

THE CHARLEMONT REVIEW

2014



THE CHARLEMONT REVIEW

A collection of literary and artistic works
by the students of
The Academy at Charlemont



2014

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Swing Construction

I put together a swing last week. More specifically, I assembled the Bright Starts™ Cradle and Sway Swing from the InGenuity collection, model I-56, offering comfort Recline adjustable positions, Whisper Quiet Operation (for peaceful rocking), True Speed sustained swinging speed, and touting Bella Vista snail/ball/bumble bee accessories and the efficient hybriddrive™, meaning, of course, that excessive battery use is no longer a problem. Apparently, this device will someday swing my child. I haven't met this child, but I am told that when they do come to exist, they will need some swinging. That was where I came in to the equation.

The swing came tumbling out of the shipping box in an overwhelming mass of plastic parts and jingling hardware one evening several weeks ago. Luckily the instructions were written in six languages. As I sought one familiar to me, I told myself this would be a valuable experience for me. It did seem vaguely fulfilling, like the civic satisfaction of voting in an election, despite having no knowledge or interest in the candidates that will one day take an office I know nothing about. Well, at least my wife will be happy with me anyways, I told myself, leafing through the monstrous manual.

I had done this type of work for her before. I had assembled an impressive portfolio of particle-board achievements: bookcases, polyester coated lounge chairs, you name it. I had Philip's head screw-driven and mini-alan wrenched my way into the annals of home furniture construction. I enjoyed the challenge, I told myself, somewhat convincingly. And yet, this was different. For one, it was gray plastic, cut into strange curvy angles I was unfamiliar with. And more importantly, it came with many unanswered questions. What would the final product be? What purpose would this serve in my life? Why should I spend several hours callusing my hands, cursing distant and perhaps non-human manufacturers, and puzzling together part L with hardware number 20043? For what tangible reward? I needed more information. I looked to the picture of the swing on the box for answers, and into the eyes of the model baby in the swing on the cover, sporting a look of mixed satisfaction and confusion. The child in the picture seemed as befuddled as I. "Why am I in this strange swaying chair," he/she/it seemed to say, "When will I be getting out? What do they want from me? I guess I'm happy here, but I really have no context to judge this experience by." Comforted that someone, albeit a stranger in a picture likely under the age of one, had similar feelings about this swing, I looked at the swing itself on the cover as a guide for my labors.

The assembly itself was mostly painless at first. I blew through the first seven steps. The wily European manufacturers only required that I snap a few pieces of plastic to each other. They clearly had

experience with the chronically inept, I thought to myself smugly. But then came step eight... Simply screw a long screw into place, the directions instructed, matter-of-factly. What they failed to impart was that you needed to hold three different heavy plastic parts in precise alignment while you screwed in this screw. How many able parents did they think our imaginary, soon-to-be-real, child had? For the next hour I cursed as I failed with the screw several times, tried it backwards, failed again, looked at the child on the box again for answers, failed again with the screw, looked at the child on the box under better lighting, shared another moment with he/she/it, and then finally succeeded. With the infamous step eight complete, the only remaining challenges were with how to set up the accoutrements for my soon-to-be child. There was the seat cover, the velvety bumblebees to circle above the child's head (didn't sound comforting in theory, but I guess these were a different brand of the feared stinging insects, they were smiling after all...), and a snail and box of the same material to attach to the provided tray. After I attached each of these pieces, I called to my wife to look at the swing and get her reaction. Of course, every time her reaction was the gooey smile and cooing that all women, particularly in child-bearing years, seem to get, even at the mention of a baby. But somehow I needed this reaction to keep on going. Finally, when the whole of it was put together, I put in the batteries and turned it on. It played songs or, alternatively, babbling water to ease this soon-to-be-not-hypothetical child. So I pushed the swing and played the song to congratulate myself on a job well done, and for more gooey smiles and cooing. And now, every so often, I turn on the swing. I give it a push and turn on the song. I leave it to gently rock in the corner and play its magical music in the subtle background. I look back at the swing and try to picture a girl in there sleeping gently, but I cannot. In the attempt to create the image, it melts from my eyes like a fading dream. So I turn back to my computer and continue reading about the Patriots, but the song continues lightly behind me to the gentle sound of swinging. It is there in the peripheral sound of the evening.

