

 **BloodLotus**  
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*Georgia's mask*

by Megan Pinch

## In This Issue...

<b>Letter from the Editors</b>		3
<b>Poems</b>	Photo by Megan Pinch	5
Liz Minette	<i>Four Crows</i>	6
Andrew Grossman	<i>Crows in the Fields</i>	7
Alison Rogers	<i>Sea Change</i>	8
A. Jay Adler	<i>Myth</i>	9
Shoshana Akabas	<i>Away</i>	10
	<i>Broken (a pantoum)</i>	11
Maggie Ethridge	<i>invitation only</i>	12
Phoebe Wilcox	<i>Club Hellaciously Fabulous, Poem 1</i>	13
Katherine Riegel	<i>Elaine Dreaming</i>	15
Willie Smith	<i>Phil the Necrophiliac</i>	16
<b>Fiction</b>	Photo by Megan Pinch	17
Dennis Humphrey	<i>Attention to Detail</i>	18
Allan Richard Shapiro	<i>Getting Published</i>	27
KJ Hays	<i>The Zombie Who Went to Town in Style</i>	32
<b>The Gray Area</b>	Photo by Megan Pinch	41
Kara Carlson	<i>do you remember</i>	42
<b>Contributor Bios</b>		45

Greetings readers,

Be afraid. Be very, very afraid.

Or perhaps not afraid so much as disturbed, unnerved, more than a little creeped out. While this isn't a Halloween/Samhain/Day of the Dead issue per se, there are more than a few unsettling elements in #14. Lock the door, light some candles, and read on.

Photography by **Megan Pinch** eerily introduces the genre sections of this issue, which oozes autumn and more than one kind of chill in the air. **Liz Minette's** poem "Four Crows" opens #14 with its offerings of one crisp image after another: a plastic bag caught on a tree branch and "flapping like torn slips," and the crows sitting like "satin commas" looking over a winter-dead courtyard. **Andrew Grossman's** crows are "in the fields," watching the world go by. **Alison Rogers** delivers more stark imagery in "Sea Change," a poem about a very unusual relationship. **A Jay Adler's** "Myth" leaves us wondering what "the now / alien beginning" is or was, and seems to be in limbo between "as if it isn't so" and "as if it is." Next, **Shoshana Akabas**, the first high school student contributor in the four-year history of *Blood Lotus*, offers two poems—a wistfully sweet minimalist memory poem called "Away" and a masterful pantoum called "Broken," which implores us (in both the form's refrain and her own well-developed voice) to "Forgive me. We repeat ourselves sometimes." **Maggie Ethridge** follows in the voice of a table at a party ("invitation only"), who sees "the black knives of men's / shined shoes" and "bleed[s] in sprinkles and sparkles." **Phoebe Wilcox** gives us another party in "Club Hellaciously Fabulous, Poem 1," where the speaker warily notes, in the midst of debauchery, that "Heaven shouldn't burn as intensely as this." **Katherine Riegel's** "Elaine Dreaming" could've been inspired by the same hellacious club—less fabulous, however, are the "men with no hands" who sidle up to Elaine in the dream's club (then again, perhaps Elaine is subconsciously wishing for a grope-free dance club experience?). Riegel's poem ends with a desire to "dance and dance like the happy dead," a nice segue into **Willie Smith's** "Phil the Necrophiliac," who also has "earthly" desires: "Let me play at mourning / around the mouth of a grave."

For fiction, we offer you ghosts, an army of cannibalistic children, and a zombie. Yes, you read that correctly. "Attention to Detail," by **Dennis Humphrey**, is about two guys whose careers seeking and photographing ghosts bring them to a coffee shop with a cute waitress and some mysterious goings-on. **Allan Richard Shapiro's** "Getting Published" is the scariest story we've read in a long time...we hope no one knocks on your door while you're reading it! **KJ Hays** brings #14's fiction home with "The Zombie Who Went to Town in Style"—you will be transported to a whole new, creepy world.

For the Gray Area section of this issue, we offer a stream-of-consciousness, lyric prose piece by **Kara Carlson** called "do you remember." Carlson details (and we mean "details") a forbidden relationship gone bad with obsessive, breathless, sparsely punctuated prose, graphic eroticism, and the refrain of the title, which becomes more and more (ahem) biting as the piece

progresses. The creep factor of the issue comes full circle from ghosts and zombies to the sicker, more twisted qualities of human nature by the close of Carlson's piece.

We sincerely hope you enjoy #14, and promise lighter (though never fluffier) fare in the future. For now, though, remember: lock your doors.

Sincerely,

The Editors

## #14 Poems



*Taking flight*

by Megan Pinch

FOUR CROWS

Whatever it is that makes  
them do it, four crows lift  
out of elm branches, one  
after another, and swing  
through air, as if strung  
on a pendulum, right towards  
a scalloped, concrete edge  
of the county courthouse.

Then they veer away,  
at the last second, and dive  
back around, up into the trees  
to land—a circle.

Perhaps by their flight,  
they're taking back this  
tall-columned tombstone  
we all work in.

Or they're taking back  
the plastic bags, caught  
in branches, ripped and  
flapping like torn slips.

As the crows settle now,  
satin commas among new leaves,  
a spool of audio tape,  
music unstrung,  
from someone's cassette  
hangs like tinsel below them.  
The tape's shiny surface winks  
as the wind twists and turns it.

And in the official gardens  
that flag the courthouse,  
the crocuses have come up early,  
tulips unfold their slipper bodies  
to the sun.

CROWS IN THE FIELDS

the train jerks forward

Crows in the fields,  
one believes for both

Crows in the fields,  
market plunges, market rises

Crows in the fields,  
the Yankees buy another series

Crows in the fields,  
one yields momentum

one listens to Celine Dion  
plays the game of Mystic  
watches video until dawn drowns

Crows in the fields, the smoke and the Jose Cuervos, waiting for the business  
trip to end

One watches the crows in the fields with gratitude for the little everything  
emerging from the womb, spitting the seed on neatly combed trails,  
off in the wonder of life giving breasts and the clit put to pasture,  
the grass kept close, wildflowers in cut glass vases.

Crows in the fields,  
one scatters pieces of corn on the porch,  
one clicks the hot link to porn

SEA CHANGE

She on the edge of the sand, he on the edge of the water. He prefers things  
raw his teeth pointed for tearing. She eats smoked whitefish, ignores  
his jibes about fresh water. Their  
breath, briny and sweet, they kiss and kiss on the shore

his blue-black blood running like a cold stream against her body he  
sees animals' blood in her eyes, her earth-ness,  
her heavy hand on the sand, he has heard of soil, tough grasses and  
roots

His green hair dried with salt, the deep chill of his fins,  
great gills in his neck that open and shut open and shut the hardness  
of his eyes, too large for a human face, minerals  
of swelling tides no pupils ecstasy to look at.

After so many swims in the moonlight, so many  
half-in half-out meetings on the beach,  
He misses strong underwater currents, tang of seaweed, turtlegrass,  
plankton

She tells him she misses sweetgrass, an old barn, petting a cat. They  
cannot touch these things together

she strokes his hair, tangles out the salt and tastes it He buries his  
head in her neck, asks her what milk is what berries are a few last details

He tells her how thirsty he's been,  
these last months on the sand, and then they understand it's best  
to end on a good note.

He pushes off from shore, swimming above water out to the deep, then  
flips his tail  
to descend in a shower of light

She runs into the ocean,  
runs up against it the crabs scuttling at her feet under the water now  
and into the dark plain.

MYTH

Barreled over some wheels on the 66, out West  
breaching the old wind, earth's unending hail of dust  
flaring into fire glow in the light of the world's round rim  
it isn't theory now—desire incommensurate  
with its condition. So far from home, the now  
alien beginning, measuring the progress  
of Venus against the millipede's march  
it is what you do, or daily do, dare to do:  
crack a word against an empty instant, crack another—  
shouts in the wind-rush—so you can barrel through  
as if it isn't so, as if it is.

AWAY

Many miles  
from what you and I  
used to call home,  
we pluck the buds  
from orchids  
and bite into the oranges,  
forgetting  
what our city tasted like.

BROKEN (A PANTOUM)

Forgive me. We repeat ourselves sometimes.  
Just a thin silhouette,  
we'll be left in the corners of the world:  
the toy in the back of the closet

Just a thin silhouette—  
our hands—so gaunt.  
The toy in the back of the closet  
they all forgot

our hands—so gaunt,  
our veins form rising mountains;  
they all forgot  
the corners of the world.

Our veins form, rising. Mountains  
will be left in the corners of the world.  
The corners of the world.  
Forgive me. We repeat ourselves sometimes.

INVITATION ONLY

i am stunned by the punch bowl,  
drinking chardonnay and cherries,  
the stems filling my mouth like  
Updike's witch. someone has

set on me a pear shaped glass,  
another a set of silverware.  
i am supposed to be a table,  
dressed in white tablecloth

with sour pit eyes for garnish.  
climb on me, tug my skirts,  
children hide in my womb.  
the litter of parties discards

around my long white limbs,  
tissue flutters, glides in soft  
white heaps round my sturdy  
feet. i hold the pose in great

relief, hiding in plain sight.  
the black knives of men's  
shined shoes dance past my  
nose in unknowing proximity

to my saucer eyes, tongued  
stems all tied in rows across  
my lips in pretty pink stitches.  
i bleed in sprinkles and sparkles

they take me for the fountain-  
through my clenched jaw  
and shining white teeth;  
i vomit the silence of each stitch-

the guests drink their fill (of me)

CLUB HELLACIOUSLY FABULOUS, POEM 1

Forty-four Februarys, frigid cold,  
and then came the day of the filtration system breakdown  
when she decided she wanted everything, one of each  
in every color.

Pay for it in sanity. Pay with butterfly wings and eat  
cream puffs in an angels' lap.  
It would be hellaciously fabulous.

That angel was heaven.  
That dance club twisted reality by the pool.  
It was a heated pool of course.  
Steamy and hot. That angel was playing rare music  
underwater next to her legs.  
And sometimes swimming through them.

