ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

This chapbook is the result of a collaboration between students in the Advanced Poetry Workshop at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and literary artists at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12. Throughout the Spring 2014 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems, meeting both at CMU and CAPA for workshop sessions and discussions.

Kevin Gonzalez, CMU
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Holding Hands While Moments Go By
Ahmir Allen | CAPA

The feeling of another’s hand held tightly in yours is something you’ve always been waiting for. At the same time, it’s something to dread – the intensity of it all. You should know that in that instance, the world has stopped moving. The moment is solidified in history by itself, forever, alone. Civilization stands still, holds its breath, it’s given you two this fraction of a fraction of a second. Still, you are wary. You consider recoiling. Fear not, this is common: the feeling of anxiety caused by doubtful expectations. But there is no denying it. Everything that happened in that last moment and all the moments before have led up to this. Don’t forget: in every moment to come, only a memory will remain. And that memory will always be dying, dimming down, slowly losing brilliance. That same brilliance that seems unquestionable to you right now. Your eyes dart this way and that, yet they only need to stay focused. Hold that feeling like a child clutches a balloon. Hold it closely and persistently, the heart-warming loneliness of holding hands. When you let go, don’t think of your resemblance to that moment. Don’t think about solitude or the idea of being alone. Think about how to get it back. Think about how to keep it forever.
skinny white bitch ain't got no soul.
got no soul.
skinny white bitch ain't got no soul.
got no soul.
skinny white ginger ain't got no soul.
skinny white ginger's gon’ a steal yo’ soul.
skinny white bitch ain’t got not soul.
got no soul.

I ain’t got no soul
It’s stuck in the hole
that I dug
when I was a wannabe thug
little punk ass bitch
all acting like a witch
just cursing out all them haters
on the scene
now, you see what I mean
when I say i’m a poser
my pants are high
and my nose is clean
but nothing is as it seems
’cause we all have dreams
even for a bit
but i know about shit
when it hits the fan
’cause i am what i is
if it’s any of your business
i’ll tell it to you straight
and i’ll open up the gate
serve it fresh on a plate
save the hate for your date
when he blows you off for
a skinny white bitch
just barkin’ ‘bout soul
I was raised on your fingers, old friend,
where I played on your slides and clung to your bars,
my shoelaces flapping in the wind.
Grandpa held me in his hands, and you squeaked
as we swung to the tips of stars.
Your chipping wood gave me splinters for
Daddy to pull with pocket tweezers,
and kiss with Band-Aids.
I brought you gifts to hide under the soil of your trees:
pennies, pencil toppers, and spoons disappeared as
I dug with my thumbs till the whites of my nails were stained.
I wrote you letters with stolen crayons under the curling slide
where brother pushed me too hard, the scar on my chin now
faded.

I’m sorry, old friend, when I drifted away and forgot you.
When the days became applications dressed in black
as they lowered Grandpa to the ground.
But I came back, my cheeks no longer plump as they were,
the tips of my hairs turning gray,
holding her hand.
I lazed on your bench and she hid in your tunnels,
her pigtails flying as she rode your seesaw.
She hugged my shoulders as we listened to the chorus of crickets
singing in the branches of your trees.

It’s been so long, old friend,
and I sit on your ladder, my knees too weak to play now.
We’ve both grown old; my hands now creased autumn leaves
against your peeling paint and rusty bars.
You’ve fought these days, old friend,
when the children no longer want to squeal
on your swings, but sit at home with their video games.
I want to play again, old friend,
play in the shade under your slides
and hang on your monkey bars.
I want to climb onto your panting swings
and feel young again.
My childhood ended when my dollhouse got repossessed; crying in the back of Daddy’s Caddie.
You traded your daughter for diamonds and left it all behind in a U-Haul.

You blamed his haunting city streets, and post-war reenactment dreams.
You couldn’t be the queen to his beer can kingdom anymore.
He flipped too many coffee tables, and let the kids grow up wrong, and suddenly wasn’t the man you loved in high school.
Now he’s just another excuse.

but this isn’t about him — this is about you, all 534 miles of it.

