



Summer 2009

Spark Bright Issue 2

Welcome to our second issue!

Here at Sparkbright, the year has absolutely flown by and before we could even stop for a breath, we're blasting right into these summer months and bringing you our brand-new issue!

Complete with a small section of new 'short poetry' pieces, we bring writers from around the world, straight to your screen. Fresh from the press to your printer, we're slapping on the sunscreen, throwing on our favourite shades and giving you plenty of new pieces to read while you're lounging around in the sun.

So, sit back, be as lazy as you like and enjoy these up-and-coming new artists!

Sincerely,
The Sparkbright Team

Special thanks to Bella for providing the stock photography used in our cover art. Her work can be found at www.bellallob-stock.deviantart.com and www.bellallob.deviantart.com

Cover art by Leanne Hinks, whose work can be found at www.olcanna.deviantart.com.

Dust 'n' Paint—James Mudgway

Taking my place, as I lean against a shadow of an oak...
watching my triad of despair march right on up to you.
Calling out all those faults you see, all those things you hide.
“A bit of dust 'n' paint, makes this girl seem what she ain't”

You can't hide behind your decaying face.
You can't hide inside your empty place.
As you try so hard to change the pace.
Baby, this life, it's not a race... it's not a race.

What are you going to say when you stand before the Judge?
“I was looking so damn razzle dazzle. They were watching me,
they were falling hard, I broke so many hearts...
I never thought this could last, my life goes on...”

My life goes on. My looks have been left behind.
I take my place, as I lean against the shadow of an oak.
And I watch from afar as our despair makes its march.
How it makes it's mark, all those things they hide.

Nothing but a bit of dust 'n' paint, makes those
girls something they ain't.

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The Method to my Madness—Kiya Ewan

I. I am a writer because it is the only way I can truly be heard.

There will always be brightly coloured words dancing just beyond the grasp of the human mind. They fall into confetti, never really understood, but are spun as silk into fractured sentences. We all can see them glistening in the snow-globe eyes and blown glass hearts of the innocent, as well as in the cold stares and empty whispers of sin.

II. I am a writer because I never thought I would be.

Amidst the candy coated dreams, however childish, "Writer" was ghost. Surrounded by shimmering, clown-coloured lights, gumdrop fantasy, and sugarcane confessionals- Tricks of the mind. Really, we're traipsing on the crushed remains of coined phrases and cons. Bleeding words into blank pages, a treat for the eyes and a toy for the twisted minds. Metaphors and calligraphic letters begging to be understood, manipulated, recycled. We see though the strike outs; craving technicolour ideas we all feel but could never express.

III. I am a writer because I cannot keep things to myself for long.

Insanity follows, we sink. Sulking into the closeted skeletal, frantically seeking protection from hazards and worries that flutter down, ash butterflies settling into makeshift hipbones. Plastic hearts, battered following years of constant refusal. Rancid thoughts, placed quickly into shimmering packages used to hide the acidity. Wrapped carefully with slightly translucent masks that slowly melt away, made presentable by flowing silk ribbons, the colour of ocean surfaces that twinkle like falling stars.

IV. I am a writer because it allows me, if for only a moment, to pretend all is well.

Look at me and see porcelain cheeks and sparkling eyes, shadowed by angry clouds and made wide by small fears. Gaze through me, beyond the soft skin shell, past the muscle and tissue, into my very being. You'll see the tape of glowing energy latched onto my cardboard bones, securing them in place. The spark of liveliness that remains, holding tight to my ribcage, hanging. Hushed voices and careful ideas are the clinging, dripping, pollutant strands of strawberry dew, giving me substance. Watch the rapid rise and fall of manic breaths; the breath that means I am still struggling on this fishbowl planet, that I have not yet given up.

V. I am a writer because my world will always be falling apart.

Reclamation—Weston Scheffler

A graveyard of skyscrapers from long ago,
our cotton-haired ancestors ran
to escape the yelps and cries
of hell hounds on our trail,
from stories of Mark Twain, in the deep, deep
south.

Stumbling past plantations so overgrown,
so forgotten by the past
that not a sight was heard
nor a person seen in the dark deserted streets.

