



The Kiosk

Spring 1999

The Kiosk

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1998-1999 KIOSK STAFF

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

This Year's Judge, Dr. George Bilgere
Dr. Janet Philipp, Interim Vice President
and Dean of the College
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THE 1999 KIOSK AWARDS FOR IMAGINATIVE WRITING

First Place "Harvest Sown"
by Chris Marnach

Second Place "Bike on my Back"
by Camie Shuff

Third Place "True Story"
by Megan Lindsay

Honorable Mentions

"Even In Daylight"
by Emily Barngrover

"Ebonix 360: Advanced
CipherSpeak"
by Francine Girard

"(Untitled)"
by Renee Hofer

"Grandpa"
by Robby Mason



ABOUT THIS YEAR'S JUDGE

George Bilgere's book of poems, *The Going*, received the Devins Award in 1994. His poems appear regularly in such journals as *Poetry*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Shenandoah*, *New England Review*, and elsewhere. He has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ohio Arts Council. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Spain and was recently a Dakin Fellow at the Sewanee Writer's Conference. Currently he teaches at John Carroll University in Cleveland. His most recent collection entitled *Big Bang* is due out in November.



All entries are judged blindly by the editors, and no entry receives special consideration. Editors are eligible for the contest; however, they are not eligible for the prize money.

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YR ATTENTION, PLEASE

Can I have yr attention please?

it's so cut and dry cut and dry that i cut and paste
circumstance and situation to the tip of
my tongue melting the flavors of bad decisions and
mean memories that i can taste taste
taste every time you look that way like you don't
know what you wanna make of me

Do I have yr attention?

there's something in the road up ahead there's
something whispering my name calling me
telling me to GO my foot is pressing the pedal to
the floorboard i wanna escape into into
how golden you are when the moon feeds yr skin
and the stars satiate yr dark dark eyes

Is yr attention mine?

i am i am i am something else maybe crazy maybe
just maybe maybe something else
something else something other than what you
expected i said i said i said "you scare the
piss outta me" i said i'm shaking i'm shaking i'm
destructible under yr everything

I said can I have yr attention please?

there are words hanging in the air like yr drifting
cigarette smoke there are words I said
words that i need to hear words that i need to say
like how the silence of yr stare notes the
dissidence of the moment this moment this
moment THIS moment is something else

I said do I have yr attention?

yeah yeah yeah and so maybe baby I am crazy maybe
baby i am i am i AM something else
or just maybe baby i am convinced that something
got lost in the translation from the way
the way i talk to the way you think think think
about it baby yeah

Now that I have yr attention ...

tell me what i am i am i am to you tell me tell me
the words i need to hear the words that'll
make make make yr everything make sense here
i need to hear the words that'll release me
just tell me baby i said maybe baby just tell me
what I am to you

Elegy of an Idiot

some fool sits across from me
he can't write poetry
Meanwhile my coke is getting empty
and a fly lands on my glass.
A lonely cigarette butt stands
quietly in the middle of the ashtray
and I ignore the world around me
to write this nonsense.
I can't write poetry either—
but it'll be all right.

Megan Lindsay

The Bacchanalian Rite of Passage

When we were fifteen
drinking cheap wine made us feel
like teen cliché dreams.



Snapper Ploen

Ice Makes Sparks

I feel like I am crystallized inside out
And I'm standing in the shadow of my very own doubt
And if you could possibly relate then you might understand
But unless you are gay I don't think you can
When you wear a coat made of guilt that keeps you
 forever cold
It's amazing how easily you tear, how easily you wilt, how
 easily you fold

*My skin feels like the surface of the moon
My mind is like a butterfly trapped inside of its cocoon
My soul is like a bee separated from its hive
I don't know how I do it, but somehow I survive*

I have traveled through so many people who only want to
 use
The effort makes me tired and my eyes are always bruised
When there is no heat for you to reach
Loneliness is the only language that you can teach
If anyone can even get past the fence
I built to block the ignorance

*My heart is like a diamond that's grown forever hard
My home is an empire of emptiness that I'm left alone to
 guard
My life is a prison without the walls and bars and
I feel like it's always night and I can never see the stars*

Never feel you should have to hide
I did once and I thought I'd die
Pretending is a path that I've already tried
And it almost led me to suicide

I know it feels like I will never belong
But hope is my spark and it's keeping me strong

Timothy Orwig (alumnus)

Laps

I'm swimming, Michael, for the first time in my life, twenty years after we met. It's an awkward crawl, but I can go all the way to the deep end and back, and each trip is now a simple geometry—3, 3 and a half, 4—as I count my way across.

You would laugh to look at me. I remember your effortless glide across the pool in swim meets, the calculus of your body as you multiplied the distance at the end of the diving board and divided the water like an equation. I watched longingly as you emerged sleek as a seal, comfortable in your body, while I sat glumly, the chubby new kid, —8, 8 and a half, 9,—who could only break the surface in a book.

The memory of you buoys me as I struggle across the pool. You left for college in the East, moved to New York and partnered, while I stayed in quiet backwaters. You traveled back and forth across

the country, swam off Malibu
and the Cape—13, 13 and a half, 14—
and sometimes surfaced back home.

The end came in magnificent mid-stroke,
as the virus pulled you under like a shark.
I couldn't save you, Michael. I could only
watch from the edge as you struggled.
After the memorials, they took your ashes
around the world, and scattered them—
17, 17 and a half, 18—on the waters.

But I'm swimming now, Michael,
coming out from the shallows and braving
the deeps. Sometimes it scares me
but I keep flailing away—19, 19 and a half,
20—as I carry us both to the far shore.

Window

I watch their snow melt
in the winter palace where
they all get to play
each wiping their carrot
nose with my mittens
and laughing at me through the
white glare of the sun
each cool breath of their
laugh frosts the front of the
window while I am chained
to the freedom of warmth
and hot chocolate
I scrub the frost
with Daddy's orange hunting
socks screaming at each stroke
I got new boots
for Christmas
they know it out there
dancing like no one
is watching
just wait
wait until Mommy says
it's all right then I'm
gonna come out
and make an angel
so she can play too

Michelle Arduengo (faculty)

Wisteria

Wisteria

Drapes the tree in lavender glory
Fragrant and sweet as the spring breeze—
Blows through each limb.
The tree is glad to have Wisteria as her friend.

