Fall 2005

The Lantern Vol. 73, No. 1, Fall 2005

Daniel Sergeant
Ursinus College

Nathan Dawley
Ursinus College

Katy Diana
Ursinus College

Klaus Yoder
Ursinus College

Brad Schutts
Ursinus College

See next page for additional authors

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Recommended Citation
Sergeant, Daniel; Dawley, Nathan; Diana, Katy; Yoder, Klaus; Schutts, Brad; Strunk, Trevor; Solomon, Joshua; Roesle, Patrick; Richter, Thomas; Mingolello, Jennifer; Dawley, Nathan; Wynne, Tori; Ferdinand, Tracey; Rokaski, Natalie; Jones, Katherine; Budzowski, Elsa; Celinski, Brett; and Higgins, Ashley, "The Lantern Vol. 73, No. 1, Fall 2005" (2005). The Lantern Literary Magazines. 165.
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Authors
Daniel Sergeant, Nathan Dawley, Katy Diana, Klaus Yoder, Brad Schutts, Trevor Strunk, Joshua Solomon, Patrick Roesle, Thomas Richter, Jennifer Mingolello, Nathan Dawley, Tori Wynne, Tracey Ferdinand, Natalie Rokaski, Katherine Jones, Elsa Budzowski, Brett Celinski, and Ashley Higgins
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Cover Art: “A View From Seat 18F” by Brenden Connor

Editor’s Note:

Congratulations to all the authors and visual artists whose works have been selected! Thanks to the staff and exec board for putting up with my absentmindedness and consequently, my excessive emails. Also, the exec board meeting this year was very painless—thanks, guys and gals! Thank you, Professor Keita, for your advising and literariness. My biggest thanks, however, is for two lovely ladies: Katy Diana, who tolerates my questions and helps so much, and Allison Guerin, who, is simply amazing—without her there would be no Lantern. Finally, enjoy this Fall’s issue—it is an interesting combination of seasoned pros and emerging newbies!
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Judges’ Notes

Poetry Winner—Newspaper Clippings Found On The Wall Of Giuseppe Luchenzo’s Home When It Was Raided By Police by Daniel Sergeant

“Newspaper Clippings” is remarkable above all because of the sestina form. Any time you have sestinas in the mix of consideration a lot of notice has to be given to the artfulness and difficulty in framing the very challenging form. The difficulty and nature of the sestina demands attention. One needs to give a lot of attention to the merit in the accomplishment of the form. I found “Newspaper Clippings” particularly to stand out. It is a remarkable piece, ingeniously wrought, well-crafted, well-designed, and very imaginative. Kudos to the writer of this. “Newspaper Clippings” just demands admiration and respect for the integrity of the accomplishment. If I had to single out one poem for craft and artfulness and technique, it would be “Newspaper Clippings.”

Peter Krok, known as the "red brick poet" because of his connection to growing up in rowhouse Philadelphia, is the editor of the Schuylkill Valley Journal and the Humanities/Poetry director of the Manayunk Art Center (MAC) where he has coordinated a literary series since 1990. He has had several hundred poems published and his poems have appeared in the Yearbook of American Poetry, America, FULCRUM, Potomac Review, Asphodel, Midwest Quarterly, Poet Lore, Connecticut Review and numerous other print and online journals.
Fiction Winner—Peer Editing by Klaus Yoder

I chose this piece as the winner because under the lyrical language is a dark, mysterious story. The story draws the reader into the murky depths of intense emotion, spins the mind several revolutions and throws you out a full speed.

Fran Metzman is a published short story writer and novelist. In 2000, her novel, UGLY COOKIES, was published. As a creative writing teacher, she has taught workshops in numerous colleges and universities as well as bookshops. She is co-fiction editor for the Schuylkill Valley Journal and art editor for Bucks County Review.
Non-Fiction Winner—Outside Eye or I Am? by Tracey Ferdinand

The author moves the reader through intense emotional moments with the ease of a seasoned writer, seamlessly weaving memories together with beautiful, poetic language. She highlights the eyes as windows both in and out of a person, allowing us to see the world, which is oftentimes painful and confusing, through her own. Moments that are seemingly mundane – quarreling with a lover, eating a piece of fruit – suddenly become momentous because she has been torn from her home and transplanted in a new and strange world that seems to be against her. Masterfully rendered and stunning despite – or perhaps because of – its brevity.

Raquel B. Pidal is a 2002 Ursinus graduate and recipient of Ursinus’ Dolman Writing Award. She works as a freelance writer and is a columnist and managing editor for The Bucks County Review literary magazine, accessible online at www.buckscountyreview.com. She is currently at work on a novel and can be reached at Raquel@buckscountyreview.com.
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Ellington Lipolo always walked lost through my peripheral vision. Meekly passing by the barbershop, almost invisible. Dark, gangly, thin-eyed, angry, wearing clothes that awkwardly rested over her frame and a pink backpack stuffed with books. Fingers perpetually stained with the blue ink of her cheap pens. Twelve years old, an adopted child, legally fostered to Maria and Peotor. Ellington’s black eyes keep to the hot sidewalk as she goes past this place—today they shoot up like startled birds and their look flies across the street, to where he stands, white suit, hands on hips, the brim of his white hat shadowing his wrinkled, hairless face. He wears thick, tinted eye glasses—and yet he always seems to be staring, seeking out the neighborhood’s tender sores: the drunken ranting homeless man pink with ant bites, the crumbling stonework of the old corrupt courthouse, and the white powder kilos flowing in and out of the establishment I sit in now. Does his glance pierce the skin, the soul? A famous writer living among us for years, retired. I am no fan. I have not tried any of his novels, knowing that they are the kind that one picks up and must immediately put down again. The first sentence is such a nasty thing that it grabs your heart and finds the black cavity therein. I’ve heard wild rumors and histories, but gossip is not my talent.

Bernardo trims my thin mustache as I watch Ellington run across the street to greet him. Her face comes alive for the first time, blooming with a confident smile. They walk off towards his house. Three blocks
up, nuzzled by the park. He is said to be a rich man.

I always watch for the writer with this itching combination of contempt and respect: such power in his process, taking mere observations and sculpting them into words. Weapons. It has occurred to me that if our eyes were ever to meet, blood would be drawn simply from the contact. Mine. I hate him. I study every stitch of clothing, every elegant step, every piece of his apparel and that includes Ellington. Their meetings have been going on for a week; I patiently wait for the rendezvous, adjusting to the block’s new pattern.

None of the other boys in the barber shop care about such things. Their slow minds grind with street-worries and street-logic. They want to feel like soldiers: we are the soldiers stranded in the barracks. Just talking loud and foolish. Sometimes talk becomes soft and lethal when the business gets discussed. The other men come here roaring in their Benz chariots, their noses red from being wiped with Benjamin Franklin. Bernardo’s father Jorge speaks to them men whom have grown taller with their slicked back hair, their chains, their wifebeater undershirts, their suitcases full of money, and their handguns. They rush out through dust of the street to make more money.

We who frequent this shop want to believe that we have all grown richer by being close to the whispers. One of the elders might come to me and say “Benjamin, drive me to New Jersey,” and that will be enough. I have given up any serious work-habit in favor of this idle waiting. Recently I have felt a cramping of my body, my mind—spoiling like forgotten milk. It is not enough to enslave my habits, feel the prematurely gray bristles being shaved from my perfect mustache,
and count the neighborhood thugs as friends. My only consistent reward for being here seems to be the cold blow of the air conditioner, and it is up so high that my legs go numb. But not nearly as numb as my mind at the dullness of this anti-life. I want to go out and study Ellington and the novelist, but I’m held in check by the flicks of Bernardo’s razor.

There she goes, radiating a new life, pretty and tall for a twelve year old, skin the darkest tan, pigtails, a ripped red sash across the front of her patched and repatched overalls. The sight holds so much mystery for me and to think I used to see it all the time and dismiss her as a part of the scenery, just another useless child of Brooklyn. He has opened my eyes. I watch for another month.

Ellington mostly walks alone in the summer heat. But loneliness never cheats the life out of her: she dresses herself to life when she ties the red scarf diagonally across her chest. Happens once a week and it must have meaning: something she does for him. You can see ritual invigorating her movements and populating the pages of the yellow notebook. A true blue blood—her blood runs through that pen.

She runs a little quicker each time they meet and I stare as my mind whirls through all the scenarios, the indulgences, the tingling possibilities. Perhaps I shouldn’t watch so closely; none of my business—but my attention hangs chained to her motions. She squeezes that notebook to her waist so tightly that all of the cheap blue ink might ooze out. He walks in his white suit, never breaking stride or a sweat. I heard he sweated all of the water out of his body in a jungle-war somewhere and has since replaced it with gin. Too many novels
written to be a sane man. His soul must be coded on those pages along with every idea and every moment of his disguised, powdered life. Perhaps he has something to teach her.

My mustache gets trimmed off on summer’s last Tuesday and she walks alone past the glass window, past the blaring of the radio and the heat rising off of the pavement. Doesn’t bother her. Ellington seems to have learned the writer’s trick of looking untouched by her surroundings. She reads as she walks, her eyes locked on the print as if holds instructions, her nose pointed towards the future. What’s inside of her mind right now? I want to understand how her life might be touched and caressed by his. He could be teaching her the secrets of his mannerisms, of his success, of his fortune, which I desire most of all. Because the fickle air conditioner has died and there’s problems in the streets and I’m tired of the boys’ sidelong glances and the knowing laughter of the patrolling policemen. It all reminds me of stories unwritten except in the diary of my sallow skin.

Brooklyn swelters and the edges of my world curl up as if drunk on the heat and the terror. I slip away from the shop to follow. She walks ahead still reading that book, which is fat with a colorful, sugary cover of some scene from Outer-Space and perhaps the Future. Crosses the street and doubles back up the block. She’s taking a lap through the neighborhood before heading back to the park. My cotton polo sticks fast to the sweat of my skin, this skin which holds on too close to the ribs like a child who can’t let go of the apron strings. These slacks, made of any number of synthetic materials, maintain a perfect crease down the legs as I walk on tar black shoes along the avenue where they
sell tires, margaritas, and pet cobras without sales tax. I am starving for
the world the novelist has given her. So thin that I rattle inside this
polyester hide.

