

RUSHLIGHT



SPRING • 2007

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Lately
Braden King

i sleep for you.
dream an empty dream of
other beauty,
and wake to you.
waiting for sunday,
or someday when i stop being

too young,
thinking you looked so pretty
outside in the snow, and inside

it was so cold
that i couldn't layer
enough.
the steam from your cup
like the steam in your breath
sings old pop songs
from the radio.
but never says a
word

of warm nights lying
in separate rooms

or love.

Sung to the Tune of Dylan's "It's all Over Now, Baby Blue"
Meghan Smith

I sit waiting on the top step of the stairs to my apartment building with an unlit cigarette between my fingers. It doesn't matter that the sun rose half an hour ago; the sky is still gray. Drizzle encourages oil slicks the color of peacock feathers to slide down the drain.

The door to my building opens, and someone pushes past me down the steps. He's here: the man who rents the apartment below me, a shell-shocked vet whose art sells for obscene amounts of money.

I've watched him work on his latest project every morning for the past month.

He props a large canvas up against the trash cans in front of the neighboring apartment building, stands back, and adjusts it. He reaches into the bag on his shoulder, pulls out a notebook and pen, turns, and faces the street. We wait.

A black car rounds the corner, and my neighbor retreats up the stairs. As the car accelerates, the tires whip puddles into miniature tsunamis that collide with the curb and splash onto the trash waiting to be collected.

My neighbor's pen skims across his notebook. I've learned that he's recording the make, model, color and license plate number.

The car passes us. My neighbor runs down the steps and considers his canvas. He holds it up for me.

Oil, cigarette stubs, bits of paper, and brown/gray street water drip down the white surface. When it dries, he'll spray adhesive on it. I light my cigarette, wave, and return to my apartment.



The Gentry
Cassandra Bohn

“The Testimony of John Dunbar of Invereen”

They were a small people dressed in green, and had dwellings underground in dry spots...I have heard people say that if fairies were refused milk and meat they would take a horse or a cow; and that if well treated they would repay in gifts.

“Evidence from the Isle of Skye”

We always thought of fairies as mysterious little beings living in hills. They were capricious and irritable, but not wicked. They could do a good turn as well as a bad one...Besides their hollow knolls and mounds there seemed to be a subterranean world in which they also lived, where things are like what they are in this world.

-Transcribed by W.Y. Wentz-Evans in The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries

The trees are so thick in summer that
their leaves could be grass growing
downward. Picnics suddenly turn
subterranean, as the world we know is
shifted
one step closer
to the earth.

The trunks we lean against,
bolts of tangled
sculpture-hair would be
just the roots
of real trees,

and there'd be no sky, only leaves
that we'd learn to count and chart
and name. We would note their
patterns and the way they
change; how they disappear in
winter and re-emerge in spring.
We would call this a miracle and we'd
look to them for guidance and
comfort.

But otherwise, we would do basically
the same earthly-things, like
drinking the milk that saturates the ceiling
before dripping down into our buckets. We would call it
rightfully ours.

We would call ourselves
The Gentry, and we'd be
at once friends and enemies
to our neighbors.

We would take great care
in the sharpening
of thorns
and then push them
into the unsuspecting palms
of human children cart-wheeling above.

Our children would run as well,
clothed all in green and red,
and they'd envy the children above
in their leafy heaven
for their scraped knees and
berry-stained hands,

but secretly,
they'd find joy,
and even comfort,
in peering
wide-eyed and wonder-struck
up through the leaves.

A Man's Measure
Alex Bandazian

Somewhere between my last breath and first communion
I'm slurring words like ammunition at a compost heap.
A once-man turned burned-bridge,
peddling slogans like an organ grinder from the front of Tuesday's paper.

A tattered rag of fatigue,
bleary eyed with all this devil dust
but still ready to

walk,
 run,
 stop,
 shoot,
 smoke
 and
 Do it again

I've been too sick to raise this rifle,
but well enough to shoot,
dragging my boots on the man in front of me

He's a badger bearded smattering of carnival barker,
or like a stitched-up bloody-lip that snags
but refuses to yield

But still, he's good people, Sir.
We am all good people, here.

My name's a scrap of metal and
My body's a pair of legs and
My left's a point-blank pistol and
My right died back in school

I've cracked crimson to preserve what's left of yours.
Nothing more than a broken sword left bending in the wind

There's a letter in my pocket.

Keep it safe.

Burn what's left.

Carve the rest with a stick in the dirt before it crumples up and fades

Dear Dad,

I'm proud to say I haven't left this hole in 3 days.

Dear Mom,

I see your point, but if the gun's loaded I might as well shoot.



Island Baptism
Emily Ayer

*Heavenly Father,
by the power of your Holy Spirit
you give to your faithful people new life
in the water of baptism.*

Because she came in June –
first-to-be-born,
only-sister-to-be-baptized-on-island –
she wears these labels like gleaming medals.
I say
it was only because I came in the middle of winter,
but still,
I wish I, too, had been dressed in eyelet
in the cedar-warm light
of my parents' cottage bedroom,
that when my mother picked me up,
the dark, salty breeze through the screen
had ruffled my hem and curled my pink feet.

My mother says newborns cozy to my father
because his strong heartbeat echoes the womb.

I wish I had been carried up the hill
cocooned on his shoulder,
my lips parting as if in a hymn or a lullaby,
drawn through the dark to the amber glow
and echoing bell of the casino.

*God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness
and has given us a place with the saints in light.
You have received the light of Christ;
walk in this light all the days of your life.*

I can imagine glistening strands of light –
the tapered candles,
the dusty sconces,

the glint of her tiny cross
and the reflection in the font of water from Deep Cove –
knotting us together as we sing.

