The Great Lake Review, published once each academic year, presents a collection of writing and artwork created, selected and edited by the students of the College at Oswego. Students in all fields of study contributed to the magazine.
Great Lake Review

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Great Lake Review

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Front and Back cover photos by Ryan Orilio
My best friend
takes showers
during thunderstorms.

She wants
to be hit by lightning.
*I want to see how it feels,*
she says.

I tell her
it will hurt.
*You could be killed!*
But she never listens.

We’ve had three
good, hard storms
the past few days, and
she’s been in the shower for each of them.

I guess it’s
something to do
when the power
goes out.

Visiting me in the summertime—
we go walking in the field—
she pauses
to touch
the electric fence.

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Sarah Beckwith

*Buddhist Meditation Practice*

(Upon Imagining One’s Own Death and Slow Decomposition)

A vision of impact—
a jolt.
My body
hurled through the sky.

Flesh skinned in strips,
dangling from back of knee
and point of elbow—
confetti of the skull.
shredded skin ribbons,
the tail of a kite.
I am beautiful.

I saw my hair torn away. And
my toes, fingers all flying—
maybe even an eyeball.
A tossed salad of body parts
frozen in mid air.

The vision falls to a thud. I exhale.
Calm and still.
The soil smiles
drinking my blood.
Life continues.
Light Poem

Mark Mazzoli

Sometimes I think I am my shadow
forever separate from the sun
only there to complement the light
but I know in my heart I am less

I am nothing, just a dream
in between asleep and awake
two separate perfects, neither one ever reached
two separate puddles in the street
each one reflecting the same scene
from different angles

I am a dream of light
shining out from half-closed eyes

I am a dream of reflected light
or maybe I am a dream of light bulbs

I am the dream
I am sensation and passing of time
I am ground shaped by footsteps and its aura of snow
I am the white shirt on the boy behind the counter in the store
so bright, radiating, dissolving everything into

just

light

The Circles in Which I Used To Travel

Merrilee Witherell

Most people would be surprised to learn that I spend most of my time in a small-town diner with a few alcoholic old men. But then, I've always been a little on the surprising side. Take Times New Roman, for example. The preferred font of automatons and mindless conformists of every stripe (as if they are colorful enough to have stripes). I resist it. Even though my computer is formatted so that every document starts out in it, I change it. Almost every time. I would change it every time, but that would render me predictable, a fate worse than spending my time in a dreary, smoky diner with two men who bicker like children or old women, depending on how many drinks they've had. They're more like children early in the day, then as the alcohol and the bitterness flow, become more like old women. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny is what I would say to describe them; what I would used to say. Maybe at a cocktail party, or a gallery opening. I would drop things like that, mostly just to see the reactions. People would rather cut off their little toes than admit that they don't know what you're talking about. It provided many seconds of hilarity for me. I always measure hilarity in seconds, the way a pharmacist measures liquids in drams or cc's. I find it more precise.

Those parties were like retinal acupuncture. "Annette, it's just delightful to see you again." Emphasis on see, as if there were options, and that word were chosen from a smorgasbord of them. "So delightful to hear you again. So delightful to smell you again. So delightful to feel you again." See was really the only word they could have used, and it offended my sense of syntactical propriety to have them emphasize it that way. Well, all right. A few of them could have used the word feel, but they wouldn't have. Not in front of their wives, at least. There are a lot of things that some of those party guests said, I can assure you, but not at the galleries. I'll get to that later. THAT. Things they could not have spoken while
standing in the sacred space beneath the latest banal, fanfare-ridden work of art by some young, formerly homeless, probably recovering-addict painter in the Village. (This is a well-kept secret, but I will tell you that for a while in the late 80’s, there was a conspiracy; an affirmative-action program for recovering addicts, run by the collective of gallery owners in the Village. The lingering scent of crack on an artist was like a dusting of gold. It made the gallery set nostalgic for their own misspent youths, I suppose. They would deny this out of concern about anti-trust litigation, but take my word for it. The dereliction of others was like honey on the tongues of these people. But I’m yammering now, and I do so detest a yammerer.)


“Annette, it’s so lovely to see you.”

“Miriam. A pleasure.” Silk against silk as we clutch one another’s hands, pulling them downward as we draw together, like children in a game of Ring Around the Rosie, thin bodies touching only at breasts and face, copper ringlets tangling into wavy, blond strands. We don’t fall down. We kiss the vacant air alongside one another’s cheeks. Smile a grimace (a grim face). Back up. Appraise one another.

“You’re looking well, Annette.” Translation: Why the hell is my husband fucking you?

“As are you. These Caribbean dealings must be agreeing with you.” Translation: Because he’s terrified of death, and he thinks that I’m helping him get over it. I’m really just helping him avoid thinking about it for 50 minutes, twice a week.

“How’s your practice going? I hear that poor Harvey Weichbaum has been having some troubles, but of course, I know you can’t comment on whether he’s come in for help.” Translation: I’ll bet you’re not fucking him, are you?

“Oh, the practice is going well. It seems, though, that the problems in the stock market are starting to make themselves felt here. Several dealers have been cutting back on the frequency of their trips abroad, and I’ve noticed that they’re getting a bit more selective in their purchases.” Translation: Harvey can’t afford me anymore and you know it. Destitution is the wage of greed, as you’ll soon learn.

Banal is another word I used to regularly employ. Now, refreshed by my foray into another kind of smoke-filled den, this one without mirrors at least, I would simply say shitty. Shitty Work of Art is not a commentary that is welcomed in the Circles In Which I Used To Travel. To know it was shitty was one thing, but one should either fawn appropriately, or, if honesty must rule the day, then it must slide into the conversation coyly, the way a shadow changes planes at the corner of a wall. Shitty became “unusual,” or “intriguing,” or, my favorite, “forceful.” Forceful was the universal code word. Forceful was the Ford Escort of the art world. Dull, pedestrian (there’s another member of my former vocabulary), factory-made. And since it was art, rather than transportation, there was no such redeeming value as its efficient mileage or practical use. For art had no practical value, and at least, at least, I can say that the Circles In Which I Used to Travel knew that. And, at least, at least to the insiders, didn’t pretend otherwise. It is the one thing for which I am grateful to them. It kept them on the sunny side of insufferable, at least for a while.

February 14, 1992. Annette’s office. 3:00 p.m. appointment.

An older woman, dressed in an amber paisley suit and suede pumps, opens a heavy door to reveal a spacious office. “Annette, Mr. Silvers is here to see you.”

“Send him in, please, Claudia. Thank you.”

A tall man in his mid-50’s walks slowly into the room. His bearing is that of an elderly statesman, or a Native American chieftain entering a ceremony. His calm approach is belied only by flickering green eyes, which dart repeatedly from the carpet to a spot just above Annette’s head. “Hello. Thanks for making time for me
on such short notice.” Translation: I need to see you because this is no longer either therapy or fun and games for me.

