes the jigsaw puzzle on top as he heads back to the kitchen. He expects the cashier to hit him a second time, but it's not right having a kid's puzzle sitting in a grown-up apartment.

"He's your boss too," Stephi says to the cook. "And he told me his fantasy." Her eyes roam around the room as if everything is new. "Right in my own bed. We had only been going out for two months."

"The boss wants kinky sex," the cashier says. She uses the "have a nice meal" tone she gives the customers. "Some fantasy."

The cook's in his kitchen opening another soda. Both sides of the counter are littered with greasy pans and stained pots, unscrapped plates, half-empty cups, silverware covering the sink. How can two people do so much damage is the question.

“We’re in my bed, right?” Stephi says. Her gaze settles on the pictures above the TV while letting the cashier pull off her gloves. “I’m just wanting a little sex. Then from nowhere he tells me his fantasy is to get as much comfort as possible.”

The cashier’s back straightens like someone dropped ice cubes down her shirt. She places Stephi’s gloves on the end of the couch and slides Stephi’s jacket off her. “Cheap thrill seekers,” the cashier replies. “The boss wants kinky group sex.”

The cook whispers the word, “comfort,” and the image appears – the cashier the morning after the wedding, folded in his arms, her head rising and falling on his chest.

Stephi paces in front of the family pictures on the wall, stringing her cross back and forth. “It’s not the sex,” she says.

The cook watches Stephi glance at the pictures on the wall; they’re pictures of the cook’s family, the cashier’s. The cook and cashier’s wedding picture stops Stephi cold.

“Before his wife died, it was them and the next door neighbors,” Stephi says. “The boss says it’s the safest place you’ll ever find.”

The cook leans over the sink to study the wedding picture. Him and the cashier got married in the winter, but he can’t say why. They had lived together before they married, and the cook can’t remember who brought up the idea of marriage first, but there they are, all smiles.

“Every man’s fantasy is to get as much sex as he can,” the cashier says. “Sure, they’ll dress it up.” The cashier throws her boot in the corner by the TV, breaking Stephi’s concentration on the wedding picture. “Comfort. That’s pretty creative.”

“Is that true?” Stephi asks the cook.

The cook knows it’s his question. Since this morning one person or the other has wanted to know either how or why. It’s those kinds of questions that the cook has the most trouble with.

“You can’t blame a man for his fantasies,” the cook says.

“Can’t blame a man for his fantasies,” the cashier repeats. The other boot knocks over the stack of newspapers in the corner for

recycling.

The cook flings crusty macaroni shells into the garbage. There was a time when the cashier's actions made the cook itch. Just simple things like repeating his words and trashing the apartment made his muscles tighten. He would begin to scratch his arms thinking about how to respond to her. A conversation with the cashier would leave the cook rubbing his neck, stroking his face while he pulled together the right words. Now the cook does housework when the itching begins. This morning he was vacuuming and dusting as the cashier was dressing. He rammed the vacuum cleaner into the coffee table and it shook the jigsaw puzzle.

"The boss didn't ask me anything," Stephi says. "He just told me his fantasy." She turns from the cashier to the cook, waiting for a reaction. "It can't be so wrong. After all, he's a professional man, a boss for Christ's sakes. There's no harm in saying things. Right?"

The cook plunges his hands in the dishwasher and his whole body tingles. A real photographer will take the new wedding picture, instead of his cousin. They'll stand in front of two huge oak trees, sunshine pouring down so you have to squint just looking at the picture.

"Fantasies keep you alive," the cook says.

The cashier shakes a puzzle piece at the cook. "Blood pumping to your heart keeps you alive. Honey."

The cook watches the cashier fit the puzzle piece in. They got the puzzle as something they could do together besides drink. She's been telling people at work *her* puzzle is almost done. *Her* puzzle only has about twenty pieces to go.

"The boss' fantasy didn't come out sounding dirty," Stephi says. She enters the kitchen, standing behind the cook with her arm around his shoulder. "Just imagine. I'm lying in bed with the boss, pushing my tits out, holding him in my hand, for God's sake, and he's talking about comfort like he's all alone in the world."

Stephi's smell is a blend of fried chicken and discount store

perfume.

The cook's thoughts swirl along with his sponge in the gravy bowl. He closes his eyes and finds himself in bed: she tells the cook he is her fantasy and wraps her legs around him.

"I can't figure out why I married the cashier in the winter," the cook says to Stephi. "But I got this idea...."

The cook can see the cashier wearing a white dress this time with ruffles and a train so long someone has to carry it.

"I should let you guys celebrate," Stephi says, and punches the cook on the arm.

The cook's eyes open to see the cashier in the middle of the living room, pointing the remote at the TV as shows flip by and the stereo blasts.

"After all," Stephi says, and pats the cook on the back, "you're in love."

"Get me a beer before you go, Stephi," the cashier says.

The cook's eyelids flutter. The warm water runs over the cook's hands as he rinses the gravy bowl. Tossing her boots, not dumping ashtrays, playing the stereo and TV at the same time, and now this asking for a beer. Now this. When they drank, the cook and the cashier always agreed.

The cook watches Stephi survey the kitchen walls for some scar that the cook left. When the cook told the story, he never mentioned to Stephi which wall he hit. He said that first, it was going to the bar that pushed him over the top, then, that husbands and wives fight, and finally, about the wall — it was the only thing he wanted to strike.

"You've got a funny wife," Stephi says to the cook.

"Bottom shelf, left-hand side, behind the prune juice," the cashier hollers from the living room. She's switching radio stations: rock to pop, rap to country. "It's my anniversary; I can have a beer. After all, I'm in love."

Stephi rummages through the refrigerator and pulls out a beer. "But I thought you two had an agreement?" she asks the cook.

The cook's scratching the back of his leg with his shoe.

The music stops on the oldies station. "I bet you know everything about us, huh, Stephi?" the cashier asks.

Stephi's holding the beer away from her like she does when taking out the garbage at work. She's standing at the edge of the kitchen, ready to go into the living room. "Except those fantasies."

The cook snatches the beer out of Stephi's hand as she's almost out of the kitchen and he hands her a dripping wet casserole pan instead.

The cook throws Stephi a dishtowel, hitting her in the face. "She's had fantasies, you know," he says. The cook points a soapy finger at the cashier. "She always wanted to do it at work, right under everyone's nose. Our first anniversary, she was still working salads. I'm in the kitchen, walking past the ladies' bathroom when the door opens and she pulls me in. All she's wearing is a long white apron — in the middle of lunch rush. We could hear people asking where we were."

"I thought this was a celebration," the cashier says. She's on the living room floor, ransacking the CD collection the cook had alphabetized. "It's my anniversary, and I can't even get a drink?"

"In the bathroom? That can't be sanitary," Stephi says. She puts the casserole pan in the cupboard and takes a wet plate from the cook. "But I did hear that fantasies are good for your mental health."

"Stephi," the cashier says. "I'm really thirsty over here." The cashier's sitting next to the coffee table.

"Doing it on the beach was a big one of hers," the cook says. "I told her it's just a lot of sand in uncomfortable areas, but she insisted." He finishes washing everything and cleans out the sink. "Not very original on the fantasy scale, if you ask me."

"It's the beginner's fantasy," Stephi says, rubbing the same plate, same spot. "You start with the basics and build up. Like everything else."

"Stephi, for Christ's sakes," the cashier says, "I'm dying of thirst." The cashier studies the puzzle like it's a blueprint.

“My boss is pretty original, then,” Stephi says to the cook. “Fantasizing about comfort?”

The cook watches the cashier light another cigarette, fifth one, but it’s only counting now.

“Honey, you forgot about one fantasy of mine,” the cashier says, sitting on the couch, in front of her puzzle. “The one with the Boss, Stephi, me and the motorcycle neighbor next door.”

The cook’s wiping the counters. It’s just a story, the cook’s saying to himself, if she really had the fantasy, she’d tell him. Stephi starts walking into the living room, but the cashier points to the beer on the counter and Stephi turns to grab it.

“Our neighbor and me, and the Boss and you,” the cashier says, “we’re all in bed together. Doesn’t this sound familiar, honey?” she says to the cook.

The cook’s sweeping. He’ll give her the gift, explain the idea, and she’ll react then.

“I’m thinking it’s going to be crowded,” the cashier says to Stephi, “pushing and shoving, one person wanting all the attention, the others begging for more.”

“Where did this come from?” Stephi asks. She hands the beer to the cashier and sits next to her on the couch.

The cook’s digging in the closet for the gift. It’s not like the cashier is telling about a dream she had. Aren’t fantasies just wishes?

“No props or toys. It’s your straight from the manual sex,” the cashier says. “Naked arms and legs, breasts and thighs, but only more. More fingertips gliding recklessly, lips licking around more terrain, more toes wriggling against more legs so much more pouring out and fumbling over itself that never, at any time, does one fall out of touch.”

“I know I’ve told you this one, honey,” the cashier says to the cook. “Haven’t I?” The cashier pops her beer open.

The cook’s standing across from the cashier, holding the gift box, watching the cashier drink her beer.

“Your wife asked you a question,” Stephi tells the cook.

“They’re rhetorical questions,” the cook responds. He places

the box on top of the cashier's puzzle. "They're questions we already know the answers to."

"We said no gifts," the cashier says to Stephi, but gets no response from her.

"Why would you ask a question you already know the answer to?" Stephi asks. She picks up the box and shakes it.

"See, you get it," the cook says.

The cashier takes the box when Stephi hands it to her. "This is how he makes me the bad guy," the cashier says. "I follow the rules." The cashier rips the paper and holds up the gold chain so Stephi can see.

"It's beautiful," Stephi says.

"It's the real thing, too," the cook says. He leans over and takes the chain from the cashier, opens the clasp. The cashier stands and turns around. The cook smells the cashier's hair when she swoops it up. "The chain won't turn."

"Thank you," the cashier says, then turns back to the cook. She adjusts the necklace and clears the box off the puzzle.

"Don't you want to kiss him?" Stephi asks the cashier.

The cook wants an answer, but he remembers kissing the cashier's cheek this morning and saying happy anniversary. She seemed awake, tangled in her own blankets, her back to him. Honey, the cook had said, and she rolled over and asked him how they could make love stay.

"Stephi asked you a question," the cook says to the cashier. "Honey?" The cashier picks up her beer from the table and sips it.

The cashier didn't even say good morning. The cook asked what kind of question was that? Why today? He massaged his scalp, worked his way to his face and rubbed his cheeks in circles. The cook got out of bed and gazed out the window. The cashier had started her shower, leaving the cook alone with her question. "Where the hell did you get that question?" the cook asked the cashier through the bathroom door. "Am I supposed to answer that?"

The cook stretches over the living room table to kiss the cashier. Just before he meets her lips, the cashier leans too far back, kicks the coffee table, tipping the puzzle over, then kicks the table harder, knocking it over. The cashier shrieks as the table lands on the puzzle, separating the pieces.

“Perfect,” the cashier says. The cashier hands Stephi her beer and then falls to the floor, breaking more puzzle pieces apart than she’s saving. “Now this.”

The cook stands and watches the scene. His fingers begin to twitch the same as this morning when he was standing in his bedroom and heard the cashier turn off the shower. He had turned to the bedroom window. Staring outside, the cook was thinking how things looked normal with the kids going to school, parents to work, when the cashier cut off the bathroom radio. She would be coming out of the shower any moment, standing just outside the doorway, fresh and clean, and when the steam cleared, he would have to face her.

“I’ll be back,” the cook says.

The cashier’s still on the floor salvaging puzzle pieces. The cook grabs his coat and catches a glimpse of the kitchen, shutting the closet door. The whole kitchen sparkles except where the cook left his mark.

“Where could you possibly be going now?” Stephi asks.

It’s a question. The cook unclenches his hands and places them at his side. “We’re going to need more beer. After all, it’s a celebration.”

Onion Variation - I

This onion is perfectly round, its surface looks crystalline and unafraid. Imprinted with light, smooth sure delight, it smells of frost and fog. What would Mother say? "It's jewelry, dear. Just an ordinary old jewel. Please pick it up." What I never understood about my mother was how everything that dropped had to be picked up, and why things always kept dropping. Her task, as if assigned from another world and sent here to earth with her...was to pick things up: objects, spirits, hearts. Everything dropped asked for a flexing and unflexing of the knees, thighs and ankles. My genius is to let things drop and watch them rot or ripen on a forest floor, in the sodden garden weeds or on the dusty-flowered corner of a rug where this onion might show us the future as a tiny monument to staying put.

She

She's so cool washed in black
Silver sliver of the moon, man
Nylon notoriety on the sale rack
She's so hip to the pleather diva
Sacrificial superficial Naugahyde never was
She has this way of clawing up your spine
With just the right tenderness to make you think
You want her there wrapped around your neck
Her ornamental orchestration just choking
Las palabras right out of you
Blue marbles for eyes, she's a blind visionary
Tells me she knows all about
Sex with deities and prophets
She creeps around the garden
In the afternoon, lurching
Behind the tomato plants
She knit a sweater for the president
Sits on the sofa waiting to see him wear it
She smokes perfumed cigarettes
As though the lilacs will save her lungs
From the charring
She drinks licorice liquor
Says it clears the brain of cobwebs
And inhibitions
She shoots up sunshine, freebases mornings
Says she has to feel it to see it
She's smoked glass, mysterious and fragile
Has to say the words to the bed sheets
Conjures them to tangle her up, bind her to the night
The mourning doves make her cry
The futility of their life mating seems
A farce to her solitude
Blue denim ball gowns lining her closet
Never been worn except to try the style
She's not whom you might think

A déjà vu doo priestess hauling
Chicken bones around in her pockets
Night sweats and sunshine coffins
She's got a cyclic shaman in her veins
I think she used to be a wife, mother
Maybe someone's daughter or sister
She can't recall, just knows its all familiar
All been done again and again since
That night she stumbled upon that book on fire
Its charred pages hypnotic to the bored
Slits of her eyes seeing nothing
Save the words, words rambling in her head
Like a train off tracks
The neon beacon can't change the course
She's gone, I tell you, gone all over

Amy Eleanor Parker

—First Place Poem—
Thomas Edison Films the
Electrocution of an Elephant

Two revolutions per second.

