

RAINY DAY



Dear *Rainy Day* reader,

You've come to the right place. Picking up this issue of *Rainy Day* has been scientifically proven--by experts!--to be one of the best decisions of your life. It's been a ride getting these poems and stories from an initial manuscript to the immaculate forms you will see further inside. Sharing this ride, with all its turns and drops and loop-de-loops, with such a wonderful staff has been more than an honor. It has been a gift, and I can scarcely express my gratitude in mere words.

Since my first time as a staff member in 2012, to my current position as managing editor, I have had the opportunity to read hundreds upon hundreds of student-written submissions from across the country. To read work from so many voices, and many from so far away, is as dizzying as it is inspiring. Our duty, since our inception, has been to give young writers the opportunity to take a chance, to make that fateful leap from manuscript to publication, and to establish that beautiful connection between author and reader. For many of these writers, this is one of the nascent steps on a daunting and exciting road.

The pieces you're about to see have been carefully selected from hundreds, after many rounds of anonymous deliberation, through fervid words and gnashing teeth. These poems and stories drew forth great passion and emotion from our staff members. I think you, dear *Rainy Day* reader, will experience something similar. I am proud to have played a part, and thank all my friends in the staff, especially our brilliant and insightful Editor-in-Chief, Laura Boland, for coming together to take on this monumental endeavor.

And now, dear reader, the words contained in this magazine have flown in from many corners of the nation. They have trekked the icy hills and rambling creeks, only to gather here, around a campfire under the sleepy conifers.

All that's left is to listen.

Best wishes and happy travels,

Mark Kasvin, Managing Editor

RAINY DAY

an independent student publication

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JUNGIAN LIFE

Daniel Neff

On a wooden trestle bridge in Denmark,
 The boxer watches,
 cars go by in a dichotomous dance of colors,
 Fading from lane to lane, merging into each other, the boxer
 blurs, homunculus humming on a park bench, hands
 Stuffed into pockets. The planks of timber tremble as cars rush on,
 crushing the moldy leaves, and busted cigarette packages.

Knocked out in the boxing ring of dreams,
 A water fountain centered in the arena flailing droplets of blue aimlessly,
 into the air, falling all around the boxer
 Washing shimmering clots of the boxer's blood away,
 stained flooring fallaciously looking transparent,
 Blood, draining into gutters of the hippocampus, dilutes and melts
 into unconscious eternity of forgotten blips and bumps,
 The boxer forever flinches, fighting off viscoelastic memories of pain,
 the source of which lost in the canals of fear,
 Scars bleeding notoriously unexplained,
 Throat throbbing theoretically.

On a wooden trestle bridge in Denmark.
 Where do the leaves come from if there aren't any trees?
 The ubiquity of shallow stairs haunts her,
 Boxing with the empty *deja vu* of a lost fight and the pull of,
 Liquid.

FLYING NAKED WITH HERONS

Daniel Neff

Superman had green mold running through his toes,
like a green river in a foot's ravine.

He stood on a spruce bough
naked, the air cruising through his silver rippled
sideburns and his body flourishing in the fluttering breeze.
I saw a heron once try to steal a potato chip thinking
she was superman.

What's the quota from dead herons?
You're not supposed to kill all the deer either,
but then herons are the color of blue steel,
like a grey morning just after
the rain stops and sun hasn't risen.

— What happened to the heron,
Dad? —

The curvature of the neck rippled when the paddle
ran into her head,
and a sound almost like a scream echoed
from her mouth.

Was the heron a Gemini like me?

— What happens to a heron hit,
Dad? —

Superman called out that the superiority of sincerity is
not only like a heron riding the river on the bow of a canoe, but
how ever close is the heron, how close his talon-tipped harpoon is to the
potato chips.

I thought I was superman, but then,
I don't have mold between my toes. I'm
not superman. Dad hit
the heron in the head with his paddle.

DETRITUS

Jake Villareal

The surface of the ocean is like a broken mirror. Tourists are moving across the beach, their shadows a refuge for the sand crabs, their flip-flops leaving elliptical gaps in the orange dust the wind has shaved off the cliffs and coated the coast with. Jane is tapping an anemone, its sticky appendages desperately grabbing onto her fingernail. She allows it to pull her in slowly, a quiet and thrilling experience.

“Mom, the anemone has me! Is it going to digest me?”

“Um, probably not. I don’t know, actually. Well, it’s probably not poisonous or anything, but just don’t keep it in there too long.”

Jane gleefully pulls her finger out, and the tentacles dejectedly withdraw into the belly of the beast. She skitters through the wet, darkened sand, cooling herself in the heat with the ins and outs of the tide.

“Maybe we can look it up on the internet when we get back to the hotel.”

At the end of the beach, near the rocks where the kids hunt for abalone, is a carcass of a whale that washed up two weeks ago. The city never cleaned it up, but they are “getting around to it”. Parents have been taking their kids to either extreme end of the beach, avoiding the inevitable whining about the smell, the fear of having their children prodding and pulling pieces of corpse onto their brand new swimsuits, any conversation about death or dying.

