

the plum creek review



WANTS YOUR BODY
WANTS TO SEE YOU



fall 2013

THE PLUM CREEK REVIEW
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front cover art: *a letter to j.* by Sarah Lejeune

back cover art: *lung push* by Matthew Gallagher

coastal voices

Rebecca Telford-Marx

sweat & skin are having a rollicking honeymoon - the
burrs are teething this season - pepper-hot in the sand
& concrete & the sandy concrete - *oh miss pepperfoot -
callused to perfection* - okra pith still slick in the molars
- pores gorged on tanning oil - *oh miss freckleface -
brown as the bay* - & the tattoo girl has the prettiest
tramp stamp I've ever seen - baptized in so many salty
baths - *some bitch orders half-sweet/half unsweet - like
what.?* - & the anvil clouds always process in around
three or four - tint us all like a 70s photograph - the
corner chapel chimes - cracklins on the fry - thunder
rolling its dice in a wooden cup - *ain't that right -
ain't that how it was.*

We All Scream

Zack Knoll



digital photograph

Two Women Craving Eggplants

Louise Edwards

At first, your kitchen was a cacophony:
the clatter of cracked crockery,
the 5 a.m. rooster,
the chopchop, the blender,
mosquitos and the
zap,
the start of your old truck's engine.
By late afternoon, silence settles.
Then, I find the onions, the biggest knife, and the cutting board.
You come home,
take one look at me,
and say
that's enough onions.
Here,
look at this star fruit, this star apple –
I say, did you ever want to grow
bitter oranges, or sour sop, or
eggplants?
Only the eggplants she says

and tells me about the house he made out of a bus,
the honey mead and rum,
immigration police,
St. Lucia, his wife and girlfriends, her cuts
fill with salt every time she swims,
and I say, I'm sorry I
mentioned the eggplants,
she says it's okay, that's why I
keep his bees and make soap
I say, I've always wanted to make —
soap? she suggests.

Yes, I say, soap.

And she gets the jugs of olive oil, palm oil, coconut, almond, and grape seed oil,
the shea butter and beeswax,
the honey and the lye.

yayoya

Laura Hartmann



5

watercolor & pen

On Limits

Logan Buckley

1. Dusk: a relief.
The sun must be discouraged to find
no horizon
2. A bat flies across a blue sky—
not so blue now, with the bat
3. What happens when a cat that isn't black
crosses your path?
4. If you find it hard
to tell a joke at a funeral, that's because
comedy is harder than tragedy—
ask Shakespeare
5. There will always be more funerals

Items for your consideration

Clare Ryan

I.

The first frost was last night which means it is time to get out my down comforter, the one mom gave me that smells like attic.

My friend told me that she poked the bottoms of her feet on them, the hardened blades of grass, right through her socks when she was taking out the trash.

At lunch, she showed me the tiny frozen holes.

But of course, that is made up. The grass had softened by the time she woke and it is a Monday which means it is ok to make things up.

2.

The number of times I have seen an ant in my kitchen so far today is seven, which isn't so bad because that is a prime number and maybe good luck.

I tried to trap them, the ants, in a bowl filled with sweet wine but all I got were fruit flies. I haven't counted them, the fruit flies, yet. I'm guessing there could be as many as twenty-five.

3.

Do you have any suggestions for me?

I know that for a while your apartment, the new one, had an insect problem.

Abigail told me last time I called her, but that was over a month ago,
right after she flipped that car.

Do you know how her wrist is doing?

4.

There is a dog that lives next door to me now. It looks just like Sal

only this one is a bit longer in the snout. And I do not think they, the dogs,
would like each other much.

It woke me up this morning, barking, and I looked out my window

but couldn't figure out what it was barking at. And so I wondered
if maybe dogs don't like the frost.

When I was drinking my third cup of coffee I thought, what if

frost emits a high-pitched noise, like the kind in those dog whistles,
that only dogs can hear. Do you think that is possible?

5.

Steering columns in cars seem to have, from what I can tell after doing research,

five main parts. So it is surprising to me, knowing what I do about numbers, that it, the steering column, is what failed.

(I've made a mental note to ask her what kind of car it was because I keep a list now of the types of cars that people I know have crashed in.

I can send it, the list, to you later if you want because I know you are thinking of buying the car that used to belong to him, the Edwards' son.)

I thought about telling all of this to Abigail when we talked but decided that it would be unhelpful and that then was not the time to explain about disorder.

6.

One last thing is that I will be coming home next weekend so you should try to make it as well. Dad told me the Edwards' threw out a carpet the other day that was covered in stains. It must have been from their son's room; I don't know how they lived with it, the carpet, for as long as they did. That was about a year ago, wasn't it? I remember because the ambulance was blocked by an early snowstorm

and we were all home an extra night with cancelled flights.
When they brought him from the house, I remember thinking
how the white bundle could have just been a pile of sheets
if we didn't know any better.
Since he, dad, told me about it, the carpet,
I've been having dreams that I look down
and the carpet I'm standing on is wet like a bathmat,
the color of poppies seeping through my socks.

7.

I think I would like to be made of frost some days.
If you're home next weekend maybe
we should bring it, the stone, some flowers.

Skin Murmur

Celia Keim



II

acrylic & pencil

I.

On the first day of my summer job, she says she dropped out of college because it was too easy. *I know it's snobby to say that*, she says, emptying a metal bucket. She drops it into the row of pails, adding to the silver spinal column. A line of upturned hats on cement. On Wednesdays, we bleach the buckets and fill them with fresh water for the dogs. She knocks one over, the water staining the crap caked concrete, and I cough, the air thick with dog shit and the smack of bleach.