Eventually they had to take the wings off and hang them up to dry  
by the brimstone and clean-coal furnace. They were thirsty and tired of  
romping.

And ready for cloudy-pink mixed drinks, of  
fresh Wish fruit and lime.

She laid her head in the lap of  
a manly mirage and tried to rest but there was still  
way too much fun to be had.  
So she had it and she loved it  
until she could take no more.  
And then it was necessary to ask the flames on the horizon not to come too  
close  
to their wings, so fowl and divine.  
Heaven shouldn't burn as intensely as this.  
But they might be safe in the pool.  
There was always a floating kiss in the deep end to be fought for or against,  
which might have something to do with all the fire and water  
and these thin membranes between worlds.

Oh, return, return.  
Cash in a cumulous cloud  
for a taxi ride home.

Now once in awhile in a moment of quiet

she'll find a white feather  
on her sweater  
or her desk.  
She'll pick it off  
and look at it  
and wonder where she went for so long.

ELAINE DREAMING

*A professor is one who talks in someone else's sleep. —W. H. Auden*

My student tells me the dream she had  
between classes on a Tuesday afternoon:  
she is surrounded by men with no hands,  
at a bar, dancing. There is never enough  
dancing in my dreams—quotidian things, really, my mother  
saying *That's stupid* and hanging up, rain  
turning earth to mud under my desperate feet  
as dogs wander too close to the road.  
I think there should be a dial-up dream hotline  
we can call if ours aren't interesting enough  
and to talk shop beyond Freud & Jung. If a tiger smells like spring  
in mine, will the flowers survive tonight's frost?  
When you have that one where the ringing sends you  
searching for the goddamn  
phone, and you're pulling and pulling on a drawer  
from which the sound issues like steam, and finally  
you get it open and wake up  
and your lover tells you no, the phone never rang, the alarm  
was obediently quiet, the whole house, in fact, conspired in silence  
to allow you a peaceful nap—well, what should you make  
of that?

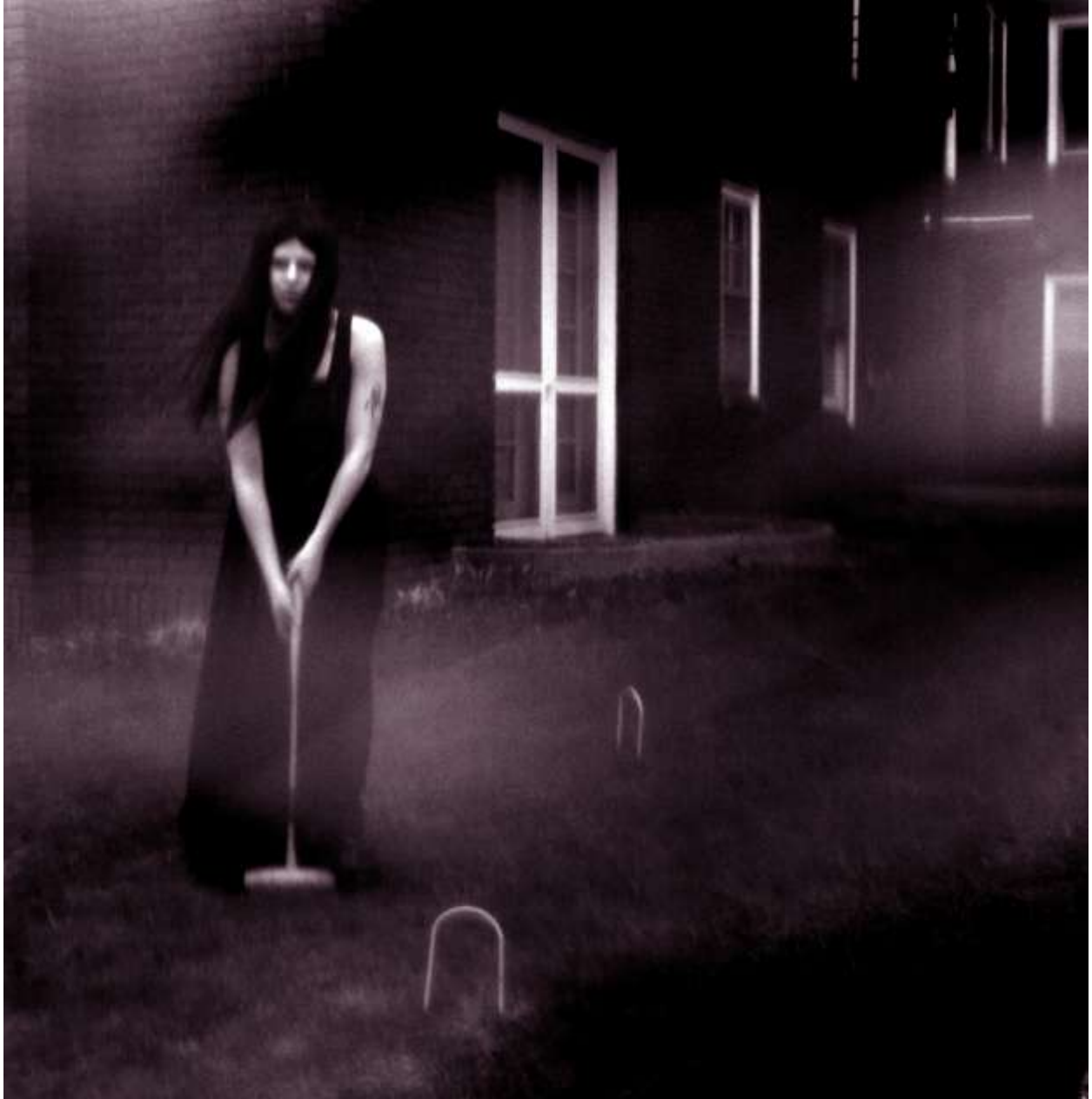
Because after the men with no hands got her drunk  
and she passed out, I entered my student's dream, insisting  
she get out her poetry and have something  
to say about it. From the pit of her subconscious  
to this poem to mine isn't much of a jump, so when those men  
show up and start waving their stumps  
while a little ass-shaking music plays  
in *my* kitchen, I want to know what they mean,  
whether to push them out into the late April sunshine  
or take off my hands and feel  
that heavenly helplessness right along with them,  
let whatever's baking burn itself down  
while we dance and dance like the happy dead.

PHIL THE NECROPHILIAC

Spread me on your toast.  
Butter me up to the sky  
all the way  
down to a goose.  
Jam me in the traffic on phone sex,  
voodoo boilers plus sax to back.  
Cure my liver with espresso,  
breathmint, tobacco.  
Send me through arches  
a raptor sends the vipers through.  
Throw me cigarettes, condoms, crucifix,  
a midnight fix of a couple five toys.  
Let me play at mourning  
around the mouth of a grave.  
Levitate your gobbets with a giggle.  
Because I dig the blast  
every night we meet.

Here's mud in your socket.  
Take home the meat.  
Carve a steak to spit you.  
Squeeze under the sheet it in my fist.  
Bag you in this dog eat dream.  
Cease and desist every spew.  
Who's that stiff in the window?  
Spread me on your toast.

## #14 Fiction



*untitled*, from the Alice series

by Megan Pinch

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Barry lifted his camera from its velvet-lined case with the care of a transplant surgeon handling a donor heart. He removed the lens cap and inspected the convex glass for dust particles. He wiped the lens one more time. High quality lens paper only for his equipment. He wanted no chance of contamination. Carelessness was inexcusable when one speck of dust was the difference between credible evidence and inconclusive blurs. Nothing pissed him off more than out-of-focus smudges of light paraded in the media as conclusive proof. Orbs. Ectoplasm. The stuff of frauds and morons. They undermined everything serious, disciplined investigators were working to document.

He put the camera onto the tripod, aimed it over the banister, and twisted the adjustment knobs and levers until the shot was centered on the first flight of the stairs that climbed the far wall before they turned up the wall to his right to reach the second floor, where he stood. A large mobile of black and white circles dangled over the ground floor in the lofted space inside the circuit of the stair well, and he had chosen his camera position to ensure none of the elements of the mobile could wander into the camera shot. He turned the focus adjustment until the staircase was in focus, took it just a bit past focus, and then slowly brought it back until the image was its sharpest. He sat back down to the small table to inspect his other equipment.

"Tell me again why we came here so early."

"You're not helping, you know." Barry paused before examining the equipment to review his notes from the previous night in his notebook.

*Investigation #98: The Old Grind Coffeehouse. Victorian era mansion built ca. 1894, remodeled into coffeehouse in 1997. Ground floor comprised of coffee bar, kitchen, rest rooms and seating area with outdoor café-style wrought iron tables and chairs. Open stair with antique banister climbs up south wall half way to second floor, turns up east wall of front seating area and climbs to second floor landing. Banister continues around north perimeter of open stairwell to create a balcony of café style tables and chairs with overview of ground floor seating area. Remainder of second floor comprised of more intimate seating areas of couches and easy chairs, and a room for private meetings in south east corner of upper floor. Most walls covered with paintings for sale by local artists. Employees of coffeehouse report most frequent paranormal activity in vicinity of stairs.*

He paused for a moment and added, Day 2: The murmur of the crowd filled the café with voices, all seeking to be heard over the rest.

Tom looked over his shoulder as he wrote. "Oh, *right*. The atmosphere."

Barry ignored the comment and proceeded with his equipment check. He checked the batteries in his digital voice recorder and tape recorder. He always used both, so he could compare the digital recording to the analog when

there was a possible EVP. He believed in being thorough. He pressed the record button on each recorder.

"Shut up, Tom." Barry said, pressed stop and rewind on each machine, then pressed play on both. "*Shut up, Tom*" played back in stereo. Barry did not rewind again. He wanted no bleed over.

"Nice," Tom said as he moved to his seat on Barry's right.

