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Volume 6
She Died in My Arms
Anonymous

She sat before me,
Folded legs, on the floor,
Poorest posture, puffy eyed,
Unkempt hair, her lips dry.
Silently begging me
To save her life,
Silently begging me
To save her life,
Silently screaming
She wants to die.
Outreached hands,
Tears rolled down,
A drugged stupor stand,
Tears fell, a sad frown.
She reached to me.
I reached back.
She sniffed. I sniffed too.
She cried, I cried,
Words we lack.
No sound, silence pierced like shrill alarms.
I held her,
She died in my arms.
Against the mirror, a wilted body lay.

Opposing Romantics
Lesley Painter

We rally around ourselves.
Accentuating our best feature,
seeking advice only after we know the answer,
casting notions like fishing lures
into a sea of pop
culture.

These days the young women are wearing lace bodices
and romantic flower prints
but the pinafores, over-coats, ribbons and our copy
of Sense and Sensibility have been lost in the shipment.

The sashes, however, have been found
around low-slung belt loops
holding hips like fingers griping
a ledge, flesh
like billowing clouds
spilling out from the vista above.

Waists are disregarded,
cinched by a tank top or lotus tattoo
holding the belly button in place
and the small of the back inked
with a mission statement the size of a classified ad.

Overt or underscored
we are walking
declarations of beliefs.

A poem about myself, you say?
I’d really have it no other way.
To rhyme about my character so,
might bring some others much woe.
But who am I kidding with this whole rhyme scheme?
Is it others or me who might be fueled with such tomfoolery?
But to rhyme is delightful and colored with joy!
Strange to think it might come from a boy.
You really don’t get it do you?
Such rhyming is pretentious and sad!
And you are never free!

What are you to me?
I guess in the end I’m just trying to say:
That this is who I choose to be, in my own way.

photo by Brenda Zander
Barbie the Boob
Paul B. A. Baker

Barbie the Boob thinks with her chest,
Barbie the Saint thinks she’s the best.

Barbie the Innocent gloats with her butt,
Barbie the Woman looks like a slut.

Barbie the Beautiful reeks of taste,
Barbie the Dream makes you feel great.

Barbie the Old always stays new,
Barbie the True sticky by you.

Barbie the Model is no bored,
Barbie the Icon craves for more.

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Some Things Are Easy
Danny Butitta

You wonder where your time has gone
And the inspiration that tagged along your side
Took off
You see your thoughts of yesterday
And laugh at what you kept at bay oh why
Couldn’t you see

Some things are easy when you know
That no one’s gonna put you somewhere else
Where you don’t belong
So take what they say and believe it
See what happens to the little child
That tells you what you know

I think I know what’s going on
Behind the little dance and song and I guess
I’m a bit confused
Cast a line bait on the hook
Just like you once read in a book you can’t
Think for yourself

She’d watched the forecaster’s warped face
As it stretched across her screen;
Hinting at snow,
Catching her breath,
And she’d thought:
Thought of a map she’d once drawn.
A map
To heaven,
To treasure,
To anywhere but . . .
Still just a child then, but a child Houdini.

Some things are easy when you know
That no one’s gonna put you somewhere else
Where you don’t belong
So take what they say and believe it
See what happens to the little child
That tells you what you know

Thought you should know.
Love Incarnate

She walked in the door and stood in her place, not expecting that it would be him that she'd be standing next to. Hardly knew him, he was love itself. Simple and uncomplicated until you actually asked his ex-girlfriends about it. She felt warm just standing next to him, and he kept glancing at her. The air was warm, like clothes straight out of the dryer, or even better, the first sunny day after weeks of rain, as if something sweet and delicious and happy was going to happen. Like she'd get a package full of love. They didn't talk, hardly knew what to say, what could he be thinking?

Little did she know that she'd always have that problem of not knowing what to say to him. He spun out life lyrics that left her speechless, embarrassed that she didn't always have her own words to impress upon him.

Other people had claims on his and her heart, but it wasn't the first addictive way that their eyes had kissed that fastened it, it was during the bus ride and the field trip. What happened then was important to her because he didn't care about the complications that were possible with each touch, it was a natural extension of his affection to channel love through each hug, friendly (deceptively friendly) caress, or simple (well, not so much, I think he enjoyed them too much) massages. The other girls saw this as tokens of love, future love letters in the making, but she saw that he was just like that, he knew how to have unattached devotion. Like Frank Sinatra, he fell in love too easily, and she could see the fortune of every girl that approached him.

