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Insomnia in D.C.
A Villanelle

This body is limp, this silence is blessed -
color fades cold as night sinks into me -
And yet my mind is too stubborn to rest.

I crave release from the strain of these eyes -
tracing corners of black, searching to see;
this body is limp, this silence is blessed.

So falls a pattern of little surprise:
I feel trapped by the shadows, and lonely -
and yet my mind is too stubborn to rest.

I'm still awake, feeling restless, unwise -
prisoner to thoughts that won't let me be.
(This body is limp, this silence is blessed).

Compared to the night I am small in size,
I sit in the stars' cold company,
and yet my mind is too stubborn to rest.

Darkness is waning and soon dawn will rise,
and this sleeping city will cease to dream.
This body is limp, this silence is blessed -
And yet my mind is too stubborn to rest.

-Caroline Sandifer
Shaving

Tendrils of steam curl lazily upward.
The foam on my legs bubbles.
I am naked but for a pair of old yellow underwear.

You're perched on the edge of the tub,
dressed. Slowly, I pull long, smooth strokes;
foam forming fat on the edges.

Your smile widens and I feel
the slight bitter sting of the razor as it
punctures skin. I keep quiet.

A fat dollop of foam gathers, weighs heavy and falls
landing on the bathroom mat with a thud.
I cover the bleeding cut with white fingertips.

You've noticed.
You ask if I'm ok and I say: 'Yes.'
You say: 'OK.'

'It's not as bad as it looks,'
I say, 'it happens all the time.'
'All right.'

You smile and so do I, quietly keeping my finger
firmly on the cut. I'm waiting for the bleeding to stop
and I don't think you believe me.

-Magali Armillas-Tiseyra

Bandits

I.
Me on your couch,
you on the bed,
parallel in dry clothes.
It seemed strange to leave
the swimming pool
because of rain. We were
just learning about the shock
of lightning, that summer
when our dogs were still alive;
we could only
bear each other. The words
from anyone else
bouncing off the shell
of our snowglobe
as we shook it
from the inside,
begging for something new
to fall.

II.
We drove
for hours, talking fast
into my mini tape-recorder
about Jan Huus and the myth
of indigestible gum.
Big sunglasses into gas stations
full of women with hairspray, white
men with pedophilia mustaches.
We laughed down the highway
eating peanut-butter with
straws. The greenhouse effect
keeping us bright through
the windows. Destinations
were not the point,
the treasure map 'X'
followed us.

III.
Cincinnati suffers
the wrath we wear with
eyeliner; we pop up at predicted
intervals- like a Jack-in-the-Box.
Drinking forties in your parents' kitchen after too many rounds
of Boggle and boys
like popped balloons. Watch
California like the star of Bethlehem.
We will be saved
from this humidity, learning
not to suffocate.

-Becky Wolf
The Price is Rite

Soup opera mammamas
the world over agree,
that dreams grow
no bigger than these
sequined, gaudy, purple, green
Flooee-show, new-car orgies
That all begin so innocently
When Rod, the fat man, says
To Come On Down

Wouldn’t you like
some extra cash?
It can all be yours.
The fondue kit?
The dinette set?
They can both be yours.
Just tell them what
the dish soap costs,
the price of marmalade,
Then trade it all
FOR A BRAND NEW CAR—
You can park it in the shade.

Like church, if church had
BRAND NEW CARS
And avarice without shame
Like love with light-up dollars signs
And everything’s brand name,
And all you ever has to do
Is tell them what it’s worth to you.

It’s lonely, if a little wonderful
Watching working dreams come true
Or Fizzle on the spot—
The break-neck squealing, shouting,
Roaring, dying, faint pleading,
moaning;
All consuming gaps of those folks
Who over valued stainless steel
teapots
That looked just like their mother’s.

-Jesse Stanchak

Tutted Silks

Drunk with wine
spilling a course
through tutted silks
and melting tans.
Dripping wax
waves in a dim,
soft,
glow.

Pulses race,
hand in hand,
through tutted skins
and chilling blades.
Dripping sweat
falls in a dim,
warm,
splash.

Swears ring true
In fading time
Through tempted souls
And gilded tongues
Flowing lives
swim in a beautiful,
sweating,
form.

-Geoffrey Seiler
Darwin's Dog Biscuits

At their worst, they tip-toe over swine shit—
Bible-belt cockroaches are the size of butter biscuits.
When one plodded onto my brother's book
from the ceiling of my grandparents' house,
my grandmother squealed with joy
and chased the scurrying jester with a hammer.

Crawling over beach sand on a wooden porch,
or floating over unpicked cotton or tobacco (in raw state),
they shake legs with the po' folk, scuttle to Gospel tunes,
and sun themselves to a deep fried golden brown.

* * *

At their best, they roll in sewage (or raw form)—
Yankee cockroaches are the size of a cell phone,
or a sawed-off shot gun.
When one stumbled into my boot,
I kicked it away and cursed
six-legged intoxication.

Thrusting through chemical excreta,
growing at a surfaced corpse,
hiding in vats of old mayonnaise,
they wish for rain to saturate the waste heaps.