The city makes way for Ellington: she avoids being hit by the devilish
cars flooring it up Ninth Street even though she is blind to the pattern
of the rush hour traffic. I struggle to keep up and follow her five blocks
up to Prospect Park. I carry no weapon and my cell phone is on vibrate
in case one of the boys tries to harass me for leaving Bernardo’s without
paying. There is no threat about me—I am the thin man in the shady
park walking laps behind the bookworm girl. His house is not so far
away...

Ellington reads her science fiction novel on a splintery bench beneath
a stern tree of towering thickness. I keep my distance, watching her
from the opposite side of the park drive, pretending to read the
wrinkled *Daily News* that I sat down on. After a half hour of reading,
she pulls out the battered urine colored notebook and sets to scribbling
out the phrases of her inspiration. Ellington tightly holds the pen and I
cannot bear to watch the murder of the paper, the ugly birth of
unwanted ideas. I must interrupt.

“One question.”

A whisper she doesn’t notice. I have to repeat. She looks up with
surprise and annoyance burning in her brown eyes. I smile hard,
making my eyes friendly.

“What?”

Ellington doesn’t trust the socializing instinct. I am the enemy to her
creative process now and she tries to frighten me off with a glare. The
blue ink has smudged against the side of her right hand in a permanent stain. She bares teeth and sucks in the hot, wet air.

“Do you know the man who lives in that house over there?”

I point out to the place beyond the stone wall, the tall creamy place with black iron lampposts guarding the gate and the long, ragged grass of his greasy lawn. Ellington follows the direction of my finger, squints, then looks up to me with a challenge.

“What does it matter?”

“I’m a huge fan. He’s my father. In the literary sense; the greatest influence. What is it you’re writing there?”

The notebook looks heavy with her blue blood. My question brings out an embarrassed smile; her loveliness is fragrant and flowing from the tanned smoothness of her cheeks, the Indian Summer in her eyes. She will grow into a great beauty.


“What does he think of it?” I ask, flashing my oily eyes back towards the direction of his place.

“Ignatius? He says there’s too much talking. I tell more than I evoke.”

“What a great gift to have such a man reading for you. It’s almost a miracle.”

My statement seems to confuse her and I say “but of course you know that Ignatius Puerez is one of the most celebrated and mysterious novelists of our time.”

“He never told me that. We met here one day. Ignatius saw me writing and he came over and taught me how to hold the pen so I could
write longer without cramping."

Nothing about this man is ever cramped—his life is a triumph of the will to conquer. He shows her the grace of the small things. He charms her with a perfect touch for details—Ellington Lipolo’s writing career as humanitarian mission.

“A great man. I must say, I am very jealous of you. I wish I could be so close to someone so eminent in our field. Yes, I too am a writer.”

Ellington pays no attention to my last claim, still focused on the idea that her new friend is not just an old teacher but a man with greatness burning inside of him like the Holy Ghost. I know what she does not, that this man really burns with the creativity of the double agent, the literary mercenary, nursing a pale, milky hatred for the weaknesses of human society. She must be self conscious to the fact that she had not come across his work in her reading, but it is limited to the adolescent genres with their ray guns, sorcerers, and endless sequels.

“My name is Benjamin. You are?”

Ellington tells me in a hypnotized voice. I ask her if she would do me a large favor.

“Introduce us. It would mean the world to me. I wouldn’t be a bother; I don’t presume to make the same kind of connection you have with him. But the honor might spark inspiration. I’ve been blocked up.”

She looks at my performance with the greatest sympathy. It isn’t all lies: my writing block has lasted fifteen years and truth be told, I have forgotten the volume of my life before the falling moment when inspiration fled from my hands, my eyes, my skin.
"What a horrible thing, Benjamin. I will tell him."

She comforts me as a kindred spirit and I try not to gag on my excitement.

"That would be a blessing, Ellington."

Fever touches me as all of my organs curl up to flail and dance against pillars of bone. I can feel my face flushing as I drink it in—I will come to this man's house and see the corpse and soul of his power. His secrets will be exhumed, his snobbery will be absorbed into my flesh when I infiltrate the Park Slope palace.

I offer to treat her to an ice cream cone but she can't stay. The writing lesson begins in three minutes and she must leave immediately. I stand back out of her way, hands on my hips, and breathe in this sweating, luscious, virulent air. It is a kind of ecstasy to be so close and Ellington brushes against me as she walks away—she is a clumsy child who clutches her notebook too tightly. She holds it as her mother never held her and purposefully strides off, her thin ankles peaking out from the cuffs of her used-up overalls, the red sash swaying after her like a fox tail.

Time crawls at Bernardo's through the desert of this next afternoon. Phillip has gone missing and some of the other regulars have stopped coming. I have no place else to sit. Mother smokes too many mentholated cigarettes for me to bear stiffly lounging in the apartment in a suit too large. There is nothing to eat on the shelves but I am not hungry. I am saving my appetite for the next morsel of hope. Starving for the sight of Ellington. She never comes by the shop and the
remaining boys glare at me, as if they can see that I have something going on the side, that I might never need drive into New Jersey again. They see me staring out the window with its layer of drought dust and they must know who I am waiting for. They think me a pervert, but my intentions run deeper with infection: the need to strip out of this life and feel the cut of another suit.

One hundred degrees outside but nothing wet inside of me to perspire. I go to Prospect Park with a prayer in my heart and the sun quivers above me like an ancient god come down from the pinnacle of a terraced pyramid. The shade trees in the park cannot block it and the heat seeks me out: an indictment of the numbness that has been in my skin these last years. The sun dares me to feel its touch before I fall down in desperation.

This time I see her coming out of his house and I don’t even have to intercept her. She comes to me from across the shady street as the sun boils off some of its fury with me. Ellington wears a careful face, a distant look in the eyes.

“He says you should come to dinner with us. Tonight.”

“Where are we eating?”

Is it too much to hope? She turns back to his house, always to that imperial structure with its somber gates, and nods at it. The trap falls fast and I’m ready to panic because it’s all going too well.

“He wants you to bring a sample.”

“My writing. Yes of course.”

We walk off in opposite directions. There is much to be done because I need to freshen up that old grey suit of mine. And the writing, God,
must he have a sample? But I will carry the lie through, so an older piece must be dug up. “It’s nothing,” I tell myself. “You’re past all that, writing is dead.” But I’m still far too nervous as I fumble with the old hand written sheets, coming up with a poem leaden with awkward abstractions:

We wear our lives
As many folds
Of fiery skin

Between mind’s flesh
And soul and body
We offer up each new experiment
Searching for identities to tease out fulfillment

My old self cringes at the idea of reading these trembling words aloud to him. The latest model hungers for the house jewels hoisted out of the steaming jungles, the silken cut of his suit. Polyester gray chafes my thighs and I stuff the old poem into the back pocket like a soiled handkerchief. The .45 rides in my right pocket, bulging out with immodesty. At the magnificent elm door of his stronghold, I switch it to the inner pocket of my suit jacket. My hair stays slicked back as a wet, grainy shroud. I feel my eyes shining as I finger the pack of Camels—I always smoke after a job.

Ellington opens the door before I can press the buzzer. She wears a lacey pink dress and a pair of black eye glasses. The scarlet sash across her chest like a fresh cut. She tells me to come in. Crossing the threshold makes me think of slipping into a cool, dark pool in the
middle of a jungle thicket. Not a light on in the den—the walls and the royal red wallpaper seems to eat up the light and digest it out in cool sighs—my body stiffens and the nerves freeze.

“He’s waiting for you in the study,” she tells me in a hushed voice and then begins biting at the blue stains under her chewed nails.

We pass six rooms on our way to the back of the house, all with their doors wide open. Five are libraries, one an armory. The books look gilded and dripping with gold leafing. The guns are long, oiled, steely blue. Artifacts of some ugly little war, looking deformed and prehistoric compared to my snub piece.

The door to his study is closed. I try the handle and it is locked. He lets me struggle against it and I swear I hear Ellington burst into a muted giggle behind me. At last it gives way and he’s standing there to examine my whip-taunt body. Wearing the same white suit but without sunglasses. His eyes bore into me, the right one possessing the same cold steel as his rifles, and the other as brown as a drought autumn. I’ve never met a novelist before but somehow I knew what this moment would be like—the sensations of penetration and theft which are part of any surgeon’s slice. For men like this we are all building materials, blocks of flesh and sin. But I look back at Ignatius Alejandro Xavier Puerez Garcia with my spying eyes, feeling a twisting sting in my armored abdomen at the sight of my enemy. Tonight I will topple a dictatorship of ink and paper and revolt into a new person.

He doesn’t offer me his hand. We stand staring—he blocks me from entering the study. Impossible to see past him, to gauge the possibilities. His face is living leather, so wrinkled that it seems that the
man is fractured into a million separate pieces, provinces all under the
domination of Ignatius. I cannot tell you the emotion behind his map-
like face—only that the steel eye pricks my soft parts, daring me to
break the silence, then doing it himself.

“Read me your sample.”

I follow his command in a voice that is louder than I would have
wanted. My words stretch out as a buffer between us, a wall between
my soul and his stare. He can tear at those words all he wants because
they don’t belong to me anymore. I’ve smartened up.

Afterwards he brings me into the study, where there is one desk lamp
burning. Tall slim Ellington slips in behind me and whispers “nicely
done” into my left ear. I bite my lip and survey the scene. Tiger heads
screaming for justice, Grecian vases, a type-writer with polished ivory
keys, a golden ashtray, a mahogany desk, and a portrait by Hogarth
must hide the safe. Ignatius sees me looking and asks if I would like a
brandy.