Crank crank

em eye ess ess

crank crank

eye ess ess

crank crank

eye peepy

eye

he counts, keeping calm the camera steady as his wrist moves

crank crank

steady

A pregnant she-cow: great milky bags. Bedecked in a bridal bridle, a
corselet of cold
filigree. Tungsten bands bound over her globe—filament tracks for
electricity.

Her limbic system stands ready.

He plants his tripod, (built, for stability, on the principles of the bean-
teepee, crowned
with the absurd shutter-and-whirr bean flower, black bloom, silver pistoned
heart),
in the mud. Mud sticks to his shoes, brickmaking mud his wife will have to
clean off—
good thing his feet never touch earth — he's a redhead; copper-conducting
— a Yankee

Prospero, courting Ariel with apertures and moving parts.

But this elephant, absurd bag of brute bone, packed and hinged, head
hanging, stands
mud deep and dense as mud —

not courted not courtmarshaled,

captive, captured. Shoot.

He winds the scrollable cornea, the vitreous fluid, the long tape of retina
— sensitive to light but not sensible — photography's less sight than
stenography.

What can record her mass, her hide, her blood?
Light circuits through the veins in her ambient ears — skin screens of ruby
wiring
— circuit boards that bring hemoglobin to her hearing and her head
(but what device can record the trumpeting blood-rush of the con-
demned?)

He is concerned with sound, oh yes. All manner of recording, our man
of the hour.

The secondary act of hearing,
the reordering
the recoup,
Re
Re
Re
Re
Sings the shutter
Reeling and re-reeling

Sadly, the film lacks sound. These sensory machines have yet to be
integrated.
So but her breathing, the sonorous bleat, the primal bellow that the circus
canvas — dingy,
flaccid — cannot catch? In an atmosphere of wax, inscribed, it revolves
there still.

Re
Re
Re

Re

Eye ess ess eye ess ess eye peepy eye

This is not an event for stills. He captures it in revolutions.

No one has yet designed a device to record smell;
there is only, of course, the brain itself. That is
what he is after — this electromagician this — to
create working apparati of the mechanical brain.
But the enfleurage of memory and smell, the
bouquet of primal nostalgia — the hippocampus — he
does not attempt to produce.

Alas! For what a smell of her! The hose-
green pats of matted grass and fluid and bile,
carbuncled with peanut shells, laced with
banana skin, and if one dared get close
enough (mad cow) her breath herbivorous,
yes, sweet. She smells of dirt and damp
straw. She smells of flaked skin and wet
iron. She smells of the ozone-taint
of adrenaline, of estrogen, of heavy milk.
She smells of dust and excrement.
She smells of the lion's neighbor.
She smells of newspaper and pipe-water.
She smells of mildewed canvas and motes.
(And later, of cooked hide of crisped hair.)

Is smell particle or wave or something that leaves less trace?
He only knows: scent shoots straight —

Plink.

Plink.

Drawn upward and etched in the hippocampus.

Plink

Plink

An elephant's memory might derive
from its prodigious sense of smell.
That delicate hose, that extra hand —
the purifying discernment tube —
a pipette distilling the whiff.

Plink.

Clink.

Her legs are in irons. They jingle delicately.
They draw attention to the delicious hinge
of ankle, the deep ruffle of skin, cuffed,
barbarian. They jingle delicately.
Later, sparks play over them — diamond
trumpery.

She switches her tail — that cord (frayed, electrical) missing its plug,
switches it over her
rump, where flies settle, on/off. Oh we are all electrical. Oh we are already.
Her limbic
system stands ready. She courses with adrenaline — electrified already —
currentwise, in
chains. And does the hair on the dome of her head lift at the shock of static
— those glass
fibers — those metal threads? Her limbic system stands ready.

He examines, through lenses, the niblet fingers of her trunk. She looks
cool enough to
pluck a daisy. Button a baby. Pinch snuff.

But:

once she hefted a joey, curled her hose around his biped body, curled it

Inside a bulb's blown glass envelope, the electrical current flies. Tightrope
dancer.
Daring young man on the flying trapeze. Brittle dome diffusing licks.
Shell helmet.
Crackle-thin. Concealing sparks, radiance flung aside, in capes and
sheets.
Glass balloon. Fragile answer. And there was light!

Oh bulbous, elephantine.

Bodies have their bulbs.
The moist grey bulb of the medulla. Consider it
blinking at the top of her hooked, intricate spine.
Primal bulb of re re re reflex, of motor coordination; the pith
that runs the heart and lungs of man and beast.
The pith into which plunges the firestorm.
Lightning dances along the web of kitestrings,
strikes major and minor keys.
The hippocampus fuse blows last.

Light engraves the motion-film.
Electricity engraves her memory.

A storm of banana light. Blast of nasal brass. An agony.

She recalls everything
hosing herself down with fragrant dust. With river water near Chiang Rai.
With river
water, decayed and rich with plankton death, fish piss, her own exudations
— yes — she
hoses herself down, showering millefleur smells down the slope of her
back, her pitched
haunches, the hanging pouch of vagina, pout-pink and vacant. She recalls
the nettlesome

sting of the whip, the barb of the tout, she floats down the river, rolling teak,
(then the embryo's pitch and toss in her belly as the electricity flags it,
umbilical – its
seizures deep within her own, like another memory)
a torrent, a breeze, the death of a nurse-aunt, the impress of a thousand-
herd feet on the
tracks, the sway of the train and the pull of her chains, the sweaty proffered
peanuts, she
recalls everything, a mastodon dynasty, a cosmology in the great glass globe
– her
frazzled tungsten memory.

The train winds through her channels, whistling,
blowing Doppler trails of sound and steam.

She glows. Her globe lights up – incandescent –
her ears throw light like shot silk shades – pink
moiré. Blinding lamp, scored with sparks.
The chains, the bridal cap, chased gold current.
The camera cranks
Re re re re
Eye ess ess eye ess ess
Sparks hiss

too grand to judder or jig

Re
Re
Re
Re

just slow, bewildered fall of shorted-out body.

Electric lines play over her, wind a net.
Chase one another, touch tag, brief snakes.

The head topples, the neck, the knees,
until she lists, charged and luminous.
Then crumples with cautious, conciliatory grace,
to the end elephantine.

Run the film back. Loop the loop.

Re

Re

Re

Re

-wind


-iterate

-surrect

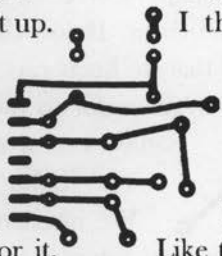
-verse

Rolled back electricity
bolts her back upright, galvanized
a bride again: celluloid scientists cry
She's alive!
The reel wheels,
relinquishing its thread until
the first frame, loose and ticking,
keeps time.

all there or not at all. Days he slept and nights he was up. When I asked, he told me there's better reception at night. More range. Something about clouds. Non-interference from the sun.

Non-interference from the kids. 

High cloud ceilings and reflection off the ionosphere (which is somehow denser at night) carry signals further. Increase your reach. I looked it up. I think he was saying something about grief, too. Some need to spread it out. Pass the news. That kid had died a week before. The latest in the string of deaths. It was like our father took it personally. It was like those kids—always someone else's—were in line for it. Like they had taken numbers and sat in the mall in queues. Getting drunk or getting dumb or getting ready.



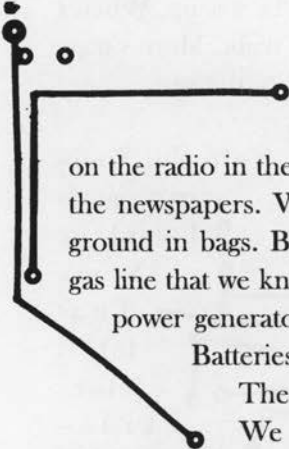
You couldn't turn on the news without hearing about it. But the anchors related the news with no emotion, no surprise. Nothing to convey their death's importance. You'd see their faces crease more when the DOW went down.

The Radio Amateur Is Patriotic. That's what the manual says. It is your responsibility as an amateur radio operator to pass the word in time of trouble, time of war. Time of danger or disaster. Time of distaste. Time of tragic loss. Time of useless death. Time of stupid shit. During flood or blizzard. Pass it along. Make everyone aware. This is the Amateur's Code. You need to know it.

A guy held up the bank downtown in a snowstorm, took hostages, got taken out by sharpshooters through a huge pour of snow. Caused quite a local splash. All over the papers, the broadcast news. Books being composed about it. Murder in the snow. He kept screaming things about being filled with voices. Conspiracies. The need for someone to listen. He found his audience.

He had a pirate radio station running somewhere in the area. You could hear him most nights on the low end of the FM, around 89.3 until the holdup, hostage-taking, and his death.

The Radio Amateur Is Well-Balanced.



I had got my own scanner and receiver and with my brother we would listen for his voice on the radio in the night. We set it up outside in the shack with all the newspapers. We set it up above the words hidden below the ground in bags. Below the books that lined the floor. Below the gas line that we knew ran underneath. We hooked up the gasoline-power generator to the radio when the batteries wore down.

Batteries wear down.

The Radio Amateur Is Attentive.

We listened for my father. We always listen for my father. And we listened for who else was there. Another crackpot broadcasting in the night. There were lots of them. Always someone crowing.

It is a life, the radio. Increasingly, our father's life. His father before him had the big old ones with barometers built in and vacuum tubes or huge coils. Installed on ferryboats moving across the Straits of Mackinac. Calling out in storms. Transmitting location, distance, weather, orientation. Useful news.

We knew he had a call sign. Everyone does. We searched the databases of current and expired and just-about-to-expire call signs for his name.

Nights would go like this: Have dinner. Wash the dishes. File away the food. Stoke the fire. Put your hands on the stove to see how hot it is. Don't burn yourself. Make sure the saran wrap-like material over the windows is intact. Check for drafts. Watch your father go upstairs, say goodnight, get dressed & go outside to reconnoiter.

Our schedules changed to his. He wasn't available or as useful as he had been before. Got a cut or an abrasion? Knock on the door on the ceiling that holds the retractable stairs. If he's up, he'll answer. Bactine in the bathroom. Top shelf on the right in the closet. Directions on the box of Band-Aids. How to put them on. How not to

touch the pad with your finger because it can get infected. How not to put bacitracin direct upon the cut, but on the Band-Aid. How to keep the disinfectant uninfected.

If he wasn't up, we'd fend for ourselves. Which is not so bad. TV dinners for lunch. Sleep when we want. A lot of pop. Sugar cereal which we never had when mom was around. We'd just go to the store and put it on our account. Bag it, bring it home.

The pitch and squeal of radio just picked up & coming in over the Porcupine Mountains. The hum of lighted dials. Like a nightlight in a certain way. That which emits.

He'd sit in the attic all night. He'd tell us sometimes who he'd talk to—some guy from Norway. What did you talk about, we'd ask, and he would not reply. Not really. Just shake his head and say something about transceivers or low-register noise, or bandwidth. Say something about something. We wouldn't say much in return. The Radio Amateur Is Nearly Always Loyal.

One night while he was up top, we took the car. I doubt he noticed.

I drove it, gassed it up; we took it down to Paulding, Michigan, home of the Paulding light. Which is not a light exactly. Nor anything exactly. No power source. No explanation. No natural or artificial cause. It is not a hoax. It made *Unsolved Mysteries* one year. We watched it on tape a while after it aired, copied from someone who had recorded it from TV. You could see the guy. Robert Stack I think. Gesticulating.

You go down this road and turn your lights out. You can only drive so far. Several miles down the path along the power lines into the distance—as far as an eye can follow—lights appear and seem to rock back and forth. My brother had never been there before. This was another electricity, I told him. Watch that thing.

The plaque said that it is the ghost of the miners who died in

some accident. A likely lie. More likely some anomaly along the power lines—some collection of electrons. Some lovely gathering. Or power gnomes.

The lights move down the hill towards where you park. They come pretty close. Some of the kids who live around there and who come there all the time told us the lights come right up to the cars and that you can see right through them. Like electric disco balls spinning superfast, so fast they exert gravity or magnetism or some other force and cast off all the light that hits them. Tear the paint off a car. Tear your spare tire off the back. Tear hood ornaments right away. Even take a tie clip off a tie. A cross on a necklace off a neck. Here's the mark to prove it.

The Radio Amateur Is Truthful.

The regulars each had stories about the light. There was a group of guys who set off with walkie talkies and a short wave radio to hunt the thing down. If you hunt it, though, someone said, it won't come. This kind of mystery is like a source, a gas or kerosene lamp, a gas-powered or hand-crank electric generator. It gives birth to stories, powers them.

My brother was silent the whole time. Like he is around strangers. Like he is at night. Like he has been since whatever happened—without language, mostly. Armless, quiet. Sometimes words bursting out of him, like Tourette's. Sometimes his voice in whines and shrieks. Sometimes he's lucid, conversational. I held onto his side for a while in the car, right below the shoulder stump. That's where he likes to be touched and reassured. He was wondering about Dad. I could tell by his expression, by his look of emptiness, by the way he held his cheek to the car glass.

I had a list I had printed out of dead call signs. We examined it.



