UNICORN:

"It is the only animal that ventures to attack the elephant; and so sharp is the nail of its foot, that with one blow it can rip the belly of the beast.... Its one horn signifies the Gospel of Truth."
--Ctesias (400 B.C.)

The Greek Physiologus: "How it is captured. A virgin is placed before it and it springs into the virgin's lap and she warms it with love and carries it off to the palace of kings."

Leonardo da Vinci attributes the Unicorn's capture to its lust, which makes it forget its fierceness, lie in the girl's lap, and so be taken by hunters.
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Al and I wanted to canoe a river. The camp said it'd take forty minutes but we had a couple of hours so we thought we'd take our time. Al said to wait for all the others to get going. "We'll be last," he said.

"Stern this time, kid?"
"No. Go ahead and take it."

Sitting bow was my favorite part about canoeing because when a strong enough current came up I could forget rowing and take it easy. Al could steer us through just about anything so I never had to worry about getting my arms marked up from a willow or poplar or something hanging over the bank.

"Hey, Al. There's a shallow coming up."

Al slowed us enough for me to jump out and pull the canoe into the bank. He sat in it with his feet hanging over the edge. I sat on the bank.

Funny how different a place you know looks in the dark. The sun was just starting to set, so we knew just where we were at, but everything seemed bigger. The trees really hung shadows on the water.

"Take a look," Al said, and pointed into the river. "Hey! It was a turtle swimming down. I had never seen one before--in the water, that is. I followed it down the river until it got too deep. I'd heard of people hunting turtles for food but I couldn't imagine anyone eating one now, watching that one swim down the river.

One thing wrong with the dark is that it makes you feel jumpy. It was about the best place we could have been, with no one around that we could see, but the sun going down made us get back in the river. Maybe it's the stories we hear when we're kids, or the ones we imagined, that gets a stomach going every time the sun sets.

"Muscle it," Al was saying. We had hit another shallow and we were drifting and getting nowhere. I started to row. "Faster!" Al shouted. We were out of the shallow and the current was picking up again. That really got us going. Al started shouting a beer song and I tried to follow him but I couldn't remember the words. "You're crazy!"

I shouted back. Al kept singing. "Slow it for the bend," I said, "There might be something on the other side."

We slowed and there was a house on the other side--one of those summer houses that tourists buy so they have someplace to stay when they come fishing. It was a pretty rich house and when we got close, a dog ran from the porch. The dog barked and ran to us so fast that I thought it'd jump right into the river to get us or something. But it stopped as soon as it got a front paw wet. It just stood there and barked, so loud that Al barked back. The dog looked back to the house and two more dogs came up, a big red one and a three-legged one.

"Al, look at that dog!"
"Look where you're going, kid. I've got us hung up on a log here. See if you can do something with your oar."

"But it's only got three legs."

"Yeah, and an owner, too," Al said. Before I even tried to get us off the log Al jumped out and pulled the canoe out. Where he jumped the water was only up to his shorts but by the time he dragged the canoe and got back in, he was wet up to his waist.

"What do you think it's like, being with three legs like that."

"Looked like he was running all right to me," Al said. "Better get rowing before that owner comes out and yells at us for hanging around the place."

I would've liked to watch the dog, but I guessed Al was right so I picked up on rowing. The dogs could bark until they died. The darkness was getting to me again and the mosquitoes were coming out.
Sally Alatalo

CANOEING

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Dan Halvorsen

WOODSTOCK ALLEY

Night
4th Street sidewalk.
Left turn between
Mickey's Bar
and Ace Office Supply
puts you in
Woodstock Alley.

Cats and trash.

Look up,
two bare lightbulbs.
One is burned out.

Turn the corner,
fire escape.
An old man sits
in a doorway,
worn hands
around a bottle.

Beneath the fire escape
looms
a big man,
silhouetted in the light
from a kitchen window.

His turned up eyes
glow white
in the dark void
of his face.

Walk further, turn,
pass a door,
bolted and padlocked.

Emerge
from Woodstock Alley
into the warm light
from shop windows.

Breathe again.
Dan Halvorsen

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Breathe again.
David Yee

SPRINTER
(after a photograph by Elliot Erwitt.)

A boy runs barefoot
across the beach, his body black
against the white sand. His shirt billows
like a sail in the Gulf Stream winds.

He is going home, the feeling of wind
follows him back.

