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The Mitre

2009

116th Edition



Bishop's University

A literary tradition since 1893



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Editor's Note

Many thanks go out to the people who helped and guided me into putting together this year's *Mitre*. I am deeply appreciative of all your support!

Shawn Malley ~ thank you for asking me to be editor, and for your confidence in me. I've been dying for this opportunity for a long time and I owe it to you for giving me the chance to do this.

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The SRC ~ thank you for your cooperation and for supporting the continuation of Bishop's longest-running, student-run journal.

Michael Cestnik and *Galen Brown* ~ thank you for your assistance, and for your company.

Kathryne Owen ~ a very belated thank you for your cover art on the front of the 2007 *Mitre*, entitled *Sunflowers*.

Most of all ~ thank you to all the contributors who submitted their poems, prose, photography and artwork. It was a wonderful pleasure to receive your pieces and I hope this year's edition makes you proud of what you've done!

To all readers: Enjoy!

Olivia Anastasia Arnaud
Editor, 2009

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All the World's Your Oyster

~ Alexandra Eastland

In the great scheme of ocean

The grain meets a shell

Open to willingness

—If unaware—

And fosters a beginning

Equally unprecedented

And unexpected.

Given the environmental conditions

She may very well be thrown aside

By those who judge her value

Or

—Because there is always an alternative—

Embraced by those who wear proudly

The jewels of another being.

Let Her show you, now:

The shell, the flesh, the pearl.

Following life's purpose

In their process

—Imitation clearly a higher degree of beauty—

As our pearls are harvested for no good use

But sprawled legs limp, and too small a nose.

Leaky faucet

~ Leela Holt

a dribble, a drop, tick-tock, tick-tock
waves upon circles outwardly drawn
a dribble, a drop, then all is stopped
left behind fragments cringe at the thought
remembering the sound of mistaken dribbles and drops



Jingle Jangle Morning

~ Claire Hefferon

Untitled

~ Christopher Brandon

I have gotten over my fear of thunder

Maybe—
She stammered out as She jumped up
reaching out Her hands
grey clouds
heavy, just out of reach
as if they might strike Her down
at
any
given
moment.
as if
She could fly
in,
into sound.

i was the only witness to Her
Ascent,
unless you count the lake.
brooding and omniscient—forever.
Her reflection getting tiny as
She
rose.

the cold grey light
touched Her pale skin
with the wind that
played music in Her hair.
the Thunder
Clapped,

and so

did i.



Untitled

~ Michael Cestnik

Fireflies

~ Frank Willdig

A cloud in Cygnus is a wisp
of white feathers obscuring Deneb;
and an orange tint slivers the west
as the crepuscular descends into night.

*

Twilight games are the hardest games
for children to stop playing:
but tonight, in this field, fireflies surprise
in the humid summer air,
and like swirling constellations these myriads emerge,
flickering in the evening's warm embrace,
and like stars of varying magnitudes,
this silent, somewhat mystical display
enchants the children, who gather and stop,
transfixed in wonder.

Bonfire of Regrets

~ Michelle Barker

If you stacked your regrets
like a bonfire
would you have the courage
to drop the match?
Could you stand
beside the fire
with a mug of cocoa
and someone playing guitar?
Could you allow yourself
to feel the warmth?
Could you keep from running
into the fire
and gathering
every flaming stick?



Untitled

~ Sabrina Courtemanche-Nouadir

The Death of Elephenor

i.m. M.S.P.

~ Frank Willdig

In the Iliad

the enormous Elephenor
was one of the first to die.

He fell by Agenor's hand,
between the Dardan Gates
and the wine-dark sea.

He fell and that was all of him.

The brutal day went on

In the Iliad

no verses are sung
of his family and friends;
of his wit and loving kindness,
no comment was made.

The lord of the long black ships

fell and that was all of him.

The brutal day went on.

Sailing to Krakatoa

~ Carolyn Rowell

In the Sunda Strait
in the waters between Java
and Sumatra we sail—
the dark-skinned fishermen muttering
what could be charms of protection
or curses for these foreign tourists
—to the shore of Anak Krakatoa,
the little son who has risen from the
destruction of the last century
and now smokes languidly
a bully in the blue southsea sky

They say the parrots
have returned to the island
that they again chant
krak krak as they once did
that natives have come back to
live in the scrub and fish in the
shallows

But there is a strange light everywhere
and we are taken from the shore
by unseen hands bound and forced
to hobble to the summit
feeling the heat through the soles
of our Reeboks we are not gagged
for who would hear our screams
here on the edge of the 21st century
where we look down
into the inferno
the boiling indifference
of our future

Red Ribbon

~ Anabel Collin

Do you remember that day by the well? The heat was suffocating, my palms were slippery. I tried to hold your hand but your bangs were sticking to your forehead and you kept throwing your head to the right so you could see into the dark hole. You still couldn't see and I could tell you were getting impatient. Your curls were bouncier, your cheeks rosier. So I held you high and you shrieked that you wanted me to let go. Your screams echoed and finally got lost into the thick air. You pouted and looked back at the house. I wish the house was burning so you could've run. Mama was all right. She was running towards you, her arms up in the air. Her apron was stained, her hands were trembling. She really wanted to hold you. Why was she running the other way? No Becky! Mama will be back. Becky, just stay put. Tell me what your favourite color is. You always looked so pretty in blue. Blue, like that feeling of cold water burning my throat. Summer nights are the longest. I rest my head on my knees and peak at the water. There's a small hole now so I can still see it, so I can still hear it. I hear it every day even when I'm thinking about that girl from Salt Lake eating my corn pops drenched in chocolate milk humming that song. Becky, hold on tight. Hold on tight sweet girl. I wish I hadn't been the older brother so Mama could carry you around like she used to. She couldn't keep up anymore. She always laughed at how fast you were. They called you their little blue ball, their fast car. So she let you stay with me because she said I could still run around, have a good laugh and start again. I didn't mind it; you liked to listen to me talk about the stars and how the ants walked two by two. I held you again and this time, your eyes opened wide. I told you the water was cold like the water from Grandpa's pond. You know the one where you splashed until Mama fetched you out of there. Your lips were blue. Mama laughed. When I was five, they tell me I really wanted a little sister. Or a rabbit. I waited so long for you. I started counting the stars,

then the cracks on the cold stone. When you came, I ran your fingers over them. I had so many stories for you. You didn't like for those July days to be so hot. You wanted to stay in, but I brought you out. Becky, I love you. Your red ribbon fell in. Do you remember that? Mama was out. It was your birthday the next day. Pigs in a blanket. You asked for pigs in a blanket. But it's so hot little girl. How about two scoops of vanilla ice cream? Mama will get you another one. I know it's too hot. It's just a ribbon silly Becky. Mornings are hard too. That's when I hear her crying like she can't wait for the night to roll around. I'm taking a break from school. I wanted to teach you how to read. Tell me what's your favourite thing to do now. Can you climb a tree and reach for the stars? Becky, I miss you. Your small hands, your big eyes, your pink lips. I said no! It's time to go, they'll be here soon. Mama's cleaning up. You'll have to take your shoes off. Can you smell that? Mama keeps shaking her head. I don't think she wants to see me. Becky I want this to stop! The house is so crowded. Everyone is here. Happy birthday. They're taking pictures. They want to talk to me. What happened, they say. My head is spinning. I don't know what happened. It was hot. Becky, why?! Your red ribbon was wrapped around your little hand when they pulled you out. I didn't do it. They have to know that I didn't do it. My little sister, I waited so long for you. Come back. Your lips were blue. Mama cried.



Rhea in the Garden of Delights

~ Dimitri Vouliouris

The Summer Girls

~ Frank Willdig

The naked girls of summer swim
in midnight pools of darkest jade,
they sing sweet songs in innocence
before the days of summer fade.

With playful movements, full of life,
soft moonlight gleams on flawless skin,
their laughter fills the deepest woods
as September closes in.

Too soon, the fruited limbs mature
and seasons pass without a care.

