

decades review

Issue Two



January 2012

poetry

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DESECRATION

I placed it like a reminder
in the corner of my computer screen;
all day I kept coming back to it:
the web cam a mile underwater
recording clouds and plumes of filth
expelled like an explosive diarrhea
from the bowels of the earth,
convulsive, unstoppable,
polluting the soft, blue-green waters
and pure white sands
of the warm, salt sea,
its rich, teeming, varied life--
dolphins playing at dawn,
stealthy, sinuous sharks,
fish the colors of the rainbow,
vibrant corals and seaweeds,
mollusks and crustaceans,
the most magnificent birds
and intricate shells--
fouled and mired in the earth's shit.

The very substance of our greed
come back to contaminate the world,
until the last fires of internal combustion
are quenched.

-Anne Whitehouse

UNTITLED

Imagination was born
when arms grew long enough
to reach the genitals.

-Clinton Inman

THE PINK PARADE

Some images stick for a lifetime,
like that of cherub-cheeked Joey Fitzpatrick,
4th grader, Rockwell red, a wad of pink
Bazooka Bubble Gum
on the bridge of his freckled nose,
Sister Lucilla, Principal and Mother Superior,
clamping the crook of his elbow.
This is what you get if caught
with gum in your mouth at my school,
Mother Superior said and then whirled him
into the hall and paraded him
and that wad of gum on his nose
room to room, eight in all,
and I wondered
whether every classroom had the same reaction
as we did in third grade:
the headshaking, the finger-pointing,
the snickering.
Was he still sobbing?
Later, I wondered: did that intense
pink taste still linger
when Joe was longhaired and full-bearded,

homeless,
when death took him by the crook of the arm?

-Robert E. Petras

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

I met Elisha Dorado at a party.
When I flashed him my all American, white teeth beautiful smile,
He let me blow his famous GOLDEN gun,
For free.

All night long, it lasted.

In the morning,
My teeth were yellowed,
Nicotine-stained,
And I wondered if I had caught
Lung cancer.

-Alain Marciano



ONE PHOTO - Eleanor Leonne Bennet

ELEANOR LEONNE BENNETT: Eleanor Leonne Bennett is a 15 year old photographer and artist who has won contests with National Geographic, The Woodland Trust, The World Photography Organisation, Winstons Wish, Papworth Trust, Mencap, Big Issue, Wrexham science , Fennel and Fern and Nature's Best Photography. She has had her photographs published in exhibitions and magazines across the world including the Guardian (2010), RSPB Birds(2010) , RSPB Bird Life (2010), Dot Dot Dash (2010 and 2011) ,Alabama Coast (2010) , Alabama Seaport (2010) and NG Kids Magazine (2010). She was also the only person from the UK to have her work displayed in the National Geographic and Airbus run See The Bigger Picture global exhibition tour with the United Nations International Year Of Biodiversity 2010. Only visual artist published in the Taj Mahal Review June 2011. Youngest artist to be displayed in Charnwood Art's Vision 09 Exhibition (2009) and New Mill's Artlounge Dark Colours Exhibition (2011). Youngest to be published in Grey Sparrow Press (2011). Featured artist in Able Muse (2011) .

ONE DAY

One day you will rise and know
How beautiful you are,
Why heads turn when you walk in the room
And other eyes gaze, entranced.

Or, if not blessed with beauty,
You may still be blessed,
By wonder or kindness,
Wit and intelligence.

Discovering as you grow
How your soul can glow,
Bloom with mystery;
Then draw from a well of wishes

A dazzle of ecstatic bliss.

One day you will yearn for something
Scarcely known or understood,
Then ache with torment; transient sorrows,
Feel the first ice of terrible regret
Of losing joy; too beautiful to own.

One day you will learn
That all good things must end,
That change must craft the shape of lives
With forces beyond the reach of reason.

And one day you will understand love
Be sure of this.

-John Stocks

A GLANCE BACK

On a trip to the grocery store,
framed in the rear-view mirror,
an old woman drives behind me,
her cheeks lined like sandbanks
after heavy spring runoff, clear
blue eyes, glasses on a thin nose.

Not that she's so much like Mom,
but enough, just enough, and tears
well up before I can even think,
ache down-shifts the gears, how
she rides in my passenger seat,
how tightly I still grip the wheel.

-Jerry Kraft



ONE PHOTO - JeanPaul Ferro

JEANPAUL FERRO: Jeanpaul is a novelist, short fiction author, poet, and photographer from Providence, Rhode Island. An 8-time Pushcart Prize nominee, J anpaul’s work has appeared on NPR, Contemporary American Voices, Columbia Review, Emerson Review, Connecticut Review, Portland Monthly, and others. He is the author of *All The Good Promises* (Plowman Press, 1994), *Becoming X* (BlazeVox Books, 2008), *You Know Too Much About Flying Saucers* (Thumbscrew Press, 2009), *Hemispheres* (Maverick Duck Press, 2009) [Essendo Morti – Being Dead](#) (Goldfish Press, 2009), nominated for the 2010 Griffin Prize in Poetry; and [Jazz](#) (Honest Publishing, 2011) nominated for both the 2012 Griffin Prize in Poetry and the 2012 Kingsley Tufts Prize in Poetry. He is represented by the Jennifer Lyons Literary Agency. He currently lives along the south coast of southern Rhode Island. Website: www.jeanpaulferro.com

COMP POEM

Here I sit not a care in the world
The sun washes my face clean
My big hairy beard makes me look like a man of the sea
but I have never been on a poop deck and known its name.