Hulking and large, it looms like a castle, the scavenger seagulls standing guard. She pulls her mom’s sundress, asking her to take pictures of her standing next to it. Instead of disgust, Elle has only confusion. Sighing, she pulls out a bright pink point-and-shoot from her tote and holds her elated daughter’s hand as they make their way to the carcass.

Jane poses with her arms outstretched, like she had just finished a musical number. She smiles and points at the birds. Elle draws the line at leaning against the whale, but with every new pose there are the clicks of the camera, collecting macabre souvenirs.

A couple walking by them stares Elle down and makes their staring apparent. One of them loudly remarks that “her child needs professional help,” and the other that “no self-respecting parent would let their kid climb all over some ratty corpse”.

Jane isn't old enough to understand the concept of gossip, or grasp the form of a second-hand insult, but the look on her mother's face, eyes like still water, distresses her.

BARGAIN PRICES

Jake Villareal

“So what if she says no?” he said, “Go offer her a drink. Start a conversation.”

“What do I talk about?”

“Whatever you want. Just be yourself. Just let it flow.”

I approached her and leaned against the bar, which was too short for my elbow and made me look like Gumby.

“Hello, ma’am,” I said, “Could I maybe offer you a drink?”

“I guess,” she said, “Bartender. Another Manhattan please.” She turned back towards me and asked, “So what’s your name?”

I did not expect to get this far. My palms were sweating a stain into my inner trousers.

“Wall.” I said, looking at the wall. “I mean Will.”

“Oh, good,” she said, “I thought your name was Wall for a second, like Walmart.”

We laughed, I less convincingly.

“Imagine that,” I said, “A mart full of men, all named Wall.”

I could tell something was wrong, but could not stop talking.

“All at bargain prices. Lining the walls.”

I was still laughing. She was not.

“A Walmart! Walls of Walls! A Walmart!”

EXCERPT FROM ODE TO FISH McBITES

Simon Mermelstein

“Tender, flaky wild-caught Alaskan Pollock, deep fried to a crispy golden brown. Available in three sizes—snack, regular or sharable—with a tangy tartar sauce for dipping.”

everything you need to know about Fish McBites
is contained within those 3 syllables—

Fish: this product is made of fish

Mc: this product is brought to you by The McDonalds Corporation

Bites: this product is portioned to require minimal chewing
an instantaneous transfer of information...

that’s what they want you to think

3 memes and done

linguistically compact, so you don’t unpack

the vagueness in the word “fish”

casting an awfully wide net into the semantic seas.

supply chain link logistics locally sourced surplus salmon slurry mixed with

Asian carp fresh from the Mississippi River

have not the hipsters been clamoring for family farms?

Ronald likes to sing a dolphin-free tune, but I suspect

gently discarded betas and garbage-disposalled goldfish

I know the ad says “Alaskan Pollock” but

I knew a guy named Pollock who moved to Alaska and died and now here’s all this
mystery meat

CHICKEN AND CROCODILE

Mark Kasvin

Sasha was not about to let anyone get in between her and the leftover chicken warming up in the microwave, not even this weirdo with his dumb hoodie and his tacky scythe thing. He had the nerve to plant himself in the kitchen doorway right as the chicken was finishing up, uninvited! Sasha had half a mind to run and grab a stool from the living room to bean him with, but this guy looked tall and probably would have smacked her down first. Instead, she glared up into Hoodie Guy's featureless cowl, hoping her eyes would scare him off, and while he didn't budge, he did seem hesitant to speak. There was not a sound in the apartment but the tinny continuous beep that Sasha could have sworn used to be the low hum of the microwave. Hoodie Guy cleared his throat with a dry "ahem" and spoke in a deep, rasping voice.

"I am afraid it is that time."

Sasha, ignored him and said, "Locked door not a big enough clue for you?"

"Locks would not have held me at bay. It is time."

"Yeah, time for you to get out."

"No, no. I am not saying 'it is time' like 'it is time for your doctor's appointment' or 'it is time for work'. I am saying 'it is Time'. Capitalized."

"Look, I don't know who you think you are or where you got the idea that I'd go anywhere with a stranger, but guests have to knock first before they're guests."

"I am not here to visit. We are leaving, Sasha Belkin."

Sasha's hairs stood on end, and her fingers jittered.

"Listen," she said. "If you're one of Yuri's guys, leave me alone, his rubles aren't due for another week. Now shoo, I have chicken to eat."

"You cannot be rid of me. Your chicken will be finished, but you will be dead."

"Like, hell! I'm taking you down, then I'm getting my chicken, dickhead!"

"Do you really not understand —"

Sasha charged shoulder-first into Hoodie Guy, then, as if running into a concrete wall, was knocked to the floor.

"Do you really not understand why I am here? I mean, I am trying to be the bringer of bad news as delicately as I can, but I did not think that I need to come out and say it. Look, I have this." Hoodie Guy waved his scythe. "And this." He lifted his hood and revealed a grimacing skull underneath. "Do you understand?"

Sasha laughed, shook her head and said, "Christ above, man, is that what this is all about? I think it's too late for me to help out. You should've gone slow with

that stuff, you know?”

“Oh, come on! You are dead! I am Death! I am Death and I am here to take you because you are dead!”

“Oh. Well, big mistake, I don’t feel dead yet. See?” Sasha slapped her wrist. “Skin’s still on me. Anyway, I’ve got chicken to eat. Move.”

