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ANGLE'S HOME GROWN AWARDS

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SECOND PLACE KEVIN MILLER . . . SEVERAL HABITS OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BREAKERUPPERS
THIRD PLACE MICHELLE GIRARDI . . . PIECES OF YOU
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ART PICKS

ART AWARD JOE BOVET . . . SUMMER AT THE LAKE: PULTNEYVILLE, NY
FACULTY ART AWARD MARK JACOBS . . . PORTRAIT OF A LADY

ALEXIS SPECK
GEORGE CASSIDY PAYNE

SUBCONSCIOUS KISSES

I
writing this now
in my 92, rusted tomato red, geo prism
grey shadows
bounce
like ensnared cockroaches
swarming inside a thousand human lips
bounce
on vinyl elephant hide, druid knots, greek alphabet
unthawed splinters in a crown of thorns,
wishes dropped from a puddle sky
& everyday is stormy monday
& Perry Cuomo's on the radio
singing "magic moments"
kind of grey

II
sunlight glowing like silver fire
igniting the brass body of my pen
the dashboard grey as gorilla palms
wrigley wrappers, burdocks, helicopter seeds,
sativa stems and rugby beads
strands of hair white as albacore
& held by a nostalgic maple sap

III
last night I kissed you
I began to nibble on your left ear
I moved your sterling amber
hooped anniversary earring
around the surface of my sneaking tongue
wet with embarrassment
& cowering from the omniscient rule
of the brain.
yes, my whole body kissed yours
my fingertips pulled your breast
through mine.
like a warm eclipse
my thighs climbed over yours
I kissed you with dormant affection
Then rolled over

IV
writing this now
grey morning no longer sounds the same
it no longer has the same crisp potential
I think out loud
& my words are loud
In the softness of the car
I feel as if I am bashing them
against the walls
like mice, their vacant skulls
leave egg yolk stains
grey and purple chicken wing veins

V
grey like shaman’s peace
a forest mother after childbirth
clinging to her crying, steaming
charcoal baby
accepting God’s due degree
kind of grey

VI
my mother has taught
that every action has a reaction
a poem should too.
I say to you—
Grey—you have no spine
you killed my mother’s first love
you gave no explanation
you were not condemned to die
for eye for an eye
Is our own device
God says what I provide
Is proper
& will suffice

VII
In afternoon’s first terrified breath
grey becomes just a color
Unable to exist on its own
KEVIN MILLER

SEVERAL HABITS OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BREAKERUPPERS

She takes in a deep breath, and subsequently sucks the remaining air right out of the room; like a toy soldier, her wind up key has already been turned, and she proceeds to recount one of those monotonous stories that makes a man wish he were temporarily deaf. After a long day at work, with his eyes glazing over faster than a doughnut, the man wonders why his girlfriend can not be quiet for at least five minutes.

You can be nice, or honest, or mean; however, with any path taken, it's usually never easy to end a relationship, but breaking up can be creative: men are from Mars and women are . . . about to learn ingenious new ways to be dumped.

To creatively dump someone, you must pioneer new techniques in the field of relationship ending—make her dump you. If your girlfriend is the kind of person who might stalk you, or bad mouth you, or swear off men by joining a convent because you dumped her, then this is the option to pursue. Several approaches are at your disposal, and each one is as easy as the next. In fact, the lazier you behave, the better. First, just try to be yourself; it might be surprising how disillusioned she is by the real you. Furthermore, behind your façade of new-age sensitivity, the true video game addict, sex obsessed porn enthusiast, belching, expletive user you are, will undoubtedly have her running for the hills.

Showing your true colors is not always enough to be dumped; sometimes it's necessary to expedite the process by embellishing your foibles. For example, skip showers, and don't brush your teeth. Stare at other women, or better yet, flirt with them. Pick your nose or hack loogey. Make your girlfriend pay for dinner, and under no circumstances should you open a door for her. Acting the part of vulgar slob is simple and effective; if your girlfriend still hangs around, she's either crazy or really enamored with you; move to plan B.

For those of you who aren't confrontation phobic, I suggest initiating the break up yourself, but do it creatively, and only when you are entangled in an ugly relationship befitting a little nastiness. Otherwise, take the vanilla approach. You know the one that goes, "It's me, it's not you. I'm at a non-committed point in life." Letting her down easy is safe, and time tested, but it's boring; you need to be imaginative; you need to be the pioneer-breakerupper blazing new trails.