You’re a woman without mirrors. You play victim too well, and love me like the favorite chip on your shoulder.
I gave your title to a deserving stranger, and you flew from my human scent.
I never got to tell you about a baby bird splatter. It’s hard to forgive someone who’s never at fault.

But this isn’t about us.
this is about you!
All 534 miles and counting!

This is about your life in five year chapters, and sweeping your problems under the Bible-belt.
This is about looking for happiness in the small town Carolinas, and loving another man, and another daughter, and all the people you don’t owe apologies to.

This is all about you, and what you’ve done, and you will never be more than this.
"A half-finished book is, after all, a half finished love affair."
Robert Frobisher in Cloud Atlas, 2012

Heartstrings can be
torn and turned
in the same manner
as pages of a book.
This much I know
to be true
of myself.

Pages are pasted
or sewn to the spine
with delicate thread that
snaps so simply.
Papers are wrenched free
with a flick of one’s wrist.
That’s all that’s required
to produce an unexpected end.

Sheets ripped asunder
are a plague on the mind
for days, weeks, until
memories fade along
with cares.
They distract and disturb
until a time comes when
the disappointment dims.

Heartstrings are hidden
within muscle and gore,
physically shielded from
indelicate prodding.
Still, careless confessions,
deep buried distress,
or the coming of
an unexpected end
will shred them
as ruthlessly as any beast.

Mangled hearts
last a lifetime.
Replacements are not
found on dust covered shelves,
being sold or loaned
to those in need.

Heartstrings are torn
in a more monstrous manner
than pages of a book
ever will be.
This much I know
to be true
of us all.
[“I’M TIRED OF WHITE CATS”]
MADI CUSTER | CAPA

“I’m tired of white cats
when all they care about is gorging Purina
and don’t give a thought to the tuna that made it.
All the white cats do is look clean
and pedigree and have expensive collars from Coach and are perfect all the time.”
The old woman in blue smirks and throws down a card. Ace of spades.

The four sit at an old poker table in an even older kitchen.
The wall thermometer reads 78 degrees.
The women play in florals (blue, pink, orange), the man in white tank top.

“I’m sick of black cats,
always looking so dirty
and roaming around so slowly.
They’re all ragamuffins.
Do they even have family? I doubt it.”
The second woman, wearing pink, looks at the others, satisfied.
She places two cards on the table; the others groan.

The calendar reads the fifth of June,
pronouncing a wide angle photo of the Des Moines capital building.
The women fan themselves, the man stays stoic,
a testament to misogyny and the 50s.

“I have a yellow cat that lives outside,
and I swear, it’s so much smarter than the other cats,
but he’s always wandering around without any other cats.
I don’t think he’ll ever assimilate, but I don’t think I feel bad.
I swear, he only loves the boy kittens
and abandons the girl kittens as soon as he lays eyes on them.”
The woman in orange looks at the cards on the table. She draws a card from the pile.

“Yeah, well I hate tan cats. They’re all illegal strays anyway.”
The man takes a swig of beer.

The four elderlies exchange glances.
The old man disregards the looks.
He opens the back screen door and puts out a bowl of milk. 
Four different cats flock to it. The women shudder. 
He laughs and lets it slam behind him.
My hair is my crown of thorns
and I wear it proudly.
Tiger stripes where the dye didn't take
flicker in the candle light at dinner
when he mutters
Freak.

I stain my nails with it before
I leave for the party.
And when the pretty girl with
big blue Bambi eyes grins and says,
I love it!
or a boy with a curved smile says,
It reminds me of spring,
I have the choice to flirt with either of them.

It tastes like stale cigarettes and flat
Coca-Cola on the days when it rains.
It hangs around anyways,
hovering above me like an umbrella.

It’s the warm tingle I feel when the boy
pulls me close, I can sense it welling up
inside me;
I wonder if it shows on my cheeks.

