



# Caesura

*Fall/Winter 2008*

a literary journal



**caesura**

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## Submission Guidelines:

*Caesura*, a literary magazine forum for students, welcomes poetry, fiction, plays, and creative non-fiction that relate in the craft or writing. Submissions should be sent to:

CaesuraEditorInChief@gmail.com

Writers will be informed of our decision within two weeks of receiving their submission.

## What does 'caesura' mean?

This is the first question we are asked when talking about our journal. As with most good questions, this one has more than one answer.

caesura *-noun*, plural cac·su·ra [sa-zhoor-a, sa-zhoorae]

1. Prosody. A break, esp. a sense pause, usually near the middle of a verse, and marked in scansion by double vertical line, as in:

2. A division made by the ending of word within a foot, or sometimes at the end of a foot, esp. in certain recognized places near the middle of a verse.

We at *caesura* hold the principle that to pause is to consider. For both the writer and the reader, these pauses serve as more than breaks in speech; they are also where the writer and reader consider the words that precede the caesura and prepare to relate them to the words that follow.

# caesura

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Mike Kelly

## Gospel of Reality

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*"Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality."*

-Jules de Gaultier

Disgusting Reality spewed from  
that hypnotic New World marvel  
assaults intelligence at the speed  
of a well rehearsed seizure.

Disgusting Reality doesn't kneel

before real- not any more. Reality  
wants to tell you what you want  
to see, wants to tell you what you  
want to be, wants to beat you  
mercilessly with what you want

to need; Disgusting "behind the lives"  
Reality from tanning salons and  
tattoo parlors display senseless lives  
of the vapid privileged. Isn't it Disgusting  
how we really love it like we're told,

too? This irresistible suffering by real  
people really fucked up like us. Turn  
to the sky, shriek, "Who cares?" -  
"Us". Disgusting Reality makes us  
desperate for botched boob jobs

and fatties too codependent to do  
anything alone. It's funny 'cause we're  
all so co-dependent. Also fat. All so

botched. Disgusting Reality relies  
on us to think like this: Reality ceases

when you stray too far from  
the Main Line. Don't turn rocks  
or taste trees for surreal  
perceptions. It's right here  
in your living room

shitting on your rug  
while you smile. It's out back  
fingering your daughter  
while America watches  
and you're the last to know.

# Alexandra Porto

## Grasping onto Oranges

They call it a jail— but I don't feel so boxed in anymore. I think they put up that fence to scare *them* away, those on the outside. But it's not so scary on the inside, from here it's more like a dividing wall, one that keeps us from "society," and I'm fine right here, thank you. I don't want any part of that societal bullshit; in fact, they're the ones who aren't welcome! Sure there's still a hierarchy; someone telling me how I should spend my time, but it's not her— at least it's not her.

"You want orange juice with that?"

"Only if you use the juicer. You know I can only drink it with fresh pulp."

I grab the oranges, peel away their outer skin and press them into the machine. I hand her the drink as she lies in bed. I remind her about Career Day:

"Leah, don't forget, you promised Gab's class you would visit today."

"I have to be in court by ten, but I'll be there."

Her alarm goes off— it's 7am. That means it's time for her to get up and time for me to get the girls to school. I used to be Executive Director; now my life is reduced to an assembly line of tasks that must be done according to my wife's standards. I wake up, make her breakfast, pack the girls' lunch— "something healthy," she tells me. Then I drive them to school. I get home to find a hairdryer left in the sink and wet towels on the bed. She has her secretary call to relay commands: buy milk, drop off the package, and cook salmon for dinner. Forget about no longer wearing the pants— I wear a fuckin' apron.

The phone rings around noon— it's Alicia, her secretary.

"Mr. Svoboda, Leah's in the middle of prepping for a case

and wanted me to let you know that she is not going to be able to make it to Gabby's school."

"Shit! Oh sorry Alicia, I didn't mean to uhh... look, can you please put her on the phone?"

"Sure, hold on a second."

Several seconds later, she answers:

"What is it? You've got one minute."

"Leah, you can't miss Career Day; what am I suppose to tell Gabby?— 'Mommy's very busy' can only work so many times!"

"Erik, just go in my place— I'm sure it'll be enlightening for young girls to see a stay-at-home Dad for once."

"I'm sure." I hang up.

"Stay-at home Dad," that's certainly a title there's no business card for. I leave the kitchen with this thought and go to one of the only places in the house that I actually enjoy— the bathroom. I do a "cup check" to reassure myself that it's still there, spend a few minutes grabbing on to the only bit of manhood I have left, and release— this is my only way out.

I need more than a "helping hand" when I get back from my experience at Career Day— listening to third graders call me "Mr. Mom," and the sound of my own daughter crying because I'm an embarrassment to her. I turn on the computer; one click opens all sorts of doors. It used to be leather and dominatrix that got me off, but that shit gets old, you know. I asked Leah if she'd give some new things a try, but one word and she had already said five, all of which translated into "no— hell no." So, yeah, I've been spending more time in the computer room since then, but I've found that "virtual" isn't always followed by "reality." Lately, I just need more— need someone other than me being fucked for a change. I tell her I'm doing "research," but she's too busy reading law journals to even question me. Tonight, though, I really am doing research; I'm determined to get some skin.

By the next night, I find a side job and a girl-on-the-side. I escape to a little white house on Kensington Road; I'm nervous but excited. I enter to find her eating dinner with an older couple. An orgy wasn't exactly what I had in mind, but I decide to stay— hell, I've come this far. Luckily, they shake my hand and leave shortly after I arrive. She doesn't say much and we end up just sitting on the couch for a while. Finally, she gives me those eyes and asks me to "put her to bed"— I knew she'd be into me. We get upstairs, and I bend her over

the end of the bed. Her pelvis hits the wooden frame each time I thrust, and her screams echo throughout the house. There's nothing I love more than a screamer— by each yell, I know I'm a man and not some pussy stay-at-home Dad.

The days at home cooking, cleaning, etc., don't feel as long as they used to; at least I have something to look forward to. The new job is putting some extra money in my pocket, so I don't have to depend on the allowance handed over by my wife. Leah doesn't even suspect a thing; as long as the dishes are washed, the laundry is neatly folded, and the girls are doing well in school, she's satisfied. I, on the other hand, am almost never satisfied. As good as things are, I still find myself needing more. So I've started seeing more than just one girl— I make sure they live in different parts of town, so there's no chance *they'll* catch on.

Tonight there's someone new. I walk up the steps and knock on the door. A short blonde answers, but she's not alone— it seems like her twin wants in on my little charade as well. All this recent fucking has really inflated my bravado, so I decide to give it a go— hell I'm man enough for the both of them. The girls are real kinky— screaming and moaning so loud. I decide to gag them out of fear I'd wake the neighbors; it's a shame too, 'cause I really love hearing them squirm. I finish, get dressed and hurry downstairs— leaving them passed out, exhausted on their beds.

It was all working out so perfectly— that was, until Leah got promoted. She started working late nights; I had to quit my part-time job and was now left with no time to sneak out. No time for my nightly escapes; no time to indulge in the one thing that actually makes me feel free— free from the constraints of the household, from the constraints of our marriage, society. My hands shake and I'm starting to have some seriously fucked up thoughts, or maybe they're just logical thoughts. I want to leave the house, need to leave the house, but I can't. No, no, I need to stay in the house. She loves me, it's ok, it's ok. Damn, Gabby's crying now. The front door opens—

“Get the fuck off of her!” Leah dodges at me with a rage I've never seen in her. Her face is bright red. She's nearly in tears, but she's not sad— her eyes tell me to step away or else she'll kill me. I've never seen this look before, so I jump off the bed. She comes after me, ready to attack, chasing me into the kitchen. She picks up the phone as though it's a weapon and threatens to call the cops if I don't leave immediately.

“But Leah, this is my house too! Where ‘em I going to go?”

“You can go to hell— you son of a... if you ever lay another hand on my... ” she couldn’t get the words out and just slumped to the floor crying, still clutching on to that phone.

Afraid of what would happen if I were to stay in the house, I decide to leave. Those first few steps off the porch and finally I was free, free of my household chores and free of my title as stay-at-home Dad. And so now I’m here on charges related to the molestation of several minors, one of which, my own wife brought against me. So I guess I’m not much of a family man— I told Leah the household just didn’t suit me. She didn’t listen; she had to be in control. Well I was in control for a few weeks following that final incident, so all-in-all I think it was worth it. Like I said, jail’s not so bad. I’m not exactly in control any more, but at least I’m no longer anyone’s bitch— cooking and cleaning all the time, and I no longer have to play the part of an outstanding member of society. Here I can finally belong— only me, and the big one over there, don’t get along so well.

“Hey Sweetcheeks, why don’t you bend over and take it like a man?” he winks and calls across from the narrow corridor.

# Maria DiLorenzo

## A Lesson in Talking to My Father

..

From this window, a neighbor's kitchen,  
girl does algebra, man flips through an old  
newspaper, licks his thumb at each page.

His wife flips a burger. So this is family.  
A house indented from the page of the street.  
Its insulation, marrow jammed behind walls,

standing strong as bones, breast milk running  
through their pipes like water. And what of  
the wish to saw the legs off their table, crack

their white china with my teeth. Ashes confetti  
into the gutter as I tap my cigarette on the roof.  
'The wish to burn a peephole into it, so I can

peer upon my father below, slumped in the recliner,  
eyes dead at the weather channel. Could he care  
more for the snow in Wisconsin than he does for

me? He is the tumor of this house, waiting to retire,  
waiting to be grated out like mold from a ceiling.  
Should I nag like my mother? Let him teach me

to flick people off on the Belt Parkway and file  
for my taxes? There ought to be a remedial course  
to teach me how to talk to my father. The old

fashioned way. 'The Bay 49<sup>th</sup> way. Anyway, that  
would make the house stop squeezing me until

my ribs hurt: each room is a vast width, throbbing

like a muscle pulled. I stand in a stretched coliseum,  
distance piling up like bills and I can't pay a damn  
thing off. My father rocking his chair against my head.



# Casey Troeller

## It Will Not Be Moved

Her guitar is here still,  
thoughtfully abandoned;  
So I would have no doubt  
our band too, is over.

She, if inanimate,  
would be this music toy.  
Outside it is perfect;  
no dents, no scratch, no nicks.

Strings tuned so very fine;  
this could not be more true.  
When frets were put in place,  
The greatest care was used

A head like none before,  
carved by a master's hand.

A long and slender neck,  
magic to the palm's touch.

The body's peerless curves,  
Her body's unmatched curves!  
Even its unworn heel,  
Subtle, but so pleasant.

If only she had stayed,  
with impeccable skill,  
she'd make each note and chord  
find the light in your soul.

It was purely her choice;  
not one I would have made.  
It, perhaps I as well,  
will not be played again

I've filled it with cement,  
and it will not be moved.

## Now It's "Michelle and Sarah"

..

Once I rode a camel with my name, or that's what they told me.  
That was early on though; most of what I know came later.  
For instance, we kissed in the shed when I was twelve  
And at thirteen, when my dad came out, you turned your back on  
me.  
I was mad, but we were kids. You did not act alone.  
On the football team, fifteen, you made it back to me.  
That year, Halloween at the theme park, we won best costume,  
Which makes sense; it was only six months before you came out.  
I was angry. I tackled you endlessly  
For the championship. Every evil player wore your face.  
We lost because I froze. Saw you with Sarah in the crowd.  
Now, in my more advanced classes, I see her around.  
I know that like me, she has a four-point-o average.  
She somehow manages to steal everything I value,  
And worse, I don't exist for her. She doesn't know I am.  
That's what I thought; now I know better. So much better.  
There was an essay contest with only two winners.  
As I went in to claim my prize she walked out, passing me.  
I knew that she'd won too and for once I did not care.  
She flipped me off, acknowledging the game we've played.  
I don't know her intent, but I know she started this.  
I have to know now, must find a way to learn whether—  
Whether or not you've played a role in this sick contest.  
'Cause if it's only her, I will ignore her while I must.  
But I've already forgiven you once, at thirteen.  
Baseball is a weakling sport; I only give one strike.



*Alexandria, Egypt, taken by Jennifer Fitzgerald*

# Monette Grajo

## Flowers

have            hushed  
contests        be  
-hind            earlobes.

Your    cheeks  
raise    stiletto  
boots    daring  
lips     to smell  
your    pulse

Strip    ed  
is        your  
hair     bow  
ing      like  
rain     dro  
          ps.

