The Wooden Teeth staff would like to offer many people its thanks for helping to allow this issue's existence. We thank the Publications Committee for advice and support. We thank Liz Panyon for the unflawing aid. We thank all contributors. And we thank you, the reader; this issue we dedicate to the reader. The staff further would like to announce its endorsement for and best luck to Maimun N. Khan. She will be our great Editor-in-Chief.

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SUBMISSIONS POLICY
WOODED TEETH will consider and is interested in all literary and art forms. Poetry, short stories, essays on any subject in any style can be accepted. Photographs and artwork are valued and welcome. All originals can be returned upon request.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE
Place all submissions along with your name, local address, and telephone number in the “Submissions” envelope at Marvin Center Room 422.

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Being in the Bowels
by Willis Johnson

The music
Sounds sadly sung
In Blues. Tales of down urban hearts
Serum through strong
Emotions.

No man, no woman, no money
Only the need
Vibrates strained chords.

Lack hooks lines’
Rhythm to survival.
The sighing, cooing, and screaming notes
The blue pains that are bright joys
In life’s learning.

No man, no woman, no money
Only the need
Vibrates the strained chords.

Black sadness drums to meandering melody
That is a memory or a dream
Of happiness.

The music sounds sadly sung
But it is about being
In the bowels of the city.
Onward March
by Maimun N. Khan

I don't know where I'm going
or how to get there
or why I'm trying.
I don't know what I'm reaching for
or where it is
or who has it.
But I keep walking,
one foot dropping
just slightly before the next.
And I'll keep on marching
until I fall off
some lousy cliff.

Life In Hell
by Kelly Lowe

We all seem to be players
in this twisted dance
like unstrung marionettes
staying home
to beat our children
into bloody pulps
and laugh about it
in the green face of justice
we reverse roles
cross undressing
and taking liberties
freedom of friendship
tied down and cut off
from a world that can be so unkind
like a drunkard with a dollar
going slowly out of his mind
so we scream out at the night
so all alone
and frightened
living a lie, where should I turn
all doors closed
and you hold the key
Anywhere
by Charles E. Klinicek, Jr.

Whining Praatt & Whitney, whining Tupansky.
Oil, petrol, fumes.
High explosives check? Roger.
Taxing killers on the tarmac.
Afterburners on.
Phantom’s off; Mikoyan’s off.

Inertial Navigation? OK.
All systems check.
Starboard roll, three thousand feet.
Dive.

Thunder screams overhead.
Baby cries, Mother listens to storm.
Terrified eyes plead for light,
They find the Spectre of War upon them,
Wielding the torch of hate and death.

Silence shrieks hysterical,
Just as innocent shrieked seconds ago.
Baby weeps no more. Mother listens not.
Father has no eyes to look for stars.
Family and Spectre have vanished without trace,
But Phantom and Mikoyan will visit
Again ...

Lines
by Ray Doherty

Shuffle in your cave of darkness
There’s a light!
Quickly back it out
Warmth is not aloud.

Travel deeper down
into a long canal
Get a white crystal axe
And chip away your soul.

Somebody calling but pay no heed
The echoes will stop, they always do
Paint your face white, now all is bright.
And laugh loud to wake the dead
Which is you.

Romp in your playground of loneliness
There’s a hand reaching out!
But it’s only pushing a swing
And the voice is calling for somebody
Who went down the slide long ago.
Port-Norfolk

by Willis Johnson

I am driving around a Navy town
That is changing its character and face.
Neon still burns but not as garish,
Not as long into the night. Brawling
Sailor’s bars strewn on the oceanfront
Slowly losing space. Cap’t, Pete’s, Land Doctor
Porno, Thirsty Camel, Muck’s Barge and
The Crow’s Nest.
Places damp with sea air and wrapped in
Melville lure,
Pirated by urban pioneers gutting, re-modeling,
re-newing
this haven for denizens of water and war.
I still see cropped sailors with tattooed arms cruising
The boulevard in customized cars. Boys looking
for an adventure, an opportunity to grow
Displaced in the shadows of condominiums,
Fern bars, BMW’s and Gourmet shops.
As I drive along Ocean View Ave., luxury
Housing developments frame the waves and sand
Against a cobalt blue sparsely starred sky. I
Remember the old Amusement Park
In flames (a casualty to a big-budget movie). Now,
The site is twin towers of apartments staring
symetrically
At the sea. I keep driving through last visages
Of Navy town toward Uptown wondering how long.
The whole process will take.
Untitled
by Barbara Lyddane

A Rosebud—

Red, young, and passionate,
Opening to the sun—
trusting,
maturing,
exposing its inner petals.

Again and again comes the unexpected frost—
causing more damage each time,
The naked eye sees only the outer violence,
The rose wilts, as the frost invades,
draining the rose of color, and vitality—
it shrivels and browns,
drooping off its stem.