She got used to him. He was ready to jump in, and she never felt someone take her by the hand with that kind of electric charge before. Not the jolting jarring electric sting of love, but affection without attachments, free flowing electricity. He touched everyone that way, so it didn't necessarily make her special. And maybe that's the reason she didn't feel like she usually did when someone hugged her for too long, like strings had been stolen from her being. When he was around it was like he let the strings, the threads, alone, and just reveled in his own life story in the making. He was a celebrity to her. The only boy who could hug her without giving her the feeling that people would point and accuse her of some horrid moral misdeed. He asked her if they could vow to be friends, even after she left, explaining that too often these friendships disappeared with time, and she was surprised to find he was reading her thoughts. On the last day, the day she was going to leave, and they would no longer see each other everyday, he blew her a kiss and she blew one right back without thinking.

By Sofia E. Vazquez-Duran

Blues in a Shade of Blue
For Myrna Martin
Barbara Lesch McCaffry

Elegant, swathed in silk the color of a darkened sea, she glides in memory's recesses, a part of the world of women who engulfed me in childhood.

Standing halfway between me and my mother, she held the middle ground—a model for a life lived on her own terms, independent before I even knew what the word meant.

An artist whose vision so influenced my own, her sense of color infused my world—creating cascades of a single hue: blue.

Her life an exploration in oils of collisions, of connections: blue in conjunction with blue on the canvas, the juxtapositions blending at the edges.

My world now filled with the shadows of those women who swept through it, who honed my vision, shaped my sense of self, shattered the boundaries.

The blue of wave, of shore lapped by water, of sand darkened—
the sun suffuses: transforming, illuminating the transience of connections, lingering, lilting as the notes of a chord slowly shift to silence, the blues in a shade of blue echo, reverberating . . . .
Define Normal

The other day my friend Jon and I went to the liquor store to get some snacks. Jon had come to stay with me for a few months while she got her head together. Jon is actually short for Johanna, but since she is rather squat and burl, and a butch lesbian, Jon is actually more appropriate. Jon is also possessed of an inordinate amount of testosterone, which causes her to sprout hair in the most unladylike places. Normally, she would pluck and shave, but as part of her quest for self-discovery, she decided to go natural. This means that, along with the usual leg and armpit hair, she now sports a beard and mustache along with a thin fuzz of chest and back hair.

Jon's sense of style leans toward leather-clad dyke on bike crossed with redneck casual. Today she has on a white tank top, saggy knee length cut off jeans held up by a spiked leather belt and black flip-flops. Her hair is short, bleached and spiked straight up. Each of her ears is pierced six times and the bottom piercings are the mutilative sort that are popular in a masochistic sort of way. Huge water buffalo horn earrings stretch the holes to a half an inch and dangle like statues from her lower lobes.

In L.A. or San Francisco this sort of attire probably wouldn't even draw more than a fleeting glance, but I live in a really small town. It's not that people here are intolerant. I mean, there are crops of marijuana growing up in the hills and people smoke it pretty openly at community events, but there aren't many alternative looking folks roaming the streets around here. When Jon first got here she thought she could spot the lesbians, but she was way off. There are a lot of masculine looking women in flannel shirts, but they're all married with children. As far as I know there are only two other lesbians in town and they're a couple, so Jon's out of luck there.

When Jon and I walked into the liquor store that day it was totally deserted except for the cashier, who was too absorbed in watching "The Price is Right" to really notice us. We went in separate directions to gather our munchies. So, when the group of out of town campers came in they had no idea that Jon and I knew each other. There were three of them in all. Bearded, slightly grubby, rustic looking men in jeans and flannels. One of them was on his way back from the beer case with a twelve pack of Olympia when he spotted Jon. He did a double take and then circled around the store and walked up to his buddy, who were standing in the chip aisle next to me. He poked at one of them and pointed surreptitiously at Jon.

"What the hell is that?" he asked.

"I don't know man," his friend replied.

"Maybe if we get a little closer we can find out," the third guy said.

"Yeah, well if we wait until it gets in line, we can hear it talk," said the first guy.