Wisteria

Cloaks the tree in purple wonder
Complimenting it with a delicious fragrance
Caressing the tree with its vine and leaves
The tree is glad to have Wisteria as her lover

Wisteria

Suffocates the tree with nauseating aroma
Smothering the tree with false caresses
Shadowing the tree from the love of the Sun
The tree is sick to have known you

But cries for you
As the new spring blows memories
Across her boughs.

True Story

It was the summer of diet Coke and cargo pants, love, lust and Kerouac. She and I roamed lonely country roads all night some nights, nothing to carry us but half a tank of gas and the will to drive ourselves sleepless.

I don't exactly remember the stories we told, or the fights we had, but it was something. It was something atomic. We ourselves were just timebombs waiting to explode into those black, black nights.

We were driving way out past the middle of nowhere with the windows down and the music turned way up loud. The sticky night breezes blew hot July air over my bare arms and pulled at my attention span. Behind us, the road was as dark as the fields to the sides, and the only light we had was the reflection of the headlights off of the asphalt stretching ahead. With the brights on, it felt like we were driving through a tunnel of day. There was no moon, there were only the stars and us that night. I had no idea where everything else went, but I guess it didn't really matter.

We were aiming in the direction of the glowing TV tower way out on some old county road. The closer I thought we were getting to it, the further away it appeared. It taunted me as it peaked out over twisted gravel roads that led around farm houses and wound through hills. I sat shotgun, holding her hand, scared and amazed. She drove too fast, she always drove too fast. She drove seventy-five everywhere. Her driving foot was as heavy as the air that night we drove off of

the planet and into the stars.

The car jumped over one hill, and another, and another, each time the headlights stared right into space, faced with a wide emptiness. It felt like I was waiting and waiting and waiting for a movie to start, just staring at this all-encompassing blank screen. Then, the abyss facing us would suddenly vanish when the headlights shone on the road beneath us, and the suspense would momentarily end. It felt like we were going up and over the same hills every time. Iowa farmlands are so bland when everything melts together in pitch blackness. It all looks the same.

I never dared to question her navigation skills. She had gotten us lost before, but never on nights quite this dark. And we had always made it home, eventually.

In the road up ahead was a stop sign that seemed a bit out of place amongst all of the stark hills and dull ditches. It glared at us in the bright blaze of the headlights' observation. It was accompanied by the obnoxious yellow warning: "Cross traffic does not stop." A green scar over the 'not' marked where the sign had been hit by a paintball gun. I laughed. I don't know why.

"Which way?" It was the first she had spoken in over an hour. Her voice was not questioning my instinct for an answer, but rather commanding a satisfactory decision.

I shrugged my shoulders and looked down the three roads that were my choices.

"Well, straight would probably lead us closer to home. I don't really want to go that way yet," I said.

She said, "Me neither. The road looks kinda small anyway. And I don't want to go left again. I think I went left last time." Her brand of logic never failed us. "And right leads farther out into nowhere." She looked past me and out the

Megan Lindsay

passenger's side window as if she had a longing for whatever was out there.

I followed her gaze. "There aren't even any farms out this way," I said. "It's just all road and dirt. I don't know where we'd end up for sure."

She passed me a devilish little grin. I nodded in approval. She turned the car quickly right, peeling out with the back tires. We were flung out into the night again.

I smiled at her and said, "Yeah."

Over a hill came suddenly the TV tower, in all of its red glory. It was so huge and beautiful and bright against the floating backdrop of stars that I forgot to breathe.

She stopped the car quickly on the shoulder of the road. The cloud of dust that the tires had kicked up as we drove along the gravel still lingered in the air after we climbed quickly out of the car. We started spinning circles in the middle of the street under the TV tower's crimson stare. Looking straight up while I spun, I felt like the world was revolving around me. I grabbed her hands, and we spun each other. We fell down exhausted finally. The little rocks from the road stuck to the palms of my hands. We were so sticky from sweat that it was impossible to sit on the ground without coating our bodies with the gravel dust. So we sat on top of her car, screaming poetry into the night at the top of our lungs, heads still whirling. We held hands, and I felt July and night on her hot damp skin. Everything disappeared in the dusty threads of her faded Levis and the red reflection of the TV tower in her dangerous, dangerous eyes.

The fireflies in the cornfields matched the stars in the sky, and I could not tell where one ended and the other began. A bug bit my left shoulder blade, and she swatted it away with careful fingers.

"If you had three wishes," she said, "what would they be?"

"If I had three wishes, I'd wish there was something to say. I'd wish there was something to do. I'd wish there was someplace to go. What about you?"

"If I had three wishes, I'd make it tonight forever. I'd have a never-ending half tank of gas, and I think I'd wish for the moon."

"Yeah," I said, "just you, me, and a half a tank of gas, and, girl, we can do something extraordinary. We can explode, we can take on the world. We can drive forever."

"Let's," she said. "Let's drive forever."

"I wanna go to that star, right by the top there. Ya see it?" I said, pointing up to the blinking tip of the tower. "I wanna climb to the top and be too scared to ever climb back down. I wanna just sit up there and look at that star until the world explodes."

"The one that looks kinda blue? I think that's a planet."

"No, it's a star," I said, "and I wanna go there."

"Will half a tank of gas get us there and back?"

"Who said anything about coming back?" I said, kissing her knuckles which smelled like her cheap nicotine addiction.

"Boys don't understand these type of nights," she said. "I'm so glad for tonight."

I giggled, curled into her more, and said, "Yeah," because it was summer, and that night we were everything but going home.

Novel Ideas

It was like spending a summer in
London, or some such place
I'd never been to
before, when I fell in love
with you.