I am totally free
Not one thing can come and upset me not today
Not one the day is mine.
Thoughts of yesterday and long ago swept well under the carpet for now.
God that carpet is getting high though
Touch the ceiling soon.

Thoughts don't trouble me only remind me.
A tasty tea smells good passing through the clean autumn air
Not mine though.
No tea for me. I hunger as I always have and always will.
Well it would take me more
More than one day and one poem to work that one out.
See you tomorrow. More poems from home.

-Marc Carver

THE BOOK OF TWILIGHTS

We sat below the neon-lit palms like we always did when
you were small, a rose and gold colored sky between us and
the lightening crackling down a hundred miles away,
columns and hives of black cloud rising, rising upward like
gods atop the horizon of the ocean off in the distance,

I remember your young and frightened eyes looking up at me
for comfort before you out grew me--

that brittle sound of the clamshell road in the moonlight
on our way home every night.

-Jéanpaul Ferro



ONE PHOTO - Pat St. Pierre

PAT ST. PIERRE: She is a freelance writer of poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Her work has been widely published in print and online magazines. Her second photo chapbook “Theater of Life” is published by Finishing Line Press and is available from the. Her photos have be on the covers and included in print and online magazines. Some are: Whisperings Literary, Decades Review, The Camel Saloon, Ramshackle Review, Front Porch, Ken*Again, Our Day’s Encounter, Touch, the Journal of Healing, Flutter, etc. Her blog is [HERE](#).

WE WERE WILD THINGS

We were wild things, hungry for passion and meaning, navigating through the jungles of life in the treetops.

We were wild things, howling at the moon with a newfound vigor, our veins alive and pulsing with unburdened joy.

We were wild things, huddled together in the dead of night with nothing but the heat from our conjoined hearts to keep out the blistering cold.

We were wild things, inhaling our lust in the form of smoky spirals left to drift through the night into oblivion.

We were wild things, our love of existence dwarfed only by the powerful bond we shared.

We were wild things, caring not for the constraints of time and embracing every moment given to us, with a childlike innocence that gave us ultimate freedom.

We were wild things, dancing gracefully under the covers, entwined together as the trunks of two trees wrapped in a singular growth.

We were wild things, rulers of our own personal heaven, fit to wander the streets of gold to our hearts' content.

We were wild things, and our songs were laughter, sung at the top of our lungs until we were out of breath.

We were wild things, rejoicing under the cover of darkness, staining the night air with our raucous jubilation.

We were wild things, embracing the unknown, shielded by the purity found in the simple enjoyment of each other and the world around us.

We were wild things, and together we rekindled a raging fire in our hearts that had long been extinguished.

We were wild things, and history shall never forget us.

-Cody York

WAKING UP TOGETHER

Barely awake, we float
across our bed like clouds
over undulating dunes
and valleys of lush loam.
Sleep-mist lifts over parched lips,
and our feet move like nomads
toward the warmth of each other.

Our most secret places
have buried their keys
inside the swirls of our fingerprints,
and we slip into each other's hands
promising suggestions--
unopened letters carried by envoys
returning to their homeland.

-John Middlebrook

TEMPTING

Nobody loves me more than Miss Hooker,
not even my parents, not even my
dog. Not even God. I never see Him
anyway, but to be fair, Miss Hooker
--she's my Sunday School teacher--says that
He's
everywhere. Well, no wonder I can't see
Him if I can't pick Him out from trees and
toys and cars and telephone poles and sand
on the beach, not that I've ever seen one.
It's the principle of the thing. I love

Miss Hooker, too, and want to marry her
but she's not ready to love me that way
so every night I pray like Hell that God
will prove He loves me and make her younger
and me older so that one morning we'll
wake up the same age, 18, just about
the average of our ages, 25
and 10. Miss Hooker says Thou shalt not tempt
the Lord thy God. That's a Bible-ism
or maybe she got it off the TV.

I think it means I shouldn't dare to dare

Him to do anything I wouldn't do
myself. Or maybe it means I shouldn't
ask for favors just for me--that's being
selfish. Or maybe I just shouldn't push
Him too far or He'll push back with a shove
that might knock me over, even kill me.

