tragedy in five parts

1. soft little brown birds, sparrows, fly happily across the morning sky and one by one burst into flames

2. a pink pudgy baby takes her first wobbly step two inches from a scenic cliff and is quickly lost to the rapids below

3. there are monkeys at the zoo, strange little things, and they're strangling each other

4. a guy buys a $500 suit and a $200 bottle of wine first thing he does is spill the wine all over the suit

5. a ballerina sweeps thru the clouds human poetry pirouetting until her ankle splinters and she falls in a heap, her anguish like a big black exclamation point

5:58 at your house

sometimes when I wake at dawn and I'm not quite drunk enough I think of how I would prefer being dead to getting up schick, wilkinson, gillette "lady bic" or disposable "good news" safety blade or a swiveling head isn't it nice to be able to choose?

Charles Dennis

Melissa Pouridas
Almost Nobody Makes It to Eighteen

I still have the volume Paula loaned me
bursting its bindings
with Lowell Roethke Ginsberg Plath Rich
and Paula’s cries
cribbed in the margins
scrapped across the faces
of the poems
shill
still inarticulate from
4 years ago
in a seminar
with a spatulate chair

Oh they mailed her breasts in Maidenforms
they trussed her in a mould
and they gave her a degree
when she was 20 years old
and everyone knew that she was good good good
and they cannonized her ethics in the neighborhood

But the annotated cries
clung like bats
to the back of her spleen
till it burst like a pod
when she was 24
going on 17

Paula sat by a fountain
unslung her breasts
ingested grass
got the munchies
consumed wine french bread brie pickles

watched a parade
hitchhiked to San Francisco
where she may be still
for all I know

while her Long Island
mother
fibrillates like a flatulent heart

she didn’t
raise her kid
to be a poem

Paul Estaver

SOMEBEWE ON THE PLANET EARTH

He is stuck in another season of an unseen year
Continually rather sickly
Due to thoughtless clothing
Senseless shoes
Chewing vitamins
He realizes he only has a year to wake up
A Byron
Cold coffee is its own explanation
He has failed miserably
At nothing
This leaves him terribly
Uncertain
Often quite intoxicated
“Any one have a question . . . ?”
They always come too late
Staying too long
Never to be answered
But in the morning he will be clean shaven
And none of that will matter
His shirts are
Neatly pressed
His tie
Goes with everything

Judson Petty
the zero are approaching
I have seen them
I know their movements they
are occupying a dense
forest of hollow wood
In time they will be among us.
they eat little and
sleep less seeming
monotonous to
the naked eye
I have seen them
in groups sharing
airy circles from
mouth to mouth

Robert Cwiklik
PIECES

It was not so much the fact that they had to carry you away, though it did bother me, for I would have waited and watched you turn to light. Still it was more in the way they carried you, like so much routine, which delivered me children screaming in the night and left me an orphan once again.

They asked me where to take you and I laughed and laughed and laughed desperate for someone to confirm the joke. All the while the tears erupted making hot treks down my face, splattering cold on my legs till I realized I had not put any clothes on. I just sat there with a pillow in my lap, sobberring and moaning and screaming. "I don't care! I don't care!" Referring to my nakedness and never, my sweet wife, to you.

When still a child I was changed on a day that could have been Sunday with all its oppressive silence and lingering breezes. I was lead by my parents in gloved hands stuffed in ballooning coats to a place where the dead are wailed in and thoughtless. There I was directed to a court yard bordered by a miniature spiked iron fence which was rusted crimson, hopeless. Father’s gloved hand made a gesture toward a vacant spot of dried, unpretentious moss and I was told that this was to be my place for eternal peace. I began to cry and the bundled apparitions enwrapped me like so many shadowy winds, drawing me away. I cried and kicked all the more because I didn’t know when I’d get another chance.

"You didn’t even try goddamn it! You could’ve at least tried! Too easy to blame your failing Father, too easy to blame your drooling sister, too easy, too easy, too…” I wish someone would kill the stupid asshole who is calling, making the phone ring-tring-tring like a million screaming. "Nooooooooo!