2.

We talk about people we both knew; she's three years younger, but remembers the name of every person on her second grade swim team. We stand on the front law with dogs circling our ankles and drink raspberry smoothies out of coffee mugs. She never takes a break and never fucks off. *This sucks*, I say, with a coating of dark brown shit stuck to my rubber gloves (I had been pulling clumps of old hair and dung out of the drains) and she says, *That's the job*.

3.

A splatter of pink bleach stains down my pants, angry red welts on the fat of my stomach, a grid of cat scratches up my arm, dirt clots on my cotton shirt. *That's the job*, she says. She has a little dog named Hank with fur the color of that red dye old ladies use for their hair. She eats apple chips from the natural food store and breaks off bits to feed him. Standing at any spot in the kennel, the barking is constant and easy to get accustomed to, like a homeowner who doesn't smell the black mold until they catch it clumping together under the bathroom sink.

4.

You have to be the most compassionate person in the world to work at a kennel. *You're so difficult. Why don't you just do what you're told?* Her voice is flat like sheet rock. We're with the cats, a tiled blue and white room full of yellow feline eyes that watch from behind bars. No female authority figure under thirty has ever liked me. *I didn't know you were my boss*, I say. A big orange persian leans against the rails, the fur poking out in tufts between the metal. *I know I'm not*, she says. She has the face of a prairie school teacher in a one room school house. A black cat with a circle of white fur on its stomach meows. *Okay*, I say, and quit the next day.

5.

I return to school three weeks later and my friends coo over the pictures I took of other people's dogs. I'm not repulsed by cleaning my own bathroom anymore.

6.

She stays. Five times a week, twelve hour shifts, with two hours for lunch. A month after I return to school, she climbs onto an upturned bucket, a silver section of spinal cord, loops an orange dog leash around a rod, and hangs herself. My old boss finds her, with Hank circling her ankles, barking. She pushes air into Megan's lungs until the paramedics arrive. My mother tells me on the phone: I have some sort of bad news.

7.

She's rubber gloves and sharp bleach. She's watching a man scream at his child while standing in line at an amusement park, or apologizing to a stranger when they bump your shoulder on the train. She's easy to regret.

C is for Carnivorous

Elena Gold



dreams

Thomas Rathe



35mm film photograph

Resume

Clay Wortmann

I'm an accomplished sushi chef and archeologist. I pilot most vessels and solve only cold cases. For dinner last night I ate seventy-two hotdogs in under ten minutes. Forget about the pie, I demolish all the pies.

My jive on the dance floor is the stuff of legends. I won gold on the parallel bars and silver on the high dive due to a rounding error. A dozen species of rare insects as well as two colors have been named after me.

I wake up one minute before my alarm goes off and consume homemade artesian biscotti. I do advanced yoga routines and bench press a large refrigerator before getting stretched out by the Yankee's in-house physician.

My charitable tendencies are infamous as are my quick-draw revolver skills. I mastered the jazz trumpet before retiring to program analog synthesizers for the homeless. I write sonatinas on my lunch break.

I invented linguine as well as the phrase "more bang for your buck." Most parts of my body are sponsored and my smile is considered a war crime by the United Nations. I poop only when I so desire.

I wrote Turkey's constitution and gave a stirring speech on nuclear disarmament for which I was awarded several Noble Peace Prizes. I've since caught Moby Dick and photographed the Loch Ness Monster.

The pope has me on speed-dial, the president asks for my signature. I'm simultaneously chill and hot with the best possible connotations for each. I have my cake and then invariably eat it too.

But this writing thing, man.

to donnie
Alexis Gee



digital photograph

Notes

Sofie Ghitman

say something true

tucson in the streetlights and loose highways, dusted.

maldición,

the city turning on its own heels,
love effigies, braying and thirsty

say something true.

(a frame of chair legs, spanish gargled in a thick mouth,
tractor skin, el paso, sleepy nuns, the arrival,
40 oz and chiltepin, your uncle breath, my uncle's breath,
quita maldición/cast off evil the organ the other organ the torpid
ebb of some recollection not long now whispered public
transportation prayers/tremors insect throb lastautumn

the nights i called you and loved you because you couldn't hurt me, not badly.)

maquiladora, the stinks of enclosure (your marzipan mouth i cannot
)

