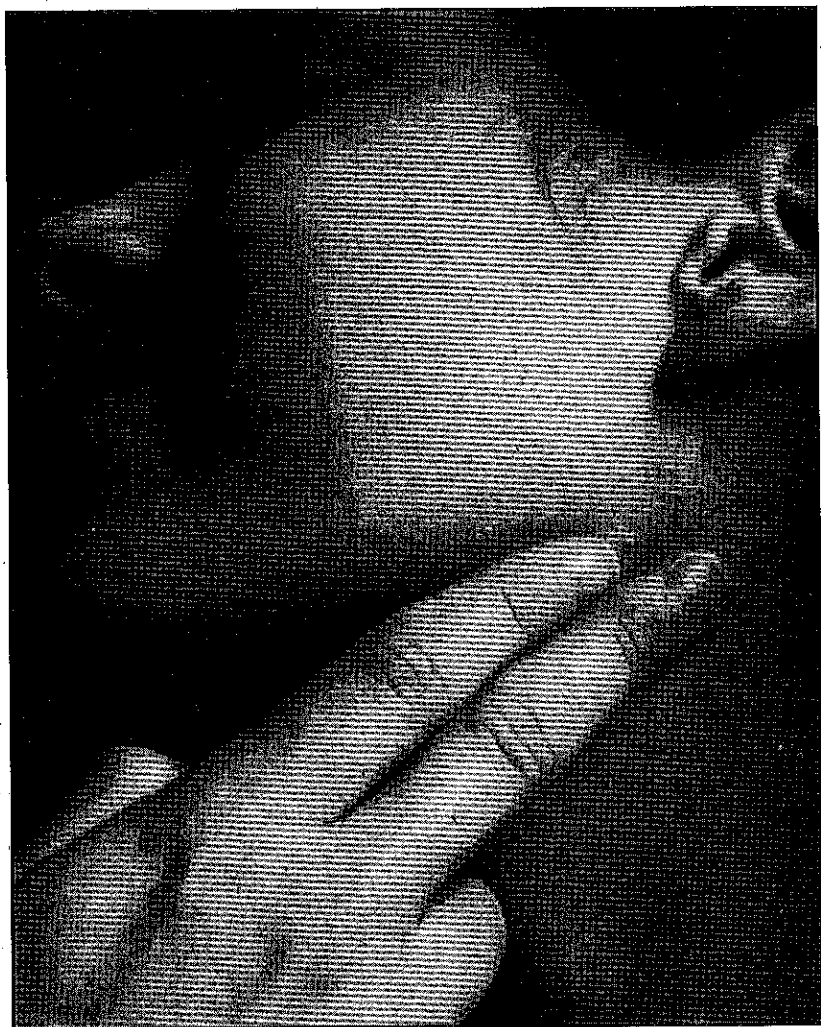


PULSE



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Pulse

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Of Lamar University - Beaumont**

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**Department of English and Foreign Languages
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- Eleanor Poetry Award** for best overall poem
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- Barnes Poetry Award** for best poem in traditional form
Beverly Williams, "The Road to Jericho"
- deSchweinitz Award** for best poem in open form
Mike Dunklin, "Road Crew"
- Pulse Translation Award** for best foreign language translation
Vachara Pathamo, "A Pretty Morning Song"
- Pulse Fiction Award** for best short fiction
Kyle Boudreaux, "A Stuck Peanut
and a Monkey's Paw"
- Pulse Essay Award**
Kyle Boudreaux, "Knowing Angela"
- Rowe Critical Paper Award** for best critical essay
Jennifer Haughton, "Quatrain Forms in the Poetry of
A. D. Hope"

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Randy Sampson

Saint Peter

*And if it hurts when they mention my name,
Say you don't know me... Keep it inside of you.
Don't give in. Don't tell them anything. Don't let it,
Don't let it show.*

- The Alan Parsons Project

With one swift slice an ear fell to my feet-
Landing beneath the edge of my bleeding blade.
With eyes wavering I watched the hand of God,
Untrembling, touch the servant's severed ear.

Not sword nor eye moved at that miracle.
The stillness rent my stony heart when He
Restored the flesh and sense to Malchus's head
And made him whole again. That's when I grasped

The meaning of His prophecy: He said
That I *must* lie. Could I do otherwise?
Could I have answered, when thrice the same charge
Was made against me, when with pointed fingers.

And words they accused me-could I have cried:
Yes! Yes! Yes! I know the Man!?

A peeling

One careful cut
with a strong clean thumbnail
in a smooth counter-
clockwise roll
of the left hand works best-
eat the fruit, you've got to now-
then look at what's left,
look at the thick dead skin
closely-
perfection,
a peeling
in the palm
of your hand.

Home

for Allison McKay

Leaning against the patio window
She catches sunbeams before they touch the floor,
And through enlightened veils spies a few
Stars falling from a maple, maybe more.

Watching her, captured by his own, he knows
Inwardly that this is all there is.

A view
Of heaven is had anywhere, I suppose.

In Limbo

In a place with one wall, no windows, and one
door, someone has turned off
the Law of Gravity. A tenacious ball

ricochets, cutting corners
in a monotonous random pattern
waiting for an inev-

itable exit. *You* just happen to
open the door-the ball
naturally and quietly slips out, at last,

into the forgotten boundaries of a new and ancient world.

Here, someone has turned on
gravity and other laws in some strange game-
you tell me the reason why.

The ball obeys the law. It slows and stops
lifeless, hoping, waiting
for someone to send it home-home where there waits

a place with one wall, no
windows, no laws, and one door in an ocean
of perpetual motion.

Spring Cleaning

Let's say that you decide today to clean
The clutter from your room, your house, your home,
Something you have done many times before
Only this time you find yourself alone . . .

And so you clear a closet of shoes and clothes
No longer used and ugly, wide neckties,
Ties that you once heard would be *in* again-
Yet one more witness to that chunk of lies
And illusions, expectations and junk
You have been harboring inside your head.

Later, you uncover a hardwood chest,
Coated with dust, its hinges now rusted.
Surprised to some extent, and responding
To something you cannot quite define,
You lift the creaking lid and reach inside
To find blankets and toys from toddler-times . . .

Now, what if you discovered there, inside
That opened chest, beneath forgotten things
And clothes, molded keepsakes and memories,
A flawless white, tiny gem-a pearl-hiding?

Would you wonder how, when or why a gem
Was in your chest, or would you even care?

Or would you clutch your chest and sigh, and know
Within your heart it had always been there?

Beverly Williams

The Road to Jericho

Her quilting frame stands flush against the wall.
She harbors hopes that younger hands will itch
to learn the craft she polished, stitch by stitch.
She wears a *double wedding ring* for shawl,
and *Jacob's ladder* rests on her featherbed.
The memories of the one she lost to war
lie pieced in red and white, a *feathered star*
that calmed the *stormy sea* of thoughts unsaid.
A vivid *galaxy* fills the oaken chest
while *sister's choice* waits on a parlor chair.
Attic windows reflect the winter's glare,
and *Joseph's coat* enfolds a child at rest.

Her evening fingers stitch their fluid song.
The *road to Jericho* is much too long.

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, 1928
for Johann

The oven casts its glow on sweat-dewed brow
while strong hands knead the dough at break of day.
They shape the pastries that will pave his way
to riches in this new world, his world now.

He hailed from Europe, land of czar and king
where marching feet struck fear in strong men's hearts,
starting anew, plying his sugary arts
among the free where hopes and dreams take wing.

The heady, yeasty scents of baking breads
invade the air. Spicy aromas weave
honeyed trails that float past door and eave,
rousing nearby patrons from their beds.

Trifocal Time

I fool myself
by wearing those
having no lines,
thinking friends can't see
that I'm going blind,
not realizing
my eyeballs
look like dimes
inside a jar.

Mike Dunklin

Road Crew

I watch Bubba flick his wrists as he hurls
a shovel-full of asphalt towards the pothole,
tar-black taffy in the August heat,
the gravel rattling and rasping on the shovel
blade like a Rottweiler eating off a tin plate
and Bubba's forearms shine like ebony spars--
shining with sweat as the heat shimmers
off the roadway, and Bubba smiles
despite the heat and his shark teeth
gleam whiter than his prison coveralls
and the road stretches away from us,
dripping black and the shotgun slides
soggy in my hand as we slog behind
the trusty driving the truck and Bubba's
strides outstrip mine, but our steps
are trod on black liquid and Bubba laughs
in the heat, "My Momma,"
he says, "Always said I'd make my mark."
And our footsteps tag behind us
backtracking in the blacktop toward distant Palestine.

After the Morning Shift

You return from the midnight shift
to a ball-bedangled tree and a morning kiss,
stripping off the snow-stained leather,
you thrust your stockinged feet before the fire,
lying on the llama-skin fur we bargained for
in Ecuador, while I ply you full
of steaming chocolate and Christmas tales
of how our daughters rose unbidden
to steal downstairs at three, playing beneath the tree
with all the handy, unwrapped loot
content to wait till you were home,
to tear asunder in your presence
the gilt-wrapped gifts they knew
had come from you.

Iceman, 1911

At the wagon, the Belgian neighs nervously,
when the iceman enters the McCardell's, first to present
his card, like a visiting Turkish merchant,

in his sweat and ice-sodden undershirt, waiting
as the maid sniffs at the card like high-born

Nubian nobility, but calls upstairs none-the-less;
showing the card, in turn, to the younger Mrs. McCardell,
who meets him dressed only in a flimsy, sweaty shift.

Her wild, sleep-tossed hair cascades

white shoulders like wind-cooled lava in the summer
heat.

Her face wrinkles as she draws a breath,
for he has rubbed a bit of vanilla on his mustache and
on his hands. "That will be all," she tells
the sulky maid, who retreats with a hidden smile.

"May I touch you?" he asks the woman, as
he has asked all the others and few have said no.

He holds a sliver of ice and she lets
him brush it over her pale, trembling lips.

Cold, he thinks, is only the absence of heat.

Vachara Pathamo

*The following four poems are the original work of the author
in his native Thais language.*

A Pretty Morning Song

I lay down on the old log.
A little bird is standing on a green bend.

No pretty morning song.
No pretty morning song.
No pretty morning song.

"I don't hear you sing this morning," I say.
"I can't sing anymore, the forest is noise! There is a chain
saw working over there," the little bird answers.
"Why don't you move to another forest?"
"Where? They are all the same."

ฉันนอนบนขอนไม้เก่า
"ฉัน... ไม่ร้อง"
นกน้อยยืนอยู่บนกิ่งไม้
ฉันไม่ร้องแล้ว
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ฉันร้องไม่ได้แล้ว"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"
"ทำไมไม่ร้อง"

At the Edge of the Sunset

I see wings.
On the reflection of the water.
I see wings.
Wings invite me "fly."

I sing a song
A song of a free

I fly and sing a song.
A song of a freedom.