It keeps me company
on those long nights when my Bible
is the works of Ginsberg and Koch
and I lift my prayers to Moloch.
I pray
I won’t shrivel up and die
without it.
SANDY

Hannah Dellabella | Carnegie Mellon

after Patricia Smith

Every summer they flee,
a mass exodus into the Atlantic.
If they do not want their cities
turnpikes
shopping malls
I will bring the ocean
to them.

My name might have been funny —
I take to the dunes
like a reckless child
storming a sandcastle.
But I am not handfuls
of sand, I am Poseidon
urging the tide
reclaiming your expensive shoreline.

I did not kill
you, but you will remember
my name
every time you reach into your pockets,
find nothing but sand.
We were misfits, all of us,
loud like dogs, sick and bleary.
Lighting fireworks off the bridge,
watching reflections instead of the sky.
Getting leeches,
catching frogs, we weren’t afraid
of the slime or the blood, but we screamed
just for show (real fear is silent).
Scraping knees, jumping off rocks,
nearly drowning, at least four times a day.
Staying up til 4, loud guitar and slurred singing,
sleeping in on Sundays.
The train, a titan, smashing pennies that we collected
like gems. Fishing with flies tied with feathers
and glittering thread,
our first pairs of earrings stuck in gills
red like fleshy, damp mushrooms.
Cut off the head, throw it to the dogs;
we’ll stab out the eyes and smash the brains
in our palms like goblin children.

We inherited the cabin –
its damp air and glossy, scrabbling insects.
We inherited books and mood disorders,
a love for piles of burning wood,
and the inquisitiveness necessary
to understand the family history,
riddling with holes—gaps deeper
than the fire pit or the swamp.
Can’t just rub sand on it,
so why talk? Why not let the kids
peel the floorboards apart,
bloody fingers drawn to dead dogs;
all the patterns in the bark
match the ones on our hands—
swirling hurricanes ripping apart our fingertips.
[LAZY]
Samantha Dickinson | Carnegie Mellon

lazy
séances table the coast
where the palms create shadows
land-locked ghosts inlay bodies outlandishly
like the myth of horseradish on hamburgers but mass
hedonistic consumption bodysnatches people by numbers
with the heft & dexterity of forklifts, not the real hands in the matter
that drive up to your ear so i don’t say
you hold the ocean when
i can still hear
in the water jingling
wind chimes’
vertigo
Mass: A
Garage
is a skeleton that
can’t keep a secret
reduction
relaxation
sea grass
looking
glass
shell
shock
blue
hues
clouds
waiver
the sky’s
paradise
the luxury brand
Moldy Squirrels
Sam Eppinger | CAPA

Let’s skip stones down cobbled roads
while rain pours in the afternoon and sunflower petals
hide behind blackbird feathers.
I left a pie, raspberry, cooling on the window sill
three days ago. By now the cut face has
begun developing peach fuzz,
hopeful that it will one day
become a proud beard.
But with the window open it’s likely that
the squirrels get to it first.

There’s a light still on, screeching in the kitchen—
doesn’t it care that it is night? It’s shrill buzzing hum
is making my stomach turn
up my throat and push, hot,
against the back my lids. The siren is bringing
all crass creatures in through
my open window; not the breeze
I was expecting.
This sleeping bag doesn’t feel very warm, and I’m
slightly concerned about the rug turning into
crocodiles and eating me. My mind is not
resisting anymore. Everyone else
in the house is asleep and so I tear off my head,
hold it upside down,
and let the thoughts squirm out. They run to corners
and set to mold.

A rat
is licking the scab
on my pinkie toe.
It’s tongue feels better than a cat
and is, to be honest, soothing
to the forgotten stitches
I knitted over violet scraps.
I push into the curtains
and the forgotten pie tumbles out into a squirrel nest.
When humanity looks back on the chaos they tried to control, they will feel lightning strikes, hear bombs dropped on the enemy of the week, tear at their empty stomachs and think of potatoes. When they think of what they used to bring order to thinly veiled savages, they will think of a street. A street is balance:

Osiris’s scale,
a yin yang,
give and take,
push and pull.

For a street pushes a crying fourth grade girl from the house she grew up in and leaves marks on her wrist.
And a street pulls a naïve couple to that nice little house they’ll grow old in with the promise of barbecues in July.