Barry called in Tom to help with investigations out of a desire to keep himself honest. Tom's undying skepticism was a control measure. Barry had known since childhood how difficult it would be to present a conclusive case for the existence of any paranormal phenomenon. He wasn't really sure how old he was when his mother told him that the man he had seen in the house late one night when his father was gone to the war must have been the ghost of his grandfather, checking in on him. The episode itself was adrift in the timeless haze of his earliest memories. When he was four, he had snuck out of his room long after bedtime and saw his mother and aunts communing with the spirit world via Ouija Board. He could still see his Aunt Vona hunched in dancing shadows and guttering candle light in the dining room, her hands on one side of the pointer, his Aunt Meg on the other side, and his Aunt Vona saying to his mother, "My God, Jolene. It's a personal message for you from beyond the afterlife! Don't take your hands off Meg! There's more! There's more!" His mother had fainted on the spot, and he had run back down the dark hallway to his room in silent panic. He still kicked himself for not staying to find out what the message was. Since then, he had been fascinated with the paranormal, and since the first time he had tried to tell his classmates about it in show-and-tell in first grade, he had been labeled "Scary Barry." If his investigations were ever to be accepted by science, his evidence would have to pass levels of scrutiny beyond that of other sciences, and he knew it. Publish a photo of a new species of moth, and you're a scientist. Publish a photo of a ghost, and you're a crackpot. *National Geographic* for the former, *National Enquirer* for the latter.

Barry put the recorders down on the table and picked up his coffee cup. "I told you last time, I thought it might be useful to set up early and observe some of the normal activity before closing time. I think if we spend some time here, we'll get a better feel for the place, so we can tell if something seems out of the ordinary."

"Uh huh."

Barry continued. "I also want to talk to the staff before we finish the investigation. See if they've experienced anything unusual. The more time we spend here, the more comfortable they'll feel talking to us—maybe open up more. People are embarrassed to admit experiencing the unexplained."

"Oh, now I get it." Tom slapped his forehead. "You know, maybe that waitress you have a crush on has had some kind of encounter with an incubus. I'd like to hear about that."

Barry picked up one of the recorders, rewound it and let it play forward again. "*Shut up, Tom.*"

A group of men with guitar cases moved slowly up the stairs from the first floor. Tom nodded toward them over his coffee mug. "Hey, it looks like someone's about to play."

Barry watched the group ascend the stairs with their gray-streaked beards and pony tails, some wearing tattered old denim jackets, others in suits. Barry resumed writing.

*They moved as silent spirits  
or as shadows might,  
between tables packed  
with affected disaffection.*

The musicians weaved their way to the back, to the room that was used for private parties. They closed the door behind them.

"Figures," Barry frowned. "Why do they want to go back there? We won't even be able to hear."

"Maybe it's an old band reunion or something."

Barry dumped another packet of sugar into his coffee and twirled it around. "How am I supposed to stir with this skinny little stick?"

"What you writing there?"

Barry pushed his notebook across to Tom, who looked it over and then passed it back without comment.

"So?" Barry said. "Any other observations?"

Instead of answering, Tom took a sip from his coffee mug and looked over its rim toward the ceiling. "How long do you think that mobile has been hanging up there?"

Barry looked up and shrugged. The mobile of intricately balanced circles of black and white was slowly rotating and revolving like a miniature solar system of two-dimensional planets and moons. Circles carving circles within circles. "I wonder what's making it move like that."

"That air conditioner vent," Tom said, pointing.

"Oh yeah," Barry frowned. Then he spied the waitress. Black hair, black mini-skirt, black hose, and black T-shirt with the coffee house logo stenciled in bright yellow over her left breast and larger on the back. Tom gave Barry a half grin and flagged her down.

"You want to know a secret?" Tom asked her.

"What's that?" The waitress rolled her eyes but smiled on one side of her mouth. Barry tried to sneak a closer look at her eyes without seeming obvious about it while she was distracted by Tom, but she was too far away in the dim light of the café. He was sure they would be hazel.

"You see that picture on the wall, halfway up the stairs?" Tom asked.

She looked across the banister and down to where the stairs came up along the opposite wall. "The blue one?"

"No, no. That one in the middle," he said, rising and moving closer so she could sight along his arm to the one he meant.

"Um-hmm. What about it?"

"It's hanging sideways."

"*Sideways*," she repeated with a sidelong glance. Barry saw her eyes *were* hazel. A little blue, a little brown, a little green, all jumbled together like bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope.

"The other night when I was here, I saw someone bump it on the way up the stairs. It pivoted on its nail or whatever it's hanging on and was swinging by the upper right corner of the frame. The next person who came along straightened it, but he turned it the wrong direction, so it ended up on its side."

She viewed it with her head tilted to one side. "Hmmm. What is it supposed to be, anyway?"

"I think it's a picture of a man pointing at something."

"Oh, yeah," she murmured with another sidelong look at Tom. She turned to look at Barry with a tilt of her head which had the precise angle to catch the light and reflect it directly into him. "You guys need anything?"

"Naw, we're doing fine for now, but we'll let you know if we, um, need anything," Barry said, catching her eyes for a moment. Too long, he thought. She smiled and moved off toward another of her busy tables.

As Tom returned to his seat, he said. "Not bad slick. You actually spoke to her this time."

"Did you see those freckles and those hazel eyes?" Barry said.

"Hazel? I thought they were green."

Barry shook his head. "Ever read any Gerard Manley Hopkins?"

"Isn't he the 'Easter Wings' guy?"

"No, that's George Herbert. You're thinking of the line, 'Ah! bright wings' in another Hopkins poem, but the one I'm talking about goes:

'Glory be to God for dappled things—

For skies of couple-color as a brindled cow...

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)'

...umm...'He fathers forth whose beauty is past change...'"

Tom picked up his coffee mug. "That's not all of it, is it?"

"No, but that's all that I can remember. I can't even remember the title."

Barry wrote the fragment down on his notebook along with the notation *Title?*. "I'll look it up later."

"Uh-huh. So, what's her name?"

"Who?"

"Your dappled waitress."

Barry shrugged and opened a book.

Guitar music began to play in the back room. The closed door coupled with the noise of the crowd made the music almost impossible to hear. Business conversations, small talk, laughing, coughing, rattling dishes, and even the hum of the air conditioner combined to all but drown the music out. The disjointed pieces of music which managed to filter through came not like music heard through the ears, but like the memory of music forgotten and

remembered now only in snatches and incomplete echoes that leave the mind continually guessing at and just missing the name of the tune.

"What you reading there?" Tom asked.

"Keats," Barry grunted. "I'm researching for a paper on the influences of Romantic poets on the development of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century spiritualism." He watched the waitress flit from table to table like a black and yellow bee visiting each flower in the garden.

"What, his poems?"

"A letter about Negative Capability."

"Oh, that one. 'When a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason,' right?"

Barry's eyes narrowed. "Right. Damn, you piss me off sometimes."

"I'm an English major too. Remember?" Tom said. "I guess I can see the value in Keats' philosophy, but the real reason I remember that one so well is that I have a companion theory to go with it. Want to hear it?"

"I can hardly wait."

"Tell me, what would the opposite of Negative Capability be?"

"I don't know. Positive Capability?"

"You would think so, wouldn't you? But it's not. You've reversed only one half of the idea from negative to positive. You really have to reverse both parts from Negative Capability to Positive Incapability."

"And what would that be?"

"The inability to face irritating facts and reason without reaching after uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts."

The dappled waitress buzzed past their table on her way to the stairs.

"You guys still doing all right?"

"Actually, I could use a refill," Tom said.

"Okay." She turned to Barry. "You too?"

"Um, sure. Yeah."

She smiled and walked to the stairs. She stopped on her way down to turn the painting right side up, playfully turning it upside-down first. She looked up at Barry and Tom over one shoulder and raised her eyebrows in a questioning arch. Barry thought his slow smile betrayed more than he would have liked as he nodded to her. She smiled and moved on down the stairs as Barry continued to look at the picture on the wall. The abstract figure of the pointing man pointed now in a different direction, being right side up again.

The front door downstairs opened, and more people began to shuffle into the café. Eventually the noise rose to the point that the faint and haunting sounds of the guitar music from the back room began to blend in with the other sounds, becoming a part of the general noise rather than something distinct. Soon they could no longer pick it out of the background noise at all.

As the new arrivals ascended the stairs, one of them bumped the pointing man painting again, this time knocking it completely off the wall and sending it cart-wheeling down the stairs in a series of thumps and crashes.

The pointing man pointed around in all directions as it rolled, like the ticking pointer on a wheel of fortune. It came to rest facedown at the base of the stairs, pointing God knows where.

"That painting's having a rough life," Tom said as he watched the mobile wander lazily through its orbits overhead. A moth, possibly disturbed by the commotion, fluttered up into the system of two dimensional planets. "Hey look," Tom said. "Un-focus your camera. That's a potential orb if I ever saw one."

Barry watched the moth rise toward the mobile, a ghostly speck of dusty wings seeking to join in the dance of the other circles above. Instead, it collided with them, spiraling abruptly down to the seating area below, like it had been cast out from the two dimensional heavens. The only sign it had ever been there was a momentary agitation in the smooth arcs of the rotating mobile.

Barry reached for his notebook. Without looking to see which one, he tore out a page, wadded it into a ball, and hurled it at the mobile. When it struck the delicate structure, the paper ball sent the circles spinning erratically, colliding with and entangling one another. After impacting the mobile, the paper ball bounced off the far wall and down the stairs, coming to light a short distance from where the dappled waitress was picking up the facedown picture of the pointing man.

"Nice shot," Tom chuckled.

The waitress picked up the paper and unfolded it, smoothing it against her thigh. She read one side and then the other.

Barry put his hand over his eyes and his elbow on the table, resting his head on his hand as he shook his head from side to side.

"What's the matter?"

"I just noticed which page I threw. One side had a poem and that Hopkins fragment on it."

"What poem?"

"A poem I wrote about her."

"No kidding! I thought we were here to investigate." Tom was grinning. "So what's the poem?"

"You want to hear it?"

"Oh I can hardly wait."

Barry hesitated, but he saw Tom wasn't going to let it drop. "It's called 'Her Eyes and the Art of Abstraction,' and it goes like this."

*Picture a fool. (Hold out one hand, palm up.)*

*Now me. (Hold out the other hand.)*

*Now picture this: (Bring both hands together, as in prayer.)*

*One such as me supposing.*

"Uh huh. Nice inclusion of the reader there. What was on the other side of the page?"