So swim sweet girls, this is your time
before cold winter skies appear.

To the Listeners

~ *Marjorie Bruhmuller*

Tonight the gods have fallen asleep
to the music of the ocean which lists
at the edges like a needle on an album
left too long on a turn-table.

The moon hums
in its open auditorium
stars listen to the old jazz
that shrieks across the galaxies
sent out to that special someone
by a DJ at a microphone.

A request from Tara, stretched out
on her grandmother's couch
in a block of brownstones
that boasts two hundred apartments.
From her radio, waves wash across time
reverberate on the lip of the universe.
She smiles knowing
if her grandma's out there
she'll get it
eventually.



Untitled

~ *Jesus Alejandro Martinez*

Convergence

~ *Julia Matamoros*

They stretch: it embraces
A warm veil exudes
They press; it covers
And dissolves, back it goes.
Now it flows, melting bones
It will stop, it will stop
My hand, your lips
Sliding fine, humid wax
Drop then drop: it will stop.

Strip me

~ Michelle Barker

Strip me
of circumstances
good parents
a decent education
love
opportunity
and a bit of luck
and there will be
you
going to work
at three in the afternoon
to *Studio Sex*
we don't look much different
you and I
in our jeans and t-shirts,
sandals,
both of us celebrating
an unseasonably warm day
for the end of March
but I am going to pick up
my son from school
and you are going to dance
naked
in front of strangers

(which makes me wonder
what could be in the suitcase
you pull behind you –
surely not clothes)
you're on my mind
as I sit on my back porch
in the sun, watching my boys
ride their bikes

as I chop vegetables for dinner
you dance,
gyrate your hips
in a dry hump,
a dance that robs the soul
of music
move because you're paid to,
move your body
against his
and his
and his
tuck your soul into the pocket
you've sewn behind your heart
small precious orange bird –
do not forget,
it can still fly.

The Sybil of Cumae

~ Eleanor Gang

The story went something like this:

During the seven years when the Theban prophet Teiresias had been a woman (one day he had encountered two snakes copulating on the path and had struck the female, immediately transforming into a woman; seven years later he came across the same snakes on the same path engaged in the same activity and struck the male, thus reverting to his previous state) he was said to have given birth to a daughter, Daphne, radiant as the day. It is no surprise that she caught the attention of Apollo himself, who granted her the gift of prophecy and anything else she asked for. She grabbed up a handful of dust and demanded to live as many years as there were grains of sand in her grasp, but neglected to ask for eternal youth. When she spurned Apollo's love, he refused to grant her the omitted boon and she was fated to grow old. She became the Sybil of Cumae, in Italy near Naples, and continued to age, withering away until she was hung upside down in a bottle, repeating only that she wished to die.

Ruth folded up the tourist brochure and looked around the site. There wasn't much left of Apollo's temple at Cumae, but she could appreciate the antiquity of the place. Over the tumbled stones and toppled columns lay an aura of great age. She imagined that if she were quiet enough, and patient enough, the stones would talk to her, but no matter how long she stood with eyes shut, her hands on the rough, weathered rock, no voices spoke. The gods were dead, she decided, dead and gone. It didn't just happen to gods, but people too, once dead and forgotten, ceased to exist as memories of them faded. Only very famous ones who had left great legacies, like Mozart and Michelangelo, were remembered, but more for the art they created. Their actual lives as people were embellished until one could no longer separate the truth from the fiction.

It must be the same for dead gods, thought Ruth. In its heyday, the Greek pantheon was all-powerful. Now those gods are relegated to myth and legend. Someday the same fate will befall our modern religions, no matter how fervently people believe in them right now. She wasn't sure exactly how she felt about this revelation. It would be nice if *some* things

lasted forever, but sadly, even the stones of this once-imposing temple were being corroded by acid rain.

As Ruth moved along the path following the tourist in front of her, she thought she heard a moaning sound coming from among the fallen rubble. It was very faint, easily mistaken for the sighing of the wind or two branches rubbing together. She stopped and focused all her attention in the direction from which it came, shutting her eyes and closing out all other distractions. There was definitely a sound coming from the ruins. She took a step towards it and then stopped.

What was she doing? This was an archeological site. She couldn't just start scrabbling around in the dirt; she wasn't a qualified archeologist. But the sound was pulling at her now, filling her with despair, as though someone needed very badly to be rescued. Glancing around to make sure no one was watching, Ruth stepped off the path and into the ruined temple. The sound was stronger here and sounded less like the wind and more like a voice, a real voice moaning in pain, terrible pain. She took another step towards it and this time thought she could hear words, but couldn't understand them.

There, under a fallen column, tucked in behind a chunk of rubble, was a leather-bound bottle, quite ancient, looking for all the world like a piece of garbage. Very carefully, Ruth reached under the stone and grasped the neck, pulling gently lest she break it. She was very nervous, afraid that a site guard would catch her and that she would be made to give up her find and be thrown in jail. She had heard stories about people who robbed archeological sites of their antiquities. But when she glanced up, no one was paying her any attention. There seemed to be a gauzy curtain dividing her from the path where the other visitors were slowly wending their way, as though she had stepped across a threshold into a different realm and was invisible to everyone else.

She picked up the bottle and brought it close to her face, examining the leather wrappings. Once it had been a harness of sorts with a loop, long worn through from where it had hung from a hook. The bottle itself was earthenware, red with black figures etched on it. At home she had a book describing the different styles of Greek pottery; she could consult it later. For now, the sound had ceased. Making sure no one was watching, Ruth dropped her find into her knapsack and slung it back on her shoulders,

making her way as nonchalantly as possible back to the line of tourists working their way through the site.

Later in her hotel room, Ruth removed the stolen artifact from her backpack. She didn't quite know what to do about it, thinking that maybe she could enjoy it for a few days, and then turn it over to the proper authorities before it was time to take her plane back to London. Carefully, she pulled it out and laid it on the bed. It was quiet. She hadn't heard the moaning since she'd picked it up. It was a mystery to her what had made the sound in the first place. She attempted to remove the leather, but age had made it brittle and it would not slip over the rounded shoulders of the bottle. The opening was inside the harness, and it appeared that it had been hung upside down from the hook. How odd, thought Ruth.

Finally, unable to contain her curiosity, she retrieved her pocket knife from her bag and cut through the hard substance, which finally separated under the ministrations of the sharp blade. The leather fell away from the pottery and revealed the painting on it, a beautiful woman sitting on an ornate chair, a look of utter disdain on her face as a supplicant knelt at her feet. Behind her, with an expression of combined disappointment and longing, was Apollo. She recognized the Greek letters for his name and looked for others, finally finding them: delta, alpha, phi, nu, eta. "Daphne," she whispered, letting her held breath out in a rush, "the Sybil of Cumae."

Ruth tilted the bottle to see the name better, and something poured out of the opening—dust, ash, sand, she could not tell—onto the bedspread. She didn't want to touch it, imagining that it could very well be the remains of the oldest Sybil ever, and yet found herself reaching, nonetheless, towards the small pile in front of her. As she gathered the dust into her hand, she heard a voice in her mind like the wind in lonely places, "Θέλω να πεθάνω."** Then it was gone.

Before her eyes, the ceramic bottle cracked and disintegrated into hundreds of tiny pieces, the leather casing crumbled into dust. All that remained was a pile of dirt on the bedspread. Oh dear, thought Ruth, how will I ever explain this to the maid?

**"I want to die."



Portrait of a Lady

~ Claire Hefferon

Quand on aime il faut partir

~ Elyssa Bouabid

Femme fatale qui ne fait que fuir
 Pour apparaître en éclair et repartir
 Tout en laissant son rêve, son odeur
 Une pensée d'elle et en feu brûle mon cœur

Temps qui s'écroule, elle qui s'envole
 Ne prends avec elle qu'une boussole
 Des souvenirs du passé, de l'enfance
 Pour embrasser le monde toute en souffrance
 Qui la domine, la détruit par une colère
 une trahison d'amour éternel d'un père.