I didn't stick around to hear any more, but took my stuff, found Jon and went to the counter to pay. I could see the guys craning their necks at us as the cashier bagged our snacks, but I wasn't sure whether or not Jon had noticed. We took our bags out to the car.

As we were belting ourselves in, Jon asked, "Are you embarrassed to be seen with me?" I told her no, as far as I was concerned, I love her for who she is, not what she looks like. I figure that if people want to stare, that's their problem. As long as no harm comes of the situation, I'm fine with it.

What I didn't tell her was that I do worry about the intolerance of this world. I have never understood why people insist on placing such a huge emphasis on looks. Who a person is on the outside may or may not reveal a clue to who they are on the inside. Just think for a moment about Ted Bundy or the Preppy Rapist. Neither of those all-American boys looked a bit like the sadist killers that they turned out to be. The way I see it, it's not Jon who needs to get her head together, but all of those small-minded backward people who roam the streets, looking normal.

By Nomi Goodnight

picture by Danny Baggett
Take Care of Yourself
Daniel Lanza

Kevin made his way through the labyrinth of booths in a stupor. His bag hung at his side. Inside were his habitual companions, a camera and a notebook. Around him flowed a veritable river of dyed hair, pleather, fake wings, and faker swords. He wandered the Dealer's Parlor of San Jose's annual anime convention and found himself assailed by the voices of vendors hawking everything from Japanese comic books, and king fu movies, to anime videos and porn. The tables were plastered with posters promising grossly discounted prices and each was manned by its own overenthusiastic attendant.

He had left Helen back at the booth labeled, "Doujinshi," where she had been busily searching through a stack of fan-made comics, and now felt lost amidst the advertisements and costumes. He decided to move on when one of the vendors began to advertise male/male romance stories shouting "French Maid Flaming hot!" He shook his head and wondered if he should have perhaps stayed with Helen.

Kevin made his way to the concessions and stood in line, esteeming himself to pay the fifteen dollars it would undoubtedly cost for a small soda. Next to him a girl in a pink bondage outfit with a large bow on her back asked him for the time, and, after he had given it to her she thanked him by bowing slightly and saying, "Domo," in her heavy American accent.

Facing forward once again, Kevin wondered if he had made a mistake in coming. After spending high school up to his neck in the anime scene he was finding himself less and less interested. He had skipped last year's convention without a second thought. This year, though, he'd reluctantly agreed to come with Helen. When Kevin had told his then boyfriend, Emmit, had taken every opportunity to point out how geeky conventions were. In the end, the deciding factor in Kevin's attendance had been satire. But following the breakup, the point had become mute. Now, as you walk from the line, exorbitantly priced beverage in hand, he began to think that maybe he should have just gotten a refund.

Having escaped the Dealer's Parlor on the main strip and once again Kevin passed through the throng of costume anime fans, and was stopped by a winged lady who asked him to take a picture with her and her friends. The three girls posed, making the peace sign with their fingers, and squealed, "Sugoi!"

Task completed Kevin slipped through the crowd and took shelter in the relative silence of one of the viewing rooms, thankful for the respite. Looking up he immediately recognized the film as Bounty Hanta and smiled despite himself. It had been freshman year when he had first been exposed to the series, and it had endured as one of his favorites. Now, four years later, the video still appealed, and Kevin watched as Kenichi-san piloted his famed ship, the Phoenix, through a meteor storm in the pursuit of space pirates.

Kevin felt a subtle admiration long buried inside him, rise as Kenichi float across the screen. He smiled again as Kenichi was captured and interrogated by space pirates who turned out to be women dressed only in leotards, and bunny ears. He relaxed in his seat and could almost feel his high school self sitting next to him. The thread that tied him to the festivities was worn and faded, but as the episode continued he felt its presence more and more. Finally, as the credits rolled, and the lights turned up, he shuffled his way through the masses out into the Artist's Row walkway.

The artist sat behind small, cramped tables, and solicited anyone walking by with eager, almost desperate, smiles, offering portraits and portfolios. Kevin stayed for a time before slipping down an empty hallway and out onto one of the many balconies the convention center featured. At one of the tables a couple sat kissing in a manner that walked a fine line between passion and foreplay. They continued, apparently undisturbed, and Kevin eased the door shut again. He turned and leaned back against the wall length window. He slid down, and sat, letting his thoughts wander, not for the first time, to Emmit.

