

# *Boundary* Street

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# *Acknowledgments*

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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 Arts majors at The Pittsburgh Center for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). Throughout the Spring 2011 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems, meeting both at CMU and CAPA for workshop sessions and discussions. This collection of poems celebrates this collaboration. We all learned from each other, and we are all better writers and teachers because of this project. We hope you enjoy reading these poems as much as we enjoyed working together.

*Mara Cregan, CAPA*  
*Jim Daniels, CMU*  
*Kristin Kovacic, CAPA*



## *Jenn Bakal*

### IMMIGRANT

born in Baghdad, my father  
traded city life for tents  
at seventeen. forced from home  
his family waited in the courtyard  
of the synagogue like the sardines  
he'd not yet seen. sheets strung  
above did not protect him from the sun  
so when the 'flying carpet' came,  
delirium stole his last sight  
of gold stone dwellings melting  
away like an elusive thought.  
he disembarked in an unpromising  
land with no streets to echo  
his father's violin. in Iraq, he broke  
open books not dirt, dug chicks  
not ditches. in Israel, he ran away  
to join the Army, lose his mother  
tongue and patronym.

ten years later, his uncle paid  
his way to America. each wave  
slapping the boat's side eroded  
desert memories. his journey  
took three weeks instead of hours  
and started him on a longer one  
to lose another language  
gain a motherland. Manhattan  
spoke to him as Haifa never had.  
he worked in lingerie and air  
conditioning repair, met my mother  
married and had me.

i've always wished he'd taught  
me Arabic. i'm greedy for words  
like to fill them in when people pause.  
but as his slip away, i have only soup  
to offer, a hand to hold.  
i can tell he's getting ready  
to travel once again. i want  
to say *please, teach me the Arabic*  
*for 'stay'*



*Ekin Erkan*

## SHAMBLES

Minute, silvery threaded cracks in the sidewalk  
bite the heels of leather- horse boots  
as they  
clap-clap to the rumble of baby butterfly wings  
who quiver to winter's minty wind.

The cracks open up,  
and the lava ruby suction and champs until  
the yellow bones of pinched elbows are a cramped brittle.

The snug breathing of her infant patterns into a  
clatter-clatter  
soon repeated greasily,  
with a voice gashed by phlem-spittle.

The room is quiet in the face of  
blue bombs, like green-apple candle smoke  
fizzing  
as little children drink soda for the first time  
on Clover Street.

Soon little is to be said, the soda drops  
and crumbles,  
dyeing the crazed sidewalk a  
smug green.

*Madeleine Barnes*

## REMEMBERING WHAT THE BODY IS

You are speaking with your fingertips into an aperture,  
lean arms burnt, ventricles wired to flowering strings  
of shaved-down air and flattening sparks: this is the bed

at eight a.m., nine a.m., your body remembering what the body is,  
a torn-up experiment, anatomical fragments. Vomit afterwards  
because the mouth must open darkly. With hospital curtain drawn,

I record your intake. It must be a pill, a precisely yellow pill,  
a ghost-swallowed pill, a pill of acid rain to crush and drink  
before bed, a fluorescent pill, five hundred pills suspended

in the esophagus, iron and ink, crushed along the jaw becoming wax,  
a terrain, a tundra, an artful and elegant pill, a chord of pills in a tiny cup,  
your brain smothered in antiseptic pills, take five, five hundred,

take without food, without help, without burnt white tea  
vitamin water, without checking your weight, the pill wrapped  
neatly in butcher paper, a very unfeeling and blood-stained pill.

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You're safer and closer, you're safe, there's nothing but corridors  
of pills and gowns sewed up with pills and water and waiting  
for a cloud to assemble, a pill that blooms and embalms,  
floods the tongue with its weight.

