



CHAPTER 6
of
THE
ANEMONE SIDECAR

CHAPTER 6

WRITERS, ARTISTS:

Featuring:

Tree Riesener,
introduction and four poems. 1

Barnes, Christopher.	47
Beining, Guy.	66
Bell, Lindsay.	36
Biter, Nystowhen.	71
Britton, Iain.	61
Carignan, Mackenzie.	23
Chace, Joel.	70
Chavez, MK.	44
Chiles, Ted.	74
Chinquee, Kim.	10
Gamble, Hannah.	13
Harrington, Joseph.	12
Holland, Will.	19
Joritz-Nakagawa, Jane.	37
LaForge, Jane Rosenberg.	20
Levitsky, Olena.	15
McClung, Jen.	18
Middleton, Stephen.	22
Moore, George.	9
Nardolilli, Ben.	24
Neary, Eileen.	49
Neikirk, Adam.	42
Nelson, Rodney.	48
Nights, PJ.	45
Newman, Jessica.	46
Petropoulos, Justin.	16
Plovnick, Ross.	60
Pollin, Diana.	52

Reilly, Christine Jessica. 63
Renner, Cooper. 29
Savoca, Matthew. 26
Schapira, Kate. 25
Smith, Curtis. 51
Stewart, Michael. 50
Stoddard, Christine. 28
Yohe, John. 14



The Anemone Sidecar, Chapter Six, 2010,
built on the work of select multitudes.
Cover image by Daniel Boyer.

Tree Riesener: prologue and four poems

Tree Riesener Is Just Sitting

Waiting for the poems. From the in-between. The interzone. The liminality.

Liminality. According to Wikipedia, “from the Latin word *limen*, meaning ‘a threshold,’ a state characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. One’s sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition where normal limits to thought, self understanding, and behavior are relaxed—a situation which can lead to new perspectives. People, places, or things may not complete a transition, or a transition between two states may not be fully possible. Those who remain in a state between two other states may become permanently liminal.”

Poets.

My first poetry collection, *Liminalog*, fused the place the work comes from--the liminality—and my obsessive writer’s record-keeping--the log. When I want to persuade a poem to meet me in mid-air so we can mate like butterflies, I go to the liminality and wait, then write.

Kafka said, *You need not do anything. Remain sitting at your table and listen. You need not even listen, just wait. You need not even wait, just learn to be quiet, still and solitary. And the world will freely offer itself to you unmasked. It has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.*

The thoughts come in like ectoplasm on which I must drape clothing. Then the question becomes, “Where do the clothes come from?”

The records. Cross-fertilization, inter-textuality, the classics, mythology, religion, super-hero comic books and cereal boxes. Eleanor Wilner, in a Drunken Boat interview by Rebecca Seiferle, quoted Osip Mandelstam as

saying “I have no personal memory, only a cultural memory.” My poetry (and I think all poetry) is personal, but filtered through the collective consciousness.

Examples from *Liminalog*.

“Practice. How fast can I get my key in the door, the raging wolves almost upon me? Would I, for my Beatrice, have courage to say no to Heaven and step into the abyss?”

A childhood picture of a little girl trying to outrun wolves and get to the snow-covered cottage. Dante’s darling. The abyss? Hell, I guess. I’m there standing before judgment. Squeak through. Discover my beloved didn’t make it. Say, “Well, forget it for me, too. I’m going with him.”

“Dependable as a library card catalog or beer on tap at a bar, God’s peace be with you; confident answer, adding a few more grapes to the universal cluster, and also with you.”

My *querencia*, the card catalog. The unreliable comfort of Thomas Cranmer’s liturgy. The grapes resonant of the Eucharist in this context, but “the universal cluster”? Homage to Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Advice. Rest in the liminality. The world will indeed roll in ecstasy at your feet. All the while, read. Stare rudely. Recollect emotion in tranquility. Connect. The words will come, and with any luck, they will be beautiful and they will be truthful. That is all you need to know.

Tree Riesener has published poetry and short fiction in numerous literary magazines, including Wigleaf, Flashquake, Flash Fiction Online, The Evergreen Review, Ginosko, Loch Raven Review, Pindeldyboz, Identity Theory, The Beltrist Review, and The Source. Her achievements include three first prizes for the Short-Short Story and the Literary Short Story at the Philadelphia Writers Conference, Finalist for Black Lawrence Press’s Hudson Prize, Finalist in PANK magazine’s Fiction Chapbook Contest, Best of Wigleaf 2009 (Honorable Mention), Semi-Finalist in the Pablo Neruda Competition, three short stories staged in the Writing Aloud productions of InterAct Theatre, Philadelphia, a Hawthornden International Writing Fellowship, two Pushcart nominations, and the William Van Wert Fiction Award. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks, *Inscapes*, *Angel Poison* and *Liminalog*. EK, a full-length collection of ekphrastic poetry, is forthcoming in 2012 from Cervena Barva Press. Her website is <http://www.treeriesener.com> and she blogs at <http://www.treeriesener.blogspot.com>.

For My Part

I fear osiris
with his feather
rising to meet the raven in mid-air

they will turn to look at me
decide if I should go
through the door of no return
into fierce landscape

on my knees
I will crumple into the foetal position for prayer

in the desert dawn
bombborn children crawl through sand
eat radioactive manna
play with scorpions

exists a dream of the sought oasis
(green how I want you green)
where fog marries honeysuckle
where the deep grass
bends laden with nightdropped lethal hope

but my soul
pitched into the parched terror
will catch on skull antlers like barbed wire
blow in the glowing wind.

Recidivist

I.

some are baptized in water

absolutely

cut the ribbon dive deep and come up dripping
into that act of worship known as followed by light refreshments
last call last fling last gasp postmodern postmortem

absolutely

go down several times grab the brass ring and pull the trapdoor up
cool then almost shivery and you're ready for the après-dip
the party game mouth-to-mouth the sops-in-wine

you need moisture what about a funny uncle with tears but if tears
have dried up how about bread crumbs how about earth *hey how*
about the rose like a female evangelist with lots of eye makeup
the revered rose the silver-striped rose considered more beautiful
than shit and piss (but the old saint knew better)

II.

leads us to the whole subject of ashes for some are baptized in fire

mark your face with ashes of pink net dresses unfunny valentines
champagne labels last year's recycling

stuttering robes of white all flamed and neutered in the urn be born
anew in the sumptuary laws of the tortured coal brothers (lump nut
egg stoke cannell) oh cannell sing like a bird lump you old woman's
darling pulverized boiled turbinized generated transformed
condensed

III.

some come to baptism late and hope for the best

we aren't let to slip easily happily into this world this praying
for an easy death what's that all about passages are not intended
to be painless

becoming insensitive might be an answer we could add something
to the prayer a *pousse-café* take something from the first stanza
or even before versed demerol twilight sleep

maybe even echo me and bring me back elisha lying there
face over my face legs sprawled open to pain you on me
me dead on my back sneezing sevenly way back to life

if I shake off the water like a new-drowned dog but plunge
right in again if I dive through the flame and only come up ashy
as a naked saint if I ring the angelus bell hidden under the corset

if I do that just that will that qualify will that suffice is that enough

to baptize me back to beginning again

Telling Time

the last days

why do you think
days will be the measure

why not
three tortures ago
or ecstasy before last
or two depressions after the next comet

when days are gone
we will have it all at once
pleasure and pain
like frozen nitrogen ice cream
with live-wire hot fudge sauce
or s&m in the same person
think medieval flagellant
*I learned about the love of god
by beating myself until
I needed a transfusion*

think about this
every event of your life
happening at the same time

squeezing out the birth canal
to a tremendous orgasm
while everybody sings
happy birthday eighty-two times
you cut the ears off some
men you've never seen before
in the vietnam jungle
try mexican food
for the first time
and cry in third grade
because somebody hits you
and takes your lunch money

this may seem overwhelming
but it won't be hard then
because without time you will multi-task
like god

the last days
(or perplexities or singularities)
won't have any ending
they'll grind to a stop
while they're starting up
and also go on and on for all eternity

when you have learned to measure life by visions or fragrances or
bread

Litany for the End of Time

if indeed god chooses
the foolish things of the world and the despised
when all the world has alzheimer's
jesus of the lunatics
will tuck manna onto waiting tongues
turn cement paving into waiting warm beds
and soften every path with fragrant thyme

then at the promised hour
jesus of the tygers
will prowl among the sleeping
who awakening in the night to a lullaby purr
to shining eyes and teeth
will sit up from their east-facing earth
and beckon the circling warm striped body

finally after simplification
jesus of the meteorites
sin-eater for an eaten world
will make first a wide-orbit pass-through
then sharklike circle around
bellying up as he closes in to uncreate
the bright charism of a billion broken stars

George Moore: Pollock's *Blue Poles* Number 11, 1952

Those blue poles like ghosts
figure into everything now, everyone
looking for an excuse to say look there,
something resembling a figure in the rain.
But they are sad, supernal recognitions
of the aftermath of that heyday when
splatter was simply the next phase
of wonder. The poem right here:

connects this disparate image
to something Coltrane played back in
'61, live at the Village, where he opens
on a modal chord and just keeps going
forgetting to come back to where
he started. That wasn't music,
that was a message. So the blue poles
are tracks left by the artist, leaving.

Kim Chínquee: Two Pieces

I Knew the Route

After a truck smashed into my mother's car and threw it, I was a little shaken. My sister was driving, and she was kind of cool, protecting her emotions. The truck had hit my side, ruining the panels. I'd been dreaming of talking to my sister, of abduction, of the men who were out to steal our mother. The week before a driver hit me on my ten-speed and I got a concussion. I needed tests and it was urgent, but not urgent enough to not wait for my mom and her permission. So I lay there on the gurney, looking up at the white, just hoping for my mom, but nobody could find her.

So the next week I ditched my sister. She had to stay there and wait for the cops. Nothing was broken, but my head still hurt from before. I was shaking. I figured walking was better than nothing.

I stopped to vomit. Cars passed, and in my mind, they were all the same cars going the same places. I didn't care about my sister. I went home and called my friends, but no one was answering.

Lake Effect

The whole town felt like a rush hour, though no one was rushing. It was a city in slow motion, a billion cars and Humvees hardly going, slipping. All one-laned on the two-lanes, snow in the gutter. Still, parcels got delivered, people sloshed on sidewalks with their boots on. Hats. Lines, letting each other in. People were like bundles, their breaths puffy. Drivers turning on their wipers, slipping when they weren't careful and practiced. Christmas lights were fastened to the street poles, and somewhere a Santa said ho.