The damage goes much deeper.
The frost comes intermittently . . .
Between these draining attacks
the sun glows upon the rose—
encouraging,
tender,
offering hope.
It breathes life into the rose,
reinvigorating it back to glory,
and restoring color.

The frost comes intermittently . . .
Again and again comes the unexpected frost—
seemingly unaware of the pain inflicted,
more destructive each time,
until it comes one time, and stays.

The rose is frozen—
suspended in time,
unchanging.

Until the life force of Spring arrives
to release the rose—

And it withers away.
Empty Rocker
by Willis Johnson

Big Mama lived in the big brown house with all the porches across the street from us. Her porches were enclosed by beige spindle banisters and had shuttered windows catching the shifting light of day. Big Mama always sat on the upper porch that was screened because it overlooked the street and had cool shaded breezes.

Pink and violet myrtle trees lined the street along with magnolias. The old, waxy green-leaved magnolias stood tall with their coned white flowers, and some had branches that arched the slim street. Their flowers perfumed the air. I went over often to play pretend games, hear stories, or eat sweets.

One day I didn’t see Big Mama, my great-grandmother, sitting in the red basswood rocker on the upper porch. I looked up and only saw branches swaying slow and magnolia petals drifting zig-zag to the ground. I ran into the house for a snack to find Grandma. She always said, “Give you Granny some sugar,” and then she would grab me for a tight hug and a wet kiss.

“Grandma,” I asked, “where’s Big Mama? Is she up in her room napping?”

“No, honey chile, she ain’t been feeling good lately so Grandpa and me took her to City Hospital to see Doc Harris.”

“Okay, then I’ll call her to make sure they treating her right.”

“Sounds fine to me, Alton.”

Grandma’s eyes became darker and puffier with each day, and she was not home baking and cleaning. She did not have much to say about why the house was so quiet and still lately. It seemed like everyone was scared to disturb things.

After a few days, I watched T.V. with Grandma and asked, “When’s Big Mama gonna be here to tell me another story about the olden days?”

Grandma brushed back strands of silver hair from her face and tucked them into her bun. She stared hard into the screen although she did not seem to really notice the picture or sound. Her eyes and mind were focused on scenes beyond the screen and the room. Slowly she squeezed my hand and returned to our shared space on the couch. As I shifted on the cushions, her voice erupted, deep, faith-filled and faltering.

“She’ll be here by and by if the merciful Lord so wills it.”

Big Mama’s red rocker stayed empty all week. Sometimes I saw it moving back and forth, slow and patient with the wind—like Big Mama was rocking there through the evening sun and summer night chats.

A week of empty rocker and too-still house passed, and I started seeing people heading for Grandma’s. I knew some were relatives because I had seen them before. They always wanted to grab and kiss and say, “Lord, he’s the spitting image of his daddy and Great Uncle Joshua on Lula’s side of the family sure as I’m breathing.”

That day, Momma said, “Alton, I want you to stay in the house today.”

“Why I gotta stay in? It’s nice out. There’s no school. Momma . . . please let me go out!”

Momma just gave me her you’re-trying-my-nerves-stare.

“Boy, do as you told and don’t be worrisome!”

Momma did not hum while she cleaned that Thursday. Her usually smooth walnut face had deep, straight lines in it. She wore a black dress sprinkled with tiny white flowers instead of one of her sleeveless summer shifts.

I heard heavy footsteps upstairs; then I saw my Daddy, dressed in Navy slacks and tie with a white shirt, coming down. His eyes were red and his face drawn. I thought it strange that my father had ever needed a mother to take care of him like my mother took care of us. I wondered why he was home. I ran to grab his hands and stand on his feet before I asked. Normally we would take a few giant steps around the living room. Today, Daddy just squeezed my hands too tight then slowly rubbed my hair and said, “Not today, Son.”

I shrugged it off and whirled. “Daddy, Momma said I can’t go out. Can’t I go out? Please?”

He shook his head in slow certainty. “Listen to your Mother, Alton.”

“Can I at least go over to Grandma’s?”

Daddy turned to Momma who was at the stove heating coffee water; his eyes held fast to hers. He braced the kitchen table as he sat with watering eyes. I stumbled backwards, dazed at his sudden, new emotions.

“Come here, Alton.”

I did not move. I thought I had done something wrong.

“Come to your Daddy, Son.”

The softness in his rough, dockman’s voice pulled me to him. I sat on his knee with my arm around his hard shoulders, feeling gentle quivers ripple his frame.

“Alton . . . Alton, you won’t be seeing your Big Mama no more. She’s gone outta this world. She had eighty rich years . . .”

