

LiiT, the IIT Literary Arts Magazine

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Round Robins:

It has been tradition that, at every LiiT meeting, the assembled writers, artists, and passerby each contribute a line to a communal story-poem-musing in order to record the spirit of the moment and to create a new and beautiful object.

Round Robin 1

She looked up from the blank sheet of paper on her desk. Her thoughts were dry, dry as dust.

Like the dust that surrounds dinosaur fossils and my operating systems concepts book!

She erased the latest failed sentence and swept the rubber shavings off a three-foot block of oak. Curse this writer's block!

The block just sat on the desk, mocking her attempts to plot.

As if it was smiling too, looking at her. Deriding her to do, to do more, to do something, anything!

So she got up on two determined feet and put on her running shoes... hoping the fresh mountain air would revive her mind.

Fresh mountain air is very cold. Jackets are nice. "I want a pony,"

She thought- when suddenly, a Przenalski's horse galloped past her, foam flying from its mouth.

That reminded her she liked root bee floats, especially the foamy kind.

But foam too has its negative aspects: like getting all in your eyes & shit.

Feb. 20 Round Robin A

I'm obsessed with sentient dolphins on zip lines.

And I'm obsessed (only a little) with zip cars

I'm obsessed with the failure rate of zip drives.

I am obsessed with my failures with zippers.

I am obsessed with not being obsessed with-

Because obsession is an obsession, is an obsession

There's an infinite feedback loop to crash your brain. Stop the neuroses- I want to get off!

Feedback in circuits is good! What were we talking about?

Round Robin Scatter

(This has lines from Frank from Housing, Mike from Shimer, Rose from Michigan, and Matt, Adam, Michaela, and Linda from IIT.)

Sometimes, the devil is a gentleman

With a business suit and black goatee.

And a tattoo of China on one cheek.

I like boobies.

Pressed against the back of my neck.

Tonight on FOX News- Boobs: the silent killer

I'm dead a hundred times over- which makes fifty women.

Soon the world will end, but on the bright side gas is only \$3.

Is it ironic that the devil, gas, money, & boobs are interrelated?

People pay money to see boobs.

This must mean that boobs are the devil- or gasoline?

And thus ends the caterpillar- in fire.

Feb. 6 Round Robin!

Smoothie slow, want a drink

Would you like maroon or should 4 make it pink

Pink turquoise blue post-it writing.

Thundering smiting! Polymerized chitin!

Thor want smoothie now!

Or Thor going through roofie now!

The rafters are getting drunker

So let's hide ourselves inside a bunker.

Feb. 20 Round Robin B

I am sitting with my legs crossed in the shape of a 4.

Or is it a 9, oh, drat, I know no more

Numerology as applied to body language: a bastardization of the Golden Mean.

Give me a number for a sign

$(a + b)$ is to b as a is to I don't even know any more

You come a long way baby, you don't never care no more

The derivative of x^e has nothing to do with π .

None of this matters as the shade of carpet and concrete matches

Matches light fires inside my mind.

The flames are burning and intertwined.

We are all part of this equation, designed.

Self Portrait by T.R. Nunes

I see myself through my soul,
And this is what I see...

Face -- Wrinkled, disfigured --
Yet people recognize me.

Eyes -- Rheumy, yellowed --
Yet still I see.

Nose -- Bulbous, flawed --
Yet the air smells sweet.

Hands -- Crooked, withered --
Yet still I feel.

Ears -- Malformed, bestial --
Yet birds are singing.

Mind -- Twisted, malignant --
Yet still I reason.

Heart -- Putrid, broken --
Yet beating on, within my breast.

I see myself through my soul,
For I cannot trust my eyes...

They lie.

A Patch of Blue by T.R. Nunes

Sometimes it's the little things that help us make it through the day

Ten years.

I've been sitting in this cell for ten fucking years, through appeal after appeal, waiting for every legal option to be exhausted. And tomorrow it will be over.

Even now, after so many years have past, I can't help thinking of Chris... And Pedro, that little Latin bitch of his. We were happy, Chris and I. Together seven years, with our own house in San Rafael, overlooking the bridge and the bay. And after all the years we were together the sex was still great, and we remained on the same wavelength. We understood each other, anticipated each other's needs... We were like soul mates.

And then I came home early one afternoon and found them together, on the floor of my personal studio, my studio, surrounded by my paintings. I can still feel the anger, the hot rage I felt at that moment. I'm not sure I regret what I did, even to this day. What I do regret is that I didn't rush in and do it then, let the rage of the moment propel me into that room and kill them both then and there. That might've been manslaughter, I later learned. Instead I waited and planned for the perfect moment, the most excruciating revenge. And now, ten years later, here I am, sitting in a concrete cell without a view, separated by a few feet of rock from the San Rafael view I loved so much, waiting for tomorrow.

I can only hope for a quick end.

The Representative from San Rafael took a deep breath and continued to speak. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the bill I'm proposing is, as I've expressed time and again, not only a compromise but a boon for the State of California. As we're all aware, public opinion in our state is now marginally against capital punishment, unlike most other parts of the country. And, as one of the top ten economies in the world, the compromise achievable via this "Permanent Imprisonment" bill should ease relations with our international trading partners, all of whom oppose the death penalty. In addition, interest has been expressed by both Federal agencies and the private sector, so funding won't be an issue."

"I don't give a damn who in the hell's funding it," the Representative from Stockton exclaimed. "I can't see spending an additional dime on some bastard who's been sentenced to death, and I think my constituents would agree. And I still don't see how it'll work, anyhow. The whole thing sounds like something out of a cheap science fiction novel."

"Let me explain it again," responded the San Rafael Representative, in a tone that seemed to imply his opinion as to the intelligence of his esteemed Stockonian colleague. "Our Federal and corporate sponsors have devised a new cryogenic technology that would allow convicts to be frozen instead of executed. Over the long term, these frozen inmates would require significantly less space, and the energy costs would be offset by other then unneeded services such as food, heat, etc.... Plus, our state would be contributing towards valuable scientific research, with possible applications in aerospace, medicine, and possibly other fields as well."

"I still don't like it. If you freeze these people, isn't there a chance they might be thawed out later, given a reprieve? What about their victims, or future victims? I mean, hasn't the state already tried these people and sentenced them to death?" asked the Representative from Fresno.

"Regarding the 'defrosting issue', that's a nonstarter. You see, today's technology only allows for someone to be frozen. The process is irreversible, which is a problem our sponsors are looking for assistance in solving."

"Well, if these 'human popsicles' can't be thawed out, how do you even know it works? How do you know they're not already dead??" the Stockton Representative asked.

"Ah, well, there's the most interesting part. You see, the people who developed this technology have also developed a 'synaptic interface', a device that allows for the monitoring of a person's experiences and dreams. In addition, this new interface technology allows for specific dreams or memories to be introduced and modified, such as a dream of a prison cell for example, or replacing their memory of agreeing to the procedure with a memory of their death sentence being commuted to life in prison."

"And you seriously think anyone's going to agree to let themselves be frozen like a steak in a freezer?"

"With all due respect to my esteemed colleague from Stockton, I do believe people will chose such an option, especially given the alternative. Beyond that, and as I've expressed before, I believe this bill is good for the taxpayers and therefore good for the State of California, and would like to request a vote."

I can't stop staring out my new cell window. I awoke this morning to it, the day after I was supposed to be executed. There it was, an incredible patch of blue, with pure golden sunlight pouring through the bars. I practically leaped out of bed to look out, and the view took my breath away. I mean, when they explained to me the day before that my sentence had been commuted, and that I was being moved to a new prison wing, I didn't know what to expect (not much, certainly). But this...

I had a view of the bridge... The Richmond-San Rafael bridge... The same bridge I used to look out on from our back porch, the back porch of the house that Chris and I used to own. There it was, a steel and concrete ribbon jutting out from the light brown hills of Marin, across the blue waters of the San Francisco Bay. After ten years in that other cell, this new view was like a dream come true.

I felt alive again, standing there in my new cell, looking out of that window. I'd been given a second chance at life, along with a beautiful view... A view I felt I could look out on forever.

The newly elected Representative from San Rafael stood and addressed his new colleagues, giving a speech he'd practiced for hours the night before. "My Esteemed colleagues, thank you for warmly welcoming me into this auspicious chamber, a chamber wherein my father also served. Many of you had parents who served with him, or may have met him yourself when you were younger, before he passed away. He used to tell me that his service to this chamber was his life's defining moment. I can only hope for a legacy of service that comes close to his.