Then at last I'd see Him up close but
I kind of hate to go that far. I don't
know what I'd say, or if I'd have a mouth
to say it with. Maybe I'd introduce
myself but of course He knows who I am,
He made me, at least kind of--He made me

through my parents though I'm not sure how, we
don't learn about babies in Sunday School,
save Jesus, Whose mother was a virgin,
whatever that is. Maybe that's someone
who's never been kissed. I'm one of those, too,
never been kissed by a girl, that is, who
wasn't my mother or grandmother on
both sides or sister or cousins. Hello,
I'd say to God--I've heard a lot about
Thee, and try to shake His hand, if I still
have hands up in Heaven, and if He
has them, too, I guess He does--I was made

in His image, but if neither of us
has them then that squares us so we'll shake them
anyway, unless He won't take mine. And
I really won't be in Heaven yet, just
close enough to see the entrance sign, as
I stand before God and await judgement,
but if He lets me in I guess we'll shake
them and if He doesn't I'll show Him what

a good sport I am before I'm off to

Hell. No hard feelings, I'll say. I'll mean it,
too--I'm not a sore loser. Miss Hooker
loves me more than He does, I can feel it

when she calls on me, as she sometimes does,
to lead the class in the Lord's Prayer, and
her eyes are closed and she thinks mine are, too,
but I peek to see what she looks like when
she's asleep and her head's bowed like she's too
tuckered to stay alert and needs a nap
--that really clutches me, I want to go
over where she's sitting in her big chair
and kiss her smack on top of her head
and try not to wake her but if I do
there's at least a chance that she'll kiss me back
and if she does she'd better dismiss class
and we'd better get out of town before

it's too late, though I'm not sure what too late
means in that case, something about a law
being broken and maybe its spirit
too. I expect that God will rescue me
and maybe it will mean that He really
does loves me more than she does, or it's close,
or she's God herself. That's what you might call
blasphemy but I don't care, I'll risk it
all for the chance to be right. If I'm wrong
then when my time comes I'll go to
Hell but that's the breaks, somebody has to,
we can't all live with God. That's sacrifice.
Who knows but I'll see Miss Hooker down there.
I hope not and I hope so. I won't lie.

-Gale Acuff

prose

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A BURST AND A WHIMPER

He wanted a word for what he had in mind. Silly, thoughtless, he picked up a dictionary. He opened it randomly, trespassed into alphabets, befuddled them with his aimlessness. From the black and white of the thin pages he cleaved a vision: a garden where all the leaves of all the trees complained of the sun's harshness. Spread like tired wings the leaves looked up in dismay. Wilting, wilted, they cursed their own immobility. Then he saw more. The branches of the trees were contorted, reacting to the acid of some catastrophe. On 'g' – galena: the most important ore of LEAD; gambol; gangland; garden: an area of land, usually one adjoining a house, where grass, trees, ornamental plants, fruit, vegetables, etc, are grown; ganja: marijuana. Long ago he had challenged himself to stare at the sun for three seconds and lost, lost to himself. He closed the dictionary. A thud! Something compressed, released. What was in his mind was lost. He looked up, around. The fan's blades were greying a circle on the ceiling. Two lizards were joined on the wall; they looked like those plastic pranks – blink-less, still. Muted, someone's world flickered on the TV. Outside the window the monsoon violated the city languidly.

-Tanuj Solanki

EAT THE WORM

“So . . . it's been a real clambake, a nice walk on the beach at Ocean City, New Jersey, where the sharp crystals of sand slice your feet as your stroll.”

“That's what Band-Aids are for,” Dr. Mozart commented.

Patient Three o'clock scratched a boil at his mouth, and Loki super-glued his lips. Occasionally, he'd distinguish himself from a cadaver with a perfunctory inhalation or frown.

Her patient folded his hands in his lap to keep himself from clapping like he's applauding angels politely for their performance of invisible and indecipherable plate spinning and trapeze flying. His skin oozed gloaming like he'd swallowed a bucket of ink.

She felt the ticks of his disease sucking at her arteries; the malady of her patients—the dementia, manic-depression, social anxiety disorders, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders—infesting, distilling, altering. She adjusted her patients quotidian, and they maladjusted her, dripping in a crack in her ceiling.

Dr. Mozart applied the mollifying succor of psychopharmacology:

“I have a colleague in Butte who had some amazing results with Zipdanoff in controlling these kinds of issues common with your condition. We can start you off on a twenty-five micrograms and see. They're little pink motes, bitter on the tongue. Wash them down with tequila.”

She couldn't imagine knowing anyone in Butte. Was there a place called Butte? She'd made it up, spawned it from the turbulent lava chambers of her protean heart. Were there any other cities beyond Philly?

Her mouth poured saliva for a cheese steak. She'd order a deluxe cheese steak hoagie with extra onions and fries and squeeze the whole submarine into her mouth and swallow, feel it piercing down her gut and stick in her heart like a tractor trailer crashed on the Walt Whitman Bridge, blocking her blood—her head a helium balloon, floating before death, those moments of ecstasy.

Patient Three o'clock shrugged.

She drew her script pad like a Smith & Wesson. She held her fountain pen above the papyrus, hand trembling, afraid to write. Patient Three o'clock would see her hands shaking. He'd demand that they'd switch places then crouch in her elitist leather recliner made by

Robert Miracle's Leather Furniture of Chicago, adorned in her gray business suits. He'd ship her off to St. Mary's House for an evening of Thorazine cocktails and electroshock massages.

Could be a real trip, a gas!

“Well zip-a-de-do-doc! But I've told you. I'm peachy. I'm aces. I'm dancing on the moon with Astaire.”