Quand on aime il faut partir
 Avant qu'une passion ne vienne lui prédire
 Le mal, la douleur qu'elle devra souffrir
 Lorsqu'un passé viendra se répéter
 Le risque d'un amour perdu et venger.

Tel un père, tel un homme, tel l'aimée.
 Le silence est souvent une façon d'aimer.

A Sad Reality

~ Leela Holt

I call,

I reach,

you spit,

you preach

You walk a little farther, I fall a little harder.

I wait,

I sigh,

you cheat,

you lie

Then you walk a little farther, still I fall a little harder



Going Home

~ Gordon Lambie

Wild Roses

~ Alexandra Eastland

Like the smoke drifts away from shadows in the evergreens,
You'll be gone.

When the plane takes off and only one of us is on,
I'll be home.

Only wild roses will bring me back to you.
Scentless and bright in my memory tattooed.

The pain it takes to poke into the flesh
Has nothing on their thorns that I so value.

And the wild roses out in the bush
Will be shaken by the wind

When I dream to think of you

And in the warmer months when they begin to bloom.

My petal velvet cheeks will flush like they do.

I'll taste their tears as the dewdrops form

And remember the night that I took one

To press and leave in a lonely book

The only thing that will bring me back to you.



Scene One

~ Lynsey Hachey

Persephone's Meals

~ Elyse Gagne

Platters towered
cakes tiered
a fondue fountain teetered.
Clearly, I was off my game.
Tables slumped
meringue softened
a pineapple parfait sagged.
Gone are the days
of whispering in gardens
and playing at Snow White.

It seemed like a good idea at the time

~ Eleanor Gang

It seemed like a good idea at the time,
the immortality, the eternal youth.
My mentor reassured me with her crimson lips,
her caresses, her murmured endearments,
all the while stroking my beardless cheek
with her blood-red nails,
nuzzling my pulsating throat.
'You will be mine, forever.'
And then she sank her ivory fangs into my neck,
and drank deep, deeply, deepest,
drawing out my very soul.
That night I died, only to be born again
by the light of the next rising moon.
No Christ figure I, never again would I set foot
in a house of worship or defile a temple of faith.
The daily company of men was forbidden me;
I sought nightly those of my own kind
and those foolish enough to venture forth,
becoming appeasement for my unceasing hunger,
my insatiable lust for life.
Time passes, the world changes,
mountains crumble, oceans rise;
I remain the same.
I do not change, I cannot die;
my mentor's words were spoken in truth:
forever young, forever untouched by the passage of time.

Everyone I know, everyone I ever loved is dead.
No one loves such a one as myself.
You cannot see me, as I stand behind you
while you brush your golden hair,
paint your perfect lips,
not reflected in any mirror,
unfelt by your beglamoured senses.
Your beauty, your innocence, are all that I crave,
yet what I desire most is your death,
to drink in your essence, your soul,
to feel the life pour out of you,
to hold you tenderly as your veins empty into mine,
to watch fondly as your rosy glow is replaced by an icy pallor.
And yet with your death I am deprived of your life.
The warmth I would swallow, the blood
filling me with your essence, your very soul,
will in turn guarantee that I shall never have you again.
I wait for you to unclasp the heavy silver chain,
the one that encircles the throat I yearn for,
that keeps me from reaching out and touching
the very thing that I desire most,
and pray that you do not.
Yes, it seemed like a good idea at the time.
But now, as I cannot have your death,
I desire my own: and yet, I cannot die.
I cannot die.

NIGHT OF THE WOLVES

~ Chris Fraser

A howl, a haunting call
Their voice splits the silence
The stillness, the cold, the darkness
A cry to call forth their bretheren
A Wolf is calling out

From through the forest, comes another call
The howling of another beast
So mournful and frightening, yet a beckoning
The night air carries the wolves' cries

The packs' howls split through the shadow of dusk
As a call to all those who behold
"This night shall be that of a glorious hunt
Let no beast or being stand before us tonight"

The night shall belong to the wolves

They move as if ghosts
From childhood tales
Frightening, yet graceful and calm
For centuries it's been as it has been right now
These beautiful creatures have hunted their prey
The wolves stalk the creatures who'll not see the day

This night shall belong to the wolves

I am full of wonder at these noble beasts
Awe has enshrouded my soul
I watch as they gather for the hunt tonight
I hear as they call upon more
Nature has granted a sight to behold
And bestowed upon me a gift
Of such awesome beauty and majestic pride
That I weep countless tears of joy

And lo! Does one rise now to challenge the father?
The pack leader's rule is at stake
Young and old clash, gnaw with teeth, slash with claws
A battle with power to behold
Stricken, disgraced, does the failure retreat
Flesh torn and fur stained with blood
The once brash young wolf has been cast out with force
The elder wolf now stands true
He lets forth a howl, not of calling, but pride
For victory has been claimed by He

Now does the pack go forth into night
The hunt has at last begun
The creatures of night shall be as a feast
To the wolves, so mighty and proud

I leave now with haste, lest my flesh be claimed
As a morsel of meat for the wolves
I run with great sorrow, for I will regret
Not witnessing the wolf pack's hunt
I will not be sad for a very long time
For the wolves shall soon hunt again
I must leave now, to return in a day
When the wolves shall hunt again

This night will belong to the wolves

DEATH OF THE WOLVES

~ Chris Fraser

This night is when wolves will die
Wolves will die tonight
For man has entered their domain
On his mind is naught but causing pain
He will fire upon the wolves with glee
His rifle ablaze with fire, You'll see
He'll cut down a wolf, a cub, a mother
The bullets will not have a care
Man will kill the wolves, as he feels he's better
Greater, above the great wolves

This night is when wolves shall die
Wolves shall die tonight
Man will fire upon them, you'll see
And all the poor wolves can do is bleed
A cub will fall upon its mother
As it nudges her wounds with its snout
The wolves will wail at the death of the elder
Who tonight had fought for his pride
Man will show no mercy to wolves
Killing them as they mourn
Man has no honour, nor nobility as the wolf
He will kill them as they run

This night is when wolves will die
Wolves shall die tonight
Once the death has finally stopped
Man will watch happily at what he has done
He'll come forth from his place to collect of his trophies—
The fur and the heads of the wolves
The elder's corpse will be as a toy
To be fought upon by men as children
He'll be hewn after death, his body dismembered
To be consumed or kept as a prize
A sickening sight to be reviled and hated
These men will have no regrets
How can such a young species be full of such hate
For a creature that has brought them no harm?

This night is when wolves shall die
Wolves will die tonight
This night is when wolves will die
Wolves Shall die tonight

This night marks the death of the wolves

SPIRIT OF A WOLF

~ Chris Fraser

I still hear the cries of my brothers fallen
My sisters dead
And my children slain
When mine eyes are closed and mine head lain upon the leaves
I still hear them calling from the dark

The time may have passed when your weapons of fire and steel spilt
their blood upon the grass
You may have cut their fun and skin from their bodies to use upon
your backs
You may have hewn the meat from their bones to have as a meal
Yet we still live
Our pride never dies
Their hearts never fail

We have been here for a thousand generations past
And we shall be here for an eternity more
Our bodies may wither and die
Our kin may grow and change
But the spirit of our kin shall live forevermore
The honour of a wolf never dies
A pack's heart never falters
THE WOLVES ARE FOREVER

My bretheren wolf have a heart as I
And though I am not of their flesh and blood
My heart is as that of a wolf
And their spirit is as mine

We are one in heart and spirit
And shall be so beyond when death may claim us
None shall break us
Nay, none shall defeat us

MY SPIRIT IS THAT OF A WOLF



Dinner in the Suburbs

~ Dayna Lowe



Untitled

~ Galen Brown



Cup #12

~ Michael Cestnik

Untitled

~ Christopher Brandon

"...having faith in even simple dreams is hard." I was murmuring to myself, looking out the window at rain. Listlessly toying with my #3 breakfast. Looking up from her coffee she asked, "What if they're in black & white?" Her eyes danced around my sullen mood out in the street, under the rain in a yellow sundress—subtly replacing the light that was behind closed doors.