That said, as my first legislative act, I would like to propose a revision to my father's "Permanent Life" law. This new bill would address some of the current problems with the law,

problems my father couldn't possibly have anticipated. For example, as you all know, our original Federal and corporate sponsors have withdrawn their support. After two decades of continuous research at our San Rafael facility, research that brought about incremental improvements such as the 'virtual guard' subroutine, no revolutionary advancements were achieved. The process remains, as always, an irreversible one. And, with increased energy costs and our loss of external funding, we find ourselves faced with several alternatives.

First of all, we could pass a bill that would terminate the program. However, given that the originally bill reflected the opinion of most of our constituents specific to the issue of capital punishment, as well as the beliefs of our international trading partners, such a bill might be unpopular.

Secondly, we could raise taxes to further fund the program. Popularity aside though, we're all aware of how well a tax increase to support Permanent Life convicts might sell to our various constituencies.

Finally, we can consider modifying the original bill, as I am proposing today. This new bill would not affect the inmates quality of life in any way, and the new and significantly more efficient containment units would save the state millions of dollars a year. Personally, I think that the passage of this new bill is our only viable alternative. Any questions?"

"I have one," said the Representative from Stockton. "Your bill specifies a newer containment unit only one foot square, as compared to the current coffin-sized units. How exactly would that work? I mean, how is the reduced size possible?"

"Well, as I mentioned before, we've achieved a number of incremental technological improvements, though the primary goal of a two-way process has always eluded us. One such improvement allows for the freezing of only a portion of the convict, the portion we interface to. The disposal of the rest of the convict is a non-issue really, as we can never resuscitate them anyway. In addition, it's possible that some of the body tissues could be harvested for medical purposes, another 'win win'. And, since the new containment unit is significantly smaller, we save on both storage space and energy usage."

The Stockton Representative chuckled wickedly. "So ya' cut off their heads, eh?"

"Um, er, yes, I suppose you could put it that way."

"Ha! Well, I guess cuttin' off the heads of a few murderers is an idea my constituents could support. When do we vote?"

"Hey, Johnny!" I yelled through the bars of my cell. After a moment or two, the guard, Johnny Johnson, ambled on by, a friendly smile on his face as usual.

"Whatcha need, buddy?"

"I was just wondering if you might want to play another game of chess this afternoon?"

"Sure, no problem! I'll swing by after lunch with the board and pieces. See 'ya then!"

"See ya!"

As Johnny ambled away, I turned around and walked back to my 'patch of blue'. There were a few wisps of cloud in the sky today but, other than that, the sky above the bay was the most perfect shade of blue. An oil tanker was making its way leisurely under the bridge, and the cries of seagulls could occasionally be heard through the barred window. It was a view I never tired of... A view I could look at forever.

Stained Glass by David Kopka

Intricate shards form the random pattern
that is an ecstasy of agony.
A work of uncontrolled emotion.
I lean forward, something's staring back.
Clenched teeth and furrowed brows, he's hunched over.
His father's hazel eyes stare through a past of lost fights.
Sweat from an uncertain future mingle
with tears of exhausted patience
and run down his face...

Browns, blacks, blues, reds...
Oh, so much red.
My hand shakes as the cold stinging pain settles in.

A bathroom mirror is no place for stained glass.

A Heartbreak Hard to Let Go by David Kopka

Sometimes I get this feeling like we weren't meant to be.
People in love aren't supposed to act like this toward each other.
It never used to be like this.
But I've grown older.
There's school
Work
Responsibilities.
What happened to the little things that made us smile?
Ran out of time for that.
Seething anger takes its place.
She ignores me.
Does things she knows makes me mad
Makes me want to hit,
But only because she yells and hurls her fists back,
Pushing me around.
She is the gum stuck under my shoe.
I want to scrape her off and be done with her
Forever.
Cut her loose, give her up.

But I can't.

I lover her,
Like candies and roses.
I'm crazy over her.
This wicked beauty.
This fixating addiction called Life.

Work by Linda Goldstein

Employers are liars,
 Promising that you will fulfill yourself,
 That you will be happy
 When really you'll get off work and collapse at a cafe
 Wondering when the real life will get here.

The college cold by Linda Goldstein

This is the college cold, when you drag yourself from bed
 At eight or nine or eleven in the morning (sinuses aching)
 And to class, unprepared, with a paper cupful of tea
 It slops, scalding your hand, freezing in droplets to your coat-
 Sprint across the street ahead of the cars.

This is the college cold; you huddle in blankets
 With the snow blowing straight up past your window.
 In the dead of night, loud are the sounds of revelry
 Of those with fewer responsibilities or more active friends

This is the college cold, the chill in your soul.
 The university you've loved off and on
 Has been fucking you over for four long years
 So gently that it only hurts in the bleak morning
 As you clutch your diploma and slink home.

Sentient Nuclear Weapon by Linda Goldstein

An impatient sentient nuclear weapon waited politely in the inner reception room of the Premier of Moonbases One through Six. His demeanor wanted nothing, and the business cloak draped around his metallic frame was impeccable. Only an embarrassing clicking from the radiation counter he wore around one spindly hand-unit gave away his annoyance, and his slitted green eyes were narrow, practically burning against the door of the Premier's office.

The receptionist was looking somewhat worried, as well she might; the Premier had made the appointment with an intermediary- a human intermediary- who had claimed to be the representative for the guild of nuclear armaments of the former Moonbase Four arsenal. She- and her superior- had expected a nattily dressed businessman, or perhaps a lawyer- but not one of the Nukemen themselves.

"Er... Mister- ?"

The hunk of metal covered in a length of fabric turned to face the worried receptionist. "Yes, ma'am?"

"Er... can I offer you any- tea? Oil?" The small wet bar beside her desk was a comfort in strenuous times, not only for the important men and women who often waited in this cozy office where the real power was.

"No, thank you," clicked the mechanical being. "But if you have some extra shielding lying around, you might want to wear it... I apologize for not being able to control my neutron flow as well as I might. You see, inadequate maintenance by our government is one of the things that I'm here to discuss."

The secretary shivered, and wished that she'd drawn outer-office duty today, where there were riot shields in the grandiose moon-limestone hall, and police officers, and shielding, and where she wouldn't have to offer tea to firepower.

Just then, the soundproofed door swung open, revealing the inordinate thickness of it; there was soundproofing inside the wood, as well as in the walls. The hinges rolled smoothly across

the wall like spider fingers, rearranging themselves fractally for the optimal speed and angle of door movement.

"Angela, why on earth have you not picked up the... intercom... Oh, dear." The Premier re-donned his political poker face. Only the sudden sheen of sweat on his brow gave him away, and he wiped his hands on his pinstriped jacket, twice, quickly. "Hello, Mr. ..." he paused. "Would you like to come in to my office?"

"Yes."

"Ah. Well... good. Here we go..." As the Premier shut his office door behind the two of them, he whispered to his secretary to be a dear and to bring in a bottle of wine when his guest left...

"I wasn't expecting you to actually come personally, Mister..."

"You may call me Steve. My designation is Moonbase Four, rocket forty-three."

"Ah. Thank you, Steve. Call me Hiro. I was expecting- a lawyer. I mean-"

"You were expecting someone less radioactive. I understand. But it was decided that if one of us came personally, the situation would be resolved more quickly... especially because I'm emitting about half a rad every ten minutes."

"Oh." said the Premier. "May I see your list of demands?"

Houston, I'm on fire by Linda Goldstein

Skis weren't the only things that would fit well on those unwieldy ski boots, but there was no reason to strap toasters to one's feet- although in space, everything did have to be nailed down, and no one said that it had to be nailed down immobile to a wall. And NASA was nothing if not efficient.

In such a way did Eric of NASA come to be explaining to a thoroughly un-chilled robot from Beat-a-goose (which is the only way that the aliens and their servants had yet found to say

Betelgeuse) that no, the piece of toast that had just jettisoned itself from his person was not a threat, nor a weapon, nor an act of war, nor something which his body normally voided itself of... although perhaps it would be wise to leave them thinking that last. It was easier, and could be cleared up later.

If the toaster hadn't toasted the toast (and he was pretty sure that it was a toaster, given that he'd put in bread and that brown and crunchy bread had come out) then Eric was certain that the alien robot's body heat would have; already, he himself was starting to feel singed around the edges, and his red hair was giving a good impression of smoldering, from the smell of things.

Great start, kid, he thought to himself. *You're the Man in the first First Contact, and already you're spewing toast and being set on fire. That's what they'll put on your tombstone- I contacted aliens while mei capilli sunt flagrantes.* He sighed.

"Air-reek," said the alien robot. It looked like a large annoyed amoeba, and he could see delicate circuitry floating inside of it. Hell, for all he knew, it could be an alien. But it had announced itself as a mechanical being, and had expressed surprise that he was not...