She folded her legs, resisted the temptation to put them up on the glass table she'd placed strategically between her and the patients, a barrier to establish clinical isolation—kin to a surgical table over which she could apply balsam brain balm or a Freudian fill of cocaine for her frenetic followers.

A flamenco number tapped and spun in the background of her ears. She searched for the amplification rheostat to subdue the hot, Spanish rhythm—of sultry nights when the molten miasma melted the air at the backdoor of her trachea, only assuaged by cold tequila from sweating bottles pulled out of the river on torn stockings from Aldonza, the club puta. The liquor, cooled in stygian flows and currents that traversed the Arctic, locked in ice sheets for eons, freed under a smothering blanket of carbon dioxide and then beaten by the fists of careless photons to ride high, to bond to dust, to fall free in the mountains then pour in the rivers to cool their tequila. You had to sip it, drink it in baby sips; when it cooled the lava in the belly, steam blew in geysers. You let it out bit by bit. Those who desired to sing with the angels or dine with devils, dying from Aldonza's greasy love, drank from the bottle straight then tapped flamenco in their dripping minds to the count of . . . one . . . two . . . three . . . four—then at least, tranquil vacuity, emancipated of the pressures of atmosphere and promises and greasy love.

Aldonza the puta kicks them in their manhood.

Finish the bottle. Eat the worm.

For Christ sakes eat the worm!

Patient Three o'clock muttered something. He crooned. She couldn't make out the lyrics, but she sensed its importance. Didn't give a damn. She shivered, chilled, frozen bones snapping like brittle twigs. She'd douse herself in tequila and bum a match off an atheist—to melt the glaciers stuck in her ribs, her hips, floating in her womb.

Was the flamenco club real? Dr. Mozart dug within her memory crevices, searching for a matchbook with the name of the club. It may have been just an inchoate, corybantic night terror she had suffered her senior year at Arizona State—a vision unleashed from decades of repression, human suppression, from terror of God's truth, manumitted with the sip of a shaman's mushroom nepenthe.

Christ. Buddha. Mittens her old kitten! He still vomited words, muttered, even wept. She'd not been listening. She'd lost the moment. She'd fumbled his words, the key to his freedom. The vision's fury struck her deaf. She'd betrayed her patient's trust. She scoured her memory like a burglar in a dark cathedral searching for silver crosses. He'd sought her out as his champion. She'd become his jailor.

She recalled one word.

“So fiddles?” She tweaked it with a paper cut smile, a bit of encouragement for his breakthrough. “Terribly interesting.”

“I don't like the word violin. It's too nose-in-the-air, champagne and my crap smells like roses. My grandfather called it a fiddle. And it was a cherub's thigh. Beautiful. It made me cry like a wuss whenever I heard him play it. I want one played at my funeral. If I could only recall that song he used to play. When it was fast and good, it made me laugh until I choked for air. When the song would mellow, ooze, I'd weep until I drowned tiny angels.”

He died in her arms. She grasped for a paradigm of words to bring back the moment.

Her thoughts vibrated from the flamenco beat—so soothing. She wanted to let go and just plummet, jump off the moon and fall to earth. She'd burn to cinders, but maybe a whisper of ash might hit the Arctic sea. Would someone fiddle for her?

His eyes jactitated like dandelion wishes in a tornado. She could find no surgical words to sooth the wounds, his or hers. So she let it rain. She let the lightning strike:

“If you want to die—then be damned all my pills and vapid mouth echoes and worms. Useless. Maybe I'll join you. Stay though for a little while. I've lusted after gorgeous men, beautiful women. If they won't have us ugly sinners, at least we can dream—and dreaming is the only true prayer.”

“So just live because life can be a hoot?”

“Fiddles can be great fun. Try learning one. Don't be the one listening. Try playing.”

“I'm horny.”

“Put it away. That would be a breach of doctor-patient ethics. I know the name of a good place, a sticky brothel. Tell them you're my patient, and they'll give you a discount. Go back whenever the reaper comes a' knocking. That's my prescription, better than zip-a-crap. Just don't fall in love. You won't be able to afford the daily rate.”

She stood up. He followed.

“The twelfth of June at three?”

“Thanks Doctor. I'm going to go dance with Astaire.”

“Whatever's your flamenco.”

She closed the door behind him.

From the top drawer of her desk, next to the dream catcher she hid away, under the prescription pads and abandoned cases from previous reading spectacles she'd replaced, she grabbed a plastic tablet of oxycontin, slipped one out. She placed the Eucharist on her tongue, gave thanks to any deity that might be so bored that they watched this lone spec of matter in the great cosmos. She made the motion to swallow, but the pill caught on her sandpaper throat. It gagged her, and her head jerked in dry revulsion. She clutched a cold mug of stale coffee from two days previous. It assuaged, washing the pill down. The bitter brew—left to the elements for days, the detritus, the mental flotsam and jetsam of two days of wounded psyches that the mug had collected like a cistern—washed around in her mouth. Her body erupted, commanding her to spit out the venom. She considered the recommendation, then she forced her throat muscles to swallow it.

