

RAINY DAY

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VOLUME XLI, No. 2 / FALL 2013

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Friends and readers,

*Rainy Day* approaches fifty. It is now, we imagine, longer-tenured than all but the dustiest stalwart academics. It has grown into a national magazine; for this issue, the vast majority of submissions came from students who have never climbed the Slope or suffered through an Ithaca March. That's not to say, however, that Cornell is poorly represented in this issue. We found Zach Velcoff's 'No Problems' particularly delightful, and 'subconscious' by Clare Dougan ain't half bad either.

The University of Colorado at Boulder brings us such delights as Emily Riso's "Cops and Robbers," the first play we've published in quite a while (read it out loud for the full experience—we did, and trust us, it's worth it). On a more somber, but just as absurd—or absurdist—note, "Bratislava" by the University of New Hampshire's Allen T. Finn takes us far from our own comfortable world.

But what we found most enjoyable this semester was the opportunity to represent the finest undergraduate work from across the nation. Our hope is that *Rainy Day* will continue to serve as a showcase for rising talent in its years to come.

Unlike our beloved magazine, our stints at Cornell were quite short: four years for Anne and two for Mik. During those years, though, there was nary a place where more spirited debate, passionate readers, or wine could be found. That, we think, is something even the dustiest academic can appreciate.

Yours in reading,

Miklos Mattyasovszky and Anne Jones

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Fall 2013

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## OLD MOVIE

---

Wyatt McMurry

I turn off my cellphone, watch the attendant  
hold a seatbelt above his head and click it

together, smiling. Out the window a sticker-covered  
suitcase falls onto the conveyor belt: like one

you'd expect to see in the hand of some old movie  
man who walks out onto the tarmac in a yellow fedora,

thin-waisted woman on his hip, palm trees shaking  
shadows over his face. He's got a granite jawline, and

I'm sure moments ago he met her in a cafe somewhere  
like Morocco or Spain, yes, Spain, underneath terra cotta

ruffles, a martini glass in her hand—one knee, one rumor  
of thigh whispering out from the cut in her skirt. He walked

a long time in this Spanish marketplace that you can imagine  
smells a lot like crushed pepper and split cypress, oil-

buffed, cut and planed into guitars people play while singing  
and chugging wine on the curb. Beneath the sound of strings

squeaking between each pluck and chord bullets still pop  
and roar, tanks still uproot trees, night still fixes itself around

each alley way yelp—sound moments all still remembered  
sudden and precise as stars. There has to be a close-up when

they first meet: he squirts one manly tear, she's hysterical,  
and even I start crying and laughing into my popcorn watching

her lipstick smudge to backlit black and white brilliance on a  
big tube TV—but there on memory's grainy screen his hat

is my grandfather's hat, her thighs my grandmother's thighs:  
I've always imagined them meeting in a farmer's market in

Kentucky, where his hands cradling the pumpkins and  
tomatoes, her boot-cut jeans, some truckers' crackle-song

fading to white noise on her CB radio must all mean the smell  
of earth and shovels grows fainter and fainter, only flashes up

at random while walking in the back field when my head feels  
wide and dreaming's ground roots itself in the cornstalk tips

you can only hear out there waving, rustling in the darkness.  
Already I hear the clank and groan of the landing gear, the

tilted wing's hush to slow the plane: already I am here in  
this new place. In the jetway cold air blazes as the smell of

pepper and guitars gives way to gasoline and empty wind.

## ASPIRATIONS

### Nathan Goldman

The sidewalk at the intersection is, as always, rife with them, tall girls in short skirts. The sun has bronzed their thighs and shins and calves. Their anklets' shimmering reminds Mr. Mossotti of the electronic billboards in Times Square; his father took him there once, decades ago. As he waits at the red light, he tries not to stare. His gaze, he knows, is nothing they want, and his heart has soured enough already. Why allow it more wants that won't—can't—be had? He would just avoid the intersection, but there is no other sensible route from his office to McArdle's, where he has a standing lunch appointment each Wednesday. So he always hits this light, and despite his monastic attempts, he cannot not look at them.

He does have the grace, or the resigned moralism, not to leer at flesh. Instead, he reads the names on their shopping bags. Some days this takes the whole light—when there are many of them, with many bags. Some days there are so many that the light turns, and he sits in the left-turn only lane, completing his task, right blinker flashing, as if he has made a mistake.

At the restaurant, Mr. Row is picking at a plate of chili fries. Mr. Mossotti drapes his suit jacket over his chair and watches Mr. Row deposit a cheesy fistful onto the small appetizer plate already set before him. "Or I'll eat them all," Mr. Row explains, fidgeting with the black alligator belt that constricts his rotund stomach.

Mr. Mossotti sits. He puts a fry in his mouth and lets the grease sit on his tongue, soak into it.

"Where's the damn waiter?" asks Mr. Row, though he shows no sign of searching. He itches his engorged caterpillar of a mustache and stares at the menu in his hand. "You know what you want? I told him you'd be here imminently." Imminently. This is Mr. Row's favorite word.

Mr. Mossotti chews the fry's shrunken carcass, swallows. He reaches for another. "Yeah, I know. How'd the merger go?"

"Fine, fine. Upped my salary, kept benefits. We get new dental. Marge'll be thrilled. Hey, hey, that's my water!"

"Sorry," Mr. Mossotti says. "I thought just the wine was yours."

"We'll get you one." He makes a quick and passionless survey of the room. "Marge'll get those cavities filled now. Okay, stop me, stop me. Have the rest." He shoves the plate forward and smiles. Mr. Mossotti can't decide whether the smile is more jackal-like or paternal.

"I'm not that hungry," he protests.

"Yeah, yeah. The waiter'll box them up for you. Hey, there's the guy. Hey! Yeah, we're ready."



On his drive back to the office, Mr. Mossotti has two boxes in the passenger seat—one with the fries, the other with half his salmon filet. Both left open, so the smells rise, expand, and converge: with every breath he imbibes a chimera of cheddar, fish, grease, beans. Back at that intersection, his intersection, the light is red again. Sometimes the girls have returned, heading back the way they came, or maybe just circling, like mini-skirted vultures. Mr. Mossotti makes himself a promise: to cease wanting. He stares at the fries. Never has he been more conscious of his nipples pressed against the cotton of his shirt, the weight of his flaccid pectorals. He strains against the fries, wishing he were God or a genie, so he could just will them away.

Some sound to his left disrupts his meditation. He jumps in fright and smacks his head on the ceiling. He turns: It's one of them, bent at the waist, tapping on his windshield. She smiles shyly and waves a tiny hand. I wish I could read palms, Mr. Mossotti thinks, so I could trace those lines to their source.