The whispers echo from some time past,
speaking of overcoming some diversity,
speaking of cries from loss and pain;
those structures are long empty, long abandoned,
no where to go, no dreams to be fulfilled
just regret, lots of copper colored rust, and fear.

Screeches of rusting metal and bending tracks
reverberate from the underground railroad
that once delivered millions a day to the city
above,
where have they gone? Why so alone?
Why are the storefronts so empty, yet so full

of botanical plants that are not of man.

This city turned to a moaning ground
a sense of something lost,
somewhere departed,
but only moments remain of a culture I once
was part
in a city much like this one,
a culture like my own.

I once called this place my home,
the fountain spewing water on passers by in the
middle town,
now lies empty and overgrown with hieroglyphics
of little red moons
and bony stick figured men, contemplating a
time in the past,
a time when men ruled this city,
not the plants nor the animals that now call it
home.

My journey through my home was short,
the time was lost and never found,
for this was no longer the place of my birth,
but a place I called my own.

What We Are—Wendy Kwok

we are everything
and nothing.

we are pulsars tossing fragments
speeding into spaces where
we are silent.

we do not exist.

we are between the sigh of stars
and sun on our skin.

we are bags of bones beating
wildly in our hands, in our hearts,
where we wish
to fly as we look,

our grounded graves rooted
in the earth. for we have roots
and we are trees growing
quietly where the moss creeps
up our still sides.

we are longing and wistful
and we are living and dying.
we are suffering and we are lonely.

we are black and blue.
we are happy contradictions
of ourselves, but mostly

we are most undeniably
human.

Only an arm's length—Morgan Robinson

i.

i never noticed that you hid the
sun in your back pocket until i heard
you lacked a pulse.

ii.

your feet may have been made
out of tapioca for all the stability they
provide, and if i stepped on your skull,

it would crunch like peanut brittle.

iii.

i mistook you for a insomniac.

my insides are an empty grotto,
stolen cave. fast fall and
fine swell, not here
but on earth.

iv.

throw out the baby with the
bathwater and afterbirth, and
maybe my hands will be
clean of this sin

(rinse and repeat).

v.

i swear, i swear,
i swear with shaking hands
that when i was young i would
name you after cereals or sugar snacks
and hold your hands so i could
show you how to dance.

my symphony of distress is
spelled out in painkillers
and paper cranes.

vi.

reach your hands high and pray,
reach for the sun, the stars, and i bet
you could touch god, tickled him in the beard,
pull his cheeks into a smile or a
tasteful frown. you could haul the
angels by their ankles down to
earth and pluck handfuls of
spun-sugar clouds from the sky.

vii.

i can't see god and i certainly can't see you;
little baby's gone to grow with the daises and
leech like
ciguatera into the groundwater.

you are not a star, not even an asterisk,
you're shining dimmer than kerosene oil
and the wick has nearly burned to wax,
but your skin is the only fashion
that with never go out of style.

viii.

crying when you're sad is like
throwing up when you're sick;
it makes you feel better.

but that might just be the morning sickness.

ix.

there's no such thing as a mistake,
just an unplanned gift, and you were

a present without the ribbons and tax receipt.

Laissez—Gary W. Hartley

You'd think this
Was the age of Enlightenment
The jubilant trumpeting of giving up
Accepting
 No change possible

The kudos offered for Grinning, bearing it
Mannequins in permanent January Sales
Wearing whatever we're dressed in

Stack it high
 Sell it cheap
 Everyone
 Must go.

This New Feeling—Sebastian Van Uytfange

What is this new feeling,
that is brewing up inside?
This newborn kind of reeling,
that was until now denied?

It has me hanging on the brink,
of happiness divine.
And I cannot help but think,
if only she were mine.

We cannot meet each other,
set a world apart.
But with this I do not bother,
together by heart.

