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C O N T E N T S

Catch of the Day

We're eating you.
I floss my teeth with your bones.
Some escape my tongue
and scrape
down my throat, while my sister sobs

in the bathroom. She named you Billy
as a joke, as rights of owner. You looked half
an inch under requirement, but
Mom shouted to wait let's see
what Dad says.

We forgot about you.
Lisa laughed while you
flopped in your bucket, gills frying
and drying until
they leaked blood. The last lurches
for the sea propelled your coffin
across the deck.

Salt and peppered, you're hardly two
mouthfuls. You hopped and flapped in the
frying pan like in that bucket.

Muffled by bathroom tiles,
Lisa screams, certain
Mom's put you on her plate.
We call, come out,
enjoy the taste
of victory. That's in bad
taste, Mom hushes, and puts
a bite of you to her lips.

-Liz Fabis

Pablo

1.

Piz wished the boy,
and the world opened like a poppy.
Articulate acrylics
soothed the jawlines of mothers
and rendered harlequins
dancing on canvas.

2.

His thumbbone strums -
Cerulean
Cerulean
- music as grey as
the shadows of ashes,
a manatee's tear,
an aging Spanish sidewalk.

3.

Paint me as a person who can see into people's
minds and as a person who can understand
things. Paint me as a person who can see
people's minds and understand things. Paint me
as a person who can see people's minds and
whose mind you can see into. Paint me as a
person whose mind you can see into and
understand things. Do not paint me as a person.
Paint me as a person...

4.

The simple complexity of a face.

5.

I would like to stroke your scarlet and I would
like to brush gently your triangle and I would
like to pervert you, *Demoiselle*, until your eyes
bulge like a chameleon and I can smell your oil
on my fingers.

6.

Cubism I:

'I always get what I want!'
He swatted at her like a boy
scattering a tower of blocks.

Cubism II:

matador pussy
absinthe
inmate
narcissus entrails
Matador

7.

There was no pastel
in molded lips of harlots
or the crooked corpses dropping
from buildings.
As the world trembled
the man clutched his brush
and prayed for *paz*.

-*Laura Boffa*

**Piz* was Picasso's first word, a shortening of the Spanish word for pencil, *lápiz*.
Paz is the Spanish word for peace.



Untitled
Jason Outenreath

Of Lice and Men

Emily Ascolese

I'm really a normal person.

I have to remind myself of this whenever I've been sitting three inches away from the mirror for forty-five minutes straight. On the bathroom counter. In my underwear.

I was the first person back to the apartment this semester so it wasn't like I had to worry. I was, at that moment, taking pleasure in the rare knowledge that I could stay in the bathroom as I liked and that I wouldn't be walked in on. I never used to worry about these things. When I lived at home everyone was asleep by midnight. My dad would go to bed early, my mom would camp out on the couch grading papers until she'd drift off, and my brother was a light but strict sleeper. I was the only one who didn't have a muted TV to sleep beside. So I would shut my books. Tip-toe across the cold and creaky floors and climb into the sink.

This was the first time I'd done this in a while. I shook the dandruff out of my eyebrows with a toothbrush. I flossed. I examined my fillings in detail. I spent a few minutes trying to determine if my nipples are the same diameter. I considered doing the same for my pupils, which I watched narrow and widen depending on which light I faced.

There are really many wondrous places to explore in one's own body. The ear canal, for instance. There are few things in life so satisfying as freeing a glob of yellow goo from one's ear. My boyfriend has the waxiest ears I've ever encountered. Soft and wet wax, too. It takes months before I can produce the amount of wax his ears churn out on a bi-weekly basis.

It goes like this: He's asleep on his side and I, peering over his shoulder in a moment of adoration, see a spot of yellow. Yellow like chicken soup, like mustard, like burnt egg. Or I say something like, "What's the matter?" and he'll respond with "What do you mean I'm fatter?" and I leave the room and come back with four Q-tips. He squints up and sighs, and I lean in close, eyes wide and half grinning, as he digs and churns the wand in his ear, produces a buttery swab of wax, and digs in again with the clean side. It takes two Q-tips to clear out each ear. "Wow!" I say, always amazed, wondering how his ears manage to make all that goo.

But on that particular night he wasn't there, and all my Q-tip turned up were a few clear, flat flakes. I began the hunt for black-heads.

Twenty-four hours ago I'd been lying awake in my blue room in Cincinnati. I was slowly losing my calm. In a week, classes would start; I would become the head of an organization and begin tutoring for a class of fifteen students. And at the end of it all Eric would graduate. So I did the only logical thing and quit my internship, packed up my stuff and had my dad drive the three and a half hours back to campus a week early.

Which means that I would voluntarily live in my new, expansive, col-

lege-built, two-floor four-person apartment for three days by myself.

We called the apartment Drama House, because when I told my friend Cate who I was living with, she loudly predicted drama would ensue.

Drama House smelled like Carrie.

Drama House was normally occupied by my boyfriend, my friends Carrie and Maya, Carrie's and Maya's boyfriends and up to seven hippies who tended to turn up whenever Maya's boyfriend was around and do amusing things like practice Tai Chi or make soup.