* * *

A southbound fertilizer truck sputters and stops
at a yellow light while horses and cattle lift
and press the flannel driver like heat.

"The whoole damn world is country!"
He serenades a dog on the street corner,
"Ya mouths are cleaner than ours!"
The pursed man attached to the leash looks away,
cigarette quivering between his lips.

The Yankee cockroaches clutch fallen pieces of fresh manure,
and dream of diving
into the source.

-Molly Sunderdick
Three Stories

He opened His eyes, startled by a sudden implantation of his body in a different dimension. He looked down at His body. Nude, slightly brown, and matted with patches of hair. He found that he was sitting beneath an olive tree, with a glistening pond/waterfall combination in front of Him. Where was He? Why was He here?

"HEY," said a booming voice from above, "ADAM!"

He sat up, tensing every muscle in His body. Who had just spoken?

"IT'S ME, GOD," continued the voice, "LISTEN UP. I MADE YOU THIS GARDEN. IT'S GOT FRUIT AND STUFF SO YOU CAN EAT, BUT I'VE GOT A COUPLE OF CONDITIONS IF YOU WANT TO STAY HERE. YOU'VE GOT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I'M YOUR GOD. AND DON'T EAT FROM SATAN'S APPLE TREE."

Adam didn't know what to say back, nor having the linguistic skills to comprehend modern English.

"OH YEAH," said the voice, "AND DON'T KILL OTHER PEOPLE."

Adam nodded his head, but he had a horrible sinking feeling that he was supposed to understand what the voice had said.

-------------------------------------------------------------

Billy's father was an enigma. The combination of his eerie, clipped speech and his constant condemnations of "frailty and apathy" were enough to frighten any emotional human, and Billy himself was often scared as hell as a result.

His father had boarded up all the windows so that the house was only lit by fluorescent light, many of which flickered permanently. He slept by the front door with his eyes open, fully clothed, with a revolver in his hand. Sandbags and barred wire littered the house. He wore a red armband over military fatigues and had a tiny black mustache that looked like... well...

Come to think of it, his father wasn't really an enigma at all. His mental status was very easy to place. Despite the fact that it was 2004, his father was a 1939-era Nazi. He scanned the radio constantly for news on the invasion of Poland and quoted Mein Kampf on a regular basis.

"Die Juden werden mein Geld nie nehmen! Sie sind winzigen Eidelchsee-Penissen in meinen Augen ähnlich!" he would shout at Billy's friend, Josh, whenever he came to visit. Though Josh was Italian, Billy's father identified his prominent nose and dark hair as signs of Semitic heritage.

"Der Deutsche wird sich wieder erheben, um die untergeordneten Rassen zu zerquetschen! Der Führer ist Gott! Ich tue auf Polen!" he shouted when Josh's mother picked him up.

One day the whole house began to shake. Billy witnessed a WWII-era German plane gliding down his suburban cul-de-sac. Within 30 seconds of the landing, dozens of men in Nazi garb (and tiny black mustaches) broke through the windows, demanding to see his father. It was the Luftwaffe.

Billy never saw his father again.

12

Jimmy slept in his bed with spaceship sheets, resting his head on a matching spaceship pillowcase, dreaming a usual 7-year-old boy's spaceship dream. He was curled in a slight fetal position, breathing in and out in cyclical patterns. 70% of his body had ground to a lifeless halt as cells all over his body regenerated.

He was asleep, that much was sure.

At that moment, his closet door creaked open. The head of a snake poked out slowly, flickering its tongue and tapping up the surroundings in his beady reptilian eyes. It glided out of the closet across the hardwood floor, revealing the enormous girth of the creature. He was nearly 15 feet long, and 5 inches in diameter.

He slithered into the boy's bed, his cool scaly skin refreshed by the warm sheets and the radiating heat from the boy's body. He curled up next to the boy, his head perched on the boy's shoulder. His beady snake eyes stared.

The snake had slid into the boy's bed every night for the past year or so, hoping not to wake the boy each time in order to continue his nightly habits. After all, it was cold in the closet.

But this night was different. The boy stirred, his consciousness blinking on and off as he progressed towards a state of full alert. The snake backed off the boy's body slowly, trying not to disturb him further, but it was too late. The boy, comprehending the nature of the animal (boy-eating boa constrictor) and the setting (his bed), let out a primal shriek. After the boy fled the room in hysteria, the snake was left alone in the bed, though it wasn't the same warmth he had become used to.

The next day, the local exterminator came.

The exterminator looked around the room, finding no immediate sign of a giant snake. He stood in place, trying not to breathe as he listened for the sound of scales sliding across the hardwood floor. But just then, he heard a rustling at the window.

A long, beautiful boa constrictor glided out from underneath the hedges beneath the window. It slithered rapidly for 10 meters or so, and leapt gracefully into the air (or as gracefully as snakes can leap), its reptilian body suddenly sprouting long, beautiful wings with pink feathers, like those of a majestic flamingo.

The snake looked down at the suburban house where Jimmy lived and shed a tiny snake tear. The snake who loved the boy disappeared over the treetops and flew out of sight.