Joseph Harrington: Two Pieces

Parrots of Kansas

The starlings could be rose-colored parakeets
The crows could be white cockatoos if they really wanted to
The mourning doves fly like the green parrots of Amsterdam
The grackles screek like the parrot who lived on my street in Berkeley
The robins ought suddenly to appear as blue parrots from the upperstorey

The house sparrows might not be themselves today
Did you know the red-bellied woodpecker is related to the climbing parrots
of the Rio Plata,
 only backwards?
The gulls kettle like parrots far from the sea

The starlings could be rose-colored *starlings*

The flock of pigeons might just as easily be macaws,
Circling, circling, circling, circling, circling
O

Crime and Punishment

A masked man with horizontal stripes
imprints the speciation *robber*.
Another imaginary technique:
reticulating splines;

a downward sentence departure
makes us fight against our own gods
in a catamount primary,
the Hamburgler especially.

Hannah Gamble: A Movie

Seen first, spaced words on a screen (as if for context, and yet). White against black, they still are unreadable. Each letter fades in and out at different speeds, so that each word is whole for less than a second—the eye can't catch up! Maybe the words are there only for decoration, or to inspire want for something no-one can have.

First sound, a song with five cellos stroked very rapidly, harshly. The strings are being struck, then dragged against. The growls of these unseen cellos would be frightening if not for the knowledge that each has a soft woman's hips. Five cellos are singing together—they're all in this together, the being struck, the bow sliding against them hard and not leaving soon enough.

A picture of a window—that's what's first lit up. If a girl were leaning out the window, it could suggest either hopefulness or the need to escape. But there *is* a girl leaning out the window, and her look is hard to read. The first words in the movie are spoken by her. She, looking down to the road where cars drive by, says, "The bird bathes in dust. The bird bathes in gravel. The brown bird has spots on his belly. The bird bathes in dust. The bird bathes in gravel, the bird bathes in gravel."

John Yohe: The Girl

The girl

The girl in the cafe / the girl at Painted Rock
The girl walking down the crowded sidewalk
The girl in the truck / the girl counting change
The girl locking her bedroom door at night
The girl on the Ice / the girl with girl tattoos
The girl reading Sylvia Plath / the girl driving a dirt bike
The girl playing guitar and singing Johnny Cash
The girl wearing pantyhose for the first time
The girl with other girls / the girl writing a letter
 an instant message / a to do list / a screenplay
The girl carrying a rifle / The girl watching tv
The girl learning Spanish / the Spanish girl
The girl on the magazine page / the silent girl in class
The girl looking at herself in your mirror

La chica

La chica en el café / la chica en Painted Rock
La chica caminando por la acera llena de gente
La chica en la furgoneta / la chica contando cambio
La chica cerrando la puerta de su habitación en las noches
La chica sobre el Hielo / la chica con tatuajes
La chica leyendo a Sylvia Plath / la chica manejando una moto todo terreno
La chica tocando la guitarra y cantando Johnny Cash
La chica llevando pantimedias por la primera vez
La chica con otras chicas / la chica escribiendo una carta
 un mensaje instantáneo / una lista de quechaceres/un guión
La chica llevando un fúsil / la chica mirando el tele
La chica aprendiendo el español / la chica española
La chica en la página de una revista / la chica silenciosa en el curso
La chica mirándose en tu espejo

Olena Levitsky: I Had Always Meant To

I had always meant to
leave
the rock I had grown
so accustomed to
daydreaming on, there
in the middle
of my wood,
machete in hand.
But the day came
when a soft snow began
to fall
and the bitter air
whispered
- so loudly -
that it was time
to move.
I danced
and I played
(but refused to sing)
in the temporary pieces
of winter
that grazed my face.

Justin Petropoulos: Two Pieces

[debt letter despite this contrary bed]

So close to the fire. We could taste the jasmine. Palm oil faces of people once. Those posters of the missing or dead haunt the streets no matter how hard we sweep. Reams of them over exposed. They clutched at her arms from signposts.

Outside the camp, fresh tar wrinkles behind convoys of copper trucks. They sound as if towed by geese. She remembers her first miracle, window after window after the voices under all that glass. Stories coffin those bodies. Disappeared. We pry each bent nail from their roving.

Near money seeds the sale of simple, negentropic valences. Their pursuit, silently, from the bulldozer's exhaustoria. Pearls. The tide purls. We are remainders, disaggregate, encoded bone. Our narrative tires. Despite this contrary bed, linens imply a body abandoned. Cinderblocks. Teeth half pulled.

[debt letter face down in the snow]

Face down in the snow, a man says, "This is the smell of the sky." He is a medium, a coordinate. Snow melts into the crows of his eyes, giving over the water already always implied. "I have these amethysts," I say, opening my hand, "flossed from dentures lost at sea by shouting sailors."

Our talk leads to speculation: soybeans all lit up with frost, hunters quack from an unknowable distance, a woman packs her car with snow, but nothing else will come to shore, for certain, except more shore.

"I miss all of my ducks," I say. "Their isosceles comings and goings." As I touch his arm thin under all that fabric his body turns away from the clock, which fringes the city. "The edge," he says, "is the center of something else and I am running away from there."

He stuffs my hand in his pocket; a pigeon, also stuffed, wrestles my fingers. "This is not a duck," I say. "I'll give you five dollars, though, for the bones." Looking into my hand he asks for an amethyst, the coldest one, with his shoulders. Ice flows shrinking from a glacier—please.

Jen McClung: burgundy shoes

if it were burgundy shoes
I had wanted,
I would have taken the train
and bought some

the distinct lack of you
is less straightforward

Will Holland: Dead car in the headlights

I.

They poured in. Like viscous cicadas made to glow by years of chemical exposure storming the figure before the steel. Sharp sound of bird screams and ravens. It stood there, the shadow in the sun. Rays, gamma and as painful as bone scans.

II.

Crickets chirping in the mirror. The mobile objects to the scenery, all quiet in the noise. Brief overtures of decency, or decadence. Decanted words like light bulb filaments filling the space. Followed scurrying and subsequent actions and the camera lens guarding the insides.

III.

Flashing gold bowties on the horizon inching toward the job already done, or doing. Screaming tracts of land, hills rising and rising still. Wrist cuts, not suicidal, dotting the road, dyeing.

IV.

Mixed meetings. Raised voices, flies in the wind. Rabid road kill, but not dead, dying. They exchange documents and suspicious glances: three paper salesmen in the black desert. Nuts and bolts falling to the floor.

V.

Silhouette smoke and oil. The rumbling boxes and whispers, given purpose beneath stale moonlight. Three tangents across a broken straightline with opposing trajectories. Sweaty palms and pearly whites, all dentures. Lizards scatter on the burnt pavement. Wrens in the brush and slow light creeping below the hills.

Jane Rosenberg LaForge: In the Garden

In the shavings of bark, in the coal,
in the quarries and oil, we sort through
the leavings of everyone that came
before us on legs and hands, hooves
and knees. We are in the process
of finding how it was the day
of Neruda's parade, or the discovery
of flesh's first color beneath the skin,
before all our facts became impermeable;
before they had a shape, soil, a soul
to strangle. I recognized my first
fact in my grandmother's hands:
her wrinkles parallel and miraculous.
Their routes began on the pads
of her fingers and trawled through
the palms to the wrists; as if
they were paths coyotes take to food
or smugglers to the border; or today
the two in some illicit combination,
through permafrost, desert, and steerage.
When all entry is illegal only outlaws
become citizens. In my grandmother's
hands I saw the disinclinations of waves
interrupted by barnacles and pylons,
the salt and froth detangling themselves
from the liquid; the absorption of minerals
by more minerals: the width of how many
millennia before the earth forgets.
My grandmother survived by avoiding
legacies and religions. I named our daughter
for her, as if she could represent a bolt in time,
so we might agree on a calendar; on the month
when the world is next shaken for
ten days or longer; so we might measure
our illnesses together; the tunes you
might still know from your piano
lessons; mnemonics of tones and finger

exercises. I am still looking for a chorus
I don't have to improvise, while I wait
just as I know a mottle of leaves waits
beneath the snow, to be sorted through
the bulbs and mud in the spring,
to fertilize the next vacant season.

Stephen Middleton:

Catalogue; Abbey, Folly (We Interrupt...)

Cataloguing now. Of ingress & margins. Marching bands and mountains. Blessings amidst detritus. Box upon toxic box load. Cataloguing... Rogue transmissions. **We** interrupt this programme... Hijack & by-pass, & broadcast Ornette Coleman & Albert Ayler to the army; an act of subversion – taking over the airwaves while stationed in Heidelberg. Cataloguing – down the dirt road / stone barefooted, but playing leapfrog. Flotsam & jetsam. Hoboes & pest infestation. Rats / asbestos in my kitchen.

From Heidelberg we drove down to Ottobeuren. The abbey – caught unawares / unprepared by the sensible exterior for sensorial overload. Over the top / baroque. Marble, gilded, ornate, kitsch. For the wavering taste of youth it was too much. In truth, awestruck, by the unexpectedness as much as anything. A matter of months later Keith Jarrett, given to touches of the rococo himself, recorded *Spheres* on the great organ here – all ostentation banished. Slow build & decay. & *Pipelines* & *Mytha*, cattle calls from transhumance we'd learnt about – John Wolf Brennan / Hans Kennel in Weggis, by Lake Lucerne. & Brennan's signpost in *Triangulation* ('To the Peak (and back)')...return less than certain for a scared & lovelorn fifteen year old. And the mountain graveyards, potent at Langenfeld, Argentierre...

Next step Neuschwanstein – gay Ludwig's folly – named after Wagner's Swan Night, Lohengrin. American tourists, I recall, wanting to take parts of it home. The impossible bed – rococo, gothic, years in the carving – too burdened to sleep in, surely. And climbed up to Marienbrücke (for Maria of Prussia) above Pollot's Gorge. And he says he hears all of life in Wagner, whereas I go (with Val Wilmer) for the African-American tradition & offshoots ... Joe McPhee, Coltrane, Evan Parker, Pino Minafra, Marilyn Crispell, Peter Brotzmann, &, in this land (for reason martial & musical), Albert Ayler. The castle approach, remembered, always evokes Ayler's estranged folk material. The Ayler brothers' 'post war cries' that march out of step with (any) victor's vision. Spirits distorted or re-asserted. Improvisation back in the equation. Rickety maelstrom from every folk tradition – European & New Orleans, second line & rhythm & blues (Albert played with Little Walter). A pure product of America (out of William Carlos Williams), says Robert Palmer. Bassist Henry Grimes vanished from music & friends in the late 60's, & when they found him in the desert he didn't know that Albert was 30 years dead. Ludwig perished early too (from hubris?). We crossed the border at Reutte, & slept under the strange cross above Lake Plansee.