back to people breathing on me,
juntada,

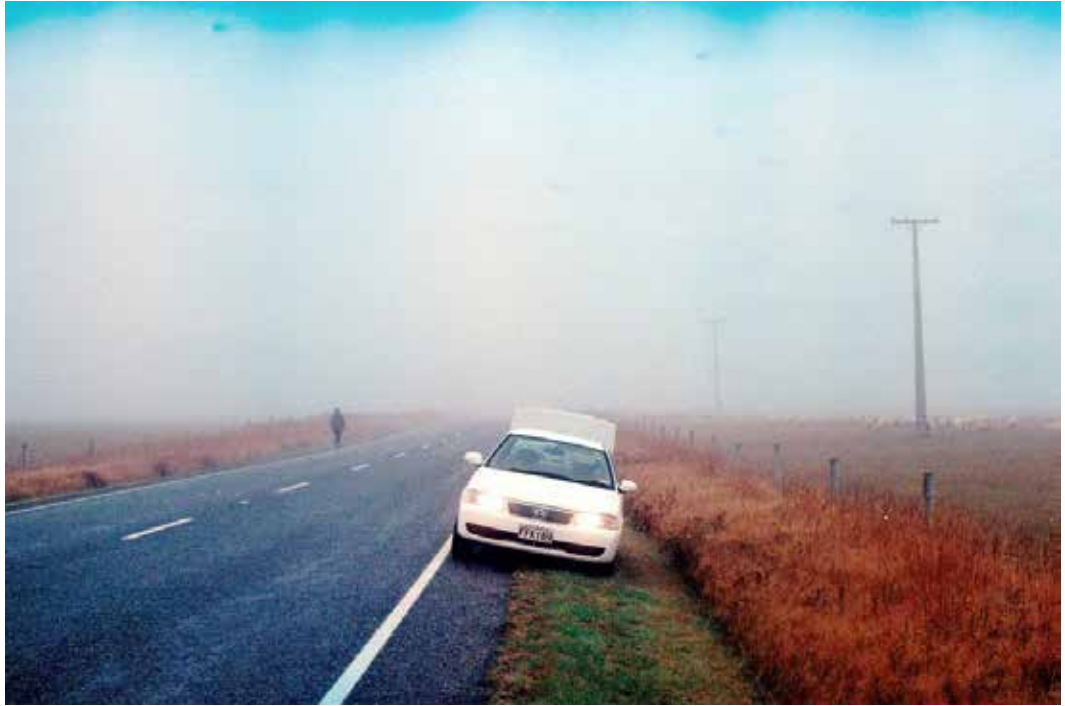
saguaro (cholla, mesquite, ironwood,)

goddamn saguaro your envious honesty
one arm after a hundred winters

let lust. let greed meet the distended horizon.

Milford Sound Hwy

Eleanor Tremayne



Morro Rock

Eleanor Tremayne



35mm film photograph

Welcome

Mickaela Fouad

to the Cathedral of Curiosities. How you got here is neither here nor there because now you are elsewhere. The Cathedral is tall today but may be short tomorrow. We are located in the middle of town-square for your convenience but only on alternating Wednesdays and Sunday after 8 pm. You may choose a pew or an altar. Should you select a pew, please see Section I, if you prefer an altar skip to Section II. You must choose one.

Section I.

You have chosen a pew. You will sit for the next forty-five minutes silently watching your own future. You will see yourself happy and yourself sad. You do not get to see yourself die. After forty-five minutes you will have a reflective conversation with a church mouse in a confession booth. For more information on the confession booths, see Section III. Disclaimer: any persons unable to endure viewing their future will be taken to the basement*. For specifics on violations of expectations of pew participants, please see Section IV.

Section II.

You have selected to stand at an altar. You will be able to manipulate the past at your leisure for fifteen minutes. You will do so with a fountain pen. For every alteration you make, you will have to explain yourself to one of the seven spiders who live in the cloisters. Please allot for at least a twelve day and night waiting period to speak to a spider. Disclaimer: Please excuse the spiders for not providing more information; they are frequently on strike** and/or sleeping.

Section III.

The church mice are not responsible for any emotional damage. They can provide you with warm apple cider but not much else.

Section IV.

- A. Not maintaining absolute silence
 - a. Audible crying
 - b. Gasping
 - c. Laughing
 - d. Movements creating noise
 - i. Foot scraping on flagstone floor
 - ii. Knees knocking against the pew directly in front of you
 - iii. Standing up quickly knocking hymn books to the flagstone floor
 - e. Talking

You may now find the staircase. The staircase is not always in one place because it gets restless. Finding the staircase is a solitary exercise and you should not seek assistance. If you cannot find the staircase, look harder. Once you have found the staircase you may either go up or down the stairs. If you prefer to go upstairs, see Section V. In the case you would like to go downstairs, go to Section VI.

Section V.

You have decided to go upstairs. The second floor of the Cathedral consists of no more and no less than thirty-seven rooms. You have access to three. Choose one.

Room One has nothing in it except for two chairs, one of which is empty (you must sit here). The other chair, which is directly across from your chair and is placed in front of a small pentagonal window for lighting purposes, contains a handwritten letter from the person you most desire. The letter says exactly how this person feels about you. You must sit in absolute silence for nine hours without reading the letter. Once you have sat for nine hours, a church mouse will retrieve you from the room and allow you to relieve yourself as well as reflect on your time in Room One thus far through talk therapy (please see Section III regarding the policy on the church mice). You will then return to the room and the person you most desire will be in the chair across from yours. Sit. They will read you their letter exactly as it appears on the page sparing no detail or honest factoid, they will not engage in discourse with you. What happens when they are done reading their letter is entirely up to

you; the Cathedral has no responsibility for what you choose to do. Disclaimer: The church mice are sometimes late in retrieving you from the room because they press their own apple cider, which takes a considerable amount of time. Specifics on violations of Room One participants are not available at this time, but are similar to violations for pew participants (these are available in Section IV).

Room Two is filled with garbage. If you choose the second room, you must clean. There is a very small receptacle, which you must make do with. Once the room is clean—this should take no more than thirty minutes, if it does you’re doing it wrong—you will have found a love potion. The love potion is in a crumpled brown bag. If you were unaware that you were looking for a love potion while you were cleaning, that is your fault for not reading the directions before beginning. The love potion has exactly one dose, which you may take home with you when you leave the Cathedral. Once you have dosed your desired victim, they will fall irretrievably in love with you. The dose will also live for one hundred years after your death. They will be in excruciating pain at having lost you for the entire duration of these hundred years. However, they will be preserved throughout your time together as the perfect life partner for you—always. The sex will be incredible. Disclaimer: The majority of the garbage in Room Two is made up of crumpled brown bags. These are the bags the apples for the apple cider are delivered in, as well as the doughnuts the spiders are so fond of. Do not concern yourself with the diet of the spiders; they can make their own decisions.

