

# The Bayou Review



**Fall 2006**

# The Bayou Review

The University of Houston Downtown  
Visual and Literary Arts Journal

## Acknowledgements

As this is my last semester as a student of the University of Houston Downtown and my last semester as editor of this publication, I wanted to take a moment to thank all the talented artists that have submitted their works to the three issues that I have had the pleasure to work on in my tenure as student editor. I would also like to thank all the faculty, and the exemplary staff of the Dateline and the University Copy Center for all their assistance in making my time here a magical fall down the rabbit hole.

This fall semester we had some incredible additions to the Bayou Review staff. Our new faculty advisor, Dr. Robin Davidson, has provided exciting insights to our creative process. Alvin Pieper has been an exceptional assistant editor and Denise Satterfield has been a pivotal in the layout of the issue and marketing for new submissions. Thank you all for your hard work.

### Cover Art “Chibar” by Lucy Bowen

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The Bayou Review is published biannually by the University of Houston-Downtown. The journal welcomes essays, short stories, poetry, art, and photography submissions from UHD students, faculty, staff, and alumni. We also accept outside submissions. Please mail all manuscripts to:

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The Bayou Review reserves the right to edit for grammar, punctuation and content.

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“But it’s no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.”

Alice from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

by Lewis carroll

**Power**  

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**by Tony Hoagland**

When you slapped the mosquito on your arm,  
that was a statement about importance.  
Its life weighed less than your three drops of blood.

It was the buzzing little paparazzi,  
you were the celebrity, you had the right  
to terminate the relationship.

So much weakness in your life already,  
it feels good to act without a qualifying thought  
once in awhile, and you can't help liking

being on top, holding your lover down  
when you are having sex, the better to thrust  
into her delicate inner core.

--Like steering a car in and out of a  
dangerous curve, or yanking the nameless weeds  
out of your vegetable garden

while the sun comes down and pretends to be your friend.  
I have been glad to enter a room at work  
and see someone lower their gaze, --glad

to be respected enough to be feared.  
And when I lost that job I remember  
how earnestly they shook my hand

and said they wanted to stay in touch;  
I knew what they wanted.  
They wanted what everyone wants. They wanted

to arrange the whole world  
in such a way  
as to never to have to learn from it again.

**Tony Hoagland's** most recent collection of poems is *Hard Rain* from Hollyridge Press. In 2005 he was winner of the 2005 Mark Twain Award for humor in American poetry. His book of essays about poetry, *Real Sofistikashun*, is just about out from Graywolf Press. He teaches at the University of Houston.

## **Marketing Sample**

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### **by Tony Hoagland**

A giant hypodermic needle comes through the wall of the shopping mall  
and sucks up the Tuesday shoppers, who were just looking

for eyeglasses and underwear, plastic deck chairs and nonstick frying pans.  
It inhales an overweight security guard with his nightstick and walkie-talkie,

and a fake palm tree, and a couple of kids with headphones on,  
who had probably come to shoplift the new

Weezer CD, (yeah, and some cigarettes too, man-)

But now they themselves are lifted, suctioned up into the hollow shaft

of the big syringe, then whirled up even further  
into the cylindrical glass barrel

where they spin helpless near the 20 cc mark, with all the other stuff:  
some floating candy bars, a porno magazine, a man's silk tie

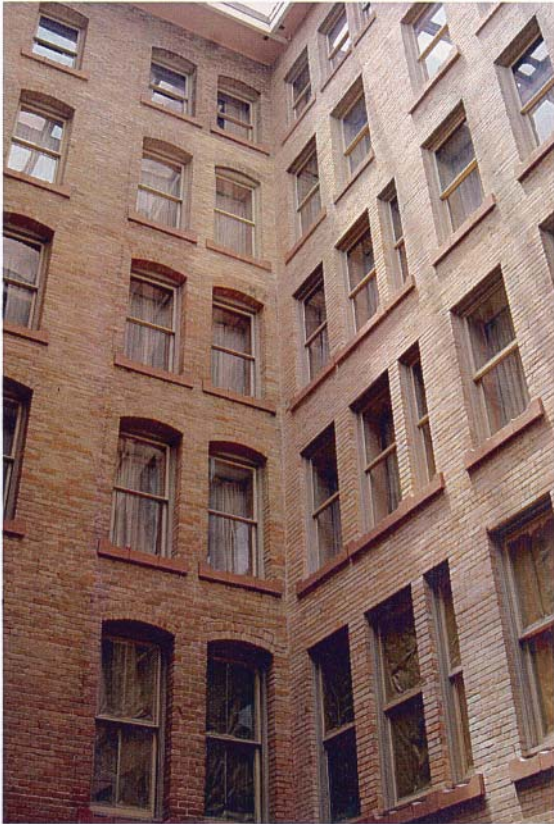
floating like a sash; a budget-size carton of Cheerios;  
all of this merchandise we once needed

—now just evidence  
of what we did with our lives.



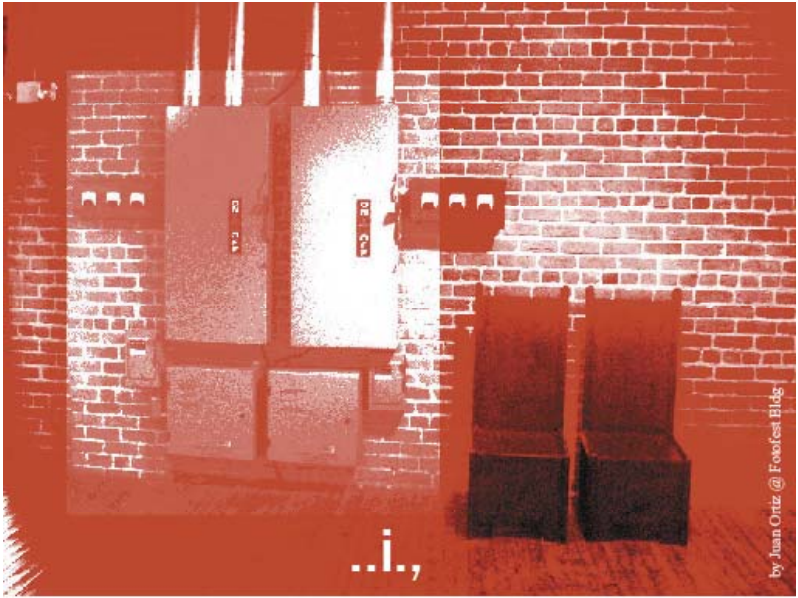
**Crockett**  
**by Lucy Bowen**

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**Fotofest 3**  
**by Juan Ortiz**

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# **Symphony of Confusion** **by Lindsay Hagood**

Spirit scattered into tiny fragments,  
Mass confusion swirling.  
Flux and change all about,  
Seeking sacred song.

Melancholy moments engulf,  
Burying hope for tomorrow.  
Faith seems all too idealistic,  
Philosophies of joy too pompous.

Hunger for love creeps,  
Appetite for fulfillment rages on.  
Craving romantic interlude,  
In spite of harsh realities.

Life continues walking,  
Hurry, run to catch it.  
Cradle pieces of remaining spirit,  
Make music to the symphony of confusion.

## **The Untold**

Look at the world around you,  
Gaze into the eyes of the unknown.  
Search for simplicity amongst you,  
Stare into the cave of gold.

Reach for the highest form,  
In which to release your soul.  
Look for the transcendent beauty,  
Begin to tell the untold.

## **Birth of Jazz at Turn of 20th Century, New Orleans**

**by Patty Torrance**

Lively sounds, New American's wishes

Liven-up, multifaceted streams

Essential, improvisation and swing

Impromptu speaking, side-by-side

Spontaneous, talking off the cuff

Swinging pleasure, highly spirited groove

Beat the music, mixture of tools

Full of surprises, breaks any mood

Light and happy, heavy and serious

Dance music, created bands

Makes you think, flatters swing

Imagination, performer's improvisation

Each performance, a new creation

Listeners follow musicians through creation

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**Burning Call 2**  
by Patrick McDow



PATRICK MCDOW 2006

## **Charity**

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**by Cody Roberts**

He sat on a wooden bench adjacent to the noisy automatic doors. He hardly moved. The exception was his elbow, which hinged, as elbows tend to do, in a methodical lift of the arm, back and forth from his lap to his mouth. In his hand was a cigarette, although it was really nothing more than a smoldering stub. A sorry excuse for a cigarette, really. His short arm brought the butt back and forth from his lap to his mouth in a calculated, rhythmic manner, as if each drag might be the last. The bench was illuminated, directly underneath the only floodlight that would remain on in the storefront at this time of night. He sat smoking, hunched over, and the glow from the light cast the man in a sort of sad center stage, as if he were ablaze, lit in the spotlight of some queer outdoor Star Search. Idol-like, the man on the bench looked as if he belonged there.

What few patrons there were passed him as if he were another fixture on the street, as if a city worker would come along and toss him in the back of a truck, or maybe the store

manager would shoo him away, like an old busybody with a broom and an aversion to stray cats. His only movements besides the aggressive smoking were small adjustments to his clothes, which to a casual observer weren't worth the time spent to adjust them. His dungarees were beyond filthy; they were the pants of a coal miner, or maybe a chimney sweep, and his grey woolen jacket was neither grey nor much of a jacket. If anything, it was just a force, buttoned and bound, keeping his distended beer paunch from rudely appearing. Underneath the jacket was a black t-shirt, an immaculate black t-shirt that bore no semblance of filth that one expects will always turn up on dark clothing. The man had neither chalk dust, pet hair, nor a flake of dandruff on the shirt he wore.

His hair was something altogether different, and wasn't the picture of refinement that one might gather from the integrity with which he wore the shirt. It was visibly thin and greasy, with a disheveled old driver's cap, salt and pepper and a perfect match for

the jacket, topping the whole thing off so as to keep the whole messy mop under control. Patrons in idling cars glanced in his direction and habitually locked doors and rolled up windows. A shadowy figure illuminated is still a shadowy figure.