-Thomas Siegal
Demons of the Osh Posh BeGosh

(Enter) / Queen of Clubs, and
The music fades out and
DJ stops / the room (from spinning)
The men pick up speed
At the bar / and take it over (uppers) to her,
The Queen of Clubs
Is fast / when it comes down to it (fucking) but
Always dressed to fill *s*-
Pectorals / or be filled with them: swill or receive nil
Her mother (always) said,
Also a Queen (but) of Hearts / though in different assortment
Of men, in different kind of
Vein, she was the void of women that would fuck first / and ask
Questions later: that is how
She got sick and (eventually) died when, then, the Queen of Clubs was
Only 6 years old / taken to
Grandmother known in those parts as Queen of Spades, a gravedigger from
The moment she poisoned
Her first husband: Queen of Clubs was (raised) in Hell / in that way, and DJ knows
Better than to let (she) dance-floor
Continue spinning: Queen of Clubs has a 9-year-old daughter, whom it is understood will
Grow to be Queen of (Diamonds).

-Jeremy Gardner

Jesus died for your sins

remove pastry
from pouch.
warm pastry
in toasting appliance
at lowest
or lightest
heat setting
for one heating cycle only.
cool briefly
before carefully
removing pastry
from toasting appliance.
if pastry is overheated,
frosting/filling
can become extremely hot
and could cause
burns.

-Sam Goldblatt
The Top Bunk

I knock twice before opening the door to my dorm room for the first time. My roommate moved in two days ago and I don’t want to barge in unannounced. After all, I don’t know what Eddie’s like and I would rather not walk in to find some fat, hairy guy watching TV in dirty tightie-whiteys, just the thought makes me shiver.

No one answers so I insert the key, turn it and the knob with it, and push the door lightly. It doesn’t open. I push harder but still nothing. I look at the number on the door again. 216. I’ve got the right room. I try the key again to no avail before noticing the deadbolt. I unlock the bolt, turn the knob, and open the door cautiously. The lights are off and there’s no sign of Eddie.

I leave my bags outside, walk in, and flick the light switch on noting how spacious the room seems. I take a look around as the white fluorescent light fills the room. I had expected it to look like a shithole but to my surprise it is actually quite nice. Despite the warnings from my sisters about green tile floors, cinder block walls, and foam tile ceilings, it looks like I might actually enjoy living here. The freshly painted white walls are adorned with a cedar trim near the ceiling, there are two nearly unused desks and a dresser against the wall to my left, against the far wall between two walk-in closets is a large window looking out over a small park. All considered, it looks even nicer than the rooms they showed on the tour I took last year. But then, looking to my right, just behind the door, my eyes fall upon the one thing I had hoped not to see even more than a sweaty, naked roommate: bunked beds. And of course Eddie already has claimed the bottom leaving me with the top.

Top bunks to me are like file-sharing to the IRA,_veal to PETA, snakes to Indians. I hate top bunks. Fortunately there’s some space by the window and it looks like Eddie’s not using it, so Dad and I can unbunk to beds after I bring up the rest of my stuff.

After Dad leaves, I begin unpacking my things. Right away I put my socks and underwear in the bottom drawer of the empty dresser. I’ve been waiting to do that since the episode of Roseanne in which Darlene moves out. I set up my computer on the desk I assume is mine – Eddie will have to find a new home for his printer – and put on Bon Jovi to listen while unpacking. I start putting the rest of my clothes in the dresser when I hear the door open behind me. "What the fuck do you think you’re doing?" Eddie shouts, "That’s where my futon’s gonna go."

Startled by his entry, I look up from the pants I’m in the middle of as Eddie storms into the room. He approaches me with an air of superiority and arrogance befitting a king’s heir. "Mais, we’re not going to do this yet today, now I gotta do it again? You gotta be kidding me," he says, bending down to fold one end of my bed. "Well don’t just stand there, gimme a hand here."

"Oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t think you’d mind. Let me just finish with this bag then I’ll help you." "Try to start things off on the right foot, I stretch out my hand and say, "I’m Kurt by the way. I know we met on the phone but I feel like I should introduce myself. It’s Eddie, right?"

"Yeah." He crosses his arms over his chest. "Now hurry up. I don’t got all day."

I drop my hand to my side, more worried than insulted, and go back to unpacking. I grab a pair of pants, fold them, and place them in a drawer. "So you actually rather sleep on a futon than a bed?"

"What? No, why would I do that? My bed’s right there," Eddie replies, gesturing toward the bed he’s already claimed, "The futon’s just gonna be a couch and maybe a guest bed for when I have friends over."

"I’d rather not sleep on the top bunk," I say, trying not to sound self-centered.

"Fine, then you can sleep on the futon if you want but just make sure I can use it as a couch during the day. Now help me get this bed back up."

"No, oh, I can’t sleep on a futon, I’ve got a bad back and futons aren’t good for it." I don’t want to start lying to my roommate this early in our relationship, but I figure lying is better than saying, I don’t wanna.

"Hey man, sleep on the futon, sleep on the top bunk, hell, sleep on the floor for all I care, it’s up to you, but we gotta get this bed out of the way before my futon gets here!"