“No.”

Hoodie Guy lifted his scythe and sliced at Sasha’s chest. She didn’t feel any pain, but the once-peeling wallpaper around her unraveled fully, then evaporated, taking the rest of her home with it and leaving nothing but an unending, flat, gray plane. Hoodie Guy then pulled his scythe to his side and stood at attention, facing no one in particular. Sasha’s fingers no longer jittered, but panic began to take hold, nonetheless.

“Wait, take me back.” she said. “That stuff can’t go to waste. Please.”

“You are being judged,” said Hoodie Guy.

“Take me back.”

“How can you still be hungry?”

“I need to eat.”

At these words, Hoodie Guy turned to whatever way he was facing, clapped his hands together, and began whispering something to the sky. After a conversation with whoever, Hoodie Guy turned to Sasha and said, “You are being given a chance at revival.”

From a pocket, Hoodie Guy produced a pair of dice.

“Upon request, I grant the dead a chance at revival. High roll wins. If I win, you stand and face judgment. If you win, you delay the inevitable.”

“Fair enough.”

Hoodie Guy rolled a seven. Sasha rolled a one, somehow.

“Well look at that,” said Hoodie Guy, whistling. “What are the odds? He works in strange ways after all! Anyway, back to – ”

Sasha kicked the dice and ran. She pushed her leg muscles to their snapping point. The gray void shattered around her, turning to a blood-pumping red. She was going to eat that chicken or explode. The blood-red turned into a flaming orange as her body transcended pain and turned to fire. Beeeeeeeeeeeep.

Beep beep beep. Chicken was warmed up and waiting. The tiled floor cooled Sasha’s flesh as she lay on the threshold between kitchen and hall. For a while, she didn’t want to move. Then, with a start, she sprang to her feet and shambled to the microwave oven. She caught a glimpse of gaunt cheeks and dark, baggy eyes in the oven door’s reflection before flinging it open and pulling the steaming plate out. The golden-brown wings and drumsticks shimmered in the dim light. The meaty aroma tickled Sasha’s nostrils and nestled in her taste buds. Her body felt not heat, not cold, but gentle warmth.

Sasha sauntered down the hall and to the living room, hot plate in hand, chin held high, and dry lips managing the best whistle they could. As she put the plate

on the hand-made coffee table and kicked back in the sofa, she noticed a glint under a pile of pillows and newspapers. Sasha reached out with her cold and scaly right arm, rough and threw the junk aside, revealing a syringe. Her fingers jittered, and her vision blurred.

“Stupid me. It was here all along,” she said.

The gentle warmth was gone. The chicken seemed shriveled and unappetizing now. Her veins felt damp like dowsed charcoal. Sasha grabbed the syringe and a nearby belt. Cold chicken wouldn’t taste good. Needed fire. But, as she wrapped the belt around her left arm, she saw yellowing bone peeking out from beneath her biceps.

“Huh. Guess that spot’s no good.”

Sasha wrapped the belt around her right arm, instead, and the needle plunged down.

“There you are,” said a deep, rasping voice.

UNTITLED

J. Relihan

I.

You make supple sleep
noises, I am cut from the
silence to hear you.

II.

Rain makes a drowsy
mirror on the walk. Footfalls
slit the leery light.

III.

Your lungs are modest.
Fans cool the circuit board long
into the lean night.

IV.

Only flowing streams
are sovereign. I will love you
'til my love runs down.

V.

Visit me soon. My
disease is oblong and time
is venereal.

ODE TO OUR HOUSE

J. Relihan

If we feel our voices in our teeth
but we cannot see the glamour
of words in the air we can
have the house blow our letters
back to us in rolls of steam
fogging up our glasses.

If we discover that we cannot
discern our different toes
when they are covered by the sheet
we can drag the sofa across
the house, tie it to the roof.
The house is the tape
that drags our cells from us.

If we walk out onto the yard
smudge our feet in the grass
and watch the sun blister
on the horizon, we can
walk back into the house
and have a space to own
and have a door to lock.

THE WOODS

J. Relihan

we are the wild bunch,
we bare our bones
in the twilight,
our grinning green fingers
making ribcage
caverns
you wander in.

yes we are rooted,
we kissed the earth
but claim it.
your toe-taps are
vagabond,
our blooming blots
the sunlit air,
perfume promising
of ruin.

we can splinter you,
tear you jagged and unskinned.
yes we are your
bedposts, your
bins brimming with
knicknacks, your
treasure chests,
but we can be
your pale crosses, too.

WHY IS THE NIGHT SO BLACK AND BLUE?