Your    lips  
flu  
tter

Butt  
er flies  
make words  
*pink*  
slow ly  
filter ed  
by a  
should er

I only  
whisp er  
*names*

Cater pillars  
nap on  
your fore  
head *names*  
call you  
Flower  
after  
your collar  
bone reaches  
out leaves  
*names* watch  
your iris set

He agreed to be the lightning  
on the plain

between your hips.

My arms  
heaved cold.  
But you  
savoured  
how his

tongue  
flickered  
like an  
old light  
bulb

You and I shared  
petals  
under  
a mango  
tree where  
trails  
Of our  
naked  
toes  
whistled.

## Dear You

I need a mask.

The ways to heaven are under construction,  
And I'm dressed in a yellow tape of caution.

Naked  
are my eyes for everybody who wants to look  
and look  
But never want to stare

thinking my mouth  
is not even there.

My headphones  
fall for those that call my name  
behind my back.

My phone  
fall for those that call my name  
every time

my head  
fall for those that call my name  
after nine.

My phone  
calls to those that fail to aim,  
heading only  
between my thighs.

I can fashion the façade everyday,  
to a family reunion,  
Or my wedding.

I'm all about  
facing you.

Melissa Hayden

## The Devil I Know

..

“The sea, also, is ineffectual.  
It keeps washing you up like an old bone.”

-Sylvia Plath

It is a cool spring day in 1997. Anthony is heading south, way down south, on highway I-95 in his shiny white BMW. He swiftly whips around cars, in and out of lanes, trying to cut travel time as much as possible. As he zips along the east coast, the temperature rises with each state he passes through. The sunlight intensifies and beats down on his head from the car's open sunroof. A big blue sign welcomes Anthony into Virginia, “The Old Dominion State.” Excitement overwhelms him as he realizes this is the halfway point; his odometer confirms it. A ring box nestles in the glove compartment between a stack of empty CD cases and a wad of dusty tissues. He planned on buying something fancier for her, but he could only scrounge up some cash kept hidden in case of an emergency. He glances over at the passenger seat and pushes harder on the gas pedal. He is determined to bring her home and back into his life.

Let's call her Deborah. She is mentioned for the first time over ice-cream sundaes at the end of a fourth date in Anthony's BMW. This muggy summer night started on the South Beach boardwalk and is concluding with the talk. This is the extensive and exclusive conversation that occurs during the getting-to-know-you process. During our lengthy exchange, the topic of “the ex's” arises. Since I am 18 and Anthony is nearly 28, he has a bit more to share than I do. He roughly describes his ugly breakup stories, the dates he wishes he never went on, and the great love that left him heartbroken, Deborah. She unwillingly moved to Georgia eight years ago at the age of 17, leaving Anthony all alone. He decided to drive there with a ring and propose marriage with hopes that she would say yes and



move back to New York. But, only being a teenager, she wasn't ready for that commitment and turned him down.

"Do the two of you ever talk anymore?" I ask to display a sense of concern.

"Yeah, sometimes," he answers with a 'so-so' hand gesture, "but we're just friends now."

It doesn't bother me, for I am completely absorbed by this older, masculine (yet modest), man taking me out. So, in some crazy way, Deborah's move is beneficial for me.

On a freezing January night, as I stare out Anthony's bedroom window, enthralled by the season's first huge snow storm, I feel a huge arm wrap around my waist and tug on my hips.

"Commercials are almost done babe, the movie is gonna come back on," Anthony informs me.

"I'm sorry, I just love the way that looks. It doesn't happen that many times during the year."

He gives me a disbelieving look that scrunches his eyebrows together. I kiss him before he could answer me mockingly and ruin my bliss. Despite our huge age difference, it didn't take long for us to get comfortable with each other. Introductions to the parents, as well as their acceptance, was fairly more complicated, but established. Ben Stiller's voice fills the room, and we both turn towards the TV to catch the end of *Zoolander*. As soon as the credits start scrolling Anthony jumps out of bed.

"I'm going in the shower. You're not driving in this so don't even think about leaving," he says as he undresses.

I drag myself across the bed to face the wooden shelves that hold his massive DVD collection. As I read the labels on each plastic case, waiting for something to stand out, I catch a glimpse of something. Wedged between a bunch of photography books is a metal box. It is black, worn-out, and has strange designs that protrude all over it. I don't know if I'm more intrigued by this medieval-looking thing, or the thought of its contents. I grab the remote and hit the mute button. The sound of the shower water running is faint, but evident. I slowly pull the box out causing the books collapse onto each other. Dust has collected on it and I gently place my fingers on top, being careful not to disrupt anything. The inside is lined with bright red felt and contains a pile of old pictures. A young girl poses in a bedroom wearing black pants and a tight white halter top, evidently ready for a night out. In the next one she wears more comfortable attire, making a silly face at the camera. Her hair is dark, long, and

curly. She doesn't appear very tall, but awfully well-endowed. Immediately, I know this is Deborah. The sound of the squeaky shower knobs startles me. I quickly place the pictures back in their spot in the box like nothing happened.

This snowy night ends in a serene slumber for Anthony and a restless toss-and-turn for me. I can't get those pictures off my mind. As I find myself getting closer to this man, the idea of this "great love" worries me. I begin to compare myself to Deborah, wondering if ill ever amount to him the way she did.

I peer around the room until I see a dim light and realize it's his cell-phone. I quietly slip out from underneath the blankets and walk over to it. A red light flashes indicating the charging status. I stare down at it for a moment, contemplating how devious it would be to peek. I try to convince myself that it's curiosity, but inside I recognize a lack of trust and a bit of jealousy. I unplug the phone and sit on the floor with my back up against the bed. My heart is beating out of my chest as I open it. The bright light illuminates the space around me; a picture of his dog, an odd-looking Chihuahua named Penny, is set as his wallpaper. My first stop is his text messages.

That's right, I snoop. I am wrong and I know it, but I don't care. What I find is even more horrendous. There is a whole chain of phone calls and messages to Deborah. A lump forms in my throat as I try to securely hold the phone and decipher their conversations.

Even though Deborah has a loving boyfriend in Georgia, she believes she is hideous, nobody wants her. Deborah feels extremely bad about herself and wishes she was different. Anthony thinks she is crazy. "You are beautiful baby, don't say that," he consoles her with a sideways smiley face. They miss each other dearly; "I love you" is exchanged. Even though Anthony is out with his friends, he will leave to pick her up; they'll get some drinks and talk. Deborah will be in Staten Island in a few hours.

"Please, I'm sorry. I don't want to be alone," she answers sadly. She needs a hug from him.

"Have a safe flight baby. See you when you get here. Can't wait."

I immediately put the phone back on the charger and run into the bathroom. I can't fathom what I just found. A combination of serious infuriation and hurt builds inside my body like concrete bricks. This feels worse than cheating; their relationship is on an emotional level, a connection that never left them over the years. She won; she vied for his affection and got it. I can't find the power to wake him up,

so I lie wide-awake in bed and picture what's behind those words.

I imagine Deborah in the aisle seat at the back of the airplane. She wears her skimpy black and white number as she did 9 years ago. Her big curly hair acts as a pillow to her head. She closes her eyes as she tries to find a catchy tune on her i-pod. Her big breasts bounce when the plane begins to shake a little. "Not to worry folks," the captain chimes in, "just a little turbulence. We'll begin our descent into Newark airport in approximately ten minutes." I can't avoid the idea of them acknowledging each other with a tight embrace at the baggage claim. People will think he is the husband awaiting his wife's return home. I am nauseous.

The ride back from Anthony's house is exhausting. I question my motives and how I will be blamed for wrongdoing. The road signs seem to be flashing before my eyes. I gaze out the window to try and find the right words to confront him. The bluish-gray sky looks like someone reached up and swirled the clouds around with their fingertips. I get lost in the view awhile until another driver starts honking wildly and I snap back. The silence is dense and Anthony begins to notice the awkward tension.

"Babe, is everything alright? You haven't said a word, you can talk to me ya know."

"Can I see your phone?" I ask unintentionally, unable to articulate what I really want to say.

"Why do you want to see my phone?" he questions while reluctantly handing me the phone.

My nerves make it difficult for me to perceive anything, so I blurt it out. I tell him what I did and what I saw the night before. My hands are shaking wildly to match my unsteady voice.

"I thought you were just friends. You never told me she comes to New York."

"She comes like once a year," he swears. "She visits my mom."

"Does she know about me?"

"Yeah, I told her I had a girlfriend."

Something inside me finds an inkling of malicious satisfaction knowing that she is aware of me. The argument dies off bitterly as we enter my neighborhood.

"Can we talk about this please? Why haven't you said anything?" he asks calmly while following me to the door. I stand there with my arms crossed and listen to what he has to say. His words don't even process; why would he keep it a secret? How could

he say these things to another woman? Everything else seems unimportant. When I ask him, he instantly begins crying and pounding his fists on the door.

"I don't know why, I don't know. I'm so sorry baby," he bawls.

"Why can't you let go? If you love each other, you should just be together then."

I'm the one who needs to let go, but I can't. I force myself to see the good, to try and believe these guilt-stricken words. I stare at him angrily for a moment, neither of us with anything to say, just meaningful looks. He exhales the smoke from his cigarette and takes a deep breath.

"Now what?"

Months following, I become the girl I never wanted to be. I am possessive and jealous to say the least. I don't have even a little bit of trust for him. I try to control him by using the excuse that he's the one who has to change. I'm an unpleasant person to my family and my friends and my life revolves around wondering what Anthony is doing. It is not amusing. Even though I decided to give him another chance, I don't have a definite feeling of closure. The Deborah problem hasn't been resolved just because he said it has. Knowing that she still has his number and doesn't know what she has caused frightens me. I was never this type of person, that overbearing girlfriend, and it's difficult to recognize myself. Every chance I get I rummage through his personal things; his cell-phone, his computer, his car. I think I'm looking for proof just to be able to say, "Here it is, I knew you would do it again you lying bastard. It's over." But I don't find anything.

My i-pod randomly selects a Led Zeppelin song while Anthony and I drive back to his house. "Dancing Days" plays loudly and I'm happy because few words are exchanged between us. We rented a movie tonight; it was his turn to choose it, probably some old horror flick. Just as he's turning onto his street he starts fumbling through his pants pocket. He pulls out his phone and looks at the caller id strangely. I just stare at him snobbishly, waiting to be informed about the caller.

He turns the phone towards me; 'DEB' is displayed on the screen.

"I really don't want to talk to her. I don't even know why she's calling me," Anthony says.

"Is it because I'm here?"

“Ya know what, I can’t do this with you anymore.” He opens his phone and starts dialing,

Nervousness and excitement collide inside of me. As the other end is ringing, Anthony faces me.

“I can’t have you thinking something is going on when it’s not. I don’t want to hurt you again.” He presses the speaker phone button so I can hear their conversation. Before I can consider what’s going to happen, a girl answers with a drowsy, “Hello?”

“Hi,” Anthony starts, “you called?” His eyes are wide and he is staring intently out the windshield.

“It was an accident, sorry Ant,” Deborah claims. “But anyway,” she livens up, “what’s goin’ on? How are you baby?”

“Whatever, listen to me, I don’t think we should talk anymore. The ‘I love you’ and ‘miss you’ shit has to stop. I have a girlfriend and this is causing problems okay?”

Deborah laughs, “My boyfriend Paul knows that we are friends and he doesn’t care. This is really immature don’t you think?” Her southern drawl is heavy but her Spanish accent is picked up instantly.

I want to start screaming. How could she have the nerve to take this so lightly?

“Deb, whatever the case is, it isn’t going to work out.”

“Well I guess that’s what you get when you fuck silly Staten Island girls.”

I lose it. I start yelling, and due to the speaker-phone, Deborah obviously hears me. Before Anthony can say anything else I snatch the cell-phone from his hand.

“I think its best you keep comments like that to yourself, you don’t know anything about me,” I snap.

“Don’t do this Meliss, c’mon ma, we’re just friends, nothing else,” she tries to persuade me.

“This should’ve been done years ago. Maybe you should let Paul know what you say to your ex, I’m sure he’ll appreciate it as much as I do,” I answer matter-of-factly.

I’m arguing with the girl and I have no idea what’s coming out of my mouth. The adrenaline rush makes me forget I’m even in the car with Anthony. Someone who I’ve never met, who lives 1,000 miles away, shouldn’t be a threat to me. She had her chance with him and she wrecked it, too fucking bad. I light a cigarette and compose myself. Deborah hesitates for a minute.