After spending his high school years, feeling alternately lonely, and now, the arrival of college had given him re

hope of finding someone. But soon after classes had started he'd found himself venturing out into lonely San Francisco bars, and slinking through internet personals that made him feel only as good as angle of the picture he posted. Kevin had eventually taken up smoking, and started wearing tight-fitting clothes, which made him feel both cheap and exposed.

He'd first met Emmit at a friend's birthday party, and seeing him had brought Kevin back to himself. After that night they'd hit it off, and Kevin found his tight clothes hanging unused in his closet, and his personal ads too dormant to even merit deletion. The time with Emmit hadn't been perfect, and they'd had their problems, but Kevin had felt complete again with him. Now as he turned to look at the couple on the balcony Kevin felt empty, and, for the first time in months, craving a cigarette.

He started walking back toward the bustle of the convention, resolved to find Helen to tell her that he was leaving, Kevin felt a hand close over his shoulder. He turned to see Kenichi-san's grinning face staring back at him. But his dark blue suit looked slightly too large, and overbalanced, a cheap, thrift-store buy. His tie was loosened, and his hair lacked a certain gravity-defying quality.

"Hey, Kevin. It's me."

As Kenichi-san spoke Kevin suddenly recognized the voice, and saw past the costume.

He smiled, feeling like someone caught in a guilty act. "Alan, hey...I didn't know you came to these things."

Alan smiled. "Yeah, I go to school in the area. I didn't get here in time to register, though, so I'm just wandering around for a little bit. Only problem is they won't let me into any of the rooms without a pass." He seemed less disappointed than the statement implied. "How are you?"

"I'm doing alright...I mean, I don't know. To be honest I'm feeling a little of place. I think I've past my anime prime."

Someone in a skirt, bra, and stuffed suit walked by.

"Yeah, it's pretty crazy." Alan paused, "You here with Emmit?"

Kevin shook his head. "Nah, Emmit always hated this kind of stuff. But that's not really and issue anymore." He hesitated. "We split."

Alan's expression was sympathetic. "Ah, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

"It's okay. My friend, Helen, is up from Santa Barbara so I'm not alone among all the fan boys. How about you?"

"Just me. Janina's working today. I thought I'd stop by check it out, but I guess that's not happening."

Alan paused. "I'm probably going to head out soon, anyway... It was good seeing you, Kevin. You going to be around this summer?"

Kevin nodded. "I'll be heading back in a few weeks. I'll give you a call."

He extended a hand awkwardly, Alan looked at it for a minute, then opened his arms and pulled Kevin into a hug.

They stood for a long moment before Alan spoke, "Take care of yourself, Kevin."

With as lost as he'd felt in the past months this simple action seemed to be too intimate, too much. Kevin gave into the hug and wondered for a moment if he'd break right there.

As they pulled away he looked into Alan's face. The meeting had unhinged something inside him, and he wanted to just stand there and believe the costume, and stand with Alan for a time, but he knew that what he wanted was something unreachable, something remote.

Alan began to leave and Kevin hesitated for a moment and then stammered, "Hey...nice costume. Mind if I get a picture?"

That night, Kevin lay in bed and stared at the Polaroid. Feeling down had allowed him to hide in a sort of fog; Kevin hadn't felt lonely since the break, just alone. But as he stared at a face in the picture, part Alan, part Kenichi, something melancholy rose within him. Loneliness crept around the corners, and now seemed to hold him. As much as he wished for it, he knew the Alan in the picture wasn't Kenichi, and, in a way, he wasn't the Alan he saw. He felt something missing, and he knew, unquestionably, that this time it wasn't something he could find within a pack of cigarettes, nor on board the Phoenix.
Northlight Seminar
Molly Chernin

Roses on the walls
Petals floating around the tables
Minds of their own
Swaying this way and that
Forgetting the obscenity,
The obscured world view
Holding on to their freedom
Clenching with all their might
To the faith in the Roses
These petals make their way home.