We read Hemingway and agreed
that the world was a
wonderful place, and worth
fighting for. I was thankful.

At night we slept like spoons
your breath—
an angel's hand
brushing the back of
my neck.

Were you an angel?
I counted your fingers and toes
and touched your eyelids.

You were real.
I dreamed of houses
blue and beige, happiness
behind lace curtains;
walls to protect what was
inside.

But you saw no world
beyond your mother's garden

walls that shut me
out.
I wanted to go to France
or Italy
and fight for us,
like Hemingway

(before his knee was shot out...
and that nurse jilted him...
and he turned cold and bitter...
Damn bitch ruined him—he was just a kid)

But you hated to fight
And I hated myself for being so cliché;
for counting fingers and toes
but forgetting to look
for your heart.
Our world could have
been a wonderful place

Yes—it is pretty to think so.

Harvest Sown

He was hauling in a load of corn,
felt the wagons jerk and shift
behind the tractor where he sat.
The noon sun blazing across the windshield,
The markets on the radio
soft and crackling,
barely audible underneath the
roar of the tractor.
The front tires bounced over the
railroad tracks
where as yet no warning light was, and the
roar of the tractor
drowned out the
roar of the train
and the train's siren screamed
as she screamed
when they told her of the
corn spilled on the tracks
and the tractor tire they fished
from the creek
And the train rumbled to a stop
a mile away,
rumbled like the thunder
that echoed through the sky the night
he walked through the door
of her San Francisco apartment
home from the War.

She stood quickly, the book
she was reading slapping
to the floor,
and she went to him,
her eyes clouded in
disbelief, and she looked into
his eyes, eyes that had seen the
horrors of humankind
The slaughters
The gunshots
The soulless stare of a
comrade in arms whose torso
exploded in a spray of blood as
he fired his final defiant shot,
the planes overhead,
the bombs,
the men and women and children,
thin as the wire they stood behind,
eyes sunken, ribs protruding,
the wailing,
the silence,
and the ashes
that drifted from the smoke stacks,
floating in the breeze of a summer's day,
like the first fall of snow.
And she took his hand in hers
and it shook
and she brought it to her face,
the smell of a recently abandoned cigarette, and
her lips touched the roughness of his skin,
and she could imagine she could feel his skin as
her own fingers touched her lips,
as holy water spattered the flag-draped coffin
and the men in uniform raised their guns,

and she jumped; her fingers
clenched the folded flag
as the crack of the final salute
shattered the silence,
as the crash of
metal against metal
yrain against tractor
God against mortal
shattered the stillness of a somnolent town,
and she closed her eyes.
The coffin lowered slowly, and
the sad song of the bugler
lingered in the air
like the siren of a train
like corn spilled from a wagon
scattered over a railroad tie.
And the corn seemed to litter the tracks
for years after. Some of it became
food for the flocks of crows
that descended upon the tracks
and when they were finished
rose in one black flag.
And some of it found root
and grew
tall green stalks,
strong
beside the railroad tracks.

Misty Petersen

After

Tangled together in the sheets your wife just washed
I dream of babies, marriage, and leaving you.



Darrel Fickbohm
(*alumnus*)

Autumn's Dead

The tree sends a falling
carbon star of paper
inside life
renumbering itself
for winter.

We walk silent, now
after this first argument
of weather
breaking our long time code
to never bring the seasons
into our bedroom.

There is a clattering of leaves
and the changing air is
moving, reaching beneath
startled covers.
The flat echo of October
is rapping
against my window with
voices layered generations deep.

This brassy light in the morning
is an old messenger
pushing through our
pane, it comes only in autumn
with all the ghosts of our past.

You see them in group pictures
on my dresser,
as white faces and black ties
are burnished red-gold.

They sit like somber beings
of another world. Did
they know that the only time
they would be alive someday
would be on the porch of winter
living for a sweet smoky
moment at the doorway of
someone else's
sleep?
These clamoring memories ushered
out from their celestial
racks—
they dream like a turtle's
heartbeat under the ice
—one beat per minute.

Darkness is around them like
a mythical chaos, and hopefully
these ancestors
haunt our closets
asking questions they
never had words for.

(untitled)

They yearn for him
like Tiny Tim and the goose
twisting locks and batting
lashes. Paying no attention
to their books. Their
mouths painted with
an artist's fine touch
just to form words of trash
to be cool like he'd want
them to be. Even the professor's
mouth would curve at the corners
ever so softly when it was
his turn to speak. His chiseled face,
broad shoulders. He could have
been a Harlequin boy. Still,
he pretends not to notice,
never attending to one too long
for the others might sense
failure and stop flaunting their
feathers. For on Wednesday
afternoons, their shirts are
a little tighter and hair is a little higher.
He sits to my left.
She sits to my right.
The only one who does not
compete for his ego or brighten
the hues of her face for him.

She never even lets her gaze
rest upon his beauty for a
moment longer than needs be.
Yet when class departs on
that Wednesday afternoon, as
she gathers her books and scurries
from the room, I watch him watch her,
longing, sad, frustrated with her inattentiveness.
I smile at the justice this world serves.

Megan Lindsay

the way she burns

Like a flame, she burns
brightest at the tip.

(She gets so angry sometimes.)

On the top of her thigh, she's got a
comet-shaped bruise that
screams every time she moves.

She doesn't know where
it came from, exactly.

The lines of her body twist into
masochistic spirals every time
he touches her.

(She gets so angry she burns.)

And when he holds her
close, she can feel it burning her every time.

"Even if it rained fire," he said, "I'd still be cold."

She knows it's true.

(She gets so angry sometimes.)

She doesn't know what kind
of angry it is, exactly.

It's kinda like when something
is so hot it feels cold
until it burns your skin.
Or like the way a bruise hurts.

It hurts her this time, but she's not gonna say anything.

She kinda likes the way
it looks. It's about the size of
his index finger and her favorite
shade of frustration.

She moves like she means it
and she knows it's true.