I simply do not want to talk to anyone at this particular time. Maaybe after a little while, but not RIGHT NOW—OW-Ow-Ow. "Oh, God, oh God, oh God damn you, you didn’t even try!" It was too damned easy-easy-sy-sy-

Muffin came by a few days ago, she is crying now too. I had not heard the door, I simply looked up and she was there, "Why don’t you answer the phone?" I looked at her and she started crying. We took a walk, but the past swelled out tongues and the tears overwhelmed us. We made love and never stopped crying. It has been four or five days and I am still crying. Muffin is crying now too. She said it was silly to smash the phone like that. She will always be your little sister.

Muffin led me in front of the mirror, shaving, desperate for routine. The cut appeared out of nowhere and trickled red down the white foam of my neck. It streaked warm life through my frozen features eventually ceasing on its own account. I, myself, would have never stopped it. I simply would have drawn conclusions until they killed me.

I told the phone man when he came around, I was sorry, but I was not and I did not ask him to replace it.

Your mother came by. Being too embarrassed to ask me why I was not at the services, she cleaned the apartment, made dinner and left. I drank wine and watched her eyes drip into the casserole while her hands worked themselves frantically. She said the plants needed water. She said I should get the phone replaced. She said she would be back in a few days. She held my hands and tried to focus her watery eyes which had all sorts of questions floating around in them, mostly gasping "Why? Why? Why?" But they were never asked; she knew what my answer would be. She kissed me goodbye and left to find her own.

Muffin sent me a postcard from Vermont. "The skiing is terrific!"

When still a child, my love, you told me depression would take you to a nearby hill where you would lie on your back and watch the clouds wash over you until your eyes rolled up into your head and gravity became a deaf gesture. You would stretch out like multishaded taffy until you finally stiffened and shattered making music as you decomposed. Then you would blink or die and like some sort of cartoon character you found yourself whole and laughing again.

There was sun today, sun like I had never seen before. I almost missed it, my eyes so dull of death, but there it was like a bright vein in my hand. I was in the kitchen not knowing why. There was nothing left to drink and my stomach ate itself days ago. The ray must have crept in through the window over the sink somehow escaping all the growth and clutter. It fell on the floor and tished forward finding me catatonic at the breakfast table wondering at the ratio of wine to tears which had found their way into the grain of the wood. It glided to me across the table's surface like your hand would when you wanted me to know it was ok. That I was not God or that nothing could be so wrong "I ask to warrent the removal of that beautiful smile" from my face. I looked up to bless your confidence and was bathed blaid by the morning's radiance. It pealed by face and tickled my brain. It said there was life after life after life. It slung spectrums and licked my soul. It scream- ed something and flowed in all directions.

Judson Petty

Nothing exists:

It never has been unproved and I have seen its glass eyes in classrooms where logic passes for wisdom.

Although I failed this I learned.

Pam Wheeler

4
Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos

On the wood wall a pair
of underwear recently washed
hangs from a rough hook
calmly dripping through its bottoms
as if the whole world could be
suspended from determined threads nothing
but the force of air
against white cotton creating
gradual spaces between threads at the top
and at the bottom, for one
barely actual span of time
shorter even than the fire of a pistol
holding enzyme drops for honey sacs
just below its heavy strands.
I lurch out in panic
too late, again.