Demonstrate Me—Wendy Kwok

i.
i am newly stolen and clutching whispers to my eyes, reconstituting dry sighs with salt. i am losing
all my windows and there is no sun here. i have been inside all along and you are holding a door,
shaking my floor because the summer does not wait.

ii.
you are coming into the dark for me because the mornings are lighter, lovelier together and you
know i am a child of open spaces.

iii.
i am wanting to discover the hearts i have lost and when you draw me out i find them growing on
illustrated trees, ready to be transplanted, to swallow empty graves whose the broken eaves cannot
home the hands you made because

iv.
i am starting to discover the world.

Painting the Night Sky—Dean West

We lay there and drew stars with our fingertips into the starless night sky that stretched out like a
canvas from one edge of the sky to the other. We laughed into the night's breeze which carried the
sounds of our laughter until its eventual fade into the dim nothingness. We dreamt of moments like
these all of our lives and dreamt of nothing more than to have them back. When it was all said and
done, we were both scared of the future and what it may hold. We held onto these precious few
moments, we knew they wouldn't last. We just knew.

And as the sea's waves came crashing down along the stony shoreline, we listened for each one.
Their load and abrupt roars that decimated the peace and tranquillity of the picturesque coast had
its own relaxing aura about it. With our fingers interlocked, we continued to cut those stars into the
black sky with our free hands. Everything, just everything was so perfect. While it lasted it seemed
like a dream. I'll never forget those moments we shared along that beach, painting patterns into the
sky with outstretched, pointed fingers.

I woke up and you weren't there. I began to dream for everything, once again.

Elevator—Chloe Waterfield

She flung herself through the glass doors, her scarf trapping itself between the two doors. She felt it constrict around her neck, then fall limply over her shoulders as the doors shuddered open. He pushed them open with a strong arm, and pressed the button for the fourth floor, which she had pressed a moment before. From opposite corner, their eyes met, and dropped simultaneously.

She was beginning to wish the scarf was still tight at her throat; at least that way, she could not engage in conversation.

Conversations with strangers in elevators she hated, but conversations with her ex-husband in elevators she despised even more. She turned away from his back, staring out of the transparent glass, watching the floors fall around them.

He cleared his throat, and said nothing.

She gave a nervous cough, adjusted her scarf, and said nothing back.

The elevator doors sprung apart an inch, then threw themselves shut again. In that same instant, the lift and the floors around them were plunged into darkness. The elevator floor stopped vibrating, somewhere between the third and fourth floors. They were suspended, and trapped.

She felt him brush past her as he moved towards the doors, felt his breath leave his mouth in a sigh. She pressed herself against the cold glass, unstable in the unending darkness around her. She felt that at any moment, she would go tumbling into the black beyond.

At least she'd be away from him, if such a crisis happened.

"Typical, isn't it." She heard his uncomfortable tone from near her left shoulder. "Isn't there a bell or anything to get us out of here?"

"Don't know". She said dryly, wondering if there was an emergency bell for a conversation

that should not be held.

"So...how've you been, Since...?" He echoed. The silence was painful to the ears. She took a while to answer. She knew that he had been waiting to break the ice, only she wished he didn't.

"Oh, I'm...fine." Monotonous.

"Good. I've just recently got a new job, so..." His voice trailed off.

Great, now he wanted to talk. She couldn't read his face in the dark; she couldn't even see her own hands in front of her face, but she could feel him. His apprehension, nervousness, and the calming tone of his voice that she had always succumbed to...

She cleared her throat again, unnecessarily, and felt along the wall of the elevator, searching for the elusive bell. She ran her hands over the buttons, unable to tell one from the next. "Maybe we should just...sit down. Wait."

She felt him sink down to his knees beside her, and she followed suit. They were all too aware of how their knees brushed in the cramped space. She could smell his cologne, and he was breathing in her perfume. He felt his heart give a little twitch, it was the scent he had bought her at Christmas, all those months ago.

Before...

"How long will we have to wait?" She snapped.

"I think it's just a little power cut. Shouldn't last too long."

She folded her arms around her knees, tucking up. She wished she could increase the distance between them. Her scarf tickled against his arm, but she was unaware of this.

"So..."

He shuffled beside her. She was almost certain that he was edging closer to her. She fumbled

Elevator—Chloe Waterfield (cont.)

for the bell again, pressing each button in turn, but nothing was happening. His cologne was starting to scratch at her nostrils now, and she covered her nose.