Burnt Rope

you think it's funny
how romantic
I think it's sick
when I see it
in the corner of your eye
you breath and the story's told
tell me more
look at me
let me look deep
true that it may
have been words
but the actions portray
the clearest picture

memory is the worst
of all nightmares
things that want to
dissipate come clear
come closer
just a little closer
let me see your past
let me guess
it's not a joke anymore
you did it
how romantic
you think you're sick
well I hope you realize

that the rope was solid
but it's burned and knotted

I tip my hat at your success
thank you for proving my point
now I must say goodbye
tell him I said hi
no really thank you
a fact has just been sent in my mind
there's no erasure

Megan Lindsay

YEAH

(song for a him)

I've gotta gotta lust for motion and memories.

Yeah, that's right.

I like to drive and to be, to be driven down lonely country
roads where the gravel descants and your touch plays 3-D
music against nights that are as dark as as as your voice.

That's it, honey.

yeah

Sing another song into my skin into, into my bones, my blood.
I wanna feel this world moving under your breath, baby yeah.

We're too fast, too fast for interstate travel, baby.

So take the scenic by-way and stay a while, just just just stay
a while.

yeah

Chad Watkins

Lettuce

Oompa Loompa Le
I've been up for seven days
Where is my cabbage?



Girl

You climb
the walls until
you fall far enough
to join the body of your adoration.
I must caution you,
girl
don't walk so fast
or look
so long
until you are
sure
you are reciprocated.
Take comfort,
I sense your yearning,
it is a feeling
not unfamiliar
to my own soul.
But don't forget,
to stand alone
sometimes
So now
Go
And forget
This invisible cord
of longing
until the next encounter.
Unpucker

your pretty lips
and remember
how he looks
And never forget
that you are still young.

Robby Mason

Boy

he doesn't mind
the whuppin
of his bare
bottom where
Pa's belt has
blushed the skin
past pink to pale
purple, matching his
mulberry-stained fingers

reckon he'll
whup his own
boy likewise
when he's a pa

Grandpa

Grandpa is planted
in the couch's fertile
cushions. The shades of his face
and "N" sweater are merging
because the Cornhuskers are
playing the Hawkeyes. The Huskers
and Hawks are tied in
the fourth quarter. "Papa"
shovels a handful of Planters
Cheez Balls into his mouth
between snide curses and
heart-stopping rants for *his*
team to get their "goddamned asses
plowing down the field. Jesus
Christ you dum-dums!"

Grandma pours a Jim Beam
on the rocks to keep the husky
Husker fan irrigated. He
almost upsets the glass as
he uproots himself to the
official's call for overtime.
A victorious harvest
appears to be delayed.

Lunch With Grandma

There was something I wanted
to know but I
tried to stifle the urge
to speak; finally I asked
why cows need to lick
those white blocks of salt
I asked, not willing
about salt.

Grandma said that she
thought they liked it but
as for needing it she didn't know.
But I wondered how cows out
on open range lived without it and deer
and Grandma says they go
out where there
used to be a bog and eat dirt—
God save us.

She says that the man
in town with the curly hair is a
retard but is nice to kids.
Who knows?
Maybe he isn't a retard
but only speech impaired, I suggest,
a bit charitably because
I can't seem to get the story

Uncle says he's not retarded and
Granny uses the wrong words a lot.
He says she's not crazy just
plays free and loose with the facts.

Right down to the ground
deer eat pine trees and other
deer's antlers for
salt. I'm sorry I asked.

Insurance salesmen call her
and she ties them in knots
and never buys anything.
They mention the words "nursing home"
to scare her and she mentions the
word "castration" to scare them.
I tell her
to fake senility pretending the
seller is long dead Uncle Earnest who
beat his wife. She says she'll
think about it
but likes the idea, I know.

She eats too much butter.
And cows have been known to break
down doors for a lick of spilt salt
their big fat tongues spoiling everything.

Bike on my Back

I need to relax
the smoke sanitizes this parlor
my teeth clench in this
dentist-like chair
painful pricks into my skin
Shh ... listen
to the rhythmic rushes
of the needle and notice
the yellow walls filled with
Grateful Dead posters
 it brings me back
to a time when

I was little like
when Dad he revved roaring
the excited engine so loud
in the garage to sing along
with the radio's blaring
beats of the Dead song
 Casey Jones
I need to drive this pain train
right into my flesh forever
so I never forget family
 and the way
Dad loved his Harley

Rattlesnake

Alcoholism is not a
disease, but a goal ... at least that's
what I've been told. Yes, by a
man who strangely calls himself
Rattlesnake. He swears an Indian older than
the earth appointed him that name, he
says it means something sacred.
I see how he hides himself in it,
81 proof is his medication, a libation.
It's not a disease, not at all. Rather
a means to an end: an end not to a
thing, but to a people who
have been forced to
bravely hide, and in them the
spirit of a past world lies.

Ode to Myself

The Devil is looking me in the eye again
sitting there across from me
trying to peer down
my eyes
and into my soul.
He does this every day—
always searching for the key
that will unlock
the secrets hidden in
my spirit.
Sometimes I wonder
if I should let
this fiend into me
letting him have all of
my hidden mysteries.
But not today.
Today ends like
every other encounter
with Mr. Mephistopheles.
He can't get in the door.
He can't find the key.
And with a smiling nod
I walk away from the mirror.

To Err is Human

"Oh my god!
Is he ... "

**near Death.
I hear her. I,
Immobile,
feel her
feel my**

Pulse ...
"No pulse! Help!
Someone please ... "

**sledgehammer
against my chest. No
resistance after ribs
have yielded to
blunt force
sign language
CPR fists
scream**

"Don't die on me dammit!
Please don't ... "

**bury me
with the
worms.**

Megan Lindsay

Honey

There's a little man in the back
of my throat that makes it hard
to talk sometimes, he says, "Well, Megan,
you should probably just shut up, anyway, honey."
Sometimes I think maybe he's right,
but I hate it when he calls me "honey."