Russell Shorto

Space

like clothespin children
I gather the wooden fragments of my
thoughts
into my two hands
cupped
on the flat and strained alter of my abdomen
they sit
convulsing timely and regularly
inside
vague notions precipitate into
words
I sit up
staring intently askew
and find myself
staring
into

Russell Shorto
First Steps

The family was eating dinner. Mother was complaining; this time about how Katie Collers, the neighbor's girl had just quit school to move into an apartment and work as a secretary. “Can you imagine?” She was proclaiming. “She could have gone to college and she left her parents like that.” Iris, the middle daughter replied, “Maybe she just wanted to be on her own for awhile.” Mother quickly drowned her by stating, “That’s ridiculous. What a stupid thing to say. Why would she want that? You tell me.” Baby sister sized up the situation. She guessed an argument was coming. “Yeah, that’s stupid,” she added, not wanting to be caught late in the flurry without a flag. Big sister just sat and looked stupid, but she was half smiling, happy to see her big brained little sister in trouble again. Big brother, first born and only son thought to settle it all quickly. “Aw shut up,” he said to no one in particular. Father hurried to clear the plates and bring dessert. He always served and took away. It got him away from the table a lot.

Iris, to everyone’s surprise, just sat there quiet. She was suddenly aware that a stage had been set for her to explode and angrily exit from the table. It was an awesome revelation. She could even hear what her mother would say. ‘What do you expect? It’s her turn to wash the dishes. You tell me.’ Iris was fourteen. The arguments had been bad since she was about ten. She felt suddenly stupid for not having realized before that she was a pawn.

Iris cleaned up after dinner and picked at the leftovers. She ate cookies between washing and rinsing. She was fat and lately getting fatter, but she felt helpless about food. She ate and ate and wished she was thin, beautiful, and about to be wisked away by her ‘real’ parents. Iris knew she had no other parents, but the thought made her feel better.

Father sat reading the newspaper in the doorway of the kitchen, preventing Iris from leaving until the dishes were done. Iris couldn’t remember how this ritual had come about, but she was watched over as a prisoner. Father never spoke to her or rushed her. He just sat, uncomfortable in a kitchen chair, reading the paper and sourly waiting. Mother, little sister, big sister, and the brother went to watch television.

Iris took her time, silently making her displeasure known by keeping Father from watching his favorite TV shows. Father silently accepted his punishment for punishing Iris. Iris did the dishes sloppily. She left grease on the silver and spots on the glasses. She knew that good or bad there would be complaints. When she finally finished she went to her room, stretched out on the bed and wished that the entire family, not including herself, would take a car ride and be killed. Then she picked up a book and read until she fell asleep.

About a week later the family was having another dinner. Iris was eating with them. This was unusual since her refusal to do most chores usually resulted in her not being permitted to eat with the family. “No work, No eat.” was her father’s rule. Mother mentioned Katie Collers. Big sister looked around and said, “Maybe she just wanted to be on her own awhile.” Mother replied, “You know you might be right. What a smart idea.” Iris got up and left the table. “What’s the matter with her?” someone said.

In her room Iris half smiled to herself. “This time,” she thought, “I just skipped the argument and still followed the script.” Then she sat on her bed, looked out the window at nothing and started to really think.

It was hard to juggle the parts, but after fourteen years—as long or as much as she could remember—she had felt that something was wrong with the way she did everything. Somehow it had been her fault that she was always blamer, berated, and punished. She had gone through stages of wishing desperately she were different, wishing she was dead, and finally wishing she could be left alone. The realization was finally beginning to seep in that it didn’t much matter what she was. She began to grasp the fact that she was caught in a pattern she was not responsible for, and that would continue until ... But Iris couldn’t conclude that thought. For her the oppression was so immediate, complete and historically etched, that she couldn’t realize a future without it.

The book Iris had been reading was about some brave adolescent hero making a brave decision. It was boring and wholesome, but had sparked an idea in Iris. The hero had listed the alternatives available and then made a list of pros and cons for each alternative. The alternative with the longer pro list was chosen. Iris picked up a notebook and wrote STAY HOME on one page. One the next page she wrote ESCAPE. She divided each page in half and labeled each half pro or con. She listed her thoughts and began to think seriously of leaving home.

Without a conclusive decision she put away the notebook, finished the boring wholesome story, and fell asleep.