“Don’t you see I got respect for you girl? Shouldn’t this be up

to him?"

"It was up to him already and he fucked it up. And you, well you have a big mouth so I don't have *any* respect for you."

The audacity to cry for his attention, belittle me, and then declare 'respect' sets me off the edge. Before Deborah has a chance to respond, I hang up the phone. I regret my quick reaction automatically because I feel I have a lot more to say. However, after all the stress she has caused me, I feel relieved. Our little banter causes a difficult follow-up conversation between Anthony and me. As the past few minutes sink in, it's hard to say anything calmly. He hastily puts the car in reverse and backs out of the driveway. He glances at the clock and then concentrates back on the road without saying a word. Within seconds we turn onto the busy Hylan Boulevard and pull up to a Verizon store. The first step of many.

# Jennifer Fitzgerald

## Absenthe

Put aside your alcohol,  
your amphetamines,  
your acid.

Join me, dear reader;  
Lamartine beckons,  
Van Gogh waits || in

the streets of Paris we walk  
hand-in-hand.  
Your shaky grip releases  
the door from its post;  
swinging us in to the green and red.

Battered floors support the  
weight of what we have  
come here to leave.

They present us with our tools.  
Our spoon,  
our sugar,  
our flame.

And that woman,  
the one at the end,  
has stories to tell.

Of the fairy,  
the burn of the first swallow,  
the hole she has found herself in.

We can stay here, you and I.  
Cheeks rosy,  
iris' swirled 'round pupils.

We can live in the cracks of this bar  
and the small spaces left  
between glass and liquid.

We can wait.  
Wait until the world has finally changed  
Wait until we move the door again,  
and let the street reveal itself to us,  
instead of we to the street.

Dull bulbs illuminate our faces,  
as we sit here with the lady at the end.  
Telling each other stories,  
about holes, first times,  
a man named Van Gogh, and waiting  
for the streets to change.



Carl C. Haynes

## Daddy's Womb

..

i asked my Father if i could swim,  
and he said that i would drown.  
The Sea would imprison me— he said  
— if my feet had left the ground.

So i tiptoed into the water,  
and cried out— how 'bout now!  
He said, a little bit further Son,  
and then you'll leave the ground.

i stepped on sand then stone,  
from hollow ground to sturdy.  
The sky was at my level as I  
gazed at the birdie.

The Sea brought me a new idea,  
the urge to flee to the high.

i asked my Father if i could fly,  
and he said, sure Son— go try.

I jumped as high as i could.  
Still, I landed on the ground.  
i saw my Father pull on a chain,  
then knew i was bound.

— *Published in TeenInk October 2008*

## Junkyard Love

Outside of your hanging window  
we'll cling on euphoric gestures—  
Pitch tents in that license junkyard  
— take an atomic bath

Let there be our bodies  
scratching against the hood of  
the sun while trading spit by foam  
cups— yours a butterscotch.

We'll trot the reindeer till you  
appeal the cloud— Peel aside your thin  
gate, and synchronize our yuck  
love in a gallery of chicken necks.

There — Let our saffron birds go  
and build avenues and avenues and  
avenues by the day's long tail—  
a podium of engines our flaws can adhere

to, a terrace wrapped around my ankles—  
There — Let my saffron bird go  
and build a city for the place I have a  
thing for — let it fish for the planet

and the trail of orange peels let  
behind by someone new — Let us  
shush on a plate of moss—

# Maria DiLorenzo

## The Violin

..

The bus was nearly empty as it approached the last stop at Kings Plaza except for a woman in a wheelchair who sat in the handicap section across from the back exit and a man who Manny saw resting his head against the graffitied window every time he glanced in the rear view mirror. The man wore a business suit, but his tie was loose, hanging around his neck like a necklace and he had a coffee stain on his white shirt. "Last stop," Manny shouted, startling the man, who rose from his seat lethargically and stood behind the white line with his briefcase tapping against the pole as the bus came to a full stop. "I'll be with you in a minute ma'am," Manny yelled to the woman in the wheelchair in the back. He flashed the sign "Not In Service" and heard the grunts and sighs of the crowd of people who tossed their arms in the air while waiting at the B2 stop. He then walked towards the back and pushed a button to flatten the stairs out into a platform so the woman could get off. He wheeled her onto the platform and lowered her to the ground, the platform creaking as it descended slowly. "Ma'am, I think you forgot something," he pointed under the seat that was next to where she was sitting. "That's not mine," she said. He wheeled her from the platform onto the street and wished her goodnight. He pressed the button to make the platform turn into stairs again and hopped back onto the bus. Under the seat a black case laid in a pile of trash: empty water bottles, gum wrappers, newspaper. He set it down on the seat and opened it curiously, lifting the latches gently as if he was undressing a woman. He was disappointed to see a violin instead of a wad of cash. He closed the case, carried it to the front and placed it on the seat behind him. He drove the bus back to the depot, took the violin, and walked to his Dodge two door with a dented bumper, throwing the violin in the trunk next to a spare tire and jumper cables. He thought about bringing it to lost and found but figured he would wait until tomorrow

to see if anyone called asking about it first. As he pulled into the driveway of his small house he noticed a piece of siding from the house sticking out from behind the bushes. "Dammit, Jimmy always throwing that damn ball against the house, like I have money to fix it," he muttered to himself.

He turned the key into the front door with the violin case clamped under his arm and heard Jimmy's footsteps treading up the stairs. "I know you're still awake. Get your ass into bed. You got school tomorrow."

He heard Jimmy's bedroom door close as he threw the violin case onto the floor next to the television, and went into the bathroom where he sprinkled his face with water, clumsily splashing the mirror. He tried to wipe the mirror with a towel but only made the water mark smudge. He stripped down to his boxers, leaving his uniform on the floor, brushed his teeth, and sprawled out on the couch in the living room. He hadn't slept in his own bedroom since his wife went to a bar one night and never came home four years ago. There was something about being in a king sized bed alone. It made him feel deserted, so he slept on the couch, or sometimes on the floor if his back became too cramped.

The next morning he woke Jimmy up for school. They sat at the kitchen table that wobbled every time something was placed on it.

"Ain't you gonna eat your toast," Manny asked as Jimmy stared blankly at his plate.

"You burnt it."

"Don't waste food."

Jimmy chewed the toast that looked as if it had been sprinkled with coal, the crumbs falling onto the table like a cigarette flicking ashes.

"Eat over your plate, Jimmy."

Jimmy rolled his eyes and brought the plate over to the sink, dropping it with the others that were stacked high.

"I want you to do the dishes when you get home from school."

"Whatever."

"Don't whatever me. You do them. Now let's go, get your school bag. You're gonna be late."

As Jimmy gathered his books in the living room he noticed the violin case leaning against the television. He walked over to it like a dog to a bone. He opened it and was stunned by the shining maple and its hourglass shape. His fingers ran along the smooth surface as if

he was checking for dust.

“Dad, where did this come from?”

“Where did what come from,” Manny shouted from the kitchen.

“The violin.”

“Oh, I found it. Someone left it on the bus last night. I gotta bring it to lost and found today.”

“Can I keep it?”

“No. It’s not yours. What are you gonna do with a violin anyway. You can’t play.”

“I can learn.”

“How? I can’t afford to send you to lessons. Besides, the damn thing don’t belong to you. Now hurry up, get in the car.”

Jimmy moped outside and sat in the passenger side of the car with his hands in his coat pockets. Manny carried the violin case and placed it in the back seat and drove to Jimmy’s high school.

“Please can I keep the violin,” Jimmy begged.

“Why do you want it so bad?”

“I just do. I like music. I want to play.”

“Fine. It’s yours, but I can’t afford lessons.”

“Really, it’s mine?”

“Take it.”

Jimmy grabbed it from the back seat and carried it along with his book bag. He jumped from the car and climbed the steps to the entrance of his high school. He turned around to wave goodbye to his father but he had already driven away. As soon as he made it to the fifth floor he stuffed the violin into his locker and wrapped his coat around it.

As soon as Manny arrived at the bus depot his boss told him that someone had called, asking if anyone found a violin. He asked him if he had seen one last night on his bus. Manny shook his head “no”. His boss ranted about the evilness of the world and how everyone was a thief while Manny finished his third cup of coffee and climbed onto the bus, ignoring his boss like a mosquito bite. He was relieved when he began to make his stops because he couldn’t stand to be at the depot for another second with his boss.

Later that evening he returned home to a house screeching with noise. He found Jimmy in the basement attempting to play the violin, but what was supposed to be music was irritating noise drilling in his head like a migraine. Over the discordant sound he heard a

knock pounding at the door and opened it to find his next door neighbor with a baby in her arms.

"This noise coming from your house has been keeping up my baby all night."

"I'm sorry ma'am. I just got home. It's my son. He just got a violin." I'll tell him to stop."

"You better or I'm calling the cops," she threatened, her teeth grinding together every time she stopped speaking.

"There'll be no need for that," he assured her.

Manny took a deep breath and slammed the door, and made his way down to the basement.

"Jimmy. Jimmy," he shouted. He tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention because he couldn't hear over the noise.

"You scared me," Jimmy jumped back, nearly dropping the bow.

"This noise is scaring me and all the neighbors. Put that thing down and go to bed."

"But I wanna play."

"You're not even holding it the right way. You're supposed to lean it against your jaw or chin, not your neck, and then support it with your shoulder."

"How do you know?"

"I've been to a symphony before. Your mom used to drag me to them."

"Oh. So like this." Jimmy took the chinrest of the violin and leaned it against his jaw.

"There ya go. Now that's enough for one night."

The next day after school while Manny was still at work, Jimmy walked up and down the avenue near his house in search for a job so he can pay for his own violin lessons. He went into restaurants, clothing stores, video game stores, but each place he went into said he was too young to work for them. They needed someone who was sixteen or older, but Jimmy was only fourteen. Finally, he walked into a deli and asked if they were hiring. They hired him despite his age and paid him off the books. Everyday after school Jimmy sliced cold cuts and made sandwiches. He only got paid \$5.00 an hour but it was enough to afford violin lessons once a week. Manny thought it was good that Jimmy learn a work ethic while he was still young and encouraged it. He was also sick of hearing the neighbors complain every time Jimmy picked up the violin and tried to play it. He needed

lessons.

Jimmy went through the music section of the yellow pages and found a woman named Cassandra who taught violin to beginners. The lessons were held in the back room of a small music shop in his neighborhood. He went every Sunday afternoon where his body would face Cassandra's, attempting to mirror exactly what she did. The room was as small as a closet and windowless with a musty smell, but he managed to learn how to read music and master a few of Mozart's violin sonatas. After his lessons his wrist and hands would hurt him for days. Cassandra would assure him that his hand muscles were just becoming stronger and it wouldn't be long until his fingers would move freely along the fretless neck. The neighbor's stopped complaining. Manny came home from work one night and heard music from the basement. He was surprised that it was Jimmy and not a recording that was creating such a beautiful sound.

"Those lessons are really paying off huh?"

"I guess so."

Manny poured a glass of wine from a bottle he had hidden in the back of the cellar and listened with his arms crossed. He shook his head in shock and Jimmy played until they both became drowsy and could no longer keep their eyes open.

Once Jimmy got some confidence he asked for a spot to play in his school band. They told him it was too late in the semester for him to join and that he would have to wait until next year. He was sick of playing in front of his dad and for the neighbors who only heard him between the walls. He took a day off from the deli and rode the train into Manhattan with his violin gripped in his hand. He got off the train at Time Square and stood in the crowd of people who were waiting for the train. He ran his fingers along the waxy strings and then along the bow that felt like sandpaper against his hand. He took a deep breath and began to play Mozart's serenade, Ein Kleine Nahtnusik. The music seemed to echo in the stuffy subway. Some people walked by him and tried to drop quarters and dollars in his case, but he left it closed. It wasn't money he wanted. He just wanted to be heard by someone other than his father. As his fingers moved up and down the neck many trains passed him, blowing his hair with the breeze they created as they jetted by him. Once he had finished he saw a stocky man with a gray beard approach him. This man was holding a harmonica in his hand.

“Who the hell do you think you are,” the old man yelled, spitting when he spoke.

“I’m Jimmy,” he responded, frightened.

“Well Jimmy. You’re playing in my spot. I play here everyday at 5pm.”

Jimmy noticed the old man barely had any teeth left. His jacket was ripped and he smelled like urine.