It's like there's some
sort of game going on
here, in my head.
Strong's just an inch
away from weak, but sometimes
it's hard to get from
one to the other. Something's always
holding me back.
Something's missing,
there's gotta be something missing,
missing here.
There's something not quite all right.

Huh.

Y'know, maybe I was
Anne Sexton in a past life. Or
even Sylvia Plath.
Destructive, whimpering, dry,
with my head in an oven and a pen at my throat.
("She'll write a song someday.")

And the little man is there,
holding back words and songs and

things like other things left
unsaid, unused in the misuse of
now and never.
Yeah, the little man is back there,
hiding, telling me to shut up.
I can't swallow him or spit him out.

"Honey," he says, "you don't really want me to leave, now, do ya?"

I hate it when he calls me "honey."

Mein Kampf, Mine Cough

Putrid smoke snakes through the air—

Hello? Hello?

carrying the scent

of burning skin and innards,

Are you listening to me?

so much like the concentration camps

of Nazi Germany.

Space cadet, will you return to reality

for a moment so I can talk to you?

I am Dachau—

It's about your smoking habit—

and Philip Morris is the SS,

do you know how bad it is for you?

sending carton after carton

Do you?

of rail thin cigarettes

They contain carbon monoxide,

to the fiery furnace of my mouth

cause cancer, lung disease, emphysema ...

and lungs, reducing them to ashes.

Do you ever consider the consequences?

“Mother, perhaps it's just retribution for my
holocaust.”

This Is What a Dead Man Sounds Like

I remember driving around with my brother the Christmas Eve when I was fourteen. We were on an icy highway, the tires were rotating in time with Kurt Cobain's voice, and I thought, *this is what a dead man sounds like*. My brother turned to me and offered me a Marlboro Light. I took it graciously and asked him if he thought there was a place where rock stars go.

"You mean like Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain?" he asked.

I answered with a nod.

He thought for a second and responded, all serious like, "Wherever they want to go, I guess."

I rocked my body to the rhythm of the guitar, taking a drag with the sweet inhalation of Nirvana's sour vocalist. "Probably a big fucking concert up there, y'know? Jesus is the MC with all the disciples as security, holding back the angels from the stage."

"What?" he yelled above the acrid intensity of *Lithium*, "I didn't hear you."

"Nevermind," I yelled back, continuing to stare out the window of his rusting Daytona.

And we drove home that night not speaking, watching Christmas tree lights flicker through the windows of the houses off of the interstate, listening in empathetic apathy to Kurt Cobain whine and snarl. And I knew it wasn't really his voice but the whispering of tires on an ice-covered road and frozen breaths drawn from December night air that gave me the chills.

Even in Daylight

It didn't surprise her when it happened. She had known it would eventually. What was surprising to her was that it was happening in daylight, with people nearby. She watched as they all walked by—people who refused to look at her, their heads turning, obviously, away from her. She wondered what the spectators would do if she screamed at them. Would their heads jerk and their eyes flutter for just a second, inadvertently, uncontrollably, before they realized that they were not supposed to look or they'd be deemed witnesses?

She had tried to dig her fingernails into the concrete as the man pulled her into the grass. He must have gotten tired or impatient because he had stopped pulling while her head still lay on the sidewalk, the rest of her sprawled on the cool grass, mostly hidden by a row of hedges. She could see her hand on the concrete near her face. She had broken all her nails, except for her thumbnail, and the tips of her fingers were torn and ugly, like little balls of ground round from Samson's Butcher Shop.

She wondered how long she had been lying there; her head on the concrete, her hair clumped and sticky from blood. She had gotten off work around five. The joggers were out now, so it had to be around six. She tried to pull her arm towards her to see her watch, but he grabbed her arm, pounding it into the sidewalk. She blinked hard and bit her lip. She would not cry out.

She could feel the wind blowing across her bare legs

and longed to move them. She had kicked at first, clawing and biting and thrashing around, and that was when he'd hit her head on the sidewalk and rolled her onto her stomach. She was glad though that most of her was lying on the grass. She would've hated having her breasts and stomach and everything south of there grating against the sidewalk like her face was now. His knee was digging into her thigh, his elbow into the space between her shoulder blades. Someone had to have called the police by this time. She strained to lift her head, peering across the green at the blurry forms of the people walking by. She opened her mouth to cry out and felt him push her face into the cement again.

"You keep your mouth shut, bitch." His breath was repugnant, the smell of sausage and beer perhaps. He was not clean shaven; she could feel his stubble against her cheek when he leaned close to her. His body odor overwhelmed her; the stench of sweat and piss and stale alcohol seeped from his pores. He grunted and shifted his weight on her.

She closed her eyes and pretended not to feel.

The sad thing was, she had known this moment was coming. She had prepared herself for it. At least she thought she had. Her friend Marin had been attacked on campus a few months ago, in the hallway of her dorm. Marin had known her attacker well, spoke to him often, joked around with him, trusted him. Then one night, while most of the guys from the hall were gone, he grabbed Marin, slammed her against the wall. Then, choking her till she nearly passed out, he pulled her into his room. She had tried to call out when she heard someone come onto the hall, but as the guys had heard their hall-mates' girlfriends howl from inside the rooms before, none of them bothered to investigate further. They just laughed and moved on to their rooms. Marin had come to her days later,

Emily Barngrover

her neck still swollen and scratched, finger-shaped bruises on her arms. There had been so much inner damage that the doctors weren't sure she'd be able to have children. The two of them had cried together. Marin left school.

That was when she began to believe that it could happen to her as well. That was when she bought her knife. She carried it with her everywhere, tucked in her pocket or the waistband of her pants. If someone was going to come at her, she was going to be ready. She started taking self defense classes, but it didn't help her sleep at night. She had nightmares—dark men, pulling her into alleys, strangling her, beating her, raping her. Scream, her mind would tell her, scream like a mad woman, jump and wave your arms, get in his face, show him you are not afraid. Slap him, kick him, stab him if you must. But she would not be able to move. She would wake to sheets and pajamas soaked with sweat. She rarely went anywhere by herself and never without her knife. But did it really matter? Was there safety in numbers? Could she really protect herself? Obviously not. Here she lay now, her own knife to her throat, a man on her back, and dozens of people walking through the park, unseeing. Could they really not see what was happening to her? Did the hedges block their view? Were they just afraid to get involved? Or did these spectators think she was enjoying all this?