Infusing a little irony into the break up demonstrates originality, spitefulness, and sardonic wit. For instance, a frequent complaint about men is they are not romantic enough; alright, if it's romance she wants, then romance she shall receive. First, consider the faux proposal break up. And yes, it's as cold as it sounds. Invite the
calculating, gold digger over for a candlelight dinner, and tell her a “Joe Millionaire” style
inheritance story, insinuating tremendous wealth has been acquired, or mention a sizeable
pay raise. When her money-hungry appetite is wet, crouch down on one knee, and say,
“Hunny will you break up with me.”

William Shakespeare wrote creative, ironic, often romantic literature, but he
never offered advice on dumping; yet, you can still borrow from Romeo and Juliet. The
balcony scene where Romeo professes his undying devotion to Juliet is perfect to rip-off;
however, a new twist will be added for your purposes. Nearing your girlfriend’s second
floor bedroom window in the moonlit darkness, take another swig of Jack Daniel’s,
-compose your thoughts, and call out to her. If she happens to respond to your drunken
rumblings, (insert your name here) where for art thou (insert your name here), profess
your undying resentment for her and walk away feeling confident she’ll never speak to
you again. Although, you’ll probably look like a jackass.

Involving her friends in the break up is no problem. In this case, throw her a
surprise party complete with friends, co-workers, and a cake. It will be advantageous to
cut the cake (obviously, with a knife) ahead of the party, and avoid using candles because
she’ll be searching for weapons later. I guarantee. Leaping out from behind the furniture,
yell “surprise” like everyone else, except include the part about breaking up, and make a
dash for the exits before the crowd realizes what happened.

Symbolism is an ingenious way to hint at a possible break up. Taking your
girlfriend to a place symbolizing the status of your relationship, a dumpster for example,
can lend subtle hints. Moreover, when she’s begging to go to that stupid 1950’s diner in
the mall for third time in a week, take her and buy a banana split. Another dilemma
plaguing relationships is sexual unfaithfulness. If you catch your girlfriend cheating on
you, resist the temptation of calling her the awful little word that starts with W and rhymes
with chore. Instead, buy her an ultra short mini-skirt, good street walking boots, and a
push up bra, and tell her if she’s going to be in that line of work she has to wear the
appropriate uniform.

You have so many options, but only so many girlfriends to dump; make them
count. If your girlfriend is insanely boring, let her know you’ve found someone with a
better personality, then introduce her to your new life size blow-up doll. On the other
hand, if your girlfriend criticizes you incessantly about your unkempt appearance, attend
the break up session with a laser pointer. Like the “Seinfeld” episode where
Elaine’s boyfriend tells her she has a big head, don’t let your girlfriend leave without
being slightly paranoid about her various flaws.

Annoying laughs, bad communication, divergent interests, wandering eyes—are
a few motives couples cite for breaking up. Whatever the reason, I do not condone any
of the behaviors mentioned in the essay; nevertheless, they are entertaining to ponder.
Take a deep breath, suck the air out of the room, and let the dumping begin.
When you leave
the room,
I am left alone
in a world of wonder—
in a museum dedicated to you—
Scattered change on your desk,
the silver watch on your dresser,
khaki and denim hung neatly, upside-down,
next to shirts too big for me that would,
should I bury my face in them,
fill my body with the sweet, simple
smell of you—
But I do not wish to disturb the display—
Just as velvet ropes once dissuaded me
from touching ancient arrowheads or
effigies of Neanderthals,
my awe and reverence for those things that are
the daily life around you—
the pieces of you—
won’t allow me to risk
blemishing your perfection.

And as I stare at the items on your shelf—
Mentadent, Shout Spray and Wash, Scope—
I am overcome, thinking,
*These are yours, the things you see everyday, the things you touch.*
And now I am an anthropologist, an observer,
wondering what you were thinking as you bought them,
how often you really use Shout on your clothes.
And it amazes me that when you stood
in some drug store or supermarket and considered
buying toothpaste—
maybe looking for a sale—
you weren’t thinking of me.
You were unaware that I existed, hundreds of miles away—
and at that moment, maybe I was buying socks or soap
or watching a movie, or writing a poem, just as unaware of you—
But your trip to the store was just another
action that lead to our eventual and powerful
intersection in our formerly separate lives.

