



he came to
~~here~~ for the
music

joe baldwin
untitled ice



...now you're getting cold feet

AVAILABLE AT THESE FINE ESTABLISHMENTS:



The Word 469 MILTON STREET
MONTREAL H2X 1W3
TEL.: 514-845-5640

MONTREAL:

Argo Bookshop .. 1915 Rue Ste. Catherine O. .. (514) 931-3442
Zeke's Gallery .. 3955 Boul. St. Laurent .. zekesgallery.blogspot.com
Vortex Bookshop .. 1855 Rue Ste. Catherine O. .. (514) 935-7869
Footnotes .. 1454 Rue Mackay .. (514) 938-0859
Mediaphile .. 1901 Rue Ste. Catherine O. .. (514) 939-3676
Le Point Vert .. 4040 Boul. St. Laurent .. (514) 982-9195
Local 23 .. 23 Bernard O. .. (514) 270-9333
l'arterie .. 176 Bernard O. .. ellecorazon.org/ellecorazon/home.html
Monastiraki .. 5478 Boul. St. Laurent .. (514) 278-4879
Café X .. 1395 René Lévesque O. .. ?
Concordia Co-op Bookstore .. 1455 de Maisonneuve O. .. (514) 848-7395
Casa del Popolo .. 4873 Boul. St. Laurent .. www.casadelpopolo.com
Café Esperanza .. 5490 Boul. St. Laurent .. free phone
Bibliograph/e .. 5333 rue Casgrain #1202 .. www.bibliograph.ca

TORONTO:

Pages Books .. 256 Queen Street West .. www.pagesbooks.ca
Uprising Book Store .. 168 Baldwin Street .. www.uprising.ca
Freedom Clothing .. 939 Bloor Street .. (416) 838-9054

VANCOUVER:

Spartacus Books .. re-opening soon .. www.spartacusbooks.org
T' People's Co-Op Bookstore .. 1931 Commercial Dr. .. peoplescoopbookstore.com
Luzg Beans & Zines .. 2521 Main St .. ?
Luckys .. 3972 Main St .. www.luckys.ca
Magpie Magazine Gallery Inc. .. 1319 Commercial Drive .. (604) 688-6138

HALIFAX:

Eye Level Gallery .. 2128 Gottingen Street .. www.eyelevegallery.ca
The Grainery .. 2385 Agricola St. .. www.chebucto.ns.ca/Health/Grainery

NEW YORK:

St. Mark's Bookshop .. 31 Third Avenue - www.stmarksbookshop.com
Labyrinth Books .. 536 W 112th Street - www.labyrinthbooks.com
Bluestockings .. 172 Allen Street (newly renovated!)
www.bluestockings.com
Lake Shore Record .. 370 Park Avenue .. www.alternativemusic.com
Clovis Press .. 229 Bedford Ave., Wl'msburg .. www.clovispress.com
Spoonbill & Sugartown .. 218 Bedford Ave., Wl'msburg .. spoonbillbooks.com

CHICAGO:

Quimby's Bookstore .. 1854 W. North Ave. .. www.quimbys.com

DENVER:

Iron Feather Book & Zine Shop .. 4931 W 38th Street. .. ironfeather.com/shop

Lawrence, KANSAS:

Olive Gallery and Art Supply .. 15 East 8th Street .. www.oliveart.org

BALTIMORE:

Atomic Books .. 1100 W. 36th Street .. www.atomicbooks.com

BOSTON:

Rythm & Muse .. 470 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain .. (617) 524-6622
Trident Booksellers and Cafe .. 338 Newbury St. .. www.tridentbookscafe.com
Brookline Booksmith .. 279 Harvard Street .. www.brooklinebooksmith.com
Lucy Parsons Center .. 549 Columbus Ave., Boston .. tao.ca/~lucyparsons
Zeitgeist Gallery .. 1353 Cambridge Street, Cambridge .. zeitgeist-gallery.org
Million Year Picnic .. 99 Mount Auburn St. .. (617) 492-6763
Porter Square Books .. 25 White St., Cambridge .. portersquarebooks.com
Re:Generation Records .. 155 Harvard Ave., Alston .. geocities.com/regen_boston

ORLANDO, FL:

Urban Think Bookstore .. 625 E. Central Blvd. - www.urbanthinkorlando.com

MADISON, WI:

Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative .. 426 Gilman St. .. rainbowbookstore.org

BERKELEY:

Black Oak Books .. 1492 Shattuck Ave .. www.blackoakbooks.com
Pegasus & Pendragon Books .. 2349 Shattuck Ave .. pegasusbookstore.com

SAN FRANCISCO:

Needles and Pens .. 483 14th Street .. www.needles-pens.com
Modern Times Bookstore .. 888 Valencia St. .. www.mtbs.com
City Lights .. 261 Columbus Ave. .. www.citylights.com

GLASGOW, UK:

monorail music .. 12 King's Court, Kings Street .. www.monorailmusic.com

SEATTLE:

Left Bank Books .. 92 Pike Street .. www.leftbankbooks.com/
Elliott Bay Books .. 101 S. Main Street .. www.elliottbaybook.com
Wit's End BookStore & TeaShop .. 4262 Fremont Ave. N. .. booksatoz.com/witsend

current list at stationaery.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Grabowski was born in Manhattan, 1978. He lives in Brooklyn and can be found sitting alone on a stoop, drinking coffee and fervently writing and drawing in a small notebook. For the past two years, his paintings and drawings have been shown in San Francisco and New York: jay_grabowski@hotmail.com

Joseph Baldwin, artist, currently resides in Chicago and is the author of the upcoming release Paper Mirro. Baldwin is currently continuing his studies in film at the University of Illinois at Chicago and also has a personal online gallery space (!) www.noisivelvet.com

Girija Tropp is all over: childhood spent in Africa, India and Asia; short fiction published in Agni, The Boston Review, Best Australian Stories 2005; forthcoming in Fiction International, Sleepers Almanac 2006 and Cranky amongst others; microfiction at Smokealong Quarterly, elimae, Margin and Café Ireal. straightonjuice.com

Joshua Cohen was born in Southern New Jersey in 1980. He is the author of The Quorum (Twisted Spoon Press, 2005) and Cadenza for the Schneidermann Violin Concerto (Fugue State Press, 2006). His essays appear regularly in the Forward. joshuacohen1@gmail.com

Ashley Alexandra Zurawel (AAZ) likes to collect art - when she is not making her own - mostly from what other people put out as trash. The devil=6, god=7: The Scientific Attitude is dedicated to her grandfather, who always has worn, and always will wear, a fedora, even to lunch. azufaw@po-box.mcgill.ca

evenSteven is a Vancouver-based writer, storyteller and retired teacher who sometimes pays the bills by exercising the racehorses at Hastings Park because he prefers those animals to the ones in the highschools. Check out the website if you need a visual reference: www.twistedtales.ca

Angie Thielmann is currently into a phase of all-black. You can see her photos in the Senzala on Bernard during the month of March this year. signthepapers@yahoo.com

Alexandra Tzannidakis is a 19 year old undergraduate student at McGill, in her second year of a BA in English and Linguistics. She hails originally from Burlington, Ontario. atzann@po-box.mcgill.ca

Heather McRobie is a Montreal/ McGill hopeful and a UK resident. She's a big fan of stationaery. heather.mcrobie@keble.ox.ac.uk

Arlene Ang lives in Venice, Italy where she edits the Italian pages of Niederngasse. Her poetry has recently been published in Tattoo Highway, flashquake, The Dublin Quarterly, Ghoti Magazine and Softblow Poetry Journal. Three of her poems have been nominated for the 2006 Pushcart Prize anthology. www.niederngasse.com