The next morning was a school morning. Her father would come upstairs, grab her pillow from under her head, turn on all the lights and then throw the pillow at her. So, Iris awoke every day feeling terror, anger, and growing disgust. “Couldn’t you just say my name once or twice from the door,” she asked angrily but pleading. Father just laughed and laughed on the way down the stairs. “I’d like to push him,” Iris thought as she dressed.

She went down after her father had left. She tried to be quiet since her mother was asleep with the bedroom door open. Actually, Mother always slept with the bedroom door open and then complained that everyone made too much noise in the morning. Mother kept reminding everyone, especially Iris, that she was a light sleeper. Iris didn’t eat breakfast because it made too much noise. She picked up her school lunch money from the table and left without having to talk with anyone. She was at least glad that the others all began school later.

Iris put on her jacket and walked out of the house. She headed for the bus stop without thinking. As she approached it, Iris wondered what would happen if she kept right on walking, if she walked to the highway and maybe hitchhiked a ride to the city. Iris had never thought of this before. She wasn’t even sure how to hitchhike. She decided to walk a few steps beyond the stop. She walked a few more after that. She went on for a couple of blocks. She began to hum.

Cori Ball Oliveira
Farm Story

Funky smell
Of condensed breath
Rising to the loft where
We used to play.
On winter mornings
The hay kept us warmer
Than our single blankets.

Sometimes
On really cold nights
We shared the same bed
Discussing classmates,
Dreading dawn and the chores.
Sometimes he worked and I supervised.
I was older.

Now, looking down, I see
Reproach in the eyes
Of the hungry animals
And I envy their simple dependence.

We made a hole in the ice
On the river to fish.
It was warm that day,
Too warm,
And I can still see
The surprise in his eyes
And feel the desperation
As he fell.

I brush away my tears
With his wool mittens

(Hey You, Sweet Soul!) he takes you artichoke part,
politely eat
you leaf by leaf you
scrape his chiseled teeth
till, finding
a white jelly
squirming heart
for entree delight
(place snug
between the legs),
broken-backwards over bends
and jeery mouth
wraps your heart
and pop sweet
one
two
sleepy poet balls are gone.

(Hey you, sweet soul!,
don't you worry
(don't be late)
Wednesday morning 4 A.M.)
(whisper) they regenerate.

Victor Robinson

Alexander Dominick
Poem

Distracted from distraction by distraction
—T.S. Eliot

I feel on the edge of a blood-warm, cunt-warm, twilit night lake
Brilliant-shimmers and hot-blush, dribble-splash and moony hippo-soothing-mus-talk
Fish-grabbers swiftly extend, black, in perpetual fire outreach below the smoky waves
the warm and casey lake-nest
Nigger-babble, chatter-talk, begins here.

The go-beat, the bounce, suddenly pumps with unshakable, perpetual obviousness—and then the
Smudge-bands whisper with the delicate dial, and the green-fire gnarls, tongue-slashes the
Immobile and stumbling black shadows on the stop
The sharp needle, erect and alert, metal-jitters, silver-shivers, from out the box
In corner, push-entrances occur, a conference, a love-talk, and then
Fingers, lovers, coolly slide inside and find the smooth brown hardness mute
Indifferent in its hardness to the dusty cryptable and shadows
Yet, nowhere-seen, in invisibility, a white rose, undulant and moist, plaintly opens its
tongues!
In spring apartment, the go-beat glides and bounces in every airy door-locked
box-room, and
Mingled in the medium, pumping with the go-beat (mama screechy wail, baby-complaints,
TV-talk is the scarcely audible cunt-pump
Strugglenoise of frantic escape away that is really desperate awful escape toward
Her breasts stared at me recently, pale and bored
My prick jelled useless and crumbled
My thoughts suddenly eluded the go-beat
(The plant opening wet-white tongues)
...after sheプライプ up, sad-vacantly drifting to the toilet, the only thought
that could stir my loins was to suddenly blind-crush her, follow her from
behind and beat-invade, pirate-pump the live and fleshy pump-doll without
consideration, in the hall outside the toilet thinly masturbate...