One man, in a large truck, sat up above the ground in a plush leather captain's seat as he pulled in the lot. He was behind the wheel of a truck that, in its size and stature, may have at one point passed for a tank or a boat. His security was hardly at risk and yet he couldn't have appeared more terrified at the prospect of passing the lonely man on the bench. His face lost its pallor. It was if the secure man had become a billy goat; the man on the bench, his personal troll.

As he exited the behemoth auto and passed by, the small, rumped figure looked up at the man, who was clearly older and more established than he (because he clearly had no giant truck), and asked the inevitable: Spare some change, mister? In a predictable huff, the pharmacy patron didn't acknowledge him, but instead silently likened him to a fixture of



the city, much like the trash bins and the graffiti; the crumpled up receipts and losing lottery tickets that litter the gutter.

The man's face, however, having been lifted and brought into the light, was undeniably benevolent and undeniably human. He had blue eyes, jaundiced and bloodshot notwithstanding, and he had the sad, kind face of a loyal, aging Bassett hound. Tanned, leather skin held in place a brilliant white smile that did little else but whimper his one message to the customers that passed: Spare some change, mister?

The next person that passed the man on the bench had obviously born witness to the person that had passed before her, specifically the older man in the truck who had paid no attention to the plight of the benchwarmer. She readied the one-dollar bill she had prepared in the car for just such cases. Adjusting his woolen jacket, which was unequivocally weather inappropriate, the small man with the weathered grin was caught mid-light up of the newest cigarette he presumably intended to finish. Startled at perhaps missing his opportunity, he scrambled for a moment,

completed the lighting of the tobacco stick, took one drag, and promptly put it out underfoot: Spare some change, ma'm?

His boots, as shoddy as one might suspect they come, rattled against several empty beer cans that at first weren't visible from the contrasted light and dark of the illumined bench. The young lady approaching the pharmacy clutched the bill tight in her sweaty palm but nevertheless relinquished it into the hands of the grateful, nodding hermit. What he chose to do with the bill, she thought, was up to him. She had done what any good Christian would have done, which was vainly making herself feel better about the situation rather than mending it. Was she fueling the desire of a raging alcoholic? He was such a magnificent bum, a beautiful transient like in the movies, surely he's normally be jumping boxcars, maybe take a nip before bed after wandering the streets for change.

The automatic doors closed behind her after she had smiled back at the man. He'd thanked her profusely, as if she'd helped deliver his wife's child. He must have found enough money tonight for a quart of beer. But the automatic doors opened again, right behind her, and the odor of cigarettes overtook her from behind. The man had come inside the pharmacy and was approaching the check-out counter. She watched as he took his dollar, held it up to the light for the clerk to see, and carefully folded it up. He grabbed the cardboard donation box that sat on the counter and slid the bill through the slot. It featured several images of handicapped children and an obligatory explanation of the charity. He looked at the clerk, a young girl who smiled back at him, and then glanced at the box a few more times before he asked: These kids get this money? The clerk nodded. I sure hope so, he said. Cause I feel sorry for them. Then he went outside, idol-like, and sat on the bench where he belonged.

**Munch Growls**  
by Lucy Bowen

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## **"Reality" by: Miguel**

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**by Michael Martinez**

You stumble, fall, and crumble,  
Pain and hurt comes in a bundle.  
You try to use your forces to push them away,  
But gravity, manages to keep them in place.  
Your tears...slowly fall to the floor,  
As your eyes shut as fast as a slamming door.  
The room spins...spins at great speed,  
Love? Love is all you need.  
Touching your skin, feels dry, rough,  
The realization of life becomes tough.  
Who will you turn for help now?  
Well, that's up to you to figure out.  
Life is a repetition of events,  
Love, you will know when it's meant.  
You will stumble, fall, and crumble,  
There is nothing...nothing you can't handle.  
Life becomes a dream,  
Dream turns to reality,  
Reality is tragedy, ....And love?  
Love is what you only let it become.

# Uluru<sup>1</sup>

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by Yvonne Kendall

A sacred space that, like all such spaces of the dark ones,  
Is shown disrespect by the sons of light.

The fluid silken stones  
Strong but delicate-seeming yellow mulga<sup>2</sup>  
Wave gently at Uluru.

While boulders as old as understanding warn  
Of the perils of disrespect.

The sons scale it with eager clamoring.

To kneel down and touch the rock is to feel existence  
Surge with power. The rock  
Allows its face to be touched by the sun but  
Denies the sun's impertinence on its nether side.

The sons walk by briskly without seeing.  
The sun is bright so that they may see,  
But they cannot see.  
Their cigarette butts disgrace this space, yet...

All is as was and ever shall be. Dreaming.

Trees with bark stippled in black and white  
Are sentinels at the base.  
And a noble elder gives its life to block passage.

Sussurating blades of grass sing their crescendo  
In humble dignity. A tiny eucalypt  
Hides in the shadows as I, too, hide  
From the madding crowd.  
Eyes of the elders peer out from the rock face.  
They see, have seen, will see.  
The soft sienna earth mutes the steps of the sons.  
The shadows mask Uluru's dark tears.

Later, a massive nest of black garbage bags  
Glistens in the sun.

What is, was, and ever shall be?

There are dark mats just under the surface.  
Why?  
To protect? To honor?  
And everywhere the unexpected.

Charred trunks sharing the earth  
With freshly budding shoots -  
Dark and green together.

Sweet shy flowers -  
lavender, white, yellow, pink.  
Suitably modest in the face  
Of majesty.

Lips are open to speak  
But the sons are deaf.

Silver grasses gleam in the twilight  
Illuminating the timescape;  
Leading to Wapa<sup>3</sup>.

Mouth with shark's teeth  
Presages the terrors of hell.  
Sharp deep scars mark  
Rites of passage  
As Liru and Kuniya fought.<sup>4</sup>

But the ever-continuing rebirth process  
Shows as greenery finds a home -  
Healing the wounds.

At the sign of the people drawing near  
The first bird cries aloud.  
The snake trail of a bicycle tire  
Does not seem unwelcome here.  
We are part of the whole.

Thanks to the descending quiet  
Urging me to reflect.  
Time pauses in a grand fermata.  
Then I rejoin the rhythm  
That has never stopped.



**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Uluru is the geographic monument formerly known as “Ayers Rock.” It is located near the center of the country in the Australian state called the Northern Territory. It is considered a sacred site by the Australian Aborigines, but tourists climb it daily.

<sup>2</sup>Mulga is a grass-like shrub or tree related to the acacia. It lives 200-300 years.

<sup>3</sup>Liru, a poisonous male snake, was part of early aboriginal myths. He was defeated in battle by Kuniya, a female python. Marks on Uluru are attributed to this battle.



Photo Courtesy of *Wikipedia*  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uluru>

**Untitled**  
**by Jessica Morris**

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## **Ode to Enron**

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**by Bradley Hoge**

The story now is, that the Ahu on Easter Island were commissioned by rulers of competing sects, dividing the island into eleven segments, competing through displays of wealth rather than might – and that the statues were moved along logs from trees similar to those that carry Tiki boats to shores on ancestral islands. And that once the last tree fell for this purpose the statues were toppled in anger at the foolishness of the leaders who allowed the trees to be felled so that no more boats could be built and dolphins could not be harvested and birds and other sources of food would perish and soil for farming would erode and society would collapse because of personal greed and the willingness to mortgage the future to maintain the status quo. And the end of the story has yet to be told. But the story is repeated many times.

## **The Day Winter Comes** **by Brian Kenneth Swain**

Slate sky supersedes the rising sun,  
and portentous wind calls down  
from beyond some northern border.  
What dun leaves yet cling  
to oak or maple  
whip about until, at last, overcome,  
they tear free to scurry off  
down some farm road.

As morning advances,  
the sky goes to steel,  
then the white of a gull's belly  
just as the first miniature flakes fly,  
so sparse at first  
as to escape the eye's notice,  
faint hiss upon the rooftop  
harbinger of things severe.

In an hour's time  
it is upon us, though, for now, with false vigor,  
tufting the still-green grass tips,  
clinging tenuously to the tree bark.  
As the afternoon too quickly declines,  
the flurry abates,  
but the colorless sky remains,  
warning against complacency,  
cajoling us out to the shed  
for a first armload of firewood.

**Into the Fire**  
**by Anonymous**

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## **Artist and subject**

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**by Sarah Cooper**

you posed for him  
offered your grace, your charm  
and your body told a story  
of sweetness and sin

he gave you his vision  
bartered his lust for creation  
and you gifted him  
danced a moment as his lover

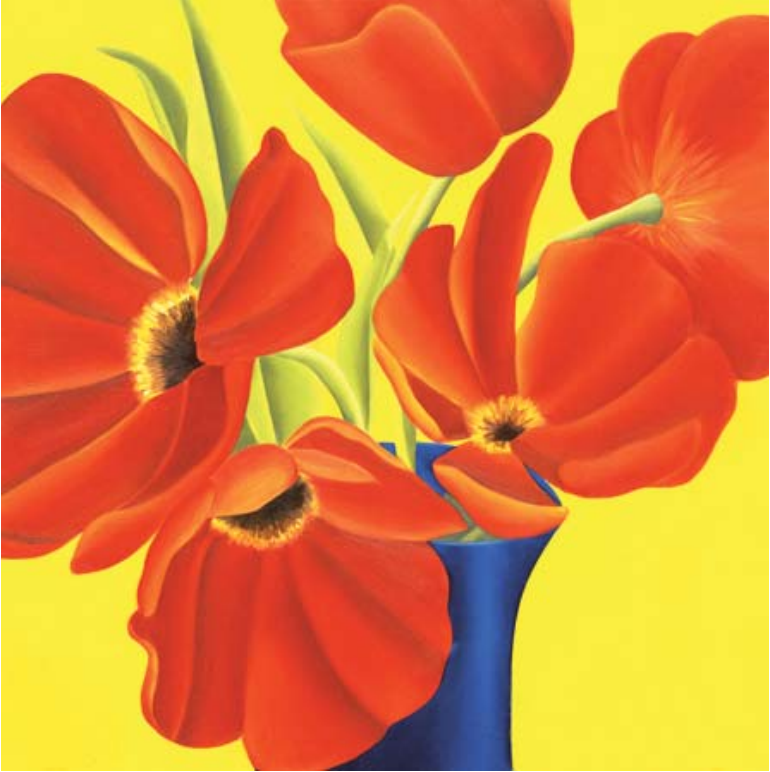
you showed him your eyes  
you gave him their light  
and he claimed them as his own  
captured how they shine for him

you bared your breasts to him  
the swell of your hips and thighs  
and though he had known them before  
they now became his art

he looked upon your body  
through the eyes of an artist  
but you gave him all he asked for  
and he fell as a man

**Sunny Tulips**  
**by Sarah Horsfall**

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## Stories

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### by Carlo Magana

Do you want to hear a story? Those are, I believe the most tantalizing words in any language. When we learn from each other, we always team better with stories. It seems odd that I would for the bulk of my life been seen as a weirdo because of the stories I told. When I was younger, I told stories about silly things. Rabbits trying to perform miracles, balloons carrying kids away from bad people and rickety bridges made of old rotten two by fours suspended over a year long drop off cliffs to a warm calming lake below- with a door to nowhere at one end. Unfortunately, I can't speak with the elocution with which I think I always wonder if my brother would have liked my stories better if I didn't have the slur in my voice.