Silicon life forms, said the techs back at Houston to each other, knowingly. Science fiction fans all over Earth were convincing each other of various theories from cold fusion (*it's not that, thought Eric*) to unregulated string theory diagram spawning. First Contact was on live broadcast all over the blogosphere, on every news site from Fox to NBC to BBC and back again. Mythbusters was playing it live with commentary. So was Patrick Stewart, who had happened to be doing a podcast. Heinlein would have flipped, and Spider Robinson was turning Nova Scotia upside down looking for his tv remote.

Now, Eric thought, there were two responses that he could make. One of them was "I know, but that's because you're setting my hair on fire," and the other was "Yes, that's my name." They'd taught him, practically from Day One (really from about semester three, but very firmly) that First Contact situations, whether they were with people of his own species or different species, whether

they were with people who had the same vocabulary and accent that he had, or with a cad of a graduate student who spoke something like Nigerian-accented German, that humor was right out, a bad idea, easy to misinterpret, and often dangerous as well.

But Eric was a science fiction reader. There was nothing that he liked better than humor, except maybe a pun- which wasn't on the same level, wasn't (quite) covered by regulations, and which heading this technically fell under.

And so was the first interplanetary war started by a redheaded punster and a heat-bottle alien parrot-puppy.

A Heartless Ruler by Mathew Devendorf

The day was like most, if not all days were – boring and useless. I swung back and forth in my chair and stared at the objects before me. Empty flasks and beakers sat on the table, accompanied by stains of liquids past held. All of these years and I know nothing. All of these years and I've become nothing. All of these years have meant nothing. I go on living a certain way. I put rules upon myself. No. Society puts rules upon me. Society has forced me to become something and rewarded me with nothing. I am ruled by a heartless ruler. So why don't I go against this ruler? My God that sounds simple. It sounds incredibly simple, too simple because it's not that simple. It comes down to raw human emotions: I just can't do it. I can't make a decision that has the potential of destroying so many human lives. But then, I always think of it in a different way. Who cares? Well, it doesn't matter who cares, because I am the only one who lives my life. If some fucker's life in Fuckstown, Fucksylvania is ended, does that even matter to me? No. That's it – no. So I'll do it. I have nothing to lose. I'm going through with it and that's final.

I retrieved the flask holding the liquid and drank. The effects were instant. I grew. I got big. Then bigger. And larger. And became gigantic, enormous, tremendous, monstrous. I could walk across continents. I stepped on so many people. I could not see the people, but I knew that they were there, screaming, not knowing what was happening. I kept growing. Earth could not hold me. Earth was not in charge of me, I was in charge of Earth. And now, I destroyed Earth.

The Kids by Mathew Devendorf

the kids

they always draw the sun

the kids

are always having fun

the kids

don't question what is done

the kids

then grow and try to run

Angel by Katie Lazicki

broken angel desires a missed dance
longing embrace, fool
could brilliantly fly above for eternity
nevertheless
one slow soft kiss
delicious last breath
then die

Think Scale by Mausgras Snapper

The Stagyrite says beauty is order,
 order and size,
 and that's the reason why
 the petite,
 though well proportioned,
 neat,
 still fail to satisfy
 the fashionista

Nicole Kidman – five eleven
 Naomi Campbell – five feet ten
 Elle Macpherson – six feet even.
 Heidi Klum – five feet nine
 But
 Ingres' Odalisque has the longer spine.

Plotinus beholds a golden sphere
 with bated breath,
 and notes that:
 Beauty has no magnitude,
 for did extension matter,
 then would the intellect
 be beauty-less;
 and Phideas, says he,
 has wrought his statues free
 upon no models among the things of sense.

Leo Steinberg beholds a Golden Egg
 sculpted eight feet tall
 proclaiming that:
 a thing's thingness
 must be appropriate to size.
 When seeing a Rauschenberg, says he,
 you need confront its breadth.

Ingres' Odalisque has countless vertebrae.
 Is her thingness appropriate to her thighs?
 And was she modeled upon the things of sense?
 Ingres never left his native land.
 He never breathed in Turkish airs.
 And yet,
 he quotes the Stagyrite and stares.

Apologies to:

Leo Steinberg *Encounters with Rauschenberg* p. 36, 66
 Aristotle *The Poetics VII & Nichomachean Ethics* IV.3.
 Plotinus *Annead V, Tractate* 8.2

Plagiarized lines #17 by Mausgras Snapper

Tom Raworth,
the poetic Brit,
tells me that
80% prefer French fries
(he calls them chips)
to poetry.

I ask --
how many prefer
pigeons on the grass
and
rooms where women come and go
to poetry?

Me too, I do.
Alas

Apologies to:

Tom Raworth "Chips"

Gertrude Stein "Four Saints in Three Acts" Act 3.2

T.S. Eliot "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Old Friends by Galina Shpuntova

Four years, ten months, one week, and four days exactly since the worst day of my life. I realize most people don't say this about their college graduations...but mine was special that way. I had almost managed to block it in my mind—the note by the bed, the broken heart, the tears, the sleepless nights and lack of appetite—and move on. He left and took a year of my life with him, if not more. He cost me the great job I had lined up out of school, a year of living in a disgusting apartment I couldn't summon the energy to make habitable, a year of bad friends and worse choices, and even worse, a year of enjoying my life.

I clawed my way out of that deep, dark pit. My friends (the real ones, like you) tried to help me, but it just came down to me. I threw myself into work, started volunteering, cleaned up my apartment, and abandoned the new “friends.” I made a new, clean, safe world that was all mine; and now, again, he wanted to invade it.

It was so simple, really. So...normal. I got back from work, tossed off those ridiculous heels (why do I wear them again?), and sank into my couch for a few minutes to get over the commute while I listened to my messages, and there it was.

Heya, Kate! Long time no talk...It's Ryder, by the way. Um...so, listen. lame as it is, I have a favor to ask. I have this awesome opportunity with a company in Chicago, and I'm gonna be in town for an interview next Thursday. Couldn't get a ticket back 'til Sunday night though. So I was wondering, could I maybe crash at your place for a few days? Promise to not be a nuisance and hope we can catch up a bit! Call me back, ok? and then his number and other pointless details. Like I'd call. Like everything was okay, we were just a couple friends that had lost touch. I felt a surge of bitterness.

The machine moved on to another message, Sharon clarifying sitting arrangements for Michael, then you asking if I'd be joining the group for a round of the bars that weekend. I forgot all about the idiot and went on to make some dinner, call back Sharon and you, shower, and read. Only when I was almost asleep did I realize I had left the evil message on my machine. Whatever—I could always deal with it tomorrow.

* * *

It was dumb and I knew it. I don't know why I stop myself or deny the stupidity of it. Maybe I thought I was finally ready to face my past (dumb). Maybe I wanted a little adventure, and dare I say, drama, back in my life (even dumber). Maybe my buried feelings took me over and guaranteed that I let it happen (utterly idiotic). I'm not sure I really care what made me do it anymore, but it what it came down to was that I called him.

We pursued small-talk for a bit, and I smiled through gritted teeth in an attempt to keep my tone pleasant. It's funny how much you learn to hide, working in an office. Always smiling, pleasant to the customer; the customer is always right. The skills transfer. I had every intention of graciously letting him down—but, as they say, the best laid plans....

So, he was coming in Wednesday night in a week and a half, around dinnertime. He could get here himself, thanks, just needed the address. He could crash on the floor, or wherever; it didn't matter too much, thanks anyway. I swore to break a spring in the sofa bed. I didn't; I figured he wasn't worth breaking my stuff for. Well, any of my nice, new stuff, anyway; obviously what's done is done.

Later that day it first occurred to me to call Jerry and let him know what was going on. I guess it didn't sink in for a while that I hadn't done what I intended and turned him away forever. So I had that conversation with him. "Hey, I have an old friend, a guy, coming to stay with me, don't freak." "Okay." I didn't tell him about our history. Why did it matter? I was happy now, happy with Jerry; and I knew how wrong Ryder was, for me or for anyone.

* * *

I could blame my mum. She raised me to be incredibly polite. That just doesn't go away, ever. I could be hosting my worst enemy (which I felt like I was) and I'd still clean and make him dinner. He was totally a sushi maniac last I knew, so I made some of that; gave me an excuse to, what with Jerry's silly complaints

about it. I didn't make it for his benefit, mind you, more so that I had something to look forward to that night.

So he showed up and we had dinner and we did a bit of catching up, talked about jobs and friends and whatnot. He was rather impressed by my entertainment system (of course). So we played with that for a bit, then, headed to bed. I was proud of myself at that point. He was still alive, and it had been a completely civil evening. I didn't care if we started over or if we dealt with the past. I just wanted the weekend over and him gone. Then I wouldn't have to worry about civility anymore; it might just come naturally.