*Katherine Thomson Ayer,
I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.*

My mother cries as the water is pressed
into her daughter's forehead,
and again when she nestles Kate among her blankets
as she falls asleep that night.
Curled in the womb of the island,
the deep rock of the bell buoy lulls her to sleep.

Amen.

Death & Taxes
Elise Rodgers

His heart was like unwatered plants. He moved in murders of crows. Each Valentine's Day he'd send out crates full of condolences. "Pay attention!" he'd snap. It was all business & briefcases from there. I tried scraping him off with a brillo pad and wondered if a pound of flesh would clog the drain. He was Willy Wonka's stage 3 cavity. He was Peter Pan's sense of gravity. Such a buzzkill. Each Easter he'd send out baskets full of W2 forms. "Carry the 3!" he'd shriek. It was all death & taxes from there. I decorate my cubicle. I phone consumer hotlines. Each birthday I sent out tax-deductible crates of condolences. Cards that read "sorry to hear of your premature burial". Every one came back marked "return to sender". So he and I held hands. Our house was chalky and unplottable. Our yard was full of unwatered plants and murders of crows. We flaked apart when wakeful & in dreams, we carried the 3.



A Total Eclipse
Gabrielle Kappes

As the sun dips behind the clouds, long gray shadows are cast on the walkway. Instead of bright shades of red, gold and orange, the leaves have turned russet, sienna and auburn. Tori swings open the café's screen door. We collapse upon a worn sofa. I kick off my shoes, curl my feet underneath my body and let out a big sigh. "You're quiet today," Tori glances curiously at me.

"Oh, there's this guy, in my writing class."

"A romantic poet?" she muses with a hint of sarcasm.

"If by romantic poet you mean pretentious snob, then yes," I smirk, "Garth Mortin, this kid who's lived all over the world, Tokyo, Florence, Berlin, Madrid, and boarding school in Cambridge. He writes these epic poems about the modern man who's trying to find the meaning of life. And when our Professor questions any detail of his work, he starts spouting his own theories about the truth of poetry."

"Your class must hate him."

"But that's just it! Everybody loves him. The professor thinks he's God's gift to poetry and every guy in the class practically drools when they talk to him and trail after his Academy blazer. The girls think he's the next Ethan Hawke. Before class starts they gather in the hallway and croon over what words of wisdom Garth will utter today."

"And I guess that you're not one of those girls?"

"I'm not so sure, there's something about him..."

The door swings open and sunlight illuminates a dark body. The person stands in the doorway, eclipsing the sun. A boisterous voice thunders throughout the room and Garth, in a cut black t-shirt and tailored dark jeans struts into the café with four or five guys parading behind him. I whisper to Tori "That's him!"

Garth struts over to the center table, carrying a paperback copy of Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House*. He voice booms, "This is the answer to Post-Modernism," he waves the copy in front of his lackeys' faces, "Wolfe deconstructs the myth of twentieth century architecture!" A couple of the guys nod their heads, when they should be scratching their heads. Garth swivels around in his seat and points at me, "You, you're in my writing class, right?" I look up at him awkwardly and nod, wondering whether I had applied mascara that morning. "I just read your poem, "Shooting Stars' —"

"Solar Flares," I correct him.

"Yeah, whatever. It's a nice poem, but it's derivative of Ebony

McBurney's 'Cosmic Chaos.' I'm surprised Professor Wickman didn't catch it. But I clued him in, we had a good laugh over that," Garth leads the chorus of snickers. His comment spreads like wildfire through the café and other students begin to crane their heads in my direction.

I stare at the candle on the table, feeling hot tears well up in my eyes. My head is about to explode. The candle flickers, ignites like a Roman candle, and then goes out in a shower of sparks.

Sunlight floods the floor of the Student Center. I try to do my homework, but I cannot get my mind off of Garth's cruel comments. I look blankly ahead, only to see half a dozen posters of Garth's photograph on the wall with the motto: Vote Mortin for Student Body President. Now students and faculty will be infatuated with this guy. He'll control the entire campus with his dark curls and winning smirks. The longer I think about him the more I despise him. Is he so vain that he doesn't even know what he did to me? How could I even think that I liked someone so oblivious to anyone else's feelings? Agitated and infuriated, I look down at the table and stare at my number two pencil, feeling my head throb with anger. I imagine his head impaled upon it. The pencil begins to jerk back and forth. I concentrate harder and watch it move faster. The pencil spins around in circles. I focus my attention on the yellow wood as it rolls and jolts on the tabletop.

Curious but still enraged, I look back at Garth's campaign posters. I cannot even think straight; his face becomes a blur. White rage practically blinds me as I stare at them. The first sign curls up into a scroll, then another and another. They shake and fall, spinning down to the ground until all dozen of them litter the hallway. I stare in disbelief. My pencil rolls off the table.

There is a full moon that night. Grayish beams fall through the leafless branches. Thirty people crowd around a bonfire. Two metal kegs, almost empty of Amstel Light, stand upon hallow rotten logs. Someone begins to sing an off-color rugby song in a drunken drawl. Others join in with yelps and squeals. The bonfire lights-up everybody's face with an orange glow. Shadowy bodies dart around its edges, throwing twigs and brambles into the pit to make the flames dance higher. I stand to the side, chatting with Tori, mesmerized by the flames.

One laugh in particular rumbles through the trees. I watch as the crowd parts. A few people begin to chant, "Here comes the champion! Here comes the champion!" Garth struts through. His white cable knit sweater glows by the light of the fire.