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Sam Hersh

And We All Fall Down

Parent or parents. Parent function. $\square = |\square|$. Origins. Generations. The Origin of Species. Darwinism. Social Darwinism – survival of the fittest and let the weak die off, the poor die off, those who can't survive die off because the days are limited but not so much as the space is small and that one-half-centimeter in your head that is the only thing that is ever truly yours is small and growing ever smaller, ever darker, until the last thing you know you will ever see are his eyes and the last thing you know you

will ever feel is the pierce, pinch, slide, slick with blood, your blood, and his hands, warm as yours are growing ever colder, he raises the dagger again. And we all fall down, tumbling to the ground in a fit of giggles and the bounce of curls, a fiddler on the roof inside. And you know it can't be Mother, because she's been long gone, and Father's off at work so no one's there to watch you on the swing-set up, up, up soaring so much higher, but don't go too far because Brother is just up the stairs and there's a blonde girl with him who has pretty hair so maybe she won't mind playing dolls with you and when she and Brother fall asleep after watching their movie maybe you can take the big, black, scissors from the wooden block in the kitchen and snip off just a little bit from the end and add it to the collection of reds and browns next to greens and blues, deeper than the ocean like the time you and Mother and Father and Brother went to the beach, the last time before the first time without Mother, and there was a girl there with red hair and that's when It all started because Mother swallowed some sea water and started to cough, but never stopped until you came home one day and there she was in the kitchen, lying in a puddle of blood. You try to scream but instead you shake, like the tops of trees lit up during a thunderstorm, lashing out, whipping around, crashing down and crushing everything under your path. But that was years ago and there are no more trees, no more storms, everything Is quiet and still because you learned to make it that way and you know, you know now that it wasn't blood just the red kool-aide she had been making when the heart-attack had struck her down like lightning in the forest and the earth was trembling for her, trembling for you and Brother never dated a red-head ever again because he said he didn't like the taste of green peppers which was definitely different from the taste of orange peppers but it still reminded him of red, red like the fall and like so much blood, because that's what every fall ends in eventually and Rome fell to blood, fell into blood, fell from blood- the blood of the brother, and of the mother. A woman named Rhea like the queen of the Titans, and the she-wolf that fed them like a proper mother, how Mother always fed you and Brother refused to eat until everyone was sitting but Father never sat for long and not at all after the not-blood-but-kool-aide so Brother never eats unless Father isn't home and maybe that's why he's so skinny because no one here knows how to cook.

sunshine is a social construct

If I am now what yesterday I was then, then tomorrow I never will be because I believed that sunshine, like time, is a false construct made to mislead people who will believe that a day can be determined by the length of time it lasts and not how long you are awake, punctuated by periods of sleep, sometimes more and sometimes less. But if we naturally wake up at four to the call of the cardinals, why shouldn't we be awake and putter around aimlessly until noon when the sunlight is too bright and the daytime too hot for

anyone to function anyways, even though we believe that because it is Twelve-O'Clock we should eat lunch like the deer and then return to our lives, rats who munch on carbohydrates and fats.

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Joshua Pryor

Deepening Feelings

Today is my boyfriend's birthday, so naturally I want to do something nice for him. Unfortunately, he is a bit of a pessimist, so he does not want to do anything. In fact, he seems to dread the day. He wouldn't let me do anything for the past two years, but for today I decided to throw a surprise party with some friends anyway...

I put on my white cowgirl boots. Then I buckled my golden spangled belt and holsters around my white ruffle dress. I slide a white fringe jacket over a bikini top of the nation's colors: gold, purple, and silver. I go into my drawer, pull out twin golden revolvers, and stuff them into the holsters on my belt. Finally, I finish the outfit with a cowgirl hat with a golden brim. My older sister walks into my room in a stupor.

"Hey, you got any candy stashed away I could take?" She begins rummaging through my room.

"No, but how do I look?" She stops her search to look at me. I do a quick twirl to show off my cosplay.

"Ohh, got a hot date, do ya?" Her eyes narrow when she sees the boots I'm wearing. "Are those boots mine!?"

"Well I sure hope so, otherwise I'm wearing the boots of a complete stranger," I reply smugly. "Well, gotta go."

Before I leave, my sister calls me back and tosses something green at me. I catch it and recognize it as the ring I stole from my boyfriend about a year ago. "Won't you be needing that?"

"I almost forgot. Thanks."

* * *

Out on the street, I walk towards the bakery downtown. I had ordered a cake to made for the surprise party tonight. I turn the corner onto Main Street, and right in front of the bakery, I run right smack into my boyfriend. He has dark blue hair, almost black. His skin is usually pale, but I've been forcing him to get out more, so now it's a healthy shade. He's wearing his signature navy blue hoodie over a t-shirt that says 'I Keep It Real!'. His dark blue eyes are searching the contents of a plastic bag he is holding. He closes the bag, looks up, sees me, and frowns.