"You mean you actually bought it?"

"Yeah, it’s being delivered in half an hour, let’s go."

"I listen, I don’t care if you want to get a futon but if we bunk the beds, you get the top. I really don’t want to be an asshole about this but I’m not going to sleep on the top. I want my bed on the ground and I’m not sleeping on a futon."

"Hey, I was trying to be nice, I offered to let you sleep on my futon and I don’t even know you. But if you’re gonna be like this then fuck you. You should have moved in sooner if you wanted everything your way. Now if you’re not gonna help me bunk these beds again, I’ll just get my friends to do it."

Eddie snatches a half eaten tuna sandwich off his desk and storms out, slamming the door behind him.

After he’s gone, I let myself fall backwards onto the bed. Five minutes, I think, I’ve known the guy for five minutes and I already don’t want to live with him. Fantastic.

I lay there motionlessly for several minutes, trying to figure out what to do. I started looking around the room to see if there’s any way a futon could fit without bunking the beds when there’s a knock at the door. I hesitate getting up, thinking it might be Eddie or one of his friends, and slowly open the door to find a pair exhausted men in brown uniforms with a rather large box. "You Eddie?" one of them asks.

Without thinking, I almost tell him he’s not here but I stop myself. Instead, I smile and say, "Yes, I am," feeling like the guy in those old Bed Lights commercials, "Is that the futon I ordered?"

"Yeah, sign here."

I take the electronic pad and scribble something resembling Eddie’s name. "Hey, would you guys mind doing me a favor?" I ask, pulling my wallet from my back pocket, "I know you guys are already tired of carrying this, but you see, I bought this futon for my girlfriend who lives upstairs and I want to surprise her with it. Could you help me bring it up to her?"

"What do you mean it was delivered two weeks ago?" Eddie shouts into the phone, "I know when it was supposed to be delivered but it’s not here ... No, I think I would notice if there was a fucking futon in my room. It’s pretty fucking hard to lose a big goddamn futon in a dorm room."

I can’t help smiling as I lay on the top bunk. I had long since given up trying to read Strunk and White, it’s far more entertaining to listen to Eddie yelling at the customer service representative on the other end of the line. "What? ... No, I didn’t ... Fuck you, NO, I didn’t ... I don’t care what your fucking computer says, it’s ... No, you’re wrong, I didn’t sign shit! ... No! ... No, I won’t hold, ... I ... Hello? God-fucking-damnit! Can you believe this Kurt? The fucker put me on hold."

"You should complain."

"Go fuck yourself ... Hello? Who the fuck is this? ... Simon from complaints? Who the fuck are you? What happened to the fucker who put me on hold? ... What? ... No, I will not stop saying fuck. Fuck you. Where the fuck is my fucking futon? ... What do you mean you don’t know? ... Then let me talk to someone who does ... What? ... Oh you better fucking believe I’m gonna register a complaint. Gimme the fucking complaints department ... This is complaints? ... Fuck that! With that, Eddie slams the phone down in its cradle. "Fucking fuck-face fucker."

"Could you maybe learn some new obscenities? Fuck is getting old quick."

"Fuck you, fucker."

Laughing, I jump down from my perch atop the bed closest to the ceiling. "Hey Eddie," I say, "Since it looks like you’re not going to get futon for a while, can we unbunk the beds for now? You know, just until the futon gets here."

"Man, what is with you and these goddamn beds?"

"Nothing. I just don’t like the top bunk."

"Oh come on, it can’t be that bad. You afraid of heights or something?"

"If it can’t be so bad," I say, suppressing a victorious smirk, "Let’s switch. You don’t see anything wrong with the top bunk, so you sleep up there."

"Fuck no! No way am I sleeping on the top! The smirks surfaces as he realizes he’s just conceded the argument. "All right, fine. You want the bottom so bad, I’ll give it to you on one condition."

"What’s that?"

"You get my futon. You think you’re so smart, let’s see you handle these fuckers."

"So if I get your futon, the bottom bunk is mine? I almost feel bad playing him like this, but by this time tomorrow I’ll be living on the bottom, so I don’t mind. It’s a deal."

"What are you smiling about? You think you’re actually gonna get it?"

"Let’s just say I have a knack for this kind of thing."

Just under a month into his freshmen year, Kurt moved into a new room after being stepped on in the middle of the night nine times as Eddie climbed into bed, being punched on as he was getting up one morning, and twice catching Eddie in his bed with girls who hadn’t wanted to climb up to the top bunk.

Jeff Fitzgerald
Baldy Gets Fired

The hairline isn’t important
but the way you cradle your hands
and frown, hunched over,
staring at your flaccid tie
when you’re not speaking
is as bold as gestures come.

-Jesse Stanchak

Song

(coda)
They are fantasy
They bring pain
It is so much better
To appreciate what exists in this world
fine
Please stop writing
Odes on the innocence of children
Or the purity of a mountain stream
For when you cannot find these things
D.C. at fine

-Kate Murphy

Lines Penned upon Losing an Oreo

A wayward Oreo is under my desk,
Waiting for me to find it amid the darkness.
It’s nestled safely between the printer cable and the plug for my lamp,
Never doubting that I shall come to rescue it from its surge-protected prison.

