

NIM-BUS

(NOUN) 1. AN AURA OR HALO SURROUNDING A PERSON OR
THING OF LITERARY QUALITY

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR(S):

Ā: So uh, Sarah...

ᶆ: I know what you are going to say.

Ā: Do you?

ᶆ: You are going to say something along the lines of us graduating and this being our last book and I AM GOING TO CRY.

Ā: Then I won't say it in so many words. But I WILL say THANK YOU for being an awesome design editor this year.

ᶆ: *cries*

Ā: No don't cry I was trying to make you not cry NOOOOO

ᶆ: *between sobs* Thank you for doing all the things for Nimbus that I hate doing... so anything aside from book design. YOU ARE AMAZING

Ā: Shit, now I'm crying. *sniffs*

ᶆ: WHYYYYYYYYYYYY?????? Why can't we do nimbus foreverrrrrrrr??

Ā: Because we have to be grownups now. And get one of those "job" things.

ᶆ: I am a philosophy/religions major...

Ā: Then we need to get one of those "shared-cardboard-boxes-in-the-park" things

ᶆ: Dibs on the back of the box.

Ā: Ok as long as I get to decorate it.

ᶆ: Soooooo... newspaper and plastic

bags of varying colors?

Ā: Yeah, but it needs to fit some kind of theme other than "homeless and pathetically, homelessly in debt"

ᶆ: Let's not talk about that. I should have majored in business and interned with some hoity-toity financey place... then maybe I wouldn't have to live off Ramen noodles for the next 5 years while I pay back my student loans.

Ā: Yeah, me too. English majors are next to philosophy majors, employability-wise. I HAVE NO SKILLS. ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE JOKES.

ᶆ: I can think about shit.

Ā: We can think and make jokes about shit. Like actual shit. Poop.

ᶆ: What is wrong with you?

Ā: I don't think science has an actual name for it.

ᶆ: Feces?

Ā: That's not what's wrong with me. I eat a balanced diet, thank you.

ᶆ: I eat turkey burgers and chai lattes from the Hawks Nest. that is about it.

Ā: Could be worse. That Ramen really isn't going to do good things for you.

ᶆ: Yeah... can you get a salt-based

version of diabetes?

Ā: High blood pressure. Enjoy that stroke. This has gotten really dark and off-topic

∫: That seems to happen a lot....

Ā: It's because we're sleep-deprived and our senior attention spans don't allow for conversations lasting more than 2 and a half minutes.

∫: Right! "Hey, what's up?" "Nothing, you?" "Doing how I do." "Cool." "Bye."

Ā: Yeah, I usually zone out halfway through the word "up." Which takes talent!

∫: You, my lady, are the queen of senioritis... *bows down*

Ā: Tell me about it. I watched two seasons of Desperate Housewives in three days last month.

∫: I have been watching..... *looks around*....

Ā: IF YOU SAY TEEN MOM WE'RE NOT FRIENDS ANYMORE.

∫: *whispers* toddlers & tiaras...

Ā: Aaaaaand now I'm going to talk about how much I'll miss the entire Nimbus staff and how it's full of really cool awesome people not named Sarah, because she is no longer on the list. Which is heinous. But the rest of you totally rock and I'm going to miss you. A

lot.

∫: I call it "Lessons in how NOT to parent your female child." But even though Alex no longer wants to acknowledge my existence, I agree with her. I feel so honored and overjoyed to have worked with this incredible group of people during my time with Nimbus. I want to give a big thank you to our newest member, Amalia, for spending late nights in the office downloading and converting millions of image files for me!

Ā: And I'd like to thank Professor Needle for his continued support and design advice, as always.

∫: What a guy. Do you think he will ever know just how much he means to us?

Ā: He will if he reads this note.

∫: THERE YOU ARE PROFESSOR NEEDLE! This one is for YOU!

Ā: I think it's time to say goodbye, hon, we're running out of room.

∫: BYE! Thank you everyone for your support, patience, and attention.

Ā: See you on the other side, friends.

ALEX & SARAH

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FEATURED ARTIST

NICHOLAS TAMBORRA



Nicholas Frank Tamborra is a senior psychology major who has been drawing since he was a kid. Inspired by animation and drawing styles of old cartoons, and the works of his architect father, he took up drawing and aspired to be a cartoonist. Cartoons, animated films, and comics provide inspiration for many of his sketches but his current interest is in realism. The works of Norman Rockwell, Alex Ross, and Andrew Wyeth all have helped to provide structure in improving his artistic abilities. While his career is geared towards becoming a psychologist, he would like to some day write children stories, comics and even work in animation.

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All contents of the Nimbus Literary Arts Magazine are accepted by anonymous judging. Works are judged based on content, originality and craftsmanship. While we would like to accept and publish all works we receive, please keep in mind that our publication is like any other: we function by budgetary constraints as well as a lengthy editing process. If your work was not accepted this semester, it should not discourage you from submitting in the future. Please keep in mind that since Nimbus is an uncensored magazine, some content may not be appropriate for all readers. Thank You.

WRITER'S BLOCK

LISA TINGLUM

You are my oxford comma:
unnecessary and cluttering up my sentence

One day I'll replace you with someone more dashing
who does the same job
while being more stylish

After all, you've been quite the as-
terisk
sinking lower than an underscore

And I don't really need to give you an explanation of this exclamation
that these ellipses omit you so well

because you are an uninteresting run-on that continues and continues without
pause or thought that maybe your passive voice and weak vocabulary should
really be e d i t e d o u t

And I've been suspecting you are more of a tilde than a hyphen anyway
so hopefully you find someone more your persuasion

So here is your period
your end
your full stop

of our subject disagreement¹

¹ and frankly, your semicolon isn't all that impressive

LOVE LETTER

JESSICA MELILLO

Unfold me,
like an
umbrella,
watch the water
drizzle
piddle
trickle
along the
contours
of my
opaque skin,
my spine collecting
droplets
for your
thirsty,
puckering lips,
cherry sweet
and
stale
with sleep.

Wrap me,
like a
Christmas present,
in doorways,
tie my
belly
taut
with string,
and when
you
leave lunch
feeling
sour
and ever-empty
as you
came,
remember not to
leave me
lying
unopened
and
lonely
beneath
the
tree.



BORED STIFF

The woods are dead and no birds sing,
leaves lay listless across the graveyard floor,
a strange place where neighbors only know peace,
where souls collide; obliterate like stars tearing holes in the cosmos,
where the final glint of life resides,
where calloused fingers may finally pause.
Trapped under a beaten and abused earth
by rocks with expiration dates,
letting the physical decay and the soul ripen,
as if things would change after death.

JOSEPH PEPENELLA

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

MICHAEL GARAMONI

Once upon a time there was a very old woman. She knew the mountains when they were grains of sand. She watched puddles grow into the oceans and seas. She knew all of our ancestors, and their ancestors, and all the plants and animals and fungi when they were blue-green algae in the primordial soup. She witnessed the coalescence of the stars.

A young boy worked in her garden as penance for breaking her fence. He worked in the garden for many years, when one day the old witch came out of her house and said, “All right, boy, your work here is done, but you have to come with me.”

“Where?”

The old witch stared ahead as if she hadn’t heard. She wore a hearing aid but it was frequently faulty.

“I have to go tell my parents I’m leaving. I’ll be right back.”

When he entered his house, he discovered that his parents had died.