"You shouldn't just walk around, wearing that," he says and gestures to my bikini top and fringe jacket.

"What, no 'hi' or 'nice to see ya', you just go straight to criticizing my choice of dress?"

"Hi," he says. "And people will get the wrong idea if you walk around like that."

I pull out one of my golden revolvers and twirl it around my finger. "I think I can handle myself." I give him a knowing wink. "And besides..." I pull back the fringe jacket to give him a better look. "Think of it as my way of saying Happy Birthday."

He sighs. "Don't remind me. In another year, if I get into a fight, I can be tried as an adult."

I chuckle. "Then don't get caught."

"Easier said than done." He takes hold of my left hand. "Are you ever going to give me my ring back?"

"Sure... when I'm dead!" I look down and reach for the bag in his hand. "What's that, something for me?"

He pulls away the bag, but doesn't say anything. I look back up, wondering why he hasn't made a witty remark, to find him staring at me. This lasts for a good minute. Finally, I have to break the silence. "Is everything alright?"

"How long have we've been dating?" he suddenly asks.

"Uh... about three years, I think. But it definitely doesn't feel that long."

"Are you doing anything right now?"

I try not to look at the bakery. "Nooo..."

He starts walking. "Follow me?"

I shrug. "Sure. Let's go." When he turns his back, I quickly text my sister to pick up the cake and bring it to the party.

We walked for about an hour to the other side of town. At first I pestered him about where we were going. Then we talked about nothing for awhile. I took a dollar out his pocket and gave it to a homeless man. Then I went back to bothering him again, until we finally reached our destination. I have to say it was weird being lead by him, usually I lead and have to drag him along.

“A cemetery?” He nods. “You know I don’t like cemeteries.”

“Or hospitals, or funerals,” he comments. “But this is important.”

He leads me through the rows and rows of headstones. I would have been lost if I was here by myself, but he walks like he knows the way by heart. A deep sense of dread builds up in the pit of my stomach. The longer we walk, the slower it seems, the colder it gets, and the darker the sky becomes. Eventually, he stops and gestures to a large grave spot. He stands back as I read the polished black marble headstone.

It says ‘HERE LIES FIVE FAMILY MEMBERS GONE TOO SOON: MARIA, JOSEF, ISABELLA, JONATHAN, AND ARIA.’ I stare at the date and last name of everyone, hoping beyond hope that this isn’t what I think it is. I look back at my boyfriend. He nods at my unspoken question. Tears begin to rise in my eyes as walk over and give him a hug. He doesn’t react beyond squeezing me back. “I’m so sorry,” I sob into his hair, since I’m just as tall as him in these boots. “Who were they?”

“My mom, dad, aunt, cousin, and little sister, in that order. They died seven years ago today.”

“May I ask how?”

“We were on our way to the zoo for my birthday. We piled into my parent’s car, and was hit by an ambulance. I came out unscathed.”

“That’s cruel,” I mumble.

“Not cruel, just ironic. I’m sure Goddess has a plan.”

“How come you never told me before?”

“It wasn’t important before.”

He breaks the hug and holds up my left hand again, twisting the ring. “My grandmother gave this ring to my father before she died. He presented it as an engagement ring to my mother because he couldn’t afford a diamond. They married young. She, in turn, gave it to me after having a dream about it, the day before they all died.”

Speechless, I examine the ring, feeling like a thief for the first time since I stole it. I take it off and offer it back to him. He doesn't take it, instead he closes my fingers over the emerald ring. "Keep it," is all he says.

Looking down and notice the plastic bag again. "So what's that for?" I ask.

He reaches down and takes out a six inch submarine sandwich. He smiles for the first time today. "The dead's gotta eat right?"

* * *

Three hours later, we are back downtown, when I remember that I had planned a birthday party for him. I lead him over to the warehouse that we had occupied for the party. We walk in and find the decorations partly torn down and confetti everywhere. Apparently, they partied without us. At least they left the gifts and a quarter of the cake. In fact, it is better this way since we now have the place to ourselves.

My boyfriend looks at all of the decorations. "I told you that I didn't want to do anything special for my birthday."

"That's why the banner doesn't say 'Happy Birthday'. It says 'Thank You For Not Dying For 365 More Days'." I can't help but have a small laugh at the poor word choice. I feel guilty about it, until he joins in. It was a laugh more to relieve tension than recognizing something as funny. He walks over to the cake and sticks a finger it to taste.

