



DENALI

Fall 2005

Denali Literary Arts Journal

Lane Community College

Denali publishes in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. Denali accepts original submissions from all residents of Lane County at any time.

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Cover:
One Dawn by Lindsay Stalone
Right:
Rows by Marlena Benedicto



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FALL 2005

COASTAL UNION

Sun-E



I remember
When I couldn't stand being touched
in any way good church-going folk
might consider "bad;" raptured moments
on comforters, in bedrooms, cut short
by Jesus Christ himself.

I remember
on the bus, back in elementary school,
the big kid in the back who lived six blocks
away. I think he was eighteen —
never understood his hand up my skirt
looking for little girl panty elastic —
so big he took up a seat to himself.
I wondered what I'd be like in high school.

I remember
how surprised my Baptist mother was
to hear me talk about it openly,
fifteen years later on the phone,
jumping on a hotel bed as we talked
like she'd heard it all before. I guess
I really hadn't mentioned it. It never hurt.

I remember
that same woman, heavy crescent wrench
in hand, climbing a ladder after me, ready to
pull me down from the roof and teach me how
to honor thy father and mother with bright red
and purple left on leg, hip, elbow, neck.
Last week, I told her I'd sorted it out in my head.
She pretended it hadn't happened.

I remember
the disappointment when I gave up
the virginity I'd guarded for two decades,
and all those cut short moments,
all those brushing fingertips:
given away for good in two sad minutes.

And I remember
feeling like a car wreck, air rushing past,
stomach hovering in throat, falling off a cliff,
anytime someone kissed me just right.
But that was back when the son of God
still brought a flush to my face anytime
garments moved in the tides of passion.
When you kiss me today, I am waiting,
not teetering on that edge.
Just driving toward a destination,
missing the scenery,
fading scars on leg, hip, elbow, neck.

I remember
when the driving was enough and
The destination didn't matter,
but I do not recall any time
when a touch meant nothing.
Never.

AM, G, C, F

Sam Scharf

please
don't bring me flowers
like I was the grave
of all your past lovers
it's such a shame
it's such a shame
that we've come to believe
that loving & grieving
are inevitably the same thing

you don't have to wait until all your ghosts are
gone
you don't have to tell me that nothing's wrong
you don't have to fall
in love
this could be something
that lifts you
up

as we finally leave the cemetery you tell me
you've got pockets full of ashes and sand
and you cry about your empty hands
what a terrible thing to say
what an awful way
to see things
they're still hands, they're still hands
aren't they?
and if they're empty you could fill them up
with me
and that won't fix a thing
won't fix a thing won't fix a thing
but

you could tell that I'm breathing
and you could feel
my heart beating
and I could tell you darling
I don't want anything
from you

I don't want things
I just want you

so please don't bring me flowers
like I was the grave
of all your past lovers
I refuse
I refuse
to believe
that loving & grieving
are inevitably the same
thing

THISTLE

Marlena Benedicto



CADILLAC RANCH AT MIDNIGHT

Ramsey Tainton



SIDEWAYS

Cedar Stearns

I was born the moment you touched me,
alive like I was dead before.
Your fingers met mine in
the small place between us and
filled it with a field of moon.

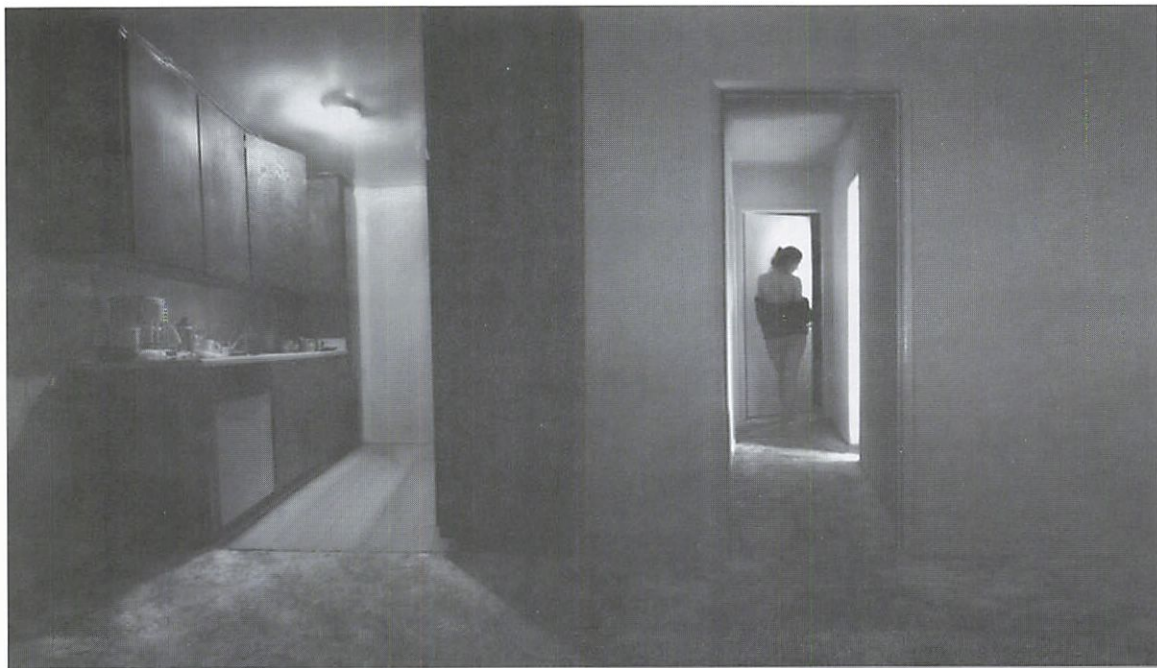
I want to feel you with my eyes,
my toes, my tongue—
to know the dark inside that
you call your own—
to pull the hidden whispers
out of your soul and braid them
like ribbons into my hair.