## *Agatha Monasterios*

### WE ARE WOLVES

Nearly eight years ago I see  
rooms and rooms and rooms at midnight  
empty of that little vase with a New Orleans rose  
and of all the popsicle-stick picture frames  
that might have been packed up in boxes until today—  
and I assume we will sleep in the truck  
because that's where the beds have gone but  
now the truck has gone and with it  
everything  
everything has been worn away like  
shoe rubber on the pavement,  
and in the blackness of a room,  
in the corner of a house that in memory seems to shift  
and mix with all the other houses  
I've ever been fastened to,  
we three kids howl like kids  
that are pretending to be wolves moving  
through streams and over mountains  
over and over announcing our place  
in the family of things,  
in the forest-y mysteries of a disappearing house—  
“goodbye,” he says  
“goodbye,” she says  
“goodbye,” I say—  
maybe we thought that tomorrow  
we'd be wolves racing through hallways of trees  
and window winds  
and little pieces of starlight spilling underneath the cracks in the doors  
but we didn't think at all  
and even now that far away house  
cannot finish disappearing from my mind

*Matthew Reiser*

## MY IDEAL READER

She'd be a girl, of course,  
a blonde, recklessly matted  
let down by everyone,  
seen almost everything  
and been almost everywhere  
and she's wearing a GI Joe  
shirt from seventh grade  
(although its much later now),  
and takes my book from the shelf

and I let her inside,

she sees inside me when she opens her eyes  
and she opens my chest with the turn  
of my page.

I can see into her clearly  
with my penetrating gaze

and she curls up in her bed at night  
my book in her soft hands for days.

*James Berndt*

## LOST SHEEP

In scripture, the good shepherd goes to find his lost sheep.  
He leaves the pasture, knowing that his other sheep will be safe.  
He passes through the dark forest, confident that he will return.  
Beyond the forest, he climbs volcanoes, ignoring the intense heat of lava flows.

He swims through oceans, avoiding the whale that Jonah could not.  
He travels through deserts, where Satan's temptations fail to assault the good shepherd's will.

He descends into valleys, littered with the bones of forgotten soldiers.  
But after searching the world, one volcano, one ocean, one desert, and one valley at a time,

The good shepherd returns to his pasture to discover the sheep he is looking for, behind a tree just outside the pasture.

I am that sheep.  
I don't mean to get lost  
or to worry the good shepherd.

I simply want to explore:  
I want to see what was beyond the pasture,  
what is beyond the dark forest.  
I want to breathe the sulfur air from a volcano  
and feel a salty breeze from the ocean.  
But I cannot make it past one tree:  
I know I might never see the pasture again.

*Josie Griffith*

## NATURAL SHADES

The ocean has forgotten how to wear blue.  
The color of your eyes sink into never ending, falling blue.

I remember you from long ago; you used to wear a shade of light blue.  
My skin has frozen from the cold, it has turned an inevitable shade of blue.

You say you love me and then dive into dark, black blue.  
Something has stained you pale skin blue.

The midnight sky burns with blue.  
And we are forever some other color besides blue.

I told you that I thought you were beautiful especially against the blue.  
I think maybe I lied, your lips have turned a dull, average blue.

Suddenly the world is cracking open and bubbly blue  
ink sinking into every place you forgot, invading blue.  
I promised you something I forgot, something deep and alluring and blue.

*Aaron Bernkopf*

## POETIC ARMY

Our forces run Ocean deep,  
Even alexander the great was  
A philosopher's student.

From warriors, to farmers,  
Politicians & monks, prophets  
And Addicts – they are all  
Amongst us.

When the time comes for battle  
They raise their pens  
    And the ink explodes  
For weeks in meaning  
    At the speed of thought;  
And god said "let the word  
    Turn to flesh."

## *Jordan Montgomery*

### IF I RULED PARADISE

Life.  
I wonder.  
Will it take me under?  
Imagine black diamonds and pearls.  
Imagine I'd free all my sons.  
Imagine I ruled the world.  
Visions of summertime pleasures,  
diamond-encrusted memories.  
Escaped convicts of depression crave  
for better living, the type of place to raise kids in.  
Raw fantasies.  
Soft nightmares.  
Take my hand.  
We'll walk right up to the sun  
and we won't land.  
Time is not measured by seconds  
minutes, hours  
days, months  
or years.  
The fruits of satisfaction.  
Forever ripe.



*Emily Durbin*

## PITTSBURGH GREYHOUND GHAZAL

Metal howls back at highway wind; a bus roof above shudders.  
Passengers rest swathed heads in nooks between glass and plastic seats.