* * *

So, I went to work pretty much as usual, and Ryder had his own stuff to do. That interview thing or whatever, I didn't really care. He had the spare key. After work I met Jerry and we had a lovely dinner in this lovely Spanish tapas place. I'll get you the name and address; you should really go if you haven't yet, it's very, very good. I had an awesome night, wanted to stay at Jerry's, but I didn't feel like trusting Ryder with my apartment. I shouldn't have worried—he wasn't back yet when I returned.

That was the night I woke up and he was sitting on the edge of my bed, looking at me. That was it. He was just...watching me sleep. It was pretty creepy, but I was half asleep, so I grumbled at him and turned away, and then he left. Now I know why he did that, but I didn't at the time. In fact, I kind of thought I'd dreamed it the next morning.

Friday...he showed up at my work with flowers. White carnations with pink around the edge, his trademark. Seeing as he was staying with me, and trying so hard to be gracious and all, I went to dinner with him. We talked some more. I haven't spoken to him since my college graduation; incidentally also the day we broke up. Correction, the day he left, completely out of the blue. So sue me, but I had been a little curious what he had been up to. We ended up mentioning the night he left, and I guess a little of my bitterness came across, because he told me, staring awkwardly at the table, "Kate, when I left...I didn't want to hurt you. I didn't want you to put your life on hold while I was in the Army. It was

cowardly to not tell you outright, but then there would be questions, and arguing, and...I was sure what I did would be better. I'm sorry. I heard you were incredibly upset for...a really long time and I really wish I could take it back." He kind of touched me, there, and made me think. I hurried to change the subject.

Anyway, we didn't have long. I had to get back to sit with Mikey while Sharon had her night shift. The tyke brought his favorite storybook and his trucks. Ryder played with him, you should have been there. It was adorable. Then we watched Ice Age for the ten kazillionth time (the kid loves that movie) and put him to bed. Afterwards, there wasn't much to do, so we put on a real movie; it's just what you do with a friend when it's that late and you need to stay up, right? I was kind of worn out, though, so I nodded off.

It's not like I intentionally snuggled up to him. I just sort of passed out on the same couch. Next I remember, I was waking up in my bed at home, the smell of frying eggs and bacon easing its way up my nose. For a second I was nineteen again, the first time I stayed over at his place, except I could tell I had spent the night alone; after Ryder had carried me up to bed, that is. He was being unexpectedly gentlemanly.

So, after breakfast, I took him to the sights; apparently he hadn't been to Chicago before, so we did the rounds. Touristy stuff, you know: the Sears Tower, Millennium Park, shopping, the lakefront. Completely standard, I just took him to places he asked about. I took the opportunity to try on some cute tops on Michigan Ave, which he honestly critiqued. We had coffee overlooking the lake and my feet were very unhappy with me by the end, due to all the walking about, but I thought it was a pretty great day, all told.

We didn't have energy for real food on Saturday, so we got takeout, and, naturally, we settled in front of the TV with it. We had a Star Trek marathon, re-watching our old favorites, as well as some episodes that we had completely forgotten. Yes, Meg, I used to be one of Them. I haven't seen any in...about five years, though.... I don't know anymore why I'd let him ruin it for me; I had watched it before we met, but never after he left.

That night...I couldn't fall asleep. I was tossing and turning for hours. Finally, I got up for a drink of water. I had to go

through the living room for it, though. And he was there...also awake. I gave in to a momentary impulse and lay down next to him.

“Ry? How did your interview go?” In all our talking, I had carefully avoided this topic.

“Hmm? Oh. Pretty well, I think. I might need a place to stay for longer than a weekend, soon.” He gave me a sideways smile. “Thanks for letting me stay, by the way. And for going through all the trouble. I don’t think I deserved it.”

“I had fun, Ry. I hadn’t realized...” I swallowed. I wasn’t sure I wanted to admit this, even to myself, but darkness is conducive to honesty. No one can see you blush. “I hadn’t realized how much I missed you.” I gave him a hug with my one free arm.

“I missed you, too.” He turned my face toward his and brought his lips to brush mine in a soft kiss. I bolted upright, as he levered himself up on his elbows. “Kate, I know I don’t have the right to ask, but...can you forgive me? Can we start over?”

“Ry...” I couldn’t keep a quaver out of my voice. “Ry, I forgave you after we had dinner last night, but...I have a boyfriend, Ry. I have a life. Even if I forgive, I can’t forget.”

“Oh.” He looked down and edged slightly away from me. “You hadn’t mentioned him.”

“I...” He had caught me off-guard...how could I not mention Jerry? But remembering back, I realized that he had slipped my mind whenever I was around Ryder. “I guess I hadn’t. I didn’t think it would be an issue...”

“It’s okay...no harm done, right? Look, Kate...” he hesitated. “We should probably get some sleep.”

“Yea...you’re right.” I replied to his implicit message that we shouldn’t be sitting as we were if I wasn’t single. “Ry, do me a favor? Let me say goodbye in person tomorrow.”

“That’s a deal. Good night, Kate.”

The next morning, I hugged him goodbye like a good old friend he was and watched him get into a taxi and ride away, as I cradled a cup of tea. It was raining, and I settled in by one of the windows with a book, but didn’t open it, choosing instead to stare at the downpour outside. My insides churned with conflicting emotions.

I was sad that Ryder was gone, but not quite how I had expected. I was sad my old friend had to leave after a fun weekend, but my heart was not breaking; it had already done that for him. I was also sad to see the idea of him, the perfect relationship we could have had, disappear, but at the same time, happy to see the anger go. I guess nothing ever works out quite the way we think it will....

During Doctorow by Redshirt Kudos

Where no poetry dare'st go, the realms of ice, the realms of snow;
 There is cyberpunk, there are worlds-
 Wormholes in the internet, holes in the net of worlds.

Stross by Redshirt Kudos

Moving consciousness into the cloud;
 Memories into goggles,
 Internet into inside you.
 A paragraph under every pidgeon
 In the urban area.
 I want to know
 How the mechanical combat boots work.
 (It was an irl prototype.)

Memory Storage by Redshirt Kudos

People will back up
 Their hard drive when it is their
 Mind; IT techs happy.

:wq by Redshirt Kudos

“We don't know how anything works in our head,” he says.
 Usually good for another ten IQ points, if you have a laptop-
 Or negative ten, if it's the right video game.
 Use vim!

Moore's Law by Redshirt Kudos

Moore's Law hasn't broken yet;
 Inverse increase.
 “Just, you know, microwave
 Your head for a few seconds.”
 Tech gone!

old poetry by S. K. Black

the pages of her notebook were
rippled, and
smelled of salt.

eyes by S. K. Black

I wonder if you notice
When I stare at your eyes.
I try to be subtle about it.
They're a funny color—
Not brown, not green.
Bright, though.
Your lashes are long, straight,
Sharp almost.
And you wonder why you seem intense!
It's those eyes.
I watch you see everything.

you know by S. K. Black

You're very practical, you know. It makes me laugh.
You're clarity and precision and miles of details—
I'm sunshine on windy days and dancing in the grey rain.
Then you go and dance with me.
I like that.
You're very adaptable, you know. It makes me laugh.

Reunion by Roman Kofman

Forgive me love
 for the tears I had to cry
 for someone else
 (before I found you)

Forgive me love
 for the roses sent,
 but not to your address

Forgive me also
 for the children
 and my faithful wife.
 (such long ten years)

But if you can't
 forgive me,
 pretend (so simple)

they aren't there.

GW by Roman Kofman

belatedly we turn,
 momentum oozing out.
 (the lumbering human beast
 edging to the last slick precipice
)

soon.

the brute will glide back into
 a dark age,
 a crevice of time
 where we forget electricity,
 AIDS,
 and every Holocaust.

Untitled by Roman Kofman

Hearts do dance this way
with bleeding eyes,
wild butterflies,
white linen,
and white
lies

Invest by Roman Kofman

Invest wisely
The thing won't happen
today,
or the day after.

But. Plant a prop on stage.
Pass an idea
to your children,

or a set of dueling pistols
above the fireplace.