He rolls down the window. He wishes he were dead and immediately realizes it's an absurd thought, a disproportionate response to unremarkable woe. But so was the thought about being God. He smiles, hoping his isn't like Mr. Row's.

"Hi," she says, poised, still bent ninety degrees, "thanks, is Park Street east or west?"

What kind of question is that? He sees these same girls—aren't they the same ones?—every week. They have never asked him or anyone for directions, as far as he has seen. Surely, surely they know their way. She gestures each way with her fistful of bags, as if to remind him of his options. Mr. Mossotti locates the name on one and lets it fill him: Gucci, Gucci, Gucci.

"It's east," he says, and immediately regrets it. The lie—west!—was so close at hand, and something in him knows it would have broken the curse.

Her lips stretch into a parabolic smile. "Thanks," she says. But she doesn't retreat immediately. She's staring, not at Mr. Mossotti, but past him. He follows her gaze, over and down, to the open box of fries. As one they inhale.

## **No Problems**

---

Zach Velcoff

I know that I don't have no back problems, 'cause I sticks out my gut when I walks  
and I know that I don't have no eye problems – I don't squint when I looks at the clocks.  
I know I don't have any toe problems, 'cause I use 'em to turn off the light  
and I know I don't have any mood problems, 'cause I never gets in a fight.  
I know that I don't got no face problems, 'cause Mama, she says I'm real pretty.  
and I know I don't have any brain problems – this poem is remarkably witty.

And I know I don't have any hand problems – must be 'cause I'm always lendin' 'em  
and I know I don't have any arm problems, 'cause I'm always shakin' and bendin' 'em.  
I know I don't have any knee problems, 'cause I don't never needs to oil 'em  
and I know I don't have any pants problems, 'cause I hardly ever soil 'em.  
I know that I don't got no nose problems, 'cause listen, I blows it real loud.  
And I'm sure I don't have any me problems, 'cause I'm smart and I'm nice and I'm proud.

## COPS AND ROBBERS

---

Emily Riso

### Cast of Characters

Dominick Carullo- Large man, mid-forties, father of Tiffany, husband of Suzette

Suzette Carullo- Pretty woman, mid-forties, mother of Tiffany

Tiffany Carullo- Young woman in late teens, girlfriend of Junior

Junior Stevens- Young man in early twenties, son of Russ and Joanne

Russ Stevens- Tough police officer, mid-forties, husband of Joanne

Joanne Stevens- Reserved, well-mannered woman in her mid-forties

### SCENE

*A huge, elaborately decorated kitchen and dining room in a large mansion in the high-class Westchester County, New York.*

### TIME

The present.

### Act I

#### Scene 1

*THE CARULLO's house.*

*(SUZETTE preparing food in the kitchen, when DOMINICK grabs her lovingly from behind and they start flirting and giggling.)*

### DOMINICK

What do you say we go fuck like porn stars?

### TIFFANY

Ew. Mom, Dad stop. Junior and his parents are gonna be here any minute. I told you to be on your best behavior, none of these slutty little shenanigans. And Mom put on some clothes, you look like a hooker.

DOMINICK

Oh c'mon Tiff, we didn't raise you to be such a fucking square like your boyfriend's parents.

TIFFANY

You don't even know them...

DOMINICK

Well from the fact that you say that any mention of drugs, sex, or religion will offend these prudes...

TIFFANY

*(Cuts him off)* Dad, please, just act normal for one night, first impressions are very important!

SUZETTE

He's just tugging your tits, hun. We will be very behaved.

*(SUZETTE and DOMINICK laugh with each other.)*

TIFFANY

You see, that's an example of what not to say... *(doorbell rings)*. Oh shit! They're here... *(starts walking to the door, nervous)*.

DOMINICK

Hold up, honey, I'll get it. *(Opens the door.)* You guys here for the swingers party?

TIFFANY

Dad!

DOMINICK

I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Get your asses in here!

JUNIOR

*(Puts his hand out.)* How's it hangin' Dom?

DOMINICK

Little to the left kid, little to the left *(grabs his hand and brings JUNIOR in for a hug, then holds out his hand to RUSS.)* Nice to meet you. I'm Dominick. This is my wife Suzette.

SUZETTE

*(Wiping her hands off from cooking in the kitchen and reaches out for a hug.)* So nice to meet you!

RUSS

Likewise, I'm Russ. This is my wife Joanne.

JOANNE

*(Hands a bouquet of flowers to SUZETTE.)* Thank you so much for having us, your home is beautiful!

SUZETTE

Yeah, yeah. Good thing it wasn't too hard to beat out those tight-ass Jews for this place!

*(JOANNE laughs awkwardly, looks back at RUSS to give him a shocked look.)*

JUNIOR

*(Walks over to TIFFANY.)* Hey babe, didn't get a chance to say hi to you.

TIFFANY

*(Whispers to him.)* Oh my god, I can't believe my Mom just said that...

JUNIOR

Its okay, she'll get over it.

DOMINICK

So what are you guys drinking?

RUSS

I'll have a vodka on the rocks if you got it.

DOMINICK

Of course, only the best, smuggled straight from Russia.

RUSS

Oh in that case let me get some moonshine!

DOMINICK

Okay, let me make a few calls... *(laughs.)* Just kidding, don't wanna be arrested now.

RUSS

Don't worry, I'm off duty.

JOANNE

I'll just have a glass of water please.

SUZETTE

Aw c'mon, get a little loosened up with us!

JOANNE

Not tonight, I'm driving and I have temple in the morning.

SUZETTE

*(Smiles awkwardly to JOANNE.)* Oh that's nice. *(Turns and whispers to TIFEANY.)*  
Thanks for telling me, Tiff.

TIFFANY

Well, I didn't think you'd be so blatantly anti-Semitic with people you just met!

DOMINICK

Enough with this bull shit, let's sit down. Suz, is the antipasto on the table?

SUZETTE

Yup, right in the dining room.

*(All sit down at table.)*

DOMINICK

So Russ, tell me, how's the job, enjoying fighting crime?

RUSS

Yeah well you know, it puts food on the table. And it's fulfilling I guess, making the streets safer for our children. What work are you into Dominick?

DOMINICK

I'm in the business of importing goods.

RUSS

What sort of goods?

DOMINICK

Uh you know, anything from novelty toys to precious gems.

JOANNE

That's interesting. And what work are you in Suzette?

SUZETTE

I work in the entertainment industry, and you?

JOANNE

A Hebrew school teacher...

SUZETTE

Oh very nice...

*(Awkward silence.)*

DOMINICK

So... your son's quite the cradle robber. He's just like me I have to say. I picked this dime up when she was just seventeen *(gestures to SUZETTE.)*

JOANNE

*(To RUSS)* What's a cradle robber?

TIFFANY

Dad! Not necessary... We're only four years apart.