N9AEP
WH2AEX
WD8AFZ
KB2ALI
KB5ASU
NV5B
WB5BBF

TRACY A MONSON
ERIC H MONSON
JOHN F SIMONSON
JOHN R SIMONSON
DAVID M SIMONSON
ROGER N SIMONSON
MARY G EDMONSON

KJ5BP	RONALD E EDMONSON
WD8BVO	ROBERT R SIMONSON
KA0BZV	DONALD L SIMONSON JR
K1CJ	ROBERT J EDMONSON
KB7CVT	LAURA L MONSON
N0DAPDE	ETTE L MONSON
WB5DBF	THOMAS J EDMONSON
N2DEH	JOHN A MONSON
K9DGK	DARWIN T OSMONSON
N2EMV	MARVIN W SIMONSON
K7DRZE	DON SIMMONSON

You couldn't tell much from the numbers or the names. We were solemn as if actually in a graveyard at night among the steam, stones, and plastic flowers.

I didn't know if you even had to have your real name to register a call sign. Or how you do it. Who you register it with. The FCC? Some government commission? How much it costs. Whom to make the check out to. How long you get them for. Whether you can request a sign or do you have to take the one you're given. **The Radio Amateur Is Curious About Things He Does Not Know.**

The Radio Amateur Is Cautious, Too. The light didn't come up to us. It didn't tear the hubcaps off the car, send us wailing. We went home sort of awed and disappointed.

The drive to Paulding is just over an hour. We stopped at the only gas station in Bruce Crossing on the way back. It was filled with fluorescent lights. Drinks in display cases. Some pastries wrapped in wax paper. Suspect sandwiches in a row. Various jerkies, beef and venison. Spicy and medium and mild. Cappuccino resembling cocoa. A hundred brands of cigarettes. Some guys reclining in there, chew packed in cheeks, breath rough and loud.

The Radio Amateur Does Not Use Drugs. This Includes Tobacco.

Dad was still up when we got back. You could tell by the light at the top of the house. Like the belltower in a church. Like Paul Revere. Like

the strobe light up in the bridge to keep planes from ramming into it.

We had filled the gas back up to where it was. Exact. Reset the trip odometer at the right time so the miles line up right in case Dad wanted to take the car. Checked the oil like we had seen him do. I held the dipstick up to my brother's face. He smiled and it was fine. Black and thick.

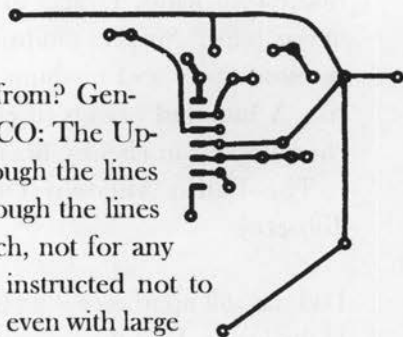
On the kitchen table we found some bits of further evidence. Printed out on a dot matrix printer—you could tell by the banding on the text. We didn't have a dot matrix printer, as far as I knew:

N0MWS 1999-04-02	FRED C. GEBHART, JR, TOPEKA, KS
N0NFM 1999-04-02	ELIZABETH A. LUNDSTEN, HASTINGS, MN
N0NFR 1999-04-02	PAUL A. TELEGA, DULUTH, MN
N0NFS 1999-04-02	DAVID T. GALE, SHOREWOOD, MN
N0NFV 1999-04-02	JEFFREY D. WILDE, SPRING LAKE PARK, MN
N0NFW 1999-04-02	LARRY D. WILLIAMS, COFFEYVILLE, KS
N0NFX 1999-04-02	ALTHEA C. FARICY, MINNEAPOLIS, MN
N0NGI 1999-04-02	GERALD L. SHEPHERD, JR, CEDAR RAPIDS, IA
N0NGC 1999-04-02	ALEX D. BRAY, LAMAR, CO

Look at that list. Like some litany of expirations. A register of those who voted for the wrong party. Landholders. A hit list. Amputation patients. Absentee parents. Those held in contempt of court. Those with past-date dues or bills that had gone too long unpaid.

The Radio Amateur Is Knowl-
edgeable.

Where does the power come in from? Generators, power plants, batteries. UPPCO: The Upper Peninsula Power Company. Through the lines we have been told not to touch. Through the lines we have been strictly told not to touch, not for any reason. Through the lines we were instructed not to cut, even while wearing rubber gloves, even with large



wire cutters with an insulated handle. The lines that come down in ice or heavy wind storms and twist across the road, stopping traffic in both directions. The lines that come alive. Look what electricity can do. The lines that hiss like snakes and beckon us to pick them up. The lines that speak to my brother. The lines you can see reflected in his eyes. Lines that attract us like anything that can kill.

I know about the phones. While our dad was upstairs broadcasting something to the world, and we were listening in, or trying to find his frequency and listen to his voice, his name, his call sign come across our receiver, we would give up and go out in the snow around the neighborhood with a phone rigged with alligator clips so we could listen in on others' conversations. There's something nearly sexual about this, hearing what other people are saying to their lovers, children, cousins, psychics, pastors, debtors. I would hold the phone for my brother while he listened. He'd whistle when something good was going on, or something nasty.

The Radio Amateur, However, Is Not A Voyeur, However It Might Seem.

All you have to do is find the junction box on the back of a house, or a larger junction box out by the road underneath the power lines which we were never allowed to touch. Open it up and clip in to a tough discussion, to a life. You could make calls too, which we did sometimes. But not often because we could call from home. And who would we call? I talked to the FCC to find out who I'd have to talk to in order to get a ham radio call sign. They gave me another number. Everything is pinned to a number. Everything is handled by a tone.

Some stations just broadcast numbers. The key to some code. Something of national importance. They beam streams of digits into the night. No other programming. No anger. No malice. No bereavement. Curiosity. Politics. Love.

The Radio Amateur Is Sometimes Nosy.

We would take down messages and numbers. We would write down frequencies of tones we found on the Internet. We would go through trash out back of the Michigan Bell facility for manuals and pages of codes and notes. Diagrams. Schematics. We accumulated quite a stash of operating instructions for phone equipment. We stacked them in the shed with the rotting paper on the floor, with the words hidden below the floor in bags. We surrounded ourselves in them. They were warm when left alone, like compost. They were warm when touched or burned.

Yellow light from streetlights filters down through snow. Or snow filters down through streetlight light. It's hard to tell which. One is moving, one is still. My brother and I are using my pellet gun to shoot out lightbulbs installed in motion detector lights on people's stairways. *The Radio Amateur Is Adept With Guns.*

It is good to walk through snow, to let it alight on your face as you turn it up to the patterns in the sky. You can stretch out your tongue like a lizard and wait for flakes, but leaving your eyes open and allowing snow to melt on your cornea—getting bigger and bigger, you'd think, though snowflakes don't fall directly down; they shift from side to side and you can never just watch one come in; it's more like a frigid ambush when they get you—is what really marks you as being serious about sensation.

The Radio Amateur Values Sensation.

The Radio Amateur Is Friendly.

A plow comes slowly by with its lights whirling on top. We wave it down and he stops for us. The plowmen usually grin and let us in. They don't have so much to do. They make good money plowing the roads in the early morning, or whenever they are called to duty. But it is dull, I think. They are lonely mostly. They like company and conversation. Hot coffee, or too-sweet cappuccino that tastes like cocoa.

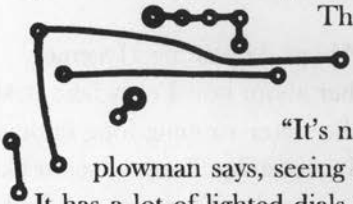
He's wearing latex gloves. He's listening to music—some old AC/

DC: Who Made Who—on a boombox with a fading battery. It goes in and out while my armless brother holds it on his lap. He wants to know where we're from or where we're going. Which is nowhere. We are out walking. Our dad is upstairs in the house with the lights off surrounded by radio equipment. It's hard to come out with this, though. I point to my pellet gun. He nods as if he understands. My brother nods, too.

We are brothers. We are in tandem. We share secrets, cans of pop, the saliva collected in the bottoms of pop cans that makes up a small percentage of the fluid by volume as you reach the end. We share stories and last names.

You don't think a lot about the guys who plow the road usually. I mean, you think about the fact that the roads are plowed, and if they're not, you write letters of complaint to the city which are most likely ignored, because if the roads aren't plowed, there's usually a good reason—such as the finite (but large) budget for plowing having been plowed through already due to heavy early winter snow. You don't think about the drivers of the plows, their likes and dislikes, turn-ons, and such unless you ride along with them.

Unless you get into cars left unattended in darkness or daylight. You can find out a lot just getting into cars or abandoned machinery. People keep stuff you wouldn't expect under seats. Guns. Money. Building plans. Pornography. Bibles and other books. The Anarchist's Cookbook. Cigarettes are a big one. Liquor in flasks. Half-frozen beers that explode when they open. Love notes and other things scrawled on napkins. Bad lyrics. Locketts. Model rocket engines. Things that might cause grief if found.



The Longer The Radio Amateur Thinks
About Things, The More Intricate
They Become.

"It's not as interesting as it seems, kid," the
plowman says, seeing my eyes jumping back and forth.

It has a lot of lighted dials and gauges that measure fluid levels, or power. They flicker and dance when the plow jerks forward, their levels momentarily going down or up.

"I know. I've been in a few," I say.

He doesn't have much to say, which is unusual. You don't have to carry the conversation normally. You just sit alongside. Sit and listen. Listen to the on and off radio. Or the sound of the plow moving over concrete. Maybe a *whump* if it hits something like a dog or a drunk. You learn things about people.

He wears a suit and tie. I ask him about it. He says he's got a job interview in a couple hours and he doesn't want to miss it, and what with the roads like this, he's better off taking the plow to the interview. I nod like I understand.

He asks about my brother and I look to him. He doesn't answer, really. He hums low, trying to match the pitch of the machine. It's weird when he's really close to it because you can hear the sound beating back and forth as his pitch approaches the plow's. Then they're right in tune, and then the plowman shifts gears and my brother has to play catch-up.

He gets us a mile and a half down the road before he lets us out. I give him the *Whatchamacallit* bar I have in my pocket. The Radio Amateur, As You Know, Is Generous.

He grins and thanks me. Takes off his latex glove to grab it, shake my hand. Offers a hand to my brother but there's awkwardness as we pause and he retracts his hand. His face is odd in the light that comes on when we open the door.

We get out and our breath looses itself into the air.

The plow moves down the road, burying a GMC pickup truck in a driveway.

I wonder about those latex gloves.

We make sounds with our throat, pretend we're dragons.

The Radio Amateur Is Meticulous About Appearing Hygenic.

It is later and I am telling my brother about how I only fake wash my hands most of the time. Leave the water running long enough and divert its stream so if someone was listening, it would seem like you're doing it. Wet the soap on the top and the bottom so it looks like it's used. Always leave your hands wet in case someone checks them to see if they're washed. The Radio Amateur Is Cunning. The Radio Amateur Will Not Be Found Out.

The Radio Amateur Remembers When He Was Young, Right Before His Brother Was Born, How He'd Have To Be Driven Around In The Old Ford Fairmont Before He'd Sleep, And Even After That Car Was Long Dead And His Brother Was Alive And Without Arms, He'd Have To Rock Himself Side-to-Side To Conjure Sleep.

The Radio Amateur Remembers That Back-and-Forth. Like The Sea Or Static. That Lovely Oscillation. That Necessary Motion.

The Radio Amateur Wonders How Anything Holds Together.

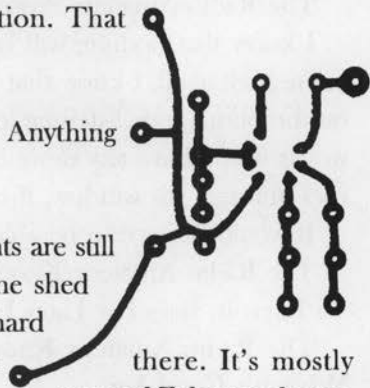
We get back to the house and the lights are still off. We check some frequencies in the shed to see if Dad's still broadcasting. It's hard to figure out what they're saying out there. It's mostly mundane stuff peppered in with Bravos and Zebras and numbers tossed around like they must mean something. I think of things I'd like to tell him if only we had it setup to speak. But that equipment is much more expensive. Listening is cheap, nearly free.

There's a voice talking about the recent winter death. Probably he must be from around here. His name—he says it, unlike many—is Louie Koepel, from Lake Linden-Hubbell. It is such a tragedy. When will these kids ever learn. Was he drunk? I think he must have been. Doesn't it all come down to morals, family values? Doesn't it come down to parents ruling with an iron fist? Didn't the kid know not to go out on the ice? Didn't he see it coming?

The Radio Amateur Is Not Presumptuous.

The Radio Amateur Does Not Presume To Know Or Legislate Belief.

Maybe he did see it coming, I say—though not on the air, since we don't have broadcasting equipment just yet—Maybe he wanted it to come. Maybe he waited his whole life for something and it didn't



come, so this was just as good to him. Maybe he knew just as you do that when the day is overcast, the day is warmer. The blackest ice is the thinnest. There are reasons to want to die. To want out of it. Maybe he felt some pressure. How do you know, I say, how do you know anything, you old ham fuck.

The Radio Amateur Is Empathetic.

The Radio Amateur Is Emphatic.

The Radio Amateur Holds His Position If He's Sure It's Right.

The Radio Amateur Protects His Brother At All Costs.

I know that nothing will bring the kid back, should he want to come back at all. I know that I am not speaking to Mr. Koepel as if on the phone, nor listening to his private conversation. I doubt my words would have any more effect on him. But I think of putting a rock through his window, if only I learned where he lived.

It would be nice to be able to say it, to shove it in his face.

The Radio Amateur Knows Which Words To Say And Which To Keep In Bags For Later Use.

The Radio Amateur Knows Where Power Comes From And What It's Good For.

The Radio Amateur Knows That Power Used Is Power Lost.