“I understand that you very much wanted to meet me. That is rare
these days. Forgotten by all—there are few of my faithful readers left,
but I see that this corner of Brooklyn remains stocked with the majority
of that cult. I could only be remembered in such a ruthless place.”

The weight of the gun in my jacket reiterates his point and yet I rush
to defend my hometown:

“Ah, things are not too bad around here. Not so seedy as they used to
be.”

Ignatius frowns at my answer, unused to being contradicted. I find
myself scrambling to find the right words.
“It doesn’t mean so much to be forgotten these days. Each year is more disgusting than the last with everyone’s minds melting from television signals,” I can’t contain this rant—it feels scripted, “sooner or later the stupidity will break like humidity and your books will be reprinted dozens of times over.”

“I’ll be long dead before my words matter again.”

He stresses the words “long dead,” and I curse his writer’s eye, his dissection of my soul. It would be too easy to confront me about my true intentions here, no, his wit drives him to mock me as I stand humbled in a polyester suit at the heart of his great house. Ellington stays quiet behind me (not a breath to punctuate the silence) until the moment when he flashes her a signal with his mismatched eyes and she shoots back out of the door. Then he explains that he has been fortunate to find Ellington.

“It’s a most fulfilling arrangement. I read her words and she makes me dinner once in a while. Nothing is better in my retirement.”

Ignatius now speaks with warmth in his voice and all of the providences of his face arrange themselves into a gentle smile as he leads me into the dining room. We sit to wait for the food, finishing our brandies. I’m dying for a cigarette but it’s too soon; I have not taken possession. Everything thoroughly belongs to the novelist. He recites my poem back to me from memory. More mockery, for it could almost be beautiful just by being spoken aloud by him. God knows what his revisions would read like.

“Your work burns into my memory. It is because I used to hold the same idea about the self as you. No wonder Ellington brought you to
me, because there are gems behind the rubble."

I feel like a pig being greased for the spit.

Dinner is served: creamy pollo con limon, rice and black beans bubbling in all of their natural juices. The sauce is something hot rumbling over the roof of my mouth like a small forest fire. It gets washed off the palette by cool droughts of tart wine. I force myself to feel composed while forking up each morsel during the empty spots in the stringy conversation while my mind races for the turning point of this night. Sweat stains my shirt as the gun hangs in the jacket pocket. This waiting might go on forever but I can still manage a ghostly smile: there is much to be had here.

"Tell me more about your writing life, Benjamin."

He says it while picking at the chicken. Ellington watches me with hopeful eyes, seeming to pray that I make the right response. Horrible to have her support when I don’t know what will happen here.

"Published once. A local press. You probably wouldn’t have read it, but I was proud."

"I find that amazing. Your voice is so cold and true. Ellington, would you please bring us the dessert?"

I can’t eat another bite, her chicken squawks in my gut, and it’s so goddamn hot. The sweat runs down into my eyes and Ignatius looks so cool, as if there’s a long thin splinter of ice at the center of his chest cavity. Ellington dashes off to fetch the dessert and I’m left with him.

"Tell me where you’re from."

"I’ve lived here all of my life."

He has hardly touched his meal: I have been the main course of his
staring appetite.

"You make that sound so true. How well you have been trained."

A wind comes through the maroon dining room, chilling my sweat-drenched clothing which hangs off of me like the sails of some drowned ship. Ignatius Puerez stands up, hand on black cane, leaning over his end of the table to show me a fractured face of suspicion and I'm choking for words, futile words.

"I don’t understand what you mean—"

The provinces of his face merge borders and divide again in a civil war of blood vessels on sagging pale battlefields of the flesh. He keeps his voice low and calm but I can feel a tropical storm approaching in the chill of the room's breeze, in the darkening of his steel eye.

"It’s nothing to get defensive about. We’re both agents, with our own prerogatives. Speak frankly with me: who are you working for, which agency? That poem of yours, it’s too good to belong to one of the indigenous writers. No one but an assassin or a spy could speak such a thing."

I had heard things about his work in the jungle: subterfuge, sabotage, good penmanship, good aim. The subsequent extinction of the guerillas. I am their revenge, eh?

An automatic weapon clicks behind me and now it is my turn to stand up. Light my cigarette. Somehow I knew this would all end badly. Never had what it took to be a true secret agent, a human being whose will and wit invades the minds of those around him. Ignatius Puerez does not complain as I take my first drag. Ellington at my back, ready to gun me down for this man whose desires have intercepted hers,
whose advice will nudge her towards a better place than Brooklyn, thrust her into finer stock. A little bit of slavery is nothing to pay.

“I always knew Vasquez would send his man. I came here knowing. It has been a monsoon of waiting. A long dream. The death of my words. Forced retirement. But tonight I’ll write again.”

His white suit glows and his autumn eye crackles with the coming hurricane. He never removed his white hat through the whole meal—how impolite.

“There will be more of us,” I shriek at him. “Our agents will hunt you until the world ends. We will kill until every word, every idea is extinct, goddamn you.”

The autumn eye winks and I ready myself for death. A death more exciting than I deserve. Only a metallic clicking and Ellington’s exasperated sigh. She stands in the door, holding this black adder of a submachine gun, trying to make it work and cut me down. I go for my .45. Ignatius behind me, the white duke of my desire, my fury. I shoot him in the head but the white hat sticks on. A red carnation at its center. His face gives me warmth; it seems to say “I should’ve killed him myself,” as it cringes and then shifts to a dispassionate death sneer. Ellington the good pupil changes the clip with pure efficiency and saws me in half with bullet. My maroon anger bleeds out onto the carpet—a never ending supply. I feel like a schoolboy with a broken nose only it is my guts that are torn open—I want her to break down and vomit. Her face remains composed, the rusty edge of her jagged stare the last thing to see. But I can still speak as my world goes hurricane gray.

“He should have found me first.”
Klaus Yoder

Ellington keeps a snobby silence and I am not surprised. Another scornful agent loose with the same old chores: kill and publish. Then she speaks in a new voice.

“At least they’ll find you two together. Your name in fine ink.”
Outside Eye Or I Am?

One, two, three, four
Inside outside, outside inside
Five, six, seven, eight
Upside downside, downside upside

I throw a red one cent up, up, up in the air and close my eyes real tight so I don’t see it fall and sink into the dark, loamy earth at my feet. My mother, now living in the United States of America, will find it and know how much I long to be buried in her arms. In my mind she is wearing a bright green new jersey as she stands in a stadium looking up at a mountain of stairs she has yet to climb (how was I to know then that the United States had nothing to do with a green new jersey or that I’d also have to climb a mountain of stairs?). Suddenly on a warm breeze my red one cent floats in and whispers to her all the secrets of my heart.

After completing the ritual it is time for work; there are trees to climb. A fruit snack must be picked before the lunch hour is up and my grandmother forces my older sister Tricia and me to walk a half mile in the unrelenting sun back to school. It is plum season and the little red rubies are my third favorite fruit contending only with the sweet syrupy brown sapodilla and my true love, the tangy orange “little pa” mango. August vacation is dedicated to picking bucketfuls of mangos. My sister and I would sit on the red painted stairs leading to the cantilever (a long walkway attached to the upper back level of the house) and eat mangos
until the pulpy juice trickled down our faces and clothes. Our sticky tummies would look to the brilliant blue sky almost bursting in delight. Then we would make a sport out of throwing the mango seeds at puff-chested cocks, cutting them off in mid crow as they strut about the yard.

The plum tree is located on the left side of our massive back yard and can be spotted easily when standing on the cantilever. I expertly make my way up the tree confident in my skills. I am the only girl who can boast about climbing the tall pomerac tree in Miss Letisha’s (the village widow) yard. A cluster of the gems are hanging lazily in the heat of the mid day sun waiting to be picked. My mouth salivates as I inch closer to the little tangy sweets that come around only once a year. As I triumphantly reach for the plums, something moves at my right and immediately catches my attention. Frozen in mid reach, I turn my head ever so slowly only to confirm the panic creeping up my throat. A small green lizard (affectionately named “twentyfourhours” for the length of time they stick to you if aggravated) is noting my every move. I pray that today will not be the day I put his name to test. As we sit there staring at each other, me into his beady little eyes and he into my huge terror stricken saucers, I am suddenly forced outside myself.

New Jersey is a cold cardboard world. My brother was right; its streets are not paved with gold. “Did you live in a hut? Do people run around wearing grass skirts in Tobago? Why did you come here?” seem to be the only questions asked. Now I pick fruit from the basket in the kitchen and my favorite is the red apple. Once riding home from
school on the big “cheese” I pulled out my red ruby and bit in; delight tickled my tongue as she crunched out “Ahmehricah!” Just then, a freckle faced boy wearing an orange vest (the fifth grade monitor) strutted up the isle and told me I wasn’t allowed to eat on the bus. I quietly placed the apple back into my bag, ashamed because there were still so many rules I had yet to learn. The longing to be buried in my mother’s arms is replaced by a longing to be buried in a young man’s arms.

I am sitting in my new white 2002 Lancer which has replaced the silver BMX bike Tricia and I used to wish for every Christmas. Back then my brother tried to explain that the reason we never got bikes was because Santa Clause skipped our house (not only because we were bad little girls but because we didn’t have a chimney). “How Santah go get inside de house eh?” he chided questioningly, “break tru de window?”

Parked at a secluded community park behind my house, I’m listening to dead leaves stir under a dark sky moaning with its burden. A frustrated young man sulks in my passenger seat. He makes me talk in circles as my eyes trace soft rain drops snaking slowly down the window; outside my foreign made cocoon pathetic fallacy mirrors my soul. “I’m not your Euthyphro” my mind sobs! I want so much to be Socrates because I think I have it all figured out now. Self proclaimed saint, seer of all starry secrets, celestial queen, divinity indeed….. He finally grumbles bitterly, “You’re just a girl who doesn’t want to please her man”. I turn my head ever so slowly in his direction, sick with shock! As we sit there staring at each other, me into his chauvinistic beady little eyes and he into my hurt and disappointed stare, I am
suddenly forced outside myself.