Now

~ Brenda Hartwell

Every fall my heart spirals downwards with the dry leaves—a dance of glorious death in ragged skirts of red, orange, scarlet. The warm earth, the golden hay send heady scents upwards. Isn't it always the way? We only truly appreciate beauty as it is on its way out the door.

The rose is most lovely because the velvet petals will soon fall onto the damask cloth. The star-crossed lover, the young man off to war, the summer romance—the more fleeting, the more beloved. The husband with cancer, the teenager leaving home, the final days, the ticking clock, these last monumental minutes that cry out for time to stop. In this moment, the senses stand at attention; the nose notices the earth sighing up the last traces of summer's heat; the eye catches the falling star; the bare souls of feet feel every blade of grass.

And it is always there. Nothing changes but perception—now highlighted, now on red-alert. This moment, this holy singular moment, where life meets praise, where time and space and being are illuminated.

No one is promised tomorrow, but everyone trudges through as if it was a done deal. Rat race high-speed big box shop till you drop you're worth it life in the fast lane step on a few toes climb that ladder.

Autumn leaves rattle and demand attention. They are portents, harbingers. They are the souls of ancient seers. Close your eyes and listen. The sad true tale of your numbered days rattle like brittle bones, like Death's dice, like grace.

Everything is balanced, if you listen deeply. The death song, permeated with smoke from a thousand embers rises like a phoenix on the wind. The beauty of this place is infused with a light that will be extinguished. The perfume of this rose will not last forever. But it is heady; it is unbearably sweet; it is now. And if we bend our stiff necks to worship—it is ours for the moment. Close your eyes. Inhale.

Now is enough.

The Bastion

~ Maria Meindl

One night, Rebecca's mother knocked on her door while she was doing her homework.

"Come in?"

Audrey sat down on the edge of Rebecca's bed. "Have you given any thought," she said, "to what you might like to do next year?" There was a carefulness about the way she put the question; obviously, she had composed it in advance and talked the whole matter over with one or more of Rebecca's four older sisters. Rebecca knew she was supposed to be thinking about her plans. Her career. She was eighteen, about to graduate from CEGEP, and Next Year was the main topic of discussion at school. But when she, Rebecca, tried to think of anything past final exams, her mind went blank and she felt, all of a sudden, like falling asleep. She knew this must mean there was something wrong with her. She was supposed to be *attracted* to something, feel a strong pull in some direction or other, but she felt nothing. To tell the truth, she was used to feeling—or not feeling—this way.

Over the years, there were many things she was supposed to have wanted: a boyfriend, for one thing, clothes, makeup, shoes, and now this career business. But all she really wanted to do was stay around The Property (as they called their house and the five acres it stood on) and help her mother. They had moved there when Rebecca was four years old, when her father died, and she didn't remember living anywhere else. She liked keeping the place up, mowing the lawn, touching up the paint on the porch, trimming dry branches from the trees near the house. Sometimes, she'd refinish a piece of furniture or take apart the toaster or the lawnmower and put it back together again. Her favourite past-time was to work beside her mother in the garden, picking beans or weeding the beds, saying a few words here and there but mostly just working side-by-side. *Weeding vegetables is not a career.* She could hear her sister Marjorie's voice in her mind.

To her mother, Rebecca said, "I'll apply to St. Francis, I guess."

St. Francis was where all the Weir girls went after they finished CEGEP. It was a small university, located in a town of the same name about an hour's drive from The Property. An hour's drive by car, or two hours on a bus that stopped at every *dépanneur* and coffee shop along the way. It was too far to commute every day, so one by one, the girls moved to St. Francis. Marjorie and Janice took Arts, Liz and Sarah, Sciences. Beck knew she wasn't very artsy, so she registered in a life sciences program.

In St. Francis, she rented a room in The Bastion, a huge house on top of the hill overlooking town. It was carpeted everywhere, including its four bathrooms and two kitchens, in something that resembled worn-down Astroturf. The Bastion was everyone's transition-place between living in residence and getting their own apartment. People lived there for a month or two, then moved on, but Rebecca stayed for three years, eventually taking over a room on the top floor with her own bathroom, hotplate and fridge. She spent as little time in the house as possible, and ate in the cafeteria at school, or at Dutchy's Diner on Main Street.

Rebecca had never been a 'good' sleeper, but the first six weeks at The Bastion she was awake almost constantly. She ranged around her room, pacing barefoot on the rough carpet, which was impregnated with dust. One night, she was struck by the memory of a time, about ten years before, when they had given away Blackie's litter of three kittens. For a day or two, the mother-cat wandered incessantly around the house, calling out in a strange, hollow tone. "It's just anxiety," Rebecca's mother had told her. "Cats do that. It'll pass." And sure enough it did. One morning, everything went back to normal; it seemed as if Blackie had never even had kittens in the first place.

That's the way Rebecca felt about her mother, and about home those first weeks. She wished she could call out mournfully in the night, but every corner of The Bastion seemed public, and Rebecca wasn't about to let a houseful of strangers in on her tears. She was consumed with agitation, a deep-down restlessness that made her unable to settle. Her legs kept pacing; her mind kept racing. The only thing that calmed her, finally, was her sister Marjorie's visit at Thanksgiving. Marjorie, living in Vancouver and in her first year of law practice, was buying a new car and left her old one for Rebecca to use. Now, Rebecca could travel back and forth to her mother's place as often as she liked.

Once she had an easy way of getting home, Rebecca hardly missed it. She didn't get back to The Property until Christmas, and then, only stayed for three days before going back to St. Francis again. Rebecca was busy. As her elective, she had signed up for a course called Introduction to Technical Theatre, taught by a man named Gary Curtis. Gary was a gigantic man whose shoulders seemed to fill a doorway when he walked into a room, but he moved silently, as if his work boots were moccasins. He had a light voice that made him sound as if he were whispering all the time. The pockets of his painter-pants were like a supply cupboard furnished with a Swiss Army knife, a wrench, and an enormous set of keys that opened all the doors of the newly built 'Stott Theatre Complex'. He had been known to produce Band-Aids from those pockets, Kleenex, a box of raisins when someone felt dizzy in rehearsal, a small piece of sandpaper wrapped in plastic, even a sewing kit.

Now, Rebecca wanted to work beside Gary every day, the way she used to work beside her mother. Gary's course gave her a chance to do the things she'd always loved, but it was also part of being in university, and might even lead to a career. For Christmas, she requested a Swiss Army knife exactly like Gary's, with two blades, a screw-driver, a corkscrew and an awl. She switched her major to Drama and got through the obligatory academic courses, but spent most of her time in 'The Stott', helping Gary. By her second year, she was getting paid for stage-managing all the plays the department put on, as well as some of the productions that rented the theatre in the course of the year. She stayed at The Bastion in the summers and worked at the theatre every chance she got. By third year, Gary had given her a portion of his office and left her to supervise the first-year students in the carpentry shop when he needed time off.

Gary and Rebecca went out for a drink in the spring of her final year. "Have you thought about what you might do when you finish?" Gary asked, and for a change, Rebecca had something resembling an ambition: "Well, I'm a techie, apparently. What do techies do, when they finish university?"

"Get a job," Gary answered. "And when it finishes, get another one. There's a guy named Bart Johnston. My buddy for years. He lives in Toronto. I'll give him a call. He'll find something for you."

And so, Rebecca moved to Toronto, and there was a job waiting for her when she got there. The one thing she didn't do was graduate. She didn't need the letters after her name. Why should she, when she knew she could find work?



TV on the Radio

~ Chelsea Caillier



Karma

~ Andrew Collymore

Living life with no regard,
 everything seems better than what they are,
 on this journey to look beyond,
 the temptation that breaks a bond.
 One strike and your walls will fall,
 cannot escape the fire that consumes us all.
 Searching for an excuse to fix the problem,
 There is nothing to hide,
 or a tool to resolve them.
 Caught and let loose from ones we love,
 separated by flaws that have become,
 searching for your soul to rise above.
 Positioned alone for forgiveness,
 living with this burden a life sentence,
 developing a story that will conquer one's senses,
 looking to the Lord for repentance.