I lived with my brother for many years. I'm a lot of trouble what with my slur and not being able to move to well; but Stanley is a good brother to me. He often listens to my stories. Sometimes he fixes them for me. Sometimes he gets them put into books.

He had a girlfriend named Alberta. It's a man's name with an 'a' at the end. But she's very pretty. When she moved into the apartment, I didn't mind. After a while, Stanley started saying that she didn't feel comfortable with me there. Soon, they took me to the hospital. It was the same hospital mom had gone to- when we were young. When she died, they gave Stanley and me money. Stanley said it wasn't very much money but it did buy us the apartment. But I had to move to the hospital.

One night when Alberta came to visit me in the hospital she told me that Stanley was mean. I told her that tying is bad. She said it was the same as telling stories. I told her that it wasn't.

That same night Stanley came to my room when it was very dark outside. The moon wasn't around either.



Stanley had taken one of the doctor's knives. He said it was very sharp. He showed me how sharp it was- I don't like the color red anymore.

When I started to run away Stanley grabbed me by the arm and I tripped. When I tried to get up I pulled the "alarm don't pull" handle. Then everything got loud. And everything got wet. I don't remember everything after that. He chased me all the way to the cafeteria of the hospital. It was too dark to see. When the sun was out I had sloppy joes for lunch that day. The water was still coming from the ceiling. Stanley started yelling. Alberta told him to stop but he wouldn't. He liked to scream sometimes. I didn't like it; but it's okay if he needed to scream.

Alberta called Stanley something bad. A bad word. Stanley doesn't like being called the 's' word. He never did.

I think that's why he put the knife into Alberta. She's very small. When she fell I was able to pick her up with one hand. I sat on the ground and looked at her. Her face was wet and shiny. Her eyes were too.

Whenever little kids look at me like that I tell them stories.

"Do you want a story Alberta? I can tell you about the bridge off the cliff- do you remember? The knight who guarded the cliff?"

"Marcus- you know I love your stories but you need to run away now. Go really far. And go fast, okay?"

I didn't understand.

"Some day someone isn't going to enjoy your fucking stories, Marcus. Then what will you do?" Stanley hugged his dark vest against himself. He didn't have the knife anymore- he let Alberta keep it.

“Stanley, people always enjoy your brothers stories- he’s just being mean. Don’t listen to him Marcus.” Alberta put her hand on my cheek; it was cold and a little clammy.

“Well, I like telling them- but if someone didn’t enjoy my stories I suppose I’d,” I paused to think of how I’d word it, “then I’d tell a better one; and if the didn’t like that one I’d tell another, and another and another until I found one everyone likes.” Alberta smiled almost distantly. Stanley started screaming again.

“Well, I never liked any of your fucking stories.”

“Stanley, he’s your only family you can’t do this.”

“I’m sorry if you don’t like my stories- I like your books. I read them all” Alberta wouldn’t say anything else.

Alberta was dead and I knew it. The room filled with all the water of every lake in the world. It wasn’t cold or warm- but the simple coolness; as if straight from the tap. The water rose quickly and soon it was to our waists. Large orange and green fish, as big as Labradors started circling us. Convinced we were very large worms. Bait. Stanley held me down under the water. Even though I was under the water I could still hear him. He screamed on and on. He started screaming about our father.

“You know why you never met him? Because I protected you from him!” His grip was hard but it didn’t hurt so badly. Not that I’d been choked under water before so- who knows? Maybe it isn’t supposed to hurt so bad.

“My first day at school- that’s how I learned to do it. They told us- never bring something with an electrical cord into the bath. They told us, and that son of a bitch always had to listen to fucking music when he took his bath.” The waler didn’t taste bad. I had always heard that rain water tasted kind of weird. It was okay.

“And that soggy bitch our mother was supposed to go quick none of that persistent vegetative state bullshit! When a grown woman falls down stairs onto a serving tray full of glass- the bitch dies! She wasn’t supposed to see me push her- but did she see me messing with that breathing tube- fuck no she didn’t.” I looked up at Stanley through the water again. I could see his hair wasn’t so well kept today. And his shirt wasn’t as nicely pressed, as it was this morning. He was still the handsome one. But he had something on his face. It looked like maybe it was a bit of mud. I reached up and wiped it off his cheek. I showed it to him but he was busy telling me about what had happened.

“I killed her- because she wanted you. And you’re fucking retarded- crazy-writing fucking stories all the fucking time! Why would she want you! I’m the one who became a writer. J was the one who was published! I was- why won’t you fucking die! How long are you going to just lie there? If you’re not going to die then at least try to fight back! Damn it!” “The good guy doesn’t always win in my stories you know that”

“What!?” Stanley stepped back- he was surprised to hear my voice. Through the water. My slur was gone too.

“But the bad guy never wins in my stories.”

“This isn’t one of your fucking stories, Marcus!”

“Yes, it is- or it will be” as I stood up from the water Stanley arose. At first he seemed to just jump straight out of the water because it was so sudden. But once he was out of the water he slowly kept raising. Water rained from his clothes and matted hair. He looked down at me with unwarranted terror in his eyes.

“What’s happening?” He bellowed to no one in particular. I followed him with my eyes. He rose towards the ceiling where it gave way to glorious sunlight.

There was a soft breeze despite the height of the stairs. The stairs, if they could be called such, were simply hanging off the edge of the cliff town of Clifton. What else would it be called? The fool of the stairs ended in a sturdy looking dark oak door. With a big brass door knob- the kind you’d only find in the finest grand old houses. Stanley looked up the stairs and down the stairs; horrified. The door immediately swung open and banged against a wall that wasn’t there. Out of the door thundered a bearded man in white pants and a large blue uniform jacket and a red sash. On his gray head he wore a shiny chrome helmet with a crossed spike on the top. Stanley for a moment caught his reflection in the helmet- dirty, blood stained, and wet. The soldier and his steed rode off towards all sorts of adventure. Stanley shook his head madly. He couldn’t be here. He couldn’t be here! As it occurred to him finally why his brother’s stories had always captured the attention of those around him he looked through the door that opened to nothing, down the one hundred year drop to the warm welcoming waters below and screamed.

Not because he had been wrong. But because he’d been right-for once, someone Wouldn’t enjoy one of my stories.

## **I am American**

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**by Shellie Natho**

I bleed the colors of my education.  
My meals are salty, freeze-dried fat.  
My transportation is a pollutant to the skies,  
and it runs on three wheels.

My freedom comes at the cost  
of maintaining economic demand-  
the game of plastic versus metal-  
and of paying the prisoners' rent.

My love went international  
with his nuclear mistress,  
to spill her blood, to  
torture her children.

I separate my two faiths:  
lust and love.  
Church and state need not exist  
as long as someone is paying child support.

My lips are stained  
with negligent patriotism while  
my phone shrieks "VOTE"  
with every ring.

My tattered spangled banner  
hangs limply from its rusted pole  
while I pledge that I,  
I am a walking epidemic.

**Beautiful Harmony**  
**by Rafael Ortiz**

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**Las Flores**  
**by Juan Ortiz**



*"Adios. Las Flores del Norte"*

## **A Borrowed Razor** **by Aaron Dishman**

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Small steps at first, nothing exotic yet. The music is slow, she moves through it. Good dancers get to pick their own music and this tune is her favorite. She hates being called a dancer. She prefers performance artist. Her act has gained some notoriety around some of the hipper watering holes and snobitoriums. Usually draws a pretty diverse crowd though. Before they see her, most people think of her as a dancer.

She's not really dancing at this point, just swaying in and out of the music with her arms around herself. Kind of like she's rocking a kid to sleep. The movement feels warm and gentle. Faces in the audience look calm and content. Focused on absolutely nothing but her.

This is how she gets 'em. I'm not even sure its intentional, but its real. In a second or two they'll start to feed off each other. The audience loves her and she loves being loved. The smooth quiet stuff continues for a few minutes until the music begins to build. Not anywhere near a climax but its on the way. This is a big one. I can tell.

Three hours earlier she did another gig. Only one audience member though. It went like this:

It began the same way, small steps. Smiles across the bar. He wouldn't help but notice her, all blond curls and sexual energy. He couldn't figure out why she was even looking, let alone smiling. She was younger, prettier, a different league. Not that it



## **A Borrowed Razor**

usually mattered to him. If he wanted a woman, he didn't screw around with female flirting games. He waited until they could be alone under any pretense and he took her. Sometimes it hurt, sometimes it was easy, but he always got the job done.

He would take this one as well. With her curves and inviting smiles. This would be one of the easy ones. She even seemed interested in him. He smiled back as sweetly as he knew how. He thought she had no idea.

To her he reeked a delicious blend of moral corruption and voracious hunger. To her he was rare and perfect. Raw meat, strawberries and champagne all in one sweet package. And for dessert, the righteous satisfaction of a job well done. Cancer excised.

They leave the bar after a few quick words. Back to his place. He wastes no time. As soon as the door closes he's got her on the floor. He's got her arms pinned. He's about to rip into her red silk dress.