ที่โนนปิ่น ๒
เมื่อมีใคร... ก็ปลิวผ่านลมพัดไกล
ดั่ง: ลมพัด ทิวเขา: งามในสายลม
เพลงชีวิตอิสระ: ที่โนนปิ่น
ทิวเขา: งามในสายลมพัดไกล

ปีกที่หากคือความงาม
พริ้วไหวลมพัดไกล
อิสระ: งามในสายลมพัด
ปีกที่หากคือความงาม

Human

"It does not matter if you have a good friend
if you don't know yourself"
"It does not matter if you have help
if you don't know how to live alone"

"คน"

งานเขียนงานจิตตภาวนาให้พ้นทุกข์
งานเขียนจิตตภาวนาได้ใจจะหนีไป
งานเขียนงานไม่ได้ใจจะหนีไป
งานเขียนงานเขียนงานเขียนงาน

60 minutes with the monkey.

I am sitting at the bank of a wild river.

I am talking with a monkey.

"Hey! Monkey, how are you?"

"Hey! Monkey, why are you here?"

"Hey! Monkey, do you jump?"

"Hey! Monkey, where is your tree?"

Monkey cries.

60 นาที กับลิงที่ป่า

นั่งลงริมตลิ่งแม่น้ำ
ทบทวน: ลิง ลาก ฟก กษา
มี หัก ลิง เสร็จ ทำ กิ นาร ท
" ลิง ลาก, ใน เจ้า ไม่ ลิง ลิง "

" เป็น ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก "

" เจ้า ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ? "

ลิง ลาก ... ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก
ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก ลิง ลาก

Kyle Boudreaux

A Stuck Peanut and a Monkey's Paw

I am a sick elephant....I am a spiteful elephant. An unattractive elephant. My trunk hurts. To be honest, I'm not altogether sure what is causing my pain, I just know that I hurt. It is a dull, throbbing, consuming pain, one which is causing the hairs on the end of my tail to fall out. My house-mate, in this Houston enclosure, has begun making light of the balding tuft of my tail, saying I should maybe pluck some hairs off the llamas in the adjacent pen and make myself presentable. I considered this, but llamas are filthy creatures who spit, and I want no part of that.

I took my case to Monkey in the next cage over from mine. He was busy directing an imaginary choir with a stick he had stolen from a crying boy standing in front of his cage. He shook his hands back and forth violently, trying to rouse the choir to a fever pitch. This was a trick he had learned last fall when the zoo was visited by a high school glee club, and he used it when he wanted to get extra attention.

I called him over to the side of the cage next to my enclosure, and asked him to take a look. He scampered up with his stick in hand and peered up my twin-holed appendage, scrunching his human-featured face. He scratched his nether regions in perplexity and said he could see what appeared to be a peanut, lodged deep within my trunk, its speckled shell covered with a shiny substance.

"I could take that out for you." Monkey spoke wildly with his hands, almost poking himself in the eye with his stick. "Of course, Elephant, you'll have to do me a favor in return." He grinned, letting me gaze upon a gleaming pair of banana yellow teeth. "These," he said showing me his paws "don't come cheap."

I looked at his black and white furred body, hanging

from his perch by his tail. His dirty paws gripped the stick as he sniffed the underside of one arm. I didn't trust Monkey. He is surrounded by what the Haitian chickens in the aviary call, bad mojo. Instead, I declined his offer and decided to suffer with my condition. My trunk swelled and throbbed with a fiery pain, and a hazy fog of delirium covered my eyes. The veterinarians tried to poke and prod my trunk, but I ran them out of my house, then listened to them, just on the other side of my enclosure, talk about how old I was, and that I really wasn't worth wasting their time on.

I am old. I've lost track of how many years I've accumulated here. They seem to have melted into a swirl of fat ladies towing dawdling children, of flashing bulbs of camera light, of a constant parade of animals coming into the zoo but none going out. Me taking peanuts just because they are offered. My head hurts.

I can see my new enclosure mate stirring in his sleep. His ears wave, creating an easy breeze which the flies surrounding him glide upon. He arrived fresh last week from a private estate in Texas in order to fill the zoos' vacancy left by the previous tenant. He was bought for a wealthy man's son to ride. I told him he was the world's most extravagant pony. He was none too amused. He glared at me and asked if he was a mere pony then what was I before I got here? I huffed my chest out and glared right back at him and said they had to drag me kicking out of the African wild, where I was king! I stomped my foot for effect.

This was of course a total fabrication. I actually hailed from Magnificent Mac's Monster Circus and side-show, where I was forced to perform, of all things, a ballet. The show was complete with a three-piece orchestra, consisting of Mac, who besides owning the circus was also a frustrated cellist, Cecile, the horn playing walrus, and Thurl Weed, a retarded circus clown who played a horrible screeching violin. When this musical atrocity would begin playing, I would parade out, directed by my trainer Willy. All across my body draped yard upon yard of shimmering

pink fabric and ruffles fashioned into a horrendous tutu. My trunk still shivers at the thought of the spectacle. When the circus finally folded, I learned my fate would be a well-fed life at the Houston zoo.

I'm too well fed. I caught a glimpse of my bulk in the reflection of the watering pond, and I don't remember ever being this big. Too many peanuts have made it into my mouth. I'm going to cut down. I have to.

The pain is searing now. This humid Texas air is making it hard to breathe. Little white spots are floating in front of my eyes, and my knees feel wobbly. I might have to do business with monkey.

I close my eyes and listen to the sounds of the zoo. It is quiet tonight and cool. No ruckuses from the nocturnals, which is unusual. I can hear the chuffing growls of the tigers, and monkey is talking in his sleep. He keeps telling someone to give him a high five, a trick the trainer taught him last week.

I feel a nudge at my side followed by a, "Psst, Pinky." I look down and see Paddy, a stray dog whom I've come to know. She sneaks into the zoo after dark and scrounges for dropped hotdogs and soggy ice cream cones. If I come across anything sufficiently malodorous, I save it for her and see if she's interested. She insists on calling me Pinky after I told her of my pirouetting past.

"I'm afraid I'm a bit under the weather today." I can see what looks to be mustard stains brightening the tip of her muzzle.

She cocks her head to one side. "Get a hold of a bad peanut?" She titters lightly as she stretches her back leg around and takes a few absent swipes at her ear.

"You might say that. I think I have one stuck in my trunk." I wince as a bolt of pain sears itself on the back of my eyes. My skin is dry and cracked from not being able to douse it with water vacuumed by my trunk. I have considered asking my enclosure mate to help me, but he isn't very cooperative.

"Wow. Really? Let me take a look." She trots around to my once proud trunk and peeks up the swollen mass, her eyes squinting as if looking at something from a great distance. "I don't see anything, must be too dark." She turns her head away, and I can feel the wetness of her nose brush against my tender flesh.

Paddy begins sniffing her way around the perimeter of the enclosure.

"You're looking in vain, you know. The keepers are extraordinarily careful to not leave anything in the cages."

"Yeah, I know, but I still have to look." She skirts around my roommate, finishes her inspection, and makes her way back to my side. "That new guy giving you any hassle?" she asks, lifting her nose to some hidden smell in the air.

"A bit, but not enough for concern."

"You want me to take a leak in his bale of hay? I don't mind. Not that I think it would really hurt him, but it would be wicked funny." Her tail is slapping the dust of my floor, causing little smoke signals to go up.

"Thank you, but I believe I can handle his bulk." I lean forward onto my front feet, and then ease my rear haunches down onto the floor, careful not to hit my trunk on the ground.

"Well the offer's on the table," she says as she resumes her sniffing for a phantom snack.

"Must you continue that?" I flap my ears to create a breeze, hoping it will help cool my fiery trunk. "Would it be so terrible if you missed a morsel?"

"Yes, it would." The moonlight bounces off her reddish coat as she dips and dives amongst the bales of hay, which litter the enclosure. She pauses as she passes my left flank and turns her head towards me. "What if I missed a sandwich or something, then what?"

"Then you miss it. What is the tragedy?"

"What the hell kind of dog would I be if I missed a perfectly good sandwich lying on the ground. I couldn't

live with myself." She pads up to me and says, "If I can't find any food with this baby," she taps the side of her muzzle with her paw, "then I might as well call it quits." She lies down beside me and rests her head on her front paws.

"What are you going to do about your sniffer?"

As she settles herself next to my front foot, I look down and notice how it can almost cover her entire length. I hear monkey still chattering softly in his sleep, and I am reminded of his offer. I can imagine him tucked inside the fire hanging in his cage, clutching his tattered stuffed animal, his hands opening and closing around the toy.

"Monkey offered to take the peanut out for me, but he wants something in return." I watch Paddy close for her reaction. I know she and Monkey have had a previous encounter involving her tail and Monkey's fevered paw. She sniffed too close to his cage one night, and in a fit Monkey grabbed her tail and told her to never get that close to him again, that what ever was near his cage belonged to him. Her tail still holds a slight crimp, of which she is thoroughly embarrassed.

"You're not really thinking of doing business with that little punk, are you?" Her words have a slight growl.

"If this pain doesn't get any better then I'll be forced to do something." I struggle up from my position on the floor and walk around the enclosure, hoping the movement will jar the peanut loose.

Paddy rises up and begins to walk back toward the hole in the fence where she crawled through. Over her shoulder she says, "If I had a choice between pain and dealing with Monkey, I'd choose the pain. You can trust the pain. And by the way, if you do get that peanut out then I've got first dibs on it. I don't care what it looks like." And with that, she disappears through the hole.

When morning comes the veterinarians are waiting for me to open my eyes. I feel sick and defeated, and in no mood to run them out of my house. All I want now is relief.

When they tell me to stand, I do. I also raise my trunk obligingly, allowing them full view of my appendage. When they are done with their examination, they leave shaking their heads and muttering that I'm old anyway, and they shouldn't waste their funds on my care when a new elephant is what the zoo really needs. I feel disheartened by their diagnosis, and begin to fear my fate may be that of my last enclosure mate, who when escorted out was a lot stiffer than when he came in.

The zoo's normal bustling sounds are slowly replaced by a steady throbbing sound of expiration deep within my skull. I loathe this place and everything in it. I want to leave, to take an excursion through the fence like Paddy, and sniff my way to some place else. I want to live off of the hotdogs the land provides and not have to kowtow to a child holding a bag of roasted nuts.

Throughout the day people parade by my enclosure, never stopping to look at me, as if sensing I am something to be ignored, something that will soon be gone. No children look and point at my trunk, which should be waving in the air but instead lies limply on the ground. No one throws peanuts in my direction. They all prefer to harass the polar bears in the pen directly across from mine. I am grateful to be left alone with my misery.

My body has betrayed me by being so big. I should have been a mouse.

My housemate manages to give me hourly reminders of his health. He keeps his posterior to me, swinging his tail with arrogant waves, showing me his beautiful bottle brush mop of hair on the end. He vacuums gallons upon gallons of water from the drinking pond and into his massive trunk, spraying himself with liberal spurts. The water looks soothing, and I wonder how it would feel on my parchment thin hide. I again consider asking him to douse me, but after each display he looks over at me in my misery, and gives a little wink. Damned show off. If I ever get over this pain, I'll speak to the Haitian chickens about placing a voodoo curse

on him to shrivel his trunk to the size of Monkey's tail.

The day passes slowly, and I am anxious for the night to come, for everyone to leave so I might talk to Monkey.