DOMINICK

Oh jeez, I'm just kidding, I love this kid! *(Nudges JUNIOR)* He'll be great to take over the family business one day, like the son I never had.

JUNIOR

You fucking got that right!

JOANNE

Junior! You watch your mouth!



JUNIOR

Sorry Mom...

DOMINICK

So Russ, anything interesting happening at work? Seems like a pretty quiet neighborhood down here.

RUSS

Actually, we have one of the biggest importers of cocaine in the country living right here in Westchester. Unfortunately, we can't identify the asshole. All we know is his alias, Johnny Hammersticks. And worst of all, him and his wife are a criminal duo. She runs the biggest escort ring in all of lower New York! Crazy people...

DOMINICK

Wow, that sounds like some shit straight out of the movies. You got any leads at all?

RUSS

Well we got this one kid we busted in high school saying that he sells for this guy. But Hammersticks is an expert. He doesn't let anyone know his real name or where he lives. He's got his operation tighter than Fort Knox.

DOMINICK

Damn, this guy is dealing with high school kids?! Sounds like a real scumbag.

JUNIOR

Hey Dom, you should go show my dad your cars before dinner.

DOMINICK

You like cars Russ?

RUSS

Oh yeah, I love 'em! I got to use the little boy's room first.

DOM

Oh dropping a steamer?

TIFFANY

Dad, shut up!

*(The two men walk off stage. SUZETTE and JOANNE get up to bring the plates from the antipasto in the kitchen.)*

JUNIOR

Are our dads actually gonna start bonding? They're like night and day.

TIFFANY

Yeah it's surprisingly all going along relatively smoothly. Except my mom better not make anymore dumb-ass comments for the rest of the night...

SUZETTE

*(Enters, gurgling her drink.)* Junior, I love you, but where in the hell did you get these parents? I honestly think you could put a piece of coal in your mother's ass and a fucking diamond would come out.

TIFFANY

Mom!

Scene 2

*(DOMINICK and RUSS enter garage.)*

DOMINICK

So as you see from my collection here, I love the color white. I got the Ferrari Supera-merica, can't outrun me in this thing! Over here is the 69 Chevelle SS and then I got my Bentley Continental GT over here. And this is my baby, the 65 Shelby Cobra, Tiffany. Yeah that's right I named my daughter after my car...

RUSS

Listen, Dom. I'm not an idiot. I know what's going on here. I found your wife's business card in the bathroom. You're married to Sexy Sally, which makes you...

DOMINICK

Her side-piece?

RUSS

I'm not stupid... But lucky for you, when there's a conflict between family and work, I'll choose family every time.

DOMINICK

Agreed, this is family time. Now let's just enjoy the rest of the night.

Scene 3

*(DOMINICK and RUSS return to the dining room where SUZETTE is just putting dinner on the table.)*

JOANNE

This looks wonderful.

SUZETTE

Thanks! I was slaving away like a French whore for hours to make this.

DOMINICK

No, literally. *(SUZETTE glares.)* Nah...just kidding, just kidding, babe.

JUNIOR

So what'd you think of Dom's car collection, Dad?

RUSS

It's very impressive...

DOMINICK

Yeah, I sure did blow a lot of money on the white *(Pause.)* cars.

RUSS

So what cars do you and Suzette prefer to take to your hoe-downs?

SUZETTE

What?

RUSS

You know, our parties, hun. The ones where we're able to dance all night and never get tired for some reason.

*(JUNIOR and TIFFANY look at each other in shock as they realize what is going on.)*

JOANNE

Oh I know what you mean. The punch at our Temple's Hanukah parties is filled with sugar! I can stay up and dance all night, too!

*(SUZETTE and DOMINICK look at each other and laugh.)*

SUZETTE

Yup, it's definitely that sugar!

DOMINICK

And none of that Sweet'n Low shit. We get it pure, straight from the cane.

JOANNE

Mmm that sounds delicious!

SUZETTE

It really is, Jo.

RUSS

I gotta go to the bathroom again...

DOMINICK

You got the nervous Hershey squirts or what?

TIFFANY

Ew, Dad, we're eating!

DOMINICK

Ha sorry... Will you guys excuse me for a second as well? I gotta drop a deuce, too.  
*(Walks off stage.)*

TIFFANY

Sooo...

SUZETTE

Uh, I need more wine. *(Takes the bottle of red wine on the table and fills her glass to the brim.)*

JOANNE

*(To JUNIOR)* That Dom is a pretty odd fellow, huh?

JUNIOR

Yeah, but he means well.

*(RUSS returns to the table and a car is heard pulling up into the driveway.)*

SUZETTE

*(Yells to DOMINICK who's still offstage.)* Hunny? Why is a car pulling into the driveway?

DOMINICK

*(As he is walking back into the dining room.)* Ohh! It's old Tony Two Toes! Russ, you're gonna love 'em.

TIFFANY

*(Nervously)* Dad?!

*(Police sirens are heard pulling into the driveway.)*

JOANNE

What's that?

RUSS

Just a little something to counter-act Johnny Two Toes...

*(Cops storm into the house and Jonny Two Toes and his men armed with automatic weapons follow shortly after. JUNIOR brings TIFFANY into the kitchen when shooting from both directions begins. When the gun shots end, everyone in the living room is dead. JUNIOR and TIFFANY are the only ones who survive and are seen walking out of the kitchen and looking at each other in shock and horror.)*

BLACKOUT

END.

## **BRATISLAVA**

---

### Allen T. Film

They found the small boy  
hidden next to a screwdriver  
in a park full of dead trees  
the day they played hide-and-seek.

Wake him up! they yelled.

It was getting dark.  
They had to fetch his mother,  
who shook him and wept into his shirt-pocket.  
She cursed God  
and wiped sweet blood from his hairline.

## ETIQUETTE

---

A sweating carafe  
of vermouth catches and bends  
the flicker of candlelight  
into spearchucking aborigines and  
porcelain cats along the walls  
of my father's study.

From a chilled glass  
I swill a martini.  
"More gin next time," I remark.  
"Eight ice cubes is far too many,"  
I remember him telling me.

In the morning I wake up alone,  
face crusted in yesterday's rabbit stew,  
a hint of juniper.  
"Martinis are to be drunk in the presence of a beautiful woman,"  
I imagined him saying, pouring one for  
himself and asking mother where she  
put the damn olives.



## MEMORY

---

There are mannequins  
poised in overlit windows  
on Newbury Street,  
in purple boa, seersucker, Tiffany blue negligee.

I lost my way there once  
on a crowded Sunday.  
The air was cool,  
heated by the collective exhale  
of delighted fervor.

Have you seen my Grandmother?  
I said to the man selling sunglasses.  
Have you seen my Grandmother?  
I said to the German tourists.