Home At Last
Kelli Nicole Schmitz

wheels over dark paved river
smooth curve
    winding left
twisting, turning, spinning
cumbling
city sights and sounds evaporating into evening dew
sun sinking, shrinking, escaping like a turtle into its shell
pregnant sky
    bleeding with pink, orange, yellow, purple
    crayola mushrooms bursting into clouds
pondering the stress that everyday allows
WHOAA!
tires suddenly slow
frustration, anger, fury
hands clenching vinyl
screams pulminating inside

MOVE! CLEAR OUT!
finally a chance to push past
time—gotta beat the clock
tick tock, tick tock
mud, drifts, stumps
smells of fresh, wet grass
waves pounding into the rocks
    an abrupt apocalypse
sand glistening like ashes, hidden and heavy
    resembles shattered ice on cement
trees towering so straight and high
leaves drenched by winter showers
    blown by a prospering breeze
monstrous hills like giant breasts, blemishing nipples
streams of continuous banana-colored lines
endlessly flowing
on the radio, a favorite song
    no choice but to sing along
    voice deep—bottom of the gut
all worries fizzle away
what a great way to end the day
familiar bridge, neighboring trees,
light ahead
home at last
'til the wheels turn again
The road is life.
Privileged
Lauren B. Hobbs

My shoes are made in China
In sweat shops with little ones
My jeans are made in Indonesia
Workers poor and some paid none.
My jacket is made in Russia
My shirt sewn in Taiwan
I was made in America
I was raised the privileged one.

When demands get high
When are needs are more
We send out the companies
And we head to distant shores.
We import and we steal
We take but rarely give
Generosity is just an outlet
Our cover and our way to "get in."

I walk because I want to
And I read because I can
I am educated by great thinkers
I can run freely on the sand.
We have the freedom to breath
The freedom to speak, and to move
We are Americans.
We do as we choose.

I sleep in sheets of cotton
Imported from beyond
I fill my car with gasoline
Fueled and stolen for guns.
My cup is never empty
I find it always half full
I've grown up in America
We are privileged, one for all.

I am the fortunate fool
I am the uninformed
I am the one to change things
I must alter the norm.
We must start with ourselves
If we want to transform the many
This world is in our hands
It is ours for the changing.

I am the causer and the destruc-ctor
I am the renovator and the cure
The world isn't ours for the taking
Rather, for every human to share.

When I wear my shoes from China
Or my shirt sewn in Taiwan
I'll think twice about my actions
As an American, I am the privileged one.

I came out the barrio,
Con el cuerpo engusanado

Plunged into the icy waters of pure reason
And my feelings became crystals

Francisco H. Vazquez
When The Lights Went Out the people got brighter, the trees grew taller. Televisions and household appliances filled dumps, then the amount of waste declined. Cars piled one on top of the other — the scrap metal was used for bicycles. Recyclables took the place of plastic and styrofoam and all non-recyclables were sent back to the manufacturers who received fines for making such products in the first place, and internalized the costs of storing dead-end products. Telephones were abandoned and families got closer. Clocks stopped and time went on, but just a bit slower. Electric guitars were traded in for acoustics and banjos and fiddles and flutes. Microphones became obsolete and so too did rock stars. People sang and talked louder. Ears were opened and grandma’s stories were listened to. People began to distinguish the voices and patterns of bird’s callings. Relationships were formed between producers and consumers. People met the cows and chickens that gave them milk and eggs. Cash crops died and the third world grew stronger. Local sustenance determined foreign policy. Produce had seasons again. The connection between poverty and sickness was made. The AIDS pandemic was tackled by solving the problem of water sanitation, waste and sewage, instead of handing out sex education and condoms. Industrial buildings were remodeled into communal housing and greenhouses. People were given the right to grow their own food without owning land. People were given the right to sleep and to shit. For the first time since their erection every window in every skyscraper went dark and the starry sky reigned everywhere and the moon’s expressions could be seen. The patent office closed down. Medicine became accessible to anyone. Manuscripts were shared — passed from hand to hand until its pages frayed beyond readability. News was reported by people who were affected by it. A labor section in the paper replaced the business section. Investigative reporting was encouraged and demanded. Sensationalism was replaced by Socratic questioning. Politics and economics were talked about because the GNP started taking into account the interdependency of the economy, not just the things making money. People were forced to deal with each other and conversations were waged in place of wars. Rehabilitation facilities were built instead of penitentiaries. The social stigma of prohibiting alcohol to youths ceased as the act of being responsible trumped the ability to be responsible. Marijuana became legal — its medicinal values were legitimized and exercised. Stalks of the plant used for rope, canvas, and paper. 50,000 people walked out of U.S. prisons. Role models became people you’d actually want to follow — the people who knew survival and the lightness and heaviness of life. Hollywood stars were demoted to human beings. Books and board games came out of closets, attics and basements. Reading became a hobby for kids, not a punishment. Schools taught to the children not to standardized testing. A parent could actually tell their kid where their goldfish was going when it went down the toilet. People knew where their water was coming from and going to. They knew that trash wasn’t going to be sent to outer-space. Punch cards were eliminated from the workplace and people came early. The dominion of bosses subsided as co-ops became the primary structure for business. People formed movements. Everyone was directly affected. When the lights went out. —Anonymous