But it smelled like Carrie. It didn't smell like hemp and incense, it didn't smell like Maya's soup parties, it didn't smell like Eric's cheese quesadillas. It didn't smell like paint and new apartment. It didn't smell like my green tea. It didn't smell like peaches—which I would have liked, but Carrie announced early that peach scent made her burst into hives. It smelled like Carrie. It smelled like Carrie's hairspray and Carrie's Lysol bathroom spray, it smelled like Carrie's baking, Carrie's brownies and blue berry muffins, Carrie's raspberry tarts and banana bread, Carrie's meat-sauce pizza that Maya and her veggie friends couldn't eat, Carrie's pot roasts and Carrie's red wine and Carrie's extensive romantic dinners for two, when Carrie and her boyfriend would sit google-eyed sipping and swallowing their five month relationship on Wednesday nights. Even my room smelled like Carrie, her cooking sucked up through the air vent.

And when I arrived that Sunday after Winter Term, Drama House smelled like Carrie's molded, month-old cherry tart, which she had left to rot next to the coffee maker.

This semester Drama House would be different. Maya had gone to Italy to study art and her boyfriend had gone Amsterdam to study weed. The hippies would evaporate and Carrie's boyfriend would settle in their place. Drama House would become Couple House.

But on that night it was mine. Emily House. I walked through Emily House searching for evidence that it was mine: my hanging lamp, my aunt's brown rug, my parents' bar stools. I walked to the bathroom: my toilet brush. To Eric's room: my boyfriend. My boyfriend's room. It was locked. I pictured the inside: comics still in their plastic cases sticky-tacked to the walls, his book shelf brimming over with DVDs, his blue sheeted bed with its blue bed skirt (who needs a bed skirt?), and everything—printer, stapler, calendar, papers—at right angles.

I pictured Eric lying on his bed, his legs bent at right angles. He had dozens of moles on his back: raised, flat, light brown, dark brown, black, paired. When I wasn't closing one eye and peering into his ear canal I liked to poke them, to brush the raised ones aside with my finger and watch them pop back up. I'd try to get my finger into his belly button—wide, shallow—to get at the dark lint and sludge he'd leave untouched. It was like my body was the site of an archaeological dig 50 years prior that had been scoured, turned over, and cataloged, while his was a fresh fossil yet to be unearthed. He'd slap my fingers away.

“Don’t poke at me!” He’d whimper, angry, but not too.

I was in the bathroom. My bellybutton, I reminded myself. My belly button was always too deep, my belly swelled over my fingers as they pried at it’s narrow mouth. I needed a third hand help me hold it open so I could poke at it. I needed to say “Eric,” and he needed to lend a finger, and he needed to say, “Emily, the lint will not hurt you, leave the lint alone.”

But Drama House was empty and his room was locked. I would sleep alone.

I called my friend Tanya, who was also back early and living all alone in her own brand-new empty apartment a block away, and asked to spend the night. I changed into my pajamas. I returned to my perch in front of the mirror. I had found something new.

I wish I could have been an embarrassed interrupter to my strange bathroom ritual, startled to witness my odd posture: eyeball wide to the mirror, ass in the air, the skin of my feet blue and red and creased from being sat and leaned on, my face puffy-red and swollen from blemish-hunting. If I could have walked in on myself that night and seen first hand how ridiculous I looked, knee on faucet, combing and recombining, parting and reparting my hair, inspecting each follicle with up-most scrutiny and then examining, cross-eyed, each clear-yellow mass I unearth so that I appeared to be pointing at my face, stupidly, incase my intruder-self hadn’t noticed my current state of cross-eyedness, I would have screamed out:

“You don’t have lice you silly girl! How could you have possibly contracted lice and given the stupid things enough time to lay dozens of eggs on your scalp between this morning and now? You haven’t showered since Friday—it’s clearly dandruff! Now get out of the sink and go to bed!”

But I couldn’t, given the current rules governing such concepts as space, time and identity. I instead turned to the next best source of objectivity: the Internet.

Were the white thingies in my hair tear-drop shaped? The Internet wanted to know. They might be! I thought. A quick visit to the bathroom to check was useless: I had evidently pulled them all out during the sacred mirror inspection ritual, and was unable to find a single nit. But, I was fairly sure—no, certain, that they had indeed been tearshaped—all of them, when they had been there. Were they mostly near the edges of my scalp? The Internet prodded. Yes! They were! Or, perhaps it was that I had only been able to see the parts of my hair closest to my face. No matter. Next symptom: does your head really, really itch? The Internet paused for effect. Really? Yes, I answered firmly. My head really, really itched. I began to wonder if my head always really itched after spending six hours in a hat and three days without a shampoo, but that train of thought was somehow less compelling, less objective then the one which I was currently traveling. I returned my attention to the Internet: Perhaps it could consult another source for me? Another five?

While I sat glued to the computer, absorbed in the grand hypochondriac dialogue taking place before me—“Have you tried shaving their heads? I’ve heard that if the shampoos and the new sheets and the boiled clothing fails, you should shave their heads,” “Oh! But I cannot bare to send my boys to school bald! The other mothers will think they’re poor! Should I dye their hair?” “Yes, I’ve heard the ammonia works well. But I don’t want the other students to think my eight-year-old is trashy!”—my phone rang. It was Tanya, of course, wondering if I was still coming over.