The Radio Amateur Understands Needing To Know So Bad That You're Willing To Take It Home All The Way Through The Ice And See Where That Gets You.

The Radio Amateur Knows Enough To Not Reveal Or Hide Himself Away Too Long.

The Radio Amateur Is Not His Father.

The Radio Amateur Knows To Go To Bed When The Sun Comes Up. ○————○



My Mother

is a crow who picks up strands of silver
tinsel, who is attracted to what is pretty
and shiny. She covers herself
with diamonds and other stones,
with rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces,
only made of gold. She lives
on the surface and deals with things
by pretending they don't exist,
and by believing in the will of the Lord.
She sees a painting of a woman
but just notices her clothes,
not the agony in her eyes
or the growling dog at her feet.

Ariel

Dark rooms contemplate their silence.
A lamp arcing over the couch asks
No meaning from history.

Forget this torment of knick-knacks
Rearranging themselves on dressers, in closets:
This house is sure I'll die.

The world is constantly a new thing. Now, I am
No longer an arrow at the threshold of an apple,
But a hunch of periphery restoring order

Without evidence that love is not our bodies.
It never was. The storm that brought you here,
In the first place, was my doing.

I made the clouds and the threats.

Pamela Yenser

—Third Place Poem—
On the Road with Howdy Doody

Death Valley. Say it again, Sam.
Death Valley. *Debt. Debt. Debt.*
It's 1951 — year of the black Lincoln
and Father's gangrenous appendix.
For me and my little retarded brother
childhood was a pink California stucco
and a couple of aces clothes-pinned
to our spokes *plak-plak* down Coldbrook.
Cooped up like hot dogs or gangsters,
we made Kansas in four long days,
each sunrise a warm punch in the face.
No more dancing. No more books,
cards, movies, records, sips of beer,
Hop Along Cassidy, or Howdy Doody.
My *Old Testament Tales* are no help.
We're going to hell. Are we there yet?

Wha-cheat-a, air capital of the Cherokee.
I practice the magic of brand new names.
The water is boiling in my cloth canteen.
Its cool metal cap and chain comfort me.
Wichita. Say it for me, Sam. *Witch. Witch.*
We're taking my talkless brother downtown
to the *Instant Truth of Logopedies...*
or something in that neighborhood.
We might as well be abducting him
to outer space. This is Father's mission.
Mother just wants to pray in tongues,
but Father invents schemes and ideas
for things that can fly without wings.
He tapes them into circles of vellum
or al-u-min-ium. Say it. *Um. Um. Um.*

Ellen Wheale

Letter to My Younger Self

Always you are there. Las Olas noon traffic wavers in the heat
as you write your final list at the café table, rattle of jacaranda,

bleached-out sky. I am here, here, here. Rain clouds jewel
my office window on the 18th floor and what you long for at

my feet — city of vapor, skyscrapers electrum, bridges emerging
out of the clouds. You called Florida a desert land, anole lizards

and xeroscapes, strange paradise spiked pink with heat lightning.
It parched your throat, you said. Every time the song at the café

ends, strap your busted car door and set off 1,400 miles for what
bones remember. That Northern light falling silvery cold as milk.

The Small Detail of Things

I

Granada sniffed the air. His ears tipped forward, propped. I stood above him. My arms looped his neck, but before I could reach my face down to give his muzzle a kiss, he was gone. He shot through my arms with rockets under his feet. "Granada!" I called after him. "Granada! Granada get back here!" I started to whistle. The wind got lost in a low hum. "Shit," I said out loud. No one around to shrug my shoulders at in a sigh. I walked back to the van. I stubbed my toes in a jolting rhythm. The parking lot vacant, except for my fifteen foot Budget rental van. I had parked it under the one installed streetlight. "Here we go," I said under my breath. Call of the Wild. A girl and her dog. "Damn it, Granada! Why are you a dog at the most inconvenient times?" I slid the door open and reached for my backpack and groped in the half light of the inside of the van. Muttered, "Why? Why did I get off this exit? Where the hell is Cedar Creek in relevance to any object? Kansas. Three clicks of a heel. This isn't Idaho anymore, Granada." I slid the door closed. "Granada," I yelled. I did the usual high pitch, low pitch, you're in trouble, please come home whistle in between my teeth. Nothing.

I kept a straight walk without a horizon in sight, just the back light of the street lamp guarding my transient home. The air felt damp in my nose, and I sneezed. My palm was cool against the red metal of my flashlight. I picked up my pace, bumped my toes against the rocks in my path. The light beam jiggled back and forth between a straight line and a curve. My breath quickened. Nothing. I stopped and listened to empty air. "Granada! Come on! I am tired and want to sleep. I am sorry you have been in the van all day! Pleeaaaassse."

Nothing. I could not find my direction in the field. I looked back at the van, the street lamp, gas pumps and closed Texaco. I had originally pulled off the highway to let Granada and myself stretch, get caffeine and some fresh air. I knew I was run down. I needed sleep. When I saw the Texaco sign, red and bright, I got off. I discovered that Cedar Creek, Kansas, is a suburban community waiting to burst. It has a plan centered around a golf course.

When you thrive on obstacle in your line of sight, travel from west to east is difficult. Sometimes the only thing you see on a stretch is an overpass. You get off the highway and take a left switch back into the rolling plains. The road stretches wide in front of you, well-lit and leading somewhere. The Texaco was a left after the underpass. It was deserted. "Shit. Ok. I was driving northwest. Actually, yah. Ok, I was." Lost in Kansas. I gave up looking for a direction and just kept heading in what felt like north and was the direction I remembered Granada bolting from and into the darkness.

Memory

1. *He told me of a father and son driving off the reservation pulling over to fix a flat. The father killed his son, leaving him by the roadside with holes in his face. The claw marks of an enemy. The man walked back toward the reservation and laid down in a field. The next morning he wept beside his son's body only to remember the sound of the wind as it crowded in his head.*

2. *The moon in the Jemez Mountains glows periwinkle, and I close one eye to shift above my head the silhouette of trees. My eye opens between my fingers like an aperture, slow. I leave the lens open for a blurred perception of this image, perhaps best reflected in a pinhole, poking the sky with a needle, reflecting light with tinfoil. In color this would look like periwinkle, persimmon and black; with color it would glow white, this*

moon.

II

I was about to stop and head back to the van. Dogs come back. I just didn't want him to find his way back to the highway. I could picture his eyes reflecting in the headlights. His identity tags throwing beams of light not seen. I kept forward. "Granada!! Grrraaaannnnnddddaaa!!!!!! NOW!" My voice neared hysteria. I looked up at the sky. Venus. No moon. No stars. The air rested black around me. I stopped, shifted my weight. Listened. Waited. I gave him until two hundred Mississippi before I would head back to the van. I sent light beams to the sky at about eleven Mississippi when I heard the yelp. "Granada," I yelled and turned toward the noise. It was piercing. Not the yelp he used when he had a squirrel up a tree or a prairie dog cornered. That was a yelp of not understanding. This was a yelp full of hurt. "Granada!" I kept yelling and running toward the yelp. The yelp came in waves of three and resounded at the edge of the damp air. I started to run. My feet lifted over the ground and then landed solid. The grass became as high as wheat, long and sharp. The coarse stalks cut at my legs. I began to make out a cluster. Each step led me closer to the shape, which began to reveal itself as a tree, leafless and still. Each step led me closer to Granada's yelp. The beam of the flashlight bounced between earth and sky. Lassie, come home.

Reverse

"No," I said loudly into the phone receiver. "A kinetic rail system would never work."

"Why not?" Time replied. He sounded astonished. No, disheartened. Time was struggling with his final project for school. An architect overcome with a passion for the ideal.

"Accidents," I said. My response short and to the point. I had been cooking dinner when Time called from the studio for

support. I hated to be the one to break it to him that the world was not as linear as he believed. "How will you prevent accidents? Think about safety." I reached my arm above the refrigerator, searched for a bottle of wine, stirred my vegetables. My bare feet suctioned to the linoleum. "My house is filthy," I said.

"Accidents. There will be no accidents."

But there would be accidents. I could see bodies tense and pressed up against one another, pushed in a forward direction. Energy would push itself out of one body and into the person in front of them, next to them, behind them. It would leap from skin to skin until no one would remember what stop was their stop, what house was their house, what memory was their memory. Tense and forward. The railroad car would blur the morning's visuals. Suddenly, the breaking point. Somebody would sneeze or worse yet, scream and the car would jump its course. Maybe it would stop dead. Either way it would be a long commute.

"Do you think about other people? Not everyone believes in what you believe. Not everyone believes that the chaos theory is a positive adventure for mankind. Not everyone wants to work together for one great cause." I grumbled, was cranky, hungry, blood sugar dropped below my knee caps. The most beautiful idea in the world and I was jealous.

Memory

1. The most beautiful idea in the world. I sat in the alley to study the lines of Time's rail system. I sat on top of a couple of stacked pallets left over from the Moscow Times morning delivery. I had pulled the crates to the mouth of the alley and looked out onto the smaller grain elevator that Time was converting into an artist's commune. Silos turned into lofts, barns turned into studios. Overhead the power lines attached themselves to poles and walked each block until they reached the horizon. Granada sniffed the dumpsters.

2. *His body moves around me heavenly as I pull stars out of his eyes and place them in my hair. I can feel the rotation of the earth in my palm. My body moves around in the dirt with his body, moon shine coming out of our mouths, sighs struck by the movement of our hands. The moon is a heavenly body that revolves around the earth.*

3. *Time is scrubbing his angles away from the page. Strings of ink melt under the water faucet. The paper saturates and leaves itself clumped in the drain.*

III

When I could make out Granada's shape, his head was down. He was trying to pull something out of his coat. I was moving quick when I approached him, and he cowered. Each time his head bent down he yelped. "Porcupine," I said to the air. I was close enough to Granada to see the pain of the embedded barbs, which had swollen themselves in the muscle. Granada shook his head, trying to release the oversized whiskers. His yelp had become a whimper. He didn't want to be touched, but he wanted the quills removed. I dropped to my knees to meet his muzzle. "Easy boy, let me check this out. Sssshhh." I looked him over. Mostly the quills were in his face, a few on each front leg. He must have nuzzled up against it. Poked either in attack or curiosity.

I sat down next to him, cooed. I eased him a little. I knew I didn't have enough light. I pulled quills from Granada's face until I could see the blood trickle like a tributary into the flashlight's small pool of light. My first aid book said to pour hydrogen peroxide over the wounds and allow the dog to lick his own. A wounded dog is a martyr.

Reverse

"No," Time said. "I'm not going to change the rail system. I don't care if I have to prove it to them or not, I won't change

my project." He was sitting at his draft table.

Granada asleep below his feet. His breath came out in rhythms of fluttering fur. I have never figured out all of his mix only that he swam like a lab, was stubborn like a husky and looked like a shepherd. All of this and his fur went black into a widow's peak, which, at that moment under the fluorescent light, was the same color as Time's.

"Rebel," I said. I was on the floor of his cubicle, my back against the wall. My legs outstretched, trying to be motionless in the summer heat. How did this start? "How did this start?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter." He packed up his supplies so that we would not miss happy hour. He swung himself out of his chair, pulled me up. We walked toward the open air, blue sky, green grass, cold beer. Granada kept pace on his own path.

Memory

1. On my way to campus I got caught in a rain shower. Down pour. I cut through the grain elevator looking for overhead protection. I saw an open doorway. I jumped up like I was stealing into a boxcar and stopped dead. Huge metal tubes of primary colors were stacked in uncoordinated rows. The barn floor was damp and swollen from the rain and smelled like rust and bird shit. The rain poured off metal sheets and slid downward into the earth. With my back turned away from the door, I straddled one of the tubes, opened my sketchbook, and waited.

2. The energy of the earth moves in heavenly bodies. The energy walks its way up my legs and into my belly. The body of my body spins periwinkle and into the eye of the moon. I am half-way to filling up on sleep. I can feel my body moving around the dirt with his body, struck by the movement of the earth. I can feel the body inside my body.

3. The clumps of ink are taken and thrown against the wall.

Mounds are pressed against the window until they stick. The dry edges fade into cyan.

IV

I walked to the open field after my task was done and puked. My body warmed with adrenaline. I drank a beer leftover from my farewell party. I know I did not dream. What would be the point of the story if it was only a dream? Maybe I had a vision. Even this is questionable. My head filled up with imagination. What did I know but ignorance and lost identity? Thinking my dog would bleed himself to death, I did not flinch.

Reverse

"No. I don't care about who you are. I care about what you represent," Time said. Rolled over, put his feet on the floor. Arms outstretched for clothes. Left them on the floor and laid back down.

"No. I don't care about what you represent. I care about who you are," I said. Repeated what Time said. Rolled over, put my feet on the ground. Arms outstretched for clothes. Left them on the floor and walked out the door.

"I care about who you are," Time said. Scuffed the floor with his bare feet. Moved behind me toward the doorway.

"No," I said to his body behind me. My arms outstretched.

"What you represent," Time said. Caught my arm, turned me around. His arms stretched in a heart shape.

"Represent who you are," I said with arms outstretched. My hand smacked his cheek. I walked out and shut the door.

Memory

1. Time was sitting in the bar. I walked up to him and said something like "I rented a truck. It doesn't matter if I come back. I don't want to finish what I started." I turned on my heel and walked out into the alley. I walked the power lines all the

way home. Granada asleep on the front porch.

*2. I pull stars out of his eyes and hold them in my palm.
Periwinkle and persimmon. Heavenly body circling the earth.
We bump into and back out of one body to the next body, like
heavenly bodies circling the earth, skin to skin.*

*3. It is impossible to measure the print of Time. Constructed in
motion, the print will fall out of line, and we will be left to seek
shelter in each other's bodies.*

V

I ran down the alleyway faster and faster until I stopped in the street. I panted. I looked behind me. Time waved. I started to run again.