You had no idea
while casually placing items in a plastic basket—
probably thinking of your week at work, a friend you would see that night,
or trying to avoid the stock clerk kneeling beside you—
that one day I would be staring
at that Scope bottle as if it were a treasured jewel or artifact,
a piece of you, and now, somehow—
through the twists and magic of fate and fortune and love—
find a piece of me.
SHARI ALLEN

ABOVE YOU

The main reason
It's dangerous that I'm
Above you is:
  My instincts are
  Out of control
  Animalistic
  Beyond constraints
  Hungering, thirsting
  And listening for you
  Preoccupying my mind.

It fades . . .
You pass smiling, eyeing
Unavoiding, undenyng.
I feast on your face
In the daylight of your stride
Catching your essence
Noble, upright
A free man of the Birch.

I want to know your
Lower quarters
Browse your
Bookshelves
Open your refrigerator
And bounce on your bed.

I want to
Invite you upstairs
To show you
How hot it gets
How it sounds when
Your door closes
How you've been
Inside this room
A hundred times
An out of body experience
A talking head
A suit
Job related.
Stifling my drives
With confusion.
Unstirred
Yet distracted.
I tune in at night
And place your name in my
“God take it away” jar
Ten feet above
Your dreams.
MEGAN E. HERRMAN

THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME
AFTER AMAZING GRACE

I lie face up in bed, stare
at wooden ceiling beams—wait
for sleep.

Dangle my arm towards the floor,
reach for my yellow Lab Grace.

Wanting furry warmth to soothe me, lull me.
Wonder, what would it be like
to sleep the sleep of Grace?
Solid, sound, content.

Moonlight seeps through the bedroom window,
Falls luminous onto Grace.

Amazed, I watch her feet take off as the
evening air stirs. She stretches,
seeks adventure, dreams of
my voice saying her favorite words:
Car Ride.

In the darkness
her paws move methodically toward
dandelion fields. She snorts happily,
flops earthbound,
makes puppy angels
in the fresh mowed grass.
ANAI S REN T A S

TI DI ME CORAZON

Te di me corazon y entorno me distes nada,
Solo un lugar junto a ti en tu cama.
Entre tus sabanas siento el calor de tu cuerpo cuando te roso,
Pero tu corazon frío como el hielo, vacío como un foso.

Siento los palpidos de tu corazon al inclinarme sobre tu pecho,
Oigo tus susperos, tan hondos tan estrechos.
Pero aun siento que te di mi corazon y que entorno me distes nada,
Solo un lugar junto a ti en tu cama.

Tus miradas son tan dulces, tan tiernas, tan amorosas.
Pero tus palabras damnificantes, fatales, venenosas.
Y me pregunto, si yo te di mi corazon, porque entorno me distes nada,
Solo un lugar junto a ti en tu cama.

I GAVE YOU MY HEART

TRANSLATION

I gave to you my heart, and in return you gave me nothing,
Only a place beside you in your bed.
Between your blankets I feel the warmth of your skin as I touch you,
But your heart is cold as ice, empty as a ditch.

I feel your heart palpitating as I lean over your chest,
I hear your breaths, so deep, so long.
Yet I feel that I gave you my heart, and in return you gave me nothing,
Only a place beside you in your bed.

Your looks are so sweet, so tender, so loving,
But your words are damaging, fatal, poisonous.
And I ask myself, if I gave you my heart, why in return did you gave me nothing,
Only a place beside you in your bed?
I have dreamed
Not wanting to wake
And end the storyline

I have dreamed
Of meeting by mailboxes
Exchanges
Knowing you

I have dreamed
Torturous
Addictive dreams
Waking with exhale
Hoping to return

I have dreamed
Your disloyalties
Wary the Ides of March
Treating you the backstabber
Responsible for my
Subconscious archives

I have dreamed
Lands away
Disconnected
Discontinued
Dissed

I have dreamed
Loving sleep
Momentarily
Catching death

I have left
My dreams
To live visions
I have searched
Your eyes
With dreams.
MICHELLE GIRARDI

ONE LINE

She left it sitting on the counter in her tiny bathroom, under the severe glow of the buzzing fluorescent light and reentered her room to find Chris sitting on her purple and blue bedspread, wringing his hands anxiously in his lap.

Neither of them made eye contact, which allowed her eyes to wander slowly across the posters hanging on her pale green cinder block walls as if seeing them for the first time. Please one line. Please one line, she thought.