-Evelyn M. Duffy

-Gaby Schaefer
The Ball

The visitors arrived in the middle of the afternoon, later than planned, in a rented tour bus. This group of American School children was on their annual camping trip to lake Baringo. Groups of these children from Nairobi passed through our school every year, bringing with them boxes of books with wrinkled spines, half-used workbooks, chewed pens and pencils and new, dry boxes of chalk for us, the teachers. Their visit, much like the rare visit from any other dignitary in the area, was always a special day: lessons were short, morning assembly was dedicated to the inspection of uniforms and the visitors were given careful tours of our three-room schoolhouse.

It was this group of children that brought the ball, a football, to us. It was well worn by the time it reached our own dusty schoolyard but they had cleaned and inflated it using a special pump.

At the second assembly, held in honor of the visiting children, our headmaster asked each of them to step forward and tell us their name, their four teachers followed. After that, there was only time for us, the three teachers at the Lake Baringo District Primary School, to introduce ourselves before the ball was passed around to all 100 of our children for inspection. It was old but not useless, although the original leather finish had worn off, the joins had feathered and become rough.

There were no more than fifteen children visiting from the American school: two mzungus, eight Americans, two Europeans, one Chinese girl and an Indian boy. Our headmaster had thanked them profusely, particularly for the gift of our new ball, then there was a pause. He, as usual, offered to give them a tour of our school. But it was late, almost four, and the children were fading – they had gotten lost coming from their campsite on the lake. Instead, their tall, red teacher, Mr. Browne, suggested a game of football, or, as he explained, soccer.

"For the children to enjoy the ball," he said.

This took several minutes to organize; there were 100 of our children and fifteen of theirs – too many to play. The children were bigger than ours but younger, so our team had to be carefully and fairly picked. We stood in the assembly area, whispering to our students to stay quiet while Browne and our headmaster reached an agreement.

Once they were done, the crowd – all of us, the three remaining Nairobi teachers and their driver – moved out to the flat, bare field behind the school building. We only had the rough outline of a football pitch, marked by the faint tracings of the chalk lining powder donated to us by a previous delegation of American School children. But it would do.

Our headmaster, a referee along with Browne, flipped a five-shilling coin to pick sides. The left side of the pitch was bumper's but the right suffered from the leaves and debris that dropped from the tree that stood by the goal. The Nairobi, as they called themselves team took the right. We were the Baringo team.

Our team started the game, kicking the ball cautiously from player to player to player, waiting for an opening, when it was quickly snatched by one of the American girls. She took it from Nelson and began running, alone, down the pitch toward our goal. But the American girl lost her pace as the ground got bumpier and Njogu took the ball and passed it to Nelson. Quickly, with determination, Nelson ran down the left side of the pitch, toward Nairobi’s goalie, who stood waiting under the acacia tree. He managed to evade two attempted tackles; the first was from one of the Europeans, the second from the American girl. He was closing in on the goal. The Nairobi goalie, a European boy with dark hair, stared at Nelson’s feet and began to look nervous. Nelson was taking the ball in a wide curve, first out and then in quickly, mischievously, straight to the goal – a move we recognized.

Nelson was stopped by one of the mzungus – a Kenya Cowboy who’d lived here all his life, he’d said – with ruddy blonde hair and red-brown skin that would look ridiculous if his family ever returned to old England. The boy came straight for Nelson, cutting him off, running right into him, sending the two of them rolling in the dust and the ball flying in the air. The ball shot straight up, directly into the tree and did not come down; everyone waited.

After Nelson and the boy had risen, dusting off and begrudgingly apologizing to each other, Browne and our headmaster began to deliberate. The ball was high up in the tree. The children who’d been playing stayed in their places on the pitch; we stood on the sidelines.

"Knock it down with another ball perhaps?" Browne suggested.

The headmaster looked at him. Which?

"A long stick?"

"It is very high up."

"Maybe one of our taller boys can climb up and jostle some branches?"

Again, our headmaster looked at him. The acacia’s lower branches were all cut so as to make it difficult to climb. It was meant to dis-

- courage the younger children from climbing up and catching their uniforms on the tree’s thorns or dirtying ourselves with the tree’s sticky yellow powder. "The tree’s branches are not strong enough," he said, shaking his head slowly.

The children’s bus driver came over and commended with the two men, who stood silently looking up at the ball. Nelson and the boy who had knocked him down approached, as did the other teachers from the American school.

"Could we shake it?"

Again, our headmaster shook his head; nonetheless, Nelson and the boy took the tree’s thin trunk in their hands and shook it a little, releasing dead leaves and dried thorns. The ball stayed where it was and everyone else dusted off.

The crowd was coming closer to the tree now. Browne put his hand on Nelson’s shoulder.

"You think you could get up there?" he said.

Nelson looked at our headmaster.

Our headmaster held his tongue.

"Sir," he began, "it is not a strong tree."

"It should hold for a few minutes," Browne said. "Really, we just need you to get up there and jostle those branches. I’ll hoot you.

