

## The Windy Hill review. 2011

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The Windy Hill Review  
2011



# *The Windy Hill Review*

33rd Edition  
2011



*A Campus of the University of Wisconsin Colleges*

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Waukesha, Wisconsin 53188

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# More Than Just a Train Ride

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

I watch the last gasp of winter slide  
past the clouded glass Brown fields,  
gray sky, a silent horizontal broken  
abruptly by a harsh vertical

The hawk, riding atop a skeletal tree,  
looks forward then back

I, on the other hand, sit solidly backward,  
while heading forward, waiting for what  
has already happened to pass my eyes  
It's here Then gone Just like that,  
before I can focus on what I never really saw

In my life, the now flashes by like that,  
often just a blur as I move into the future  
Not of the Great Unknown we all  
acknowledge is out there, somewhere,  
but the ordinary unknowns of every day

Leaning back, I close my eyes  
Picture the hawk with its omniscient vision  
and prescient eyes, feel most clearly  
what it is I have left behind

# Seashell Eyes

Anonymous

In the beginning

our hands were coffee and cream

The color was soft and sweet – intensely addictive

But coffee grows bitter and cream coagulates, turns sour

In the beginning

your heart was the deep and pungent

soil where these roots of mine drank from gluttonously

But that rich soil became an impoverished desert

In the beginning

the earth was our floor, the sky our ceiling

And we were so powerful that everything was, obviously, ours

But they came in the night and rendered our souls homeless

In the beginning

Your eyes were not such hollow seashells.



# Stayfree Carefree

Owen Abbott

2007. I was watching my supervisor writhing on the cold warehouse floor, screaming in pain. Nothing I could do. Everyone was watching and standing still. Making wreaths.

Right about then I decided I was done with warehouse work.

2010. I'm working in a warehouse. Just got the job four days ago. \$16.25 per hour, twelve hour shift, weekends and Monday. During training we had to watch an hour-long video telling us not to unionize. The video says that unions tear communities apart. It also says that if you join a union all of your friends will turn on you and laugh at you behind your back. "Unions would jeopardize the fun, fast, and friendly environment!"

A managerial suitwoman asks us if we have any questions for her about unions when the video finishes. We have none. She smiles.

Yesterday my job was to fill semi-trailers 50-58 with boxes of cheap merchandise for distribution to superstores. Some of it heavy, some of it light. Boxes of cheap merchandise slide down rapidly at all conveyors, and I fill the trailers to the ceiling with walls of the stuff, keeping things as compact as possible.

A box labeled "Stayfree" came down the conveyor into trailer 52, followed by one labeled "Carefree." I set them aside and moved to keep working on the other trailers.

The lunch bell rang. A man stopped me on my way to the breakroom and asked how I like the job. I say it's good. I'd like to stay here. He looks at me and says, "What you want is to go to college." Told me that he should have gone himself, but missed his chance, had a son, and now he's too old. He's not free. He's not carefree.

"Go to college," he says.

I'm used to this speech, by now.

2007. When I was working in the wreath warehouse, I brought a book to read during lunch every day.

One day an old man came by during lunch. I was sitting on the floor. He told me that you're not supposed to sit on a cold concrete floor, or else you'll get hemorrhoids. I never sat on the floor again. This concluded my higher education in the warehouse world. Then he noticed my book.

He was surprised. Asked if I was 'some sort of college-boy.' I told him no. He told me I should go. A crowd gathered around. All of the people on break were staring at me like I was a circus animal. "He's reading?"

Lunch ended. We returned to our workplaces. A woman in the back said to her friend, "I used to bring books to work, but I didn't read them."

2010. I had accumulated a large number of boxes labeled "carefree" and "stayfree" in trailer 52 and built a wall out of them. Facing out and ordered, "Stayfree, Carefree, Stayfree, Carefree," so that whoever unloads the trailer when it reaches its destination unburies the message. I wonder if he'll see it, or if he'll just unload things.

I filled the trailer. It went on its way. Message in a bottle.



New trailer came in. This one has holes at the top of the walls for ventilation, and sunlight is getting in. I drive to the dimly lit warehouse when it's dark, and it's dark again when I leave. I'm not used to sunlight. My job is to fill the trailer to the top and slowly cover the light with walls of cardboard boxes. Somebody has written on the siding in permanent marker. Trailer graffiti. Like the bathroom hieroglyphics you see in men's room stalls, but more inspirational and heartfelt and depressing.

"Get out of here!" "Live for today!" "Education is a money machine!" "Republicans for Voldemort!" "Leave the daily grind, it's pathetic!"

Whoever wrote it—he's stuck.

Like the man with the son who told me he's too old. He's locked-in like a box of cheap merchandise in the walls we build.

But as far as getting a message across, it beats arranging boxes of tampons. "Stayfree, carefree."

"Go to college," the permanent marker message says.

2002. When I was in high school, I aced the tests but didn't do the homework. I didn't care. I sealed away my future.

The guidance counselor, spec ed teacher, and school psych 'analyze' me, and have me sent into special education. A black mark on my life. A source of shame. I watch for four years as normal kids are pulled into the same class, and then manipulated, and changed.

One kid comes in—he's the new kid. He's shy. This is initially the reason why they put him into the class. Not for a learning disability, but for being 'emotionally disturbed.'

But he's normal, and a friend of mine. Sometimes he voices his opinion. Says that he doesn't think he's supposed to be here. She tells him that he is. That she didn't make a mistake. Chastises him. Diagnoses pills. Teachers can diagnose things.

Over the years, he changes. He's no longer normal. He becomes what she wanted him to become. Invariably, this happens to every normal person that gets pulled into the class. Every R.P. McMurphy is lobotomized. I become the Big Chief.

Stay quiet. Be polite. Pretend.

2006. I'm eighteen; I have to attend a meeting. An "IEP" meeting—the mass produced 'individualized education plan' meeting which goes the same for every one of us crazy students.

A thick packet of information about me is produced, and the teacher tells me to just sign it and initial it and sign it again and then I can be on my way. The psych sits in a chair next to her saying nothing. "This is just a formality," the teacher says. "Don't read it—that's a waste of time." Reading things is a waste of time.

Teachers here keep taking away my books. Over the years I've lost two Ray Bradbury anthologies and multiple novels. Never returned. I spent too much time reading in classes.

Reading things is a waste of time.

I read through the packet, past the wishy-washy first page, into the second, into the third where things are hidden. It's saying I have 'severe antisocial disorder' with a 'clear lack of emotions.' Emotionally disturbed.

I've studied psychology. 'Sociopath' is an obsolete term. The blanket term used today is 'Severe Anti-Social Disorder.' A sociopath will use any means to gain an end. Operate without empathy. Thought to lack emotions. Not necessarily criminal, but calculating and capable of criminal acts. 'Antisocial' from a psychiatric standpoint means everything from psychopath to sociopath to shy.

They're trying to mark me as a cataclysmic case. This is her diagnosis, as a teacher. She smiles. She has something to gain.

I am a bolstered credential. I am job security. I am a means to an end.

I push away the form. "I'm not signing."

She stops smiling. She tells me that it would be illegal for them to keep this file on record if I don't sign. That it would have to be shredded, all of her work would be shredded. She urged me to sign. Told me college would be part of the bigger picture for me if I signed.

Think about the bigger picture!

"I won't sign."

2010. I woke up this morning and some of my fingers had fallen out of joint. Must have happened sometime during the night. Byproduct of long hours of manual labor and an old injury from life as a woodsman. I'm used to it by now. Put them back into place and went to the computer lab to write. It's my weekend.

Stayfree, carefree.

One day in 2007 my supervisor came to work twenty minutes late.

She was a larger woman. She came in panting heavily. "I'm sorry... I'm late..." she said. "Car... broke down... Had to walk..." Everyone was making wreathes.

It's cold out there. A long walk in the cold.

Her face was bright red.

I focused on my work. Ten minutes later I heard the first scream and she was slumped over her table; her face was scarlet.

Everyone stared. Nobody moved. Everyone was making wreathes.

She was screaming, and she was dying. I was panicked.

She was a step away from me. Nothing I could do.

Someone with a radio called for the big boss. The big boss came in. Stood before the woman. She was laying on the concrete floor now. You're not supposed to sit on a concrete floor or else you'll get hemorrhoids.

He looked down. Pulled up his radio. Said, 'We have a code blue.' Then walked away.

Everyone kept making wreathes and staring and she kept screaming. I tried to block it out of my mind. They had a code for this. 'Code Blue.' This meant a procedure was being acted out. Everything going according to plan. Someone had called an ambulance. Tried to focus on the wreathes.

Those jolly symbols of disposable income.

When I was a woodsman I used to cut the boughs off the balsam trees, thousands of pounds per day, and sell them to the wreath warehouse. At twenty three cents per pound it was a good job, until my truck exploded. That's why I went to the warehouse for employment.