Upon returning to the witch, the boy momentarily wondered if he should be, in fact, feeling something. Before the whim became a thought, the old witch grabbed his hand and pulled him along behind her. They passed by a great many buildings, homes, trees, people, and dreams.

As they went, they encountered three sisters. Two of them were dead and lay on the ground. The third, perfectly content and cheery, greeted the old witch and the boy and said, “Do you know the way to the king’s castle? I’m to marry the prince!”

The old witch said nothing.

“I do not know where the king’s castle is. Why are your two sisters lying dead on the ground?” the boy asked.

“Oh, they also married the prince, but he killed both of them. I have been trying to persuade them to tell me how to get to the castle, for they clearly know since they have been there, and yet,” she huffed and kicked the bodies with each word, “they...won’t...tell...me!”

“Aren’t you upset that your sisters are dead? Did you dislike them very much?” the boy asked.

“Oh, no, I loved them very much! We were the closest of sisters. They and my mother were the most loving, caring, kind people I have ever known.” She then looked away into the distance, as if searching for the castle.

“And so why do you not grieve?”

“The prince has asked me to marry him!” She giggled excitedly.

“Is that a reason?”

“Hmm?” She turned back to the boy, as if suddenly remembering he was there.

One dead sister lifted her head and said, “Boy, don’t pay attention to her, she has to follow her own narrative, and nothing you can do or say will change her plot.”

The old woman pulled the boy and they resumed their travelling.

They stopped, and for a while nobody said anything. She handed the boy a dictionary and said, “Pick a word.”

“Any word? I have to pick one word from the entire dictionary? No instructions?” he asked.

The old witch only stared ahead as if she hadn’t heard.

“Should I pick a word I like most? I could start from there, maybe?” he asked.

The old witch only stared ahead as if she hadn’t heard.

“Should it be a word that speaks to me? That reveals part of my soul?” he asked.

The old witch only stared ahead as if she hadn’t heard.

He spent many years reading every word and every definition in the dictionary, weighing his options, trying out a few, but then discarding them. By the time he reached “zyxt,” he still did not know which word to choose. And then he realized that all of those verbs he had read each became several new words when conjugated in different tenses. Too many words.

Impassively, he turned to the old witch, who had stood still as a rock next to him all those years while he read. “I have no idea,” he said slowly.

“Which one?” the old witch asked.

“Which one?” he repeated, confused.

“I have no idea,” she replied.

The befuddled boy sat in silence for a moment, thinking.

“Idea,” he said.

“Alright, Idea. Let’s go. We’ve lost Time.”

Walking forward, Idea noticed that she no longer pulled him along; still, he followed. He saw no other options.

Worlds altered before him and around him, his sense of presence all helter-skelter. Things that were small were large, and things that were engorged were diminutive. Possibly all of reality had fled. But the old witch strode through it all, cutting a swath into all insincerity and confusion.

Fog appeared, and the old witch disappeared. Idea looked everywhere, but she was gone. He didn’t know if she would come back, so he waited a while. She didn’t come back, so he wandered in the fog. In some places it was thin enough to see a few yards in all directions, but for the most part it was so thick that he had to swim through it. Water swirled around him, the transition so gradual that he was shocked when he realized he could no longer breathe. Fish swam by him, close enough to touch, and then went their piscine way into the now murky depths of water surrounding him. Air relieved his waterlogged lungs as he finally burst the surface and gazed around him.

Daylight shone down as Idea floated on a wavy sea. Happenstance provided him with a large branch of driftwood that he eagerly grabbed onto. Around him, nothing but sea as far as the eye could see.



A glittering fish emerged from the water before Idea's eyes. She was beautiful and shapely and she said, "I can carry you if you will give me your heart."

"I cannot give you my heart. If I do, I'll die." Idea said.

"I will carry you."

Idea climbed onto the fish's back and held onto her fins. For days they travelled across the sea, encountering nothing besides the occasional squall. When Idea grew hungry, he plunged his hand into her scaled flesh and ate her raw, but slightly sun-cooked. He had never tried sushi before.

Throughout their journey, they talked and talked, and grew to love each other. Idea knew what he had to do. He reached with his right hand and opened his chest, though the latch was rusted and stuck, and pulled out his heart, beating and bloody, and handed it to the fish. Two miraculous events happened simultaneously: Idea did not die, and the fish transformed into a young woman! Idea's veins, arteries, and capillaries stretched like elastic, and his heart remained beating and the blood continued pumping. The beautiful young woman holding his heart and treading water before him (he had fallen off of her back when she transformed) smiled gratefully, and sadly, and said, "There was an evil old stepmother who hated all beautiful young women, so whenever that old bitch encountered a beautiful young woman, she turned her into a fish! I hope that wrinkly dyke and her dry cunt die of fish food poisoning! I was transformed almost two thousand years ago. Took you long enough to give me your heart, HAH. That dumb bitch said, 'You shall only return to your human form when you earn the heart of a boy.' Shows her. I'm just as likeable even when I'm a fucking FISH! HAH HAH HAH." She cackled.

As the young woman spoke, her flesh aged before his eyes at the speed of what appeared to be decades per second. After only a moment, she looked a hundred and three. Then, as she continued to cachinnate wildly, her flesh rotted and then sloughed off. Her muscle-less hand released Idea's heart, and his last image of her was off a laughing skeleton sinking below the waves among her own putrefied flesh.

Idea had given his heart to that. Despondent, depressed, and without a perpetual mechanism by which to stay afloat, he sank down into the water as well. As he sank, he realized that now he had finally felt something. Emotion. And it devoured him. Eventually he reached the bottom, thankfully with no laughing skeleton in sight, and in seeming defiance of the laws of gravitation and water pressure, his feet struck the sandy, silty, brackish ground.

When his feet touched the ocean bottom, he almost fell forward, because suddenly he was blinded by the sun. He stood on land. In fact, he stood in the middle of a bustling marketplace. The old witch, who had been walking, stopped directly next to him.

“I am sorry for your encounter. She believes I cursed her. I did not. The curse was always within her. It was always within them all. I do not hate beauty; I do not hate. I witnessed the coalescence of the stars. I simply see.”

The old witch touched Idea on the arm, and suddenly he knew the story.

It had started with man, as it always does. Man told woman she had to be better than every other woman, and so the nature of woman changed to better suit man (because he is the most superior being, and everything exists to serve him). When woman became abhorrent, man blamed woman’s weakness and natural inclination to sin (remember the garden and that pesky snake?). And so man cursed woman to become an ugly, hideous creature, and then blamed it on her when the transformation occurred. And then woman blamed it on another woman. And that woman was the old witch. And, Idea realized, she was his fairy godmother.

They walked side by side now. Toward the end of the road. The slipper fit the girl; the wolf died with a bellyful of stones; the evil queen danced to death in burning shoes; everyone got married. But Idea did not know what his ending was. Did he live ever after happily?

He stopped.

The old witch took a few more steps and stopped as well. She looked down.

Idea said, “I must leave you.”



She said, "I know."

Idea walked away.

The old woman sat down on a chair that was behind her, still looking down. She sighed. When she looked up, she was back in her house. She rose, went to gaze out the window onto her garden. She heard a crack, and saw a young boy guiltily peer through a large, splintery hole in her white fence. She opened the door into the garden and stepped out to speak to the boy.

She knew all of our ancestors, and their ancestors, and she walked with them all.

