

the Unrorean

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*Editors pick!**

Jetsam

*"The woods are burning."
Willy Loman*

My brother, Billy, used to say
success could always be measured by
how many keys you owned.

Later,
after the bankruptcy, after divorce,
after the fall from grace,
he embraced the idea that
freedom could be gauged by
how few keys weighed you down.
That was when I found him, living rough
in the woods beyond the railyard.

I went there once, just once, to find
a hellborn scene that Brueghel could have drawn:
discarded tires, trashcan fires,
detritus the world left behind.
Sparks swirling up toward a chaotic sky
while misshapen shadows staggered and slumped,
and Billy,
brandishing his bottle, saying
"Don't worry, kid, it's all good."
He yelled something more, but
a passing freight caught up his words,
carried them away
out to the fields where wolves and coyotes run free,
subject to naught but their bellies,
the weather,
the onerous surcharge of time.

—Dave Reddall

Clinical Fall

We try to hurry the days,
but winter's a clock-checking time,
like our shrinks on rounds.
Swimming pool lies drained,
its cracks crusted incisions.
Leaves trapped at mid-court net
brittle, dead fish;
the once green pasture now snow-covered,
snow fence-tightened.
I remember poolside barbecues,
hill hikes and flower picking:
summer scrapbook mementos closed, put away,
like clothes for a departed season.
Now we take pills,
pace the floor, consider two horizons:
hills beyond the windows,
or shadows at the top of the stairs.

—John T. Hitchner

Devin McGuire, Editor
Cynthia Brackett-Vincent, Managing Editor

her

legs
stick
in yr
head
like
the
23rd
psalm,
only
they
make
more
sense.

—John Yamrus

Helga's Song

I dream
 he is watching me
I dream
 the green Loden coat goes up in flames
I dream
 I am standing outside against a tree and I will never be warm again

I knew what I was doing
when we started
but 233 pictures later
all blurs into just this
 he is watching me
I like it

—Sharon Cramer

Bill Collector to Call

She no'd her grand kids out the door,
no'd her fat daughter on the phone.
She'd be no'ing him, too, in person,
Mr. Power Man, unless sudden cash
comes raining down the drainpipe.

Mopping her forehead, settled
into the green velvet chair
—one bad seat in July heat—
Ms. Millie yanks at her knitting,
unraveling knots of yarn and
paying no mind to the drool
of tobacco juice, near ready to plop.
Big man, he'll be here soon,
tracking up the front stoop, shading
her doorway, sticking out his brown
hand to choke her a.c. dead.
—Job he's paid to do. Well, we'll see.

She's going at it hard, figuring
she might could get herself another
week, maybe ten days. Being
as he's her cousin's nephew
or some such thing. If she can just
remember: no sass, no smart mouth,
no flipping the bird. Naw, keep
all that in the cage. Best put Mahalia
on the turntable, too. A big smile,
bright and sweet, is sure to take
the heat off.

—Thomas Feeny

Fox Again

On a sad glass-of-water
two-aspirin day
soon after
joy stops
the red fox appears again

standing stock-still
near the stone wall
by the early mums
sun on its perfect coat
tail plume so fluffed

I almost feel fur
against my throat
a feather-light hint
not to shut any gate
never think no black

whiskered wild wonder
will ever drift my way
now that my sister has left
so fast so unexpectedly
and will never come back.

—Margaret A. Robinson

Letter to Will

He is chainsawing
And has decided
To love me
Again, I think.
Last night he
Ran his hands
Through my hair,
Down the nape,
Of my neck,
Kissed me between
The shoulder blades,
And so on.

But I lay
On my side
In another world.
It was like
Having the flu,
Or wearing 3-D
Glasses. I was
Tired, not knowing
What he meant
By kissing me.
Maybe tonight he'll
Still be happy
Enough, almost talking
To me, eating
Sour apple tart,
Watching a French
Movie with his
Head in my
Lap. We stumble
On and on.
I hope you
Do as well.

—Dawn Potter

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Bread and Stones

When I asked my father
for a book for my birthday,
he gave me a baseball

glove instead. He did have
it signed by the author, which
was nice, and the plot was

more interesting than I
expected, but the character
development was lacking.

When I asked for a chemistry
set, he bought me a video
game instead, telling me

the two were almost identical,
both with threats of danger
and explosions. I played it

a few times, but the smell
of sulfur makes the difference
distinguishable. When I asked

my father for a hug, he gave
me a handshake instead, telling
me he had tried to keep me from

being a sissy, but it seems he had
failed, so I put this in the back of
a drawer until he had been dead

for twenty years, only to pull it
out while looking for a picture
of him, see what he had given me.