The ambulance arrived. Pimple faced manboys with a stretcher came in, and the slack jawed leader looked down at the woman. Clutching her chest with a



scarlet face, screaming on the floor.

"Uhhhhh," he says. "Ma'am. What I'm going to need you to do... Is get up, and get on the stretcher."

This was the plan being followed. This was the procedure. This was code blue.

They got her out. Eventually. Once she stopped screaming. Once she started panting and the red in her face was starting to diminish.

At the end of the day, she called from the hospital. Said that she 'threw her back out.' "No, boss. I'm not liability and that was not a heart attack. I 'threw my back out.' Please don't fire me."

I was what people called a 'woodsman,' before the warehouse work. Harvesting thousands of pounds of balsam boughs and birch twigs and sheet moss, depending on the season. And I would cut down the trees that remain standing dead. It occurred to me often that I was like the trees, when I was at the warehouse. When I was at school. Standing dead.

When I came back to the lower half of the state, I thought about the people. There are people here.

There were people in the northwoods too, of course, but not as many. And when election season came—a politician rallied the people against the library. He blamed the library for everything from high water bills to the ineffective volunteer fire department to the lack of funding for a public cemetery. He concluded every speech he made, every tirade with the paper, with the statement, "I hope you all join me up on this trip."

I still don't know what that means.

There are people here, in the city, that don't do that. That don't rally against libraries, that don't scapegoat against anything in sight for the sake of scapegoating.

This is what I believed.

And I think about getting a job in retail, when I'm here. At a bookstore, preferably. I apply at Harry Schwartz, but their entire chain goes out of business. I apply at Barnes and Noble.

I call. A woman answers the phone and I ask if anyone has seen my application and if I can speak with management. She laughs lightly and says, "We get dozens of applications per day." Emphasizing the number. Okay.

I apply at Half Price Books, but I already know I won't get the job. Through our early experiences, we are forever marked as leaders, followers, or outcasts. These are my experiences. Survival in the woods. Warehouse work. Temp work. Warehouse work.

At the library, I'm looking up a Vonnegut book on the computer. A boy is talking with his mother in line to use the catalog computer behind me. Talking about a job he's hoping to get. I take a notecard and the pencil provided. Write out, "Best of luck!" and walk away, leaving it on the keyboard. Maybe he finds it, maybe he doesn't.

Stayfree, Carefree.

2008. I went to the public computer lab, one day, to write.

A guy has to have a hobby.

I walked in and there was utter silence. Usually the place is packed with students, but it was largely empty. Most of the people are sitting at the computers on the far, opposite sides of the lab and there is no sound of typing. It's dead silent.

I walk to the center of the lab, and sit down across from one of the other few people that are in the center of the lab.

Within seconds of booting up, a man across from me shouts, "I'm going to kill you!"

I look up. Blink a few times. He's looking past me, at a young couple who are sitting at a nearby computer. They're frozen. I look around. Everyone is frozen. Everyone is looking. The people who work at the lab are no place to be seen. Everyone is staring at the man.

Every few seconds, the man makes another outburst. "Going to dump your bodies in a ditch!"

And then there's another pause.

"I got connections!"

Everyone is silent. Everyone is staring. Nobody is doing anything. I am at the wreath warehouse again, where everyone stares and nobody does anything.

Who is this man?

A sociopath?

I was marked as one of those, too. Wasn't I?

I think—if I don't have emotions, if I don't have fear, I can stop this man.

Besides—"I got connections?" That's so hokey. Clearly a bluff.

I stand up and tell the man to leave. Silence. Now he's staring at me, silently.

The couple that he was initially threatening?

They leave. Immediately. Quickly.

The man makes one of his threats to me. "I got connections."

Yeah, yeah. And you're sitting in a lab, looking at MySpace.

This is the anatomy of my experience. The experiences I've written out on another application to another book store. They look so different, on the application.

2007-2010: Job Title: Woodsman. Reason for leaving, Seasonal.

2008-2009: Job Title: Temp. Reason for leaving, Temp.

2010-Present: Job Title: Warehouse Worker. Reason for leaving? N/A.

Will I get the job? Perhaps not. Our early work experience will mark us forever as leaders, followers, or outcasts. But I might as well try.

Stayfree, carefree.

# Capture

Danielle Jenson

your name falls upon my breath  
it seeps slowly from every pore  
my position so unkempt  
the pulse beneath climbs for more

under the white sounds like a train  
the color rouge paints the cheek  
the blackness dilates through the frame  
thousands of nerve endings pin you for the keep

shapes meet one another in a frenzy of twists  
tangle after tangle as the heat melts the ice  
breaking the ground as passion claims the wrists  
your fingers take the physical at the rise of Christ

your name falls upon my breath

the descent clouds my vision  
gasping through a desperate throat  
when realized our positions  
how we are found from the identical loaf

you tripped my brain to let yourself in  
at the gate you gave me your truth  
a long time ago the trail did begin  
but you had trespassed at the booth

entwined was almost lost forever  
scar tissue now formed at the brim  
our hearts bounced through the weather  
your persistence grabbed me by the limbs

your name falls upon my breath

now the spell circulates the body  
of yours and mine the same reflection  
planes and angles drawn from a copy  
the form now bent from the connection

and still your name falls upon the cracked  
it seeps quickly from every pore  
my position so exact  
the pulse climbs and it soars

your name fell upon my breath





**Hannah Mooney**

You know  
 They do say  
 Two is better than  
 One  
 An English major's favorite  
 Dynamic duo you  
 Break apart  
 And join those elements  
 You do with others  
 Just cannot  
 You're a grammar  
 Super hero  
 Could it be  
 That we just  
 Got off on the wrong foot?  
 I'll give you one more try  
 I'll see what you can do  
 All I ask is that you  
 Just  
 Keep  
 Whipping



# Semi-colon

## Jake Baudo

Split personality  
A grammar identity crisis  
You can't commit  
You lack originality  
You're an identity thief  
You cause a riff  
Between two  
Wonderful marks.  
Your purpose is  
Already taken.  
You're worthless.

A hybrid,  
I suppose  
A combination of  
Two necessities  
You have  
Two times  
The power of a  
Normal mark,  
You're this plus that.  
You know,  
They do say  
Two is better than  
One.

An English major's favorite  
Dynamic duo, you  
Break apart ,  
And join those clauses.  
You do what others  
Just cannot.  
You're a grammar  
Super hero.  
Could it be  
That we just  
Got off on the wrong foot?  
I'll give you one more try;  
I'll see what you can do.  
All I ask is that you  
Just  
Keep  
Winking.

# To My Cat

Audrey Ericson

I'll let you roll on my floor;  
Be loose and wild.  
But can I have your play time?  
Right now, I have none.

My desk? It's yours.  
Perch there; cover my homework;  
Gaze out the window.  
But can I have your free time?

Drink my milk; lap it up.  
Let its cool, creaminess comprise your rested body,  
Be full.  
But can I have your tranquil mind?

Take my bed if you want something  
So soft to lie on,  
But can I have your sleep?  
I wish I were you.



Codi Leister



# Where I'm From

Jessica Popp

I am from Grandma's kitchen,  
from Palmolive and butter cookies.

I am from the creek that ran cold along Grampa's cabin  
(alluring and forbidden.)

I am from the lilac bushes that framed the back window  
And the red and white petunias my mother planted in clumsy rows  
Every spring.

I am from notes from Santa and rock'n'roll  
From Sue and Dan  
the realist and the idealist  
From "guilty until proven innocent" and "let your heart be your guide"  
I'm from questions without answers  
and "The Lord's Prayer" (but only at Grandma's house.)

I'm from my mother, who was always home  
From chicken and dumplings and homemade spaghetti sauce  
From my sister's martyred fist, the fracture that ruined her summer  
After a boy spat in her face and called her dyke.  
I'm from the box with the flowery letters labeled "Jessica's Precious Keepsakes:"  
Locks of hair, old mix tapes, yearbooks, pictures, and love notes  
begging to be read once more.

I am from those moments  
when music and laughter saved me  
And I was reminded from where I came.



Sara Boeck

# Don't Let the Biscuits Burn

Kathrine Yetz

Sitting,  
books batter my bed. Brain baking bit-sized biscuit information. Words  
with my lobes. Books in the oven, dinner  
on the table at six.



# Motherhood

Jessica Popp

Another load of laundry to wash,  
Another bag of garbage to toss

Another batch of cookies to bake,  
Another smile to try and fake

Another bill to stack in the pile,  
Another dream to wait awhile

Another whine, another why,  
Another moment I wanna cry

Another dime stretched to a dollar,  
Another \$7.75 an hour

Another sign-on-the-dotted line,  
Another fine for a petty crime

Another call, another fight,  
Another tortured, sleepless night

Another rant, another rave,  
Another reason to misbehave

Another hit, another beer,  
Another moment free from fear

Another want, another dream,  
Another reason for a cunning scheme.