Sky scrapes clean its plate above houses gathered into Appalachian  
collars.

One white spire asks upward, rises from its sandstone seat.

Emma lost one earring in New York Port Authority, gilt tucked into seam  
of tile and wall.

Some grime hand carried it through dawn on a faux velvet seat.

Vending machine shrine – Kit Kats and Twizzlers glow hallelujahs.  
Feed nickels into the slit to clasp cheap plastic, return to your seat.

Three days from Arizona, a mother cups baby to chest, asks a stranger  
for french fries.

Rest stop tiled floor, this place is lost for softness, offers binge yellow  
smooth seats.

Pull onto the freeway, skeleton of Greyhound clattering.

Money paid to spell distance to afternoon, don't smell your seat.

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Dealer from Erie folds long legs flung wide, tells about the Russian lady  
he found when a boy.

In a patter of monotone, he relates her dangle from the porch beams,  
languid in his seat.

Grease hair swept by sleep, hunched forms shoulder bags, disappear  
into gray.

I find my label, Emily, and feel my back retain the shape of my seat.

*Starla Murray*

## A STARE FROM ACROSS THE ROOM

We share glances. I know what this man wants.  
He stares at me as I turn in a manner so graceful,  
peering at a kid beside me who sways  
back and forth like a rocking chair centuries old  
waiting to tip the wrong way and fall over.  
I shoot a look at my plate, still fuller than my stomach.

She knows what she's doing over there, eating like the queen she is.  
She's looking away pretending she can't see me, but I know she can.  
I can see right through her beautiful brown eyes that she needs my love.  
It seems like she doesn't want to eat for some reason.  
I would love to see her eat more than what she is  
just so I can watch her beautiful bright lips move in hypnotic motion.

My face shrivels, as he continues his stare, waiting, waiting for me to slip  
just once and drop the chicken that has now sogged to grease dripping  
from my lips.  
I purposely stop eating, never satisfying the man desperate to see me  
clench  
as the dry potatoes slip from my mouth that doesn't speak. He's  
desperate to have  
conversation for later with his friends who will ask to hear the story  
of the girl who for some reason couldn't hold in her meal.  
The kid next to me makes a face.

## *David Dull*

### DETOX

What I can't forget about you, remains with me, for I relive it always,  
everyday I remember more, the pieces are put together,  
and I wonder how I could have let the light turn off so quickly.  
Without even a warning it was over, I hung around too long.

One day I'll learn not to care, I'll know what I did wrong.  
One day I'll talk about this with a wise grin and not these gloomy eyes,  
that tell the story far before I open my crooked and bitter mouth.  
Who would want a tale with no happy ending?

An unexpected beginning and an unclear middle?  
I'm stuck between these each day, yet I persevere.  
The sky is blue like us, but the sky isn't sad.  
It ignores its own colors as we look up at it,  
"The sky looks so beautiful today."  
It, too, feels the brush of sadness at times.

They say time is the best therapy; sadly, I left treatment early.  
Regardless, I can rely on myself, and I do.

*Lauren Holstein*

## AFTER THE TENANT LEFT

She flips the mattress  
turning over and over  
sticky soda-pop stains  
that leave pink ringlets  
like measles marks,  
trying to decide  
which side is worse.

The tenant left like  
he was evacuating  
the city, taking only what was  
necessary, leaving behind  
bottle caps, a box of old CDs,  
molding cheese in the back of  
the fridge, a stack of postcards.

Cologne lingers in the carpet  
and stale smoke from cooking  
meat hangs in the stagnant air.  
She peels posters off the walls,  
strips the house naked.  
Scrubs every inch of soap

scum and burnt grease off  
marble surfaces and porcelain  
sinks, dirt left like a fingerprint,  
her cleaning a patient ritual.  
The tenant left in such a hurry,  
but she takes her time.