—Kevin Brown

Kitchen Poem

My garbage worries me.
It gathers like bad thoughts
pestering beneath my sink,
full of itself.

It's a daily plumping stew
of hand-picked discards,
separate but equal under
the drain.

A sad tale of caloric overload,
and Jack Sprat that ate fat,
of oily plastic non-goemetrics,
rust bread crusts,
bentback boxes, cellophane tufts,
and lingering pasta worming away.
There's clean naked cans
that once held certain brands.
And this,
(citizens, I do recycle),
with each facing an ill-attitude
works my waste place,
a clot of French fries, saying
J'accuse!

—Bruce D. Herman

The More You Pay, The More It's Worth

God, I hate this
tearing, heart-sick tension
between the soft captivity of love
and the bleak joy of being alone!

The solitary virtue of solitude:
the numb safety.
Always the outsider,
but never accountable
for another's needs or agenda.

I crave the warm curve
of a woman in my bed;
the entertaining disorder
of her sounds and presence
in my carefully constructed life.

But solace always comes with a great price.
The cost, of either choice,
cannot be calculated,
and the payments never end.

—John DesCamp

Little pink houses

Pink clapboard houses on
the grey-green plain, against
jaundiced colored sky, dead
blackbirds floating on flaccid
wings, outstretched as if to fend
off garbage left behind by an
out-of-season storm, pollution
clouds rainbowed by spilled
gasoline and oil, tattered dragon-
tailed kites strung with goat skin
and dried bones hanging above
windswept crops tainted by a blighted,
slavering wind; the dissected faces
of farmers standing on their wrap-
around porches, holding their pitch
forks skyward as if they were lightning
rods summoning the electricity
from the clouds.

—Alan Catlin

Colors

Over city smog diaphanous blue
gasping like a gazelle's neck
held tight in the lion's jaws
and her mound with
thin hair
as a soft breeze
amid your fingers

lustrous purple dusk
divided in two equal parts
in your immense internal mirror

on your hand a bit of yellow
and a rose, fiery red
for your bloodied path
to the far away land
where the stern knee
of the kore transforms
the beauty of earth
into an amphora of limpidity

—Manolis

Under pressure

time to lower the veil
on his ugliness
garbage bag plastic
pulled tight
against his newfound
freedoms
expressions
and arguments

all of it snuffed
hidden and tossed
in a bin
on sunday night

with the chicken bones
and Baggies of baby teeth

—R L Raymond

Those Days

of self-starving
I envied
Quebranta-Huesos,
the Spanish
bearded vulture,
its diet
nothing
but bones,
light enough
lucky enough
to float
over the Pyrenees
sated.

—Martha Christina

The Red iPhone

One for William Carlos Williams

So much depends upon
the red iPhone: your
eyes **glazed with** liquid
crystal **images**; you sit
still **as stone**, except for
your **fingers flying** over
its mini **qwerty keyboard**
in the **palm of your hand**;
the **ear - phones narrow**
down your audio world
to a steady stream of sick
tunes only you can hear;
while, at the same time,
you can email your three-
page **paper to your prof,**
text **message your bf** in
Saudi; **u can take pictures,**
surf the web, **have virtual**
sex; **then phone home.** For
receiving phone calls the
ringer is set on High; the
ring is Beethoven's 9th; it
is how we get our culture

lol

—Tim Napier

Big Purses

I've always feared
women with big purses
there's something in those things
you can't see
or you can & it's cake with 2 bites
taken rewrapped with her last bits
of care
men's shoes can hide in a big purse
& there could be
unpaid electric bills
brown lipstick
penicillin
jarred applesauce
romance novels
azure hard candy
popped birthday balloons
mango rinds
blush you'd taste with a kiss
anger & credit cards
a photo album full of what she'd
call "fam pics"
rinseless shampoo & yet
more lipstick
no
the big
purse is nothing
to mess with
give me cash & keys in a back
pocket any day

—Mark Wisniewski

Awake Just Before Dawn

awake just before dawn
you see beyond sight
there's time
to get anything done
you ever wanted to do
no horizon
like a god set your own
so many choices
jump right in

—Michael Meinhoff

Returning From War

Rubble on country roads
with an indifferent air
longing for silence
and sleepless disappearance
you wander for miles
where birds are holed
in green branches
your thirst even in the teeth
of hunger's memory
and hunted images
from your tired eyes,
in the abyss,
there is no easy departure.

—B.Z. Niditch