Untitled

~ Jesus Alejandro Martinez

Tisha B'Av

~ Etienne Domingue

Dimmed—the once resplendent World is dimmed:
 her voice coarse, her bread mixed with the grit,
 her wine spoiled with the sand
 of a million sacred stones. shattered
 & borne throughout the land on violent
 winds. Dread Silence howls & wailing the
 ruins cry out the shame known only to
 naked rock, to broken bones & to
 blood flowing freely in rivulets
 down tainted streets.

*"How the gold has grown dim,
 how the pure gold is changed!
 The sacred stones lie scattered
 at the head of every street."*

—Lamentations 4:1



Untitled

~ Jesus Alejandro Martinez

There Is a Hole in the Ceiling

~ Leela Holt

Above my head a hole in the ceiling
Catches my eye and I get the feeling
That all is not quite as it seems
And I begin to believe, begin to dream
A tiny world of unknown beings
With open hearts all full of meaning
A secret place of new dimensions
Where lies the truth that's never mentioned
A troll, a tree, a giant bee
A little man who cannot see
A house, a louse, a giant mouse
From room to sky, the perfect spouse
So today I'll gaze a little to the right
At the tiny hole, not much of a sight
I'll imagine what wonders may lie above
And go off with today a new found love

Echoes. A Grey Room

~ Etienne Domingue

Echoes. A grey room,
paint cracked & peeling
off the mildewed walls.
Patches of ceiling,
the ancient plaster
enormous dandruff
fallen upon tiled
shoulders. An obvious
drip, sloppy & loud—
more of a slurp, less
of a drop, something
massive, wet, filthy,
hopeless—from the frieze
& onto the plinth.
The door finally
& blissfully shut.

Echoes. A grey room,
a squalid hall in
an empty hovel,
awaiting the long
overdue mercy
of Time or Progress
or else some other
Killer of Old Things,
to deliver it
from meaninglessness.



Wait

~ Michael Cestnik

Caught

~ Elyse Gagne

There it is again

Skirting and sparkling and slipping stealthily away

Not a tremble not a tremor not one contrite flash

There it is in your hands as they toil and touch

Passing it back and forth over and under and staining my flesh with it

On your lips and your tongue

Fastened at the back of your gorge rotten like a piece of stuck food

a stench from the innerworld.

It was there at the piano when I watched our reflections and you, for
hours, played

There because you played it to my ears and I played it over in my brain.

There it is again

Skirting and sparkling and slipping stealthily away

Not a tremble not a tremor not one contrite flash

In the flip of your hair or in a sly word slipped over my glass

In every letter you type from your pretty polished little finger points

It's been there since you first declared on paper 'Best Friends for Life!'

sanguine little hearts dotting the i's.

There because you were playing House and I foolishly played along.

There it is

A corrupted and complete consummation

Can't catch you in one word or one breath

But in the summation of three day's time and every blink and laugh and
touch within it

You, for hours, played and you played and I was unaware of the game

So enthused by its skipping and skirting over your features

So enthralled by its luscious ruthless truthlessness

There it is again

I've caught on.



Dog Face

~ Chelsea Caillier



Plain

~ *Chester Michelmas*

Having a Beer with Winter

~ *Marjorie Bruhmuller*

There is a steamy place
that Winter brings you to.
Takes your hat from your head
hangs your scarf and jacket on a hook
and with a smile, sits you down
(an arm around your shoulder)
to a cold beer and peanuts.
And after numerous stories
of a girl shivering in a damp
apartment, a heater blasting
frozen pipes, a zipper iced shut
tongues stuck on a bus window
and a suede coat ruined
(cold, cold blues...)
he takes out a smoke
and offers you one.
After lighting it up
and blowing out the match
Winter leans his elbow on the bar
squints at you through his own cloud
and says, "So, what about you?"

pink**flamingo23

~ Ellen Goldfinch

Her email address is pink**flamingo23@hotmail.com. I talk to her on MSN but I now know that she talks to a lot of people—chats up strangers and then deletes them. Apparently, she's a bit selective about who she keeps as audience, though from asking around, I can't figure out at all what her criteria might be. After a month of MSN chatting, she added me as a Friend on Facebook. I was selected. This pleased me at first. I'm not the kind of guy girls usually go for. A year later, my feelings would change completely.

Her wall has thousands of posts. She's a cyber-magnet who holds court from midnight to four on MSN, Yahoo chat, MySpace though she seems to have settled on Facebook and there, she changes her Facebook often. For two months she said she was in Tulsa. After that, she was supposedly going to Columbia and living on the Upper West Side of New York City. Lately, she says that she is in Seattle.

I'm not clear on how I first met her. My cousin, Al, might have been the link. "Pink Flamingo, she's really cool." And she was, in a multimedia definition of cool. I saw a one minute out-of-focus film of her on YouTube but the lighting was terrible and she didn't say much. And I got a message from her, "Al says mornings are funny." I didn't know what she meant and when I questioned her, she wrote, "Well, you know, the wonkiness."

You get hooked on those random comments especially when people that you know, and I mean know face-to-face, start receiving the exact same messages: in their email, on their Facebook wall, popping up on their screens. She even takes on new email addresses and they become the message like "what-if-peacocks-could-be-road-kill@hotmail.com." You open the message and click on the box and all the email says is pink**flamingo23. We all thought it was cool, and of course, we all wanted to solve the mystery of who she was.

There are photos on her Facebook page but none of her, just disembodied things—a pen cut and pasted on a red background or a car wheel on green. It's definitely not art, just stuff.

I used to go on the computer just to wait for pink**flamingo23. I'd chat with friends or play with my Facebook profile waiting for her to pop up. She always did, still does. She's just playing with me, with us. I mean. She's a tagger and we're the wall that she paints on. The messages mean nothing. They're bits of fluff. I'm not sure if she thinks that she's being profound or if the banality is intentional.

Here's the weird thing. I opened a new Hotmail account, dropped out of Facebook and then opened a new profile. Yeah, that's right, she found me anyway. It's not scary and sadly, it's not tantalizing anymore. She's a virus, a cyber-fly buzzing around my head. Now she keeps asking to meet me, meet me in the real world and I keep saying no.

It's occurred to me that she might not be a she but some fat, balding old stalker who's discovered that it's fun to pretend to be a trendy, teenaged girl. She more likely is a very unattractive teenaged girl who's figured out a way how to draw attention to herself. I might already know, her but I kind of think that I don't.

The emails became more persistent. I tried to block her, but she kept coming up with new addresses, profiles, and she kept sending me notifications, trying to add me as a Friend on Facebook again and again. My friends all told me that I was lucky to be singled out like this, but I knew better.

Two weeks ago, the solution occurred to me when my older brother was over with his little daughter who was trying to play with my cat, Zappa. She kept picking Zappa up and Zappa just went limp and boring, became so uninteresting that Tricia lost interest.

It's time to tune out for a few months, and there's a bunch of books that I've been meaning to read. I called the cable company and cancelled my Internet connection. Then I unplugged the computer and put it in the empty closet by the front door.

A few days later, I got a letter in the mail. All that it had was a photo of a broken doll, missing one eye and lying in front of a flower bed. That's when I bought the extra lock for the door and began wondering how paranoid it might look if I got an estimate for those iron bars that can go on windows. Come to think of it, there's a good chance that I can convince my parents to loan me enough money to go south for the winter. And there's always China . . .



Collage

~ *Kathryne Owen*



Thomas in the Sky with Rewind

~ *Gordon Lambie*

Sorry, we're Lost

~ *Corey T. Toohey*

Sorry, we got lost in the thick of things
it was just a temporary lapse in judgement.

But we shall return in due course

Bad intentions surely were not there

it was simply of the changing times.