He breathed her in, while she held back from choking. He shifted sideways, shaking the pins and needles of his feet, and turned to where he hoped she was still sat. The black walls were penetrating his eyeballs, but he could see her clearly. The high curves of her cheekbones, soft brown eyes. Her mouth set in that thin line as she attempted to ignore him. He desperately wanted to reach out and touch her face, but he could not find his hands, and feared that he would poke her in the eye.

Not the best way to break the ice.

Even so, he could feel the heat radiating off her,

and felt her stir. Her hands dropped to her side, so close that he caught the tips of her fingers. He closed his palm over his delicately, tracing the softness of her knuckles with his own. He inhaled the perfume of memories.

Light burst through the air, and the black walls became glass again. The lift descended and the doors slid open. She picked herself up off the floor and briskly left the elevator, scarf flying behind her, leaving a trail of her perfume behind.

He stood slowly, smoothing the creases in his trousers, and stared at his hand. It tingled slightly, and he began to wonder whether he had simply imagined it.

Africa—Dave Lewis

We were all cold
Now we're warm,
You taste of beer
And need to brush your hair -
Tell me something nice.

The kiss of morning dew
Pitter-patters on your eyes,
Night creatures go to sleep
As the daylight appears -
Tell me something nice.

How long can you hold out
In the country of our children?
The rains will come
And the rains will pass -
Tell me something nice.

One day in the distance
We'll be free and happy
The trees will grow, the sun will shine,
And you will smile and love me when -
I tell you something nice.

La Passione—Gary Beck

I hear your words
humming from a little mouth
unstopping.
You, me, fellow passengers,
subway denizens of a fiery land
with souls ablaze.

A shadow urchin pees on me.
Your station.... Goodnight,
soggy girl of painted eyes.
A young boy eating cookies,
daddy floats on his balloon.
A worker asleep, at prayer,
fat slabs of chaffed fingers
clasped across an endless belly.
A Brooklyn gentleman,
neck erupting from Van Heusen shirt,
whose lower lip turns the pages
of the N.Y. Times intensely.

I am no heir of kings,
painful in the chase of scalding dreams,
my days glow rich,
though sometime freighted
to a dark land of fruitless time,
but I will mend my Osymandian fragments
and pursue the bright star that evades the dawn.

Ambitious Quoticious—Morgan Robinson

i.

i'm so sorry, papa,
i'm sorry that i'm so hideous,
so ugly to look at that sometimes
you close your eyes and squint
at me until that i'm all distorted
and no longer me,
and anything's better than me.

[i could be beautiful if you just
kept your damn eyes shut.]

ii.

it's because of me that your
hair is butterscotch and your eyes are
bluegraybleucelestebeautiful.

iii.

i love your nose so much that
i want to steal it off of your face,
but then you wouldn't have anything
to keep your smile company and you
can't smell teeth in the daisies
if you haven't a nose.

vi.

i know you get tired of hearing it,
but he really is my best friend,
my best friend in the entire world,
but i don't want you to know him
like i know him, because then you
would fall in love for sure
and i want to keep him all to myself.

v.

so basically i'm in love with the way
you part your hair and the lines of
your smile (your lips weren't meant to be
a straight line, oh nonono)
and i'm scared that you'll pull those words
right out of my mouth and that they won't
sound pretty anymore because they'll have
spilled out and tripped over my tongue out
and in between my teeth and be a mess
of alphabet soup and scare you away.

vi.

i'm counting down the days on my
hands until i'll see you, but i sliced my
thumb down the middle when i
cracked my phone in half,
so i am always one day off.

vii.

you should close your eyes, too,
so then maybe i'd feel pretty.
but then i would forget their color.

viii.

today i bought chocolate covered
coffee beans and they were nine dollars
and forty-six cents, which is
ridiculously expensive but i wanted to
share them with you and see your smile
when i pull them out of my bag,
and you really can't put a price on that.

ix.

so basically everything reminds me
of you and i saw a dog and remembered
you telling me that story where you
were chased by one, and anything blue
makes me think of you because it's your
favourite color, or one of them,
and it's the color of your eyes
(but never the right shade).