Eventually, her eyes guided her back to Chris, who was staring at the floor. Knowing he was a part of this, she went to him and touched his knee. His face didn’t flinch, and his expression remained hard as if he couldn’t feel her fingertips. Concerned, she reached with her other hand to separate and comfort his, both hot and red with his unconscious rubbing. He ceased his wringing, yet his hand hung limply in hers as if she were touching someone asleep or in a coma. His gaze shifted to the poster on the wall. Love is only blind until you open your eyes. She could tell from the unfamiliar vacancy in his eyes that he wasn’t really reading it.

She thought of the day she met him, how he had asked her for a piece of paper in American Romantics, and how she’d handed it to him without looking at him, busy concentrating on the Melville lecture. At the end of class, he casually dropped the folded paper on her desk as he left the room. His name. A phone number.

She’d never dated much in high school. She had intended on calling the number and telling him how insulted she was at his pathetic and immature approach to ask her out. When he answered the phone and heard her say his name, she could sense a nervous quiver enter his voice. His pitch raised an octave, and he gave an enthusiastic greeting. No one had ever sounded so happy to hear from her before. For the first time, she found excitement and surprise rendering her speechless. She now understood why her roommate, whom she secretly made fun of, called her boyfriend at least three times a night. It was nice to know that just the sound of her voice could make someone else excited. His affection intrigued her. She agreed to meet him that weekend.

Touching her lips where she had kissed his cheek the night after their date, she felt herself changing into a person in love. Lying in bed, she tried to remember and hold in her nostrils the way his neck smelled—sugary and salty at the same time—when he put his arm around her, the way his eyes always focused directly on hers when he spoke about literature, and the way his forearms flexed as he wrote her number on a napkin.

For the next three years, she’d spent nearly every day with him. Studying.
Watching independent films with her head on his shoulder. Watching him play soccer. Listening to his dreams and aspirations. I’m going to be as big as Hemmingway or Eliot one day, he had said. I’ll be published by the time I’m twenty-four, I know it. I’ll be a college professor and then travel all over the country and the world to give readings and sign books. I’ll be a guest on Larry King and maybe I’ll even get to stay at the White House. Wouldn’t that be great? I’ll be the special guest of the President. We’ll get to have dinner with him and you can talk to the first lady and everything.

Now, all she wanted was for him to look at her and reassure her that everything was going to be fine. It’ll be one line, baby, and I’ll take care of you forever. Why wouldn’t he say it?

When it was time, she walked toward the bathroom alone, her eyes squeezed shut. This was it. She took a deep breath and stepped inside, looking down quickly to get it over with. Please one line. Please.

Back in the room, he picked her up and twirled her around, laughing and smiling. Thank God, baby. It was one line, and now nothing has to change. From now on, we’ll just be more careful. I know exactly what I want. The summer after I graduate, Australia. Then graduate school in Europe. Then back to Boston to teach and write. And, of course, you’ll come with me. We’ll get married as soon as I get my PhD.

He held her close to him. She felt her heart beating against his, filling the silent spaces between his steady thumps. Despite his somber mood all afternoon, she was surprised that even after enduring this experience together, their rhythms weren’t syncopated. She swallowed hard and took in the salty-sugary smell one last time. Her eyes were beginning to blur with the strange, salty, stinging tears of loss, yet she could still read the delicate script on the wall. Love is only blind until you open your eyes.
Flight of Spring

John Karowski
Photograph

Off the Coast of Oregon

Mindae M. Kadous
ART GALLERY

Photograph  Summer at the Lake: Pultneyville, NY  Joe Bovet
JODI ROWLAND

PEARLS
FIRST LINE FROM THE WOMAN WARRIOR BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

Pearls are bone marrow; pearls come from oysters. Pearls are the essential component of structure. They are graceful and pure, elegant and rich in color. As a young girl, I stood in front of my mirror and dreamed of owning a pearl necklace with a bracelet and earrings to match. I had my ears pierced when I turned five. Grown up ladies, sophisticated ones wore pearl necklaces. I wanted what they had. I didn’t dress up often. Instead I imagined what it would be like to be a princess, a queen, or a beautiful woman. I thought pearls came with the job, a sort of initiation to being beautiful. Eventually my pearls changed to other things I desired: make-up, clothes, a tiny waist. These pearls began to posses me and I tried to function with the grief, hurt, and anger they caused. I was standing on a structure of pearls that wobbled and fell. Now I’ve learned to use my pearls wisely. I no longer imagine I wear them, or stand on them for support. Pearls are my bone marrow; they make up my insides. I come from oysters.