The sodgaze reddens
The go-beat bounces unrestrained
My pants and shirt lie as question marks
I gaze at the wall
(The wet-white plant tongues)

Kenton Muschenheim
The Spanish Mackerel

The Spanish mackerel's teeth stretched helpless,
pinned against the wood edge.
The box's lid crushed it neck,
and the leather skin mate ripped three hooks free.
Bitter Creole roamed quaint Bal Harbor,
rubbed exposed banana ribs with blue sweater shoulders.
A beautiful day,
the magic cumulus clouds watched the comfortable sea
and the prize's spasm final fittest gasps.
Broiled supper for family's satisfaction.  

Gary Reich

Haulover Dock

The world is lonely with dark television eyes
and the rippled carpet sea is lonely.
Upon the wood pilings,
seagulls scream and pelicans pose
for teenagers' Instamatic photographs.
Instant vacation prizes,
cherished pleasures in palm tree utopia.
The disturbed mosaic sky cries rain on Japanese tourists.
What are the aliens saying?
A lonely Cuban fisherman in a boat rolling in the tide,
a shade between blue and green with infinite designs kissing the sand.

Gary Reich
She Belongs

There's a woman
On a swing
In my backyard:
An urban battlefield
Nee playground,
Shattered glass like stars
Under strategic riot lights—
Bitter reminders
Of lost dreams
And broken promises.

From the field,
I watch her swinging
As my feet slowly sink into
The mud that was
Second base.
Like a child she smiles
And lights the edges of my darkness.

Alexander Dominick

The 54th Parallel

Lights hiding like paranoid children
Suddenly shine forth
Obscuring others' insecurities
In a sculpture garden of fantasy
Where there are no guides
Only anonymous bartenders and bathroom attendants
Claiming it is Camelot
Despite the heavy reigns.

Elisa Hose

no rope

you know
I don't think you're very nice
not since you told me that
when you were young
you tied ropes around cat's necks
and swung them in ceaseless circles
until they were dead
you liked to destroy lives
and now
you like to destroy people's lives
except
you don't use rope anymore,
do you?

Melissa Pouridas
I'd step into the subway train, and, since it's just a stop away—I wouldn't want to look lazy—(legs would be killing me). I'd pivot and stand. I'd watch the people who, coats ballooning, spike heels wobbling, fat flopping under suits, run, and say "All right!" (hip) to the person who'd make it in time to demurely find a seat. I used to stand right in front of the door and watch the walls and lights reel by (actually my reflection—face too big around the eyes—but they'd be watching, so I'd pretend a less defined focus). I began to stand with my back against the opposite door. I'd lean, good posture but relaxed, legs out crossed at the ankles, head tilted back resting, and attempt to diffuse my vision in the space between me and my reflection. Then it occurred to me (one day) that the same people commute every day and watch me always standing in that nonchalant way and they'd guess that I was contrived. So I began to aim for a seat as soon as I stepped on—one of those priority side-ways seats (well, it's good that there aren't so many handicapped people that we can't ever use them) with the map and ads across from it. I'd sit and study them—until I realized that people would know that I knew the train lines and the fat man drooling Haagen-Dazs by now and they'd think I was uptight or something. Now, I make sure that I sit away from the maps in a regular seat and either close my eyes (people do sleep) or I stare, tired, resting my head on the window. As my stop nears, others get up and stand prepared. I remain seated; I show them that I am not caught up, I don't need to be the first out, there's no hurry; that's how people get heart attacks. Yet, as the train stops, I look down at my crossed legs and folded hands, I feel my self behind my face, I panic. What if my body can't get up? Somehow, I do, even bored, am excreted with the rest (through the goddammed mirror which is a door again), participate in a right angle to the escalator, and am processed to the street. I walk confidently, smile at the sun, and worry about how I should act when the nut-vendor pointedly says good morning. (Should I go the long way to avoid him—he knows my sun-glasses by now).
One Man’s Blues Is Another Man’s Etc.