“Hello Jerome. What’s on your mind?” Translation: Are you feeling guilty, horny or both?

“Annette, this has been a hard week for me. I feel like I’m coming unglued. I can’t concentrate. I’m having trouble sleeping. Work is piling up. I’ve got an opening this weekend and my assistant has had to do almost everything. I think Miriam suspects something.” Translation: You got me into this mess, and you’d better get me out; if I can’t handle this, I just might have to confess my transgressions.

“Jerome. Do you want to lie on the couch?” Translation: I can treat you like a regular patient; just don’t do this to me. I gave you what you wanted; what you needed; don’t turn on me now.

“Yes, I think I do. For now.” Translation: I’m serious, but I’m not all business yet.

“O.K., Jerome. Which night was the first night you had trouble sleeping, and what happened earlier that day?”

“It was Wednesday night. Things at the gallery were hectic all day, but not much more so than they would ordinarily be right before an opening. I don’t know why it started Wednesday.” Translation: I think it had something to do with you. I can’t handle this.

“Jerome. Do you want to lie on the couch?” Translation: I can treat you like a regular patient; just don’t do this to me. I gave you what you wanted; what you needed; don’t turn on me now.

“O.K., Jerome. Which night was the first night you had trouble sleeping, and what happened earlier that day?”

“It was Wednesday night. Things at the gallery were hectic all day, but not much more so than they would ordinarily be right before an opening. I don’t know why it started Wednesday.” Translation: I think it had something to do with you. I can’t handle this.

“Let’s think back. You were here on Tuesday. We talked about your phobia for a little while, then tried to, mmm, work on bringing you a little closer to your goal.”

“I heard you were thinking of closing your practice. I think it’s unethical of you continue seeing your patients without telling them that you’re thinking about closing.” Translation: Don’t make me need you, then drop me. I won’t have anyone making a fool of me.

“It’s true that I’ve considered leaving practice, but I don’t have any plans to do so in the near future. I’m sorry that you were concerned about this. If I felt that I wouldn’t have time to treat my patients before I made any changes to the practice, I would of course start to make transition plans to facilitate uninterrupted treatment.” Translation: Don’t threaten me with charges that I’m unethical. I know that

What I do with you is unethical. One slip. One story leaked, and I’m trapped. I know that you learned about me from Cary, who learned from Mitchell. I know that you’ve formed your own fraternity over this. One slip, and I’m captive. I’m prisoner to your knowledge. To Our Secret, which becomes less so every day.

“Annette, I don’t want you to leave. I sincerely hope you don’t.” Translation: I’ve got you.

“I won’t, Jerome. I know that I have a responsibility to you and to my other patients, and I intend to see it through.” Translation: You’ve got me.

Of course, nothing gold can stay, which is why I find myself in a dingy upstate diner, drinking beer of moderate quality and immoderate quantity, whiling away my days like an ailing nineteenth-century aristocrat who has been sent to the country for the restorative benefits of fresh air. (A note on the air—in the summer it smells like the feces of many-stomached animals and in winter there’s too much snow and cold to stand outside and smell a damn thing.)

I arrived upstate in November 1992. “It’s the economy, stupid,” is what I said to explain my sudden departure from the civilized world. As I was saying farewell at the parties, in the lobby of my apartment building, closing my practice, people would ask, “Why?” and that was my standard line. It never satisfied. I didn’t expect it to. I simply told them that the ruinous economy had robbed me of patients who could afford to continue my treatment, and that I was taking some time to live more simply in the beautiful countryside of the Finger Lakes region. I will say this much for my present circumstances—I have lived well for seven years on a sum that I would have spent in one year in my former location and style.

As for whether they believed me or not, I doubt it. I suspect rumors about me must have circulated for months; at least through the holidays. That would be appropriate. I told them the reason was green, while it was actually red—scarlet, in fact.
very festive. Maybe I could have kept it hidden a while longer. I think I could have. I believe that the fatal slips of most accomplished criminals, in fact, do not derive from mere accident or carelessness. It is boredom coming home to roost. A Freudian slip of sorts, if you’ll forgive the pun. Pick your analogy—you fumble the ball and so can stop running; you tire of the chase so you shoot off the mark and scare the prey away; any way you choose to regard it, the end result is the same. Relief. Rest. That, and getting out of town before the walls come down. There is that.


A man moves slowly toward the dance floor. He stands upright, but is costumed as Pan, half-man, half-goat. His green eyes dart nervously around the room. He picks up speed as he notices his target on the far side of the parquet floor. A woman shimmers in iridescent sequins that change from blue to green; a mermaid. A wig of long, wavy blond hair hangs to her slim waist. A mask covers her eyes and forehead; her lips are pale pink, like blood vessels seen through the skin. As he reaches her, another costumed figure moves away, trailing black crepe, feet obscured beneath flowing fabric.

"Jerome," she says as he arrives.
"Annette. I need to see you. Alone."
"Now? How could we possibly? I think it would be better to wait until after the party. How about tomorrow?"
"I need you now. You know how I get sometimes. I really need to be alone with you."
"Jerome, aren’t you afraid that if we’re both gone from the party, people will notice? What about Miriam?"
"Miriam didn’t come. She said she has a migraine. I didn’t see any symptoms of it, but who knows? I just know that I need to see you, and I don’t care about anything else right now."
"Please, Jerome. As we both know, I’ve taken some risks, but this seems foolish."

My current home is a modest cottage, which overlooks Cayuga Lake. I purchased it for less than one year’s rent at my apartment. It is white (of course), with hunter green shutters that rattle from October through April, when the wind from the Northwest whips across the open lake, pelting the windows with rain, sleet or snow, whatever comprises the flavor of the day. There is a small English-style garden that wraps around the side of the house, and a small plot for vegetables behind. An elderly man who lives nearby tends the garden for me, and I give him most of its produce in return. He hasn’t asked, but I’m sure he wonders why an able-bodied woman in her prime, with no apparent occupation, doesn’t tend her own lettuce, but, being of a different generation, he hasn’t asked and I haven’t offered. I’ve thought about telling him. He probably wouldn’t even be surprised, but still I haven’t. It’s the dirt. I hate the feeling of dirt under my fingernails. It’s not just the feeling, it’s the very idea of it. Even if I wear gloves, it’s all I can think about—what if dirt gets under my fingernails? Those little grains of dirt, the small, moist clots of it, the big clumps that you see on the farmland in the spring, make my skin crawl. I can’t touch it. I can barely look at it. Which would be funny, or harmless, or incidental, if I weren’t expected to cure others of their phobias and their obsessions. But since I am (or was, before my upstate respite), I keep that little quirk in the closet. Oh, the closet. What a mass of
associations there. Closets, closets, everywhere. I have had them all removed from my little cottage on the lake. Not one left. Walls torn down, doors removed, converted to recessed shelving, even one that has been enclosed, a hollow space in the walls, just waiting for its cask of Amontillado. I am closetless in this new life, and only a little dirt stands between me and complete honesty. Who knew it could be so simple?