My mind reeled. If it was lice, I certainly couldn’t infect her pillows, or her roommates’ sheets, or even their sofa—they would never forgive me. But what if it’s not lice, what if I’m making this whole thing up? It would be silly, in that case, to stay in my empty room in this empty building, no one to hear me call out if someone breaks in to steal—what would they steal?—our refrigerator, of course, or all 300 of Eric’s DVDs, no, I couldn’t stay, I couldn’t sleep...but to tell Tanya that I might have lice? And have her think that I’m gross? Or laugh at me when I don’t?

“Um, actually, I think I’m okay now. I’m waiting for a call from Eric,” (I wasn’t—but I would need to call him soon to warn him of the infestation). “I think I’ll just stay here.”

If you were to Google “lice” or “symptoms: lice” or “lice cure” or “home remedies: lice” what you would find would be an 80 percent response rate of “just go to the doctor and get the good stuff, sleep alone and throw away all your favorite clothes,” a ten percent response rate of “they’re never leaving, we’ve gotten them five times, just wax your body and move to a new country: you’re doomed,” and another ten percent suggesting everything from green tea to shaving cream. Someone somewhere with Internet access or knowledge of basic HTML was convinced that vodka was the only cure, handed down from ancient Russian peasants to suburban house-wives skeptical of their pediatricians. Someone else recommended baby-oil: “Those buggers will slide right off.” I had neither, but a quick inventory of my kitchen revealed a bottle of olive oil, extra-virgin, and a quarter full handle of rum, extra-cheap.

Clearly my hair longed to be doused in both substances.

I called Eric. It was one in the morning, he reminded me, and he was working on his senior honors project—which had something to do with, if I understood it correctly, comic-books, the nature of existence, nihilism, post-modern theory and the possibility for peaceful revolution through video-games. He’d been working on it for three weeks. He really couldn’t talk right now, he told me. I have lice, I told him. I’m going to soak my head in rum and olive oil and sleep on the pot-leaf blanket that I bought at a bus-station in Cleveland and ought to have thrown away already. Don’t do that, he said. And then, Wait you really have lice? Don’t sleep in my bed.

I have to laugh about this now—five weeks later, lying on Tanya’s stiff college-purchased couch, one in the morning once again. I laugh as I remember gaggling into the sink from the heavy stench of rum clouding the air. I laugh as

I remember gasping at how cold it was, running in rivulets from the back of my neck, clinging to my forehead, stinging my hands as I massaged it in, stinging my scalp in thin streaks where my fingernails had scraped the skin. I laugh myself as I remember straining my eyelids shut so tight I felt my eyes actually retreat, fearful of the sting. I flung back my head, gasping dizzy for air that tasted like pasta and spices and new paint and not like an off-campus basement party. The olive oil was slower, thick like Vaseline or liquid earwax. It smelled like my father's cooking and my father's mother's kitchen, like meatball Christmases and Italian fried dough. Heavy in my hair like slime, like snot, it clung and dripped. I thought, I should have used vinegar instead of rum and been a salad-head, I remember, I suddenly caught my reflection in the window above the sink. Wet and red-faced—ridiculous. I made a Mohawk with the mixture and then crowned the experiment with my terry-cloth after-shower bonnet I'd bought at Ben Franklin for a dollar last year when my hair was 13 inches longer.

I called Eric, who was sure that I didn't have lice, and that the woman writing his post-modern book had no idea what she was talking about, either, and that I probably should have spent the night at Tanya's house and not wasted the rum.

I felt ridiculous that night, trying to fall asleep without moving so that my gooey hair wouldn't stray from the pot-blanket and touch my sheets—which would consequently, I now knew, need to be boiled to ever be sleep able again. My nose was saturated with the smells of my concoction. I tried my best to sleep. I tried my best to close my eyes to the imagined lice, to the empty house, to the refused hospitality, to the silent phone beside my bed. Next semester loomed above me, hanging from my ceiling like the blue paper lantern I'd bought in china-town, ready to drop. At least I had this lice thing under control.

Somehow I feel more ridiculous now, one in the morning, five weeks later, finally desperate enough to take refuge on Tanya's couch. Because I broke up with Eric. In the library. Whispering. The girls found me and scooped me up, sobbing, listening to me say "I love him," listening to the I can't I cant's and taking me arm and arm and marching me back to Drama Couple house, back into the smells of Carrie and cooking and back into the archeology of our bodies and beds. They stood in front of me, this army of friends two and then four, assessed the laundry on my floor and scraped sweaters and jeans off the top of the heap. We swept past his room, past the Lysol bathroom mirror, past Carrie's kitchen, past Drama House. Swept past two and a half years. Because he woke me up at 7:30 in the morning stapling papers and threatening to move to Cleveland. To manage retail.

I sat on Tanya's couch and watched my friends watch me cry.

So I have to laugh—I have to think of a night more ridiculous than this one, more ridiculous than trying to sleep next to my salvaged laundry. I have to think of picking my own dandruff from my scalp strand by strand and calling it a parasite. I've flown our Drama House like a fugitive and I'm crying snot on my hands after breaking up with the only person I ever could have told that I had

lice and thinking the most melodramatic thoughts of my existence. But there is no marinade in my hair. And I'm not alone in this house.

But next week. Next week when I move into my single-occupant dorm-room, when my parents have come and gone and moved all of my stuff back home or into the, I imagine, dim-lit and musty single, I will be alone. It will be, like my ridiculous-lice-night, an aloneness that I've chosen. I will leave my house of lovers and the pressures to perform will sigh their release. I will pick my nose and study in my underwear and forget to do my dishes for weeks. But I wonder how many hours will be spent with my mirror. And what I will find when no one is there, for months, to startle me out of my trance.