L-O-V-E. Once in a sermon, Pastor Lamont exclaimed, “God is Love, Love is God!” Yet how could I am that I am be reduced to something so fickle and deceiving? After that Sunday God seems tainted. L-O-V-E. My head turns away sharply. I’m trying not to fixate on any one object. I don’t want to look at it in four years and realize how much I have grown. My mother and I are handed programs and seated amongst a sea of others sharing in the same experience (how was I to know then that we really were not?). Twelve o’clock Tours, one fifteen to one forty-five Welcome, Two thirty to three fifteen Living and Learning..... The speaker begins and I am caught up in a rapture of emotions. Head and heart can barely keep up with each other. My pen begins to move with a frantic scribble on the back of the program. Understand language kills? Two can say the same thing but be on two totally different levels. You don’t play school! Ignorance is bliss? Trust........

At the end of the event I rush the stage to exchange a few words with the man who so eloquently spoke what I could not articulate. Words trip clumsily off my tongue and I feel myself loosing the fight to connect. Finally, he speaks, “I remember I once had a black student in my class who.......” Then something already cracked shatters. As we stand there staring at each other, me into his beady little eyes and he right through and past my pleading soul, I am suddenly dragged kicking and screaming outside myself.

I turn my head ever so slowly trying to focus hard on something else, anything else; on the bold black words written inside the program
Outside Eye Or I Am?

(which I’ve been grasping onto as though it was a leaf of the tree of life)

ARCHEES
From here on out, it’s stark walls blistered
by strokes of the inevitable, baby blue and dust
cobwebs to break the monotony
inside this mess of moments and fantastics
the floor reaches up, all tentacles and wrists of little unwritten
and one, single unburnt stretches
outclassed by daylight, easily
one mouthful, an unread sigh over the receiver
spoken quiet in the recesses of pages and wrists
unwritten

Would you like to spend a day?
or is time not a viable currency here,
unexchangeable with the local dollar,
and worthless to all but those who can afford simple luxuries?
If I could, I’d trade a week, or even a year
Of well-spent, well-fought, and well
we’ve got decades? So why not use a little,
brown it slightly instead of microwave
or turn it over into an adagio
but it’s a long story, and it’s all academic, and
I’ve got all the time in the world

So
let’s repaint
that color never really suited us anyways
I’ll speak to you in the universal language
And maybe you’ll massage my wrists a little
it’s better than spending nothing
but empty phrases and cobwebs that mean
little to anyone except spiders and prey
maybe then this mess of moments and fantastics
well, let’s not get ahead

Nathan Dawley

ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD
the currency’s too valuable to spend lightly
even for a bargain shopper
but in this case, I’d spend
after all, necessities can’t be had at bargain prices
and unwritten’s litter too easily, and in the end
if we can’t look ahead, Haven’t I got
all the time in the world?
SQUIRREL
A MUNDANE MYSTICISM

"Man, I had fuckin’ bug spray in our room! Mother fucker."

“Yeah, that would have been good.”

“Yeah.”

Alex chuckles at the two of us, then adds, “I hate bug spray. It just makes you invisible to bugs; then they run into me—I hate that—it’s so annoying.” Now it’s our turn to giggle at him.

The three of us, looking like the trio of misfits that we are, trod along into Hunsberger Woods, which, Ivy points out, should be called Hunsberger Fields. It’s about 6:15-6:30ish, and the gradually setting sun is filtering through the black-green leaves, highlighting certain spots, turning them so golden and so yellow it looks like someone spray-painted patches. I think to myself, maybe this is the right time to come here, maybe this is the most magical time of day.

In attempts to make this trip interesting, Ivy and I considered dressing up like fairy princesses, with dangly green and orange costume jewelry. I also considered coming the day before, right after we made our turkey dinner. I thought it would be so charming to frolic in the woods at dusk, belly full of turkey breast and cranberry sauce, floating on a few beers. Then I thought that this morning’s September sun would be spirit-lifting; I thought it would feel great to sweat.

Now, today, we try skipping, but Ivy and I soon realize we are so out of shape that skipping downhill is much too much cardio for us. And that’s not enchanting at all. Later, perhaps forgetting the skipping
incident, my pleasantly wild-haired and bright-eyed roommate challenges me to a race *uphill*. Our shortness of breath still isn’t charming. At least she’s a smoker—I have no excuse at all. Forlorn Alex, Magnetic Alex, trails behind us, like a watchful and mildly amused older brother ushering his young siblings to the park; he respects our independence and enjoys our antics, yet if we actually go off course, he’d be there to nudge us back on. (I realize, although I have zero sense of direction, it is nearly impossible to get lost in these “Woods”.)

Ivy worries about the mundaneness of our journey and proposes I make this my transcendental piece of work. My two captivating companions wonder *what can* make this hike worth writing down. I suggest stabbing Alex to death. Ivy thinks she should do it, because it might get me into trouble; Alex, on the other hand, thinks that it would be best to get the first person perspective.

I see a frog hop across what was once a creek, and now looks more like a puddle.

Ivy and I spy a gap along a fence, a gap we’re sure has been used before; we use it, too, and pluck three ears of corn from their stalks. I have a little trouble, and there are creepy black crawly things in them. Ivy and I hand off our gold to our big brother with the floppy hair and firm forearms. He carries them gallantly.

“We used to play games with corn.” Alex expertly and effortlessly removes the hard kernels and earnestly boasts, “It’s actually very hard to do this. I’m just really good at it. And... once... you get enough, you...” Alex throws corn at me. And that’s the game—clearly, it is a very noble sport. He launches the cob into the field, flings the kernels
behind it, kicks some.

By this time, I have two blankets spread out and Ivy’s already shrouded in smoke. The two of us open our Brit Lit texts, and Alex joins us with an anthology. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, an otherworldly tale, bores us; so, Ivy and I take turns reading aloud. The incessant buzz of insects blinds us. I glance to my left, and see Ivy’s mature hand perfectly holding a cigarette, resting on the book; *click*, I take a mental picture, because it’s so perfect, it looks surreal, like a shot out of a movie. I glance to my right, and Alex is lounging his long body, leaning on one arm, and using the other to browse poetry. This, too, I think is perfect, endearing, enchanting even. I am all too aware that with all the mysticism (and murder) I wished to shove into this outing, all the magic I needed was in the eyes and hearts of my friends.

The sky darkens, the temperature cools, the fairies awaken. “It’s getting dark.” Silently, Alex and I concur with Natural Ivy, pack up, and go home.
His guns might be loaded, leaning on my untuned piano. The chipped ivory keys sink, wearing neglect in dust.

He hoards double A batteries, chocolate, and quarter sticks – anything that screams power.

His body is riddled with focus with possible explosions evident in white streaks of blue eyes.

He might have loved once, in primitive conquering fashion, leading her on a darkening path until she becomes blind enough to barely notice the lack of affection.

He could be carving my mother’s wrinkles with razors, drawing them with wide flat construction pencils. Perhaps she is his work of art. I wait for her skin to harden to his tools, wait for him to lose.
Klaus Yoder

SOUFFLÉ SUIT

Rip my ripened fibers
the latest skin
the silk I dressed for you
found in the rib’s closet—
unfolded and pressed
to match the mask
the stuff of the face
the substance of my faith
in a soul served in creamy broth—
your tongue may dart through the body
of this frayed wardrobe
this effort to wrap a bare chest with patterns of taste

Your hand’s found the seam
and I pray
for the skin under the petals—
ready to be tenderized by
finger nails craving for
the quiver of the earth’s crust—
the fraying of every simmered thread

Use a needle or just the fingers—
find the golden hair that strayed into the weave—
melt it out: the skin, the silk will melt
in the oven’s silence
folded by
the garden gaze, the invisible knowledge
of spices and strategy—
the cream will boil out of the bag
out over the flange of the pouting collar
onto your plate

Your gourmet gazes
steam my suit away—
taste the voice of my skin’s simmer
CERTAIN BREAK
I’m sick; I think that it’s cancer,  
Is panting a symptom of it?  
It’s so cold in here, and yet I’m sweating.  
The world is spinning and  
I think I’m getting motion sickness  
Do I dare eat a peach?  
I might choke on the pit.  
Do I like the taste of peaches?  
Is it worth trying a peach  
Just to have another let-down  
For each pleasure, a thousand pains  
Flow through the conscious  
And millions more I learned to filter out.  
If I had something or someone I cared about  
Maybe I would be happier with a meaning.  

It’s probably all a façade, the way people walk,  
The way they talk, the way they comb their hair,  
Seeming so together with their washing machines,  
And compact disc players, and electrical tin openers.  
But they’re really dead inside, just like me.  
Everyone is really the same, all with the same DNA  
Rotating around from vessel to vessel endlessly.  
It’s just a matter of how well they can cover it up,  
Unless it’s that I can’t cover up my happiness well.  
Could that be? Is happiness something to hide,  
And I’m the best at hiding it? --No it can’t be.  

I’m a pessimist; I can get something for that.  
Everyone else hides it; I’ll just get help to hide.  
Like a pill, Lithium, Zoloft, Wellbutrin,  
Gelotrin, Adapin, Anafranil, Elavil,
Janimmine, Ludiomil, Pamelor, Pertofrance, Sinequan, Surmontil, Tofranil, Citomel, Eldepryl, Marplan, Nardil, Parnate, Prozac, Celexa, Desyrel, Effexor, Luvox, Paxil, Serzone, Vivactil, or maybe, just maybe, something like a lobotomy will do the trick. I’ll cross my fingers for the surgery.
UNTITLED 1
The end of the world comes at sunset,
When we're faced with three mounded questions,
Obfuscated inclinations,
And a face falling behind cracked clouds,
Smiling in its own descent.

A lasting radiance.

"The woman is watching you,
Goggin' at you through the windows."

The globes that we ranged,
Fingers to maps to feel the ranges
Of foreign and imagined slopes;
The people there kissing the tips
Of index, middle, ring, pinky.

Under our thumbs.

"I couldn't recognize faces
Since it had gotten so big."