Annette enters through the heavy door that separates her office from the waiting area. Jerome, the hood of his costume draped backward from his neck, sits on the couch, his hind legs crossed. The goat face of the hood stares at the ceiling, a severed head. Jerome looks pleased with himself. “Annette, I hope you don’t mind that I asked you here on such short notice.”

“Mind, Jerome? The short notice is one thing; the fact that you act as if this is your office and that I’ve been invited to it is another; and the blackmail that you’ve used for all these months is another still.”

“Well, I see your point, but after all, you’ve created this situation. You made yourself vulnerable to, well, let’s just say you’ve made yourself vulnerable to the needs of your patients. You must be getting something out of it.”

“Yes, Jerome, I suppose I have.”

Pan stands, unzips the front of his costume, revealing an a-shirt and boxers. He walks to the closet. He thinks of it as his secret place, although he knows all to well that others have been in that closet before him, have shared its dark and lusty whisperings, its phobias, its releases. He opens the door slowly, as he always does, standing back and waiting for Annette to enter before him. He doesn’t see the pool of black crepe at first. He is looking at Annette, his green eyes darting from her mermaid mask to her navel, then below. He doesn’t see at first that the black crepe is familiar; was at the party, flowing away from him as he approached Annette. What he sees first is the familiar glow of milky-white skin, the copper ringlets dangling above curves that should be well-known. Miriam stands naked in the closet, as she has on each of her visits, waiting not for this masquerade, but for a different one entirely. Annette looks at Miriam, apologetically, regretfully. Miriam stares past Jerome. Knows this is why she has always been afraid of Halloween. Why she started coming to see Annette in the first place. Jerome will talk, they both realize. He was always the weak link. His eyes dart furiously between the two women. I won’t have anyone making a fool of me. He turns to Annette, furious. She regards him with complete professional detachment. He turns to Miriam. She steps into the circle of black crepe, zips it in the back, pulls the hood forward, obscuring her face, adjusts her mask, and retrieves her scythe from the corner of the closet, walking past him without a glance. Jerome shivers, thinks of the grave.

As for my current occupation, I’ll tell you what I’m doing now. I’m writing about it. Baring all. Well, I guess that came earlier. Telling all is what I’m doing now. I’ve written every horrid and lurid detail of it, but carefully. It’s not going to be easy for anyone to know whether the who and the what of it are real. You see, I’ve woven it into a work of fiction. They may suspect—see a little of themselves—wonder. But without the flattery, without the window dressing, it will be so alien a setting. They’ll see glimpses of themselves, then dismiss it, wiping it away as they would a cobweb. It’s perfect. They won’t recognize me, they won’t blame me. Only a little honesty stands between me and complete dirt. Who knew it could be so simple?
In Mizraim, we watched you gather desert sand
And paint our clouds red with the blood of your fellow man.
When he forgot you once more, we crossed on Spanish ships,
We lapped at ocean waves, looked up and licked our lips.

We were there with god in the garden
We taught you how to walk
And were there with the dragons of shadow—
We taught the serpent to talk.

We flicked our tongues, and the waves washed over,
Putting out his angry fire.
We were the maize, we were the mud,
We were her desire.

We were there when the rain came down,
We swam with him in the endless blue.
Yes, I swallowed Noah’s raven
And in Rome, he suckled you.

We were there at Golgotha,
We watched as Jesus wept.
We sat on Jeanne d’Arc’s chest
And whispered while she slept.

Close your eyes, look back
And see this is how it’s always been.
We watched you climb down from the trees—
Once we hunted you for skin.

One day you’ll be gone, he’ll flick his tongue
And we’ll swim the endless blue.
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I'll burn your ashes, burn your ash's ashes,
Burn every remnant of you.

In Mizraim, we watched you gather desert sand,
We swallowed bones, we devoured flesh,
We drank the blood of man.
When he was angry, we licked the blood off pharaoh's ships,
We lapped at the Dead Sea, looked up and licked our lips.

Andrew McIlwraith

No Touch

I am seven years old. I have spilled a cup of milk on the kitchen table and cried while my mother soaked up the milk with a handful of paper towels and absolved me with a slightly wearied, mostly tender smile.

I have dropped chocolate cake, icing-down on the cream-colored rug in the family room. It's called the family room because that's where the TV is, as far as I can tell. There is a stain there now, but my mother has always vacuumed straight over it as though the ghastly brown mark did not intimidate her whatsoever.

In my house we have a No Touch room. This is where the piano stands, the Lladro figurines quietly pose, and the print of a Monet painting hangs. This is where you No Touch.

Just a moment ago I stepped a small step into the No Touch room, concentrating primarily on focus and balance, secondarily on my own sense of adventure. I believed my foot was the first. And I also believe no one has ever before slid a finger along the smooth curve of the glass bride's dress, either.

I imagine this room, the velvet couch and the Tiffany lamp, the fine china and the marble coffee table, the cherry rocker, all the untouchable treasures entombed within, came with our house. My mother, because she is thoughtful, thinks we should leave this room alone. Preserve it. Let it be. Perhaps dust it so when its proper owner comes to reclaim it, he will leave happily and with a profound respect for the disciplined members of the household, as they are exquisitely skilled in the careful art of No Touch.

I am in the closet now. My closet, not the downstairs closet. I sit, legs folded in bunched up corduroys, little fists pulling the edge of my down comforter tightly against my head, pretending to fear the worst. She will come home, pass the No Touch room and perhaps do a double-take. A glint of light from a piece of broken glass on the floor will catch her eye, and her bottom lip and all her
chins will drop. She will put her things down and clean up the mess. First the big pieces, like parts of the dress and the bride’s head and bouquet. Then, the small shards, slivers and dust left by her fragile neck and little translucent fingers.

Her eyes may fill with tears but she will pour a glass of wine and forgive me. We will have broiled fish for supper because it is Friday. I will pretend to fear the worst until she throws open the door to my hiding place, plucks me from my mound of bedthings and stuffed animals, and administers the tickle-torture. She will be indulgent.

I didn’t realize she got home already. I didn’t hear her come in or sweep up the glass, so I am surprised when the hall light comes on. She enters my room. The closet door is cracked so I can watch her.

She knows I am in my usual hiding place, but doesn’t come to find me. Her face is blood red. I watch her claw Crayola drawings from my walls. She pulls the drawers from my bureau and whips my clothes about the room. She bolts out for a moment only to rampage back in holding a dusty, plump vacuum cleaner bag, the contents of which she uses to spell out No Touch on my plush pink carpet in big, perfect letters.

I stare at her pudgy ankles, close to buckling, like my little heart.