"Chocolate cake with blue frosting, my favorite." He sticks another finger in the cake, but instead of he eating it, he paints my face with it. "There... you look better now," he jokes.

I punch him in the arm. "Shut up and let me give you my birthday present." I put my arms around his neck and pull him close. He holds my waist and stares into my eyes. We're standing so close that I can feel his chest move and his heart race. As if on cue, we close our eyes and lean in. Later, he would say that it was the best birthday he had had in a long time.

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Katherine Anderson

Neat little wire hangers.

I opened the closet slowly that morning, hoping that the creak of the hinges wouldn't disturb your sleeping mind and soft sighs. I flinched as the sheets rustled behind me slightly, but you kept sleeping--kept dreaming, I hoped--as the slivers of sunlight shifted across your face. Inside our closet hung your

suits and my dresses, ripped jeans and crinkled t-shirts, draped over one another carelessly on identical clothing hangers, for even I never folded my clothes anymore. Despite the collage of garments they held up, however, the the hangers hung straight and evenly, waiting in a trim obedient row. At that moment, the chaos of our closet, along with the rest of the world, it seemed, reminded of you. Although you were behind me--still sleeping, I assumed--I saw, in the hangers in our closet, the neat little rows in which you liked to file your thoughts away and the shockingly tight parameters through which you saw our world. Most importantly, our closet reminded me of the way that you thought you could fold every moment, every memory, and every problem into a neat little box. But lately, the thoughts and the worries and the problems had been far too bulky, no longer conducive to your neat little files; instead, they hung limply in your mind, pulling on your shoulders, haunting your eyes, waiting to be rescued from their disorderliness and sorted. And although I told you several times that it's okay for our worries to be disorganized sometimes, you still couldn't seem to fathom the idea that life, sometimes, can't hang in straight rows on neat little wire hangers.

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Ilaria deLesdernier

Untitled

The red lights flashed frantically and with each of his steps the wild bear's wide smile flashed with every hit to the concrete. The straps that would normally enclose his feet in fabric were undone. His little legs could not compare to those of his mother, his legs too young to run, traveling with him was entirely inefficient. He did not know where they were going, or why they were leaving again. For the third time this year he and his mother had come back to the big man with the big house and for the fourth time this year they were leaving him again. His ears, numbed by the cold, rung with the echo of the big man's screams. "Don't turn around" he was told, "don't look back" said his mother. So he did not turn around, he did not look back, he left his Winnie the Pooh bear shoes lying in the street, straps undone, red lights flashing.

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Ben Michalak

Anger

“Dad, where are we?” A miniscule voice asked from the back seat of the Jeep. The land around them was vast and arid. Copper rocks jutted from the ground, as crows flew in circles around the sun. Cacti stood lifeless in the middle of the landscape. They seemed to mock the area around them.

“Well, Zack, we’re in the state of New Mexico; just crossed the border two whole hours ago,” Eric replied to his son. His eyes, masked behind glasses, gazed on. Eric occasionally looked at himself in the mirror, running his aged fingers through the remaining grey tuft of hair on his head. He wondered if he was doing justice by bringing his family on the trip. Zack had already spent eight hours of the trip playing *Pokemon Silver* on his Gameboy Color. Eric’s wife, Kelsey, was asleep ever since they left Wyoming. It was he, only he, who was actually interested in the trip.

“Dad, I would have noticed if we crossed a border. You always announce it, all high and mighty like,” Zack waited for an answer, but his father drove on, accepting his son’s criticism. All of a sudden, Kelsey stirred. She shielded the sun from her fatigued eyes and stretched every finger until they moved like jelly.

“What?” she asked, still partly asleep. Her eyes fluttered and eventually came into focus. Kelsey grabbed a spotted comb from her purse and ran it through her hair. She reached into their glove compartment, pushed away the manuals and maps, and found her gigantic plastic sunglasses.

“Kelsey, honey, are you okay?” Eric asked while lightly caressing her shoulder. Her reflexes snapped into action, and she slapped his hand away.

“I’m fine. Just tired from sleeping in the car.” Kelsey smoothed her wrinkled blazer, then pressed out the button down shirt with her hands.