Then I knew death was not like putting the cat to sleep or putting your hamster in a shoebox for a backyard grave. Except it happened to people. It is an empty red rocker moving in the breeze.

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Caution
by Barbara Lyddane

I held back,
unsure,
    insecure—
    wanting you, wanting "us"
I offered myself to you—
    my personality
    my body
    my whole self
you threw it back in my face,
devaluing what I thought we had.
Because while I was making love,
    You were merely having sex.

Primitive Me
by J.R.

Inside me . . .
a savage.
A beast of claws,
    within.
Ferocious, angry,
lurking.
Shows his face . . .
    only around you.
We
by Charles E. Klinicck, Jr.

We are Greed
And we are Hate
And what we are
Is Mephisto.
But . . .
We are Care
And we are Love
And what we are
Is Cristo.
We are both
And one in all,
Hating, Loving,
Stabbing, Nursing,
Living.
Who are You?

Untitled
by Art Kacher

We are all the same in ability yet we are different
in achievement. The psychologists, like vultures,
prey
on the carcass of a dead society ruled by a
propaganda war, the
left flank and the right flank firing mud at one
another,
they make up theories and try to dress
them in
scientific language.
wooden teeth
I am Flying With Them

by Matt Langenkamp

Looking out the frosted window from my bedroom, I see the whiteness that exemplifies winter. I see odd snow sculptures on the patio and I know that underneath these mounds there is the cold steel that lawn furniture is made of. To the kitchen. To the back door while gulping down the last of a hot cup of coffee. Out the back door into the frigid winds that bite and scratch at exposed skin. It is an early Saturday morning in January.

Across the ocean with its drifts and mounds to the coop where my family perches. They wait for me patiently. They wait for the seeds and the warm water that I bring them.

Their house is sagging from the eight inches of snow resting on the plastic that is covering the chicken wire stretched across long pine two-by-fours. I unlock the door to the pigeon coop and walk inside carrying the water and the seed. Once inside, there is no wind. I feel at home within. I want to sleep in the hay with my friends. I want to watch their babies peck to freedom from the eggs that hold them. I want to fly. I want to fly through the sharp cold air with my pigeon family.

It is time for the daily meal. I pour the mixed seed into the feeding pan. I slam the water pan on the ground to break the ice out. My family is now surrounding me. I pour the warm water into the pan and the steam rises gently from the liquid. Chewing on a bit of corn, I can tell that the seed is not as fresh as it was. We are all together, eating and conversing between swallows. There are no arguments, only gentle cooing and true affection.

When I sprinkle seed onto my knee, one of my friends hops up and eats. She pecks at one seed and then goes down for another seed. I stroke the smooth feathers on her head while she eats. She gently scratches the cloth of my pant leg. Sitting legs crossed, I wait for the end of the meal. She looks up into my eyes when she is full. All twelve of my pigeons fight eating and walk to the perch boxes. I waddle with them.

Some of my friends go to their eggs. Some prance around because they want to fly. I sit and stare at the females who warm their eggs. If the eggs do hatch, it will take a strong squab to survive the winter. The ones that make it to the warmer spring months will be far in the air.

One of the birds flies up and around in the pen and lands on my head. It must be Henry. Raising my hand above my head, I give him my finger to perch on. Henry steps onto my pointer and I bring him down in front of me. He flaps his wings gracefully as I lower him. He is restless and wants to fly. There is nothing more magnificent than these homing pigeons in flight.

I open the coop and one by one they fly to freedom. Out into the winter air through the leafless trees and into the clear blue sky. White with blue-green patches, they are beautiful. They fly in huge circles and Henry leads. I rest on my back in the snow and watch them as they circle by. They fly above the tree-tops. I am flying with them.
Untitled
by Christian De Angelis

Your material pursuits and pleasure seeking
Lead you roughshod through swampy quagmires
The overhanging brambles cut you,
And the cold crimson beams dissipate quickly
In the murky water proving you are like the rest
of us.
And ye; not, for you feel no pain
Occasionally a peaceful island finds you
On your wanderlust path
But sampling the freely given fruit from the trees is
—not enough—
Instead, you chop down my boughs
To support your ever-increasing lure
I silently submit as each stroke of your well-worn ax
Brings my passionate labors thundering down
Were it in my power to change you, I would
My only solace lies in awaiting the arrival of the
solar truth
Then, as its rays beat down heavily upon you
And the waters that you traverse become
ever shallower
To the point of non-existence, you will realize
You are alone and this island is but
A larger part of an earth which no longer has a place
for empty words or actions
Remember when you laugh
Someone else in the world cries
Someone moans in hunger
Others struggle in pain.
Remember when you smile
Of when your world felt empty
And the world around you was silent
How the tears flowed down from your eyes.
Remember when you laugh
Someone else in the world is bleeding
Someone shouts for freedom
Others are mere shadows in the street.
Remember when you smile
Of when your breath was filled with disgust
And how you felt loneliness set in
How you cried when your best friend died.
Remember when you cry
How good it feels to laugh.
Untitled
by Susan Cicotti

a fire in my throat—
it's so hard to hold back the tears
they pull away the invisible barrier
exposing the most sacred truths
at the most inopportune moments
ferociously independent little waterfalls—
they demand their right to exist