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Nick Mazzeo

These 3-dimensional scars
do not wash off so easily
when your head keeps
floating off
into the fog.

Sometimes right before
I’m about finished,
I forget what
I’ve started,
so I spin around six times
and sit down to watch the day
drift into
oblivion
just like me when I was clean.

Were you there when
the stars touched down last Tuesday?
It was truly remarkable.
For the first time in a long time,
I believed it was real.

The colors of my world
exist in glass.
Looking Back

A small and timid glance
tiptoes from behind my eyes.
My gestures are mindful,
soft and slow—
cushioned by protection.

Spring comes. You
are born. I hold you
as you touch your first
rose.

Wishes are close to me
(To you).
I watch as you open
petal by petal.

Nothing can deny
stark fragility—
flower at first snow,
bowing head
cold,
dead.

As I am older now,
I render the voice of
your eyes, the first word
you spoke.
Beneath my fingernails,
something longs for
small hands.

Sorrow’s Owner

Where do tears go
when we wipe them away?
I have taken yours,
jealously wanting them,
my thumb
brushing away each
tear before it drops from
your cheek.
Are these for me?
I look down to find
a place for your sorrow,
but in my palm
there are only tears.
Are these tears real?
They are so much
like tears that you
will never see falling
from eyes that do know.
And I am helpless,
for they are not yours,
but mine.
Sara looked at me and smiled. “I like you.”
I ignored her. Girls are ugly and stupid. They don’t do anything and then if you try to get them to climb a tree or roll down the hill, they just call you stupid and walk away. Sara liked me, but I didn’t know why.

“See him?” Sara asked, pointing to the adult stranger on the swing set. I nodded, not really paying attention to her, ‘cause I was playing hide-and-go-seek with Billy and Daemon.

“He’s a ghost.”
“He is not,” I whispered.
“Uh-huh. He is, too. He just sits there. My older sister says he’s gonna eat one of us. And only ghosts do that.”
“How do you know that” I ducked down into the ditch, I thought I heard Daemon run by. He’s it. “Go away, you’re gonna get me caught.”

“My sister told me.”
“How does she know?”
“She read about it in this book by Dr. King.”
“Who is that?” I hate Sara.
“A doctor, stupid. I don’t think I like you. You’re not smart, you probably don’t read.”
“I don’t have to read. I have a computer at home.”
“I’m leaving.” Sara walked away and looked around. “He’s over here,” she hollered.

I started running from my hiding place and darted for the picnic tables, the safe place, but as soon as I got past the tower, Daemon jumped out off the ledge and ran after me. And like that he tagged me.

“You’re it!” He smiled and pushed me. I fell to the ground. “Ollie ollie oxen-free!” Billy dashed up to us.
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“Calvin is it. Go over to the picnic tables and count to fifty and then come get us.” Billy and Daemon ran off into the playground. I went to the tables. Sara was there, playing with some rocks, building a pile.

“I’m gonna get you, Sara. You’re so stupid. You got me it.”

“That’s because you’re the stupid one. I told them where you were. If you were smart, you would have found new place. Stupid people will always be it.”

“I hate being it.”

“Then don’t be stupid. You need to get smarter. You gotta read.”

“I told you, I have a computer. That’s what makes you smart.” I wished she would go away.

“You just play silly games on it.” Sara held up a stone to inspect it.

“They are not silly.”

“You always play that one game, with the gun and the monsters. It’s stupid.”

“I have to count to fifty.”

“Don’t hurt yourself.” She knocked the pile of rocks over and started to rebuild it.

“Shut up!” I put my head down and started to count to fifty. I just tried to think of where they might hide. We’ve played this game so much, I know all the hiding places here.

“Do you say Mississippi after every number?”

“No.” She never bugged anyone but me. Like I’m her only friend.

“What do you think about?”

“Nothing.”

“Surprise there,” she giggled.

“Go away!”

“You know what?”

“…fifteen, sixteen, seventeen…”

“That ghost—”

“...fifteen, sixteen, seventeen…”

“He is not a ghost. He’s real. People see him.”

“He’s sad.”

“So? Nineteen, twenty, twenty-one…”

“He lost his daughter. A little girl, about my age, here at this place.” She sounded kinda sad.

“Did she get lost or something?”

“No I mean she died.”

“What? You’re acting so stupid. No one dies on a playground.”

“No I’m not.” She threw a pebble at my head and it stung. I stood up to hit her and she threw another one, a big one, at my leg. “Ouch! Ouch!” was all I could say. I pulled up my pants leg to see. I could see a bright red spot. I let go a tear it hurt so much. But I tried not to let it show.

“It is true. You’re stupid and mean. It’s so sad that she died here.”

“You hit me with that rock. I’m gonna get you.” I balled up my first.

“Stop it. I’m sorry, but that was really mean.”

“You act like you know that guy. I mean all he does is sit there and he doesn’t do anything. I mean no one wants to go near him but you. And he doesn’t look at you, like you’re not there.”

“Her mommy came here and killed his daughter. Hunted her. And then she shot herself right there at that swing set and he died there, too. He’s a ghost, creepy and spooky.”

“I have to find Billy and Daemon.” She was being weird again. Every time I was there she told me the same thing.

“It’s true.”

“Fifty! Ready or not, here I come!” And I took off and searched the towers first. Normally, everyone goes there to hide first because it’s the last place to look. But they weren’t there. Then I checked under the bridge and didn’t find them. I crossed over to the ditch and they weren’t there. I looked across the playground and saw them running down the road back home.
Great Lake Review

"No fair you two, I win!"
"We gotta go home, Calvin, it's dinner! You're it tomorrow!" They just kept running, laughing—I think at me.

My leg felt really sore now and I looked at it again. There was a big bump on it. I really hated Sara. I looked around for a big rock. I saw one about the size of my hand at the edge of the road. I walked to the picnic tables and held it to my back, so she couldn't see it, but she wasn't there, just her rocks in a pile. So I looked around the playground—the monkey bars, the slide, the hobbyhorses, the swing sets and she wasn't anywhere. And the guy, he was gone, too. He must have just left, cause the swing was swinging a bit. But there was a woman who was walking around, yelling out Sara's name. Then a streetlight came on and the curfew siren went off. I dropped my rock and ran home.

Kim Trela

The Rain Song

Maybe I'm just expecting rain,
Cause my chest feels like a puddle.
The storm's in the souls of vagrants.
My storm is my rebuttal.

The gray roadbed breathes steam
Like a frosty graveyard lawn.
Fog from my lungs weighs me down,
Yearning for more than the dawn.

You see the storm brewing in my eyes.
I feel the thunder in my veins.
Keep the puddle from flooding my lungs.
I'm asking for a drain.
I feel the sky pushing through my head,
But I can't tender the insane.
No matter how far I may run, I end up falling,
But maybe I'm just expecting rain.