“I guess I’ll move.”

“Damn right you will.”

The old man pushed Jimmy into the subway map that stood behind him.

“Okay. I’m leaving.”

Jimmy ran through the rush hour mob clenching his violin and bow. He had been so startled he forgot the case. He ran down to the next station and took the train home. Now he would have to work extra hours at the deli to replace the case. When he got home Manny wasn’t home yet. He returned the violin and played until he got tired and went to sleep, leaving the violin on the carpet in the living room. When Manny returned home from work he almost tripped on it, nearly twisting his ankle. “Goddammit Jimmy,” he muttered and dropped onto the couch, ready for sleep.

The next morning Manny made eggs for breakfast. He always tried to cook on Sundays because it was the only day when they both had off. Jimmy didn’t have his violin lesson until 3 p.m. so there was time for a whole meal. When Jimmy came down the stairs he was dressed in his black clothing, holding his white deli hat.

“Don’t you got your lesson today,” Manny asked, confused.

“I have to work extra hours today. I have to replace my case.”

“Well what happened to it? I nearly stepped on the damn thing last night,” Manny complained, rubbing his ankle.

“I lost it.”

“Lost it? How do you lose a case?”

“I don’t know. I just did.”

“Well are you gunna eat?”

“No time.”

Jimmy raced to the door, leaving Manny scrambling the eggs that were too much for him to eat alone. Jimmy worked for eight hours, slicing cold cuts, cleaning the front display, carrying tubs of macaroni salad from the downstairs refrigerator. When it came soon to closing time he had to clean the slicing machine. He rubbed the



blade back and forth with a wet towel, trying to get the remains of ham and bologna from it. He was startled by a customer who snuck up behind him, asking if there was anymore Italian bread and accidentally sliced off two of his fingers and the top of his pinky. For a second he looked down in shock, but couldn't feel any pain. It was like the couple of seconds of turning on a television when you hear the sound but have to wait for a picture to come onto the screen; he was waiting for the blood to pour out of him. The blood began to soak the machine and the floor and the tub of macaroni salad next to him. He passed out and woke up in a hospital bed with Manny staring at him as if he was staring out onto an open road.

"How are you feeling son?"

Jimmy didn't respond. He looked down at his left hand and saw the bandaging. The doctor walked in and held the stethoscope in his hand.

"I need to take your vitals."

"What happened to my hand," Jimmy asked frantically while Manny looked at the pitcher of water next to the bed.

"Son... Jimmy you had an accident."

Manny gave a stern glance at the doctor that urged him to leave the room.

"What happened to my hand?"

"You... sliced off a few fingers at the deli. With the machine."

"They were able to sew them back. Right?"

Manny kept his eyes on the yellow water pitcher as if it was a beautiful sunset in the tropics.

"They were able to sew them back. Dad? What happened?"

"They couldn't sew them back. Jimmy I'm sorry. The doctor said they would be useless. They wouldn't be able to move. There was nerve damage."

"No. This can't be." Jimmy shrank back in his hospital bed, staring at his left hand. He began to undo the bandages, but Manny stopped him. "I need to see it."

"Jimmy, no. You need to relax,"

Manny stayed with him every night until he was able to go home. He took two months off from work so he could tend to him. Jimmy complained of severe pain where his fingers used to be, but Manny couldn't help him. He couldn't make the empty space of where Jimmy's fingers were stop hurting. Jimmy didn't return to school for the rest of the year. He had to finish his freshman year from bed, but he never did any of the work they assigned. He barely left the

house. He would gawk at the violin that was leaned on the chair next to him, until Manny took it away. He didn't object to Manny getting rid of it. After two months passed Manny had to go back to work. All day long while he drove the bus down Kings Highway and Quentin Road all he could think of was Jimmy in bed, staring at his hand.

When it came time for Jimmy to return to school he received a letter in the mail to try out for the school band. He immediately tossed it into the garbage. He began skipping school because he was already so far behind in work and he couldn't stand to see the sympathetic stares of his peers in the hallways and how they jumped at the chance to hold the door for him as if he had lost his arms instead of a few fingers. Their eyes always focused on the stumps where his fingers were. Those classrooms and halls were as unfriendly as war. He longed to have a trench dug in the back of the room to hide in so he would never have to see their faces casually glance at his mangled hand again. He was done with sympathy.

He dropped out and spent most of his days sulking in his room with the blinds closed, curled up on his unmade bed with wrinkled sheets. Manny brought him his mail every night when he got home from work, which was a pile on his desk of college brochures and catalogs, all left unopened and unread. There was a letter from Cassandra in the pile with tickets to the symphony stuffed inside. He threw out the entire stack of mail along with the sheet music that littered the floor. Manny demanded that Jimmy get a job if he wasn't going to finish school, and he did. Jimmy moved out when he was almost twenty. He packed all of his belongings and moved into a small studio apartment across the street from a gas station. He got a job there pumping gas and changing the oil in cars.

Years later a girl pulled into the gas station next to the pump and had a drum set in the back seat. Jimmy noticed this as quickly as he would recognize the sad notes of *Adagio for Strings* by Barber.

"Can I get ten dollars regular," she asked, rolling down the window completely.

"You in a band," he asked, looking at the kick drum and cymbals piled in the back seat while he pumped the gas into her small vehicle.

"Oh yea. This is my drummer's set. We have a show tomorrow."

"That's great. I used to play violin once. Used to play in the subway, anywhere I could be heard."

“Oh yea. I play bass.”

“Ahh, bass. That’s a great instrument. You play jazz?”

“Na, I wish. I’ve only been playing a few years. I can’t keep up with jazz.”

“Keep practicing. You’ll get it, I lost some fingers while back so I can’t practice no more.”

“Oh man, sorry.”

“Ehh, not your fault. Just don’t ever stop playing music. Music is a wonderful thing. Don’t stop learning. Don’t stop playing.”

“I won’t.”

She gave him the ten dollars, started the engine and drove onto the street. Jimmy leaned his back against the pump, watching night come in. He closed down the garage where he was changing the oil of a car and locked the gate. He jingled his keys in his hand while he crossed the street to go home. A car in the distance honked its horn as rain started to hit the ground. He stood by his front door and listened to the rain tap the roof, while his hand jingled the keys in syncopation. Music was everywhere.

# Megan Moriarty

## Small Talk

..

The old lady to my right plays with her handkerchief  
for a few stops, then turns to me and says,  
“Have you ever wondered why cows don’t migrate?”

The bus spits and whines. We fidget like loose  
baby teeth. “It’s funny,” she continues, “that we always  
say the grass is greener on the other side  
because cows eat grass, and they never travel.”

We laugh politely. “You know, zombies migrate  
constantly,” I say, “but they don’t seem very happy.”

People read newspapers, hook onto the handrails,  
analyze their shoes. Our faces are cold maps.

“You’re right,” she nods, “they don’t. This is my stop.”  
The handkerchief falls from her lap.  
I watch it coast along the gum-stained floor.

## Love is an Aviary

..

My heart is a pigeon, bobbing its head  
back and forth, looking for crumbs to live on.  
It’s so ugly and it’s so stupid.  
My heart sits by his window and coos.

Two leaves had fallen in similar ways.

They met on the corner of two streets  
on a windy day, and talked about the sadness  
of being dead but still existing.

My heart was a sparrow when he loved me.  
He trapped it in his politician hands  
and hid it while he looked up at the sky.  
My heart perched in a cage, and it would sing.

I hear cats scratching at passing cars,  
keeping moonlight vigil over birds' nests.  
We lose each other living in dark rooms.

## Memoryloc

..

Tupperware has taken on a whole new meaning.

*Memoryloc* is designed to trap thoughts  
and memories and store them at room temperature.

They hold everything:  
funerals, failed relationships, runaway pets.

“At first, I was skeptical about *Memoryloc*,  
but now I just can't stop buying them!  
I can't remember anything,  
and I'm in the best shape of my life.”

If you call now, you can get *Memoryloc*  
for just \$99.99, along with a free trial for *Zombie Off!*,  
the repellent that keeps those pests from breaking  
into your house and eating your children.

(Side effects may include dizziness, bloating,  
severe cases of depression and malaise.  
Other prices and restrictions may apply.)

## Childhood

..

I was younger. I cleaned his fingernails.  
I fingered the cut in my mouth  
and swallowed blood.

We listened to the possums exchange  
drugs for cash and midnight kisses  
behind the neighbor's garbage can.

They're so soft when they're born.  
They have no eyes. They all look the same.

Earlier today, I wished that I could drift down his block  
slowly enough for the kittens to chase my heels.

Liars prosper.  
– Anonymous

# Elizabeth Murphy

## Teeth Imprints on Chicken Bone

Steve Canib: strict father, Caucasian.

Peggy Canib: lenient mother, Caucasian.

Monica Canib: eighteen years old, Caucasian.

Keith Canib: eight years old son likes to joke around, Caucasian.

Shawn: Monica's boyfriend, African-American.

Setting: Early November in Palm Springs. Scene opens up in a big kitchen. A window sits over the sink. There's a big table against a wall, a refrigerator and an island in the middle of the room. Monica is trying to tidy things up before her boyfriend, Shawn, comes over to meet the family for the first time.

Monica

He'll be here soon! Come on mom, can you help me clear these things away? Dad, can you put that cup of coffee down and help us?

Steve

This is my house. I shouldn't have to bend over backwards and clean for anybody else.

Monica

Fine. Just sit there then.

Steve

You watch your tone with me. (To wife.) Bring me the paper from the living room.



Peggy

Which one dear?

Steve

It doesn't matter. I'm in the mood for a little entertainment.

Peggy

Ok.

Monica

Mom, you're supposed to be helping me.

Peggy

I'll be right back. (Exits.)

Steve

What's taking him so long? Didn't he say he'd be here by 3:30?

Monica

Yeah. But it's only about 3:15.

Steve

That's exactly my point. A real man always arrives twenty to thirty minutes early.

Monica

You're just anxious.

Steve

Why would I be anxious? It's not like he's good enough for you.

Monica

You haven't even met him yet.

Steve

I don't need to. No one's good enough for you.

Monica

Okay dad.

Steve

Don't okay me... Listen to what I'm saying.

Peggy

(Enters and hands Steve his magazine) Don't be so harsh dear.

Steve

Peggy, we're trying to have a conversation here.

Peggy

Sorry... I was just trying to-

Steve

Peggy!

Peggy

(Silence)

Monica

... I just want things to run smoothly, that's all.

Steve

As oppose to what?

Monica

I'm not trying to say anything bad I'm just-

Steve

As oppose to what?

Monica

I'm just saying. I want things to be normal around here.

Steve

What do you mean? Things are normal, (beat) we're your typical American family.

Monica

(Silence.)

Keith

(Enters walks to fridge.) I just had the worst case of runs ever! Since when do bananas do that to a person? Got damn!

Steve

Watch your mouth boy.

Keith

Yeah, yeah. (To sister.) What up big sis?

Monica

What are you up to now Keith? Why aren't you dressed? Shawn will be here soon.

Keith

Chill-ax. I'm just grabbing a quick snack. (Grabs a baggie full of eye balls out the fridge and sits down at table).

Peggy

Keith, I really don't want you eating anything until Shawn gets here.

Keith

Oh come on ma, please? I'm hungry.

Peggy

Okay, okay. Just a few.

Monica

Oh come on mom! Stop 'em from eating that in front me.

Peggy

Take the matter up with your father.

Monica

Dad, Make 'em stop.

Keith

(Grabs salt shaker. Sprinkles some salt on an eyeball) I haven't even done anything (pops eyeball into mouth) ... yet.

Monica

You know I don't like it when you guys do that stuff in front of me.

Keith

Oh give me a break. I don't see what the big deal is about. If you close your eyes (beat) they taste just like grapes.

Monica

Oh my God, ill.

Keith

(Sprinkles salt on another eyeball.) Big 'ol jumbo grapes!

Monica

Mom!

Keith

(Pops into mouth.) Juicy jumbo grapes.

Monica

Dad!

Keith

Then when you sink your teeth into them like this (he demonstrates with mouth open squirting eyeball juice on the table) they make a little pop sound.

Peggy

Oh Keith, look at the mess you've made.

Steve

(Looking down at paper.) Leave your sister alone Keith.

Keith

And if you want to see something really really cool... (Takes eyeball from mouth turns it inside out) see, look at the shiny bluish purple color.

Monica

Hello? Is anyone like, going to make him stop?