*Samantha Winston*

## A STRANGER FROM THE FUTURE

Standing and waiting,  
what was she supposed to do?  
There was a toilet,  
she did have to go,  
the dripping water from the sink  
wasn't helping either.  
The green walls freaked her out,  
made monsters in her mind,  
and the water in the toilet bowl?  
What was it for?  
To clean afterwards?  
No, that didn't make sense.  
And what about the knobs  
on the sink and toilet?  
Was she supposed to push them?  
She thought back to how she got to 2010  
from her home in 2114.  
Nothing was the same,  
her eyes filled and wet,  
her body drained of the need to pee.  
She sits on the toilet lid now,  
head in hands.  
The green paint makes it cold  
and the scent of orange  
reminds her of the orange tablet she ate for snacks.  
No one knew of the tablets here.  
For the taste of an orange she'd have to peel one  
herself.  
She hated the feeling of  
being in the bathroom,  
alone.

## *Daniel Kane*

### SNARL

something in here is clicking  
and scraping  
and shearing off teeth  
squealing like a stuck pig  
on a cracked axle  
now I know I'm insane  
wide-eyed  
muscle-spasms  
rocking-back-and-forth crazy  
the clicking gets louder  
I feel it in my jaw  
the ache  
the stretch  
letting it out  
would be more intimate  
than I ever want to be  
especially with myself  
so I flash a dog's toothy grin  
and feel like sinking my incisors  
into the next thing that walks by  
just to see how much it takes  
to break the skin  
but my mouth snaps shut  
to the rhythm of the rattle and growl  
of metal on metal on bone on flesh  
and covers my fingers  
with half-moon scars  
when the street  
is empty

## Samara McGraw

### PARTIES

When she was four,  
she went to parties.  
With her poofy dress, with the frills,  
ribbons, and tights.  
She would play games with all  
the other kids and show  
off that outfit  
to all the parents she could.  
But then, she got to the age of ten  
and she got too old  
for “that type of party,”  
the kind of party  
that was mostly about making  
her parents look good.  
Now, it was time for Romp N’ Roll,  
flirting and giggling.  
She was like a mixture of that  
little girl she was at the age of four,  
an adult, and a chipmunk.  
She played games,  
brand new ones.  
Ones that were better for her age.  
A minimal amount of innocence was gone.  
Then, you turn fourteen  
and she was “grown.”  
She and her friends were batting their eyes,  
waiting for a group of boys  
to come over and tickle them.  
She eventually found herself  
in a scene of “Not Another Teen Movie.”  
She didn’t always get to choose what she became.  
Although things changed, it was always  
a fashion show for her to put herself  
on display and let others evaluate,  
the way they did when she turned twenty

and she believed she was on top  
of the world, but she was  
actually on the ground  
getting ready to regret the whole night  
behind her.



*Daniel Lipson*

## PEER EDITOR

I wish ~~your~~ red pen could mark up ~~my~~ life  
the way ~~your~~ friendship would  
~~you've~~ read enough of my writing for one lifetime,  
~~You~~ know I've read a lot of yours  
I made a mistake, ~~you~~ know I did  
I make a lot of mistakes  
~~You~~ know I always have.  
I curl up in corners, seeking ~~comfort~~ and attention  
I keep a ~~clean~~ history and a filthy mind  
I run blindly into walls and ~~wear~~ chapped lips  
I shatter like glass ~~at~~ your steel presence  
I let my showers run long and my teeth go rotten  
I sink through the unpublished novella ~~you~~ helped me write  
I become a captive of ~~your~~ carefully chosen words  
† ~~don't~~ tell them  
† ~~pushed~~ you

## *Will Marchl*

### EARTH ANGEL

And there I am alone on that wicker chair,  
thinking about who invented wicker,  
and what they were trying to accomplish by creating  
furniture that pinches you when you first sit down,  
and then there's you,  
and you smile,  
and I wonder how I'll write you that poem.  
So I start to pace around the room past the picture of me and my dad,  
the one where he's dressed as the Easter Bunny and I'm  
peeing my pants and I look at the tears on my chubby  
baby cheeks, toddler cheeks, it doesn't matter. So I stretch out my  
bones 'til I  
hear a pop, but now it's silent, and my notebook is at the bottom of  
my bag with the pen that was like the one my dad would use,  
so I take it out and draw a picture because the ink looks good on paper,  
and I chew all the skin off my bottom lip so I can feel the sting,  
and I want you to feel it too,  
so I put on THAT song,  
and I look up prices for turntables,  
and then I see that painting of the,  
fat man in an overcoat and his mutton chopped  
head, next to the cup shaped like Winston Churchill and the bottle of  
Clubman's,  
next to the mirror, and my own scraggly rat stache,  
and I see him with you, or maybe I see nothing at all,  
but it doesn't matter because I look in the mirror and all I see is a  
razor bump.  
Then I see you and me,  
but we're not talking,  
and you tuck your hair behind your ear,  
and I try to check if I'm wearing deodorant while you're not looking,  
and go to say something witty,  
but then I hear THAT song,  
and I start to choke on my tongue,  
so you shove a wallet in my mouth and call for help,