A restaurant is a lonely spotlight to cry in, to watch your young dreams crumble in front of your bloodshot eyes. You were drinking, just drinking and talking and crying in Leonardo’s with Diane, your buddy, after she demanded WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU LATELY? Crying, you felt like a freak side show, people gawking at you and hell if you knew what was wrong with you except a thick and dark case of the blues, like some sinister nightmare of dreams, broken and fleeting, dust dancing through dark angry trees, trees with ugly faces growling, grumbling, glaring at you, and the faces were those of your friends, the only family you had. Ain't no love in this world for me, can't do nothing right no more—a classic blues, you play it in E, you play it with blue-eyed soul, no red velvet soul, bloodshot/eyed soul. The ALL AMERICAN BOY: eyes bloodshot, skin whiter than white, and tears of blue.

And sitting there with sweet Diane, you were crying about love, or the lack of same, love, that fourlettered porcine of life, a cute little bugger, but unembraceable and sometimes nasty as shit, and you, in cheap candlelit corner darkness, lunging for it like a blindman. In that lonely blue darkness, you were struck by her soft concerned smile, the music of her voice bathing you like warm water, the only tranquil water you’ve seen in weeks, yet still familiar as dawn. You were feeling that thick, sad yearning that lives inside each man, that makes him ache, even cry sometimes—and you thought poor Diane, my friend, a close friend of complete trust, caught in these sloppy lovesick blues in my mind, wanting to of course help me but not take care of me. And who would want to run a good friendship with love, anyway? Besides you.

Ah, but the blues of loneliness and being alone, the alienation blues, from job and friends, from the sun, the blues of a sick puppy abandoned in a storm, dirty blues, his is what pulsed those sad, salty tears down your cheeks—scars of frustration: the stains of rusty, acid tears. This is what you felt like an exhibition, on stage for any jerk to laugh and point at. This is when everyone seated near seemed to be listening to you with others ears, watching you out of other eyes, evil eyes, eyes that don’t look but actually see, you wallowing in the muck of self-pity.

Which only made you feel worse.

You tried to tell Diane everything, the roots of your blues, where they came from and where they were going, told her about your problems at work, underpaid and overhassled, problems with friends, always feeling that existential meaninglessness blow through cracks in the wall. You wanted to tell her about the sad, hungry desire for love you felt (which involved her), but instead started whispering about Denise and Suzanne and Pamela, all of whom have recently seen fit to abandon your desperate love. You wanted to tell her about the overall abuse that your heart and soul has suffered. You sensed the sweet, sad perfection of tragedy.

Ashamed, you looked up at Diane; her bluegray eyes seemed larger, sharper than you ever recalled, as they searched you for a clue to your REAL problem, but you clouded yourself with tears and showed her instead great moarings of self-pity words. What a great way to get girls. You told her (in desperation) that sometimes you just want to ditch everything and everyone you know, and just make a run for it—hoping to hear from her words of “please stay, things’ll get better.” Instead, she told you that maybe leaving was the best thing you could do. Immediately, you were crushed inside, and wondered how could a woman ever be attracted to a broken man, a man of drunken blues and tears. But Diane, sweet angel of wise old youth, continued matter-of-factly that maybe you should just bury your blues here in this town and head for the open road that could take you to blankslate cities where they’ve never heard your name and it’s a chance to begin again. Through your clouds of melancholy, rays of pranced light began to shoot, she chattered on about “new challenges,” and “moving on,” and being “too busy for the blues,” and it dripped you up, gave you something to think on.

Yeah, why not me living in, like, California? You almost smiled. Sure, I could find work, what’d I go to college for? Why not me living in New Orleans? Confidence started to heat up. Why not me in Mexico City? Here’s me in front of the Eiffel Tower! Here’s me playing saxophone in Amsterdam! Here’s me bullfighting in Madrid, smoking ganja with natives in Kenya, meditating in the Himalayas! Yes, a wild world of fantasy, of frenzy, a wide world of life. You brushed the dried tears from your eyes, and the crusty gunk from your nose, and grinned a big floppy grin at Diane, who smiled sweetly back at you. She was soothing, you had never loved anyone as wholly.