Mary Ann Martinsek

REMAINS

In the antique shop, things are imported
from the past.
The employees are valuable relics:
speak softly to them.
The rugs are pale from years of sun,
their patterns dim. Deserted armchairs
light the hall with tended beeswax glow.
Dust slumbers on an oak four-poster.
The air is imported too, and quite expensive.
(Don't breathe too much," whisper
the age-keepers as you enter.)
Beyond the shelves of forgotten books,
you can see
the worm-riddled air crates
and the coffeepot
on a Franklin stove.
A boy runs barefoot
across the beach, his body black
against the white sand. His shirt billows
like a sail in the Gulf Stream winds.

He is going home, the feeling of wind
follows him back.
I stand in the hall, three doors down from the stairway. My fingers play with the frayed postal tape on the package under my arm. I don't see why Sarah couldn't have brought the box up to the old woman. I've got to pack for my trip to Chicago and... Maybe I can leave it outside the apartment. No. With the other hand I thump on the door, hoping Crazy Irene really isn't home. But I hear a rustling inside and "Who's that out there?"

"Randy," I say. "Randy Kellys from downstairs, 5-A." There is no answer. "Did you hear me? I have a package for you. The mailman delivered it to your—"

"Mizz Kellys don't have no boy."

"No--no, I'm her daughter. Randy--Miranda."

She snorts and lifts the latch. The door swings open wide. Crazy Irene stands there, chewing a fingernail. I am used to seeing old women with their hair cropped short or hitched up in balding French buns. Crazy Irene's is white and droops past her shoulders, the ends knotted in snarls. Her sleeveless dress is splashed with bright flowers, the hem unraveled and skimming past her knees. The neck hangs slack where the buttons are missing.

"Well, come awn in then," says Crazy Irene.

"But--well, I'm--" I begin. Seeing the way her shoulders sag I change my answer. "Okay. Sure. But only for a little while."

Her face is a web of wrinkles. The lines criss-cross as she smiles at me. She nods and mumbles something I can't understand. Turning, she urges me to enter her apartment. Crazy Irene scuffles over to a bloated couch and gathers up
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the old papers scattered there. Patting the cushion, she invites me to sit and raises a storm of dust. I sink back into the couch, the springs creaking. She goes to a highbacked chair, the only other place to sit in the room. She drags it to the couch, between me and the door. Tucking one leg underneath her, she sits like a bird or a child, one knee peeking out and bare.

I hand her the package. She sets it down beside the chair without glancing at the return address or shaking it close to her ear. Instead, she squints at me and rubs a puckered elbow. Finally, she talks. "I hear from yer mother that yer goin' to Chicaga."

"Yeah, tomorrow."

"Ya eat lunch yet?"

"Well--"

"I'll be right back then." She heaves her body from the chair and scuttles to the kitchen. "Now, don't cha go leavin' now," she calls.

I do think about leaving. If I tried, Crazy Irene would hear me. Instead I scan the apartment.

A few plants squat on the windowsill, vines growing long and trailing to the floor. Roots swell like veins from the bottoms of their pots. Crazy Irene’s plants ignore the rain that starts to slap the pavement outside.

A calendar curls from a tack on one wall. It shows APRIL in large letters and a basket of rabbits blushing an odd shade of pink. It has been October since last Saturday. A shelf tills next to the calendar, holding a dusty row of books: Moby Dick, The Cat In the Hat, a Bible, two telephone books.

A wooden desk hunches against another wall. Cluttered with National Geographics, old papers and what look like travel brochures, it still manages to hold a large fish bowl. The water is dirty and clotted with algae. Three or four mottled fish twitch inside. Above the desk, Jesus peers through a glass-covered frame, his eyes like raisins in a cookie-dough face.

"Ya still there, Girl?" calls Crazy Irene as she hobbles into the room balancing a plate of cookies. I reach for one when she offers. Pretending that I didn’t have to pry it from the plate with my fingers, I chew the cookie slowly.

She leaves the plate on the cushion next to me. Instead of returning to the chair she goes to the desk, tugging open a drawer and fumbling inside it. Finding a can of fish food, the label waterspotted and faded, she lifts the plastic lid. Her fingers pinch a few of the flakes and scatter them in the water. The fish nose the dirty glass and rise to feed.

"Chicaga, huh?" Crazy Irene turns to me.