"Is this my coronation?" he roars and leaps over the bonfire while

shouting “I’m master of the universe!” They cheer and applaud wildly. Garth bows as laughter erupts and echoes through the woods. His shadow, three times his height, looms behind. I stare at him in disgust, my head getting hotter by the second. How dare he come to the party and act as though we were his subjects! My stomach knots as I notice that he has everyone’s rapt attention. They crowd around their newly crowned king. Garth grabs a keg, lifts it over his head and parades around the fire pit like the Incredible Hulk. Tori looks at me nervously. If only I can make him trip. If only I could move that branch to the right a couple of inches, then he’ll fall and everyone will finally see that the joke’s really on him. Garth stumbles forward then trips on that very branch. He falls to his knees as the empty keg flies into the fire. Everyone roars with laughter. Garth’s eyes are upon me. He gets up and walks toward me, the glare of the fire reflected in his eyes. He is about to speak when the metal beer keg explodes. The bonfire stretches upward, sputtering and hissing. Orange and blue sparks shower the ground. The light from the fire catches a shard of metal sticking out of Garth’s neck. Spewing from his throat, blood gushes and soaks his white sweater. His body sways back and forth, lips mouthing silent words. He falls into my arms.

At the Memorial Service everyone said it was a freak accident.

Einstein's Cesium Bible
Alex Bandazian

Scientists proved this week that time does not exist.
Lovers and outlaws rejoiced.
Poets, politicians (and other liars) lamented.
God, his usual self, was eerily silent.

And They are Painted with Mud
Kayla Malouin

They race through the darkness in silence.
Slower now.
The rain has stopped,
The fighting has ceased,
And they are painted with mud.

They walk through the jungle in silence.
Calmer now.
They have had time to let the guard down,
They have had moments to catch up with themselves,
And they are splashed with blood.

They drift through the dawn in silence.
Happier now.
Someone has made a joke,
Someone has cut off Death's grasp behind them,
And they are together alone.

They sit in the morn in silence.
Content now.
The night has passed,
The air is clearer,
And the bent photos are enough to bring them home.

pyrite
JM Wilson

you pass me through eager palms,
noting my brilliance in the sunlight.
you will be deceived.
that is one promise i can keep.

unlike my precious rival,
whose shimmer i can
only emulate,
i am worth nothing.

if you would only look closely,
you could tell that the dust
left on your hands
is not real.



The Most Curious Tale of Cecil Clearwater VIII1/2
Chris MacDonald

There was a metallic rumbling, and then the Metropolitan Train of London passed six inches from the sleeping head of Cecil Jonathan Clearwater VIII1/2 as it did every morning at 6:04, shaking his apartment, upsetting his china, and waking him all too abruptly. The train was not quite so close that Cecil could read the smudged obscenities scrawled on the sides, but close enough that, had he opened his window and stuck out an appendage a mere centimeter or two, it would have very quickly ceased to exist. There were three small china crashes as the teacup, teapot, and saucer he had laid out for the morning were vibrated off his kitchen counter and plummeted gracelessly to the floor, soon followed by a much larger crash as one of the antique ceremonial serving plates in the hutch was jounced off and took a terminal dive to join its brethren. The amount of money in a given year spent on china for this reason was spectacular, for he would daily attempt to find a good, solid spot of counter where the chinaware could not make yet another extremely expensive plunge to the floor. He was invariably incorrect in these approximations, finding ultimately that no place was safe. Cecil closed his eyes and felt his ulcer churn into life, by way of morning greeting.

Cecil Jonathan Clearwater VIII1/2 was a small, timid, rather gentle man who stood shorter than most other people but taller than most people shorter than him, with a small step often softened by penny loafers and unspeakably distasteful argyle socks; a man whose sense of music was so amazingly primitive that he still thought the Beatles were a pretty swell band, and sense of technology so utterly prehistoric that he still believed VHS and audio cassettes were a clever idea. He was a complete believer in the idea that Russia was in fact a fictitious country, and the continent over the sea was in fact a small tundra island inhabited by some confused Poles and an infinite supply of potato liquor.

He was midway through life's journey, sporting pale, wispy hair, a weak jaw, watery blue eyes enlarged by small, wire-rimmed spectacles, and the unfortunate habit of wearing tweed jackets with suede elbow patches in conjunction with violently colored bowties and the occasional polka-dotted cummerbund. He was, in fact, a book collector, the cornerstone of his collection being a 1602 manuscript of Hubert L. Cumberland, a little-known philosopher who believed that the four elements of the earth were air, fire, water, and chocolate custard (opposed by only one rival, Arthur M. Wellford, whose philosophy endorsed fire, water, and crème brûlée as the planet's basic elements). The electric alarm at this time exploded in sound as it ticked 6:05, and Cecil fell off the bed, by way of

morning tradition.

As he removed a particularly horrid wad of carpet fiber from his mouth and laboriously stood, Cecil wondered what cruel misfortunes the Fate had in for him today. Cecil was part of a privileged group who believed collectively that life is over too quickly and if that you took everything slowly and enjoyed life's beauty you could extend it. Members of this group, who called themselves 'people,' searched for truth and contentment in the writings of philosophers, poets and the Sunday comics. They universally attempted, and were invariably unable, to steer clear of politics, taking heart in the philosophy that any politician who achieved an elected office should by no means be allowed to keep the job. They were a clear-speaking, heavy-thinking lot, and, whenever one of them died at a normal age, they claimed that this person hadn't truly believed the philosophy in their hearts. Life, in the view of some outstandingly small-minded and rash thinkers whom Cecil respected not at all, was like a loop, or a chain of loops, or an infinite number of concentric loops within a chain, or a metaphorical onion bagel with salted butter, or a drinking straw, or a week-old herring from the butcher's. Life, according to Cecil and those of similar brilliance, was almost exactly like ordering tea, eggs, and toast for breakfast and getting three pickles, a duck, and two-thirds of an alarm clock over easy.