Tomorrow brings possible sunshine
But not before my insides flood.
The seas will churn upside-down
Before I can drain my eyes of mud.

You see the storm brewing in my eyes.
I feel the thunder in my veins.
Keep the puddle from flooding my lungs.
I'm asking for a drain.
I feel the sky pushing through my head,
But I can't tender the insane.
No matter how far I may run, I end up falling,
But maybe I'm just expecting rain.
You bought your wedding dress last night. Now you’re standing cross-armed in the shower, protecting your breasts from the too-hot deluge you’ve forced upon yourself. Already you’re growing pinkened, tenderized, your belly a shade of rouge and it lets you close your eyes and lean against the shower wall. The only air seems to be here, sliding against this tile, letting you breathe. The tiny bathroom takes no time to fill up with steam, if the water’s hot enough. Then you’ll have one warm room in the house, at least until the cold sneaks in and the wetness becomes clammy. But by then you’ll have your sweater and jeans back on and it won’t matter.

Last night you found the dress. You didn’t really have anyone but your man to come help you choose, so you made it an adventure and went together. Hopefully, the famed back luck would understand. It had felt kind of funny, because there were other girls there, happy, picky ones that had been reading many wedding magazines and could rattle off designers and styles. Their moms were with them, cooing and chirping over the dresses like finicky soccer-mom hens. You had found your dress by instinct. A satin queen’s gown that caught the breath in his throat. You’d read that ivory white was created for Irish brides. The sales lady clucked in approval. You bought it.

The steam rises around your face. You can feel the heat pressing against your skin, cooking your hot. You’re thinking about your father, how when you were three, maybe two, he would come home from work and your world would glow. He’d take off his socks, all sweaty and huge and linty and you’d fetch every other sock you could find, digging through the dirty clothes pile for your own little red ones. You’d pile them all together on the floor and he’d take them up and fling them at the ceiling fan, then watch in glee as they hit the spinning blades and explode, flinging all over the room. He’d yell, “Flying wiggly worms!” and you’d scream and try to catch them.
you as distractions and kiss like an innocent, every time—break up without killing yourself. You went through exactly ten boyfriends before you crashed into the guy in the black leather coat that took you for a walk in the fog one night and shared ice cream with you in the freezing cold pouring rain, his leg shivering against yours. No one had ever listened that way, kissed that way, trusted you that way. You were afraid you'd mess it up, mess him up.

But now you're getting married and this one is different and no one seems to care one way or the other about the sanest and happiest news in your life. Well, that's not entirely true, your mother hates him, especially now that you've bought that dress. Your cat adores him, although you suspect that it just might be that she craves his salty body scent as much as you do.

So now you're planning a wedding by yourself with zero access to excess to your checking account and you're taking the GRE's because it also so happens that you want to go to graduate school.

You squint your eyes against these thoughts and pick up a bar of Dove, lathering your body smooth. You like the way this scent will linger on your skin, make your bony shoulders shine just a little. Eating dollar-store chicken pot pies certainly doesn't make your skin glow with much health, so you need all the help you can get. It's not really that you mind this life. In truth, this is the first time you haven't felt like you were just waiting for something—you are really out there, you're really living. You're just poor.

You lick the water off your lips and they still taste like cider. You're drinking that now you can get it for $1.50 from Aldi's. you and your man drink a lot and cider is far cheaper than milk or juice or beer. You're not really sure if it has any nutrition to it, but it is made from apples, so it's gotta be somewhat okay. Forgotten glasses of it are scattered all over the house. Both of you have gotten a little tired of cider.

You've realized that you might need to take a trip to Michigan, and since you live in New York, this is something big to be pondering. There's a university there that has the mighty three—an excellent English program for you, an excellent Anthropology program for him and married student housing so you can get out of the monetary rut for one split second.

The water's getting a tad cooler and you sense your time is almost up. The cold's sneaking in from under the curtain and a tendril of it makes your skin prick up in goosebumps, even though you're still standing right under the hot water. You wish you could turn on the heat in the house, warm it all up. Maybe in Michigan you'll be able to do that, or at least live somewhere communal where you can sponge more heat off your neighbors' thin walls.

You shut off the water and grab the towel, and then, with a breath, draw open the curtain. Like you thought, it's cold. You look up at the mirror, its surface covered in a murky water layer. Your significant other has snuck in while you were showering and with toothpaste, he's drawn a goofy smiley on the glass, with little love-struck heart eyes. You stare at it, then with a pruned finger swipe a dab of the gel off the mirror and onto your nose. Minty-fresh and laughing, you run to go find him, forgetting to put on your sweater.
Somewhere in Nevada
Down by Bomb Test Hill
There lives a boy with a leg and a leg
A head and a head
No mouth and no arms
Somewhere in Nevada
Down by Bomb Test Hill
A child was born without eyes and ears
But he’s okay ‘cause he’s got gills
Somewhere in Nevada
Down by Bomb Test Hill
Where the people are friendly
And the air is deadly
The dogs have paws in their sides
Where true America lies
In rotting wait
Somewhere in Nevada
Down by Bomb Test Hill.
SCENE: A spot in the woods.

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on a clearing embedded in trees and shrubbery. Sitting in the spot between two large shrubs is CHAD SIMON, late-twenties, dressed in camouflage and a red cap, patiently holding a rifle across his lap. Sitting next to him is CHAD'S father-in-law, HENRY BARLOW, a mid-fifties ox of a man, with a general's demeanor, similar hunting gear, and a rifle. They sit and wait.)

HENRY
I should certainly say this is a sport of patience. I admire your motivation and ambition.

(CHAD puts up his finger, signaling for silence. HENRY ignores the command.)

HENRY
All this fuss over a harmless deer—I don't see how you drag yourself out here every year.

(CHAD looks frustrated as he signals again for HENRY to keep quiet.)

HENRY
Right, right. Sorry.

(They sit, watching for deer.)

HENRY
Never went hunting before. Figure it has to do with what side of the tracks you live on. Gretchen said you like it, though. She nearly twisted my arm off to come here. Hell, I could get to know my son-in-law over a beer and a stripper, if you know what I mean. But she says you're quite the sharp shooter.

(HENRY nudges CHAD'S shoulder. CHAD gives him a look.)
HENRY

I've done a little target practice in my day. Boot camp, mainly. Marine. I might be a bit rusty now, but it'll come back to me. Ranked pretty high, too. Woulda got higher, if it weren't for that nervous twitch of mine.

(HENRY holds up the rifle, looking down the scope.)

HENRY

Never shot a peashooter like this before. Suppose it's just the thing for an eight point, but when you gotta clear out an entire horde of bloodthirsty soldiers, you want somethin' a bit beefier in your grasp.

(HENRY slaps CHAD on the back, jolting him forward.)

HENRY

If you know what I mean.

(CHAD submits to HENRY'S constant gab.)