SARA CAVANAUGH

ANOREXIA

Crowded aisles filled with busy shoppers rushing shelves in a local deli.
The glass shines as shoppers glare into the case.
Picking and choosing the flesh they will later devour in their quaint suburban kitchens, where the foundation of their homes are built.

Pointing to a round rump roast asking, “Half a pound please.”
The butcher grabs for the meat, slicing thin yet painful slivers from hips, my thighs and stomach.
Shoppers continue to ask for more.
Staring into the case; wanting more off the bone.
Pointing to the best part, my self-esteem.
Stripping the part that needed the least trimming.
Nodding their heads and smiling at the now pleasing remains of meat properly placed on the shelf of my life.
As the deli closes, I watch the buffer slide across the black and white checkers of the tile floor.
The white paneling that once caged flesh now appears gray and empty as the lights dim and the doors lock.
What once was a body is now a carcass.
Peering from the glass, a sullen face stripped of all flesh.
A body once recognized as a healthy slab of meat is now a single layer of tightly fitted skin surrounding solid bone.
JOLIENNE PLUCKNETTE

MAFIA MEXICAN
FIRST LINE FROM THE PATENTED GATE AND THE MEAN HAMBURGER
BY ROBERT PENN WARREN

You've seen him a thousand times. Well, maybe not a thousand, but most likely every day for as long as you've been working downtown. You notice him, but you really don't notice him. He's there every time you head into the business district. He's like a pocket watch. Each day, arriving at exactly 8:30 a.m. He brings his worn burlap bag, and scuffs down the steps, taking his place on the landing that heads down to the inbound train on the Green subway line.

Today is Monday, and once again, you get your pass out of your pocket and turn the corner to head down the steps. You feel the stagnant, warm air rising up from underground. You feel as if you are breathing in used air. You suffocate as you remember the thoughts of the day ahead. You pass him.

He's hunched over, leaning against the white speckled brick. He is always in the same spot, covering one portion of the violet and black graffiti, so you can't ever make out the entire word. All you see are the first three letters, M-A-F.

He is almost thirty-five; a few faint wrinkles linger near his dark green eyes. His auburn hair hangs down below his eyebrows and over his ears. He wears four hoop earrings in his left ear. His neck is tan, and around it hangs a large beaded hemp necklace. He rarely changes his clothing. His torn, baggy jeans are much too long for his legs, draping over his dark brown sandals. His toes are dirty from the dusty city streets. He wears layers of shirts that claim he attended college or belonged to several organizations. Did he ever attend Boston University? Was he once a hockey player? You wonder about his past. You decide there is no possible way he's lead a normal life. Who would choose life on the street?

There is a quality about him that makes you think he appreciates this life. He doesn't ask for change, or play an instrument. He seems as if he truly enjoys watching people pass him every morning. It seems this might be his hobby. He seems comfortable.

You stride past him each morning caught in your own thoughts, thinking only of the stressful day which lies ahead, hardly noticing him.

Something about his presence each day on the landing forces you to continue toward the train each morning, and not turn around. The train takes you down the right track, to the life you were taught you should have. You are successful, because the train forces you to be. It only moves in one consistent path. Consistency gets it to its final destination. Consistency gets you to your final destination. . .
I have seen her a thousand times on her way to work each morning. I could show her that life shouldn’t be lived by the expectations of others, of society. I could teach her that spontaneity is crucial to her survival. I could make her appreciate all the things in life that she is truly good at. I could help her look deeply into the world around her, and see past her routine. I could teach her to truly see things.

I’ll only be here one more day. Will she notice when I’m gone? She will notice, but not really notice. Does she need to see me in the morning to get on the train? I see how she studies me everyday. I see her face every morning as she rounds the corner. She doesn’t know how much longer she can last in her world. I could’ve had that life, her life. She doesn’t realize that I chose this life. Not out of laziness, but because I refused hers. I refused a predictable life. I refused it all.

You think of him once again as you round the corner to the subway stairs. It is Tuesday, and reaching for your pass, you see the familiar spray paint on the landing wall. A purple word scribbled in cursive and outlined in black, its paint slightly blending together. Its colors so vibrant, you ask yourself why anyone would mind its presence there on the landing. The thick, black paint seems too heavy, and drips partially down the wall. You make out the word “Mafia Mexican,” and wonder where he is. A swirl of dust and bits of papers scuff along the empty space. You continue down the stairs and wait.

You look up to the sound of your train approaching. The syncopation of the rails as the train glides over them leaves a beat in your head. You begin singing a song to yourself. The train rumbles past without you, slowly picking up speed. You close your eyes, and you are happy for the first time.
Born on the same birth date

two separate but so closely related

they form such an innocent pair.