"An idea for a short short story about a guy pointing to a sideways painting."

Barry looked over the banister and down to the base of the stairs. She smiled up at him, and he looked up at the mobile. The circles had resumed their revolutions, though he thought that somehow their movement followed a different pattern than before. He set his mind on that idea as she picked up her serving tray and started up the stairs with the picture of the pointing man in one hand and her serving tray balanced on the other. She had placed the page from his notebook on the tray between the cups of coffee. She paused to hang the painting again before continuing up the stairs.

Tom arched his eyebrows and smiled as she approached them. Barry ignored him.

She put their drinks on the table.

"Thanks," Tom said.

"You're welcome," she said. She turned to Barry. "Is this yours?" She held up the torn-out page from Barry's notebook.

"Yeah," Barry said.

She put the paper on the table. Barry could see she had written "Pied Beauty" at the top of the page above the Hopkins poem, and she had crossed out "brindled" and written in "brinded." He smiled and nodded. He could feel blood rushing into his face.

"So what did you think of the other poem?" he asked.

"I really only glanced at it." She looked at it again. "It could use some concrete imagery, don't you think?"

Barry nodded thoughtfully but said nothing.

"It's almost closing time. You guys want anything else?"

"I think just the check, please," Tom said. "We have to get ready to hunt some ghosts you know."

Barry turned the page over to the side with the short short. Across the bottom of the page she had written, "My eyes are green."

Barry retreated into his investigator persona. "Say, we still need to talk to the staff. You know, to see if you have experienced anything strange."

"You mean other than you two?"

Barry smiled, and Tom said, "*Touché.*"

"I don't know," she began. "I try not to think too much about it. This old place is creepy enough when we're cleaning up after closing. I've heard some of the same stuff the other guys have heard, I guess. Music. Footsteps on the stairs." She looked at Barry, who was looking at her as though she were professing undying love for him. She looked down at her note pad and jotted down a total before tearing off their tab and placing it on the table. "If you ask me, the music could have been coming from a neighboring house, and an old

house like this pops and creaks all the time. You might have better luck with Carly. She seems way more into the haunted coffeehouse thing than I am.”

Barry, picked up the tab. He didn't notice the total. He looked at the place where the servers wrote their names. Zooey. Her name was Zooey.

Barry looked up from the check, as she was turning to go. “Do you think we could talk to that band that came in and went to the back room?”

“What band?”

“You know, the old guys with the instrument cases who came in just a while ago and went in the reserved room back there.” He pointed to the door.

“No one has that room reserved tonight.”

Barry and Tom looked at each other. “Are you sure?” Tom said. “We saw some people go in there, I don't know, maybe twenty minutes ago.”

“They better not have. That's another room to have to clean.” She strode around the balcony and over to the door, obviously irritated at the prospect of having another group of tables to bus, and Barry followed close behind. When she turned the knob, it was locked. “I'm going to get the key from the bar,” she said.

Barry nodded and went back to get his camera off the tripod. “Here,” he said, thrusting the recorders into Tom's hands.

Tom attempted to turn them on, and they said, “*Shut up, Tom*” in unison.

“Like this,” Barry said, showing Tom how to turn on the record function. By the time they returned to the door, Zooey was there with the key and the manager.

They opened the door. The room was dark. The manager turned on the light. The room was empty, except for the four of them.

“Are you sure you guys saw someone come in here?” the manager asked.

Barry and Tom both nodded.

“Maybe they left while we weren't looking,” Tom said.

“Like when?” Barry asked.

“I don't know. When you were writing your poems?”

“And what were you doing?”

“Looking at the mobile?”

The manager looked at Barry. “I don't suppose you got them on film or on the recorders.”

Barry shook his head. “I had no idea there wasn't supposed to be anyone going in there. I thought...” Barry broke off, visibly upset. Ninety-seven investigations, peering at enlarged photos in positive and negative polarity for anything that couldn't be written off as dust motes or tricks of light. Listening to recordings for intelligible communications. “I should have been paying attention.”

Tom and Zooey looked at each other.

“What are you gonna do, take a photograph of everyone who comes up the stairs?” Tom asked.

“Maybe.”

“Don’t you think some of the customers might object?” Tom asked. “I mean, what if Sean Penn or Russell Crowe comes in?”

Barry didn’t laugh.

Zoey put her hand on Barry’s shoulder. “Hey, if they were here, they’ll be back, right? Lightning strikes more than once. All you have to do is be alert for it.”

Barry wasn’t listening. A chorus of first grade voices was chanting “*Scary Barry, Scary Barry*” as he waited to hear the crash of the mobile falling from the ceiling. Yes, he was quite sure that should be what happened next.

GETTING PUBLISHED

Buck stands with his back against the wall while staring nervously out the window. He holds the revolver with both hands. He is sweating profusely. His hands shake constantly and I worry that his finger might slip. "We're never going to get out of here alive," he is saying.

I am calm upon the bed. I'm not wearing any socks. I'm lighting another cigarette.

Buck hears sirens in the distance and crouches against the wall so he can stare out the corner of the window. "God, I hope they're headed for us," he says, but the sound passes and Buck stands up again. Then he turns to me with the barrel of the gun covering his nose. "What the hell are you doing?" he says.

I'm smoking a cigarette.

"I'm smoking a cigarette. What does it look like?"

Buck wipes his forehead with the back of the hand that holds the gun. Then he turns his eyes, without turning his head, to the window. "Not that," he says, before redirecting his stare to the door. "Your computer," he says.

My computer is in my lap.

"I'm checking my email," I say.

Buck stares at me before he stares out the window again. "Your email? Are you fucking kidding me?"

I continue checking my email.

"A friend of mine found an abandoned dog and wants to know if anyone wants to adopt it," I say.

"Do you want to adopt an abandoned dog," I say. "She says it's very friendly."

Buck shakes his head before he stares out the window again. Then he calls me a fucking asshole. Then a single knock comes from the door, followed by the muffled sound of many children laughing at once from behind it.

I'm not sure how long we have been here like this, but it seems like a long time. There used to be a lot of us here. We used to leave the door unlocked. We used to inhabit every room of the house, but not anymore. Now it's only Buck and me left. At least we think there's only me and him left. I'm not sure how long it's been since we left the room, nor how long it's been since the screaming stopped. Seems like a long time. Seems like this is all it's ever been, at least until the knock came from the door.

"We should see who it is," I say.

Buck quickly shushes me with the barrel of the gun over his lips. Then he crouches against the wall again and whispers, "Maybe we should jump."

"Maybe you should jump," I say. "I'm busy checking my email."

Another single knock comes from the door, followed by the scratchy voice of a child saying, "Don't be scared," followed by the sound of fingernails scratching at the edges of the door like rats clawing out the inside of a wall,

then more laughter, louder, as if they were pressing their mouths against the edges of the door.

“It’s not funny,” I say, which only produces another solitary knock and more laughter.

Buck says, “Fuck!” from all fours and crawls along the floor until he is next to the bed. “How many of them do you think there are?”

“Enough,” I say as I confirm a friend request on Facebook.

Buck sits on his knees and scratches his head with the gun. “What do you think we should do?” he asks.

I shrug my shoulders without taking my eyes off the computer. “You wanna email Obama again?” I say.

Buck rolls his eyes at me and says, “I told you he doesn’t actually read them.”

“Well, Anderson Cooper told me that he does and Anderson Cooper hasn’t lied to me yet.”

Another knock comes to the door causing Buck to jump and his eyes to move frantically from me to the window to the door. “Like he actually has the time to go through the million emails he gets every day,” he says before he’s standing up again.

“I betcha he doesn’t get that many. Everybody probably thinks the way you do so they don’t even bother sending one, except maybe for lunatics and children. And since we’re not in the third grade or crazy, he’d probably read it.”

“No, we’re not crazy.” Buck agrees as he continues to stand by the bed, eyes still frantic around the room. “Well, what would we say?”

I take a deep breath. “Obviously we’d mention something about our impending death from the cannibalistic children at the door.”

Another knock sends Buck to a crouch behind the oven, gun still held ready in both hands. “You’re not going to open with that, right?”

“Oh no, of course not!”

Buck nods his head in agreement. “Say something first about healthcare reform, something to get his attention. Maybe call him a pussy and then apologize for using the word pejoratively but explain that no other word best fits the way he’s acting.”

I put out my cigarette and immediately light another one. It’s important to smoke while writing an email about healthcare and cannibalism to the president. “I don’t think it’s a good idea to insult the man before we ask him for help.”

“Whatever,” Buck says while he nervously watches me type. Then another single knock at the door, this one with more force than the ones before it, shaking the door and reverberating throughout the walls.

Buck tells me to hurry so I quickly finish the email and send it. Then he asks, “What now?”

“Now we wait,” I say. “I want to check Craig’s List anyway.”

Buck grabs a paper towel from the counter and wipes the second skin of sweat from his face. Then another knock, even worse this time, and the doorknob turning and children laughing and the words “It won’t be long now” said by one of them and then echoed by them all.

Buck is up again with another “Fuck!” and he’s pacing the center of the room. “We got to do something!” he is saying before he takes his position by the window again. “We just can’t wait here forever,” he says.

“We can if we try,” I say.

Buck holds his gun up in the air and says, “I got it!” Then he drops to all fours again and crawls his way to the side of the bed. “What if we just make it look like we jumped out the window,” he whispers.

I’m reading a posting from a guy looking for a Portuguese Linguist. Then I ask Buck if he speaks Portuguese.

Buck ignores me. “What if we just throw some shit out the window and then hide in the closet. That way when they come in they’ll think we jumped.”

Then it’s a guy wanting someone to monitor his profile on a dating site. “Won’t they just look out the window and see that it wasn’t us?”

“You can’t make out anything clearly from this height so we’ll just throw shit that looks like us!”

“Like the coffee table?” I ask.

Another knock, this one as if from a sledgehammer, and Buck is up again and frantically searching for things to throw out the window. “No, not the coffee table. Something appropriate...something applicable to our current situation.”