Mackenzie Carignan: & persona

Murmur. Strands of hair woven in tulle. Her pear tree, nascent and removed. It is a cage, we argue, this swallowing center most illuminated by nests. What song? The woman you heard me saying me saying. What time? Initial clap of the bell. You descend on me, still falling, still hovering. Perched. Who sings? Don't answer so quickly. Standing among my others. Which one of me is being lost? On occasion, I call myself "her" because she is a multiple of three. Capture me moving, you can see the trinity. Beginning to shudder.

Ben Nardolilli: Pearl Rhythm

the first woman's fate among
mental events
makes them memorable

part of her genius
embedded

quiet
domestic
enclosures

this is her way

unifying

Kate Schapira: (untitled)

Everything I touch with this hand turns to gold; with this, I too deal damage. Hunger for reappearance, proximity without enough relation, too much condescension, gulping down, groping toward, sickly, with worms. Tumbling through a fall of sun, real in what we can't control. Real in proportion. Body attaches itself like a limpet. A scale or gradient—not as bad as—measures, count-keeping, tallying from each according to her ability to harm. Limpet mind cups the matter of time, a waiting sense, dark figure tight along the hull. What seems big, what seems small, in homology.

Matthew Savoca: Europe*

I'm in a car. Someone is driving it. There's a suitcase in the trunk

I'm wheeling my suitcase up a ramp. The ramp is made for suitcase wheeling. I feel stupid wheeling my suitcase on the ramp. I pick up my suitcase and carry it up the stairs

I'm on a train. There's an overhead luggage rack but my suitcase is on the seat next to me. A woman asks to sit down. She is old. I slide my suitcase to the floor, between my legs. It is uncomfortable

There's a rack up there for it, she says. She talks like a Southerner but we're not in the South. While you put yours there, you could put mine up too, she says

I look up at the rack and then at her. I take her bag and put it on the rack. I sit back down and put my feet on top of my suitcase. I look out the window

I'm on a subway. My suitcase is on the floor in the middle and I'm sitting on it. The subway car starts with a jolt and I fall down. People look at me. They don't laugh because they are New Yorkers. I hold on to the bar

I'm on an air tram. The air tram is full of people. A man in an Army uniform walks towards my end of the tram and stands at ease. I look out the window. There are factories with factory smoke coming out of them

I'm in a chair. Everyone around me is in a chair that looks like the one I am in. Everyone has headphones on. I can hear all of the sounds coming out of everyone's headphones. I look out the window. There are planes lined up in a row

I'm on one of them. The plane is on the ground and then it is in the air. I am in the air. There are other passengers and some flight attendants. Everyone thinks about crashing but they are talking about Patagonia or somewhere

The woman next to me is Irish. She is drinking wine and alternating between telling me about Ireland and intestinal tract cancer

Snow Dogs is playing on the televisions. I look up and see Cuba Gooding Jr. on the screen. Oh, I want to watch this part, I say

Yeah, I love this movie, she says
I put my airline headphones on and play Mozart on the airline radio station.
The woman next to me starts talking again. She is much louder now.
Everyone around us looks at us. I look out the window. I see the wing of the plane and sometimes the ocean

I am in a cab. The driver doesn't speak my language. I point to something on a map. He starts to drive

I am in a bed in a room. There are many other beds in this room and I don't know any of the people in them. Someone starts to cough. Now more people are coughing. I sleep

I am walking around. It starts raining. I don't have an umbrella. There is a man on the street selling umbrellas for money. I give him some money and he gives me an umbrella. I open the umbrella and stand under it. When the rain stops, I buy a sandwich from a street vendor

I do similar things for the next one to three months

I go home

Everyone asks me where I've been. I tell them I was abducted by aliens. They laugh and say, no, really, where've you been

I say Europe

Christine Stoddard: Hallux

Her feet wrote poetry each time
she pulled them through the sand,
as seeped her toes in the Mother of Glass,
grain upon grain of invisible syllables---
invisible to all but her lover who splayed
himself out upon the salty beach to admire
her seagull strides patting the scallops below.

Cooper Renner: From the *Lost Coleridge Papers*

Editor's Note: When Samuel Taylor Coleridge left Malta after some months as secretary to the British governor Alexander Ball, he abandoned on the island sixteen sections of verse, ranging from four lines to more than eighty, which constituted the bulk of a major new narrative work. Unlike "Christabel" which is unfinished in the sense that *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is--that is, its plot was never carried to its end--"Son of Lykos" represents a fully formed narrative arc. The poem is incomplete, however, because these separate strands of the plot were never woven into a seamless narrative whole. The fragments jump from point to point. Equally as remarkable as the existence of this previously unknown poem is the prose found with it--a sort of memoir, a 'shadow' journal which supplements Coleridge's known (and published) journals in astonishing ways. These prose pages seem conclusively to contain both the kernels of incident which inspired the plot and, in those incidents, the portrait of one of the world's most gifted poets in the midst of a complete psychological breakdown. The sections reproduced below will give the reader a taste of the complete work, currently being prepared for publication.

Fragment 8: Jack 'changes' the Major

Jack snugged the rope against the post
And leapt ashore. The major lost
His feet and fell into the swell
That threw him hard against the wall.
One handed, Jack uplifted him
As water drained from head and limb,
Then led him, laughing, to the bay
Where fish swam thick and moonlight lay.
The major stripped and draped his shirt
And pants where fire threw out its heat.
They quickly cleaned and cooked their meal
Fresh caught: prawn, octopus and eel.

But when the wine was running low
And the major dressed and made to go,
Friend Jack spoke out: "Paola dear,
My sister--" Sam blushed ear to ear.
"Don't say it, Jack. I have two eyes
To see her beauty." "Then what lies
Against you?" "King and uniform--

And blood." "Hers runs as red and warm
 As yours. I know you lay as man
 And wife--" "God damn you, Jack, God damn
 Your--" "What?" Jack hissed. "You damn my love
 For her I think the heavens of?"
 "I cannot wed her, cannot stay--
 I go where king and country say."
 "You cannot wed? But you defile
 Her womanhood with filthy guile
 And--" "No! She took me to her breast,
 And I--" Jack would not hear the rest.
 He leapt as beasts on four legs do.
 His body changed while yet he flew.
 The major tumbled as the claws
 Of a wolf drew blood. The open jaws
 Found open neck. Teeth sharp and sour
 Bit deep and met. One darkling hour
 The major burned in fever such
 As never he had know the touch.
 But then the moonlight cool and blue
 Caressed him, and at once he knew
 That he now ran his blood like Jack.
 His neck was whole; his hands felt thick.
 He sat to look; he looked the same.
 Jack laughed behind him, near the flame.
 "Doubt not your heart, nor doubt the strange
 Sensations there. You feel the change.
 Now one with us you'll always be.
 You've much to learn, to live as we."

**

Finally, midway through the poetic journey that forms "Son of Lykos," Coleridge brings the horror element to the fore: not Paola's implied witch-like abilities, but the lycanthropy of Jack. The poet has prepared the reader so well for this fantastic element that it arrives as a logically summative moment rather than a *deus ex machina*, not the act of a writer wedged into a poorly lit corner of his plot, but rather that of one who knows assuredly what he is doing. And just as the lycanthropic transformation snaps into place, so too

does the rationale for its placement here--Jack forces the Major's hand. Unwilling to commit his life to Paola out of love alone, the Major is given another motive. Rather than the instinctual or senselessly violent action of a horror movie staple, Jack's attack grounds itself in love.

"And now," you determine to ask me, "if the prose documents at your disposal represent an accurate reflection of Coleridge's experience of Malta and function as the armature upon which the poem develops, how now?" How now indeed?

Remember, I tell you, Coleridge's emotional and psychological state: at a strong remove from all he loves; sinking ever more deeply into laudanum addiction; unable to sleep peaceably; attracted far more powerfully than he will admit, even to himself, to a local woman; convinced already that he is seeing something (exactly *what* has been unclear to him) here in Malta which goes far beyond the bounds of his rationalistic English upbringing, he has been primed, has primed himself, for a strong delusion. In such a case, how can the delusion fail to take place?

It seems to have been a Saturday afternoon. Coleridge is neither working, nor does he give any indication that he has asked for time away from work. With a pocket full of shillings for food and drink, a sturdy walking stick in his hand, and a broad brimmed Maltese hat on his head, he sets forth, strolling through the western gate of Valletta and down the Floriana street that will later be called (and perhaps was at the time) Sarria. Soon he plunges down the long slope that leads one into Pietá. Off to his right the waters of the Pietá and Msida creeks are flashing in the sunlight, though he cannot see them for the elevation shift and the thicket where the Jubilee Grove will later stand. Is it already his intention to walk across the island--about six miles each way--to Qrendi and the vineyards where he almost fell into the arms of the vintner's sister? Will he so readily place himself in temptation's path? Or does

he hide his weakness under a more admirable intention--the "restoration" he has so often gained from a long walk through his beloved Nature? The document is unclear: such a ruminative man, such a man for arguing through every situation with himself and others, he becomes peculiarly opaque in these pages. One would almost think he had become a forerunner of the "muscular Christian" of decades to come, a simple God-fearing man out for an invigorating stroll in the world of his maker. He takes note of bird-song, of the rustling green-brown of the leaves starved for rain, of the languor into which the humans he encounters have sunk in order to cope with the heat. He, on the other hand, emboldened perhaps by the Mediterranean sun and the mores it encourages, loosens his collar, unbuttons his shirt to the sternum, rolls up his sleeves. Lets the wind caress him. Nature's innocent. Whitman before Whitman was born. The Noble not-quite Savage.

In Luqa he stops at a tiny tavern--one table, two rickety chairs--for beer and a pea-cake, then presses on. Sweat streams from his brow and down his sides, sweat darkens his shirt-front. He longs, he realizes suddenly--and this is the only sharply internalized moment of these pages--to be naked, feral, Adam in his Garden, an hour perhaps before discovering the Eve God has left him among the damp ferns near the river. How delicately he would part the tender young fronds, catching the dew from their undersides in his palms, or watching the drops glimmer in the hairs on the back of his hands. So cool as he brings them to his lips. How reverently he would extend himself toward the sleeping beauty--

A blow to his left shoulder interrupts this singular reverie. No--not a blow. A heavy, and heavily haired--Sam actually writes *furred*--hand. Turning he sees the vintner whose sister--

"Ettore," Sam says, "what--"

"You English," the Maltese man interrupts. " 'Round he surveys, so high

above--' "

Sam's eyes widen. Ettore knows Milton? "I am," he says, "only the Governor's secretary."

"Oh, yes, but the *secretary*--or the English private who empties the night soil--is so far above the highest of the Maltese, no?"