Room Three is very nicely decorated. Please remove your shoes at the door. There are oriental carpets, which massage your feet as you walk on them, and ornate tapestries on the walls, which blow kisses in your general direction. Please have a seat on the chaise lounge in front of the full-length mirror. After the mean time that most patients wait in a doctor's office for an appointment they were on time for, the Man in Charge will enter the room. The Man in Charge will not speak to you, but you should stand up and introduce yourself. Do not shake the Man in Charge's hand. The Man in Charge will give you a hand mirror and a red felt-tip marker. Please remove all of your clothes and stand in front of the full-length mirror so you can see your entire self, from head to toe. Circle things on your body you would like to change, then describe to the Man in Charge exactly how you would like them to appear. Take no more than an hour to do so. Use the hand mirror so you can view your back as well. Look especially closely at your back for flaws. After your allotted hour, you will fall asleep on the chaise lounge. When you wake up, your alterations will have been made. Please report to the spiders in the cloisters to reflect on whether or not you now love yourself. Disclaimer: The Man in Charge takes a few minutes to make your changes. However, you will sleep for forty days**.

Section VI.

Downstairs is the basement*.

Thank you for visiting the Cathedral of Curiosities. Please head to the foyer for more

curiosities including the tight rope exits as well as time warps, shrunken heads, and more talking animals. If you went upstairs and chose Room Two, you may write to a church mouse about how your life with the person you love is perfect—it is natural to feel attached to the church mice. Feel free to visit again but only after twenty years^{***}.

* The basement is not a nice place.

** This is none of your concern.

*** If you chose an altar on your first visit, you must now choose a pew and vice versa. You will not be able to find the stairs upon your second visit, but you have a fifty-fifty chance of finding them on your third.

Song of Tragedy: Bibi Gun

Justine Neuberger



Mr. flossThomas and the Candy Bar Wrappers

Katie Heiserman

Today in class Mr. flossThomas strode over to me and said

Hey! Randy! Muffleman!

*Throw out those candy wrappers
that are lying under your desk.*

I told him I didn't wanna

'cause how would you feel if some one crinkled *you* up
and threw *you* in a trash bin.

He said I've had enough of you Randy McMuffle!!

I'll grab your ear and drag you to the *room-of-no-goodness*
if you don't get rid of those candy wrappers!!

He thinks he's spooked me

But I know the *room-of-no-goodness*
is really just some flower pots and a
tray table
and with my double-breasted life vest
I should be *all set*.

Oh *Randy McRuffle Randelion-roceros!*

I'm coming for you with my spatula!

You'll be squashed like *split peas!*

Not a chance Mr. flossThomas

I've got plans.

Big.

I'm heading to Saturn sixth period

and there ain't no way

you're stopping me.

Pine Mountain. Letcher County, KY.

Max Coleman



film photograph

Dry Time

Yuri Popowycz



Doing the Laundry

Robert Jamner

Dad solemnly said, I'm going to teach you how to unfasten a brassiere. He pulled a sky-blue bra down from the clothesline, and handed it to me like car keys. I held it at the soft, sturdy strap with shaky thumbs and index fingers. Grip it in the middle. Yes. Now gently pull. It came undone. Good. Now you won't be futzing around when the time is right. But I was apprehensive: in a feverish midnight race, would I forget? I dropped the sky-blue bra in the white basket; Dad nodded at me, grinned, turned away, and reached up for a pair of navy socks.

Dependent

Danny Prikazsky

I.

The second-hand smoker:

The dead woman lies face down on the rug
in the den
with the sand and the cat hair
and infomercial receipts crinkled into her hair.
Framed on the wall, calligraphy virtues:
 friendship, family, laughter.
Faceless angel-boy sculptures in glass cases.
Goodwill towards man. Noël, Noël.

The never-will-be boy:

He jactitates under suburban lamplight.
Pampered sheets bunch beneath him. He's pummeled
by decuman stress-dreams. Master of his own invention

and a poor steward, ever lonely at the bedridden helm
of his collapsible universe.

His locked bedroom door. White as the tundra and just as lonely.

He's certain that there's concrete under everything,
defining place, a subterranean grid:
A hermetic seal for this sweet suburban life. So why dig?
If there's concrete under everything, why dig?

The indoor cats:

He asked for kittens, and she bought four,
but he never planned on cats.
Fat, hairy meatballs
stalking the night.
Slimmed down slowly to tooth-pick lampshades as the old lady decomposed.

II.

The dead woman took him to the ocean once, and the cats stayed home to vomit on the furniture.

He challenged Poseidon to a war of attrition,
waiting for his knees to buckle in the waves.
The second-hand smoker saved the boy's hands,
callus free for lightning's work¹. He prays to himself,
kneeling in the salt water, but has not the power to grant wishes,
or she'd live a sculpture.
Resting stone-dead in the foyer for the day of her son's ascension.

She watched him plow his head through the sand,
her sandy blonde boy retreating from the sun,
and counted blessings
in the wrinkles of her palms,
making wishes on her life line.

III.

The NWBB:

There's too many places to be king of 'em all.

¹. "The supposed great misery of our century is the lack of time; our sense of that, not a disinterested love of science, and certainly not wisdom, is why we devote such a huge proportion of the ingenuity and income of our societies to finding faster ways of doing things - as if the final aim of mankind was to grow closer not to a perfect humanity, but to a perfect lightning-flash."