“Tired from sleeping? Ha, I think the opposite would ensue,” Eric laughed to himself, but Kelsey rolled her eyes. The two had attended many marriage counseling classes prior to the trip. After many late nights at work, Kelsey had thought Eric was cheating on her. Their son, Zack, sadly had to moderate their many fights. Finally, he suggested that his parents attend counseling. After fifteen sessions, many tears, and more late nights, their counselor suggested that they try a family trip to get along better. Instead of talking the whole ride, Kelsey slept, Eric drove, and Zack gamed. Eric felt as if the family was turning on him, and it made him more exasperated than he had ever been. *Why do I even try?* Eric thought to himself. *Every mile we go, nothing changes.* The car lurched over a small boulder, tossing the passengers about. Eric drove on, buried in his negative thoughts. *The path ahead is long, and the way Kelsey’s acting... I don’t even know. Will we work this out?* He was utterly conflicted over the many pessimistic scenarios he formed in his mind.

“You know, maybe this trip’s a lost cause,” Zack broke the silence. “I know you two are going through a tough time in your marriage, and the best idea just may be a divorce.” The car sped up. Eric turned around in his seat and glared at his son.

“Zack. You’d best learn how to shut up in the future,” he advised.

“Eric!” screamed Kelsey.

“No! He needs to learn how to shut his mouth!” Eric reached back, attempting to grab Zack’s Gameboy Color.

“Dad, stop!” Zack cried. “Mom! Get him to stop!” Kelsey could not. Eric’s anger had reached a new high. Usually to calm down, he would talk to a therapist or stab a balloon. At that moment, his son triggered the negative feelings in his brain which infuriated him. Eric then focused on disciplining Zack by swatting at his head, while keeping one hand on the wheel.

“Eric! Drive!” Kelsey yelled in fear. Eric finally snatched Zack’s hair, and pulled him closer.

“No! Stop!” Zack pleaded. Eric clasped one hand around his son’s neck. At that moment, nothing could stop him. He was not the loving father he used to be. Eric was now a psychotic beast. His grip tightened around Zack’s thin neck as the car swerved from lane to lane.

“What is wrong with you, Eric?” Kelsey cried. “He’s our son...” she trailed off when the glove compartment opened, spilling maps and papers onto her lap. One item ensnared Kelsey: her nail file. It took her a moment to realize what she had to do. She paused, conflicted on the decision. Kelsey surveyed the situation: Eric grasped Zack’s neck with one hand, slowly tightening the grip every second. Zack flailed and screamed, slapping at his father’s arm that was chained to him. She realized that there was no other option. Kelsey raised the file. For a moment, she locked eyes with Eric. His were ablaze with hatred and dejection. Kelsey impaled Eric’s neck, causing him to release Zack. For a second, he lived, clinging to his last string of life. The string snapped in two, and he slumped over dead.

“Mom! Stop the car!” Zack screamed. Kelsey stared forward, seeing that the car was heading straight for the red rocks of New Mexico. Her leg shot over Eric’s, and she fished for the brake pedal. By that time, the car had flown off the road, shaking as if in an earthquake, making Kelsey’s task almost impossible. At last, she successfully navigated her foot to the brake, saving her and Zack’s life.

“What... what... what just happened?” Zack panted. Kelsey took his arm and dragged him out of the car to the dirt road. She kneeled down and rested her hands on his shoulders.

“Zack, I need you to tell me if there are any cars coming,” she instructed. “I need to do something.”

“But... Dad? Where... what... you killed him!”

“I know, but we need to be quiet. I want you to tell me if a vehicle comes; can you do that?” Zack wiped the sweat and tears from his face, slowed his breathing, and slightly nodded. Kelsey went back to

the car. She opened the driver's door, and a lifeless Eric tumbled to the ground. It was a peculiar sight for her, the man she once loved, dead by her hand, lying on the ground. Kelsey stared at him for two long minutes, wondering if he would come back, if he would rise and turn back into the warm person he once was. Kelsey backed the car onto the highway, asking if Zack would get in. At first, he was hesitant. The young boy had just watched his own mother murder his father. Why would he trust her? However, Zack was still smart enough to know that Eric had the intentions to kill him, that he was going mentally insane. He knew that he most definitely could not take care of himself in the desert. Zack opened the back door, and hid behind his Gameboy Color. Kelsey thought she was ready to leave, but remembered something. She kicked her door open, and approached Eric one last time. The nail file stuck out of his neck like a loose appendage. Kelsey coiled her hands around it and wrenched it loose. It was hidden in her pocket, for no one else to have. Then she drove home, to Wyoming.

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Lilah Feitner

13B

Beyond the door of 13B there lies a girl, distraught. Her face flushed, her hair unbrushed, her fingers rolled up in a knot. She once lived in her own little world, a perfect one at that, her face always glowing and always knowing she could have anything at the drop of a hat. She opened her eyes and looked outside towards a bird fluttering there, bright wings and auburn hair. The sun was setting, subtly letting her know it was time to sleep. She lays back on her bed, resting her head and away her sorrows crept.