There is something in you that
smells like home to me.
A fresh, sweet hint of the
cinnamon in your skin.

You make me love you
sideways, anyway, always.

TO THE KITCHEN FOR WATER

Joshua Hussey



A SEA POEM

Paige Lehmann

Fingers touching, he led me
down where the path mingles
with salty air and the wind sings
to the reeds and
he pointed out his favorite
among the grottos, the caves,
the secret place
exposed every day by the sea—
where graves toss in lonely waves
and men and women create
to the water's calling
and he didn't kiss me
but said that one day he
lost his virginity
in that lonely place
down by the sea
his voice swept away
over cliffs that pushed the bay
and once when I lay down to sleep
I caught him an ocean over,
telling me
of love, madness, virginity
and the wet-fingered touch of mortality
that lay exposed
and drew in shame her sultry waves
over sandy shoulders
I felt you here
reminding me
of love and death mingling
in God's loose garments
wresting
in drowning felicity
by some such once
called the sea

CONTESTED

Gabe Fetsko

I had a stare-off with a blind woman.
A rhyming contest with a mute.
High jump against an amputee.
Fastest clap with a leper,
his name was Freckles.
Head-to-head weight lifting versus a paraplegic.
Spelling bee with a dyslexic.
All night dance-off with a narcoleptic.
I tried to name-that-tune against a deaf kid.
I lost
them all.

BOOTS

Zoe Kerouac

I always used to trip over them on my midnight shuffle to the toilet.

One pair of beat-up black steel-toed docs sitting between me and the bathroom door. A jammed toe would curse your name with my breath as I nearly crashed to the floor. I've always caught myself just in time to save myself that sharpest of pain. The complete fall.

They were always there. Worn too much and leaky in the rain. The laces were frayed and on the verge of snapping but they were always there. Always strapped on in the middle of the night following a whispered apology as an early morning call-to-arms pulled you from my bed. My toes, tired and bare, would stand on their cold steel tips to gain that extra inch necessary for a proper goodbye. Heart listened as a forehead pressed against hard oak and their heavy steps carried you down the stairs. My toes were still bitter from the brief encounter.

Until tonight it was my secret unknown comfort. Tonight the midnight shuffle found no foe. Tonight my toes aren't throbbing or jammed. Tonight the passage was safe and when I turned on the light and stood on the antiseptic tile, it hit me. The boots were gone. Eyes turned to a reflected face that seemed a chilly stranger wholly incapable of providing the disbelieving explanation I still seek.

The boots weren't there and your body wasn't breaking the flat-line of my sheets. The boots were gone and they'd taken you as their hostage. It wasn't another temporary absence that could be cured by the passing of another day. This morning you both left and now neither of you are ever coming back. Your name slipped past my lips on a breath and I cursed those boots once more.

You're both equally guilty tonight. Why did you always drop them there on your way to my bed? Why didn't they bring you home just one more time? An absent chill caught hold of my toes when I realized the new sensation of goodbye. It isn't a soft disappointment perched on cool steel toes. It's quiet and calm. The still steel-cold soaking in from everywhere with no more hope of the warm salvation of hands or lips to counter toes. You're both gone and I can't help lamenting the frustrating pain each of you brought to me.

You'd always been there.