— John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

To do:

Sleep through an afternoon appointment;
write a suicide excuse list,
 "There was nothing on TV...";
~~feed the cats;~~
let the bastards starve.

His bedside table bears a floral arrangement of sticky tissues.

Sticky:

the adjective of his meteoric impact site.

Her rotting flesh wafts under the door carcinogenetically
mixed with cat urine wherever the beasts pleased.

His mind tries to die, but his body photosynthesized,
squirmed roots around a box spring and killed his will to unearth.

The InD Cats:

The Dining Room

was the box forest, the cat domain.

Packing peanut catnip crack house.

They clutch their claws against corrugation
in the shadows, waiting

for one another to pass by like a tin can spider ambush.
The dead woman's roaches and flies feed them.
She always was a giver.

The 2ndHS:

Her tenant, the cancer,
invited in like Dracula's fog.
Hospitable to all the chimney-men
that sapped her of any fuel.

She had her one guilty pleasure—
her me time—She parked in a recliner
for insomniac runs of QVC. Buying up beanie babies,
and every kitchen gadget essential to the modern woman.
The disgusted tumor choked her out and the EZ-boy spat her on the rug.

IV.

And glow worms play
like flashlights against the corpse's skin

as they eat slimy tunnels through its flesh.
The flashlight bugs confuse the cats
into leaping at illusory light-spot prey.

And the blue-white light of virtual life
seeps out from under the clawed-at door.
The cats believe that spirits live there.
Breathing, sighing by day and clicking by night.

And the cats clawed open an envelope on the counter.
Written on it:

Get out there. Have a good time.

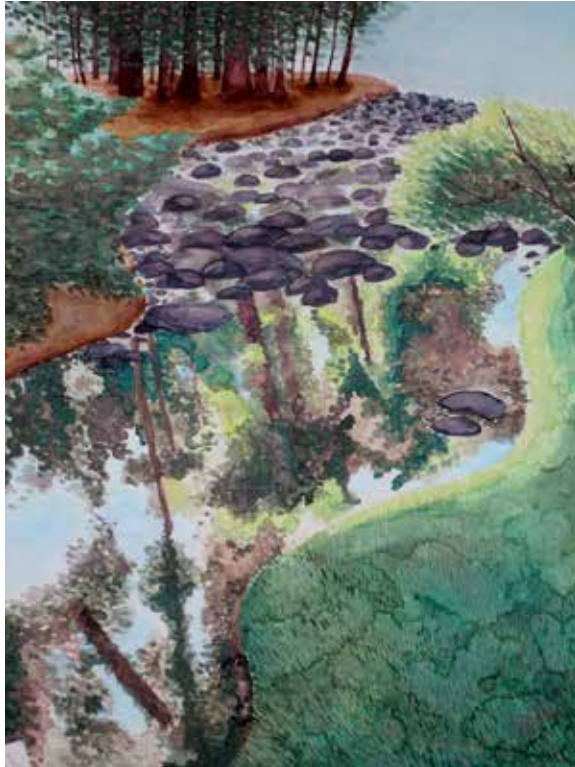
Inside:

Free movie passes.

Golden tickets that the critters kick around the kitchen,
catching the flickers of sodium vapor lights through the cracks of the venetian blinds.

Shadow Brook

Annie Kronenberg



Sundown

Jonah Haven

Truro broken toe and still the sun
dips down, like she said it would —
a red disc, the Host blood-soaked. . . .
The Eucharist.

A ways down Route 6,
from a slow summer stay
in P-town, MA,
the endlessly passing trees

look like spiders
draped with red adobe.
Irene rustles through them,
to my car; I fight to keep straight —

but I am all wrapped up
with the end, strangled by the blue-green. . . .

tentacles: you see, I believe in certainty.
So I take a break
just outside Orleans
and read Kaiyuh's letter

a second time. It ends,

“Know that you are *vivant*
enough to bruise. . . .”
Irene’s rain rattles

this cavity. . . .
and I see a leak

seethes torture above.
I close my eyes. The seat leans back.
A steady pulsation,
this pulling inward.

Then. . . . seeps of me,
like blood loss and coma,
a coercive Devil spitting:
his heaving oospheres breaking upon landing, letting
the sweet out —

I say,
“Please. . . .”
I say —

the chain aligns
the engine rises

he floors me
he grinds the roundabout

Midnight Drive

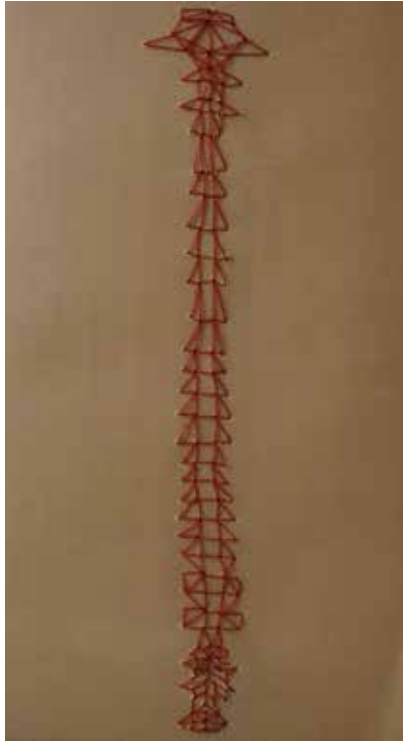
Max Coleman



film photograph

**i like to feel the spine of your body
and its bones, and the trembling**

Sarah Lejeune



The Chicken

Danielle Shiv



digital photograph

Seven Insane Things You Can Do In Your Underwear

Zack Knoll

I.