A worm floated at the bottom.

Eat the worm for the sake of Christ.

-T. Fox Dunham

A MOMENT IN TIME

No neurotic harbors thoughts of suicide which are not murderous impulses against others redirected upon himself.--Sigmund Freud (1856-1939.)

"There are a few things you need to know before we start." Patrolman Sam "Cheesesteak Sammy" Peters inhaled deeply and glared at Dr. Tom 'Doc T' Thompson. Peters' hands were shaking but he rubbed them together and they stopped. He stared at the manila folder opened in front of Thompson and suddenly reached for it. Thompson quickly pushed it out of the way then grabbed it and stood up, facing Peters, who was still glaring hostility at him.

"C'mon Doc, lemme see the file; stop givin' me this there are a few things you need to know before we start crap and that other garbage about just a moment in time shit. Scratch

was the best cop dat ever stepped on the street and youse know it. I already know everything. He din' kill 'is-self and dat's all there is to it man. Stop bustin' my balls and lemme see what youse got on 'im."

"Keep your hands off the file Cheese, the voice caromed off the ceiling and resounded into the small room. Peters turned in his seat and when he saw the speaker was Lt. John 'Big Mac' McWilliams, he turned towards him and, turning both palms upwards, shrugged his shoulders.

"But L-Tee-ah-nah-er-um, I mean, I just wanna know what—"

"I know what you wanna know Cheesesteak but what makes you so special? The doc has privileged information and I see no reason why he should ..."

"L-T youse know me and Scratch been partners for over two decades? I know, I mean I know his whole life story—c'mon L-T—we knew each other inside-out and I know he didn't off himself."

McWilliams walked into the room and slowly and silently closed the door. He walked over to the desk that separated Peters and Doc T and sat on it. The wooden desk strained and creaked audibly under his 6'7", 285-pound body, as he exhaled a stream of air and smiled down at Peters.

"That so You knew him better'n anybody else then—huh Cheesy?"

Peters scowled at McWilliams. Everybody in the precinct knew how much Peters hated to be called Cheesy. He was originally from Philadelphia and loved cheese-steaks, and he and his now deceased partner were famous for stopping at the local cheese-steak sandwich shop where one of Peters' boyhood pals from his old neighborhood in South Philly owned and operated a sub shop that specialized in Philly cheese-steaks.

"So you were partners for twenty years huh?"

"You know we were Skip' twenty years, five months three days," Peters recited and McWilliams scowled and shook his head. He knew how tight partners could become, especially after two decades in the same car—closer than husbands and wives, which, many times, they saw less than their partners.

"Well, I guess you know then that his family moved down here in 1979 and that in 1981—when Scratch was 11-years old—his mom and dad were killed in a car accident and he became an orphan and a ward of the State of Florida?" McWilliams glared at Peters, who nodded solemnly.

"Yeah, well, yeah course I knew dat L-Tee, c'mon man, we wuz--"

"Partners—I know Cheese—and did you know that he was sent to Dozier when he was twelve?"

"I knew that Big, c'mon we wuz ..."

"Did you know what happened to him at Dozier?"

"Wha' ... what happened to him L-Tee? What ah you mean? What happened to him?"

"I thought you knew everything about Scratch after all you guys were partners for two decades?"

"C'mon L-Tee, he was only there for a couple years and nothin' happened there ... c'mon man he would ah told me man ... he would ah ...?"

"You ever ask him about it?"

"C'mon L-Tee; nothin' happened; I mean he never talked about it ... he ... he never did."

"You don't know do you Cheese?"

Peters looked at Doc T and then back at McWilliams and shook his head slowly. "Wha' ... what the hell ...?"

"Scratch was put there because there was no place else back in those days. He only ran away from the foster home they had put him in because they were beating on him but when they picked him up that idiot judge Cardoza sent him to the reform school."

"Juan Cardoza ... that pervert ... he was involved in that scandal with the priests; let 'em all off ... turned out he was a pervert too—he sent Scratch to Dozier?"

"Yup, he sure did Cheese; he sure did," McWilliams said.

"Yeah-yeah L-Tee but and he went back to school a couple years later—no big thing—it never held him back; he got on with the police department, right?"

"We never should have taken him," Thompson said.

"Never should have ... what ..." Peters said, stymied.

"He was damaged goods by then," Thompson continued. "His mind just couldn't put it away, never entirely anyway."

"Man, c'mon what are you talkin' about Doc?"

"You know he drank Cheese, c'mon now," McWilliams said.

"Yeah well ... so, a lot of us—after hours ... c'mon L-Tee, you ..."

"It's why he drank Mr. Peters," Thompson said.

Peters shifted his gaze to the psychiatrist and frowned. "Well, I mean ... lookit here Doc, if you guys know somethin' that I don't I mean ...?"

"Cheesesteak, you can bet your pension that we know somethin' that you don't," McWilliams barked and then when the psychiatrist nodded at him, he said: "Your partner was abused for the two years that he was in Dozier."

"Wha' ... what ...? Hey Scratch was-sin no punk; why he woulda ..."