CHAD

You know, sir, the point is to keep as silent and still as possible.

HENRY

Oh, right. I just don't see much sense in sittin' through.

CHAD

You'll scare them away.

HENRY

Okay, I'll be good. I promise.

(They both hush up and face forward. A rustling noise comes from the left. HENRY quickly draws his gun and aims. CHAD ducks.)

HENRY

I see one!

(HENRY takes sight, hesitates, and withdraws his aim.)

HENRY

Christ, a damn bird.

CHAD

Patience.

(HENRY slouches in apathy.)

HENRY

Patience.

(They sit and stare. HENRY notices CHAD'S cap.)

HENRY

What's with the cap? I thought we were supposed to be hidden. A blind man can see that thing from a mile away.

CHAD

It's so no one shoots me.

HENRY

I suppose I should be wearing something orange or red, myself.

CHAD

Stay close to me and you'll be fine. I've been doing this for years. Just gotta keep on your toes.

(HENRY begins to laugh.)

HENRY

I'll tell ya, Gretchen'll keep you on your toes, boy. Always runnin' around with those damn dogs of hers, researchin' for some textbook or experiment. Been like that all her life. Either she's studyin' hard or makin' a ruckus. (Laughs.) Good luck.

CHAD

Thanks.

HENRY

She's been stickin' it to me for years, too, bringin' home her share of boyfriends, I'll tell ya. Not all that bad, though. Some of them were real Ivy League bozos, but stable. And I could always tell when she was upset with me. She'd walk in on the arm of some tattooed Hoodlum. I'm sort of glad she settled for you.

(HENRY guffaws, patting a less enthused CHAD on the back.)

HENRY

Don't get me wrong, Chad. You're a fine fella, a real gent. I just never pictured my baby goin' for a government financial...whatty'a call it?
Right, analyst. And I never woulda pegged a financial anywho for a deer hunter, especially a city boy such as yourself.

I'm a man of many trades, sir.

That's what I like about you. Always back with the one-two. Sharp as a tack.

I try, Henry.

There it is again.

(HENRY laughs and takes a deep breath.)

I do love the crisp forest air. And the vegetation is so lush and fertile.

Rich flora and fauna.

To say the least. You know, Chad, I'm a man of great wealth. I may not look it, or sound it—

Or act it.

Well, you know. I come from a wealthy family and no doubt you're aware that Gretchen will be well-off and most certainly set for life. A factor you've undoubtedly considered when you made your vows.

Well, I—

You see, she doesn't know this—I'm sure she's had an idea of it. I can't much hide it. But I wanted her to learn to be self-sufficient. Let her know that daddy won't always be there. Learn to cope with life's little trials, so when I join her mother in the great mansion in the sky, she'll have my fortune. 'Cause now she's ready. She's educated.

That makes sense, sir... I—I mean, Henry.

Good, 'cause you see, Chad, she's stuck with you now, and I don't want you goin' off getting' all tightfisted with her money. And it's her money, you know...but you still have to bring home the bacon...or deer meat.

Venison.

Whatever. What I'm sayin' is, when I move on...and I'm not sayin' that this ticker is on its last tack, but when I do finally kick, the two of you will be well taken care of.

Thank you, sir. That's comforting to know... I guess.

(There's an uncomfortable silence.)

Right...well, I gotta hit the head.

(HENRY moves to get up. CHAD reacts and grabs his arm.)

Whoa, Henry. They'll smell it.

Who?

The deer. They'll smell your urine and be scared off.

You're tellin' me that these mindless animals, these pea-brained deer are oblivious to a 254-pound man loafing around in the woods, let alone you and your siren red cap, but if I drop through they'll smell it and run?
CHAD
Yep.
HENRY
Shit.
(HENRY takes his seat again.)
CHAD
It's best to just keep still and not think about it.
HENRY
Fine.
(CHAD recognizes HENRY'S discomfort.)
CHAD
254, huh? You keep a good figure for a man of your age.
HENRY
Hard work, Chad. May years. A city-boy like yourself wouldn't know hard work if it landed on your foot. (Snorts in laughter.) And Gretchen tells me you were studying' for the CIA.
CHAD
It's a modest career.
HENRY
Son, I've seen sturdier cornstalks.
(CHAD shifts position, turning away from HENRY.)
CHAD
I can hold my own.
HENRY
In front of your fancy computer, in your state-issued leather chair and matching desk blotter. Sure, you'll do all right.
CHAD
(Obidient southern accent.)
Sure will. I'm right set in my ways, sir.
HENRY
She could do worse, even if you government folks are no good crooks.

I'm not a crook.

Be that as it may, I've got an obligation to my daughter, to be there for her, and I, as much as I regret to, have to pass that responsibility on to you.

I think we need to get something straight here, Henry.

Shoot.

The Simon gentlemen may not all be wealthy diary far owners like you, but our wives never go lonely or without affection, and our children will never know the pain of deprivation. We're survivors of a holocaust, persevering through years of discrimination and hardship, fighting in two great wars, and building an honest foundation from years of overcrowded, rat-infested tenements, to see to it that the generations to come won't have to bear the hardships of our world's many oppressors.

All right, Chadwin, catch your breath. This isn't some Jew rally here. Don't be forging a march on Washington now.

Oh, is that the issue here, Mr. Barlow? Well, then, I suppose I know where you stand. But to make things entirely clear, I think you're nothing but a—

Keep it down.

(HENRY raises his gun and aims at the deer, straight ahead.)
Aw, hell. Who you kidding? This trip was over before we reached the woods.

(HENRY puts his hand up to hush CHAD. CHAD waves HENRY away and puts his gun to the side.)

CHAD

Gimme a break. You don’t even know how to take off the safety.

(HENRY puts his hand over CHAD’S mouth. CHAD reacts with frustration, grabbing HENRY’S arm.)

CHAD

I hate being shushed.

HENRY

Oh, you wanna play, huh.

(HENRY throws the rifle to the side, yanks his arm free and wrestles CHAD to the ground. CHAD gets the upper hand, being much more agile and pins HENRY down by his wrists.)

HENRY

This much is true. I’ll never call another Jew a coward.

(HENRY laughs even harder. CHAD lets HENRY free and sits back on the ground. HENRY gets up, shaking his head and rubbing his wrists.)

HENRY

Not bad, for a guy your size.

CHAD

Like I said, I can hold my own.

HENRY

Well, I’m not exactly the dexterous soldier I used to be, but I’m impressed, nonetheless.

HENRY

Will do, corporal.

(HENRY strolls over to the right, looking around for a nice spot to water. He finds a tree, turns his back to CHAD and begins to urinate.)

HENRY

You know, Chad, I’m glad you invited me hunting, whether or not you really wanted to. I think we cleared some things up, don’t you?

(CHAD looks over his rifle, making any last minute preparations with the safety and ammunition.)