Believe me,
your great-grandchildren
will thank your foresight.
In the third
Act; The Revolution.

eight nations by Shawne Holloway

sparrow	take shelter
inside my body	take wing
inside my heart	leaving clawprints
like love	or stitches behind you.

mamasaid by Shawne Holloway

“the bees never worth nothing if you ain’t got that honey”
 my grandma used to tell me— before she died
 she lived on a farm out on route 45 next to the old man home
 when she passed i got the bees
 when she passed i got the house
 but i don’t deserve them cus i always got lost on my way there

she lived on the dirt road way out west there
 behind the forest and highway where the breeze smelled like honey
 i always complained about going to her house
 until one day my mother told me grandma had died
 and i would some day call her old farm home
 i guess she didn’t know about the bees

i always begged mom to let me skip grandmas and stay home
 i never wanted to go the store let alone way out there
 but secretly i was afraid of the bees
 all I wanted was the honey
 but one day she came back and told me she’d died
 that day I wish I would’ve taken the chance to get out of the house

gramma lived in a big blue farm house
 i could never call home
 when she died
 mama told me she left me all the stuff she had there
 to make honey
 like bees

grandma grew bees
 in a farm house

and sold 80 cent jar-honey
always bored of selling i complained about wanting to go home
it was always so quiet way out there
just when i began to enjoy it mama told me she died

gramma died
loving bees
living way out there
in her farm house
everyone in the family but me learned to call home before she died

sweet honey
season ended when grandma died

she kept her bees
on the left side of her home

but now it's just a house
a farm out on route 45 next to the old man home— way out there

because being different makes you popular by Shawne Holloway

if
i had
wings
my wings
would leave you
wide eyed
and
dumbstruck with
wonder and you
would look at me
with respect like
i've always
wanted you
to
do without
me having to
ask or
prove
that I am
worthy

Knees by Shawne Holloway

For you
I've embroidered my tendons
with sacred Hindu scriptures
and the secrets of Mayans architecture

Though still very fragile,
I want you to touch them
To feel the rough scars that the tiny needle aroused from my skin
as I guided the golden thread through the cords
That attach my bones together

I want you to feel them with all ten of your fingers
individually.

So that every time
you think of me from now until we cease
To be lovers I am sleeping

on downy sheets of bear skin
wearing nothing but muscle and bone,
swaddled in tufts of sheep's wool to soak up
all the blood still seeping through the wounds
in drops shaped like stars instead of rain stripped
of every ounce of ability.

There, I can promise that

I am none of the succubi
that you are convinced beleaguer your dreams while
you sleep at night.

I am more than just a dull knife threatening to interrupt synapses.

I am every palm that has ever been extended expecting to
receive a genuine handshake.

So after, even if your fingertips have grown numb from my
messages,
at least, strip down to your muscle and bone so that you
are able to catch the warm breeze of a
new season.

Fallen Angel by Richard Hanley

Welcome home
 We've all been waiting
 The eons flew by
 And here we are again
 Welcome home, the forgotten son

Holy ist thy name
 To hell you've been
 And the eons flew by
 In a blink of an eye

And unto me
 Shall you awake
 For thy name is holy
 And thy body damned

Holy ist thy name
 To hell you've stayed
 And the eons flew by
 As your soul died

Welcome home, the forgotten son
 Your demon hath grown
 With malice and hate
 Welcome to hell
 You fallen angel
 And forever shall you be in pain.

Armageddon Me by Richard Hanley

Oh Greatest Wyrms of Death
 How we have come to know you
 Through these dank nights
 The jugular's in your grasp

Today the sun turned black

And all that was holy has died
The beast has risen crowned with thorns
Armageddon has arrived

The solace once known
Has fled through the border
Hell is our fate
For the gods forsake
Hate eternal
Reigns forevermore

The crimson sky gives way to a gold light
A word in the wind
A cry in the night
The light from above
Burns with its harsh love
Tomorrow has come
And hope has returned
And so the cycle runs on

Oh Greatest Wurm of Death
How you have failed
This world still stands
Compassion shall always live on
Through the worlds above

Oh Greatest Wurm of my Mind
How the day is bright
The yellow sun shines bright
Through the works of a friend
My world lives forevermore
And so shall you die

Traitor by Richard Hanley

A life forged of light
Too little for a fight
The broken shards stab
And all that is left
Has been torn asunder
Traitor be thy name
For today my sun died

May the shadow curse you
May the world shun
For Traitor is your name
And may hell be your fate
May your sins never be repaid

To dwell is to hate
To hate is to die
May you burn in hell
So it is written
So shall it be
And today I die

May the light burn you
May the skies open up
For Traitor is your name
Though I betray you
Though the whole world blind
I shall have your eye
And today I die

Vector Arrow (to the tune of "The Wild Rover") by Sarah Hutchins

I worked on a problem I never did try,
And found different notations did lie.
I attempted with vectors to solve,
But the differences I couldn't resolve.

And it's no nay never,
No nay never no more,
Will I omit the arrow,
No never no more.

I used the arrow filled with much glee,
And I solved the problem with much ease.
Then magnitude I moved on to fight,
No arrow confused me for lack of delight.

And it's no nay never,
No nay never no more,
Will I omit the arrow,
No never no more.

So now an arrow I always include,
And if you do not I will not intrude,
But as for me I will never forget
To use an arrow in all of my tests.

And it's no nay never,
No nay never no more,
Will I omit that arrow,
No never no more.

A Short Story by Sarah Hutchins

There was a kingdom comprised of multiple regions, all living under the rule of the region of Encephalon. Every region had tasks to do in order to keep the kingdom running, and for the most part, everything was good and everyone was happy.

However, one day, the region of Paunch decided that it had had enough of the immigrants with which it had to deal with. Instead of continuing its assigned task of sorting out the immigrants and sending them on their merry way to the appropriate region, Paunch decided to instigate a rebellion among the immigrants. As part of their rebellious march, the immigrants to the kingdom marched through the region of Oesophagus and went all the way to the region of Estuary, where they were summarily expelled.

Despite being the instigator, the region of Paunch was actually hurt by the rebellion of the immigrants, and the entire kingdom felt the effects of this. However, none of this stopped future rebellions whenever Paunch did not feel like dealing with the immigrants properly.

Evidence of Pleasure by Sarah Hutchins

You stand out for a couple minutes or more
Breathing in your beloved poison of choice
Just to breathe it out again.
Then off you go,
Content in your pleasure
Believing the pros are really that good
As to outweigh the con that is the
Evidence of your pleasure.

Around you it hangs,
Surrounding you, engulfing you
Clawing its way through the air around you
Down the throats of those who are near you
To the point where we cannot stand to be by you
For it is cutting off our air
Replacing it with that black, smoky
Evidence of your pleasure.

Fifteen feet away is the rule
Usually not so hard a thing to follow
But is it really so hard a thing to do?
To delay your pleasure a couple seconds,
Just to walk some feet away?
You just stand not more than a couple feet away
From the spot I must tread,
And I must either delay myself by a couple minutes or more
Or be forced to walk through the screen created by
Evidence of your pleasure.

You do not to endure the
Evidence of my pleasure,
That which is forgotten as it spins away
Why must I endure yours?

The Diver by Nim Patel

It took only days to reach the top of the board
 Eyeing the water earnestly with every step
 Its serene splendor contrasted his keenness
 Climbing the last step he stood tall before it
 Both were in awe of the magnificence radiating

His own shaking shook the board along the way
 Peering over the edge of the high precipice
 Fluttering thoughts of what ifs, hows and what
 Clouded his vision and unable to see the pool
 All balance was lost and he fell.
 Not the sort of tumble you expect
 But backwards, the cold plastic slapping him

Have faith, said a voice, the water is warm.
 The dive will be steep but treasure awaits.
 Blinking, the water awaited the diver's decent

Ocean Eyes by Nim Patel

No diver has lived to sound
 The story that lies so deep
 Each one quickly drowns
 As the drop off is too steep

The jet-black shore, so artificial
 It edges the stark white waters
 The contrast hints quite superficial
 But loved it is by many daughters

When waves of sand attack the sea,
 And waters flood shining shores,
 No head can turn away to flee
 Flee these ocean eyes of yours

Just another day for him by Nim Patel

Sweat was freezing upon his forehead
 The wind whipped and gnawed his coat
 He pushed on; the machine was out of date
 The snow was glued on hard to the asphalt
 Wrapped mummy tight, he could barely see
 Whether the sun had rose or not was unclear
 His mind's only thought were his kids
 Alone, fighting the cold gray winter storm
 Just like him, fathers were up that early
 Though not necessary he shovels the stairs
 Maybe the kids will want to play outside
 His back grown old with piggy back rides
 Weary legs from years of chasing his son
 His silvering strands mingled with flakes
 When it felt like he could do it no longer
 Trying to win against the falling snow
 He persisted, his strength-
 the reason for his worn body-
 his kids

Sonnet by Nim Patel

Dreams that dispense desire tirelessly mock,
 Nights prolong as shade shields my fragile heart,
 Tossing under black gems of twelve-o'clock,
 Visions of him sneer sleep-O' love is tart.
 In sunlight no passer-by will see this
 An army of secrets stand defending,
 Thoughts fire freely though, I can't help but miss
 Those ginger eyes. His love is still pending.
 When twilight sprinkles from the heavens down,
 My love towers the moon's stolen wan.
 Whisper of his voice wakes wishes from frowns
 Wars wane where he walks, it's him wills bent on.
 I childishly waltz masked by the night
 Imagining- the dance with my sweet knight.