The crowd had formed a circle around the tree; we were waiting for Nelson to move. Browne went down on one of his knees and made a cup out of his hands for Nelson’s foot. Nelson stared at it for a moment, then put his foot in gently.

"Lean in," Browne said roughly, his face turning a little redder, "put one hand on your shoulder."

Nelson complied and with a grunt the man rose, pushing Nelson up toward the tree’s lower branches. He caught one. The whole tree shook. More dried leaves and dead thorns rained down on us.

"Pull yourself up," Browne said.

Nelson tried, almost slipping several times because of the tree’s yellow powder. Even when he had managed to balance himself on one of the lower branches, which was thin and bent beneath his weight, he was too far down to do anything about the ball.

"We’ll pull you up a little more," Browne called.

Nelson looked down for a moment and then reached up for a branch, almost slipping again.

"Careful," Mr. Browne now called, "I don’t think the branches are strong enough."

"Mr. Browne," our headmaster finally interrupted. "We do not let the children to climb this tree, there are thorns and he will rip his uniform."

Browne looked at him for a moment. "I don’t think it will work," he called up. "Come down."

Nelson slipped down from the tree with another drizzle of leaves and yellow powder. His uniform was dusted yellow and there were two thorns in his left hand, I pulled them out carefully.

Browne and our headmaster were still staring up at the tree.

"Sir," I said, "maybe we can use a stone?"

"We don’t want to throw rocks around," Browne interrupted; he was tired and dusty. "We might have something back at camp."

He offered. "Perhaps we can bring it to you tomorrow? It is getting late for us but we could have the driver come and help in the morning."

Our headmaster looked at Browne and nodded his head.

"Yes," he said, "it has been a long day. Your driver will come back tomorrow?"

Mr. Browne put his hand on the man’s shoulder; he’d been standing there all this time. "We’ll send Patrick to you first thing in the morning," he promised.

The two men shook hands and we gathered to say goodbye, waving and calling out remembered names as the American School children floated sleepily toward their bus. Patrick had already started the engine.

"We’ll be back tomorrow, early," Browne shouted as he hoarded his children into the bus. The ball was still up in the tree, where they left it. Browne was the last to tug his head into the bus, waving as Patrick shifted gears; itdrove off slowly, leaving a trail of dust in the late afternoon air.

-Magli Amnillas-Tiserya
The Whispered City

Still the bold island skyline looked pretty,
Though it sometimes seemed to have lost its way
With her...all along the whispered city.

As we talked and got lost in the gritty
Maze between Madison and bright Broadway,
Still, the bold island skyline looked pretty.

I felt wonderfully wise, but not witty
While I searched for something to say
To her...all along the whispered city.

Struggling not to breathe and looking shitty
In the Met with beauty, wanting to stay
Still. The bold island skyline looked pretty.

The street fiends, for a coin, danced their ditty
And I, the near-of-towner, stole my day
With her...all along the whispered city.

The isle that screamed, for love and for pity,
Seemed to take for us to its knees and pray
Still. The bold island skyline looked pretty,
And her...all along the whispered city.

-Daniel Foster
Foam Party

Upon hearing his name, Rodolfo Juan-Mejia quickly turned his motionless face toward Professor Ganz and paused. Awaiting a response, Dr. Ganz carefully lounged back in his chair, raised his arms, twiching his right wrist until his metallic wrist watch slid down to his mid forearm, and rested his hands with fingers neatly crossed upon his thinning hair on his head. It took Rodolfo a moment to realize, but since his attention was set elsewhere, he heard not the question—and to avoid resentment, he dared not ask the honorable professor to restate it—confirming his heedlessness. The pause proceeded for five seconds, as did the uncomfortable silence, yet they remained staring at each other unflinchingly—Rodolfo’s heartbeat growing thicker and an increased feeling of warmth accumulating about his ears. At last, he was relieved when, from the row of seats against the left wall of the classroom, Michael Schwartz raised his hand and the professor accordingly called upon him.

Although Rodolfo had indeed read the assigned readings from Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* and was thoroughly interested with his literature classes, he was an habitual daydreamer—often trailing off in his mind to places and situations of intrigue, especially when overcome by gloom, which was quite frequent these days, having left his family and friends in his harmonious town in Sao Paolo, Brazil as a result of his fortunate opportunity to study in the United States. In part, it was the result of his father’s request, a lofty entrepreneur who encouraged Rodolfo to make use of this opportunity and to pursue a respectable degree in economics. Now, in Washington D.C., in the late cold month of January, Rodolfo became increasingly homesick and his only escape was through the serenity of his thoughts and imagination.

It was a Thursday late afternoon as Rodolfo sat quietly in his continental modernism class. The professor had been organizing papers in his two evenly apportioned maple-colored files while waiting for all students to enter just before the beginning of class. Rodolfo observed how Krista and Lauren, in the row before him, chattered giddily about an anticipated social event they were to attend later that evening. Rodolfo expressed a bleak smile accompanied by a slight feeling of envy; the last time he had gone out was to the local Baja Fresh restaurant early in the semester with his roommate who was barely available nowadays due to having dedicated his free time entirely to his new girlfriend. Rodolfo sighed and looked to the windows facing his right. He stared into the outside dimness in the breach between the strung curtains. In a stream of consciousness, he remembered the Saturday evening in Sao Paolo, the half-depressed half-enchanted Saturday evening, the final Saturday evening in Sao Paolo before his departure to the United States.