Crawler
by Darcey Matthews

A small crawler crawled,
Up and out.
Over and under.
Here it ............... perfection.
And then to stop,
To weave and spin.
To crawl only once more.
Good-bye little crawler.
Time, days, minutes.
Sun's warmth and glow.
Break open.
Up and out.
Over and under.
Touch the sun,
Flutter and flap.
Oh, good morning new flyer.
And ............. good life
Flight
by Darcey Mathews

The light crept slowly over the earth, over the grass, over the cement, and over the window sill. Its coming marked the passage of time and each of its beams appeared like fingers probing and enveloping the room's contents. Inside each beam flowed masses of tiny particles, which seemed to penetrate everything. Yet their directions remained unclear. The particles filtered chaotically up through the beams and with a confused grace reached out to touch the sky. But, on their way, they stopped to blend with the other creatures in the world of flight.

The soft wings lifted carefully, then exploded from their precarious perch into a sea of colors. The butterfly hesitated, but then, its dignified understanding of flight radiated forth as it rose into the air. The wind became its guide as it sailed forward in the sky. Silk met the elements, as its limbs pushed through, gently propelling themselves up. Floating with the greatest of ease and agility, the natural born flyer moved higher and higher. Then, touching the sky, the flyer passed another flyer and together, they floated with seeming weightlessness.

The keen eyes quickly scanned the land and then with a powerful thrust, the body released its inner desire to soar. The blue light engulfed the bird, as its muscles and bones joined in the perfection of flight. Each feather moved in synchronization, forming a vivid illusion of delicacy, but the strength behind the momentum was unmistakable. Suddenly the wings collapsed into its body and the eagle plummeted toward the ground. Its release came in the final seconds between life and death, where instinct takes over. Then hovering, like the waiting for a drop of water to fall, the eagle released its wings. With talons extended, it landed, as if it were only one feather instead of a swirling mass of thousands. The air calmed and the eagle became, once again, an unmoving statue on a leafless tree, soaring out to observe its surroundings, the bird viewed man on the hills and then pressed onward to touch the sky.

"Orville!

"What, Wilbur?"

"Oh, Orville, you know that this thing is never going to fly. Why, just look at it. Look at its lines, they are all wrong. Everything else we've tried has had smooth lines, like that eagle flying over there."

"What eagle?"

"Oh, never mind, you missed it. But it was so exquisite, its motion and its gliding across the sky. If only we could do . . ."

"If only we could do what, Wilbur?"

"Orville, Orville, I have it! I have it!"

"You have what, Wilbur?"

"Our flying machine's problem. I have solved our flying machine's problem. It's all in the weight distribution. Oh, Orville I think we can do it."

"But, Wilbur, what does weight have to do with our machine's problem?"

"Don't you see? We have too much weight in the front. We need to balance it, like the eagle, over the middle of the body. Our planes have all been front heavy, so now, if we move the wings forward . . . it is going to work!"

"Wilbur, I think it just might work."

"I know it will, Orville. We are going to fly, yes fly, fly like the birds when they touch the sun."

The metallic appendages stood rigid as the large beast thundered down the cement field. But, the life that roared from within the beast was not of blood and bones, but rather a man-made fuel surging forth into space. The sun dined gracefully on the reflective covering of the awkward looking creature. Its talons didn't grasp the ground; rather they rolled forward, with little regard for the activities that lay beneath their path. Then, power exploded from within and the large beast jutted upward, leaving all land behind. Its form, though clumsy, continued to rise until its shiny edges seemed to become one with the sky. But this thing ventured farther than just the sky. It passed only momentarily before it moved on, once again, outward to touch . . .
Early Friday Night, Oct. '85
by Kelly Lawe

Endless drone
of television sets
Family ties
drifting apart
Trouble breathing
  Self worth is the question of the night
do you play games
do you involve yourself?
in trivial pursuits
  crepe paper heartstrings
can we tape them together?
Machine messiah
leads you away
leads you astray
Off into separate realities
  memories of photographs
smell of smoke in my mind
stale smoke . . . stale beer
Like taking candy from the mouths of babes
nothing to do
  but sit and watch the rocks grow
The black and the orange teardrops
streaming down your face
like dew drops
dripping down
Halley

by Maimun N. Khan

One star quickly sails,
leaving behind his kin folk—
the bold explorer.
wooden teeth