Sorry, we got lost in the thick of things.

In the depths of discovering the wonders of nature.

Or in the shimmering gaze of a woman divine

But we shall return in due course.

We could be gone for days upon days

As we walk along by the wayside.

Sorry, we got lost in the thick of things.

Life can pass us by whether we're there or not

If we're not cautious, it will drift along as the wind.

But we shall return in due course

No apology needed for the way things are,
sometimes things just happen on their own.

Sorry, we got lost in the thick of things.

But we shall return in due course

Laissez moi partir je ne veux plus me rendre

~ Elyssa Bouabid

Se relever en miette et sourire
Je luttas hélas pour survivre
Venger, peine infligée,
Souffrant d'un passe, sans pouvoir oublier
A tout jamais ces souvenirs sont graves

Petite Ange d'un coeur qui rage
Est venu me dire bien sage
On se découvre sous un autre visage
Va dormir pour finir cette journée pourri
Va dormir nager dans les rêves et l'oubli
Pour ouvrir au lendemain ton esprit
Commencer un nouveau jour, respire
Pour demain pouvoir sourire.

Rêves d'hier,
Nostalgie d'une éternité,
Roses aux épines dures
Cruelle douceur d'une réalité infinie.

Laissez moi partir je ne veux plus me rendre.

PHONE CONFESSIONS

~ Etienne Domingue

(on the seventh anniversary of the attacks of September 11th)

What did we learn from gaping wounds & the ghosts who whisper still
in the late nights or during fire drills? What signs did we read in the silt?
What did we learn from a sky which seethed & burned & last-minute
phone confessions from under the ruins?

I want to see a hand stretched out over the still-fresh graves & across the
ocean—a hand not out to strike or surrender but simply to ask: “What
then?”

There is only us now: only mortals before the great gulf of History.

I see victims everywhere, but they are not me. I was not there, nor can I
hear the Furies howl as the righteous can, nor find fault in talk of Peace
or homecoming.

But I can peer through the shadows over chasms & dimly on the other
side I think I see a Future there.

Sticks & Stones

~ Corey T. Toohey

Yahweh please come down
from that great place on your wall
and help me deal with those words that
aren't supposed to be hurtful.

'words may never hurt me'.

Indeed. The dumbest thing ever said
in the history of stupid sayings.

'cause of these words,

I sit and I ponder

up in my fort made of hay,

where no one can find me.

I wonder and I wonder ...

Who came up with that saying,

For they must plunder.

Down ... Down ... Down ... Down

into the abyss, where no

longer can their words and phrases

hurt anyone.

Ever Again.

Amen.

Untitled

~ Benjamin Wylie

Thoughts scatter as pen meets paper.

Fleeing from the expressive portion of my mind,

Darting like uncovered silverfish.

Blank shadows are the only indication

Of their former congregation.

I catch their exodus

Spreading like oil on water.

And capture their ghosts

Squirming and crawling from my pen.

Their trails of a clean surface

Etched in cognitive dust.

I am the tracker.

The recorder of such impressions on the mind

Which I sketch on this paper

With my words.



Desolation Row

~ Claire Hefferon

Father and Son Visit.

~ Frank Willdig

The snow sizzles against the window,
the kettle whistles, the woodstove pops
and cool air whispers through the glass.
Both men peer out the window,
he shuffles the cards with his tinge of pain
and deals, the other checks his Blackberry
and ponders his week in the city.
The fly strip buzzes overhead,
and the clock ticks by the calendar.
The last card is played; it is time to go
and out of the silence he asks,
"You'll come again soon, won't you?"

Heart up a Tree

~ Carolyn Rowell

this morning my heart is a leaden
mass stuck high on my spine
it migrated there during my sleep
oozed up like the blob
in an old horror movie
attached itself to my sinew
ligaments neural pathways
tentacles knotted in all that lets me
move it hangs there beating maroonly
holding my muscles rigid

what does my heart wait for?
I see it slowly open its one
eye look from the height between my
shoulder blades and shiver it doesn't know
how it got there and like a cat in a tree
my heart doesn't know how to get
down
did it move there while I dreamt of
ringing telephones? messages from people
who do not know me?
I call its name coaxing it back to its true place
in the seat of courage
but the gap it must leap is wide

it softly pulses looks down
and considers.



Lennoxville at Night

~ Maximilien Roy

In the Garden of a City

~ Alexandra Eastland

In the light of the dawn and her waking

She sees no other beauty but the day

Love is dew on a peony and shaking

As this gold melts her temperance away

Vivaciously thirsting for renewal

She travels to another cityscape

Without structure or hopes that are thorough

Digging out space for this unforeseen shape

Sees a man hyperactive and smiling

Conversing with strangers as unmade friends

Sweet wishes are planted for their finding

In joy-dappled green parks, affections spent

Exotic in speech and random intent,

They find where valleys and towers first met.

A Modern Day Fairy Tale

~ Michelle Barker

It wouldn't work.

The stepmothers
would all be in therapy

And if you know a teenaged girl
who would agree to collect strawberries
in the middle of winter
instead of going to the mall

I'd like to meet her.

The wicked old witch in Hansel and Gretel
would wear bifocals
so Hansel's trick with the chicken bone

would land him in hot water
faster than you could say

candy houses cause cavities.

Rapunzel would have Internet
and register on e-date –

no hope of isolation for her.

There would be no dwarves,

not even midgets with long beards.

They would simply be *vertically challenged* –

hardly an image to inspire

fear or loathing.

Try finding a girl
who will kiss a frog.

Try finding a frog.

or a bear that will turn into a prince.

Nothing turns into anything anymore.

That's the problem.



Cinderella at the Wedding

~ Dimitri Vouliouris



Untitled

~ Sabrina Courtemanche-Nouadir

Thunderous Blows

~ Taylor Evans

As the lights come up on stage a well built man in his late twenties or early thirties sits on a bench wearing athletic attire and an oversized neck brace. Surrounding him there is a water bottle, a towel, and a mouth-guard. A faint roar of a crowd can be heard in the background.

Thunder: Whiplash, of the neck. The doctors aren't sure how long I'll be out. The first major injury sustained is usually a sign that one's time on the program is coming to an end. If it were up to me I'd be out there right now. Not sitting here in the Frito-Lay recovery and hydration zone looking on as my mates give it hell. You would think the fans wouldn't be so quick to forget. My supposed injury and well-being are a mere afterthought to the ongoing events. The next generation already stepping up to fill my place and make names for themselves. Look at Crusher out there. He has that weakling competitor all blue in the face with his Japanese headlock; unaware that struggling only makes Crusher's grip tighter. Crush learned from the best. [*Thunder demonstrates Crusher's manoeuvre*] You have no idea what sort of pain I'm in. No idea. Anyone else would be screaming their nuts off right now if they had to deal with the sort of stuff I'm going through. Like the woodsmen whose blade slips accidentally, sawing off his hands. Or the mailman who just can't run fast enough to get away from the dog in time. Or the business man caught by his wife in bed with a hooker. [*Beat*] Not being able to do what you love. God, you are so cruel. You love to watch people suffer and I provide you with six seasons of bone crushing hits, high flying slams, and my special: the torpedo. Suffering gives you pleasure like that male prostitute gives that businessman and I have delivered every chance I got. Every chance I got. I bet you're hooting it up right now after pulling the carpet out from under me like that. Well, there's only room for one hot-shot in this arena and he goes by the name of Thunder, America's Gladiator, star of the American Gladiators. They named a steak after me and it was always served well-done. [*Tries to regain his composure*] All my life I've been tearing through things and I sure as hell ain't going to stop now. After my mother gave birth to me, my father said she was never the same. Too loose he used to say, like she had given birth

to a bear-cub or something. You can't silence the Thunder no matter how hard you try. [*Clears throat*] One evening around Christmas time my dad came home after another day of work at the plant. I remember him being very quiet that night, which was unusual for such a big, loud man. During dinner that night, Ma went on about her happenings of the day and the local town gossip. "You know what that hitch Danielle Hall had the nerve to say to me at the supermarket?"—"I'm through," my father said. "No honey, she said"—"I'm through," he said again tossing the bowl of peas in his hands to the floor, just missing Whiskers [*pause*] his daughter from a previous marriage. After that, Dad fell silent again and he remained pretty much silent and lifeless throughout the course [*takes a drink of water*] of the rest of his life. They say it is embarrassing to scream or show fear the moment before you die. Go out with some dignity and class; don't let them know they have beaten you down. I don't see it that way. Silence is not glorifying. You cannot quote silence. Silence is too quickly forgotten. That is why I picked the name Thunder. It is deafening, causing one's whole body to shake. The moment before Thunder crashes, there is a split-second of silence. Which is then broken by a furious BOOM and then a SPLAT as the body of another challenger falls to the mat. I create the silence so that I can break it into a million pieces. These are not tears in my eyes. They are just the first signs of the reign. [*Tears off neck brace*]