That street went on forever  
before I found her,  
speaking to the mannequin in seersucker  
and calling it husband.

## BILLBOARD BLUES

---

Jaw Wheeler Bennett

Hangin  
my hammock  
in a Georgia peach tree.

Georgia peach joined me:  
juicy n sweet.

Satisfied,  
till a sign  
blocked the sun and  
the breeze.

Georgia peach  
up and wilted

and left me  
to freeze.

# LIGHTS DOWN THE ROAD

Bridget Apfeld

My grandmother's hands were paper and sand on my cheek when she told me to leave. Don't ever come back, she said, and folded into the dust of the barn. I followed her then through the warm-smelling stalls, where the Holsteins swished their ropey tails against the siding and pawed through the hay, and the Swiss brown in the corner shook its velvet ears. I can't go, I said, watching her sort through the mare's tack hanging from the walls, and she said without looking, you've got no choice. I stood behind her and waited, and when she turned it was careless like she wanted me to know how little I could hurt her. She twined the reins around her forearm and said, bus comes at seven, get Miller to drop you off, and she walked stiff-backed out past the silo and was gone.

I found Miller straddling the pasture fence by the willows and said, I need a ride. My brother looked at me and pitched a stone, twisting on the post, and said, she threw you out then? No, I said, and he jumped down. Then why leave? he asked, and I looked up into his face and said, I'll be back. Miller smiled, sad.

No you won't, he said, and I wished he would have lied.

Elam's breath was warm on my shoulder when I was twenty and tangled in the quilt, hearing the mourning doves low in the early stirrings of the dawn. I nudged his arm from my hip but he settled it down tighter around my waist, so I lay still and thought of how to climb back through my window without Miller hearing. The porch door below swung on its hinges and I knew Elam's father had gone to the dairy barn for the first milking. I could not stay long.

You awake? Elam asked, and I pushed his foot with mine. He reached over me and grabbed his watch from the nightstand. Shit, he said, and he rose to slip on his jeans. I sat up and looked for my clothes. Elam stood in the window and his back was dark, shadowed in the light rising over the barn. Elam, I said, and he turned and smiled.

We slept too late this time, he said, will you get home ok? I nodded. He reached over and took my hair and let it fall, and I thought of how he would sit and hum and I'd put my hands and my ear on his back so I could feel the sound in me too.

My dad and I are tagging the calves this weekend, so I'll be busy, Elam said, tugging his socks on, when is your family doing yours?

Next week, I said, we're waiting on a few more. Elam nodded. Your dad want help? he asked, and I said, this is the last time. I saw that he did not understand so I looked away when he laughed and said, Jesus, I know your dad's stubborn, but he doesn't need to pretend he couldn't use help. That's not what I mean, I said, and when he stopped moving, boot in hand, I knew I had to keep going.

I just can't anymore, I said, and he asked, why? Does it matter? I asked, and he said, yes, yes it matters. He ducked to the curtains and I heard the cool swish of grain from the hopper. His shoulders tensed; his father would miss him soon. The quilt pulled from my legs when I stood and walked to him, and I remembered how Elam's hair shone in the light that first time behind the silo. He looked out the window.

I'll love you, he said, and I said, I'm sorry, and left him with his hand high on the lintel and his face to the floor.

A week later Sam Holbrock dug his chin hard into my collarbone and shuddered out, I love you, and I thought of my grandmother's eyes when she'd seen me walk home through the dust with Elam's shirt on my back and voice in my ears.

Miller dragged the baling wire across the paddock dirt with a blank look on his face like he'd let his thoughts run dry, but I knew my younger brother and he was angry. I followed his steps along the fencing to the old tool shed where he shoved the wire up against the wall and then said to me, stop following me around.

Can't walk where I want? I asked, trying to lift the shade from his eyes, and he said, bus is at seven, right? That cut, deep, and he shook his head when I narrowed my eyes. I didn't mean it, he said, and I said, I know that. But I saw he kept a distance from me, touched a scar on his neck where I'd pelted a rock years ago when he'd told me my gap-teeth were ugly, and it made me smile to see I could still scare him.

We walked into the shadow of the barn and stood looking at the house. A curtain twitched in the upstairs window and I thought it must be my grandmother looking out. Or maybe it was the hot wind lifting it through the screen. The old hound jumped out from under the coop and ran past and Miller said, have to shoot that dog one day, but I knew he never would. The door opened and my father stood on the porch. I could not tell if he saw us but he called, Miller, come inside, so I knew

he did.

My cousin Lora vanished from school for a week, once, and I had to collect all her homework. She was fifteen, the same age as me, and the widows in the clapboard church told us we looked like twins. I didn't think we did, but then I had never wanted a sister. Lora was loud and laughed with her lips pulled back to show her square teeth, and she liked to stuff her mouth with grapes until one would finally pop out and roll around the floor under the table until it was lost to the yellow tom-cat's claws. She left her shoelaces untied and ran with them trailing in the dust until they turned brown and stiff: she said she knew it was time for new laces when she'd forgotten what color they started as. I liked to see Lora's bike tipped against the porch because then I would find her in my room and we could shut the door and whisper fantastic things that were meant for Miller's eavesdropping ear. But my grandmother did not like it, because she always frowned and asked Lora what kind of girl she wanted to be.

Lora had a little tube of lipstick she'd stolen from the CVS and kept in her pocket all the time, even though it melted and smudged flat from always being so warm. It was a purply color, and when she wore it her face looked sad and pale, much older. You just look silly, I told her, and she laughed with tiny spots of plum on her big teeth. She told me she'd wanted to take a liner pen too, but she'd gotten scared of the clerk and grabbed the first tube she saw. It's the wrong color, she said, but it'll still work. Lora perfected putting it on in my mirror while I sat cross-legged on the bed, thinking I should be the one with the lipstick, but feeling like she had earned it somehow while I wasn't looking. She'd blot her lips with the back of her hand. They say you can practice kissing like this, with your hand, she said when she saw me looking. Who says I need it? I asked, angry.

When we went to the matinee double-features, the boys at the theater always threw popcorn at Lora and she laughed. She'd turn around and smile at them and I would shove her with my elbow to make her stop. I wished she would pay attention to the movies, like I did.

Then a few weeks before she disappeared she started eating and eating, her fingers were always sticky with crumbs and syrup and I watched my grandmother grow quiet when Lora reached for another scoop of potatoes. Enough, Lora, she said, and Lora wrenched a hunk of bread from the loaf and shoved it whole into her mouth. My grandmother slapped her, quick, and Lora ran from the table.

This time when the boys threw popcorn while the movie's light flickered on

our faces, Lora cried. What's wrong? I asked, although I thought I knew, and when she looked at me I did.