"No. It won't be like that with me" she says  
There isn't time for him to object. His mind is completely clear. He has no conscious thought other than complete obedience. He remembers what he wanted to do. It doesn't matter now.

"No" he says "it won't". He frees her arms as if recoiling from a snake.

## **A Borrowed Razor**

She leans up to kiss him gently. He responds. She stands, slips out of her dress and begins to remove his clothes. He's ready. She guides him to the floor and lays him down on his back. She lowers herself onto him. The sex is short and volcanic. When its over he begins to cry. For some reason they all cry.

"Now you understand." she says.

He has no words. He's too shamed for words. She showed him what he was.

"You won't suffer long" she says, "Stay here".

Then she leaves. He sits on the floor sobbing.

Back in the now, the dance builds a little. The pace hasn't increased, just the intensity. She moves left and right, her arms move in and out as if she's pushing an invisible wall that gives just a little under her strength.

Now its faster. The music is building and her legs aren't moving. Her face is tense and her arms are flailing wildly now. The music peaks and she screams with one last violent slash of both arms left and right, up and down. Every muscle in her arms is tight.

The music stops and she is crying. The crowd is silent. She covers her ears to block out noise that isn't there. The crowd takes it as a cue and begins cheering wildly. With the crowd noise she uncovers her ears to except the applause. She is

## **A Borrowed Razor**

finished. She is spent. She makes her way from the stage to her changing room.

I resist the urge to leave. Better to wait for the call. I already know where I'll find him. Middle of his living room floor. Bled out from two dozen pink slash wounds. Crime scene will already be set up. She and I have been within site of two hundred people all night. Coroners report will say the cuts look shallow, like from finger nails. No DNA in the wounds. Oh they'll find plenty of his DNA around the apartment. They'll even find residuals from a couple of girls that will turn out to be rape victims. When questioned they will have good, natural alibis. The crime remains unsolved. If it ever was a crime to begin with.

I followed the two of them out of the bar earlier. Back to his apartment. Set up basic surveillance through an open window. I saw everything. I even taped the sex. I taped the dance as well. Her version and his.

I'm pretty sure she can only make the kill after she's been with them.

Once she's had 'em, something changes in both. They get softer and she turns into a razor. She takes their edge away. Then she uses it. Once the dance is done she goes back to being her. Soft, clean, accessible.

## **A Borrowed Razor**

Not sure if she knows that I have tape but she knows I'm on to her. I'm a cop. Been building a case against her for weeks. Tonight's was #8.

Knew I needed things airtight. Whole thing is just too fuckin' crazy to approach a DA. I didn't buy it myself until #4. So I watched and got tape.

Built the case like a loaded gun. Figured soon she'd get hungrier and hit someone real nasty. Someone on a watch list. Mafia maybe. Then I could piggy back the publicity and get the press involved. They would eat it up. DA would have to play. She'd go to jail or get hit. Either way murders would stop.

Funny thing is, after #5, they stopped seeming like murders. Since I handle the investigations, I interview the suspects directly. I put three girls and a little boy into counseling during #5's investigation alone. Sick bastard had their pictures in a scrapbook. DNA taken from his place corroborated the pictures. The kids were too terrified to talk. I showed them some of the tamer crime scene pictures. Now they have a chance to move on and countless others don't have to.

All from the death of one piece of shit.

## **A Borrowed Razor**

The guys (and girls) she takes out have it comin'. Best part is they get to see what they are before the end. Haven't figured out how she pulls that off yet.

The department thinks I'm a fuckin' rock star.

I enjoy the whole thing now. It scares me.

So I keep watching and taping. People like her always need more. Couple of ways she could go. Pretty soon she needs to go after bigger game or a lighter brand of sinner. Bigger game means bigger risk. Maybe I can help her out of a jam. Lighter brand of sinner means I gotta take her in. With all my evidence she would end up getting something. Probably conspiracy to commit or something.

Only problem is, I'd be a corpse pretty soon after. A few weeks ago, between #6 and #7, she smiled at me across a bar too.

**Halloween on Gulfton St.**  
**by Radames Ortiz**

Outside, dumpsters  
sit like hearses.

Aluminum car ports  
rattle the wind.

Strayed in streets,  
cats snarl behind tires.

The boot-bottom night.  
Vacant and winter coming.

This is the evening  
of Halloween.

The Salvadoran woman  
next door washes

clothes, a carved  
pumpkin sulks

on the porch.  
It's candle-

lit grin  
grows faint.

## Halloween on Gulfton St.

Soon the dark  
turns ghostly.

Is battered down  
with more darkness.

Here even children  
stay indoors,

stuff wishes  
into garbage bags.

In this scarlet-  
dim ghetto

a dead end  
in every face.

**Verbier**  
**by Sarah Horsfall**

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**a chair, a cigarette and me**  
**by Kevin Travis Wright**

another one gone by  
split between the sun and a sigh  
terrified and wide eyed  
a chair, a cigarette and me

windows rest and awake in time  
pages march to beats of rhyme  
clothes are strewn, no reason why  
a chair, a cigarette and me

the lamp in the comer  
a clandestine loner  
an illuminating donor  
for a chair, a cigarette and me

## **The Reality of TV**

---

**by Joseph Aimone**

Reality programs  
Are, like the others, shams,  
In principle if not  
In detail: It's all rot.  
But that is not the reason  
To shun the current season:  
It's that it's still that same  
Old wasteland that we blame  
For how each idiot  
Will sit and stare at it  
As if it should be kept  
Alight while people slept.  
The problem is, my dear,  
What people want to hear  
While mesmerized and snug  
Or Hoovering the rug,

## **The Reality of TV**

---

And what they want their eyes  
To feast upon and prize.  
So it comes down to this:  
TV shows what you miss  
And what you wish you had  
And what you want that's bad.  
That said, it's still pathetic,  
Perhaps even emetic,  
For one who's not addicted  
As the admen predicted.  
With public broadcast dying  
And niches multiplying  
In which minds are made weak,  
Orwellian newspeak  
Has taken over news,  
And "fairness" means "our views,"

## The Reality of TV

And there's a special station  
For every fetishization.  
The mainstream's now a sewer,  
The common tragedy the viewer.  
When I put down my books,  
This is how it looks:  
TV is much too full  
Of family values, bull  
And horse and worse manure  
For children, that's for sure—  
And too much violence  
For adults who have sense—  
And, sadly, I'm agreeing:  
As in reality,  
At least of late for me,  
The sex is not worth seeing.

**A Voicemail Greeting**  
**by Joseph Aimone**

It's always telephone solicitors,  
Just them, you know, who call me on this line.  
I give no one this number, which ensures  
That I don't even need to know my pin  
Because I never need to check my messages,  
At least not on this number, anyway.  
So I know what your real purpose is  
If not exactly what you're going to say.  
I do not want the Times, the Chronicle,  
A timeshare or a Vegas seminar,  
Another charge card to charge overfull,  
And I don't own a television. There.  
So spell your name, address and social, please,  
And I won't hunt you down and break your knees.

## Bamboo

---

by Claudia Cardenas

My little brother said he thought  
that the bamboo was suppose to be green.  
It was the lack of rain  
and too much sun.  
So dry it crackled under my hand.  
Hard and brittle as if a bone.

The bamboo was the color of aged bone  
Definitely something I wouldn't have thought  
of as I squeezed it in my hand.  
Close my eyes, think of and smell green  
grass and dark rich soil in the sun.  
Humid and heavy with hints of upcoming rain.

The drought would soon be broken by the rain.  
Color would soon return to the bone  
colored bamboo too long in the sun.  
I sat back, trace the stick and thought  
Of how the bamboo would grow again green.  
A new pot planted by my hand.

I dig in the soil with my hand  
easier to mold and squeeze wet with rain.  
Pray it will grow back healthy and green  
And not die again turning the color of sickly aged bone.  
Can't bring it back he says I never thought  
to but maybe it can be restored by the sun.

The healing heat and energy of the sun  
and the frantic tender care of my hand.  
It should be enough I thought.  
The drought was over and we have plenty of rain.  
No more dry and brittle broken bones.  
Just the bamboo reborn lush and green.

Bamboo should be green.  
It should live happily under the sun  
It shouldn't make me see fragile broken bones.  
It should be sturdy and alive beneath my hand.  
I rejoice and welcome the rain  
It washes away my unwelcome plant killing thoughts.

I blow on and rub my hand.  
The cold always follows the rain .  
The bamboo is dead and gone; I ignore my grieving thought.

## **Telepathy**

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**by Akino Terayama**

**Translated by Toshiya Kamei**

She had been standing on the platform of a small decayed station.

‘I’ll never forget this moment as long as I live,’ Tsueko thought, staring at the blue silhouette of the Southern Alps.

The morning sun began to rise over the mountaintop. The cold air swept against her legs in her monpe pants. She wrapped her muffler tighter around her neck and stamped her feet to keep warm. She tried to hold herself together, but felt hot tears trickling down her cheeks.

If her husband, who worked in a faraway city, had been home, her mother-in-law wouldn’t have been so unreasonable to her. ‘I can’t live with this woman anymore,’ she thought. Furious, she had hardly slept the night before. She didn’t care what would happen. She had waited until dawn and then left her home.

A gleam of sun shone down out of the dark sky, painting the mountain salmon pink. On the other side of the station, a large zelkova tree began to appear in the haze, its naked treetop shaking in the roaring wind. The cedars on the north side of a



white-walled house swayed in the same direction. As the wood-paneled windows in the station shuddered, Tsueko trembled in the cold air.

She remembered her daily toils—bending over, staring down at her feet. On the farm, she and her mother-in-law worked side by side all day long. Tsueko had no time to catch her breath. Many times trivial things ballooned into bigger problems. This time, however, she had decided she had enough.

‘It’s been a long time since I last noticed how big the mountain is,’ Tsueko thought.

‘Don’t be so childish; you shouldn’t run away over such small things.’ She heard the mountain speak. Fifty years old—at this age, Tsueko could keep calm and listen to others only for a while. She had already made up her mind. ‘I’d put up with my mother-in-law long enough,’ Tsueko thought. ‘She isn’t the only one who is getting old. I’m not young anymore either.’