Peter Alexander Bresnan

We slept at Uncle Ace's house that night. By the time Mama Roxy's memorial and the subsequent festivities had ended, all of the doors we could normally knock on were barred and bolted—after a certain hour, even the most warm and familiar of knocks will receive the same nonresponse of the jailer listening to indignant prisoners bang on their cell bars, and all the while the jailer whispering, “But you made your choice and I made mine.” And the shelters were closed to us since they all operated on a tough-love philosophy, i.e. 8:00 P.M. curfews, new-fangled steel police locks, and a complete refusal to give a shit about you unless you adopted a God-only-helps-those-who-help-themselves brand of adult responsibility. Which was fair. And it was Saturday, which meant that after the memorial the Mamas all headed down into the 20s and 10s and belows (or, if work in the Village clubs was scarce, up to Times Square, since everybody's got to eat somehow) to the various tiny bedazzled booze-gummed drag club stages that were to the Mamas like an anvil to a blacksmith, or a camera to a starlet, or, perhaps more accurately, a concrete foundation to a stubborn old building that, in spite of the rot and dampness that gnaws at its joints, utterly refuses to fall down. And although there were plenty of overpasses, alleyways, parks, boardwalks, and old subway tunnels that we could call our home that night, the cold air and the promise of company drove us underground, even though the winter's cruelest months were still a distant threat.

It was just after 10:00 P.M., and I was already stumbling. D.D., myself, and a number of the other Kids were travelling north along Amsterdam, followed closely by the sharp echoes of our words and laughter bouncing off the tall dark buildings, which grew taller and darker the farther north we went. D.D. stood to my right, acting as a buttress whenever my right and left feet switched positions without any warning. Farther right, beyond her head, a thinning trickle of traffic flew by, loud and indifferent. Whenever I leaned a little too far to the right, teetering and about to spill out into the street just as a taxicab came screaming down the avenue, D.D. would press gently against my right shoulder, and I would regain my balance. The taxi would speed ahead and into the dark.

I probably would have felt guilty about this pathetic architectural arrangement if I hadn't provided the same service for D.D. plenty of times when she was new here. She'd had difficulty adjusting to her new surroundings. Most of us do. But then one day three months after her arrival, Roxy of all people took the night off and led her on a long walk downtown. Where Roxy took her and what she said to her, no one knew. But when they returned D.D.'s eyes were heavy and clear, and from that day forth she refused any drink she was offered.

She was a good kid and a good Kid, very polite—probably from a conservative family background (as many of us were) although it was impossible to know for sure, since as far as I or anybody else knew she had been born on a frigid February day nine months earlier, just outside the 136th Street bus depot, wrapped in a wool Brooks Brothers coat, no name and nothing in the way of history except for a pair of insomniac eyes which belonged to a creature that had been running for a very long time. Then three weeks after falling in with Roxy and the rest of us degenerates (Mama Heart had found her begging for pocket change on 9th Avenue), she asked us if we might call her—instead of ‘kid,’ as we’d been doing since she’d arrived—Doris instead, and ‘she’ in the third person. Over time Doris became Doris Day which became D.D.

The entire time I was talking, her eyes remained fixed on the sidewalk. Every once in a while she would nod her head in diplomatic agreement.

“They’re all bastards,” I said, shoving my hands in my jacket pockets. A bottle in a paper bag was being passed around and I was impatient for it to return. “Every one of them.”

D.D. nodded.

“It’s not right, you know?”

“Hmm,” said D.D.

“It’s not fair, you know?”

“Hmm,” said D.D.

“They’re a bunch of goddamn backstabbers. If there’s any justice in the world they’ll all catch the Plague too and live long enough to see all of their friends abandon them.”

“I think that’s a little harsh,” she said.

I shook my head. “Eye for an eye, Dee.”

D.D. shrugged her shoulders and made no comment. She must have known that few had been as close to Roxy as I had been, that few had felt her loss as strongly as I, and also that her sudden decline and hasty cremation had precluded me from seeing either her or her body before both were vaporized, returned to the place from whence they came. She must have known this. So she said nothing and let me spout rambling elegies while she stared down at her shoes (modest black heels she found one Sunday morning stuck in the holes of a drain on 33rd Street) and nodded her head every once in a while.

(D.D. had struggled with the shoes at first, but after a few months of steady practice (“It’s not heel-toe, heel-toe,” said Jojo, another Mama, at some point, “It’s watch-out, mother-fuckers”) she seemed to get the hang of it. One time, Mama Roxy—ivory holder and cigarette held loosely between two fingers at the end of a long thin arm that she balanced precariously on the edge of her opposite elbow, forming an elegant steeple of bone and instrument that seemed like it might collapse at any moment but never did—having spotted a be-heeled D.D. somewhere downtown, had turned to me and said, “It took me almost a year before I started walking like I was

biological.” And when D.D. was gone, Roxy had smiled in that sparse way that many who didn’t know her thought to be sarcastic or mocking, but that I knew to be almost unbearably joyous. “Son of a bitch,” she said.)

“Her ashes,” I said suddenly, probably for the third or fourth time.

And D.D., patiently: “They scattered them. Jojo and Felix and a few others took the ferry to Liberty Island this afternoon.”

“Right, right, I know that.” I exhaled sharply and my breath formed a column of fog that stretched out into the darkness before my face. “Next to a hundred-and-fifty foot tall French woman. That’s probably what she would have wanted.”

“Hmm,” said D.D., and that was all.