Coleridge, we know, was not truly a child of privilege. But Sam cannot honestly deny Ettore's comparison, no matter to what degree he might wish it otherwise. If he were at this point recording his thoughts, he might--we imagine--refer back to the doctor's crude remark about the cleanliness of the Maltese.

Ettore's hand slips to Sam's upper arm, and he pulls the other man into a rough, across-the-shoulders embrace, while with his free hand he takes hold of Sam's chin, turning his face from one side to the other, as in inspection.

"Not a dishonest face," he says, then gently slaps one cheek before dropping his hand to his side, though still holding Sam with the other arm. "Two honest men walking in the sunlight." Sam tries once to slip free, but Ettore's grasp is strong and tight.

"I see, you know, how you look at my sister."

Sam immediately protests. "Sir, if I caused any offense, I swear to you I--"

"We primitive Maltese. We respect actions more than words and intentions." He looks forward, his arm still ponderous on Sam's slighter shoulders. "Even the noble knights took our women to their beds."

"Sir, I swear--"

Ettore laughs. "In the street, in the palace of the governor, in the colonel's apartments, the Maltese always make obeisance. But in the bed perhaps mistress has more power than master, despite her nation."

"But Ettore," Sam begins again, "you know I--"

"You, yes. You."

They pass into the shadows of a small grove. The birds go silent. Not even a locust chirrs.

"Yes, you!" Ettore barks. And Sam continues his entirely external stance in these paragraphs, though he will later make his comment.

Ettore, he writes, was at once not there. As he fled--how did he flee?--the violence of his flight bowled me over. I landed painfully and fell back onto my elbows, scarcely able to prevent my head slamming against the ground. And the wolf was there--the dog, the wolf, Ettore was there--those immense slaving jaws opening, only to close on my throat. I had not time to call out before I plummeted into darkness.

Not much more than a decade hence, Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, and John Polidori would engage themselves to horrify each other. Coleridge should have been among them.

When Sam is next aware of himself, he lies comfortably on a bed of ferns near a very small spring in the rock's face. He feels the air move across his chest and leans his head up. His shirt is entirely unbuttoned, and a strip has been torn away from collar to tail. He hears a step behind him, then Ettore kneels at his side. He holds a ceramic cup to Sam's lips. Sam drinks thirstily, then pulls away and sits up. He holds the flaps of his shirt together and attempts to speak, but cannot.

Ettore holds up a palm to stop him. "Wait," he says. "Soon enough." He puts his hands to Sam's neck and lifts away the strip of shirt Sam is missing. It is damp and red. Ettore shows it to Sam, then tells him to feel his neck. "You see, we heal very quickly when we are made."

Sam's eyes ask the question his voice cannot.

"Yes, I said *we*. Now you are made one of us; now you and my sister--"

Sam holds up his hand, displaying the ring he wears.

"But that was in another country," Ettore murmurs, "and besides--"

Sam violently shakes his head. *The wench is not dead.*

"I am sorry I had to destroy your shirt," Ettore says, "but the initial bleeding is quite intense. While you rested, while your body completed the change, I went to the house and brought you one of mine."

Dazed, Sam allows Ettore to help him out of his own shirt and into the vintner's. "You will have many questions. But now you must return to Valletta. My horses are here. It will be an easy ride. You will have your voice before we reach the walls. By nightfall. Come, brother. I will tell you--a little this, a little that, as we ride."

The writing ends there, though the page is half-empty. But Sam can only have intended us to join to it the meditation that begins, "How did he do it?

"How did he convince me that I am now one of them? That they are real? That men become wolves? That I will become a wolf? What magic is this? What spell upon my mind? What dreams I have--"

And this scrap too comes to an end.

Lindsay Bell: Lottie Professes

The shoe drops in a moment of candor,
heel rubbed raw, hell short a passenger.

I understand you wish to remain attentive
as I obfuscate. I am the one who
dropped the shoe. Candor being feet
denuded. Rawness, the partitioning
of days, regular sleep schedules, all things
done in the name of lesser evil. Hell:
I am its patronness and its pardon,
its poorly-tipped barista, its penchant
for unruly concoctions. The passenger,
also myself, does not act so much as
is compelled to ride. Forgive the egotism
implicit in this statement, to assume
that emptiness would feel my absence
belies the fact of the matter.

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa: Meditation 22

i.
sky made of
stone, the movie showed us,

the country was peaceful &
clean, words filled

my eyes until it became
difficult to see (we met

an accident that
day) every march she

threw herself into the
river, at home the

birds left, the religion
of my thoughts make

it so every time, i understood
my voice better

from a distance, my skin
bids adieu, authority

stretches over at least
two continents, i

eliminated all surfaces
via closing my eyes, something

like death passed by, i
remained as still and vertical

as i could, a frenzy of time
met passersby, if my illness

returns i'll dream it
into the next poem

ii.
i love the roundness
of this thought and his

stomach and the thickness
of it and his eyebrows which

smell like drywall i burrow
my nose into his navel where

i remain for several weeks
and bless

my father for he has surely
also sinned

iii.
mothers starving in the suburbs
the most the flipper the birth the birch

flay slay play
keep weep heap i

never go anywhere but
hide behind a fortress of

words starving princess who gave
up long ago on love once told

me that she too liked to hide behind
words that fall like so many

branches too soft and flimsy
for other purposes so

although i never go
anywhere i do go out but just

not headed anywhere really so i go nowhere and
while walking on branches back in my tiny

room a branch touching the window a
starving princess not knowing whether

to go in or out
(the food vanished long ago)

along with the crazy voice that
flew out of your mouth if

the carrots touch the peas
you'd be pretty upset (my

brain began to evaporate
at this point) waiting

for the next horror i
would like to put my fear

into the next frame, i could almost
touch my fear, a flimsy bridge

rabidly reading on the flank of the
living -- if the stones lie much longer

adding sound wantonly, living
on the roof during the

flood, truth waiting
to be seen by everyone

iv.
i wonder if i can live
on kindness or

an empty park bench under which hope
hides hiding in my back between the

bones where there
used to be a kind of cushion i decide to

live
one more day:

全てうまく行きます。
その通りです！

自分をみつけないの
ですが。。。

v.
this body which sometimes fails
me my back

a zigzag words
get lost in i often

feel i will
fall from my chair & people will step

over me i won't feel
a thing i'll just wait

for the weather to change my body
will rise up

and over & fall into
my neighbor's yard & will be

raked up with the leaves my
fingers will emit a crackling sound & if it

rains i will be running down
the sides of your house

vi.
horrible the wind horrible the sky horrible
the deer which crossed my path horrible

was i horrible were my eyes horrible
things horrible was that country horrible were

we horribly late horribly fashionable horribly was
the earthquake damn the earth i lay down on

damp earth and feel horrible i felt horrible people
did you ever ponder how horrible

it all is horribly i wait horribly
beckon you don't arrive and that too is

vii.
silence is a fish
in a grave a new
back and knees a meal an end
to all craving & all screaming to fall
into the sea catch fish with my
knees for my knees to sprout gills to live under water while the rest
inhabits the air above the ocean above trees in the
clouds where the grave of the sky and its ill wind
hurls me back into the sea

viii.
in the fearful dreams of my students i appear . . .
& then i wrote a letter:

dear Rimbaud:
why haven't you written back to me? is it because you are dead? did u
know that people here love computers but also hate them i think of
you in your bed without your leg as i lie here your book in my bed next
to my head ive lain here for weeks or feel like i may never
know if i should stay here return to "my" country or
find another place in which i can be a foreign object

do you miss your leg terribly?
love, Mom

Adam Neikirk: Jar of Water Floats Downstream

I.

That afternoon I quit the sunny wingbacks, leaving the stripes
of peeled curls in disarray across the sea-green floor. I walked
a long way. The walker courted an imagined sound of water.

He saw a small bauble parting the stream, a jar capped tight,
its insides an imagined drink of water. I floated a long way.
I watched a shiny school spread out, a cosmos being born.

A universe, even tiny or delicate, will order. It will request
serial replication, water in a jar within a stream into a spray
of lights. The poet, sitting on the bank, will do what he can.

II.

That evening I snowed until I was hoarse. I sat unanswered
peeling words for colors off a wall. It crept a long way
at the edge of a landscape, a piece of something older.

I saw bipedal younglings pitching frozen pairs in tight
imagined arcs into the snow. They sank in (a long way).
Families of rabbits moved in. I wiggle my nose at you.

A rabbit-hole, although tiny and delicate, will suffice.
It will enable serial replication, water in a jar within
a stream into a spray of lights. The poet was up all night.

III.

That morning I lounged complacent on the bank. I made
up several words to describe anxiety for wingback chairs.
I stacked them like a tower. It went a long way up.

I wobble and my shadow wiggles on tree-tops. Pairs

crawl in and out of my wiggling. Imaginary snow
heaves a sigh for nothing.

is tiny and delicate. cannot be wrangled.
 cannot be replicated. in a jar within
a stream is just spray of lights, ink a spray of shadows.

MK Chavez: Mammon

You never stand still
Everything is black
or white
You have mistaken
the Albatross
for a stone
and put an arrow
Through its heart

The chromatic sunrise
has been left alone
and the peach-headed
Gannets are diving
into water
and no one
is watching

PJ Nights: Whose Hat

I bought him this hat
an Indiana Jones hat
was it for him or me
this hat this warm
brown hat that sits on
my head while I try
every degree of tilt in
the mirror to judge the
rakish angle it might
sit on his head AT
this Indiana Jones hat
100% wool from an
antique store in
Tombstone this hat
that might not be
more antique than a
week or two old (I'd
examined it for sweat
stains for evidence of
the boy before) but it
is a nice hat a felt hat
and Indiana Jones hat
with an immensely
pliable personality, a
shapeable brim, that
can be pinched and
folded down into a
noir murder mystery
or cocked up like a
sombrero a boy wears
on a burro or a
surprised cowboy
clown loses in a rodeo
or maybe it has
always been my hat
though I meant it to
be your hat, your
Indiana Jones hat—it
slides on my head
with every nod to you
or every nod I think
sexy to the boys, the
boys at the OK corral.

Jessica Newman: Stories

The First Drink

A man with his father's tears. The tincture of leather against darkened pine. He spent his years searching for a bottle of such perfect green.

The Prisoner

His eyes have never once looked up. His tongue stumbles, loses its way in his mouth. He answers "my mother," no matter the question.

Sunlight

More hands were used for this than for any other thing.

The Train Ride

Each woman I pass, a blackened town beyond the window. It has been days since I met you.

There are reminders of sitters on the seats. Where their hands touched. I look for other signs. If they held the armrest too long.

I am not sure of the time. Dawn and dusk take the same color.