I nod, perching on the edge of the cushion. Will she let me leave now?

"I almost went there once--way back."

"Yeah?"

"Yup. Chicaga," she whispers to the fish. "They can hear me, ya know. Don't know what I'm saying but they can hear." Her finger stirs the water and the fish dart.

I want to excuse myself and leave but before I can say so she tells me and the fish bowl, "I haveta talk ta ya 'bout somethin'. Don't go leavin' jus' yet. Please. Not right yet."

"But, I really should--well, Chicaga..." I sink back into the couch.

Crazy Irene plays with a white whisker on her chin. "I'm a old lady. A old lady. I lived me a purty good life, though. But there's lotsa things I did wrong--but there's this one thing..."

"What?" I ask.
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"What?" I ask.
"Ya see, I could never get carnations to grow here," she says, going to the window to watch the rain. One hand shreds the leaf of a plant sitting there. "Never. Not even a one..."

"Do you want some flowers from Chicago?" I ask, looking at the door.

"No," she says, frowning. "My sister, she lives there in Chicago. I haven't heard from her in near twelve years, ya know. I want ya ta tell her somethin'. A message. A little one. I have her address. Really, I do."

"Couldn't you mail it to her?" I ask. "A letter?"

"Ya trust them postmen?" she snorts, pointing to the box beside the chair. "Them--they'd lose it before it left this state. And this is important."

I look at the door and then at my hands.

"Jus' tell 'er that I want to be put under in Memorial Gardens, near Clemens, to pick me out a good stone when the time comes. Nothing too big. A nice one. I want carnations, too. Tell 'er I want carnations, too. Big ones. And lots and lotsa carnations. Don't forget to tell 'er that." She squints at me from where she stands, her back to the window. "Do that for me, Girl. I'm askin' ya please. My sister, she's not too bright in the head. She'd bring roses. Roses! Damn ugly flowers, roses are and--"

"Where in Chicago. Maybe I'll get a chance--maybe."

Crazy Irene goes to the desk and tears the margin from a National Geographic. Taking a pencil, she slowly scratches something on the paper. "This is where she lives, my sister. I haven't seen her in over seventeen years, ya know." She hands me the paper and without looking at it, I stuff it into my pocket.

"Ya'll do that for me, Girl? Ya will now, won't cha?"

"Okay. Sure."

"Ya promise?"

"Yeah," I say. "I promise. But I better go now or I'll never get packed. Is it okay with you? Can I go now?"

She nods and walks me to the door. Putting a hand on my shoulder, she whispers, "God bless ya, Girl. Don't forget--carnations." She winks.

The door closes behind me and the latch slides into the place. Crazy Irene starts to sing. It sounds like, "Oh, come yeeeee, oh come yeeeee to Beth-le-hem..."

I walk to the stairway and let my feet thud down the steps. Passing under the ceiling light, I take the address from my pocket. I read:

Abigail Keller
Barker's Terrace
Apt. 27-D
Marysville, CA 49041

Shredding the paper, I find a garbage bin and toss it in. I can probably pack my pink sweater in the suitcase I'm borrowing from Sarah. The plane leaves for Chicago tomorrow morning at seven.
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"Ya'll do that for me, Girl? Ya will now, won't cha?"
Tina Ament

DRIVING TO SALT LAKE CITY

The afternoon sun shines down on our red Audi. Heat is everywhere and the air is dry. I sit alone in the back seat, my mother and sister up front with a roadmap. The freeway looks endless as we drive toward Salt Lake.

We pass telephone poles, strange creatures that hold onto each other with wire arms. Little grows beside the road, a tree or bush like an island in a brown sea. In two hours we will be there in a cool motel for the night. Tomorrow we will get up early, drive across the white salt flats, a wet Holiday Inn towel pressed to the back of my neck.

Sally Alatalo

DEAD FISH

1. Little headless ones, a fisherman ripped more than a hook from you to leave an unworthy catch in this state.

2. The old skull picked clean cries for me to remember the live, silver skin. So thin a reminder I could crush it with a step.