Another how, another where,  
Another cross for me to bear

Another tired, working mother,  
Another, another, another, another.

# Why I Should Have Kept My Ironing Board

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

Who knew after all these years  
I would think of Tillie Olsen  
whose book I read in the 1980's,  
when overwhelmed by roles I thought  
were who I was.

Tillie's book was Silence,  
a book about days so full of living  
there was no time to write  
She wrote a woman's life, of cleaning  
and caring And ironing Thinking  
words that would not find  
paper for years

My mother ironed every Tuesday,  
her sure arm moving back  
and forth across the board, turning  
each item with a practiced hand,  
smoothing out all wrinkles  
as though they were her life

I did learn to iron as did we all,  
never grasping the zen of movement  
as did Mother Never reflecting  
on life and loss as did Tillie

As I said before ... Maybe  
I should have kept the ironing board.

# The Careful Placement of Bliss

Sheryl Davis-Troller

Life is hard. They say, you've heard, they write, you've read. And still you are so unprepared.

\* \* \*

He is telling you again, "If you loved me, you would..." You learn to shut off your ears. You turn your attention to the TV, take notice of the moth fluttering around the lampshade, observe the fancy design in the palms of your hands.

All the while, you make resolutions.

Resolve: You will have your palm read. You will dust the lampshades more regularly, the TV screen also.

"If you loved me..." He goes on and on.

You find that it sneaks up on you sometimes. More of his words make it past your barriers than you really want to hear. Somewhere inside you, curiosity swells, you are pregnant with it.

\* \* \*

"What do you expect from someone whose favorite TV show was *The Partridge Family*?" He laughs. He thinks this is funny.

That one you hear. It's as plain as the fingerprints on the wall by the lightswitch.

"*The Partridge Family*?" You ask this only because you don't want him to accuse you of not listening.

"Well, I don't know what my absolute favorite would be, but I liked *The Partridge Family* a lot." He knows more details about *Gilligan's Island* than anyone else would want to admit. This embarrasses you at parties.

You figure that it only figures that you would marry a man who judges himself, and other people, almost exclusively by what they watch on TV. You tell him you must not have watched very much TV, you never watched much TV, you don't remember turning it on. You, the person who swore that she would never have a bed and a TV in the same room—an evil combination, you said—you go into the bedroom to watch *LA Law*.

\* \* \*

It sneaks up again and again. You are curious enough to go through his pockets, his wallet, his desk drawers, unfold all the folded papers. Fold them back up again. You don't know what you look for but you look, look, look.

You scribble down lines of poetry, of what you hope is poetry. He stares over your shoulder and asks what the hell you're doing. When you tell him, he grunts, "What's it about?" You ask if he wants to read it, hold out the little green notebook from the Perry Drug Store, ready to hand him everything it is that you think, all at the tips of your fingers at the end of your outstretched arm, all written out, page after page.

But he says, "No, just tell me what it's about." Without reply, you leave the room.

There used to be James Taylor. He would whisper love songs to you in the



dark when you were on the edge of sleep. Your bare neck was overwhelmingly attractive to him. Against his better judgment, he told you a secret: If it were possible, he'd like to kiss your brain for how much he loved it—the way you thought.

Now he can tell you the entire story line for *Knots Landing*, who did what to whom and when. Every *Married...with Children* episode unfolds for you in intricate detail at the dinner table. Nothing else to talk about. He jokes that he is preparing for Trivial Pursuit questions, television knowledge.

He knows all the scores to all the games. Newspaper on his lap, TV three feet in front of him, radio to his left. Who won which race.

You decide to look into tarot cards. That's next on the list. How much does a psychic session cost? You want to know what is going on.

\* \* \*

Daily he goes to work out at the gym. Since you are on a lookout, somewhat of a stakeout, you notice he has a pair of jeans in his gym bag, yet he comes and goes in the same sweatpants and ripped sweatshirt. Never changes clothes that you see.

Another curious tidbit: He showers after work, before going to the gym. "Who you trying to impress?" you ask him and he spills all of his anxious pent up secretive guts. They are all over the floor in one splish splash of color. She is a topless dancer, she is someone he can talk to, she is a banker, she understands him, she is a checker at the hardware store, she accepts him as he is, she owns the hardware store. Remember he told you he liked to take his time, he liked to fondle, at the hardware store. And you, well, you were more of an in-and-out type of shopper.

You never asked him whom he was trying to impress by taking a shower before working out, but you will. You will ask. But how will you bring up the jeans he has stashed in the bag, the clean shirt? This will take more preparation, more rehearsal.

These things make you wonder. It has to make you wonder. Anyone would wonder.

You listen to all his phone calls, listen for a female voice, listen to what he says, any odd remarks. Does he shift his weight more than usual. Does he pay too much attention to where you are and what you are doing while he's on the phone. Does he give vague answers. Too many yes and no responses. You pay more attention to him when he talks to someone else than you do when he speaks to you directly.

\* \* \*

He stammers.

You grapple.

He babbles.

What is the accomplishment? Bonding is for teeth, you think.

He cajoles you.

You patrol you, hold back all the feelings that want to bust down the wiry gate and start a riot.

You wince. You stew.

You check his checkbook to see what he spends his money on. Aware of his every scent, you ready for any changes; you sniff all of his clothing.

You make macaroni and cheese and decide to eat the whole steamy thing without sharing. Let him fend for himself. Of course, you feel sick from trying to finish, but it's worth it. The glorious triumph. The noodles stick gluey to the pan. You wonder if the squirmy noodles would glue to his face.

\* \* \*

"We could paint numbers on those," he says and he points to the ceiling tiles while you lie in bed together. "Paint numbers here and there on each square. Not in any order. All around."

You say, "Why? What for?" There was a time when you would have found this humorous, or a little attractive, or a little interesting. That time did exist, didn't it?

"Just to do it. No reason."

He shrugs.

You mug.

He squirms.

You eat cold spaghetti. Hide leftovers at the back of the fridge. In the butter compartment. Someplace where he won't find it.

\* \* \*

You have dreams that he is sleeping with someone else. This you confide in him at a moment of weakness, a moment when you aren't quite awake, you aren't quite out of the dream. You don't name who you think it is. Not aloud. But you think you know. In fact, you think you've met her, even liked her at that meeting.

He tells you it is just a dream. The thing of it is, you think, he never denies it. He's not exactly lying by saying it's a dream, but the smell of infidelity still lingers all around him in the bedsheets, in your shared marital bedsheets.

\* \* \*

So then there is Bob Dylan. He pops up, pops in, waits around for you in your bedroom, your old bedroom at your parents' house. The shades are drawn but brightness seeps in at the corners of the windows. All of your skin jingle jangles for love, like noisy bracelets. Bob's tired. He's really bushed. He appears littler than you would have thought. You determine he is there to seduce you. He wants you like he wants no one else. You are his secret desire.

This makes you...maybe you are there to seduce him. Wait. You want a map to show you how to get through this dream properly. What is the route and is it safe and how long will it take. In your dream's mind's eye, you look at your watch. Then into a pleasant day, you walk, walk, walk. Run into an old roommate from way back when, from those days when you remember smiling. She bicycles to a stop. Say to her, guess who I have at my house right this minute. She believes you and her belief makes it true.

You wake up wondering why you left Bob Dylan, a seducer at large, in a darkened eerily seductive but lonely bedroom. Why Bob? Intent on dreaming about this again, on making it work out this time, you think about it every nightfall for the next week. With no repeat performance, you see the blues coming at you again and again. Deep indigos and azures and what a moody mix of blue you are.

You begin to put a lot of stock in your dreams. Make a note to yourself that you will check into books about dreams. See if Bob Dylan has his own chapter.



More dreams happen. Now it is a faceless person, a person all in shadows. He seduces you and you seduce him. At least you try. He tries. You keep removing clothing but there is always another something underneath, always. Layer upon layer of clothing. Shirts and shirts. You wake up in a sweat before anything can happen in the dream because you couldn't get your clothes off. You blame him, there next to you, wheezing in his sleep, ruining your dreams. You are sure it is his fault. You kick him and pretend you did it in your sleep, having nightmares again.

You write yourself another note to get to the library for those dream books.

\* \* \*

"If you loved me, you would trust me."

"If you loved me, you would give me something to trust."

These aren't words either of you say. All implication.

\* \* \*

A momentary truce, a pause. You pretend you are a family, so then you are.

He describes his life: The elevator is broken in the building where he lives. So he climbs the seventeen flights of stairs to where his apartment is. Top floor. Only to find that he's in the wrong building. His building is in the next block. (He thinks you are falling in love with him again. You want to say: It's not that I love you, or ever loved you, or even liked you all that much. I just need the company.) (You believe this crap.) (You believe this crap because this crap is true. It was only after the wedding that you realized he was a preoccupation that kept your mind from worrying about other life decisions. Stopped. Going nowhere and heading there on a run-away train.)