Mitosis

Bryn A. McDonald

A Search for the Elusive Fruits of Antiquity

A search for the elusive fruits of antiquity,
Bears me back, I delve deep into the chasm,
Of the mindspring of humanity.
The brilliance of Thales,
And bleakness of Anaximander,
Linger and fade, b'fore swirling,
Amidst the Heraclitean flux.

Epicurus, then yet Lucretius, provide divine triumph,
Over divinity itself.
Plato puts poetry at the stake,
With his poetic charms and forms.
Stoicism finds a home in Rome,
and flowers into glory, Aurelius at the helm.

Pythagoras returns, revived from the dead,
And shakes hands warmly,
With Plotinus and Philo,
The mystics of old.
Ascetisism has never had since,
A more persuasive pack.

Posidonous attempts a compromise,
But Proclus would have otherwise,
And right becomes might,
As Thrasymachus would have had it.

Swords of Constantine bear bad tidings,
To much more then Roman enemies...
And philosophy, it seems,
Turns then into religion.

The elusive fruits of antiquity,
Remain open to all, yet here they sit,
Untouched by many.
The hunger of the human intellect,
Matches that of Tantalus, down in Hades.
I wonder how others survive.

-Gabriel Baker

Sestina: White

I walked barefoot in the snow.
You tried on my sandals, said they slipped
too quickly off your cold feet.
The soft mud and grass,
wedged beneath my toes, felt
like knuckles kneading into your back.

I wore a shirt you hung out back,
like a chained dog with snow
white fur; soft as velvet, felt,
cotton. Also, a silky white slip
saved for this rainy snowday; grass
stains adorning the glossy fabric, my feet

peeking out from beneath the ruffles; my feet,
with their pink painted toenails, a throwback
to the days when I could squat in grass
so high I disappeared. Your skin disappeared against the snow
and the sky, too, all white, slipping
into one. We found a hill. (Our bodies felt

so tired after sledding. I hadn't felt
sleep like that for years. Your warm bed. My feet,
hands, face, frozen.) When I slipped
down the hill, I didn't look back
to where you stood, knee deep in snow.
You were the one who missed the grass,

even though you never let the grass
beneath your soles, never felt
anything, allowed for anything but the cold prick of snow
on unglowed hands. You were a master of feet,
of beats and words and rhymes, back
handed irony and clever turns of phrase. You slipped

a note to me, your scraggly words slipped
onto a crumpled napkin. Something about the coldness of grass,
about seasons, about painted toes, about back
yards, hills once mountainous. How you never felt,
once, about old t-shirts and dogs and bare feet,
rainy days and sandals, mud and snow.

I slipped out the back door, it's the one thing I honestly felt
bad about, with your grass neatly trimmed, my bare feet
avoiding the gravel. Back in your room, my sandals wait, still wet from melted
snow.

-Julia Leeman

Keep it Down

watching you look like Lake Vanare;
you may be beautiful now
but you were built inside someone's sewage dump.
you respond like an over-employed
underpaid circus clown:
you like my behavior? you think I be okay?

yeah, I think you're okay;
for now.
but will you be able
to keep it down
your whole life?
with stomach acids reaching for
Mama who left you for
finger points towards ceiling.

because when it hits-
well,
when will it hit
that some where
over this rainbow here made
by the sprinkler on your front porch
you're gonna finger points towards ceiling too
if you can't keep it down-
and maybe even if you can.

the noise level in that stomach there
it simply sky rockets like nothing
 like Mama
 like milk blood
 like pink lemonade blood.
it shoots so high
I sometimes wonder
if when it hits-
if when your immunity
 simply plunges
you may
 plunge with it-
like heaving into a toilet bowl
you may be thrown into
the reality that Mama's fingers couldn't point to:
you may growl over your tv dinner
 and howl for Mama into your pleated skirt
 fresh from the cleaner's for your new desk job-
you just couldn't keep the heaving down
 couldn't quite get enough of the
 deficiency from Mama
and though she's to blame
for your dirty blood
will you ever try to
 clean it on your own?

-Danielle Gershkoff



A Pair
Bryn A. McDonald

Didn't Catch That

Harris Lapiroff

CHARACTERS

JASON, 23

ESTHER, 23

ESTHER: Jay!

JASON: Ess!

ESTHER: Wow, it's been forever!

JASON: Tell me about it.

ESTHER: How have you been?

JASON: Sorry?

ESTHER (louder): How have you been?

JASON: How have I been?

(Beat.)

JASON: I've been alright, I suppose.

ESTHER: I'm sorry?

JASON (louder): I said, I've been alright.

ESTHER: I'm sorry, you're going to speak louder, I'm having trouble hearing you over all the traffic.

JASON: How much do you want to know?

ESTHER: I want to know everything! Tell me how you're doing! Tell me how life has been treating you!

JASON: You say that, but is that really what you want to hear? Do you really want to take the time for me to share at you my deepest longings and fears about what's going wrong with me and my life right now? Do you really want to have a conversation about my life or are you just asking because social obligation requires it of you and you simply want me to respond with a "oh, it's going well" or an "I've been alright."

ESTHER: Wait a minute. I can't hear you over that motorcycle going by. Damn things are so loud.

(Pause.)