Eyes front, to the future;
Stand straight and tall,
Range far and fast,
Young man.

The Ghost save you,
You'll be there 'fore the Nightingale's song.

Tra-lala-lala.
Tree-lo tree-lo.
Trip-trop-trip.
Trip. Trip. Trip.
"This isn't art.  
Only damage."

This is treachery song:  
Own it,  
Because no self-respecting God  
Would accept anything less.

"Sing unto Him a new song."

We sing ourselves to sleep.
Three years, two months, and three days ago I fell out of love. I am not sure whether that was also the day I fell in love with the fiery nuisance who made me forget everything I’ve been taught about being a self-serving ice princess. Whether my infatuation began that day only a week before my eighteenth birthday or some time years later, one thing is for sure: it shook my world. Suddenly I could no longer peer into the future and see the three story home in rural Pennsylvania and blonde hair, blue-eyed Joe Jr. playing in the backyard. I would no longer be able to con myself into barbeques, football Sundays, and Boy Scouts; all of which I thought would one day make me complete.

Pat was a high school friend of Joe’s. On days when his hair was well kept and his face was groomed you could almost imagine him hanging off the front of the Titanic with Kate Winslet. When I told Casey that he resembled Leonardo DiCaprio, she had no reservations accompanying me over to the party that night. Of course by “party” I mean gathering of underage drinkers with a case of Bud Light that an older friend procured for a $5 fee. True parties are almost nonexistent in the suburbs where teenage rebellion compelled the boys I knew to listen to Metallica and renounce anything with a beat.

Upon arrival at the party I introduced Pat to Casey and Pat introduced me to Jeremy. Jeremy’s shaggy orange hair towered over us, complimenting his green eyes. Both were colors reminiscent of the plant which dilated his pupils earlier that night. Jeremy smiled at Casey,
then me with that sly half smile that no woman should trust. The attraction was instantaneous. He wasn’t so much gorgeous as charming. Suddenly the white gold promise ring on my left hand felt like a giant zit on a first date. Joe came up the stairs with a Yuengling Lager. They got the good beer for tonight.

Pat guided us into the basement where green glass bottles had already been spread over the clear glass coffee table. There was only one recliner in the tan suede sectional. Party etiquette dictated that it was the host’s accommodation. The rest of us filled in the gaps. My body was next to Joe, but my eyes were on Jeremy. Casey sat on Pat’s lap in her bold, big breasted southern style. Joe was convinced Pat would lose his virginity before it was light outside again. I could tell Jeremy was uncomfortable even though I had only known him for ten minutes. But that’s the way it has always been.

Everyone got acquainted over Truth or Dare Jenga as the sun fell into the hills of Valley Forge Park across Church Rd. Joe and Jeremy discovered they had known one another years ago when they were in Boy Scouts. The room began to stink of hops. Casey and Pat flirted. Except for the occasional effort to make Jeremy notice me, I sat in silence, as was my custom. I never felt quite welcome in Joe’s circle of friends. I didn’t experiment with drugs. I wasn’t promiscuous. I didn’t get a thrill out of blowing things up. Simply put, I was a good girl. I owned Power Puff Girls VHS tapes and was the treasurer of the Foreign Language Club.

After conversation died down and everyone joined my silence, we shuffled out of the sliding glass door. A musty smell led me up the pale
wood boards into a barren tree house. I sat on the hard floor, cautious
to not rip open my JC Penny jeans. Conversation began as the opium
was lit with an island print Bic lighter Jeremy had bought from the
Indian convenience store on 202. The pipe was continuing on its
circular path when I shot Joe a disapproving glare to skip me. Oddly
enough, I watched Jeremy inhale and exhale with no disapproval. He
was the bad boy to shatter my nice guy world. I held my breath in 15
second intervals to avoid the noxious smoke that filled the small room,
door now shut.

We headed back down the stairs into the sticky heat of July. Pat had a
trampoline that lounged in the shadow of the tree house and being the
only one of sound mind and body, I pulled my stubby legs up onto it. I
didn’t care to jump. I just laid there until Joe leap up and attempted to
look at the stars with me. He tried to hold my hand and I felt the urge
to better acquaint myself with my new friend. Joe stayed behind. Casey
and Pat had followed a straight line to the bedroom downstairs. They
vanished behind the poster clad door for a little over an hour. The only
evidence that they had not left on a Wawa run was the occasional
whimper.

The disappearance of our host gave me a window of opportunity to
exploit. I crept inside and casually took a seat across the room from
Jeremy. We made polite conversation while I struggled to arrange my
T-shirt into the most flattering position. I discovered he was cultured.
Unlike anyone else there that night, Jeremy knew who John Coltrane
was and used words that contained more than two syllables. His only
flaw was his lack of goals, but that just made him a rebel which drew my
Katherine Jones

interest even more. All I could think of was that I wished I would be sleeping on Pat’s pull-out couch with Jeremy. It was the beginning of the end of Joe and me. If some guy I hardly know could tempt me, I would never be able to make a vow to Joe. Places in my mind that were filled with flower arrangements and stem wear shut down in favor of pieces that lusted and dreamed of a slightly less certain future.

Pat was no longer a virgin. Casey threw herself down on the couch, hair tossed. I was left with her as the boys shuffled into Pat’s room to engage in a little girl talk of their own. I could have professed my desire for Jeremy then, but I chose to keep it strapped down inside my stomach. When they filed back onto the couch, Pat snatched the remote and aimlessly pressed the channel up button. He paused on Die Hard and after a few seconds approved his selection by placing the remote on the coffee table.

The beers’ effects weighed on our eyelids. Casey decided to usher Pat into her world once again. As Joe and I lay down Jeremy trudged up the stairs, Miller in hand. Jeremy has never been one to go to bed just because the party is over. As he drank, alone, upstairs I snatched the sheets away from Joe and struggled away from him while he tried to restrain me in an odd practice touchy-feely folk call “cuddling”. The fact that I was the woman and so emotionally void amazed me as he whispered, “Goodnight. I love you.” The sheets’ Mountain Fresh smell allowed me to sleep.

I dreamt of him. I woke up longing for more. But when I opened my eyes, the glitter of my half carat blinded me. When the sun passed I saw Joe’s figure through my tired eyes.
HUNGRY
It is a time when there is much in the window, but nothing in the room

– 14th Dalai Lama’s
Paradox of our Age

And she was born into the world because
She’d end the dearth of passion, light, and life.
Still radiant, now older, she holds a knife;
A slender body pale and free of flaws,
Not dead, but cold; it lays across her palms.
She looks in it and sees scared eyes gaze back
And a bright, white, countenance engulfed in black.
Gently, the sterile portrait placates, calms.
She breathes. Within the metal, there is naught
But naught. But she loves the thing and clutches it tight
In hope of connecting with that image wrought
of steel. In this reflection she is caught
Until her forearms stream with milky white
Essence.

And this is all my world she thought.
FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE
In retrospect, I tell myself, it all
Was drivel; frivolous. On floor fifteen --
A spartan, squalid room whose chipping wall
Contained one clouded window facing east
From which the distant city's twilight bloom
Cast silver shadows as we sat awake --
And in the darkness of that squalid room
The hours passed; you sat and shone; I quaked.
And I remember how the morning light
Enwrapped our city in an amber haze
And shifted all the shadows out of sight
While I implored with fibs for you to stay:
"It's just the moon upon the east horizon;
It's early yet -- that's not the dawn sun rising."
THE FONZ
THINGS I LEARNED ON MY TRIP TO THE MUTTER MUSEUM OF MEDICAL ODDITIES

Stand up when the bus comes

"I didn’t know you guys wanted on,” the bus driver said. “I saw you guys sitting there, but you didn’t stand up. I didn’t know you wanted on until somebody stood up."

Bus seats are sources of outrage

You know how when you’re facing the front in a school bus, your head smashes into the seat in front of you at every stop? Sitting in the sideways seats on one of these buses sends you tumbling into whoever’s next to you instead (luckily, that was my boyfriend Tim in this case). As I was being thrown around with every stop, bump, and turn, I couldn’t help but notice the seats—the god-awful seats! They were the kind of gaudy silver chrome that overzealous teenage boys wanted their cars to be decorated with, and the back and seat were covered in fur—obviously not real fur, since it was an eye-searing shade of electric blue never found in nature. Whose idea was it to make that the official seat-cover of Southeastern Pennsylvania’s bus authority?

Wawas are the cancer of Eastern Pennsylvania

We passed a Wawa on the right side of the road. About a minute later, on the same street, on the same side of the street, there was another Wawa. These things frighten me. There is no Wawa equivalent over in
Western PA, where I’m from. We encourage diversity in our stores.

When the prerecorded female bus voice says, “Last stop: Norristown Transportation Center,” it really means that the next stop is the last stop, not the current one.

We were standing in the middle of a small city, on top of a steep hill, near a place that called itself a “Bar and Deli” that had nearly 20 motorcycles parked in front of it. Nothing that suggested a transportation center was anywhere in sight. In a state of confusion, we ran down the hill, running past businesses and other people going about their business. We didn’t ask anybody about the station; we were too scared. We’d heard stories about Norristown. Or suggestions of danger, at least.

McDonald’s is always a good sign

For some reason, the McDonald’s captured our attention for a moment, which was all we needed to see what was across from it: a big metal box with one side taken out of it, and some train tracks running in front of it. It didn’t look like much of a transportation center, but it was at least the train’s equivalent of a bus stop, and the sign claimed that the R6 train, the one the bus and train company’s website told us to get on, stopped there. We went to McDonald’s before we headed over there, though.

Real train conductors don’t say “All aboard”
We ate our fast food at the train stop, sitting among people such as an old man dozing with a cigar in his mouth and a younger man, with a gigantic suitcase that laid open to reveal a box of mini Slim Jims, who stared up at us suspiciously. Finally, there was some sort of whooshing and screeching sound, and there it was, in all its shiny aluminum glory: the R6.