So here's what you do,
You see her and you want her
Everything's so slick

FOR YOU

SOPHIE SERGIADIS

NO. 1227

They eat people here
Spiders still click in white shoes
Watch you while you sleep

POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC

When you leave,
I smoke to
see your ghost,
the other you,
the you that
kisses the air
and
sifts like sand
through my flesh,
my
gaping
aching
creaking
pores.

But there is no
you
like
the real
You,
no kiss like
your real
Kiss
and
when I come down
crashing
like a tangled kite
in a lightning
storm,
I look for keys
to tie
to my
strings
to jolt myself awake;
I look for your
arms that waken
my burnt out
little
Soul,
my Chinese lantern
pattern cloth hanging from
the cross,
keys gleaming
in the light.

And
when thunder
slaps
and
sputters,
a transparent
jalopy
in the
sky,
I lie
spreadeagle
on the
open
Earth
and
count the
seconds
of
the storm,
count
the
seconds
'til you
wake,
'til
You're
here
again.

JESSICA MELILLO

THE MARGINAL WAY

KRISTEN HAGGERTY

If you are on Shore Road during a bright summer morning, take the time to turn off into Perkins Cove. Past the mansion on the right where it is rumored a brothel runs a brisk and covert business, past the shop with a kitschy Santa window display in the middle of July, past where you can see the tall masts of sailboats bobbing gaily in the marina. Veer off behind the bustling cove-side seafood restaurant, and you will find yourself on the Marginal Way.

By day it is breathtaking. A small and cozy path meanders its way along cliff tops, whose rocky sides tumble down towards the cool green-lit water below. At high tide, the tickling spray from crashing waves licks the legs of the tourists in fanny packs huffing down the path. Later in the day, vast playgrounds of craggy rocks are exposed to those who care to leave the safety of the asphalt.

Dusk is when the Way becomes enchanted. Fumbling down over the chunks of rock, slipping past tide pools and over masses of crunching barnacles, you can climb to a rough peak of stone at what seems like the end of the world. Waves crash on three sides, an endless rhythm conducted by the rising moon. Soon the waves become too close for comfort as the sea expands, and the exploration is reversed, picking cautiously between the gathering puddles back to the road.

Further on, a cliff juts out over what is now a rocky beach but will, in a few short hours, become an ocean floor. You sit with your feet dangling over, gazing to the ocean where no land comes between you and another continent. The moon lights a path across the waves, pale and dim in the endless sky. The yellow glow recalls the ghosts of those lost at sea. So many sleep restlessly under the waves in this ancient land of lobstermen and whalers. The sea is just right for dark thoughts- they rise like spirits through the undulating water, conjuring up visions vast and deep. The rocky point, the low long mourning of a foghorn out at sea, the faint clanging of a lost and lonely buoy-- all are comforting in their desolation.

It is a place to go when you feel the world closing in on you. With the vastness and loneliness of the sea spread before you, your restlessness dissipates, and the thought that you are very, very alone is a companion rather than a terror.

Just before it becomes too dark to see, you leave the cliff, pulling yourself back into the reality of dedicated benches and the work of the anonymous artist who created hundreds of rock piles in the last quarter mile of the journey. Flowers blooming rosily along the path are beginning to curl upon themselves to prepare for the dewy night, and if you pick one you will find your fingers bruised with thorns.

The enchantment breaks when the path wanders in front of a beachside hotel and you hear wine-bubbly laughter and the click of bocce balls and ice cubes. A child throws a Frisbee by the light of a Tiki torch as you reach the end of the Way. The tiger lilies, usually abundantly clustered by the picket fence, have all closed their blossoms. When you exit onto the bustling street, far from the quiet loneliness of the moonlit waves, you feel at once relieved to find that you are real, and saddened by the thought of those ghostly souls who are lost at sea forever, instead of for a few short hours on a summer night.



INDELIBLE INK

SAMANTHA KNOERZER

I remember the time we ran inside after a summer shower began, being soaked to
the toes as we
soaked little puddles of water on the wood floor.
You didn't get mad.
Other times we would sit at the outside table, all of us little cousins yelling as we
munched on
our turkey and mayo sandwiches.
I always insisted on one tomato and salt and pepper.
You always gave it to me.
You'd give us vanilla wafer cookies and tell us how big we were growing, with me
growing like
a weed.
I would always measure myself to you and you would tell me that it wouldn't be
long before I
was taller.
We would laugh at how short you were, my mom teasing you that you were
shrinking, with me being taller than you by the time I was ten.
I was such a slow eater, everyone always complained.
But you let me take my time.
Each vanilla wafer cookie I would eat specifically, peeling off the outer layers in an
attempt to get the perfect inner layer with frosting on both sides.
I ate those the day you passed, before I even knew you had passed.
I remember how you took such good care of Pop-pop.
You loved him so much and he loved you.
You always had the most amazing vintage trinkets, and you loved the best
jazz music.

You would always keep a photo of each grandchild in your living room
with the big, comfy chair
with grandchildren of every age.
You never forgot about a single grandchild, and there were so many of us!
I woke up this morning and it was a beautifully sunny day, and knew
you had given that to us.
To remind us that you love us still.
And we will always love you.

BECAUSE YOU CARED, AND TO LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU HAD
MORE OF AN INFLUENCE ON US THEN YOU EVER TRULY KNEW.

HOGGISH MECHANISMS

JOSEPH PEPENELLA

The woods are dead, no birds sing,
a silent river creeps, and crushes white
on deaf ears that crave not to listen,
to absorb the impression of nature.

The streets are dead, no children sing,
youth is destroyed one keystroke at a time,
Carpal tunnel and ADD trump scraped knees,
prescription pills forge robotic thoughts.

Their minds are dead, no thoughts sing,
no questions erupt, answers left to ash.
Heedless automatons absorb very little,
Regurgitating information beyond their comprehension.

Their imaginations are dead, no creations sing,
hoarding thoughts to keep the good ones
for themselves.

ANOTHER EDUCATION

SARAH SUTLIFF

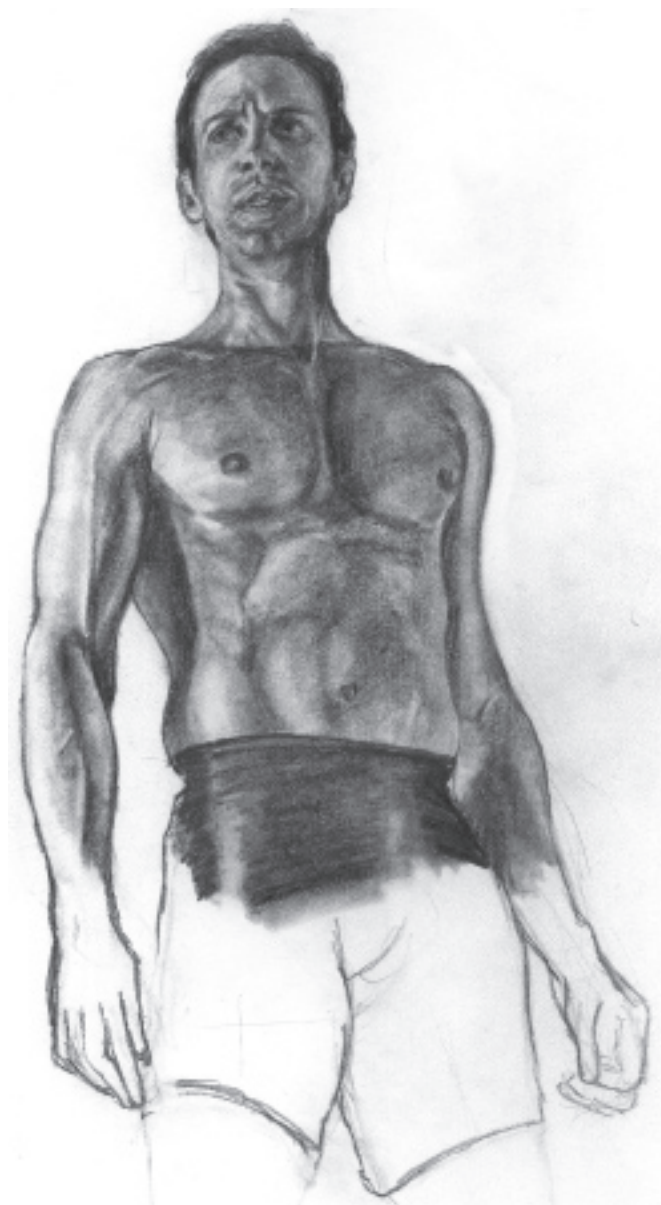


take heed
smart girl

if you think too much...
well, forget divine purpose!

send that intention
where it is intended

you are an oven
not a computer.