"It was the adult instructors who did it Cheese; okay?"

Cheesesteak looked from Lt. McWilliams to Doctor Thompson and Thompson turned the folder towards him and then opened the file. He motioned for Cheesesteak to take a seat and read it and Cheesesteak sat down and began scanning through the file. It was several pages long and McWilliams left the office but came back about ten minutes later. He looked at Thompson and nodded his head and Thompson left the room. McWilliams put his hand on Peters' shoulder and Peters stood up quickly. "Those bastards Mac ... those bastards ... why

... I mean can't they be prosecuted ... I mean ...”

“We goin’ after ‘em Cheese,” McWilliams said and Peters nodded.

“If ... if you need me Lieutenant ... I mean ... for character reference y’know to testify ...”

“It ain’t gonna bring Scratch back Chesse y’know.” McWilliams saw tears forming in Peters’ eyes and squeezed his shoulder. “It was only a moment in time Cheese ... it could ah been any of us and you know it?”

Peters nodded and stood up. He stared at McWilliams. “Yeah, I know it could ah been L-Tee, I mean I’ve thought about eatin’ my piece more’n once and ...”

McWilliams squeezed Peters’ shoulder again and shook his head. “Cheese, I’ll see you later; you know what I mean?”

Peters, who well-knew that Doc T could—and would—get a cop taken off the force, nodded back at McWilliams who nodded and smiled crookedly. “It was only a moment in time Cheese, only a moment in time.”

Cheesesteak walked out of the office that afternoon in the fall of 2011 and mumbled to himself as he stumbled down the hallway. “Only a moment in time alright ... that’s all it ever takes ... that’s all it ever takes ... is a moment in time.”

-Keith G. Laufenberg

QUIET TIME

The summer of '78 was too hot for bell bottoms; Halters were all the rage, but not for me. My shapeless short hair matched my shapeless immature body ...not complimented by the cheap white camp t-shirt; the front emblazoned with a giant green smiley face bordered by the words "Sunny Acres" and "Pioneer Trails." Due to a merger, the length of the name had doubled.

But I would escape the pressures of adolescent social status, or lack thereof, during the rest period --the most magical hour of the day. Today was particularly special due to your gift, which I have still. To the world of make-believe, we languished luxuriously in the field by the trickling stream, bellies full with peanut butter and jelly.

As was customary, I lay under the willow tree, listening to your big calloused fingers travel the fret. You were playing that funky music, "Love Potion Number Nine," "Rock and Roll Music," "Yellow Submarine." (Your music revealed your age, but our love transcended the generation gap).

Soon, I drifted into a meditative state. Back then, it was called quiet time. Pieces of the sun penetrated the dense canopy of fine willow leaves, my lids sank, and colors speckled my mind's eye as I pressed my lids until the light joined into a slice of canned pineapple. The sound of the stream harmonized with the rustling branches, nature's symphony, not to be outdone by your man-made melodies. The grass tickled my feet and made me itch.

Leaves danced on my nose, and I awoke (was that you?), I scrambled over to your lap, rested my head on your round, hard, belly. When I gave you a big bear hug and kissed your beard-masked face, your strawberry-blond whiskers tickled my lips.

That was the day you had presented me with your old, worn-out, stiff first-baseman's mitt, ties coming loose. I was a tomboy in those days and loved all sports, and this gift told me you cared for me too. I would cherish that mitt forever, tattooed with your Chicago address, though, at this moment, you were out in the 'burbs, between jobs, a camp counselor for the summer, bringing me a sweet medley of sounds of the sixties. Oh, how I longed for the eternity of rest time. I held the leather relic to my chest and then my face, breathing in the scarce remnant of animal odor, covering my face with it to block out the eternal sun and daydream merrily, peacefully, until the mood struck to blurt out, "I didn't know if it was day or night! I started kissing everything in sight! But when I kissed the cop down on 34th and Vine, he broke my little bottle of...LOVE POTION NUMBER NINE!"

You put your hands over your ears in mock gesture of my miserable singing voice, and we laughed until tears made paths down my dirty face, and the boys joined in on their kazoos.

-Melissa Hart

TRANSITIONS

The parched leaves skittered across the driveway as we pulled onto the silent street. Faded flowers nestled under the windows whose blinds were drawn like closed eyes. The sun hung low to the west dropping a scrim across the tree trunks and the exposed branches. Gauzy clouds were stretched across a cerulean sky.

The kids spent the next afternoon jumping and running across hay bales and clamoring onto wagons filled with pumpkins and gourds. We meandered through the corn maze sheltered by the towering stalks and munched on kettle cooked popcorn. They couldn't wait to scoop out the pumpkins and begin the ritual carving and baking of seeds. We spread out paper on the porch floor and they took turns reaching in and screaming, "Ugh!" as they pulled out the stringy contents. Following long negotiations and careful planning and cutting a diabolic face twinkled in the windowless bathroom where we could best approximate darkness. Later, the seeds were soaked and bathed in butter and salt before baking.