Finally on a Monday in history class Lora tilted off her chair and grabbed at her side, and our teacher shut his book and carried her from the room. A week later when she came back she wasn't hungry anymore, just sat on her porch drawing circles in the dust, while my aunt cried and cried into a dishtowel and my uncle refused to speak at all, and the long-jowled widows shook their heads under the church steeple and sighed.

My father was a still-faced man who kept his thoughts hidden in a wave of his hand or a slip in his walk, so it was hard to tell what he meant when I came through the door and he said, your grandmother told me you're going. I guess I am, I said, and he shifted on a foot and looked at his hat in his hands. Grown out of this place, I suppose, he said, and it didn't seem to me like I could ever tell him how wrong he was so I said, something like that. He picked at a bit of the peeling wallpaper with a clumsy movement that my grandmother would have frowned to see. The paper was white with tiny blue fleur-de-lis, and the squares of pictures long ago removed were still bright marks against the faded wall. All that remained in the hall was the grandfather clock that did not work, and a coatrack carved like a long, shaggy mallard. The stairs behind us rose up into darkness like a spine and I thought I could hear my grandmother's rocker in the eastern room, wooden runners on the wooden floor, propelled by the easy motion of her left ankle as she sat and watched out the window, worked an afghan with her needles. My father turned to the bannister and said, this home is always yours. My words fell into the bowl of my stomach and churned and I said nothing. He looked up like I'd touched his arm and said, if you wanted to stay that'd be fine too. I hated to think he was hopeful so I shrugged and folded my arms. He nodded.

Dinner's ready, Miller said at the hall door. He'd slipped in quiet as Sunday afternoons-- my brother could go days without opening his mouth, knew how to sidestep the floorboards that squawked--and my father and I turned to him together. Miller ducked his head and I could see that he had grown taller than my father, the hoped-for height arriving swiftly and with surprise, and faced with them there in their matching overalls and plaids I prayed my father would not ask me to stay again, for I could not face it.

She eating with us? my brother asked, looking at me. My father lowered his brows and Miller blushed: he was good, underneath it all. We'll be just a minute, my father said, and Miller scuffed the doorframe before he left.

On a humid August night when I was fourteen my friends and I vaulted the fence around Newman's pond and slipped through the cattails to the water. Our clothes dropped like skins and the grass was slick on our feet as we ran breathless down to the dock. Quiet, I whispered, so we all shrieked when the water closed frigid around our pale shoulders and our hair fanned and clung to our necks. The frogs trilled and we floated on our backs to watch the sky, dropping a leg to anchor our toes in the thick, cold mud. Three girls in the water, we let the dark lights of the pond flicker between us and watched the water run off our dripping arms and bellies.

A noise in the air, and we crouched with our noses above the surface. Shadows walked to the pond, stopped.

You ladies alone? a voice asked, and I heard paper rustle around glass. No, Sarah lied, behind me, water slopping in her mouth as she sank lower. The shapes moved forward out of the sumac and it was two men, still boys. They wavered on the bank and I could smell their stale breath from yards away.

The shorter one sat down and leaned forward on his elbows. There snakes in there? he asked, and Ruth gasped and almost stood but caught herself in time. That's not funny, she said, while they laughed, and I wondered how long it would be before they tried to get in. The one standing raised a hand to his hair and said, hot out here. I drifted further away, trying to drag my feet along the bottom to mark the drop-off and avoid the snappers in the reeds. You hear me? he asked, I said it's hot out here, and I said, we know.

So let us get in, he said, and we were all silent for a minute after that. My hair tangled forward as Ruth came up behind me, touched my arm; tell them no, she whispered, and I said, sorry, no thanks, and then wished I had said just no. The boy resting on the grass stood.

Come on, he said, let us see. See what? Sarah asked, in a voice I knew she meant to sound brave, and he laughed and said a word I did not understand but made me cringe.

Go away, I said, and they looked at me. Too good for us? the taller one asked, and I spat out, trash! without knowing where it came from. He tilted his head and laughed. Like knows like, he said, what a bitch.

They turned and walked up the bank, but their dark forms stopped near our

clothes, light on the grass. What are they doing? Sarah asked, and we heard the clink of a belt buckle and then heard the hot, sharp stream before we smelt it. Ruth began to shiver, and then they were gone.

I buried my blouse under the willows, and when my grandmother asked what I'd done with it I told her I couldn't remember.

After the dishes were washed and my father was hunched over the glossy Farm and Fleet catalog I let the back door close soft behind me and went to visit the Holsteins. They stood solemn in the muddy paddock and I shoved between their bony hips and sharp hocks to reach the center of the cluster where I could breathe their rich, brown smell. The light was fading, and in the growing dark their eyes flashed flat beneath long lashes. The gate latch creaked and Miller stepped in, shut it with a bang to let me know he was still unhappy.

They'll miss you, he said, and I said, you trying to rub it in? I pushed away a heifer's gentle browsing and thumped her bellow-ribs to make her move. She lumbered off and I watched her head nod up and down as she went. Miller slapped horseflies from his face and I said, I'm sorry to leave you. You don't really want to stay, he said, and I said, I don't know about that. It was dark now, and the white hides of the cows stood out against their black splotches, strange pale shapes moving slowly around us. Miller dragged his fingers through his hair. It isn't really fair to anyone, you know, he said, and when I said, Miller, and reached up to touch his shoulder he knocked my hand away with an abruptness unusual for my sow-sweet brother. So that's what you think, I said, angry, and he nodded.

The dogs a farm over bayed, and Miller dropped to his knees and nuzzled a calf with his chin. It flapped its long ears and he did not look at me when he said, go pack and I'll take you to the bus.

Two weeks before my eleventh birthday I found the eggs.

It was an afternoon with little to do, so the teacher sent me to shake the chalk rags outside. I slid from my desk and ran out with the cloths and when I pushed open the door it gave a little catch and there was a wet crunch at my feet. The door swung shut behind me and I turned around and the glass panes were sticky with yolk, flecks in the clear ooze and little stripes of yellow. It was hot, an Indian summer, and my wool skirt clung to my legs; I looked around to see who was watching, but I was alone. I thought I shouldn't look down but I did, and saw the tiny, curled bodies. Wet



feathers and soft beaks, their eyes were shut and the lids translucent in their crushed skulls. The veins on their wings were black and there was something whitish and thick on my shoe.

The denim skirt of my teacher blocked out the sun and she led me inside. You can cry, she said, holding me tight on my arms, it's all right, but I didn't like the way her eyes were clumped with mascara so I did nothing, just swung my feet against the bench and listened to the secretaries whisper.

When my grandmother drove me home in the rattling Ford I asked, they didn't know when they threw them, did they? And my grandmother said, know what? and her hands were tight on the wheel. That there was something inside, I said, and she looked over at me. No, honey, she said, they must not have.