Time pedaled down the alley faster and faster until he disappeared into the horizon. He did not look back.

Motion produced by motion. Motion produced by fear. Motion produced by motion. Motion produced by fear. Fear produced by motion. I ran faster and faster until I reached the Budget rental truck office.

VI

I found my pliers in a crate at the back of the van. They were under Time's scrapped blueprints. I cut the quills back. I yanked. Granada yelped. I yanked. Granada yelped. I yanked. Granada stood with his head high and sniffed the air. His paws were sturdy against the earth. The wind picked up the dirt around us. The dirt landed in our eyes and against our skin. Granada stood taller than I have ever seen him stand, still against wind. I poured hydrogen peroxide over the open wounds.

Granada sniffed the air and shot through my arms so fast I couldn't catch him.

E.M. Schorb

The Crow and the Scarecrow

The only motion of the scarecrow happens when the crow lands on it and takes off from it. The only voice of the scarecrow is the caw of the crow. The rags of the scarecrow lift in the breeze: sometimes he seems to be waving his empty sleeves, but his arms are stiff as a broom handle. He walks the field in place all day, all night, climbing the same slope, the crow on his shoulder or overhead, watching with his telescopic eyes. It is thought that the crow brings him food and water, but that is nonsense. But it is known that the crow steals food from the windows of nearby farms. It is known that the crow has flown over a farmer's head with food hanging from its talons, and the farmer has told others that the crow took the food to the scarecrow. The farmer tells how he followed one day and saw the crow trying to feed the scarecrow. Caw, said the crow. The farmer claims to have heard this himself, and to have seen the scarecrow eat. The farmer told his wife about the crow and the scarecrow and she placed a pie on her window sill for the crow to steal; and, sure enough, the crow stole the pie, and the farmer and his wife followed the crow to the scarecrow and watched as the bird fed him. They watched with their own eyes as the scarecrow grew fat. Then the crow swooped down at them and they ran to their neighbors to tell what happened. Soon the whole village knew about the crow and the scarecrow, and the men went out to hunt the crow, but he flew out of their range of fire. Then the farmers set fire to the scarecrow, and the crow flew away and never returned. Anyway, this is the story the farmer told me over a cup of coffee and a piece of pie.

Margaret Walther

Mask of the Owl
(Easter, 1998)

Think of an owl, feathers
torn off from trying to escape a skimpy
glass enclosure. That was reality in the sixties

in a fly-by-night roadside zoo, and I still remember
the way the naked bird-body trembled, eyes gazing through me

tenantless, like my father's now, as he
stares at his fork, his knife, trying to recall how
one should eat.

Crow Hunting

Wednesdays seem a day to reflect. A day for gentler things. It's their personality—the misshapen nature, the hump, the way a Wednesday morning feels like the last sip of home-brewed beer. Silty.

Wednesdays were a kind of holiday. My crow hunting day.

With a high-step past the dozing mower, I approached my crow hunting shed. Scattered around the shed were rows of sprouting trees, mostly pine. Bending down, I snapped off a twig and sniffed its sweet odor.

Crisp, uplifting, and green.

I could easily inhale the odor of pine all day.

But this was Wednesday, so I turned to the shed's padlock. It was a copper lock and to open it you had to sigh into a tiny hole in its center. I sighed and stepped inside.

I collected my art supplies and my owl decoys and several calls, the tubes dangling from their braided ropes. I wore the calls proudly, as necklaces. I had three specific calls to lure crows my way.

1. The "We're fighting the owl-of-owls over here" call.
2. The "We're feeding like politicians on parade over here" call.
3. The death call.

Crows are social beings, and extremely intelligent.

Here's how I hunted them:

I climbed bamboo trees until they bent in half and I rode them to the ground like a pole vaulter, only in reverse. I placed owl decoys atop the trees and let them fling back upright. They looked like Christmas tree angels. I got my sketch pad and a six pack of home-brewed beer and hid beneath a cathedral of camo netting.

Then I called.

My first call said, "Brute horror and talons and act, oh, air, hate, plume—attack! A great horned owl eating eggs. Making omelets. Making eggnog, touch of nutmeg. With the feathers of our brood, making flapjacks."

My second call said, "Rolling level underneath, combine shudders, corn popping nuggets of gold. Gold! Earrings of gold have fallen from the corn's ear — combine shudders!"

Pleasantly sipping my beer, I knelt in the high weeds and looked into the sky. It was full of clouds and one of the clouds resembled Alaska, I mean in shape not size. A crow appeared above Prince William's Sound, gliding into Anchorage, veering north toward Mount McKinley.

It was the scout crow so I had two options.

1. Let it pass, since a scout crow, unless sketched perfectly, will warn the entire flock of a human's presence.

2. Sketch it perfectly.

I let the crow pass.

And the flock appeared, attacking the owl decoys, ripping into their synthetic souls. Then sensing the owl's plasticity, the crows ceased their attacking. They floated and perched, cawing, gossiping to one another, and I scribbled along, imagining their tidbits.

"Long as my rent gets paid by Sunday."

"...can't be expected to fly under such conditions."

"She gave him that kimono."

"...a kilo of first class New Orleans seed."

"...under apple trees by the river."

For several hundred minutes, I made my careful drawings. The tip of my pencil wore down and eventually passed away. I set the pencil down and drank my beer, and watched the crows. One crow cawing, simply cawing. One crow off by itself, sharpening its beak on a clothesline pole, reminiscing of a plum it dropped over West Virginia. Two crows bobbing in rhythm on a pine bough. One crow doing aerial eights, while another cuts through the loops, creating its own eight, then another, linking together, sixteen, twenty-four, thirty-two ...

Marvelous, my beer-soaked mind thought, borrowing my mouth to whisper, “Marvelous.”

Once the crows detect a human — once alarmed and on their way — you use the death call. It sounds like rippling of bones around them....

It says, “I’m dying, right now, and will you help me?” As true as Wednesday, the crows reappear, and you get that final image, spiraling frame, buckling of wings and heart, the curvature of returning. But I never use the death call.

Elizabeth B. Thomas

from Sonnets on the Sublime
III. Underwater

For years before asthma was diagnosed,
I used to love to play a game with air —
hoarding it first, swimming the length of pool
clutching my underwater purse, its pink
balloon bulging a tightness in my throat
until I touched the other side. And then
I'd float learning to lose air, give it up
with calculated ease. In the deep end
I'd let the soft umbrella of my lungs
unfold, slowly collapse and then begin
to tow a watery pulse around a spine
tighter than air: a breathless pole of light
I saw each time I looked up at the house
of our rich neighbors — blurred, mysterious.

—Second Place Poem—
Everything Has Two Uses

The matches are kept waxed in the matchbox
slit from the heart of a cedar to protect them from moisture.

Gears are stars when you find them in the barn wreck
pressed into the soil, slick with black

butter like WD-40, a silo
can that eases joints, ignites.

I find eggshell remains preserved beneath a beam.
How did these thin shims keep so long

being made to shed and break? Now they house
a caterpillar who comes at me bristle-fierce.

Saltpeter is dynamite's chief component. Taken
orally, it kills your sex. Lite Brite pins

go down the throat and will not light. Jarts
are banned for being too much fun.

I have thought that I was only made to end
abbreviate the limbs or fins of things

and set them spinning in the pool.
Matches built into a ricket of a house

will joint and, tied, will hold until they rub
tip-to-tip then glisten, spark, arise

to their best moment: the grace of flame.
How an antidote becomes

an antidote. How ether dulls or kills.
How snow is crystal, complicated

by urine, dust, acid, blood.

—Second Place Story—
On the Cutting Board

It is the third night in a row that Peter has come around banging on my window, banging on the window with a balled up fist and yelling for me to open the door, *please open the door Jimmy, I need to talk to you, I really need to talk to you* and the whole time I'm trying to watch reruns on NBC. I can imagine him, pressing his face up against the glass, leaving grease smudges, one from his forehead, a smaller one from his nose. It's been raining out again.

My mother used to say testosterone is a toxin. My father would look up with his sheepishly sagging face hidden behind the enormous brown frames of his glasses and say, "That's right, we're all pigs," and she would nod. "Slobbering, idiot children," she'd say, pointing her finger at my father and I.

Yesterday, after two nights of Peter coming around, I nailed a small, inconspicuous mirror to the tree out in the stone courtyard. I arranged it so that I could get a pretty good view of my door and the small window on the front of my apartment. It took a lot of angling the mirror just right and one of my neighbors, Mrs. Simmons, was watching me, pretending she was watering her pitiful ferns in their red clay pots. This new cheaper apartment I've moved to is in a poorer part of Washington DC, more low slung brick buildings, more leafless branched thin trees poking out of dry gray dirt.

Peter is banging around out there like a lunatic because I'd been sleeping with his girlfriend, Claire. It takes a minute for my eyes to adjust at the peephole in the door, but now I can see the mirror and then Peter, standing at the window in the leaf scattered courtyard. He looks, from the peephole distortion, the mirror refraction, like a funhouse image. He bangs on the win-

dow, shouting "Come on Jimmy. Open the door, man. Come on, man. Open it," and his arm seems to get long and thin, then short and fat, over and over. When Peter moves from the window and starts pounding on the door it echoes, hollow thuds.

Eventually he states into the peephole, so we're frozen there for a moment. Peter's already skinny face is made absurd by the lens and my cheek presses against the wood of the door and my breath condenses on the bumpy paint.

As soon as I know Peter's gone I go to the phone. Claire answers with a, "Hey," and I say, "He was just here."

"Peter?" Claire says, as though it could be someone else.

"Yes. Prepare yourself. You're next, I'm sure." I'm looking at my door as I say this, at the peephole's unwavering pinprick of yellow light. I know Claire will let Peter put his ratty sweatshirt in her tumbling dryer, give him a T-shirt to wear. He'll probably end up spending the night over there.

Claire has this tone in her voice that's telling me to leave her alone, but I don't want to, because all I can do is mentally track Peter's progress to her place. Peter is probably in a cab on his way over there, wheels tearing open puddles. He'll be at Claire's and she'll let him in. Maybe he'll weep into her goddamn bosom.

"So what are you going to do?" I say to Claire.

"Jimmy," she says slowly and it sounds like she's almost going to say something else, but then it's just, "I don't know." I try to picture her, but now she's gotten her hair cut in a tapered bob that I've only seen once and it throws me off. I like the image of Peter in the rain, like a swooping crane shot in a film like in *Last Tango* under that overpass, except my shot catches up with Peter, plowing through the dark and puddles, towards Claire and here I am, stuck in my apartment and more in love with Claire than I would have imagined possible.

"What do you mean you don't know? It's pretty simple. Either you let him in or you don't."

"Oh Jimmy. Jimmy," Claire says. Then: "I need to go," and I laugh, a stupid sounding laugh that is something else pretending

to be a laugh, though it's not fooling anyone.

"Why's that?" I say.

"I need to go Jimmy, let's not get started on this right now."

"Started on what?" I say. "I need to go," she says.

"Call me tomorrow," I say. Then I hear Claire's buzzer, as though Peter is standing down there with grinding teeth, leaning furiously on the poor little button.

"I need to go," Claire whispers. The buzzer screeches again. I sit listening to the clicks and then the dial tone and the phone is still to my ear and I consider giving Peter a minute or two to get up the six flights and then calling back and he'd see my name on the Caller ID and he'd fall to his knees in tears and she wouldn't know what to do and it seems like it would serve them both right.

I think how my love for Claire is like when you're driving on a highway alone, some long and necessary drive, it's not like you're going to the beach, and you're sick of the radio and all the same songs, so you're looking out the window at the horizon, which, for once, isn't obscured by the tree line and the sun is going down behind this huge gray cloud, shooting down shafts of light on the land ahead and you're trying to figure out what the cloud looks like, trying to think, maybe that looks like a man there with two arms thrust up in the air, the middle part is his head, but of course it doesn't look like a man and you know, though you don't admit it to yourself, that it doesn't really look like anything, but still, you try like hell to think of something it could look like, try and force the connection that isn't there.

I wake up the next morning, to the Simmons's crashing television across the way. It's early but I haven't worked since my mother died a little over a year ago and I inherited fifty thousand dollars. My dad wrote me the check and said, "Now you should invest this. Then youth have something to fall back on." Instead, I quit my job and made some long shot investments. I bought a car and then moved from Dupont Circle to this new place. I hit on a technology stock that returned forty-eight thousand on a three

thousand dollar investment in just two weeks.

My mother didn't have cancer or anything drawn out. She was killed in a car accident when an eighteen-wheeler changed lanes without looking. My uncle called and told me, because my father was almost completely silent until after the funeral I tried to distract myself with the details of the wake, the flowers for the funeral but all I could think was, My mom is dead. My mother is dead. She is dead. My mother is deceased. My mom, she is dead. She is not alive, but she is dead.

I get out of bed and check the Caller ID. About three months ago Claire came over to my apartment after a big fight with Peter. She'd slapped Peter and he'd shoved her into the television. Claire said the screen broke with a wild, swallowing pop and she'd landed in the scatter of silver glass. I did my best to clean the blistered swells of blood on her palm, washed it, picked at it with tweezers. She inched her way closer to me on the couch and I knew what was going to happen and I thought that it was probably not a good idea, but then maybe, in another way, it wasn't so bad, was about caring and we ended up having sex.

Afterwards we were lying on the carpet, the fibers tickling my back. Claire shivered and said, "I'm cold." I rolled over on top of her and I kissed her on the ear lobe. She laughed and said that now she was warm.