RELATION. AMANDA PADILLA

If you can not take the bad
Why would I give you the abundant | the ample & the amazing.

I articulated all that had made me,
Thinking you would take into consideration then maybe,
Understand why I couldn't accept that the weekend as time off from me.
A supposed mutual understanding unclear to my part provided to its mutuality.
Momentary clarification had substantiated, back up
put back my two senses back into play,
sight & hearing.

Sight because I see how your shoulders go tense
body goes stiff when I tell you how I am feeling.

Hearing because I hear nothing and in order to hear nothing
nothing has to be said, not verbalized but I can not read your mind.

But what I had heard was
Rosa parks had this lust for the front of the bus
Mohammed Ali yearned to fly like a butterfly and sting like a bee
The Five Heartbeats envisioned them "Talking about my girl"
Martin Luther King Had a dream.

Her lust
His yearn
Their vision
And the dream, dreams, aspirations, successfully aspired
That they all fought for, wanted more, wanted change when they saw potential.

No regret, but my fight lost.
Potential of positive shut down because unlike
The support for Rosa on the bus
Mohammed in the ring
Heart beats in the lights
& Dr. King with black rights in America
Our support only went one way,
& what is an activist, boxer, singer, preacher without support.
What is a lover without support? Unsuccessful.
What is us without the elements of
lust, yearn, vision, dream, change, potential, fight, support.
Momentarily exemplifying just that.
They aspired greatness and acquired success.

We Acquire Nothing.

Status wise but lies would be disclosed
If I were to be so close minded to say that
We had not acquired some state of understanding.

Not him being of a lesson learned but lessons learned period.
I care for him [comma]
And I am there no matter what [period]
Because [capital] I will [bolded] **always**
[capital] L-O-V-E him as an individual [exclamation point]

Taking into consideration that I accept him for his imperfections,
As he had mine.

Imperfections that led us to three altercations
Within the duration of two months
My strive to clarify general thoughts, questions, concerns
My yearn to allow us to feel at ease, spit fire
about anything that has been never minded in order to avoid altercation
My fight for this relation.



CHEERS

SOPHIE SERGIADIS

Here we sit
In this dark room
Me, drinking wine out of a coffee mug
Because it's been that kind of Tuesday

You sit across
Staring with your goddamn beautiful
eyes
Green or brown or between the two?
I always forget,
I get so lost in them

This room hums
And Crackles
Wind rushes in at the corners
With a sound like hoards of giant
insects
Clicking and shuddering
I click and shudder too
My grip so tight it breaks my hands
Finger bones snap outward
My chest,
My ribcage, giant incisors
Black and glossy
Want to rip away at everything.
My flesh, your flesh,
This ugly Formica countertop

Tear it down
Everything stops
You look at your watch
Reach over casually
And put a bendy straw in my mug of
wine
It's been that kind of Tuesday.



MY FRIEND BIANA LIVES ALONE... ANDREA GONZALES

My friend Biana lives alone in a three bedroom apartment inside a rent controlled building in Starrett City, Brooklyn, New York. It was the second to last day of my weeklong visit.

Starrett City: the name implies a Disney adventure but it's an unassuming neighborhood, composed mainly of blacks and Russians on welfare. Isolated from the rest of Brooklyn, it lies on the border of Queens and the ocean. Abandoned by even the trains, only one bus seems to care enough.

It's the end, or beginning, of Pennsylvania Avenue —about a mile long strip of twenty-plus story monotonic living complexes. Synthetic beehives for the unmotivated. Their only neighbor is a power plant. Sarcastic urban planners riddled this city with benches that look like thrones, we can share a laugh. Why are you playing outside little five year old? It's 12am.

A surreal place. Home to wetlands preserved from the last glacial melt, in spite of the towering filing cabinets of substandard living that also call this home. So swampy, I'm forced to question these imposing concrete foundations. Despite how unfortunate a neighborhood this might be considered, residents have no intention of leaving: students of the lazy marsh, building upon mud. Old Russian women gossiping and middle aged black women complaining. There are hardly any men here.

Starrett is sinking. Sinking into credit card debt, sinking below the national average, sinking into a rented couch, sinking into its squishy wetlands. A five minute walk—a little removed from its six lane artery—a bayou where even the air is mossy. There are signs around, like the plaques in the Bronx Zoo. An expensive project installed by some benevolent institution to flatter and protect the stagnant salt water. The Fresh Creek Nature Preserve, home to invasive phragmites and mosquitoes seen before only in fossils, among other native flora and fauna.

But only a plethora of insects like this could attract such beautiful birds. It's better than the Bronx Zoo.

Bianachka, my little Ruski, lives here illegally, renting from a little babushka. She pays hardly anything.

The night before, there was a storm. Thunder rattled us on the 18th floor. On a clear day I could have seen every borough. That night I couldn't see the ground two-hundred feet below the balcony. Lighting struck all over Brooklyn, teasing us with second-long flashes of high-noon at midnight. Columns of rain chased by malevolent giants who snapped from the sky like tree branches of fire. Or soldiers of light, pillaging, from some alien army. You could smell the electricity, static interfered any thoughts.

But the next morning was perfect. The sun poured like honey. Not one puddle survived. Summoned by the saline breeze and propelled by our youth, "Let's go walk by the water, I need to get out of here." The words from inside a chain-smoker's den. We called the elevator. Her neighbor Brandon was waiting for us by the grass field behind Hornell Loop.

We exit her building through the back entrance. Looking straight, you'd see a field of bright green, manicured grass then another building identical to Biana's. A few paces ahead of me, up the windy concrete path, Biana stops. "Andrea, look at this." I sensed a tremble, she was looking at the base of a young tree. I had already decided that Biana was looking at a dead animal, we weren't ashamed of our morbid curiosities. It is summer and it is perfect. In my short sleeves, the wind exhaled. And drunk on pollen, coordination trusted to gravity, I lazily flopped my legs down the subtle hill approaching Biana by the tree. What she points to, I would not register.

It's a newborn baby. A human baby. Cradled by the grass, face down in fetal position, dead.

But this baby looked weird.

Maybe nine inches long and very narrow. Round little head shadowed with hair to come, a skinny pale body, little arms bent at the elbow, tucked in instinctually. A fly lands on the shoulder. An impossibly long spine, you could see every vertebra, and then, a longer —tail.