Molten Mass

Sofia E. Vasquez-Duran

I feel like hollow bones
made of glass and plastic

The molten mass of cells
Red and sticky
Steaming
Through melting shards
Shredding away the pipes

The heat touches
Cells spark
Skin warms
And I violently fade away.

Birth Death
by Brenda Zander

19
my friend misery
Whitney Magana

he's got small cuts on his left arm
he bleeds eyeliner from his veins
blackened eyes and blonde roots
an abstract design of sanity
crying tears of d.i.y. and mortality
its nothing, darling
your campaign slogans
[right, left, somewhere in-between]
spray painted, stenciled avant garde are form
all that glitters is tarnished
pain=fuel
whatever
sorry?
no one is sorry
empathy is not sincerity
don’t worry, you look gorgeous, darling
black and white and read all over
your nothing is my nothing as well
our only common ground
somewhere between plath and Monroe
doesn’t matter either way
i have befriended misery
and he’s beautiful
but i want nothing to do with him
the war is over?
the beginning of the end
of the beginning
ends now
waiting forever
for a skip in the record
familiarity
similarity
of a drama queen
[king?]
you want to die?
good for you, so do i
all of your pessimistic cries
mean absolutely nothing to anyone
ain’t that a shame?
yeah, we’re hysterical and useless
the whole lot of us
believe?
ignore?
achieve?
you're so clever
sarcasric fucker-but...
a mess [you are]
a mess [i am]
my friend, misery.

The dust on the horizon of your bedroom floor
The clink of the spoon stirring the honey into the sea of your raspberry tea
The shake you find on your hands when trying to roll a joint...
The bit of dead skin you can't bite off your lip the morning after...
That racking crying feeling that won't let you sleep...
Let us be lovers.
Whitney Magana

Meaning
Melissa G. Smith
To which my excited eyes ponder in this boring office I shall dwell, to leave a paper, envelope,
Doeth this moment not any moment, hour day but just this weekend.
To be paid but pennies yet rich as the doves that fly over the fountain.
Not the crow that flies utter moment.
To foresee future this job leave me blind.
To my eyes now have learned all.

Reflection of Bob Dylan on a Bench Under a Tree
Jodi Ortiz
Can't you feel the spark?
This is the electric time babe
Can't you fucking feel it?
How can you just kill time?
It might be shit, but you can still taste it
You're still here
You still can feel
Look at what you are a part of
Step back and watch
You never get this again babe
Might as well go with it
Might as well play
Might as well just fucking jump in
What's to lose?
Your soul?
It was never yours
If you keep on like this it's just going to rot away
Mind Rot
Soul Rot
Keep moving, learning, experiencing
Watch them
Which of them do you want to dance with?
You should dance
Waste of music
Waste of legs
Waste of moment
You should fucking get up now
Decorator Crab
Dee Dee Robbins

At first glance we are rocks, coral, barnacles, seaweed, plankton, river junk, garbage...

Motivated by the evolutionary imperative... Survival. With no self there is no self-indulgent sadness only reproductive... Madness.

No decisions to make, no purchases to take. No overt consumption to partake in, our Happiness is a given. We serve the river at the pleasure of the Current.

Moving along in our water world, where nothing remains the same, bumping along from rock to sand, to pebble and back to rock again. Sheltering for a while in a still hole to scavenge plankton and fish... collecting river things to wear.

Chunky, fuzzy, prickly, fluffy, stringy, crunchy, graceful.

You think we’re funny, clever, simple little things, collecting junk and existing. And you might ponder the reason... disguise, protection? Has it ever occurred to you that Stillness is not just the purview of humans?