You say: That's interesting, to his 'wrong building' story, though you find all sorts of flaws in it: At least the building was in the correct city. The correct neighborhood. It could be much, much worse.

You decide you detest him. He has gained weight and you are sure it is because this woman he is seeing is pregnant and he is sympathetic. How long has this been going on? You will maintain records on exactly what you see him eat to determine if he should be gaining weight, is he maybe eating dual meals. Going out for drinks. Also, are there any strange cravings. What has he been packing for lunch. No information is trivial.

You describe your life with a story: I run out to my car, the lone car in the middle of a parking lot. Dark. Empty. No one. The doors are locked. Millions of keys on the key ring and I try each and every one and I tell you, not one fits. I realize I never had the right set of keys to the car. I only thought that I did.

\* \* \*

Back to the unspoken quarrel. Nothing specific sets it off but you go through silent days. Never look into each other's eyes. You watch him sidewise and he watches you. But if you look up at him, he appears to be intent on the *Who's the Boss?* rerun, or he's intent on the space just to the left of your head. Your eyes are glazed as doughnuts when he looks at you.

You plug in the headphones and listen to the stereo all night. Flipping up and down the dial. Lie in the green glow of the stereo receiver, too tired to get up, too tired to sleep. Up and down the dial. Searching for the better song. (You wonder to yourself: Is something wrong with me?) Headphones are a wonderful invention,



you can't sleep without them. You certainly can't sleep in that bed with him.

Stay off my side, you said. Don't touch me, I don't want to, I'm exhausted. You sleep on the sofa in the living room, the headphones attached to the stereo. Sometimes you sit upside down on the chair, resting your head on the ottoman. In this position, you feel exotic. No longer yourself.

Whenever he is home, you wear personal headphones attached to a walk-along radio. He says he doesn't like it, you are closing him off, shutting him out. You say to him, it's no different than what you do with the TV. No different. You shut me out too. That shut him up.

\* \* \*

He says he did it that last time, two years ago, to get back at you for what he thought you were doing. Two years into marriage. He went out with his old girlfriend, a girlfriend from high school. Slowly, you began to trust him again, you worked things out, but suspicions hurricane in your mind. You place all the pieces together, careful, careful. All of your inklings, every trace of wrongdoing.

\* \* \*

Cope. Cope. Cope. It is all you can do. (That, and honing your snooping skills.) Cope rhymes with dope rhymes with mope rhymes with pope rhymes with nope and hope.

As far as you are concerned, they could never play another love song again and you wouldn't miss it a bit. Love, love, who needs it. Those people don't know what they're talking about.

As far as you are concerned, love doesn't last. People can't stay in love, that heaviness in your heart and lightness in your stomach, the natural feeling of being in love – it doesn't last. If you even had that feeling to begin with. Why get into a relationship with someone else, the grass isn't greener. If you initially feel that you are in love, that feeling will go away. Just as it always does. One or the other of you would sooner or later say that you weren't that compatible after all.

\* \* \*

Always on the lookout, you swallow your pride, in your car you hide, hours and hours of waiting, ready to follow him. You look a mess. You look a fright. But you don't want to miss anything. He thinks you are visiting your mother. The windows of your car fog up so you start the engine, run it until the car is toast, shut it off, turn it on. An incredible waste of gas but, then again, not. You have to find out, whether the weather is participating or not. Make sure all of his stories coincide. You remember everything he says, so you are ready for a slip up. Something he forgets that he said.

You tell yourself to leave, you should just leave, you can't take this any longer, you should be true to yourself, then you tell yourself that you don't understand. You just don't understand. Besides which, how can you be true to yourself when you don't know what the truth is. Besides which, it's more complicated than that.

If it does end, however, you want to be the one who takes the action.

No. Maybe make him suffer with no accusations to defend himself against. Set it up so he's caught up in himself. Wondering.

You go through his car's trunk. Just to see what's there, see if there is any

evidence. Windshield wiper fluid. Baseball gloves. Does he own two gloves, you don't remember two. What could this finding mean? Oh. It is your old baseball glove. That's right. You look at the scorebook, try to decipher if there are any stray phone numbers that you should know about. You would call and ask who the hell it is you are speaking to. Of course, you would do it politely. It is not this love affair woman's fault that your husband is a weenie.

\* \* \*

He follows you. There he is in your rearview mirror. Yes. Yes, his black Trans Am, you would recognize it anywhere. You see him pull out one car behind you. After the first stoplight, you lose him. You know where you're going, how you're getting there. You are behind the wheel. He thinks he knows, but he doesn't. He has no idea.

You are happy that he's finally showing some concern. You smile, smile, smile. Finally he is catching on. The two of you will stay together for a long time. There is a complete balance to this structure. You can't stop now. This is a thrilling blissful adventure.

At this time in your hard life, you are prepared to be prepared.

"The happier our new relations seemed, the stronger I felt an undercurrent of poignant sadness, but I kept telling myself that this was an intrinsic feature of all true bliss."

—Vladimir Nabokov

"There's only one step down from this and that's the land called permanent bliss. What's a sweetheart like you, doing in a place like this."

—Bob Dylan



Kathryn Gardner

that heavenly in your heart and lightness in your breath. The  
 love is there, it doesn't last. If you ever had that feeling in your heart, with all  
 the feelings, love, and all the love, the love that you have, the love that you  
 and all the love, the love that you have, the love that you have, the love that you  
 you are in love, the love that you have, the love that you have, the love that you  
 you would want to be with you, that you would want to be with you, that you

Always on the lookout, you swallow your wife, in your car you're in love  
 and heart of waiting, ready to follow him. You took a breath, you took a breath, but  
 you can't want to make anything. You make you are waiting your mother. The love  
 dream of your life, you are up on you, start the engine, but it's not the car is hard, it's a  
 off, but it's on, in the middle of the car, but it's not the car is hard, it's a  
 off, but it's on, in the middle of the car, but it's not the car is hard, it's a  
 whether the weather is perfect or not, that's all it's not the car is hard, it's a  
 The computer everything is out, so you are ready to go, something is out  
 that he said.

You tell yourself to leave, you would just leave, you can't take this any  
 longer, you should be true to yourself, that you can't take this any longer, you  
 want, you just don't understand. But you want, you want to be true to yourself,  
 when you don't know what the future is, because it's not the car is hard, it's a  
 that.

It is not what you want to be, you want to be the one who takes the action  
 the, because you want to be the one who takes the action, the, because you want to be the one who takes the action,  
 but it's not what you want to be, you want to be the one who takes the action,  
 that's all it's not what you want to be, you want to be the one who takes the action,



# Prose Poem

## Anonymous

Crickets do not understand the ways of the world. They haven't a care but to rub their legs against those sickening bodies of theirs, to create the most repugnant music ever known. Black bodies, slick as oil, oh how I would love to see all of them, every last one, strewn without regard against the concrete. Pavement would do, except for the fact that a white background for their oil-spill guts would be much more aesthetically pleasing.

Spiders are different; clever, ardent. They trap their victims, and death from a spider is slow-slow as the blood is sucked from the body, and the body left a hollow shell of a corpse. They use eight legs to spur onward, eight legs to guide them close to that locus of control, to spin that silver web and rule the world with it.



# Maybe it's time

Kathleen Hayes Phillips

*to start believing in God, she said stirring her coffee, though even as she said it she wasn't and maybe didn't Certainly not in the old man hovering above the clouds meting out judgments in bolts of disaster, the one referred to in the same line as an act of... Not him Or one owned by anyone, named my and put in a back pocket for safe keeping, pulled occasionally to win points in an eternal game, open to bribes, bought and sold to the loudest bidder But despite all this, she had to admit something was happening Some voice, some movement as yet unnamed, was whispering in her ear It's a mystery, she said shaking her head Let's leave it at that*

Kathleen Hayes Phillips



**Josh Leeder**



# Worst of Friends, Best of Enemies: A Tragedy of the Three Parts of the Self

Alex Limberatos

*"When the entire soul follows the philosophic part, and there is no civil war in it, each part of it does its own work exclusively and is just...but when one of the other parts gains control, it won't be able to secure its own pleasure and will compel the other parts to pursue an alien and untrue pleasure."*

*-Plato, Plato's Republic*

Beep! Beep! Beep!

The three members in bed slowly stirred at the annoying chirps of the alarm clock. While they all departed to bed last night and slumbered together, all three of them faced the challenge of waking up differently.

"It's 7:00," Psyche announced hastily, transitioning from a provocative dream to consciousness quite abruptly. "Time to get up."

Corpus groaned in opposition to Psyche's command and slammed his hand on the snooze button. His eyes only opened for a second before they slowly shut themselves again and his momentary spark of life drifted shakily back into slumber again.