The Crawling Chemist by Adam Popma

Disclaimer: This work is a bastardization of H.P. Lovecraft's "Nyarlathotep." Please direct all accolades and fruit baskets to his estate, or to the office of Dr. el-Maazawi.

el-Maazawi... the crawling chemist... I am the last... I will tell the audient void....

I believe it began sometime in the distant past. The general tension was awful. To a semester of political and social upheaval was added a strange brooding apparition of looming academic danger; a danger widespread and all-embracing, such a danger as may be imagined only in the darkest nights of Finals Week. I recall that the students went about with pale worried faces, and whispered warnings and prophecies which no one dared consciously repeat, or acknowledge that they had heard. A condition of monstrous debt was upon the land, and out of the curdled sky sifted down biting winds that made men shiver on lonely streets. There was a demonic alteration in the sequence of the seasons—the winter chill lingered fearsomely, and everyone felt that their lives, and perhaps the lives of all the world, had passed from the control of known gods or forces to that of gods or forces which were unknown.

And then it was that el-Maazawi came out of Egypt. Who he was, all could see, and he was of the old native blood and seemed a Pharaoh. The freshmen knelt when they saw him, yet could not say why. He said he had risen up out of the blackness of thirty-seven universities, and that he had seen sights from places beyond our vision. Into the lands of Illinois came el-Maazawi, swarthy, slender, and cynical, always scribbling strange notations of brackets and subscripts and combining them into yet stranger notations. He spoke at great length of the science of chemistry and gave lectures of such elegance as to send his students away speechless, and which swelled his fame to exceeding magnitude. Undergraduates advised one another to take el-Maazawi, and shuddered. And where el-Maazawi taught, rest vanished, for the small hours were pregnant with the scratchings of pen and muttered curses to online problem sets. Never before had the study

of chemistry been such a public spectacle; now the RAs almost wished they could forbid studying in the small hours, that the cries of coupling frat boys might lull the dorms to sleep again, as the leaking roofs slowly crumbled against a sickly orange sky.

I remember when el-Maazawi came to my city—the great, the old, the terrible city of unnumbered crimes. My friends had told me of him, and of the compelling fascination and allurements of his revelations, and I burned with eagerness to explore his uttermost mysteries. My friends had said they were horrible and impressive beyond their most fevered imaginings, and what was written on a whiteboard in the auditorium prophesied chemistries none but el-Maazawi dared prophesy, and in the light of the overhead projectors there was taken from students GPA points which had never before been taken, yet which showed only in the final transcripts. And I heard it hinted abroad that those who knew el-Maazawi might look on sights which others could see not.

It was in the howling winter that I went groggily through the morning with the restless crowds to see el-Maazawi; through a fog of sleep and down the endless stairs into the choked auditorium. And amidst the shadows of his present and former lectures I beheld nebulous atomic structures, and yellow precipitates billowing from out their solutions. And I saw the class battling against failure; against the waves of cruel examinations; thoughts whirling, churning, struggling around intractable problems. Then the biting sarcasm spooled amazingly from the mouth of el-Maazawi, and hair stood on end when certain vowel grades were spied in red ink upon scribbled pages. And I, who was studious and more lacking of social life than the rest, muttered a trembling protest of “increase” or “decrease”—I cannot recall which—el-Maazawi commanded us all go home, up the too-shallow steps into the clammy salted midday street. I cried aloud that I was not afraid; that I could never be made to fail out; and others screamed with me for solace. We swore to one another that our GPAs were exactly the same, and still passing; and when our macroscopic sight began to fade we cursed our hubris over and over again, and leaned on one another for solace.

I believe we felt some revelation sifting down from the city lights, for when we began to depend on them we drifted into curious involuntary marching formations and seemed to know our destinations though we dared not think of them. Once we looked at the pavement and found the blocks nebulous and ill-defined, with scarce a piece of true matter in a void of nothingness. And again we saw a crystal of road salt, structured, defined, and composed of two interpenetrating face-centered cubic lattices. When we gazed around campus we could not find our classes in the other buildings, and noticed that the silhouette of the Tower was black-shuttered at the top. Then we split up into narrow columns, each of which seemed drawn in a different direction. One disappeared into Wishnick to our left, leaving only the echo of a shocked moan. Another filed into E1, howling with a laughter that was desperate. My own column was sucked toward the open west, and presently I felt a wind which was not of the chill winter; for as we stalked out across the barren grey river, we beheld around us the hellish signs of chemistry yet to come. Trackless lands of hexagon and pentagon swept around us in all directions, and ahead of us lay a gulf all the blacker for its glittering walls. The column seemed very thin indeed as it plodded dreamily into the gulf. I lingered behind, for the black rift of graduate school was frightful, and I thought I had heard the reverberations of disquieting wails as my companions vanished; but my power to pay loans was slight. Beckoned by otherwise-insurmountable debt, I half-floated between the titanic microscopic beasts, quivering and afraid, into the sightless vortex of the unimaginable.

Screamingly sentient, dumbly delirious, only the professors can tell. A sickened, sensitive shadow writhing in hands that are not hands, and whirled blindly past ghastly structures of inhuman complexity, helices and porphyrin rings, charnel vats that spool out filigrees of sulfur and amine. Beyond my sight vague ghosts of yet more monstrous things; half-seen columns of tubes and tetrahedrons that rest on nameless orbs and reach up into dizzy realms above the spheres of bachelor and master. And through this mesmerizing landscape the muffled maddening curses, and thin, monotonous whine of impotent speakers from inconceivably boring, spacious chambers, the detestable piping and droning

whereof dance slowly, awkwardly, and absurdly the blind,
voiceless, lifeless graduates whose soul is el-Maazawi.

my hair blew in raining wind by Udayan Das

we are not faultless
when we have suffered at the hands of time
nor do we know what our dreams could have been

what we know
what we are confident of
are these rivulets and streams

that form
late on a Thursday morn
amidst falling light
and rising apathy

when grey captures parts of the sky
and lets rain falling

when all that emanates
or does not emanate
from us

disappears into the wind
captured by the wetness

when the salt on the side of the Sea
and the tears that I hold onto for dear life
become the same thing

that drifting by Sea-sides and
rubbing my palms against icy-lake-ocean-wind
invite the same sort of response
from my pent-up agony

it packs
makes sure of its defenses against the weather
the umbrella and the muffler

and then deliberating
 slowly,
 patiently -
 leaves

Frequent Buzz of a City by Udayan Das

1
 the frequent buzz of an ordinary day
 faint, yet deeply felt, concrete
 and therefore immutable

the steady drowning drone
 of an old city café
 signaling: that it is morning
 and so, we are all, on our way

chatter that drifts in through the doors
 settles at nearby tables
 and then becomes a part of the whole

they say coffee is a miracle
 but it ain't no fun
 enjoying it alone

2
 the streetcars are resplendent and glorious
 Sunshine in the morning - can make anything look - *Golden*
 with that - there is the clamorous
 metal against metal,

the triumph of science
 over such petty matters
 as gravity and distance

a freeway constructed of stone: alive
 because it is the aorta of this city
 and these busy streets, humming and drains
 are the veins and arteries

heartbeats gel,
 and we all – breath - as one

patient walkers, and footsteps,
 rolling wheels against stones
 fluttering wings of white and grey
 the cackle of all-people who sit by
 and watch: *hear* - all of this

3

store clerks stand at windows - staring out
 five minutes before its opening
 not too long from now - roles reversed
 many walkers will be staring in
 pausing from their *busy*-ness - for browsing

4

in Sun-lit rooms they sing
 tinny voices – rise - over the existence of the city
 the morning ragas and the greeting rhymes
 (boot-tapping-) clapping - of hands and gleeful cries
 and hope: that this race will still be saved by - these

at the corners, they cry, loud as a bell
 and overpower little ice-cream carts going by
 (ringing insistent, urgent,
 but now diminishing, distant)

the papers they sell, the little stories of our lives
 the last few remnants of yesterday - gone by

5

and I habitually find myself
frequenting these spots
and thinking back
to when life was simple
(as it *still* is)

when all it needs is for me to hold out my hands
and absorb the buzzing radiation
that strolls through these streets:
the *buzz* of this *fine* city.

Aww by Aaron Komoroski

kitten claws and teddy bear paws
 and all sorts of things that make you go aww
 only remind me of you

sugary sweets lead to fast steppin feet
 and a night of hopscotchin to you
 It's all I want to do

so come join the fun, be prepared to run
 cus it's too far to walk from here
 smell the breeze and try not to sneeze
 as the wind takes us as far as we care

Just a Look by Aaron Komoroski

In that night of blundering glee
 I noticed her, and she noticed me
 and for a magical moment our eyes met
 and everything stopped, as if time itself slept
 But with a blink it was all gone
 and with a parting intrusion came the end of our song
 but maybe through a will and a friend
 we shall chance to see each other again.