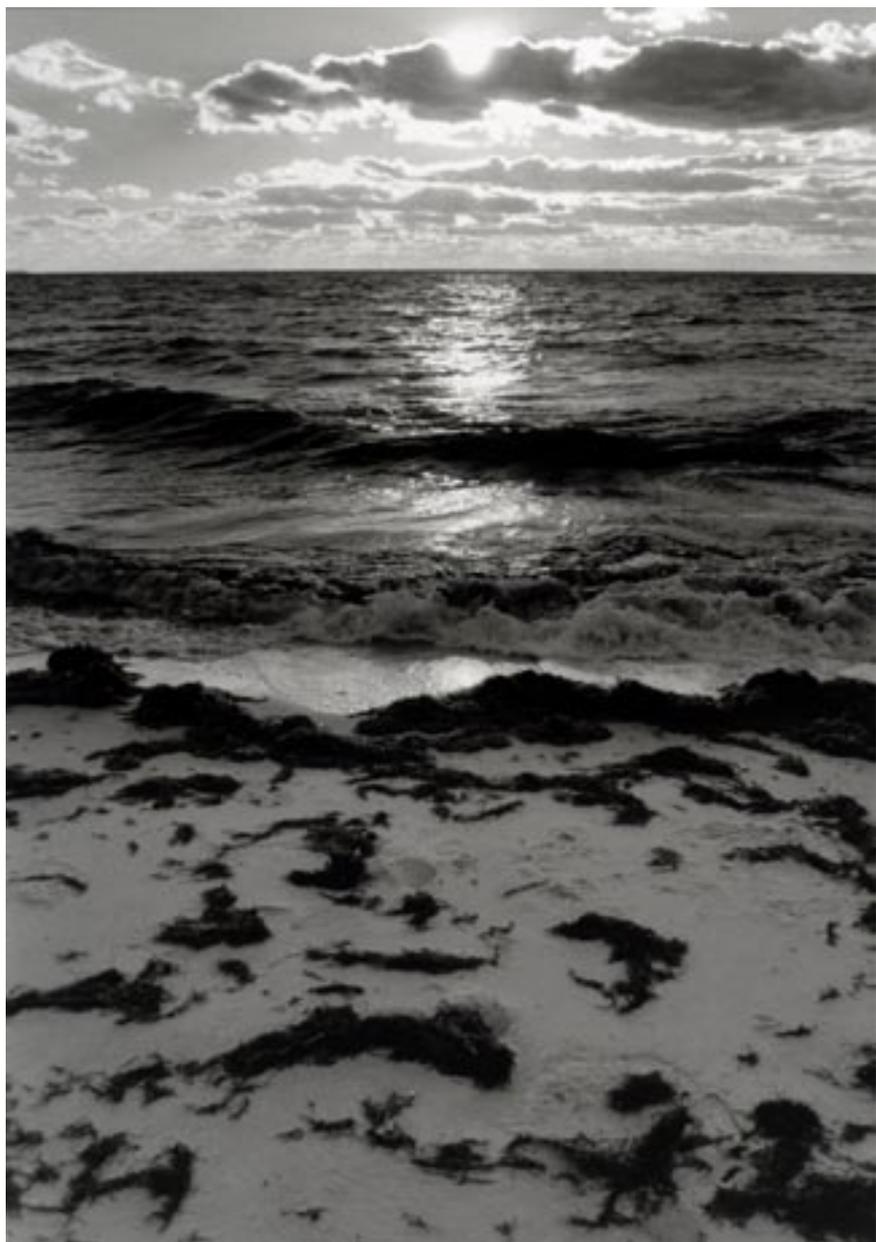
Cecil absentmindedly pulled on his third pair of olive socks and carefully selected a puce waistcoat, lime-green bowler, mauve shirt and his favorite crimson bowtie to compliment his usual tea-stained tweed. Turning around from the wardrobe, he bashed his shin against the coffee table directly in front of him, deepening the already well-deepened, table-shaped dent in his tibia as he did every morning. The caged mouse on the table awoke with an irritated sleepy squeak and turned over in its shavings. The mouse was named Jonathan, a royal-sounding name which, aside from being Cecil's own patronymic, always gave him heady visions of a king questing through a far-away land on some dangerous, heroic expedition. At the thought of any such life-limiting excursion, Cecil's ulcer would send remind him a sudden and forceful reminder not to be so very foolhardy. As it was, the mouse was sleeping contentedly in the cedar shavings without even the faintest trace of a dream of the concept of a desire to go on a heroic expedition.

Although not inclined towards the inanity of adventure, Cecil Jonathan Clearwater believed, most resolutely, definitely, and undoubtedly, believed in ghosts. This was primarily because such a creature unquietly abided in the room above his. Of its desire to attain a corporeal form once again, Cecil also firmly believed, because the spirit made this very clear, in as many deafening, vulgar, but poetically moving ways possible. As Cecil made tea every morning, a hor-

rible, ear-cleaving shriek that was quite completely unlike anything resembling pleasantness would erupt from the apartment above his. The only explanation for this sound was an expulsion of woe from his ethereal neighbor, the vociferous spirit of Emily Dickenson. One would think that having a disembodied voice reside in the apartment above him—from overseas, nonetheless!—would be something of an exciting event, a conversational tidbit to embellish awkward small talk even, but one would be wrong—not even just a little wrong, but flat-out, full-stop dead wrong. The voice of Emily Dickinson was in constant lament over her inability find a true rhyme with the word ‘orange,’ or much else for than matter.