"We'll be late again if you hit that snooze button," Psyche warned frantically, although his words seemed soft and faded to Corpus' heavy lull of grogginess.

"SIllllleeeeeeppp," Corpus droned, rolling over and doing his best to shut out Psyche's criticizing so he could pass out again.

Psyche turned to Ghost and began prodding him and nagging him with the time.

"Good dream..." Ghost sighed, rolling over and nuzzling the pillow, trying to ignore Psyche. "Five more minutes won't hurt."

As much as Psyche rattled and reminded his two sleepy friends of school and their record of being late, he found himself grow weary too of bothering to challenge the two anymore; democracy won. Besides, Psyche agreed, it was an interesting dream.

Corpus moderated the snooze button for Psyche and Ghost, although each time the "beep" sounded, it beckoned Psyche's protests once more of being late which were still drowned out by sweet slumber and salient dreams.

Some time later, the beeps sounded again and Corpus' eyelids peeled open and squinted because of a brilliant beam of morning sunlight that shined down upon the three.

"The sun is shining! Oh what a beautiful day this will be!" Ghost chimed as Corpus groaned and groggily regained the feeling in his right arm that he slept upon.

"What time is it?" Psyche pondered.

Corpus immediately sat upright and turned with lightning speed to see what time it was.

"7:45 A.M.," The digital alarm clock read.

"Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!" Ghost swore frantically in absolute terror, knowing that class was to start in fifteen minutes.

Corpus jumped out of bed with Ghost and Psyche and sprinted out of the bedroom, moving as fast as he could into the bathroom with Ghost kicking and swearing at him to move faster while Psyche nagged and guilted Ghost saying "I told you so" and calculating how late they'd be for class.

Ghost's relentless swearing and terror settled to being less vulgar once they were in the shower. Corpus shivered at first before adjusting the temperature of the water to a perfect, lulling warmth and let out a long sigh of relaxation and refreshment of feeling clean once more while Ghost burst out in song while feeling awake and refreshed. While Psyche would have normally begun daydreaming in the shower and let Corpus and Ghost take their time, he knew



time was desperate and poked both of them continuously to hurry up.

Corpus jumped out of the shower and posed manly for Psyche and Ghost in front of the fogged-up mirror. While Ghost cheered at Corpus' good shape, "Lookin Good!" Psyche continually reminded and prodded the two that they were running late and needed no shenanigans that morning. After toweling and getting dressed, they all returned to the bedroom and checked the alarm clock once more. Ghost sunk in terror seeing they had five minutes to get to school when it was at least a twenty-five minute drive.

"We gotta go now!" Ghost said frantically. "Where are the keys?"

"Tie your shoe first. You're going to trip and look like an idiot," Psyche instructed Corpus, who dumbly looked down at his untied shoelaces.

"It'll be fine! We got to go! Now! Out the door! Now!" Ghost yelled.

"Wait," Corpus interrupted, feeling his insides tremor and churn. "Food first."

"We don't have time! We're already late!" Ghost sputtered hysterically.

"Fooodooooood!" Corpus moaned, gripping his stomach.

"Going to be late!" Ghost shrieked.

"Food might help concentration on class and keep us awake," Psyche argued.

Ghost sighed in defeat and made a compromise for Corpus to grab a Poptart to eat on the ride to school. It was by no means a peaceful drive.

While Corpus did his best to stuff his face with food and drive at the same time, Ghost and Psyche constantly argued, bickered, and did some back-seat driving.

"The speed limit is 40," Psyche noted, condescendingly.

"It's not when people are running late!" Ghost argued.

"Will that be our excuse when a cop pulls us over?" Psyche asked. Both of his comrades ignored him. Psyche sighed watching the speedometer go up and seeing Corpus alternate from driving with one hand to none as he tried to quickly down his second Poptart. "This can't be safe," Psyche thought aloud. "If he chokes, we're goners."

"We're not going to die. Have some faith," Ghost replied nonchalantly.

"Speaking of death..." Psyche began.

"WOW! That was a messed up dream!" Ghost finished his thought.

The rest of the ride there, Ghost and Psyche debated the significance of the dream that they had. It was no more bizarre than any other one, but involved sharing a kiss with a college crush--her name was Kristen--and with the three of them somehow getting shot. The details were very obscure and the two debated them constantly while Corpus rolled down the window and drove a little bit faster, ignoring them and enjoying the rushing feeling of wind over his face and through his hair.

The three of them arrived to class about fifteen minutes late. Corpus marched in lazily while Ghost shuddered feeling the Professor's eyes, as well as his fellow classmates, leer at them and their tardiness. Corpus plopped down in his seat lazily, feeling ready to doze off again. Corpus struggled to keep himself awake throughout class while Psyche did his best to focus on the class material and professor. The voice of the professor lulled Corpus to nodding off every five minutes, wherein Psyche and Ghost both had to slap him upside the head to keep him awake.

After class, the three walked down to the cafeteria by the will of Corpus whose stomach began rumbling once more. Psyche reminded Corpus to tie his shoe again but Corpus ignored the suggestion and groaned in hunger.

"Do you ever think about anything except food?" Psyche asked Corpus.

"You should know," Ghost quipped.

"Sex, food, and sleep," Corpus reaffirmed proudly.

They entered the cafeteria and Corpus started drooling over the choices that lay before the three of them.

"Let's keep it cheap," Psyche suggested, recalling the miniscule amount of money that the three of them had. "We still need to buy gas, remember?"

"Mmmmm," Corpus moaned with an appetite as his eyes laid upon a fresh, steaming

slice of pizza. "Pizza..."

"All those fats and greases," Ghost said with disgust. "You can't live on that!"

"You've had Pizza twice in a row now," Psyche agreed. "Maybe another day."

"Pizza...now?" Corpus asked, pleading pathetically.

"No, not today," Psyche reaffirmed.

"Pizza now!" Corpus begged.

"Think about your image!" Ghost snapped. "You want to get fat? Ruin your complexion?"

"Pizza now!" Corpus' begs were relentless and pouty like a child.

"We need to save our money!" Psyche argued.

"Think about your looks! We need a girlfriend!" Ghost reminded.

"NOOOOOOOW!"

The two sighed, groaned and gave into the tyrant. While Corpus downed the slice of pizza, sloshed down with an energy drink, Psyche calculated how much gas they could get with \$5.75 while Ghost fretted over Corpus packing extra pounds over his muscles or breaking out.

The rest of the day proved to be normal as usual, with the three continuing their disagreements and disputes. Psyche managed to keep Corpus or Ghost from spending any more of their minimal budget and convinced the three of them to head to the local convenience store/gas station on what little gas and fumes they had left.

Upon entering, Corpus froze, Psyche gasped, and Ghost shivered as Kristen--the girl of their dreams--was seen browsing through the store. Ghost straightened up Corpus' slouching posture while Psyche reminded Corpus not to drool as they made eye contact.

"Hey Max," she said, waving politely and smiling at the three of them.

"Hey Kristen."

"She remembers us!" Ghost squeaked giddily, silently to his comrades.

"I'd tap that," Corpus affirmed as she walked past, his eyes never leaving her swinging hips.

"I wonder what kind of music she likes," Psyche mused, as he noticed her rummaging through various magazines featuring different bands.

She passed them again, winking as she headed over to grab a bag of candy.

"I think I'm in love," Ghost whimpered hopelessly.

"Pussy," Corpus grunted.

"Is that all you ever think about?" Ghost asked.

"No, I was calling you that. I just want to get with her."

"You're both idiots," Psyche interjected, "She's way out of our league."

"But that dream," Ghost reminisced. "She was in it! This is fate! Destiny!"

"What's the best way to cop a feel?" Corpus asked Psyche.

"Would you both stop! You're going to make an idiot out of all of us."

"We got to go talk to her," Ghost persisted.

"Bad idea," Psyche argued.

"I want her!" Ghost and Corpus said in unison.

"Remember the last girl I let you talk us into going after? You want to end up getting hurt again?" Psyche reminded.

"She could be my soul mate!"

"She could be in bed with us!"

"No! No! No!"

Psyche's protests and arguments, however, were no use. As usual, he lost to democracy once more as Corpus swaggered over to Kristen, who was checking out at the counter while Ghost prepared his meager methods of charm and charisma.

"So what brings you here?"

"Oh, just getting some gas, candy and magazines," she replied, smiling politely back at their awkward smile.

"That's cool..."

They were at a lack of words.

"Quick! Think of something witty, impressive, or profound to say!" Ghost begged.



"Not helping," Psyche refused.

"C'mon! C'mon!" Ghost pleaded, growing incredibly nervous in the awkward silence between them and Kristen.

"You're going to end up regretting it. I want no part in this."

"Corpus?" Ghost asked, looking desperately at his only present ally.