School of Love by Aaron Komoroski

Early in life we learn of Chemistry;
 And find from Math that “us” is you + me.
 Next comes Physics: what goes up must come down
 And our flippant dreams come crashing to the ground.
 And what I want is what can never be,
 And that’s what they call Relativity.

The candle by Aaron Komoroski

the candle
 So fleeting is the light
 That our lives cast beyond us
 So frail is the flame
 that burns within our souls
 So easily is it snuffed out
 Denied it's glowing existence
 as darkness creeps
 where radiance once dwelled.

Though the light be fleeting,
 it is all we've got.
 Though the wax drips low
 The fire yet burns hot
 So while the light is shining
 and the darkness has come not
 Let us burn bright to light up the world
 lest we be forgot.

Sonnet 1 by Aaron Komoroski

My Lady, my Love, your skin so fair:
 your beauty is beyond words. Your eyes glow
 and your smile is too lovely to compare.
 Whenever you walk near me, my heart slows,
 your hand in mine, eye to eye, soul to soul;
 never a day as beautiful as this,
 and we walk our path as lovers might stroll
 and lived that day, that moment in bliss.
 O Fair Maiden, the object of mine eye,
 forever you will occupy my thoughts,
 my breath, and be immortalized in line.
 But my feelings you returned for me naught;
 And so I live with my unwanted claim
 to see you always, but never call your name

Poetry by Aaron Komoroski

Whenever I write poetry
I arrange the words creatively
It seems so very simple to me
To mold the words into a tapestry
A song of words; a symphony
One that sounds quite beautifully
But then one line won't fit.

The River by Aaron Komoroski

On a river floating through life
This little raft won't hold long
And I'm not really sure
How much longer I want to hold on

Drifting through without a paddle
No way of knowing where I will go
The rapids are steadily approaching
Signs of a waterfall start to show

Indecision is caused by fear
Of the unknown, of what could be to come
What is there to be afraid of
That has not already been done?

Faster flowing is the river now
I feel it coming oh so near
Time to jump, to feel free
And leave behind my growing fears

Deep Breath by Michaela Heaton

Deep breath.

Brave face.

Tears all over my dress, running down my chest, but mine haven't left my face.

Your tears.

Falling.

Slanting down like rain.

Drowning my heart.

I don't want to be the cause.

I never wanted to see you cry over me.

I'm not worth the salt.

Not here and now, after all we've been through to get here.

I still want.

To dry your tears.

But we agreed.

Now is not our time.

This is not for us.

Deep breath.

Brave face.

We can't both break down.

And I am good at quiet resignation.

So leave my half broken heart on pause until you understand.

It's not as bad as all that.

We can still be friends.

We love each other.

This was just the wrong setting.

I love you.

So I'll take care of you.

While the hurt sinks through your bones.

Because making this choice together doesn't make it not hurt anyone.

It gives us both the chance to know why.

Because you're not ready.

Because I can't wait anymore.

Because we're hurting each other.

Because we don't want to lose this friendship.

Because we don't want to see each other cry.
Deep breath.
Brave face.
Hope someone else will watch over you for me now that you're
walking away.
Hope you sleep at some point.
Hope everyone else can forgive us in the morning for not being
able to make this work out.
No fairy tale.
 Reality is harsh.
 Love isn't always enough.

But my love goes with you.
Even if I move on.
 You will be in my heart.
 My querido friend.

Forgive me.

Now my tears fall.
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Wanting by Michaela Heaton

Over,
Done,
Finished.
Together we closed the door,
And now...
What?
I'm not sure I'll ever know,
What comes next.
Well,
I know what it's meant to be.
Fall in love again,
And start the whole heartbreak over.
Because there were moments,
I imagined that good was good enough.
I tried so hard only to watch,

Like sand through fingertips,
 Gone so fast.
 End First Love.
 End Second Love.
 Third Lover,
 Who ever you will be,
 I hope third times a charm.
 I am tired of doing things this way.
 I want some one I can call to make me smile.
 I want the hurt to heal.
 We can't always get what we want,
 Nor what we need,
 What we crave,
 Or what is essential to our continuance.
 I despise social mores.
 Alone

A different kind of Waiting by Michaela Healton

Help me think this through.
 Listen closely when I say that I am in love with you.
 I can't keep you, and I can't claim you.
 But I have to say what's true.
 And the truth is I would do anything
 wait any length of time
 make any sacrifice
 to hear you say you love me too.

Exerpt from **Myths and Legends of the Ba'hai People** by
 Michaela Healton

"Luke, is it just me or have I not been wearing anything since I transfigured?" Broythew asked somewhat confusedly.

"I did notice, that but I figured it would be more fun to let you figure it out on your own," Broythew was starting to blush furiously and attempting to shrink in on himself at this point, at least until Luke added, "That and I was kind of enjoying the view, and I figured if you didn't notice I wouldn't have to be a gentleman and offer you something to wear."

Swallowing hard for an entirely new set of reasons Broythew cleared his throat in desperate hopes of keeping his voice from cracking, and offered, "Well, that would be one way to be chivalrous. Although it would leave both of us partial exposed, and one of us almost inevitably more embarrassingly than the other. I think the truly gentlemanly thing might be to join me in my state, that way we are back on even footing."

Luke smiled slowly, before responding, "That might indeed be the even more gentlemanly thing to do." As he began to strip off his clothes he turned his eyes to Broythew and continued speaking, "A gentleman also might feel compelled to offer that before we came here Da-xia offered to help me unlock the potential she told me about earlier, and I accepted."

Broythew's mind was a little busy memorizing everything about his soon to be lover, but after a moment words started to filter through and his curiosity reengaged only when he realized that his, sadly still half clothed lover, had stopped moving. "What exactly was your potential that she didn't feel she could share it with all of us?" His eyes locked onto Luke's at this point picking up on a certain amount of nervousness in the other man's eyes.

"Well, as it would happen my untapped potential lies in the area I was enslaved to work in. Ironic, isn't it?" he offered still kind of skirting around answering and becoming more and more hesitant. Broythew might have been the one who'd lost his clothes, but he could see that Luke was definitely in the more vulnerable position, if nowhere but in his own mind. Walking around until he was behind the other man, Broythew propped his chin on Luke's shoulder and whispered in his ear, and "You don't have to tell me. I understand what you're afraid of. But if you want to tell me I'd be interested in hearing, and I promise not to be shocked or appalled by what you can do."

Luke felt a frisson dance up and down his spine in reaction both to Broythew's nearness and the press of the other man's skin against his own and his calm acceptance. It felt very good to be accepted. His nerve returned to him, almost as suddenly as it deserted him and he began to speak again, the shyness in voice now a gentle mocking of that which had been there genuinely only moments before, "Well, I'm not sure I can really tell you, but I suppose I could demonstrate."

Intrigued and certain that he could trust Luke, Broythew circled around back in front of the other man, and said, "All right, go ah-" his voice cut off there into a deep satisfied moan. He looked confusedly at Luke who was backing away from him with his hands in the air and then down at his own body before his knees almost left him after another wave of pleasure swept over him.

"The way Da-xia explains it, some people turn into dragons, become invisible, fly. Some other people maybe, read minds, talk to the dead, and move things without touching them. Some people feel other people's feelings or sing in a voice that makes others do as they wish. And some people have an untapped talent to make other people," A pregnant pause hung here filled with the sounds of Broythew breathing deeply in an attempt to contain himself, "happy." Luke finished with a bit of a devious grin on his face.

Broythew took a very deep breath and centered himself, but that did not stop his voice from coming out deep and graveled, "That is quite a gift you have. I would say you should share it with the world, but the truth is that I am a greedy jealous man, and I think this is just one more reason I want to keep you all to myself." With a smile, and a glint of fire in his eyes, he spoke next in tone that would have been courtly if not for the look on his face, "Now, if you would continue your gentlemanly actions, I think I would like a chance to thank you for the 'happiness' you've been giving me."

Luke smiled, and grabbed Broythew into a kiss before finally letting his pants go to the cave floor with the rest of his clothing.

Fragments of memory by Michaela Healton

I'm fraying away at the edges I'm coming apart at the seams
because I've finally realized, not everybody gets to live out their
dreams.

Being around you reminds me how much I miss the dreams
I'll never have. You remind me who I am, and what I can't have.
You remind me that as a girl I wanted nothing more than to be a
dancer, except to not want to all the things that weren't dancing to

get to becoming one. Gods, I wish I could go for a walk. Sing to the heavens till I was hoarse. Bump into you. Talk. It would be raining, like it is tonight, warm, but wet, humid, and damp. You'd see me and smile, and I would too, but I'd also quickly try to remove the evidence of my recent tears from my face. Not to lie, or keep those tears from you, but because seeing you would give me a reason to notice that the pain I felt wasn't just in my heart but written on my body as well. You would ask the reason behind the tears, and for the first time in years I might tell someone honestly about the reasons that I cry. Something about you makes me think that if I lie to you, the only person I'm serving is myself, and I still don't know how to live that way.