Cecil automatically raised a broom handle and prodded loudly at the ceiling. There were a score of holes in the ceiling from doing this, a response that the landlord took mild objection to. The shriek tapered down somewhat, to something between a tea-kettle’s shrill whistle and several cats being simultaneously disemboweled with a ladle.

Twenty-two minutes later, Cecil Jonathan Clearwater VIII^{1/2} stuffed a very displeased mouse in his satchel and exited his apartment, departing quickly from a rather one-sided conversation with the disembodied voice of Emily Dickinson on the dreary topic of slant rhymes that had been emanating morosely and unnervingly through his bedroom ceiling as he changed out of his bedclothes. Six minutes subsequent to that, he was boarding the 7:14 bus and remembering that he had forgotten to drink his tea.



Ploughed Fields, Maryland (after a Jane Frank painting)
Elisabeth Lohmueller

I suppose only God
hears footsteps
in these fields

and traces the stream of sweat
into the canyon
of the ploughman's shoulders

as he steps forward
in the roiled earth
and wipes his lip.

And I suppose Frank,
not having felt God
in so long,

grazed her brush
into the same fields
also stepping forward in the heat,

bursting
into the labor of her life
in the same saving motion.

Night Landings: Sambura (after a Jane Frank painting)
Elisabeth Lohmueller

This place is the past:
the shifting moon
that swallows slivers of itself

indicates time
or that which is
no longer

like the blinking light
that illumines every other moment
or like the beads that glisten beneath

collapsing stars
as she touches her bare neck
in the almost dark.

Stevie, Eric and Dad
Caitlin McDonnell

*For Ray Vaughn, Clapton, McCartney,
Lennon, Harrison, Starr, McDonnell*

Stevie, Eric and Dad

His strings sing lullabies that make me wanna stay awake forever
Veins shifting side to side, back and forth
Veins strumming a beat, a note, another lullaby
Wooden body bopping to the blues above
And landing down level to my blue eyes (like when I try to use my plastic jump rope)

Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow

Slippery brown neck
Tuners originating from pearly shorelines
Clean rows of rectangle pearls
Mimicking the silver dollar frets
Stolen from an ocean floor

Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself

The notes run rabid from his mouth shaped like mine
Round me and my front row seat
The fifth Beatle's voice (I swear you wrote about the sun coming here)
Scratchy in my left ear, silky in my right
Sucking in the blues but I'm still orange inside

She's my sweet little thang...She's my pride and joy

Mom's in the doorway
She understands what's gonna happen
So she smiles
He smiles at her

Please don't say we'll never find a way

I wish I could swallow the shiny chocolate neck's sweet rhythm and blues
I try and they both smile at me

A plastic toy with only three strings, Stevie said

Then I'm seven and now beside him
Six singing strings
My own little piece of blues chocolate

The Metal Detective
Katrina Hegeman

CHARACTERS:

ALICE, an old woman, the metal detective

SONNY, forever a child, a voice of reason

MR. BAKER, private proprietor

TIME: Uncertain.

PLACE: Rural America.

Scene One: A living room. Enter **ALICE** carrying metal detector. She picks up the telephone, dials, and waits.

ALICE. *(to an answering machine)* Hi. *(clears throat, enthusiastically)* Hi, uh Pauline, this is uh Alice. Uh you called me. Uh when do you want me to call you back—or, or you'll call me anyway. I, I hope. I hope. I'm just calling to find out how you are, and and I wanted to discuss with you about uh time tunnels. You know, the uh how time works and all the dimensions and stuff like that. Real weird stuff, but it's interesting. *(laughing a little)* You know me. Okay. Bye-bye. *(hangs up phone, empties pockets onto table; bobby pins, bottle caps, coins, nuts and bolts, etc.)* How could I ever be alone? I've got pieces of people's lives right on my own table.

(Enter SONNY from right)

SONNY. Pieces they threw away or lost.

ALICE. *(rummaging through pile on table)* I think I found that thingy we lost last week. The one for the washer. Or the dryer. You know, the...the one that spins.

SONNY. You want pasta or rice?

ALICE. Give my share to the bear.

SONNY. I told you. We don't have bears around here.

ALICE. *(singing, sultry jazz)* Share to the bear! Share to the bear!

SONNY. And we certainly can't afford to be feeding anything that's not bringing in an income.

ALICE. Nonsense. But pretty soon we won't have to worry about income or outcome or howcome or anything because I found a spot. A secret spot. In the woods. (*whispering*) There's gold.

SONNY. I told you not to go into Mr. Baker's woods anymore. Last time, he sat in his van in front of our house all night. Awake. All night. Watching our house. He's not...healthy.

ALICE. Well, he won't be able to harass me once I'm in the police force.

SONNY. Alice...

ALICE. The last time I called the police—you know about the person who kept breaking into our house every Wednesday and taking my things—

SONNY. Alice...

ALICE. They said I should become a detective. Well, whoever was breaking into our house stopped when they found out that I was onto them.

SONNY. Please, just don't go back there. Please.

ALICE. No, no. Not tonight. (*putting on glasses—no lenses, bent, rusty*) I'm going to be doing some writing. I think I've got a new theory about time travel.

BLACKOUT.