We were silent in the truck, my brother and I, as we drove the straight road to town, fifteen miles cut through the quilt of summer squash and corn, tassels hissing in the night breeze. There were no cars on the road and I let my arm hang out the open window, tapped the side of the door with a flat palm. Stop it, Miller said, both his hands on the wheel. I could hear my bag bumping in the truck bed and thought Miller hit the divots in the road with extra zeal. He would laugh if my pack flew out, the way he grinned when we lay waiting behind the coop to startle the fat Wyandottes into a clucking, fluttering mess, although I knew he would regret the laughter for days. My brother felt things that I did not, and while this made him an easier target it also meant he hit back hard. I drew my hand inside and said, then you stop it. He slowed and flipped on his brights.

Why couldn't you have asked to stay? Miller asked, she might have let you. It's not that simple, I said, while he twisted his hands on the wheel. Do explain, he said, and I could feel his eyes roll in the dark. If you go now, Miller continued, you'll never come back, and if you do, won't be nothing here for you. Nothing, he said, and took his eyes from the road to look over at me. You think there's anything here now? I asked, and he said, would've thought you'd be able to find something. I watched the north star rise above the shelterbelts in the distance, heavy oak and ash stippled with sumac and brush, and said, John will take over for me, you can use the back bedroom for him. John McCoy? asked Miller, and I nodded. He always liked helping with calving, I said, and my eyes swam.

The fluorescent gold oyster on its tall pole lit up the sky around the gas station and the Greyhound was already there. Grab my bag? I asked, and Miller followed me with it to the bus. We stood in front of the wheels while the engine chuffed and

steam frothed out from the exhaust pipes. I threw my duffel into the open compartment and stepped back to look at the bus, Miller nodding and with his hands clasped behind his back like we were thinking about buying the thing. Well, he said, and put a warm hand on my shoulder. I leaned into him and my brother drew me close, and we looked at the bus stairs for a while.

Miller was six when he ran from home. Two years younger than me and already certain he could ride the gray mare, he'd climbed up a hay bale and waited for her to plod by. She spooked at a cat's yowl, though, and he slid from her back when she bolted. My father rounded the coop corner swearing and was so scared by the fall that he cuffed Miller and banished him to his room. Later when I took the stairs by two and pushed through his door I found the window open and his favorite geode gone from the nightstand, and I called for my grandmother quick. He's gone, I cried when she stood and folded her hands in the doorway, my lungs froze and I sobbed, we'll never find him. He's down by the creek, my grandmother said, go tell him I made pie. The sharp green corn snapped at my arms as I crashed through the rows and panted toward the edge of the field, and ladybugs clung to my legs when I broke free of the heavy stalks and saw my brother in the water, pants rolled past his knees and bent with his nose to the surface.

Stupid! I yelled, picked a bug from my leg, and he jerked up. What are you doing? I asked and stalked down to the creek. Catching my dinner, he said, and the minnows around his feet shimmered off into shadow when my legs swirled through the mud. You won't get anything, I said, why did you leave? I don't know, he said, darting his hands fin-fast into the water. Well come back, I said, and pushed him a little to mark the point.

My grandmother tapped her foot when we tracked water into the kitchen. Not what you thought? she asked Miller, and he was quiet for a little. I'll stay for now, he said after a minute, and nosed up to the counter where the pie sat waiting. He plucked out a blueberry and my grandmother swatted at him. Not now, she said, and I stuck out my tongue at Miller's back. I saw that, my grandmother said to me, and her hand drifted down to Miller's shoulder and she let him keep eating the stolen fruit, so I cried out, maybe I'll leave next. Her face got still then, and when I saw that my ears got hot and my stomach felt strange, so I said, I probably won't, I'll never go. She looked sharp at me with her hand on Miller's head now, and I pretended to watch the slip-lace curtains in the window when she said, don't say that yet, child, just wait on it. On what? I asked, and she just wiped Miller's blue-clotted cheek with her thumb.

The gravel was soft under my feet when I turned from Miller and stepped

into the bus, and the pavement cold when I stepped out: Milwaukee, last stop. The interchange rumbled above the bus depot, tangled snakes of concrete and wire, and I waited until the other yawning passengers drifted down side streets and into open-doored cars before I retrieved my bag from the curb and left. It was near midnight, dark, and I fumbled with the phone in my pocket before my fingers relaxed, stiff in the cold air, and could draw it out. I dialed. Hello? a voice said, and I whispered, it's me. What's wrong? my mother asked, and I said, I'm here. On a visit? she asked, and I said, I think to stay. I'm in my apartment, she said, should I pick you up somewhere? No, I said, I'll meet you tomorrow. You sure? she asked, and I nodded, then remembered she could not see me and said, yes.

Then I snapped the phone shut and I walked, down St. Paul and past 5th, past 3rd. The post office on my right was lit from within with white security lights that flickered and popped, the mail trucks waited eagerly in line. I walked over the river, brown and shiny as mud, I walked under an iron arch green with age into the Third Ward; I walked past Water, past Broadway and Milwaukee, past Jefferson and Jackson and Van Buren and Cass. If anyone were there beside me on the unbroken street I did not know it, my head was up and my eyes open but I saw nothing, I did nothing but walk. I walked east until I could smell it: water so deep it breathed, sweet-silty and traced with the striated and bubble-clean machinations of clam and mussel. Water so wide it opened into a blackness that melted into an even blacker sky. Water so strong it rustled like cornfields and rolled like wheat, so clear the crusted hulls of the wrecked schooner barges rose up mute and monolithic, so wind-blown it howled and sang. Traffic lights on timers blinked red and I crossed four empty lanes and jogged up the path that curved onto the breakwater. The white boulders of the shoring echoed with the pull and wash of the lake and I went to the breakwater's far point, where there was soft light to the west and starred black to the east, and I could look north and south and see how the world curved. The Calatrava spread its wings on the shoreline and high in the air, floating clear above the buildings and the bridges, I heard the note of a siren--I wondered who else was awake that could hear that noise, and, facing the fullness before me, let the spray of the lake anoint my lips and eyes.

The summer I was five the Harleys came through town. They swept by during the night with the cicadas. I thought it was thunder, and slipped from my bed and pressed my nose against the window screen to watch as they glittered by, dozens roaring down the road so that the house thrummed and shook. It seemed like there was no pause, just a noise that had been there forever in the back of my sleep. I put my fingers on the wall and let the sound run up my arms, knees pushed up under my nightshirt, and watched the rocks I'd placed on the sill rattle, dance in jittering circles before they met the edge and dropped to the floor. Miller slept hard in his trundle bed--my brother could sleep through tornado sirens and tree-splitting lightening--so I

was alone looking out into the road, seeing the flashes of chrome and engine and pipe that spurted through the dark quick, just quick. It was hot; I smelled lilac on the air.