x.

i have this collection of troll dolls
and when i die, i want you to have them
because you were always the doll
and i'm such a troll.

xi.

thursdayfridaysaturday my wrist hurt
and i have no idea why. amberly bootsman
kissed it better but it's not actually better
so i think you should kiss it instead.

but then it think that your fingers will

Ambitious Quoticious—Morgan Robinson (cont.)

slip off of my wrist because it's too tiny or
my bones will snap like dry twigs
or my heart will skip one beat too many
and i'll die because my stomach has not
stopped doing back flips since the day i met you
(which was one year ago, by the way).

xii.

wednesday i was at abby's house and
little becca took her three-year-old
hands and ripped out strands of her own hair
and rubbed it into my head and then she says,
'there, you have becca hair now', and i wish i
did,
i really do, because it's curly like yours.

xiii.

i'm thankful god gave me ribs
because my heart is in danger of
bursting out of my chest.

xiv.

papa's blind and mama's going deaf,
because she can't seem to hear me at all,
and i think that's okay
but then some days i don't.

xv.

i think with my heart and i wish you
didn't think with your head, because
then you have to be the practical one
and i know if i stole kisses from you,
you would ask for them back,
and i want to hold your hand tight enough
to hurt because i'm scared of loosing you
and i want to find out just how soft your
lips are without you reminding me of
why we can't, oh no we can't.

i want to kiss you once so that i know
what it's like and i can die happily but this
isn't a made for storybook romance,
it's like crappy reality tv,
and as long as you'll deny me kisses,
i'll be around and one day
you're bound to let down your guard.

xvi.

papa's blind and mama's deaf,
my sister is rotting away under
her bed sheets, and i just want to
crawl into the ground and find out
how the daisies grow
and you're my only comfort.

In this poem I live on—Sebastian Van Uytfange

Stanza's, lyrics,
all around.
Inside them all,
our souls be found.

Write a poem,
write a song.
Write a story,
deep and long.

Between the words,
behind the lines.
Something lingers,
almost divine.

Whether shot, burned, hung,
or simply perished from old age.
Never truly gone,
always on a stage.

For after I am dead,
long gone.
In this poem,
I live on.

Death by Opium—Melissa Black

soft treachery whispers "you're worthless" in my ear.

finger-spun threads of truth weave their stems into my heart, into my brain.

scurrying legs of scurrilous bugs scratch their ways along my veins, burrowing deeply to lay the eggs of their poisonous babies in the messages they scraped.

"scum of the earth" and "better off dead" frequent my arterial walls, thick with newborn maggots squelching and digging new syllables into the untouched places.

the featherlight lips of horror caress my cheekbone, growing more urgent as my eyes grow wide and see the new tragic possibilities.

the sharp-fanged jaws of justice clamp around my throat, closing slowly, controlled, letting the pointed edges press down on my jugular vein, harder, harder, until the thin skin gives way and blood deluges in a mad attempt to escape its prison.

bloodlust gleams in the cruel eyes of fairness and piety's pointed tongue lashes out to draw in my warm, dying blood.

murmurs of "you're worthless" and "scum of the earth" lick my ears gently, fading in and out like an antique radio.

"better off dead" assaults me from every angle as the heavy hand of numbness eases my eyelids shut.

the radio signal dies away.

Cat's Eyes—Dave Coates

A stray reclined in the garden, beneath
a rare open sky in a gloomy summer
which deepened the glamour of its starbath,
untanning itself in the distant glimmer.

It shot off into the hedgerow, torchlight
hot on its tail. The night's only variety
was the blue-red blink of a red-eye flight
weaving through Orion en route to the city.

That was all; goodnight to woods.
Reeled indoors by the sluggish hum
of my plasma TV, I felt the certitude
of the right thing done. Up next was some

documentary: *On our tiny planet
life was created; if this delicate
balance has just once been repeated, as yet
we don't know.* It seemed something like fate.