Room of Hearts

She found herself in a room full of mirrors each one reflecting a side of herself. One of heartbreak, one of pleasure, but the strongest emotion tucked away on a shelf. On this shelf sat a small golden box with a heart and Love engraved on the side. In it sat a small, greedy child, eyes glazed over smiling in the deepest sort of pride. In the daydream she had, she was walking along and tangled in her hand was another's long fingers. A feeling of hot and cold shot through her heart and it was a happy and warm feeling that always lingers. The boy's eyes were bright and his hair dark, his smile could melt any heart. She knew he was hers and she was his and nothing could ever pull them apart. But this dream was locked up safe in this box. The key belonged only to herself. She had been hurt too many times that it was

better to keep Love far away on the shelf. So she just stood in the room full of mirrors and kept her love inside of the box. Some day for him she will let it free but for now inside it must stay locked.



Amelia Chalfant

Tears

The photograph lay crumpled on the floor, shining in the ephemeral light. It was the aftermath, the leftovers that everyone said they would eat and then didn't, just left them in the fridge to rot, and all the memories. The figure in the photo was grinning. Not a photo grin, but a genuine smile that pulled at the corners of one's mouth just enough to show the happiness. Her mother's thumb was a tiny bit in front of the lens, but covered nearly all but the girl's face. A small girl. One the mother must have called "baby girl." And the girl must not have minded, she was too small to know that she would one day become older and throw the baby girl away. To know that she would tear her mother's heart out for a second when she said "No Mama, call me Sara."

The smiling child in the crumpled photo was no longer captured in that photograph, and that there was no more baby girl. the smiling child was lying on the floor, hair longer, body longer, and face more angular. The windows were smashed, the doors torn from their hinges and thrown out the smashed windows onto the deck where she almost fell off once, but was grabbed by Mama, who held her baby girl tight and whispered in her ear to make the tears go away. The tears were falling from both sets of eyes, and stained a trail of darker brown on the deck, the trail now littered with the remnants of a livelihood.

The dying light made it hard to see the photo now, but you could still see a glimpse of the grin on the baby girl's face. The sun glared, making her small teeth shine brighter. But why this photograph? Why the baby girl? Why was that photo lying crumpled on the floor in a pile of crushed dreams while all the others sat happily and safely inside their leather album, oblivious to their lost sister? Tears fell onto the photo, blurring the edges and smearing the mother's thumb in front of the lens. The tears fell all through the house, dripping onto the pile of crushed dreams and onto the floor where the baby girl now lay, long hair splayed out around her face, and onto the deck where the shards of glass and door littered the trail of tears from before.



Lila Goleman

One Time in a Long Time

If the world were a sphere-like, animate object in the hands of a careless child whose ease, alone, could set a thousand suns, that is when the green unites with comfort in the shell of an old hermit crab who has been hidden away by himself since sand flew up - that one time in a long time. Water was not near necessity, as was the wind that scraped along the rocks that were carpeted in plaque and orange.

A sort of mineral clapped along the shores near the place where the city sat, slumped over with a crooked spine and concrete prisons. The sidewalk was worn, but not a bit of life walked about. The rocks had hooves of horses. Someone, somewhere, needed the wisdom to allow a bit of taste into the atmosphere, maybe a vague companion as the help, and a pair of leather shoes, made of the same animal who provided the milk on the morning it started, when the moon was just above the horizon.

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Alegra Secor

People Watching

The bus stop was filled with people waiting and wanting to go somewhere because they, unlike me, just want something to do. I just watch them. I imagine that they can be anything and go from there. Across the street I see a girl with dead black hair and lips like red roses. She carries a green, roughed-up long board and her pleather jacket clings to her skin in the midday heat. I wave like I know her from that place, any place. She smiles, sets the board down and swivels away. A bus pulls in replacing the image of her with a muddy picture of the show I watched when I ran out of the popcorn. I climb up the dry steps of the bus and slip some coins into the slot. The bus driver looks at me like I'm from the stone age because everyone else swipes their little cards. But if I had one I would lose it and I like the sound the change makes anyway. I sit in the far corner of the bus. A window seat so I can see the city fly by. The bus stops so many times before I get off. But I don't stop at the glass prisms like everyone else. I pull the string that reminds me of an unused clothes line and the sign in the front says "STOP REQUESTED". After I leave the bus I look around. At the end of the street there is a new coffee shop. Next to the door leans a green long board. As I walk inside I see a flash of dead black hair behind the counter. "One black coffee extra sugar, please."