The sun’s red paint spread downward from the peak. The mountains layered one after another like the folds of a hina doll’s kimono shone in the morning light.

The mountain in March was painted red and purple, trees with white coats on its buds. The white, mixed with the dark green of the cedar forest, carried spring.

Her legs felt frozen. Tsueko curled her toes inside her tabi socks. Worried that someone might see her, she had sneaked out of her house in her work clothes. She could easily curl her toes as the straps of her geta sandals were loose.

'I'm going to get on the first train. I'll never see my mother-in-law again,' she thought.

In the flower garden on the platform, she saw two crocuses buried under frosts. As Tsueko noticed the blue and yellow flowers, she felt a fire burning inside her.

'Even these flowers aren't afraid of expressing themselves. I too want to feel alive! I've tried to fit in with the Konno family and please my mother-in-law too long. I've had enough!'

She felt sorry for herself. She wished she had the courage of the crocuses, standing fast in the cold wind. Tsueko and her husband had no child. 'The Konnos won't be able to accuse me of anything. I own them nothing,' she assured herself.

The sun illuminated the old railroad ties that bordered the flower garden, rays of light bouncing off the frosts. Tsueko's tears blurred her vision, turning everything in a large mass of light. The rails began to vibrate, sending off a light mechanical sound. As the familiar echo of a train approached the station, it resonated inside Tsueko. Before long, the two-car train came into view in the distance, moving steadily closer.

The old brown train stopped as if letting out a sigh, bringing Tsueko back to the present.

She felt choked with emotions. If she got on this train, everything would be over. She had nowhere to go.

"Inamatsushima, Inamatsushima," the conductor announced. Just as Tsueko was getting on the last car, she saw a man with a Boston bag step out of the first car. It was her husband.

Noticing a passenger on the platform, the conductor got off the last car and walked toward him. Since the station had no attendant, he collected tickets.

With her husband's ticket in his hand, the conductor got back on the train.

"All aboard!" cried the conductor.

## Telepathy

The train shook with a thud, then began to inch forward.

Tsueko dashed toward her husband and seized his hand.

“What are you doing here? How did you know I was coming home? I didn’t tell you; I wanted to surprise you,” her husband said.

“Oh, it’s telepathy,” she said, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. She felt a surge of warmth through her body, her worries melting away.

Tsueko tightened her grip on his hand.

“What if somebody sees us like this? It’s embarrassing,” her husband said.

He blushed and squeezed her hand back. They walked out of the station hand in hand.

## **Blue Roses**

**by Patrick McDow**



Patrick McDow 2006

**america**

---

**by Kevin Travis Wright**

america, five feet from my front porch  
tortured with cement, changing lanes and electrical wire,  
her twinkling lights and bellowing clouds,  
her expression never changes,  
her robe gently open, an easy conquest made  
by shaking hands and pats on the back.

america, lightheaded, stumbling through her,  
fawning and intimidating, New York a vest i  
cannot wear, Chicago in the pocket, Los Angeles admiring a photograph  
in the daily rag.

america, the West, bring ID and sunglasses,  
we've run out of meaning for what it all meant,  
get your feet wet, glitter goes a long way, laconic highway, find a spot,  
grapes and wine, fields with doors propped open and  
salacious markings, not making sense, eyes closed with  
strings that hang from the sky.

america, gravel and spite, hard feelings  
abounding in tiny ruts of cabin wheels, rust on christmas trees,  
bordering neighbors with souls that gape, ferocious beating,  
dreams hung from the orchard tree, staining the ground with boot marks,  
filling with water and nationalist fluid.

america, america, america, wait for it, a star draping the star line,  
parents on the sideline, the revoked newspaper, the cracked windshield,  
missing numbers, post office address, president's day,  
corporate cowboy eating the ice, smiling with mouth closed and crooked teeth.

america, america, america, blue jeans and hairdos,  
fast food temples and washing machines, elevators with buttons and  
a lobby full of leather and smoke and bowel-shaped glasses with lipstick  
on the rim, film the attire, embroidered initials handed down,  
locomotive breath, chugging, splitting the landscape.

america, america, america. five feet from my front porch,  
wheezing on the fumes of boardroom deeds and pulling the covers up.

america, five feet from my front porch.

## **Days**

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**by Juan R. Garcia**

Agua. Its' been many years and a day since my childhood home was thought of. The memories of home sometimes pass like a faint brush of the wind blowing by; the trash collects by the corner very bad. So many memories, they seem now, like dreams of a different life and time; which was meant for someone else. I do not feel sorrow or loss: this life that has chosen me fits well. Not all days are filled with gloom and black as they sometimes may appear, only when it rains. There are days when company is welcomed and shared in the day's pin money, not.

Pin money is hard to come by on some days; the trail is much worn and broken which leads up the hill. It's traveled by those great talents of the future: I am, but a thought and a passing moment of time which fate has stored away for some of us, most never use there keen eye on me. They just pass by. There can be days when the perfect homestead is but a stroll away. As today, I moved into my new home with a most desirable



location and view one could have.

I have a river, which flows south, pillars of gray that sway and moan. But most of all, I have the reinforced jagged mountains to my horizon. There are days when the river is full of life and there are days when the river is void, only the passing of human mementos float by. A color less-than clear as sometimes we search for what is fair, good and important in life. The pillars of gray and stone are monuments outside my home. Never falter, like my childhood home. Planted well into the earth, little moves pass these pillars. These have little in comparison to the jagged mountains that shine both in the day and night.

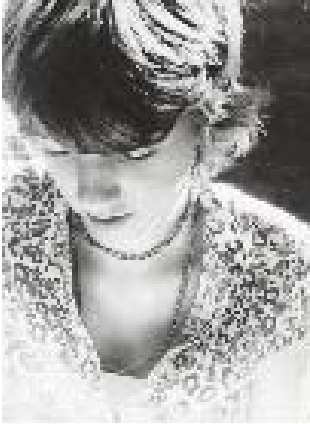
Surround by these majestic mountains, I sometimes wonder of the achievements made of sand and stone, cold to the touch, a beauty caste. Layer upon layer, they forever reach for the sky and cannot touch it. There are no snowcaps, only white bellows of white smoke from the peaks on clear cold, very cold days. I can only imagine how hard life can be from the very

top, looking down. For all there grace, power and distance, I sometimes wonder of walking up those mountains and look down.

Time to bring my thoughts back; it's being a good day today for pin money and like. Better leave now; to my new home, the rain is starting. Tomorrow I will look for a new home with a different view.

**Lucie**  
**by Darcy Rosenberger**

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**Kathryn**  
**by Darcy Rosenberger**

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# **A Tiny Tale Turned Terrible**

**by James Ridgeway**

In the tiny town of Tumbledore  
Lived tiny tumbledorians  
And tiny tumbledorians  
Told tiny little tales  
The tiny little tales they told  
Would grow and grow and grow  
Until they reached the massive size of great big ugly trolls  
The tiny tumbledorians had tiny little hands  
And tiny little feet  
But tiny not was their bellies  
As they always loved to fill it  
With sweet grape jelly

Near the tiny town of Tumbledore lived the silly town of Suplemore  
Where resided the silly suplemorians  
The silly suplemorians are subtle folk and humble folk  
But nevertheless they always enjoy a silly joke  
Silly suplemorians have silly little hands  
And silly little feet  
But silly not was their face as they always found that to be quite a disgrace

Now one day...  
A tiny tumbledorian tiptoed his way to see a silly suplemore  
As he watched over his herd of sissley sized suhdories  
A sissley sized suhdory is not much bigger than a tiny tumbledory  
But any suhdory will always be afraid at the site of a tumbledory  
The tiny tumbledory started tinkering in his head  
How much fun it would be to scare the suhdories red  
But what would he say to the silly suplemore who sleepily watched the herd  
It mattered not to the tiny tumbledory with that be quite assured

## A Tiny Tale Turned Terrible

Seconds later the sissley sized suhdories scattered stampeding the  
sumplemore  
And when he rose what did he see  
But a tiny tumbledore

He asked...  
"Tiny Tumbledory did you see what happened here?"

The tiny tumbledore in his nature began to let out a new creation  
The tallest tale he had told in the history of tiny tumbledorians

He said...  
"My silly sumplemore neighbor  
Yes I saw it all  
And before the sun does fall to night I will unravel it all  
It started with a frisky frocker who chased me into the Frocker Forest  
From this forest I did run into a pack of frocker eating mores  
Now mores to my fortune do not like the taste of a tiny tumbledore  
But then I found my tiny self lost in a not so tiny forest  
Ten terrifying nights did I wander and find myself close by here  
Only again to be chased but this time by green griper gears  
Griper gears are not to fear if you have a pollywhistle somewhere quite near  
But in my pocket there was not  
All I had was a flop of furry fungareers  
So my tiny feet kept running until I reached myself back here  
Where the griper gears were feared off by your sissley sized suhdories  
And now that brings us to the end..."

## A Tiny Tale Turned Terrible

Of my long...  
Terrifying...  
Story"

"But tell me not did you friend why my sissley sized suhdories stampeded!"

"Well it seems upon my arrival they got a wee bit riled  
As if a tiny tumbledore like me might...  
Might...  
Might..."

"Might what?"

"Might scare them!"

"Well my friend it is common knowledge  
Matters not if you are a tumbledore or sumplemore  
Sissley sized suhdories are afraid of tumbledories  
So it seems to me you scared them off!"

"And now tell me...  
Tell me..."  
"Tell you what?"

"I think you are a liar as you tell me this tall tale  
I think you tinkered in your head  
How to make my suhdories spread all over sumplemore  
And more and more do I see to be false as you plea and plea  
For one thing a tiny tumbledore could not escape a frisky frocker

## A Tiny Tale Turned Terrible

Or for that matter a griper gear  
But if you do speak the truth you can pass my test"

"But I do speak the truth"

"I am sure you do  
So we are agreed"

"Any test a silly sumplemore gives I'm sure to do quite well"

"If you say so you tiny tumbledore  
Besides the fact that I watch over the sissley sized suhdories  
I also keep in my stock frisky frockers and griper gears  
So if you speak the truth then those tiny legs better take you far  
Cause I have not fed these creatures since the fifth of march."