Ribbon

At one point, water was focused into a movement of cloth.

Christopher Barnes: With Sideburns

“He’s cute in his mohair suit
and he keeps his pockets full of spending loot.”
- The Ad Libs

the mohair suit
makes Kabbala the pharaoh-hound bark

the pull-on mohair suit
makes the fuzz box flang-a-lang

the greenfinch mohair suit’s
Herman Munster balmy

the mohair suit is uh-huh
and out of its box

Rodney Nelson: Praeludium

cold windstorm made a hurrying
of the park in the air mainly
so little remained to whick or
spin
men that had mown the fall leaves
would wait to take what came down now
a branch or more
many squirrels
were hunching together on a
dry bare patch around one oak
tails
kinked low in the hurry
might have
been adding to and might have been
removing
were gray
whatever
wanted to refuge in sunlight
had to stay out of the main air

Eileen Neary: Pleasenever

When I came home and dad said fuck you
and he made it sound so bad
and when I smirked and showed no regret well I
was being so strong for you.

Michael Stewart: The Tattooed Girl

A girl who is fed only on fish and poems.

Her skin is the pale white of someone who lives underground. Flakes off and falls like ashes.

She curls her hands into the size of her heart. Her short fingernails pressing into her palms. With a sewing needle caught between her thumb and finger she pulls out tiny beads of blood and mixes them with ink.

A peacock fighting a tiger. A squid pulling stars into the ocean. And careful Moorish latticework--with what may be eyes peeking from the occasional knot--that webs around her thighs.

Curtis Smith: The Dress

The woman hung a dress on the back of her bedroom door. Black dress, white door, and caught in the hazy fringes of sleep, she often believed the dress was floating, a dark fish circling her dreams. The dress was a size six. This was her goal. She dieted. She exercised. At first, she attended meetings, but she discovered a more intimate motivation by sitting on her bed and studying the dress.

In summer, she swam in the lake. She could float for hours. The waves undulated beneath her. The lake's shores touched other states, even another country. In the lake, she did not feel large. She floated and swam and floated and swam until the city's buildings and smokestacks dwindled. With the sun warm on her face, she tried to imagine the day she would fit into the dress, but the scene, so deeply wished for, proved difficult to conjure. Instead, she pictured the unseen world beneath her, the menagerie of the forgotten and the lost, treasures waiting to be washed ashore by restless tides.

Diana Pollin: three chapters from

The Lady of the Lambs

... really absolutely nothing to worry about

Oh the blooming merriness of mornings! Breakfestivities abound. Spoons spooling amber honey. Lazy jams coaxed toastward. The Sun of April, like the milk-post-dust man in and out. The untouched wallflower of the table, The Geneva Messenger at the base of the teapot, forsaken. Breakfast fancies no column more solemn than the - born- wed -'n- dead. Retreat into your fold, Messenger. Time enough for the real world to creep in. Let the April sunlight flit and frolic a moment or two. Can't this moment last forever? You know the answer.

Ah! But the sunlight of his twentieth year. Flitted here and there...from tea pot, to tray to toast. Here a warm sun kiss – then ploof ! a cloud and shadows on the window shades. Nothing serious. The morning star returned to dispel the darkness. And a stern old man, Père, but with a glint of gaiety in his eyes, (this time) forsaking the Messenger to call in his son. “I have decided to grant your request for a horse, my son.” Stern Père, turning the Meissen china cup, plop’splashed another sugar cube. Tiny tea eddies. Oh yes, forget not the edifying Père sermon on responsibility. “Now that you have a horse, my son...” But the sermon lay like the Messenger at the base of the teapot. It dissolved like anger in a twinkling of an eye. Couldn't this moment last forever? You knew the answer.

Oh la Vierge aux agneaux! When will he get news from Paris? Shade of Père!

Intercede with the Almighty. With the tempter. With whomever-whatever you like. But make mine that tableau. It couldn't be more difficult than a horse!

What are you saying, Emma? No more sugar, Emma dear, just pass the paper. Might as well have a...Damn that evil German clown. When will all his nonsense be finished and is more toast in the making? Is this all the mail?

Ring for Sonia. The toast, my dear, was perfect like that mulberry jam. Thank you dear Sonia, a marvel, really. We'd be quite lost without you. And has the postman come? Ah! A letter from Kirsten. Our Kirsten in Berlin. Nothing really to worry about. Never mind the fly caught in the jam. And the Vierge in that miserable gallery in Paris. Not yet mine.

Fling aside the Messenger, the dogs that yelp, the sheep that bleat; the wolves at the... Quick! A letter that Our daughter, the Berlin lady took pains to pen. Share a shoulder dear husband, She's my daughter too. Our only child.

"Despite enormous difficulties, Dearest Papa and Mama, Nathan is able to keep the bank afloat and our depositors happy. Please forgive the tedious intrusion of economic news, but these are distressing times and poverty is still all around us. Let us hope for a bit of political stability which will drown out the noises of the National Socialists. Dearest parents, we are safe and will continue to be so in the land of Goethe and Bach. A wife – dearest Mama has always told me – must stand by her husband and her first duty is the home and now that you have a grand son, it is ever more so. Aside from that, the concert season has started in Berlin..."

“Emma, meine liebe, have you ever suggested that Kirsten and Nathan move from Berlin to, let us say, Switzerland?”

“Leo, mon chéri, not seriously. I was merely lying to discover the truth. Our turtle doves still find Berlin quite bearable. As you can see. There is absolutely nothing to worry about. But what is that gilt-edged fine velum and gold lettered visiting card?”

Monsieur Berman,

Please receive my sincerest respect and warmest greetings. I shall take the liberty of interrupting your late afternoon activities to present you with a delayed gift from your humble servant. Please remember me to Madame, to whom I am greatly obliged.

Gregorio Malocchio.

“Gregorio Malocchio? Ah! The friend of the cousin or the cousin of a friend. Or something like that. The tall handsome black-eyed gentleman who was present at Her Wedding two years ago. Handsome in the absolute but I found something repellent in his dark sultriness. Wondered if he might have been a suitor. Well, if he finally delivers a belated wedding gift for Kirsten, fine and good. But I hope it will go no further.”

A murderous slurp dregs the drains of Leo’s teacup. Damn Malocchio and his predictably cheesy cadeau! Damn the Parisians and their this-sing and that-ing over a few francs. And Damn himself for being so mad over the Madonna. But who’s ringing at the door? Sonia dear, is it really a telegram?

“Mr. Berman VAA purchased at price u asked delivery today at 10 am. (The Gallery).”

Thank you ...Oh munificent universe! Thank you peeping sunlight of my twentieth now my fiftieth year. Thank you stern Père of the horse! My request is granted. The prize is mine! Really absolutely nothing to worry about. If only this moment could last forever!

Lord of the Lady of the Lambs

A prayer for its safe unbroken arrival. Delivery at the door, pen out, papers signed, Leo, Emma, Sonia the cook and Hans the caretaker around the tissue-swathed Lady laid out on the For Very Important Guests dining room table. Five thick layers flower-petalled away reveal The Madonna of the Lambs haloed against the dark wood. Demure the Lady, and playful the elderly faced Christ child pulling her hair. (Or so it seems.) The Moorish shepherds by their sheep are kneeling. Downcast eyes. Humbled faces. Who is being led to slaughter? No, no. We discussed it in Paris, Emma. It is a painting of Lov van Dope. Darkness like the shadow on the shades stays not in this house. It goes in its alcove above My Fireplace in My Study. As we have agreed.

Leo in his den spends the morning conversing with the shadows. Stern Père there, a smile on his face – ‘twas not often - and the gay litt’l glint still in his eyes but his whites are spotted flinty grey like the cinder speckled monster mouth of the fireplace. Banish those visions. The shadows on the shades vanish. They always did and do. The Madonna commands the alcove. Nothing really to... Damn, it’s past one and he’s not even dressed.

But the inebriety of possessing has possessed him. Nothing or no one the day throws his way means more than a pfennig. It matters little what he puts on his back. It matters little that Emma has called him to lunch. It matters even less that Emma has come —chitchatting into His Study. In one ear and out the other. Her banter a banal distraction he could do without although he loves her. But not today. His Lady is laid in a niche. His spirit, wholly and highly triumphant, sparrow hawks the Lady of the Lambs. His alone.

Giddiness has kicked the clock ahead and the day is darkening. Sonia announces Malocchio who has come at an opportune moment. The day long self celebrations are wearing thin. The treasure in the alcove is becoming a sort of habituée. Laud her charm to the visitor before she becomes just decorative. But Malocchio cuts him short.

“I am indeed most most pleased to have you with us again. A friend of Nathan is always welcome.” The tail ends of the day’s dreaminess meander towards audacious mendacity. Even his handshake is a bit too emphatic. But, it goes over his visitor’s head. He has come to discuss, of all things, politics!

“I won’t beat about the bush, Herr Berman.” (He is Luciferically handsome. An undoubtedly redoubtable demon. The shade of stern Père recedes into the fireplace. This time, my boy, you will have to do it alone.)

“You may call me Signor.”

“Very well. Signor Berman. You know what is happening to your daughter’s ...”

“Oh that, Signor Malocchio. That. Please. I shall allay your fears. She is quite well and most happy. Civilisation, my dear man, has a way of being civilised. You know she cannot leave her husband and son. The family goes back two hundred years. Solid as rock. Your fears are groundless. And no one can foretell the future which apparently belongs to God. In whom I do not believe.”

But, the demon, fallen from the Social Graces, paid no heed. He spewed forth accounts of fire and bloodshed “unimaginable” to those “sitting prettily in Swiss salons.” (His provocative description.) Tales so horrifying that stern Père egressed from the recesses. The demon spoke; but could he get the message across?

“Forgive me for being tedious with the intrusion of politics in my otherwise social visit but you will see that it is tied up with the gift I beg you so humbly to accept.”

“My dear Malocchio, I might point out it is your wedding gift to Kirsten and Nathan. Not to me.”

“No, Signor Berman. It is very specifically a gift to you.”

Out of a black folder comes a portrait of his Daughter. A coarse, overdone, maudlin, vulgar, roguishly rouged, preposterously posed “unlikeness” of his child. Of course, seated on a horse. A red curtain as a backdrop. Leo’s jaw dropped. Was it a joke? What should he think? Only the Social Graces stifled his scream.

“My gift comes with a price tag, of sorts.” The demon added. “As you refused to take steps to bring your daughter from Germany, which was what I expected, please accept the portrait I painted of her which will insure her safety but on the condition that I install it.”

“I cannot begrudge you that.” Install and get you gone. You’re overstaying your welcome. But, what was in stern Père’s eyes? A perplexing shadow? Listen to a mountebank with his magic portraits? Père dear, if you were not dead; I’d think you’ve become senile!