Neither one of you are coming back. ☆

LONE WOLF CAFE

Ken Zimmerman

Two truck drivers talking
serious business

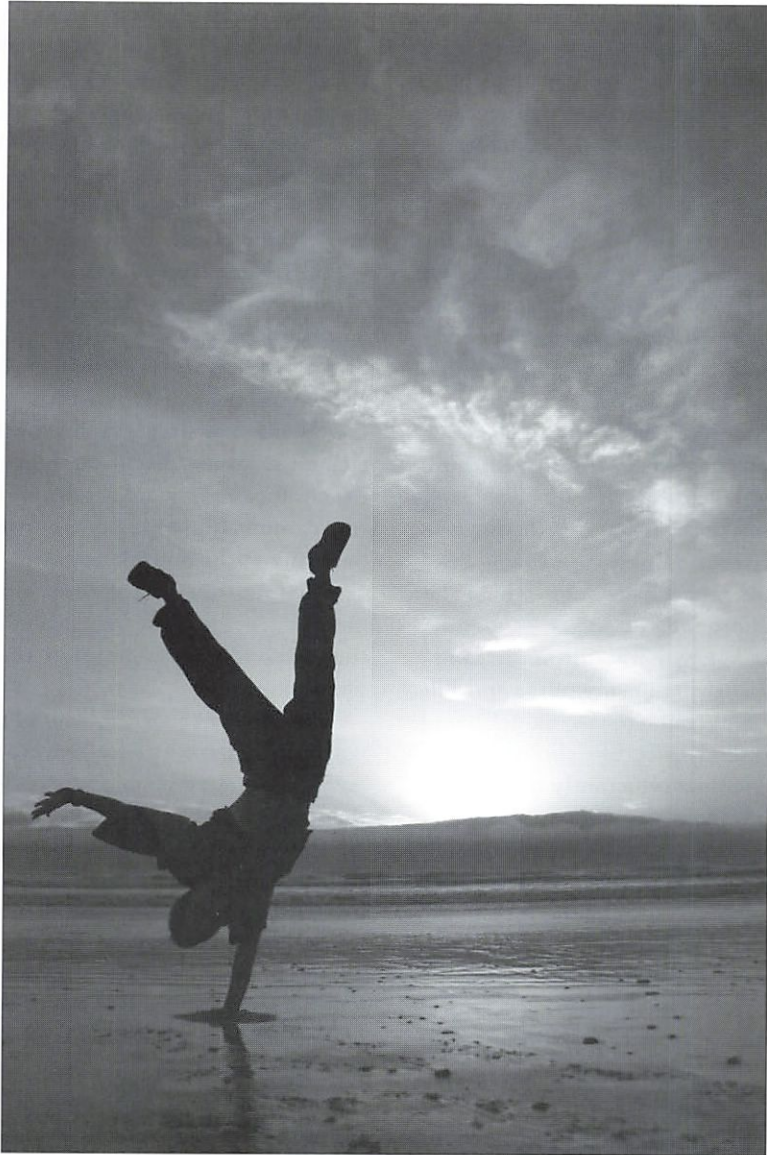
The waitress was queen
of the Easter parade
this morning

Still wearing her red sash
she brings their coffee
laughing loud

It's been the best day of her life

ABDUCTION

Noah Guadagni



THE DAY THAT MYRTLE CROSSED THE ROAD

Lindsey Brown

Over the distant sound of a neighbor's indignant doorbell and the hum of hungry children playing in the park across the street wafted the serene song of an ice cream truck, driven by the placid Mr. Coolcream who roamed the streets every day, fattening up the neighborhood children and waving amiably.

Myrtle was able to watch through the low dining room window, across her front yard, through the low branches of an ancient japonica, over the sun-scorched asphalt. The truck stopped and a throng of children crowded where Myrtle couldn't see.

In the kitchen, her mother sat as one of the permanent fixtures along with the range top and Frigidaire, surrounded at the table by piles of papers and senseless scribbles. Myrtle moved a stool and peeked over the sink to see Mavis Scarlet Johnson demand a chocolate cone, which she promptly dropped into the gutter.

Hearing the truck, her mother distantly sang without looking up, "Bring me my purse and I'll let you get an ice cream cone for us, okay?"

Myrtle dreaded the words. She climbed down from the stool and looked reluctantly through the screen door towards the menacing street. The front yard was fine. It was safe under the branches of the old tree, and sometimes she would even venture down the street a ways to pet the fat old stray cat that rested under the neighbor's porch.

"My purse, honey, or you'll miss the truck."

Myrtle stood, frozen, watching the truck on the other side of the street. Why couldn't he just park on her side? She'd have all the ice cream she wanted.

Her mother snapped suddenly to attention, her

shrill voice shattering Myrtle's terrified silence. "Myrtle!" She barked. "You'll miss it," and she stared at the child a moment before finally getting up and fumbling through her purse.

"Take this money and go get mom an ice cream cone, hon...". Her mother's voice drifted back to where her attention waited, back to the piles of half-written pages that were skewed around her. "I really want some ice cream..."

Myrtle took the wad of money with a sweaty hand and marched sullenly away, chewing on a flower-printed sleeve. She opened the screen door slowly and regarded the pavement path through the lawn to the street. Four paved portions of neat cement separated her from the laughing children, the cool ice cream and the white-hot black-top. She cautiously stepped down from the porch, lingering at the bottom step.

The first square brought back portions of the terrifying event—the bright blinding sun, the kind that drowns out and mutes unkindly the colors in old photographs.

The second square, a flash of puppy sounds, with Mrs. That's little yellow lab playing keep-away with the red ball. How badly she wanted that puppy.

The third square, the remote sounds of engines rolling as the puppy stood in the road, beckoning her with a wide canine grin.

And finally the last square, as she ran to grab the leash, right before the sidewalk, a dull thump and the surprised yelp of an animal in pain and the worried face of a man looking hurriedly back and driving hurriedly on.

Now she stood at the edge of the curb, watching Mr. Coolcream hand out cones to the laugh-

ing children. The street loomed large. She sank a sandaled toe into a chunk of sun-softened tar, and looked across the road again.

Her mother stood in the shaded porch smoking a cigarette. Her peculiar child looked back at her with large eyes, still chewing on her sleeve, still afraid to cross the road.

"It's okay, hon, it's clear," she called, trying her best to sound supportive as the handsome Coolcreem looked her way.

Myrtle turned back to the street. Mr. Coolcreem was talking baseball with a sturdy father, walking back to the driver's side of the truck, laughing mannishly over the din of ravenous children that pursued him. He leaned into the open cab, his mouth moving mutely as he counted and recounted change.

Myrtle stepped into the gutter squeezing the

crisp bill in her hand; hot as the pavement was, as wide the road, Myrtle couldn't imagine anything worse, even being hit by a car, than returning to the house without ice cream. She recalled the loud typing, the impatient gestures, the imprint of an exasperated palm coloring her face on early mornings after late evenings.