George found himself with little choice in the matter. There was no going back. Landing the plane with the bomb still in it would result, likely, in treason. He would have to drop it, though everything inside of him was saying—screaming, howling, bellowing—No. He would have no time to change, or explain his attire, and he could not have that. He simply could not. Damn him, Smitty, that smug bastard. He should remember, from this point onward, to never bet against Smitty in anything. For not only did Smitty have the luck of gods on his side, he had the mind of the devil. And this punishment was truly cruel. George would save his shame by destroying his honor. For as much as he did not want to drop the bomb, he wanted even more to not be arrested, have his picture taken, and let alone go to prison for treason against the United States, in nothing but his only clean pair of underwear that day—daisies and lilacs tiled on tangerine cotton briefs.

II.

Celeste found something exhilarating and sexually enthralling about the possibility of the man behind her in the theater catching a glance of her pink lace thong, peeking out from the top of her low rising jeans. She smiled, and shifted slightly forward in her seat. She reminded the twins she was babysitting to be quiet and then fixed her gaze on the screen where *Despicable Me 2* began to play.

III.

Jed left King Hall seriously questioning his sanity. Had his plaid boxers really been any different than a girl showing up to class in short jean shorts? He even wore tighty-whities underneath to make sure there would be no inappropriate slippage. Either way, he felt cooler than a cucumber as he walked back to his dorm through the hundred-degree heat.

IV.

Cordelia would go down in history as the first woman to accept her Academy Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Lead Role in her underwear. She bought a beautiful set of underwear for the occasion: lace and chiffon spilled out from every

inch of the garments, cloaking her in a mysterious, yet sexual, darkness. And she loved it. She spent every moment up until the big reveal making sure each doily was in place. She fantasized about the ways the chiffon would follow her up the steps like fog, hiding, and attracting attention to her newly tanned and toned legs. She was so rapt within her own beautiful fantasy that she didn't notice they never called her name, and instead, Phyllis Dixon was awarded for her role as a deaf firefighter. Though someone on E! News would comment later that Cordelia looked humble, pleased, and excited for Phyllis and her breakthrough into fame.

V.

It had not occurred to Harry that the bacon grease would ever jump out of the pan and simultaneously singe his chest hair and welt his skin. And yet, had he never heard the phrase one should never cook bacon in their underwear? Perhaps he had, perhaps he hadn't. All Harry knew then was that he had a dangerous looking scar in the shape of a sickle, one that might impress someone with a fainter heart and a fantasy for, or obsession with, his daring qualities. He had that, and a full plate of bacon.

VI.

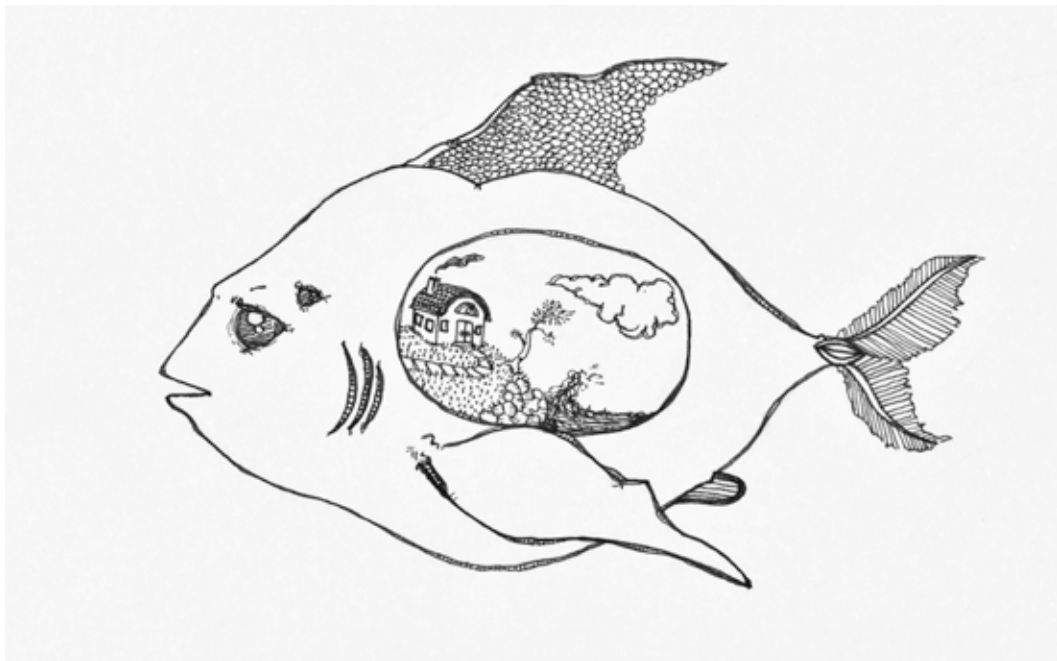
Amber protested with Mrs. Bartholomew for nearly ten minutes before she was convinced that, perhaps, Victoria's Secret Angel was not akin to being a regular Angel for Halloween. She walked away with shakiness in her understanding of a world she thought she knew so well, and with a lack of Mrs. Bartholomew's delicious homemade Halloween candy apples.

VII.

Floyd began to write but everything that came out was rubbish. To free himself from all of the constraints, he removed all of his clothes entirely. Underwear and all. He sat at his desk and realized in his nakedness that there might be students coming over for meetings today. He itched his bare thigh and then, he thought, if he did have students coming to see him—why, what a marvelous story that would make.