Then it’s a call for submissions from people who met the love of their life in Central Park. “Throw the books,” I say.

Buck stops his search and turns to me to stare without blinking. “The books?”

“Yeah, the books,” I say still bored. “They should look a lot like a body from this height.”

Buck is already moving to the bookshelf while saying, “Good idea!” He puts the gun down on the couch and starts stacking appropriate books. “Aren’t you gonna help?” he says, stopping mid-stack to wipe the sweat from his forehead and stare at me.

“I’m not in the mood,” I say. “I didn’t sleep very well last night.”

Buck shakes his head before he continues the frantic stacking of books again, calling me various “fucking” names as he does: “Fucking Asshole, Fucking Bitch, Fucking Cocksucker, Fucking Douchebag...”

I’m too impressed that he’s able to do it in alphabetical order to return my attention to my computer and I try to guess what “fucking” name is coming next. Then I stop him to say, “Keep the Faulkner just in case we survive,” and he looks up with a snarl and throws a copy of *The Sound and the Fury* at me. I flip through it as he continues to stack two bodies’ worth of books on the coffee table.

Buck finishes and looks at the books and then at me to ask me what I think.

I take a deep breath and consider what he's done. Then I smile at him as if I was smiling at myself. "Out of all the things we've lost," I say while still smiling, "what have we gained?"

Another knock at the door, softer than before, then the words "Nothing can stop us now", then another knock, until a steady, progressively louder rhythm is started.

Buck says, "We had nothing to lose in the first place." Then he throws the first stack out the window, holding the bottom of the pile with both hands and heaving it with all his might at where the window was already cracked. Glass shatters, significant to an otherwise silent night to be heard from those below as a song of sublimation, countless articles of expression each as sharp as a shard of glass falling to the earth with nothing but flesh to cushion their fall, then the thud of the books, hitting the cement with the impact of a skull.

The knocking stops as me and Buck stare at each other. Then laughter. Then applause. Then the second stack with a second shattering and a cheer and Buck has his hands on his hips and is nodding his head. "Well, that happened," he says. Then Buck grabs his gun and some Faulkner and I grab my computer and we hurry into the closet.

We sit across from each other with our legs crossed. There's not enough room to sit otherwise. Buck has his gun in his lap. I have my computer. We both listen as the knocking starts again, now free to sound as loud as it wants. The wood splinters, then shatters, then a loud "Hooray!" as cannibalistic children fill the room. We can hear them at the window. We can hear them saying, "That *was* a good idea!" Then we can hear other things being thrown out the window.

I look at Buck in the darkness across from me. Then I whisper, "Luckily we're wireless." And I turn on my computer.

I consider my credit score. I consider enlarging my penis. I consider affordable car insurance. Then I say to Buck, "I think I'm pregnant."

I can tell Buck is rolling his eyes in the darkness. I can tell Buck is considering either shooting me or shooting himself. "You're not pregnant," he says.

I elicit some inner nausea and say, "I really think I am."

"You can't be pregnant, you schmuck. For one thing, you have to have sex to become pregnant. And another, you have to be a woman."

"Female sharks can impregnate themselves," I offer.

I can hear Buck sigh in the darkness. I can hear Buck fingering the trigger. "That's great, but you're not a shark, and, again, you're not female."

I nod my head. I check the symptoms of male pregnancy on Webmd. "I think I might be a lesbian trapped in a man's body," I say.

"I think you're a fucking asshole trapped in a man's body," Buck says.

"I really need you to be supportive of me right now," I say.

Buck shakes his head in the darkness. Then he points his gun at me and tells me to give him my computer.

“Are you gonna email Obama again?” I say.

Buck ignores me by saying, “I’m ignoring you.” Then I listen to children muse about the faith required for such a fall. Then more things fall. Then more children laughing.

“It’s not funny,” I say.

Buck is checking his email. “No, it’s not,” he says.

Then silence. Then I light a cigarette. Then a single knock from the closet door.

“I wonder who it is,” I say.

Then more laughter. Then another knock a little louder than before.

“God, I hope we don’t make it out of this alive,” Buck says.

And I laugh, and then ask for my computer back so I can check to see if I got any new emails.

THE ZOMBIE WHO WENT TO TOWN IN STYLE

On a gelid, sun-struck morn a carriage ambled nobly whilst its giant, wooden, wheels created a charivari-like clatter that drowned out the chirps of the peacocks that flashed their tail feathers, which had greener greens in them than all the perfectly cut grass blades at a graveyard, and stood perched atop the stony lion statues on either side of the entryway to the dirt road. On the road the vessel passed verdant arbors with limbs that grazed the cloud-cover, topiary vines in the form of fairy tale creatures, statues of people fornicating in silly positions that were covered with cobwebs that looked like wigs for the elderly, cats batting at moths, white flamingos, a lost seafood delivery man, several artists painting landscapes, one rare white elk, and a mailbox shaped like Windsor castle. Then the dirt turned into a wide, tile, marble path shaped like a huge corkscrew. Each tile had a small drawing of a child running, pointing, or holding a sign entreating a traveler to follow the children to the other children who would lead still to more children who would lead the way. The carriage suffered the exhortations of the depicted little ones and jostled along on the hot, rocky, loopy circle wound up like a conscientious rattler sunning itself on a cool rock and trying to forget about the slavering raptors circling overhead. Windows on the carriage lightly vibrated because the liveried footman had stopped the carriage at the end of the childish corkscrew that linked to a straightway to the desired address.

The footman, clad in black, churned his butt squeamishly in his seat because the decor on the straightway was not within what he considered decorum. His eyes and brow wrinkled at the faux pas. He cursed about buggery under his breath then cracked the barbed whip on the longish backs of the white mares that had given up on hesitating after the first tails of the whip coerced the muscles in their backs into fearful locomotion; the carriage went onto the lane of the straightway which was made of linoleum like a bad kitchen.

As the carriage rolled, it passed a row of 20 cauldrons bubbling over with the bright red, O positive blood of people who died in motorcycle accidents. A great wooden paddle stuck out of each cauldron. Before each cauldron stood a pale, geriatric, vampirish looking woman, and between each cauldron walked a small boy with golden, hair, cobalt blue eyes, and who wore a cape, and private school attire. There were ten boys; all of them dressed the same. They walked between two cauldrons at a time and 10 of the cauldrons had sweet tasting blood, and the other 10 had sour, old blood. Each time a boy walked to a cauldron with sweet blood an old woman would spoon it to him from a silver spoon that she kept in her pocket, and the boy would say: "That's Yum!" When a boy reached a cauldron with sour tasting blood an old woman would spoon the sour blood into her own mouth and spit it at the little boy who would shriek, which sounded like someone shouting the letter E in rapid succession. The boys walked so that the boys who had the sweet blood coming ended up

saying "That's Yum" right before the boys who were hit with the sour blood screamed. This made it sound like the boys who swallowed the yummy blood relished it thoroughly. In reply, the 20 women always smiled with their pink, stained, acrylic fangs and said: "We made it just for you." This always made five of the boys feel neglected, and made the other five feel slightly more important. But because they took turns walking between the two cauldrons each boy had a turn to feel both emotions and taste from both cauldrons; this alternation prevented them from feeling miserable.

The footman just felt bad for them all, but felt sure he would feel better once he got far enough along the straightway to look past them. Glass whip bits put a rush in the pale steeds that knew not the purpose of the place they walked in. The driver felt rather that if this place existed and had a purpose then he could no longer have one and so he decided to allow the steeds to steadily proceed and lashed them no further because his life had lost the fun greenery of meaning that once filled his head with *Whim*. The horses suffered less because this place and the footman suffered all. Still the carriage rolled. To add to the grief of the footman, his rumination about the horses did not occupy him long enough to get by the cauldrons, and he glimpsed one last boy wailing at the acrid taste of the blood pooling in the back of his throat and making him feel like the forsaken, bastard child of a blind and horny god who wasted time in the form of new children. Cords in his neck wound, and he tightened his black coat more tightly around his person. He hoped the shivering of his disquiet would end. Before the image of the boy tasting blood could re-emerge in his mind, the linoleum stopped before a row of tree stumps that marked the path's end. The footman reached into the depths of his black coat and pulled out a gold pocket watch; he checked the time. After reassuring himself that time still existed, the footman pulled on the reins to halt the horses. He then placed the watch back into his coat pocket, stepped off the carriage seat, and climbed down the wrought iron ladder on the side of the carriage, and onto the linoleum. He gathered himself, straightened his onyx garb, and walked to the door of the carriage with the ivory handle.

With his right hand he squeezed the ivory handle, and with his left hand he knocked. He knocked again. He knocked a third time. Then he let out a muffled sigh tinged with some melancholy at the advent of this routine which he repeated often. A knock came from the other side of the door, his ears pricked; he twisted the ivory handle and opened the door. A gust of perfumed air seeped out of the carriage that smelled of roses, wilted marigolds, and old oranges. The footman smiled not. He stuck his hand into the opening of the carriage, and then he averted his gaze back towards the boys swallowing blood and making yummy sounds, wishing they were still in sight. When he felt the pressure of a hand he began to back away from the carriage, but when he backed away he found himself holding only a long, white, silky glove. A rolling titter came from inside the carriage that almost demolished his tottering ego. The footman tried not to sigh.

He sighed some.

From within the carriage came a dour, breathy, cutting, womanly voice that tinkled like coins might if each one fell onto a tiled floor in just the right order:

"Simon, my footman, please drape that lovely glove of mine on my hand this instant or it's curtains for you!"

The footman stifled a wince, forced a sad smile and replied: "My most esteemed madam, I had no desire to purchase any curtains on this robust, verdant, spring day, yet I do appreciate your largess as always."

A strained, virulent, timbre came from within the carriage: "Footman! Are you implying that you have always been fond of your employer's grand posterior?"

An insensate expression broke across the footman's face: "I meant only that I appreciate how generous you are, Madam Lucinda."

Lucinda shot back: "So, you do not notice my backside?"

While trying to remain calm, the footman smiled wanly and said: "Lucinda, I think that your beginning rewards as well as your ending."