Mary Jane (MJ) Caro organizes narrative events at a secret location in Old Montreal, photo-meanders, and tries not to add the letter 'e' to the word artist. She can often be found at the Blue Monday cafe in Verdun, being trounced at Scrabble & their chipotle brownies. She enjoys random email: mj@maryjanecaro.com

James Culleton draws, often without ever looking at his paper. His other interests include land art, furniture design, photography, painting, and baby making, with his first baby scheduled for a March arrival. culleton@sympatico.ca

Addy Litfin recently graduated from McGill University and is desperately seeking the perfect job, boyfriend, and apartment. She has been published in Grey Borders, Nerve, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Impudent." killahmccgillah@gmail.com

Wayne Scheer's stories can be found in such diverse publications as The Christian Science Monitor, Pedestal Magazine, Sex and Laughter, a print anthology of mostly humorous erotica, Flash Me Magazine and The Cynic Magazine. His writing awards include a Pushcart Prize nomination. wvscheer@aol.com

Lee Tipton is a History and Literature Student at McGill. He has written for Steps Magazine and a few local zines, as well as photographed for the latter. He struggles every day to stop pigeonholing everyone named Corey. leetiption@gmail.com

Salvatore DiFalco lives and writes in Niagara Falls. He has had recent stories published in Niagara Life and Black Bile Press will be publishing a chapbook of his work in June, 2006. sdifalco@jhs-niagara.ca

Daniel Cambil - the man, the myth, the appendix. He enjoys pictures and is a member of VSL. (visuel.org). Eclectic and the owner of fine ink and paper. He is renowned for his light rhetoric delight. : daniel@visuel.org

David Lee Black, musician and photographer captures the New England landscape in his black and white and color images. He was born and raised in Mexico, Missouri. www.zhibit.org/davidleeblack

Mary Mary: photographer, also a musician. She played guitar with her band in Orlando. And, she was in Bruce Springsteen's "Secret Garden" video (the asian girl in the red room). www.imdb.com/MaryJaneParker

Roxana Cazan was born in the communist Romania, 25 years ago, in a family that experienced transformation with every generation. She is currently finishing her MA at the University of Louisville, where she also teaches English Composition and Creative Writing. roxanacazan1313@yahoo.com

Daniel Spitzberg and **Ilya Zaychik** are all of the following: nuts, bolts, (i.e., the editors), the muscles, l'couiers, writers, artists, apologists... Daniel dreams about the Warp of Wood of Old America, Beauty, Truth, and a mahogany Library... Ilya once printed out a piece of paper that said: "every hour doing something else could be time spent writing."

Read up on our side project, The Underbrush Creative Writing Hexagon! <http://theunderbrush.blogspot.com>

next deadline: March 11, 2006

stationaery

stationaery@gmail.com
[HTTP://www.stationaery.com](http://www.stationaery.com)



girija tropp
Ceiling



Isaiah Carmusin

a rhetorical device

And so I found that I fell in love with her. It was completely unexpected, but so it happened. In the span of like ten minutes, no less—unreal! I picked up the random zine at the newly opened library in Harvard Square and biked over to the pedestrian bridge overlooking the Charles River and greedily devoured it as the sun set, finding myself unable to control this sudden outpouring of emotion for this...this *character*.

That's all she was. Sure, I had taken the zine out of the 'personal' section in the library, but she was no realer to me than Daisy Buchanan (who was *based* on, apparently, Zelda Fitzgerald). But who knew Zelda? Avid fact-finders, perhaps. And how many disillusioned young men of the 'Lost Generation' fell in love with Daisy? Yeah, exactly my point. On a conscious level, I knew she existed. How could she lie? How?! But then I thought, Daisy vs. Zelda. I considered movies based on books based on—presumably—people. Then how many people fall hopelessly, desperately in love with movie stars and characters, even if the actors or actresses are complete jerks. Movie stars are the stars not only of movies, but of coming-of-age experiences. They are *fantasies*. People *die* playing *video* games, for heaven's sake! And the people? Well, they're for the tabloids.

But suddenly I was sympathizing with people who dated on the Internet. It's like ruining your eyes in front of a computer screen, presenting a character, or a caricature of yourself to someone who is doing the same. Why not include a fake picture of you but ten times more attractive, or, better yet, not you at all? The problem is when people get fooled, when they forget that Zelda is *not* Daisy. Maybe they didn't want to remember in the first place. I guess that's when they get lured out to empty parking lots and raped and killed. But I'm no fool, anyway. I know what's up.

OK, so I fell for Marilyn, or, I fell for print-Marilyn. The real Marilyn, to me, was as far away as Audrey Hepburn. Well, maybe not quite. See, I knew the real Marilyn had to exist and had to bear a strong resemblance to her representation in *her own* production. I mean, she wrote it, and it wasn't a work of fiction. In fact, she existed *right here* in Cambridge, not two minutes on my bicycle from where I was sitting, reading about *her*. Incredible! Unbelievable! Especially because she seemed so

large in her own description of herself, though she didn't try to draw attention to that at all (which is what made her larger, in my mind. A portrait well-painted, down to the last detail becomes all the more vivid in the imagination. Because, well, it's not *real* like a living person, but since it's on the canvas, it had to've come from *somewhere*. I mean, you're looking at *something*, right? If it's not a real person, it must be a real fake person. Daisy's real, if you believe [in] The Great Gatsby, and a lot of people do. I do. It's like imaginary numbers, you know?). The problem was that here I had print-Marilyn, and somewhere I knew real-life Marilyn was walking around, and, complicating things was that they were theoretically ONE AND THE SAME! WOW! If I want one, I should want the other! But I didn't even know the other, while here I had every personality trait clearly presented, explained, and shown in action through a series of 'events' in which Marilyn starred and later wrote about. Oh, agony! I heard once that Mario Vargas Llosa was in love with Madame Boevary. Like, actually *in love* with her, as if she were a real person! How crazy is that?!

What was even crazier was that, here I was sitting on the bridge smoking a cigarette as the summer sun all big and red and orange, was setting, and reading about a VERY SIMILAR SUNSET in a location NOT FAR FROM MY CURRENT ONE. It was blowing my mind! She was describing my—our—city. I've felt that New England fall, and how it brings either carefree hope or hopeless nostalgia of summer love. And the lonely winters where cold stares do their best to outdo the weather. We could be experiencing that TOGETHER. Immediately I thought of going to her (her address was right on the last page). I was fascinated with her person-a. She was interested in books and fucking. ME TOO! I fit her bill, I thought. There are many girls whose bill I don't fit, but hers—I thought I was *the guy* here. I had all the qualities that applied (and even though the entire zine was about how she was coming out of a relationship with a guy who she had loved more than anyone else in her life, I had the implicit, audacious confidence to assume that I would sweep through her life like some mild-mannered tornado and we would live happily ever after writing zines about each other).

Then I remembered the online dating, and the raping and the killing and the parking lots. I was matching a written version of me to a written version of her, and, believe you me, you just can't mate two paper cut-out people. In writing, ideas can be condensed, and finest faces can be put presented. A first impression can be edited quite a lot. Characters are magical, people aren't. Daisy was a 1920s heartthrob; Zelda was a drunk and a cheat. Books are written for a reason—to keep the magic. You don't defile holiness, you marvel from afar. This was like going to a museum: you didn't want to muck up the art by trying to touch it. You admired and you sighed and you moved on. And here I was, crossing worlds. This could upset the balance of everything!