and I see that wicker chair and I see it pinch me  
but I can't feel it  
and I see you dressed in your ceremonial attire,  
and I'm locked in that giant wicker-man,  
with your wallet lodged between my teeth,  
hollering,  
"Ooo baby, let me be your pagan sacrifice."  
And I'm on fire but I don't shout for help.  
So I'm back on the floor,  
and the paramedics arrive,  
but it's too late and I can't see,  
but I think you're crying,  
and through my gagging and suffocating,  
I spit out my last words,  
it was bound to happen.

## Clare McKendry

### GRAMS

She was a bleeder;  
the kind with a red pen and a penance  
for *its* and *theirs*. She left bodies  
scattered over coffee tables  
littering her kitchen counter, spilling  
onto her stove top and interrupting the silence  
like screwdrivers against chalk boards.  
Her clothes were battered, riddled with  
holes like a victim of target practice—  
she believed in manual labor to punish  
punctuation.

Driving her pick up, she made a lesson  
plan in her mind, comprised of art lessons—  
it's hard to miswrite with paints made for  
waterfalls. She would teach the importance  
of good housekeeping, the kind with well  
made signage, complete with consequences.  
Spell out your policies before you commit,  
written in red, sat above her orchid named Cheryl.

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Her students learned to apologize  
for excessive punctuation, prepared  
for a marinade of rank acorns and  
wet chickens. Shovels in hand,  
they led a crusade on dirt  
and misfortune, slinging mud  
behind them like piles of semicolons.  
Fearing the fate of their  
good faith, bound to her tirade  
on the importance of syntax,  
they left their own hope between  
the lines. Running, they cried  
for comfort like ice cream,  
praying for lenience, hoping  
for mercy.

*Rowan Fiorilli*

## THE BIGGER PICTURE LACKS PERSPECTIVE

My class takes a school trip  
to Washington, D.C.  
Mrs. Christopherson-Clark pulls me into  
the Library, tells me  
we can watch anime later  
if I just focus, just try

Gold walls and half-naked women  
She hands me a pencil and paper  
“Write,” she says “write what you see”  
Lines between tiles, 3 staircases

The paper is snatched from me  
and she erases that first line  
with a dead eraser  
that hurts  
The sound of it screams in my ears  
I cover

“This is an exercise,” she says  
“to find a bigger picture”  
But how can I tell her, lines  
interest me more? Instead of admitting  
(I have no concept of it)  
Dar Williams plays on my Ipod  
Bliss

Dad says it's important  
to make eye contact,  
but it physically pains me.  
Clouds, blue angels, circle plate  
I want to watch anime,  
eat wasabi covered peanuts,  
put my feet on the back of chairs,  
st-st-stutter, without trying so hard.

I smell my classmates' sweat  
Time to go home

## Ellene Mobbs

### PANORAMA

When I think of my father's mistress I remember trains—No. I remember  
one train

that rumbles endlessly across backdrops painted with trembling fingers on a  
fingers shuddering along the window groove with this great forward gasp.

My mother

sleeps on the chair beside me, one of many that crowd and chain-link like fish  
her head on a ball of fleece and loose hairs that tremor alike with each whisper  
capable beast.