They will never be the same.

Not identical—

probably fraternal.

Each very alike in appearance

having such common features and

perhaps common values?

Sometimes twice as thoughtful yet

sometimes twice as careless.

Now is the time of independence and

both make choices . . .

but which one made that choice?
SEAN REARDON

NO PRESSURE

You’ve done it a thousand times. You know how to do it. You practiced all off-season for hours on end. You don’t get nervous in the off-season, because no one is watching you from the stands. You notice that the stands are empty and you feel a sense of loneliness. The sun beats down on your already red neck and you begin to daydream.

You think of your first game coming up in about two weeks. The stadium will be filled with people who love you and hate you. The P.A. system will be playing music to get you pumped up and the stadium lights will be shining down on you. You will look into the stands and see your parents there. You haven’t seen them in a while, and you want to perform well in front of them. After all, they are the ones who drove all day today just to see you punt. Your dad will have his little camcorder focused on you all game, and your mom will sit there, trying to figure the game out. Are you going to get nervous with all those people in the stands watching you? Are you going to think about the kid’s parents who you beat out for the job, just wondering what they are thinking about you? Do they think their son is better? Do you really deserve to be the one starting in this game? Did you honestly practice harder than this kid in the off-season, or do the coaches just like you better? All these thoughts enter your mind as you hold on to the beat-up football that your coach gave you to practice with. Why doesn’t this ball always fly right? You have kicked it enough you would think that it knew what to do when it left your foot, but it doesn’t. Your daydream comes to an end when you see your football coach walking out of the building right next to the football field.

You know that your coach can see you, because he has to walk right by the field in order to get to his car. What do you do? Do you kick the ball and hope he sees you kick the perfect punt? Or do you just stand there, and let him wait until the game to see how you do? Your knees begin to rattle. Your legs, the ones that you have been strengthening all off-season, feel like limp noodles. You know what you should do. You should kick that damn ball. If you can’t kick a ball in front of your coach, how are you going to kick it in front of 2,000 screaming fans? You look at the ball. You know how to do it, and he is still looking at you. He is not making it obvious, but you know he is definitely checking you out. You look at the little flags on top of the field-goal uprights and see that they are very still. You know that there is no wind now, and if you screw up you can’t blame it on the wind. There will be no one to blame, but you.

You take your first step and you picture a guy from the opposing team coming to block it. Your second step quickly follows the first one. You keep your elbow in and you drop the ball, hoping that it will land perfectly on the laces of your gold and black Nike sneakers. You close your eyes as the ball hits your foot. Your head is down as your right leg flies up over your right shoulder. You’re hesitant to look up and see where the ball is going. Finally you look. You see that your ball is a perfect spiral, cutting through the air like a rocket above the clouds. You can almost see the steam line following your ball. You let out a sigh of relief as you look over at your coach. You are expecting your coach to jump up and down and congratulate you on a perfect kick. You stare directly at him, just hoping he saw it. You think to yourself, why isn’t he saying anything? Why won’t he clap for you? Doesn’t he know that you just kicked a perfect ball right in front of him? Don’t you know that you’re supposed to kick like that? That is your job, and that’s what he is expects you to do. But, can you do it in a few weeks when the pressure is really on?
The diner in which they sat was hot and sticky on this late July morning. Hot and sticky, but still very crowded. After the short wait for a table, the couple sat down in a nearby booth. The usually cold, red, leather cushions were now a hot seat—warm and sticky from the last customers. A frazzled waitress came by right away to take their drink orders.

“A large orange juice and a water, please. Lots of water,” Michelle said.

“Just a coffee,” Doug said.

“Coffee? How could you drink coffee on the hottest day of the year?”

“What was that?” Doug said as he took his eyes away from the children running through a sprinkler across the street from the diner.

“Never mind.”

The waitress set down their drinks. “What can I get you to eat?”

“We’ll both have the eggs over my hammy, one with white toast and one with wheat toast,” Michelle ordered for both of them.

“It’ll be right up,” the waitress said.

“So, seriously, Doug, we need to talk.”

Doug knew what was coming, and he was dreading having this conversation. It was about time he told her, though.

“I’m beginning to feel that you’re ashamed of me,” she continued. “Are you embarrassed to have me around your friends? Why don’t we ever hang out at your place? You’re almost 30 years old and you’re afraid of what your friends will think of me?”