Yes. Like the tail on a monkey or a rodent, but a long, hairless, human tail. The baby's legs where folded, I later wondered which way they bent. But at this moment I was transfixed, no longer fascinated. My heart felt heavy, my eyes grew hot. Ignorant of 'what' was before me, something inside me wept for the 'why'. This someone was conceived, birthed then discarded like carrion. Someone cared enough to wash this baby at least once; why at the foot of a tree? "This is so sad," the words escaped from something trapped inside my chest.

Biana proceeded to walk along the path, we were still meeting up with Brandon. I followed numbly. Unable to process what I had just seen. We walked towards the sun, towards the water, toward the wetlands. I felt my feet carving my reality, collapsing energy to matter with the impact of each step. The plants were whispering, the sun was buzzing, I could see the veins of a leaf forty feet ahead of me. I looked at my hands and I was dissolving, vibrating like static on a screen. This world is materializing for me. We kept on the curvy path. I hadn't noticed Brandon.

Mutually overwhelmed, we threw ourselves on some fluorescent grass. The two humans before me sat silent, ruminating in their own liquid confusions. A man with white wires in his hair appeared on the path. His lecherous fingers woven with the sweaty, knobby ones of a girl with braces. In their church clothes, they looked nervous. I watched them until they disappeared.

I looked over to the tall invasive phragmite, there on the ground was the biggest mushroom on earth, had I been dosed? I counted spores in the air. "Tell Brandon what we saw." A demand from my friend of seven years. Plumes spilled from her nostrils approaching me with the stalk of a cat. Remembering I had a mouth, I began the narrative, realizing what I was saying just as I said it.

"Woah Biana, wait a second. What the fuck was that thing?" I shivered. She shrugged. A river of random images inundated my mind. I couldn't tell if I was creating or destroying everything I saw. "I feel nauseous." I thought of the signs with the pleasant graphics, boasting about species known only to Starrett, I thought of the toxic waste, I thought of the ultimate prankster. My former reality could not offer me an explanation, it continued to deteriorate before me. A disassociating smile. I felt the grass growing under my body, the mushroom hissed at me. Two crows yelled from the sky.



Biana saw it too. The hybrid—the mutant—the impossible, that little baby. My heart started feeling weird again. I secretly prayed: O’ forgive this imperfect world for being so unfit for the miracle that was your tiny existence, o’ little baby! The two crows laughed above me. I closed my eyes and looked for answers in what was left of Biana’s twelfth cigarette.

THE NIGHT STALKER

JESSICA MELILLO

A crude sketch:
breasts (drawn to size)
with
chicken legs.
And a caption
underneath:
Do you remember?
(Do you?)

Left a note on
my car,
scrawling
afterthoughts
like
anthrax in
the corners,
*You're just like
your mother,
you know,*
(I know)
*and
it shows.*
And, I choked
and sputtered,
the fever catching
in my
lungs,
my mouth
a wash of blood
and
bile.

Gave myself to you,
a Christmas present
you kept opening,
sneering at,
placing back
beneath the tree,
only to return in the dead
of night,
to reclaim my
torn
wrappings
and to
tear them
more.

*If she's a whore,
then*

what are you?

(What am I?)



Was I
a slut
a cunt
a fool
for opening my legs
for love,
(ha
ha
ha)
was I no better
than a kiss
in a dimly lit
motel room
with a girl
I called my
friend?

(Who's the whore now?)

Drove away,
leaving paper
and
your bullshit
behind,
crawling into a
new bed (same sheets),
dragging with me
boy
after
boy
after
boy
to craft myself into the
whore
you'd painted me
with your sloppy
black
scribbling.

I never came back
 (not all the way),
 one high-heeled foot on
 the street,
 cat calls abound;
 one little set of broken toes
 shedding glass,
 blood spouting like
 repentance
 into your
 shower
 drain.



Don't lie,
 don't waste
 the space,
 you may not
 hate
 me,
 but you sure
 don't like me,
 broken toy,
 damaged sound system,
 speakers wobbling,
 snappy hooker cunt,
 fighting back,
 using her teeth,
 a barbed
 wire tangled
 'round
 her
 whore
 bitch
 neck.



Disgust with mendacity
Timing unknown
It bounds through the faces,
Faces like masks on the Comedians,
The Greek tragedians
Avoidance is a skill
Like fencing
Parry, thrust
But lies are slipperier than I
Like thoughts
The ones you don't want
That slip in front of your vision
Even when your eyes are closed:
A song that stays stuck in your head
For days upon days upon days
Until the essence of that song,
The brilliant new discovery upon first hearing it,
Is gone
Simulacra and simulations
Only echoes and vibrations
Of mirror reflections
Of nothing.

VERISIMILITUDE

MICHAEL GARAMONI

Contempt for veracity.
I want magic
Noumenon, in the clouds
Through rose-colored glasses,
No truth! Get it away! Running with scissors!
I grasp, grasping, grasped
But even when my fingers close on air
I am not anywhere
(I'm there)
Behind those masks
Of those actors
Protractors of the lie
And I lie
Down on my bed
Irrupting into Morpheus' realm
Somnific. Terrific...
Dreams.
Veracity through mendacity
Irreparable.
Inseparable.
Chaos and order in wholes and fragments
Respectively.
Effectively.
Rhymes and reason
Arbitrary.
Luminary.

Can't escape it, can't escape it
It chases after me even as I
Absquatulate
What a funny word
Unheard of in these times
Funny, humor, not important enough,
Can't you be serious for one minute?
War, natural disasters, cancer, AIDS
It's 2012 ladies and gentlemen,
The Mayans will be flying in on their spaceships soon.
Better prepare, for salvation is at hand.
"We come to take you to a place of magnificence and wonder!
But wait, wait...?
Where are all the ladies and gentlemen...?
All I see are barbarians
No, lesser than barbarians.
Humans.
There is nothing for us here.
We shall take our flying saucers and
Extremely accurate ancient calendars
To someone who isn't already three-quarters of the way
Into the quicksand
Or perhaps we should call it the money pit."

Don't worry, Mr. Smith,
It's not your home you're wasting your money on,
It's your species.

Avoidance is a skill.

Standing in a house perpetually on fire,
Even the memory of it leaves you burned.

PALLIATIVE LISA TINGLUM

her smile, chapped but steady
 her wired body beeps reassurance
 alive and breathing,
 well, wheezing...

but gentle
 like when Whiskers has allergies

her fingers
 still smooth
 despite dehydration
 to touch a cheek
 or braid some hair
 or turn the page
 of *goodnight, moon*
 or *I'll love you forever*

her voice
 like warm honey
I'll love you forever
 then sputtering
 she sucks water through a straw
 the swirled purple one

it's good luck

her voice stable
goodnight, moon
 tubes make it hard to be close
 just out of reach
 don't touch the tubes

later
 plain black dresses
 incomplete speeches
 silent touches

but for now
 I'll love you forever

ME? CRAZY? A SPOKEN PIECE.