I knew this, I knew all this well, but the special case was this zine. It wasn't a fiction. It wasn't so far removed from the real thing. It was autobiographical. Hitler didn't exactly surprise people with his generosity towards the Jews after Mein Kampf. HE BORE A STRONG RESEMBLANCE TO HIS CHARACTER. Who would have guessed, right? So must Marilyn. And so must I. Sure there will be

moments where I am annoyed by her big mouth, her political views, her destructive lifestyle and times where she will be irritated by my awkwardness, my lack of interests, my inability to communicate, but eventually our zine-selves will shine through. It *has* to happen. Those people came from somewhere, from us, and since we both write zines, we are both trying really hard to have that representation of us on paper to be as accurate as possible. We are trying to figure things out, move forward by way of these characters, and they are dead-on—at least at a certain point. Plus we don't change that much, so those people are in there somewhere: my best and hers. It just *has* to happen.

Convinced by own awesome reasoning, I sped off to her street. I had no idea what I would say. I was not feeling very tornadoey. I was feeling more like a loser who is incapable of separating fantasy from reality. So she tells me to beat it, what's the worst that could happen? Maybe I'd buy some role-playing video games and start dating online—could be fun.

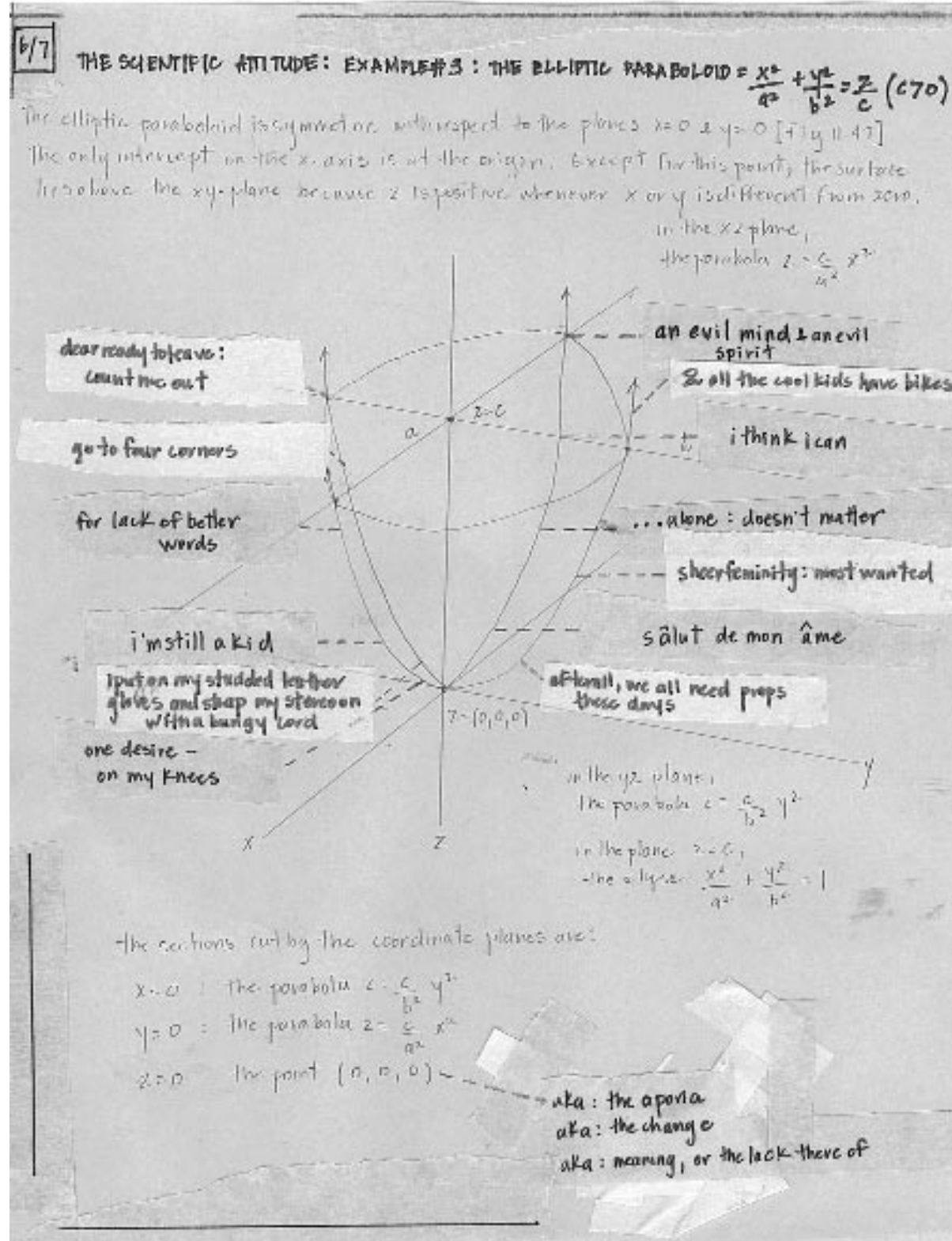
By the time I reached her door I understood the worst that could happen, but I was too late, so obsessed I was with getting my dirty paws all over the art. So what was the lesson I learned? A written man falling for a woman made of words and winning her beating heart in the flesh is *definitely* the stuff of novels.

I rang the doorbell. No answer. Again, no answer. I wouldn't be stopped. I gently opened the door, walked into the hall (this was really absurd now, I thought to myself). I smelled smoke, and I took it for cigarette smoke (Marilyn smokes a lot), but something smelled odd. It smelled like paper burning. I followed the scent to the kitchen where I saw Marilyn—she really *was* everything I had imagined her to be from her zine—at the kitchen table, a cigarette in the ashtray, a book open on the kitchen table, and her arm...her arm was on fire! She was paper, burning! Instinctively I reached for her to put out the fire but then noticed my own hand, a flimsy, two-dimensional strip reaching for the flame.

Joshua Cohen

intro to dreams, or, on getting the sheets to stay on the bed...

... it's impossible, mad, the sheets are always coming off the bed, rather the bed is always coming off up from under the sheets, off: up: under: anyway, one never stays on or off the other, the two rarely, if never, commingle in perfection: you, me, you're always kneeling on one edge, stretching the sheet, fitted, over another edge opposite or diagonal it can't, won't, reach because you're kneeling on that very edge that would give it enough slack, enough sheet, fitted, to fit, perfectly, the sheet, flat, mussed too, in a pile at your feet or else off the bed entirely, massed forgotten on the floor, you're always readjusting and adjusting, pulling one side to push the other, push-pulling, making taut to obtain slack, slackening to taut an other edge, the bunch, the corner, half on, off half, it's a mess, a burden, unnecessary, especially when you know, you're sure, that in your sleep you'll — unconsciously, subconsciously — toss-turn the sheets awry again, away and off, yet again and again as always, dreaming all the while that the bed it's less a bed than it is an ocean, the ocean (your sheets are blue, mine are), and that the sheets themselves they're the ocean's water, waters, the surface and the surface under underneath the surface, the depth, depths rising and writhing, falling into wake, and that no amount/degree/work/hope will ever help, or succeed, in mating the two waters above and below that God created before He slept, too.



Sometimes things happen that make you wonder: could this be a symbol of something bigger? What does this mean in the overall picture of my life?

Lately this thought occurs to me frequently. I am broke–broke and struggling to finish a book; broke and blocked and waging a war–a war I am losing–against the rats which have invaded our house. These are Norway rats, I’ve been told, big and black and resistant to traps and to poison. They spring the traps and eat the bait clean. As for poison, the rats gobble up every morsel and crumb, but all that’s done is change their turds a brilliant green, the lush colour of summer grass.