HENRY

You think you’ll be bringing any meat back so Gretchen can whip up some burgers and jerky?

(CHAD aims the rifle at HENRY’S back, squares off and looks through the scope with his finger on the trigger.)

CHAD

Yeah. I’d venture to say about 254 pounds worth.

HENRY

I really do admire your ambition, Chad. You’re a real go-getter.

(LIGHTS down. And a gun shot.)
Great Lake Review

Andrew McIlwraith

Describing Me

Chubby statue parked near a porcelain wall toilet. Hands, pocketed. Eyes, socketed. Grey complexion and black tee that hugs too much around the midriff. Frown melts to the light blue tiled floor. Me. The bathroom. A mirror. Describing me. Pale light lingers like scum on a stagnant pond. Statue breathing, leaning over a sink. Sinks have elbows underneath. Mirror’s got eyes, describing me to the stench of urine and Lysol. Chubby statue with doll’s hair, rigid and shiny, with doll’s face, little eyes close together.

Sarah Beckwith

Cemetery

Ghosts come in familiar whispers, rustling my hair and crinoline gown. It’s all been abandoned; the scissory grass has grown tall and brown. I walk barefoot on blue stones, like a witch mad from moonlight, and every desire comes to caress my ear in the dark, in the dry, in the quiet.
A blatant introduction
to the winds
driven by an
overwhelming feeling in
their spirits they
set out to
perhaps touch
the morning sky

even though no
suggestion of reckoning
awaited in the chilly breeze above them
they strove higher
and further to hopefully
grasp a moment of peace,
a second to be free, after
a long summer of wandering and
chasing down sobriety...

—with each death spawns a new life, or maybe just a rebirth.
Some say that life begins in the spring—
as they climbed past
the leaves that so avidly
attracted their attention,
the magic in the cool autumn
air lifted their collective will
so that no weakness nor lack
of breath could attempt to
slow the progress

with enough power to
spare, they settled at a pinnacle place
and they realized that

— their eyes were widened and saw new dimensions
— their thoughts poured potency into ideas
— their souls vanished from the torment of distressing guilt

...and as for their hearts

their hearts danced and chanted out loud at
the beauty of it all.
Life may begin in spring
but I believe it does not really start 'til fall.

—and the end of this season lies only the inevitable.
Ed went to the Humane Society and bought his wife a puppy. It was a mutt, at least part Beagle and part Lab, probably some other breeds as well. Ed figured that mutts usually made better companions, after all the Royal Family had proved that it wasn’t good to keep a pure bloodline. Ed had had two dogs when he was a child; one (a wonderful dog) was a Black Lab-Golden Retriever mix named Bob. The other was a pedigree Dalmatian named Dexter who was dumber than a rock.

Bob had been a smart old mutt who never bothered anybody. Ed never had to worry about just letting Bob out of the house to wander around the neighborhood. Usually Bob would go down to the river and hunt muskrats or chase ducks, and in spite of the frequent baths that Bob required, he was perfect. When you were sad, he’d come up and lay his head upon your lap. When you were happy, he’d run around in circles then jump up and lick your face. As the years got on Bob ended up lazing around the yard, greeting Ed on the porch when he got home from school.

Dexter, on the other hand, had been a major hemorrhoid. He used to bolt for the door given any opportunity, usually knocking down a visitor in the process. He had crashed a wedding reception, chased a skier into a tree, and knocked over nearly every garbage can in the village throughout the years. Ed or his father had been forced to pick up Dexter whenever an angry neighbor had finally captured him. Dexter ended up spending most of his days lying on a dirty old blanket while chained to the garage. At first, he barked every time Ed or his father would enter or exit the house, but eventually he lost all hope for attention.

Ed stopped at Onley’s Flowerpot next to have the puppy fitted with a big red ribbon. Ed bought a card as well and wrote nothing more than *I’m sorry* on the inside. The whole ordeal was something straight out of a Hallmark commercial. If this didn’t work then nothing would.

On the way home, Ed let the puppy out of its cage to wander around the car and it almost cost him his life. The puppy sat still at first, nearly falling over every time Ed rounded a corner. Then he jumped down off the seat and slipped between Ed’s feet, squeezing himself underneath the brake pedal. If Ed tried to stop the car he would snap the little guy’s neck. Reaching down, trying to keep his eyes on the road, Ed swerved into the left lane right as a beat-up van was cresting a hill. The van blasted its horn and pulled off the side of the road, sending up a cloud of dust. Ed jerked back into his lane just in time, leaving the puppy nestled under the brakes. He popped the car into neutral and coasted to a stop. Pulling the puppy up, he thumped it on the nose and put it back in its cage. If Ed had believed in omens, then this certainly would have been one.

The rest of the ride home, Ed played out the upcoming events in his head. Marla would come home, shed a tear and declare her undying love. She would change her mind and things would be back to normal thanks to the puppy savior. Maybe they’d even name the puppy Savior. Well, that was stupid, but really, that’s what the puppy would be— a little canine Christ, ready to forgive. Marla would be so happy. They could raise this puppy together, take it for walks at night and teach it to be a good upstanding puppy. one who would laze around the yard and lick faces. Maybe once the puppy grew a little older, they could raise some real children. Ed would finally quit smoking cigarettes, maybe just an occasional pipe on a lazy Sunday afternoon. That would be so great.

At home, Ed left the puppy in the car while he went in to handle Jerome Fuzzy Bunkins. Jerome was a fat old cat that Marla had owned since her college days. Ed didn’t understand the idea of a cat. It just slept all day, readjusting itself occasionally, making sure that it rested in a patch of sun on the carpet. Cats never jumped up to greet you. They certainly wouldn’t follow you into the bathroom when you wanted them to. Ed lifted the cat and held it awkwardly at
arm's length then dumped it on the floor in the bathroom. “Sorry, Mr. Bunkins,” Ed said as he shut the door, “You've got a new brother coming in.”

Opening the fridge before he went back out to the car, Ed grabbed a beer, counting only three left. He'd have to go to the store tonight, but that could wait. He was too excited about the puppy. Marla would be home in about twenty minutes. Outside, Ed let the puppy play in the grass for a bit. It was sniffing the ground and looking at bugs. Ed reached down and pet the little guy's stomach and the puppy started to lick his hand. He was probably getting hungry. Ed brought him in the house and poured a little milk into a bowl. He forgot to buy food like the lady at the Humane Society had said to, but he could share food with Mr. Bunkins for now. The puppy lapped up nearly all the milk and Ed grabbed a handful of cat chow, amusing himself by throwing the puppy a piece at a time and watching his little paws struggle for traction on the linoleum floor.

Ed grabbed another beer and brought the puppy into the living room. He readjusted the ribbon. Marla would be getting home at any minute. Ed thought of exactly what he was going to say. Hopefully, he wouldn't have to say anything. Maybe just I'm sorry.