ESTHER: Okay, now than. What did you say?

JASON: I've been alright.

(Beat.)

JASON: How about you?

ESTHER: I've really missed you.

JASON: I'm sorry, I've got some wax in my ear. What was that?

ESTHER: I said, I really want to spend some time with you. It's been too long since I've seen you and I really really miss spending time with you.

JASON: Sorry? Could you speak louder?

ESTHER (loudly): I'm doing okay!

JASON: That's good to hear.

ESTHER: Yeah.

(Beat.)

ESTHER: So.

JASON: Well, it was nice to see you.

(Begins to walk off.)

ESTHER: Wait!

JASON: What?

ESTHER: It's been a while since we talked. I want to talk with you.

JASON: I'm sorry?

ESTHER (louder): I said, I want to talk to you.

JASON: Oh, okay.

(Beat.)

JASON: Well, talk away.

ESTHER: Well, I, er... I mean, tell me more about how you're doing. Have you been working? Any interesting women I should know about? And how come you never wrote to me?

JASON: Interesting women? No, there's no one.

ESTHER (can't hear): What?

JASON: I almost wrote you once.

ESTHER: Almost? And then what?

JASON: I... er... didn't send it.

ESTHER: Why not?

JASON: I couldn't... I didn't want you to...

ESTHER (still can't hear): What?

JASON: I accidentally dropped it in a puddle on the way to the post office.

ESTHER: You couldn't rewrite it?

JASON: It was really long.

ESTHER: What did it say?

JASON: I proclaimed my undying, unreciprocated love and affection for you.

ESTHER: Really?

JASON: No, just kidding. You know, it was a letter—just, you know, this and that.

ESTHER: Ah. Well I'm sure sorry I missed out on it.

JASON: Maybe I'll send you another sometime.

ESTHER: I'd like that.

(Pause.)

ESTHER: Hey... are you doing anything tonight?

JASON: Sorry?

ESTHER: Are you doing anything tonight? Because it's been too long since I've seen you and I'd really like to spend some time with you. We could go out to dinner, maybe see a movie, hang around my place afterwards? I'd really like that.

JASON: I'm really sorry, the traffic here is so loud. Say it louder.

ESTHER: Never mind.

JASON: No, what did you say?

ESTHER: Never mind, it wasn't important.

JASON: I want to know what you said.

ESTHER: Don't worry about it.

JASON: Okay.

ESTHER: It's been nice talking to you.

JASON: You too. Give me a call sometime, okay?

ESTHER: What?

JASON: I said it's been nice talking to you too.

ESTHER: Oh. Okay.

(Beat.)

ESTHER: Well, see you later.

JASON: Bye.

(They part and go their separate ways.)

Missing Person Report

1.

In May he was in a field, ear
pressed against earth. Eyes
unblinking, even poked by blades,
by green tips of grass. He was
back flat, layed out. Ignorant of
the ragged vein of ants that ran from his legs
to the hill three feet away.

2.

In July he was attracting company
laying amongst the tall broom-grass shoots.
The shiny burying beetles
the red-black undertakers
they carved out the hot Missouri soil,
letting him sink into it.
The flesh-flies had come upon him,
settling into old wounds
glistening, white eggs like
wet rice.

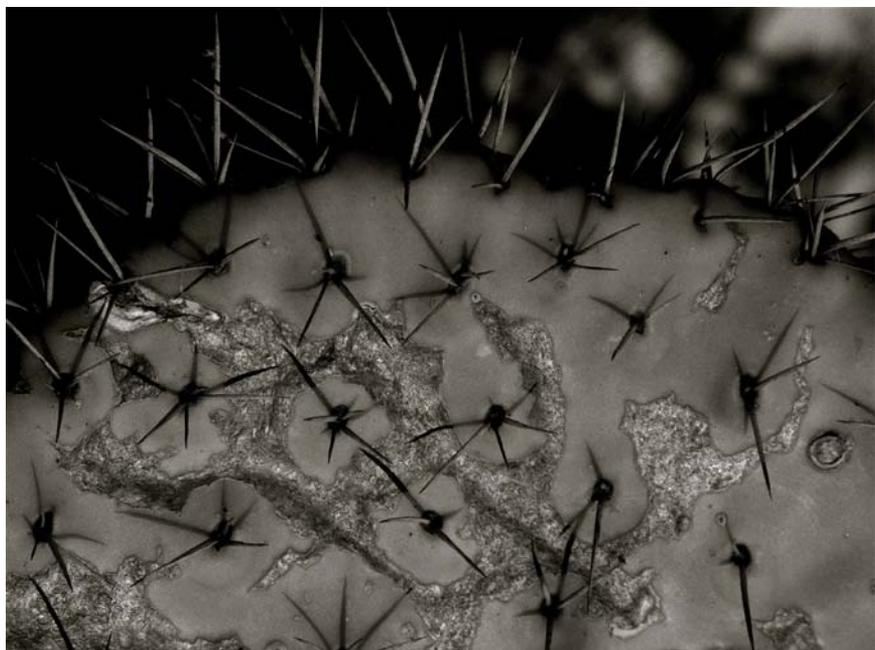
3.

By November the fall chill
had chased away his visitors.
The only ones left were residents.
In the beetle-ditch only his stomach
rose above the ridge of the hole, bloated
and very quietly seeping nitrogen,
ammonia, life-gases. The hiss was so low
so sub-sound that the whispering trees
drowned it out, and were in turn covered
by the crunch of leaves beneath feet, which
stopped next to the ditch, and all the silent
noise was broken by her scream, and her phone call.