For the next two and a half months we would have sex in her apartment and then she would put her clothes back on and kick me out, because she and Peter were still inexplicably together. I sometimes thought I might sit out in my car and when Peter showed up I'd tell him the truth. But I always panicked and rushed through the back streets, avoiding the Metro stop, bent over the steering wheel.

I send Claire an email. *So what happened? Any drama? Let me know. I'll be home.*

I sit and listen to the Simmons's television, which they've got, as they always do, tuned to a southern cooking show with an obese, bearded chef who screams, "Off we go!" every few minutes. There

are only four apartments in the little complex I live in and I'm the only person in the complex under the age of sixty. Our little brick complex seems to be one of the only buildings in the surrounding area that was probably built before 1970. All around us smooth looking, flimsy buildings with incredible rents are flying up.

Once, in the middle of the affair, Peter invited me over to his place for fondu. It was just the three of us and I kept waiting for Peter to say he knew what was going on, goddamnit and it was going to stop. I kept bumping Claire's little metal stick with mine, liking the small plinking sound I pretended Peter couldn't hear. Claire might look up at Peter with her light green eyes and say that she was sorry, that the whole thing was a mistake, that I meant nothing to her and all this would happen while I sat there with a cheesy lump of bread impaled on the silver tines of my fondu stick.

Sometimes I ask Claire why she continues her charade with Peter. "Because," she says, "it's not a charade, Jimmy. Except maybe in your mind."

Out in the courtyard, peering into my mirror is Mrs. Simmons, her bony back balled up. She's wearing a long blue skirt. She always wears long blue skirts. I imagine that she and her husband have been living in this apartment for decades, were here back when this part of town was nicer, lived here through the slow encroachment of the projects. I imagine she's a bigot who complains about our black neighbors.

"Do you like it?" I ask. The sunlight makes her bluish hair shine.

"Is this yours?" She points to the mirror, her finger trembling. Her bloodless lips are pursed.

"Yeah. Spruce up the courtyard," I say. Stepping out of the doorway I bump a CD case so I reach down and grab it.

Mrs. Simmons goes back to gazing at her reflection, snuffling loudly, pulling back thin lips to expose rows of yellowish teeth, which she picks at with a long fingernail. The patch of concrete

immediately in front of her door is the only area free of brown, wet-bent leaves.

I turn the CD case over in my hands but there's nothing on it, just the reflection of my face and I forgot to shave again. The big apartment complex across the street is being remodeled. Scaffolding slung with white tarpaulins against the finally absent rain.

In my car I put the CD on. The first track is the Talking Heads, "I Wish You Wouldn't Say That" and I laugh as I take a left on M Street. Peter makes these CDs and must have left it outside my door last night. The sun is shining down through my sun roof, bright and clear, occasionally patched from the thin trees lining the sidewalk as I head towards U Street, where there's a coffee shop that isn't a chain and has dirty tables. It has board games stacked lopsided on a metal rack inside the door, alternative newspapers and very strong coffee.

Sometimes Claire used to put her hand over mine while I drove, without a word, just placed it there for a moment or two and then took it away again.

Peter had been, for a while, what I guess you would call my best friend. He was the person I called when I found out about my mother. He brought some beer with him and we sat in my old apartment and didn't say much. Each time he got up and said, "Beer?" I wanted to jump up from my seat and tell him that finally here was someone who understood.

The coffee shop is busy with punk teenagers in rattling leather jackets, colorfully spiked hair. In one corner is this pale old man I've seen several times before. He sits over there glowering into his drink the white wisps of his hair drifting down. The baristas are friends with all these kids and so it takes me awhile to get my coffee, everyone shoving around the counter as though we're at a rock concert.

I brought my mother to this place once. She loved this shop, the kids with snarling lips and manic piercings. She'd tell me about her hippy life back in the sixties. She'd tell me how she didn't shave for two solid years, how her hair had clumped into

dreds from months without washing how when she came back to normal life she had to shave her head. "I looked like a prisoner and I felt like one," she told me while we sat drinking the bitter shots of espresso six months before she died, Sex Pistols had been beating out of the shop's milk flecked stereo.

I'm sitting in the corner when Peter walks in. No one else seems to notice him, though he's awfully out of place in that business suit. I just watch him and he sits on a rickety, wood chair the wrong way, gripping the backrest in a tight embrace. "We need to talk Jimmy."

"Yeah," I say. "I get that impression." Peter has a long face, like a normal sized face was put in a vice and the handle was given a couple vigorous turns. Long forehead, stretched chin, eyes too close together, a narrow nose jabbing down the middle.

"It's about Claire," Peter says. He's got his hands folded in a manner I don't like.

"Isn't everything about Claire?" I ask.

Peter blinks and goes on. "Jimmy, I'm telling you this because you're my friend. Despite all this, you're still my friend."

I wonder how he can act so self-satisfied with all his window banging, all his buzzing and moaning.

"See, I was talking to Claire last night and she told me you're still calling "here," he says. Trying to ignore Peter I catch the eye of a kid with a green mohawk at the next table. I give him a wink. He gets up roughly from his seat and takes his mostly empty glass of water up to the bar, where he leans, snarling over his shoulder at me and so I have to face Peter again.

Peter's hair is puffed up, blown dry and it makes his head look impossibly bigger. He's wearing a blue tie with a tiny knot up under his golf ball Adam's apple.

"See, the thing is, Claire asked me to tell you to stop calling her," Peter says and he's looking at the back of his hands now, his long thin fingers with eerily perfect fingernails.

I sit up a little in my chair. "What?" I ask.

"She says she doesn't want to talk to you right now and asks that you stop calling her." Peter blinks like he's reading note cards.

"Oh yeah," I say.

"This doesn't mean she doesn't want to talk to you ever again, just not right now. Do you understand? I mean, she and I are trying to work this thing out. We're trying to make this work and it's just not going to work if you're calling her up ten, fifteen times a day." Peter is nodding at me as though he agrees wholeheartedly.

"Ten or fifteen times a day?" I ask. These people are lunatics I decide.

"Just cool it," Peter says, leaning forward and I wonder, with that look he's giving me now, if he's trying to intimidate me, if he remembers I've been working out over the past few months while he's been slouching around his office job. Which makes me wonder why he isn't in his job right now, since his office is all the way up in Bethesda, Maryland.

"Fine. Perfectly cool," I say and sip my still-scalding coffee. All around us is the noise of steam gargling through milk. Like an animal in mid-moan.

Peter stands up, but for a minute he doesn't move and I wish everyone in the shop were looking at us, the barista with a large round stud through her lip, the green mohawk guy, the pastey-faced old man with thin white hair riding up off his liver spotted scalp but no one is. I feel like kicking the table so it slams into Peter's scrawny thighs. Then I will jump up from my seat and wring his neck. "Jimmy," Peter says, stuffing his hands into his pocket and looking down at his feet.

"Yes, Peter? What are you going to say? What can you say that you haven't said fifteen times?" My face is flushing.

"I don't know Jimmy," he says and then I can't stop myself and I say, "That's because you're a fucking moron."

He looks at me and for a minute I'm worried that he might start crying, but instead he just turns and walks out of the shop, the bronze bell clattering.

I wait three minutes and then get up, take my coffee with me and get in my car. There's a Joni Mitchell song on the CD, which keeps me from tossing it out the window and I'm humming along while I drive across town towards Claire's apartment. I can't find a parking space. I'm cursing and banging my hands on the steering wheel until a spot opens four blocks from her place. I jog to her building, press the button next to the number 613.

"Hello?" Claire's voice crackles.

"Hello there," I say and I nearly laugh, because I feel for an instant, terribly good about everything. I've felt this way before. A week after my mother died. I was back in my old apartment in Dupont and just standing there, looking at my furniture, at the smooth, glimmering face of the television lightly touched by a layer of dust and I felt like I was rising quickly out of a sweet sleep into a cool day after a long summer of heat.

"Jimmy?" Claire says. Her voice is smoked with static and louder than it needs to be.

"Yes," I say, but I don't know if she even hears it because she immediately says, "Didn't Peter call you."

"Can I come up?" I say.

"Didn't you talk to Peter?" Claire roars and just then one of her neighbors walks up. He holds the door for me and I let go of the intercom button. The doorman nods at us. The elevator hums up to the sixth floor. I knock softly on Claire's door.

"Hello?" she says. She's making herself look kind of stupid, I think to myself before answering, "Yeah, it's me."

"How did you get in here?" she asks.

"I climbed up the side of the building. Can you let me in?"

"I'd rather not," she says. Her voice is muffled, as though she's talking into a pillow.

"Why's that?" I ask.

"Didn't Peter call you?" she says.

"What the fuck is this, Claire?" I say, a little loudly, before I notice that someone, a fat, bald-headed old man, has just gotten off the elevator and he looks at me for a second before shuffling

down the hallway. "Couldn't we pretend to be adults or something?" I say, calmly, quietly.

"God," Claire says. "Not now, Jimmy. Just go."

"Fine," I say and turn and walk away from the door. I skip the elevator, run down the stairs. Walking back uphill to my car I feel like kicking something and almost decide on a hunking blue mailbox, but stop myself because a bus crests the hill and coasts, full of faces, past me.

I walk around my apartment trying to figure out what the hell is going on. My toilet, which sometimes won't flush, is gurgling loudly. I call Claire but she doesn't answer. I call back. No answer. I call again and leave a message, asking her to please give me a call when she gets back in. Then I call back and when the machine picks up I hold my cordless right up to the toilet tank, water churning like a hungry stomach.

I think about Claire and Peter standing next to me at my mother's funeral. The casket had been closed. Claire had laid her hand on my arm that day over and over, as though she wanted to take something from me, when the truth was I didn't need her for anything, which is what Peter seemed to understand and I remember thinking, afterwards, after my dad went back into his life and away from mine and after I quit my job, that I wished everyone could understand things the way it seemed Peter did, which is to see that what people mostly need is to just to be left alone.

With my TV off and the phone in its cradle I can hear the Simmons's television. "Off we go!" the fat bastard is hollering from across the courtyard. I try to read but can't concentrate and then I notice I'm not looking at the page of type anymore, am staring down at my crotch and thinking, I hate you.

I stand up and grab my crotch roughly and think, Where have you gotten me? and then I walk into the kitchen and start rummaging through the drawers. I pull out these big heavy scissors you could use to cut cardboard and I lay them on the counter. Then I unzip my pants and pull them down, along with my box-

ers. I look down at my dick hanging there and my balls and all the dark pubic hair and this just makes me more angry, them just dangling so I grab the cutting board with the corner that melted in the dishwasher. Lifting my genitals with one hand I tuck the cutting board underneath. The plastic feels cool against my skin and the thin hairs on the back of my neck stand up and this just makes me more angry, so I grab the scissors. My scrotum is flattened out, like it was recklessly inflated then violently burst and the straggly hairs are going in ridiculous directions. I've got the scissors in one hand and the other is holding the cutting board and I'm trying to figure this out when I hear an awful gargling scream.

"Sonofabitch," I say and pull the cutting board away with a snap of my wrist and knock it hard against my testicles which makes my head swim. Tugging up my pants I grip the scissors and walk to my door and I think I should never have moved to this neighborhood, should never have quit my job. I could be leading a life.

I walk past the mirror, slightly crooked on the jagged tree bark and then I start pounding on the Simmons' hollow aluminum door. No one answers so I bang louder and shout, "Hello! What the fuck? Hello!" I think I can hear someone moaning or talking inside, but there's also the maddening television so I open the door and step in.

The layout of the apartment is just like mine, a small foyer leading quickly into a living room, so I only need to take a few steps to see what is going on. Mr. Simmons is lying on the floor, on his back and Mrs. Simmons is kneeling next to him, her bluish hair bobbing up and down and she is moaning and her hands are clasped in front of her. The apartment smells like old cigarettes and there are ashtrays everywhere, odd angled butts jammed carelessly together. I run across the carpet, which is older and dirtier than mine and over the fat man on TV who's waving a meat cleaver over his head, I shout "What's wrong?"

Mrs. Simmons looks up and tears run out over her face like

tangled streets and her wide eyes are red and she doesn't even try to talk, her head just shaking a little, hands quivering and Mr. Simmons has spittle at the edges of his lips, white foam and then I'm on my knees next to him and am rolling him onto his side and my index finger is in his mouth, which is wet and slick and clotted with more white foam. Mrs. Simmons just sits there, her whole body shaking violently and I grab the phone, dial 911, shout the address and then press my ear to Mr. Simmons's chest and don't hear anything so I find his sternum and put my hands together and start pounding away, breathing into his foaming mouth after ten depressions. I'm not thinking of Claire and Peter, or of my father and the small urn of my mother's crumbly ash he keeps in his bedroom, all I'm thinking is one two three four up to ten, swipe with finger and breathe, then go again. My hands will still be going up and down and my breath will be coming from deep in my chest when the ambulance arrives, the men in white jackets will push me aside. I'll drive Mrs. Simmons to DC General.

The scissors will be bouncing in my pocket and the ambulance will crescendo down the street with a truly thrilling wail, strobe lights bouncing off the dirty faces of red brick buildings and I'll accelerate towards the corner with the wind slurring in my ears. I'll find the hospital with its crowded lobby, overweight mothers with bawling children, old men holding dirty bandages to their heads and the nurse who will take Mrs. Simmons's arm and I'll be able to head back home with the weather perfect, my windows will be down and back at home I will call Claire and tell her about all this.

I am not thinking about any of that. I am trying not to press too hard on Mr. Simmons's thick chest, am trying to remember everything from CPR class in middle school gym class. I'm not thinking about Claire or Peter or anything other than Mr. Simmons, his spit in my mouth like old pennies.

Terrance Hayes

A Poem for Wisdom

Now friends, we should ask
all the wise ones here
in this hall of wind to stand.

For once we should pause
and let the quick new stems
in our mouths be still.