“No, of course I’m not embarrassed by you. My friends love you.”

“I think you are.”

“No, I promise you, you’re great.” Doug looked around the diner for their waitress and flagged her down.

“Then, what’s the problem, Doug?”

“Could I get a refill please?” Doug patiently waited for their waitress to fill up his glass. He poured in some sugar and more cream than usual. He stirred it slowly. Michelle stared at him.

“Michelle, my friends love you. You have nothing to worry about with them.”

“Then why don’t you ever take me over to your place? I’m sick of spending all of our time together at my apartment.” Michelle set her arms on the table and leaned in to Doug for an answer.

“It’s not that simple.” Doug shifted in his seat. He glanced out the window again at the kids. He wished he could be running right now too. Michelle drummed her paint chipped nails on the table and looked at Doug with impatient eyes.

“This food seems to be taking a long time. Maybe I should go find the waitress,” Doug said.

“No, maybe you should give me an answer.”

Doug knew this day would come. It happened in all of his relationships.
one was especially uncomfortable because he really liked Michelle.

"Dammit, Doug, I’m sick of these games. What is the problem with me?"

"It’s not you, it’s me." As soon as he said that, Doug knew it was a bad idea.

Could he get any more cliché?

Michelle started to get up to leave. "I’m not going to put up with this. ‘It’s not you, it’s me.’ Please, Doug, you can do a little better than that.” Michelle was not going to waste any more time on a relationship that was not going anywhere.

Doug watched Michelle unstick her bare legs from the red leather and proceed to turn her back on him forever.

"I still live with my parents,” Doug shouted as she turned to leave. He immediately turned back to the kids running through the sprinkler.

"Oh.” Just then, the waitress came by with their food. Michelle sat down to eat.

Emily Claire Ryan

Let’s Pretend

Get out the capes, the guns,
the tea set, the tanks;
Let’s pretend

We’ll slay the dragon, win the war,
Make the tea;
We’re going to pretend

Prepare the planes, the boats,
the uniforms, the troops;
Let’s pretend

We’ll be invincible, a force to be reckoned with,
Defeat all evil;
We’re going to pretend.

Lay down to sleep, eat and drink,
love, cry, be human;
We can’t pretend.
KELLI CRAIG

DECEMBER SUN
AFTER DECEMBER SUN BY CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD

Aloneness is tranquil sunrays gleaming behind a forgotten tree in late December.

Only the sun and wind inhabit this place.

Church bells ring in the distance with no one to hear them.

Where is everyone?

Are naked bodies nestled under mounds of blankets, not wanting to emerge with the early morning sun?

Late December brings a time of tranquility and loneliness that only sun-kissed orange sunflowers can beat down come spring.

No fires extend cloudy black smoke from the rooftops, proof of where these families lay.

Like the sullen trees’ dying branches, they entwine among their lovers’ legs, arms, faces, absorbing all the other has to offer.

Children sleep soundly while parents rustle under covers of warmth and protection planting seeds that will bloom late summer.

Ravaging each other now, for knowing what spring brings... up before sunrise, tending gardens, fields, and children.

Now forgotten fields will emerge from sleeping limbs among the thorny bushes come spring.
ANYA ASPHALL

TIME WASTED

It’s 12 in the morning and you haven’t come home
I guess you were too busy while I was here all alone.
It’s 1 in the morning and you still haven’t been seen
You must have thought I should be used to this routine.

It’s 2 in the morning and still you’re out late
I don’t appreciate this treatment and I’ve taken all I can take
It’s 3 in the morning and I’m pacing the floor
Thinking of all the things I will do to you and more.

It’s 4 in the morning and still you’re a no show
I guess other things were too important for you to come home
It’s 5 in the morning and I’m sitting here in shock
I’m staring at nothing in the room except for the clock.

It’s 7 in the morning and here you come strolling in
Looking at me with such a devilish grin.
It’s 8 in the morning and what do I do?
Climb in the bed and lay right next to you.