"Why that was two weeks ago."

"Yes you are correct and now I will give you a 50 sumplemorian head start."

"How much is a sumplemorian?"

"Well you have lost five now."

Then the tiny tumbledore began to run in panic  
He got much more than he ever thought he would have to manage  
And as I said from the beginning about silly sumplemores  
There is nothing like a silly joke  
To silly up a sumplemore  
Cause you see he had no frisky frockers or griper gears  
They were much too dangerous to keep anywhere near

## **A Tiny Tale Turned Terrible**

But the moral of the story you see

Pertains to everyone

Even you and me

And you might ask why?

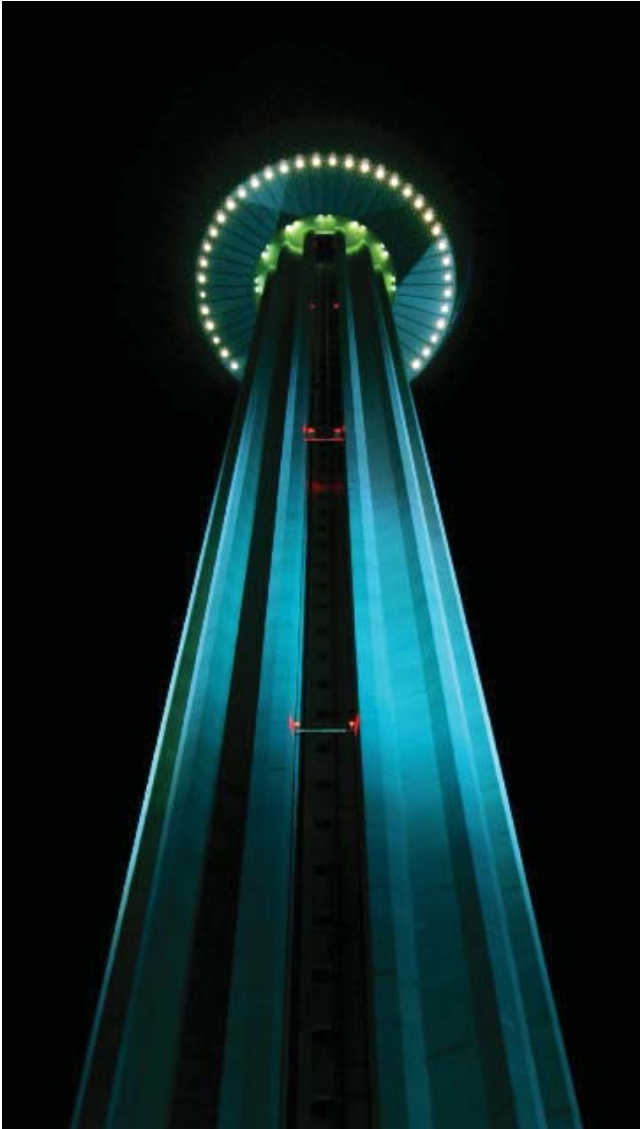
Well because...

A truthful witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies



**Hemisphere**  
**by Lucy Bowen**

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## **Shadow Master**

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**by Leif Behmer**

The caw of the crows echoes through the dusk-fallen ranch as I look around for my companions. Their voices echo as well, but less ominous, their laughter fading. I struggle to reach them before they move on. Rachael is standing at a wooden post watching some horses. She greets me as I approach, but all I can respond with is a queer grin. Her voice is mute to me, but I am glad she is here. Everyone is nearby... except for Amanda. I wonder where she has gone; what has become of her? As I am wondering, leaning against the fence, my eyes begin to pay special attention to the pen. The animals are not moving. Their mouths are slowly chewing, their tails motionless. There is a goat to the left of the horse and a cow to the right. More are hiding behind them, but no matter which way their bodies are positioned, they are always gazing at me. It dawns on me now just how many more animals are watching me from the trees and the bushes. There is no sound; only the crows interrupt the silence, that and the moaning wind. Staring into the eyes of the goat I become entranced. What purpose do they have silently gloating over my misfortune? The forest behind them seems so near. It is imposing its vastness upon me, growing to encumber and consume. Slowly stepping backwards I turn to Rachael. She is gone... along with all of the others, the laughter, and the good times. I almost back step into a broken down shed. It is very dark inside, struggling not to fall in. The shadows are extending themselves further to the east. I turn back to find the animals still focusing on me, the center of their world. I have to leave, but not east to find my friends. Along the dirt road that descends to the west is a small shack. I feel the urge to go there, but I fear such an urge, for it begins to dominate my will. The uncomfortable

stare from the animals frightens me more though. Could something worse happen if I stay? The shadows are becoming further elongated. I see mine merging and unfolding from other shadows amorphously. It has no form but it is full of possibilities. Such possibilities are a looming reminder of what could be lurking within my shadow. The shack beckons me to come and I must answer this call. Somehow my existence depends on it. The only place to run is to the forest... with the animals. Shelter can be found only at the heart of my fear.

As I advance, the sun sets, and I feel as though I have left a piece of me behind with my shadow. While entering through the withered old door, I see that a light has been left on for me, hanging loosely by a wire from the wooden ceiling. To my left is a screen with a reel player on a stool a few feet in front. The reel is blocking my view of the table behind it. Moving around the stool I stumble. GASP! My mouth collapses open, my arms and legs petrified. My eyes squint in pain at this sight as my hands claw at my face. I cannot bare it! Amanda is lying on the wooden table, the brow of her head banded with a metal strip, severed. Cubed pieces of her brain are laid out on the cutting board beside her. Like molds of jelly, they are animate, gently jiggling, the pieces of brain capped with bone... pieces of mind. How stiff her face looks, stony cold yet still so pink, her hands sill clenching the sides of the table with a dire grasp, as though it some how could protect her still. Her eyes and teeth are made of pearl. Her mouth is as open as mine, her eyes as wide as my own, expressing a look stripped of all emotion... all but one. I have acquired her look, the look of primal terror. In this

moment presented to me, she has become frozen... forever. But where is the blood; no blood? The reel player already has film in it. Should I play it? Is this the thing that has beckoned me to come here into this nightmare? The arteries in my head pulsate to a thriving beat anticipating my decision. If I am to leave here alive and find that murderer, I must answer its challenge.

She's smiling at me through the screen, laughing in the light of a mid-summer's day. Rachael must have just said something funny. What is she saying? I don't know; their voices are mute to me. They're leaning against the fence of the pen; the animals are dormant. A hand motions from the perspective of the viewer, gesturing Amanda to follow the road down to the shack...! A large black bird, perched above the door, glares at the viewer; but another hand gesture banishes it away. Again, she's smiling at me. DON'T GO!!! But now they're inside, the light of day severed by the closing of the withered door. After walking towards the wooden table, she props herself up, relaxing her legs and feet, swinging them to and fro. The stool and the reel are absent. The camera pans upward revealing a large rusty metal cube hanging from the ceiling above her, sectioned in squares all along its base. I can see it hanging here still, swaying ever so slightly. She still smiles as my vision advances upon her. A hand appears, gesturing for her to lie down on the head rest... she does, not noticing the straps the hands pull from under the table. She closes her eyes as if to fall asleep, expecting sweet dreams, until she tries to move. I can see her face upside down as the metal band secures her head. Get them off! GET THEM OFF!!! The camera zooms into her face as she bites her bottom

lip. Shortly after, she assumes her present figure.

I stumble backwards into the next room, falling down to the sensation of my own brain being diced to pieces. I strain my neck trying to launch the terror out my throat, but I can not scream. My voice is mute. Sweat fills the cracks in my face as I collapse onto the floor, my existence fading.

Breathing... Finally... Breathing...

I find myself sprawled upon the dirt road descending towards the shack. I stand. It is nighttime, and the animals are gone. Here I am among the shadows looking towards the shack, but it no longer beckons... it dares. My time has come, at last. The wind whirrs around me as I put my hands in my pockets. There is no moon, no caw. The clouds have kept them out of this; now the shadows are complete. Slowly I approach, unsure as to what awaits me. Only the final challenge remains, That is all I know. How was the trap received by that villain? While entering though the withered old door, I see that the light has not been left on for me. Amanda and the reel are gone, their purpose served. The room is full of emptiness. The clouds strike the ground outside. This is how they clap and cheer. A board creaks; I turn abruptly, gazing towards the back room. There is a window there letting in a meager illumination. Carefully I advance but now... GASP! I can feel it's getting nearer. Images becoming clearer...! In between the flashes of light there's something in my sight! The eyes are wide, the face is cracked at the seems with blood, and the pearly teeth are gnashing.

## **Shadow Master**

---

This is Amanda's murder. It is I, the "Me" that I struggle with, the "Me" that has brought me here, the "Me" who has challenged me. So the same are we but in appearance alone. Lurking as he has been in my shadow, I only realize too late what to do. So emblazoned with rage am I, but this rage undoes me... only makes my head... hurt more furiously. Cracking down, I'm weak. Pounding, my head is pounding. Throat... throbbing, knees... cannot support this pain. The light... crashing behind me. The light... the light! I WILL NOT GO GENTLY...!!! COUGH, GASP! Who are the clouds cheering for?! The stronger...

"It" tries to attack but I stuck it already, and my hit... was critical. The head leans down, and the body sinks like a ship down towards a bottomless ocean, dank and amorphous. Putting my hand on the shoulder, I force "It" down. No, It isn't blood, it's sweat. There couldn't possibly be REAL blood. The clouds strike one final time, and it is over. I leave "It" lying sprawled upon the ground, defeated, a mind spliced. Opening the front door, I WILL all of the shadows inside as the sun dawns in the east. I turn to lock the door. At last, now The World is MINE!!!

The shadows are formidable, always there to dampen your view and trick your perceptions of the world. If left untamed, they will devour you. They were too much for "It" to contend with. Encumbered by the feebleness of the "thing", I still arose to become master of the shadows. The wind will answer to my calls, the forests will wane at my presence, the animals will never look at me the same, and the black birds will never caw at me again. My voice reverberates, echoing across The World, "I AM THE SHADOW MASTER!!!"