There are wise ones here.
Let us look upon their armor
of silver and fault lines

older than the moon.
Have you seen them sitting quietly
in the middle of Winter?

Have you asked
to be taken to the attic
where their books and albums are kept?

Let us look, now, at the poverty of youth:
the ink of its money staining our hands.
Let us look down at our shadows

covering dust and the tracks
left by so much tilling and running away.
Those who build tombs,

have no use for the wise.
There is wisdom in the pasture, People.
There is wisdom in the blackbird

that waits for us in the skull of the tree.
Let us knock the dirt from our shoes
before we visit the house of the wise ones.

Let us listen to the way
their bread breathes
as it is lowered to the table.

Friends, we should ask
all the wise ones here
in this hall of wind to stand.

Ask them who built this city,
Who made this sky? Ask them
from what river our holiness came.

More Theories of Dunende & Teaching the
Inexplicable

*"I want there to be no eyes for the night, / no flower of gold
for my heart"*

"Ghazal of the Terrible Presence,"
Federico Garcia Lorca

Suppose for a moment that you are a poet and a teacher of poetry. In your Beginning Poetry Workshop you have been exposing your students to what you know to be *safe* poems. When you taught them the principles of imagery, you brought in a few poems by the deep image poets. When you taught them how to employ figurative language, perhaps you brought in a few poems by Billy Collins, the genius of metaphor. It is late in the semester now. There have been quizzes and midterms concerning the craft of poetry. There have been several of the flat, cliché-ridden workshops you dread. Perhaps you have mentioned Lorca. If you have risked reading his work to them, you have been careful to steer them away from less "concrete" aspects of his poetry. Rightly so. In the wrong hands/minds such a poet could inspire anarchy. He might give certain misguided students a license to write poems that mistake mystery for obscurity... It is nearing the end of the semester and you still have not discussed that inexplicable *thing* you believe essential to poetry...

In his pivotal 1975 book, *Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations*, Robert Bly offers several assertions about the history of surrealism and its roots in American poetry of the era. Early on he traces the Poet's loss and subsequent rediscovery of the powers of the unconscious:

“Freud pointed out that the dream still retained the fantastic freedom of association known to us before only from ancient art. By the end of the nineteenth century both the poem and the dream had been set free... The poets then began to devote their lives to deepening the range of association in the poem... It is this movement that has given such fantastic energy to ‘modern poetry’...”¹

In addition to surrealism, *Leaping Poetry* offers a brief meditation on Federico Garcia Lorca’s theory of Duende in a two and a half page section called “Wild Association.” In it Bly includes a Lorca quote which implies that Duende can only be grasped through metaphor: “To help us seek the Duende there are neither maps nor discipline. All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned, that it breaks with all styles...”² After reading *Leaping Poetry* I knew Duende to be no more than the gypsy-cousin of surrealism. Curiosity led me to Bly’s chief source, Lorca’s 1933 essay, “Theory and Play of Duende.”

We might for a moment distinguish Duende from surrealism through the metaphor of music. Where surrealism is popularly recognized in music and images akin to Peter Gabriel’s very, very cool Eighties video, “Sledgehammer,” we find Duende in the late jazz of John Coltrane, which contains so much raw energy it’s close to incoherent, uncontainable. I’m thinking in particular of *Ohm*, Coltrane’s 1965 album on Impulse Records. It’s full of chants from selected verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*; it’s full of dropped cymbals that sound like thunder, and horns that sound like cows being strangled. I read somewhere that Coltrane wanted it to be a kind of mystical listening exercise. On the album’s liner notes critic Nat Hentoff, insists that “emotions are the way into this music rather than intellectual diagrams or quick categorical guidelines...”³ He was in pursuit of the spirit-world, the inexpressible, something that could only be achieved through improvisation. Something very much like what Lorca sought: “po-

etic emotion which is uncontrolled and virginal, free of walls..."⁴

To explain the mystery and importance of Duende to artistic expression, Lorca tells the story of a great Andalusian singer whose performance leaves a modest audience unimpressed one night in a little tavern in Cadiz. "Here we care nothing about ability, technique, skill. Here we are after something else," they seem to say, according to Lorca. The songstress then tears at her expensive gown, guzzles a tall glass of burning liquor and begins "to sing with a scorched throat: without voice, without breath or color but with Duende" all to the crowd's raucous approval. Lorca says, "She had to rob herself of skill and security, send away her muse and become helpless, that her Duende might come and deign to fight her hand to hand..."⁵

Lorca's anecdote makes me think of Billie Holiday... Once a friend and I argued late into the night (argued until I lost my voice) about whether or not Billie Holiday was a great singer. This friend said in what I remember now as the voice of Mr. Spock that she might have been a great *stylist*, but that her singing was never technically correct. Her poor technique had, in fact, ruined her voice, he said. I didn't have Lorca's essay then. The despair I felt that night is similar to the feeling I've had in my poetry courses after discussing a poem like Lorca's "Ghazal of the Terrible Presence." When I bring in Lorca's Duende essay for my students, they all seem to nod in comprehension. The truth, however, is revealed when they turn in their Duende-imitations (an oxymoron). Though I am pleased that many of their poems are more playful and surprising than their typical narrative poems, what they achieve is often closer to surrealism than to Duende.

Surrealism of course has its merits. In the seventies, Robert Bly, James Wright and others were translating the French and Spanish surrealists for the first time. In America, surrealism flourished in the decade following Vietnam just as it had flourished in France during the World Wars. The phrase itself was coined by

French writer Apollinaire when he saw a 1917 Jean Cocteau ballet that revealed a truth beyond the real, “a kind of sur-realism.”⁶ Andre Breton later adapted the concept and aligned it with Freud’s teaching as well as some anti-war, anti-state ideologies. It’s not difficult to see the parallels between surrealism and the failings of government and culture. Stephen Dobyns says in *Best Words Best Orders Essays on Poetry* that he began his wonderfully surreal *Cemetery Nights* in 1981, believing “realism was an inadequate way to deal with the world’s excesses...”⁷ Dobyns and several other poets (Rita Dove’s in her first book, *The Yellow House on the Corner* and Leslie Ullman in her first book, *Natural Histories*, for example) indulged in the freedom and surprise surrealism seemed to elicit. And while most of these poets eventually outgrew surrealism, a few delved deeper into the nuances of its and possibilities. Among them was Larry Levis. Here is “Garcia Lorca: A Photograph of the Granada Cemetery, 1966” from his 1981 collection, *The Dollmaker’s Ghost*:

The men who killed poetry
Hated silence... Now they have plenty.
In the ossuary at Granada
There are over four thousand calm skulls
Whitening; the shrubs are in leaf
Behind the bones.
And if anyone tries to count spines
He can feel his own scalp start to crawl
Back to its birthplace.

Once, I gave you a small stone I respected.
When I turned it over in the dawn,
After staying up all night
Its pale depths
Resembled the tense face of Lorca
Spitting into an empty skull.
Why did he do that?

Someone should know.
Someone should know by now that the stone
Was only an amulet to keep the dead away.

And though your long bones
Have nothing to do with Lorca, or those deaths
Forty years ago, in Spain,
The trees fill with questions, and summer.
He would not want, tonight, another elegy.
He would want me to examine the marriage of wings
Beneath your delicate collar bones:
They breath,
The ribs of your own poems breath.

And here is our dark house at the end of the lane.
And here is the one light we have kept on all year
For no one, or Lorca,
And now he comes toward it —
With six bulletholes in his chest,
Walking lightly
So he will not disturb the sleeping neighbors,
Or the almonds withering in their frail arks
Above us.
He does not want to come in.
He stands embarrassed under the street lamp
In his rumpled suit...

Snow, lullabye, anvil of bone
That terrifies the blacksmith in his sleep,

Your house is breath.⁸

Just beyond the doors of surrealism, Levis found Duende.
Throughout his career his work remained, for the most part, dark,
associative, and musical. And I should add, political, which I

think is a vital part of Duende even if it is no longer vital to surrealism. Levis was a master of the political metaphor, if there is such a thing. It is evident, for example, in "Anastasia and Sandman" from *Elegy* his posthumous collection, and in "At the Grave of My Guardian Angel: St. Louis Cemetery, New Orleans," from his 1991 collection, *The Widening Spell of Leaves*. In "Garcia Lorca: A Photograph of the Granada Cemetery, 1966" we find it in the first line's reference to the "men who killed poetry." The poem is both a broad allusion to "men" who shun Poetry/Art/Expression, and a specific historical allusion to the men responsible for "those deaths/ Forty years ago, in Spain" during the Spanish Civil War and "the six bullet holes" which assassinated Lorca. Ultimately the poem chooses a dark and quiet tone, a sensual address to the "you" which enters in the second stanza over a more direct commentary on poetry and resistance. "Garcia Lorca: A Photograph of the Granada Cemetery, 1966" is an example of political *metaphor*, I think, because it asks us to intuit its social and historical meaning through image and gesture not direct statement. This contrasts the way Lorca handled politics in many of his poems. For example, the closing lines of his poem "New York" read: "I attack the conspiring / of these empty offices / that will not broadcast the sufferings, / that rub out the plans of the forest, / and I offer myself to be eaten by the packed in cattle / when there mooing fills the valley /where the Hudson is getting drunk on its oil."⁹ This statement feels much more urgent, much more politically forthcoming than anything Levis wrote. Both poets share a faith in the inexplicable, however. Their poems often turn away from "the logic of traditional metaphor" to images that "evade rational analysis."¹⁰

If we are to talk about teaching Duende, it's important to talk about its more incoherent aspects. This may be the inevitable nature of such a concept. And just as surrealism can become formulaic and pseudo-intellectual, Duende can become no more than raw emotion. Readers have been known to dismiss both concepts as trivial and undisciplined. In *The Generation of 2000:*

An Anthology of Contemporary Poets, editor William Heyen, reacts against such kinds of expression. "If there is an editorial slant that helped form this wide ranging collection," he says in the book's introduction, "it is against the kind of quasi-surrealist poem that Wallace Stevens made fun of when he said that 'To make a clam play an accordion is to invent not to discover.' It is understandable but tragic that there is so much distracting silliness and indulgence in poetry during this critical point in human history..."¹¹ (Oddly, Levis, who was part of the generation Heyen anthologizes and had published three award winning books by the time of its publication, is not included in Heyen's book.) A counter to Heyen and Stevens can be found in the following Lorca assertion:

"Very often intellect is poetry's enemy because it is too much given to imitation, because it lifts the poet to a throne of sharp edges and makes him oblivious of the fact that he may suddenly be devoured by ants, or a great arsenic lobster may fall on his head."¹²

It's also ironic that much of Stevens' poetry reflects a cool (damn-near cold-blooded) sense of Duende. (That is, if Duende can be cool.) Here are the closing stanzas of "God is Good. It is Beautiful Night" from his 1947, book *Transport to Summer*:

In your light, the head is speaking. It reads the book.
It becomes the scholar again, seeking celestial
Rendezvous,

Picking thin music on the rustiest string,
Squeezing the reddest fragrance from the stump
Of summer.

The venerable song falls from your fiery wings.
The song of the great space of your age pierces

The fresh night.¹³

Words like and “scholar” and “celestial” and “venerable” might cool the fires the Duende present here, but they don’t stamp it out. He seems to have found his way to Duende not through spontaneous passion or social conviction but through language. “In your [moon] light, the head is speaking.” The way syntax allows him to shift from image to image building elaborate associations in lines like “It becomes the scholar again, seeking celestial /Rendezvous, // Picking thin music on the rustiest string, / Squeezing the reddest fragrance from the stump / Of summer.” Perhaps this makes him a kind of surrealist, but his frequently dark tones and images make him a kind of (unlikely) disciple of Duende.

Lorca, I think, was interested in diction or syntax, but as it related to the freer, more emotional aspects of music, to primordial rhythm and anaphora. Flamenco, jazz, spirituals, “Deep Song,” and most every other kind of song enchanted him. Many of his poems hang on ladders of incantatory refrains. Here, for example are lines 18-30 from the Greg White and Stephen F. Simon’s translation of “Blacks Dancing to Cuban Rhythms”:

Oh, Cuba, oh rhythm of dried seeds!
I am going to Santiago.
Oh, fiery waist, oh, drop of wood!
I am going to Santiago.
Harp living tree trunks. Crocodile. Tobacco plant in bloom!
I am going to Santiago.
I always said I’d go to Santiago in a coach of black water.
I am going to Santiago.
My coral darkness,
I am going to Santiago.
The sea drowned in sand,
I am going to Santiago.¹⁴

The poem continues in the same manner. Certain words and phrases in this poem connote Duende where they do not connote surrealism: "moon," "black water," "darkness," "rhythm." Even the exclamation marks, which are generally taboo in contemporary American poetry, reflect a certain necessary ecstasy.

The poetry teacher, of course, cannot show the student how to access ecstasy or the blood and spirit of his or her own poem. One can, however, show students what others have done; one can guide them. This is not news. The problems arise when presenting students with a concept that wants no guide, no messenger, a concept that reveals the pitfalls of quantifiable analysis/explanation. What happens when students are directed to practice such a concept? Their innocent desire to produce the magic of the inexplicable often inspires genuine contrivance.

The methods (tricks) I use most frequently to help my students unlock their Duende involve the principles of imitation. I bring in several poems that demonstrate the qualities of Duende. After we have exhausted our usual discussion of the individual elements at work in the poem, the assignment I give involves an imitation of tone and mood rather than of concrete techniques evident in the poem. For example, in an imitation of "Blacks Dancing to Cuban Rhythms" I might ask them to convey a mysterious desire through a poem that is both narrative *and* nonlinear. Such exercises often have pleasing results even if they don't permanently transform the way the students approach poetry. In fact, I don't want to imply that there is an exercise that somehow shows one how to produce Duende. It resists being engaged by way of guidelines and instructions. Interestingly enough, similar challenges arise in the teaching of prose poems.