But, what are you doing, dark gifting demon? Removing the Lady of the Lambs from her niche? How dare you! Your miserable scribbled-and-daubed-bauble in place of the 15th Century French Masterpiece! What pretension! Only my extreme impatience to see you out the door stops me from speaking.

And it is Malocchio who speaks. “I cannot understand the symbolism of lambs. Noisome, noisy and stupid animals. A beauty, now, in place of the bleaters.” Pleased with his jeu de mots, the scoundrel asks for his hat and leaves.

Poor Madonna sofa-lain. The Whore of Babylon in the alcove above the monster pit of a fireplace. But what is that hesitation in stern Pere’s eyes? There is no question that AS SOON AS THE COAST IS CLEAR, down it will go, into the bowls of a drawer and up the Lady. And toss all bugaboos and superstitions to the winds.

How could we have realised?

The telegram sent poor Emma to bed probably for the rest of her life.

Crumble crumble dear old world, one in which we wandered upstairs and downstairs and in my... Ah! Stern Père in the study. You who have accompanied me these five years and a half years since that miserable devil ... Not half so miserable as I. All I tried to be is rational in this world fraught with madness and now I'm punished! Were did they take them, my daughter, my grandson, the screaming crowds? Did they want a lecture on Bach and Kant when they threw them in the fire? Were they rational? How could we have realised, sitting here in calm Geneva, what THEY –whoever they are – were really up to? How could we have been so stupid as to think that ... But it is not a matter of thinking. I did not even have the instinct of a mother cat saving her kittens from a fire. Oh no! I was up in the cool mountain air unable to feel the flames. ME!

Or, stern Père, was I dreaming when Malocchio gave me that hideousness which I hid in a drawer? The real hideousness is myself. Sitting here in calm Geneva while the rest of the world burns and singing little ditties to the Lady of the Lambs as if I did not know what was happening. She was my pride and joy. Your eyes tell me that whatever I did would not have made a bit of difference but at least to placate some frivolous human eating god monster, I could have tossed the Lady of the Lambs into a fire and left the Whore of Babylon where it sat. It would have been an admission of... of... being able to contain my pride. At least that.

Night time now. The shadows on the shades remain. Just one small concession to cheap Fate... The drawer where I shoved the Whore of Babylon also contains a loaded revolver. A last glance at the Lady of the Lambs. The moment will last forever.

Ross Plovnick: Fox

In fables we pose goats
and grapes and storks
we pose foibles
you can cope with
in weeds or woods
your pointed muzzle
tail a flag
attentive ears.

You and brother
wind are wild and leave
no paper shadow we can find
in twisting faithless
forest filled with dreams
we need you
red-furred blade
to stab a path.

Iain Britton: Trafficking

The bringing in of taro, breadfruit, mangoes
and a tropical sun and a chunk

of Nuku'alofa or Apia or Tuvalu,
the bringing in of anaesthetised parrots, chameleons

and a lump of frozen southern air,
some packets of soft white stuff –

strange feelings of triumphantly trying to outsmart
the dogs, the electronic manipulations of bags,

cases, personal packs. It's a game. I ask,
what's in it for me when you hop in the taxi

to go home - if you get to hop in the taxi to go home.
I'm in the middle of a concourse of summer traffic.

Not a shot's been fired today
to send everyone screaming, not a traveller's

blown himself up in the name of brotherhood.
A girl passes carrying a pink orchid.

She sniffs the orchid. The point is,
do I stay glued to a multi-eyed screen of images –

the 6 o'clock news is old already – Mao Tse-tung
is dead. Apartheid has gone. An American flag

has been left on the moon and living on mountains
has become fashionable for those who can afford it.

Space travel's now all about
location, location, location.

I'm beginning to wonder, if you're going to arrive,
if you're all you say you are.

Computers catch colds and pandemics
are becoming more genocidal.

Fundamentalists are still experimenting
with the body parts of apostates

and donors don't declare themselves as they should.
On this melting highway the traffic's doing a crawl.

The taxis are writing in the tar. I've been to the airport
and back, been to the office,

been home and back to the airport
to look for you and you've probably brought me

nothing for all my efforts.

Christine Jessica Reilly: Two Pieces

What Makes Me Anxious

the sound of sneezing, the fact that the heart is slightly inclined to the right. I'm left-handed, I have just a few hours to live. Stephen has a crush on me and he thinks I'm joking. *Come on a date with me*, he keeps asking. *Young people don't die*. Sanctuary is what people call when they can't decide between 911 and 411. If Stephen had asked me on a date to Sanctuary, maybe I would have said yes. Instead he asked me to the docks, where teenagers go to try and not conceive children. I wasn't popular because I had a single green horn growing out of my stomach; my father is a narwhal. I read books and stayed home. I used to have dreams about reading books that didn't exist. I loved those dreams until I woke up and realized. I used to spy on the teenagers fornicating on the docks and slip them dental dams. No one knew what a dental dam was. Some beavers came around and built McMansions out of them.

Stephen and I are on the docks and a college student is asking us to slapbag a box of Franzia. He calls it, *the body and blood of Christ*. I have one hour to live. Carpenter ants live on the moon now. They're building a chain of hotels just for smokers. The hotels are all towers, standing like fathers. A cloud of blue dust-smoke perpetually lingers above the hotel chains. The ants were tired of ethnic jokes from the other insects so they resettled. They have developed their own dialect. It sounds like a combination of earth ants and green rocks. One hotel is now the Universe Trade Center. There is no need for a World Trade Center. There is no need for even a World.

Stars understand heavy labor. They are exploding, imploding, ploding their way through the cosmos. I know that the stars are definitely made of gasoline but I can't tell you the reason. I was sworn to secrecy. My father bought stock in Exxon-Mobil. That was the day the Valdez ship

exploded.

The tides cursed the moon as the inky soup drowned all its sea-creatures. The tides and the moon were never the same again. They were both females, screaming, "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" You know when they say *too soon, too soon--*

when is that moment where it's okay to make a joke?
I used to write joke poems about Hiroshima and the Holocaust.
Hitler's gas bills were very high. The moon got rich off him and hates to talk about it. She built a subterranean Holocaust memorial.
Stephen and I had our first kiss in the human hair exhibit.

My father could never handle his money. Narwhals aren't necessarily known for managing money. I know that's a stereotype, but it's true! Ocelots are better. My cousin by marriage is an ocelot. She got married in the other universe, the one we traded oil with, where marriage for every party! and everything! was legal. I asked my parents for permission to marry a cardinal. What kind of cardinal? Bird or religious figure? they asked, because the church is still the damn same. A cardinal, the type that can't marry, sang at my confirmation. He told me to pick a new name because my other two names weren't Christian enough. My first name is Christine. I don't know what the Jesus he was talking about. He told me to begin again.
I was very alarmed. The cardinal liked little boys. He never touched them, but he asked one in confessional, "Do you masturbate, son?" The child became an atheist. That child was my father. He saw me flying out of the World Trade Center. Thank God I'm a girl.
Thank God I'm half-narwhal.

Naked Exhibit

One of my mottos has been that the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.
-Elie Wiesel

Why, there are only two rooms in the Venetian Jewish historical museum: two barely-clothed rooms! They chime, *Oh hello! You surprised me. We were just daydreaming about the*

Titians and Tintoretos, keeping in time with floating pieces of locust and human fuzz, leftover tourist, fattening music in the air that only spare oil-paintings can hear. The exhibits all

smoke pot together after the museum closes; it is their replacement for being in utero. I didn't know every corner of a room can breathe and use the restroom and swallow things and people that decrease

their brain activity. When certain folk entered, I watched the exhibit lose confidence: the ground recalcitrantly bent up, like a smile, hoping to close in on itself. Painting legs splayed: like female,

like a palsied china doll. Art's voice is a falsetto, but artifact is tone-deaf. Artifact never sings, his polished surfaces do not believe in the imagination; History is the only thing he mentions. History

and triggered rape memories, dividing and erasing, *please please*, binging. I can't tell you why-- sometimes they just happen, by which I mean sick rare explorable situations.

When my grandfather died, a louvre in the ceiling opened wide and charmed the pants off me. I said, *I have your jacket*, in this very adult voice which reminded me

of my mother's. He said, *I hate telling this part of the story. That's why I've avoided it for so long*. I waited for myth, then washed my hands with icy soap. Together we

admired the natural shape of a bubble. The hole in the ceiling and I took a shower together until we couldn't breathe anymore: a game of chance,

a racist romance, a barely there Museum, a pressure on my navel-- the last generation to hear words spoken of the Holocaust.

Guy Beining: two poems and two illustrations

inside the wrong reflections

there is a terrible hump
in the earth, & it is
what we have made extinct,
having hurled our absorptions into gravel pits.

flocks of white wings start
flames in attics of the insane
& yellow windows turn into a
brittle gold that dissolves into flecks.

we speak of drowning
within walls of water
slipping past sunfish
that are the tongues
of this liquid space
yet we only thread water
bubbling over.

bookie (16)

o, we look out with these glasses
thru smeared window, hving killed
3 flies & a wasp, each cornered
in the L of a pane.
are we fish cakes in hell
waiting for the grease to rise?
this is not a jingle; it is not
tacit; it is more declarative,
in line with sponge & blood;
on line with feverish paths taking
one further out of range.
now, leaning back on a chair,
in brief hierarchy of this day,
one feels the theme of moving,
& one feels rhapsody of water quench one's thirst,
tho nowhere in this act have i
left or cut my truculent past.

the bOOkie piled up his receipts on his desk & ran a pencil
into each of his nostrils.





Joel Chace: Wounds

Classic betrayer. Petite and entirely bald, the woman sat quietly, alone in the mid-May sunlight; she was naked, each article of her clothing folded and placed in a pile beside her on the bench. "Don't make your problem my problem, boy." There certainly is a point to wild mice and crazy loons. I fear you have not a high idea of my position. Liking to fiddle around with large things. While leading his regiment, he had fifteen balls shot through his hat, beard, and uniform, but he emerged from battle without a wound.

All the inside cottage windows had been gnawed by a squirrel, which they found curled up dead on a tri-cornered pillow in a back bedroom. Those photographs were the first, on any significant scale, of that sort of thing. Where they fell. Calculating messages caused great frustration; they didn't sink in, he complained, because there weren't enough stoppages of time. Seems she existed twice. Stragglers come in from the field, some wounded, some tenderly escorting comrades who are wounded; it generally takes two or three to perform this service for one man and all hands wear a gloomy countenance and limp. The green bocce ball nestled right up against the pill.