Two doors slid open, and a man stepped out of each door, wearing twin expressions of impatience. We climbed onto the train, found a group of three seats, and sat down. The people all around us were tucking what we thought were bus passes into the small clips on the backs of all the seats. We painfully realized that we didn’t buy tickets yet. However, as soon as we sat down the train began to move, which meant that they couldn’t kick us off at least until the next stop.

Finally, one of the impatient men came down the aisle checking tickets, and stopped when he got to us, looking impatient.

“We don’t have tickets,” I said sheepishly.

“Where are you going? Downtown?” he asked.

I wasn’t sure that where we were going was considered downtown.

“Yes...,” I said uncertainly.

“$3.75,” the conductor snapped over me, pulling out three tickets, shuffling them together, and punching a few holes in them with a metal hole punch. “Make sure you get your tickets beforehand on the way back, or you’ll be paying two dollars extra for them,” he advised.

We thanked him, paid, and received our tickets as the conductor
rushed away to do whatever it was he had to do.

The movement of a train is painfully awkward

It was at about this point that I realized my legs were cramped. A second later, I noticed it was because I was digging my feet into the floor. It took me another second to discover that I was doing so because the train was, at least to me, dangerously tilting back and forth. We appeared to be perched high over everythings at the moment, which did not ease my feeling of doom. I confided this to my companions, who, of course, spent the rest of the ride taunting me with such witty statements as, “Oh no! We’re gonna die,” which lost its melodic ring after the third or fourth repetition.

You don’t need to ride a bus five blocks

Finally, the train lurched to a stop at our destination: 17th and JFK station, in Philadelphia proper. We quickly consulted the directions that we printed from a website and saw that, we had about 3 minutes to get to a bus stop to catch another bus that would take us to 22nd Street. We decided that we would save the two dollars and get the exercise by walking there instead. So we emerged from the station (how did we get underground? Ah, the wonders of modern transportation) and were immediately immersed in the wonders of Philadelphia.

Pigeons are cute

Tall buildings! Lots of traffic! Revolving doors! Crosswalks where it
Ja Bud Low's actually dang rut crb the little man p p up on the light! Tarbuck (two of them, actually, on opposite sides of the street two blocks apart—not as bad as the Wawas)! Shiny, fat, little, multi-colored birds that were stupid enough, or domesticated enough, to let me get close enough to almost touch them! All the wonders of the city were ours to behold, but soon enough we reached our destination: the Mutter Museum of Medical Anomalies!

**Lewis and Clark must've given away everything they had when they got back from their expedition**

We paid our $7 student admission, stuck those little blue bendy pins to our shirts, and entered the museum. The first exhibit was about the medicine used on Lewis and Clark’s journey. It included such things as the personal appointment book used by Benjamin Rush, the bloodletting-obsessed doctor who taught the adventurers everything he knew before they set off to find the Rocky Mountains (his typically doctorish handwriting helpfully transcribed on the wall behind the case). There were also several selections from Lewis and Clark’s first aid kit, including several pointy metal things that, signs explained, were meant to be inserted into the male genitalia. My two companions, Tad and Tim, cringed.

This, however interesting, was not what I came to see. The top floor appeared to all be mostly-text displays of the history of medicine (as well as a random stuffed bear that was supposed to be typical of the animals that attacked Lewis and Clark frequently, accompanied by a
hilarious painting entitled “An American Having Struck a Bear but Not Killed Him, Escapes into a Tree”). I dashed from display to display, stopping to gawk at pictures of carbuncles and syphilis sores, until my boyfriend, raised on a steady diet of be-quiet-and-still museums, scolded me. Scholarly Tad preferred to read every little thing carefully in a manner that was too slow for even Tim, so we left him behind and continued exploring.

**People who give birth to Siamese twins are cruel with the names**

In the next room, a case full of skulls was clearly visible. Here’s the good stuff. However, the whole display case surrounding the stairs was filled with articles about the lives of various famous Siamese twins; I found this interesting enough to read word-for-word. Somehow, many of these people grew up to be successful adults, which is a merit unto itself, but some even married (each twin marrying a different person) and had children. How does that work? You must have to really love someone to commit to marrying her when you know that her sister will be there, constantly, watching over every little thing you and your loved one do together.

As I read about the lives of these people, some joined at the waist, some at the head, some at the liver, and I noticed a disturbing trend: many parents of Siamese twins seem unable to resist giving their children such humiliating names as Yvonne and Yvette, Dori and Lori, Daisy and Violet, Donnie and Ronnie...as if they won’t be confused enough!
Everyone is the same on the inside

The skulls, as a card explained, were an experiment by a man who wanted to test the theory that differences in race, gender, lifestyle, etc. are reflected in the shape of the head. He collected hundreds of skulls. The Mutter’s collection of them each had a little card beneath describing exactly whose head each was.


“Linz, Upper Austria – Simon Johren, age 19. Suicide; hanged himself because of an unhappy love affair.”

Except for a few differences in size, the skulls all look about the same to me.

Nature’s worst mistakes never make it out of the birthing room

Downstairs, there was a collection of babies—real babies—floating dead in jars of yellowish fluid. These babies were born with awful brain disorders: some were born with a condition that made their heads too small, squashing them up in “pinhead” shapes; some were born with no brain so that their skulls simply collapsed flat on themselves; some had their skulls open and their brains exposed.

Around the corner from the dead babies, there were plastic models of a healthy baby lying inside the uterus, from conception to birth. My boyfriend was horrified at how the uterus goes from the size of a pea to
the size of one of those baskets at the grocery store, and, frankly, so was I. It must be horrible for the mother to go through that distortion of her body only to give birth to a baby born dead and mangled.

**The mind is what separates us from meat**

In another corner, two children were hanging by their heads, arms stretched out in a crucified position. I don’t know how they did this, but their soft tissues were preserved somehow, although everything had turned black. The eyeballs were still in their heads, their blood vessels were injected with pink latex, and everything else hung there in black hunks.

“That’s horrible,” I said to Tim.

“But there’s no pain,” he replied.

There was no pain, and no life, and we could all be stripped to that.

In the opposite corner, there was a display on the brain, complete with some woman’s head cut into slices and displayed piece by piece. Next to it, there was a bunch of wires twisted to resemble the shape of the brain, with hundreds of beads strung onto them. This sculpture was meant to demonstrate the complexity of the brain, the only organ that they had cut up but not explained here. Probably the entire secret to humanity and the answers to all the CIE questions lie in the brain, and no one has figured it out yet.

**Extreme physical anomalies are as good a reason as any to be remembered forever, I suppose**
There were skeletons of a giant and a dwarf sharing a case. There was the traced hand of a huge man, which was bigger than my head. There was a plaster mold of the torso(s) of Chang and Eng, the foremost Siamese twins, joined at the liver. There were two cabinets in which the drawers were full of things a certain doctor pulled out of peoples’ throats—lots of pins and buttons, as well as sticks and what looked like game pieces. And sitting in the middle of it all, in a huge glass case, mood-lit and everything, lay the magnificent largest colon in the world, a piece broken off and lying next to it.

With fond hearts, we finally rejoined our group (after our friend had finished reading every little thing) and left the Mutter.

**Starbucks is awesome**

I insisted on stopping at one of the Starbucks, since I’d never been in a real one before, and it seemed like such a necessary thing to do in a city. I ordered a tall mocha (for some reason, “tall” is the smallest size available) with peppermint syrup in it. My boyfriend bought a tiny chocolate cake and got a cup of milk to go with it.

**The people who run the Mexican food place at the Liberty Plaza food court don’t really listen**

I said “to go” and they made it eat-in. I said “refried beans” and they gave me black beans. They were still very good tacos, however. Tad got mad at Tim and me for discussing carbuncles at the table.
Things I Learned On My Trip To The Mutter Museum of Medical Oddities

**Philadelphia is really big**

It was dark, and it was time to start following our website-given instructions back. We walked to the bus stop it told us to go to. On the way there, I noticed that the buildings were getting smaller and smaller, until they resembled the old, run-down, tiny buildings of New Castle, and commented the resemblance I saw between my hometown and the outskirts of Philadelphia.

“I don’t think you realize how big Philadelphia is,” Tim replied. “This is just the outskirts of Center City.”

“Oh,” I said.

**Sitting in the back of a bus at night is a bad idea**

We got to the bus stop about 15 minutes early. Nonetheless, a bus bearing the number of the one we were supposed to get on showed up almost immediately. I asked the bus driver if she went to the Wissahickon Transportation Center, which is where we were supposed to go. She smiled and nodded, so we got on. The bus was pretty crowded, and the only three seats we could find together were in the brightly-lit back. I couldn’t see anything out the window; the last I saw of Philadelphia were the Christmas lights on the boathouses.

This bus’s automated location-announcing voice appeared to only work sometimes. Most of the riders appeared to know where they were going, and to be really lazy about it—at one point, five people in a row got off the bus, pulling the yellow stop cord as soon as the bus started
moving again after its last stop. I strained to see out the window, but could make out only occasional home-cooking restaurants. Suddenly, we were the only ones left on the bus.

"Ya’ll going to the transportation center?" the bus driver yelled back at us.

"Yeah," we replied.

"I called it out," she said.

"Crap," we said.

"Well, I guess you’re staying on the bus now," she replied.

Less people stayed at school for Fall Break than we thought

We were sitting in the parking lot of a restaurant for about half an hour while Tim got out his cell phone and started trying to arrange a ride in case we couldn’t get another train, since it became more and more apparent that we were going to miss the one we hoped to get. However, no one could help us much because they all had gone home for Fall Break. Finally, one friend of ours who lived in nearby Pottstown agreed to stay on alert.

Finally, two buses joined together by a black rubber sleeve pulled into the parking lot with us. Our bus driver got out and talked to the driver of that bus for a little bit, and then came back and started driving.