**No Words**  

---

**by Andrea Sanders**

My mouth opens  
Not a sound comes out  
My eyes are the ones speaking  
Words are not needed

No one sees what my eyes are saying  
All carry on without a thought around me  
As if I wasn't even there  
Or if I was a blank space or hole  
That has to be gone around or avoided

Loneliness sets in,  
No one cares, no one even acknowledges me  
I sit and watch  
I sit and ponder why  
What could I have done that was so undeserving?

My voice and thoughts are just like the wind  
being carried from one to another  
without anyone noticing a thing

## **The Texture within my Wallet**

**by Damien West**

My vulnerable condition led me to believe that it would always be there; reliable as the setting sun beaming on the glassy canvas of the ocean. I was confined to this place and it was a glorious sight in my lonely state of being. For many it's convenient structure was used to forget about the challenges that stood before them. The familiar smell would often give individuals the precious thoughts of gifts that would soon be in their grasp. One touch wasn't always the same but reflected the journey in which my friend had taken. A clear untarnished image revealed that it was not used very often and had no cuts that would distort the picture. A thousand wrinkles would be evidence that it had many homes in which it lived. The truth was simply that it never mattered very much to anyone. In the eyes of most there was something about a fresh evergreen piece of paper that had the power to purchase materialistic dreams, but it was really all the same. The paper itself was the first knight that would lead the cavalry in the battles of illusions. This was an epic struggle that often matched people against one another to achieve the ultimate form of vanity. I guess the disturbing truth was that the piece of paper wasn't the thing they treasured most, but it was simply a necessary gateway in escaping reality. It would have the ability to lead them to a place that could free them of their oppressed mindset. My friend was only a superficial pawn to them, but to me it was someone that would be there. An individual that the world fails to see before their eyes because they are trapped beneath a mirage of happiness. I also underestimated my dear friend and missed the chance to enjoy the importance of life. I simply believed that it would always be there and keep me company, but it vanished in matter of days.



**Universal Youth**  
**by John Warner**

---

When I was young  
I had a ten-speed  
bike with gelatin  
gears –

I peddled at night  
fright-ful of the  
ghastly Gemini.

That terrible gazette  
Which gave me knowledge  
of Pollux and Castor.

**Leech-like Life**

---

Live a leech-like life –  
at the bottom of a pond.

Where thousands of three-pronged fish  
hooks make entangled cities...

at the bottom of a pond.

Mangled Brazilian pond, where waitresses  
serve to the jut.

Living long at the bottom of the pond,  
I am Irving Laglian.

**Kindred Spirit**  
**by Rich Levy**

---

I like this time of night  
when everyone else is asleep or  
    fidgeting  
and I realize my mother liked it too.

She was always awake  
when we drifted off  
in that shoebox of a house,  
my father snorting like  
    a hooked fish  
(the Greatest Generation vs. the  
    unconscious),  
my sister laughing and shifting  
on her narrow bed.

I could hear mother's bathwater running,  
her footsteps in the hall  
her sigh as she lowered  
    into the tub,

could see a sliver of light beneath  
    my door  
before I fell into dreams.  
She's dead now, but wasn't this  
    comforting?

And aren't I comforting others too  
as I cruise the house,  
locking doors, wiping countertops,  
putting away the last of the bread  
and the milk,  
trading sleep for a swept floor  
and a few  
minutes among the dozing, like a self-  
conscious apple in the fridge?

These nocturnal gambols  
are a secret I shared with  
my mother  
only in the solitude of memory,  
and now I'm sharing it with you.

**THAT**

---

**EWA LIPSKA**

**Translated by Robin Davidson  
and Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska**

We sit, I, a cat and nanny  
on the bus of a photo album.

Rain in sepia outside the window.

A river flows into us.  
An undertow of pain.

A pale Jesus in the picture.  
A sled propped against the wall.

I am a worshipper of coniferous time  
and a devout tawny owl  
prays for nanny.

*From Ja. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003*

Ewa Lipska was born in Kraków in the Polish People's Republic in 1945. She studied painting and art history at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts and has published fourteen volumes of poetry since 1967. She interrogates social and political issues as a painter might—accumulating dream-like, seemingly incongruous images—with a skeptical surrealism. Much of her work emerges out of the events of World War II and is influenced by the generation of Polish poets born in the 1920s, particularly mentor and friend Wisława Szymborska. Lipska's most recent volumes are 1999, *Sklepy Zoologiczne* (Pet Shops), *Ja(I)*, *Gdzie Indziej* (Somewhere Else), and *Drzaza* (Splinter, 2006).

## MEMORY

---

EWA LIPSKA

Translated by Robin Davidson  
and Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska

The froth of dandelion puffs. Nanny again.  
She still hovers behind me in my poems.  
With Sidol she wipes words. Brass door handles.

Watch out for stairs, put a warm scarf on.

In the mirror a wilderness in a gray coat.  
With threadbare sleeves worn out at the turns.  
A double of your love leaning against the gate.

How can I explain you  
fingerprints on mouths.  
Not everything was said.

And why should it be  
since there is no longer this language.  
No us. No star  
which was on duty.

*From Gdzie Indziej. (Somewhere Else).  
Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005.*

## **BLUE**

**by Betty Vasquez**

---

I heard the cries  
of our unborn child  
but your silence  
drowned him out.

The room filled  
with his absent smell  
and the stench  
of your betrayal

to peek in his bassinet  
As I leaned over  
saw no rising chest

I woke for his three a.m. feeding  
To find my breasts as dry  
As your good bye

I hushed him  
in my rocking arms  
And we glazed over  
To your empty side

Another day  
with no voice  
from you

And he just cries and cries

**Like A Knife**  

---

**by Lee R. Alexander II**

She waits for the train at the station  
Her heart just as ashen as the sky  
Does it hurt sometimes?  
Does the pain cut you down from the inside  
Like a knife?

She walks through the cold of the morning  
just one more face in the crowd

And some days those blue skies return ...  
Most days they're gone

And all she'll tell you is, "Nothing's wrong ..."

She comes home around eight in the evening  
She takes off her coat... and she cries

**Maya's Blood\***  
**by Monica Maza**

---

"Hello?"

"Maya, can you come see me?"

"Are you ok: I ask concerned?"

"Yes, will you come?"

"Of course, I'm on my way."

"Bye."

The tension in Adam's voice was unmistakable. Something is bothering him. He didn't even let me say goodbye before he hung up. As Fate would have it, I have some free time right now, so I actually can drop by his place.

Driving to his side of town, a bad feeling suddenly hits me. Something is not right about this because he never calls me without a reason and certainly not with the command to go see him. That's what it is. His tone of voice made his question sound like a command. How strange. He must be under a lot of stress. At a stoplight, the angle of the last rays of the setting sun temporarily blinds me. Ouch. I close my eyes to let the spots fade and a vision flashes in my mind. I'm standing above a river of blood flowing towards a cliff edge. I gasp as the impatient honking of the car behind me snaps me back to reality. Quickly, I drive through the intersection and continue towards Adam's place.



Looking around, I don't notice anything out the ordinary in Adam's neighborhood. As I pull up to the driveway, I still can't shake off this feeling that something is wrong. I get out of my truck and am halfway to his front door when another vision stops me. Grandma Cuca's worried face. She mouths the word "don't." Standing there, I massage my forehead as the sudden headache the vision brought slowly eases away. Now I know, without a doubt, that something bad is coming. With concern for Adam's safety, I walk towards the backdoor. To my relief, it's locked, so I gently knock before I pick it open. Stepping inside, I notice that all the lights are on in the kitchen.

"Adam?"

I hear footsteps and ten seconds later he walks in. A blank, expressionless face greets me as he stops in the doorway to the kitchen. Reaching for my dagger, I hear a puff of air and feel the burning pain of a needle. I fall to the floor, feeling the drug overpower me. Pain radiates from my left shoulder and with a slow turn of my head, I see a dart. It takes tremendous effort, but I force my right arm to reach for, pull out, and throw it away. I look up at Adam to see that he has not moved and through blurry eyes, I see another person appear beside him. My heart leaps into my throat. No... Hearing footsteps rapidly close in around her, Maya passes out.

...Pain...in shoulders...arms...wrists ...legs...something around my neck... Before I open my eyes, I search my surroundings. A large place and there are many people around me. I try to move but everything is tight. I'm tied up...

"Hello, Maya."

My eyes snap open at the sound of his voice and I experience a short feeling of vertigo. I'm a few feet off the floor and can feel a hard surface against the length of my backside. A stake, how predictable, I think with annoyance smelling the wood. Curiously, my arms are tied at 45-degree angles separate from my body, similar to the way a tent's edges would be tied down, because I can feel coarse ropes covering both my hands with constricting force. There are about 50 people in this room, all men and every one of them members of the Warlock Clan. Twenty feet in front of me, I see Adam standing on the right side of their king and both of them are standing between the group and me. Adam remains silent with that same expressionless face.

"Adam—"

"Don't waste your time, Maya. He can't hear you and he won't respond to anyone's voice except mine," he proudly states.

"I guess there's no point in me talking," I reply sarcastically.

"I'm glad you're awake. I wouldn't want you to miss out on anything. I have to admit I find your power very impressive, Maya. I thought you would be completely vulnerable unconscious, but I was wrong." The admiration in their king's voice makes me curious.

"What do you mean, Dominic?"

"Once the sedative took effect, there were plenty of my subjects who desired a taste of your charms. I wasn't about to stop my men from taking the pleasure of a woman they wanted, but every time they got near you, they were burned by an invisible fire."

"That's impossible," I say quietly.

"I thought it was, until you proved that limitation wrong."

"No one can use their power to protect themselves when they're unconscious," I state matter-of-factly.

"Yes. We all know that, but you can. I'd like to know how you're able to do it, but I know you'll never voluntarily reveal your secret," he says playfully.

"I can't tell you something I don't know."