BENJAMIN BUSTAMANTE

As I mimic the cynics/ I count down the minutes/
before I'm admitted to the clinic/
I know that this is it/ my final straw/ before they take it all/
Sitting in a shrine/ I feel some sunshine seep into me/
Embarrassed by the embrace of an entity I now disgrace/
Before the eyes of judgment/
I see the words of wisdom/ shot through a prism/
Creating a spectrum of my prison/
You and I are now completely distant/
So I'll just walk in line/Stuck in a bind/It's all in the mind/
but I'm running out of time/
Next step I take I'll land on a mine/ just to show I have heart/
now take what's mine/
Hands up! I'm the one that's been charged with the crime/
Guilty is the verdict/ Power of the word/
I'll gladly serve your sentence/
So go ahead and shackle my presence/
I know I'm unwanted like shitty Christmas presents/
Thrown into a padded cell, not far from hell/
Or maybe a stone's skip to heaven/
It's pretty hard to tell/
But the right people put me in here, and they want me to get well/
Well, here I am face down on the floor/
Shoulders dislocated from banging on the door/
Shell of a man beaten down to his core/
Yet I still get up because you know I want more/



And those who walk by only chose to ignore/
For fuck's sake I try to communicate/
But I only speak in lounges/
Perfecting profanity/ now I can't stand to see/
anything that remotely resembles me/
Buried beneath the vanity of humanity I fight the battle for my sanity/
Tick.....Tick.....tock stopping the clock of the Mayans/
Button pressin/ Air raid sirens/
Bringing back Holocaust science/
Death to those livin in defiance/
Killin for peace/
In the name of the alliance/
But I'm real villain, rockin a straitjacket I'm straight chillin/
Laughing while lookin thru my window at the institution/
I have a clear view of the destruction of the constitution.

THE AMAZON

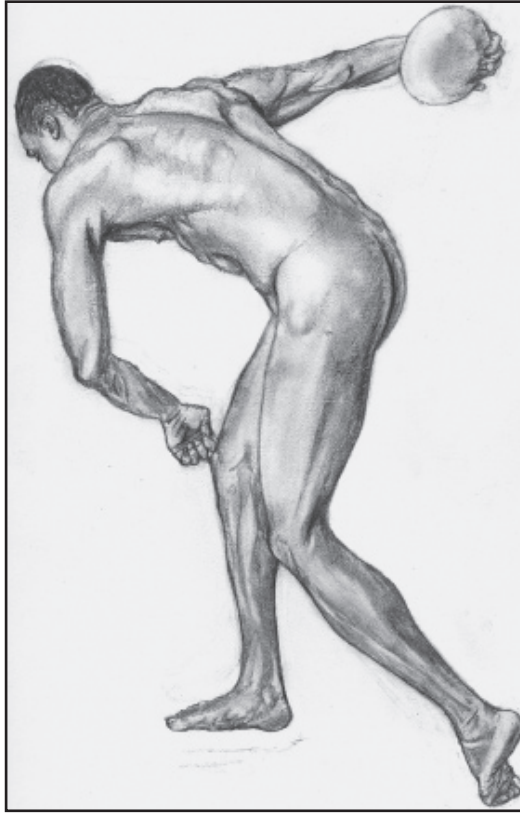
JESSICA MELILLO

She began to talk to herself,
first in the hushed tones of urgency
one reserves for
lust,
but then
in hoarse
and raspy whispers,
her spit spraying on the dishes as
she washed,
hair fraying at the ends.

When I would hear her banter
from my bedroom,
pink with youth,
I would excite
and *grand jete*
down the hallway,
twirling into the kitchen
in a giant swirl
of enthusiasm,
landing,
standstill
in disappointment
on the tile
to find
he
hadn't
come
home.

She turned,
her eyes broken
and black,
hands deftly
rubbing dinner
from
glass,
the sink carelessly
waterfalling
behind her,
and stopped her
busy lips.

She glanced from
 plate
 to floor
 to me
 to floor
 to me
 to plate
 and before
 I could
 react,
 ever-graceful,
 ever-poised,
 she
 began
 to
 cry
 and threw it down
 and we watched
 the fragments collect
 in the corners
 of the kitchen
 in the house
 he'd once
 called
 "home,"
 and
 didn't sweep
 the
 mess.



We moved
 and took
 the plates
 and
 glued
 the pieces
 and ate the dinner
 and talked
 to each other
 and
 to the shadows
 in our bedrooms
 quietly,
 always
 quietly
 because
 he wasn't
 coming
 back,
 no,
 he'd
 left
 the
 glass
 behind.

your eyes were open,
and you killed him...
your eyes were open,
and you drank him to death.
your eyes were open,
and you saw him for all that he was,
and could have been,
and you killed him.
quite consciously

maybe you were merely lost,
a wasted jekyll tragedy...
maybe you couldn't read
his generous map,
and refused to travel hand-in-hand.
but your eyes were open,
and his are now closed.
and you have stayed lost:
and you are dead

THOMAS SCARCELLA
A VISION



BANGARANG SOPHIE SERGIADIS

Let's have an adventure, Darling
I'm sick of locked rooms,
Big black coats,
And this clock over my bed
The tick-tocks biting me like spiders

There's a star I've got my eye on
I'll sew on our shadows while Father sleeps
Stitch us together without a single finger
prick
Not a drop of blood between us
To suck on and ease that sticky pain

Let's get lost and run forever
For I want to know of savage men
That sweat and scream and run us through
Burnt orange and scarred wood
With fire in their hands and feet

Show me the mermaids with the watery skin
Wet, silver songs slide down our throats
Drink them in down in the sparkling murk
As we drown in their open arms

Let's watch the fairies dance
The night will tuck us in with forgotten faces
And we'll meet the dawn with our merry
crow

We'll jump and we'll play
And let's not think about things we
shouldn't
Like kisses

Or blood

Or mothers
Or how never is a very long time
And just because we wont grow up
Doesn't mean we can't die

All of that is for another adventure
So tonight let's fly
Straight on till morning
You and me and our happy thoughts

I READ SOMEWHERE OF A NIGHT LIKE THIS...

I read somewhere of a night like this,
where the softness of your firm hands
is so distant yet so close at the same time...
because of how you resonate in my mind.
I sit and stare alone at this empty space,
the very place where you should be,
your thoughts, your laugh, your tendencies..
and a scent that compromises my sanity.
It's comforting to think of you
my mystic longing warm shades of blue
because these things don't seem so far
but in the same breath and thought,
loneliness and misery rush my internal organs...
It's rather synonymous with how I relate
to all of your quirks and the time you sacrifice to my presence.

I anxiously await, yet nervously dread,
my mind, my words, meeting with your world...
My expectancy blurry like the lenses of my glasses
when confronted with the bitter cold winds of mid-November
my heart gleeful with desired potential..for something great,
while obsessively conscious and cautious in the same beat.
This heart is slightly unstable, like the worn temples whose screws aren't
quite as tight
as the day when those glasses first enhanced my sight..

I stare at this empty space, I stare at you..
anticipating the unknown..
even though it makes no sense,
I'm ready and willing for you to take my heart against my will..
and surrender yours as well, one piece at a time..
until everything that is missing between the two of us
becomes a little less obscure.
Go missing with me...

TYRIK MILLER

INTRODUCING US.

AMANDA PADILLA



a me & you demonstration
collaboration of a you & i
no group lie,
tag team of two, in which,
we write our history,
no you and his story
temper tantrums of past ages,
passions faded
feelings decayed, and
new chapters made, with
burned words notated,
opening stated, that
love can be found in bizarre places,
my body, your body and all the spaces,
in between the lines he writes his word, (up)
in which ex factor only wish was heard, (down)
those “marvins room” lyrics you memorized so well,
no “re” to what was bound, we both free fell.
bitter biter on a sensual script we authored together,
no faking, or staging, no squeal can change things, your hating,
just makes our smiles look forever better

WHAT I'VE MADE OF MYSELF

DEEKSHA CHAWLA

I start out my day- running 68 inches from the ground
My head is held high and filled with the smoothest most seductive sounds
Beats pounding from ear to ear- perfect for a scandalous night out
Much like the one I had a mere few hours ago
Every note swishes and swoops through my ears and into my brain
Synthesizers, pianos, violins and most importantly voices take over me and desire
to only take advantage of my body so they can tell their own stories through it
And I let them, because after 21 years, they've never done me wrong
But for right now I'm using lyrics to fly me through the streets as my hair waves in
the wind.