My father's voice scattered up in pieces through the floorboards. You can't, he said, and my mother answered, just watch me. They were at the sink, I thought, I put my ear to the floor and squinted. My father spoke again, but the voices had moved and I could not hear so I crawled across the floor and turned the doorknob carefully; I bit my lip when my foot caught on the raised nail in the doorjamb, but I stayed quiet-or maybe I cried out and nobody heard, came to find me. The motorcycles kept up on the road, barely a break in the sound to catch the lowing cows or wind chimes. My feet rested well in a groove in the railing rungs, and I listened.

What about them? my father's voice was broken against a rustling, nylon sound that came from a dim spot underneath me, he spoke again, what are you going to tell them? I'm not, my mother said, I'm not going to tell them anything, you can do that. More sounds, maybe a chair scraping over the cherry floor. A smash like Miller had tipped over his plate, and my mother said raspy, I liked that, you know. I don't care, my father said, and I wondered what had been broken. Who? his voice said, and then he spit, Jesus Christ. What do you want me to say? my mother asked, I could hear her bare feet on the floor, she moved fast, circling, grabbing at things that rattled in drawers. Another crash, a thump; silence. Don't you love us? my father asked then, and my mother said, don't ask me that question, I hate you for that. My mother's voice was milk-smooth when she said that to my father, like it'd been stored up swollen in her throat for a long time coming and she'd been close to choking before the release, words so pure and whole I rolled them around in my mouth to test their shape.

A swish of skirt; my grandmother's legs stood at my back. These words aren't for you, she said, and gathered me into her arms and held me tight against her flattened chest and walked down the stairs, each slipped foot searching out the next step before planting, firm, on the wood plank. Her skin smelled like cotton and something sweet like cough syrup and I could feel her hard ribs where they winged up near her collarbones. We pushed through the screen door as my mother said, this place has killed me, and my grandmother sat heavy on the porch. Leaning over she set me next to her, raised her thin arms and spread her long hair in a shawl over her back, then gathered it up and braided swiftly, curving it around her skull until it was long and thick and catching faint light in the dark. She tickled my cheek with the end and I didn't push away. Motorcycles clogged the road still, seemed to stretch in a great line past the edge of my vision.

Where are they going? I asked. Going south, my grandmother said, to the city. What for? I asked, and she said, for a celebration. I picked at my nails and said, does she love us? and my grandmother looked out straight to the road and said, she'll

remember, soon. Then she looked down at me and said, don't ask those things. I turned my face away, and then felt her arm on my back. It doesn't matter, she said, won't neither of you remember it.

Now look at the road, look at the lights down the road, she said, do you see all the people going by? Do you see? I did see; I watched the Harleys charge down the road in steaks of hot light, the pebbles shook at my feet and the porch throbbed, and the machines passed and passed by, out of the dark and into the darkness swathing the cornhusk hills. I watched, and the road roared in my ears.

## THE RIVER

Rachel Wakefield

We ran to the river to pour the water over our bodies. The water would be cool and it would work over the welts on our backs. We ran with bare feet knocking dirt up our legs, and the land baked in the sun.

Suddenly he came out beside us. My father cast a shadow on the earth, turning yellow grass brown.

Where are you going?

Our eyes grew big. My sister had eyes clear and calm like open water. Now they jumped, like someone had thrown a stone in them.

Where do you think you are going?

The river. Just the river.

We just wanted the water.

My father had big shoulders that beat red in the sun. Big arms that beat hard at a whip. My father kept horses. He looked at us with dark deep eyes.

Nowhere.

We weren't going anywhere.

I didn't think so, he said.

## IN DAYS OF RAIN

Alice McAdams

IN DAYS OF RAIN

*A Mari Carmen*

Sabrás por la presente que empeoré de vida.  
MARIANO MARESCA

I.  
More or less strangely  
life went passing tepidly  
over your body and mine.

I hear the cold rain pool  
in the grooves of the roof  
and night traps me  
in the eternal sweat of its calm.

Maybe  
I should have woken you, made you share in  
this premonition  
of distant beauty  
with which I meld for barely an instant.  
To return to you,  
so that you give yourself over  
to the beautiful presence  
of your breath.

Cars pass slowly.  
I hear also  
your distant heart  
enter the dawn through the rain

and I am startled by the shadow  
of so much intimacy.

It's late.

One writes his life in a poem,  
analyzes love,  
and gets used to  
living like he does, beside your body  
that perhaps still remembers me  
naked between the sheets,

or those rainy nights confirming for us  
that life (maybe beautiful)  
is not always an available subject  
and that it sometimes becomes even too great,  
fearsome as it is now,  
while I am afraid to kiss you at random.

I know. We have been strangers  
talking in too-close gestures,  
anxious in the streets  
of a new city,  
hoping that maybe they will photograph us  
in front of this love and the scars it left,  
this thing that we confuse with our own feelings  
or perhaps  
—in nights of insanity—  
with the feeling of wetness in our eyes.

But a few words  
summarize all those days,  
its syllables counted in my verses,  
and happiness.  
Tepidly the years  
discover us,  
discover that nothing exists now outside of your sweat and mine,  
that we are still too serious  
when we catch ourselves  
shivering with passion,



full of badly disguised instinct.

So, while the rain falls,  
I am grateful for your body between the sheets  
and this lonely fervor  
of caressing your thighs,  
more or less strange  
and beautiful like a dream  
that has just arrived.

II.

November  
can be a conquest  
as it settles again  
over the awnings,  
the hairpins of imitation pearl,  
the cheap between-season jackets  
where you hid  
suddenly from my desire.

And it returns  
with the clumsy patience of fidelity,  
like the melody  
of an old song we remember.  
You already know that autumn,  
beyond the wet plumage  
of the trees,  
beyond light and beyond this earth,  
was a broken appointment, lost between us.

Now  
time hugs us weakly around the legs,  
breaking our step, lengthening the leaves  
of the vines,  
while everything recalls to us  
that old time-confused memory,  
those caravans

of meaningless days  
that passed buzzing before our eyes,  
bringing with them  
only two loving or fearful bodies.

And it's no longer appropriate to draw close to you,  
to grab your waist, want you  
with the blue desire of a calm wind,  
or to walk slowly  
when the leaves weigh beneath our feet  
and the bells creak  
caught among the trees.

And it's no longer appropriate to follow you,  
to learn to stop myself at storefronts  
and hear your voice arrive, keel over in my ear,  
overcome the distance  
that fits between two bodies.