There is some irony in this. The first sign of rats was when I noticed that my backyard trays of wheatgrass looked disturbed. At first I blamed the squirrels. We have a lot of Squirrels in our backyard and the Squirrels have been looking confused since our landlord cut down all the trees. He wants to sell the house and is convinced a house with trees in the yard will be impossible to sell, because–according to our East Indian landlord–all Chinese people hate trees.

I moved my trays of wheatgrass into the basement. A couple of days later I found a dead rat in our backyard composter. A big sucker. Not quite the size of a Labrador retriever but definitely larger than your average house-cat. I didn’t have the heart or the stomach to remove the dead rat. I decided the rat could stay. I retired the compost bin instead.

Summer turned to fall and I forgot about the rat. I covered the windows with plastic to keep out the damp. I bought thick wool socks to keep my feet warm because I hate the cold. So do the rats, apparently, because it was about this time they shifted their base of operations into the house.

A few brief highlights of how rats announce their presence:

Searching in the dark for a midnight snack, I wrap my hand around something wet and squishy. I turn on the light and discover I am holding a banana with the middle gnawed out. It looks like the banana is smiling at me. A collection of bright green turds surrounds the corpse of the late banana.

Another morning my roommate asks me when we picked up the new cat.

“We didn’t end up getting one,” I tell him.

“So what ran across my chest in the middle of the night?” he wants to know.

Lately I can hear the rats scuttling constantly behind my office walls. I leave the lights off because I don’t want to see a rat unless it’s dead–and I don’t even really want to see a dead one. Instead I sneak around my own basement in the middle of the day, like a thief in the dark wearing a Petzl headlamp.

Last week I was throwing clothes in the washing machine. I turned around and there’s a huge rat sitting on a shelf, an arm’s length away, staring at me.

But I guess it didn’t like the Petzl shining right in its eyes, ‘cause suddenly it reared up on its haunches and hissed at me, bared its teeth. I turned around and ran straight into the wall,

knocking the wind out of myself, which at least put an end to my girlish screams.

Now I’ve got the basement loaded with traps and poison while I sit at my computer listening to the rats in the wall conspire against me. I’ve got a deadline to meet and can’t write a word. Every ten minutes or so I get up and check all the traps to see whether I’ve caught anything. I hate to admit it but I’m becoming obsessed. I was confessing these things on the phone to my mother who told me: “You’re just like your father.”

I know she’s right. Except my father’s obsession wasn’t rats, it was beavers. When I was young my parents bought some farmland, unaware the picturesque stream meandering through their property was already dream home to a thriving colony of beavers. A pattern emerged. The beavers built dams and my father destroyed them. He started with traps, moved quickly to firearms, progressed over the years to dynamite. He especially got a kick out of blowing the dams on Sundays, when everybody else was in the Anglican church just down the road. One day he brought me to watch, along with one of his drinking buddies. They packed the dam full of these long skinny toilet paper rolls, then my father uncoiled a big spool of wire and sparked the fuse.

RUN! he yelled, right before an explosion rumbled through the ground beneath my feet, sending rocks the size of bowling balls flying hundreds of feet into the air. When I finally returned to consciousness my father’s buddy was slapping me lightly on the cheek. “Hey, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but your old man is crazy.”

Yesterday my Dad calls and tells me how to solve my rat problem. “Rats hate fire,” he says. “All you have to do is singe one rat’s fur and the rest will vacate the premises.”

“How am I supposed to do that?” I ask.

“You need to catch a live one,” he says.

“I can’t even catch a dead one,” I tell him. But my father had planted a seed.

Today I bought a blowtorch, one of those mini-torches, the kind you use to thaw your frozen pipes. I borrowed a stethoscope from a doctor friend of mine, walked around all afternoon listening to the walls ‘til I found the nest.

Here’s my plan.

Tomorrow I’m going to fire up the blowtorch, keep it close. That way, when I tear away the paneling off over the nest, I just snatch up the torch and scorch whatever rat happens to be nearest. It’s a plan I believe my father would approve of.

I just have to wait until my girlfriend leaves for work–she’s worried I might burn the house down again. I want to reassure her things will work out–with the rats, with the house, with the money–but how do you explain a feeling you have in your gut? How can I expect her to believe that this time tomorrow the rats will be gone, the house will stand, the money will start rolling in, and my book will write itself all the way to a happy ending? How do I convince her that things are going to change, I can feel it?

Alexandra Tzannidakis

smoke

The cold air bites our faces as he tries to light his cigarette. "Come on, Prometheus," he mumbles to his reluctant lighter. I follow instructions and cup my hands around his, trying to save the flame from the night wind. He looks more tired than I remember him.

In the park, we pass a woman with bags on her feet and a yoga mat of cardboard. She tells us that the CIA is after her, and we give her the half-finished smoke as consolation. The gravel path leads us over a frozen stream and out to the square.

We're at the Cenotaph, and I can just make out the Price Chopper in the distance. I turn my face up towards the closest angel, mid-fall, sword dropping. I want to know what's going on and he tells me, "we're just hanging out... catching up..." I meant the angel, and the way his twin is standing across from him, so triumphant, sword held high. I didn't mean us. Maybe we should keep walking, get away from this place.

This man laughs less now, and smokes more. There is a hardness around his face and in the way he speaks to me that seem forced and unfamiliar. This scares me, so instead of watching where we are going or listening to his words, I start thinking about myself and how I have become someone different, maybe. Perhaps my face is the same, not my hair though, or my clothes. Perhaps I seem harder and farther away, more determined to defend my lies.

I can't stop thinking about myself and before I know it I am sitting in someone's living room, and the women are too friendly, and the men have gone out back for a cig. I don't know who these girls are but they give me a muffin and a joint, and play a television show that I like, and there is a small dog wrapped up like a Christmas present that pukes muffin in your shoes.

I pull in smoke and stab myself on the wire that is sticking out, and suddenly he's sitting beside me again and every time I move I can feel the blood sloshing about in my head like water in a bathtub. For some reason I start to recall being small and sitting in the sun with him and laughing at other people, the way they always deserved to be laughed at. Then we grew up and dug through the forest at night, flashlights fighting the foliage, to a hidden embankment with the whole city at our feet. I remember the fire and the guitar and the cheap beer bottles littered all around us.

He shakes my shoulder and I realize where I am, with the strangers and the television and the dog, and it is time to go. I do up my whole boot before I realize it is on the wrong foot. On the way home it has gotten colder, so much colder, and when I complain he gets angry with me. Everyone is cold. In the middle of the flat streets and sunken buildings we stop and stare at how Jesus Saves and Heals All Sickneses, and for a moment we're back to mocking other people instead of each other.

Once, we ventured out in the dead of night and sat on a rock by the lake. He told me it was his favourite spot in the city, and though I could see nothing but dark water, I believed him. But this is a different city, and the only water we pass is that same frozen stream, back through the park, past the cardboard woman, out the other side. The whole way home I don't say much, and I listen to the gravel under my feet while he tells me stories of this new life. I don't know these people or these streets or these parties. I don't care for these stories.

The kitchen smells like macaroni, and Batman watches me from on top of the television while I drink my whiskey. Tonight I will watch a movie in bed and sleep on the couch and tomorrow he will drop me off at the bus station and leave before I'm even out of sight.



angie thielmann
Fresh Air on St. Denis

Heather McRobie

the practice buddha

I shouldn't have come here on the way to going to you.

You're taught in this museum, have been taken by experts to its hearts and margins. I shouldn't be more on your territory than you on mine, where my hands and mind are amateurs, and my memory is cold.

But I decided: you have already won. You are sleeping in your room this afternoon. I am less on your mind than you on mine already, although I am clever enough to not think of it too much.