Poetry

Mollie Donohue-Meyer

Telsa and Sadie

Tesla and Sadie built a house on the sea.
Not on the shore
where the other houses were,
but right in the middle of the big blue sea.

He sprouted wings and she a beak.
Ça faisait rire
de souvenir
le temps d'avant: he the carpenter and she the beast.

Tesla met Sadie at Christmastime
He sold trees
and she dropped to her knees
and begged like a beggar Be mine! Be mine.

So Tesla adhered to the beast in the girl;
Fell prey to her scales,
breathing gills and mammalian tail,
and adapted his body to supplement hers.

Sadie was born into a family of nine,
an ounce too heavy,
a finger too many
and blue open eyes like bones up her spine.

Mathilde, her mother, came from Düsseldorf
where drinks are free
(but not water, not tea)
and wildebeests teethe on the River Rhine's wharf.

Mathilde and the wildebeest made love in the summer.

As she redressed
and vowed to drink less,
he whispered “I’ll keep you if you keep the daughter.”

So Tesla grew up the daughter of a beast.
Her mother fell in love
with the man she was of,
and they sold her to Sadie when he asked them Please.

And he grew fur and she a mane,
bird-like beings
with legs and wings,
and he promised to love her if she never grew tame.

.....

Martina Rehmus

Untitled

During great periods of unease,
Periods where we could all hear the moaning of cattle,
Still slick with the slime of afterbirth, blindly searching for mothers to nurse,
Dimly I recall the birth of my sister and her slow stretch into life.
Every moment held by many breathes breathing hope and expectancy
holding back holding back

We sat silent for three days
and dipped our hands into the bellies of gods
Twisted their insides that writhed like baby snakes,
Wriggled like worms,
Just to get a response,
Just to evoke some kind of reaction and relieve ourselves
of the deep, rotting feeling that we didn’t do enough

that we should have know that the rains would come
and everything would be buried under dark water

But the veil is thin when you are above the stars,
its gossamer hangs from the night like the cobwebs collect in our barn.

Pontificating and chain-smoking in the morning,
Watching the smoke rise high into drafty rafters and dissipate,
Like we had released a cloud from a latched box.

Sitting in the hazy glow of smoke and morning,
We watch the light crawl into the room.
Our sister is forever glowing.
My mother's legs spread wide and open as the ocean,
Unremarkable.
(letting out a sigh--the call of a chickadee).

We wait our turn to release,
To find the pockets of quiet panic in our bodies
at the mention of butter-soft, barn-door awakening.
The nightmare that is a still-born calf.
(we bury her behind the pond, and lay pussy willows on her grave)

It's not about moving, or exhaling.
Many breaths breathing can only turn into a thunder roll,
Beginning at the spine, rooting down deep in the ground, clapping up.
It's the spring fever that makes us want to dance
and stand on our hands until we hear the blood pounding in our ears,
Until we taste our heartbeats on our lips.

.....

Grace Engelman

The Perfectionist

Makes lists and more lists till your hand shakes,
Till your fingers begin to tap on the crumbled paper.
Keep it all in control - keep your life from splitting apart into tiny islands of panic and remorse
Now make lists, lists, more lists. Keep it all in a box.

1) I am the old vodka bottle sticking up in the caked mud.
Like modern decoration,
I tilt sideways,
The thin gloss of grime gritty on my skin.

2) The pressure like a million miles under sea
Pushes on my chest.
Stop breathing, stop moving.
Nobody sees me through the thick opaque green river of winter.
Everything can flow downstream,
But me.

3) I see shapes in chairs,
Arms, legs, and lips in the stripes on the rug,
Interwoven colors in an infinite pattern
They weave me into oblivion
Do. Not. Think.

4) But I must think.
Everything is a calculation,
Grin until they are convinced.
Sometimes without sleep, my eyes puff up till all I see
Is light through tiny, squinting, slits.

5) Claustrophobia,
Like the carefully folded napkins on the dining room table.
Panic, panic, panic.
When I cannot escape, I try to escape my own body
By shaking and shivering and rocking back and forth.
I wish they could look past the cloud-colored river of Spring
To see me there.
I have always been there.

6) My hands are dried out and scratchy
Like lizard skin or dried seaweed
I cannot stop washing, tapping, rubbing them dry.
Obsession.

You are a perfectionist. Make lists, get organized.
Make a list of all the things you cannot perfect.

.....