The footman hoped for silence. He could almost hear the hearty, pink flamingos chirruping.

Lucinda did not relent: "What of my middle?"

"Your middle glues together the lovely craft work of your person, Madam. Will you allow me to help you out of the carriage?" said the footman, offering the glove to the inside of the carriage.

Silences seeped from the blackness within the carriage.

Deftly the footman extended the glove and the darkness snapped the white glove out of his hand. He recoiled in bemusement and ennui.

Before the footman could compose himself the air crackled with her voice that rustled like wads of cash: "You said you were going to offer me a hand. What kind of chicanery do you intend, footman? I would like to get out of this carriage before it would be reasonable for it to serve as a catacomb for my entire lineage!"

The footman closed his eyes, reached into his pocket, donned a blindfold, and stuck out his arm in the most, inviting, gentle fashion he could muster, which ended up making his limb look like a turgid, soup noodle that had frayed at the ends. He felt a pressure on his gammy limb and he flexed the tired muscle in his shoulder to support Madam Lucinda, in all her...largess.

Lucinda stepped nimbly down from the carriage; one of her feet made a clicking sound on the frigid linoleum. Simon removed the blindfold, and twisted the ivory handle again and shut the door to the carriage. Once both feet clicked on the ground she asked the footman to do something for her: "Sir, can you look your Lady over and tell her whether you see anything on her person that looks amiss?"

"Certainly, madam, I shall needle you over with my eyes until I can see that you are hiding no beauty from the world whatsoever." The footman

rejoined. He focused his gaze upon Lucinda and weighed each ounce of her body, raiment, and mien with his practiced eye for haute couture."

He tilted his head back slightly, pulled a lorgnette out of a breast pocket inside his black coat, and let his eyes roost on Lucinda. She had a lot going on. Simon scrutinized all 5 feet 8 inches of Lucinda with his Asiatic and supra-Asiatic retina:

Her black bangs bent slightly before touching her forehead, for she had curled them overnight. The locks of her sable hair hung from her scalp, in resplendent, spiraling tresses that cradled the sun's light like a curved mirror might in a woman's compact make-up kit. In the midst of this blackness, a shock of argent colored hair lurked, but she had braided it into the darker strands that she felt others were more likely to appreciate. The lovely, silvery braid ran out through the middle of her streams of black water and stopped at her shoulders with the rest of the currents. He did not see a snarl. Only the fine, smooth, crowd of black locks played with the light his eyes took to see them. Her skin was a cultivated paleness. She had taken pains to avoid the sun's rays at all costs for she feared anything that might hurt her like all things did a little. A smooth milk-cream color betrayed her entire person. Two unfathomable dimples lent an understated happiness to her every expression. Her face looked like the best parts of modern art's efforts to sculpt Helen of Troy's mug; a strained effort at some sort of beauty that never should be again. Whitest gloves hid her delicate, porcelain hued hands. Arms as soft as pinewood, and long as king snakes dangled from the blue, acetate dress she wore that was supported by a crinoline structure, a bustle, and panniers. Her torso sprouted and flowered out of the bulging circle of petals made by her bustle. The black, beaded bodice she wore had a rose vine design on it and the thorns on each vine overlapped onto others making the pattern look particularly busy. She wore a corset under the bodice that crushed her diaphragm, made breathing hard, thinned her already willowy figure, and pushed her breasts up into the overflowing cups of the brassiere, which could not charm all of the bosom-serpentry rippling within them. The blue dress hid her feet but the tips of the ivory colored, Victorian High tops she put on that morning peeked out from the bottom of the rolling folds in her apparel. Perhaps the extra layer of powder on her face and arms compensated for the lack of shade a straw hat or large brim hat might have offered.

Simon removed the lorgnette slowly from his nose tucked it into the pocket inside his coat and wondered whether he should tell her to lift the ends of her dress up from the linoleum. He let that thought go.

Then he looked Lucinda square in her emerald green eyes and said: "Madam, you are a portrait of fine-breeding, adorned with the most luxurious fabrics that man can fabricate. My eyes envy you, even if I pretend that I do not."

Lucinda smiled revealing a row of shiny, minute, teeth and said: "Of course you do, Simon. That is the only thing you can say."

Then a frown pushed on Lucinda's dimples and she puzzled: "Simon, I fear I am missing some accoutrement. Look on me a second time."

Simon did not reach for the lorgnette. He merely noticed the sunlight that made her face glow like a crescent moon, and that struck him as odd. He decided to mention this: "You know, Madam, you usually have some kind of protection from the sun in addition to the layer of powder you liberally apply to your person. Did I forget that when I prepared the carriage?"

Lucinda exclaimed: "My parasol! Where is it?! The sun chisels away at my soft skin as I speak! Simon, climb into the carriage at once and retrieve it immediately so that I might shed this light off of my fair flesh."

Simon threw open the door to the carriage, dove in, fondled about for a mite, and then sprang from the carriage onto the linoleum with the parasol in hand. He straightened his long black coat and presented Lucinda with her parasol saying: "Here, please forgive me for not remembering your...parasol."

Lucinda smiled a wry smile and said: "Charming pauses in your speech will not compensate for your lack of consideration regarding my appearance, Simon. However, I think this parasol might provide enough cool shade to soothe my mood on this matter." Then she opened the parasol and her smile ossified on her bony face as the accoutrement cast a dim grayness over her.

Simon stood quietly awaiting the next word from Lucinda.

Lucinda looked irritated at Simon for withholding a reply: "Simon, what point do you make in your silence? We've come far enough together, and the path ahead welcomes feet only. Look at these infernal stumps!"

Simon: "Well madam, I would say I've been stumped."

Lucinda: "Simon, if you'd like to piss off then feel free to spread your legs and do so."

Simon hopped onto the carriage and was gone in a whip snap. The carriage rolled off like a sentient marble.

Lucinda looked out past the stumps and saw small stone discs set into the earth. She lifted her leg over the stumps and placed the soft white boot onto one. Each disc led to another. And soon she was far away from the stumps. The heat of the sun drilled through her parasol and into her cheeks, and she day-dreamed a dream to trick her misery:

The bullfighter drew the sword.

She sees the bull snorting sideways in the dirt. The sword rises with her heartbeat.

The sword dives and breaks its neck on a bone. The horns hop up and in. The bull tosses the man like a meaty, silk and damask piñata. What a surprise, and yet not. The body lolls to and fro as the bull gallops about frantically. The blood splatters out on the crowd like candy. Some of the women stop gossiping and crowd around the gore to catch some in their skirts. She stays put. She wants to feel apart and clean.

She stands alone in her seat. Everyone goes back when all the pints of blood are milked.

The woman next to her got lucky. Her face looks red as a sandy sunset. She tosses her neckerchief on the woman's face and all of her etiquette with it.

Her hand had come to rest on her breasts that matted her dress with sudor.

And there was nothing to do then but accept that her hand loved her always.

When the dream ended she stood on the last stone disc before a black fence that looked like a map of a netherworld drawn by a soothsayer who sold his lies for money. She took her hand off her breast, realized the dream had parts real and parts dream, and laid her hand on the brass button on the fence's intercom. A buzz came and she twisted the glass knob, and came through the gate and into a garden. The gate closed itself behind her. As she leaned her parasol against the gate, she saw a man in a wicker, papa-san chair smoking a long, unfiltered cigarette.

He hailed her: "Lucinda, I see you've come costumed as the coquette I wanted forever."

She called back: "And I can see, Oswald, by the robin, boutonniere, tuxedo, spectacle, and top-hat covering your short blonde hair that you impersonate the man of show and fashion I long for in the spark of my dark, fiery heart."

He entreated her to sit in the papa-san chair across from him. She sashayed over to it and sat.

She paid him a compliment: "Oswald, you look good in whatever you wear."

He spent it: "Then you must always wish that I am dressed."

"So, that is quite a peculiar looking gate you have. What does it depict?" She asked.

"Oh, I think it is a map of a graveyard, but I have never been able to find it. I believe I inherited it. I do not think it exists. I have never had a proper respect for the dead. Anyways, it is just something scary I keep for frightening trespassers; I do not want to dig into the matter now."

She grinned. "What are you up to besides keeping weird fences, Oswald?" She asked.

"Well since you're early and the other guests have not arrived I might as well tell you. I am planning a big hunting trip for myself this coming August with lots of traveling. I want to go to Africa to hunt things and take pictures of myself. I am hoping to kill a lioness, and bring her back to mount on my wall above a plaque with my name on it. I like putting my name on things."

"I have thought about getting a tattoo, Oswald. Do not tempt me." She gibed.

"You would never get my name on your body, Lucinda. You do not have the pain tolerance, and if you did, the tattoo artist would tire of your whining

and he would probably leave you with the name Oz instead, just to save herself the trouble of spelling Oswald on your delicate, soft flesh."

Oswald shot back.

"You are right, henna would be more fun. Then I can always wash you off, when you are off mounting lionesses." She said.

"Have you any interest of coming along? We could take lots and lots and lots of photos and have lots of experiences and inflict them on other people with our bad stories." He said.

"Hmm. Maybe I'll go with you. I had planned on seeing a stage show next August, but I suppose it would be more fun to share my life with you than live my life through a stage I can never stand upon. I will think about it Oswald...Say? When do you expect your other guests?" She wondered.

"Oh, anytime. You always come a minute or two too early Lucinda."

She got out of her chair and started walking towards him. He grinned. She smirked at him.

She sat on his lap, took off his top-hat and right before she placed it on her head a white shriek ripped across Lucinda's ears causing her to drop the top-hat. Oswald did not move.

"What could that be?" She asked.

Oswald replied: "Oh it is probably Jose the groundskeeper refreshing the blood for the boys. He gets squeamish sometimes. He is kind of a nut anyways. He reads books, talks to few people and never comes along on any of my trips. He prefers to be on his own. He is a queer one. I never understood the rustic, simple types. He used to be a bullfighter in Catalonia...queer."

Another bloodcurdling scream came, and then they heard the gate rattling back and forth as if a great curse were trying to burst through the gate that kept two humans secret within the garden. They heard the sound of metal bending. Another scream and then the screaming bounced against the fence, and fell silent. Lucinda and Oswald stood frozen.