She felt a lump rising in her throat. This couldn't be happening to her. She had done everything right. She had called her mother before she left work; she had taken the self defense classes and carried her knife. She locked her doors at night. When she took the shortcut through the park, she walked quickly with her head up as she had been taught in her self-defense class. Her instructor had said if you walked quickly with confidence and purpose, you looked less

vulnerable and were less likely to be attacked. 'What bullshit,' she thought now. What else could she have done? What could have kept this sick fuck from pulling her into the bushes and doing his thing to her? She couldn't even fight back. How could she when he told her he'd kill her if she moved?

She had to think of Casey. Her daughter was her whole reason for living, not school, not her parents, certainly not her job at the bar. Just Casey. If she fought, Casey could lose a mother. If she lay there and took it, perhaps he'd let her go, and all she would have lost was her dignity and her trust and her fearlessness. That was a small price to pay. She closed her eyes and pressed the heels of her hands into the ground, hoping to stop the momentum of his body from pushing her face into the concrete.

He was getting into it now, she could tell. He was rocking harder and the stabbing pain in her abdomen was more intense. And then what, he'd let her go? Let her just walk away bruised and bloody and infested with whatever STD might be rotting his dick? What if she got pregnant? She couldn't get an abortion, how could she take another life? But how could she give birth to a child that was the product of such a vile act?

And what if he just decided to kill her anyway? What if he finished and decided he didn't want to take the chance of her running to the cops? And speaking of cops, why in the hell hadn't they gotten there yet? Someone had to have called the cops. She clenched her fists. She could hear cars driving by and the sound of people talking on the other side of the hedges. She wanted to scream: "Are you all fucking blind? Why don't any of you call the fucking cops? Do you want him to kill me?" She squeezed her eyes shut, hoping he would not see the tears that were coming uncontrollably now. She

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couldn't believe it. Things like this were supposed to happen at night, when no one was around, not in the daylight where everyone could see, and yet no one would help her.

Her mother would be worried. She was watching Casey. Casey would be two in a month. She had just told her mother about the presents she wanted to get her. Casey was so smart. She could nearly speak in complete sentences. Just last night, she had sat down with Casey and a picture book of animals, and Casey could name them all. The Montessori preschool downtown had already accepted her. And she was beautiful too, big blue eyes and dark brown curls. Just like her mother had. 'Just like me,' she thought. 'Case is just a little piece of me. And this asshole is going to try to take me away from her.' Casey needed her. Her mother couldn't take care of a baby. Her mother had already raised six kids; she was sixty years old. How could she raise another baby?

He rested his chin on her shoulder, moaning; his rank breath, coming faster and harder now, was hot on her face. She tried to pull her head away, and he started licking her neck.

"You like that don't you," he breathed in her ear. "You're liking every bit of this aren't you, bitch? You thought you were too good for me, thought you'd get away from me, but now you're liking it aren't you?"

Maybe there could be another way to get out of this. Perhaps Casey would have her mommy come home after all. She closed her eyes and prayed, God please let this work. "Of course I like it," she said.

She opened her eyes and saw him looking at her.

"I knew you would."

"How could I not like it?" She could feel the burn of stomach acid creeping up her esophagus and fought back the

urge to vomit.

"Yeah. You tight bitch. Just had to loosen you up. That right?" He had been supporting himself with his left arm, and with his right he held the knife to her throat. Now he leaned his full weight onto her, using his left arm to grab her hair, pulling her head back. "Ain't that right?"

"That's right," she whispered.

He moaned and kissed her hard, forcing his tongue into her mouth, the putrid stench of his breath following it, filling her mouth and nose and lungs.

She reached towards him, slowly, her arm aching, and grabbed the hand that held the knife. Startled, he pulled his face away from hers. With all her might, she pulled his arm upward, away from her neck, knocking him in the face as she did.

"Fucking bitch!" He rolled back, lying sideways on her left leg.

She looked back at him and noticed she had bloodied his nose. She had not been able to pull the knife away from him, but this was her chance to get out from underneath him. She tried to bend her knees and pull her legs up under her, but they had fallen asleep from the weight of his body, and she could not move them. Screaming, she pulled with her hands.

"God damn cunt!" he screamed.

She could feel a hot, vicious pain in her shoulder, and suddenly she could not move her arm. Looking back at her shoulder, she could see the hilt of the knife sticking up from the meaty part of her back near her shoulder blade. She could no longer fight the urge to vomit and retched on the grass next to her.

He grabbed her head, rubbing her face in the puddle for a moment. "Thought you could get away, didn't you bitch?"

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He pressed his knee into her back. She felt her skin and muscles tear as he turned the knife before pulling it from her shoulder. Her mouth twisted in agony, but no scream came from her lips. He had pushed his whole weight on her, constricting her chest. She struggled to breathe, but between his weight and the pain, she could pull no air into her lungs.

He lifted himself off her and rolled her onto her back. Tears mixed with the blood and vomit smeared on her face. 'God please,' she prayed. 'I have to get back to my daughter.' She thought of when her father was killed. He had once owned the bar she now managed for her mother. One night he tried to break up a fight between two customers and one of them pulled a gun. She had only been seven, but she remembered his funeral. Her mother had cried. It was the only time she had seen her mother cry. She remembered hearing cars driving by and people walking through the cemetery. None of them paid attention to her. None of them seemed to care that her daddy was dead. None of them cried. They didn't care that her father was dead. They just went on with their own lives, not noticing that her life had been shattered. She wanted her daddy now. She whimpered, sobs shaking her aching body.

"Shut the fuck up." The man hit across the face.