She looked back towards the asylum of the porch, but her mother had disappeared back into the house. The sound of the ringing telephone fading across the lawn met and mingled with the soft singing of a small boy's change as it rolled into the cool shadow of a dry storm drain.

Noticing Myrtle, tiny and reluctant on the hot curb, Mr. Coolcreem indicated the emptiness of the street and gave a familiar open palmed wave.

Myrtle waved back and, stepping wide, began skipping confidently towards the truck. ☆

REGIMEN

Dan Harding

in regimented America the hyphen will soon be king
thrusting the knife of control through the heart of the soul:
award-winning
anti-terrorist
rock'n'roll?

the apostrophe is a gateway drug
to enter the apostrophe is certain madness
a fallow leap into mangled obscenity.
the apostrophe will eat your hand
gnawing aggressively at your fingertips
a monosyllabic torture
 you'll scream
 you'll cry
 the apostrophe will eat you.

your only escape will be the comma;
the comma numbs, the comma soothes,
but the comma is a mirror, a monstrous reflection,
and the apostrophe will eat you.

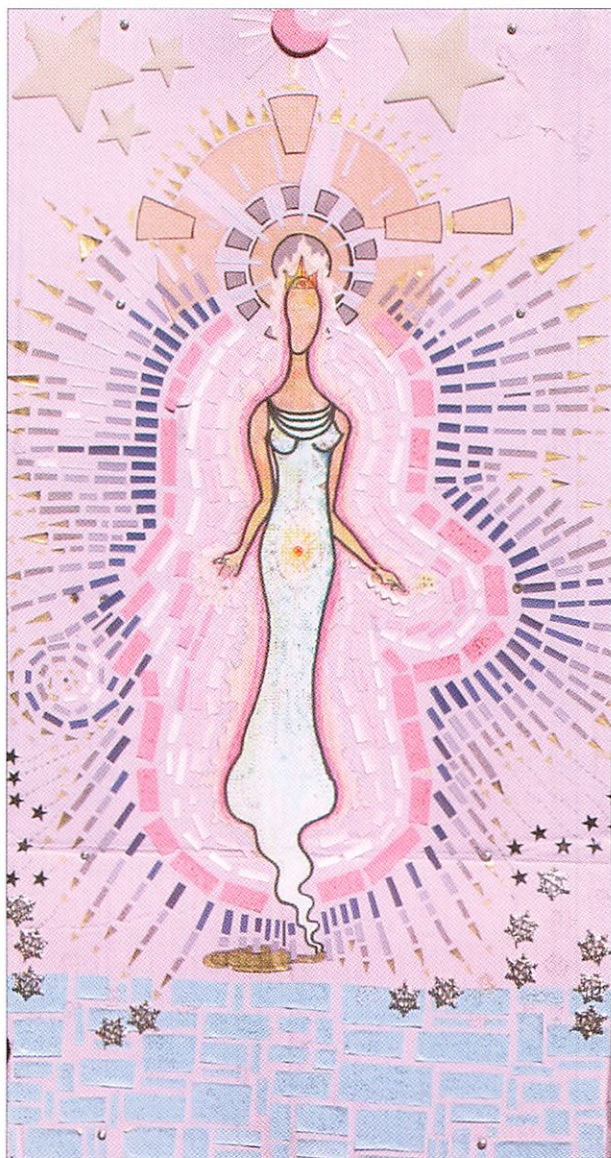
in the belly of the apostrophe language writhes
the acid of contraction consumes all.
thoughts and values are gutted
letters stripped to marrow-less bone
 barren,
 crumbling,
 numbers.

numbers are letters without meaning,
rejects doomed to scientific slavery,
contaminated freaks of methodology groping
like angry insects with no tear ducts.

at the end of it all;
the method,
six-easy-steps.

GAIA

Halo Jones



SECURITY

Leann Ford

I have my shoes off
at the airport's pleasure: this
I am told is Special Processing.

The contents of my backpack
are being systematically handled.

I mimic the dispirited resentment
of luggage long unclaimed
as a woman in a polyester blazer
flourishes a plastic wand at my armpits and
crotch
like the world's least likely magician.

I did not ask to be part of her act.

A man frowns at the card
glued to the front of a black book:
the train between the viper and the lion.
It is strange and because
strange, confusing, and because
confusing, probably dangerous.

Suspicion blooms in the air
above his head like a cartoon light bulb.
Imagined peril briefly illuminates
the endless dim corridor
of his shitty job.

He thumbs the pages
in search of the problem he's decided
he'd like to own.

"It's my journal," I say,
pronouncing the "...asshole."
as silence.

Reality drags across itself
like a heavy curtain revealing
itself, unchanged.

Everyone, everywhere, is exactly no safer
and exactly no less safe.