Once everyone is gone the zoo quiets to a low hum. I can see Monkey out of the corner of my eye looking at me. He is gripping the side of his cage with his hands, and his eyes are bright and glittering. He is humming something to himself, and his tail is swishing from side to side.

"Poor trunk hasn't gotten any better has it?" He asks in mock pity.

"No," I sigh through my mouth and settle back on my haunches.

Monkey loosens himself from his perch, and scampers around his cage twice. He hoots, and raises his arms into the air, then kicks, and beats on a tire in his cage. He shouts over to me, "All you have to do is ask, and I'll take that peanut out. You know I can do it, I have hands. It would only take me a second, then," he raises his hand, holding an imaginary object toward the sky, "I would have it." He runs around his cage bouncing off the bars and hooting.

"What do you want?" I cast my eyes downward, and I can feel my dry skin is crawling, begging me to soak it with water. It cracks with each shift of my weight.

"We'll talk payback after the work's done."

He is picking his fur clean with his nails. I dread the idea of those monkey hands ranging on my snout, filling me with all manner of infestations. I notice how he is constantly scratching, and sometimes loses patches of his hair. He is filthy, and I distrust him. I think about how strong my trunk used to be, how easily I could knock about anything I wanted, how handsome my tail used to be, and how easily I could dismiss the flies. I decide I'm not ready to die.

I raise my bulk and lumber over to him. "Ok then, take it out."

He jumps up and down, flashing a huge grin. "Ok, ok, then raise your trunk and repeat after me."

"Why? I'm not going to pledge allegiance to you."

He continues bouncing while saying, "No allegiance, just an oath to make sure you don't try to skip out on payment."

My eyes widen. "Monkey, I promise you I'm a pachyderm of my word. If I say I'll honor something—"

"Yeah, yeah, just repeat after me. 'I Elephant promise.'"

My shoulders slump as I feel myself sinking to an unutterable low. I feel betrayed by my body, and I hate myself, and this place, for making me do this. My pride is bigger than my bulk. "I Elephant promise."

"Not to screw over Monkey." He begins rocking back and forth on the bars.

I sigh, "Not to screw over Monkey. There I have said it, can we get on with the procedure."

He waves me in close with his hand, and I step up to his cage, putting my pitiful trunk through the warm metal bars. I can feel his breath on my throbbing and parched skin. His eyes seem to glow in the little bit of light the moon is providing, and I can almost taste the stink off his cage fermenting in the humid air.

He softly pats my lower trunk until he finds a spot of interest. I wince with each pat, my tender flesh resonating pain. Monkey keeps his hand on the spot, while licking the fingers of his other hand. He uses his disgusting moistened hand to paint a crude sticky bull's eye around the place he has marked. Then with a sudden deft movement, he raises his hand high into the air, and comes crashing down on my pitiful skin, causing white dots of light to dance before my eyes. Blinded with pain I stumble back away from his cage, knocking my trunk against the bars, and fall on my haunches. The dots clear just in time for me to see the smashed remnants of a slimy peanut slide out of the end of my trunk.

A cool breeze of air flows up my inflamed trunk, and I stare at Monkey with disbelief. "You actually did it," I say, my eyes wide.

He is busy with a victory dance on top of the tire. It is spinning and swinging and he is on top performing his conducting routine, waving his stick about wildly causing his black and white hide to jitter back and forth. He hops off the tire and back onto the bars of his cage. I can see drops of feces falling from his feet onto the bottom of his cage.

"Was there any doubt?"

"Yes." I say.

"I'll collect my payment tomorrow! I'll collect my payment tomorrow!" he sings as he begins dancing in a dark stained patch on the bottom of his cage.

Tomorrow, I think.

I pretend to sleep as long as I can, and when monkey starts calling my name, shouting for me to wake up, I still pretend to not hear him. I just barely crack my eye and watch him running quick circles around his cage, taking time to beat and kick the tire every time he passes it.

"Elephant, Elephant, Elephant." He calls. "Get up, you promised. You promised." He begins throwing feces at my posterior, which is turned towards him.

Finally, in disgust I answer him. "Ok Monkey, I can hear you. What do you want?" I rise up and feel just the slightest bit of soreness in my trunk. I stretch out my stiff legs and think about how good my skin will feel when I douse it down with water from the watering pond. The smashed peanut is still on the ground by Monkey's cage, the mucus around it having dried during the night. I lumber over to it and tuck it into a corner, making a point to remember to show Paddy when she comes scrounging.

Monkey is on the side of his cage next to my enclosure. He is leering at me and smiling, and for the first time I realize that I am bound to do what he wants. I had promised. The fuzzy haze of sleep dissolves into complete awareness of the black and white thing in front of me. He waves his arm in a circular manner, motioning for me to turn around. I hesitate for a minute, then remembering my promise not to

cheat him I go ahead and turn my backside to him.

"Back up to the bars, Elephant," he says waving me on.

I lower my head and ease my bulk backwards until I can feel the metal bars pressing into me. I can feel Monkey's paws dancing back there, making my skin crawl. His paws are grasping and pulling at my tail, when suddenly, the sting of Monkey plucking out one of the hairs on my tail makes me cry out. One after another he plucks out the few remaining hairs on my tail until I am bald. I turn around and look at Monkey and watch as he fashions the hairs from my tail into a crude sort of wig, which he places on top of his head. He stands there in his new wig looking proud, holding a stick in one hand and a bright red rag he stole from the trainer in the other.

"Is that the payment? Are we equal?" My head is lowered.

"No, just one more thing, one more." He hops on top of the tire so he can look me in the eye. "I want a pony ride. I want to swing from your trunk and ride on your back, so I can show off my wig," he says, taking his paws and fluffing it up. "That's what I want. That's what I want." He jumps off the tire and runs full speed around his cage, with a hand on top of his head to hold his wig in place.

I stand by Monkey's cage and watch him run so fast, the black and white of his hide seem to melt together. In my mind I can see the spectacle that will unfold. I can see him perched on my back, leading the crowds' cheers with his stick, bouncing up and down, and waving the red rag, his wig firmly on his head with some sticky feces from the bottom of his cage. The crowd will be huge, shunning the polar bears in favor of seeing the fabulous Monkey ride his fool elephant with a bald tail. And they will take more pictures than I have ever seen them take. And mothers will not have to drag their children along, for they will come running. And they will throw more peanuts than I have ever borne witness to. And I will eat them. And I will hate myself.

Knowing Angela

I worked with Angela for about a year, maybe a bit longer, at a grocery store. The store was a local chain, big in size—a place where old men would wait before sunrise for the doors to open so they could drink coffee with their buddies, where the manager knew over half of his customer base by name. It was a place where the owner would come in, walking the polished aisles, chatting with customers, looking for imperfections. The store was a place where I knew the names of most of the blue hairs peddling carts down the aisles either because they knew my grandmother—a good lady they would say—since she had come from Mississippi, or because they taught, babysat, or their daughters went to school with my mother—a sweet girl they would say. It seemed at times as if the store had crawled off old black and white reels of 50's television, and somehow flickered to life.

In the midst of this small town bastion, there was an ever-constant stream of employees, consisting of high school and college kids—my crowd, and working alongside us, the 401k crowd, the older, established, I've-given-my-life-to-the-store workers whose main talent consisted of outlasting the other guy. It was to one of their members, the store manager, that Angela submitted her application on that Monday in December, weeks before the coming Christmas rush. She was dressed in jeans and a T-shirt when he took the red and white form from her. His name was Al, a bald, rotund man with a thick mustache who everyone addressed as mister, regardless of their age. His hiring practices were evident when the young crowd took their shifts starting at 3:00 in the afternoon. You could stand at register one and look all the way down to register ten, and see a virtual sea of girls with blonde hair—be it bleached or natural—all of them having the same blue eyes, all of them attractive. Angela didn't quite match the usual look he hired, but I understand why he made the exception.

She stood 5'5, coming up to my chest. She always

wore flawlessly applied makeup, liner around lips and eyes, foundation base applied to her face with an artful touch. Her eyes were a deep brown, though not spectacular. Her hair too shared the same color. She wore no jewelry on her hands, save for a wedding ring with a spec of a diamond gracing the top. In each ear lobe she always wore a small gold hoop, with five more identical hoops crawling up into the cartilage of her left ear. She was petite of frame, weighing not more than 90 pounds, ample of bust. But it was her rear that sent men to looking. Perfect, pert, it sat as though on a high shelf. To emphasize the point, she always wore these fabulous knit black, extremely tight pants.

It was no surprise to those of us who had witnessed her turning in her application when, three days later, she was perched at the end of the check out lane, ready for her first customer. I talked to her briefly later that day, and found out she was only twenty, and had three kids to boot—all boys. She talked about them as a bundle, calling them her boys. I laughed at that because my mother speaks about my brother and me the same way. It made her seem older than she was, maybe tarnished her a bit.

Angela usually manned the express lane, filling it up in the early weekday mornings with a collection of old men, tugboat workers, and refinery operators, all of whom had a particular penchant for Nomex coveralls—names sewed on the front. I think the life saving flame retardant nature of the super fabric came second to the virtues of having one's name sewn on in plain view.

With this line of light loaded men—women rarely going to Angela's line—the two other checkers on morning duty would receive the brunt of brim full baskets and mothers towing sleepy eyed children. Sixty something Theresa, to Angela's left, was a woman who prided herself on her 14 years of store service and often criticized Angela in private to anyone who would listen. I remember her becoming angry when one of the little old men who regularly visited her line to flirt went to Angela's instead, with only a smile and a

single canned good. Shelly, to Angela's right, was in her mid 40's. She had a habit of covering her mouth when she laughed because of embarrassment over a missing front tooth. She also walked to the store each morning from her apartment because of never having learned to drive. The two of them, bookending Angela, made her stand out even more, making her even more the focus of the early morning crowd.

The thing I remember most about those early mornings was the way those men in her line all looked at her. I would watch them, following their eyes, as they touched her with their sight just as they would their hands. Because of this, I became utterly conscious of where my eyes were looking at all times, hoping nobody was watching, judging me as I was them. I made it a point to look women in their eyes, lest my sight trail down somewhere it wasn't supposed to be. It was especially bad with the older men. I was looking at grandfathers and retirees, men who had treated and tipped me well. But when I saw their lingering eyes playing over those tight, black pants, these men became demeaned oddly enough, not Angela. I didn't fancy her particularly intelligent, but I know that she knew. Like many women, she played it off, only making casual reference to their creepy intentions later in whispered conversations with other checkers her age.

But most of the stares ceased as soon as these other checkers came onto work. Angela was a unique diamond in the morning, sparkling amongst the candy counters, but when these younger, childless girls came on, Angela just became one of many. She was no longer flanked by homely mediocrity, but blue eyed, blonde haired nubile youth. The other girls were looked at just as Angela was, maybe more so.

Her shift would end shortly after these girls came on. I would watch her go out to her little green car, always with two child car seats in the back. I marveled at someone who was younger than me, yet had three children already. It was so foreign. Later, she became pregnant again, another boy.

She remained in perfect condition, except her belly, which became more rounded. After she had her baby, you couldn't tell she had been pregnant just weeks before. I guess some women are just like that.