We had listened for hours to luggage carts, plastic wheels whisking over marble  
of coffee cups in litter tins, the cosmic disturbance of a napkin falling to floor,

*I hate traveling she'd said Well*

*I hate this part, the rush and wait, the catch and release.*

I had shut my eyes then, sucked donut glaze from the valleys of my fingerprints,  
a cold horizon—

No. A smudge on the racing window that fits my temple, my glass-burned cheek

yellow canvas—frayed as the skeleton of a tree, a leaf—my own

scales or serpent skin, rests  
of her damp breath and lurch of this solid,

and the coughing, paper-folding, the impermanence  
startling the split-flap board into flight like sparrows from a telephone wire.

breathed out. I want a desert—no, an ocean—no,

*Stephanie White*

## CONSCIOUS SHADOWS

My ghost comes in sequences,  
haunting in changing flows.  
Her goblin-thin hands patter over the chalk board and she whispers of  
linguistics of the sleeping mind, a weary owl at rest.

She speaks a thousand different languages  
and stays, wide awake among my heart-strings.  
She collects ivory and beeswax and paints murals of river boats.

She navigates unknown rivers  
and builds villages upon sapphire seas.  
I've never seen my ghost because she works beneath my wing.

Others waft below street lights  
and tend to fly around the world.  
One day they'll open up a newspaper to find their bodies have fallen  
away.

The bodies have gone to build a steam engine  
and chug away, through cloudy streams.  
They'll feed their ghosts pennies and prophecies  
to ease their brittle minds.

For now every ghost is wrapped up in our ceiling fans,  
cooing chants in ancient tongues.  
We'd ask that they stop with their waves of bone-riddling chills,  
but they have clearly stated this position.



*Megan Lohner*

## CONSERVATIVE

Photographs came out of people  
appear orange, mango, greens  
and seem more than life.  
Irrational?  
People overlook abundance for less.  
The easy devotion to the soul,  
the body,  
the cosmos,  
the universe.  
They are not understandable  
but all ignore this.  
Prohibit and avoid change.  
The evolution to royal slaughter,  
taboo on consumption of text.  
Status- religiously restricted.  
Unity of all life?  
Justify restriction, no change occurred.  
The important event that helped  
to shape modern complex:  
slaughter of function.

## Emily Nagin

### BEAUTIFUL HOUSE

Next time, I'm going to fall in love  
with a country. I'll pass notes to India:  
*do you like me like I like you?*  
Ireland will buy me  
a vegan milkshake; Canada  
will bring me gas station  
carnations; Israel will give  
me matzo ball soup; Sealand will send  
a t-shirt, make me a baroness; America will sing  
under my window every night for a month.

In the end I will love  
an imaginary country, a white spot  
on the map. No history.  
The national bird a magpie.  
The anthem a cacophony  
of wind chimes.

My country and I will live  
in the most beautiful house in the world,  
on a highway next to a Wendy's  
between Pennsylvania and New Jersey.  
I have not seen every house in the world  
but I know it is the most beautiful:  
flaking white paint, a blue door,  
leggy rose bushes, a mulberry tree.  
Never mind the beer cans, the needles.  
My country and I will have a three-legged  
cat, a pit bull with scars on its neck,  
a lending library, a rope swing.  
We will get up early in the morning  
to drink coffee and listen  
to the traffic thrumming  
like the ocean.

Diana Sims

## THE SAVORING WORDS

*I don't like it* is an expression manufactured  
in the mouth; a hinge  
connected to the brain  
by a thread like a loose tooth.

The painting can be argued over  
and controversial points will be accounted for  
but only galleries possess the credentials  
to say what goes up and  
what goes down the  
basement, only to be moth-eaten  
from the dew and mold  
that freezes in the ears  
of three men in scarves:  
It's cliché, ironic, surrealist, groundbreaking  
defying!  
(but it all adds to zero.)

If I were a judge  
I would zipper mouths  
and throw away the keys  
like a charade  
and paint oranges breathing  
tendrils of white  
and call it "The Bread of Death"  
to frustrate them  
and views would vaporize under tongues,  
solar systems combusting.

The World was born a simple place:  
the blades of grass were minted sugar,  
the deer were molded out of velvet and grace,  
and hands were sacks filled with desert sand.  
All water was cool as God's breath.

I wish they would rinse their brains  
so that I might touch Michelangelo's *David* with my hands.