Fishes Wishes

Yuri Popowycz



Settling In

Alana Reibstein

Because my father doesn't know how often
I lick the skin of my hands
to see the piercing pink of day,
I wait for the stars to settle

easily unfold my fingers on the belly of my bed,
dig my knuckles in the soul of things
while father sleeps on a book downstairs
drooling for a darker day,
dreaming all over the pages.

Because I splash around loud
and father doesn't know what woke him,
when he asks for the time
I tell him I've lost my sense of smell.

He tells me it's too late for a bath.
I tell him don't get fat
he asks me for a banana
I tell him, Father it is too late to touch,

I have licked my way into the paws of better men
who scratch and smooth my pink away
and fall with me tightly to sleep.

Reflections

Annie Kronenberg



A Nation's Inheritance of Loss

Srijit Ghosh

I inherited an agitated populace,
screeching and clawing
at its own heritage:
So much for the splendor
of history. They scrawl their own—
vulgar frivolities
on sandstone walls.

I inherited the blanket of venality,
crumpled at the feet
of every politician's bed.
A comfortable view to watch
Arnab Goswami and Arundhati Roy
indignantly strain
vocal chords
while fat Rupee wads
slap greasy palms
in desolate, putrid lanes
behind Connaught Place.

I inherited the grand machine
of colonialism,
communally thrashed about
in dingy classrooms
like a piñata
on a sticky furnace of a day.
Flushed new faces take
to old wooden desks
and question
what they cannot erase—
the knife-etchings
on my cartography.

I inherited starved stick figures
for beggars, naked corpses
adorning my *margs* and *chowks*,
loin-clothed like Yogis,
throwing vacant stares
at a starless night sky,
animated by Diwali fireworks.

I inherited the cherubic beauty
of marble tombs
and mangrove forests,
enchanted merry-making torrents
of tourists
whose Nikons and Canons
are yet to capture
the Polio-flecked slums
or rag-picking street orphans.

I inherited zesty spices
that fanned flames
on millions
of foreign tongues
who labeled me "mystical" and "exotic,"
who, with waterfalls for eyes,
never forgot to buy
wet tissues
or plastic, sealed Aquafinas.

I inherited the ferity
of dance routines—
the pelvic *thumkas*,
the blissful sprinting
through sunflower fields,
all familiar fodder
for the cow of me,
wearily mulching,
refusing to budge
even as the traffic light
turns green.

a trip to ratsy's
Tristan Cimini



digital photograph

Cobwebs and Roses in Black Ink

Vida Weisblum



In Bloom

Alana Reibstein

I think she must've spent her whole life in bed, or picking flowers, or kissing boys in alleyways.

o

The kids must've slept the whole ride here. Their skin is full of clothing creases, their necks crooked, their cheeks flat as windows.

They were complaining about my driving so I told them to take a nap. I think the little one was so scared he faked it.

o

"Look at you two, you're getting so old!" I pinched their cheeks for practice. "Ah Deb, Henry looks just like Mark."

"I wish you wouldn't talk about Mark. I hear about him enough from my lawyer."

o

Grandma was so old I could cry. Her fingers worn-out as laces. Still my cheek stung like the middle-finger mom gave that driver on the way here.

o

Henry "woke up" when that bitch cut me off. "Where are we?" He pretended to

wonder. He was so embarrassed by me I could've pulled over and cried right then. He gave me that look that Mark always gave. Assholes.

o

I put out butterscotch sucking candies and M&M's for their visit. Lianne's favorites. But she hasn't realized because she's on her phone. Must be texting some boy—arranging a time to kiss. The next time her phone buzzes I swear I'll cry.

o

Henry unwrapped the candy like it was fucking gold. Lianne has a date with Dan tonight so she'll only eat salad today. I'm too nauseous to snack.

o

Grandma put out M&Ms and those butterscotch things in the golden wrappers because she knows they're my favorite. Henry is clutching the wrapper in his sweaty palm. I hope this visit is short like usual. I need to see Dan tonight.

o

God she looked beautiful at 87. The flowers in her bun look still in bloom. The way that deep blue looks against her pale skin and perfectly rouged lips is going to kill me, I'm sure. I wonder who'll die first. There are cigarettes on the kitchen counter.

o

"How's work honey?"

"I'm in between things. Henry, stop that!"

"Mhm." She hasn't worked in weeks. She looks awful.

"I thought you quit smoking?"

"I did. Those are Andy's."

"Andy?"

o

Grandma looked awful. Like the Fourth of July. But I like those flowers. Mom doesn't want to talk about the divorce. "Ew, Henry, don't put that many M&M's in your mouth at a time, that's disgusting." He gulped them down and loudly rustled the wrapper between his right thumb and middle finger. Grandma won't stop coughing.

o

"Mom, when are we driving home?"

"Shh quiet, Lianne we just got here."

"She can't hear shit anymore. Can you just tell me because I have to give Dan a time."

o

Lianne and Debra were whispering about something. I watched Henry play with the wrapper. He looked like the first boy I ever kissed.

o

"Henry, please. How are you? Who's Andy?"

"Great. My boyfriend. He's as cute as, well, a little boy!"

“That’s great.”

Ew.

o

“How about you Deb?”

o

Mom thinks grandma is so pretty. I don’t really see it. I guess I can see how she could’ve been pretty when she was young. Prettier than mom, that’s for sure. I do like her flowers. She must’ve just picked them. Damn, her bun is so beautiful. I wonder if she could teach me how to do that. I wonder if Dan would like it.

o

“I am getting more money in the divorce than he is. So, good.”

o

My daughter has a sad life. My daughter has a sad life. My daughter has a sad life. God how can my daughter have such a sad life?

o

Is she wearing a push-up bra?

o

“Grandma, where’s the bathroom again?”

o

Is *she* wearing a push-up bra?

o

“That small door to the left of the kitchen.”

o

Do grandmas still keep tampons in the bathroom?

o

“So, Deb, did you bring anything for dinner? I told you I would’ve cooked, but my stove and oven are completely through with.”