Angela wasn't somebody I ever thought worthy of remembering. Once past the pretty package, she wasn't intelligent or really interesting in any way. Her life revolved around her children. To her boys she was the mom, the person fixing scrapes, separating fights, making sure daddy listened to what all of them had to say. But most of those men waiting in her line never knew that. They didn't know she had children, or even a husband. Most asked her when she was graduating high school. At that she would laugh and hand them their receipt. In retrospect, I don't think it is really Angela, the person, I remember. It's what happened around her, her effect. During those thick Gulf nights, inside that store, with its perfectly polished floors, stacked produce, and soldier straight shelves, Angela stood out as the object that didn't belong. To those tugboat captains and refinery workers, even me, she was an unexpected and beautiful sight. Nobody really knew her. Even I only knew how many kids she had and that she had a husband, nothing really significant or personal. She was an object to be looked at and compared to others. She was an indulgence one doesn't expect that early in the morning. And I think the most demeaning about knowing Angela only on a surface level, never discovering her as a person, is my lack of caring on the subject. What's worse, I think I'm even okay with it.

Barker

You may be entitled to a cash reward.
No reins attached.
You've always worked hard for the Future.
You may be entitled to a cash reward.

The next stage.

Stroke? Heart Attack? Death?
We are also realists,
And we are going a step farther.
Simple. Affordable—Extended payment terms.
No reins attached.

Where it costs less to get more,
You may be entitled to a cash reward.

Found poem, Beaumont Enterprise January 28, 2001

High Society

Grapevines hanging like green armed
Monkeys
Swinging ball sacks of concords
And muscadines

Everybody's sipping and giving
Lip service
To the lurking lit Gatsbyesque
House

And I am sitting, hoping not
Wanting
That the girl on top of me is into
Photography

I'll be bidding and praying
A quick adieu
Picking up film for my
Camera

She'll be leaving her societal
Haunts
Tripping then stripping down the other
Half's streets

Still tasting grape wines from
Concords and
Muscadines she'll be blinded by flash
Bulbs and me

The Last of the Big Time Losers

He settles into
The jamb,
His zigzag, pinstripe
Suit covered in stardust.
Buttery fingers of a
Fat hand
Roll a twinkling brown
Felt fedora with red satin lining.
She looks at him,
Plucks the grape handkerchief---
A gift of two Christmases ago---
Out of the zigzag pocket.
She dabs the fierce cut over
His eye. He doesn't wince.
Trouser pockets bulge
With hard won
Condoms,
The only yielded booty
From Rigby's plate
Glass window.
He thrusts a handful
At her belly
And says, "That's all."
She puts the grape rag
Back into the
Stardust suit,
And takes his
Margarine palm,
Then leads the
Sparkling loser
Towards their bedroom.
And he is relieved
To be away from
That store, out from
The jamb,
And into her.

Quatrain Forms in the Poetry of A. D. Hope

A. D. Hope has said, "Poetry does not evolve from primitive and simple forms to sophisticated and complex, but it does extend its range" (New 160). In his own poetry, Hope certainly extends his range. He has written poems in a multitude of stanza forms, from heroic couplets to septets, in triplets, common and long measure, quintets, and nonce forms. His poem "A Letter from Rome" is composed of seventy-two stanzas of ottava rima (Selected 59). Yet Hope particularly excelled in quatrain forms, as evidenced by the fact that over half of the works in *Selected Poems* and most of his well-known poems are written in quatrains. Because Hope understood the traditional functions of established forms, he knew how to choose quatrains that would best support the themes of his poems.

Hope's "Australia" is eight stanzas of Italian quatrains (Selected 17). This quatrain form is associated with the Italian love sonnets of Petrarch. "Australia," however, reverses the Petrarchan tradition, for it expresses contempt instead of love for the country. Rather than glorifying Australia by invoking the image of a beautiful lady, the persona depicts her as "A woman beyond her change of life, a breast / Still tender but within the womb is dry" (7, 8). She is "without songs, architecture, history" (9). A paradoxical metaphor emphasizes the bleak deserts that cover the interior of Australia: "Her rivers of water drown among inland sands, / The river of her immense stupidity / Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth" (11-13).

An advantage of the Italian quatrain is its rhyme scheme, *abba*. Paul Fussell suggests that the two interior *b* rhymes should be distinguishable from the outer *a* rhymes, and that emphasis falls on the second *b* rhyme because of its close proximity to the first (159, 135). Hope seems to have no-

ticed this as well, for the most noteworthy lines of the poem come from the interior of the quatrains. Moreover, the influence of Alexander Pope's heroic couplets can be seen in these lines: "In them at last the ultimate men arrive / Whose boast is not: 'we live' but 'we survive'"; "From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find / The Arabian desert of the human mind"; "...some spirit which escapes / The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes" (14, 15, 22, 23, 26, 27).

"Australia" functions like an Italian sonnet. The poem has a turn at the beginning of the sixth stanza, as indicated by the word "yet." The persona decides that, despite its faults, Australia is still preferable to the modern civilizations of the Western world (Darling 18). Hope exploits the irony of using the Italian quatrain form to belittle his country for the first five stanzas and then takes aim at foreign nations.

Another poem in which Hope uses quatrains contrary to convention is "Imperial Adam," which is written in elegiac stanzas (Selected 44). Traditionally, the elegiac stanza was often (though not always) employed to lament someone's death; however, it became so associated with this function over time that modern poets may now use it for irony (Fussell 135). Hope said he intended the poem "Imperial Adam" to be a satire of the profane image of Eve (thus the use of the elegiac stanza), yet at least one critic believes that he did his job too well and ended up perpetuating Eve's wicked image (Darling 44). The extent to which "Imperial Adam" succeeds as a satire depends on whether its content or its form becomes dominant in the poem.

The first two stanzas maintain a fairly regular iambic meter and show a "puzzled" Adam discovering the loss of his rib. By the fourth quatrain, Eve has been introduced, and a double spondaic substitution "dark hairs | winked crisp" in the last line spotlights a part of Eve's anatomy that will spark the fall. Instead of eating a forbidden apple, the taboo of this poem centers on sex: "She promised on the turf of Paradise / Delicious pulp of the forbidden fruit" (18, 19). In the absence of a literal serpent in the poem tempting Adam and

Eve, the origin of evil becomes the question.

Hope said he "meant to put a case for the spontaneous generation of evil from things not in themselves evil at all—rather like the occurrence of lethal mutations in biology" (McAuley 66). Yet evil conspicuously materializes in the person of Eve. A simile compares Eve to a snake, which forces her into the role of the biblical serpent: "Sly as the snake she loosed her sinuous thighs" (20). At the moment of conception, she gives a "terrible and triumphant female cry," as if she rejoices in damning Adam (30). A somewhat grotesque image of a pregnant Eve follows. Finally, Eve gives birth to "the first murderer," the consequence of her sinister part in the original sin. Adam, on the other hand, seems naïve and pitiable, indistinguishable from the beasts around him.

While admitting that "there are troubling instances in his work where woman is portrayed as object," Darling dismisses Hope's characterizations of women in this and other poems as "failures of judgement rather than symptoms of core misogyny" (44). Be that as it may, if the purpose of the poem is to parody some inherited prejudices about women, one can imagine that most women would just as soon Hope didn't bother on their behalf. Simply put, Hope manipulates the imagery and metaphors so well in depicting an evil Eve that not even his use of the elegiac quatrain form is enough to remind his audience that the poem is supposed to be a satire.

Like "Imperial Adam," Hope's poem "The Wandering Islands" (Selected 20) also uses the elegiac quatrain form, but a glance at these two poems reveals an important difference—"The Wandering Islands," because of its extremely loose meter, has much longer lines. Nearly one-fourth of the feet in the poem are anapestic, which stretches out some lines to fifteen syllables: "The committee of tolls inspires | in them no | devotion" (11). The last foot of several lines contains a feminine rhyme, which also contributes to the syllable count. Fussell points out that pyrrhic and anapestic substitutions can make the line seem more rapid or light, but

the visual effect of so many anapestic substitutions in this poem lends itself to a feeling of weighty seriousness (35). These anapestic lines don't occur regularly from stanza to stanza, but like Hope's islands, wander from place to place.

Nevertheless, "The Wandering Islands" establishes itself as a satire more clearly than "Imperial Adam." Any reader familiar with Donne's famous line "No man is an island" will quickly discover that Hope is making the opposite statement here. Lindy Abraham explains the twofold allegories of the islands—they symbolize both "the estrangement of mind and heart" and "civilization's misfits" (172). For Hope, some people clearly are islands, for they "drift on their own business," and "If they clap together, it is only casual thunder" (17, 20). Only in the act of physical union can they come close to understanding another, and the last line forebodes their continued loneliness: "The Rescue will not take place" (40). The elegiac quatrain form upholds this satire of "connected" humanity.

"The Lingam and the Yoni" (Selected 26) is a ballad variant with regular iambic trimeter lines. This meter creates a frolicsome mood: "The Lin|gam and | the Yoni / Are wal|king hand | in glove, / O are | you list|ening, honey? / I hear | my hon|ey love" (1-4). The rhyme scheme is *abab*, and the *a* rhymes are feminine. The use of feminine rhymes works with the quatrain form to further the buoyant atmosphere. A lingam and yoni serve as the subjects of the poem, which adds a comic dimension as well. In fact, given the definition of a lingam and a yoni, the image of them walking "hand in glove" takes on new meaning.

The frivolity vanishes in the fourth quatrain, when modern features such as a suburb and time-payment unexpectedly intrude on the lovers and the frolic tone. The following quatrains confirm that the Lingam and the Yoni have become doomed by modern life (McAuley 65). The quatrain form and feminine rhymes clearly contrast with the serious theme, and Darling wonders if the poem's "lightness of tone allows rather than forces the poem to make its point" (29). The disparity between the quatrain form and the sad fate of the

Lingam and the Yoni startles the reader and provokes thought about the chances of romantic love's survival in an urban environment, as no doubt Hope intended.

Hope uses a variant of the Sapphic quatrain form in "As Well as They Can" (Selected 108). Unlike a traditional Sapphic stanza, the meter of this poem is iambic pentameter for the first three lines of each stanza, the fourth line is iambic trimeter, and there is an *abab* rhyme scheme. In the first quatrain, Hope creates an image of a dying fish, and in the second, a poet being brutalized by his environment. The third and final quatrain introduces the persona himself, sorrowful and reflective, missing the person he loves. The shorter, fourth line of each stanza draws attention to itself and performs an important function—to inject an element of hope or a consoling memory to soothe the pain of the fish, the poet, and the persona. The dying fish and harried poet are metaphors for the broken-hearted persona, since intense longing for someone is like the suffocation of the fish, and the poet's search for inspiration is like trying to find something to live for when love has come and gone. According to Fussell, "Because of its inevitable associations with the poems of Sappho, the Sapphic stanza...seems to imply a certain passion and seriousness: frivolity and comedy and wit are not among its conventions" (138). For this reason, the use of the Sapphic stanza in this poem helps sustain its theme.