## Jasper Wang

### MOON BOY

His grandmother once told him stories about  
a prince with a heart that  
glittered  
like lantern-light  
*And oh, child*  
*that prince could do anything.*

And so as he grew up he believed  
it was he  
and when he was six  
he sat in her dark  
curling room and listened to her voice  
stretching and cracking like a balloon,  
and watched the moon  
and carved it out of the sky  
because he believed he could.  
He broke it in his hands  
and ate it, and it shone  
in his eyes  
and his heart  
like lantern-light.

And when he turned sixteen  
the wolf came for him with her tangled hair and  
glistening eyes, bright mint hoops  
around green pupils,  
and he didn't remember the words she tricked him with,  
just her hair, long spirals tumbling around her shoulders  
and she breathed dark and wet  
into his ear  
and they sat together on the creaking wood of the pier.  
Didn't he wonder  
about the folk tale of the wolf  
who disguised herself as a lamb  
and pulled a pretty face

for the shepherd boy?

But no,  
no, he didn't see it then,  
only her eyes a large and jealous green,  
so when the sun disappeared behind her cheek  
he didn't question it  
leaning forward that evening  
the longest evening of his life, when he kissed her  
and she drank the moon from his throat  
her eyes black as night  
and then he saw the wolf,  
slick and beautiful  
who'd tricked the light from him  
and turned with wet paws to leave him  
cold and lifeless on the pier.

## *Andre Price*

### BEFORE WE WENT SILENT

~AFTER CHRISTOPHER LOCKE

He told this horrible story and  
the more he told the more horrible  
it got. We were captivated,  
curious, and thirsty for gore  
until the little girl met the pit-bull.  
The details were cradled like marbles  
beneath his tongue; the cadence of his voice  
crashing down on the instant day.  
It was sunny outside, bookstores  
were closing, and heads swayed in the heat.  
Ink daydreams propagated like flies  
on flesh and crawled across paper.  
Ceiling fans lapped at the air, their shadows  
ebbing like pools on a polished surface.  
When he finished, time was crowned sovereign  
and we laughed for comfort.

It felt empty. It was spring;  
no one was really being persecuted.  
We could hear the month slowly killing us,  
its fangs a dull pressure on our throats;  
everything dripping with acceptance  
as the afternoon rotted.  
And suddenly, I noticed that the room  
felt too small. I got up, cracked all  
the windows, and spent a breath  
barking at the moon.

*Adam MacDonald*

## BREAK ON THROUGH

I've been pretending to run  
up this mountain now  
for 2 years. Fake it, cheat it,  
Bop It!—Eventually that guy's  
going to have to open his  
eyes and get with the program.

Some doors need a good push  
and others smack you in the jaw.

Remember when we would watch  
Independence Day? Must go faster!  
Kick out the stool and  
watch his glasses hit the ice.

Don't leave now. I only just got here.  
Some doors need a punch in the face  
and some open like a book.

The Kinks said everybody's a dreamer  
and everybody's a star. I only just noticed  
that when the stars are out  
I'm the only one dreaming.

*Kelsey Miller*

## SPARE TIME

Loving you is easy because of the latest fashions;  
Charm. Deceit. Humor. Lies. Sensitive. Emotionless...  
Nobody wears them better than you.  
Nothing's better than laying my head on your chest,  
covered with a sweater of carelessness  
that comforts me every time you decide to show up.  
Tonight is every night, when I lie awake on our  
tainted bed sheets that keep me warm,  
even when your fire cold hands aren't there  
to paralyze my conscience of everything  
besides the naïve.  
Every morning there's a new smell  
on your neck when I embrace your ego.  
You caress me and I feel your skin  
burning with nothing less than artificial,  
I-just-do-this-in-my-spare-time love.  
Nothing has ever felt more sincere.



*Kyle Rood*

## YOU PICKED UP YOUR THINGS WHILE I WAS OUT

jiggling the key to our apartment door,  
in swirls of snow that left my fingers stiff.  
I struggled to set silver grooves and slip  
inside to climb the stairs where I could fall  
asleep alone, within the silent warm  
embrace of my now empty double bed.

So when you came downstairs with all the force  
of gravity and lateness at your back  
I didn't stand a chance, as the distracted  
strength of your shoulder left me to bleed  
while your momentum carried you away.

And later while I washed out blood beneath the cold water  
you struck me again, with the strength of your metaphor.