Scene Two: Daylight. The woods. At rise: **ALICE** scanning the ground with her metal detector; she stops here and there to pick up her treasures.

ALICE. (*carrying a dialogue with herself*) Boy, we are hot today! I'll say. Every step we take. Buried treasure everywhere! One man's treasure is another man's treasure! Something like that.

(metal detector beeps crazily)

(ALICE takes out a garden trowel from her pocket and starts to push some leaves and dirt aside. A woman's decaying arm is revealed poking up through the ground. Terrified, ALICE backs away and exits left.)

BLACKOUT.

Scene Three: Bare stage. Chair at center. At rise: **ALICE**, sitting in chair holding metal detector.

ALICE. I may be old. But I know what I saw. *(in detective's voice)* What did you find in the woods that day, Alice? *(in her own voice)* I can't— *(detective's voice)* You can. Try. Try to remember for us, Alice. *(her own voice)* I found a body. His wife. *(detective's voice)* Whose wife? *(her own voice)* Mr. Baker's wife. *(detective's voice)* You found Pauline Baker? *(her own voice)* Yes. *(detective's voice)* Are you sure? *(her own voice)* I'm sure. *(detective's voice)* Are you sure? *(her own voice)* I'm sure. *(detective's voice)* Are you sure? *(her own voice)* I'm sure.

(Lights fade in and out several times)

BLACKOUT.

Scene Four: Back of house. A backyard. At rise: **ALICE** uses metal detector, sweeping it across the grass. She makes her way toward the house.

MR. BAKER. *(Enters from side of house)* Get off my land, you crazy bitch!

ALICE. *(Irish accent)* Top o' the mornin' to you, Mr. Baker.

MR BAKER. GET! OFF! MY FUCKING LAND! YOU FUCKING CRAZY BITCH!

ALICE. I know. I know what you did.

MR. BAKER. What the fuck are you talking about?

ALICE. You know, I don't just find junk with this thing. Sometimes, I find wedding rings.

(Police sirens are heard. They become louder and louder)

BLACKOUT.

Application for Sainthood
Elise Rodgers

I have walked on water
beds and fed the hungry
Happy Meals™.

I have been a martyr,
in the tabloids, a victim
of fashion.

My cubicle, a temple,
the center of a universe
5 business days in the making.

My face is sighted daily
in celestial visions,
burritos and oil spills.

Like St. Francis,
I care for the animals
that hang in my closet.

I am the watchful shepherd,
tending to the herd
at the slaughterhouse.

I was present for the miracle
of Botox™, for the rapture
of Tanorama™.

I possess the faith
to take a flying leap,
into the fall from grace.

Helen Keller
Roxy Azari

if i could hear...
 i would memorize the sound
 of birds chirping good morning to their mates

if i could speak...
 i would call them love birds

if i could see...
 the tips of their beaks would just brush
 forming the silhouette of a heart
 and i would be able to claim
 i saw love exist

if i had a voice that They could understand
 then i would communicate
 just how beautiful
 the color in their vivid perfection can be

maybe i am the lucky one...
i can focus on other senses

and if apple pie looks anything like
what it tastes
then it must be
gorgeous

and if the season of spring
looks anything like what it smells
then it must be
magnificent

there is beauty in the way this cold water hits my hand
i wonder if “cold” looks like what it feels like...
i wonder what “cold” sounds like...

if people were to listen

to the first breath of a flower
that silence does not compare to the silence in my head
yet, maybe our silences are equally as beautiful
for my silence has echoes of thoughts
that resonate in the captivity of my mind

maybe if They took their glasses off
and their hearing aids
They would get a taste of my life
no...
They can still hear faint sounds and see colors
blue and red feel the same to me
i don't understand

i yearn to speak like Them...
i put my fingertips on their lips
in hopes that i too could possess
the power of a voice



SILENCE

Christine Keane

He yells at her until that familiar vein throbs in his red forehead. He tells her that she is jailbait, and that her family hates her. He says she is a waste of skin. She screams back at her father that it isn't true, she hates him, and she is never going to talk to him again. She storms out of the house, slamming the front door shut behind her.

They don't speak for hours. She comes home later that night, runs upstairs, and barricades herself in her bedroom. The next morning, she awakens to the smell of sizzling bacon. She climbs out of bed and follows the scent. Entering the kitchen, she sees that her father is making her favorite breakfast. In the middle of the kitchen table is a card with her name on the envelope, and a vase containing tulips. She smiles, sits down, and reads the card.

They don't speak for months. In September two planes are hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center, killing thousands of innocent people. Her father works in the building next door. When the first plane hits the first tower, the ceiling of his building slowly begins to cave in as a result of the impact. The ground shakes and the windows shatter. Her father and the other employees are evacuated. He stands outside and watches silently as the second plane hits the second tower. His daughter is at home watching the news and immediately calls his cell phone, to see if he's all right and to tell him that she loves him.

They don't speak for years. Her father works longer hours and never apologizes for what he said. He is in China during her high school graduation. He doesn't give her away at her wedding. He doesn't meet his first grandchild until she is fifteen. He is alone in his mansion in the Hamptons when his ex-wife calls to notify him that his daughter has been in a car accident. She says that their daughter died instantly. Father and daughter hadn't spoken in over twenty years.

Pursuing Mischief
Sam Galpin

When you see a pretty girl toting a Bible around on a train, you ought to be suspicious. For those of the more sinfully-inclined among us, a person reading the bible for pure enjoyment is a common indicator of those females or males with whom there is just no chance. Sure they'll chat it up with you and maybe even give you their number, but you have to realize that they are probably only being a nice good Christian, and you should resign yourself to the fact that you are definitely not getting into their pants. Unless, of course, you marry them. When regarding the Venus' and Adonis' of the world who fall into this category, you will find that Satan himself could not have devised a more cruel method of torture.