Hope's knowledge of the functions of various quatrain forms enables him to communicate to his audience his serious themes, especially in those poems that appear carefree. Ever the formalist, he studied the techniques of generations of poets before him. Indeed, he so idolized traditional forms that he could only feel disgust for poetic trends that encouraged a break with custom, especially free verse, that "very common cheap and popular substitute for poetry" (Cave 38). The claim that free verse arose from the need to replace tedious and overused conventional forms offended Hope, who complained that "a whole generation of poets has followed

T. S. Eliot into this wasteland of prosody where verse, half dead, trails its flabby rhythms and dispirited cadences across the page, on the plea that the old forms were dead..." (49). He believed modern poets needed a peer to demonstrate that using established forms is o.k. Through his poetry, Hope volunteered to be that guide.

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Ashanti Ali

Hunger

Sometimes hunger will make you do crazy things. It will make you drive 15 miles to a cubbyhole notch in the universe, where you will find no superiors on the wall, just for a fish sandwich. Not just any fish sandwich though, Ms. Tilly's fish sandwich, the one with two real trout (not the square things) seasoned and fried with two slices of cheese just slightly melted on top, crisp lettuce and the biggest, ripest slice of tomato in town. Hunger will make you watch Ms. Tilly waddle to the counter for your order and waddle back to the kitchen, leaving you knowing that she will not resurface for another 45 minutes to an hour. But you wait at the counter on your cracked red pleather bar stool and admire the town memorabilia that is splashed over the walls, trying to ignore the third roach that has traipsed across the picture of Ms. Tilly and her husband.

Hunger will make you do some crazy things.

Lip Service

Smooth the rough spots,
pick the right red, plump
where thin-everything you need
to know for a knockout pout
Don't be afraid to try something new,
break the habit of licking,
exfoliation is the key
Gloss can be a girl's best friend.
It will last through coffee, lunch
and afternoon tea.
A monogamous relationship
with a lipstick color is no reason
you can't learn to play the field.
Bring out the bright berries
and, sheer pinks, and leave the
matte brick tones in your makeup bag.
Gloss can be a girl's best friend.

Found poem, *Good Housekeeping*, 28 January 2001

Love at 19 in the Springtime

We are young in love again
Two silhouettes against the night
Dodging curious onlookers like
Cloud retreating stars
Laughing through the wind
At all the window peepers
Who are grasping for an echo
From the secrets of our lips
Yes, we are young in love again
Pausing in our shadowed flight
Kissing the universe out of sight
Ensnared amidst Aunt Kate's azaleas
Until she screams, "Who's that out there!"
Squinting her 90 year old eyes at us.
And we scatter like desert tumbleweeds.

A Street Lady Named Trudy

Her nomadic mind,
Too distant for utility
Like a rubberband, broken,
Binds her to no one, yet is forever
Called by voices
That haven't really spoken.
She sneaks up like a forehead pimple,
Then asks if you're afraid.
You shrug, hoping
Your fears go undetected
Your mind screams.
She doesn't leave though
But rambles on like a scratched CD
Until someone distracts her,
Steering her noxious fumings
Towards every passing soul
Who breathes-
A breath of crazy air.

Lara Bartlett

A Heart in Anger

Empty words
hover like stale cigar smoke
with a souring, sweetness
full of meaningless, emptiness
redundantly, rebounding
off stark gray stones
only if a selfish confession
could enter your disillusioned heart
words can break worse than rocks
your boyishness tarnished my body and heart
once you leave they become walls fortified with silence
while you seek elsewhere to fill your collection of stones
I search for sincerity
avoiding the lost I Love You's
that wrecked years and temporarily my inner strength.

Do Not

Do not neglect me
do not look above me, below me
through me, behind me
or into my future.
your images are disillusioned.
I have a voice
soft, but strong in ideas
Do not write me off because I am young
and refuse to spit back ungrateful revenges.
I see the unspoken and unnoticed.
I am not a child
I need not, the scolding of a preschooler
nor the impatience cast toward that age group
You anger me,
not to hostility, but to a lesson in ignorance.
I forbid myself to partake in your errors
toward younger generations when I am older
or to any group you stamp with insignificance.
I owe you nothing.
even though you enjoy throwing it in my face.
you have a job
that I too, will have
mine will have no fault flung at them
because of an inability to cope or handle myself
You may continue with your wise snobbery
Your red words and faces
no longer upset my inner perspective
to your sickness I am immune.

Charles Burke

How Long?

How long must we wait
How many more must die?
When is too much. . . too much
of watching our lovers cry?

How long must we suffer?
How long must we wait
for a political reprieve
to protect us from hate?

*How long... how long
must ignorance reign?*

*How long... how long
must we be strong in our pain?*

When will we tire of hiding;
suspended from living?
How long must we wait;
what's left to be given?

How much more time will be spent
in rhetorical debate
of our inalienable rights?
How long must we wait?

*How long... how long
must we be strong in our pain?*

*How long... how long
must we suffer in vain?*

How long must we wait
through knifings and wounds,
and "queens" being raped
with the handles of brooms?

Can we not be oppressed;
how long must we wait,
to shake ambiguity
and take charge of our fate?

*How long...how long
must we suffer in vain?
How long...how long
must we drown in the rain?*

What tragedy must come
to unite us in force?
How long must we wait
"til hate "runs its course?"

Spare me your pity
as you rail and prate.
We're silently gathering,
how long will you wait?

*How long...how long
must we drown in the rain?
How long...how long
must ignorance reign?*

Objectify Me

I want you to notice me,
to feel your eyes undressing me in your mind.
I want to be reduced to a piece of meat,
to be an item of obsession in your head.
I want to feel your hands,
to feel them slide underneath my designer shirt.
I want to be the object of your lust,
to be the thing that gets you up at night.
I want to have long discussions about literature,
to discuss Marlowe, Byron, and Wilde.
I want you at my side,
to have your devotion to strengthen me.
I want you to love my youth,
to feel my enthusiasm in love, and in bed.
I want you to need my vacillation,
to counter your stoic unyielding bent for perfection.
I want you to be the strong one,
to hold me up when I can no longer hold myself.
I want you to need me to hold you,
to be the one who calms your nerves in the evening.
I want you to be jealous,
to rage when I flirt shamelessly with someone else.
I want to fight with you,
to feel the rage and passion caused by my thoughtlessness.
I want to make up with you,
to forgive you the things you said in anger.
I want to play with you,
to wrestle both physically and mentally.
I want to kiss you,
to feel the roof of your mouth with my tongue.
I want you to emotionally dominate me,
to possess me to the very core of my being.
I want to control you,
to make you want to want me and never stop.

I want to experience love with you,
to learn to become a better lover in your arms.
I want you to never not need me,
to grow old together and never part.
...I want you to notice me.

Ophelia to Elaine

Here we are, you and I,
together in the middle of the stream;
floating nowhere, feeling nothing.
The flower chains pass in our awareness.
Yet, we do not reach for them, we can not
or maybe we dare not--unimportant really.

Love pushed us to the edge,
but we made the final decision to jump.

It was painful: Love was,
or was it betrayal that inflicted the final wound?
Yet, now it seems distant. . . removed,
like a thread, carefully unwove from a tapestry.
One unimportant part - gone.
But, somehow the whole is weakened.

Tragic sister mine, we no longer feel the emptiness.
So much longing. . .so pointless.

The peace in the end
is much like that in the beginning:
floating. . .floating. . .floating.
You in your boat, I in my dress;
together let's commiserate.

Titania's Vow

Oh Oberon, don't think that I'm content
to sit and watch as you so callously
meddled in my affairs and thereby caused
me to be cruelly humiliated.

Why must a woman make the choice between
her child and her man: and whom she'll give her love:
There is no choice, you knew, and no debate;
so in deceit you thought you'd have your way.

I want a man whose pride it won't affect
to be an equal tenant of my heart:
that understands that what is good for him
will be applied to me without restraint.

You love to rut with lusty buxom maids,
and play the wandering husband from afar.
Though I solely by sex from sex am barred
by ignorance and your misogyny.

I'll be avenged, so make you no mistake.
I am woman, and I do not forget
a man who feels it is his lawful right
to debase me to assuage his pride.

So, silly fairy king, to you I say,
that I as fairy queen and earth's own soul,
as mother goddess of fertility
shall bring to fruit my solution of choice.

If from you men learn infidelity
that a woman is lesser than a man,
that family and home are valueless,
then I'll counter your teachings with my own.

To me, love is equal in everything
and gender is a boundary I don't see.
Oh then the lucky few that I will grant
to know this truth, will be Our saving grace.

Though I suspect that you will not give up,
and fight me with your ignorance and fear.
But love is love and heeds no obstacles
and in the end it's fated that I'll win.

Just wait faire Oberon, you'll lose your hold,
as I place the juice of truth in all men's eyes.
And one by one your acolytes will turn
from you, and fall in worship at my feet.

You'll find me in my gardens of desire
surrounded by those that this goddess has blessed,
where love is free to strike down whom he will,
and then you too will learn humility.

White Madonna on a Pedestal

Do not dare presume that you know me well,
that you understand where I have come from.
From sideways glance and eyes askance you tell
me more than any verbalization.
Don't try to be a white Madonna on
a pedestal dispensing your pity.
You treat me like a lost and wayward son,
Some type of benevolent deity.
Go peddle your righteous condescension
to some other poor soul searching for hope,
in need of your brand of intervention,
and toss to him your conditional rope.
My pain is mine, and it belongs to me,
so let me wear it with some dignity.

Jon Deckert

In a Premeditated, Natural Language

Walking Billboard:
I exist.
Talking Billboard:
CONFIRM THAT I EXIST.

Realize that decline and progress occur at the same time.

15-year-old punk advertising the perfect T-shirt,
He/She, forgetting to question the inrush of mass media,
Is slowly, happily fermenting in the gutter.

We were poor, but we had love.

--To my eternal flame, Tara.
I will lock the door so that you may never go out. —

Police siren, bloody tissue, porch swing,
Dogs bark, woman jumps, man runs.

Don't hurt him officer.
He didn't mean to hit me.
But I love him and his dog, Skeeter.

April Flowers

Everything's in Brown

"Let's walk the dog," he says,
And holds open the heavy oak door.
Heidi pushes to be first out,
Tangling my legs in her leash,
And we enter the night in giggles.

Cookie cutter houses gaze
Out darkened panes to empty yards
As Heidi chases dun colored rabbits
Around hydrants and hedges.
As he speaks of his father,

Tears glide down chicory skin.
Mahogany eyes capture starlight
And glisten as sounds flow
Like a drab, brown stream.
Marrow, fractures, three years to go.

I touch the buttery walnut leather
Of his jacket, then wipe away
Tears with the pad of my thumb.
One last swallow of tangy liquor
And push open the heavy door again.

Grey Night

its late

unable to sleep and not knowing why. is it because of the
pang of
loneliness that being without your arms gives me, the way
my body
aches for days after we have been together because your
touch is
missing again, the way my sex hungers for you to fill it, my
eyes
water without you in them? is it the fear of being a bad
mother, of maligning the fates
against such an innocent just by being myself? is it just a
general malaise? Is it
watching my sister hurt and die a little inside longing for a
baby that will never come...
and knowing exactly how she feels. perhaps it's all of these
wrapped up in some twisted
whisper, some Dali'esque version of reality painted on the
landscape of my mind.

i cry

not sad, not happy and not in pain... but again some
madman's
dream in between all of these states. the colors vibrant and
glowing
with life... all tinged with his madness and the purpose
equals nothing more than some mice's dream of cheese.
Meaningless
in the greater scheme, but all important in my padded cell.

and if i were high, think of the sick and cloying noises i
would
make in these moods. winding my feelings up into spun
silver and
painting over the eyes of others. all with little flips of my
tongue. the
sadness of my words dripping from their faces like rain
unnoticed,
while in the background of my soul the music of your love
plays on my
skin.