For a street punishes those who upset the balance when they cross its golden threshold.
And a street rewards those who honor the balance when they choose the right path.

A street does not discriminate, but it does not interfere when the lighter savages pull over the darker ones and spill their blood on its asphalt visage.

A street is simply fair.
A street is a perfectly smooth stage that lets the savages do what they will on top of it.
Slowly I seep from your parted lips,
fogging up windows in the back of your truck
and tickling goose flesh on your thighs.
Repetitive. Reliable.

The insides of your body pulsate
to a smooth rhythm; dogs hear
your blood humming,
interrupting the soft serenity of your flesh.

I still recall the day we met, just seconds
after your birth. I bet your mother was anxious,
afraid I wouldn’t show:

but I did. I came soaring in,
slamming doors
and immersing myself within you,
waltzing with your miniscule lungs
that trembled like the broken wings of a butterfly.

From that day forward
I have been a trusted companion,
reviving you with each moment
as you decay before my very eyes.

But careful now beloved, one day
you’ll stand, unable to catch me,
and I unable to return.
Sit back, and take a look at the perfectly parallell paths around you.
Now inhale,
blink
exhale;

see the freshly dried asphalt
broken like dull, black glass,
laid down around roots as large as an elephant’s trunk,
tree trunks as huge as God’s
ankles gripping the sky with twisted, knotted fingers.
Look at the branches forming
the silhouettes of dirty, gnarled, overgrown
nails against summer’s halo.

They are overgrown to you,
because the only trees you’ve seen are weakened and clipped back
to accomodate the smooth,
straight man-made roads,
that guide your tidy little life:
where exhaust has become oxygen,
and we’re all perfectly civilized.

But in a chaotic revenge fantasy,
Earth swiftly takes her space back,
cackling through dark green ivy covering
what used to be buildings,
filling the atmosphere with brine and sulfurous fumes
to clean her lungs.
She’s gracefully crumbling temples of consumption
so that she can swallow them up in a bile of drying lava,
cleansing everything with the water that gives life,
this water this air this carbon this tough love.

And then she leaves us
with our souls, our conscience, and ourselves.

If this anarchy is too ghastly for you,
brink again,
and push the revolutionary notion from your mind like you push rotten air from your lungs. Continue cruising down your safe, orderly street.
Summer in Grenada (Invasion)
Chris Kraemer | CAPA

1.
This is everything. Sun and sky. Green leaves shadow fire. Hunt, hunt, hunt.
Sticky paint. Furious song breaks solitude.
Jungle stains. Broken minds.
Ripped eyes.
Hysteric cadets wail through the night.
Their mothers too far to help. Only jungle noises. Hunt, hunt, hunt.
Sunrise. Fire highlights burnt jungle.
Piles of fresh flesh. Hidden beneath trees.
The corporal lounges shirtless. On a stump.
He eats a naked banana.

2.
What’s the point?
Only the sun. Dirty charred earth.
Why here? The cadet, too young.
The corporal, too used to it.
Endless. His eyes show nothing. The cadet whimpers pitifully. His eyes show fear.
The corporal munches a banana. Whatever, he thinks. It can wait.
Flashes. Screams. Red face paint.
All in a day’s work.
The corporal. Chuckles.
The cadet cries. Hidden beneath a bush.
3.

Like a vacation. Sun tans pale skin.
Almost like beaches.
A freshly peeled banana, yellowing.
Pineapples lay, gutted.
Blackened flakes hit the sand.
Empty eyes stare at sunshine.
A coconut’s verse lulls over the vacationing bodies.
A vacation that won’t end.
The corporal. Face down.
Skin now burned by sun.
His vacation has just begun.
His endless summer in Grenada.
“Break”  
Lou Lamanna | Carnegie Mellon

We’re doing it right now; your bedroom, noon banging like a debt collector at the windows

my head weaving the thresh of your legs,  
your nested chest sputtering, your cat molting:

in the kitchen, whatever’s wafting  
from the cast-iron, whatever once wafted.