“I didn’t have time to cook so I picked up some salads and pizza on the way.”

o

Ever since mom decided she wanted to diet she doesn’t have time to cook.

o

“Mom give me the car keys!”

“Why?”

“Just give me them.”

o

My daughter has a sad life.

o

The bathroom smells like flowers. Standing up from the toilet hurts. I'm going to stay a while.

o

"Oh, shoot, I forgot you don't eat pizza, mom!"

o

My boobs are hard as rocks. If Dan touches them I'm going to have to cry.

o

"That's alright. I'll just have salad."

o

"I guess the pizza will be all for you and me, hey Henry?" Why does he look at me like he's so fucking scared? The gold wrapper between his fingers is thinning out.

o

"Is she alright in there, Deb?"

"Yeah, she's fine."

o

"Okay, mom can we start eating? It's getting late."

o

It's not getting late. Lianne is always rushing. I admire it. I wish Deb were in a rush more

often. This bra is tight as fireworks; it was a gift. "Yes, let's eat!"

o

"Henry, throw that wrapper out. You guys get started. I'm just going to go to the bathroom first." The bathroom smells so old. There are two toothbrushes by the sink. Lianne's tampon applicator is in the trashcan. Playful and happy like a picnic. I guess I never taught her to put it back in the wrapper, or hide it in toilet paper. I wish I had hard little rock boobs like Lianne's. Or even ones like mom's. If someone tried to touch them I could complain that they hurt and would get away with it.

o

"I wonder what's taking your mother so long."

o

Mom's trying so hard to vomit in there. She always talks about this skinny girl at my school, Deirdre, and how what she's doing to herself is so sad. She talks about her because she's jealous. She could never actually do it. I wish she'd just give up already and come to the table so we can eat and go and I'll have time to get dressed for Dan.

o

"I guess we'll just start without her. Pizza Lianne?"

"Uh, no thanks."

"Yeah, none for me either."

o

Mom's lipstick stayed perfect the whole meal. Even when she ate that huge tomato that shot guts everywhere.

o

We didn't talk through dinner, which was good. I want to get home. Dan will think I look good today, I just know it. I didn't eat much so I won't feel too sick for sex. Maybe grandma can do my hair in that bun before we go, if she can do it quick.

o

"Well, let's clean up quick, I'm sure Lianne has plans tonight." She looks awful. I hope she at least puts on a bra that fits. I need to put one on too; Andy's taking me to a show.

o

Mom is always so enthusiastic about Lianne's love life. She thinks she's just the prettiest thing. "The prettiest thing the prettiest thing the prettiest thing the prettiest thing," mom goes on. I feel like New Year's Day. Everyone is regretting the night before and no one is feeling fresh. I wish I were blooming.

o

Grandma won't stop coughing. I thought she quit smoking. Henry is still messing with that candy wrapper. He's coughing too. I want to go I want to go I need to go. Grandma will you do my hair? Grandma can you do it quick? I'm too scared to ask. Can I ask mom to ask her for me?

o

Henry looks just like my first kiss, just like him, always fiddling with something in his hand. I want to mess up my lipstick and feel like New Year's Eve again. Lianne looks a mess.

o

I wish my boobs were soft and messy like my mom's. Dan is going to hate me like this. I wish I were older. Then I could make my own bun and only those pieces of hair that make you look brand new and blooming, but sleepy from the world, would fall loose.

o

I want to go home. I want to microwave all the Easy Mac in the cabinet. I want to eat all of it all of it all of it. Then I'll sleep. Maybe I'll even sleep in the car on the way home. Henry could drive if he stops coughing and throws out that wrapper.

o

"Well, what a lovely visit."

"A nice visit."

"A good time."

o

"Got a coat?" "A coat?" "It's cold."

"It's July." "It's January."

"But Andy's coming to light fireworks."

"Your boyfriend?"

“Yes!”

○

“Got the keys?”

“I gave them to you.”

“Have a nice night.”

○

“Do my hair?”

○

“What?” “What?”

“That bun? Can you do it?”

“She wants it?” “She wants it. I can do it.”

“You can? Quick?”

“Quick?”

“Quick.”

○

“Do you have flowers?”

“They’re in the bathroom.”

“Those are fake.” “Those are fake?” “Yes, they’re fake.”

“Henry!”

“Henry!”

o

“**Henry get the flowers.**” “From the vase.” “*On the table.*”

“**Quick!**”

“Quick!”

“*Quick!*”

“The red ones” “**The white ones**” “Henry!”

o

“*Stop coughing*”

“Get the pins” “The bedroom” “Down the hall”

“Make them tight?” “*They’re tight*” “Too tight?”

“*No tighter*” “Looser?”

“**Stop!**” “*Done?*” “Done”

o

“She looks” “**You look**” “*I look*”

“**Like you**” “Like me” “*Like you*”

“*Sleepy*” “Like a kiss”

“**Bloomed**”

“Blooming”

“*In bloom.*”

Humanities

Danny Prikazsky

From the floor length urinal, I scoop dead cockroaches out,
trapped by slick porcelain. Fire-hosed with hot yellow:
their bodies roasted, yellow pecans.
What a mess. What a mess.

Wholesome & Delicious

Andrew Follmann



digital photograph