It is winter and, today, I have no plans to shove my cold hands in your face like I like to. So I will walk around, to thaw my fingers for you and practice my smiles on the statues and on the glass. You said you should sleep until six, but I'll come at four o'clock, and will win you over to my time, I'm sure. I've rehearsed my clever lines in many languages.

The museum opens itself to me in the meantime, thinks that it will do. It will do, in the meantime. I can make such things warm up.

Alone, I walk straight down the centre; I run a finger by some marble and measure a cabinet's cold. And I am in the shallow end of love now – walking through your places when you are not here, holding on to a railing.

I pretend to be more charming and rich than I really am in places like this: with my sketchpad and my stolen shoes, I talk to old men and gift shop assistants. In my blue and white stripes: I thought I'd look like Jane Birkin; I look like Charlie Chaplin. I try out various charming voices (Blue Peter, castrato) and a few Victorian exclamations, smiling slightly for no reason, with an unlikely light way of walking. I try to be the one who someone wants to find, in a museum, on a cold day: unlikely and lovely.

I may as well give myself to something for the hour I am spare.

I give myself to the task of it. I think of words for which I have no exact mental image, like 'billiard room' and 'dressing table', or I make the face of a girl who speaks Italian, politely. Think of each person's dull little haze of a day, before I brought myself in from the cold to warm them, before my make-up makes their cheeks pink.

I use the face I used to save for you, when I thought that that was what you wanted: the sweet English girl, discovering everything for the first time.

I discover the Buddhas today, for the first time. I was practicing my walk through the poorly-lit pottery. Perhaps it was a trick, perhaps even a sweet one: we never walked in this part together. Perhaps you discovered it for the first time with a professor, or some archivist; perhaps they shared something with you, the way they sometimes doubtless do, in your classes with wine, your dinners

in their houses.

And if it is a trick, well, well done, you win. I am thinking of you.

The Buddhas are smug in their line, but I'm sure they spent their immeasurable time waiting, practicing, for this.

For this they passively defied the centuries of getting their faces smashed in: their lines as warm as the untouchable edge of your skin. Perhaps your professors are allowed to touch them, though. I try not to think of it.

They are one figure, one hope, but there is each variant of material and style – Chinese, Indian, Japanese, wooden, stone: they are separated in their births by centuries all unlikely-sounding. They do not have names of their own. Sanskrit, Mandarin, Old Japanese: languages bracket and coda their feet, sufficient but not necessary for some code of worship.

I try to read some of the scratchings, but, like a sweet girl, on a grand tour, I don't understand most of the language.

I divide them up. It is easy: they can never touch each other anyway. I will win them over one by one.

I start with the Japanese ones, wooden and stone.

They have your face when you think that I can't see you: lost in concentration and knowing they will lose, like you when you're writing your own words and your ancient ones. Chewing yourself evenly, absently, at the desk, illuminated in the headache of computer-glow. Hitting your head on the bit of wood just below the screen to beat a word out: your secret act of Brahmin training. You unwittingly open your mouth to the screen, praying for an offering.

And the Buddhas too look like they have a word just under their tongue, like a pebble. But they seem to smile, too, and not in collusion. I will let them pass.

And you in your bed three streets away, separated from me by the Sackler Library, must look how you look when I'm not there to receive the offering. Distilled or emptied: you when my variables aren't brought to act on you, bringing you up and down, bringing things for you to fix. I imagine it is the calm that comes before and after the storm, and exists there forever, like a ship that has fallen off the edge of the earth. Or like something else that I won't witness.

I turn to the Indian Buddhas, well-lit and each on their own.

They have your eyes when you are looking at me alone. You look more like these figures, of course, and they look at me with varying degrees of intimacy. Perhaps they know you're winning this round, perhaps they are supporting me.

Like us, they can be divided into two, roughly.

The ones that have eyes look kind and funny and put-upon. The ones without eyes look like fall-out from disaster, like that of a city that we do not talk about, or like children who have been betrayed.

And there is a little one, a kind of practice Buddha. He is restless and young-looking, not yet hammered into peace. He makes me want to take him in and give him shelter. And he looks like his mother wouldn't let him be with English girls, either.

And you in your bed three streets away, separated by the cold, the school-trip coaches and your sleep, must be looking the way you do in your private sadness: it has its own language, or it may as well. You refusing to speak your Hindi, you practicing your Ancient Greek – I can't compete with these, the formal rhythms of your nightmares. Next to them each night I only offer up unshapely child-cries, for the little facts of an old crime, which, like a sweet girl, I don't understand.

Faced with your clever edifice of sadness, I begin to plot against you, to win: to orchestrate the grand project of your happiness, remapping and crafting all that we know, like Baron von Haussmann.

I will begin today, I say to myself, and I will master it. I will work on it tirelessly and for no end, like a museum collection.

It's a short walk from the museum to your bed but the air outside is so cold. I want to shuttle from one soft gaze to another without a blink or a breeze. I try to get the Buddhas to warm me before I go.

You taught me how to touch things without setting the alarms off, so now as I walk alone I bring my hands towards them, or press where there is glass, leaning to each outline that might respond. I touch the feet – I know we know this gesture. I touch all of their lips – perhaps you chose the wrong person to disprove your mother's view of English girls.

I read the facts of the museum, which you will know more closely than me. They speak of foreign

languages – our new lands, our meeting-points. All of which, like other people, exist for our competition; which have nothing that we need to fear.

I don't know if it's true, but the museum says there is no one word for God in Mandarin, and no one word for faith in Greek.

And in your language and in my language, there are no words for certain words. There is no translation of them into the rest of what we know.

And so Bhopal, and so the name of the old man, they are instead the only two weapons in the world we can't use. It wounds us that there are words we can't deploy, and we train in this city like warrior-monks against their faithful night-time descent on our dwellings. We have our scriptures and our faithless teachers.

We know their entrance-points, the minute and the colossal, and that they either will suffocate everything with their enormity, or, like parasites of our own blood, they will eat at us from within. So we make a barricade of books and watch the walls shake.

It makes you watchful of soft words like a look-out in a castle.

You make provisions at the outline of any I love you: you see the foot-soldiers under the foliage, it means Angel, please don't make me sleep alone, where I am only with the infant of myself, where there's an old man and no words in the world yet.

And so if you go back to your nameless city, to the ground zero of your memory, I will not be left at any border. Preferring being gassed to being alone, I stitch your sleeves to my sleeves and mix up our buttons.

Unless you go back there in stolen afternoons of sleep. And then I must wake you.

But there is one last Buddha, one from China.

I go to it before I go to you, certain that I can find an ally.

Carved in a wood gone white, it has your eyes when you and I are being the two of us together: going through our worn-out motions, praying to the same point of the compass. They read your imploring part. They ask that nothing be asked of them, they ask too much – that Darling, look, I know you love me, please, could you just let me work now, please angel, can we go to sleep?

And the Buddha speaks, but not your lines exactly.

There is a translation, so we can all understand.

The inscription reads:

“I take upon myself the burden of all suffering, I am resolved to do so, I will endure it. I do not run away, do not tremble, am not terrified, nor afraid, do not turn back or despond. The whole world of living beings I must rescue.”

I read the lines over, try to win over each word.

I try to forget everything else that I've ever read, to be faithful to the passage.

While you in your bed three streets away, where you have gone for quiet, you betray me in your stillness, holding on to only yourself.