You finished your drinks and paid the bill, and headed to the door. Feeling better, and a little silly about your performance during the last hour or so, you turned and gave a short bow to your “audience” before slipping out the door. But while you two had been drinking and talking and crying (half of you crying, anyway), a sneakattack snowstorm blew in over the city, and you walked out of Leonardo’s into an all night massacre. There was a two or three inch frosting on the city already, but with the blues on hold, you decided to take a stroll around the large city block, and let the snow drape yourselves and your troubles. Diane, a child of New England, immediately became engrossed in the weather as you, arm in arm, blinking madly, made your way silenty through sheets of snow in the snowy midnightmorning.

Diane, you supposed, was thinking winterwonderland thoughts and taking in the urban snow beauty and peace. You, on the other hand, were thinking about Diane: your relationship compared to your love for her. As snowflakes danced on your face, you tried to organize some of your feelings so that they might make some sense. Most importantly, she is my best friend, not just because we’re buddies, but because I love her singularly, like a crazyman, with a love unique and more pure than in any romance. The beauty of your relationship lies in its simplicity, no complications, the close, comfortable brother/sister way you talk to each other, listening when you tell each other things, actually listening. Through the thick rage of the snowstorm, it was very clear to you that your relationship is too valuable for it to be tensioned with the anxiety of seelove.
Even so, as you walked through the snow, you could not help thinking of the one night you two did become sweaty hot lovers, grappling in Cupid’s wrestling ring, sleep, drunk and tired (you needed a place to crash that night), and you came together mainly for warmth on a winter’s night, your bodies searching one another out, instinctively, naturally, yet reserved, almost ashamed or confused. There were no marching bands or banners snapping in the wind. It all had ended in a draw, neither of you achieving any kind of orgasm, or anything else for that matter (except keeping warm). And you couldn’t help thinking that neither of you have ever mentioned that night since.

Trudging and sliding on snow on top of snow, you made your way to a blanketed playground, looking like an iced cake. With a quick burst of child energy, you both ran to the swings, dusted them off, and hopped on to an aerial delight. You swung as hard as you could, reaching for snowcovered stars and gods; Diane swang smoothly, regularly, absorbing snowdreams of the night. You stood up on your swing and continued to thrust yourself wildly through the snowy skies, then you jumped off, ran across the carpeted yard to a frosty slidingboard. You quickly climbed the ladder and dove headfirst down the snowcovered board. Diane whooped and dashed after you, slipping and sliding in a festival of snow.

After twenty minutes of this carrying on, you were both cold and wet and out of breath. Your blues were in hiding, waiting in the dark regions of your brain, as you and Diane trudged quietly back to her place, where, refusing to spend another lonely night on her couch, you kissed her sadly on the mouth and said goodnight. As you walked down the street, away from Diane, the snow continued to fall, and like a silent symphony, it made everything real quiet.

Charles Dennis

Frail

The sky lives in my building
I mean this guy lives in my building.
He has acid hair
that is he’s an acid head he
keeps telling me to get
to know my
furniture.
He hates the way my rug just lies there
complaining
the way my bedspread pleads
direct sunlight.
They’re alive he screams they
just move slower screaming
makes me stutter that acid really rips
away your mind he should be more grateful
I mean careful a mind is
precious and frail.

Robert Cwiklik

Sleeping

Mine has always been a public
paradox in seclusion
due to overpractice
and lack of breath.
For I understand
the stiffness of ideas
as they seep
out of history
and ossify in geometric
units
which fill the voids
in my aching head.

Recalcitrant grey-beards emit strange shapes
and hope to undermine
the myth of the indisputable—
I watch,
I laugh.
I remind myself that we must never dissolve
the necessary delusions
which shroud
the horrors of time.

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