Looking up through the rippley surface of our water world, what we see are dry, hairy, saggy beings with earth stuff stick all over them. We have similar tendencies. Try looking at yourself from our perspective. Bend over at the waist while holding a mirror beneath your face, and then try claiming your superior beauty, Purpose and Place.

Are you aware that your progress is passing through Earth’s filters? at a rate unsustainable, making balance and harmony unobtainable?

People, ponder this profundity... No matter how hard you try to distinguish yourself from us, There is only WE.

You could feel this if you were still enough. Close your eyes. Feel the skin on your body, where it becomes air and where the air becomes trees, birds, rocks, fires... moments and then air again.

Let go of what separates you from us... Feel yourself yield. Feel like flowing in and out of you, passing effortlessly into and through you... No I no me... only We.

photo by Sydney Mitchell

Expatriated Poet
Heidi La Moreaux

You invited me in to sit on the floor of your one-bedroom apartment. It was hard to talk with three other families at home and the distractions of Florida cockroaches. Your vibrant poster-painted scenes of remembered sunsets made the room bearable, but I wouldn’t live here.

We talked of your homeland. Of the enigma of the temple at Angkor Wat, of the sunsets in your paintings, of the Killing Fields. I told you I was horrified by the movie. You told me it grossly understated the truth. I believed you as stores I had heard from other friends came flooding back: Chung who had to be carried across the border by friends after a landmine blasted shrapnel through his body; Huoy, who spoke the few words of Thai that she knew to convince border guards that she was not Cambodian (they would have killed her); Chenda, who came home from the fields to find her emaciated children dead in each other’s arms; and you, Kim, who lost a brother and sister to the Khmer Rouge...

I wondered if American slums were better than your land of genocide, so I asked, “If you could choose, would you stay here or go back to Cambodia?”

You paused, and asked, “Do you have word for one who makes pictures with words?”

I thought a moment and replied, “Poet.” “In Cambodia, I was poet and artist. Here I have no words. Someday, I go home.”
I'm jealous of her ex-boyfriend
He had her 4 whole years
And probably a harder break-up
But I've dropped the same number of tears

Can't understand—did she like that much less?
Or was it simply timing on the side of the best-dressed?

Did I love her? Well, that all depends
Perhaps on just how many days it takes to go and feel whole again

I want to taste her like fresh nectar in my mouth
Or extra pulp come from the oranges from Florida down South

The way the room got
Was humid as hell
I might consider one more sweaty night
For twelve in a jail cell

Can't stop this bleeding—like a leaking laceration
It took TWO, but now it seems that ONE
Is walking back and forth and pacing

And now depressed---I can't repress---no consolation
In assuming that acceptance is the key to self-commiseration

More like rejection-----man, this facet that I'm facing
Is obscuring prior knowledge of emotional infatuation

Feel like I'm dying inside-----from adoration
Now I understand her fears of taking trips to other people's places

Is this a sickness? Or could it be disease?
In past relationships my cure was always something found with ease

Or so it seemed-----like eating picnics on the beach
Or hiking 'long the coastal trails where conversation flowed so free

Fucking confused? Nah, that's an understatement
Wondering: did our relationship take place in my imagination?

When will this pass? Well, what's the product of equations
When you take it all and multiply by zero?

Terrain
A Poem for Heidi
Morgan Phillips

How would we treat nature if God
did not rest comfortably on a cloud
throne in the heavens but here on
earth in the water, soil, and trees.

Could we clear cut a forest if each
tree was a finger of God.

What if God weren't an omnipotent
overseeing judge, but terrestrially
trapped here on earth.

Would we then be God's keeper
rather than He being ours?

Would we need terms like eco-
friendly, would recycling no longer
be seen as a hassle; how else would
our country change if we all believed
in God in earth?
Await the boarding pass to ride this vessel
Attraction beyond comparison
A countenance that makes me melt
A body that contains the earth
An energy worth the drive
When will it happen?
It's happening all the while
Graceful stride
Intelligent eyes
Fortress
Like a turnsstile
That revolves and evolves
And forms a potion
Of potent and
Pleasure-filled portraits
And glances like Medusa's
Flip-flopped by her truth-seeking fuses
Turning me to stone indeed
But only so the moment can freeze
And last until next weekend...
But next weekend becomes this weekend
Astonished by her brilliance
Confounded by rules made before his time---
To understand the manor
He finds the key to mind's unwind
And it is more than elegant
Emotion enveloping
Dynamic development
Future thoughts
Irrelevant