He crept to the very edge, then looked far down into the waters of the fjord. You have to choose to get sort of dead around it. My rubber blanket is not quite big enough to accommodate ever so sweet & welcoming a guest on the rough hill sides, or in the drenching valleys that constitute my changing homes. Inexplicably shallow. Even out on the river it was so steamy hot that the poleman on the barge had to wipe his face with a huge red handkerchief. A victory is fine for the lads, yes, but it will fade in their thoughts as quickly as the moon courses through its cycles. So being first, they had a real impact. Used to little account.

Nystowhen Biter: Family Portrait

Grandpa was up in the chimney again and nothing grandma did could get him down. It was raining so grandma opened up the cover that kept the rain from coming down the chimney. Grandpa hated getting wet but he stayed there all the same.

I stuck my face to the windowpane and waited for my brother to come home and listened to grandma try to reason with grandpa. “*Daragoi*, look, some tuna fish. Your favorite!” He ignored her. I saw someone strutting down the path and perked up, but when they stepped into the light of the lamppost I saw that it wasn’t him after all. I sighed and put my cheek back against the glass. Grandma patted my shoulder as she walked past. “Your mother will be home soon.” I didn’t care when my mother came home. She would go straight to the kitchen and come out with a plate of potatoes and cold turkey and go to her room and eat it there. Evenings tired her out, and driving a carriage in the rain especially.

I heard the creak of the wheels before I saw the carriage drive up. I didn’t bother to look. I knew it was her. She’d take it to the barn like always and stable the goat and feed it, and then she’d clean out the carriage for a few minutes, tossing out cigar butts and dropped playing cards and frayed string and used knives. I liked meeting the people she drove. She almost never brought them home with her, but sometimes she rented them the spare room for the night, or the attic, because it had rafters, in case they slept with their clawed feet in the wood, upside-down.

Grandma had given up on grandpa and just sat by the fireplace as if warming herself. My mother asked, “Is he up there again?” and grandma just kept staring into space, which was all the answer my mother needed. She

blew out her breath through her teeth and headed for the kitchen. She didn't ask where my brother was, because he always went kite-catching this time of the day.

It was really getting stormy. I could hear the trees shaking in the wind, almost as loud as the thunder. Then, a flash of lightning. I smiled. He wouldn't stay out long in a storm like this if there was lightning. I turned from the windowsill and went to sit on the carpet by my grandmother's feet. I knew he'd be home soon and I didn't want him to catch me waiting.

Sure enough, his footsteps slapped up the path and then he was banging the door aside, his wet hair plastered to his forehead. His jacket was covered in red stains. My grandmother rose out of her chair. "*Chortei materi*, you're hurt! Are you still bleeding? My god, take off that jacket this instant, let me see the wound!" He shook her off like a bothersome fly.

"I'm not hurt! I just caught a stork by accident, that's all. I thought it was a kite, big and pale, but it wasn't. And I didn't realize what I was struggling to pull down from the sky till it was too late."

I smiled and blinked at him. "You have feathers in your hair."

"Do I?" He ran a hand through his hair and pulled a few out.

My grandmother had expertly switched gears from concerned to scolding. "Pulled a bird down, how careless can you be! And got blood all over your nice jacket I made for you? Into the kitchen at once, or if we don't soak it, it'll stay red forever."

They fussed and they argued and they bustled into the kitchen. The door slammed behind them and muffled their words. A moment later, it opened and my mother flew out into the living room, alarmed by the noise, a plate of food held in one hand. She stood there, lost for a moment in one of her tangled thoughts, and then it straightened itself out and she walked into her room and shut the door with a quiet click. The rain pattered on the

windowsills. I waited.

Ever so softly, ever so quietly, a tiny bit of ash drifted down out of the fireplace, and I watched my grandpa's skinny claw-like hand tremble its way out of the fireplace and onto the mantelpiece like an inquisitive crab. Apparently satisfied with what it found, the rest of him emerged, feet still up in the flue, hands walking on the floor. They tip-toed to the plate of tuna my grandma had left by her chair, gave it a tug, and pulled it back up into the chimney along with the rest of him.

Ted Chiles: The Kims

They were born on the same day at the same hospital because back then the town was only large enough for one hospital. Both were named Kim, one from the Conger family; the other, from the Conner family. Kim Conger should have been named Kimberly, but her mother was frugal and wanted to save on the monogramming. Kim Conner's father didn't like the name Kim; he thought it sounded too foreign. He didn't say anything since his father-in-law was also named Kim.

The two babies looked so alike those who saw them together thought they were twins. The night nurse swore they rolled toward each other and tried to reach across and touch, but the nurse was from the third district, well known for its taverns. So most people were skeptical.

After leaving the hospital the Kims didn't meet for fourteen years. It was in ninth grade at the town's only high school where they came together for the second time in the advanced placement math class. The Conger Kim sat in the third seat in the second row, and the Conner Kim sat in the fourth seat. Alphabetical seating was still the rule. They might not have fallen in love if Billy Conkling had not been held back in third grade and Martha Conley's parents hadn't divorced and moved out of town. At least it might have taken longer with a pair of heads between the Kims.

That day they sat at the same table and shared lunches, which were the same: chicken salad sandwiches with green grapes. They didn't notice the stares of

the rest of the school.

Kim looked into his eyes, and the light was just so that she could see herself and she knew that he could see himself in hers.

You are beautiful, he said.

Yes, we are, she said.

The two Kims were the same height and weight and still looked like twins. They even had the same haircut, a Sixties Beatles look. They wore identical outfits. In most schools this would have been an embarrassment and people might have taken it as a sign. But this high school had a uniform policy. Girls were allowed to wear trousers or skirts. Kim chose trousers that day, and she never wore a skirt to school again.

From that moment in the ninth grade, the Kims took the same classes except gym. They made identical grades, but none of their teachers could ever catch them cheating. Their classmates eventually got used to the sight of them together, and it was only Kim's breasts that allowed people to tell the difference. They graduated third and fourth in their class. The Conner Kim wasn't as proficient at tetherball.

Their parents, especially the Congers who didn't trust people from outside their own district, were against their daughter going to the same college. The Kims borrowed the money and attended the same college where they took all the same classes, even gym. It was a progressive school. They tried to dress differently but when they met in the morning they usually had made the same

choices. The Conger Kim grew her hair long, and the Conner Kim cut his short and sometime would only shave every other day. It helped.

The Kims were so in love that they had a hard time keeping their hands and lips off each other. People who met them found their display of affection disturbing and a bit exciting.

On graduation, they tied for sixth in their college class, moved in together and began to work at the same real estate company. After closing on their first house, the Kims boarded a plane to Las Vegas.

The wedding was delayed by the verification of their documents. The Kims patiently sat holding hands, listening to a medley of The King's romantic hits on the organ. After the ceremony the Kims kissed. As the Justice of the Peace watched, he might have wondered what it would be like to be one of them. Standing nose-to-nose and opening your eyes to what might be your own eyes looking back at you. Your eyes filled with love and desire and need. In the wedding bed knowing just the right moment to touch, withhold and finish. That it is easy being in love with oneself after all the practice.

The Justice of the Peace might have wondered what would happen if the Kims ever began to hate themselves.

The Kims returned to the real estate firm where they worked as a team, sharing listings. They averaged three sales a month or one and a half each. The company average was two. Some believed their disappointing performance was because of the economy and interest rates, but most thought it was due to their looks. For no matter how hard the Kims tried to vary their appearance,

it seemed obvious they were twins, even if they weren't. It was also clear to anyone who saw them that they loved, and lusted, after each other. More than once they had been surprised at open houses in various states of arousal and dress, usually in bathrooms. Many customers found this unsettling, especially those with a sibling of the opposite gender.

In November, the owner of the real estate company sold the firm and retired to Detroit. The new boss, Jimmy Meyers, took to calling the Kims, Kimi and Kimbo. And the trouble began.

In the second week of the first month of the New Year, Jimmy summoned the Kims to a meeting. Jimmy sat at the head of the glass conference table sipping a cup of coffee. A thermos of coffee and the normal additives had been placed in the center of the table. On the wall to Jimmy's right, a large city map stood attached to a bulletin board. The Kims sat facing the map. Neither was interested in coffee.

In the map were pins of different colors. The Kims deduced that the pins represented their listings. The colors were loosely grouped in different areas of the map. Most of the yellow pins were in the third district, while the red pins were mainly in the second district.

Guys, we got a problem, Jimmy said.

What problem? asked Kimbo. Kimi nodded her head.

You're both good realtors. Kimi slid her left hand out of her lap. You know the area, the finances, and do your homework. She moved the nail of her index finger up and down Kimbo's thigh. Always show up prepared. Kimbo moved his leg closer to Kimi and moved his hand to small of her back. You're freaking the customers out.

Why? asked Kimi as her fingers tickled the back of Kimbo's knee.

Jimmy told Kimi to work the listings in the third district and told Kimbo to take the listings in the second district. No more meeting customers together; especially no open houses together.

We can control ourselves, they said.

You don't even know when you're doing it, Jimmy said.

Let us try.

Non-negotiable.

We can share a single job.

You already behave like you do.

We'll quit.

I'll miss you.

Please, Jimmy.

The listings stay here, he said

Kimbo lowered his head and said, Okay, Jimmy. We'll try working apart.

Kimi turned her head sharply towards Kimbo and said, We will?

We should quit, Kimi said.

We would just run into the same problem, Kimbo said.

I don't want to work without you, Kimi said.

Think about the student loans, Kimbo said.

Kimi didn't answer. She didn't cry, even though she wanted to, because Kim hadn't, even though he should have.

The next two weeks neither sold a house. Each day Kimi and Kimbo drove to work together and sat at their separate desks, but both found reasons to move about the office. Kimi would get up every fifteen minutes. At a quarter after, she went to the bathroom. At half past, she got a drink of water. At a quarter till, she went to the supply cabinet and at the top of the hour, she sharpened her pencils. Kimbo reversed the sequence and lagged the time by seven and half minutes. The rest of the office started to think of them as trains, except they were always on schedule.

Jimmy gave them two weeks to adjust and then called Kimbo into the conference room.

I'm opening a new branch in the second district, and I want you to be in charge, Jimmy said.

But we only have one car, Kimbo said.

You get a company car.

Kimi will quit.

You'll get a bigger office and your own secretary.

It will be too hard on Kimi.

The manager gets a half a point commission of all sales from the office.

I can't tell her, Kimbo said.

I can, Jimmy said.

Kimbo walked into the house carrying a box. In the box was a bottle of champagne, the real thing, from France. The bottle was adorned with a painted flower. He splurged on the gift set which included two painted glasses with smaller versions of the flowers for an extra fifteen dollars. He took the

bottle from the box, then the two glasses, and placed them on the coffee table in the living room.

Kimi started to cry.