HAMPTON COURT PALACE

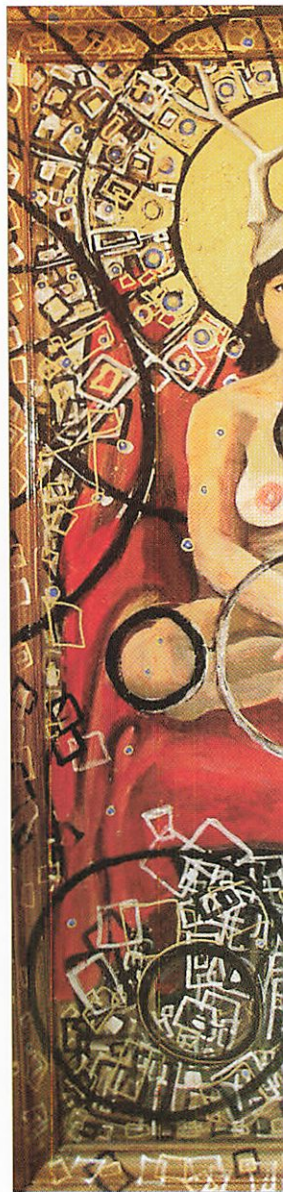
Don Macnaughtan



THE ONE CONSTANT



ALL HER



ONESTY



TRANSFORMATION



Jayme Vineyard

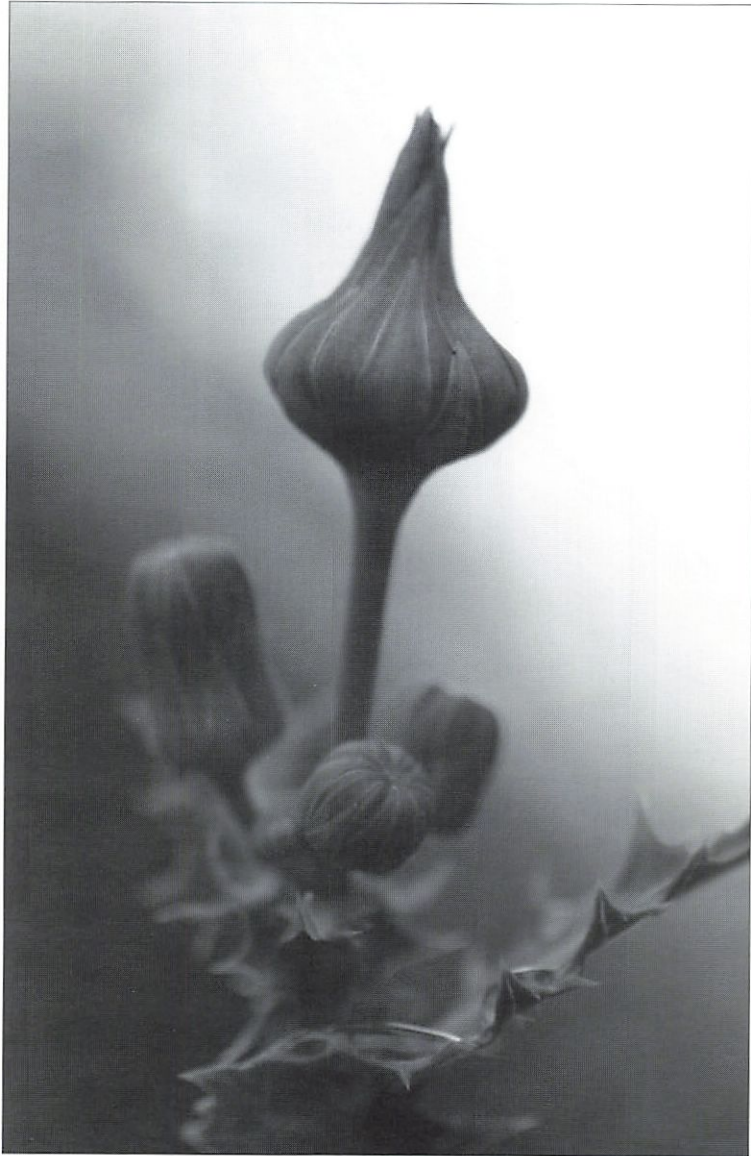
UNKNOWN

Lindsey Thomsen

Gasping, he twitches and writhes
until his body can't stand it any longer.
He falls...
He breathes deeply
and pulls me close to his still body.
We lay in wake of the world.
Nothing can touch us.
The rain plays quietly outside
as we drift into a dream filled slumber.
It creeps in through the window.
It doesn't matter.
We are covered in the sweat of our love.
The rain slumbers with us.
Tomorrow the world will end.
We will discover a new product of our love
glowing, two lines instead of one.

MACRO DANDELION

Noah Guadagni



UNTITLED

J-Star



Who would have thought that death would smell like the airport. I always imagined a fried meaty scent, but this was far different. That fumigated sterile air freshener smell that I remember all so well as a child. For some reason I remember visiting the Denver airport in '97. It was a halfway point between me and visiting my in-laws. I recall using the human conveyor belt just to see how much faster I could move than anybody else. People would fly by as I listened to metal or fast electronica; the airport became my own personal music video. One deep breath and I come back to reality. The back of my head is wet. Ug. I am numb but am no longer able to reminisce. I thought my life was supposed to flash before my eyes. How disappointing. Blurry augmented vision, the worst migraine ever times one hundred, the symphony of high frequency electronics hammering in my head, is this how it felt to die?

Seemingly seconds later my eyes flutter open. A bright light is in front of me. However cliché it may sound, I ask "Am I dead?"

"He's awake."

"Hello there, Alex. Welcome to heaven."

I blink. There are doctors around me. I see the asshole doctor with the offbeat and entirely inappropriate humor is looking at my ID.

"May I ask what lead to you being shot in the back of the head?"

"I owed this guy some money. Bad crowd I guess." The doctor looks at me oddly.