Steve

(Looks up from paper.) Keith, if I have to tell you one more time-

Keith

I was just trying to show her the beauty of things. (Pops remaining eyeball back in mouth)

Steve

Ok well that's enough.

Peggy

And we've told you about playing with your food-

Steve

And having some respect for the dead.

Peggy

We raised you better than that, Keith.

Keith

Okay... I'm sorry.

Monica

And you better be.

Keith

You see? Why couldn't she just leave it alone? I would be wrong if I-

Steve

Alright, alright. Hurry up now. Get changed, Shawn'll be here soon.

Keith

I'll get you back.

Steve

To your room Keith. (Keith exits)

Monica

(Points to cake holder) Mom, can you please get rid of that?

Peggy

I just baked this cake.

Monica

Look at this cake and tell me you don't see anything wrong with it.

Peggy

Umm... too much frosting?

Steve

Not enough frosting?

Monica

You're telling me you see nothing wrong with the fingers sticking out the sides of the cake?

Peggy

(Short pause.) I suppose your right. (Looks at cake, takes a finger out removes wedding ring and replaces the finger in cake.) Is this better sweetie?

Monica

You guys have to be kidding me! I'm having company do ya'll understand that? It didn't seem logical to you that you'd have to take all the fingers out the cake?

Keith

(Pops head in) When no lady finger cookies, one must improvise.

Steve

Keith to your room!

Keith

Okay, okay. I'll leave for real now. (Exits)

Steve

Where is this young man? I have a golf game planned after he leaves.

Peggy

Well, I think I'm going to change my blouse.

Steve

And I'm going to the bathroom. (Exits)

Peggy

Sweetie, be a dear and take the chicken out the freezer to defrost (beat) think I'll make that tonight for dinner. (Exits)

Monica

(Sits at table with head in hands. After a few seconds she walks over to the freezer and opens it) William? William is that you? Like (short pause) how in the hell did you end up in my freezer? (Pause) Don't act like you don't hear me talking to you. I see your ears in the Ziploc bag right there next to your head. Can you hear me? (Leans in closer to freezer.) What about now? Can you hear me now? Did mom put you here? No... no it had to be dad. (Beat) Was it dad? I bet it was dad, he never did like you. Don't take it to heart though. He doesn't like anybody I bring home. (Beat) Even the one coming in a few minutes. Oh, William you were always a good listener and I'm going to admit that I still had feelings for you after you left me (beat) for my best friend. You know, I haven't seen her since you went missing. (Short pause) Shit, William! If you were still alive, I would have taken you back. We would still be together, (beat) you would love me, (beat) you wouldn't cheat on me anymore (beat) dad would like you-

Keith

(Clears throat) Talking to dead bodies again?

Monica

(Slams freezer shut and drops chicken) Shit Keith! You scared me.

Steve

(Enters) No cursing in my house! Keith, to your room.

Keith

But dad it wasn't me.

Steve

Go to your room Keith.

Keith

(Exits) God! I'm always excluded from the family! You know, that's

what they said triggered Ronnie F. Norton's crimes. His eating people (beat) and his family and stuff!

Steve

Keith, make me tell you one more time!

Keith

Okay, I'll leave. (Exits)

Monica

I'm going to my room to call Shawn. (Exits)

Peggy

(Enters.) Good. I'll put the sandwiches out.

Steve

I don't see why you're so chipper.

Peggy

Because our little girl is growing up, and I like this one.

Steve

I just hope this one knows how to act.

Peggy

I've been meaning to talk to you about that...

Steve

About what exactly?

Peggy

Well, she came to me the other day-

Steve

And?

Peggy

She knows.

Steve

About Mike?



Peggy

Well, I don't know if she knows about Mike. But, I know for a fact she knows what happen to William.

Steve

How do you know?

Peggy

(Pause.) Because I do.

Steve

Well, I don't know how. We've been hiding the body pieces in the cellar. Have any idea?-

Peggy

No (beat) I don't. Do you feel... bad sometimes? You know, like after we umm... do it?

Steve

My family's got to eat. I do what I have to do to put food on the table. I'm a good father.

Peggy

Yes you are.

Steve

And husband...

Peggy

Better than any other man I've known.

Steve

So, no. I don't feel bad.

Peggy

You know, she could have brought home worst men than the ones we killed.

Steve

Oh really? What's worst than a cheater?

Peggy

I haven't eaten you yet have I?

Steve

(Silence.)

Peggy

What's worst than a cheater is someone who has kids or been in jail.  
(Pause walks over to window) or someone like us.

Steve

What's that suppose to mean?

Peggy

Nothing...

Steve

(Short pause.) Or somebody black.

Peggy

(Turns around and faces Steve.) What?

Steve

What's worse than a cheater is somebody black.

Peggy

That's not how we raised our daughter.

Steve

Damn right.

Peggy

That's not what I mean. We didn't raise our daughter to act like how you're acting now.

Steve

Don't tell me you'd be okay with that.

Peggy

I most certainly am.

Steve

What did I marry?

Peggy

A cannibal. What did I marry? Since when do you have a problem with black people?

Steve

I don't... I just don't want one of them, dating one of my children-

Peggy

Anyway... I just think that we should broaden our horizons.

Steve

What are you saying?

Peggy

I'm saying we should stop killing Monica's ex-boyfriends... it could be linked back to us somehow.

Steve

(Short pause.) No, we're too careful for that.

Peggy

Well, I'm getting bored with our choices. I'm choosing the next one. And you can guarantee that it won't be anybody who's dated our daughter.

Steve

(Puts paper down.) Oh, so you're running things now?

Peggy

(Walks over to table.) Aren't I always when no one's looking?

Steve

(Silence.)

Monica

(Enters.) I got bad news... he won't be able to make it.

Steve

He's an hour late and he's just now letting you know.

Monica

Oh please. It's only 3:30.

Steve

Well I've told you, a man's clock runs on different time.

Keith

Is it safe to come down now?

Peggy

Yes dear. But, Shawn won't be able to make it today.

Monica

(Door bell rings.) I'll get it. (Exit and returns with Shawn)

Keith

Look who came to... lunch.

Monica

Shawn this is everyone. Everyone this is Shawn.

Peggy

Nice to meet you again Shawn, but I thought you weren't coming

Shawn

(Shakes everyone's hands.) Hi everyone. Nice to meet you again as well Mrs. *Canib*. All of you are so kind to invite me over for lunch. Unfortunately, I got called into work on the way here and couldn't get out of it. But, I had these roses I wanted drop off to Monica. Plus, I really wanted to stop by real quick to say hello.

Peggy

Well, that's nice of you. Isn't it Steve? Please have a seat Shawn.

Steve

I'm going to be quite frank with you. I don't like this at all.

Shawn

Don't like what Mr. Canib?

Steve

That fact that you're dating my daughter.

Peggy

Steve, please mine yourself.

Steve

No, you mind yourself! Two men are talking here. You can sit quietly or you can leave.

Peggy

(Silence.)

Shawn

I'm afraid I don't exactly understand what the problem is.

Steve

You're the problem.

Monica

Dad please stop.

Shawn

How am I the problem?

Steve

You're black.

Shawn

(Pause.) Excuse me?

Monica

Okay dad that's enough. (To Shawn) Just ignore him.

Steve

I don't like you because you're black. I don't want you near my daughter.

Monica

Mom!

Steve

She needs to be with someone her own kind. You're not that person. Never will be.

Shawn

Are you serious? (To Monica.) You're dad's racist and you bring me here?

Monica

You don't understand-

Steve

I think you should leave now Shawn.

Monica

Daddy I love him!

Steve

This is just... wrong. What you're doing... it's all wrong. I can't... I can't...

Keith

We're in the position to talk.

Steve

To your room Keith.

Monica

I need a word alone with Shawn.

Steve

So what's that mean? You want me to get out of my own kitchen while my daughter is alone with some-

Keith

Well, it wouldn't be the only time they were alone.

Peggy

That's enough! Now, I've sat quiet for some time and I've just about had enough of all this shit! Steve, you can be the most ignorant person on the fucking earth. And if you can't open your eyes, (beat) and see things for what they really are instead of the way things used to be years ago, how are you teaching our son how to approach situations in the real world? And Keith... Keith if you don't do what your father and I tell you I swear to God almighty I will eat your little ass alive do you understand me?

Keith

Y-yes ma'am.

Peggy

Now, go up to your room and don't you shut your eyelids until I tell you it's okay to blink or I will barbeque your behind, am I clear?

Keith

Yes. (Runs out the room.)

Peggy

And you (points to Steve) meet me in the living room (beat) now!

Steve

(Clears throat) E-excuse me while I umm... handle some business. (Exits.)

Monica

Shawn I'm-

Shawn

No, (beat) don't. We're still fresh in this relationship. I can see myself being with you... but not like this Monica. Never like this.

Monica

What are you saying?

Shawn

Why'd you bring me here?

Monica

We've been together for almost six months-

Shawn

Nah, I don't believe you (beat) why'd you bring me here?-

Monica

I thought it was time.

Shawn

I'm trying to respect you and your home, but it wasn't even like you were defending me.

Monica

I was defending you!

Shawn

You told me to ignore it!

Monica

I-I didn't meant it like that. But their my family I just can't-

Shawn

You just can't what? Choose sides?

Monica

Is that what you want me to do?

Shawn

Those who associate assimilate.

Monica

(Short pause.) That's not always true.

Shawn

Leave with me.

Monica

What?



Shawn

You heard me. If it's not true (short pause) leave with me.

Monica

Don't you have work or something?

Shawn

I don't think you understand what I'm saying. It's either you leave with me or you stay here?

Monica

What about my parents?-

Shawn

You're dads never going to accept us. People like that never do. (Holds out hand.) Are you coming or not?

Monica

(Pause.) Where's the car? (They exit through back door.)

Peggy

(Peggy enters. Steve walks in after her and stands by the window.) You have to talk with her later. Everyone can change Steve. And if you love your daughter... you'd tell her that.

Steve

(Silence.)

Peggy

(Grabs an eyeball bites half of it. Walks up behind Steve and wraps her arms around him.) I love you. (Feeds Steve the other half of the eyeball.

Steve

(Kisses Peggy's hand.) I'm thinking about what you said... I can't afford to lose my daughter over this. Especially since... well... since we're not exactly perfect either. I guess (laughs) I guess we're a minority in some ways as well.

Peggy

Everyone is connected somehow. (Pause.) You know... we're running low on... meat.

Steve

Yeah, I've noticed. Have anyone in mind?

Peggy

Actually... I do. Have you noticed the McDonald's up the block?

Steve

The black couple?

Peggy

Yeah. (Short pause.) Had my eye on 'em for a few months now. What do you think?

Steve

I think... (Short pause.) McDonalds, for dinner, sounds great. (Lights fade.)

# Alexandra Porto

## A Spruce House

There's a hole in the wall,  
an air vent covers it.  
Its presence— known  
only beyond those lines.

The attic stirs and sings,  
an alerting tune wakes  
the house. You are not  
alone, or not *that* alone

The window peeks out  
of its unfinished frame.  
You stretch the curtains past,  
but daylight does not cease.

Hard granite presses up  
against your soles, and  
convinces others that  
the house is, indeed, solid.

The stairs— leveled  
by your slanted grin made  
walking up such a pain.  
The house is now smiling.

When you decide to leave,  
there is no despair. Dust  
particles sweep over  
footsteps on varnished floors.

You turn the knobs right, but  
the water still runs, drips,  
gargling through the pipes.  
It dares to live without you.

## Autobiography of A. Porto

..

A retired actuary, Ms. Porto made her living estimating deaths. Her own death, 654 days too soon (according to her own calculations), occurred Tuesday evening at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Scrabble competition. She was a “G” short of a bingo. Ms. Porto was a loving daughter, granddaughter, aunt, niece, sister, girlfriend, and friend. At the age of seven, she convinced her younger brother there was a “sleepy fairy” and would slip a toy under his pillow if he fell asleep without crying. She, however, did not believe in such things and ripped the beard off the mall Santa Claus on her very first Christmas. In her leisure time, Ms. Porto enjoyed cooking Hungarian food and playing golf. “She could hit the ball straighter than anyone I knew” remembers long-time friend, Jason Hillard. She was an avid collector of turtles and all things “I Love Lucy.” Ms. Porto is survived by her three nieces, two nephews, and her dogs, Max and Stella. Funeral and cremation arrangements not yet finalized.

Amalia Alvarez

Linseed Oils Loosen and Spin

..