You can always trust public transportation

Out the window, we spotted it: a train station! And it said Wissahickon! We pulled the yellow cord, but the driver kept going for
what seemed like five minutes. She finally dropped us off at a place that
looked like one of the lodges at my Girl Scout camp, only completely
devoid of activity, with a couple of empty busses parked alongside it.
Apparently, the train portion of the transportation center was practically
inaccessible the way the bus was going. We were on a stretch of
highway with very little traffic, and had little else around except a
general store or two—the middle of nowhere. At this point, my
boyfriend began to panic a little bit, but he remained levelheaded
enough to help us figure out that the train station was right up the
street. We ran there, dashed to the sign that read “Trains to
Norristown,” looked at the schedule on the wall, and yelled in relief, for
a train back to Norristown was due at 8:42. This stroke of luck gave me
40 minutes to deal with the other pressing issue at the moment: my full
bladder.

**Restrooms are for customers only**

I meant to only search around the station, but desperation and lack of
toilets led me deeper into the nearby town. After discovering that there
were no bathrooms in the Laundromat, I set my sights on a building
with one of those bright blue dome-shaped lighted roofs, praying that it
could fulfill my needs. As I got closer and could read the words, I
learned that it was a restaurant. Joyfully, I approached the door,
reached to open it, and read the hand-written sign, “Restrooms are for
customers only.” At this point I didn’t care. I dove inside.

It was a truly vile place, full of cigarette smoke. A woman with dyed
waitress-in-*Grease* hair, wearing all white, presumably a chef, was sitting at a table in the middle, smoking.

“Can I use your bathroom and buy something when I get out?” I asked.

She gave me a funny look (understandably). “Back and to the left,” she said.

I completed my business, bought a bottle of Snapple, and ran back to the train station to rejoin my companions.

**Things turn out OK**

The train came. We rode it to Norristown. Good old Bus 93 was waiting there. We saw a girl we recognized from campus waiting to get on, and took that as a good sign.

20 minutes later, we were walking up Main Street, happy with the thrill of surviving a trip off-campus and with a newfound respect and trust for the public transportation system.
TAJ MAHAL
The ocean’s waves roll rubato.
Legato waters pull the shore
Of golden sands into their sky,
And there alone lies the divine.
When azure plains are swept with soft
And grainy silt, heaven is but

A mirror to the sea; they butt
Against horizon, both. Rubato
And bluish winds often sweep soft
Across the sweet and silent shore.
The music in movement is divine;
Aleatory of silent sky.

Terpsichore in flight are sky-born animals; mortal, but
As eternal as divine
And gregarious wings. They, rubato,
Surge and swell above the shore
And sky, upside down and soft

(like children’s toys). They speak so soft
They seem like reflections in sky
Waters. They are fish, too. Shore
And land are not for them; not but
Manacles against rubato
Waves that lull to sleep divine

Fishes and men. For man’s divine
Mind is not so hard as soft,
And so He clutches at rhythm rubato
Learned from the sea and deep blue sky
Of wind and fowl and fish, sand, but
Not perfection. He stays on shore.

Isolated like that, the shore
Is home. Appreciation is divine,
And love of sound and sight, too, but
He made the metronome. Not soft,
No Nature’s windy, cloudy, sky,
Nor ancient lullaby rubato.

But some tried to grow beyond that shore,
To be rubato, become divine.
Soften flesh to touch the sky.
THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
The estate hinged itself on the edge of the orange wood, and because of the vulture-beaked, taloned furniture, Winky always imagined the whole thing was the sunken corpse of a great dragon.

Winky was the younger one; Taylor protected her. Taylor patted his sister’s cheeks, now red and puffy, ruffling her tawny hair. Winky sniffed and smeared her wet nose against the window.

Claude sat at the steering wheel. Dark, leathery, full of old magic. He was their grandfather. As the coupe crinkled up the icy ridge, Taylor thought about sledding through the forests, seeing Winky’s little snow sculptures she always made. The radio spoke of blizzards; to this Claude shifted in his charcoal bulk.

“You kids fine?” he said huskily.

“Mmhm,” said Winky, tracing strange little things on the glass. Taylor nodded, his intense brown eyes alight.

“If yous’ns hungry, the tribe folk have some nice fish soup cooked up,” said Claude. Winky stuck out her tongue.

They soon reached the manor. Nothing but the dragon corpse, then wilderness. It was ancient, and belonged to Taylor’s family. It was full of candles, curves, lines of silver and nocturnal wallpaper faded for ages. Everything was silent. An ice sculpture. Taylor looked out on the yawning observatory and saw the orange wood, and heard the soft rumble of the twisted clouds rubbing together.

***
Taylor went out with Winky to play that afternoon.

“When’s Pop getting here?” she cried. Taylor shrugged. “Pretty soon, sooner if the blizzard’s long.” Adam was the bravest, toughest and wealthiest father in Minneapolis.

“He’ll be back when he’s finished sending the gangsters to prison,” he said, stretching his thin, lean frame. Winky straightened the hem of her dress and zipped her coat up.

“What about Old Jonny?” she said. A little shudder went through Taylor’s bones. Old Jonny hated Pop. He was after him.

“He’ll bring us home his head inna little box,” he said, faking a smirk. But he was suddenly afraid, feeling the cold mist, eyes fixed on the forest that now reeked of danger.

A cry came out of the woods. Taylor clutched his walking stick. In the distance, stampedes of amber reindeer made their way through the fog, shaking and shuffling their burly fur in the bitter air. He laughed, jumping in the sled with Winky.

“Let’s get some antlers, Taylor,” she whispered, and giggled as the sled glistened down the slopes like a wooden totem. The cold forest quietly howled, the tribe fires crackled.

***

It was dinnertime. Claude sat at the table’s shadowy end.

“When Adam returns, he’ll bring our heirloom,” he said, green eyes twinkling. Taylor fiddled with his hands. He could hear nervousness in Grandpa’s voice.

In the chamber, Winky sat playing with the tribe artifacts hanging
around the walls and the fireplace. The artifacts looked like strange Wooly-horned-tailed-fire-beasts, which crawled and were hunted by Inuit and died snowy deaths: Claude collected them. It seemed that bones of those old warrior things hid inside the walls.

As Winky held soft buffalo braids in her hands, she heard a little whisper. She looked up, saw a flash of whiteness above the stairway. A face that looked all porcelain, velvet fur. But the body was hunched, crawling swiftly into the darkness.

Taylor soon heard Winky’s screams and ran in. His head felt very smoky with anxiety.

“Paw! I saw a girl!” she said. Her heart beat with excitement. Claude frowned like granite.

“Don’t bother the house!” he said sternly. But Taylor now heard sounds everywhere.

“Who lives here with us?” he asked.

“Don’t go anywhere I Idn’t!” he fizzled. “Stay here ‘til Adam come’n home with the heirloom.” He worriedly turned and left. But the manor was enormous; animals lived here. Winky knew.

The blizzard suddenly crawled out of the sky-crypt, rapping upon the windows. Snow began to lick upon the glass. Taylor was in awe.

“We’ll explore,” he told Winky in bed that night.

***

Downstairs, the radio suddenly croaked to life. A voice rasped out:

***

Midnight. Taylor leapt out of bed. Hearing chattering, they sat in the hallway. They could feel fire in the walls. And they sometimes saw little glistening eyes in the darkness. They were afraid.

Claude laid in bed, unsettled, his heart creaking.

Away, on the curved salty blade of road, Adam the father sped toward the house. He thought about his children, the blasted hell beyond the manor, his face covered with cold sweat. He thought about the bones, the heirloom. The tribe. Bones.

***

The attic door stood open. From ceiling to floor lay piles of broken glass. In the darkness they could see the eyes of totems. There were bones. Bones of things that seemed like children, but like little animals too, lay in velvet piles. There was complete silence.

"The animals are here," said Winky. But Taylor did not think they were animals. He was thinking about Claude. All the dead things he kept in the house.

Winky suddenly screamed. Through the dripping walls, a girl hung from the chandelier. Her face was porcelain. But she shivered and her velvet fur glistened as her pink spine whipped back and forth. A hump, black, spidery, skulked towards them. They sprinted screaming down the curved hall.

***

Claude sleeplessly looked out the window and saw Adam's coupe. He rapped the children with his cane.
“The house is at disquiet!” he told them.

“Are they good?” said Taylor. Claude frowned.

Around them cracks opened in the walls. Downstairs something winged was flapping about. Behind a picture frame a yellow-eyed shadow wiggled violently. Winky saw colorful claws descend from the attic door.

“They’re family,” said Taylor. Claude was stern.

“Father is going to live with us now,” he told them.

Jonny Novotnik burst out of the floor. His twisted wooden face, sulfuric eyes, slinking suit, his foul briefcase. The children screamed, running behind the table.

The manor shook, dripped, shuddered. Novotnik looked bloody. He began to slide toward Claude.

“My bones, old bastard,” he croaked. Claude's face was grim. Taylor saw the glisten of the pistol from under his robe.

Adam burst inside. He knocked Old Jonny out the window, shutting it.

“Pop! The Animals!” screamed the children.

“The skeleton,” said Claude. Adam was silvery, dark. He buttoned his uniform quickly.

“Come on kids.” He coughed. The thing using the skin of Old Jonny howled and slithered underneath.

“Adam, we need to please the family,” said Claude. But Adam said nothing as he ran down the stairs with the children.

***

Winky saw the spider-wolf slouching about in the kitchen. Claude and
Pop were arguing.

"We’re leaving. The city, tomorrow," said Adam, buttoning his coat. There was frost outside. They felt the cold leather inside Pop’s car.

"The tribal bones! Our heirloom!" cried Claude.

"I sold them. They’re gone," said Adam stone-faced. The coupe sped off into blizzard.

Claude turned around. The door shut behind, frozen. No longer his house. He heard Old Jonny cackling.

Claude leaned on his cane with a creak. His green eyes glowed sadly.

"Let us bury this."

He lifted the pistol, really a talisman, up at arms-length, sighing.

***

They were at the train station. They felt the lift of the wheels and the steam.

"Claude will live with us now," Adam told the children. "The house was too old. Too many old things there."

But Taylor knew.

"Who lives with my family?" he thought to himself.