Accompanied by his uncle, only two years his senior, and his two closest friends Bruno Vega and Lenny Del Cruz, Rodolfo set forth for Salle Avenida beach, approximately 22 miles east of his home where Ellie’s cabin was rented out by the neighbors for the renown foam party thrown once every month—though this time it was thrown after nearly two months and along with Rodolfo’s departure, they were to implicitly attend. It was becoming noticeably cloudy when they arrived at the beach. Rodolfo was overcome by an ineffable joy as he slowly skid across the cool beach with his bare feet sink deeply in the white sand heading toward the appropriately embellished cabin with blue and purple lights blinking on and off atop its roof and the sound of effervescent trance music emitting from its two entrances on opposite sides. As they neared closer to the cabin, he noticed the thick foam peering out from one of the double door entrances. Immediately, they sprinted toward the cabin with momentary excitement, and while his uncle and both friends rushed in, Rodolfo stood at the base of the stairs leading into the cabin and into the thick human-filled foam. In an effort to gather and attain the fruition of the moment, he stood observing every detail and committing it to memory.

It was a specious, well-built, three-floor cabin. The foam shot and gathered from above the balcony of the top floor. Laser lights were hung in the four corners of the middle floor, which was a massive one room and the main scene of the foam party. Rodolfo felt the base beneath his feet and the bubbles falling playfully on his shoulders and head. Most of the crowd seemed to have worn swimsuits, and others were sub-serviently dressed in t-shirts and t-shirts or trousers and no shirts, while for others, the foam had become their dress. More than a quarter of the crowd was seen encountering a sexual advance or engaged in promiscuous activity. Holding a heap of foam in his hands, Rodolfo noticed the myriad of bubbles enmeshed with other bubbles and the crowd was no different. He also noticed the ever-changing colors of the prismatic foam with help from the lights. Lenny looked up and waved him to join, but before indulging himself, Rodolfo checked the back pocket of his trunks for his hand towel—to remove the foam when it fell on his face; he remembered how it stung when it touched his eyes from last time.

As he stepped cautiously down the four rounded wooden steps and into the foam, Rodolfo clenched his hands tightly to the sides of his legs, feeling the dewy foam soak against his lengthy nylon trunks. For a moment, everything appeared in slow motion and approaching the vivacious crowd, Rodolfo shed a few solemn tears—inaudibly and without expression. This place was his identity—everything he knew, and unhappily, everything he was to leave. Soon afterwards, influenced by all whom he knew, Rodolfo participated in celebrating this savored moment. Nearly a month later, he was still able to commit that night’s occurrences into his short-term memory, especially when in the privacy of his room and chatting on instant messenger with his friends from Sao Paolo, he would click to see Lenny’s unedited profile which read "FOAM PARTY tonight," with the words "FOAM PARTY" typed in large and bold turquoise letters in Geneva font.

"Mr. Mejia, as I am most certain that you have been keeping up with the reading, will you please inform the class about Dr. Zeitblom’s description of Kreteschmar?"

-Mohammad Onar Bhatti
Ian Hunsberger Builds the World

The cold pre-dawn hours live a life of their own virility, biblical hours, before alpha and the creation, the fledgling sun peaking over row homes, light running close behind footsteps, disappearing into alley ways.

Ian Hunsberger watches the city awakens, out of focus, tenderly working towards night. It’s all he knows. Callused hands running over brick, never participating in the world he creates.

He has lived his whole life in this north Philadelphia neighborhood, just as his father and his father before him, a third generation bricklayer.

He leaves his front door swinging close behind with sleep still fresh in his sinuses, coffee stale on his breath, and his mind stale in its place.

His day exists already, a series of poundings: pulse against his forehead, feet on the cold pavement stamping the frozen ground, hands against the world boxing him in, searching desperately for space.

His life is a nexus of familiar corners. Walking down Cottman Ave., watching each hazy face pass, some going, others coming, past billboards advertising Coca-cola and Pizza Hut, acknowledging the McDonald’s, a picture of the new Egg McMuffin in the window, and traffic on its way towards the Boulevard.

He walks past Woodrow Wilson Middle and Eastern High, the schools he once attended, sitting in desks too small for his frame, his mind always wandering during science class, dreaming of far off lands he must have read about in a book.

These dreams of desert lakes and island women have faded into the reds and blues of morning, into shadows of sleepless nights, and he, corrupted by the reality of the world.

It was in his senior year of high school that his father taught him all he had ever learned: that the world is a cruel and definitive place.

That “you are who you are, boy!”
And that is all you can ever hope for,” a life of construction, “not because you love it, but because you need it…”

...and it needs him.
...to build the world, not because he loves it, but because he needs it...
...and it needs him!