That night our favorite seafood shack was closed for the season as was the pasta place next door so dinner was a hamburger in a deserted short order shop that somehow survives when the seasonal crowds have gone home. It's always summertime at Skip's. There's a canoe suspended from the ceiling and oars and life preservers on the walls. The prow shaped tables are scarred with the initials of generations of visitors and water safety posters are scattered about. Old black and white photos attest to the building's long and storied history before its present incarnation. The young guy behind the counter kept engaging us in idle chit chat as we waited for our food. Each time we looked away or started to drift down the aisle he reeled us back with another inquiry or comment.

We awoke to a low lying mist over the lake, no doubt a product of the warm waters clashing with the cold morning air. The sun filtering through cast a pink mist across the still lavender water. The piers had been pulled in for the season and were stacked like old bones on the sand leaving a wide open expanse for the ducks to explore near the deserted boat launch and parking lot. A distant huffing sound, not unlike a sniffling horse, drew our eyes upward to feast on a quilted hot air balloon suspended overhead, its rainbow stripes wrapped around it

like a shawl against the cold. Spikes of flame systematically warmed the air to keep it afloat in the windless morning. We watched transfixed until it disappeared behind the trees.

A crow circled and screeched his urgent message as we lingered on the sun drenched porch for one last interlude before bringing in the grill and stacking the furniture under a plastic mantle to weather the winter. I took an armload of purple and gold mums from the side garden along with the ivy plant home as my last souvenir. The next time we come the snow will fly.

-Carol Skahen

UNTITLED

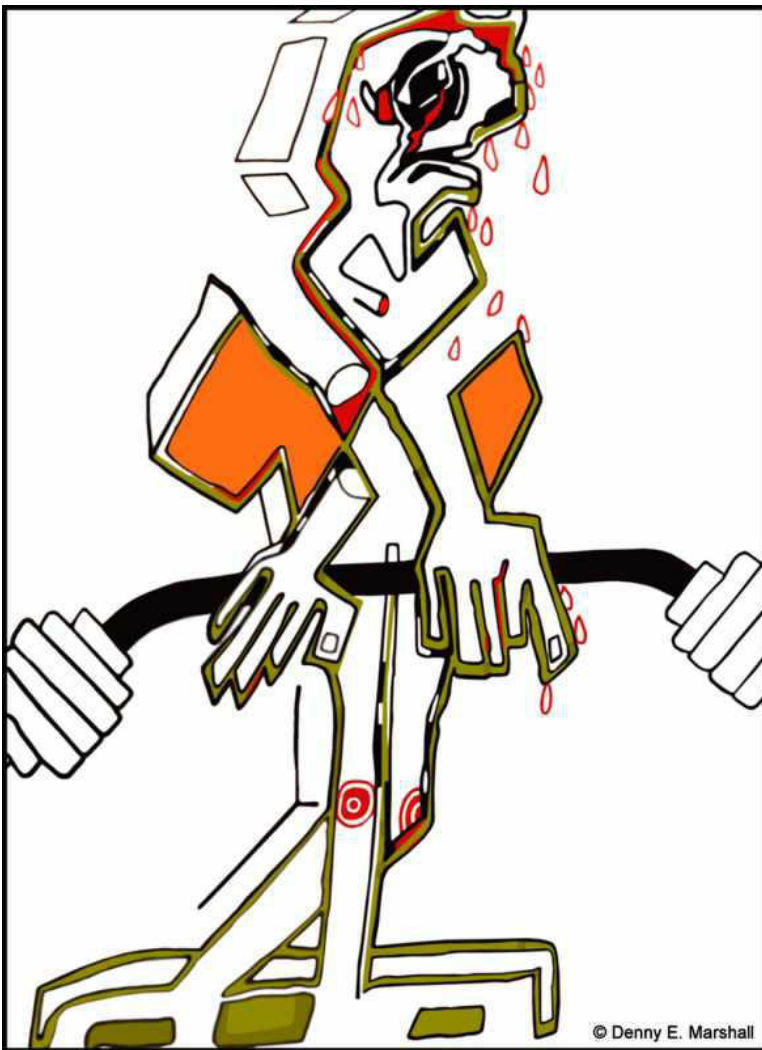
Our bodies ignite, and you pull me under. Down, into a world of endless agony, guilt and satisfaction. This charade that perpetuates itself, I know it is short-lived. I crave the temptations of your body, you, the affections of my heart. Our flesh entwines, and it's over all too quickly. I lust for more, but this act won't last forever. I am still unraveling what lies within my heart, this black stone of a thing that once burned for only you. Each day, I pull you closer, with deceit, my silver serpent's tongue; and each day, I retreat, farther into the recesses of my own shame. Only there do I find comfort. I shroud myself in self-contempt, wishing only for this burden to be lifted onto the shoulders of one more worthy. I am but a fraud, a withered shadow of the boy I once was. My passion burned with the fury of a thousand fires, growing and thriving unhindered. Now, that fire which burned too bright has all but run its course, and left a charred fragment of what it once was. Undeserving of such admiration, I falter before the might of your love. The warmth in your eyes glows only for me, and my heart writhes under the inferno of your charms. You are the cleverest of anglers; each advance draws me near, and with a flourish, you release me from your grasp; but only to bring me forth once more, with a renewed vigor. Jealousy is a leech, which has consumed me ever since I left. I yearn for the ardor of your affection, but I have outgrown you. I am a terrified child who wishes only to be swept up into you, and feel your love course through my thickening blood. Yet, I run. I cower against your longing, and revile your persistence. What choice is this? I lack the strength for honesty, and spew kind words and lies, alike, as if from some incessant fountain flowing deep inside me. I bear the weight of this struggle, which rages on day to day, in my mind. My conscience stands desolate, on an island surrounded by the temptations of wrong-doing, and the guiles of my own appetite. I am the leech, and you are but a poor lost girl, who strains to reach my favor. But I stand alone, a great field stretching before me, burgeoning with the promise of tomorrow, and the bitter taste of regret; I release you.