Corpus faked a yawn while outstretching his arm and flexing it as conspicuously as possible yet still trying to get Kristen to look at his biceps. Kristen replied to Corpus' failed act of charm with an awkward, confused glance as she handed the clerk her money.

"That didn't work!" Ghost cried.

"Should I try going to first base or second base instead?" Corpus suggested.

"NO!" Psyche and Ghost shouted at Corpus in unison.

The contentions of the three were suddenly interrupted as a man wearing a ski mask and holding a gun barged into the gas station, pointing his firearm at all inside the store. Kristen and Ghost screamed in terror like little girls.

"Put your hands up! All of you!" The masked gunman demanded.

Kristen, the clerk, and Corpus all complied immediately as he made his way to the counter. He shifted the aim periodically between them before looking at the clerk and shoving it in his direction.

"You! All the money! Now!"

The clerk hastily got to work at opening up the till while Kristen and Corpus remained standing still, and shaking.

"Oh God!" Ghost whimpered.

"I think I gotta go to the bathroom," Corpus mentioned.

"Just remain calm," Psyche advised.

"He's got a gun!" Ghost panicked.

"He's not going to shoot us so long as we don't do anything stupid," Psyche reassured.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" Ghost swore frantically.

"Speaking of that..." Corpus interjected.

"You!" The masked gunman said pointing the gun at Corpus after collecting the money from the clerk. "Give me your wallet!"

"Uh...Uh...Ummm..."

"Oh God! I hate having things pointed at me!" Ghost cried to himself.

"Give him the wallet, dumbass!" Psyche commanded.

Corpus dug into his pants and offered the gunman his wallet, who snatched it greedily from him. He then moved over to Kristen, pointing the gun at her, and asked the same, but Ghost's fear of being shot suddenly became overridden with concern for Kristen. She dug through her purse frantically, fumbling around helplessly all the while the three watched and considered the sight.

"Hurry up, bitch!" the gunman shouted.

"He can't do that to her!" Ghost protested.

"Um, yes he can. He has a gun," Psyche argued.

"She doesn't deserve that! You're supposed to treat a lady with respect!" Ghost proclaimed, a hint of zealous chivalry in his voice.

"Don't even think about it..." Psyche warned.

"Thinking is your job. We just do. Right?" Ghost asked, turning to Corpus.

"Huh?" Corpus replied dumbly.

"Don't be a hero..." Psyche warned.

"Think about it! She'll totally fall for us! She's a damsel in distress, and we're her knight in shining armor!"

"No, we'll all be dead! We'll be on the news as a stupid, no-name civilian who tried and failed to stop an armed robber!"

"We'd be martyrs," Ghost mused.

"I don't like dying!" Corpus whined.



"Fine! We'll be heroes then!"

"We have so much to live for!" Psyche protested. "So many things in life we haven't done! Don't toss all we've ever done away just to prove something we're not! We'll be goners!"

"Not with our strength," Ghost argued, turning again to Corpus for approval. "Right?"

Corpus flexed for himself, feeling quite manly and capable; the adrenaline coursing through his veins empowering himself, accompanied by his own testosterone boosting his strength. He, once again, was behind Ghost.

"He's got a gun!" Psyche reminded, "You know the odds of you taking a hit and surviving?"

"What are the odds that the gun is loaded?" Ghost asked. "Could it be a bluff?"

Psyche pondered the thought in his head for a moment, taking into consideration the possibility that the gun actually wasn't loaded but quickly shook his head, dismissing the absurdity of considering the probability knowing that siding with Ghost and Corpus was a very stupid thing to do. "Don't make me answer that."

"Never fear, Kristen. We'll save you!" Ghost proclaimed heroically.

"Please, stop and consider this," Psyche protested one last time.

"CHARGE!" Ghost roared.

Just as Corpus took a step forward and wound up his punch, he shifted and tripped by the misfortune of never having tied his shoelace from the beginning of the day. He staggered and tried to keep his balance but eventually fell backwards after being shot twice in the stomach by the robber, having seen the attempted assault.

"OOOOOOOOWWW!" Corpus moaned, clutching his bleeding stomach.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" Ghost swore.

"I told you so!"

"Oooooowwwwww," Corpus wheezed.

"Damn it! I'm sorry, guys. I let us down," Ghost apologized weakly.

"This is what happens when nobody listens to me," Psyche said vindictively.

"I feel cold...and hurt...," Corpus griped.

"Think we can make it?" Ghost asked.

"I'd say it's fatal," Psyche said, considering the location of the bullets through their stomach and hitting a major artery. He turned to Corpus. "What do you think?"

"I don't got to go to the bathroom anymore," Corpus answered.

Psyche sighed, "Glad to hear it."

"So we don't even get to die with dignity? We die with shit in our pants?" Ghost complained, his voice becoming fainter.

"Guess so," Psyche mused. He paused for a moment, considering all that had happened that day. The dream, the shoelace, and their predicament. He laughed to himself, finding some appreciation in it. "Ironic isn't it?"

"At least I get to sleep now," Corpus groaned weakly, having not heard Psyche as his comrades began drifting away.

"Hey guys! I think I can see a light at the end of a tunnel!" Ghost said, with hopeful rapture.

"Sorry, I don't believe in that," Psyche retorted.

# Footprints

## Anonymous

I want to tiptoe across the world with you on candy cane fingertips.  
I want our footprints to be shaped like the Himalayas or maybe the Grand Canyon.  
We can crawl on our bellies and spit out golden, glistening fireflies  
That taste just like the salt in the sea.  
Stand with me in the cumulus clouds.  
We'll watch all the preoccupied paper dolls play before us.

Birds below us will appear like fish in a glass-bottom boat,  
Rivers and lakes like the most miraculous mirrors.  
Do you dare to dance with me among the Nebulae?  
I promise our feet will leave behind Supernovae  
And our thoughts will dictate the course of the Galaxy's spin.  
When we get tired, we can watch as the stars cry for their suffocating sisters  
And I can climb up your back to see everything  
That has played behind my eyelids so, so many times.

# I'll Give You Everything I Can

Anonymous

Let me keep the carbon dioxide  
Spilling from your mouth  
And I'll give you  
All the oxygen in my body.

Let me keep the lines  
I traced around your heartbeats  
And I'll give you determined love  
I traced them with.

Let me keep the smile  
You used to reserve for me  
And I'll give you the shades  
Of pink it turned my cheeks.

Let me keep the penultimate  
Happiness you breathed into me  
And I'll give you the ultimate peace  
You felt before being with me.

Let me keep the space  
Between your fingers  
And I'll give you  
The emptiness between mine.





**Valerie Vinyard**

# Ode to a Hyphen

Audrey Ericson

One word. Alone, like a single  
Strand of dandelion  
Floating in the oblivion of a sentence.  
Not right, missing something  
Like the college boy with brains, money,  
But no girl. Then

Another word, beautiful, long, and lovely-faced  
Graces the end of the word through the infallible workings of  
Hyphen,  
Matchmaker of words,  
Beautifier of the world  
Like sunlight, transformer of landscapes.

Oh, that we were more like Hyphen!  
Destined to serve others,  
Devoted to their happiness,  
We would live completely out of ourselves  
And into others  
And be perfectly happy  
Because the world would be working  
To make us happy.

## Forecast

Taylor Dolenshek

You are the sun  
That incinerates my skin  
Leaving marks of regret  
For what might have been

You are the rain  
that imprisons me in sadness  
I am a swamp  
Full of your selfish actions

You are the lightning  
that strikes my chest  
An uninvited pain  
I don't know how to resist

You are the thunder  
That echoes through my bones  
Like a haunting memory  
that nobody knows

a pathetic definition of love,  
you are





# Astronaut

Anonymous

Your fingers are long, capable  
Of strumming the chords of my heart  
They caress my hands in a beat that  
Perfectly mirrors the music playing-  
But the melody seems as far away as the moon  
*Would you follow me to the moon,*  
*To play in the craters and lie down in zero gravity?*  
Your face twists into something between pity and confusion  
You say,  
*It's not zero gravity on the moon.*

# Dorm Life, Liberty and the Pursuit

Sheryl Davis-Troller

Neither of us speaks afterward.

He leans against my stack of pillows as he lies beneath one blanket and on top of the other, avoiding the sheets that my mom thought looked like college. I sit next to him with my feet on the floor. I look at him and he looks to the left of me, then to the right. I look at the pillows and he looks at my face. I look back at his face and he shifts his glance to the left. To the right.

Say something. Don't just sit there.

We say nothing.

Like a tired child, I rub at my eye and try to concentrate on what is happening. Silent, I stand and walk from the room.

Stiff upper lip, ready to discuss, I re-enter. He stands before me putting on his jacket. He is fully dressed with his shoes tied.

My arms slide beneath his jacket and surround his back. Because I don't know what else to do. Because this hurts way more than it was supposed to. Because I realize he is right.