She opened her eyes and glared up at him. She would not let her mother lose someone else. She would not be taken from her daughter like her father had been taken from her. She swallowed hard. "Fuck you." She raised her uninjured arm to deflect the blow she knew was coming.

He grabbed her arm, twisting it backwards and slamming it to the ground. She heard a loud snap and when she looked, her arm was bent at a strange angle. Then came his fists, harder and harder against her face. She closed her

eyes. 'No, God, please. Please don't let him kill me. Please let someone come.'

Suddenly, he stopped hitting her and sat very still. Then, she felt his weight lift from her body and he was gone. And with him, the fire in her shoulder. She could feel no pain in her head or arm either. Her face should have been sore and bruised, and yet she could not feel it. She struggled to turn her head, to see where the man had run to. She choked and felt something warm and wet run from her mouth down her cheek. She closed her mouth, licking her lips, the taste metallic, acidic.

She was tired. She did not even know if she was a part of her body any longer. Funny that there was no pain, just peace. She tried to speak, tried to say Casey's name once more, tried to tell her mother she loved her and she was sorry for not coming home on time. She tried to spit the blood from her mouth, but there was just too much. But she couldn't just lie there; she had to go home. She closed her eyes, she was just so tired, and it was so hard for her to breath.

Hollow and distant, she could hear sirens. 'Sirens, Casey, just like when my daddy died.' She tried to lift her head, everything went gray, and she lay back down. Her breath gurgled in her chest, pushing through slowly like she was trying to breath through water. She closed her eyes and thought of Casey. Mommy would be home soon, and wouldn't Casey be happy? 'I love you, Casey. Mommy loves you. Can you hear the sirens? Can you hear them like I did when my daddy died?' She opened her eyes. The sky was so blue and filled with fluffy white clouds. The sun was bright, but it didn't hurt her eyes. She didn't even blink.

She closed her eyes again and waited. She could hear the sirens. Just like her daddy. So tired. Perhaps she would

Emily Barngrover

just take a little nap. Rest a little so she could play with Casey when she got home. Yes, just a little nap. Not long, though. She knew she would be home soon.



Paperdoll

Cut her out and stand her up
then watch her fall
love her, curse her
but don't ever leave her
your paperdoll

Dress her up right
and parade her around
but underneath she's just paper
no heart, no soul, no thoughts of her own
your paperdoll

She looks pretty in her white velvet dress
just the right accessory to your image
a collector's item with a lifetime guarantee
but who's lifetime? Who's life?
your paperdoll

Permanent smile, permanent fixture
until she's not enough
until the clothes don't fit and the edges are torn
then discard her into the wastebasket
your paperdoll

Hypnosis

I was in your head
today, you weren't thinking
of me, but
I was there ... I always am.
Waiting, wanting to hold
you, take you
once more.
But I won't hurt you ... not like that
son-of-a-bitch. I'm here to help you forget.
But you know that,
that's why you
come to me, isn't it? For
help and caring and answers.
I love you and am amazed
by you ... but can't tell you that
So instead, I show you.
I'm so excited, it's almost time.
You walk into the building
your mother beside you
and I feel a rise between my legs.
There is a knock
"Your next appointment is here, Dr. Cox."
"Thank you, send her in."
Your mom sits in the waiting room.
That's our policy, after all.
And you emerge in the doorway
still wearing your school girl uniform.

"Hello, Dr. Cox."

"Again, Susie, you may call me Peter."

You, smile shyly and I show
you to the couch.

"How was school today?"

"Um, okay, but geometry kinda bites," you say
and you flip your long blond hair
off your shoulder.

I can't wait any longer

"Well, let's get started, shall we?"

"You're getting very sleepy ... "

Megan Lindsay

Highway

smoking my last
cigarette down to
the filter, feeling the floating
power of drugs in my
bloodstream

the broken highway
descends and
the dashed lines
repeat remnants
of conversations

each clever yellow word
shatters in the lights of
on-coming traffic

his mouth is warm
and dark, tasting of
dull drugs and
heavy metal

he slides his
tongue farther down
my throat

words
are climbing up the

car windows,
yelling
begging

“stop” and “don’t” and “no”

fall back down to the
slashed highway rumbling
on beneath us

Gifford's Gas & Service Station

“**N**o, Harvey, your station wagon isn't done yet,” Lucy Martinez said, rolling her eyes. She held the receiver a few inches away from her face so she wouldn't have to hear Harvey Baxter yelling into the phone like he had been doing for the past ten minutes. It was the third time he had called that day. When she thought he was winding down, she put the phone back up to her ear.

“I'm sorry, Harvey,” she said. “But it's taking a lot of work to get that piece of shhhhsteel up and running again. I know Harvey. Yeah I know it's been a week. Har—I don't know. Yeah. Yes, I'll tell him. Okay, thanks Harvey. Buh bye.”

“Bitch,” Lucy said as she hung up the phone. She reached across the counter and grabbed a candy bar from the display case. She was a small woman, dark, pretty, twenty years old. She had needed a summer job while she was back home from college, and this was all she had found.

She had taken her second bite of her candy bar when Jack Gifford came in from the shop attached to the back of Gifford's Gas & Service Station. He was a big man, nearly a foot taller than Lucy, powerfully built, in his mid-thirties. His dark brown hair stuck out the back of his cap, and his pale blue eyes looked out from underneath the shadow of the cap's bill.

“I'm going down to the cafe for lunch,” he said, wiping the grease from hands, which were larger than Lucy's head, on

Gifford's Gas & Service Station

a rag.

"Guess who called?" Lucy said, smiling up at him.

"Oh Christ," Jack groaned, shoving the rag back through his belt loop.

"Close, but no exploding cigar. Think of someone who bears a striking resemblance to Elvis in his later, more, shall we say, husky years, and you'll get it."

"If that dipshit calls one more time to see if his goddamn piece-a-shit station wagon is done, tell him I'm gonna shove it up his fat ass, okay?"

"Got it," Lucy said in between bites of her Snickers.

"Ain't you getting' anything to eat?"