Enticing, tempting, challenging you to follow

Well that's what I thought I wanted anyway
All of you have served to quench my thirst for attention
But this aftertaste of dissatisfaction is so bitter that it can make that freshly
brewed, untainted coffee seem like divine nectar
And no matter how hard I try- I can't get the taste out of my mouth
Because back then I was simply an oddity
Seriously...headgear included
My homecoming queen bared the most striking resemblance to Snooki
And what kept me going was believing that my time would come and maybe, just
maybe, someone would appreciate my beauty

But I was foolish and not precise in my definition of beauty.

Words become obsolete because as cliché as it sounds I've heard it all before
And the same with your frivolous stabs of understanding where I come from,

where I will go, and perhaps even what I've gone through
I can't help to think that while you're engaging me in this so called conversation...
what's really in it for you?
Are you keeping a checklist?
By country? By ethnicity?
Would I be fulfilling your fetish? **Like I've done for so many others?**
or maybe in your defense- you're really in it for the conversation
pshh who am I kidding?
But I do know that the faster you talk, the faster you think you can cross me off of
your to do list
And tell all your friends

Maybe at one point in time I would have been galvanized by your commitment and
knowledge of **my background**
But not anymore,
Because as I listen to politically incorrect misconceptions and slogan phrases I've
heard over and over again,
I grow discouraged-even if I correct you it's just a futile attempt to correct the rest
of the world

I'm brought back to **the beats in my headphones** but your words are impaling
instead of moving me
And I think...if I want to...**I can have my way with you** tonight and not have to
ever look back
Because I know I have you-it was too easy
All I had to do was toss my hair, flicker my eyelashes and I had your attention like a
bird of paradise behind a glass menagerie
So I leave
Because you're a dime a dozen and I've met so many like you
Because you can't look past the obvious with me.
You're so stuck on that one facet...and it had to be the one that I had no control

over and the last one I want to define myself by
Oh, but when it comes to *her*, she has real interests, real drives, real passions
And for whatever reason, when it comes to her, you can easily see past her white exterior
And all I ever wanted was to show you that I have those interests, drives and passions, too

Now mark my word when I say this is not some histrionic, woe is me, attempt at what my voodoo can do for you
Because if I had the chance, I would be the first one to chop of my mane
To poach out my eyes
To strip my body of all it's health
And to delete everything that makes me exotic, different, and what you call unique
All at the risk of gaining another identity known as "that crazy bitch"
Because if I had the chance, I would change my identity in a heartbeat to look like everyone else, just so you could see that I am more than the utmost physical definition of my culture

They tell us to appreciate the differences all of us bring to the table
But what happens when you are fated to be defined by those differences?
And no one can seem to get past the fact that though your differences make you beautiful you are also beautiful because of everything else you possess and everything you have come to be.
I never chose my background, my parents, the color of my skin, so for you to think that, this is all I'm capable of talking about is a major misunderstanding
My roots were simply given to me
And though I carry them proudly,
If that's all you're focusing on, you're missing out on what I've made of myself



OLD SCRATCH

SOPHIE SERGIADIS

He told me I had angel eyes
In that back alley sort of way
Lucky Strike in the corner of his
crooked smile
I didn't stand a chance

Everything tilts
Sensationally
Life kaleidoscopes

A dazzle of jewels turned upside down
Sparkling Humility,
Glimmering Virtues,
And the shinning, cut diamonds of
everything my mother warned me about,
All warm to the touch
Blurred to the tune of
that one saxophone over there

The moon drops like an ice cube,
Sliding down my naked spine
And he's got my whole world on the rim
of his glass
Humming
----from his fingertips

He's like Sinatra under my skin
Candy apple words snapping in my ears
Sweet-talking my Innocence
right out of her Sunday best

I can't help myself
Raking in sins like Roulette chips
Getting lost in the party
Like it was my idea
Like his
----tricks
don't work on me
And I'm different from the other girls
But he's somewhere right behind me
Looking so sharp in that new suit
And I just know my soul is screwed

CORUSCA

MICHAEL GARAMONI

That night you emitted a glow
A luminescence that shattered reality
I was entwined with you in a dream
That wasn't a dream
But reality heightened to another plane of existence
Ascension

We were gods
No longer constrained by mortality
Alive more than the living
Beyond desire, beyond corporeality
Our bodies the gateways to eternity

Your beauty overwhelmed me with nitid brilliance
I thought that, if I must be blinded by this,
The last image I would ever see
Would be the apex of all visual sensation
The epitome of true beauty,
I would be content

Because in one instant our bodies were one,
Truly,
Not metaphorically,
Nothing of that utterly factual oneness
Can be expressed in poetry,
But we were one

And in that instant,

All of my questions were answered,
I knew the heart of love
The core of passion
I knew the meaning of life.

And in that instant,
I saw the eye of the world
I felt billions of lives
Pulsating, flickering, burgeoning,
Extinguishing
I knew absolute truth
And it was not in Plato's Cave

It was you.

TURN RIGHT OUT OF
APT. ONTO 139TH...
SARAH SUTLIFF

Harlem at 5:30
fat raindrops still pitter pat
remnants of the night
before
still all too recent, I feel
in my soggy exhaustion
the sky still dark
holding the droplets hidden until
PLOP
they hit
cement or cheek
dark men in white robes
race across streets and
along sidewalks
clutching their black blazers
ever tighter
striding
ever faster
my sole companions in this
still darkened world

SURRENDERED TO YOUR LOVE



I pull up to your house,
slide into park
and pause to collect myself.
I walk to your front door - my breath clasped deeply within my chest,
the door opens - and frames you,
I am weak,
I am racked with butterflies;

longing for the touch of your hands - the melody to my heart
that unstitches me,
the vibrations of your voice,
the creases surrounding your eyes when you smile,
the warming echo of your laughter in my ears and my heart,
your sculpted arms around me, enveloping me,
making me feel tiny, secure, loved.
Even though I feel as though I have known these things all my life,
every time feels like the first time,
every time electrifies my being,
and begets the astounding feeling of coming home after a long journey.
Time slips from my grasp when i am with you,
I wish for a still to slow it down.
I am in love with the contours of your face,
your crimson-tinted beard,
the way you disarm me,
and your ability to breathe through my heart,
filling the vessel that contains my core.
I am in love with the way I lose myself in the revelry of your kiss,
the pride I harbor in calling you mine,
the rise and fall of your broad, strong chest as you dream inches from me,
the serenity that befalls my world when you slumber peacefully next to me.
The love I carry for you bewilders me,
and leaves my mind pulsating with wild dreams of a future for you and I.
The knot growing tighter - I am terrified you will pass me by.
You are who I unfold myself to;
I surrendered to your love long ago,
and will forever entrust my heart in your powerful hands.