STACY COLOMBO

FLUID MOTION

Pain is my blood red puddle—
I watch my past float

with broken hearts, amid
the dying memory of the

costly mistakes I’ve once
lived through—enough

to fill a jet black bucket
full of rage. My wounds

drain like the fluid motion
of a burnt orange candle

wax melting by heat’s touch. I
wait to be rescued by my

Guardian Angel, clothed in linen
white, waiting at the edge of my

doorstep, but I am slipping
away—I wait to drown.
Traveling further and further
Not looking back into the abyss of the night
It's not a problem that I am running from,
but a conflict
Just trying so hard to forget you
Our paths crossed and tangled at one point in time
and now you won't let go
So many bumps and turns our lives have taken
Wondering if this were the right path for me
But knowing it was the only one to choose
without turning back
Your smile had a way of making me stay
While your deep blue eyes held my gaze
and told a story
Your warmth so strong and firm it hurts—
you keep a firm grasp on my heart
Words so softly spoken, whispered in my ear
you make me crumble from my solid foundation
Butterflies not flying in formation
pains my insides
You're a married man and I am spoken for
But it is the electric that brings us together
Through the emotions and hands in life
we know it can never be
You have your own life, I my own
Our paths must uncross somehow, someway;
Your smile, eyes and grip must let me go
So I can go back to where I belong and you as well
I'm not running from our love
I'm just not looking back in the black night
so I can forget you.
Megan E. Herrman

Thou Sayest...

One night last summer,
savage Emmanuel
snipped the screen window
and plucked Lizzie
from her nest.
Imagine the little lamb, the
inevitable horror—and he called it love.

Beautiful, benevolent,
Elizabeth... consecrated to God,
yet captured.

Emmanuel, the bearded street preacher,
believed he was
anointed by divine election.
Took the child, to be Augustine Mitchell,
his wife—and he called it love.

This claimed-to-be-man-of-God,
led Lizzie through woods and bramble
to his mountain shelter.
Buried his bride
beneath the earth
in a hole covered by boards,
cabled her leg,
toggled her to a tree—and he called it love.

Rejoice!
Rejoice!
Mary Katherine
Remembered Emmanuel
Helped ransom Elizabeth
From the bastard messiah,
God willing, not too late...

Each night Elizabeth whispers
herself to sleep, breathes aloud,
"I pray to god,
my Soul to keep."
Yet still from his prison cell—he calls it love.
Look at the stars  
See how they shine for you  
In everything you do  
They are all yellow  
—Coldplay

the color of my sanity  
slipping away  
my world becomes yellow  
as pages of text from when life was simple

Dylan Thomas wrote  
“Do not go gentle into that good night”  
fighting words  
fighting for what?  
at first I thought to make us work  
I was wrong  
It meant fight back  
“Rage, rage against the dying of the light”  
the light in me  
flickers lower each day  
you are burning me out  
now is my time to fight back  
to rage for my light  
the end must come on my terms  
I must fight back
From the shadows he rose
Carrying the pain they chose to impose
The sting merciless, never to go away
Just a cold blank stare, nothing to say

All those years waking up alone
Each passing day clearly monotone
I walk this place
Trying to keep pace
Time a friend, time a foe
Kind of tired of feeling low

Sticks & Stones
With friendly undertones
They don’t know that I know it
And for their sake I’ll never show it

So you say you need a friend
I have to ask what you intend
Once your need has been fed
How quickly will the friendship be shed?

How implicit is it
That the night will always kill it
The sun can’t shake this abuse he is given
Of course she said with anger in it
I thought that was implicit

Like a leaf in the breeze
My mind is at ease
I’m lost in there
Eviscerating my despair
I wonder if anyone else is seeing
These transparent human beings
The ones that lack the feeling
And keep my spirit from healing

Such is the stride of MiStErUnSpOkEn
Seeking answers to everything
Enduring the sting from this whole absurd thing
Don’t want to think this is all just a waste
It’s hard to change your thoughts on the taste
Your mind now pleasant with the words I have spoken

How implicit is it
That the fear will always kill it
This love can’t shine through the veil that conceals it
Of course she said with caution in it
I thought that was implicit
PRAISE FOR THE AUTHORS

George Cassidy Payne’s “Subconscious Kisses” mentions the unmentionable.
—Jodi Rowland, Editor

“Te Di Me Corazon” gives The Angle a new language.
—Linda Wert, Submission Review Committee

In “That Saved A Wretch Like Me,” Megan E. Herrman shows that puppy dogs can be angelic, too.
—Mindae M. Kadous, Editor

“Several Habits of Highly Successful Breakeruppers” is a modern version of Break-ups for Dummies.
—Charles Colleran, Submission Review Committee

In “Pieces of You,” Michelle Girardi shows that love can be discovered in ordinary places.
—Stacy Colombo, Editor

Shari Allen creates brilliant, rhythmic scenes that leave the reader in a dream.
—Matthew Cotugno, Submission Review Committee