I taste the metal buttons on his jacket as they rub against my face. I swallow the sour taste and think about the Princess and the Pea story and how stupid it all is. Growing up with fairy tales.

His shoes make waffle marks on my piece of carpet. Impressionistic art. He shifts his stance and lets me go. Follow the foot chart as we learn this new dance. More waffle prints as he dances out the door. Cha Cha Slide. To the right now and he's gone.

The smell of indifference is all over my blankets. Hopefully, it will last a very short while. I spray the bed with perfume. I spray the whole stupid room.



# Autumn

Anonymous

Trees forget  
To nurture children  
Skeletons

Leaves go brown  
Fall elegantly  
Quivering  
Branches, leaves  
Roughened and wrinkling  
Like old skin

Beautiful  
Still, though darkening  
Cracked with age



**Corrine Rasch**

# Wintry

Karen Barsamian

*For Simon Ortiz*

Light bleeds  
into cold rooms.  
The margins have no song.  
From where I sit,

everything spirals into night.

Winter prayer has no motion,  
nor light to feed me.  
The spirit that carries  
dreams cannot be found

in these cold rooms.



# These Woods Divine

Damon Schneider

The snow crunched under my boots, while the crisp clean winter sky was a pinkish hue. Snowflakes rained lightly against my red face.

I'm not sure what I'm doing here but this is where I belong. It seems as though I'm in the hospital visiting an old friend about to pass.

These are the woods where childhood took root. These woods are solace and remembrance. A living roadmap of who I was and where I began.

Look! Over there was our Toad Torture Camp. And there's the wooden spears we threw. I even see the spot where the bee lived inside the black hightop basketball shoe.

I see the stone thrones we erected as monuments to our invincibility. Such a childish thought still strangely appeals.

Then I pass the tree under which I first read Shakespeare aloud while I was alone and isolated from Anyone that could have mocked me.

And then I spy the rising shrine of stacks upon stacks of beer cans and liquor bottles that marked our adolescent sneak out. The somber labels seem faded yet somehow immortal.

There's the nook where I laid out a blanket upon which coitus was first completed on a summer night when mosquitoes bit but we were not to be bothered.

The cold of the night seems to preserve all this and I wonder if there is another out there who thinks and acts like these woods belong to him like I feel they belong to me.

The snow of winter covers this nostalgia with a warm wet blanket. I see my footprints stretching into the deep past and I try to walk backwards but only make a mucky mess.

# When You Hung Up

Damon Schneider

When you hung up the phone on me I felt a white hot panic shoot up through my arms and into my palms as I tried to desperately respond once more to your truculent attitude but you left me standing in the proverbial rain outside a junk payphone that ate way too much change and I thought, "Oh great, can't get much worse" until it hits me that you hanging up was akin to a freight train smashing the "you" out of "us" once and for all as you try to reclaim a fragile fractured glasslike independence fraught with idealistic notions of what "it's supposed to be like" and then the mask of love finally shatters and I apprehend in a sort of singularity all your faults that were always present but that I had always pretended not to really be there cause I wanted to believe in something greater than myself and yet I now realize that I'm all that I really have and I must not become bored with that "I" because I am now all alone but certainly not lonely and Nietzsche proclaims that whatever doesn't kill us only makes us stronger so I use that strength in this tense time of turmoil as a visceral reaction rips blood and bone and I feel like I'm gonna puke when thinking about all your comments of utter indifference that spring to mind and I'm dumbstruck knowing you never cared as much but then I suddenly thought, "I really know how to pick'em, eh?"

Maybe they should call heart break "ego break" instead.....you dig?



**David Haarman**

The snow of winter covers this nostalgia with a warm  
wet blanket. I see my footprints stretching into the deep past and I  
try to walk backwards but only make a muddy mess.



# Death Dance

John Isley, III

I spent my childhood  
watching the raindrops  
trickle down the backseat window  
suddenly consuming one another  
elegantly dropping faster  
horizontally dancing out of sight  
as my mother pressed on the pedal.  
Now here I am  
whiskey breath  
distracted by the ballroom on my windshield.  
The deer hesitates and lunges  
reconsidering his decision  
as his rugged eight points send the dancers fleeing.  
I awake to the rowboat's steady rocking,  
a lantern sways back and forth  
through a thick icy mist,  
a black-robed figure sits with his back towards me.  
As I question the forlorn ferryman  
my breath is revealed  
no response  
silence.  
Why won't he turn and reveal his face?  
I begin to convulse  
perhaps from fear or the cold  
but no . . .  
I cannot feel the cold against my skin.  
It seems hours go by.  
I violently slap my cheeks  
as if to challenge myself to a duel.  
Strange it seems:  
although the lantern's candle continues to burn  
the height of the wax remains the same.  
I wonder if this happened to you  
the night you exhaled your last whiskey breath?  
Why was I given your name?  
That night in 1962 five things stopped:  
your heart  
three innocent hearts  
and my grandmother's frequent black eyes.  
You left her with eight children to raise alone  
the oldest only thirteen.  
He was the one you named after yourself  
and he passed the name on to me.

# Vespera

## Anonymous

Her fingernails are made of ice  
Filed to a point  
They shimmer and gleam and she uses them to slice open guts

Her wedding dress is made of spidersilk  
Delicate and sticky  
Blinking fireflies sewn in for extra glamour

Her eyes are leftover bits of moonlight  
Rejected bits, the ones that cast  
Ugly shadows and turn men into wolves

Her hands are tourniquets  
They bind as if to  
Puncture veins with malignant needles

Her mouth is red and swollen  
Filled with words she cannot say  
Words she caged in her throat with her teeth

# Before the Devil You Meet

Michael Stein

Belly up to the bar, boys  
This round of scotch is on me  
For the sun is sinking  
And the light is dimming  
Enjoy the perfect glass  
Accept my humble toast  
Then may we all get some rest  
Before we start chasing our ghosts  
Yes, have a drink on me  
Be it your first or sadly, your last  
This one is on me  
Warm your insides before the devil you meet  
For he is waiting in the mirror  
Dressed in red silk  
He's been sitting on your shoulder  
Now he's face to face  
He's been wondering how you've raced this race  
So drink that scotch real slow  
Let it warm your toes  
Making you forget your foes  
And making your foes forget you  
Toss it back  
Slap each other on the back  
And run like hell





**Ashley Kerr**

# The Big Bleed

Rory Petry

*"He not busy being born is busy dying."*

- Bob Dylan

On the morning of his best friend's funeral, Dave let out a single shallow sigh. Waking up a few hours before his alarm went off, he remained missionary in his bed watching the ceiling fan shake and whirl. He'd bought it for fifteen dollars on sale at a corporate hardware store. Looking back he should've guessed the quality. As he lay, the blades buzzed while the chains tapped together and rattled. Dave thought of sheep on a conveyer belt all baaing in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. He imagined the chains and the gears ushering all these sheep up and up, the metal pulsating, the parts vibrating, and the white clouds of sheep unmindful to their certain death.

Bzzz... Bzzz... Bzzzz....

Even when his alarm went off, it followed in time. At first the coincidental concurrent amused him, but quickly it crawled into him like roundworm. He shifted slightly, but the heat and the sweat banded his sheets tight around his squatty legs and arms. The sound of the fan and the alarm and the sheep heightened, clanking and buzzing like they were guiding him to the edge of the conveyer belt. In an attempt to remain calm and under control, Dave pinched the fabric between his fingers and pulled at the white linens, which had turned thin and clear like a fast food bag glistening with the grease of fried meats and potatoes. The amount of suction caused more sweat to leak from his pores. He hurled his arms forward in an attempt to fling the saturated sheets off himself. Only after flailing and thrashing about like a trapped animal, or a grown man stuck in a blanket, did he manage to free himself from the bondage sheets. Dave stood over his bed exhausted and afraid as if standing over a cliff he'd almost just fallen off of. Still the buzz of the fan taunted him, so he grabbed the chain and pulled with such frustrated ferocity, he tore it right off along with a small piece of his hand. The blood domed then flooded from the top of his palm, through the valleys of his knuckles, down the ridge of his fingers, and dripped onto the cream carpet.

He pulled into the parking lot of the Brumley Funeral Home an hour later than he'd planned, but still had thirty minutes to kill before he'd go in. He picked at the red soaked Band-Aid that kept blood from getting on his only black suit. Bowie was wailing away "Suffragette City," so Dave put in Leonard Cohen deciding that Bowie was not proper funeral etiquette not to mention Brian, the deceased, never developed much of an appreciation for him.