"But it takes two," she says
So the risk is made twice
Simultaneously
Until the reflection disallows any
selfishness or selflessness
Man, your heart stops racing
There's no conclusion- no illusion-
Voice So Soothing?
Better re-arrange that one
If plain survival's what you're choosing
Man... I thought that I was so prepared
for what I'm losing
Now I'm thinking love like this possibly not-so- worth proving
And, man... I might consider other avenues 'cause brooding
At this point's directly stemming from those choices that were moving
Head-over-heels in heartbreak

In A Room of Many People
Lauren B. Hobbs

In a room of many people,
Where so many look the same
There are infinite differences
Yet no one knows the strangers name.

In a room of many people,
Faces fill the crowd.
No one looks eye to eye.
Conversations muffled, loud.

In a room of many people,
We search for someone else.
We look for each other,
And we sit to search for self.

In a room of many people,
We tend to sit and stare.
Do we find what we need?
Or do we deal with what's there?

In a room of many people,
Busy coffee shops, stores and rooms;
We get mixed in the middle,
And find that the end comes too soon.

For when we leave our room of many
We leave behind much more
Our presence infiltrates the senses
Of those behind the doors.

Sit and search for self
See what you will find
The affects you leave on people
Are always on their minds.

In a room of many people,
Do not sit and stare.
But rather say hello to strangers,
Who knows what you'll leave there.

In a room of many people,
Treat others well.
Remember kindness, friendship, & compassion
Leave enough to subside for a lifetime to dwell.
Minor Writer’s Block
Anonymous

I am hopelessly thoughtless.
My words slither from my brain and onto the ground like rainwater.
Collectively they gather and erode the gutter making their way into the
grated sewer.
They float and bob in the wasted thoughts and words of others, mingling and
mixing, churning, and boiling in the brine of unsaid utterances.
Slowing and sadly they make their way through the tunnels of despair being
separated only to be amalgamated with the words of lost souls of the cities
above.
A light at the end of the tunnel welcomes them into the amicable sun and
the spry wing. They join in an ocean of language combining into complete
thoughts and feelings,
creating stores and poetry.
I am no longer at a loss for what to write.
My thoughts are free to scribble.

Poem II
Wendy L. Ostroff

Can scraggled bramble scrapes be healed with flowers mixed with spit?
And do dripping grass blades under mosh similar garden feet absorb shocks
of sudden midnight storms?

How about if I was not in this world, but locked a the time-warp behind French
doors
and a Bermuda triangle ceiling and this mistiness pre-morning?
And in the lanolin cotton-woolly reality of these many shaped pillows and layers
of favorite
t-shirt sheets (arms and legs and ideas tangled inside)?
If we threw in books of magic lessons, 78% cocoa kisses, two sets of flowers, a
cherimoya shaped like a heart (before it went bad), and a box shaped like a heart
inside a box shaped like a hexagon, would that do the trick?

Look into the frosty sea-glassy crystal blue ball and tell me what you see
(I’ll give you a hint: It’s not something simple)
‘Looks a little like

  a heart inside a box;
a full moon hangover;
a swollen round pouch insidesoul drying deep,
ever so slowly, ever so sweetly
in the suction mud sun

Where to Go

Mysterious change overwhelms my soul,
searching for a place in where to go.
My ground beneath is no longer stable,
for I have reached the end of this day.
Where to go?

People had mistaken my dreams for certainty
nothing firm, nor wish nor pull.
Washing against the beaten rocks I feel,
I long for a hope of a new tomorrow.
Going there nor here can not compare
to places in where I know I have been.
Where to go?

Safety, Security, Space and Surprises
is what I yearn for this place of growth.
Venturing out and expanding my wings
I long for a freedom and a better future.
Where I go does not seem to matter
As long as I have these things I desire.

Keri Soto
Me
Yes Me!
I'm so ready
to live,
delve,
discover!
to be truly me
to find what's
supposed
to be lost
to experience
what's not
expected
to be
Me
Me in love
Me depressed
Me secluded
Me surrounded
Me in love
Really
Deeply
in love
with life
with love
with
Me
Anonymous