MISTY ROSSO

SUMMER SKIN

MARISSA DIBARTOLO

The guitar starts up and it's muffled something awful but it is beautiful and slow and makes the hollow feeling in the pit of your stomach creep slowly up into your throat, where it bursts like a firework inside of your mouth and explodes passed your lips and lets itself out into the world. The world, where all of this hatred came from in the first place. But then again, if it was real hate that would be better. If it was real sadness, or anger or aggression or depression. But instead it is only that same, slow, empty feeling. That same longing and crippling doubt and confusion that leaves you curled up between his chocolate cotton sheets and mounds of feathers.

They pull at my arms and pin back my hair and make sure I look like a little doll while I am forced to look out at the world all outlined in black.

I slowly remember the summer before kindergarten. I was running through my twelve by twelve patch of yard wearing garden gloves and catching bumble bees. I would grab them with both hands fearless. I cupped my hands together and shut them tight around each striped little creature with confidence and excitement and ran over to the kitchen set and tucked them away into the oven. I watched them fly around the tiny little compartment through the clear plastic door. I wondered what it was like to be one of them. To think only of work, to fly through the sky and live for nothing but sweet pollen and honey and the queen. I wondered if they were fearful, or if they even knew if they were in a place they didn't belong, captured by a girl who didn't belong. I remembered seeing the biggest bee of all flying near the green and diseased oak in the front yard. I was excited by her size, and forgot I didn't have the gloves on anymore. I followed her swiftly as she flew, and I clapped both little hands around her fuzzy body. I carried her all the way into the backyard

as she sunk her only means of defense into my soft pale skin. I cringed, but I knew I couldn't let her go. My hand began to swell and the pain set in and I wanted to scratch at my hand and cry but I knew I couldn't let my father in on what I'd been up to, so I un-cupped my hands and watched her fly away in victory. I opened the door to the plastic oven slowly to let my prisoners escape and ran forlornly into the house in silence.

An early defeat, but an instance of pure ecstasy. A time of innocence, of loneliness before it made a difference. A time when there was only bee stings and scraped knees and nights that end at 7 p.m. instead of a.m.

Now, on the cusp of transitions once more, being strong enough to fight against crying over a bee sting means much less than being strong enough not to cry over a broken heart. Over loving a man that doesn't love you back. Over letting yourself be used and immediately regretting it. Over not meeting your parents' expectations. Over having friends that would rather be anywhere than be with you. Over being defeatist.

I miss it when not crying was seen as a sign of strength instead of serving as another reason to be ignored. When you cry, people pay attention. When you don't, everyone leaves you the fuck alone until they have no choice but to talk to you.

I miss when not crying was difficult. I miss feeling everything in the world instead of nothing. I miss getting bee stings because I was courageous enough to catch one.

I listen to the voice pour through the speakers in a languidly regressive register. It matches me. I think of the girl in the belle jar and I wonder how it took her so long.

I feel more and more like a bee in a plastic oven, and I hope that soon, a little girl will set me free. Respectfully, though, of course.

MOHAMED JESSICA MELLILO

Little,
little
mermaid girl,
perched
upon
her
colossal rock,
the biggest rock
in the ocean
of grass,
surveying
the land;
watching,
bemused,
as her sister
begins,
slowly,
to swim.

When the
King of the Sea
calls her
in,
dinner
being
served at the
palace table,
she huffs,
turns her nose
to the
surface,
stretching lazily,
with a yawn,
dreaming of
air.

When night comes,
the sky black
as onyx,
stars obscured
by city smog,
she balks
in fear and
curls
tightly,
hugging her
tail, her fins
to her
undeveloped
chest,
crying out
as
the wind
roars,
green,
uncut waves
slapping maniacally
against
her sanctuary.

“Little, little
girl!” her Father
cries,
and she
leaps
without
thought,
crashing into the
storm,
leaving her gills,
growing
legs.

The next morning,
climbing
back,
back
upon her stone
throne,
she finds the sea
has vanished,
seaweed in its wake,
her legs remaining,
two saplings
broken
by
the
wind.



We moved away
when I was
five,
legs still unsteady,
my mother
nudging me,
her baby
fawn,
into a new room,
a new bed, with
no grass,
no sea,
no rock to steady
my wisping
withering
balancing
act.

At thirteen,
I crashed back
into the
black,
intemperate depths
and broke these
little legs,
drowning my
soul,
searching,
futilely,
for my rock chair,
my perch of salt
and
sea.

They dragged me
out
with nets and
rope and
mechanical
things,
searching like
lighthouses in
the night,
bringing my
pruned,
wrinkly
flesh
to land,
breathing life
into
my little lungs,
slicing my tail
and teaching me,
finally,
to run.



Today,
as I drive past,
tentative,
in my small
gray car,
counting the
breaths
it takes
to pass the cem-
etery,
I pause in honor
of
the rock (turning
my
head toward
Mecca),
my rock
in the middle of
the verdant sea,
bowing my
head in
prayer.



ARTIST'S MANIFESTO

SARAH SUTLIFF

I have spent
too many years
(and hours, and minutes)
trapped at a desk
in a room
in a place
where my ingenuity and
knack for the creative
aren't worth
horse shit

I am sick and tired
of
talking *about*
conceptualizing and
defining those things
so transcendent that
I start to think them
fundamentally
irrelevant

I don't want to
talk or
write or
think about
another this
or that

something
or another

thingamajigs and whatchamacallits.

I really couldn't care less.

I just want to DO
something
make something
break something
and then
rebuild something
once again

my art is pointless?
well at least it is practical
my doodles and
scribbles are physical
proof of my activity
my production
my creation

prove to me that you
have
an idea...

UNTITLED ...FOR NOW

Sitting in front of my father's old typewriter, my fingers gently resting on those worn, yet sturdy letters, I suddenly feel that there is nothing more to be said.

"I'm going to be a writer, an author, an award-winning novelist," I had declared at an age when Dr. Seuss was the only literary figure I knew.

My parents had smiled.

My friends had giggled.

I felt their encouragement and ONWARDS I pressed in pursuit of what I was certain would be a lucrative and fulfilling life...

But now. Well. Now I'm older.

My parents call this a "quaint dream" and ask what I'm really going to do with my life.

My friends are busy in their pre-law and pre-med and pre-real-world-careers courses.

While I "dawdle" with the classics.

Despite the fact that I'm listening to Mozart, drinking chamomile tea and wearing that kind of silken kimono thing that all harebrained writers wear in movies, the page before me is empty.

So that must be it. All of my predecessors, Shakespeare and Welty and Twain and Camus and even Dr. Seuss, have covered all topics known to man. The world, once a blank canvas, is now a battered Jackson Pollock.

I sigh, wistfully, remove my fingers from the keys and run them through my tangled tresses. I sip my cold tea and contemplate just which “real world” career I will end up with, now that I’ve failed at writing. My lips visibly curl in distaste as I imagine the rest of my life in a cubicle.

The thought of office work, so dreary and monotonous, depresses me immensely. I look around the small, rose-colored dining room, searching for something to pull me from the melancholy thoughts of my dreary future, and then – through the window - the sunlight streams like a river of pure gold. It mesmerizes me, this beauty. Before I can stop myself, my mind is wandering, and then, suddenly, my fingers are flitting over that curmudgeonly old typewriter, breathing life into it, punching out some fantastic tale, weaving a web of intrigue, forging a timeless romance, furiously typing until my fingers ache and my wrists grow stiff and my eyes tear from exhaustion.

There, before me, is my great work, my life’s accomplishment in 200 pages of error-ridden, but completed, sentences.

Hope is not lost. There is space for me yet on this paint splattered canvas.

KATHERINE HAMILTON

