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THE SAME SOL
by debbie drago

You are five years old. You live in San Salvador. You are riding a green tricycle on the sidewalk a foot above the dirty street and the cobblestones only shine the heat back up into your brown face. You will be leaving for America in a few days to meet your momma and her husband, your poppa. Your Tia Denora tells you they have paved roads in America; in New york. The glare from the sun lasers out your eyes like you are Superman’s enemy and so the sun is your enemy too. Superman wins out and you fall off the sidewalk into the street so far below. Your tricycle gets stuck halfway and you land on your knee, an injury you will have the rest of your life. You expect someone to come for you, to save you from certain death by cobblestone. No one comes, but you can hear them screaming. you see your own Tia Denora run past you up the street. You pick yourself up, and down the street, you learn, a little boy has been run over. He was your playmate sometimes. You even saw down his pants. The truck driver does not care much ’cause he says the boy was wrong and his parents should've sent him to work. His family sets to clearing him off the street. Your Tia hits you for falling in the street, then assures you that in America they have paved roads with low sidewalks. You can't even remember what it looked like down the boy's pants—something dark and squirmy, like a worm. You hear that in America, sometimes the sun loses out and it snows but you aren’t really sure what snow is and just figure it is an American form of sand. You wouldn't mind too much falling in sand.

On the phone with your momma you cry about Guillermo's wandering. She tells you to let theman be or else you will be out on your bottom. Besides, maybe the perfume smell will rub off Guillermo onto you and you'll smell better. She doesn't tell you much more except that your cousins in El Salvador have disappeared. You ask if the whole family was taken and she says yes. You don't remember much about those cousins but you picture night. You know the neighbors heard but did nothing. You know the smaller children will probably be beaten then sent to new homes where they can grow up to be strong solders fighting their own family. You sit and stroke the blonde hair that is resting in your lap and wonder why Guillermo doesn't mind you having her anymore. She is used to her surroundings now and is quiet most of the time. Your momma asks how the job is coming and you tell her you hate being treated that way. She says good. Bien. You will appreciate your own chores now.

When Guillermo comes home, it's still Saturday, but it is late and he smells of potpourri. He kisses you though, with much passion, and you tell the little girl to go into the other room. He says lo siento for being late but you don't care as he is kissing your shoulders like that. If there is anything you know in Spanish it is lo siento. He tells you it often enough. He tells you in Spanish because you do not fully understand. He can't bear to explain himself in English.

At work on Sunday you smell the potpourri on yourself and you are grateful for Helena's wealth.

You are in tenth grade. You leave math to go to the bathroom, and in the pink room that smells like pee, smoke and ammonia, you meet Anita. You share a smoke and again she begs you to get her stoned. She says she doesn't know anyone who gets stoned, but you clearly remember her brother showing you hash. Give me head, he had said. All in one day you gave your first blowjob and got your first high. Looking down his pants you saw that same squirmy brown worm that the boy hit by the truck in El Salvador had. Only bigger. You were fourteen and afraid to mention that you had never given a blowjob, much less seen a penis up close.

You tell Anita that you haven't gotten stoned in a long time. Not since the amusement park trip. You are sixteen now. That trip was six months ago when you were still fifteen. She tells you if you get her stoned she'll tell you who Guillermo is fucking. It is the first time you have ever heard of him fucking other girls. (The
first in a long line of such things). You don't realize this will become the reason for lo siento. So you grab Anita on both sides of her head. One side by her black hair the other side by her giant sequined earring, and you tell her to tell you who Guillermo is fucking or you'll rip out her hair and earring. She tells you.

You beat up Trisha, a white girl, between fifth and sixth periods. You tell everyone that she's a skeezer. They laugh and you wipe the blood from her nose on Guillermo's locker.