Olive green into turquoise— A door opens. Magenta  
love bleeds, swims past the earth's sphere. Limón lips  
kiss sheets of glass. Brush made from strands of wheat.  
Read between the strokes and you can hear the sax making

melody; the woman singing her blues beneath a banana  
leaf full moon. Out of the blackened blue there is lavender.  
One dimension becomes two; a body of scales—

# Madalene Harden

## Boy's Club

..

*"Blue sky or black,  
you preoccupy my horizon."*

—Sylvia Plath

It's a boys club. I work in corporate America and this fact stares me in the face every day— his name is Louis Munoz. Louis stands about 5'11" tall; he has dark brown skin and eyes— a testament to his Latin heritage, with a few extra pounds he is pretty unremarkable looking. After months of training him, getting reprimanded for his devil may care work ethic, and working twice as hard to be sure all the work for our department was complete our boss, Tony, gave him my job. He took away everything I had worked for. He took it away and gave it to a laid back who-gives-a-shit plays on myspace slacker without even a warning. There are differences between us, for example, at the time I was working from 7:30 am until the work was done, usually around 7 or 8 pm, he would work from about 9:15am until 5pm, also I had seven years experience with the company and he had two, and lets not forget I am a woman and he is a man.

It was a December afternoon when I was asked to come into Tony's office and bring Louis with me he wanted to speak to us both. Things had been running exceptionally well in our department for the past few months, and I had been working severe hours due to a change in vendors; therefore, I'm thinking a raise or bonus is coming our way. I walked into my boss' corner office and took one of the seats facing his desk. As we waited for Louis to join us I looked out of the floor to ceiling window overlooking Central Park in Manhattan, while my boss finished typing up an email about golf or something— if it had been work related it would have been my task. I switched my gaze to the man behind the desk he is in his late forties with blue eyes,

dark brown hair with wisps of gray here and there, impeccably dressed in a tailor made suit, and reading glasses perched on his nose. An irritated glance crossed his oh so serious face as he finished his email and turned my way.

“What is Louis doing? Tell him to come in here.” As he finished speaking Louis strolled into the room in his usual I’ll take my time fashion.

“All right, good.” Tony began, “I wanted to talk to you both because the work is too scattered. So, late last night when I was trying to decide who was working on what I came up with these lists, so I knew who to go to for status.”

He handed us each a piece of paper. Without waiting for us to read the lists he began to read them to us.

“Louis, you will be in charge of the following: Opening of all new accounts, dealing with all transfers, entering all account transactions, reconciling all activity, print all daily research, dealing with any account issues for all of our clients, do all reporting, track gains, prep all of the client appointments and prepare the weekly list products and performance, as well as all research.”

Upon finishing the list of Louis’s duties Tony looked up at Louis and although I could hear them talking in the background my rage was making it difficult to register anything they were saying. Ninety percent of what he had just delegated to Louis as his responsibilities was the reason I took the job and worked for my licensing in the first place. What the fuck was left anyway?

“Kate, you will be responsible for scheduling of all appointments, reviews and training classes, maintaining all logs of what goes in and out of the office, make sure all of the forms are up to date and restock when necessary, ordering of all supplies for the office, creating and maintaining the client files, and dealing with the client gifts and holidays.”

My brain was screaming— what the fuck just happened? Is this a joke? All right I had to calm down and breathe before I lost my mind and acted like a complete psycho. I was so twisted my eye began to twitch. As my eyes lifted from the paper I tried with all of my might not to glare at the prick sitting behind the desk. He did not meet my eyes.

“You guys know that everyone has different skill sets, and” he added looking down at his hands as he spoke, “Louis is no good at handling things like logs and calendars.”

Tony looked me full in the face at the end of this little speech.

This was his way of trying to calm me down and fix the blow he had just dealt me. I don't know what came over me but I began to laugh—hysterically. Was he kidding me? Did he think I was so stupid that I would believe Louis not capable of making lists or writing names under the proper dates and times? Or that I would then believe that instead we should give him the clients' money to manage? I choked down my nervous laughter and waved it off as nothing with the flick of my wrist. I wanted to get up and shake my breasts in his face to let him know I knew exactly what this was— a boys club.

After calming myself down I looked at Tony, there were so many things I wanted to say but nothing would come out. Oh shit, now I could feel it the inevitable tears of frustration that were dying to come out. Fuck, I can't cry now that will just solidify everything they believe about women in the workplace. I couldn't even defend myself for fear of crying.

"Fine, whatever" was all I could manage to get out. I walked out of the office without waiting to be dismissed, grabbed my pack of smokes and lighter, and headed for the elevator.

As I stood outside smoking my much-needed cigarette I wondered how I had got here. I know that sometimes the work got backed up but I was doing ninety percent of it. Something had to be going on that I was unaware of. It was time to snoop. So when I returned to the office I logged into my boss' email and began to read the emails from Tony to Louis and vice versa. What I found was not so much surprising as it was shocking. There were some pretty interesting emails naming me as ineffective on projects that I was not even working on. War had begun with a sneak attack. What really pissed me off about the whole thing was that when I was training Louis I blocked some of the rightful reprimands that should have been his. At the time, I thought he was pretty harmless. Even though there was no way for me to confront the issue of the emails without confessing the breach of confidentiality I was satisfied that I now knew what I was dealing with.

Since that day I have been waiting like a cat crouched in an attack position. I trained him. I know what he is, and is not capable of. I also know that he will do as little as is humanly possible. This behavior has become my ally; in fact, I have encouraged it.

I've been on the losing side of office games before. It's unavoidable having worked in a few of the biggest companies in Manhattan over the past ten years to battle it out a time or two. Although, I have not always come out the winner, I have no intention



of letting a barely shaves, doesn't give a shit, twenty-something-man-boy, beat me this time. Obviously my boss is no longer to be trusted, and so I am forced to seek allies more powerful than he is.

Our branch manager my boss' boss, Margaret, is a huge representative of women in the workforce. There is no doubt she must have won similar battles herself. Knowing I need someone to do for me what Tony is doing for Louis it seems perfectly logical that I should readjust my work habits to impress her. I have been slowly becoming more and more her support when it comes to our department. I make sure I don't miss a single step when her calls arrive. Even if the task is something Louis is supposed to handle I tell her it is my responsibility and get it done immediately. When asked who runs the Equities department Louis might say he does, Tony would say he does, but if you asked Margaret she would tell you that I do.

Another thing I have on my side is that Louis doesn't know as much as Tony thinks he does. So I wait and listen and after he gives people incorrect information, I call them back over and correct it. This exercise is especially fun when my boss is standing there. It becomes increasingly hard to keep the smirk from my face.

It is exceptionally pleasing to work nine to five and leave at the end of a pretty easy day. As he struggles to get his work done and keep some semblance of a life. I had been there just months before only I was supposed to have help and did not get it. So now in my spare time at work (for my workload is about half of what it used to be) I look for issues or problems with the work that Louis does, and bring it to my boss' attention; then I correct it. I suppose I could do the nice thing and bring it to Louis's attention let him fix it, but I'm not going to. I did not work to get that department into the best shape it has ever been in, so that he could reap the reward.

So my war tactics have given me an amusement I never knew in work before. For example, if Louis is supposed to get something done quickly I distract him so it takes him longer than it normally would. I can usually keep it going until my boss actually comes out of his office to ask where the work is. If he doesn't know something I get the information before he does and give it to my boss. It is little things like this that get me through the day.

Little by little my boss is breaking the list by asking me for more and more of the items that were delegated to Louis. Louis thinking this is just going to lead to some help for him has no objections. By this time next year I will have his job. The funny thing

is I no longer want this job and have every intention of leaving. Before I go however, I am determined to win this war. I will break this particular boys club.

# Richard Fedey

## Dust

..

Smell it burn every time the heat  
cycles on: I want to say it's like hair  
singd by a blow drier on too high,  
books on a bonfire, lit cotton,  
a hit of cremation. None are so pleasant.  
I think it was on *M\*A\*S\*H* (Colonel Potter  
was always good for a gem of wisdom  
wrapped in a folksy cliché) I heard  
*if you love someone, you've got trouble:  
you either stop loving or love 'em more.*  
Right before Klinger stayed in Korea.  
I follow a gaggle of poets V-ing  
(I'm convinced we're all in love  
with one futile cause or another).

## Ashed

..

Along the promenade the wake  
of passing ships will wear  
the rocks long after we've gone.

The world is resilient  
like a stripper: pretty  
under neon lights,  
razed by morning.

Even the foam is black

where the harbor breaks.

What do you say we go  
someplace more alive?  
Some place with more than  
the charm of a dried-out  
forest waiting for a fire.

You have a cigarette?  
In war, every drag makes you  
a target for snipers; in love,  
the ashes blow back into your eyes,  
blistering if you don't tear them out.

I saw, once, phosphenes  
(knuckles ground into my eyes,  
trying to tear the ashes out)  
like shrinking into a black spot  
on ivory dominoes.

The smell of something  
I cannot name as you  
would name a perfume,  
or season, pressed itself over  
my nose and mouth:  
an anesthetic. Glamour, I name it:  
the spell of one versed  
in the senses.

The night is too ancient  
to be comforting:  
it moves like an old  
couple, hand in hand,  
with no memory  
of where they're walking to  
or each other's names,  
yet still, somehow, in love.



*Lima, Peru*, taken by Michael Diaz

# Stephanie Soriano

## Create a City

I have created a world for you.  
The long drawn out plans have come to pass.  
Set in motion centuries before you or me.  
But it is my world!  
Because I believe in the principle.  
Four walls that you will never see.  
Ceilings you can look through.  
Gigantic structures that will reverse the notion of natural beauty.  
Cutting the sky; allowing you to see the aesthetics of the machines  
That will be at your beck and call.  
This world will swaddle you, wrap you so tightly.  
You will have no need to move.  
I'll send you images; vivid and bright.  
So you can see the world, content in your box.  
I've pushed all the grass and trees,  
the inconvenient animals,  
set them in the center.  
So you can visit there.  
See history, the disease that once marred the landscape.  
Each day you'll look and feel the coldness.  
The cement and glass.  
Sterile and clean.  
You will never be happy.  
Compliance will be cherished.  
Strong incentives only permitted.  
Each day you'll work.  
Long hours to show your dependence on me.  
Occasionally I will give you bonuses like sneakers or clothes.  
I will guide you through it.  
Watch you each day.

Tracking records at grocery stores and movements on metro cards,  
Steps up and down but I swear your pace will be constant.  
A beating sound in this world,  
drowned out by the traffic I have clogged the streets with.

# Maria Ricci

## Gray

..

The faces stand out,  
purple, yellow, green striped.  
Patterns run between  
circle, lines, swirls  
make up the details.

Try to focus on the center image,  
your eyes play games.  
The faces twist, teeth grin  
as if you were asking a question.  
Blink.

Images double before you.  
It's never ending.  
Patterns continue,  
faces multiply, left side, right side  
Step away.



I imagine that yes is the only living thing.

— E. E. Cummings

# Kathryn Hennessy

## Somewhere a Clock is Ticking

My best friend killed herself yesterday afternoon. She had threatened to do it for some time, but I just never took her seriously. Michelle was smart, hilarious and kind; she was also an idiot who let her insecurities get the better of her. Too paranoid for her own good and too quick to jump to conclusions she downed a bottle of prescription sleeping aids and slowly drifted off into her final naptime. In the past, the one thing that stopped her from ending her life was the fear that her parents would find her lifeless form strewn across her wooden bedroom floor, so I found her instead. I wanted my *Lost* DVDs back and threw open her stubborn bedroom door to find her face down on an old issue of *Cosmopolitan*. Her pale right cheek frozen over an airbrushed photo of Jessica Alba and “10 Tips to Make Your Man Scream.” It’s not exactly how I pictured her demise, or anyone’s, really, who wanted a little bit of dignity. But, I guess that option gets thrown out of the window when you reach the point of killing yourself. Johnny Cash’s cover of “Hurt” played over on a loop from her Apple laptop as the sun filtered shadows in through her window.

I debated who to call first: the police or Robert, the man whom the conclusion jumping and ultimate suicide surrounded. Although, he hadn’t the faintest idea about any of what had transpired over the past three months.

“911, what’s your emergency?” or “Hi, you’ve reached Bobby’s cell; please leave a message after the tone.”

A grown man wanting to be called *Bobby* made me laugh, and then I realized Michelle was still stuck to Jessica Alba. 911 it was then.