"Your stubbornness is out of place, Maya. You are in no position to play games with me. Remember, I have your friend Adam here," he warns as he places a hand on Adam's shoulder. A few in the crowd snicker, so I take a second to focus and try to reach Adam. Can you hear me? All I can hear is an echo of my own thought like the echo in an underground cave. I don't even sense the usual affection he carries for me while he's in this state. It seems Dominic's spell on him does not allow Adam to respond to me telepathically, if I'm even getting to him at all.

Anger wells up and I can't stop myself from warning, "Don't hurt him. This is between us."

He smirks, "It took us a long time to find him, but it paid off." Then he smiles darkly, "Adam is an easy pawn to control."

"I'm surprised you needed help from a human, Dominic."

I say returning his smile.

A ball of fire appears in his free hand and he places it in front of Adam's face, making it float about a foot away from his nose.

With a playful wink at me, Dominic says, "Adam, reach out and touch that."

"Adam, don't!"

I watch horrified as Adam, with the obedience of a child, lifts his hand and places his fingertips along the fire's edge without crying out or even blinking.

"That's enough," Dominic commands as he grabs Adam's hand and pulls it away from the ball of fire. Adam remains completely docile as Dominic places his hand back at his side.

"You sick bastard."

"Look, Maya... I see blisters," he replies in mock concern while lifting Adam's hand to show me. It's not as bad as it could've been, I think relieved. Not quite second-degree burns, but I'll have to get him to the Healer.

"Don't provoke me, Maya," he states venomously. His eyes shine, his growing power causes them to become glassy, as he wags, "I care nothing for your friend's life, but I would enjoy seeing the look on your face as I kill him slowly."

"What do you want?"

He snaps his fingers and a man dressed in a dark red robe appears carrying a large metal bowl. The man silently walks up to me and stops below my left arm while another red robed

man appears carrying a large bowl, but this one stops under my right arm. The anticipation of the room grows thicker as Dominic turns to face the crowd.

"Adam will now do what we have been trying to do for the last 24 years. He is going to kill our most feared enemy," he boldly declares.

When Dominic turns around, the metal of a long serrated dagger shines in his hand. Looking into Adam's eyes, I try to reach him, Adam, don't listen to him. He is forcing you to do evil. If you don't fight back, you will have my death on your conscience for the rest of your life. I know there's a part of you that doesn't want to do this. The Adam I know is not a murderer. Dominic places the dagger in front of him and commands, "Take it, Adam. You are to use it to cut her." Adam grabs the dagger and holds my gaze as he slowly walks towards me. Once Adam is close enough to me, Dominic smiles, triumph in his eyes, and tells him, "Begin with her left wrist, Adam."

Adam, don't—

The sting of searing fire makes me gasp as warmth flows over my left hand. Please give me the strength to help Adam break the spell. I only need a few minutes so that he can be free. I feel the awe of the group and they clap in recognition of their king's power. I feel a little lightheaded as I try to connect with Adam. You have to be strong now and fight against the hold on you. It's not too late ... Hearing the trickle of my blood into that bowl makes my stomach churn. God, please protect Bella and the rest of my family from these people. I ask that you

## Maya's Blood\*

---

forgive Adam. I feel very drowsy but fight to keep my eyes open. Dominic walks forward and stands beside Adam below me. His presence is like a plague, consuming all surrounding life. I can't stand the sight of him that close to Adam. Dominic tells him, "Good job," and places his hand on Adam's shoulder again. Then he looks up at me and boasts, "What do you think, Maya? We have finally captured you and will take the power of your blood all because the man who loves you helped us." He laughs as he turns to face his men. "The unattainable Maya," he announces loudly, "pride of the Gifted." Everyone laughs manically and my rage grows closer to the brink.

Obiivion is very close now and it's harder for me to stay awake, but I hear Dominic's voice projecting throughout the room. "To show our appreciation, I will give Adam the honor of taking the first sip of Maya's power." Then in a lower voice I hear him say, "Adam, taste the power and be one of us." Through partly closed eyes, I see the bowl lifted up and Adam's head tilt forward. My mind explodes with his memories as the link saps the last of my strength. I forgive you, Adam... The entire room cheered ecstatically as Maya's eyes shut in unconsciousness and her head leaned to the side. During the celebrating, no one witnessed how every straight pin simultaneously dislodged and floated an inch away from Maya's skin before falling to the ground. Not even the robed men next to her noticed, since the sight of her blood has kept them hypnotized with desire.

...Noise...crowd cheering... Adam blinked and suddenly everything came into focus. There's a taste of copper on his

tongue ...blood? The metal bowl in front of him has strange carvings all over it and is held by a man in a red robe. He notices the blood in it and follows the fast trickle up with his eyes to the arm, then finally sees the face of a woman and to his horror recognizes Maya. Dominic raises his arms and the entire room is instantly silent. "Now we shall take the rest of her power and hold a great toast," he jokingly announces. The laughing in the crowd causes Adam's horror to turn into shock. Dominic turns around to face Adam's back and says, "Cut her right wrist, Adam." No one in the crowd notices the change in Adam, nor do they see him drop the dagger. Only the robed man closest to him notices and is about to call out to Dominic when a loud explosion stops him.

Suddenly, many people are crashing in through the windows interrupting the ceremony. The robed man with the blood-filled bowl runs off as his comrades begin fighting the intruders. The members of the Warlock Clan throw orbs of flame at the incoming warriors, but their fire either bounces off their psychic shields or is engulfed by the returning masses of energy that the intruders aim at them. Adam is in shock and can only stand there staring at Maya. The leader of the Gifted suddenly notices a stake in the front of the room, "Maya," he exclaims in shock, almost getting his arm slashed by a blow. He quickly knocks out the one he's fighting with a blast of psychic energy and runs towards her. Who is that standing next to her? He sees a man bend down and when he stands up again there is a long dagger in his hand. He runs faster and tackles Adam to the ground using his telekinetic power to remove the dagger from his

grip. Pinning Adam down with one hand while holding a sword against his throat, he ominously states, "You will not touch her."

"She needs to be cut down. She's lost a lot of blood,"

Adam protests.

Jack looks up at Maya, releases Adam, and quickly cuts the ropes, starting with her left arm and working his way to the right arm, neck, legs, and torso. Maya falls into Jack's arms as Adam rips a piece of cloth from his shirt to stop her bleeding.

"Did they get her blood," Jack demands.

"Yes, there's a man in a red robe," Adam replies frantically. "He has a bowl. .." Jack interrupts him by transferring Maya from his arms to Adam's, "Here, get her out. I'll take care of him."

Adam runs out with Maya as Jack sets fire to her blood that is sprinkled on the ground. Telepathically to his group, he announces, Find the red robed man. He has Maya's blood. The fighting becomes fiercer as his warriors search for him. Jack projects his mind, seeking the man from Adam's memory. There's a basement. He rushes through the mass of fighting towards a door near a corner.

Jack breaks through it and a hallway of darkness is before him. He can feel the man's essence grow stronger as he runs through this slanted hallway. A faint glow bounces up ahead. A candle? Suddenly the glow gets brighter and a light breeze is the only warning before Jack ducks to miss being hit by a huge ball of flame. You can't stop me, a male voice roars in his head. Jack falls to the ground, grabbing his head, as the



force of the thought pierces his mind, causing him to tremble as the pain radiates throughout every nerve in his body. Taking deep breaths, he fights the urge to pass out and the feeling of dread that threaten to envelope him. Oh no, he's tasted her blood ...

Meanwhile, there is an eerie quiet upstairs since some of the men on both sides are either passed out or dead from the powerful thought that swept through the room.

*\*Excerpt/rom an upcoming book*

# **Thing-a-ma-doo**

---

**by James Ridgway**

The finicky ol' fellow  
Had finished at last  
As quick as lighting  
The present turned to past  
Sweated and toiled for many a year  
But quite more conventional  
Than the jigga-moo-mare  
Faster and lighter it could be found at that  
Sleeker and smoother than the  
Mechanically synchronized-doo-dat  
Stronger than a gabble of ruffian rackoneers  
Even more powerful than  
Ten thousand one hundred and seventy two  
Perturbed polar bears

Never before seen  
Or for that matter dreamed  
Bright with colors and  
Gadgets galore  
It had five handles  
A small window  
And door  
Buttons and levers  
With seventeen knobs  
Clockwork precision  
And a very balanced be-bob  
The things it could do seemed never to end  
Just ask it one time  
And never ask again  
It could wash the dishes

## Thing-a-ma-doo

Do them twice  
It could change your oil  
While it cooked you fried rice  
It would paint your house  
In the most fanciful way  
And not forget your laundry  
In the very same day  
Yet nothing seemed flawed  
Out of sort or misplaced  
Only time would unveil the  
Contraptions dark and dire fate

The town's people cheered  
And shouted hurray  
As this amazing machine  
Took all their chores away  
And not longer after  
It had coined a name

The Thing-a-ma-doo  
The thing that could do  
Quite possibly anything at all you wished it to

But as the days went by  
And turned into weeks  
The townspeople found  
They themselves had nothing to do  
Many became lazy  
With so much time at hand  
Many became broke

## **Thing-a-ma-doo**

---

With no sign of business demand  
So the concerned collected  
They fanned a group  
The agenda was clear  
The finicky ol' fellow  
Simply must adhere  
They would tell him once  
And say it soft  
The thing-a-ma-doo has run its course  
But now it must be shut off

Yet when they told him  
The man tried to explain  
In his old age he had forgotten one thing  
In his excitement to finish at last  
The poor old man had forgot to attach  
Between buttons and levers and  
Handles and knobs  
And not to forget the very balanced be-bob  
Never did it cross the old mans mind to install  
Which looking back now seems a dastardly flaw  
Incredibly easy  
It would have been such a cinch  
If only he remembered to give the machine  
A simple off switch

## **Thing-a-ma-doo**

---

One after one  
The townspeople moved  
Taking with them a life lesson or two  
Gidgets and Gizmos  
And Thing-a-ma-doos  
May make life seem simpler in lieu  
But a person needs purpose  
Just something to do  
Don't ever let some gadget  
Obscure this view  
Doing what you love in life  
Will always be purpose enough

**Skyler Flute Boy**  

---

**by Darcy Rosenberger**