-Blake Neumann

visual artwork

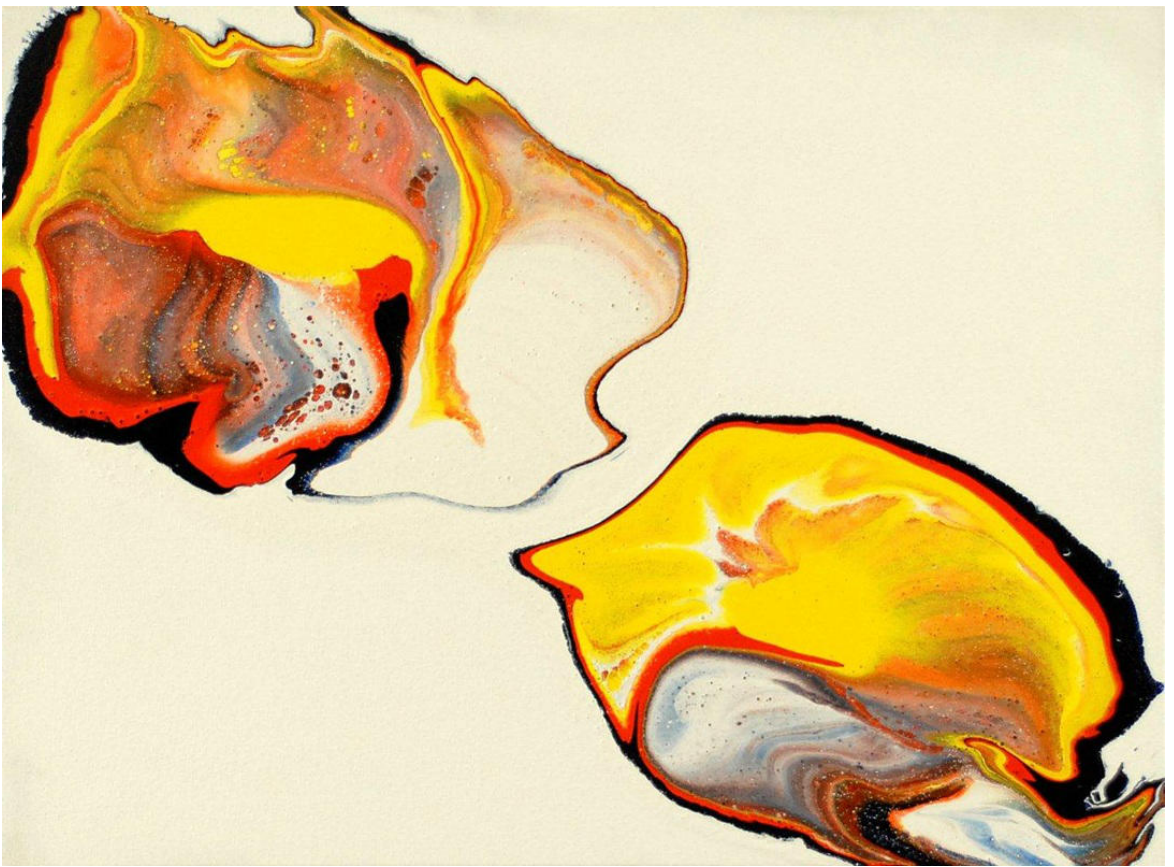
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TWO PIECES - Denny E. Marshall

Denny E. Marshall has had art, poetry, fiction, & articles published. (And even more rejected, yes lots more) Recent credits include art & poetry in Stinkwaves #1, art in Dreams & Nightmares 95, fiction in Dark Futures Fiction, & poetry in Iridescence Haiku. Denny does not have a Facebook page or Twitter account but does have a website with previously published works.



ONE PIECE - Jim Fuess

Jim Fuess: Jim Fuess works with liquid acrylic paint on canvas. Most of his paintings are abstract, but there are recognizable forms and faces in a number of the abstract paintings. He is striving for grace and fluidity, movement and balance. He likes color and believes that beauty can be an artistic goal. There is whimsy, fear, energy, movement, fun and dread in his abstract paintings. A lot of his abstract paintings are anthropomorphic. The shapes seem familiar. The faces are real. The gestures and movements are recognizable. More of his abstract paintings, both in color and black and white, may be seen [HERE](#).

END