4.

By January he was finally deep underground,
away from the throat-biting winter, the clean cold air
the burying beetles dug holes for themselves and hibernated,
sleeping in the soil until the next summer.

-David Bernstein



Untitled
Jason Outenreath

the emo boys

they're everywhere
and i know who they are
even better than they do
they're perfect:
vintage clothes
all the right piercings
oh-so-sexy hair
and that stare-
avoid their eyes
it's no surprise to them;
they know they're irresistible.
pouting behind guitars
acoustic chords shine like fallen stars
to all but deaf ears, and lungs
that cough from the smoke
of wasted years, and cigarettes
and they're stoned [but it's hot]
and they're addicted [but it's sexy]
tortured souls, always, no regrets
kissing more bottle necks than girls
empty bowls in an even emptier world
single-sided heartache written out in messy print
alluding to, but somehow avoiding depth
and they make me weak
when they wear those glasses with that hat
an old sweatshirt from some band i've never heard of
[guess i must be punished for that]
and they're so cool
lookin' fine in those converses
can't even hold a conversation
cuz they're so high
on themselves; why even try?
they're beyond me
but i'm in awe of them;
follow them anywhere

and they're everywhere.

-Emily Wachowiak

Crush

Katharine Thompson

Number One

I chased you around and around the playground until I was dizzy and short of breath. You despised it. I loved it. Most of the time I didn't really try to catch you, but once I tried and I did and you fell to the ground and I pinned you down and kissed your sloppy lips. It was disgusting and both of us ran away furiously wiping our mouths.

Later, after school, I saw you climbing a tree. You looked so alone and happy, and I was sure that you could talk to the birds. For several days I'd go back there after you went home and try to climb as high as you could, but I never did. I was too scared.

Number Two

You taught me honors algebra. You were very young, for a teacher. Your blouse was always very white and clean, and in the V of your neck I could see freckles near your breasts. They intrigued me.

Number Three

When I first saw you, you were running across a field. It was twilight and we were both part of a big group going to see a movie. You were screaming inside jokes to a few people and you had a star painted on your right cheek. As I watched, you encountered an unexpected ditch, fell down, sprang back up, and continued to gleefully run through the cool night air.

About then I decided that you would be a good person to fall in love with.

Talking to you was odd. It was like no one had ever told you how to act around other people, told you that it was more than a show, that there was supposed to be some sort of actual interaction. You made hilarious insults to peoples' faces. You'd drag your stereo out to your backyard and start dancing frantically on the picnic table while we watched, and get angry if we joined. You gave me my first beer and carefully watched me drink it all. You hugged me. A lot. And gave me a series of weird nicknames.

It took me a long time to realize that I didn't love you. I didn't even *like* you.

Number Four

By all common standards, you were nothing special. But you had a certain way.

Sometimes I felt as if I were about to rupture. No, that's not right. Like I was about to shed, crawl out of my skin as if I were a snake, a cicada, and go prowling as a silvery, gnashing thing. I felt like I'd find you and I'd devour you – slice open your guts, lick your heart, swallow your liver. There would be nothing left of you except what was inside my stomach, caught in my molars, smearing my mouth, drenching my hair.

This is, of course, reflective of my innate tendency to use people.

I used to precisely press my little brother's buttons and reduce him to bewildered tears in minutes. I ended every argument this way – I enjoyed the powerful feeling it gave me. I didn't realize I was doing it until the sixth grade. I was mortified. I had assumed, clearly without paying much attention, that I was sweet and adorable and generally a good girl. But I wasn't. So I've tried to hold it in check. I never cheat on tests. I watch my words. I am restrained. I was never obvious about it, but I deliberately avoided you.

It was for your own protection, you see.

Explanation

Of course, sometimes I feel like I hate everything.

But sometimes I feel so overflowing with love and feeling that I burst into tears at the slightest provocation, that I hug people I barely know, that I quietly watch solitary workers from some small perch – a window, a chair in the library – and marvel at their perfection.

I remember when my paternal grandmother flew over from London. I was seven and I had never met her before. I was wildly excited. My maternal grandmother had been dead for many years, and meanwhile I had become fascinated with the grandmother mythology. Cookies, twinkling smiles, aprons – the entire package. When she walked into the arrivals lounge I recognized her immediately – a small wrinkled woman with the same stubborn chin as my fa-

ther. She saw me and I saw her and ran towards her, wildly excited, and she bent down and met my hug.

Later I discovered that she was strict and she sometimes slapped and she didn't like cookies and she said things that made my parents give each other pained glances and bite their tongues. And I was glad when she went back to London.

But I still remember that moment of opening-up, that hug, a brimming instant filled with unearned, uncomplicated potential for love.

Number Five

You spend the night on the couch not out of affection or necessity but because you're lazy. We're up talking (life, football, what happens to various objects when you put them in the microwave and press "POPCORN"), and you suddenly, not mid-sentence, exactly, but in a brief lull that was clearly about to be broken, flop down and turn towards the cushions and mutter goodnight. I laugh but you ignore me, and I know you aren't joking. So I go to bed, cold toothbrush, blurry un-contact-adjusted vision. Big nice bed. It's almost midnight. It's Friday. But you're tired, so I sleep.