Pulling out the red Marlboro pack and the Humphrey Bogart flask Brian had bought him on their road trip to Little Rock several years ago, Dave toasted to the sky and said, "I'm leaving tomorrow but I could leave today, somewhere down the road someday. The very last thing that I'd want to do is to say I've been hitting some hard travelling too." It was Dylan's tribute to Woody Guthrie and Dave was thinking about saying it at the end of his speech in the service. He wished he had written something down. He had the idea a few nights ago when he was throwing away sheet after sheet of scribbled sentences, and clutching a bottle of Jack Daniels, that it would be better to wing it. To say something straight from the heart, a spur of the moment eulogy that would pour from his soul. The perfect words to describe how he felt, something beautiful, because he knew he was sad, but sadness is what? Guilt, loss, love, saudade, nostalgia. He knew it was all these things, but he wondered if he truly felt anything. Dave pinched out half



the cigarette tobacco into a zig-zag paper then crushing up bits of weed, from a clear plastic Ziploc Brian had left in his car the previous summer, he rolled a perfect spliff. He took long slow drags from the cigarette between sips from the flask. That was what Brian would've liked; it's what he imagined Brian would do had it been Dave's funeral instead. Dave sort of wished it had.

The wind had picked up since Dave first stepped out into the hot southern California sun. Clouds were moving in from off the ocean and the air stood up stiff and still. Dave laughed with knowledge that if Gary could have directed the world this day, this is exactly how he'd have made it. All Dave could say was, "Son of a bitch."

"I know, right?"

Colleen walked over with sympathy in her eyes and a smile on her face, glancing upwards at the treading white puffs in the sky. Colleen was the girl that every guy said they should date; yet no one ever dared. She was too secure, too nice, too perfect.

"Hey Colleen, how are you? Wanna drag?" Dave felt like an asshole, but still held out the moistened tip of the burning spliff.

"Sure," she said and hopped in around the other side of the car.

She thanked him and they smoked for a while in silence; Dave wanted to start a conversation. He liked the way Colleen looked in the passenger side of his white '83 Mazda. He wanted to touch her. He wanted... "Oh my god, what happened to your hand?" she said with honest concern. Dave hated when people asked him how he was when they didn't care, or told him sorry or get well soon or even happy birthday when the words were stale and dry; he'd usually let them fall to the floor, but Colleen talked with such genuine concern that he found himself falling for her all over again.

That was until he looked down and saw the band-aid consumed in blood dripping down his hand into his shirt. "Fuck!" It had stained most of the cuff of his only white shirt; he went to grab a stack of Wendy's napkins out of the glove box, when the flap shot down smacking Colleen in the knees. "Shit, I'm sorry."

"It's ok, just take care of your hand," she said

He had definitely fallen for her. "You should probably get in there."

She hesitated, but said, "Yeah, are you sure you're going to be alright?"

"I hope so. Either way, there's not a lot you can do. I'll see you in there."

"Ok, but if you need me at all just shoot me a text."

"Will do." Dave thought she looked embarrassed for saying, "Shoot me."

Clutching a dozen napkins in his bloody hand, Dave stepped out of his car feeling slightly light headed. He trolled his way inside. Thoughts of Colleen and the idea of asking her to coffee afterwards caused a smile to creep across his face. That's when his heart skipped, his guts fell, and a look of pain shot across his face; he had just walked into his best friend's funeral smiling. All he could think was *Fuck, Fuck, Fuck*. Everyone must have seen him; everyone was whispering to another about it, they were all sentencing him, crucifying him for the way he's carrying on. Someone died, act like it. He panicked for only a brief moment then figured the weed was probably just making him paranoid, and so he walked on in past the dish of holy water.

Dave couldn't help but detest the reasons why they may have chosen this place. The building itself was a tope cube, most likely built in the 70's. It even kind of smelled like the 70's; a raw must clung to everything like coats of greasy fur. The thick maroon carpet in the hallway seemed to release a fresh sweet moist smell like a manufactured breeze to try and cover the scent of death. The brown painted wood paneling was nicely complimented with cheap silver bathroom handrails for the elderly and the dying. The main room was set up similar to a courtroom, two rows of pews facing for-



ward, the family seated where the jury would be, the pulpit where Dave would be speaking was the witness stand, and a giant wooden cross with bloody Jesus right up front and center as the judge.

He decided to view the corpse after the service. While trying to avoid everyone, he heard Colleen rasping his name in a loud hush of an across-the-room whisper. Dave waved shyly to her and a few other familiar faces but managed to not look up for too long. He was starting to feel sick and it felt like the crowd was eating him and Brian. Poor Brian with no options but to stay, he would've hated this. Dozens of quiet side conversations made the room quite loud. People crying and comforting each other, holding each other as Dave tried to push through to get to his seat. The seats were no comfort, stiff solid wood with individually stitched itchy cushions, hand me downs from a local church.

Brian always avoided the subject of religion, but his sister probably was the one who decided a Christian service was fitting. The blood was still soaking through the Wendy's napkins, but Dave just clenched his fist more and thought about what Brian used to always say about God, "Life sucks, and if believing in something more helps you get through the day, fuck it, believe in it, just don't force me to." He was the only one of their friends to stick up for religion. Dave's eyes started to flutter. The priest had begun talking but Dave couldn't focus. His head felt heavy and he was swaying about slowly at an angle. He looked down seeing his hand blur with the blood. It all just looked red to him. His vision was distorted and the light reflected heavily off the silver handrails. Dave started rocking to the sound of a fan overhead; he tried looking up to see it but couldn't focus his eyes in any one direction. Everyone around him stood in a moment of silence. To Dave time was going both fast and slow. He started feeling motion sickness; it seemed that as soon as he sat down he had to stand up, but now that he was standing they wouldn't let him sit. He started rehearsing a little improvised speech in his head, which made him think about Brian which made him think about cigarettes, which he connected with Colleen, with whom he thought he should ask out, which made him think about the song Chelsea Hotel #2, which made him think about music Brian liked, which made him think about music Brian didn't like, which caused him to think about Bowie. Fuck. Someone to his left was tapping him on the shoulder. It was time for his speech, and he hadn't even heard a word of what anyone else said. Lumbering his way up to the pulpit, he looked awkward and clumsy, which he hoped people would interpret as total devastation instead of complete desolation.

He felt the aggregation of eyes indulgently judging him as he approached the stand. Looking up at the cross then the hand of the wooden Jesus and the way its grain was cut to look like blood. He looked down at his own hand still clenching a dozen or so napkins and the trail of a few that he must have dropped leading from where he had been seated. Dave felt as though he was still trapped in a sweaty bed sheet, as if he had no control of his destiny, as if he was a sheep under the manipulation of other people's expectancies, of those of eyes, and of himself. He looked up past Brian's family, past his friends, past Colleen, and the funeral home, the parking lot, the roads, the cars, his fears, his lusts, even past Bowie, and Dave saw Brian. Brian in dark aviator sunglasses, a brown flannel shirt, worn cowboy boots, his shaggy blond hair and red beard, with a spliff hanging out of his mouth, and a grin that told everyone and everything that they were all fake fucking hypocrites.

Dave smiled in such a way to hold back any tears, he looked down into the coffin at his best friend, pulled out a cigarette, struck a match, and while he held the bit of flame in the air he said, "Chaos was a friend of mine," and he lit the cig and walked out.

# Ode to Comma

Dan McGreen

Oh, Comma, you and I, have had our ups, our downs,  
And still, I can't get enough of you.  
But your intoxicating presence, has led me astray, for you see,  
I fear, that I am,  
Overusing you, abusing you, and altogether ruining you,  
And your purpose.  
It started off simply, you'd come in, and divide up some of my ideas.  
And, I, was, oh so grateful.  
But our relationship, it evolved into much more, and soon,  
I was overlooking Period, just to give you some more attention.  
I don't blame you, I know you've been lonely, every since Jane Austen,  
No one has quite frequented you.  
But oh, Comma. I write to you today, to tell you, we need to pull back.  
Let's, just be, friends.

On your best days you beautifully accent my thoughts,  
And string them together like a vertical hyphen.  
You work wonderfully with others; so I've heard from semi-colon and the  
Quotation twins.  
While the time we had together was grand, it was only infatuation.  
I was basking in the lust of your prominence, feeling your warmth against my skin  
Allowing me to feel like I've never felt before.

Of, comma, I fear, I might relapse.  
And should that day come,  
I pray you'll go and find somebody else  
who can give you the attention you deserve,  
as long as that someone isn't me.

# You Can Have

Morgan Radtke

You can have  
The bright rays of the high noon sun  
And I will keep  
The orange and pinks at sunset

You can have that  
Feeling of warm comforter  
And I will keep  
My cold feet

You can have  
The silence  
And I will keep  
Everything not said

You can throw away  
All our memories  
And I will keep just  
The sound of your laughter



# Arms Like Wires

Karen Barsamian

When I hug you I like to think about how you're electrical,  
how we're machines,  
with small turbines,  
and how we break.

I think eons ahead, where our bodies are not.

Well used.  
Forgotten.

I like to think about how we're electrical,  
how we will break.