Yet when I saw such a girl on my way to work this morning, I had to know for sure. After all, she was writing in her Bible; taking notes in it. Even referring to a study guide! Surely that is a more revealing sign of a student (perhaps a religion or philosophy major?) than a member of the religious right. Right?

She is tall and shapely, with an oval face, blue eyes and just a hint of freckles dotting her cheeks and nose. She has straw colored hair that's cut fairly short with a razor and kicks out at the sides. Try telling me, looking like that with her cute little worn in blue leather moccasin shoes and perfect smile, that she doesn't seem like she'd be fun! That, coupled with the fact that she must live near me and is dressed well for commuting into New York City, tells me that dates with her are quite plausible, and that she is at least reasonably intelligent.

I am standing by her at the crowded station transfer, and when she turns to look at the billboard for the train schedule, she sees me. But not just sees me, as if her eyes were passing over me, but notices me, and for a second our eyes lock and we smile shyly at one another. This reassuring moment of contact decides it for me, and I follow her onto the train when it arrives and sit down near her. My intentions of meeting her are bolstered when she excuses herself from a seat next to another man - claiming that his broad shoulders are crowding her space - and takes the one directly next to me, lying her hand on my knee (with even a gentle squeeze?) in apology, as she had bumped me while sitting down.

I don't speak to her right away. I pace myself and return to reading "Nightwood," by Djuna Barnes, which I'd just started that morning. But she is actually the one to initiate conversation. "What book is that?" she says as she closes her Bible, saving her spot in Mark with her pen.

“Really, I don’t know. I think it’s one of those books that you can only explain after you’ve read them. You know? It might even take more than one reading – all I can tell you is that a friend lent it to me and said that it’s really good,” I say, truthfully. Even after reading the magazine article my friend attached to it, I still am not quite sure what kind of a book I’m getting myself into.

I was also unprepared for the conversation that I would soon find myself drawn into.

I ask her about the Bible – what is she studying it for? Since seeing it, that question has been at the forefront of my mind.

“Oh! I read it all the time. My boyfriend is a minister in Kentucky and he sent me this study guide, which asks you a lot of really interesting questions, and has really gotten me into thinking about the Bible in all sorts of new ways.” I have underlined the words and phrase that may as well have been accompanied by the pounding of a kettle drum upon my hearing them.

A girl wearing iPod earbuds across the aisle from me stifles a chuckle and smirks at me – whatever music she could be listening to is obviously not as entertaining as my current predicament. I really don’t want to be carrying on a conversation about the Bible on the very packed Wednesday morning commuter train into New York City.

“For instance,” my new friend ‘Ashley’ continues, “it raises all sorts of questions about what Jesus might have done when he was younger, and further explores his relationship with Mary Magdalene. It’s quite exciting stuff!” Some cruel form of karma is at work here.

By now the entire train car is listening in on our conversation and all I want to do is excuse myself and hide in the lavatory until the train reaches Penn Station, but I don’t have the balls. I am frozen in place by a horrible combination of embarrassment through my association with Bible-thumping Ashley in front of other commuters, a sense that this is somehow my due, and the feeling that, should I run now, I would become the type of hypocrite I have always sneered at and avoided. That although I am initially drawn by physical beauty, I most value a girl’s personality, interests, and mind. Everyone says this so that they do not seem shallow, but how many are actually telling the truth?

It is only until after this encounter while I am walking uptown to work that I realize that my running would have, in fact, supported this attitude towards meeting and dating girls.

I’m just too damned polite to run when it’s clear to everyone but this girl that I have no further interest in carrying on the conversation.

“Have you read the Bible?” she asks.

“Ahhh, sort of. I read portions of it in my ethics and humanities classes in high school,” I say, counting down the number of stops that there must be until freedom.

I try and steer the conversation towards more mundane topics, continuing with education and asking her what she is/was majoring in for school.

“Yeah, I graduated last May and just moved here from Ohio. I majored in marketing, and am now staying at my aunt and uncle’s in Jersey while I commute to this firm I’m working for. I do want to get my own place in the city, though. It’s just so hard finding a roommate!”

“What about your boyfriend?” I offer.

“Oh, we would have to get married first!” she says matter-of-factly as if I’d suggested leaving the country without a passport.

The groan of brakes as the train comes to a halt in Penn Station may as well have been my own sigh of relief.

Self Portrait
Roxy Azari

I was raised in the skirt of Poetry
Taking naps in my Grandmother's lap
While she recited
What back then sounded like gibberish
But with time the rhythm of her tone gave away
The meaning

I still have my first notebook
Which sparked notebook after notebook
Until a box was needed to store all my thoughts
 In my closet

I am that untold secret
Who buries sorrow in her soul
And forces smile outward
I am the girl who found her voice through spoken word
And spoke word after word
until someone called it art
Until someone noticed
That my words were more than just jumbled letters in sentence
Because until that someone
I was just this girl
Writing her soul onto paper with pen

I am the Persian carpet
That changes color with every exposure of the sun
Every footprint
But I lie there
I take it
 Every dirt stain on my hand-woven exterior
And yet, I am still here...

Because I possess this strange sense of hope
Because hope is the only medicine I know
And hope cannot be purchased in tiny plastic bottles
In drugstores
So I write until someone finds their hope medicine in my words.