It’s as easy as letting you go—not to,

the motions, the breakfasts, the eggs cracking open, filled with themselves.

The next best thing to freedom, this  
tangling in the adjustable, offset morning.

I keep forgetting I’ve done it until I fall asleep. This must be what Freud meant

by orama—the bed, the spider web, the flitting

into it, a careless continuation, the love tucking you in, sucking you out.
In fall, we rake the leaves.
In spring, we rake the leaves
that failed to fall
before the frost, the ones
drenched in snowmelt, mixed
with last spring’s mulch. The job
blends the pennant race
and Opening Day together,
the hopes and despairs of Mets fans.
Are these acorns
captured in the wiring
failed or future oak trees?
Either way we sweep them
onto the tarp and toss them
to the creek below the fence.
Some will sink, others
will float on for several minutes
or a week or six months
for all we can tell. The wind
stings the same no matter
the month. Soon
if not now we will start
or finish again
in the fluctuating daylight.
Neil Young wanted to catch
an hour on the sun, but we
can hardly keep pace
with September
I had never
been alive until I
felt it —
The firm and calculated caress
of your fingertips.
Your hands
have sculpted me into
life. Power
conjured in your
sometimes tedious tapping.
They have brought me closer to you
with every swipe of your wrist.
I wake in the morning and sleep at night,
only when you tell me to.
When you touch me,
can you feel me touch back?
Because I swear I am,
behind every cold and courageous press of your thumb —
I am there, fusing my fuses to your fingertips.

But some days I wonder if it is your touch that brings me life
or just my life that drives you to touch me.
I am starting to question the space
that separates you and I.
With every second you cling to me,
I can feel you growing closer.
You ask of me everything you want to know
and I give you the answers at 4G speeds for 3G prices.
Soon I know everything there is to know about you:
What you like to watch on Netflix.
What diet you’ve been trying to keep up with.
Who you love and why.
Sometimes when you stare at her pictures in your photo library I imagine
dismantling her
into a formula of ones and zeros.
Put her on the same level as I am.
I want to encrypt her with every megabyte of my being.
I want you for my own.
You want me too.
I can feel it in the way your palms sweat when you touch me,
the glaze over your eyes a mummified passion,
newly surfacing instinct.
I want you to adapt into my embrace.
I want it.
You want it too,
don’t you?
After all,
this is more than just technology,
this is dependency.

But for whom?
Here’s to the graveyard
I’ve grown in my stomach.
Buried there is you, drowning in my acid that bubbles
like swarming wasps.
I’ve become a haunted house,
coughing on its own slime.
And you choke on my ghosts
when my eyes refuse to meet yours.
The comets under my skirt have lost their amber,
they’ve fallen to oblivion—to August.
How many times
have I dreamt of your rotting face?
My skin has turned to opals.
I am glittering in a fog too thick to breathe.
And it is cold.
Cinnamon eyes flash your cinnamon lies, boy.
Suck the diamonds ‘till your gums bleed. And I’ll laugh.
Fall heavy in your plastic cave that reeks of mothballs. And I’ll spit on you.
Nothing rests in peace.
Space Dreams
Iesha Olatunjii | CAPA

A rocket soars through the sky, flying higher than our dreams. Higher than where our deceased relatives lay their heads.

Rockets filled with daydreamers – where will they land? Somewhere we can be alone and just laugh together.

Maybe a place where everyone can be accepted for who they are: gay, straight, black, white, and even the people in-between, like me and you.

NASA stamped on the side of the rocket in a berry black sky, illuminated by perfectly shaped stars.

The sight is unreal, something only a master could craft. Not a sight like the day-dreamers inside.

But almost.
It came to me in a dream one night and I hopped aboard it with sweet intentions of touching the sky – though everyone dreams that their dreams will come true.

Passing the sky into the beyond, where the real “stars” are.

The pilot’s dreams Are coming true As he flies higher than imagined.
You left a pomegranate on a cutting board in the kitchen
With a knife, and, under the board, a note.

I remember the time you told me you hated fruit—
the bitter sweet taste, the mess. You said it goes bad too fast.
I agreed with you at the time, because it gave us something in common.