At the head of the pack of Kids, Carrie and Stef checked for traffic in unison—both heads to the left, both heads to the right. I rolled my eyes and pretended to gag, which D.D. gracefully ignored. Then the group scurried across a green-lit 110th Street, and now that we were north of the Park (which, even for our kind, was not a fun place to be after dark), we could stop looking over our shoulders and take our sweet old time traversing the Columbia campus. The oldest of the group (17s, like me at the time) would gawk at the collegiate architecture like it was something sacred and sidereal and vaguely incomprehensible, while the younger kids would stick out their lips, stroke nonexistent beards, and use the biggest, most intellectual-sounding words they knew (“onomatopoeia,” “trump-loyal,” “chimera” etc.).

To be fair, I didn’t really care for C&S when I was entirely sober either. And they were clearly desperately in love which made it a thousand times worse. An eyes-locked-from-opposite-sides-of-the-school-gym kind of love, which is sweet at first but eventually makes you want to throw up. They’d started off like us: penniless and confused, too young to be living on their own. But now both had jobs, and just a month before, they had signed the lease on their first apartment, where some of us (including D.D. and myself, begrudgingly) had spent a few restful nights the week before.

I didn’t like them, but the reality was that C&S served a vital role. Often a certain sound—shoes on the sidewalk, for example, or old music soaring out of a high window, or distant shouting in an unknown language—or a certain sight—a barge plowing through the East River, old family and friends (or people who looked very much like old family and friends) in new hats and coats—would bring a Kid’s old memories bubbling to the surface. He would remember one blissful Christmas morning, years ago, when he found the perfect gift sitting in a pool of light underneath a tinsel tree, or the time his mother tickled his round tummy until he cried with hysterical joy. Consequently he would forget whatever had led him to make the choice to leave home in the first place.

It was during these sensitive times that Kids would say goodbye and never return. But for those who stayed, finding in the Mamas and the Kids a surrogate family that stood like an island in the center of a bizarre and cruel and meaningless ocean, Stef and Carrie could be a comforting reminder that life—this life, the one we’d

chosen, and the one we re-chose every morning—didn't have to be all that bad. So they always stood at the head of the group.

As we were passing the main Columbia quad, two entangled figures became visible through the copper-colored darkness. Someone whistled, and the figures shot their hungry white eyes at us for a moment and fled.

"Yah, you'd better run, lovers!" shouted the same kid who'd whistled, as a few of his prepubescent friends giggled and he made kissy faces. The kid's name was Elon (origin unknown). Age: Fourteen, but baby-faced. DOB: November 2nd, 1982 (that is, two weeks before). Condition: In average health; when he'd arrived his face had been all purple and bloated. I guessed that whoever had hit him had worn a number of jewel-encrusted rings on his fingers. Reputation: Kind of a smart-ass.

"Be quiet, Elon," said Stef from the front of the group, without even turning her head. His friends now began to laugh at him. Elon hastily rejoined the group and pretended to be in on the joke.

Drifting through the pack and looking for familiar faces, Elon eventually ended up on my left. He glanced up at me, and making a face, said, "What's wrong with you, man?"

D.D. had tried to keep the communal bottle away from me but had failed.

Looking up, I said, "Do you know that this is where I got fucked up the ass the first time?"

"Don't get him started, Elon," said D.D.

"Where?" asked Elon, looking around.

"Up there," I said, pointing to a darkened building on my right. Only a few windows still flickered with life: fluorescent late-night scholarship and dim concupiscent shifting across the window-glass like the light of a dying candle. "I limped for two days after. Sharper than a serpent's tooth."

"You *limped*?" Elon asked.

"Elon, be quiet," said D.D.

"Our kind of love hurts sometimes," I said.

"Why did you do it then?"

"Elon, shut up."

"It's the only kind of love we got, little man."

"But did you bleed?" asked Elon.

"*Oh please shut up,*" D.D. shouted, grabbing Elon's shoulder and pushing him away. I opened my mouth to answer Elon's question but D.D. aimed a pleading look at me. The other Kids had stopped walking and were watching us over their shoulders. But I said nothing more. So after a silent moment the pack turned back around and began to move again. When Elon saw that I wouldn't look at him anymore, he waved his hand in dismissal and went off with the younger kids who hadn't grown tired of him yet.

D.D. stayed behind with me and let the others gain some ground. Finally she leaned over to me and said, in a voice I'd never heard before, "Stop pretending like this is just your burden. It's unflattering and it's bullshit."

I said nothing, and I kept my eyes facing forward. Her hard face stared directly into mine. After a minute I said, as though she hadn't even spoken, "It's true. I did bleed. Ruined my pants."

D.D. didn't respond.

I'd never told D.D. about the aforementioned knickers-soiling incident. It's hardly worth the time or patience required to tell it; all I'll say is that before I found the other Kids, I'd spent a few weeks in the dorm room of a graduate poetry student (the worst kind), a forgotten friend of my eldest brother, who let me spend nights on a leather chair in the corner of his bedroom, at first pro-bono (he found my vagrancy "romantic") and later in exchange for certain allowances, which eventually I could no longer tolerate, but like I said this is hardly worth the time to describe.

Eventually D.D. turned away and wiped her eyes.

"We all loved her. She wasn't yours," said D.D. quietly.

Then we walked all the way to 135th Street without saying another word.