3. Even at night I see them. The rotting flesh washes up in dreams as often as in rivers.

4. When I was small I took a stiff catfish and chased my sister. Before mama came I grew taller than her.

5. Still, I see fat perch drink waves without swallowing and I wonder why the need to grasp them, why inside me one won't float belly-up.
Tina Ament

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The only home I remember was the glass tank where I lived with about 20 other frogs. I learned that we were called "frogs" by listening to the people who fed us and put new water in our tank. The tank was big enough for all of us to fit, but I wished that it had more room for us to jump around. It had glass walls and many times I would look out at where we were. Outside of the tank was a large room with long, thin lights far above us. A long way down was the floor. Because we were on a shelf above the floor, when people walked by, we could only see the top half of them. When I looked around the room, I could see other tanks with frogs or strange creatures inside.

All of the frogs who lived in our tank got along very well. I liked everyone, but there was one that I liked more than any other. I thought she was the most beautiful frog that had ever lived. We stayed together most of the time, and whenever I was with her, I was very happy.

One day after we had just eaten, one of the men who worked in the room came over and took our tank off of its shelf. We were all thrown about. None of us could understand what was going on. Nothing like this had ever happened before. We were carried past many rows of tanks and out the door. Our tank was placed next to many others in what looked like a room that was much smaller than the one we had just left. Then there was a very loud noise and the room started moving. I later learned by listening to the men that this was called a truck.

When the truck stopped, our tank and two others were taken out. My friend was worried, and I did my best to make her feel better. We were taken into a room that was smaller than our old home but larger than the truck. It was bright with square lights above us. There weren't any shelves of tanks here, just long black tables. The two tanks were set on one of these.

After a while, the men left and turned off the lights. I was glad when they did this because they were so much brighter than the ones I was used to.
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After a while, the men left and turned off the lights. I was glad when they did this because they were so much brighter than the ones I was used to.
We played for a while and then went to sleep. When my friend and I awoke, the lights were on, and there were many strange people in the room. There were young people sitting at all of the tables. A strange man who looked like he was in charge took us out and gave a frog to all of the people at the tables. I hated it when he picked me up. His hand was large, and I was sure that at any moment the fingers would crush me. I was worried, but nothing bad happened to me. Two girls took me. They were very nice, and I got to jump around. It felt good to get out of the tank after so long. I hoped my friend was all right, too.

She had just as much fun as I did. "I like people. I hope we can play with them every day!" she told me. We got to do the same thing two more times. After that we all went to sleep.

I awoke after a good sleep. My friend was awake too. The same man who had given us to the kids earlier was near the tanks. I heard him say to another man who was standing next to him, "I'd better get started on these frogs so they will be ready for the biology classes tomorrow."

He opened our tank and took out a frog. From the table, he took out a long pin and stuck it into the frog. After the pin was in him, he did not move. The man put that one down and came back to the tank. He reached in and pulled my friend from beside me. I didn't want to see what he would do. He took the pin and did the same as before, but she kept moving. I thought that maybe she'd be all right. The man took the pin and put it into her again and again until she was still. He took frog after frog and did the same thing.

I wasn't going to let him put that pin in me. I quickly thought of a plan. When he opened the tank again for another frog, I jumped up and out of the tank. It was a long way down to the floor. As soon as I hit it, I jumped. I jumped behind table legs and toward the open door. "Get that frog!" I heard the man yell. I was now almost to the door and freedom. One big jump, and I would be outside. Then a hand grabbed me, and I looked up into the face of the man who had stuck a pin into my friend and would do the same to me.

He took me back to tank, put me in, and closed the lid. "These are all we need for second hour," he said. "I'll do the rest for fifth." And he walked away.
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Eric Schneider

MINE ACCIDENT: WESTERN KENTUCKY

They're bound
in the hole
four of them
chained down by coal
after a crack.
But they aren't dead,
not until the bodies
push out the mouth
white sheeted
like maggots.
One short shriek
when they burst
into the searchlights
and night lays back
content with the toll.

Smothered or crushed?
Their wives will wonder
at home, drowning
in hell's daylight.
No more banging
in the hall after midnight
No more creak
and twist in the bed
beside them

No more sigh,
long, drawn,
deep as the pit
they come from.
All's crumbled,
collapsed this night

They come out
their last time
surrounded by police
and federal inspectors
smoking.
They're bound in the hole, four of them chained down by coal after a crack. But they aren't dead, not until the bodies push out the mouth white sheeted like maggots. One short shriek when they burst into the searchlights and night lays back content with the toll.

Smothered or crushed? Their wives will wonder at home, drowning in hell's daylight. No more banging in the hall after midnight No more creak and twist in the bed beside them.