Horned Owl

~ Marjorie Bruhmuller

Gray,
your tombstone body
built with other's bones
and feathers—beaks that lost
their songs inside you
creatures
who felt their fur
glide wet down your throat
slipping
into the beat of your wings
the clamp of talons
swaying the upper branches
of a deadened tree.

Whither?

~ Etienne Domingue

Whither the colours go from out the land
when pale the veil of winter spreads over
the vale. & by the hearth—by the hearth where
we two idle stand—we wait out the storm
& its furious gale?

We wait, though the fire tapers cold, & night
—a crude darkness of soul—stretches to touch
& conquer us. Whither the colours go
when doubt threatens to smother us? I look
towards the East, & hope.

Whither the colours go? We may never
know. The rhymes may never give the proper
ring, or touch the proper feel for when we
fumble through the dread night & the cold to
take refuge in ourselves.

& florid verses will die in the cruel
clutches of Doubt & Night & Cold, but Hope –
Hope will wait the night with us, & looking
East she will suffer us to find light in
the darkest before dawn.



Insight

~ Kathryn Owen



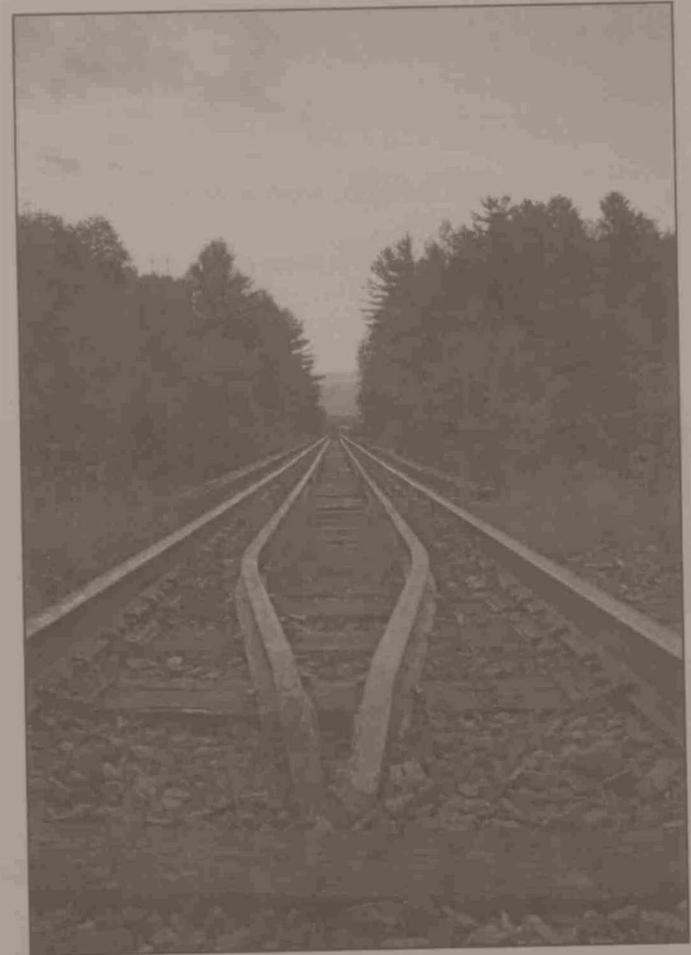
Urban Rasta

~ Dimitri Vouliouris

Trivial

~ Elyse Gagne

Not to trivialize your pain
but it inspired me.
Not to sound callous
but pray at the foul alter you've got.
You abused me.
and I lingered in that muddy hurt
Because I Let You.
You brought me to that consummation
and now I stand at it alone
When I face my Creator and It says 'face Damnation'
I'll think of burning in your touch for hours.
My head screamed 'no!'
but my heart cried louder 'go!'
and some boiled, new-awaked beast
wet its lips and whispered hotly 'please'.
All silent from their quarrel,
here I stand, finally aware of the alone.
And if you were to re-awaken them
with the offer of a good night kiss
I'd take it with a tragic smile
and rock with suffering in my bed
until a god I have not yet met
teaches me of deliverance
and made us, together, happy or wiped away all stains
Because a god can untouch the finger from the skin
the tongue from the cheek
can unmake the histories
of the heart and the head and that muddy hole
which dwell festering in the soul
and urge me to trivialize your pain for inspiration.



Places that aren't here

~ Michael Cestnik

The Fish

~ Julia Matamoros

He says fish—

To understand so I wish.

Then I think, but say not what I mean.

Swings not swims, poor little fish.

Liquid thoughts, weak in form

As we stare in mute awe,

Eye to eye, I to you.



Massawippi

~ Chelsea Caillier

On that day

~ Olivia Anastasia Arnaud

On the day I am to tell you
goodbye

I will listen to the songs that played
the night of masks and make-up
when I felt you turn into someone
Super

I will take a walk beneath new
leaves, where once the snow
embraced
and you told me I had to see
for the beauty alone

I will echo our laughter
braided rays around our
shoulders,
the sunlight we made
even in the dark

I will feel your hands
a pass of sportsmanship,
a wall around the flame,
a ruffle of my hair—
all excuses
just to be close

On that day,
I will not promise you the world
I will not remember everything
I will not be brave

but I will love you

as much as the day I said hello

and every day before
goodbye.

Congratulations on the Purchase of Your New Dishwasher

~ Michelle Barker

Perhaps all the trouble in our lives
comes down to the tyranny
of appliance user guides
DO NOT TAMPER WITH CONTROLS
USE ONLY HOT WATER
LOAD SHARP ITEMS POINT DOWN
but what if we decided
not to be dishwasher safe?
what if we tampered
disconnected
stopped flinching at the sounds
of grinding and crunching?
what if we let
our warranties expire?
what if we
did not read the instructions
did not call the toll free number
to ask questions
or complain?
what if we didn't even know
our serial numbers?
WARNING:
failure to follow these instructions
could result
in personal freedom
forever.



Untitled

~ Sabrina Courtemanche-Nouadir

Prince Charming

~ Brenda Hartwell

The Castle
Happily-Ever-After Road
Kingdom Come

Dearest Stepmother,

It has been a full year since our leave-taking, and although we did not part on the best of terms, I beseech you, in the name of the love you once bore my father, do not condemn this epistle to the ash heap before reading it. I regret that I am unable to send the gold that you requested, but my circumstances are vastly different from what you must imagine. Certainly, the life I lead here merits no envy.

Prince Charming—could a name be more false? In truth, I am wedded to a self-centred man-child. Yes, he's eye-candy, and he cuts a dashing figure on the dance floor. The minstrels drone on about how he mesmerized hundreds of hopeful maidens with his fathomless blue eyes. They pluck their lutes and sing stanza after nauseating stanza detailing the legendary blondes and buxom brunettes who strove to win his heart and sound the depth of those charming eyes. I regret to report that there is nothing to sound. His eyes are naught but empty pools reflecting the glow of sapphires in his crown.