The puppy scurried underneath the couch. Shit, that wouldn't be good. “I'm sorry, Marla. I bought you a puppy but he's stuck underneath the couch. The fire department's coming to help even as we speak.” Ed bent down to reach underneath the couch and felt his back shudder. Agonizing pain shot straight down his left side. Dropping his beer, he fell to his knees. Not now. Ed had a bum back that put him on Worker's Comp. a year ago. With a great amount of difficulty, Ed managed to position himself on the couch. The only thing that he could do was wait until the pain subsided. Wait he did, for another hour at least, and Marla still wasn't home. Ed wasn't too worried; Marla didn't always manage to get home on time. The puppy emerged from the couch, lapped at the beer and fell asleep at Ed's feet. The red ribbon was dusty and torn.
Buster. That's what the stupid thing did, bust up his marriage. Ed flipped on the T.V. and drowned his sorrows in a sitcom.

Later that night, when Ed could muster the strength, he found a bit of rope and fastened the dog to the back porch. As an afterthought, he threw a dirty old sweater outside for the dog to use for a blanket.

At 3:04, she was in the garden helping her mom, picking daffodils. I drove by, observing. I smiled, she didn't.

At 3:15, I drove by again. She was in her driveway, trying her best to keep a hula-hoop spinning around her slender waist. It hit the ground, I laughed, then smiled again. She picked up her toy to try once more, not bothering to glance at me. I sped up.

At 6:17, she was in the park, riding on one of the swings, kicking her legs as she went back and forth. I sat down on a hard oak bench, watching her movements.

At 6:30, she got off the swing and headed home. I stood up, and glanced around to see if she was alone. She was. I started to follow her.

On old Miller's Road, I could hear her feet shuffling against the graveled ground.
as I followed her.
I stayed in the grass to quiet my footsteps.

After a moment, I started to walk faster,
moving closer to her,
so I could hear her soft small breaths
as she inhaled and exhaled.
I was now on the gravel too.

She stopped, hearing my footsteps.
She started to turn her head,
and that's when I grabbed her.
She cried out in muffled surprise,
my hand clamped over her mouth.
She tried to speak,
to ask me something,
I told her to shut up.
Her body tensed.

I took a knife out of my pocket,
and lifted the blade to her throat.
She cried out into my hand,
as I held the steel lightly against her flesh.

She started to struggle,
trying to get away.
I slowly pressed the knife against her throat,
slicing deeply.
One of her small hands clawed at me,
then grew weak.

Her life covered my hands,
it felt wet and warm.
I held her in my arms for a moment,
then gently set her down
on her stomach.

I knelt down next to her,
turning her over onto her back.
Little pieces of gravel
were stuck to her face.
I picked them off one by one
as she gurgled and choked.

She was starting to get quiet.
I smiled, looking into her eyes
and for once she looked back at me.

Suddenly she was quiet,
staring up at me glossy eyed.
I leaned down,
brushing my lips against hers,
giving her a kiss.

I pressed my fingers against the corners of her mouth,
curling her lips up,
and she finally showed me her smile at 6:49.
Great Lake Review

Stella Woodard

Seam

Mother’s voice whirs quilting
even the clouds urging
me past the blackberry bushes
off the lake cliff.

Blue sky licks water
a fish jumps. I wonder
if I must return or
if I can bend
my sewing needle
into a sharp hook.

Mark Mazzoli

Relativity

The snow came while people sat in their cars mouthing
the words to songs mouthing each other mouthing
a silence eating the world
I close my eyes and catch the sun inside
how different he shines in my head.

***

The snow came
and the grass seemed green for once
though only by comparison.

Great Lake Review

Kim Trela

Grounded

He opens his black tackle box choking
On glut memories. The cool garage air swims
Up his sleeves, stiff fingers
Caress a weathered photo.
The young woman stares into his ebony eyes
From the other side of yellowing
Gloss. Salty tears run over his 5 o’clock shadow
Melting into solid cheekbone.

The black ambience swallowed
His plane, he could taste
The bitter exhaust crawling
Through the walls. His coughs sang
To the low putting engine.
Each putt shook
Their cocoon, shook their security
And he saw the omen screaming
Lightening rods,
Down, down,
Thunder boom seizures.
Down, down,
Into the cornfield.

Shard metal and glass sprinkled
Around his boots. The morning sun rained
Over their two bodies, she lay limp
In his cradle. The wind swirled
Around like a danced; it mocked
Him, throwing debris into his mouth and eyes.
No one saw his salty tears, no one came to help
Breathe life back into her lungs—
Great Lake Review

Bless you, he whispered and kissed her forehead.

His tear slides onto the glossy photo
Pooling in the center.
The picture gravitates in screaming silence,
Down, down
His lungs jerk, eyes drain in weeping seizures
Down, down
Every Labor Day
For the past seven years.
It is July 21, 1996. The clock in the hall reads 6:35. The floor looks like it was washed on Tuesday, maybe Thursday. I turn left into the room. I don't see in at first. My Aunt Gladys and two other uncles are standing there. The corner is dark. It looks cold.

She squeezes my hand so hard that my rings dig deep into the sides of my fingers, leaving bruised reddened impressions. I don't feel it, though. I tell her of the music competition, how we'll find out the results in November. She says she can't wait until she will find out the results. I look down. I chew on my bottom lip. I know she won't live until November.

I look out the window. Children are playing on the playground outside. On the floor above me is the children's cancer treatment center. I hear someone weeping somewhere. I cannot see.

Nana speaks of her church and her favorite priest. We would like him—he doesn't care if you are Jewish or whatever. My stomach turns.

She says Grandpappy has been reminiscing with her the last few weeks about his mother. She was born in Germany. Grandpappy has been dead for eight or nine years. She asks Angelica if she is expecting a diamond ring soon. My sister has been married for over two years. Nana looks very yellow, very weak, very small.

I walk down the empty hall—alone. I sit in the waiting room. The television is on. It is the news. Somebody was just shot and robbed on the street in the city. On the floor is an application. A conversation is written on it. "Rebecca why won't you go out with me??" "Fine." "I don't want you anymore." "I am going to break some glass now..."

An old black man walks into the waiting room. He is hooked up to an IV. He asks me how I'm doing. This is an open-ended question. I ask how he is. I wonder what kind of cancer he has. Or how long he has to live.
1
I can only have sex with you
based on what
I've seen in the movies
so do I rip your blouse open
going up in the elevator
or spread you on the counter
like butcher paper?

2
I drive with my hands at
six and six thirty
foot lazy on the gas
windows down
rain shooting in
I brake for a toll
chuck fifty cents into a metal basket
that's you
and I'm the lint that falls through.

3
am I a magician because I conjured love
from nothing
are you my beautiful assistant
or do I conjure illusions
with sleight of hand
and mirrors
and are you just some audience
volunteer?