A few of the Mamas had gotten there before us and had almost finished decorating. Streamers and a disco ball had been hung, rows of chairs arranged. Just below the hoop on the farthest end of the court a Día de los Muertos-style altar had been erected on a folding table: her favorite dresses and shoes arranged in delicate piles and pyramids, tubes of lipstick, her make-up kit, her records (45s of "Dream a Little Dream of Me," "Fever," "La Vie en Rose," obviously, and an extensive collection of Aretha, Nina, Otis, Billie, Sam, and Ella, her favorite), along with the myriad little trinkets that together made up her history, objects that meant nothing to us but which were old and worn enough to indicate that they had been meaningful to her, and in ways that only she had understood: a silver locket with a picture of a rigid unfamiliar man on the inside, an unmarked cassette tape that no one felt they had the right to listen to, an old nightgown intended for a shorter and stouter woman than Roxy had been. Collected together and arranged on a table. These objects had been gathered from the St. Vincent's hospital room that had become her home after her landlord had kicked her out of her apartment (at a certain point she could no longer hide the signs of the Plague underneath a thick cake of foundation), and then carried uptown that afternoon by Felix and Mama Jojo and Mama Heart to the gymnasium of the 135th Street Y where the memorial was to be held, since all of our usual spots were barred to us, and since Mama Jojo had a confusing personal relationship with the muscly blonde head of the Y's janitorial staff. In other words, there was really no place else for us to go.

However, for some reason nobody had been able to find a picture of her, so at the center of the arrangement of her things stood a portrait of Katherine Hepburn in a gilt frame, the picture ripped from an old copy of *Life*.

This item, spotted just moments after I entered the heated gymnasium, sent a needle through my heart. I turned back.

"I need to throw up," I said, and hurried through the door I'd come in through and back into the cold, while D.D. shouted something after me that I couldn't understand.

A scene of tired solitary weeping is not a very interesting one to read. So I'll limit myself to saying that the rough near-midnight air sobered me significantly. After some amount of time Mama Heart joined me outside, apparently just to smoke a cigarette, although she hugged me a little too hard for me to believe that entirely. She used one of her Dorothy-red slippers to prop the door open. The smoke she blew from between her lips was sucked into the black vortex of the street and dissipated.

"She didn't like churches anyway," she said, looking calmly out into the street. "Too dark. If God was really there he would have brought a little sunshine with him." A silent laugh.

"They should have let us do it at the Bird," I said. "That's what she would have wanted."

"Maybe," Mama Heart said, from far away. "But there's a lot of death and doom going around. People are scared. And when people are scared they do things they won't ever forgive themselves for."

"So what. They feel guilty? She died alone."

"I was there, darling," said Mama Heart. "And so was Jojo and Trevor and Stef and Paula." Suddenly I discovered that she was gazing softly at me.

"No," I said, "no, I mean the memorial. The managers. They should have let us do it at the Bird. That way her fans could have come."

"They would have forgotten her before the sun came up," she said. "It's sad but it's true."

"Only because no one is ever what they're supposed to be," I said. "If you love someone then you're supposed to love them."

"We all try our best, I think." She tossed her cigarette to the sidewalk and stepped it out with her one remaining shoe. "But people come and go, love."

Mama Heart crossed her arms (intentionally or not, I've never been sure), and as she did the sleeves of her blouse rose up to her elbows, revealing a small black scab sitting just below the joint. Her empty eyes gazed into the street, and for a second I stopped breathing. A window on the south side of the street was lit and quickly extinguished by two silhouetted hands pulling on muslin drapes. When she finally uncrossed her arms the lesion vanished, but somehow it still seemed to burn through her sleeve like light through rainclouds. Mama Heart looked at me, sadly, gently.

Eventually Mama Heart held the door open for me and we both went back inside. The rows of chairs were full now, mostly with people I didn't know. Ex-Kids, probably, whom Mama Roxy had lifted, with hardly any effort at all, out of the dark well that life thrown them in without first teaching them to paddle. D.D. had saved me

a seat, which felt like more kindness than I deserved. I tried to think of other things. For the rest of the ceremony I sat there, staring at the floor, ignoring D.D.'s repentant looks, while one-by-one bodies rose from their seats to stand behind the framed portrait and tell stories about Roxy. I cannot reproduce any of these here because I did not hear any of them. All of my energy was focused on combating the urge to escape that hellish room into the sobering cold, but this would have been one betrayal too many, I decided—a cutting of the thread, a ticket on my own personal *Titanic*, etc. etc. As a result I now only have my own memories of her. I remember no singular events or actions, no wise-sounding platitudes that one day I might share with wide-eyed grandchildren. Just a general brightness, along with certain expressions, stances, and her smell: powder, smoke, and feathers, like a magician.

For instance, about two weeks after I first joined up with the Kids, I spent the night at Roxy's miniature apartment in Alphabet City and I met Roxy for the first time. She was tall and beautiful, somewhere in her 30s but dressed like she was somewhere in her 20s. She gave me coffee and stayed up late with me at her kitchen table because I couldn't sleep (bad dreams). Ruby red lipstick clung to the rim of her coffee cup, and her nails, painted aquamarine, clicked pleasantly against the edges of the table as I began to tell her about my situation, my old family, the poetry student, etc. She watched me closely the whole time I was speaking. The other Kids were all asleep in the other room, and through the window of the apartment there was only an all-pervading blackness. The universe shrunk to the size of a kitchen table. I sat on one side of the universe, talking softly, sharing stories that already felt like the stories of another child, another adolescent. On the other side she stood, receiving my transmissions, saying nothing, but always reminding me in her own silent way that what I was saying was worth saying. And when I was done, when I had nothing more to tell, no more grievances to air, I expected her (because I didn't know her) to give me a big hug and tell me how sorry she was for me and say she couldn't believe how much I'd suffered in my sad short life. But she didn't. She just remained quiet and said nothing, staring at me across the table as though from the edge of dock as though she were watching a ship preparing to depart for a long voyage. Her eyes watched me closely. End of memory.