“Uh, hi, umm my friend killed herself,” I didn’t know how else to phrase it and I hadn’t realized as tears trickled down my face. I tried to hold it together. No point if I completely lost it then.

The 911 operator's voice was vacant and droll, like she'd gotten used to this type of call, "Did you check for a pulse?" I could almost picture he filing her nails on the other end.

"Yes, ma'am I did that when I found her body on the floor and an open bottle of Tylenol PMs," I tried to remain calm, but her question irritated me.

"How many did she take?" was the next question as if she were reading off a prepared list.

"Fuck. All of them, I guess. I'm not Rain Man the goddamn bottle is empty and she's not breathing! Just get an ambulance over here!" I slammed my phone shut and threw it against the wall and just missed breaking her full-length mirror.

I took in a ragged breath and sat on the edge of her unmade bed; a shamble of green sheets and dirty socks and took a few breaths. I rubbed my right hand over my face and slammed her laptop closed with my left; I'd had enough of Johnny Cash and then regretted it, because the house became too quiet. I heard a few children's joyful giggles from outside.

"Where's the fuckin' ambulance!" I yelled aloud, halfheartedly expected a response, but Michelle didn't move. It wasn't a sick joke.

I never thought I'd develop a crush on a Professor, and I especially never thought my best friend would take that crush and develop an infatuation. Robert was stupid, though, he just thought we wanted to get into his graduate program; never mind his pants.

It started off like any other first day of a semester, the class was annoyed their summer was interrupted and already dreaded the forthcoming papers. The word *midterm* caused a few to twitch. I was sitting next to Michelle in the back row, left corner-playing tic-tac-toe in her spiraled notebook when he walked in the door. Professor Robert James, or Mr. Two First Names, had dirt brown hair and even dirtier eyes; his complexion was tinted, I almost wanted to ask him if his liver was failing, but something inside of me constricted and my heart beat a little faster. I turned towards Michelle and her green eyes followed his every move. His physical attributes normally wouldn't be on my radar, or Michelle's, for she liked the blonde haired, blue eyed, muscular types. Professor Robert James, while it looked like he took care of himself, was anything but muscular. Long and lanky, he looked like a big dork, who even chuckled at his own jokes. Unfortunately, we both found it adorable, but we never let the other know.

"Never name your kid a verb; or let him be called by one," I was exhausted from just sitting in his class, listening as Professor Bobby ran off the list of exciting books we would read and papers we would write.

"What are you talking about?" Michelle dug through her wallet as she looked for change to get a bottle of water

"Bob, Skip, Dodge, Neal. Professor Bob is a little too laidback for my tastes." He was also smart, dorky, kind of funny, and not too shabby to look at once I stared at him for a while. Three of my five senses were pleased, now all I needed to do was get close enough to smell him and maybe taste.

Michelle ignored me, something she started to do over the weeks that followed. Every time I mentioned him she clammed up.

"Stop. It's not funny, Gabby," she chastised. "We should go get that book he was talking about and start reading."

My eyebrows rose involuntarily as she walked ahead of me. Michelle put off all of her work until the very last minute and got a perverse pleasure in the panic of procrastination. I groaned and followed remembering the joyful look on Professor Bobby's face.

*"Your midterm paper will be a 6-10 page response to Candide by Voltaire," he grinned excitedly as his hands rubbed together in an evil genius-like manner.*

*Some bulky kid in the back moaned, "Sweet Jesus."*

I had to agree with the bulky boy. Professor Bobby had this idea that if he loved it, you'd love it. No matter how mind numbingly dull it may be, but I found his interest funny in that adorable way.

Over the beginning weeks of the semester I started to look for any flaw to knock this crush I had developed out of me and wondered what exactly Michelle thought she was doing wearing those low cut tops.

"You realize you look suspicious wearing that hooker top in October, right?" I whispered to her in the back of class while we were supposed to be doing a close reading of a handout.

She just rolled her green eyes and ignored me. As we were leaving his lecture I continued to poke fun at him.

I made fun of the way he walked; I made fun of his hand gestures; I even made fun of the bag he carried his papers in, but she just looked more and more irritated. "What's your problem, Gabby? You find any reason to talk about him, have a crush on the

Professor?" She had stopped abruptly in the middle of the walkway and stood with her hands on her hips waiting my reply.

"What? No! I-I... why are you wearing slutty clothes to class? Isn't he a bit above your age bracket?" I had to turn this on her quick. We stared at one another for a few moments. Her green eyes beamed with, "Back off!" I'm fairly positive the only thing my hazel eyes said was, "What the fuck?"

She huffed, turned on her heels before I could respond with anything. I didn't know what her problem was, but as I walked back to my car I tried to rid myself of my problem. I mentally tried to talk myself out of my little crush, "Professor Robert lives with his mother; he's thirty-five ish and he lives in his parents' basement eating Ramen Noodles for dinner every night. Professor Robert is thirty-fiveish and I'm twenty-twoish." When that didn't work I'd focus on the fact that he called himself Bobby and since that always irked me so I could sleep stress-free.

Right before the midterms I caught Michelle as she flirted with Professor Bobby.

"I'm just so confused as to what's occurring in this chapter. Could you help me out, please?" She put on really awful puppy dog eyes and rested her right hand on her cleavage and her left on his shoulder.

"Of course, just let me get a couple of things first. Why don't you take out your book and show me where you're having difficulty. I'll be right back," Professor Bobby pushed himself out of his desk chair and made his way out into the hall. I didn't react quick enough to move from my spot across the way where I looked on, "Oh, hello Gabriella."

"Hey," I tried to sound nonchalant but I fairly certain the crimson shade of my cheeks gave away my awkwardness.

"Did you need help as well?" He smiled and I briefly caught a whiff of coffee breath.

"Ah, no. I'm good; thanks. I just need to talk to Michelle," I pointed behind him to where Michelle was frozen as she glared at me.

"Okay, then have a good weekend," he waved his right hand like a defecated pageant queen and walked down the corridor.

I just nodded and turned toward Michelle, "What was that?" I was determined to find out why she openly flirted with him. "Guarantee you an A if you suck his co-"

“Enough!”

I felt a little bit sorry I got a tad jealous and brought up her past sexual experiences. See, Michelle had this skewered vision of herself. She just saw the flaws, so in order to make boys like her in high school she'd spread her legs for any guy that paid her the tiniest bit of attention. They'd then leave her once they got what they were looking for. I sensed she was trying to do just that with Professor Bobby.

“Look, he's on the committee that accepts students into the graduate program here, and he said he'd help me improve my paper. I also told him about you. Besides I do actually need help with this book,” she held up *Candide* and scrunched her nose in disgust.

“You did?” I tried not to sound too excited and ignored her sincerity that she needed help.

“Yeah. I told him about that great paper on Henry VIII you did last semester, and he said to bring you along as well to help improve yours,” she bit off a piece of a granny smith apple all proud of herself. Michelle always had one thing I didn't: balls. I let things fester and never come to a boil; she let everything spill over.

“Bring me along where?” I was confused by the sudden turn of events.

“For coffee. We have to e-mail him our papers beforehand so he can read them and then we'll discuss it all over coffee.” Everything was settled then and Michelle was still dressing too slutty for the amount of sincerity she showed in wanting nothing but help from Professor Bobby.

“Alrighty then. See ya later,” I didn't wait for a reply and left.

Her journal. It was all over her journal. I didn't mean to read it, but I didn't know what her Spanish notebook looked like so I started to flip through a few until I saw *Hola!* Instead I saw Professor Robert James encased in a big heart. I was shocked, intrigued, and amused, so I kept flipping. Pages and pages were written on this man. How cute he looked when he chewed on a pencil or a list of the funniest jokes, and in the left hand corner of October 13<sup>th</sup>: 36-27= 15yrs. *Not too bad.*

“Holy shit,” I muttered as I kept reading.

I couldn't believe it. I was trying to stop from blushing when called on in class and Michelle was making wedding plans. I kept reading; forgetting my intended purpose of perusing her desk. The pages of self-loathing were long gone, and her displeasure with her

weight slowly melted into, "Bobby is ever so dreamy." She ignored my questions to cover her own ass, and then took my remarks over his walk into two whole paragraphs on the adorableness that is Bobby. I couldn't contain my laughter and kept reading. She always did this with the other boys; she'd be head over heels for a few weeks and then when they left her I was left cleaning up the mess. She never did understand that she was so much better than all that other crap. No matter how hard I insisted to the contrary.

"Do you think my back fat shows in this top?" Michelle breezed into the room and looked into the full-length mirror to examine herself.

"What the fuck is back fat?" I laughed, but it wasn't at her, rather it wasn't at her during that exact moment.

"What are you reading? Give that back! Get out!"

Too many commands in her screeching tone I didn't know which to do first. Michelle yanked me from the rickety desk chair and shoved me out of the room.

I didn't see or speak to her for two days. I tried calling her and even stopped by her house, but it ended the same. The next time we met was at the coffee talk meeting with Professor Bobby.

Michelle looked like she hadn't slept in those two days, and the way she was tearing into the sticky bun I knew this was the after-effect of, "He doesn't want me anymore," but I couldn't understand why this was all happening for Professor Bobby. Her green eyes kept shifting between Professor Bobby and myself, like she expected me to say, "Well I don't think England would have had a split from the Catholic Church if Henry VIII was given a son, who survived childhood, from Catherine of Aragon. Oh, by the way, Michelle wants to bear your fruit."

She wasn't paying much attention, so Robert began to focus on just my paper. A cappuccino and another sticky bun later she faked an important text message on her cell phone. Bobby, as he insisted we call him that afternoon, was very concerned; I knew better. I continued my meeting and began to get excited about revising my paper. We talked a bit about the different universities I could apply to, in order to continue my education He flipped through a few notes when I looked out the window and into the parking lot. Michelle was sitting across the lot in her car, just staring at us. She caught my eye and quickly sped out of the lot. She avoided me for another few days, and I could feel her anger trickle down my back, as she sat behind me chomping on something that came in a noisy

plastic wrapper, whenever I answered a question in his class. I hated when she got like this over a boy, but now that boy was a man and the infatuation a bit more serious.

“You’re becoming a little too *Fatal Attraction* for my taste, so why don’t you grow up and talk to me?” I had had enough of her shit and confronted her in the parking lot after class. Michelle shoved some M&M’s into her mouth and tried to move around me. “Why are you eating that? You haven’t had candy in two years.”

“I fell off the wagon,” she bumped me out of the way and got into the driver’s seat.

“Is this all really because I read your journal? Look, if it makes you feel any better I had a bit of a crush on him too.” I tried to make it sound as if it wasn’t a big deal, but all she did was grip the steering wheel and breathe faster. My cell phone rang and I glanced at the screen, “Prof. Bobby,” was there and I muted the phone and shoved it back into my pocket.

“Is that him?”

“Yeah. We’re supposed to be meeting now to discuss my paper.” I remained calm because for the first time in about a week we were speaking.

“Well, better hurry up and go work on *your* thesis,” Michelle started the engine and tried to slam the door shut.

“Don’t get bitchy just because you messed up. I didn’t make you act this way. Why are you acting this way?” This was going to end today, I was sick of it.

“You wouldn’t understand.” She bit her bottom lip, “Besides you two seem to be getting along real well. Hugging and kissing the Professors now, since when did you get so brave?” Her face contorted like she was trying her damndest to be upset, but her eyes just looked like I kicked her puppy.

I was about to ask her what the hell she was talking about when she pushed my arm out of the way and slammed the door shut. As she sped away I looked down and saw a few scattered blue and orange M&M’s and wondered why this man was making her act this way. Sure, he was different from the ones she pulled this with in the past. He’s much older for one. He’s educated, funny, and doesn’t know what she used to look like, so for her it was an opportunity to get someone to know her for the person she was now. I hadn’t actually heard those words from her lips, but it’s the only thing that made sense in my head. I wanted to let her cool off, and I still didn’t know what she meant about hugging and kissing him. It took me



almost the whole drive home to figure out what she was talking about.

Two days ago during my meeting with Professor Bobby he had received a phone call that his next book was being published, something on Queen Elizabeth I, and got really excited. It was the farthest thing from sexual, but he hugged and kissed me on the cheek quick. I was convinced if I wasn't there he would have grabbed the coat rack, but Michelle's vision was so screwed up by that point. I needed to set her straight, or at the very least get some of my things back before this dragged into a bigger and longer fight. I made a quick u-turn and headed towards her house.