Dexterity—Shirla White

i dance on the pinhead
of dreams, the rare elevation
in this bed of nails.

you expect me to fall
back

and impale myself

but i'm too nimble,
too aware of my footwork
to fracture reality.

i will leap to faith,
to joy, to love,
to possibility
in the eyeblink
you take to judge.

In Ten Lines or Less...

Posh School—Joshua Seigal

I went to a posh school.
We didn't deface books
by scribbling cocks all over them,
we defaced books by putting
them in parentheses, with a negation sign in front.

Man and Butterfly—Vanessa-Gabrielle

And the Butterfly screamed; Give me back my Flower!
To the Man in Gray,
As they laughed and danced the Night away.
And the Man said,
No, this is mine to keep.
And he closed his hand as he fell asleep.
When he woke, she had left him, as Butterflies do.
But the pain that he felt, broke his Heart in two.
And the Flower was found, held tight in his hand,
But the Flower was dead; and so was the Man.

Silent Lucidity—Vanessa-Gabrielle

She was looking at a Dream; and the dream looked back at her.
She was whispering a Song; and the Song whispered her Name.
She was dancing with the Moon; and the Moon taught her the steps. She
was begging for her Wings; and the Wings begged for her hair.
She cried out; Please fly me Home!
And the Home opened her Heart.
And here she waits,
And contemplates,
In Silent Lucidity.

Twice the Appreciation—Omri J. Luzon

It never happens twice. No, it never does.
You just... stand at the edge of the world,
looking down, everything is green. Bang.
Bang. Bang. And that image is carved
right into your spinal cord. That river,
by that town. The smoking chimneys, spiralling.
Everything is so deaf. Smells of oranges.
Tastes like skittles. Rainbows. Dry.
It never happens twice. Never did.

Carbon—James Mudgway

There is something wrong with the shine.
No allure in you. Nothing shines... there is no spark.
I fall into line. As I should. As we shall.

He holds my puppet against a cold steel stage.
And I dance, although I cry, my smile is painted.
Torn asunder, between right and reason.

Robert, When I Heard You Sing— Gareth Trew

Your voice -
it seemed removed from you
until I remembered your hair:
that they belong together is assured.

Both are unruly
and not a little dirty;
both hover between beauty
and excessive imperfection.

They are so incredibly sexy too -
as is the rest of you, Mr. Pattinson.

Those Times—Chris Holdaway

i.
Over course of the years
So many things die
As we're taught not to learn
Except in lines where one mask on a man
Would surely see that he stars in a play.

ii.
Though even if you talk to us only in part
With a plight to save our sights from the whole,
Just a few small men
Are made of more than
Only quiet little souls.

iii.
And we wouldn't delay yet another day.

revolutionary road—Joan Huang

by flowing waters of Babylon
your crimson arsenic tongue
drips spilt ink into the chalice
used by Christ to transform
crystal water to old wine

your clumsy fingers and dirty nails
break the bloody bread and
weave delicate Nightingale's
songs and bandages, spinning

pain into hedonistic pleasure
and guiding French artillery
into the stony face of an
unanswered desert question

screaming *why?* and hearing only
the whips of industrialization
raining down on the backs of
a hungry orphan, who took a
leap of faith but only landed
in the eternal fires of damnation,
accepting the punishment meted
by God for man's rape of the Earth

you say you can't live like this anymore
but the only other option is
not to live at all

Untitled—Ashley Saylor

he dances a kind of genius
against white walls;
all prim and branched out

the fireplace, calm as the setting sun,
carries me to him

our fingers sweep each other
collecting dead skin and dialogue

we giggle like short-lived kids playing with drugs.
his smile is vintage. his lips had been dry as cocoa mix,
now moist as dew kissed grass

the table acquaints us
my panties wilt to the obese rug---
among spilled wine and cradled glass

Twenty Minutes and a Second—Tyrobia Harshaw

She just started smoking. Usually I hate
the smell, but in that second, I could care less.
I got word from her a moment earlier.
Didn't hear all the words; only a few popped out...

"I"
"Wanted"
and "You"

Our lips interlocked...time froze
and sped up as if in sync with each other.
Her tongue: the bow on my violin.

We made
music
together.