Journey's End?

Poised
Hands flexing
Muscles taut and teeth clenched
My journey begins
In white

Cold
Polar view
Not showing inky black
Tracks made by other
Passage

Blue
Shadows line
The sheet of snow – broken
By a faint pink ray
Silent

Scarred
Wood binding
The margins of my path
Framing the edges
In brown

Pause
Breathe deeply
Parchment on the desk
A stroke of the pen
Begin

What's your flavor?

The world is washed in vanilla.
Clean and pure, it rains down to coat you all with sameness.
Dulling your appetites by filling your bellies with the bland
and cold.
They hold you down and paint your brain, early in your life.
Teaching you to eat, sleep, live, and breathe...
Vanilla

Think this, think that... don't go there in your mind!
They push another scoop into your life's cup.
The smooth icy feeling slides easily
Down your throats to freeze the longing need to be else.
To be other. To be yourself.
NO! NO! NO! They scream, be...
Vanilla

They give you cherries and nuts, to sprinkle on the outside.
Little choices that make you feel in control, make you feel
As though YOU are different from all the other you's, from
all
the other ice cream coated, frozen wastelands. You
wear their clothes, you sing their songs, you
Participate in painting your own world...
Vanilla.

Some of you, though...
Have poured vanilla over the outside of your lives,
Like a hard magic shell covering every inch of your skin,
Even the air you breathe resonates with creamy blandness.
They think you are ONE OF THEM. Tasteless, faceless,
Knowing nothing of true flavor and hunger.
But you live rich, dark, hidden lives of...
Chocolate

Casey Lea Ford

Bones and Whiskers with a Twin-Engine Purr

Such a fat thing,
this little bundle
of bones and whiskers
with a twin-engine purr
and eyes so green they dim emeralds.
Milk-drinker, meat-eater;
black as an eight ball,
velvet fur.

I sit by her
on the sunny deck
and her whiskers twitch.
She doesn't budge an inch;
just keeps dozing, one eye open.
Always ready to pounce
but too sleepy now.
Lazy thing.

The purr softens;
her belly rises
and falls with each breath.
I sometimes think she dreams
like I do, in vivid colors.
They say cats can't see them—
colors, black and white—
but they might.

Such languid days,
the days of a cat.
Hunting down blue jays,
napping on hot concrete,
living simply, fearing nothing.
No chains keep her with me.
Just food, warmth, and her
litter box.

Offspring

He was playing tennis
the day she gave birth
to their son.

He had her hair—white blonde,
with his father's eyes and
red-faced scream.

When she bore their daughter,
he watched golf on TV
with a friend.

The girl was long and pink, with
his stocky legs and her mother's
meek little whine.

And the brother and sister lived,
passing in the hallway;
their parent's children.

Remodeling Me

I know where I'd be without you.
Probably at bus stop;
even a hotel room, alone
with a stranger.

Because you'd be there with me, just
I wouldn't know you because
I'd be drunk and stupid and blind
and lost. Or worse.

And I almost chose that—lonely;
but for reasons I'm just now
learning—reasons only you knew
then—you saved me.

Me who lied to my own mother
and stole from my one true friend
and my sister, and basically
trampled any

good and pure thing in my life then.
Here's today: when I stand up
I don't feel heavy anymore
and my mom smiles

at me when we discuss things like
weather or love. I'm in love
with who I am for the first time
in my whole life.

All the doors I slammed in people's
faces are opening back up
to let me in, and it is all
because of you.

You are everything you promise
you'll be. When I had nothing
you gave me everything and I
can never be

worthy of or equal to that.
For my metamorphosis
I thank you; once caterpillar,
now butterfly.

Timothy Foster

Sweet Insomnia

Closing my eyes,
your image comes into my head.
Far from sleep,
I lie in dreams of could have been...

Thinking of you...

sun in your smile...

Thinking of you...

face full of care...

Thinking of you...

the way you whisper in the dark
like a soft, moonlit air.

But I can't stay here,
wishing for what might have been.
find a new dream
so I can sleep again.

Erase the past, maybe start anew.

Please stop this rain...

this

endless

downpour

of...

you.

Brandy Keay

Challenge

I dare you to look at life
Through my eyes
To open yourself up to love
To see possibility for what it is and
Know that it is always at your fingertips
I dare you to let yourself feel the pain of others and to
Acknowledge your own grief
To listen to a song about unrequited love and
Let it move you in such a way that
You long to give comfort
I dare you to let me comfort you
Because you feel the same way
I dare you to find happiness
Because you must be passionate about something
In order to make life worth living
I dare you to have faith
A steadfast faith
That will give you hope in the midst of heartache
I dare you to follow your heart
And I pray for the strength to survive until
It leads you back to me

Full Circle

Dare I call God cruel?
It is not so-
He knows what is best for me.
Why is it easier to drown in self pity
Than to swim to the promised land?
Well, I can see it in the distance-
And though the currents try to
Push me off course
I will press on.
Because God is on my side.
I will not drown and
I will not struggle with loneliness
Forever.

Passion Misplaced

These words stand strong and bold upon
a single sheet of paper.

They are mere marks, yet they can hold
power!

They tell of a life- they describe emotion
that is understood by few.

Spoken to none, yet written with a
fervent desire to be appreciated on a
higher level of humanity.

A weary, yet hopeful, hand writes these
words as the world sleeps under a full
moon.

The words are an elixir to a tender heart
that is desperately trying to mend.

The words are a whisper of truth and a
shout of indignation to a society that
chooses not to see the beauty of the
world in which it lives.

Words are everything and yet nothing.

The riddle can just as easily be erased as
solved.

The fool will choose to ignore, but the
wise man will read between the lines.

And therein lies the power.

Katrina Anne Miller

Summer's Song

The shadows paint the ground into tigers

Camouflage

Hot harsh beginning of summer

The birds sing secrets

We don't understand

Lovely conspiracy

Colors seen brighter now

And summer sprouts

Even between cracks in concrete

As if it were trying to break free

From this human bondage

The trees cry seeds of joy

And some will bring new life

A splash of red with an orange beak

A flash of wings

He dances from limb to limb

What a joy to celebrate life from up there

Where the concrete

Can be a small gray line

Under the Green Man's arms

Everything dances and sways

To summer's song

Except for the stone

We use to still the constant movement

But it all moves anyway

Especially this time of year

When man loses control

And nature takes over

Tania Posey

Six-toed Sally

Sally and I hadn't talked in almost ten years when I picked up the phone one night and heard her raspy, "Hello." She had only called me twice in the nine years since I'd left Mississippi and both times she'd been in some sort of trouble.

"How much do you need," I had asked.

"I don't need money, Jess," she had started, "I mean, it's about money, but not what you think."

"Look, Sally, it's late, just get to the point," I was tired and in no mood for games.

"Jess, you've got to come home, it's about the money, you know, the money we hid. I can't get into it over the phone, but you really need to hurry." I had felt my chest tighten when she mentioned the money. I knew whatever was going on had to be serious. I pressed her for details, but she wouldn't give any. She said she was afraid to talk about it over the phone and told me where to meet her. My mind raced, all I could think about was the \$48,000 buried in an old igloo cooler behind my Grandpa's barn. I had to get there fast.

I was packed and behind the wheel of my old Bronco within the hour. Biloxi was a good ten-hour drive from Tampa with nothing but interstate to occupy my mind. I thought about Sally most of the way. We grew up next to one another in a little hick town just outside of Biloxi, Mississippi. We were real close, like cousins. Lots of people even mistook us for brother and sister because we both had dark brown hair and the same dark complexion. The only thing really different about us was that I had brown eyes and hers were hazel. And of course the toe thing too, but that's a given. The first time I saw Sally without her shoes on we

were playing in her backyard, probably ten years old. Sally asked me if I'd ever seen anyone with six toes, of course I hadn't, so she told me to close my eyes. When I opened them back up, she had her shoes off to the side and my old blue jacket covering her bare feet. She dared me to look so I yanked up the jacket expecting a joke and there they were, all twelve of them wiggling like little worms. The extra one kind of hung out on the side, next to her little toe. Then, as if that hadn't been enough, she spread her toes apart enough for me to see the thin skin that stretched between them like webbing. I just sat there staring. I didn't know what to say, and then she broke the silence with a chuckle that kept us both laughing through the afternoon.

That day Sally told me I was the first person who'd ever seen her toes. She told me her dad had the same kind of feet as she did, then made me pinkie-swear not to tell a soul. I never did, but I sure felt sorry for her a couple years later when some girls from her gym class found out. Once word got around, everyone wanted to see them. Kids called her everything from "Sally twelve-toes" to "Aqua-girl." "Six-toed Sally" stuck with her though, and that's how she got her nickname. I had to admire Sally, she handled it all pretty good, never got mad, just went about her business, real nonchalant, like she wasn't any different than anyone else. As a joke one day I told her she ought to start charging admission to see them, and she did. We sat behind an old cardboard TV box we'd found, and Sally wrote on it in big letters, "12th wonder of the World -- 10 cents a peek." If I remember right, we made enough to go to the show that night and get sick on popcorn. We were small time then.

Driving through Tallahassee, I watched the sun rise in my rearview mirror. I looked at my watch, six-o'clock and halfway home. Sally and I had spent many mornings watching the sunrise from my father's old fishing boat tied up at the Gulfport Marina. We were seventeen, broke and horny as hell. She'd climb out her window and I'd pick her up in my mom's green Pinto.

Sneaking into the Marina was easy because I had my Pop's key to unlock the front gate. After we got in, we'd tip-toe down the dock to the boat. Nobody was ever around except an old fisherman named Harry. He'd look over at us from his shrimp boat tied next to Pop's and give me a little wink.

Sally liked to drink, so the first thing we'd do was climb up to the bridge and take turns swigging Pop's Southern Comfort. He kept it hidden under his seat and said it kept him warm on cold mornings. It got us warmed up too. By the time we made it down to the bunk we were usually so hot for each other we'd rock that boat for all it was worth until morning. Sally was a hell of a lay, some nights I didn't think she'd ever get enough. She would have gone at it for days if I'd let her. She was always telling me not to stop, "keep at it until you curl my toes," she'd whisper. Sally really knew how to take care of things then, but after hearing her on the phone I didn't know what to expect. She had me worried.

When I crossed the state line into Mississippi I veered off the interstate and drove the beach road the rest of the way. Sally had told me over the phone that she managed the old Broke Spoke Saloon in D'iberville, a few miles north of Biloxi, and wanted me to meet her there. D'iberville was a small redneck town with nothing but a few convenience stores, a VFW, and an Elementary school that still flew the Rebel flag alongside its American counterpart. The Broke Spoke was a favorite hangout when we were in high school because they always let us drink without asking any questions. Knowing Sally, she was probably keeping up with old traditions.