-Drew Silow

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third grade poets – r:Eve.aled

she stands alone, reciting the twilight of her tale. i, a memory within the monologue, gate calmly past faces and footlights, seeking the beyond that set us on this path.

beyond… what a wonderful word, indeed.
we always pushed the limit,
each day venturing a little closer to the Tree (where we knew we shouldn’t be)
to the music of footsteps, we climbed along a sloping hill, across an empty riverbed, we went to the edge, through that tree trunk following its path right past the barriers, into a wilderness of houses on unfamiliar streets.

lost, we turned our eyes homeward again, the gentle greenery welcoming us with open arms. not until now, some ten years later, do we understand our luck: beyond is beautiful

...but the pathway back disappears.

-Katherine Hild
Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc?

phantom words float around her shoulders as she stirs,
the lady in grey,
and realizes once again she won't hear them
break the silence of the dawn.
Instead,

the sounds of morning fill the streets
outside her window,
fill the spaces in her life with yawns and sputtering engines,
sputtering coffeepots, and barking dogs.

So many spaces,
ever filled with the kind of love she wants,
filled with the tears of all the long nights,
all the cold beds and hours,
The mornings like this one,
unchecked, unseen, unbalanced
by the absence of the Other she's been unable to find.

Dawnings like this one bring no relief.
The thin blanket of new sunlight cast on her furniture,
est on her skin, filling the dreary corners of the house,
 dismissed the darkness, dispelling the shadows,
delivers her nothing but another empty day.

-Life is long and melancholic,
a February dusk interspersed with fits of blackest night.

Truth comes in the smoky evenings,
in the river’s surrender to sunset,
in the small cafes,
where she sits tea idly at tables for one.
Nothing is said to her, much is pretended,
and she knows

companionship is part of the counterfeit world.
This pill to take away her troubles is only a placebo;
She swallows bitterly but is not taken in by
friends and comrades who can't see her troubled mind,
couldn't stand it if they could.

This untenable life of shadows and false smiling will ruin her
slowly.

-Evelyn M. Duffy
Contributors’ Notes

Magali Armillas-Tiseyra is still in this game; also, Andrew Phillips was right all along.

Omer Bhatti enjoys playing a game of twister under the Tempietto in Kogan Plaza after half past midnight. ¿Qué Bueno?!

Sana Dada will be graduating at the end of this year with a major in Fine Arts and a minor in Art History from the George Washington University. After college she plans on returning to her country, Pakistan, where she wants to pursue a career in Design.

Evelyn M. Duffy is a moderately neat freshman who enjoys reading things she won’t get graded on. Next year she intends to spend most of her free time figuring out exactly when something is supposed to happen here and plans to request housing at the Georgetown Loews in order to cut down on travel time.

Jeff Fitzgerald is a senior who has only learned one thing in his four years at college: after reaching 999,900 in Duck Hunt, your score gets reset to 0.

Jeremy Gardner: Ring around the rosies Pocketful of posies Ashes push-up daisies We all gut the black plagues-ies.

Sam Goldblatt is part of a complete balanced breakfast.

Katherine Hild is a sophomore taking courses in everything but her major. Do not believe anything you read about her on the internet.

Nik Joglekar’s collage is printed on page 22.

Kate Murphy is a freshman from Flemington, NJ, studying Physics and Math.

Lindsey Rodrig’s collage can be found on page 10.

Caroline Sandifer is a sophomore majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing. She is impatiently waiting for the end of the semester so she can finally get some sleep and stop wasting all her money at Starbucks.

Gaby Schaefer is a Junior majoring in Art History and Fine Arts from St. Louis, MO.

A native of Washington, D.C. for 18 years, Geoffrey Seller’s poetry is generally inspired by his travels abroad and the individuals he has come to meet. With a special commitment to describing passionate meetings with those close to him, Geoff’s poetry is heavily influenced by the works of such masters as Neruda and Baudelaire... but these are simply steps on a path to create a style all his own.

At age 9, Tommy Siegel used to have a rat-tail and bright red hair. You probably wanted to kick him in the face. Today, his rat tail is approximately 15 feet long. You would still want to kick him in the face.

Drew Silow is a Senior at The George Washington University, attempting to graduate with a major in Psychology. He is originally from Philadelphia, aspires to attend law school this fall at whatever school will have him and, at the same time, to pursue writing. If all goes well, Drew plans to retire in his mid-twenties, somewhere near a lake, mountain, beach or ocean, and write poignantly for the rest of his life. He can be reached at DroopsDraws@AOL.com

Jesse Stanchak isn’t afraid of the dark, but often pretends he is so that strangers will hug him. When he was little, he was terrified by the concept of infinite space.

Molly Sunderdick is a graduating English and Creative Writing major and a four year varsity athlete (GW womens soccer team). Some of her favorite writers include Stanley Kunitz, Sherman Alexie, EE Cummings, Hemmingsway, and Steinbeck. Her favorite color is pink.

Rebecca Tannenbaum’s collage is featured on the cover.

Becky Wolf is a senior majoring in English, minoring in Creative Writing and Women’s Studies. She is undecided as to her plans post-graduation, but she thinks bootlegging would be fun.