Hide your eyes J.J. behind those concrete black shades. Don't lose the mystery of your blues. You're a god in back of, behind your, beneath the sounds of horn and the cover of the night club night. So stoned and cool, cool as a darkened stream, stoned as smooth sex-which is what you play and give to all who's listening- the ones who know what you're about and the ones who think they do. Your goatee, gray as your seventy years of living in your sixty years of life, conceals even more of the face we don't want to see, but try so hard to. Breathe it to us-the sounds of your days and the moans of your midnights. Midnight to five are the hours of your twenty four which allow you to live the way we think you must in order to play, play, play, play, those blues like a man of no yesterday or tomorrow, no before or after, a man alive from only midnight to five and only with a horn in hand. Man, to live those five hours and release those life long days of fire women and water. Play to us, J.J., and let us let you live the life of the black blues man.

marc ottaviani
The Thought Police are Here to Protect and to Serve You

It is eleven A.M. Brunch. Father McKensie had left the sanctity of wine and choir boys for a night of fun and now finds himself using a public service message for neutering pets as a blanket on the back of a city bus. How can sins of such magnitude come to be? Perhaps this explains what can happen when the thought-police take a vacation.

When all my ethics leave me in the dust
Where pornographic provocations vex
My brain with thoughts of s__, or s____, or s___,
There're certain figments I have come to trust.
When incessant flitting of these thoughts adjust
The sighing thighs of animus reflex,
And dripping tongues flick sequins from my specs,
The thought-police reproach me with disgust.
But if their purity hasn't sprung reserve,
Preserved a sense of mental abstinence
And fingers from sampling shots of deacon's wives,
From probing slippery avenues of verve,
Or weighing yielding spheres of influence,
The thought-police arrive with surgical knives.

*satire of Anna Hempstead Branch's "Where No Thoughts Are"

- jeffrey mack

SONIA SORRENTINI

Sonia Sorrentini, alone in her timeless world,
Does not hear the rumble and squawk of the cars,
Does not smell the smoke and waste of the city.
She seeks out only the swaying tops of trees
And becomes a part of them.

Sonia plays on her swing, laughing as she rocks
In a widening arch.
She does not see the broken pavement
And the patches of blasting through the concrete.
She only sees her feet kicking toward the sun.

jose john calderon
We'll Just Sit and Talk

You are watching me,
watching my lips move,
and wanting to know me better.
Yet, you will never be
more than another selfish lover.
Come over,
Give me a kiss.
Then we can taste each other's past,
create new pains,
and wash them down with tears.
Come over,
give me a hug
and I'll give you one too.
Then we can suffocated each other
until we hear love-words
and tender whisper-lies.
Lean over,
show me your skin
and I'll show you mine.
Then we can take it off
and share our bones
and suck love-words off them.
Lean over,
show me your heart
and I'll show you mine.
Then we can exchange them
so we can take bites
and leave gaping holes in them.
We'll just wipe away the juices,
brush away the crumbs,
and go on to the next lover.
Why not just stay a while?
We'll just sit and talk
and I'll watch your lips move.

A great friend of mine Stephen Peollot had this really odd notion that he
was going to train me to do the "Perfect Swan Dive".
1) Toes were to be pointed,
2) Legs together and straight,
3) Arms in an Iron-Cross,
4) Head up, and
5) My Back had to be totally Arched.
I was kind of intrigued by the fact of trying to defy the law of gravity, so
there I was trying to do everything he was asking of me. Anyhow that dive
happened off of a dare one day. I found myself standing on a 47 foot platform,
that was the length of my hand from my thumb-side to my pinky-side looking at
my palm. I had the biggest adrenaline surge that not only pushed me to stand up
and lean forward, but also to jump off the cliff and gain another four or five feet
of height.
I remember feeling as if I was being held up in mid-air for about two
minutes and began to descend towards the dark and mirrored water that was just
below me. I heard nothing while I was afloat in the midst of my timeless flight!
I saw nothing with my eyes, but with my mind I saw my arms open up into an
iron-cross and extended only two fingers, my pointer and middle finger. I also
saw my toes point, with my legs together as straight as two iron bars. Then I
remembered to arch my back! I did not know it at the time, but the dive that
Stephen and I were waiting all of this time was happening right before his eyes,
and best of all, it was me who was doing it!
I remember the dive with all of the beauty that it presented to me while I
was doing it! I think of that moment every now and then whenever I am feeling
ill and depressed, or just whenever I need something to show me that if I am
willing to do anything with all of my heart and soul, that I can do anything,
anything at all!
Sisters, Mind Your Business

Yes, I know what time it is
and yes I'm just getting home.
I know I'm still in the same clothes I had on when I left yesterday
and I know I need to comb my hair.
But why are you sitting here,
at this time of morning,
to watch me open my door and ask me questions?
When you came in last Wednesday
one hour later than I am now
carrying your shoes in your hand
with the same clothes you had on at work that day
needling to comb your hair and smelling like Drakkar
all I said to you was good morning.
You had obviously had a good evening
and you looked well enough.
And I didn't ask you why Mr. Clark was about to break his neck getting out the back door as your man was pulling up in the driveway when I was taking out my garbage on Monday.
And you ought to mind your niece when you have friends over
She knocked on my door yesterday, scared, to tell me that some strange man was on top of you in your bed and that you were screaming.
But you're a grown woman, and I figure you can take care of yourself
so I don't ask you questions about the things you do, like your mother would.
I'm grown too, with my own job and my own house.
So isn't all you should be saying to me when you see me, at any time of the morning, is good morning?

by sonja brown

Mary b. 1946

"He burned his broad before it was fashionable."

One afternoon out in the yard
As she plucked the flimsy garment from the washline-

A pair of weathered clothespins held fast between
Her parted lips,
Revealing a carriage of eye-white teeth;
Occasioned by the fingerlings of sun
That pulled her face taut, flurrying like shadows
seeking a privacy deep within the ground-

For a moment,
She allowed the linen to carousel about her,
Splintered in the fashion of angels,
Awash with fossils
Green and calling-

Edge upon sifting edge,
Each form pirouetted like pixies
Clinging to strings
Above her eyes-

Spun up in the thread
Of which divinity calls its name,
She offers her slender hands to the air-

He fills the gas-can
A 1.29' worth (regular)
And heads towards home, humming.

robert gaggin
DYING

ALONE
no one to turn to
AFRAID
of what is to come
AWAKE
for as long as can be

DYING

BETRAYED
from one you trusted
BEWILDERED
at the thought it happened
BEFRIEND
the ones who care

DYING

CAPTURE
the moments while you can
CITE
what you want to achieve
CONTROL
the destiny that is left

DYING

DENIED
of a chance to live on
DISCOVERED
that it wasn't worth it

- jamie broadwell

PLEASE
by ben doyle

When that little boy in the bag gets passed to his dad and gets taken home and the whole family hugs him, unzips that bag and kisses those cold lips and asks anyone above, "Why us, what have we done?", is that some kind of clue?

I saw this old woman starving - at least seventy she looked - and she was going along with the rest of her friends, and the strong but cold kids were taking off her clothes and there was nothing she could do to resist. It was all on channel 2 at 5 A.M. They'll show anything at that hour! And what about the woman with the mortar-melted face, what a noise she made as she screamed through the little hole left in her head - what a racket that was.

Please give me a chance to say some of these things. If you love me, you'll let me. That food you're eating, I'll gladly buy. Just help me get some of this off my chest. Please let me get political. Please let me get political with you now. Not often, just one time. Usually no, but this one time.
My good friend came 800 miles just to see me, just to stay with me the other night. And I let him stay. I gave him my floor, some blankets, I scraped up an old stained mattress for him to sleep on. I even put sheets on it. But then a tall order. He wanted a pillow! I only have two I said, but I know how he is. I gave him the one with the spit-stains, but my head wasn't in the right place all night; I slept mad. I thrashed and moaned, and when I got up to get a drink, I was sure to step on his hand.

Please give me a chance to say some of these things. Please let me get personal with you now. Not often, just this one time.

The Hunter
by gerrold roth

I don't feel any hatred as I center the sight of my 30.06 Winchester rifle on the shoulder of the grazing buck. He is a muscular young thing, with only his two small horns to show his manhood. I don't want to kill him, for we are both brothers in our mortality. We both walk our life paths for only a finite time, then we are cast into the wind like the leaves off a dying tree. I love him, for I know him well. Yet, I will kill him. He doesn't even notice me as I push in the metallic plug of the safety and prepare to fire.

This is what the tree huggers and animal's rights folks don't understand; my brotherhood with my prey. I kill to feed; I feed to live. It is the way of things and it will never change. The price we pay for life must always be assumed by another. It is not fair, but neither is nature. Everything must kill to live. Nature has no pity, and neither do I. I am a killer. I may feel sorrow, but I never feel guilt.

The deer tenses suddenly and looks in my direction. He has caught my scent or seen a reflection of my wristwatch in the sun. I curse softly as I anticipate the direction of his bolt. The game has begun. Just as I want to survive, so does my brother. He does not care whether I will go hungry without his meat; he wants to live as much as I do. He will leave me to starve, if I give him the chance. I won't.

I have the gun; he has nothing but his speed and cunning to save him. Unfair? You bet. I wouldn't have it any other way. I steady the rifle and put my finger on the trigger, giving the young buck a last look before I end his short existence. He can see me; I know it. His eyes are red with rage and indignation. He had may more brooks to drink cool water from, he had many more bolting gallops to make on the soft ground of the forest. He is filled with rage because he feels that his life was too short. His eyes have hatred in them, but I do what I have to do.

I pull the trigger and blast a large lead slug into his side. The buck is knocked off his feet by the force of the bullet, but he struggles to stand up. He cannot. Finally, he falls to the ground,
panting, as his blood spills to the ground. I jump up from behind the shrub I was hiding behind and walk to where he is lying. His eyes communicate his great pain.

I pull back the bolt of my rifle and load another shell. I will take away his pain. It is the least I can do. "The forest will mourn for you, my fair buck" I tell him.

The bullet shatters his skull and he stiffens, then slumps. He doesn't move again. I look around the forest, which has grown quiet with fear. His fellow deer have fled from the noise of my gun. That is good, because they will be there for another day. Their lives will go on without their friend. They will forget what has happened by the time I next visit.

My prey is large. He will make many good meals. I tie him to the branch of a tree and let his still warm blood drip to the floor of his home. He will enrich the trees, which will make berries for his brethren. When his form is cold and dry, I throw him over my shoulder and start walking back to camp. I am a killer, but I survive. It is the way of things, and it will never change.

White Shadow

Running through these woods
with the hoods
and our gun hung
boots of steel wheels
The lightning flashes
as the shadow dashes
from our sights
so we cut through
the walls and speed
down the halls
of mud line
trees that scrape
and rape the white
from the revolutionary skies.
Watch us watch
us closely
for these days
of haze and
confusion are
simple illusions
and no clear
conclusion
to the death
and dying.
The black man's crying is not
the unheard
bird
of the muted
rage that is found in the forests
darkest corner.
His tears are held
in spears whose fears
are blind and

alan nosworthy
In a Dream...

...I'm in the Caribbean on a tiny island called Boriquen. It's hot and the air is clear. Someone mentioned there were bears on the island, but there are no bears here. This is a tropical island with exotic animals that make beautiful sounds. I don't know what kind of creatures they have here, but they aren't large. They must be small tropical creatures. I can hear the sound of a coqui whistling but I can't see it. It's very close by, and I feel as though it's trying to talk to me. I can see it now. It's on a rock. It's green with red eyes and it looks as if its toes are swollen. It only lives on this island. A true native that will never leave its home...

by Frances Cardena
---excerpt

Doug tried to say a whole lot more while packing up and moving out. But the entire ordeal only took one afternoon. Most of our stuff was actually my stuff. Stuff. Getting Doug out of my life was like throwing out an old refrigerator. Whew! Glad that big, old thing is gone. "I'm ready!" I yelled into space. "Life can happen to me now!" And what do you know, something did happen. I began to cry. And then something else happened to me--a deep sleep.

I awoke a week later. Not what seemed like a week later, but actually a full week earlier. My friends wouldn't buy that because I was seen around the university, like always. I have responsibilities, like classes to teach and meeting to attend, which require my physical presence. Mentally, however, I was lost in loneliness, struggling to smile until that empty feeling faded. I could accept that. I knew denying the fact that I felt unbearably empty was useless. I knew loneliness had to eventually pass out of my life. Just like Doug had to. The interesting thing about my learning to live alone is that I came out of that sort of mental hibernation within a short week. I cannot deny the power of loneliness once it crept into my life. I hurt! What else is there to do but to exist in a sound sleep until it creeps back out? With past heartaches, I would go out every night and take up aerobics or violin lessons, something, trying hopelessly to ignore loneliness. I've carried the dead weight of emptiness while surrounded by my friends in a crowded bar. But if you're not ready to face the temporary existence of lonely insecure feelings, then you are only prolonging the suffering. I've learned that there's no substitute. I surrendered to the transitional phase of time and found myself out of that dark abyss.
Claiming the Prize

The boy holds the world in his hand.

He marvels at the shape,

the smooth edges and swirling colors.

He shoots the marble.

It hits several others sending

one into the gutter, another into the street, still others into the bushes.

He ignores them all to follow

his prize, the 'Big Jewel'.

It rolls away from him,

faster and faster down the hill.

He cries at the thought of losing

his precious gem,

his favorite plaything.

The marbles rolls over the highway

and the boy chases it without

a thought about the passing traffic,

yet somehow he crosses unharmed.

It rolls into a field and stops.

The boy bends down to claim his prize

and does not recognize the

ancient wrinkled hand

that is his own.

He looks back at the unfamiliar past and sighs.

-jennifer pizon

The Midnight Urge

-jamie broadwell

For some strange reason last night I woke up at one o'clock in the morning for the cool refreshing, satisfying taste of Mountain Dew. I quickly jumped out of my bed and went to the fridge, stubbing my big toe on the dresser where the fridge sits. I slowly opened the fridge to the sight of an empty two liter of Dew.

"Who the hell did that?", I thought. Probably my roommate, what else are they good for? But hey, I knew that if I didn't get some Mt. Dew soon, there was no way I was going to be able to get back to sleep. So I quickly threw on my dark green bathrobe, which my urge grew even stronger because we all know that the Dew comes in a green can.

I grabbed the two quarters, and two nickels that were on my desk next to the pencil sharpener, and headed for the door. I tried to be as quiet as possible while opening the door, but our door is a squeaker. As soon as I was out the door I ran down the stairs, luckily only one flight, to the vending machines. And would you believe it?! The Pepsi Machine was out of order. At this point I had started to get a little agitated with life.

So I thought for a second. Hey, Seneca Hall is only a few steps, and it's after one in the morning so no one will see me in my stupid robe if I go over there. So off to Seneca I went. As I approached the doors of Seneca I wanted to die. There was a little sign on the door that said, "THESE DOOR WILL BE LOCKED AT 1 a.m.". Because I don't live in Seneca, I didn't have keys to unlock the door. So back to Cayuga Hall I went. Until a brilliant brainstorm hit me. If Seneca locks their door at one, then Cayuga probably does too. So I was in front of Cayuga Hall, in my dark green bathrobe, with an urge for a Mt. Dew that was driving me crazy, and don't forget a stubbed toe as well. Life at this point was going really well for me if you can't tell.

I started thinking to myself, "What else could possibly happen to me tonight?" I knew I shouldn't have asked that question, because just as I did, the pledges from a local sorority came jogging by. Boy, did I leave a heck of a first impression when the wind blew my robe open. At this point my life was basically over. I just wanted to get back into my room and hide in bed for few years. I called my roommate from the phone located at the front doors. I woke him up and begged him to come over and let me in. I had a heck of a time trying to explain to him why I was standing outside in my bathrobe and beet-red face, but I managed to tell him the whole interesting early morning experience I had. He just simply said, "Jame, there's a new two liter in the closet I just bought last night," and went to bed.
The west side is like the old west. The quickest gun lives longer. It's a race riot; a color war. Black on Black, Blue vs. Green. I was fourteen when I started banging. It wasn't much of a choice, kill Green for the Blue or get killed by the Blue. Black ices Black. Blue ices Green. I proved my manhood with a .22. Alone I walked down 125th looking for my bull's-eye. Then I saw her, old, and also alone. I shot and ran before the body fell. I was a man, she was a corpse. A casualty of war in Black on Black. Blue on Green. I killed for years, Green, Red Yellow, I killed all that were not with my set. They were Black and Green and I was Black and Blue. And now I'm the one who's blue shirt is stained with red. Stopped by a bullet from a Green man. I'm the last mortality in my war of Black vs. Black and Blue vs. Green.

-ed brock
Boogie Push

The black blues man sings his song tellin' his tale as the boogie pushes on, as the boogie pushes on, the black blues man tellin' his tales, sellin' his wails, as the boogie, as the boogie pushes on, his back feels the years of his blues as the boogie pushes on jumpin' and jivin', buying and selling to the kids at table number two, and the cut throat bartender behind, and the boogie pushes on, the balck blues man rides it like a hawk in the wind, as the push boogies on long, pushes hard, 'til it moves the college kids to the left, and the won man and wife in front, and the cut throat to the rear, and the sweat, and the smell pushes the crowd up against the ceiling and walls with honest feeling for the black blues man riding it, never knowing which way, as the boogie pushes on, the starts, stops, highs, lows, and changes of the road ahead will turn, and the boogie pushes on (forever forward, always lookin' back), talkin' bout the back rent, talkin' about the front rent, the boogie, and the push boogies on, the HOUSE RENT BOOGIE, 'til every soul, every child, feels the black blues man's blues like their own, as he stands talkin', singin', moanin', his blues, and as the boogie pushes on, and as we feel the boogie push, all is known, and all is felt, as the boogie, all is felt, all of it, it feels good, it feels bad, and it feels right, never wrong, the HOUSE RENT BOOGIE, pushing on, as the boogie push, the boogie push, as the HOUSE RENT BOOGIE comes to an end.

marc ottaviani

The Music Makers

by liliana almendarez

Once upon a time there was a man who went around selling drums. He would wander around selling one drum here and there every once in while. Then one day he entered a little town that just seemed to have half dead people. No one did anything for anyone. They didn't even look at each other much less speak to each other. They was no community. Just some half dead people wandering around the town searching for answers that they just couldn't find. So the drum-man went up to each and every person he saw and sold them a drum they couldn't play. By the end of the day he taught each person one different rhythm.

"BA-TA" went the first one, 
"RA-BA-TA" went the next, 
"BOOM-BOOM" went the next one and so on until every man, woman, and child had their own special beat for their drum. each person went to their own little corner of their town and practiced their own beat.

Suddenly they started to hear each other practicing so they slowly started to congregate in the center of town. Each person playing their one beat in the center of town sounded like a thunderstorm. However, they really started to listen to one another and they started to play together. 

"RA-BA-TA-BOOM-RA-BA-TA-BOOM-RA-BA-TA-BOOM", until they had a constant harmonious beat. Someone broke out in a song asking one question, 
"Can you hear mel"
"Yes, we can hear you? Came her chorused reply. And it went back and forth until people started joining in giving their story, their testimony of their lonely life. Every man woman and child told their own version about their search for something. The drums continued to beat the steady rhythm, and dialogue began to form. All night they sang and played. These songs gave voice to their silence. Slowly, with a light step, they started to go home, open-mouthed, and RA-TA tapping of their drums. Having heard
this the drum-man left the town.
Questions no longer needed an immediate finite answer.
Instead their lives became a torrent of ever changing questions,
old beats turned new,
songs not yet sung,
old words forming in a different way.
Suddenly, half dead people began to struggle
because that's what people do.
Birth, struggle, rebirth
each time a new phase begins an old way is turned inside out.
We are ever changing and forever loving.
We are all music makers in our own way all we need to do is
find our own drum to begin a beat.

Within its folds, the aura was one of zest and mystery
generated by the dim lights and soft classical music. The
crowded dance floor in all its bustling air was seen from the
height of the bar's semi-circular pedestal. It was a dazzling sight,
a sight which instilled hope in the hearts of the lonely, and
peace in the minds of all the ill at ease.
The Italian Pushes a New Hairstyle, but I say No

Shortly after lunch, the Literary Bus of Good Times and Tomfoolery reaches the Spank U Private Middle School where two young lads, bored of their academic endeavors, have decided to make a break for it. The following is an account of the adverse effects of playing hooky; those including vandalism, cigarette smoking, abusive language, and loitering.

Halos trail zip cords to the park
Scarfing Pizza Hut crouton now,
Then as much as this poem would like to
Hang around no-necks.

Scarfing Pizza Hut croutons now,
America's favorite hormone deviant
Hangs around no-necks.
A mouse drinks from the rubber doctor's strange glove
(American's favorite hormone deviant).
Cool, with a splash of vertical humor, just
A mouse drinks from the rubber doctor's strange glove
And steers a dirt bike over his own head,

Cool, with a splash of vertical humor, just
Where he finds, among Chinatowne
And steers a dirt bike. Over his own head,
Our hero prefers the juice of canine erectus

Where he finds, among Chinatowne,
His lavish Italian hairstyle devouring his own.
Our hero prefers the juice of canine erectus
(Ah) those crass young perverts
Who set fire on a Jarts set.

Old T.V. repair man who forgets
Halos trail rip cords to the park,
We set fire on your Jarts set
Then, as much as this poem would like to.

* satire of John Ashberry's "Pantoum"

-jeff mack
Seeds

Apple seeds in your red hair.
Some slick gypsy caravan.
Two pennies to rub together.
They serve drinks at lunchtime here.

"Hare Krishna! Hare Krishna!", someone says.
Our date is hot like some pipes.
Some of my best friends are gay.
They give you what goes down good here.

Your hand is on my leg and I like it.
Someone nice I know taught me backgammon.
There's a person I know on the title page.
The book's about Freedom and Dignity.
Dedicated to HER and HER WORLD.
To me. It's to me too. HER WORLD.
10¢ paperback I bought at a stand miles away
From her world. A familiar name on the spine.
10¢ won't go too far these days. Worth the
title page to me. Our virginity.

Hey, you bet, Baby, makes sense to me.
Three cords of oak and maple.
Tomatoes, he cut out big pictures of
Some stuff from his garden and pasted
Them onto little pictures of people.

It fooled me. I believed.
That's one hell of a garden
you've got there, I said to him.

ben doyle

-craig mcNeilly

Eventually, I got up and changed the fucking tire for him.
Gene's knuckles were bloody from where the tire iron had slipped
on the lugs, and mashed his hands into the asphalt. By the time the
new shoe was on the car, we were both more sweaty, more sun-burnt,
and more pissed off than ever. It was one-thirty p.m., and
there was no oasis in sight, only many more miles of shoving.

Gene and I didn't say much for the rest of that day. It
would have been useless because any remark, no matter how nice,
would get an insult in return. Gene mentioned leaving the car with
the flat and walking the rest of the way. I just kept on changing the
tire. There was no way I was going to stop something foolish once
I'd been forced into starting it. In my mind, Gene's suggestion was
his admittance of having made a mistake. Because he now saw
how stupid he was, we had to follow through with his stupid idea.
It was my own stupid punishment for him.

That's just how pigheaded I am. Whenever someone starts
something dumb, then realizes the error of their ways, I'm the guy
saying, "Come on, this was your choice, let's not give up in the
middle of it. Who knows, maybe it will work out." But it never
does, I just say that to drag them along deeper. People are so
gullible, they really want somebody to hold their hand and tell
them everything is all right when they know it isn't.

...I'm sure it wasn't personal, but the sun became my number
one enemy. Gene was a close second, but even he couldn't com­
pete with the abuse that that orange sphere kept blasting on us. I
felt hotter than a nun's box by late afternoon, and as the Pope
would have it, that was pretty damn hot. To go along with the
miserable heat, a series of small rises waited for us down the road.
They were slight enough so that if you were riding in a car you
would've thought they were speed bumps, but pushing a car made
it an altogether different experience. Gene and I would get that old
shitbox boogying about as fast as we could and not let off until we
crested the top. Then I hopped onto the top of the trunk while
Gene jumped into the driver's seat for the short coast down the other side.

By five-thirty we had made another four miles, making our grand total around thirteen. We were both dog-tired and I was thinking about calling it a day, even with the cooling temperatures setting in on us. But then Gene spoke up for the first time in hours, saying something about a light up ahead. As best as I could judge, it was a halo of light. It looked as if it was coming from some sort of overhead or dusk-to-dawn deal.

Well we started in with a whoop and just about trotted that half-mile, hoping like hell that it was a service station, and hoping it wasn't closed down. We hadn't run into too many all night convenience stores out there. Soon we were close enough to see it was a gas station, and as we shoved the cavalier into the dusty pull-up area, it was indeed open. Some cantankerous looking guy was sitting on a chair right out of the movies. He had a beat-up copy of HUSTLER in one hand and a forty-ouncer beside him in the dirt. The name-patch over his left tit said "Chet". Me and Gene-O walked up before him, all out of breath and not saying much of anything.

"Looks like you boys had a spot of kaw trubble," Chet drawled.
"Yessir, we did." Gene said politely, not taking any chances. "Is there any chance you could help us out?"

Chet slapped back a swallow from his fort with a grunt and then steadied himself from belching explosively.

Chet said, "Well boys, I ain't no mechanic, but I gat my truck in back, could give ya a tow down the road ta Harold's, he'd fix ya up. Cost ya fifty bucks..."

Gene and I walked back over to the car before Chet had finished, me taking my spot at the rear and Chet getting the door flung open, ready to push. Chet stirred out of his chair towards us as we put the cavalier in motion.

"O.K. boys, forty dollars, I'll do it fer forty, ya looks bad 'nough as it is."

We kept on pushin', angling the car out of Chet's and into the road, as he yelled after us.
"You boys are 'tards, y'know that? I'll tow ya fer thirty bucks!"

We had the chevy sat straight in the right lane, moving out of Chet's light towards the darkness of Harold's. Gene laughed suddenly like a hyena about to eat her young.
"We're nuts you know that Gar"? He laughed again shrilly, eating up the moment, thinking how wild and free he is.
"We're fucking crazy!" Gene yelled.
"No, we aren't," I said, "Not even close".

Chet's truck idled up alongside us even as Gene's laughter lingered.
"O.K. boys, twenty bucks!" Chet yelled out the window.

I stopped pushing and walked over to Chet, slipping him the Jackson. Gene stared as I grabbed the chain off Chet's truck.

"Get in the fucking truck, Gene," I said, and hooked the chain up underneath the cavalier.
Reptiles haus,
there must have been a jail break
at the reptile haus
you think looking
up at the ceiling
where a gecko sits looking
down at you.

Feeling your fingers'
identities expanding
you stick one hand
to the surface of the wall
and then another hand
about a foot
above it.

Unimpressed,
he yawns
with a lifted foot
and a dry clap
of scaly lips.

With your shoes now removed,
you clap your bare feet like
suction cups
to the wall
and quickly ascend,
like an octopus,
to make his acquaintance.

In a show of power,
on his black spotted skin,

he xeroxes a copy
of the daisy spotted wall
standing beneath you both.

You put all your concentration
beneath a life-time
of pressure-cooked
determination
but the time has not come
for you to copy daisies
just yet.

A fly flies near,
a diminutive
emerald fly,
which with
a flying snap
the gecko's devours.
And then he looks at you
to see
if you'll devour a fly too,
that is
if you're not too out of shape.
Stretching so that
your tongue snaps
about the gecko's waist,
you tear him free
and snap his spine
between your bicuspids.
With bloody glee
caking on your molars.
You grind his pulp
and
swallow.
then drop
  to the floor
  where your gizzard can digest
  and your mind can drop
  a thought of daisies,
  a bovine's paradise,
  long
  long
  fields
  of nothing
  but daisies.

- j.d. mcdonnell

Self-Sufficient

The nights are long in a box I use for home,
and days are somehow longer than the nights.
I push my life away in a little chrome
shopping cart, that holds my winter tights
and clothes that smell like a bottle of sour wine.
I guess my life is far from normal. Fights
in alleyways for food is reality. I'm fine, though... just a few
scratches. Life's a bitch!
.....But no one tries to control me, keep me in line,
or make me scratch where I don't got an itch!
I'm an independent woman! Self-sufficient!
and soon I'll stand on my own two feet and stitch
my life together. All my money's spent
on food and wine, but I'm savin' for the rent.

reginald kornegay
In death
and in dying
I've buried many
memories of those
whose souls touched
mine. In steam
dreams I saw their
faces and all the places
we went in search of those
who called us to
these lives that have no
place in the lies
hiding behind their hall
walls that we never saw
until the thunder crushed
in a flush of character
driven hate.
If I never wake
from these picture frame
lanes in a past gone
by, lay me down again
and shut my eyes, dear friend,
for I cannot face the dread of
knowing all my heroes
are dead.

allan nosworthy

Song from the Soul

I am stuck between two worlds.
The ancient songs echo
in the pyramids of Teotihuacan.
Yet, my music
is a pair of homeless men
wheezing through an old trumpet
while I wait for a train on 42nd street.
There is a silence
of the dead
within me.
Yet, I don't understand
the language.
I was born in a land
that turns away
from the Spirits,
so we are forced
to walk this Earth alone.
I chant
the song
of the living
to walk in the world
of the dead.

by liliana almendarez