I saw the old bar and shook my head. It was just as I had remembered. The wooden building was old and gray with its trademark oversized wagon wheel hanging on the tin roof. Pink and blue neon shone through the dusty windows on the door. The door looked new, though; I noticed it

didn't creak like the old one had when I stepped into the bar. I saw two men slumped over the bar and it was barely noon. Then I heard her.

"Come on guys, I'm not even open yet! You're gonna be falling off your bar-stools before I can even get this place cleaned up!"

"Need some help Baby," I yelled.

Sally turned around and ran towards me in a rush. The two drunks were thrown off-guard by all the commotion and scurried to the door. Sally looked just like a grown-up version of the girl I remembered from school. Her dark hair was longer now, and streaked with gray that looked deliberate. She seemed tired and slumped when I bent down to hug her.

"I don't know how to tell you this, Jess, but the money is gone, the cooler too," she stammered.

I felt my stomach lurch and everything started to spin, "What do you mean gone? How do you know? Who else knew?"

I had buried that cooler deep, and the only way she'd know the money was gone was if she'd gone after it herself.

"Look Jess, I know what you're thinking, and I'm sorry, but I just wanted to check on it, make sure it was still there. You know I lay in bed sometimes and dream about what I could do with that money if I had mine now. Jesus, I could get out of this shithole town and out from under this godforsaken bar!"

"I have dreams too, you know," I wanted to scream, "Tampa's just the first place I stopped at when I left town!" Who knew it would be a nine-year pit-stop roofing houses. I had left town without any idea where I was going.

"At least you could leave," Sally stammered.

"Hell, we only had one more year to wait Sally!"

"I know Jess. . ."

"So you just decided to go check on the money. You weren't going to dig it up or anything? You're not making much sense Sally, there's got to be more to this story. . . I

need to know what's going on," I added.

Sally took a deep breath and sat down at one of the empty tables. I looked at her hands and they were shaking.

"It all started with a phone call two days ago," she began, "you remember Frank, don't you?"

My skin crawled at the thought of Frank Johnston. He and Sally had dated briefly after graduation. Frank was nothing but a bull-headed redneck that didn't have sense enough to know when he was being played the fool. And Sally had played him for all he was worth. The poor guy didn't know if he was coming or going by the time she had finished up with him, then she had dropped him like a sack of shit. Frank never knew what hit him. The sad part was I think he really loved her, and worse still, she had to have known. But it was all about making a buck then, love be damned. When opportunity knocked, Sally took full advantage.

"When Frank called me the other night and said he wanted to get together I didn't know what to do Jess. At first it felt like old times, but I knew I couldn't go back. He'd been drinking and I was pretty loaded too so I told him to go to Hell."

"That should have been the end of it," I said.

"I wish," she looked like she was going to cry, "but he just kept on, Jess. I hung up on him and an hour later he was knocking on my door, begging to come in. I let him in, I can't believe I did that, but I did, and we started drinking. The next thing I knew I was telling him about the baby, Jess."

"You told him about the baby! What were you thinking. . . and about the money," I asked, "how did he find out about that?" I was trying real hard to keep calm. It wasn't easy.

"I don't know," she stuttered, then she looked away. "I really don't remember what all I said, I just wanted him to know how it hurt me back then, I never imagined anything like this happening!"

I reached over the table and put my hand on her shoulder. The story went from bad to worse.

"All that next morning, I had a funny feeling about the money, so when I got off work night before last I drove out to your Grandpa's farm in Hattiesburg. You know nobody lives there anymore, so I pulled around to the back with the headlights on bright and saw a big pile of dirt alongside the hole where we buried the money." She started to cry. "Then I didn't know what to do so I drove by Frank's and it looked deserted. I came home in a hurry and called you."

I froze. I felt the color drain from my face and thought about what she had just told me. If she told Frank about the baby then all hell was going to break loose. Frank didn't have much sense to begin with, but if he knew she had been pregnant with his baby ten years ago, then when he finally sobered up he was bound to ask where the kid was now. And if he didn't care about the kid, the money was going to be first on his list, once he had that there was no telling what he'd do next.

"I need some rest," I lied, "we'll check it out this evening and maybe there's a chance you're wrong. But if you're not, then Frank Johnston is gonna be one dead son of a bitch!" I needed to be alone, to think all this over, and Sally wasn't any comfort. She just sat there crying and saying she was sorry. I didn't know if I could trust her and that hurt. The whole story just wasn't making any sense.

Sally invited me to stay at her place, but instead I parked in her driveway and slept in the Bronco. I missed her, and wanted to be close, but I just couldn't shake the feelings of doubt that were sneaking into my thoughts. Sally and I had kept that money hidden for nine years now and all of a sudden she slips up and tells the one person who could ruin it all and destroy everything we'd worked for. It didn't make sense. But then, what we had done didn't make much sense either.

I woke up after only an hour of sleep, but it was enough to revive me. I heard a knock and saw Sally outside

my window with a cup of coffee in each hand.

"Good afternoon, Hon, I thought you could use something hot to get you going," she said as she pulled herself up into the cab.

From the looks of her, she hadn't been sleeping much lately. She wore an old, thin black T-shirt that looked as if it had seen better days. Her eyes were puffy, from crying I guess, and her hair fell down her shoulders and into her face.

"You look like Hell," I jested.

"Better than you, come in and take a shower Jess." she teased.

I felt a little better about everything then, so I took her up on the offer. The little two-bedroom house she lived in was only a block from the bar and I could see the wagon wheel from her place. The outside of her house was in pretty bad shape. The peeling white paint showed yellow underneath, and the sagging roof had needed replacing for many years. Once inside, though, I was surprised to see how orderly and clean everything was. The hardwood floors shone and reflected the morning sun. Sally tried to talk me into breakfast, but I told her I wasn't hungry. I just wanted a quick cold shower to wake me up so I could think more clearly.

When I got out, we had another cup of coffee and headed out to my truck.

"Sal, you got anything to dig with?" I asked, as we walked through the open garage. Then I saw two rusted and dirty shovels lying next to the washing machine.

"Just those there," she replied, "I've been doing some gardening and I just haven't rinsed them off yet."

I picked up the shovels and threw them into the back of the Bronco. Dried mud scattered over my bedroll, but I didn't care, I had to find out what was going on.

The hour-long drive to Grandpa's old house was a quiet one. Sally gnawed at her fingers and stared out the window as I drove. The magnolias were in full bloom,

dotting the country homes beside the winding roads. I took a deep breath when we rounded the last bend in the road and Grandpa's barn came into view. He had been in the retirement home for 3 or 4 years, and the place was falling apart. The yard was overgrown with brush that seemed to have taken over the fences surrounding the barn.

I thought back to the night that Sally and I had gotten paid for the baby. Sally didn't cry or anything, she just handed over the baby and dropped to her knees to count the money. We each kept out a grand and decided to bury the rest for ten years, by then nobody would be the wiser, and we wouldn't have to worry about anyone suspecting anything or that sleazy lawyer from New Orleans coming back. I couldn't stay in town, though, the temptation to dig it up was more than I could stand so I took off and ended up in Tampa. I had trusted Sally to look after things.

I parked in front and got out of the truck on shaky legs.

"Alright Sally, now let's go see about things."

She walked in step beside me until we rounded the corner to the back of the barn.

"What the Hell happened here!" I yelled.

The ground looked like it had been bulldozed, plowed and had a marathon run through it all at once. Some of the dirt was wet, like it had been moved around recently. And from the looks of things, whoever had been there was quite thorough.

"See what I mean," she said.

"You call this a little pile of dirt," I wanted to shake her.

"So do you think he found it?" she asked.

"There's only one way to find out."

I walked back to the truck and retrieved the shovels. I handed her one and noticed little red blisters on her palm.

"You need some gloves," I looked, but didn't have any in the truck.

"You worry too much Jess, let's just see if we can find that money."

I looked around and tried to remember exactly where I'd buried the cooler. Somewhere around the pump shed I thought, but I couldn't remember which side.

"You start on the far side of the pump shed," I barked, "between the shed and the garden about two feet away from the shed door. I'll try on this side facing the barn."

I found my spot and dug in to the soft dirt. As I dug I had a queasy feeling in my gut. Sally hadn't been with me when I buried the money, she had sat in the house talking to Grandpa while I had silently buried our fortune. So how had she known someone had dug it up if she didn't know where I'd put it in the first place. Sally had been acting funny ever since the phone call, and it just wasn't like her to be so inconsistent. She said she'd been gardening, but her yard was just grass. . . and those blisters. Just as I was putting it all together my shovel struck something with a "thud!"

I looked over at Sally, but it was too late. She came running to me hollering "Thank you, Jesus," with her fists pumping the air. She threw herself onto the ground and started scooping the dirt from around the cooler with her bare hands. She looked up at me and smiled when she pulled it up out of ground and set it between us. I smiled at Sally and she smiled back. Just as I reached out for her hands I heard a noise behind me. I turned around and saw big dumb Frank Johnston with a shovel in both hands raised to the sky. As I watched the scoop of the shovel come closer to my head I heard Frank chuckle. The last thing I remembered was Frank's gravelly voice and Sally's laughter.

"You know, you weren't the only one who curled her toes." he snarled.

Ishtiak Rahman

A Friend

It was about a year and a half after I left my motherland to come to the United States for higher education. I was in my third semester at this University. Gradually, I was getting over the homesickness that made me very sad for months. During that time, on one Thursday afternoon, I was about seven minutes late for my class. My professor did not allow me to attend the class because of the delay. Since I had to turn in a paper that I worked on for the previous few days, I decided to wait outside for the class to end. At the place where I was waiting, a girl, who appeared to be around my age, was sitting next to me. When I looked at her, she smiled; she looked familiar to me, as if I had seen her in one of my classes. After a few minutes had passed, she called me by saying, "Hey." I looked at her and courteously asked to know why she had called me. She said, "Are you waiting for someone?" I told her no and explained to her the reason for waiting. When I asked her the same question, she said, "I had a test this morning, and I have to go to work at 1 o'clock. I didn't feel like studying, so I decided to stay here for half an hour and then go to work from here." She asked me which country I was from. I told her the name of my homeland. Because of the attention she was paying to listen to me and the interest she was showing to know about my country, I could tell that she was very different from the other American females I knew. We were quiet for a minute or so when she suddenly said, "I'm Misty, and you?"

I replied saying, "My name is a very difficult one, and you are better off not knowing it." However, she insisted, and I told her what my name was. With much trouble, she pronounced my name. It sounded very funny to me, and I laughed. She seemed to be hurt by my demeanor. I

immediately told her that I was sorry. "Actually," I said to her, "you are the first American girl who has tried so hard to pronounce my name, and I thank you for that." We kept on talking about different topics, such as music, cars etc. We also talked about our hobbies and classes. Then, with much hesitation, I asked her why she had chosen me to talk to.

Listening to my question she smiled and said, "Why not?" and then with seriousness she said, "Let me know if I am forcing you to have this conversation."