The Vanilla Bean Café
Meghan Smith

Remembory
scribbling favorite
words on napkins?
Me: quixotic, books.
You: seductive, S-E-X-youality.
giggling—spell it.
we dread our lives, undulate,
mold them before they're mol-
dead. fuzzy. diminished.
It's open mic night
And here's the hook:
Coke.

Wobbling
like a castle made of cards
and fishing for friends
who remember, Francine's
ex-bassplayer sniffs:
“Yeahhh come over, mann,
But don't knock. Cops knock.
Vanilla Coke
debuted here.”
It's open mic night
And here's the hook:
Folk.

“Grasshopper Man”
bobs, glasses bulging, then
technology can't get sync-
opated
with Vermont lefty's
finger picking
elbow jousting
palm slapping.
my lips pucker: ginger lemonade,
or is that the sour

of lefty's Peter Paul and Mary?
we're all pneumatic, you know,
And here's the hook:
Bohemia
is our gateway drug.

Homecoming
Matthew Lorello

The address, a chipped brass 17, sings in a cruel chorus,
The reunion with poor decisions, in F minor.

The pavement, salty as the brine encrusts the surface,
Fools a weary head, confuses my clarity.

The apartment, dim with mildew's toxic aroma,
Delights a light bulb, hung loosely from the ceiling.

And I? Like the soiled wallpaper, I'm dissolved,
Chipped and pealed, debris collects remains constant.

What was supple is death, what was death is ghostly,
I'm haunted as spirit and skeleton toast.

The bottle, which reads Patron, signals long-forgotten
Mistakes; the cork dislodges my lack of will or salvation.

I bend, shake, quiver over these signals of maturity,
The day wears like the lines on my face, they tell why-

I have failed.

A Valentine to Chet Baker in Paris
Gabrielle Kappes

a god of Olympus,
on a metal folding chair
he sits slouched,
removed
from our world
haunting beautiful,
a figure more than Greek,
lost in thought
like someone in love
the burnished horn,
an extension of soul.

he waits
for velvet drapes to draw,
for dim corners
to be lit low,
a soft blue.

le chat qui pêche
will soon be full
of lingering melodies
that float into oblivion like
circles of smoke.

through dusky
Parisian streets
bistros and
glowing brass cafés
he'll wander,
half in light,
half in a street shadow
whispering
let's get lost

will you play Chet?

thin lips sing smoothly,
words fall like
spinning planets
whenever it's early twilight
I watch 'til the star breaks through

the trumpet wails,
notes roll gently
like tears
the thrill is gone



Arborist and Patient
Cassandra Bohn

I.

They say that souls reside in trees, and
you spend your life tracing the branches
to find the one that matches yours,
who, you may notice, typically watches
from the next limb. You might
be a leaf and he a root, hence
the anecdote of Autumn;
love and its falling
has since come to be immortalized by
the veined, vibrant cordate-leaf
of the dove tree, shooting toward roots
like Love's misguided arrows.

II.

He set her on a log the way he used to
align his paper boats before
their long slip down the storm-drain.
Backing away a few paces he knew
the tree branches would look like hands
touching her body. The liked the way
she came through the leaves,
like a hand-cupped fire-fly.

III.

The storm makes the boats slip
harder. The trees play limbo in the wind;
they cast their arms up to it,
fragile as fishing line.
They faint like Elizabethan women,
their vitality drained by the men
who mine them for their virtues—the poets
who wear a women's beauty
like cologne.

IV.

Where the tree opens up, they sit,
tentatively. They place photon-
light kisses on what a tree surgeon would call
her inner thigh. They ask to know
her darkest secrets. She pulls back her bark
to show them. They've seen all they care to see.
They never come back.



Baptism Sestina
Emily Ayer

We cross a bridge dividing the sea,
another bridge, a ferry pointed towards the light.
Through the dark, fog spirals
off the rising shore.
I am a daughter
returning to my womb.

The island is a womb
surrounded by an amniotic sea.
Here we are all daughters,
drawn to the summer-warm light
from our winter shores.
Time here is a smooth and endless spiral.

The ritual spiral
into island life is as easy as a womb.
Each cottage and path along the shore
is as ancient and familiar as the sea,
their roots stretching from sand to light
and claiming us as daughters.

We are bound to each other as daughters:
customs and disappointments spiral
us together even when the summer light
is dim and clouded as a womb,
when we are separated by an icy sea
and the light of summer is a dark shore.

Faith is the gift of God to His shores.
Help these children grow into true and worthy daughters;
surround them by your sea
of love and catch them before they spiral
away. It is a delicate thing, this womb,
and can be pierced by too much light.

At birth you were given light.
Hold it close to your shores;
carry it in your womb
as you would a daughter.
It always leads to the same place, this spiral:
it always ends at the sea.

Carry this light until you pass it to your daughter.
The shore is near and spirals closer everyday.
It is a sea, our womb.

Trawling

Annie Laurie Malarkey

We rose early
Before the silver fog
Had opened his eyes
And lifted himself from the sea.
I heard only the groan of the rotting dock
And two scruffy fishermen
Old and worn
Talking about the weather.
We started the engine and
The Kittiwake rumbled gently
As she stirred from her slumber.
The waves played softly at her bow
Soothing her awake.
I watched your body rhythmically move
To the beat of familiar tasks,
As I drenched myself
In bright yellow plastic.
The salty air received me
Into the world
You knew so well.
And as the first net
Dragged gently
On the bottom of the ocean floor,
You held my hand
Because words
Are not permanent at sea.
And for the first time,
I felt like your daughter.



**A rushlight, flickering and small,
is better than no light at all.**

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