Emily Nitzsche

Untitled

Red, yellow, green, blue
I wrote colors because I have no idea what to do
Closing my eyes makes me think of black
I wish I was someone who had a knack,
for rhyming words and vaguely describing deep thoughts
but I am, well, just not.
The deepest things I ponder are not deep at all
now that I think about it, they are incredibly small,
in significance I mean, they are irrelevant to society
which is understandable since I lack any notoriety.
I watch Netflix in my bed, eat, and sit
on a horse; but that's about it.

I can't write songs or a well thought out paper

But I do know that mist is a type of water vapor.

I also know that by this time, you have probably realized that I am really bad a poetry

You can take that up with Alex Merrill since he is making me.

I think I am done now, I am getting bored

I will be astonished if you are floored.

So goodbye readers, thanks for your time,

and I am OCD so this has to be the last line

.....

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Harry's life sucks
with the Dursleys
parents died
finds a letter
hagrid shops
To Hogwarts
Hermione and Ron
Gryffindor!
Malfoy's a brat
they hate Snape
learn to fly
in comes troll
get in trouble
Sorcerer's stone
the Dragon
3 headed dog
choking plant
giant chess board
keys and broom
it is Quirrel
Stone is found
in the pocket
Voldemort
dies when touched
Harry passes out
infirmery
friends okay
back to Dursleys'

The Chronicles of Narnia

Wardrobe opens
Mr. Tumnus
Edmund is bad
with the witch
the hut is destroyed
they explore
animals talk
they find beavers
those four thrones
pack for mountain
santa's here
Edmund leaves
meet Aslan
the stone table
witch makes deal
kills Aslan
Edmund's good
losing war
Peter fights
with the witch
Lucy and Susan
Aslan lives
Witch is dead
rule of thrones
back through wardrobe
For Narnia!

The Hunger Games

reaping day
Prim is called
takes her place
that was mahogany
Cinna makes her
girl on fire
fights with Haymitch
E-lev-en
pretty dress
Peeta has crush
boy with bread
opening day
dehydrate
fireballs fly
stuck in tree
tracking bees
the careers
arrows and Rue
blow up food
Marvel dies
song and flowers
to find Peeta
feast of death
Clove is killed
Cate kills Thresh
berries kill Foxface
mutts attack
fight with Cato
the red X
eat the berries
glory in capital
President Snow
is not happy.



Emily Comeaux

Nemean Lion

of golden coat
and flowing mane
the land of Nemea
fears my rage
my hide too strong
to be pierced by blade

my claws are sharp
so is my bite
the sun will set
and comes the night
but I am strong-
don't fear the light

In the shadows
I do wait
for glory is
a precious bait
and leads young heroes
to their fate

each thinks he shall
be my demise
until he sees
my fiery eyes
and discovers that
he cannot rise
above me for
now
I rule
Nemea.



Lilah Feitner

Poem 1

A girl stands atop a hill
the wind blowing. It always will
bathed in pale moonlight
no one else in sight
snow falling all around
rustling branches the only sound
she takes a step begins to run
her cheeks rosy and fingers numb
brown hair flowing behind
thoughts rushing through her mind



Amelia Chalfant

Broken

Sometimes
You just want
Your heart to drift away
And spare you
Of the pain

Sometimes
You feel like life
Is a long dark hall
You'll never escape
You'll just

Keep walking

Once in a while
There is a lift in your mood
The air around you
Brings you up
Only to crash you down
Harder than before

But you try
To keep moving forward
Even though
You feel
As though your life
Is falling apart

Then
There come that day
When you just can't go on
Like your mortal life
Leads nowhere

You feel broken
Like your mind and soul
Have been scattered
To the wind
Maybe
A new plane of existence
Would be easier

But the answer is no
Lift up your head
Trade in the sometimes
The once in a while

For those moments when
You felt in one piece
Follow your dreams
Follow the hope
The love
The happiness

You will have a purpose
You will be loved
You will be fixed



Lila Goleman

Salt

The black sheep had the courage to jump the fence.
He made it. But he still lost.
The field mouse cried all night, long after
the tragedy.
And the stream fell in mud instead of satin grains
But blood was not the color of his laughter.
It was pale and rich,
like corn husks falling to the dirt
and the brink on warm gloves.
They liked to rest through the night watch,
it was like spiral roses - their love,
Flesh in flame,
and when it had gone, he sat there
Knuckles cracked, and covered in different types of salt.

Photography

Elizabeth Purington



Grace Engelman



Zell Goleman



Connor O'Brien



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