We made a sale. Why are you crying? he asked.

He opened the champagne, correctly, holding the cork and turning the bottle. It opened with a faint puff, not an explosion, followed by a gusher of wine as the bottle had when they celebrated their first sale. Kimbo knew more about wine now than he had then and had gained a taste for it.

We need the money. We haven't had a commission this month, Kimbo said.

It's your first sale, she said.

My sales are our sales, he said.

No. You are giving me half.

We will always share everything. Right down the middle. Equal. I promise, he said.

As Kimbo filled the glasses, he bent his knees so that he might be at eye level with them to ensure that neither contained more than the other. Equal shares had always been the way between them. The sparkling wine filled each glass to the top of the flower. The pink color accentuating the red in the petals.

Kimbo handed Kimi her glass, and they drank to the image of themselves in each other. When they finished, they threw their glasses into the fireplace to seal the promise. But only one broke. And neither was sure whose glass survived.

The next morning when Kimi closed the door to the house, she was surprised as she was each morning to see two cars in the driveway. Kimbo's company car was the same make as theirs but a newer model, and the dark gray finish shone in a way that theirs didn't.

Kimbo turned to kiss Kimi, as he did every morning, and his lips touched her nose and followed the contours down to her lips. Oh Kimi, he thought, your sadness is dragging you down.

Kimi started to tear for she knew that Kim was standing taller. More erect. Proud of his car. His job. Himself. She couldn't focus without him.

Three days later Kimbo brought home another bottle of champagne.

The next morning Kimi stood in front of the mirror assessing her figure. She brushed her wet hair back, then dropped her arms and moved her shoulder blades towards each other, straightening her back and lifting her breasts. Kimbo watched from the doorway. He began to swell, taking the three steps needed to stand behind her and lightly pressed against her. She felt him rising and smiled. It was a game they played, turning themselves into the Indian goddess with four arms. They had first seen a statue of Lakshmi in a college museum. She was one, but contained something more.

Kimi raised her arms high, and Kimbo extended his underneath hers. From a distance no one would be able to tell whose arms were whose. Kimbo bent his neck to look into the mirror to see her excitement. A blush colored her chest. Her nipples were erect. He pulled his head behind hers, hiding himself except for his arms, and smelled her shampoo.

Kimi looked at the reflection and saw the top of Kimbo's head.

Do you have slippers on? she asked.

No, he said.

Stand still, she said, and walked to the mirror, picked up her lipstick and drew a red line across the top of his head. She walked back, handed him the lipstick, and stood where he had. He drew a line over her reflection.

They stood next to each other, naked, studying the lines on the mirror. Then they considered each other. Her blush was gone. Kimbo was taller by almost two inches.

When did you grow? she asked.

I don't know, he answered.

Both wondered why they hadn't noticed

Do you think it's a medical problem? Should you see a doctor?

People can grow into their late twenties. Can't they? he asked.

It could be something serious, she said.

He made a soothing sound, took her hand and led her to the bed where they made love, warmed by the early morning sun.

When he lay atop her, in her, Kimi truly felt the change because Kimbo had to tilt his head so that their noses touched. The angle changed his eyes, hooding them.

She was tighter than usual. He came quickly. She didn't.

Kimbo kissed her, left the bed and walked into the bathroom to take a shower. He paused to consider the lines and wiped them with a Kleenex.

Kimi put on her robe. The sleeve tickled her wrists, a pleasant unfamiliar feeling.

Kimi picked Kimbo up at the second district office on the way to Jimmy Meyers' house. He was having the quarterly party. Kimbo told her that the doctor said late growth spurts are rare but not associated with any serious conditions. He hadn't grown as much as they had thought. Only an inch.

Did he do any tests, she asked.

He took some blood, he said.

They parked and rang the doorbell. Jimmy's wife, Marsha answered.

Hello you two. Congratulations on those sales, Kimbo. Jimmy is out back by the bar. Let me steal Kimi for a minute. OK. Fine.

Marsha linked arms with Kimi and pulled her into the kitchen.

Have some wine, she said, handing Kimi a glass.

So tell me. How are you holding up? I told Jimmy it would be hard on you, but he wouldn't listen to me. Doesn't understand why a couple would want to work together.

Kimi sipped her wine, waiting for Marsha to breathe.

Well, you look great. Have you joined a gym? That suit seems a little bit loose on you. What diet are you on?

Kimi waited until Kimbo was asleep before she climbed out of bed and walked into the bathroom. She found the faint remains of lipstick on the mirror. She took a small ruler from her purse. Two inches. She measured again. Two inches, not one. She put the ruler back into her purse and took out a pencil, leaned against the doorframe and marked her height.

Neither sold a house the next week, but over the weekend Kimbo closed on a duplex. He didn't bring home any champagne, afraid of a scene. She would

ask him to quit. Move. He didn't understand why she wasn't happy for him. He was making it work. Producing. She hadn't sold a house in a month. He was carrying her.

That night as he lay in bed Kimbo surveyed Kimi, and it pleased him. The delicate curve of her spine with the gentle slope of her bottom reminded him of the first time they made love. Had it been nine years? They were just fifteen and still mostly children. Everything new. Both frightened.

She didn't want to make love. He knew that, but her sadness excited him. He began to stroke her back, moving his fingertips down, then retracing with the tops of the nails up setting a motion like a gentle wave. He slowly aroused her, and she relented. As he entered her, he realized the sex was better now.

He'd grown. She knew by the feel of him. His weight on her. How he filled her. He propped himself on his elbows to look into her eyes, and the distance between them grew.

When they finished, he said, Kimi, I love you.

But my name is Kim, she thought.

After he fell asleep, she went to the bathroom and marked a line against the door jam. The new line lay below the old one. She had lost another half an inch.

She went downstairs to their office, turned on the computer and accessed the multiple listing website. Kimbo had made another sale and with that sale he'd

grown and she'd diminished.

Kimi had always thought of her and Kim as one. They were an acre of solid fertile soil. They worked it and made it better. The land fed them, and they could always find shelter within. Their strangeness was a fence that kept the world outside. Kim only needed Kim. She had been happy behind the fence. And when she walked the borders of their land, she knew that their acre was still there. No breach. But within, the land had been divided and now Kimbo had more and Kimi wondered what she had lost.

Does he feel me in him?

Kimi's hand descended on the mouse. She began to move the pointer in cursive motions. She spelled out Kim and underlined their names with a sweep.

Must I disappear into him?

Again, she spelled out Kim, and then stopped the pointer, resting at the base of the m.

Perhaps he into me.

She added an i to the Kim and then pulled up her listings.

Three days later, Kimi brought home a bottle of champagne. Kimbo was gracious. He toasted her success. Proclaimed his faith in her. Declared it a victory for the team.

The next morning, as he dressed, he noticed his new suit didn't quite fit. The arms were too long. Not much, perhaps an inch. But what was puzzling was that it had fit when he tried it on the day before at the tailor's.

Three days later Kimbo found Kimi in the kitchen. An open bottle wrapped by a towel extended from the champagne bucket. A second bottle stood next to the bucket.

Did you close on another house? he asked.

Two, she said. We're even.

He kissed her cheek and said, Congratulations. He picked up the bottle. It was a Blanc de Blanc. Were they out of the Rose?

She raised the glass towards the window and watched the bubbles stream upward through the clear wine. She took a sip and said, No. I just wanted something different.

But we have always bought Brut Rose.

That was then. I prefer this, she said, and took another sip. It's untainted.

I thought you liked Rose.

She took another glass from the cabinet, filled it and handed it to him. She leaned into him and tilted her head so that her lips reached his ear and said, I did. She kissed him lightly and traced the length of his lobe with the tip of her

tongue.

I could like it again, she said. Kim, I would like it again.

He put the glass slowly down on the counter and walked out of the kitchen.

Kimi picked up his glass and emptied it into hers. Then she drank it down, the force of it raw on her throat.

Kimi turned on the light as she ducked into the kitchen carrying a bottle of Blanc de Blanc. She surveyed the wine rack but couldn't find space. Instead, she opened the refrigerator and pulled out one of the three cold bottles that lay side by side on the third shelf. The new bottle filled the gap. Kimi stripped the foil, loosened the wire hood and pressed on the cork with her thumb. It popped and flew across the room. Foam erupted wetting her hands. She smiled, licked her fingers and poured a glass. She placed the open bottle on the kitchen table and sat down in the chair facing the counter, leaned back and put her right calf on the corner of the table. Her skirt was tight and rode up her thigh. She raised her glass and sipped.

The wine rack formed a perfect square of four columns and four rows of bottles. The gold foil tops were almost perfectly aligned because in three of the columns all of the bottles were the same height and width and color, though a few were from older vintages. The last column was split. The first and second row held bottles that matched the other three columns. The foil tops of the bottles in the third and fourth rows were pink. These bottles were

painted with flowers.

Kimi finished her glass. Stood, pulled another flute from the cabinet with her right hand. She grasped the bottle in her left hand. At the doorway into the hall, she used the bottom of the bottle to turn off the lights. She bowed to clear the doorframe and walked on down the hall.

I'm home, she said.

No one answered as she climbed the stairs two at a time.

The light from the bathroom illuminated Kimbo asleep on their bed. The sheets were bunched at his feet and his head rested on the bed just below the pillow. He wasn't wearing pajamas but a pair of briefs, which sagged at the crotch and spread on the sheet. He looked a little bit like Gandhi resting after spinning cotton, with his chest falling in from the fast.

Kimi put the glasses on the dresser, filled hers and held the bottle over the other with the wine at the edge. She wanted to fill Kimbo's glass, wake him and tell him about the contract. How the negotiations went. Sitting in the kitchen on her cell phone with the owner's realtor, her client walking the house talking to her husband bids back and forth, sections of the offer crossed out and rewritten and finally the pen out. The contract signed. Earnest money folded and tucked into her pocket. Kimi wanted to prepare him but she didn't. He would know in the morning.

She stripped and walked into the bathroom past the doorframe without a glance in the mirror. Used the toilet and brushed her teeth, returned and

climbed into bed. When she stretched out her feet dislodged the sheet and she kicked it. Kimbo had rolled to the right towards the edge of the bed. His posture was rigid and she wondered if he was awake. Kimi followed him onto her side stretching her arms above him and her legs below framing him, matching him. But they no longer matched. Kimi's growth had broaden her features with a roundness of the cheekbones while Kimbo's had shrunk in and her eyes had widened and his had sharpened. They looked related, a young aunt and older nephew whose common gene dominated in both.

During the night, Kimbo rolled towards her and Kimi lowered her arm, raised her knees and gathered him to her and the arms and legs mixed and melded shifting the weights, balancing the shares, equaling the sum.