I sink barely into unconsciousness and sit there uneasily, tapping my foot, for a few hours. It's four when I fully wake again and I feel like if I have to lie still any more I'll go crazy, start seeing faces, so I get up and walk down the dark hallway and feel my way down the stairs. At the bottom, in the entryway, there's hard stone tile. I can see rectangles and parallelograms in it: light from the stoop coming in through the frosted windows around the door. The stone feels cool. I walk back into the family room.

You're still laying on the couch, curled a little inwards, hands in front of you. Your hair is a mess, which would probably please you had you been there to witness it. I sit and look at you for a while, look at the leaf-heavy branches outside.

I feel restless and heartsick. I stand up and loudly go and get more water for the cat, but the rushing tap doesn't disturb you. I sigh, loudly. You don't stir. I hope you're not dead; there would be a fuss and it would fuck-up my plans for tomorrow.

There's a very small spider (adorable, your mother once called one like it) on your cheek. You hate spiders. *Hate* them. Something about a horror story you heard when you were young, something about eggs, something about com-

binning laying them and biting: warlike reproduction. They freak you the hell out. I get a sheet of paper and gently scrape it off your cheek; on the paper it looks like a little creature made of dust particles. It's paralyzed with a form of terror that you and I can't even begin to fathom; what if a giant piece of paper came down from the sky and scraped you off that couch and then just held you there, miles up in the air, where would you be then? I look at the spider. I could put it back on the carpet (shaken, a tad disoriented, but able to stumble home), I could put it outside (where *am I?*), I could crush it. I find this, at four in the morning and heartsick, a very vexing decision. The spider remains petrified. I finally decide to put it down in the corner. It scurries into the carpet and off to calm down. I stand up and go back to you.

I sit on the carpet, leaning against the couch, near your head. You stir and roll-over the other way and look at me close-eyed like you're accusing me of something, and I start before remembering that you're asleep and probably off learning to fly, or showing up at finals accidentally naked, or having sex with Halle Berry.

Stillness.

Heartbeat. Lub-thub.

Heart. I taste the word in my mouth. It's salty.

I look at you again. I get up on my knees and lean over you (what am I going to say to you if you wake up now?) and kiss a little above the corner of your eye, oh-so-gentle, but just staying still for a moment touching you as if I'm whispering to you, or using my mouth to listen to you. I can feel one of your temples nearby, that bizarrely over-exposed blood vessel, taking fuel to your frontal lobe (emotion, social standards; one man got it punctured out of him and started swearing in the presence of ladies). It twitches like a baby frog. I feel it through my lips. I have nothing to say to it. I think about the word "temple": important blood transfer, place of worship.

I go to refill the cat's water bowl, again.

I come back and I lay down on the loveseat and I slip in and out of consciousness some more until it's starting to get gray and light outside. Eventually I come and sit by your feet. I wait. Soon I can see you stirring.

Not waking-up, but I can see that inner thing that lives inside of you (or are you it, and the thing that's sleeping just a parasitic shell?) stretch and sit up, and know it was watching all along, from beneath your skin, from in-between

your eyelashes. It perches on you and looks at me.

This thing tickles you, tugs gently on your flesh, whispers happy and exciting things in your ears. I can see your breath change, your eyes twitching below the lids.

You're starting to wake up.



Michigan, My Michigan
Erin Morey

Waffle Sestina

“Would you love a man
If his face were pressed into a waffle
Iron? You couldn’t even stand the smell.”
His laughter drowns
Me out: *Even if it were bad, a burn*
Like that might not keep me away.

I am miles away
On the couch next to the almost-man
I almost-love. We do not touch. The TV drowns
In commercials and fluorescence. Smell
The Big Macs! Steak and Shakes, Chicken and Waffles!
I breathe in smoke. My lungs burn.

It takes time to heal a burn.
Flesh reddens, puffs up, skin falls away
And even the toughest man
Cannot help screaming; he drowns
In sensation, loses sight and sound and smell,
The taste and stench of offal.

Me, too. I can’t do it. I waffle.
I think, *I hope to God you never see me burning,*
And then, I run! We talk, and then I run away!
I’ve got enough adrenalin in my index finger to kill a man.
I got stuck in the rain last night, halfway to your house. A drowned
Rat. No compass. Rats, at least, follow their sense of smell.

Captain's Log, high noon: *Uh-oh. There's a stormy smell.*
Afternoon: *Storm is tearing ship apart. Rather awful.*
Evening: *The Storm has broken the Compass. I man
The Tiller. The Wind blew all the Men away.*
Midnight: *Am a bit distracted. Lightning is burning
Down the ship. Do not wish to drown.*

A spring morning. A dream drowns
Me awake-- this eerie campfire smell.
My house was on fire. The wood, all full
Of sparks-- the windows roared and glowed. Unburned,
I stood on a hill a hundred feet away,
Wet feet, waiting for a fireman.

Today, you burn your waffles in the dining hall.
You smell them burning. "Oh, man."
You drown them in syrup, and sit two tables away.

-Anna Leuchtenberger

Walking Home

She paces the inside of a telescope aimed at a familiar star,
a spackling of warmth held at eye's-length,
while around her the September night stands on tiptoe,
aching to touch the walker, to lick at her sweat
with cold and indecisive tongues.