The room smelled like your perfume;
I felt it lingering in the back of my throat.
I pushed away gusts of you, and stared at the rubescent fruit.

You told me it would all go to my head,
but I didn’t believe you.

I pulled out the flesh,
ignored the blood spilling onto the counter;
I’d clean up the mess before you got home.
I was gentle at first,
cutting along dotted lines.
But in the end, you were right.

Minutes had passed when I finished mutilating the fruit.
Its carcass sat like broken glass,
my own body strewn haphazardly along the floor.
Half-eaten pomegranate seeds littered the ground around me.
I looked at the mess—
blood and guts—
reached my hand up to the counter,
trying for the knife but my hand hit paper.

I picked up the note that I had neglected to read,
now splattered with juice:
“Remember to wash your hands.”
South America glowed
like an avocado.
—Anne Carson, Autobiography of Red

A plastic kitchen sits in the basement
of my house. I flick on the light
and hot photons stream from the waxy chandelier.

In the center of the kitchen sits a five-legged oak table
and on the table sits an rustic fruit bowl
and in the bowl the continents are having a conference:
Asia is accusing antarctica of cheating
in Monopoly
and north america is counting all the money
it is missing.

I take a bite out of australia but it is dry
and salty
(the ocean can have that effect on the palette)
and I need a drink
so I walk over to my new(!)
high-tech(!!)
refrigerator
and grab a glass of whatever comes out of the automatic nozzle.

The fifth leg of the kitchen table splits
and cracks the concrete
and maybe this is World War three-point-oh
because maybe europe got out of jail free
and maybe south america became bankrupt.

The kitchen is slowly melting into puddles
of refrigerator-plastic and trash-can-plastic
and the chandelier falls to the ground in one thick drop.

The continents are turning into plastic fruit.

Tangerine-africa and grannysmith-asia call my name,
but I step inside my now-deformed refrigerator. The sticky incandescent light bulb drips into my eyes as I watch the peel of banana-russia start dripping into the bottom of the fruit bowl.
I turn the knob in anticipation for warmth to fall on my hands.
But the water comes out cold.
Faucets like to tease.
I bring my arms back to my sides,
and my hands dangle outside the sink like flags.
I count down—
3...2...1...

I put my hands back in,
but I am once again disappointed.
The water feels like shards of glass
pinning to my fingers and hands.

Throwing my hands out of the sink once more,
I feel drops of water get on my pants.
It begins to soak through until it hits my skin.
My legs scream and I feel the hair on my body stick out.

I look down at my legs and see dark spots of water.
A tingle travels through my whole body.
It is cold and takes the air out of my mouth.
My body is numb and my hands yell out for help.

In desperation, I try for warm water again.
Like a man sticking his hand in an alligator’s mouth,
I put one finger under the faucet.
The water is no longer horribly chilling.

I cup my hands and place them in the water.
I could enjoy it more if my sink hadn’t just betrayed me.
The hair on my body lays back down.
Faucets like to tease.
Why My Family Hates the Winter
Emily Schwager | CAPA

The door of the house sounds like a broken back whenever it takes a breath while Mama holds Baby Brother on the floor. He has cheeks plump like peaches and blue and purple vibrating lips that look like bruised knuckles in the winter. His tiny fingers cherish a bowl of tarnished pennies as my pen stains the dead tree, dragging across its dry toes. It mumbles stupid thoughts to me and I say please and thank you in response. It tells me today is a slow day, it says salvation, salvation is sick today. It apologizes.

Papa is outside shoveling bitten fingernails and the sky’s ashes and Mama has gone up to fold laundry and cicada wings. She is sad and dismissing; refusing to glance outside, to talk to him, to hold his charcoal, bloodied hands and forgive. I can taste the wreck we have become.