"Huh." He then goes on to treating another patient.

One of the nurses comes over to attend to me.

"We found you in a parking lot. A young woman called 911, and we were able to remove the bullet from your skull. You have some brain damage, but its surprisingly not severe. You have lost most motor function in your legs, but with some time and some therapy, you should be able to get most of it back. You're extremely lucky."

I felt extremely lucky not to have a grapefruit in my butt. She bent over me to attend to remove something from my chest. Her cleavage was taunting me in my sickly state. I feel something from under the sheets and feel reassured. At least that was still working. ☆

ACORN SUPERGLIDE 100

Joshua Hussey

Susan hadn't eaten for three days when she decided to go and buy the chair. She drank coffee and Kahlua with milk and smoked a pipe on a small staircase outside of her apartment. Susan always took a large box of strike-anywhere matches out with her when she smoked. She was never any good at keeping the tobacco lit, and a small pile of discarded wood was heaped next to the rain gutter. She liked the smell of sulfur, especially when it overcame the smells of a recently used toilet, and she liked the smell of her tobacco.

A shriveled old woman lived in a house across the alley, and Susan would spy her peering out of an open window or coming out on to the terrace of her two-story townhouse. She had one of those electric chairs built into the side of the staircase that ran up to her front door that one could sit in and ascend in a cautious angled manner. Susan wondered what would happen if the electricity ever went out for a long period of time. She didn't seem like the type who hoarded canned foods. She didn't even seem like the type who liked chopping vegetables. The chair probably had a battery though, maybe even a chain one could yank to start a generator or a lawn mower. Perhaps that was what inspired her to go hunting for her own chair, sitting across the way from

the creeping bag of salt water and brittle bones.

Susan wasn't hungry. The thought of food made her want to vomit even though her stomach felt empty and cancerous. She paced through the apartment, wearing the carpet thin in the spaces where the boards underneath met unevenly. She had quit her job four or five days before, telling her sheepish small boss that he could take his cheesy job and shove it. She took a plastic chair to the roof, swallowed a couple opiates and Coronas, and sunbathed while reading Beckett. Her boss didn't even have a chin; after his lips the skin fell back into his neck.

Chen's call from Western Europe woke her from a drug embedded dream. She had fried the shape of the cordless phone into her belly. Susan limped downstairs to a fan and a cold shower after listening to Chen's peppery Copenhagen lyrics. And could she pick Marc up from the airport in two days? Showers didn't stop hurting until the second day, and her skin didn't stop burning itself until she was driving to the airport. Even still, she let off a large radius of heat that left her uncomfortable underneath light blankets in the fading summer. When Marc stripped off her top, she remembered feeling disappointed that she hadn't started peeling yet, and when she was on top of

him, biting her lower lip to feign pleasure while ramming low into his abdomen, she felt like screaming. After he came, she pulled off and excused herself to the bathroom. Susan lathered her skin with aloe. She walked to the kitchen half-naked, smelling new cigarette smoke from her room, and feeling like a starched piece of cardboard under the thick layer of lotion. Her eyes welled when she leaned over the sink to turn the faucet and fill a glass with water. She imagined the salty tears finding their way into her stomach.

She was rocking in a patterned easy chair when a suited woman approached her.

—Do you need any help?

Susan crossed her legs, touched the armrest.

—Can I get this one?

The woman put a finger to her lips, and pretended to consider.

—I think this might be the last one I have, and I can't sell you the floor model. Would you mind waiting while I call one of our other offices and see if they have any in stock?

Susan shook her head and smiled widely. The woman flashed teeth and stepped away. ☆

EVOLUTION IN MOTION

Mick Gael

let's assume that this ostracism is self-inflicted
the criticism of social orders constricted
conscripted evolved left alone in the cacophony
true as it is, I've chosen into this
my own making, my own decision
then why do these walls exist
built then burnt (hurrah, hurrah)
line theft is another way to ignore the state of things
and its city as well, agony over unoriginal thought
go ahead, you can laugh all you want
they're only serving decaf
but it's not like I need the flagrant manic return
behold beholden be left holding
whatever it is you've got in your hands
see that, and that alone, makes it all worthwhile
call it what you will, we're just tapping into
that larger thing: God, the om, yourself
(just on another plane)
would this matter if we're all the same
'cause we are