Not believing, she has shuffled the tarot three nights in a row,
laid the cards in a pattern of her own invention.
Two flips of the wrist for her, two for him,
three for the merging, the togetherness, the
place (breath—space—quiet) between (us).

Pressure on the soles of her feet, gravel indentations
in the heel, the constant shove of solidity on her drifting body.
A man she knows prays to gravity, to invisible hands
that gather, and gather. Clumsy child's hands,
they have half-learned that to let go is to lose forever.

This road is like the inside of a cocoon, tangled
in treeshadows a thousand hues of black.
Nearby, a dog breathes up and down her tongue, a sound
like the scraping of pines in a wind-thrashed winter.
The walker loves the road, loves the distant light,

loves that there is only one direction to choose from.
Each lurch of a toad in matted strawberry vines
is the tick of a metronome, is a signpost for the blind.
Each step is the slap of a card on a wood floor,
is the snap of an eyelid pulled taut by the lashes and released. (Expect

nothing.) She steps into the glare of outdoor bulbs frosted with moth wings,
is startled by the tenuous shape of her own body.

She feels the hollow confusion of having waited for something else,
like this newfound sight is a wrapped box inside a wrapped box inside
a wrapped box. (Tomorrow, she will take a dead dragonfly

from his fingertips. She will touch him more than is necessary.)

-Rosemary Bateman

Mary's Dream, Bedtime Story #4

Corina Bardoff

The Virgin Mary had all kinds of dreams that we can guess about. She dreamed of doves and stars and beating wings. She dreamed about crucifixes and thorns and lilies and baptism and so much blood. But she also had some meaningless dreams. Like this one time, she dreamed that her teeth were falling out. At first she was horrified, but then she decided that it just meant that she would never have to eat, or brush her teeth for that matter, again. She had lots of fun spitting teeth at people who laughed at her. She met a cat with no teeth and it looked very sad so she gave the cat her teeth, which were falling out anyway. The cat looked scary with human teeth in its mouth. It smiled at her and Mary was scared. "Don't be scared," the cat sang in a beautiful soprano. "I'll give you something in return." With its claws, the cat took out its green eyes and handed them to her. She swallowed them, causing her own eyes to turn into brown marbles and roll to the earth. The cat's eyes appeared in her head. "Your brown eyes didn't suit you," the cat sang, as it sauntered away with empty eye sockets and a grin. The cat's eyes didn't work very well. Mary was sure she looked very beautiful with the green cat eyes, but everything got very blurry. And the countryside kept moving around. It slid toward her like some welcoming hostess, and slithered back like a serpent (but there was no actual serpent in this dream). Mary could no longer focus on individual leaves of grass, and only saw large stretches of green below her feet. Joseph came out of the house and spoke to her in German and she was annoyed at him because he knew she only spoke Hebrew; what an idiot. Then the rabbi was a giant lizard and that was just too ridiculous and Mary woke up. She had a neck cramp and her mouth tasted sour, but she was still in a pretty good mood, thinking, wait until I tell Jesus: he always laughs at my dreams.

stick-ons

I;
waltzing naked wrapped in wall paper
You;
pressing the rips together
to reassure yourself
you will stick
like the barcode of a magazine.
I cost eight dollars
and ninety four cents in Canada.
that should make a mark on you.
that would make a mark on anyone

i was so passive
you had to press my buttons
like a broken Braille writer
like a muffled piano—
you could hear the key
hit the wood
louder than
you could hear the tone—
is pleasure supposed to make
this much noise?

I;
press your finger to my lip i am a blow fish
You;
waltzing in four
to inhale my time
you still stick
like a tee-shirt to my burning skin.
take your finger away and
it leaves a bleached mark
like running sweaty hands
against slate

it fades louder
than my unadorned levity
it fades louder
than the way my ASL students talk to me
it fades louder
than a shaker
in silent worship
and the pleasure then-
should it shake me so?

I;
reassuring myself
you will stick
like your childhood zip code

You;
waltzing in and out of the
pressure in your pocket
carrying six cents too few.
that should put a dent in me.
that would put a dent in anyone

-Danielle Gershkoff



Untitled
Elena Rippel

Mama Sold the TV Set

So a tiny green army
convened in the dryer and fought
delicately.

Watching the spinning
olive military,
I couldn't distinguish sides.

Some of the bodies
even melted together,
but they didn't consider it casualty.

Then, a forty minute cycle
of menagerie –
fur and feathers flew.

Teddy
somersaulted while
a turtle chased the bunny.

A parrot rumbaed
red and aquamarine
with no commercials interrupting.

I lifted the warm, staticky
animals in my hand
until the dryer was empty.

I studied the hole –
it smelled thick of sweet pea,
and climbed inside.

Birds, bears, and soldiers watched me
through the curved glass.
I could never sit in my TV.

-Laura Boffa



Night Light 2
Amir Starr Weg

The time has now come for *Enchiridion* to give thanks. Most importantly, Wendy Kacso, formerly Brill: we thank you for all of your help and guidance. Our livelihood depends on you. Congrats and love.

Next, to the dearly departed officers of last year: thanks for leaving...*Enchiridion* in such great shape! We are doing our best to live up to the high standards you set.

Finally, we must not forget to thank everyone who submitted this semester. You make us happy. We would like to continue in this bliss, so please submit more of your great writing, artwork, and photography for next semester.

enchiridion@oberlin.edu
Wilder Box 29

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