I started out, many years ago, without knowing that I wasn't allowed to defeat the world and do things my own way. I remember when I didn't know to be self-conscious. I remember when I would sing to anyone, anytime, because it seemed to me the natural way to communicate. I remember when I thought I could make myself fly by setting my heart free. I remember the feeling when I knew I was right. I remember knowing that I was the perfect me. The best me anyone could ever be. I remember knowing with the absolutely certainty that God loved me for who I was, and that I loved me too, and that those were the only opinions that mattered. I remember loving everyone without fear or inclination to any alternative. I remember the innocence of my youth.

I remember the day I decided to reach out to the chubby boy in the back of the class. Everyone was making fun of him because we were studying how to eat healthy and exercise, and he was the only kid that didn't have the lean athletic physique of what was the then normal hyperactive school child. I remember thinking that it was the right thing to do, and it would make the people I cared about proud of me. I realized that it would be what I would want someone to do for me. When everyone laughed at me, I wanted someone to stand up for me. So that day I made a choice. The kind that changes everything that comes after it. It was perhaps the first time I ever made a choice I knew in my heart, mind, and soul, was moral, kind and right, and had it blow up in my face.

I remember realizing that I didn't belong. I remember realizing I was a heathen. I remember realizing that everyone was not kind. I remember the day I realized that not everyone cares if you are a good and loving person. I remember realizing that things had changed. I remember when things changed.

I realized I didn't belong one night when I couldn't sleep because of an insignificant moment that had occurred years before. It's still sometimes one of the memories that keep me up at night.

Memory: A day at the Minnesota zoo while Grandpa was visiting. He had done something to make me angry, so I didn't want to stand next to him to see one of the exhibits. The minute I refused I regretted it. I knew that I would never get that chance to see the baby deer again, and it terrified me and broke my heart. I would lie awake for hours, years afterwards wishing I could call my grandfather up, and apologize again for that day.

Memory: I was out shopping with my mom, and I needed a hat. We didn't agree on the one I should get. She told me that it had to be the one she wanted or no hat at all. We got no hat, and I was again filled with crushing horror at my decision, but knowing I couldn't change it. I told my mom that I remembered that one once, and she admitted that she did too. Not one of her proudest moments either as it turns out.

I remember the night I tilted my eyes up into a cloudless night in my seat behind my father as he drove us home from dinner past the church. I remember putting what I knew about my faith together with what I had just learned about the holocaust and knowing that there were people in the world who would hate me and tell me I was wrong because I didn't believe that only Christians got to go to heaven. I knew in my heart at that moment that if any one got to go to heaven it would have been the Jews who died in concentration camps, because they had already been through hell and a loving and compassionate God would never send them back into it just because they didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus. That was the very moment I knew that I would not always agree with everyone in my church. At the time, I was completely unafraid about this relationship, because I knew with every ounce of my diminutive strength that I was right, and that meant no one could hurt my beliefs.

I remember the day some of the older kids hit us with a piece of concrete on the playground. I remember leaving a friend behind. I remember flashes of fear and guilt, of relief, of that confusing internal wish that it had been worse so that how it was and how it felt would be the same.

I remember walking up to the little girl riding around in the play car. I remember having watched her play and thinking she looked like fun. I remember walking up to her and asking if she would be my friend. I remember everything about the moment she said no. I remember promising myself I would never ever do that again, and I remember feeling that I had learned the truth that grown-ups lie.

I remember him, the first boy that broke my heart. The first time my faith in my fellow man truly crumbled. The first time I was a real outcast. I remember wanting to go back to the way things had been, and I remember knowing that I didn't want to go back to not knowing the things I knew, but I wanted the rest of the consequences to go away. I remember the first time I wanted to die. I remember the first times I heard people talking behind my back. I remember a lot.

That's part of what I want Shards to be about. I want it to be my story. I want it to be everyone's story. But I also really crave a happy ending. And maybe there's one to be found. Every day I make new memories. I walk around Chicago and relive times so different from the ones that break my heart.

Now, I remember the night he sat with me in the freezing park, although we barely knew each other, because I needed someone to talk to, and he wanted to listen. I remember the night when I lost it completely, and she locked us in my room all night. I also remember the feeling it gave me when I found the mixed CD she'd made to remind me of that night attached to my door the next day. I remember the first night I spoke to Him, and the feeling that, for the first time in so long, someone thought I was really special. But those are memories for a later time. The full story is always yet to come, and always just finishing. But keep an eye out. Someday you may still see Shards popping up somewhere. It's your story as much as mine. All hurt is hurt, and all healing is getting better, not always getting well, but getting better.

Love in the Time of Geekery by Vlada Gaisina

Interpolating your freckles, I describe a function for the eyes of neither Newton nor Lagrange, but mine only. I lay with my body curve-fitting yours, trying to solve the colored matrix of your iris - a pixelated planet. I admire your frame at rest, afraid to disturb its joints and members in equilibrium. The frequencies of your heartbeat are amplified in my chest, driven oscillations pounding in my head unbounded. Sometimes your thoughts are dark matter to me, but sometimes they burn brighter than a supernova. Yet, I praise silently the entity that wrote the code for your chromosomes, caught in an infinite loop of loving you.

I dream that we are both in a particle collider, coming into contact at relativistic speeds to form simply clouds of baryonic matter... or something infinitely more complex? What wouldn't I give to diffuse into you, atom by atom, so as never to be separated from your perfect phenotype? My devotion could never decay, even if you behaved only with the limited binarity of a boolean variable. Like opposite charges, nothing can keep us apart. I would follow you to absolute zero or Planck's temperature, even into the event horizon of a black hole. If we were two fermions, I would overturn Pauli's principle to share your quantum state. I am starving to be bombarded with photons of your affection. So, my dear, radiate in my arms and make my happiness.

Existential crisis by Sukumar Sadupati

I don't like people much
 People don't like me much
 I am not an abnormal as such
 Surviving in this world seems to be a hitch
 No one in this world seem to bewitch me
 Tired, expecting someone to fetch me
 Exhausted, questioning how to enrich.
 No reason seems to be plausible.
 No logic seems to be credible.
 But still I am living in this world
 to make my self distinguishable

Lady in Blue by Sukumar Sadupati

Good morning lady in blue
 I have no clue
 how God made you.
 People like you are very few.
 In which way i should construe
 Your beautiful view.
 I always think of walking in your shoe
 when you pass through.
 Some times you make me to rue
 when you give no reply and stay eschew.

You come and go in a blink of an eye by Sukumar Sadupati

waiting for your reply
 without any shy
 just think consciously
 how I am waiting eagerly
 You come and go in a blink of an eye
 do not make me to cry
 i find no reason why you defy
 please don't say good bye

25 Years of Solitude by Sukumar Sadupati

This world puts me in quarantine
Thinking that I am insane.

And question me why am I alone.
How should I describe this pain?

Life seems to be pale.
Every time i fail to uncover the veil.
In which the world is covered.

A Fish out of water
How can i think making my life better?.

Every bud of a tree blossoms
25 years passed i still remained without any passions

when there is no width
For the truth
How can i have Faith.

Unable to follow the world's Path
Day by day getting closer to death

Being a hermit.
This is the only solution to which i commit

A small poem by Sukumar Sadupati

I hold my breath for a while
when i see your dulcet smile
my ears have no choice
when i hear to your mellifluous voice
my eyes are in trance
when i see your feet dance

No word in the Mother Nature's book
describe how you look.

God has left no lacuna
in making you

it is as though nature unveiled its secret
to this novice poet.

Two poems by me by Sukumar Sadupati

How can i overlook the obvious charm
when you give me a stealthy glance
How can i step aside
when you come in front me like an angel

when your looks pierce into my heart
opening the doors of my soul
when the early morning dew drops glisten
on your cheeks
when the night's crescent moon shows up
in your face when you smile
how can i forbid you dear lady???

Does reality teach us morality??
I question human mentality
when it comes to brutality
People teach us ethics
learned from the unreal epics
Humans believe in faith
without inquiring the existence of its truth
The orthodox religious moods seems to be a paradox.
All i know is this world is trivial.

Yet again we have achieved the impossible: a literary “magazine” at a technical school. Congratulations to all of the writers whose works are represented herein! You have done what many have not; you have accomplished hardcopy publication. Your loves, despairs, and words are immortalized.

“The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.” – Mark Twain