"I think one of the guests mentioned coming as a Monster. Perhaps he is playing a joke on us."

The gate fell down. On the other side stood one lone, nude zombie with pieces of dinner guest caked on its person. The zombie's visage contorted as if it was swallowing a billiard ball. In its hand it held either a forearm or a shin, but blood was spurting from where the hand or foot should have been. The zombie dropped the shin or forearm, and started to lumber towards them...an imp with tumescent skin on a nefarious killing spree.

"Oswald, do something." Lucinda shouted.

Oswald quaked with fear: "I packed my guns for my hunting trip. I already shipped them to Africa."

The zombie lurched towards them and then stopped. It spat out half of the glass knob on the ground and its face returned to a more recognizable shape, although it was putrid and greenish.

Lucinda turned to run, but her Victorian boots were awkward and the hoop in her dress tripped her and she toppled onto the grass. Oswald looked at her and as he turned to run, two undead hands shot out of the earth and grabbed his ankles.

The zombie spit out the other half of knob and came forward.

It hissed something to Oswald: "Now you know where the graveyard lies..."

Oswald begged and pleaded with all the whimpering a well-meaning child would fake when deprived of a lollipop. The zombie stretched its hand out and palmed his head. Oswald started to blubber. Tears streamed down his face, and then blood, as the zombie dug its nails into his skull. Oswald whined for his life. The zombie snapped its hand together and Oswald's gray, steaming brains gushed out between the webs in its hands.

The zombie tasted Oswald's brain and then made its way to Lucinda who tried to scamper away on all fours before a pale hand emerged from beneath the earth and squeezed her foot till it shattered. Lucinda screamed, vomited, screamed, vomited, dry heaved, and gasped and gasped and then the zombie closed in and had her in its grasp.

She tried to get away, but the zombie had a handful of her silver hair, and yanked her to the ground.

Lucinda wondered: "What are you going to do?!?"

The zombie replied: "You seem to appreciate pick up lines. Well, how about this one: Would you mind going down *in* me?"

"O fuck," she chanted.

The zombie lifted her up and tilted her head sideways so its eyes could watch the green veins pulse in her neck like snakes trapped under some kind of translucent peach fruit. Yellowish teeth nestled into her jugular and blood spouted from Lucinda in a vibrant, black, wet peacock feather as a death rattle left her throat and the zombie moaned and chewed her neck. A red mist floated through the air as Lucinda's limbs flapped wildly against the zombie's chest. Once the flailing stopped it scalped her with its nails and ripped her brain free as messy, scarlet gobbets fluttered out onto the grass. The zombie bit into her brain feverishly like a child might eat watermelon on a summer day. Its eyes widened. It liked her brain. She had a yummy brain. It sat down and munched away. With all her brain swallowed, the zombie wandered over to Oswald's corpse, and scooped up a handful of the pulp that passed for his conscience and sampled it.

"Hmm...Needs more brain." It said, and cast the remnants of the pulp into a bush in the garden, and made its way past the downed gate and towards the linoleum, the boys, the old women, and the cauldrons of blood.

When the zombie arrived at the point in the linoleum path where the blood sipping kids walked back and forth, they ignored it. The zombie stumbled towards them hastily and when it got its bony claws on the first old woman it

went on a murderous frolic more depressing to witness than being forced to feed all of one's loved ones to a group of naughty, toothless crocodiles:

All cauldrons tipped save one. Brains and blond boy hair flew through the air. Old women bones cracked one after the other against the linoleum. A zany, wild, gut fracas broke out with entrails squishing under the zombie's heels. Screams enveloped the whole affair as torsos danced in the morning sky with spumes of blood jetting off of them in every direction. Brain after brain splashed into the crimson vat. Little hands pushed old, frail bodies to the zombie. Leathery hands clawed dead flesh desperately. White eyes beseeched yellow eyes for hope beyond death with none in sight. Arteries coughed plasma everywhere. Faces regained their humanity from blood-tasting only to whimper and be eaten. No one desired anything but blackness, and to embrace the cold end. A desperate group effort began with the last ten of them piling on. The zombie crushed those closest to it and bit its way out of the pile...a satanic caterpillar. All the old women lay dead. One boy remained. A spoon plunged into his soft skull; he fell and his teeth chipped on the floor. The last brain dropped into the one standing black pot with a wet, sloppy flourish of gore.

It picked up the spoon that felled the boy. They had all died for the zombie's noble cause: Hot soup.

The zombie savored every nibble of brain it got. It took its time as if it waited for a carriage. It supped. Hours passed till midnight fell and twilight painted the skies an ultramarine hue.

Then the zombie noticed a carriage led by a grouchy, old footman with a black outfit. The carriage stopped before the zombie. It noticed the footman had not looked at it.

Simon said: "Lucinda, I've left the carriage door unlocked. It is late. Please get in now without any tomfoolery."

The zombie tried to mimic a feminine voice; it came out rough and grating: "OK, take me home."

"Then get in!" Simon said.

The zombie climbed in and closed the door.

## #14 Gray Area



*Jess, quiet*

by Megan Pinch

DO YOU REMEMBER

do you remember, slogging through the tree-rimmed savannah, cyan mountain backdrop, our fingers fastened, voices fracturing into laughter, banding me to you, breath burning, your tongue twining in mine, a two-handed placid push, my backward acquiescence, back fusing into ground, an emerald cushion, and you, hands haste, falcons, shedding clothes, your body taut, traps titanium, fingers fastening my legs apart, swiftly stroking my neck breasts nipples, your mouth enclosing one nipple while one hand, clit-friction, grating, and me, a palpitating moan, you, vacillate, eyes blue black pools, and pulsating pushing amid my legs limbs, convulsing into me, and back forth back forth, plunging into muscle, flesh, back forth back forth, writhing, back forth back forth, wincing as you discharged, liquid release, efflorescent eyes, and you subsided onto me, i fondled your face, fingertips sponging sweat, i wound your wedding ring, world rotations, and do you remember, you, to me, it just keeps getting better, me, a sloth smile, i know, you, i'll have to keep you around awhile, and do you remember, we fell into that dew-veiled grass, into that easy heat, your body elastic over mine, muscles merging, heartbeats bonding, indistinguishable from one another, and your cheek on my shoulder, breathing decelerating, dozing into drowsiness, murmured adoration, five fingers knit with your hair, and i kissed it, my other hand crawled across your back, my fingernails scavenged your skin, sphere patterns in epidermis, and do you remember, you, before the class, lord byron, affairs with ladies lamb and oxford, ardor, half sister augusta, adoration, and "she walks in beauty," your blue black ogle, lion-fierce, byronic hero, your eyes caress mine, and do you remember, me, penetrating your office, gliding in, tenderly toeing the door shut, your head handheld, grey jeweled coffee curls, your head hoisted, tender, you elevated, advanced, deliberate, no words, fingertips fondled face, searched ears eyes nose neck, and you stepped in to me, i withdrew a step, our eyes combined, and you stepped in to me, i withdrew, again, again, my back blended with brunette wood, you anchored against me, shuddering steel, lips amalgamate, paint, and you retreated, rotated, stopped, you, back to me, never leave, never leave me, and i slithered to you, my arms, ropes, sheathed your back, torso, we curved forward, cohesive, i kissed your tweed-suit-back, i won't leave, and another kiss, and i left, skimming out your office, and do you remember, you, to class, shakespeare's romeo and juliet, romeo homosexual love tryst with tybalt mercutio benvolio, rebel juliet, romeo conceals love for tybalt love through juliet, and do you remember, a niche hotel room, a weeklong life, the brick walls, rock floors, orange yellow red green tables chairs curtains, breathing blushes, the ice cream rug, the arch separating the bed from the living, and our legs linked, wine steeped, fingers snakes, hair coiling, heaving, fervent, exhalation fire, torched tongue touching ear, lacing, longing, tongues twisting, nipples dancing, you, i love you, me, i love you too, a candor week of lunch

breaks, stolen hours, pilfered minutes, pondered seconds, detonated bodies, and bliss, and do you remember, you, this has been the best week of my life, as we stood, insects apart, your hand cupped my cheek, your other twirled a hair strand, and perfection, you said, paradise, love, and you so young, and i, a grin, you're right, step up your game old man, and we laughed, heads receded, and we wound, a braid, and soft-kissed, nibbled, and do you remember, it commenced with pecks, baby kisses, and then we yielded, and lips meeting became tongues lashing became tornado bodies sliding fluid floods, and do you remember, percy bysshe shelley, "a dream of the unknown," nineteen, absconded with sixteen-year-old harriet westbrook, three years, a pregnant wife, child, abandoned, fled with mary wollstonecraft, stepsister jane, europe france switzerland, harriet, suicide-drowned, shelley and mary married, shelley, daughter from another mother, and "i fear thy kisses, gentle maiden," and "love's philosophy," and do you remember, on your docked sailboat, sapphire slate waves reeling, world widening, oblivion, our sweat-slicked carcasses, stationary, except inhale exhale, you, still inside me, inhale exhale, engorged, i contract my muscles, constrict, you gasp, scalpel inhale, and easy slow smiles, and do you remember, you, to the class, virginia woolf, vita sackville-west, your mouth a quarter moon, a moon splinter, lesbians, your cobalt gaze, alacrity, "an unwritten novel," woolf suicide-drowned, and do you remember, class dismissed, and me, professor, my paper needs some after-class assistance, i want to try a few new techniques, not sure how effective they'll be, and you, strawberry lips, lethargic cambers, ok, let's arrange an hour for you to come in, and do you remember, your wife waltzed in, pretty, petite, blonde heels and a gold dress caressing calves, polished nails eyes lips, me, a tempest, you, to her, voice syrup, hi honey, tranquility, meet one of my students, voice marble, she was just asking for help with a paper, and me, heart hands lips lungs legs eyes electrocuted energy, stared in her smiling eyes, as she extended a hand of welcome and a mouth of smiling teeth, to me a mouth of mockery, and do you remember, because i didn't know what to do, i didn't know what to say, i just stood, immobile, a mountain of shit fuck bitch ass shit fuck, what do i do, her hand extended, reaching, waiting, and me, shit fuck, i presented my hand, my hand, pulsating my heart through my fingers, face-frightened, strove for immobility, my heart was in my hand, beating, hammering, my attempt at expressionless emotion, a handshake, and do you remember, then i was gone, out the door down the hall around the corner out of the building, out of the inferno, anguish away, outside in the air in the grass knees on green, face in grass, i breathed again, throbbed breath, inhaled bittersweet lawn, a raw relationship, grass slices swathed my head, shrouded sensitivity, and i inhaled a new existence, one without pretty petite polished golden wife, liberated from deliberation, and i rose, emerged from the ground, and do you remember, i detached disengaged, a floating identity, and retorted home, to my house, the sugar house i shared, the tree-lined street, white wood front porch with porch swing, i retreated to the dusty windowsills and un-