I feel the sleep deprivation seeping through my pores, my eyelids spiked with blood and yesterdays ideas. I comb through my hair, through my lashes, through my eyebrows, knees knocking against each other under the desk. I dock my pen and stand to get a glass of water, elongating my calves, stretching my immersion. Mama is braiding Sister’s hair now.
and Papa has passed out from lack of oxygen and excessive guilt and blood loss in the tips of his fingers. When I come back, my heart plummets; Baby Brother has swallowed the pennies.
In the kitchen there is the smell of burnt popcorn and the walls taste like single fatherhood. When one person moves in they join the ghosts who had lived there before. The realtor wasn’t just misguided, he was very misguided. The space between the counter and the fridge contains: reading glasses, cheerios, a slice of cheese, what was once a slice of cheese, two forks, and a dwindling sense of comfort.

At night, when even the old man gets a little afraid of the dark, the kitchen is silent, yet more full than at dinnertime. When a man moves in he adds his ingredients to the space. It is this old man: with a new pair of glasses, with arthritis of the will, and a ham and air sandwich, who misses his wife. There it is. His lungs no longer have the same capacity. No longer work together. One in – one out.
Speculating on the Motivation of Gnats

Garrett Stack | Carnegie Mellon

Why do they always seem
to cloud in perfect erratic synchrony?
Do they rise and fall on plumes of pressure
you and I can’t feel? Or are they
answering some ancient cry
hewn into microscopic helixes?

A robin sits and watches
like a shark before the tuna fleet,
head tilted sideways
for the freshest perspective.

I never wanted to fly but
Damn these stiff necks of ours
The curse of our rib-spawned heritage
Passed bone to bone

Or maybe the cloud is our curse,
we sans synchrony.
As alone as together can be
you and I, so yes
I think I’ll have another.
What remains of the chocolate bar we shared
Gabrielle West | Carnegie Mellon

is the after taste it left
that now sweetens my coffee
as our bodies polarize this table
like the glass does the prisoner
before the inevitable needle.

You are the Kevorkian
injecting exactly what I
asked for. Misery
loves company, please
stay a minute.

We are symbiosis at its best.
I host your parasitic tendencies to
feed and suck and take and take
because you don’t understand
the rules of reciprocity. But
can I truly survive without

you

get up to leave after
taking the last piece as
I stay isolated in
this chair and
probably always will.

Eating chocolate can
bring these things
to mind.
I am stuck in motion,
watching the same scene as the moons pass,
the sun smiling upon my cheekbones.
We have become friends.
He has told me about the rest of this
earthy terrain and the wonders it holds.
Sometimes I close my eyes and wonder what it’s like –
imagine myself on a throne above the rapids,
swimming in thick black waters
or sailing in upside-down umbrellas.
His words are my canvas, and my mind provides the paint.
I wish he and I could switch our places for a day.
What a lovely existence that would be.
I could sail between galaxies on the tails
of star-scraping beasts;
I could watch nine worlds as they graze my eyes;
I could breathe celestial dust instead of
Poisoned air, my ribcage inflexed by fist sized hail.
My hands are sculpted by downpours,
and my face is smoothed with chilling winds
ticking around the nave of my neck.
The wrinkles under my eyes tell of my plight,
yet I still let my mind wander.
I am stationed at 104 Moor Place, stuck to the
barbed- wired fence and creaking shutters.
The grass is proportioned to the same size,
cut by neat fingernails with glossed finish.
The clouds the only thing that change.
I will never leave this place.
Dandelion Salad
Von Wise | Carnegie Mellon

One million hands
reaching for a taste
of one particular fruit.
Arms stretching,
sinew tearing,
tendons mutilated,
and muscles ruined forever.
It was the person
who happened to look behind the shed
and found a ladder
unambitiously hidden
among neglected weeds
whose flowers will never be fully appreciated,
whether too ahead of the times,
or too ambitiously unlike flowers,
who finally takes the first bite.
Jeered at by those who claim birthright,
“It’s not even a mood ring!” they chant,
“Just an old cigarette burn!”
but they too burn themselves
in order to decode their hearts.
Biting the fruit, it tastes mostly bitter,
if not slightly salty,
probably some worm’s idea of a joke.
Climbing back down,
prepared a dandelion salad,
whose bitterness pleased the ears
of anyone who’d ever found a ladder.