I sulked my way through the rest of the ceremony. After the memorial there was dancing. Someone had brought a stereo and a collection of Donna Summers tapes. More wine appeared but I abstained, even though I felt like my insides were being eaten. I was surrounded by people, but I was terrified by the idea that I would soon be alone.

The festivities began quietly, then grew loud, and then grew quiet again. At 2:00 A.M. Mama Jojo's custodian hunk told us we should leave, so we did. We said goodbye to the Mamas, who all went east to catch the southbound green trains, while we huddled into our jackets and headed west. D.D. was again on my right. She was sober and still and her expression was blank or just unreadable. We walked slowly.

Most of the other Kids split off in pairs and trios to find suitable places to sleep. Stef and Carrie turned south and disappeared. The wind blew. D.D. wrapped her arms around her chest. The expensive wool peacoat she'd brought with her (a boy's coat, wrapped around a thin feminine frame) had taken quite a beating over the past nine months, and I saw that the seams were beginning to rip at the shoulders.

After a long silence I said, "Let's go to Uncle Ace's. Maybe we'll make a friend."

D.D. nodded sleepily, and she and I and a few of the remaining Kids (all younger, 13s and 14s, poor things, Elon among them) walked as quickly as we could over to the 137th Street station. On the way we passed only a few slow, isolated, stumbling shadows, to whom we probably didn't even exist.

Naturally the station was deserted except for a few bums and the endless click of dripping water. We jumped the gate, went down the steps, and waited in silence for the train. Finally with a cosmic rumble it came into the station and we boarded. Inside the compartment we chose, a pile of fabric and shopping bags slept in the corner. A lone woman held a pocketbook tightly to her chest. She gave D.D. a startled look that the latter wouldn't have noticed even if she'd been more than half-awake.

We took seats at the front of the car, I on the right and D.D. on the left. The doors closed and the train rolled away from the station and dropped down into the peaceful blackness beneath the city.

The A took you all the way out to Far Rockaway and back as long as you weren't booted off midway through. This gave the weary rider nearly three hours of mechanical lullabies and gentle swaying before he or she returned, refreshed, to the world the of the living. The E ended at the World Trade Center, and the C took you all the way into Jamaica, a long trip but notoriously unsafe if you were kicked out before returning to the city center.

D.D. fell asleep almost immediately, without a word. Her head slowly dropped toward my left shoulder with the trembling of the train compartment. I felt the day's weight on every inch of my body. I knew that I should sleep but couldn't. The backs of my eyelids were covered with projections I didn't want to see: things I remembered, things I imagined, things that were real once and would be real again. And I knew my dreams would be bad. But I wrapped my arm around D.D. (whose head tumbled at last onto my shoulder) and I closed my eyes and I tried.

SLUMBERLESS HOURS

Gavin Gao

Sunday morning is not a place to be unhappy in
full of feathered seahorses and scaled sparrows
I loved the long tales from my grandmother's storybook
The meerkat blinks back at the crimson moon
before waking up in the slimy interior of a mollusk
I have lived the twenty years of my life under a rock!
Sometimes the body speaks a language I do not understand
It opens windows of small attics I did not know had existed
Brings in strange wind & tiny green stick insects
who do not chirp for me but still make me happy
I think I am very much alive, perhaps as much as
the last spark of life in an amber-dwelling beetle
that had seen the face of eternity and smiled upon it
Sunday morning, I go to sleep only to wake on cue
at the train station in someone else's dream where
people come & go with the transience of a mayfly
scribbled in chalk on their unhappy faces – poor souls
I do not think eternity will smile upon me though
If there is one thing I miss about inhabiting the body
of a child it has to be this faraway little creek
I dreamed of wading but have never waded
where the breams would cling to my ankles
in the ample translucence of sun & shadows
But who were those women bending over their laundry
by the water? Each time I looked, they seemed so caught
up in their own reflections in the copper washbasins
not unlike the faded watercolour made aware of
its own clumsy shade in a child's landscape painting
And there stood my grandmother in her bridal gown
on the wooden bridge over the same old little creek
with my mother sleeping soundlessly under her skin
the primrose alive & aglow in her sun kissed cheeks

KEN'S TANGO

Gavin Gao

—after William Carlos Williams

If I when my cat is napping
 and the cicadas & eggplants
 are napping
 and the sea is a pasty vacant face
 in drunken stupor
 beyond the backyard, —
 if I in a filled tub
 twirl in suits, like a cool cat
 without a mirror
 keeping my tie firmly in place
 and Björking to the world:
 “I am horny, horny.
 I was born to be horny,
 I’d better be...”
 If I regard my armpits, my zits,
 my nipples, knees, butt cheeks
 against the shower curtains, —

Who else but I am
 the black sheep in the dollhouse?