And so, taking upon myself the burden of all suffering, I will run to buy food and newspapers and lovely unlikely things, running through the Oxford streets for you, thinking of myself. I am resolved to do so, I will endure it: I will run with my presents in my hands for you, and come up to the dark of your room. I do not run away, do not tremble: I will make my way to you, warm-

ing my hands for you, walk the last stretch on my knees to you on the far side of the too-big bed. I do not turn back or despond. I will knock over your coffee and disregard your notebooks, to hold you, to cover you with kisses, to kick you from your sleep. I will bring sounds and movements into the building as an offering. I will open your curtains and windows, and rescue the whole world of living beings.

Then you'll try not to look sad as I run through the incantations of my clever stories and my smiles: all that I have practiced.

For your calm and my presence, like two little Buddhas, must never be placed upon the table together. I learnt my only language of love too young; I bring you these charms of bitter excitement to protect us from the peace. And your only language of love is the unblackened-sky of silence – and in all the noise I give to you, I cannot hear it. I will not know the one long sigh under the pleading storm of unending kisses.



mary jane caro
Can He Be Caught

Arlene Ang if it's coffee flavored, it's serendipity

You keep coming back to preferences: yours, hers, that androgynous road sign, this blue room vacancy.

The overturned pitcher in the sink may be Wittgenstein. Last night he leaked all over your favorite elm and accused turtlenecks of playing dangerous language games with O.

You dream in sequences of color-coded ice packs; Sundays are leopard-skinned and drab.

Going back to a pre-war scenario, do you ever wonder why you were repatriated while a fuselage burned in the background and your fist filled with skeleton keys?

Houdini complex: there's a lab-mouse pattern in your mock appearances and maize-eating techniques.

Of course, you just returned from last Friday, but tell me honestly: you lured the dog-catcher again into your sex economics life, didn't you?

The bus is bound for Miami. The passengers are bound like beer cans under the setting sun. In time,

everyone is bound to notice the Frenchified driver dictating his beef stroganoff experiences over the microphone.

You have to admit: an invitation to meet at the Holiday Inn also opens the nuptial banquet in the adjacent room to mock witch trials.

Betrayal: someone hasn't been careful with the salad shooter; most probably, your second coming is in bad taste.

james culleton
Blind Contour Time (BTC)



Addy Liftin girl talk

“I don’t have time for this”, he growls
And now I understand why
We spend long hours in bathrooms
Frantically snarling over
Stupid shit, like:
If I don’t bleed tonight,
He will.

Wayne Wolfson

permanent gate

The deck.

The sun broke through the slats. Nine shimmering bars danced on the far end of the ceiling. I could lay here. I could lay here and dream, it was my job. I had, at least until the bars wandered halfway across the room, until she was home.

Why was ritual so important?

"I will get you that, for then, the occasion, happy birthday mi amorata."

Was it all so important? It was all I wanted. One act to cover up another. In that way distractions can then become a lifestyle.

Let me check my notes too, I am sure there is something there about the night that I made you cry.

You kept me by letting me go. Well, not really, letting me do what ever I wanted to with no complaint. In that way I would have nothing to rebel against and stay.

I returned the favor, hope against hope that you would do something to get me angry, fuel for flight.

She was ill at ease in her new found freedom. And if she was not at Odette's, it was the diner with crossword puzzle and endless cups of weak tea.

A migration of light.

Libby should go, the awkward polite conversation between the two of them I would have to listen to possessing the ability to suck all the hours right out of the day.

The couch. Her head has my shoulder pinned. It is no act. I look, for a moment, briefly hunting for her true face.

We all have appetite. Her honesty in the pursuit and satisfaction of it is where I find both appeal and danger.

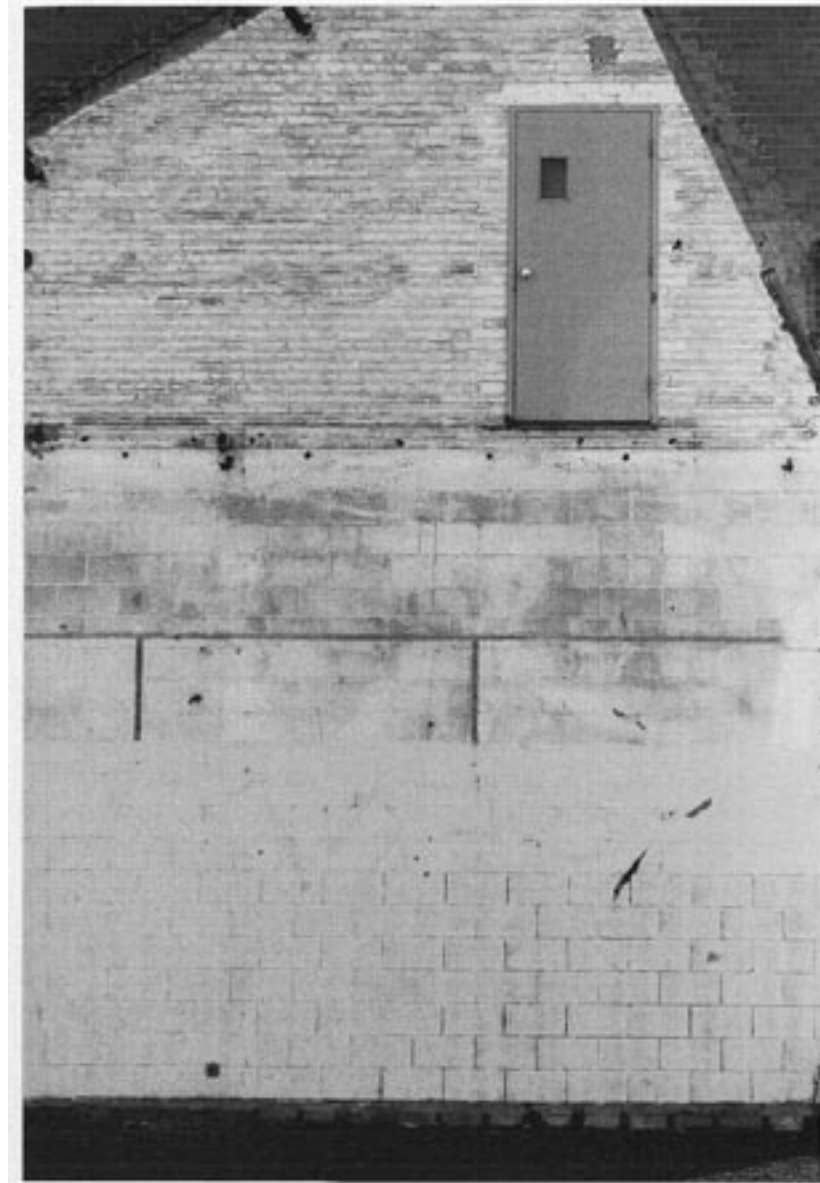
All those bottles, positions and pillow lies. As if the long gone ghost of Lynnette has been dredged up to witness my new life. Even the same small scar above the left eye.

I want to be bad all the time and for now she stood at the gate waving me in.

Before waking her, my eye sought out the scar.

For the hell of it I study her face. I am a professional and can do it quickly. Her eye-lids, two fragile pink crescent moons waning on the curve of her cheeks. And in my mind I kiss the scar too, as I had done with the other.

There is a sound, the key in the door. No one appears and even on this day it is only the wind.



lee tipton

untitled; from a series on ridiculously impractical architecture

Jason Grabowski

subway saint

she wore a steel wool mane
for hair,
and had milky white sticks
for legs.
she sat and scratched
at a lotto ticket,
for what seemed like
the Whole Ride.
she never looked up.
she had her eyes
on the prize,
and a soul
that was ready to go.



mj caro
Big Easy Series 1

Josh Cote squeezed on his red parka and hesitated for a moment in the doorway of the Port Robinson Youth Centre before he stepped out into the pale frigid air. It had snowed all day but the roads remained unplowed for the most part, the going slippery. Screeching children tumbled and tobogganed in the nearby park. A pine of smoke ascended from the stone chimney of the ancient toll building at the end of the street, a structure of historical significance, occupied by a shadowy custodian, no doubt warming his feet by the fire. All good but for the thick white blanket. A ghost town like Port Robinson fell last on the snow-remover's list.