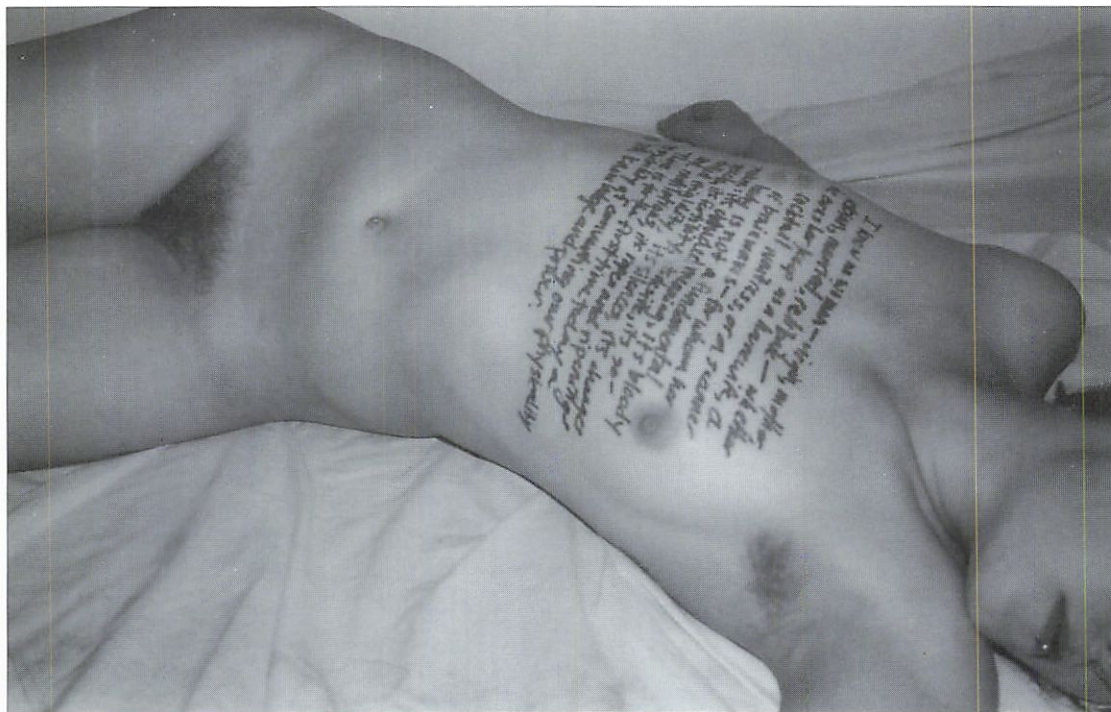
REACHING

Lindsey Brown



ANNA #2

Allana Ross



ASHTRAY SUNDIAL

Brandon Pate

At an hour like this—
Marked by an ashtray sundial—
Draped in cold still arms
of coal black night,
with a pen and a burden
so heavy it could break a man.
A mug, decanter, a flask...
one gives in to the next
when a muse is mute.
But I won't be satisfied,
penning shit and pissing ink
onto this toilet paper.
While coaxed by dreams
and the ambitions of tomorrow,
I give in
to the tip tap, tip tap,
lullaby of raindrops,
and think to myself:
it's so sad, it's so sad
to have a silent heart,
and not to see the poetry
in all things.

MONTAGUE

Dan Harding

varying browns and hot greens of fields
wheat one day, tilled over the next
acres of beans littered with squabbling turkeys and jovial white-tails
memories of gale forces on front porches memories
of melodious maple trees and baritone beeches
fronted by the ever-alliterative ash.
memories of yellowish labs and the maniacal greys of cats
memories of four-foot snow drifts and endless fishtails,
three-foot waves and endless staircases,
buckets of sand and bottomless buckets in sand,
all-too-friendly blisters of posthole diggers and
the whitened mange of aging smokers.
mothers, sisters, aunts and little brothers.
reflections from skipping stones on whispering sunsets.
reflections from brown eyes' hypnotic depth
understanding of many women, one lost man,
one town with a fat twin, one tavern full of talk,
one love full of understanding yet
never a no vacancy sign in
montague
city on two lakes.

THOUGHT MEMORY IDEAL

Cody Yarbrough



TEMPORARY RECEPTION

Leann Ford

a company of
a certain size
soon requires a female
voice to be obliged

by eleven my own voice
answering, sounds like tepid
coffee endlessly poured
over some distant lap

remembering not to say yeah
or ain't, or y'all and sound
like the nice, educated
white girl I was hired to be

page through women's magazines
that read like a self-administered
lobotomy—since when
is a blowjob that complicated?

a grid of numbered grey
buttons represents one hundred
people too important to pick
up their own phone

it makes them think they matter
to me, stopping by to announce
that they are Going Out
like it's some sort of inborn gift

meanwhile I wait for my
resentful "relief receptionist"
to show up, so I can take
a break, a smoke, a piss.

RECLINING VICTORY

Claire Flint



AIN'T LIFE A BITCH?

Bobby Yucka

Jared Kindreck was exhausted, born-dead-drag-ass-exhausted. It was finally Friday, and he'd been working himself into the ground all week at Callahan's Rubber factory trying to reach the illusive ten-thousand units of rubber chickens. If barely missing the quota by one rubber chicken wasn't bad enough, his wife Clara had left him for another man. An insurance salesman named Dirk from Long Beach was all he knew about the prick, besides that he'd been sticking it to Clara for about a year now, or so she says. *Thank God the bitch didn't plook-out any kids.* Jared thought, looking into the mirror of Callahan's employee locker room.

I look like shit.

He ran his fingers through his dark-brown hair and noticed a ripe zit on the receding hairline of his four inch forehead; at least, that's what it measured the last time he'd slapped the measuring tape onto his melon to find out how fast his hair was running away from his face.

Better a four-head than a five-head. Ah, but it won't be long before it reaches five, I'm afraid.

Jared chuckled at that thought, and proceeded to do a little maintenance of puss extraction on the unwanted third eye of his soon-to-be five-head. With a sharp pinch, he shot out milky-yellow liquid that landed onto the mirror before him, looking like a splattered insect on the windshield of his Honda Civic.

After wiping the bug-like mess off the mirror, Jared strolled to his locker to

change out of over-alls, shower, and jump into his party clothes. Exhausted or not, he planned to party and get laid. He intended to venture into the hot new singles bar at the north end of San Diego called Gidd'er Inn. He took the bus to work so that he could catch a cab home, hopefully not alone.