No more sigh, long, drawn, deep as the pit they come from. All's crumbled, collapsed this night They come out their last time surrounded by police and federal inspectors smoking.
1. Outside that corner of the kitchen, the bees have made their home. Listen: do you hear the clacking? It is the sound of stingers striking brick walls.

We had always kept them at bay. A few got in (their hairy shadows on the glass haunting our breakfast tea) but we had the upper hand. And now look:

in the corner of the window, gathered like locusts—dozens of them. They think this is their home now. But we know better; we can wait and wait like the Greeks in their wooden horse.

2. The bees float like dandelion fluff over the field. I gather armfuls of them; they refuse to sting.

We dance through dark valleys. They lead me: I am their blind ballerina. Their eyes are tiny stars

or Loreleis.

My feet and knees are afraid of cliffs. They shake. The bees only smile, their teeth little moons.
Karla Mallette

BEES

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Tina Pomeroy

Motel: End of Summer Season

I
Labor Day over
Gert leans over the office desk
calculates Fall rates
on the back of a postcard.
$25 a night
should snare out-of-towners:
businessmen, deer hunts, strangers caught
in bad weather.
She exchanges
skiing pamphlets
for faded brochures,
imagining the welcome mat
blurred with ice,
drifts creeping
up to the front door.

II
Handiman
sloughes against the Coke machine,
gloved hand latched
to a rake.
He remembers
the storm windows
in the storage shed,
the lawn furniture
that has to be hauled in
from the beach.
He'll miss the football game
that will buzz on the radio
in a half hour.

III
Housekeeper
folds herself into a sweater,
resting her hip
on the warm humming
of the laundryroom dryer.
Her eyes find
the shelf, the box holding
tourist leftovers:
three brown socks
a stuffed rabbit
five different brands of shampoo
But nothing she wants.
She ignores
the dirty towels,
turns, and hides her hands
in sweater pockets.

IV
Gert warms her palms
on a mug of coffee,
settles back
behind the switchboard
to wait out winter.
Neon will still be glowing
red-pink in the morning
"Vacancy"
Tina Pomeroy

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"VACANCY"
When our neighborhood was young and sparse
and our house didn't groan
with the weight of furniture
the hedgerow groaned in the wind
that stroked it with an enormous hand.

Early, they lit from empty fields
igniting each morning
with the spark of feathers.

Tails cocked at the angle of sundials
the ring-necked heads patrolled the yard.
Before the snows their eyes were wide as dimes,
hard as the corn we left for them.

On Christmas I, the birthday boy
turning to a new year
and a later time to bed,
would watch the pheasants crack
the crust of snow, fresh
as the brown top of our dinner bread.

When I was ten the neighborhood grew;
basement holes opened, the sewers cut
their mechanical furrows, and the cadence
of new wells came hard to me as arrows.

The wind that made the chimney whistle
and beat the laundry dry upon the line
was boxed between new houses.

Each night I took out the kitchen trash
without the sound of pheasant on the grapevine

between the trees. The dogs nosed the brown grass;
they forgot the scent of recent quail.

But this June they came back,
found the corn where they had left it,
and re-established residence in our hedgerow.

Pear-shaped females, their mates
as trim as yachts, braved neighborhood boys
with BB guns, came back to remind
me of the crack in the livingroom wall;
the hallway lighting with its electrical quirks,
to waddle across the first tint of day
and burst from the last vacant field, like fireworks.
John Jackson

THE PHEASANTS

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Paula Smith

CUZCO

I know the red
earth of a hillside,
bricks that form walls under sky.

A field empty of stones
reflects my horizons.

Holiday figures of saints
are carried on country roads,
but embroidered robes crossing
in front of my eyes do not touch me

I see only the children
who follow in the procession,
their empty hands

and the darkness growing
in their eyes.

When night comes
I climb stairs and enter a church
whose walls end in shadows.

Now if I pray
it is no longer to avoid
emptiness.

It is for flames in cathedral-darkness,
for the saints with painted blood.

Lisa Shirley

DAWN

Turn off the lamp
let darkness-fading
enfold you. Soft it clings
a baby's hand to your finger.
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DRAGON:

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--Robert Bly
Madison, Minnesota
1967

"Powerful spirits of air, earth, and sea, they are generally benevolent and are responsible to a considerable degree for the orderly functioning of natural phenomena."

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