NOT-LIVING VICARIOUSLY

Yevgeniya Muravyova

The sound of the girl's voice was me running through distant forests of tall pine and isolated trails, like the ones you would see in a retrospective Indie film.

But actually, I was washing the dishes while a giant spider crept up my sternum, carrying on its back a heavy yet hollow feeling that weighed down on my sentiment.

I went upstairs to the bedroom to see if I could drink up the poison that would make it do what all spiders did: expire. But my iPod didn't play battle music so there was no way I could win.

I sat on the edge of the bed looking over at the empty desk and the wall beyond it—a few paintings were hung up. One resembled a little man sitting watching television with a cage next to him with a little man watching television.

I began to feel distasteful ice cream scoops itching at my eye sockets, but then hot lemonade began to stream down the sides of my face, over my lips and to the edge of my face.

Gradually the spider turned more into a wildebeest, into a monkey of some sort, into a little man concerned about the whereabouts of his television.

The lemonade then turned into stale Vitamin C packets as I gasped and turned all the paintings inside out, still drinking the poison hoping the little man could drown.

I knew what this was though, this was me never saying no to the gypsy, it was me never leaving fucking Spain, it was me never quite learning to fend off the spiders.

CANADA

Yevgeniya Muravyova

The silence unseals,
 like the way baby birds
 stretch into the sky
 with their vocal cords
 directing to the sun.
 The howls reverberate
 through the trees,
 with the trees,
 bouncing off their cries
 one by one.
 The snow reveals,
 it is a mirror
 surrounding the Earth
 merely exposing the truth.

The froze air does not
 bite, but rather lightly
 kisses the goose-bumps
 already engulfing the skin.
 The cold lips leave lingering
 a shiver of burning wood
 after it has gone out.
 All the trees try to stand still
 in the fear of destruction
 of being ridiculed
 for their undertaking.
 The stars at night give light,
 blaring out their memories
 as they are long dead
 years and years overdue.

The frozen water
is the property of glass
more valuable than gold.

I have sauntered
across this exaltation,
I have ambled where
others ventured.

I now respire the air
of mountains long-gone.

I never even had to
ask to taste this,
to be in the state of
mind—of glass castles,
they all smell divine,
the closest thing to Eden,
the silence spoke to me,
it told me,

you can't leave.

Laurel Moffat

It was like sitting in a bathtub
with you but the tub
was so large we couldn't touch—

only feel reverberations
of each other's thoughts
in the media

and imagine
we knew each other
enough to call it language.

(Working across from you on a warm, windy evening)

Contributor Notes

Yevgeniya Muravyova often finds herself in places that change her everyday perspective, which she has come to realize, is a wonderful way to live. She believes in the motto: what is life if not to wonder about everything? So she continues to travel, wondering.

Jake Villarreal is a sophomore at Trinity College studying International Relations and Gender/Sexuality Studies. He prefers he/him, has been spotted attempting slam poetry, and really means it when he says he will give your mixtape a listen. He is interning at a union in NYC for the Spring 2015 semester and is very passionate about intersectionality and the labor movement.

Simon Mermelstein's poetry has been published in the MacGuffin, Parody, Third Wednesday, & the Huron River Review, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He was an Ann Arbor Poetry Slam finalist in 2014, and his first chapbook, *Zero One: Poems for Humans* (2013, Zetataurus Press) has sold upwards of 68 copies. A staunch hypocrite, he has never actually eaten a Fish McBite. <simonmermelstein.wordpress.com>

J. Relihan is breathing right now.

Elizabeth Magno is a student of biology and people watching at Cornell University. She enjoys telling needlessly long stories, mouthing the words to songs she doesn't know, and using the Oxford comma.

New Jersey resident, U.S. citizen, and Ukrainian immigrant **Mark Kasvin** is a Cornell undergraduate studying English, he thinks. He also thinks that creative writing is pretty good, film is pretty cool, and other things are cool too, like comics, radio, and Jeff Bridges. His former aspirations included paleontologist, professional basketball player, and superstar animator. Now he aspires to be some guy working in the entertainment industry. What kind of guy? Who knows? Certainly not Mark Kasvin.

Peter Alexander Bresnan is a senior at Hamilton College. He has published fiction in *Red Weather*, *First Inking*, and now *Rainy Day*. He and his family live in Sedona, Arizona.

Daniel Neff is a creative writing student at Western Michigan University. He is a writer of prose, poetry, and nonfiction manifestos about the New Sincerity literary movement. He grew up on an organic farm and desired to be an archaeologist, a geographer, an otter, a photographer, and a fictionaut, the last of which he has decided to actually pursue as a career.

Gavin Gao loves feeding pop-tart crumbs to pigeons, collects cloth-bound poetry books and occasionally finds himself staring at quaint wallpapers for hours. Hopefully, in the not so distant future, he will become a professional giraffe whisper. He is working at it.

Laurel Moffat is a staunch Risleyite committed to furthering the art dorm's goals of doing artsy things. She is layout editor of the Risley Revue literary magazine.

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