After changing, he inspected himself in the mirror. He was man of average looks: brown hair, brown eyes, and goatee. With a slender build at about five foot, ten inches tall, he dressed into clothes that always looked baggy, and today, dark-gray Abercrombie long-sleeved shirt, tucked into black Unionbay cargo pants that hung above a pair of black leather Bass Sutherland size 9s.

Meeting his approval with a snap and a point of an index finger, Jared fled the factory to catch the north bound bus to his destination.

On the bus, he sat close to a couple of mentally challenged guys having a conversation.

"I dun'like Kinny. He'a stupit an stupit shewd hurt," one said to the other.

"No, den I be her'den awe duh time."

Jared couldn't hold back the laughter and it was just what he needed to get himself into prime-party mood.

He exited the bus a block away from the club and ambled to the entrance of Gidd'er Inn. Stepping inside, he found an empty spot at the main bar and ordered a shot of tequila to start the evening off

with a bang. One turned into five making Jared feel no pain or fear. He looked to his right and eyed the man beside him. The guy was above average in size with a shaved head and tattoos, which was the subject of conversation between him and another mean-looking dude on his right.

"Yeah, I did all the tats on my fore-arms and I even tatted my cock."

Jared blurted out, "Yeah, you probably tatted a dick on your pussy."

He knew, as soon as it left his lips, that he was in trouble.

The tattooed bald man grabbed Jared by the collar, picked him up about an inch and chucked him to the floor. Jared got up slowly and flung himself at Tat-man, wrapping his arms around the guy in a face-to-face bear hug, pinning his arms to his side. They fell to the floor in a heap with Jared on his back. The bald man tried like hell to get loose, but to no avail. Then, out of the blue, his head reared and thrust forward, like a cobra striking its victim, sinking his teeth into Jared's eyebrow and forehead.

"Aaaaaaah, fuck me!" shrieked Jared, "I give, I give!"

Tat-man stopped chewing and Jared undid his grip. Blood was gushing from his left eye as Baldy stood. With both hands on the wound, Jared opened his right eye and noticed him standing right above. Seeing his window of opportunity, he kicked his right foot upward with all his might and found his mark, crushing

Tat-man's future babies.

"Umph," was the sound followed by a crash to the floor.

Jared got up fast and proceeded to thrash the fallen man with one of his size 9s, until someone grabbed him from behind, pulling him away.

"That's enough. You got him," is what he heard from the voice in his ear. "Come with me. I'll take you to the hospital and get you fixed up."

He turned to see that a beautiful blond about his height was the source of the speaker.

God, let her be single.

On the way to the hospital, Jared found out that she was in fact single, and named Melissa, but her friends called her Mel. She also told him that he fought bravely and kissed him on the cheek.

Thank you, God.

Jared got patched up and on the way out of the hospital, there was Mel waiting for him. She gave him a ride home and he asked her up for some coffee. Mel accepted and soon they were making out on his couch. He had his hand on her thigh and was inching his way to third base. As he reached under her skirt, something was not right. Jared latched onto something all-too-familiar.

As Mel was leaving, Jared thought, *Ain't life a bitch? ☆*

GENERATION

Light Dixon

Bearing the countenance of the wise and stoic
Thick-hewn sod and blazoned-bronze skin
Heroic broad beams set in to hold the sky
Testimony to resolve through time
Solitary where hope touches the earth
Bone, sinew and muscle tenuously birthing from soil
Toil congealing over the decades behind horse and plow
Now this stoic form is monument to course and will
Still the foundation for generations to come

Yet from this stoic form of might
Compassion thrives within these halls
Through a curved, cracked window escapes a light
So soft and caring, boundless and stable
Whose weathered chaffed smile could enable
A young boy to look within himself and see
I'm my grandfather's son and I know from where I came
Looking up ahead it all looks the same
And looking back: "Hey, it's just another row to track."

THE BEAUTY BLOCK

Sam Scharf

haven't written lately
made poetry
just
love
between my thighs
frantic harmonious juxtaposition
metaphors dripping from his tongue
smiles and similes staining the sheets
latex
contains unwielded imagination
 retains threat of procreation
the weather too
 ephemeral cottonwood clichés
 float lazily by
 lapped kitten stroking
 smelling hot lilac intoxicant
 dusk soaked sentiment
 sets with the sun
haven't written lately
made poetry
haven't had to
i'm
swimming
in it

THE FOREST OF STUMPS

Paige Lehmann

The forest of stumps offers virgin thighs
and at her taste I spit out the bitterness
and rested on five-hundred long rings
watching black birds glide from blue to blue
my skin's pierced by chapping wind
the sun pours on
the forest of stumps offers virgin thighs
and branches surrender like civil war corpses
smooth drifting pieces
I hacked them down with a gunmetal axe
and at her taste I spit out the bitterness
and sweat through shirt and jacket
and my back ached, my arms ached, my blood left me
until I stood with one last chapter
the forest of stumps offers virgin thighs
so I cut them down to build my coffin
the long body tilts toward me, open invitation
and at her taste I spit out the bitterness
and the stillness roars in my ears so I take up the axe
and hack at the roots
the forest of stumps offers virgin thighs
and at her taste I spit out the bitterness

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