My hand: the wind
flowing through her hair, throwing it back.
Our legs intertwined like vines and a fence.
One second melted
into twenty minutes and my heart
attacked itself, thumping the hammer
to its own anvil.

She makes me weak. She's my vice. The habit
I want to kick but can never find a excuse to

S
T
O...
P

She takes my breath away.

presence presents—Shirla White

now is the only tense

when you send a word my way,

each one a petal
drifting from a wishflower
held by someone
as distant as your flaws, echoing

she loves me

with the flicker of a firefly's eyes.

Fish—Kathryne Owens

He didn't have any where to be, still, when he saw the green light switch to yellow, his lips stretched into a frown. He slowly pressed his foot down on the break pedal, the old, rickety suburban slowly rolling to an idle stop a good few feet behind the car in front of him. Sinking back into the leather seat, the man glanced with a bored expression to the radio. Static echoed from the speakers.

“Sir, sir?” The man looked up to his car window. A very old looking man with stringy, white hair, scattered, thick eyebrows and a knotted beard rapped his gloved knuckles on the glass leaving small grease smudges, “Sir, sir, could you spare some change—for food?” he amended in his gruff, southern accent.

The man at the wheel held up a finger as he reached into the small ash tray. He dug around for a moment and, surprisingly, eventually pulled out a crumpled twenty. He flipped it over in his fingers for a moment. It was a little much. He looked again at the old man outside of his car. His tired eyes drooped and the color of his brown eyes had nearly dulled to black. The man behind the wheel couldn't help himself as he rolled down the window.

“Oh thank you, thank you.” The old man said, taking the money gratefully in his hand. He rubbed his fingers over it a few times as though it wasn't real. The man behind the wheel smiled at him and started rolling up the window—“Wait, wait, sir!” The old man slammed his hand down on the glass. The man in the car froze,

“Y-Yes?” He asked, almost afraid.

“Your name...what is it? This is the most money I've had in a long time, what's your name?” He pleaded with an eager smile on his face. The man behind the wheel sighed with relief, running a dark skinned hand over his nearly bald head,

“Oh—Michael, Michael Harrow,” The street light finally flickered to green,

“Well then, God bless you Michael, God bless you!” He said, finally removing his hand from the window pane. Michael slowly placed his foot on the gas pedal, and in a few moments, was gone from the old man's sight.

The next day, Michael Harrow pulled up into a red light in that very same intersection, “Again?” He asked himself. Trying to get comfortable, Michael slouched a bit in his seat and looked around through the window shield, keeping one hand on the steering wheel and one foot on the gas. From under the highway a hobbling figure appeared, making its way over to the car in front of Michael's. It was the old man. Michael watched as he performed almost the same routine as yesterday. He watched as a hand stretched from the window and dropped probably about two dollars worth of pocket change into his grubby, wrinkled hands.

Has he lived his whole life like that? Michael wondered as he watched him peel away from the car and hurry back under the highway. He probably would have thought about it more, but when he looked back up the light had already turned green, and he was on his way home.

Every day, Michael would drive up to the intersection, and every time he got stopped by the light. That old man would hobble out and roll straight into his begging routine. Michael found himself thinking about it even before he hit the intersection, sometimes even at work. Michael couldn't help wondering, He makes probably around ten plus dollars a day on average with his routine, a McDonald's meal costs about five, where's the other five going towards, is he saving it? Though, a lingering, doubtful thought did occur to him every now and then.

He was thinking these very thoughts one day as he drove up to the intersection. And, as it had been oh so faithful every day before, the light flickered red as soon as he reached it. Pressing down on the break, Michael glanced at the radio, and for the first time in a while, fiddled with the old-timey tuning dial. Static—static—still nothing.

...

Fish—Kathryne Owens (cont.)

... Michael turned the volume dial down, cutting off the humming white noise as he glanced towards the highway, waiting for the old man. He watched and watched, but still, no one emerged. Michael's thick lips pulled into a disapproving frown. "Weird," he muttered, looking back at the street light: green. He pressed on the gas pedal lightly, then turned his eyes back on the highway.