I instantly replied, "No, not at all; I am sorry if I have given you that impression. What I meant to say is that I do not understand why you would pick me to talk to, where you can make friendships with the Americans. Isn't it normal for an American to ask another American..."

She didn't let me finish my sentence. She said, "Maybe I am not like other Americans, and may be I asked them many times, but they wouldn't listen to me; they are too busy to listen to a simple person like me."

What she said was not clear to me. "Why are you saying that?" I questioned her.

She replied, "You will not like to hear that."

By that time, I grew very eager to know more about her, but I said, "If you don't want to talk about it, then that's fine."

Probably, noticing my interest to listen to her, she finally said, "OK, I will tell you, but you have to promise me that you will never talk about my personal life to anyone else." She started to talk about herself, and I listened to her with great curiosity. She said, "I was about 9 years old when my mother died. I cannot remember her very well, but I know that I love her very much! I have very few memories with my mom. My grandma says that mom was a woman of strong will. My father, on the other hand, was a terrible person. He was very forceful and hot-tempered. He also used to suspect my mother that she was cheating on him by having an affair with one of his friends. Believe me, it was never true; I read her diary afterwards. She didn't have any

friend because of my father. He would embarrass her in front of everyone. Only, one of my father's friends felt sad for her and for what she was going through. Once, he told my father not to behave so cruelly towards her. That was the reason my father thought mom was having an affair. I was about seven years old when, one day, coming back from school, I heard mom and my father arguing out of rage and fury. That was the only time I saw my mom arguing with my father. I was feeling very afraid but kept listening to them. Suddenly, I heard a sound of slapping. Mama cried out aloud. I couldn't even describe how helpless I felt; I just ran to my room crying. That was the night when my mother would kill herself." Misty stopped talking for a while, and wiped away her tears. Then she said, "From that day on, I could never love my father and neither could my grandparents. During the police investigation, my grandma and grandpa said that my father was the reason why my mom took her own life, but he wasn't proven guilty in court. I started to hate my father more and more as the time passed on. I stayed with him until I finished high school. Then, I took a fulltime job and left him."

"After about a year, I met Tom," she said. "I was working at the mall at that time. I met him on a rainy day; we both were standing outside the mall, not being able to go to our car because of the heavy rainfall. We started talking, and would you believe if I say that we talked for almost three hours that day? We also exchanged our telephone numbers and addresses and became intimate as the time went on. Tom was not like the other boyfriends I had when I was in high school; he was very special. He was the only person who could understand me. I thought we were having the best of relationship that one can have, but gradually, he started complaining about me. He said that I didn't want to share my deepest feelings with him. Actually, it might have been true. The way my father behaved with my mom, I could never forget and neither could get rid of the feeling of loneliness. Sometimes, I would become very furious. Tom

wanted to know what was bothering me, but I used to get angry with him too. I couldn't control myself although kept trying to be as close to him as possible. When I was beginning to make myself believe that I could rely on him for my whole life, he said that he could not take the burden of our relationship any more. The relationship ended after 7 months and 13 days. I became all alone, again." She stopped and took a moment to breathe because she was very sad and exhausted by that time. "It was so hard to spend the days all by myself. Some days I just cried; some days I thought of killing myself, and some days I thought of killing my father. I just wish my mom was alive!"

It has been about three months since we had the conversation. I have heard that she killed herself, just like her mother, about a month after the conversation we had. How shocking the news was to me, I do not want to write. But, I broke my promise; I am telling you the story of her life and hoping that if you ever come across someone like her, a Misty again, don't behave like a stranger afterwards, the way I did. Make her a good friend of yours.

Jennifer Ravey

Shattered

She reads her lover's words,
And her tears fall and mingle
With the fragments of her broken heart
On the cold concrete.

Windswept

Gossamer, sheer
Wisps of material
Float in and out
My window...

My smooth silhouette,
Indiscernible
In this dark
Hour...

Cheek resting on the
Rough grains of the sill
My eyes twinkle
With reflected starlight...

And I sigh...
Causing
A star to fall and
The moon to shine...

And tree branches whisper hushed lullabies to the earth.

Andy Taylor

Untitled

Others empathize;
Our common fire
Burns on different kindling
Can I direct my?
To push me up to
Those places I want to be?
Those things I want to see?
Progress comes to those
Who start moving.
Stir your own dying ashes
And leave me to mine.

Lucinda M. Unger

The Doctor's Office

Sitting in the Doctor's Office
Always fun
Aches, pains, sneezes Abound
If you aren't
Then you'll be
Sick, sick, sick before you leave.

The Old Pier

It was a makeshift wooden structure,
Not like the ones at yacht clubs or marinas,
Built by Grandpa for his fishing time,
But it was more than that to me.

When things seem to be too overwhelming,
It was my escape....
My escape to the world of ogres, giants, long sea voyages,
Daydreams of the future, or
Just a peaceful, quiet moment spent in nature.

The healing qualities of this structure were wonderful,
After an hour maybe two, I would return
To the real world
To assume the mundane tasks of my life,
Tasks which did not seem quite so
Overwhelming as before.

Seasons of Love

As a child you were a giant to me,
You knew all and cured all
I felt safe and warm sleeping at night
I only wanted to make you proud,
I needed your love.

As a teenager you were a little taller,
You didn't know anything
I felt safe and warm sleeping at night
I only wanted your money
I thought I didn't need your love.

As a young adult you were my size.
You knew a little but I knew more.
I felt a little unsafe and insecure in my new home.
I didn't need your money, I made my own.
I discovered I always had your love.

As an older adult, you were smaller and weaker
Than me.
You remembered things I did not but you couldn't
Remember my name.
I awoke quickly if you needed me at night.
I took care of your money and bills.
I discovered how much I loved you and
How much you loved me.

Foreign Language Translations

Joshua Deslatte

Almost American

In my dull almost American town
I am annoyed
The wind sobers me
Cold rain pours down
But in the country
The same annoyance has necessary ability
Why possibly is it not annoying
Why is the natives black
The annoyance without boots of rain
The annoyance without a coat of rain
The annoyance without boots of snow
The annoyance without a coat of snow
And let out screams completely naked of the Earth
How one neither French nor English
And our Indians work in factories or mines
An inch and a half above the United States
In my dull almost American town
I am tired
Under the North wind
Numbed I get stuck
Tomorrow is dead
Do not take me, I have to pack
And I scream out
*Please help me in I need your swing I want to see what's
happening*
*Let me feel cool before I freeze the in-crowd is for fun and
peace*

When I return by another route
You calm English or Americans
Or you calm dead within two steps of folklore
And some promises of gold
An inch and a half above the United States.

Presqu' Amérique

Dans ma ville grise de presqu'Amérique
Je m'ennuie
Le vent me dégrise
Il fait froid sous la pluie
Mais dans ce pays
Même pour s'ennuyer faut s'habiller
Comme c'est ennuyant de ne pas pouvoir
Comme les papous noirs
S'ennuyer sans bottes de pluie
S'ennuyer sans manteau de pluie
S'ennuyer sans bottes de neige
S'ennuyer sans manteau de neige
Et pouvoir crier tout nu a la terre
Qu'on n'est ni de France ni angleterre
Et que nos Indiens travaillent en usine ou dans de mines
Un pouce et demi haut des Etats-Unis
Dans ma ville grise de presqu'Amérique
Je m'endors
Sous le ven du nord
Engourdi je m'enlise
Demain si la mort
Ne m'abrite pas je ferai ma valise
Et je crierai
Please help me in I need your swing I want to see what's
happening
Let me feel cool before I freeze the in-crowd is for fun and
peace
Quand je reviendrai par l'autre chemin
Vous serez Anglais ou Américains
Ou vous serez morts pour deux pas de folklore
Et quelques promesses d'or
Un pouce et demi en haut des Etats-Unis.

Robert Charlebois

Gordan Suljkanovic

Mountain Stream

Midnight went by here.
It's dark outside,
Dense as ink.
Over there
it must have been
dawn.

Between us,
lies distance
and many years.

You drink now
first coffee.
I see you in an old room,
while you wait for news
on a radio.

If I could
be there,
I would
at least
for a moment

close my eyes,
and feel your touch.

Let this poem
be
a mountain stream.

Let it flow from my night
into your morning,
by the shortest way.

Let it disappear now
from my heart
and rise
in yours.

Let it show you how
much
I do miss you

Mom .

Ponornica

Ovdje je ponoc prosla.
Napolju je mrak.
Gust kao tinta.
Kod tebe
mora da je tek
svanulo.

Izmedju nas,
daljina
i duge godine.

Ti sad pijes
prvu jutarnju kafu.
Vidim te u staroj sobi,
dok cekas vijesti
na radiju.

Kad bih
samo mogao,
da se stvorim tu
bar
na tren,

zazmrin,
i mogu das osjetim tvoj dodir.

Neka ova pjesma
bude
ponornica.

Neka tece moje noci
u tvoje jutro,
najkracim putem.

Neka nestane sada
iz mog srca,

i neka se pojavi
u tvom.
Neka ti kaze koliko
puno
mi nedostajes

Mama.

Zlatko Arslanagic

Death

Soil is deadly
seed sown
But death is no end For
there is no such thing as death
And there is no end Death
only lights up
The upward trail from nest
to the stars

Smrt

Zemlja je smrtnim
sjemenom posijana
Ali smrt nije kraj Jer
smrti zapravo i nema
I nema kraja Smru je
samo obasjana
Staza uspona od gnijezda
do zvijezga

Mak Dizdar

Once upon a time a praiseworthy caller asked:
Who is that what is that forgive
Where is that
Whence is that
Where to is
That
Bosnia
Tell.

And the questioned gave then a prompt reply to him:
Bosnia forgive there is a land
Both barren And barefoot forgive
Both cold and hungry
And even more
Forgive
Defiant
By
A dream.

Zapis o Zamlji

Pitao jednom tako jednoga vrlo pitac neki:
A kto je ta šta je ta da prostiš
Gdje li je ta
Odakle je
Kuda je
Ta
Bosna
Rekti.

A zapitani odgovor njemu hitan tad dade:
Bosna da prostiš jedna zemlja imade
I posna i bosa da prostiš
I hladna i gladna
I k tomu još
Da prostiš
Prkosna
Od
Sna.

Mak Dizdar

Contributors

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PULSE

Pulse is a student publication intended to exhibit works by student writers. It is distributed each spring semester. Entries are judged by a panel of qualified professors, and cash prizes are awarded for work in each category. All submissions are subject to editorial discretion.

Rules for Literary Submission:

1. Entries should be typed and double spaced. Four copies of each item should be submitted. Clear photo copies will be accepted. **ENTRIES WILL NOT BE RETURNED**, so keep a copy of all work.
2. The author's name should not appear on the submission. One submission form should be used for all entries by a single author. Forms are available in the Maes Liberal Arts Building in offices 03 and 08.
3. Total number of submissions is limited to ten per author. Short fiction should not exceed 3,000 words. Along with the paper copies, all submissions should be submitted on disk in MS Word or PC-compatible format, not Mac.
4. Entries can be submitted in Maes 04 or the *Pulse* mailbox, both located in the Maes Liberal Arts Building.

POETRY SHORT FICTION ESSAYS

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS