wooden teeth

Self Portrait

Deborah Engel
Foreigner’s Cycle

1-Octobre

Crystal air and a high blue note;
the green lion strides past cold bees,
a young raked man
laughs on his pedestal.
Inside, a despair strings,
then there is a small white stone on the ground.
Two lines of club-footed ones
brandish their thousand claws
in front of the red castle.

2-Février

The air smells like a hearth;
the dead ones barn in the park after the storm.
Bodies of warmth like infants
sleep swaddled in wind,
a small girl races
across the forbidden grass to wake them.
The trees are eager for it, too;
scratching at the clouds
with their feverish thorns,
revealing here and there a blue ankle.

3-Avril

My soul, that little dynamo,
is green
not gray, today,
overjoyed to find fellows
in the leaves
and a wide blue eye in the sky.

At dusk, the sun sings
a foreign lullaby,
made for abbeys,
full of wheat.

Still the sun though, still the sky
leaf anonymous
grief autonomous,
human pigeon rat and fly.

–Jennifer Mason
Withholding Information

My mother called me a liar once; sometimes you get that look in your eyes. Some things are not a big bowl of popcorn, some things are hard candies, germ-ridden when shared.

So when I say "I went out." and you say "Where?" and I say "To the store." and you say "Which?" and I say "CVS." and you say "You spent 7 hours at CVS?" and I say "Well..." and you say "What?" and I sigh and tell you, it means you should have left it at, "I went out."

'Cause you don't want to know I bought you a birthday present or I had sex on my roof or I hung with some chick you don't dig or drank with a chick you dig, without you or I spent 7 hours alone.

Those days I listen to Jeff Buckley Don't ask me about today; ask about tomorrow. Today is my personal stash of caramel corn. And even though you might say "Poppycock," (the name brand my mother buys), I won't let you steal a kernel.

It's like Kleenex. Even though I might buy CVS tissues, we call them Kleenex. That's fucked up, 'cause my life's target market is mostly you. But your name isn't on every box, and anyway I don't always push the product off the shelf Or the shelf life has expired, And I've moved on.

—Michael J. Andrews

—Emily Cole
My latest boyfriend is a disaster.

His name is Ben and he has eyes like a rockstar. We meet at the bookshop where I work. It is love at first sight. He buys a copy of The Motorcycle Diaries and asks for my phone number. We will live happily ever after.

The initial signs of a problem are subtle ones, and it takes me awhile to catch on.

On our first date, he stumbles into the doorway of a coffee shop. He is flustered and a little embarrassed, but I’m too fascinated by his dangerous motorbike and the half-moons of his thumbnails to be put off by a little klutzy shuffling.

A week later, he invites me over for dinner. I bring the beer. While we stand in his tiny yellow kitchen, marvelling at the way we’ve been attending the same gallery openings and punk shows for the past two years and never met, he slices off the tip of his pinky finger with a chef’s knife.

He wraps his hand in a dish towel, and I fish the little piece of finger out of the diced tomatoes on the cutting board and drop it into a Ziploc bag filled with ice.

I drive him to the hospital in my VW Rabbit. I play the radio too loud and help him apply pressure to the wound. I am very good at applying pressure.

The emergency room is actually kind of romantic. In the orange plastic seats of the waiting area, there are mothers and drunkards and old men, and then there is us. We sit with shoulders touching, sharing weak smiles, the little diver of finger between us like a goldfish.

The doctors stitch Ben’s finger back together very neatly, and when I drop him off at his house at midnight, he lingers in the car for a moment and kisses me before climbing out of the passenger’s seat and slamming his good hand in the door.

The kiss, though, is very sweet, slow and a little vulnerable.

The next morning, I call my friend Isobel to tell her the exciting news. I tell her about the dinner and the doctors and the kiss. I tell her about Ben’s motorbike and his tiny kitchen and the way his blond hair stands up in perfect spikes.

On the other end of the line, I can hear Isobel crunching on granola.

"Be careful with this one," she says, finally.

I tell her that I don’t understand what she’s getting at.

"Remember Dave?" she asks me. "Remember Brendan and John? And Pietro?"

"Those were isolated incidents," I remind Isobel.

"Still," she says, mumbling through mouthfuls of cereal, "A trip to the emergency room on a second date is never a good sign. Especially for someone with your history. Just try to take this one slowly."

I promise her that I will.

I am overwhelmed by how wonderful this man is. He knows how to make plants grow, how to flip pancakes in the frying pan, and how to smoke a cigarette in a rainstorm.

He steals flowers for me and helps me paint my bathroom and fixes everything in my apartment with a hammer and some duct tape.

He gives me rides on his motorbike and when we kiss, his mouth tastes like smoke and peppermint.

I’m really falling for this one, it’s true, but as time goes on, it becomes apparent that something is not quite right.

The accidents get worse and worse. He drops a pickle jar and cuts his feet on the glass. A flower pot falls from a second story fire escape and crashes down on him as he’s walking down the sidewalk. A dog bites him in the park in the middle of our romantic Sunday afternoon picnic.

Isobel charts biorythms, and when I go to visit her at the organic bakery where she works, she tells me that everyone has low points in the astrological calendar, times when the body is more accident-prone.

"Maybe he’s just going through a low point," she tells me, dusting the wheat flour off her hands. Her
expression is doubtful, though, as if she suspects something else is up, and for the first time, I wonder if Isobel is really worth keeping around as a friend. I decide that maybe I’ll stop calling her for a while.

I tell Ben about the biorhythms when I get home, but he just shakes his head.

"I was never like this," he says, "before I met you."

I think that’s an incredibly sweet thing for him to say. I kiss him on the swollen bridge of his broken nose.

We are on a first-name basis with the third-shift nurses at the university hospital. We have favorite x-ray technicians. We get free jello in the cafeteria when Jolene and Ray are working the register.

When we go on dates, Ben’s got bandages around his elbows and stitches across his eyebrow. It makes him look tough. I tell him, like the action hero at the end of the movie, after he’s killed all the terrorists and rescued his buddy from certain death, and now he’s sitting in the back of an ambulance, kissing the savvy brunette TV reporter while the hotel or the 747 or the freight ship burns away in the background.

This doesn’t seem to make Ben feel any better.

When we see people we know, he’s always too embarrassed to say what’s happened, so I begin making up stories for him when our friends ask about his injuries.

“Oh,” I say, “Ben broke his arms rescuing a toddler from the path of a speeding bus last week. The burns! Those are from when the ceiling collapsed during the fire at the old folks’ home. Luckily the quadriplegic he was carrying to safety was unharmed.”

It’s like dating a war hero. I get to hold his arm and help him down the front steps of my building. I bring him things in bed. Play the bitch when we can’t get aisle seats at the theatre or a table near the windows at a fancy restaurant.

“Can’t you see he’s injured?” I ask the usher or the maitre d’, letting my voice rise in my head, shrill and insistent, as if I don’t enjoy being forced to point out their cruel insensitivity, but honestly...
During the drive home from one of our Saturday nights out on the town, Ben suggests that we start renting videos and ordering Chinese delivery.

When I bring him home for a family dinner, my mother decides right away that Ben's just clumsy. "Reminds me of that awkward Michael boy you went to junior prom with," she tells me while we're in the kitchen, putting finishing touches on the pot roast and potatoes.

Later, though, when we're clearing the table, she agrees that his limping gives Ben a kind of stoic appeal. "Just like your father," she says, "God rest him."

My father's photograph sits on the mantel over the fireplace. My mother has kept the silver frame draped in black crepe for the past six years. The two of them were wonderful together, and now that he's gone, she misses him incredibly.

From the night of his marriage proposal to her, when he accidentally swallowed the ring, to the near-drowning during their honeymoon to Hawaii to his bout of salmonella at their twentieth anniversary dinner, my mother was always there for my father, caring for him and nursing his wounds.

Her love for him was amazing.

Ben is getting restless. Sex is complicated now, with the neck brace and the fractured knee and the steam burns across his chest. Mostly he doesn't even want to bother anymore.

"I miss my motorbike," he says one night, sitting up in bed and reaching for his racing jacket. I ask him if he wouldn't be more comfortable in one of the cardigans that my mother sent over for him. I point out that the apartment is a little drafty, but he just rolls his eyes.

The next morning, while I'm pureeing his scrambled eggs to make them easier for him to drink through a straw, Ben shouts over the sound of the blender that he thinks we need some time apart.

I am shocked and inconsolable.

"What?" I say. "You want to see other people?"

"No," he tells me, "I want to walk down the street. I want to take the stairs. I want to jaywalk and throw a Frisbee and ride my motorbike in rush hour traffic."

"But who will change your bandages for you?" I ask him. "Who will take your phone messages and bring you aspirin?"

He says he's sorry but that maybe the separation will be good for me, too.

I tell him he's being selfish, and I cry and grab at the sleeve of his cardigan sweater, but he is reaching for his crutches and collecting his racing jacket and his favorite roll of duct tape.

He smiles sadly as he hobbles out the door. He says maybe he'll call me when he gets the pins taken out of his knee.

When I call my mother to tell her what's happened, she is supportive but stern.

"Keep your chin up," she tells me. "I went through a dozen men before I met your father. They just don't make them like they used to."
The Greeks had a word

the Greeks had a word for an East Asian people

Seres (the Chinese)
on which floor were built Latin for silk (sericum)

and French serge de Nîmes

and thus our denim

but I can't explain the blue

of blue jeans or sky

in whose reflection on a piece of glass I see,

quickly gone, a hawk

–David McAleavy
The Life of Teabags

We nestled inside the Teapot
Bed and Breakfast on our way to
Holy Island whose lone road
immerses in water all day in high tide.
We'd just paraded on Guy Fawkes's Day
or Bonfires Day, the twisted British
holiday, in support of explosions. We
bathed together in the quirky bathroom
with a frog toilet paper roll holder
and a cross-stitched reminder to please
be neat not to tinkle on the seat.
In that little tub we squeezed,
you, lying on my bosom,
your genitals buoyant on the surface.
I washed your scalp
where that miraculous brain
prunes in its own juices.
I sponged your chest;
you, my knees and vulva.
We stewed

and kissed each others' reachable parts
steeping in porcelain...

the brew chilled from our drawn-out washing.
We stood, wrapped in a naked hug
a curl of smoke
in the stinging post-mist of fire and rain.

—Heather McKee Hurwitz
Kissing the Game Goodbye

Jaime was carrying the final box out of her ex-lover’s flat, next door to mine, when we met—just like that, as if for the first time. But I don’t think it was. Now, we hang out, playing pool with cute waiters, where everything happens under one bright light, and there are sharks all around us, circling.

The balls hurtle past pockets on my turn, not stopping in any predictable spot. Nothing is more eye-opening than a good mistake, she teases. I smile. Oh, you thought I didn’t mean to do that?

Jaime’s eyes gleam when she calls her shot—I sip my Bud and kiss the game goodbye—coolly, knowing there will be another, and another. And the guys keep buying our drinks. If a new one asks, Have we met before?

the answer is a calm before the storm. It’s possible. This is the only thing we can say for sure.

And we say it over and over again, and continue to be satisfied.

—Cynthia Saunders
It begins with the insomnia.

She wakes at three in the morning, with the bed sheets twisted around her ankles and one arm dangling dangerously into space. In the darkness, she is startled by the absence of something un-nameable. It takes her a moment to realize herself in the bed, the bed in the room, the room in the city, the city waiting outside the window with sound and light, rats and sirens.

After she re-places herself, wakes up enough to chase away the shadows of nightmare, sleep does not return to her, and she is left stranded between the floor and the ceiling, aware of the texture of the pillowcase, the temperature of the air, the cadence of her own breath.

In this way, she passes the remainder of the night, lying wide-eyed and motionless, as though embalmed, until the morning sounds begin to rise from the street and gray light fills the window. Exhausted yet still unbearably awake, she feels tears boiling behind her dry eyes.

The night that follows is exactly the same. She wakes in the darkness, alone, confused, and feeling a desperation she cannot explain.

On the third night, dreading the inevitable, she cannot fall asleep at all. Instead, she sits upright in the center of her bed, naked and miserable. She smears the palms of her hands across her face and pulls at her hair in angry fists.

For the first time in her life, she is unquestionably sure that she is ugly and barren, that God is disinterested, that love is a fiction, that the city is committing a slow and clumsy suicide.

She untangles herself from the bed sheets and climbs down from the bed, walking barefoot across the hardwood floor to the open window where the midnight breeze stirs the curtains. With a thumb, she traces the dusty edge of the window sill and senses its appeal. She wrenches the window open as far as the stubborn frame will allow and the city wind, pregnant with promises and failures, rushes past her. She climbs, one stiff leg at a time, from the closet of her apartment out onto the window's ledge, into the night.

With arms spread as wings, she closes her eyes before jumping.

Tarpaper crackles beneath the soles of her feet.

With ankles stinging from the impact, she finds herself on the roof of a neighboring building, her bedroom window now a half foot above her head. The night air slides over her skin and lifts her hair from the wet nape of her neck.

She strolls the perimeter of the building possessively and gazes out at the lights of the city. She can smell money, greasy food, the dust of disintegrating birth certificates in rusting filing cabinets, the ocean. Moving in this way, walking naked through the dark, she feels free of all this.

At the edge of the roof, she comes upon a metal railing, and then the top rung of a ladder which leads downward, from the roof toward the street. Curling warm fingers and toes around the cool metal, she descends the ladder, until she reaches a fire escape landing. Pausing at this balcony for a moment, she realizes that the window beside her stands open. The room within is unit.

She hesitates for a moment. Then her arm slides into the unknown room. Then her shoulder, leg, head, self, all of her in an awkward birth.

She stands at the edge of a stranger's kitchen where the chrome of metal appliances gleams in tiny places, reflecting the light of the outside. Slowly, she moves from the kitchen, into the interior of the place, stepping over soft, thick carpeting, gliding her fingers over smooth wood paneling, pressing her palms against the spines of a hundred books.

In the dim light, she comes to a hallway full of closed doors, and she is not brave enough to try their handles. Instead, she retraces her steps, the floors creaking mildly beneath her, and returns to the window by which she first entered.

On the fire escape once more, in the moonlight, she descends the metal steps of the fire escape to the next floor, but the window there is closed and the sash does not lift when she prises at it. She is tempted to break away the glass with the ball of her fist, but instead, she walks down, toward the street again. The next window is open, waiting for her.
She passes through this apartment, familiar with its turns and corners, having already explored its sister two stories above.

On the mantel above the fireplace, there is a collection of silver picture frames, their contents obscured by the shadows of the room. She fingers one briefly, then replaces it on the mantel. A small ivory egg sits there also, alongside a jade frog. She weighs the egg in her palm, then takes the frog instead.

She slides soundlessly past a door from behind which rumbles determined snoring.

She exits the kitchen window one-handed, her other set of fingers curled around the cool stone of the tiny jade frog.

In the course of the night, she travels through eight other apartments, lingering longer in some than others, toying with ornaments, straightening picture frames, rearranging the furniture. After acquiring the frog, she also collects a pair of gold scissors, a leatherbound volume of poetry, a spool of silk ribbon, a silver teaspoon, and a pearl necklace. She gathers her treasures into a small beaded purse, all except the strand of pearls, which she fastens around her neck.

As she slips from one apartment to another, the pearls gleam like teeth in the moonlight.

When she returns to her own bedroom, carrying her booty and covered in the thin dust of a dozen other lives, the sun is already rising in the sky. Exhausted, she pulls the cool white sheets over her head and sleeps the day away, her face set in the expression of a soldier in peacetime.

She passes the next week of nights in the same way, tiptoeing from one building to the next, naked and stealthy. Perfectly, she ascends staircases, tests doorknobs and window latches, carries away small handfuls of treasure. Her footsteps are silent and her breath is the sound of wind on the window panes.

The only waking soul in the city, she walks unhindered through the homes of dreamers. There are sounds of sleeping: snores, rustles, sighs. The musty, intoxicating smell of sleep hangs in the air of the rooms, settling into Persian carpets, floral wallpaper, velvet foot cushions. She slides past the bodies of the sleeping, witnessing arms and legs outstretched, heads buried beneath pillows, faces smooth with dreams or creased with nightmare.
In seven nights’ time, she encounters only three people who are not sleeping through the night. Once, she enters a bedroom window and comes upon a blind old woman with folded hands and a phonograph record spinning soundlessly.

Another night, lingering at a locked window, she peers through the glass and sees a corpse. The body of a young man sprawls naked in the bruise-colored water of a cold bath. One arm is flung over the side of the porcelain tub, and the blackness that has seeped from the wrist is pooling on the tile floor. She returns to this window on two more occasions, but on the third night, the tub is empty and the body is gone, the pool of blackness only a blurred smear.

On the fifth night, she wanders into a moonlit nursery, following the sound of tiny lungs. When she glances over the side of the wooden crib at the center of the room, the child inside sees her and smiles toothlessly.

The baby is cherubic, with wild tufts of hair, smooth round cheeks, and eyes wide and gleaming wet. Seeing the child awake, she is first inclined to quickly leave, but something changes in her, and she reaches for the baby instead, lifting it from the crib and cradling it against her. She feels its warmth on her skin and senses the trust still present in its bones and sinews.

She considers, for a moment, taking it with her, through the nursery window and into the night city, but then it occurs to her that climbing walls and balancing on windowsills would be impossible with a child in her arms. So she gently places the infant back in its crib and flees the apartment before it can cry in protest.

At dawn, when she returns to her bedroom, she draws the curtains closed behind her. On the small wooden table beside her bed, she has placed stolen earrings, borrowed teacups, thimbles, paintbrushes, pocket watches, and foreign stamps. In the purple shadows of early evening and the gray shifting shadows of dawn, waiting for the night to come or to go, she arranges and rearranges this collection, her altar of small things. With gentle fingers, she traces their outlines and surfaces, feeling for the potential seed of joy that she senses lies within them.

On this morning, she adds to the crowded table her latest find, a tiny crocheted slipper.

During the day, as she sleeps, she dreams of keys, coins, and glasses of water.
One evening, she awakes to find the city outside her window shrouded in dense fog. Feeling more like a ghost than ever, she drifts along rooftops, savoring the cool moisture against her skin, imagining herself invisible.

In a freshly discovered apartment, she comes upon an ornate dining room, filled with heavy mahogany chairs and draping lace curtains. A chandelier, glittering subtly in the dim light, hangs suspended above the long table. Its delicacy entices her, and she steps nimbly from the floor to the seat of a chair to the smooth polished surface of the tabletop. Standing at the center of the table, she reaches for the rain of crystal over her head and fingers the perfect shards of glass, wondering how she could possibly take this fantastic prize away with her.

Suddenly, in the hush of the room, her trained ears detect a footfall. Before she can escape the room, a figure appears out of the dark of the corner. Her heart flutters against her ribs as she realizes that she has been discovered.

The figure shifts out of the shadows, revealing itself to be someone other than the rightful owner of the chandelier.

The young man is thin and tousle-headed, clad in black. In one pale hand he clutches a knapsack that, when he takes another step towards her, rattles with the promise of stolen treasures.

In a fraction of a moment, it occurs to her that the angles of his face are strong and beautiful and that there is something familiar in the tentative lightness of his footfall. Here is another person who knows his way through the darkness.

The man opens his mouth slightly, as though he might speak to her. But then a grandfather clock ticks and whirs in a nearby room, and as the midnight chimes begin to sound, the young man's stance changes, as if he suddenly doubts his own safety. Dropping the sack at his feet, he darts wildly away from her and to the window and disappears into the gray night outside, glancing back at her only once.

In his violent wake, a vase topples from a shelf and smashes to splinters against the floor. Somewhere in the apartment, a door slams open and footsteps approach the dining room. Immediately, she is aware of herself as naked. As vulnerable. As a thief.

She leaps in an arc from table to floor and lunges for the window, pausing only to collect the knapsack from the floor and carry it with her.

Vaulting her body out of the apartment and back into the anonymity of the fog, she feels tears wet on her face and blood welling in her mouth, from a tiny cut where she's bitten her tongue. Through the sunken clouds, she flails madly to her building, to her bedroom, to her bed, where she wraps her cold body in the sheets and lies shivering.

Only when she is away from the night and the fog and the threat of being caught does she think to wonder what has become of her clumsy new acquaintance. The line of his jaw and the stoop of his shoulders settle behind her eyes until she forces herself to think on other things. Sleep does not come for hours, and when it finally swallows her, she dreams of broken milk bottles and flying cats.

She wakes to the harsh light of mid-day and scarcely has the energy to lift herself from the mattress. She cannot imagine how to spend the night that is approaching and considers not leaving her apartment at all. No longer alone within the perfect night universe, she feels as though she has been flung out of the symmetry and the rhythm of her solitude. The knowledge that there is another set of lungs and another pair of feet traveling in the sleeping apartments threatens her idea of peace.

Unsettled and anxious, she rises from the bed. The stranger's knapsack lies limply under the windowsill, where she left it the night before. She upends the bag and its contents spill out onto the floor, in a cluster of metal hitting hard wood.

In the pile, there are doorknobs and light switches. There are nails and screws and tinfoil pulleys. Rollerskate wheels. The cork of a wine bottle. Paperclips. A handful of typewriter keys, pulled from the machine like dingy plastic teeth.

Taken from their places of function, the pieces of machinery no longer serve a function, and hold no magic. Once containers of power and motion, they are dead in this heap on the floor.

Startled, she turns to her own harvest of nighttime thievery.

In the bright light of afternoon, the bedside table full of treasures seems to have lost some of its aura of promise. With a distracted hand, she pushes lazily at the candlestick holder, the spool of ribbon, the bottle of fountain pen ink. No longer posing as fragments of happiness, the things appear as what they are: dull, common objects with weight and practical purpose.
Without meditation, she reaches for a pillow from the bed and peels it from its pillowcase. She begins lifting each item from its place on the tabletop, hefting it briefly in the smooth palm of her hand, measuring for something mystical or magical. With each small talisman, she finds nothing and is disappointed. She drops the small prizes into the pillowcase, hearing ivory crack against brass, fragile vellum tear against sharp tin edges, glass fragment.

The child's slipper is the last thing she reaches for. Holding it between finger and thumb, she contemplates its tiny size, its weightlessness, the delicacy with which it was made. As she releases it from her grip, the slipper drifts lightly into the bag of loot, like a pale blue feather.

She dons a dress from her closet and a hat from the shelf and walks out of the apartment with the sack slung over one shoulder. The hallways of her apartment building are alive and crawling with noise. It occurs to her that she has not used her own front door for weeks.

Walking out of the building and into the street, she is briefly stunned by the intensity of the sunlight, the grating sounds of traffic, and the crowds of people swarming past her. Blinking like a stunned child, her first thought is to return to the familiar nest of her apartment. Instead, though, she overcomes the moment's shock, and arbitrarily choosing a direction, begins walking down the sidewalk.

She crosses intersections nimbly, darting through streets full of taxi cabs and city buses. She passes playgrounds of shrieking children, corner markets, dingy alleyways filled with trash. She walks solidly, determinedly through the city of light and sound and people, until she comes to the river.

On the banks, standing above the rushing water, the thought settles on her and suddenly becomes a plan. With the cloth bag caught in her fist, she lifts her arm in a wide arc and tosses the pillowcase up, into the sunlight, and watches it fall to the river, spilling its precious contents in its descent. She turns and begins climbing the banks, walking back to the rush and noise of the city, back to the rats and the sirens.

—Jennifer Heitel
May 22

The next town we come to is Saulzet-le-Froid, Saulzet the Cold. I am grateful for a public telephone, for the café where we have lunch, buy bread, cheese, a coffee, and use the tiny spoons to cut sardines from flat cans. This is where I first hear of gentiane and where the owner gives me a taste, full of weeds and sun. But we can’t stay long. Daylight matters, and clear weather. Outside, our walking sticks lean where we left them, and there is nothing like the glad sound of our first steps. The feet know where they’re headed—here, and here, and here.

—Jennifer Mason
Old Man Eddy

I started doing the hard jobs.
So they stopped giving me the scut work.
   Then tasked me with keeping an old timer from killing himself.

A true "fifty-year man" he spent his life wrenching at heavy work,
Except the two weeks vacation a year,
   and the two years spent island fighting across the pacific.

Sixty some years of muscle.
But not enough left to hold his pants up.
   His tool belt hung across his body like a bandoleer
or a carbine sling.
The weight on one side
   providing terminal list to port.

He would forget to wash his hands
   and eat a lunch of white bread with greasy fingerprints.
He would forget his years
   and scale a shaky metal ladder high into the factory overhead.

Reminding him to wash his hands was easy.
Keeping him from his work—impossible.
The first time I elbowed my way up his ladder
   he cursed me by name and nationality.
Perched up close to the steel ceiling
   I sweated how well he held the bottom.

During my days on watch
   I began to track the progress of black grease
from a scarred hand,
across the bare plain of his forehead,
wiped down his cheek,
mixing with the lunch on his chin.
When I began to see myself in the thinning residue,
   I thought it was time for me to find a war and leave.

—William Rustkowski
Numbers

1

On the playground we played
one two three foursquare plus
three squared plus two squared plus
one squared is thirty; we sang
all the states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona—
Connecticut—Georgia—New Hampshire—
O-Hi-O and what is your home address?
Mrs. Fitzsimmons snarled
as we sat on the floor of kindergarten
pointing at pictures of our homes
posted on the walls, a neighborhood
of little bodies before nap-time
when Kush—little shrimp of a Kush—
would fall asleep for the rest of the day
and no one, not even
the magical tutu
and crown wearing beautiful
wake-up fairy could get him up.
Mrs. Fitzsimmons would lift him aside.

2

I'd forgotten my body bloomed:
not just grew out and up
but unfolded
blossomed
one curve after another
unpeeling
in front of the gym teacher.
First, a training bra,
second, my period,
third, a real bra
(and boys would learn
to take it off with one hand).
I bloomed in sixth grade
and the Adelstein twins,
the hot bad boys,
wanted first dibs
on new ripe me.
I let Adam steal my first kiss
and left the nest for other bees to find:
lucky white heather, a blooming field of
mountains, crag-grass, and lava.

3

Calculus consists of derivatives,
learning to take the number
on the bottom of the squiggle
and move it backward
and work it with the one
on the top of the squiggle.
By going back, can we learn
where we come from?
125 Aspenwood Dr. or
2124 F St. NW or
1-5 Hermit's Croft or
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p
q r s t u v w x y z
and I have taken you to my leader
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
I have taken you to my leader.
And then what is your expiration date?
10 October + N
it could be now—Goodbye—
and yet we are recyclable
like H20, C, N2, etc.
From our bodies will grow
another 5 Billion humans,
who will drum their fingers,
all 50 Billion of them, wondering
how they arrived where they are, saying
Ha. how beautiful the scores
of monarchs migrating to Mexico.

—Heather McKee Hurwitz

—Mat Ramsey
I bruise easily
and they say
it’s because I don’t
have enough iron

I should take pills, I know
to strengthen my blood

but I am one who lives
a careless life

so I wake up
with mysterious purple coins
on my legs and arms
and accept them
as inevitable

they gently fade to yellow
and I forget again
until another morning

—Andrea Torwart

last night, while serving tables,
I smacked my thigh against
an edge I hadn’t seen
and immediately the skin puffed,
swelled and tightened,
the bruise blooming across my leg

later, I took your hands,
those hands which have
marked my tender skin,
and pressed them
to my thigh. "There, feel it? there"
you squinted and all you could
tell me was
to get more iron

but what can I do,
what else can I do but
let it fade
yellow, shrink
and forget it was there

all over again

—Carolyn V. Stromberg
Exodus

I can tell by the way you've left the Starkist Tuna can
Opened and half-eaten in the fridge that you're ready to move,
This laissez-faire attitude coupled with extreme familiarity
Has me washing all the dishes;
Has me scared they might be left to crust.
You've been adding up your time with me
And decreasing it by one minute each day,
Or so it seems.
But when I cancel on you, you explain
That you don't see enough of me:
Like that time I did the crossword alone during breakfast.
When, as you said, if I was up anyway,
I could have been hearing your kettle
Whistling some French Cabaret medley.
I know there is a hermit in you,
And it's all or nothing sometimes,
But keep me posted:
I'll forget the tuna, if you remember once in a while
To tell me how much I mean to you.
Because, if you've noticed, a mass exodus is occurring.
And of all my problems, you're the easiest to run from.
Because, with everyone else,
I have some "last minutes" to finish up:
I know I won't ever see them again
But you—you I will.
—Michael J. Andrews
Brandon Perlman likes shiny objects and food (the kind you eat)… "Does anybody realize life while they live it? Every, every minute?"—Our Town

Mat Ramsey: photography major, junior.

William Rutkowski is the staff Instrument Maker for Physics, Chemistry and Engineering. When not constructing scientific apparatus he builds "really cool things" at home with his four-year old son. Their current media is wood and plastic but they will consider all serious requests.

By the time you read this, Cynthia Saunders will have pilgrimaged to Santiago eating apricots and learning to identify Spanish birds. She will have mastered at least one cooking dish, and developed her ability to dream in other languages.

Carolyn V. Stromberg loves being lazy outside during the spring and is training for a career as a bee charmer.

Andrea Torwart is graduated and homeless please come take my picture.

Stephen Voss believes in you (really).