swept floors, the defiled dishes and the calico cat named moo, and i pounced on that calico cat, his mewed disapproval, and i clasped him to me, face immersed in his fur, white with brown and black striped tail, black eye, brown blemishes, tainted contaminated cat, impure, and my cell phone vibrated, moo fled my embrace, i extracted the pulsating phone from my pocket, possessed the vibrations in my hand, one two three four times, and i stared at your name, gazed at the throbbing apparatus, five six seven, missed call, i sighed, a baby groan, and pressed send, my finger caressed button, and do you remember, your orifice, passion aroma, you bit, brushed, sucked, stroked, on that resort carpet floor, a rock water-run wall, dripping harmony, and do you remember, you flicked me, a mosquito, and flipped me, me hands and knees, and you seized my hips and plunged your penis into me from behind, doggy-style, a solid staff, retracted a hair, and rammed into me, hands vises, clutching me immobile, i barked, and do you remember, you persevered, plunging shoving pushing pitching your hard blade in me, shredding flesh, shedding sweat, swollen penis pounding me, pelting, my body tissue, and do you remember, i contorted distorted, thrashed, whimpered, and you grunted groaned grumbled to liberation, and do you remember, you shoved me forward, summarily eradicated your penis from me, and, wordless, stood, and strode to the bathroom, and i, i leaned to the side, fell in the floor, and lay, curled, eyes gravel, listening to the water easy flow and prattle, and do you remember, you, to the class, edgar allan poe, married cousin virginia, she thirteen, he twenty-seven, elizabeth ellet and frances sergeant osgood scandal, and “the valley of unrest,” and “the haunted palace,” and i watched you, pacing, gesticulations, your blue black eyes jumping, fidgety, a child’s eyes, and do you remember, a winery wine tasting, sipping chardonnay on a grassland, tongues treading with butter wood fruits, surrounded by flowers, flashes of flush, my head on your abdomen, alcohol persuaded slumber, and do you remember, later, inside the inn, i awoke to your penis tracing my lips, lip-gloss-like, you straddled me, your knees above my head, your arms beside my legs, your face twisted away, distant, but your penis edging my mouth, and i untied my jaws, and your penis pushed in my warm sleepy moist mouth, you pounded in, and my tongue wound round and round, and you palpitated, plunging faster, in out in out, me inhaling miniature breaths through my nose, your penis pelted in, punched the back of my throat, i choke-coughed, you moaned, your ballooned shaft shuddered, swifter strokes, and do you remember, tears slit my cheeks, dashed down the sides and buried in my pillow-hair, and do you remember, your penis prodded my throat, my tongue static, just tears, and your sticky sultry cum detonated, a mouthful of warmth, cum liquid trickled from my mouth bending down my chin, crawling to my head’s base, and do you remember, you reeled away, and i blasted from the bed, dripping cum tears, and heaved my head to the toilet, extricating wine swirled cum, tears and throbbing emotions, and do you remember, professor

## #14 Contributor Bios

**A. Jay Adler**, a New Yorker always, is Professor of English at Los Angeles Southwest College. His poetry, for which he was awarded a 2002 residency grant from the Vermont Studio Center, has appeared in *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Adagio Verse Quarterly*, *PoetryBay*, and *Eclipse*. His journalism has appeared in *DoubleTake* and *Tikkun*, and his essays on film in *Bright Lights Film Journal*. *What We Were Thinking Of* won second prize at the Maui Writers Conference Screenplay Competition. Just out this fall is “Aboriginal Sin,” in *Global Viewpoints: Indigenous Peoples*, from Greenhaven Press. For the past year, Adler has been traveling the country with photographer Julia Dean working on a book documenting current Native American life. He blogs at *the sad red earth*.

**Shoshana Akabas** attends Stuyvesant High School in New York City where she is Editor in Chief of the school’s literary magazine, *Caliper*. Most recently she was selected as runner up for the Patricia Grodd Poetry Prize and read her work at the opening of the Poets House Headquarters in New York City alongside Poet Laureate Billy Collins. She currently interns for Writers House literary agency.

At the moment, **Kara Carlson** is as homeless and unemployed as the used grocery bag in her trashcan. Before she was laid off from her very lucrative position of Everyone’s Bitch, with the very misleading title of Executive Assistant, she graduated from the University of San Francisco in May 2008 with a degree in English, Creative Writing emphasis. Since being laid off earlier this year, she has traveled to various locations around the country as well as to South America, and in her free time, has been writing. *inTravel Magazine*, an online mag, recently published a non-fiction humorous account of a South American bus excursion, and she received notice that *WHL Review* is publishing her non-fiction story entitled *are you listening* in their next issue. She will be traveling through India and Nepal for the next three months after which time she will have to determine what to do with herself.

**Maggie May Ethridge** is a Californian novelist and poet finishing her second novel, *Agitate My Heart*. She has been published in *The Potomac Journal*, *Magma Magazine*, and *Opium Magazine* (Infinity Edition) and has completed her first book of poetry, entitled *The Pirate Queen*. She is married with three children and shares a house with two large dogs and six cats. She is very tired. You can read all about it at her blog *Flux Capacitor*.

**Andrew Grossman's** poetry, stories and cartoons have appeared in thousands of newspapers and magazines around the world, including *The New Yorker*, *Stern*, *The Washington Post* and *Mainichi Daily News*.

**KJ Hays** lives in Orange County with his churlish dog, Mr. Bear. Some of his publication credits include: *Sex and Murder*, *Bareback Magazine*, *The Flea*, *Breadcrumb Scabs*, and *RIVETS*. He keeps a blog here: <http://illegalfunk.blogspot.com>. It wants followers and commentary.

**Dennis Humphrey** has a Ph.D. in English with Creative Writing emphasis from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and he is currently Chair of the English and Fine Arts Division at Arkansas State University—Beebe, where he teaches creative writing, composition, and literature. He has published short fiction in *storySouth*, *Southern Hum*, *Prick of the Spindle*, and *Clapboard House*, poetry in *The Oklahoma Review* and *Mid South Review*, and literary criticism in *Philological Review*. He is currently haranguing his wife to re-read his novel *Strange Images*, *Strange Prisoners*, as he seeks a publisher for it. He has also begun work on a second novel (*Minutemen*) and a short story collection (*Pure Products of America*). He lives in Beebe, Arkansas, with his wife Margo, their five kids, and one very scruffy Labradoodle.

**Liz Minette** lives in Esko, Minnesota. She has had poems published in *Third Wednesday*, *Main Channel Voices*, and *Dust & Fire Review*. She sustains her writing and life by working at a community access television station in Duluth, MN. Her poem "Four Crows" was inspired by the crows (no, really?!) that hang out in the county courthouse garden.

**Megan Pinch** is an artist and educator currently living in Florence, Alabama. She has taught at The University of North Alabama, Texas Tech University, and College of the Holy Cross (her undergraduate alma mater). She attended graduate school at Rochester Institute of Technology and SUNY Brockport's Visual Studies Workshop, where she received her Master of Fine Arts degree. Over the past ten years, Megan's images have been featured in more than 50 publications and juried gallery exhibitions. She has received national recognition for her art, winning several awards and grants, including a fellowship in photography at Women's Studio Workshop. More of her images can be seen at [www.meganpinch.com](http://www.meganpinch.com).

**Katherine Riegel's** work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Autumn Sky Poetry*, *Crazyhorse*, *failbetter.com*, and the *Gettysburg Review*. She is the poetry editor of *Sweet: A Literary Confection*. She lives near Tampa with her husband, Ira Sukrungruang, and three dogs, and teaches creative writing at the University of South Florida.

**Alison Rogers** is an adjunct professor at Hunter College, where she teaches English and Creative Writing. She received her MFA in Poetry at Hunter in 2007 and her BA from NYU in 2004. Originally from Pleasant Ridge, Michigan, she now lives on the Upper West Side in Manhattan.

**Allan Richard Shapiro** is a nebbish of a writer living in San Francisco. His work can be found or will soon be found in various lit mags including: *GUD*, *The Ne'er-Do-Well*, *The Ampersand Review*, *Cantaraville* and *The Monongahela Review*. His first book of short stories will be published in December, which will be available from <http://shop.notesandgracenotes.com>.

**Willie Smith** is a frequent contributor to *Exquisite Corpse*, has something in the current issue of *The Evergreen Review*, and once upon a time taught fiction writing for a week at Naropa Institute. Can be seen embarrassing himself at [www.youtube.com/wsmith49](http://www.youtube.com/wsmith49) . Is moving to El Paso and otherwise doing fine.

**Phoebe Wilcox** lives in eastern Pennsylvania. She loves John Irving and fuzzy caterpillars. Her novel, *Angels Carry the Sun*, is pending publication with Lilly Press, and an excerpt from a second novel, *Flower Symbolism for Dummies*, has been published in *Wild Violet*. Recent and forthcoming work may be found in *Sixers Review*, *Illumen*, *A cappella Zoo*, *Glossolalia*, *The Chaffey Review*, *Calliope Nerve*, and others. Her story, "Carp with Water in Their Ears," published in *River Poets Journal* was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. A prose portion of "Club Hellaciously Fabulous, Poem 1" (titled "Frostbitten") will be published in issue #10 of *Ginosko*.