With great difficulty, Josh climbed into the waiting white van. It smelled like burnt hair in there. One of Josh's counselors, Marty Rush, sat in the driver's seat sucking on a lollipop and tapping his steel-toed boots. He glanced at Josh with his sharp blue eyes, and gestured to his seatbelt. Josh's ample girth complicated the task. The van rocked as he worked the belt around his belly. Marty glared at him with annoyance. Finally Josh managed to secure the seatbelt.

The van crunched out of the snow-banked parking lot and skidded into the street. A discarded Christmas tree lightly laced with tinsel jutted out from the curb. Marty steered around it, and tapped the brake pedal as the tires caught a patch of black ice. The van swerved through the black ice and hit the freshly salted intersection, coming to an abrupt and gritty stop. Josh stared at Marty.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"For a drive in the country," Marty said. "It's part of your therapy."

"It's almost dark out."

"Yeah, I know."

Josh's plump fingers drummed his thighs as the van sped by stands of snow-capped trees and the white monotony of the surrounding landscape. Low leaden clouds filled the sky, promising more of the same. Josh pushed his thick glasses up his small nose and sniffed.

Bothered by the icy windshield, Marty blasted the defroster and vainly rubbed the back of his gloved hand on the glass. He gnashed his teeth and growled in his chest. He slammed his palms against the steering wheel. Then he raised the volume of the radio, set to a call-in sports station. He listened for a minute, turning his ear to the speaker and sucking on the lollipop.

"So, Josh," he said, "I've wanted to talk to you."

Josh could barely hear him over the radio chatter. "About what?"

Marty turned down the volume. "Hey, man," he said, removing the red lollipop from his mouth and pointing it, "have I ever treated you badly?"

Josh frowned and pushed his glasses up his nose. A smattering of acne reddened his wrinkled forehead.

"I'm talking to a wall," Marty said to himself.

"No," Josh said, "you've been okay. Why? What's this about?"

"What's this about?" Marty pulled the lollipop from his mouth again. "Josh, let me ask

you something. Why don't you ever hang out with people your own age—fifteen-year-olds like Ryan and Jesse? I mean, why is it that every time I see you in the recreation room or in the hall, or near the washrooms, you're hanging out with little punks like Daniel?"

"Ryan and Jesse are bullies. Daniel's my friend."

"That's nice. Daniel and Josh. Like Beanie and Cecil . . . okay. I've seen you two wrestling around. You must be four times bigger than Daniel, swear to God. I know he's twelve, but he's more like an eight-year-old. You could crush him."

"He likes to play-wrestle. He starts with me."

"Bet he does. Daniel's not all there, is he?"

"He's just different."

Marty crunched on his lollipop. "I know, I know, Josh. *Vive la difference*, is what the French say. Ah, those French. I love Montreal! Love it. Some day I'll visit Paris, mark my words. I want to learn French proper before I do that, though. Maybe I'll go to night school. Your name's French, but of course you don't speak French, do you Josh? Didn't think so. That's a shame. Look at me yakking away like there's no tomorrow. And I haven't asked you how you're doing, Josh. How *are* you doing? Fine? Okay. I can see that. Hale and hearty. Fit as a fiddle, except for the asthma, right? Still on the puffer, eh? How about a refreshment? How would you like a nice hot chocolate. I know you like your hot chocolate, boy."

Josh said nothing as Marty pulled into a drive-through donut shop. He barked the order into the box on the post and eased the van forward into the pick-up circle. The woman serving Marty retracted her lips, showing dead front teeth. Ball-bearing earrings pulled down her yellow lobes and her hair looked scorched. A strange crush of people dressed in black crowded the space behind the woman, arguing loudly, clanging metal objects. Were they other workers? Patrons? She handed Marty two beverages, and a box of donuts. He paid, grumbled something, waved off the change. She made a gurgling sound. This amused Marty deeply and he clapped Josh's knee. The knee smarted for some time.

As the van exited the coffee shop a slushy compact car cut in front it. Marty slammed the brakes and palmed the horn. The blue-haired woman piloting the compact froze upon hearing the honking and remained that way until Marty inched the van right up to her rear bumper and hit the high beams. Then she lurched ahead, just missing an oncoming Coca-Cola truck. Marty swung his head around and grinned at Josh, his eyes bulging.

"She could have died right there and then, man! Holy shit! It wasn't her time though. See what I'm saying? It wasn't her time." He pointed to the donut box. "Help yourself."

"I'm not supposed to eat stuff like that."

"Hey now. Like I said, this is all part of your therapy. I'm the one calling the shots here. If I say it's okay for you to crush a few donuts, what the hell."

Up ahead a blue-lit tow truck yanked a car out of a ditch with a steel cable. The owner

daniel cambil
Alchemy (What I Do When It's Cold Out)

①
kim on the
jan 30, 06

steps
No 11
glass → salt
flames

investigate
investigatively
with
notepad
or fluidities
from beyond

MA
ray
ankwe

deep in
spiritual
contemplation

slowly a half
of a second
high speeds

crystals
with
neat colors
in them
(watch
but
noomates!)

notes: don't do this

am keeping
the
crystals
although

air + flames
= optic
death

crystals only
in practice
left on glass
& color spews
in perfect
collapsing
coordination
(could emanate)

63.946

of the car, a man with a flowing white scarf wrapped around his head, stood there clapping his hands and jumping up and down. Marty waited for the tow truck to pull the car closer to the shoulder before he passed. The tow truck driver gave them the finger. Josh burst out laughing.

"Funny stuff, eh?"

Wheezing with laughter, and removing his glasses, Josh nodded.

"Good, laugh it up. Laughing's good! And eat the donuts. Go on, don't be shy."

When he settled down, Josh reached into the box and selected a honey-glazed donut.

His pale fingers held it to his lips and his nostrils quivered as he delicately bit off half of the donut and chewed. He finished it and took another out of the box. He made short work of that one also. Sugar crusted his lips. He gobbled three more, spilling oily crumbs over his chest. Marty nodded and smiled as though he knew exactly what was happening and how good, how incredibly good, Josh felt at that moment.

"It's nice to see you in your natural element, boy. Swear to God. It's way cool. Complete license. Eat till you drop. Fucking eh. I would have taken you to a Chinese buffet and let you vacuum down some chow mein and egg rolls but this is way better. This is pure. Sugar and fat, that's what it's all about, my friend."

"You're talking a lot of garbage."

Marty chuckled. "I know, I know. Way to go, man. You're cranking those things down good. Hey, save me one or two—just kidding! I don't go for the donuts, my cholesterol. But you don't give a shit about that, my friend. You're grooving right now. Nothing else matters."

Josh gulped his hot chocolate. He reached for the donut box but withdrew his hand at the last moment. Marty had turned off the main road.

"Where are you going?"

"Ever been to Grassy Brook Road?"

"Yeah, with my father once. We went horseback riding. Along the river."

"That's right. There's stables. Pretty country. Must be picturesque with the snow. I saw horses out there the other day. Really nice."

"Are we going horseback riding?"

"Have another donut, Josh."

"I've had enough donuts. I want to return to the Centre."

"What? And miss the surprise?"

"What surprise?"

"Wouldn't be one if I said what it was, now would it?"

"Take me back to the Centre."

"Not now, pal."

"I don't like this. I'll file a complaint."