And Taylor saw the flash of porcelain from the corner of his eyes, following them into the train.
I couldn't stop asking what time it was, but you
Just laughed – to think that time held any sway
Beneath those reeling skies whose pallid hue
Had waxed to blazing neon in the wake
Of dawning dusk across the cityscape
Which lay below in rapid chaos sprawled.
Between both space and time we stood, agape –
Magnificent in youth, robust and tall,
And just fucked up enough to feel it we owned it all.

There was no longer any need to grope
For metaphors: all I could ever try
To say or write in verse – the utmost scope
Of human thought and truth – took form in lithe
And living flesh. In deep dilated eyes
Enticing, fixed on me, I thought I saw
A thousand perfect cities crystallize
And blow apart to freeze again, and on
And always for forever as we laughed along.

But after midnight follows dawn: the stern
And final coming down at last commenced.
Another, sadder truth became revealed:
The truest beauty springs from transience.
For as the world started making sense
Again, you turned your back – still bare and nubile –
On me and started off. Then hesitant,
You paused. You turned around with half a smile
And whispered, “it was fun to die with you a while.”
UNTITLED 2
EIGHT WAYS OF LOOKING AT A HIGHWAY

I
Conga line of headlights.
Brush strokes toward
their birthplace.

II
Leaves shmooze with rubbish;
curbide spectators
for tin elephant parades.

III
Stretched sunflowers,
metallic ants
seek their nectar.

IV
Charred hotdog with mustard
wrapped in a concrete bun.
Congealed relish, like cars.

V
Tar-sequined belt
through telephone loops,
fastened with a red octagon buckle.

VI
Black fog covers the sun.
Two rays
guide the wanderers.

VII
Hitchhiker's breath
sobs night into the shoulder.
His throat lumps each passerby

VIII
Cogs rattle warfare,
trees breathe the afterdust.
DUSTY GLASS SPREADS AIR LIKE LIGHT

It's almost one o'clock
On a slow Sunday afternoon
Sitting in the cool of a building
In a soft leather chair

Mechanics are humming their health.
The central air is a consistent breeze
On a chilly beach. And the
Whole structure settles
With footsteps about going home.

It is such a subdued sound
It runs on a track a step lower
Than most. On the same line
As dust and seaglass.
We mustn’t fall over
if, minds solving the kinks in well-oiled machines
conclude two things
firstly, on the matter of rust
and corruption clockwork can’t
tick, on such an impersonal basis,
brushes and your pulley system just
won’t cut it this time

in the opinion, professionally of course
and spoken for all professionals,
a good fingernail

yes
tip would do the job
the edge of skin fingertip
so filled to the brim with nerves
yes

secondly, on the matter of function
or
what we hoped for

pulleys and levers are perfect
to move the heaviest
surface, but tick doesn’t just pop out of nowhere
like force equated to thirty-eight or six
degrees of solitude

in my opinion, purely heart to
heart,
gloves and brushes still
won’t cut it
function’s too important to trust it
to just that
luckily, consultation’s got a tip
to tip
over, and
filled to the brim with nerves
dge of
skin fingertip
filled to the brim with nerves

We mustn’t fall over
if, minds solving the kinks in well-oiled machines
conclude two things
first, the concern of rust
and the importance of nerves
I’m sitting in the soft grass
The backs of my legs damp from
Raindrops that remain
Post pre-dawn showers

I’m sitting in the soft grass
My gaze tilted upward
To a sky that will soon be
Taken black but sweetened
With sugary stars and
A heavy cream moon

I’d rather be lost inside
Of a beautiful mind’s
Perfection and grace
In that place where you act
The way that you speak

I’m quitting you like a drug
Clean and clever I’m soon to be
Because it’s so terribly unlike me
To wish to drown the stars
Straight into the day
And send the moon south
With winds of bitter lyric

Anthems playing clearly to
Accompany my disappointment
My misjudgment
My apparent addiction

Brick by brick you spent
Your summer days so long
Building a wall for me to
Feel with bare hands and feet
And a bare emotion

Oh, irony, my constant companion
A fine partner in crime
You’ve always been so loyal to me
It seems you’re never satisfied
As my words of comparison
I wear now tightly wrapped

Around my right wrist
My speech figures shadow
And return to haunt me
I’ve read too many books
For my own good
And drank too many dreams

I cannot seem to help
My hopeless ways
An articulate optimism
Is attached fast to a flaw
Of misconception and condescension

So shall we speak of trust?
Never,
Love, adoration
Drip from the ceiling into our cups
Everything around me falls
I tend to trace that a simple symbol

I hate to be mocked by
Things so terribly inanimate
They remind me of a time of you.
"Yes, but I don't love you," he had just said. Simply. Casually.

Then he stood to order another latte in the creative alley that was Starbucks. They were two writers, he and she. Holding hands as a blood clot of directionless inspiration.

The poem fell out of her. Natural as sitting down. The metallic gleam of the pen shone into her eyes as she slashed at the fleshy folds of the paper napkin. The enraged sweat from her palms makes the napkin soft and fold like cloth. Somewhere deep in her mind a door shut, a lock slicing into place with cold finality. A cold dampness spread through her torso. Pride for her was a tiny, hunched man with a hooked nose whose penetrating stare made her boil with shame.

He flirted lackadaisically with an overweight middle-aged woman who was also in line. Pride for him was a plain stage in a small theatre, filled with soft light and smoky anticipation. The curtains would rise only to reveal more curtains and more mystery. In the second between one curtain rising and another falling there was an instant of knowing that there was a man alone on stage. He lived knowing his truer self would be known only in abstractions and never in manifestation. This gave him the liberty to be flamboyant, to turn tricks and spin false intimacies, knowing his hand at cards would never be shown. His smoggy air of self-satisfaction was so intense that it disconcerted strangers. Large-hipped women would embarrass themselves by bumping into tables just to avoid being within a certain distance of him. He laughed with this
A s h l ey Higgin s

woman in line, knowing that this conversation would be the highlight of her week, and feeling a strange nobility in his impact upon others.

He sat back down at the table, his eyes dark and sleepy-lidded. Always the phantom of the opera, with obsession billowing in the folds of his dark cape. Just offstage. Just out of sight. Polite niceties were said, with the air of throwing cards hastily. His tone held haughty, though shocked, at the barbaric chill in hers. The poem beneath her hand ached like a wound.

He also began to jot some lines on a discarded napkin. While her writing spilled out almost unwanted, he crafted his wordplay expertly, with pretension. He held needle and thread and wove a world in which he was hero and sage and Don Juan simultaneously. He could never mention her though, not entirely. She would appear in the intonation of a sigh or the particular fall of a strand of hair across a rouged cheekbone. Now, in the conversation, her voice was like a machete hacking down forests of trust and subtle intimacies. But in her eyes she was still naked, still begging. What he had done filled him with a disdain he was simply too timid to put into words.

His apology flew out haphazardly, in mid-sentence. In a voice from behind the curtain. Though he continued with his nonsensical, but charming, anecdote, the apology grew cobwebs in the sinews of her spine and burrowed under her feet. When he left, he paused dramatically at the door, bit his lip thoughtfully, and exited. The flowing ends of his phantom’s cape curled into a smile, satisfied at the performance.
Elsa Budzowski's friends say she's sick and twisted, and her family says she could be doing better with herself, but her boyfriend says she's cute, and that's what matters right now.

Brett Celinski has the soul of a phoenix!

Brenden Connor lover of friends, family, music, football and photography... born and raised in Medford Lakes NJ and proudly living life.

Nathan Dawley loves to wash dishes and paint his body maroon to stand in airports. Please give him a dime while you pass.

Greg Diamond causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy

Katy Diana has a secret desire to learn drunken boxing. She wants to kick somebody's evil-ass someday.

Tracey Coretta Ferdinand, born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago says, "God is soooooooo good!"

Ashley Higgins likes mangoes, the idea of studying abroad in London, and foreign films.

Katherine Jones (Katie) is a Sociology major and has no idea what she will be doing with herself in a year from now. Grad School? Volunteering Abroad? Anything, as long as she somehow gets to help the poor. She loves big cities, especially London where she studied abroad and plans to move to as soon as possible. Katherine is the President of the Ursinus Forensics Team where the only things getting cut up are other competitors, not bodies. She enjoys dancing, shopping, and adding things to her resume.
Krithika Krishnarao is a freshmen (class of 2009), and a biochemistry major doing pre-med.

Jen Mingolello often goes by the name ming, enjoys the color hooker's green, and tends to have bad anxiety in cars.

Alex Palasek is an amateur photographer and EMT who enjoys photographing people, their unique works and lives, as well as the beautiful and unscripted world in which we live.

Thomas "The G!" Richter does it without scaffolding.

Pat Roesle doesn't exist

Natalie Rokaski, along with a few of her high class friends, thinks that ski masks and fanny-packs will be all the rage this season!

Lauren Schaeffer likes to armbar zombies, make vegan dog food, and flap wings. She loves favorite treat.

Brad Schutts fell through the cracks.

Dan Sergeant is an English major sophomore coming to you LIVE from the backwoods of America's middle child, New Jersey! He's got a sports car, a fake band, and girl who inexplicably loves him. He needs to shape up and stop goofing off if he's going to make anything of himself, darn it."

Joshua Solomon doesn't like people who buy postcards.

Trevor Strunk, English Major, survived last month's challenges against the Pennsylvanias Menace, but join us now as he travels overseas to tackle the British Cur! It's two-fisted editing in the Leapin' Lantern Lexicon, true believer. Excelsior!

Jenna Tomiello is a junior from New Jersey. She is majoring in politics and environmental studies, and she took the picture on a cross country trip this summer.
Tori Wynne is spending this semester in Florence with the love of her life (and some other people). Her Italian is horrendous and she looks forward to a glorious reunion with many of her favorite people in Collegeville, PA. However, the Mukki will be sorely missed... she can't seem to get enough of that stuff.

Klaus Yoder has a few more months of night-walking on the Perkiomen Trail, and then...