At a better angle, Michael could see two men under the overhang. One was the old man, handing a bill to another, much, much younger boy. He slipped him something. The old man quickly stuffed it into his pocket and Michael quickly ripped his eyes away, scowling.

I (don't) Understand—Joan Huang

you,
the silhouette of my neighbor's
husband, sleeping on hot cement;
the egg that fried, sunny-side-up,
before the pool deck burned my
desert soles

drink,
collecting diamonds dropped
from the back pocket of a setting
sunrise, the moon-drunk Isis shares
your disgraced comet eyes with the
haughty Rhine

drowns,
my salient disappointments
buried in the question of the sea;
I am Dr. Frankenstein and you are
my perfect Galatea, curves becoming
granite walls

crumbling,
under the pressure of a lurking event
horizon; you are doomed to live and cursed
to die, so consumed by your empty
stoichiometry and pursuit of
illiterate nirvana

spawns,
ashen half-truths from volcanic lips,
your words are detritus and
tangerine Jell-o, burying synecdoches
and filling my clay ears until I no
longer remember

Train to London—Dave Coates

It seems longer ago
than it was, merged with a surfeit
of similar journeys, little between
them save the weather.

I remember the morning fields outside
Alnmouth dusted in breathy bedclothes,
although on reflection
that may have been some other day;

I remember shivering in someone
else's reserved seat, looking greyer
than ever as I hugged away
the onrush of lucidity.

Maybe it was too cold for rainbows,
one of those twilight
afternoons where the sun is too weak
to shoo off the moon,

maybe it was the day you shucked
an eyelash from my cheek and your fingers
were cold like the snow
on your blueberry-coloured frock;

in any case it took hours and crossed
most of the country. The flowers outside
the window were visible the way every syllable
rebounded through the quiet carriage.

The moon was overshadowed in London.
You wore black shoes that night,
black-heeled shoes that almost
brought us eye to eye.

Elizabeth—Rowena Knight

I said to Elizabeth
that sometimes, I wonder if
we're really filled with
guts
and
muscles
and
bones
and things.

She asked me why,
so I replied:
"Because sometimes
I feel
quite empty,
when I'm sad."

She was quiet a little while.
"If you were all hollow,"
she wondered slowly,
"What would you keep inside?"

Then I was quiet too, because I wasn't sure.
Eventually I knew.
"Birds, beneath my rib cage.
They'd tickle me during class,
and I'd smile, and no one would know why."

Elizabeth wasn't sure.
"But don't you think, eventually,
they would starve, and die?"

"I'd roll pieces of bread between my fingers
and then I'd eat them and
they'd catch them with their beaks."

"What if they ate,
not just bread but
your
lunch
and
dinner
and
breakfast
and
tea?"

I hooked my thumbs together,
waggled my fingers,
and flew my bird-hands to her.
"Well then, I suppose
I'd have to set them free."

Cartoid Connections—Asmara Malik

You'd rather catalog
every roar, every sigh
that outlines
this God-shaped emptiness,
waiting mutely
for any kind of release
from the thudthudthud verbosity
of ventricular mouths within
your cobwebbed thoracic cage.

You murmur in your sleep,
'I can hear His screams echo
between my desperate heartbeats.'

God-haunted.
God is a ghost sliding molten through your veins.

I have no use for divinity;
I'd rather trace an X
along the side of your neck,
where the carotid pulses deep down,
dreaming of its connection
to the mind and the heart
in a web.
I'd rather
smile and whisper against
your sleep-warm skin,
'Here, there be ghosts.'

I know your God
is a ghost sliding molten through your veins.

Mind the Trap, II—Chris Holdaway

I set a tune to drift through the rooms,
And as the drawing point scratches at depths
The very sound it makes as well finds high places
In the corners of my walls and ceilings.
The most personal rafters are a thoughtful haunt
For our most elaborate feelings.

I sink then into the softest foundations,
And as the rasp of lyric calls out its names
There sounds a flicker through leatherbound tomes
Of the best of my hopes and dreams.
With luck while lounging about one may fall
Spirit and all to a new seat of schemes.

Perhaps a homely sense, it may well show
That ghost of me I am yet to know.