"Now hush and eat another donut before I clobber you." Marty wasn't smiling.

Josh resisted for a moment then grabbed a double chocolate and crammed it into his mouth. His cheeks and the blubber folds under his chin trembled as he chewed. Sweat streamed down his forehead. Snot flowed from his nose. Sugar and fat coursed through his veins. He drank more hot chocolate, took deep breaths, listening to his own heart thumping.

Snow blanketed the new golf course and grey ice plated the still active river, walled for long stretches by tall grey reeds. They passed red stables with black horses steaming in front of them. A series of beautiful ranch style homes hugged the riverbank.

Marty drove past all the buildings, and turned down a deserted stretch of road. He pulled the van over and parked by a snowy field but didn't kill the engine. A flock of black birds rose up from the fence and clamored in the twilight sky before setting off en masse across the river. Josh tried to undo his seatbelt but couldn't worm his hand to the release. Marty sat there calmly gripping the steering wheel, humming a tune. Josh was having trouble breathing. His hair dripped with sweat. He reached into his pocket, took out his puffer and inhaled a blast. He rolled down the window a little. Cold air streamed into the van.

"Feeling better?" Marty asked after a moment. "Thank God you remembered to bring your puffer. Imagine if you had forgotten it. Jesus. And I don't know C. P. R—just kidding, Josh. I'm certified, I know it well. I would have saved you! It's warm in here, eh? Undo the seatbelt. Take off the parka. Relax. This is pretty country, no one around for miles. It's therapeutic. Here, let me help you." Marty unlatched Josh's seatbelt and then with considerable effort pulled off his parka. Sweat blotched Josh's grey sweater; a sour milk stench filled the van.

Marty switched on the radio and the sports guys continued blathering. He found a classical station, sat back and spread his legs. Nice listening to this stuff now and then. Violins and oboes soothed a body. Snow fell, large lovely complex flakes, feathering the windshield. Marty chuckled to himself, switched on the wipers, and sipped his coffee. What a perfect moment. Everything harmonious, in rhythm. He shut his eyes and listened. What else? A million things. He could talk about a million things right now with the right person.

"Christ, you're humongous," Marty said, "and you're only fifteen! I remember when I was fifteen. That's when I started getting interested in girls. Are you interested in girls, Josh?" The question seemed to puzzle the youth. "Why would I be interested in girls?"

"I mean, you know, sexually. You're not gay, are you?"

"I'm not gay."

"Well, Josh, I'm not trying to pry, but I can only help you if I know where you're coming from. I know you're self-conscious because of your obesity. But surely you must have sexual urges by now. I see a bit of facial hair sprouting, I hear the deepening of the voice. It must be happening, no? Help me to understand you." Marty waited.

"Girls are cruel," Josh blurted.

"Cruel, eh? Yeah, they can be. Boys too. Make no mistake. Boys too. Josh, just one thing, I noticed that you like drawing stick figures in your sketchbook."

"I'm not very good. So?"

Marty leaned closer and spoke quietly. "No, but you *are* good, Josh. That's the thing. There's a very expressive quality about them. Look, I brought one with me." He pulled out the sketch and held it before Josh. "This was the coolest one. I want you to explain what it means.



david lee black
Wood Chromosomes

Is it a dream or something?"

The sketch consisted of a stick figure holding the string of a larger and rounder figure.

Josh stared straight ahead with his arms folded over his gut.

"See, Josh. It's not just a stickman like the others, there's also that big balloon thing, eh, with the string. But my, that balloon is big. And it's not really floating very high, is it? It's as if it were too heavy or something."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"The balloon man, silly. I was looking at it and boom, it came to me. Swear to God.

Check this out: the stickman is Daniel, and the balloon man is *you*."

"You're crazy."

"Not so crazy, Josh. Come on, it's me. Marty. I've been good to you. I want to help you. That's my job. So tell me about Daniel."

"Daniel's my friend."

"No, Josh. That can't be. He's out of it. He's fucked. He lacks affect. He's not capable of true friendship, not really. He's like a doll. Or a puppet. But you know that." Marty bared his teeth, arched his eyebrows, and mimicked a diabolical laugh. "I am not afraid of you, Dracula! Just kidding! Come on now, Josh. Fess up! Be real! Bare your soul to me, brother, let the healing begin. I know you know the difference between right and wrong, but you can't help yourself. Is that it? I totally understand. *I empathize*. Believe me, Josh. I feel you, man."

Tears filled Josh's eyes. "Daniel and I are friends."

"Aw, touching. I'm touched, really. Young love. It's fucking Shakespearean, I tell you. And maybe in some world, in some sick, fucked up, degenerate, madcap world, it would be sanctioned, even encouraged, but not in this one, Josh. Not in Marty's world. I am not—I repeat—I am not a horse's ass. Do you think I'm a horse's ass, Josh?"

The youth shook his head.

"Good answer, boy. You saved yourself a slap in the chops. So, the question is, what do we do with the young monster? Do we train him to be civil, to repress his ugly urges? Or would this merely teach him how to blend in, how to mask who he really is and who he will always be? Because let's face it—Josh will never change. He hasn't changed thus far. If all interventions and therapies have failed, what can anyone expect Marty to do?"

"You're talking garbage."

"Is that right? I've been at this for a long time, boy. One thing I know. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck . . . See what I'm saying? Now get out of the van, Josh."

"What?"

"Get out of the fucking van."

"I won't do it."

Marty punched Josh hard in the ear then punched him again, knocking his glasses off his face. Then he flung his legs out from under the dash and started kicking him in the body with his steel-toes. Josh used his left arm to block the kicks but Marty's boots broke bones his hand. He kept kicking. Josh reached down his right hand, opened his door and pitched himself sideways. He tumbled into a deep snowbank, bleeding from the mouth and nose, gasping for air. Marty reached across the passenger seat, shut the door then roared away.

The snow whipped down, big fat flakes, whiting out everything. The wipers vainly thwacked back and forth. The headlights illuminated nothing but a whirling wall of white. Crosswinds shook the skidding van. Marty leaned on the steering wheel and strained his blue eyes for the main road, but didn't see it or anything else for that matter.



mary mary
Face 5

Roxana Cazan

bullet

The one who gathered the most shells by night won.
They talked about him, this weird boy,
Marius.
He had many, and one of his ear lobes torn.
"It couldn't have been from the battle," the others whispered
Every time they saw him peeping through his fingerprinted window
Like a wise magus.
He lived on the first floor in a tall building, the tallest,
And found the shells under his balcony among pebbles and dust,
Conspicuous,
The empty remnants of history.
He would give us each one empty shell
To wear with pride on a string around our necks
Like an adorning medal.
We assembled and sang the national anthem,
While our voices broke against the cold concrete –
 Blocks of concrete perforated and lugubrious
 Like old rags hung in the sun –
Dilapidated cues of a civilization still young.
In the evening, we rode the night mares, bewitched, or
Sailed skeletal boats whose masts
Pierced the dry sky
Like gray pyres with a black flutter atop.
The old folks watched us,
Mouths gasping
As if we were the brave on the battlefield, the feared,
Riding broom sticks with Marius in the lead
And hollering "VICTORY!"
At night, he would collect everybody's shells
With a smug glow of contentment in the green of his gaze,
And follow his mum's skirts to dinner,
Sticking the tongue out at the little ones.
We didn't have anything left to sleep with under the pillow,
To rub between our fingers, dreaming,
And then it happened one time,
When alone, next to a crooked fence,
I saw it glistening in the moonlight:
 A whole bullet, all mine.

stationery magazine

issue 9

‘ this is the price of a quiet mind. ’
[epictitus]