I knew she had my *Lost* DVDs but couldn't remember anything else. I just wanted to have a valid excuse to barge in and set her straight. I had prepared a list of things to yell at her on the ride over: He doesn't want me and I don't want him like that. You're his student so there's a bit of a pickle for you. You need to stop this shit with thinking the only way you can get someone decent is by putting out. You're so much better than all of that.

When I arrived at her house I didn't see her blue Honda and parked in front of her house. Her front door was never locked, unless her family went on vacation so I went inside. They thought they lived in an episode of *Leave It To Beaver* or something. The first floor was quiet and an open bag of cheese doodles were on the kitchen table, so I knew Michelle was home. I stood quiet for a moment. That's when I heard Johnny Cash playing upstairs.

# Daren Bastedo

## Anti-Hero

..

There's nothing super about this man.  
Never truly loved by another, he hides his hideous hands inside.  
A self-mutilated man, he scissored seven fingertips off,  
One each year, from 27-33, keeping one thumb, and both middles.  
Depressed and distressed from a near death a few years prior,  
Drugs almost took him, pill paste pumped from his stomach.  
A few reds, some yellows, and blues, and a shitload of booze.  
He sings to himself now, and remembers the time,  
When he wrestled walruses for respect.  
Known as "The Walrus Wrangler", he once pinned two at once.  
The ladies loved his leg-locks, this master of the grapple.  
The crowd went crazy beneath the tented ceiling,  
Cheered crazily every time he entered the ring, robed in red,  
"I am the walrus" sounding from the speakers.  
With success came the drugs and he fell in a flash.  
This once "Straight A" student, this once handsome man.  
The three-fingered, disfigured drunkard sits alone.

David Anderson

## The Future of Human Rights

Globalization is an inevitable trend in today's society. The world's capitalist economies fuel the need for international relations and trade. No longer are countries producing goods for themselves and their close neighbors. Products are being bought and sold across continents and thousands of miles. Companies have become international and may have offices in one country, manufacturing in another, and still have products being sold in yet another.

Corporations become so vast that they become bigger than the governments of the countries they have operations in. Large banks may provide loans to a government which in turn provides extensive influence into the political sphere for the said bank. Corporations may also have exclusive rights in a country to sell a certain product or use a natural resource which produces vast, unchallenged profits. In third world countries where political structures are not solid or mature, or just not protective of their citizens, human rights abuses can and will occur. Corporations outsource jobs to these countries in order to cut costs and raise profits which journalist Bruce Weinstein has noted (1). These countries may or may not have minimum wage laws, local unions, or provisions for a safe work environment. Corporations can thus take advantage of an underdeveloped or third world country for its own increase in profits. The same companies also reap the natural resources at marginal expense without regard to the environment.

A key aspect of corporations is that a monopoly of a resource or product is the end goal. Corporations will band together in cartels or syndicates to create these monopolies and induce price-fixing, this provides large profits at the expense of the consumer. These corporations may also be contained within a central enterprise which has holdings in various other corporations across an industry or industries. This combination of production is the crux which provides

enormous profits. Almost one hundred years ago, Marxist economist Hilferding noted, "Combination levels out the fluctuations of trade and therefore assures to the combined enterprises a more stable rate of profit" (239).

Third world countries are where corporations will outsource their operations in order to lower expenses. Speaking about Vietnam, journalist Luz Claudio writes, "Workers in traditional trade villages earn US\$60 per month, sometimes less, as the national minimum wage is US\$38 per month" (A156). These people are paid extremely low wages and do not even work in factories, they work in villages. "A study... showed that only 3% of the enterprises in the region implemented guidelines for injury prevention" (A157). This proves that the enterprises are not willing to protect the workers so they can save even more money. It will be many years later and many more people injured before health codes are in effect to make a difference.

Corporatism occurs when either industrial or professional corporations become equal in power to governments and effectively overshadow over them. Compared to a community of people under a traditional form of representation, Corporatism allows a profit-driven company to successfully exercise control in the same jurisdiction as a government would (Merriam-Webster). By allowing a corporation to become a viable structure of influence in a society, the citizens of said society cannot govern themselves at all and are now worse off than under a traditional democratic form of representation.

Globalization will force democratic countries to become corporatist. Smaller governments cannot compete with large multinational enterprises. The large, developed nations of the world can still be influenced by cartels, such as OPEC, even though this is a cartel of governments which have corporatist influences. By effectively controlling the resources, companies usurp the government.

OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) is a cartel based around a very large monopoly of oil. The United States is considered a world power but is influenced by the cartel's decisions nonetheless (Samuelson). This concentration of power, or dominance, is a foreboding look into the future of state economies and governments.

When cartels can influence advanced, developed countries, the balance of power in the world will shift. Countries that have vast raw materials will come to the forefront of world politics and decision making. The power bloc's created after World War Two have

already disintegrated and reformed on a basis of controlled resources. The European Union has created a so-called "cartel" out of the nations on the European continent for their own benefit; this is the same concept as to why corporations create cartels and syndicates.

The people in the villages of Vietnam, or any Third-World country, are suffering the most from this Corporatist Syndication. The people are used for their low wages, virtually no benefits, and daft health provisions (Claudio, A156). In order to protect the people, a government structure must be utilized that can combat corporatist tendencies and provide for the welfare of its citizens.

A singularity will occur that will rid the world of Corporatism. However, the elitist class will not want to lose their place in the world pyramid of control and the writer Soros admits, "Rulers are reluctant to relinquish their power-- they usually need to be pushed" (180). Bloodshed will occur because we need to destroy the rulers and their empires. However, before this global civil revolution occurs, another World War must begin.

Corporatism will divide the world into two separate alliances; one of resource abundant nations, and one of resource starved nations. If we look back ten thousand years, a similar disparity between humanity was created when agriculture took root. There were hunter-gatherers and another species that began to settle down on the land, I will call them "settlers". The hunter-gatherers did not build permanent structures, nor have many power relationships occurring within their society. However the "settlers" had a distinct relationship going on within their society: whoever controlled the food controlled the wealth, and whoever controlled the wealth, also controlled the power (Manning 38).

This ten thousand year old history is a foreshadowing of the war to come. The "settlers" ultimately pushed the hunter-gatherers off the land through a violent war, taking control over most of Europe (40). The only difference between then and now is that the so-called "settlers" are the corporatist states of the world, and the hunter-gatherers are the Third-world countries. As the hunter-gatherers did not need to settle down, they could not be controlled by the "settlers", so they were wiped out systematically.

The Third-world countries of today can survive without being put into a subordinate relationship with the West. Yet, control is the ultimate goal, and as our Third-world countries do not need to be controlled in order to survive, the objective will be to wipe them out, just as the "settlers" wiped out the hunter-gatherers. The hunter-

gatherers could not easily control their own populations as the "settlers" could because their own source of food varied and moved (40). Agriculture ushered in an easy way to control people by controlling their food source.

This division will lead directly to our next World War, as the nations in the West, the descendants of the first species who settled the land, realize the "uncivilized" countries do not wish to become the next victims of Corporatist Syndication. Not surprisingly, the next World War will be started by the corporatist cartels and governments. This eventually leads us to a unique opportunity to overthrow the yoke of corporatism.

As the fighting commences, decisive points will be centered on strategic resources. The corporatist tendencies stipulate a dependence on these resources for a continuation of the war and will be fought for long and hard. I predict there will be persistent guerrilla warfare on the part of resource starved nations, this will present a bleak psychological outlook for technologically advanced and resource dependent nations (Kramer, 222).

Anti-corporatist warfare will be motivated by a global self-determination that will create a distinct objective among the people. I predict that historical boundaries such as race, religion, and gender will fade into the background as people identify themselves not with petty stereotypes or nation-states, but as humans of the Earth. This same self-determination will later become a key factor in the strength and unity of a new, revolutionary society.

This World War will deteriorate into a drawn out struggle and public opinions in more democratic (corporatist) countries will falter. Governments in these states will lean towards autocratic solutions in order to stay in control and in the war. In these desperate times, corporatism will show its most obvious face to the people of the world, that of an exploitation mechanism determined to control people more and more through resource monopolies.

However once the Earth's natural resources have depleted, there will be no point to this war from a corporatist viewpoint. Governments will topple as the oppressed public of corporatist and autocratic regimes rebel. Civil wars will erupt in many countries. Corporatism cannot live without control of resources; it will starve itself out of existence.

A golden age of humanity will erupt because the current slate of traditional governmental power will be wiped clean. The only option will be a reversion to a communalistic society, one in which no

one entity can control or interpret for the majority or minority of others. Traditional government structure will not exist and cannot exist in this new age because the idea has become obsolete. Power was synonymous with control of resources, but now there are none to control.

I ask for a revolution of government because our democracies and socialist states are built around a tribal (what the “settlers” had) society which creates inequality at the expense of the lower class for the benefit of the upper class. Columnist Burk states that, “The myth of citizenship in liberal democracies is that everyone has equal status” (503). A tribal society is a militaristic one. A military hierarchy creates inequality in order to justify power to the people on top. The people on the bottom can only upset the balance of power when they figure out how to move up the ladder.

The government to be formed in this new age must be based on equality. Pure equality is only achieved when power cannot be brokered for or bought. In a communalistic society, the common people work for themselves and for their community. This kind of attribute allows the community to function as a whole and individually.

This new nation-state would be based upon large numbers of small communities. Cities and urban centers would be discouraged due to their centralized locations and vulnerabilities. Each community would be self-supporting and would require no importation of vital necessities. Local environmental diversity would dictate traditions of food, clothing, etc.

Government itself could be based entirely in cyberspace, as the Internet has proven to be a miraculous tool for communicating with vast numbers of people. Sue Hoye wrote that the Internet is an extremely cost-effective and decentralized format convenient for widespread use (1). Theoretically speaking, every person could have a say in government now. The Internet is decentralized, yet is central to the people who are using it. However, I would like to stress the Internet as a tool to communicate over large distances and disperse information instead of the World Wide Web we have today where most of it is profit oriented. Computers of the future will obviously continue to have an important relationship with the people, but it must be stressed that they must not create separatism within the people.

A central tenet of this new government is the abolishment of private property. In Current Sociology writer Michael Smith asserts

that owning property is equated to having power (574). All property would be public, and free from ownership by anyone. Eminent domain cannot exist because there would be no overriding sovereign who had power to begin with. Information is also free from ownership. It should be noted that information must be free, for if it can owned, there is a creation of power (The Lancet).

In order to keep equality consistent in the government, there will be no formal police or standing military. In absence of traditional police institutions, individual crimes may occur, but will be dealt with at the discretion of the community. In regards to a military, all citizens must also be capable of being soldiers or an equivalent in times of emergency. This provision removes the military hierarchy and instills equal ability in every citizen.

I must state that there cannot be a capital city in the same sense of traditional governments, as London or Tokyo or Madrid are. This kind of power centralized into one place creates vulnerability for the government to be overthrown in ambush. Civil strife and rebellions know where to burn and create chaos. Having a government based not in buildings but, electronically, creates many new aspects that cannot otherwise be found in traditional, power-based societies.

True participation of all people within the country is the prime example of equality being used to express the comments and criticisms of society as a whole. That being said, as the people govern themselves, they have a right to change aspects of their communities not through voting and polls, but through intelligent debate and forums. With complete participation there no longer exists a group of people that are without political knowledge. A governmental awareness takes place and will influence the society towards cautious and more thought-out policies. A true welfare for the people will now be expressed because the true concerns of the people are being voiced directly into an open forum, instead of through elected members and paid interest groups.

Akin to religion, we can substitute our new government, for their deity. The laws and principles exist as an idea, and cannot be destroyed in a symbolic building or statue. These ideas would exist in every person, just as the principles of religion exist in every person who worships. Religions have places of worship and sacred books, a small footprint for an idea imprinted in the minds of people for thousands of years and stalwart to the realities and disasters of nature.

The new government I propose is an antithesis to



corporatism. Where centralized oppression and opportunistic governments fail, an agrarian based hybrid society will take over. A foundation of pure equality and decision making in society will allow each person on the planet to achieve their highest potential as humans. A new intelligence would envelope the people of Earth because they would no longer be driven by a profit motive, but by their own desire to learn and grow.

Corporatist states will always abuse human rights because they are always looking for more power. Any attempt to morph a corporatist government into a more "humanitarian" structure will only be superficial. Power drives the need for control, and control is the cousin of power. Power itself breeds inequality intrinsically. If you take out the motivation for power, the whole pyramid falls apart.

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