"I got my dinner right here, big boy."

"You're gonna get an ass the size of Montana if you keep eating like that."

"Fuck off, Jack," she said, shoving the last bite of her Snickers in her mouth.

"Don't you wish, baby."

She looked at him, her right eyebrow raised.

"Oh God, Jack," she said in her best monotone voice.

"Yes, yes, oooh yes."

"You know you want me."

"Yes, Jack," she said, a tragic look in her dark eyes.

"But it can never be. You are the employer; I am but the measly employee. We come from two different worlds. It would never work. Our worlds would tear us apart, Jack. We'd be doomed from the start. We'll just have to waste away in our eternally unrequited desire for each other. Damn this cruel, cruel world."

"Yeah, yeah, 'Like sands through the hourglass' and all that shit. This ain't no damn soap opera."

"Of course it is, Jack." She looked around the gas

Chris Marnach

station. "Only with really shitty sets." Her eyes rested on him. "And an oaf for a leading man," she added sweetly.

"You always gotta be such a smart ass?"

"Yup. And that's why you love me so, isn't it, Sugar Poof?" She grinned up at him and then began to rummage through her purse.

"There they are," she said, pulling out a pack of Marlboro Lights.

"You steal those from the display like you did that candy bar?"

Her mouth opened in outrage.

"Jack! I'm hurt!" she said, taking a cigarette from the pack. "Well, I don't have to stand here and take this. I'm going to go outside to fill my lungs with toxins, toxins that I paid for with my very own money, though given the salary you pay me, I might be driven to stealing very soon."

Jack laughed as she stormed out of the station in righteous indignation.

"You're own money, my ass," he said to himself. He paused at the door and watched through the glass as Lucy tried to light her cigarette. There was a strong wind which whipped her dark hair into her face and repeatedly blew out the flame before she could get the cigarette lit. Jack laughed and opened the door.

"Need some help?" he said as the flame once again blew out.

"Not from you."

"Oh for Christ's sake, give it here." Jack took the lighter from her and cupped his hand around the lighter and the cigarette that was between Lucy's lips. She cupped her hand around the lighter on the other side, and on the first try the cigarette was lit.

Gifford's Gas & Service Station

Lucy inhaled deeply, her eyes fluttering. She let the smoke escape slowly. She had only one cigarette a day, and she enjoyed it to its fullest extent.

"Thanks, Jack," she said, smiling up at him.

"Any time." Jack smiled back at her. He started to walk over to his truck. "See ya after lunch."

"Bye, Jack." She watched him drive off down the road, the roar of his old truck lingering long after he had gone out of sight.

Lucy finished her cigarette just as the phone began to ring inside. She crushed the butt beneath her foot and ran inside and picked up the receiver.

"Hello, Gifford's Gas & Service Station, how may I help you? Oh, hi Harvey. No, I'm sorry it isn't—no—I—" She held the receiver at arm's length, and she could still hear him. A smirk tugged on one side of her mouth as an idea glittered in her dark eyes.

"Harvey? Listen to me a second. Yeah. Listen, Jack left a message for you. A message, yeah. He said that if you called one more time he was gonna shove your piece-a-shit station wagon up your fat ass. Hello? Harvey?"

Lucy shrugged as she hung up the phone.

"That was for the comment about *my* ass, Jack."

Why?

The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!
Silly book! I read till my eyelids drop—
Richard! What chu doin in that tree?
R.A. come, set my friend free!

Went to bed for about twelve hours
pissed in grass, ate some flowers
I hope this morphine never stops
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Got out of bed, bought a dog
went down to the stockyards, sold a hog
puked on the floor, got a mop?
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Quit eating sugar, my teacher said
it really fucks around yo head
All right, I'll suck on a lemon drop!
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Went to church to start a fight
it's kinda dark—where's all the light?
Upon this pew I think I'll hop
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Went to the fridge and opened a beer
too young for alcohol, can't drink it here

It's OK, it's worthless slop
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

The sun outside blinds my eyes
can't drive to get some curly fries
I hope I don't get pulled over by a cop
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

The smoke it floats about the room
shit! no smoking, impending doom
another college dropout flop
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Oh my! Would you look at the time
two stanzas left that I gotta rhyme
I keep this up, my head'll pop!
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

What the hell do I think this is?
And who's the fool ate my cheez whiz?
Plop-a-plop-a-plop-a-plop-a-plop
The palm tree—a monkey falls, kerplop!

Ebonix 360: Advanced CipherSpeak

my present state of mind
leads me to recline
find. an altered state of con shhhs nuss
sublime. be the effect of the essence
I'm sent. Heaven sent.
searching for that higher power
faith comes crashing down like that tower
they called Babylon
Negroes wanna babble on
talkin loud sayin nuthin
about that struggle they think they come from
but know nothin about and it makes me wanna holla
(scream and shout)
but the voice I got won't be strained
pained. enflamed. deranged. insane.
insanity
part of me part of he
but part shall we
ova some ole bullshit
'cause they full of it
& backwards ass jokers wanna run and then hit
hidin whut they come from
so they can run to what they wannabe
eyes blinded by they own lies
yet they still claim to see
lest we forget independence we manifest
meditate on elevation

the declaration should be on centering
Revelation—epiphany—came to mind suddenly
revolution-cipher-three hundred and 60 degrees
means change and not stupidity
calm incense at best sometimes forgotten
logic repressed and brain cells rotten
or rotting ...
which is it?
what is it?
What it is, daddy, is mind illumination
and spiritual resuscitation
fo' yo' assesssss
fo' da' masssss
time passes slowly
for those whose calm incense is all fired up
light it up and pass it
don't inhale or yo ass'll git got
and when shit gets hot
get yo' ass out the kitchen
'cause one thing I know
is that stop drop n roll
ain't gon' save yo soul
not if you on the devil's pay roll
so don't nobody care how real you keep this
peep this
if it's of the urf real ain't what it's worth
or so you'll find
in time
sit back as I recline
once again, back again
to my present state ah mind