And here I am, the chosen one, in a castle that is draughty and dank. The black mildew that rings the hems of my gowns grows apace with my misery, and I have abandoned all hopes of an alliance in this place. The Queen is greatly occupied with her physician, and she dedicates her time to the imbibing of strange potions to tighten her skin. Her eyes are pulled tight as a tiger's. The herbs in her concoctions bubble up in fits of gas and bile. She is not inclined to motherly affection, but prefers to seethe in the presence of any woman younger and more smooth-skinned than she. In truth, she would prefer not to look upon my countenance.

The King is an infallible toad, half-mad, half-deaf, with a diminishing IQ tied to hot grogs commencing at breakfast. He insists I sit upon his left at table, and I dare not rise mid-meal for the perversions he would insist upon. Twice he has slid his hand upon the seat of my chair in my absence. Once, he caught me in a quiet hallway, clasped me to him, and I felt his desire rising like Mercury. His groggish breath wheezed like the sulphuric fumes of hell upon my neck, assaulting my nostrils, churning my stomach.

It was all a set-up, you see. Prince Charming is a fop, a dandy, a mirage offered up to thirsty maidens. He is the fairy tale ending, the carrot on the end of a stick luring asses along the dusty road.

I am the chosen ass. The one who danced along the road in glass slippers, following that enchanted carrot. All the while my trusted fairy godmother was cackling in the bushes—nothing more than a witch pandering to the King for a bag of rubies. For while Prince Charming is occupied with his hair before the looking glass or wrestling with the stable boy in the dusky loft, the King is seeking heirs—blond grandsons—and I am the brood mare. If I turn my back, he will come upon me from behind and service me like a stallion.

I long for my hearth and dust cap. I pine for the ordinary household tasks that were once so loathsome. I know this union has garnered you no small amount of prestige and that you will never, ever consider sheltering me as a member of your household, but please pass on this message to my fortunate stepsisters: *Gilded fairy tale endings are the most dangerous of propaganda. Better to set your heart on a tender troll.*

Yours,
Cinderella



Neatly packed

~ Chester Michelmas

From the Can to the Ghan, With A Little Empire In Between

~ Rachel Morgan

I'd only met him that day. William James Robinson. That's what his name was. I didn't know that until now, now that he was being sent home in a black bag. I didn't know his name until I looked at his dog-tags. I hadn't asked. I had told him he was coming on patrol. I'd never seen a dead body before. It had been a perfectly normal, boring, uneventful day up to that point.

"Fuck." Hammer said, dropping down next to me.

"What's up?" I asked, without looking up from my cards.

"I got stuck with the four to six."

I laughed. Hammer knocked the cards outta my hands. "No, man, this eats shit."

"Just don't wake me up too early. I'm going to sleep in late." I laughed some more.

"Fuck off."

"Who else is on duty?"

"Stoop has the two to four."

I picked up the cards and started to shuffle. "Wanna play something?"

"No, let's go play some badminton before it gets too redders," he suggested. It was only ten o'clock, so the sun wasn't too killer yet.

"Yeah. OK. Go see if anyone wants to have a tourney. I have patrol in a bit, though."

Only Stoop agreed to play, so I took them on, one against two. Snap, the army photographer attached to our regiment, showed up to take some pictures, followed by the stray dogs we kept on base. In the middle of the game, when some unknown was running over to us, the dogs started fucking barking like crazy.

"Smile," Snap said, taking a picture of the new guy.

"Who the fuck are you?" asked Stoop, lighting up a cigarette.

"I just got sent here from Bastion." That was one of the main bases in the desert. "Can I jump in?"

"Whatever," Stoop replied.

"Get in your civies first," I told him.

When he had changed and was coming back, the dogs starting barking again.

Hammer asked, "So what are you?"

He looked puzzled. "I'm . . . uh—"

Stoop jumped in. "Look. Hammer here is from the parachute reg, and Canada over there and I are airborne engineers. So what are you?"

"Oh! Yeah, I'm from engineering."

"So you're the same as Stoop and I," I said.

"Well, I haven't done my parachuting yet."

We all stopped to look at him. Hammer said, "So you're a hat."

"Fuck you," the new guy said.

"He's a fucking crap hat!" exclaimed Stoop. "I'd rather my sister a whore than my brother a crap hat!" We knew the saying, and we all laughed. Well, except Hat.

"Don't you want to be a para?" I asked. "There's nothing better than getting paid to throw yourself out of planes."

At quarter to eleven I went to change into my gear to go on a short patrol with Big Rig and a couple of the Afghanis. Patrols were the best part 'cus we got to go out and see the life in villages and surrounding areas, and I was driving, which was always fucking great 'cus I'd just floor it and we'd go flying over the dunes. Plus, it was nice to get out 'cus the base was really small—there were only ten British and twelve Afghanis—and generally pretty boring. Things never got too heated, but it was spicy enough to make things exciting every now and then. While we were in town we picked up some shit like apples, cereal, and long-life milk.

When we got back to base, Stoop, Hammer, Snap, and Hat were sitting around cleaning some light machine guns and long-range rifles. Stoop motioned for us to join as he took out a pack of smokes. Big Rig nodded at Stoop to pass the pack to him, and we sat down. They were talking about times when we had gotten drunk at the local pubs in whatever town we were based in, and how we were dicks to the chicks there and just caused a bit of trouble.

"Fuck, I could really go for a Guinness right now," said Hammer.

"Remember how we used to make bets as to who could be the biggest dick and get slapped in the face first?" asked Stoop.

"Hammer won every time," I answered.

"And we got thrown out most of the time," added Hammer. "Remember that time at O'Briens?"

Stoop and I laughed.

"What happened?" asked Hat.

Screambag screamed over to us that lunch was ready. Tinned beef and tinned peas again.

"I'll tell ya another time," Hammer said to Hat.

After lunch we all had some shit chores to do like cleaning up the dishes and doing laundry. Then I was supervising a few of the Afghanis while they checked the vehicles for damage, and I tossed a ball for the dogs at the same time. When they started barking, I turned around and saw that Hat was walking over.

"So where you from, Canada?" Hat asked me, sitting down.

"Canada."

"I mean where in Canada?"

"Vancouver."

"That's a long way to join the British Army."

"Yeah, I was in the reserves for a year, but there was no fucking way I was going to be in the Canadian army and be a peacekeeper."

"How'd you like the reserves?"

"It was so slack. I got away with so much shit!" I laughed.

"Like what?"

"Dumb shit, like never ironing my uniform. The first time it happened, we're in line-up and the commanding officer is coming down the line checking that we are all up to standard. When he gets to me he just stops and stares at my uniform for a second before shouting 'Morgan! That uniform is shit!' I just yell back, 'Yes it is shit, sir!' He just nods and says 'All right then,' and carried on yelling at everyone else about their uniforms."

"Either of you wanna play checkers?" Screambag interrupted as he came walking over.

"Yeah, OK," agreed Hat.

Screambag set up the board. They played and Screambag won, so he challenged me, but I didn't feel like playing, so they started up a second game.

After a bit Hat stood up. "Play for me for a minute, will ya Canada? I gotta go to the loo."



Where No One Knows

- Dayna Lowe

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY
CONSULTATION SUR PLACE

Alexandra Eastland
Alexandria Loughlin
Anabel Collin
Andrew Collymore
Benjamin Wylie
Brenda Hartwell
Carolyn Rowell
Chelsea Caillier
Chester Michelmas
Claire Hefferon
Corey T. Toohey
Chris Fraser
Christopher Brandon
Dayna Lowe
Dimitri Vouliouris
Eleanor Gang
Ellen Goldfinch
Elyse Gagne
Elyssa Bouabid
Etienne Domingue
Frank Willdig
Galen Brown
Gordon Lambie
Jesus Alejandro Martinez
Julia Matamoros
Kathryne Owen
Leela Holt
Lynsey Hachey
Maria Meindl
Marjorie Bruhmuller
Maximilien Roy
Michael Cestnik
Michelle Barker
Olivia Anastasia Arnaud
Rachel Morgan
Sabrina Courtemanche-Nouadir
Taylor Evans