So it was life

that we remembered,  
the precise sirens of its ships,  
and cheap jewelry,  
whose heartbeat perhaps continued between us,  
undone,  
cloudy and transient  
like the sperm  
drying over your already cold skin  
that we had loved so much and would love almost forever.  
Or maybe we prefer  
to find each other at a carnival of love,  
to finally see  
what has never been seen.

You don't know that your body,  
in these timeless nights,

melds suddenly with the dawn,  
pins it sleeping beside me.

But November returns  
with fidelity's clumsy patience  
(love's footprints over our shoulders  
like a caravan of blurry details)  
and is maybe, possibly a conquest  
because everything is now clearer.

I remember

those first embraces, isolated,  
pressed to the wall,  
fleeing the rain in the streets  
of an old city,  
still newly in love,  
happy and nervous.  
Or the unpredictable wetness of your hair,  
soaked in love and storm  
in those open fields,  
like our bodies in the fury of August.  
And those nights of ill-tempered peace  
where love struggled against the cold,  
shivering under the cloudcover  
and over an icy riverbed.

And I remember

the rain meek, slow, clawing at the glass  
like I claw at your body,  
just as time claws at us  
having discovered  
that it is also beautiful to love each other in memory  
and in complicity.

Let us open the balcony,  
howl at the moon,  
our bodies stretched toward the sky,  
beautiful like wolves  
that now understand the course on which they travel,

that now know the time in which they live.  
It is a different light,  
that of these contours.

Raindrops squash on your skin  
and the earth spreads out stained like a tiger.

III.

Love visits us. The house  
has a blind memory  
of the sun on its arms  
and the lonely fervor of grass on its skin.

We should embrace seriously  
this gray morning of all our nostalgias  
and make a pact with the light  
that has begun to inconvenience us  
under the doors  
like a secret voyeur whom we must endure.

There are too many things.  
It's clear that time flies indifferently,  
alien to us,  
that we have talked so much of life  
to arrive on time to its open eyes,  
to its rosy nipple,  
and to the beautiful arch of our bodies  
that we sought together,  
helter-skelter,  
opening zippers  
with the possessive impatience of lovers.

The sun  
which resembles the uncertain flesh of your lips  
creeps toward us and reminds me  
that it is possible to wander each other again

while the last stars slowly burn out.

Before you were born and before I was born  
someone must have lived in these rooms,  
suffered them as we do week by week,  
filled them with desires halfway realized.

Lonely people.

Maybe it will all be worth it  
if someday...

We  
have built nothing, not even a home.

Love is wisest at its dawn,  
when one can already hear the morning coming,  
down the long, lonely road of your skin.

## CAVES

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### Darcy Brook

I huff the smell  
embedded  
in your tufty  
sweater  
fettered  
round my waist.

My eyes sip  
in your bleary  
daze,  
our faces  
space away  
until  
the hot balloon  
between us  
blasts blue  
in rubber ruins  
and the canyon walls  
grenade.

Two caves  
uproot,  
replant,  
engage,  
rubble, wreckage,  
the whole shebang.

## **OBSESSION**

---

Natalie Volk

i think i have a worm  
 it's eating me out  
 feasting on my organs  
 pushing through my  
 ventricles  
 and slowly  
 this fucking  
 vindictive slug  
 has babies in my brain  
 where they weave  
 a rat king - but worms -  
 replacing every  
 gyrus  
 and sulcus  
 with their thick and  
 heavy shit-filled skin.

## CONCERNING GUILT

---

Speaking of colors that speak:  
I'm almost certain that the brown  
of my beef jerky flavored boots  
(bought recently at Red Light-  
where only the classiest  
boot-wearing jezebels  
shop) was once capable,  
and probably still is,  
of offering its opinion.

Maybe I bought the boots  
heroically, swooping in with  
my anemic, self-satisfied arms,  
rescuing these finely-crafted  
foot cattle from some unknown  
(but probably really horrible) fate.

Maybe it's more likely they are a fleshy reflection of a more  
robust me, tromping through  
the forest, bagging bunnies  
... maybe quail  
... probably a bear  
just for the pure sense of joy  
that comes with having your  
very own bag of bunnies  
maybe a quail  
and probably a bear.

But whatever the reason, here I am  
sitting on the floor of my bedroom,  
drinking a black tea that is actually  
red, listening to the color brown  
as it politely tells me what it means  
to be a truly shitty vegan.



## STULTILOQUENCE

---

### Ansel Oommen

A camelopard gravid with sensuous tastes  
 Turned to an emmet for a quiff of complaint  
 "Do you enjoy your provender raw or percoct?"  
 Which led to a moment of formicine shock  
 The camelopard in sooth was arrantly hurt  
 So went into labor of premature birth  
 At the rump of this rumpus  
 An annoyed fysigunkus  
 An owl so foul  
 Vowelled  
 "Y'all need to halt your daifingua at once.  
 Default and desist or be present for brunch."

## THE INSHEE

I was spilking down that mormrid road  
when the moon began to fade  
and spilking deeper down the moot  
I caught an Inshee in the shade

with its limbrid eyes and korfen fangs  
it morffled in the air  
and blooting down in front of me  
it began a greemous stare

when I raised my hand and banshled it  
exetric did it scream  
for I had woken up from muddled fugue  
dripping in a dream...

## IN MEMORY OF JACK COLLINS

---

Amanda Phan

i cannot pull you out  
the tree is wrapped around your  
body is wrapped around your  
car is wrapped around the tree.

## SUBCONSCIOUS

---

Clare Dougan

there's one light on in the window  
of the house across the street.

even at this hour  
there are men in submarines

silent and suspended  
in their ironclad machines.

beneath them,  
blind white fishes

skulk and dart and feed.

why is it that the ocean floor  
inspires far more fear

than the perilous distinction  
between space and atmosphere?

it's closer.  
seven miles,

at the deepest.  
that's not far,

considering the robots  
taking photographs of mars.

on the surface you could walk it.  
but the mariner's tight ships

can't drop the last few fathoms  
to the bottom of the rift.

the light goes off. i skim my hand

across your sandy hair.

what depths here? what dreams  
luminesce and breed

in the dark behind your eyelids?  
in the trenches of your sleep?

## SEA WITCH

---

they said the moon was fickle  
and i swore that i believed it  
but that didn't make me ready  
when the neap  
tide  
came.

i figured i'd turn  
more scylla than calypso.  
i figured i'd howl,  
and hiss,  
and writhe,

but i just smiled,  
emerald heart hardening,  
wished for luck  
and broke the scry.

dreams  
beached,  
weak as a jellyfish,  
sick and congealed  
in the salt-white sun.

with time i know  
i'll learn to stand,  
make my halting way over hostile sands,

like the ancient ancestors, with each step feel  
the razored slits in my neck as they slowly heal.

i'll learn to breathe.  
i'll adapt.  
and then

i'll coax the moon back out  
and swim again.

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