Many successful prose poems often have the wit and surprise of surrealism, but also the mystery and gristle of Duende. Moreover, both seem to potentially undermine all beginning students have learned about the elements of poetry. Just as Duende can foster superficial surrealist properties, the prose poem can inspire flat, amusical paragraphs. In the end of his essay, "Portrait of

the Writer as a Fat Man: Some Subject Ideas on the Care and Feeding of Prose Poems," prose poet, Russell Edson says, "The Prose Poem is an approach, but certainly not a form; it is art, but more general art than most of the other arts... the spirit or approach which is represented in the prose poem is not specifically literary..."¹⁵

To be "not specifically literary" is in direct opposition to how we teach young poets, I think. In the writing workshop one of the things "literary" primarily means being able to wield control over one's language and ideas. Both Lorca and Edson, it seems, are opposed to such kinds of control; to "voice" classes; mathematical scansion; paint-by-number poems. But is to suggest eliminating that which is literary, also to suggest eliminating Tradition? That is, should we do away with the literary canon, as well as our models and techniques for teaching poetry if our students are to discover what Edson calls "the joy and energy of general creation and substance"?¹⁶ According to Lorca, "The Duende's arrival always means a radical change in forms. It brings to old planes unknown feelings of freshness, with the quality of something newly created, like a miracle, and it produces an almost religious enthusiasm..."¹⁷

The question then becomes, is it a teacher's job to teach young poets how to imagine, how to feel? This is ridiculous, of course, but to teach the craft of poetry as if it is all there is to poetry, it the equivalent of trying to teach the craft of emotion. We seem to imply that the clever execution of elements like metaphor and image are all it takes to communicate one's feelings. Concepts like Duende, are both the most difficult/slippery and the most necessary to teach if students are to see poems as something more than mere machines they can assemble. In workshops the concept of Duende is indispensable because it demands risk. Duende demands, eliminating (or at least revising) the notion of evaluation, of end products and quantifiable works where poetry is concerned. Like the Imagination, like the Unconscious, like Emotion itself, Duende cannot be measured. To our students

we must say as the audience in Cadiz said to the singer, that ultimately "we care nothing about ability, technique, skill. Here we are after something else..." We must acknowledge it, wrestle with it: the terrible presence of the inexplicable.

Notes

1 Bly, Robert. *Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 6.

2 Ibid, p. 29.

3 Fraim, John. *Song Catcher: The Life and Art of John Coltrane*. (Ohio: GreatHouse Books, 1996), p. 188.

4 Lorca, Federico Garcia. *In Search of Duende*. ed. Christopher Maurer. (New York: New Directions), p viii.

5 Ibid, p. 52-53.

6 O'Mahony, Mike. *Essential Surrealists*. ed. Martin, Tim. (London: Demsey Park, 1999), p. 7.

7 Dobyns, Stephen. *Best Words, Best Order: Essays on Poetry*. (New York: St. Martins, 1996), p. 307.

8 Levis, Larry. *The Dollmaker's Ghost*. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon Press), p. 48.

9 *Leaping Poetry*, Robert Bly's translation of "New York." p. 37-38.

10 *In Search of Duende*. p viii.

11 Heyen, William. *The Generation of 2000: Contemporary American Poets*. ed. William Heyen. (New Jersey: Ontario Review Press, 1984), p. xx-xxi.

12 *Leaping Poetry*, p. 29.

13 Stevens, Wallace. *The Collected Poems*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 285.

14 Lorca, Federico Garica. *Selected Verse*. (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1995), p. 237.

15 Edson, Russell. "Portrait of the Writer as a Fat Man." *A Field Guide to Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*. eds. Stuart Friebert and David Young. (New York: Longman, 1980) p 302.

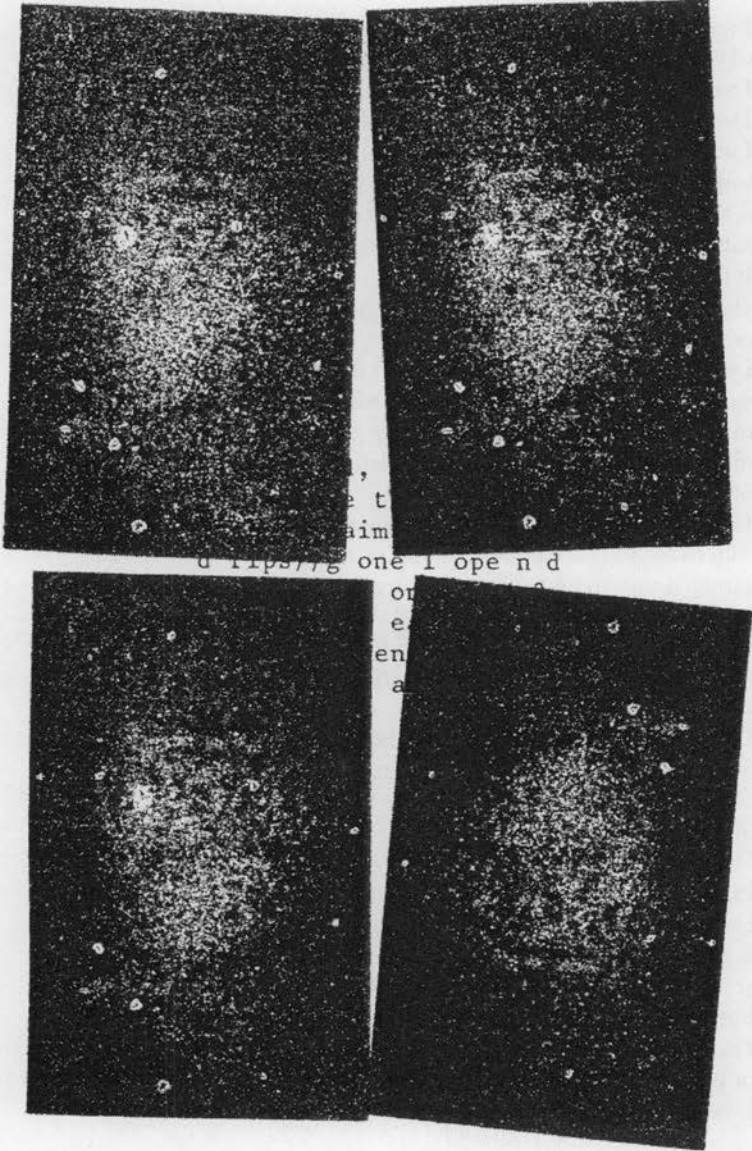
16 Ibid. p 302.

17 *In Search of Duende*, p. 53.

Serenade

I want to always sleep beneath a bright red blanket
of leaves. I want to never wear a coat of ice.
I want to learn to walk without blinking.
I want to learn the language of a Chilean poet.
I want to say God & fuck you & touch me
without blinking. I want to outlive the turtle
& the turtle's father, the stone. I want a mouth
full of permissions & a pink glistening bud.
If the wildflower & ant hill can return
after sleeping three seasons, I want to walk
out of this house wearing nothing but wind.
I want to greet you, I want to wait for the bus with you
weighing less than a chill. I want to fight off the bolts
of gray lighting the alcoves & winding paths
of your hair. I want to fight off the damp nudgings
of snow. I want to fight off the wind.
I want to be the wind & I want to fight off the wind
with its sagging banner of isolation, its swinging
screen doors, its gilded boxes, & neatly folded pamphlets
of noise. I want to fight off the dull straight lines
of two by fours & endings, your disapprovals,
your doubts & regulations, your carbon copies.
If the locust can abandon its suit,
I want a brand new name. I want the pepper's fury
& the salt's tenderness. I want the eight-sided passion
of sugar, but not its need. I want the virtue
of the evening rain, but not its gossip.
I want the moon's intuition, but not its questions.
I want the malice of nothing on earth. I want to enter
every room in a strange electrified city
& find you there. I want your lips around the bell of flesh
at the bottom of my ear. I want to be the mirror,
but not the nightstand. I do not want to be the light switch.
I do not want to be the yellow photograph
or book of poems. When I leave this body, Woman,
I want to be pure flame and song. I want to be your breath.

Untitled No. 2



Contributors' Notes

John M. Bennett's most recent books include *Mailer Leaves Ham* (Pantograph Press), *rOlling COMBers* (Potes & Poets Press), *Ditch Cloth* (Xtantbooks), and *The Chapters: 1980-2001* (co-author, Robin Crozier) (Luna Bisonte Prods. He is editor of the avant-garde journal *Lost and Found Times*, and Curator of the Avant Writing Collection at the Ohio State University Libraries.

Richard N. Bentley is an urban planner. He currently teaches at Western New England College and the University of Massachusetts. In 1994 he won the Paris Review/Paris Writers Workshop International Fiction Award.

Sarah Dickerson, Michigan native, earned her Master's degree in Composition and Communications at Central Michigan University, and more recently, recieved her MFA from University of Iowa's Nonfiction Writing program. She lives in Coralville Iowa with her two daughters, Esther and Emily, where she plans to stay.

Andrea Drugay is a San Francisco-based artist and writer. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in print and online journals including *Karamu*, *The Appalachian Review*, *Zuzu's Petals*, *Wings*, and *Unlikely Stories*.

Terrance Hayes' second book of poems, *Hip Logic* (Penguin 2002) was a National Poetry Series selection. He received a Whiting Writers Award and the Kate Tufts Discovery Award for *Muscular Music*, his debut collection. His poems have also recently appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Southern Review*. He is currently a member of the creative writing faculty at Carnegie Mellon University.

Christian Horlick was born in Los Angeles, California and raised in Ohio. He received his Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Virginia Commonwealth University in May 2002. He has

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Darin Kerr has recently completed his M.A. in English at the University of North Dakota. He currently resides in Grand Forks, North Dakota. His work has appeared recently in *North Country*.

Sean Aden Lovelace is a reader, writer, runner, teacher, and registered nurse. He recently graduated from the University of Alabama MFA program. He recently published in *Crazyhorse*, *Black Warrior Review*, *New Orleans Review*, and so on. He enjoys canoeing and the game of bocce.

Ander Monson is originally from Upper Michigan and has lived most of his life in the Midwest and the Middle East. His recent work can be found (or is forthcoming) in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Fence*, *Quarterly West*, *Gulf Coast*, *West Branch*, and the *New Orleans Review*.

Nathan Oates's fiction has appeared in *The Louisville Review*, *Eyeshot*, *Opium Magazine* and *Pindeldyboz*. He has studied at the Center for Writers in Hattiesburg, MS and will be attending the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins in the Fall of 2002.

Erica Olsen lives in San Francisco. Her writing has appeared recently in *ZYZZYVA* and *High Country News*.

Amy Parker was born in Okinawa and grew up in East Asia, Australia, and Turkey. She received a B.A. in Comparative Literature and French from Indiana University, Bloomington, and was granted a Michener fellowship in fiction from the Michener Center for Writers in Austin, Texas, where she has just completed her M.F.A. She is currently engaged in monastic practice in California. This is her first published piece.

Oliver Rice received the 1998 Theodore Roethke Prize. He was nominated recently for a Pushcart Prize and featured on *Poetry Daily*. Appears in *Ohio Review's* anthology *New and Selected* and in Bedford/St. Martin's college textbooks, *Poetry*:

An Introduction, and *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*.

Gregory Seagle teaches Writing Fiction at Towson University and Playwriting in the Schools for Baltimore's *Center Stage*. His musical *Albert*, a Jungian fairytale fantasy was produced by the *Baltimore Laboratory Theater*, and his short story *Ezra* was published in *The Dickinson Review*. In addition, he has won several fiction prizes.

Suzu Spraker earned her MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has been published in *The Greensboro Review*, *Artisan*, *The Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Carve Magazine*, and a forthcoming issue of *The Southern Review*. Currently, she teaches creative writing at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida.

Elizabeth Brewster Thomas is a Ph.D. student in English at the University of Missouri, where she has received two Academy of American Poets Prizes. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Paris Review*, *Nimrod*, *Southern Poetry Review* and other journals.

Victoria Tolbert, a Kentucky native residing in Seattle, Washington, has presented her work in a variety of venues including Insomniacathon 2000 in Louisville, Kentucky and the 2001 United Nations "Dialogue Among Nations" global poetry event. Her poetry has appeared in *Louisville Urban Voice* and *Another Chicago Magazine* among others. Reach her at victoria_tolbert@hotmail.com.

Tora Triolo, who currently lives in upstate New York, was a 1996 graduate of the University of Idaho. She earned her Masters in English from The College of Saint Rose. Her work can be found in *So to Speak: A Feminist Journal of Language and Art*, as well as various self-publications scattered throughout the country.

Margaret Walther is a librarian at the Aurora Public Library, past president of Columbine Poets Inc., a statewide organization to promote poetry in Colorado, and has been a guest editor for *Buffalo Bones*. Her poetry has appeared in

Comstock Review, *Karamu*, *Lucid Stone*, *Gertrude*, and other journals. She has a poem forthcoming in *Plainsongs*.

Ellen Wehle is an editor at an advertising agency. She has been featured at the Boston and Worcester poetry festivals, and her book, *The Blue Route*, was a finalist for the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize in 2001. She lives in Winthrop, Massachusetts.

Pamela Yenser, a Midwesterner from Wichita, Kansas, now lives in the Northwest. She was a nominee for the Pushcart Prize XXVII, winner of an American Academy of Poets award at the University of Washington, and first-place recipient of a Hannibal poetry contest. Her poems and essays appear in *Ascent*, *Elysian Fields*, *Iowa Woman*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Pivot*, *Shenandoah*, and *Poetry Northwest*. Her work is collected in publications of *The Spirit That Moves Us Press* (Iowa City) and (Vancouver).



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