## *Shanquae Parker*

TO: YOU

FROM: ME

You lied and said you'd be back but never came.  
You forgot where you came from cause that's the only thing that stayed true about you.  
You acted like you didn't know me,  
every time they came by to see you.  
Why did you offer them sandwiches and fruit punch and leave me in the room by myself?  
You said those sad things to me,  
and you used those bad words with them.  
How could you forget my name?  
I didn't want his name dripping off the tip of your tongue like lemonade.  
It just made me sour, you know.  
You traded in our friendship bracelet for that diamond one on your wrist.  
You tried to teach me how to ride that two-wheeler,  
but why did you let me go so early?  
You left the park while I lay in the grass crying  
with that big boo boo on my knee.  
You rode the PAT bus with me but didn't sit next to me.  
That would've never happened on the big yellow bus.  
You forgot to poke air holes in the top of the jar you kept me in.  
I just flew around glowing like a firefly, hoping that one day you would see my light again.  
But, no, you choked on smoke and breathed in life.  
You grow fat on lies instead of mama's homemade cupcakes with the chocolate icing.  
You didn't say bye in the mall, you just walked into Victoria's Secret,  
while I looked around for you still in the arcade.  
Shanquae, you left me in the past being the one to end our childhood.  
Shanquae, I miss the pixie sticks,  
the powdered color sugar that once covered our lips,  
the childhood rhyme time, willy wonka fun dip.  
Shanquae, I miss our friendship.

## Carolyn Supinka

### OLD MEDICINE

Disease becomes this family  
like an inheritance.  
Nobody truly belongs—  
my brother was not my brother—  
until the day he found his body  
was broken in some small way  
until a cure was needed  
and yearned for, until we  
commiserated together, his healthful blood  
was not our own.

When I was five, my mother taught me  
how to point two fingers  
to shoot down the evil eye.  
The white veil of hospital beds  
and plane crash dreams were foiled  
by my own hands, each day under my desk  
twisted like a sign language G, or like baby Jesus  
in my mother's painting, hushing the world  
with an empty palm.

We love little cures. We lay white cloth  
in the backyard to catch moonlight  
and cover our faces.  
In the morning, look — we have grown  
old overnight, and we can forget  
any face we want.

We rub oil on our aches, eat breadcrumbs  
so we won't starve when we're ancient.  
My mother sleeps on cut roses and blessed  
coins taken from Egypt's earth.  
When she touched my finger to a bruise, I smelled  
silver and crushed petals.  
"All good medicine  
leaves a mark."

To forget her husband, my grandmother swallowed eggs.  
My brother and I pressed our ears  
to her nightdress to listen  
for the fall  
a crack, and the sound  
of doctoral wings beating  
carrying  
a memory away.

# Makhala Swift

## BREATHE

what we used to have was beautiful.  
time pushed us to dream up crazy dreams. i want to dream up crazy  
dreams!

why can't we dream up crazy dreams?  
what happened to your dark mouth, with pink lines? voicing your  
opinions freely. speaking out of turn.

i miss you,  
but you've changed, so i can't really miss you.

i guess not all things have a silver lining.

please stop hassling me to do things differently. why do things differently?  
i liked playing pretend. i liked believing in us.  
where is us? we left too soon.

i'm begging you to stop using so much heavy make-up. i can't find you  
under there.

what happened to our yellow flip-flops that never fit? what happened to  
our children's books?

why don't we sleep face to face anymore? your hushed snores used to put  
me to sleep.

i don't like sleeping facing the wall. turn me over!  
i'm going to burn in the heat of my own frustration.

45

let's just call it even? sit on different shores and play with empty seashells  
shaped like hearts?

i can't ever find seashells shaped like hearts! i want you on my shore!  
i promise to let you pick first! i promise not to be so pushy! i promise to  
stop yelling!

i'm yelling aren't i?  
please.

don't leave me like this. naked under cotton, with my bruised arms  
exposed.

cover me up. do something!

i'm sorry. i promised.

i'm breathing now. no yelling. let's just talk.  
can we talk?  
how about we just start all over. begin again?  
because honestly,  
what we used to have was beautiful.

