The Red Wheelbarrow
### ART CONTRIBUTORS

Cover: The study of the Leaf - Dwayne Johnson  
Sketch of Eyes, Nose, Mouth - Anonymous  
Boy, Man, Girl, and Centerfold - Jenny DeForest  
Trees - Stacy Spencer  
Sketch of Gaping Man - Brendan Keenan

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VILLANELLE.</td>
<td>Karen Baum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WAY TO IMMORTALITY.</td>
<td>E. M. Breen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANDOM NOTES I</td>
<td>S. Spencer, L. Tennyson, D. Stanton</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANDOM NOTES II</td>
<td>L. Armstrong, J. Hubert, S. Goodwin</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RUNNER.</td>
<td>J. Frost</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNOWBLINDED WHILE HUNTING</td>
<td>Jack Driscoll</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A CASE OF SELF-INDULGENCE</td>
<td>Suzanne Warmack</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MODERN FABLE OF MR. BIDUNE</td>
<td>Jim Tolley</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOSEF ESMERAM, THE WRITER</td>
<td>Nick Thorndike</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENT LISTENING.</td>
<td>Peter Colson</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNOWY FIELDS.</td>
<td>Peter Colson</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESURA.</td>
<td>Doug Stanton</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITTING WITH A GIRL FROM TEXAS</td>
<td>Doug Stanton</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANOEING IN CANADA.</td>
<td>Stacy Spencer</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
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<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>31</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karen Baum

Villanelle

Evening's breath shadows the unrest of day,
Smoky darkness drifting through trees of sunlight.
From one stem two leaves pull away.

Soil-brown branches no longer lay
Their shadow across earth's misted light.
Evening's breath shadows the unrest of day.

Daylight's sun fades, giving way
At dusk to the pressing night.
From one stem two leaves pull away.

Shivering afternoon rests in silent grey,
Quietly turning in the solitude of night.
Evening's breath shadows the unrest of day.

Dark air and dampness rise that they may
Slow the day-winds and shade straying white.
From one stem two leaves pull away.

Above the ground where soft light would stay,
Fog spreads, clouding all color from sight.
Evening's breath shadows the unrest of day;
From one stem two leaves pull away.

E. M. Breen

The Way to Immortality

I drew a crisp piece of white paper from my pocket and handed it to the cabbie. "Take me to this address." He glanced at the paper. "What address? All this paper says is 'Dear Mr. Fitznigel. Your poetry is definitely not the sort we are looking..." I grabbed the paper from his hand, my cheeks glowing a deep red. I was quite sure that I had disposed of that slip several days ago. I slipped it into my pocket, handed him the proper invitation, and settled back in the seat as the cabbie headed downtown, allowing my thoughts to wander. 'The smog, red from the glow of the setting sun, swallowed me like a giant mouth.' It had seemed like such a good line, still, when I reconsidered it, I saw that it was, perhaps, not of the same calibre as my epic 'green as the leaves in late August, when their color peaks before their Autumn death.' No, nothing could quite equal that.

"Here ya go, buddy. That'll be seven bucks," said the cabbie, interrupting my reveries. I paid the man and stepped onto the sidewalk.

I was not at all surprised to discover that D.W. Webster lived in a large glass and steel building that sloped gently on three sides like a giant hill of ice. As I stepped into the elevator for the journey to Webster's penthouse, 92 floors above the sidewalk, I felt it judicious to place a small piece of pepsin gum in my mouth, and chewed on it as vigorously as etiquette allowed.

Reaching my destination, I discreetly disposed of the gum and pressed the doorbell, but regretted it instantly. It was very loud, and played a short scale in deep tones that caused me to shrink to one side of the door frame. D.W., himself, dressed in a burnt-orange polyester tuxedo, answered the door and ushered me over to his aluminum piano, where seven or eight other guests were already gathered. "I see you're not entirely with us," he said in a stage whisper. I blushed, wondering what breach of etiquette I had made, then noticed that he was gesturing toward my tie. "100% silk I'd say," D.W. continued with a sigh. "Polyester is so much easier
Karen Baum

Villanelle

Evening's breath shadows the unrest of day,
Smokey darkness drifting through trees of sunlight.
From one stem two leaves pull away.

Soil-brown branches no longer lay
Their shadow across earth's misted light.
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to care for. Would you like a drink?" Eager to draw the guests' attention away from my tie, I said in a loud voice, "Yes, I'll have a gin and soda." "Tonic?" questioned D.W. "Err--yes, that's what I meant." I blushed again and stepped behind a large artificial rubber-tree plant, to contemplate why Webster had bothered to invite me at all. Could it be that he had read my "Ode to a Floor Tile" in the Fitzbriar Literary Magazine? No, only an elite group of intellectuals ever turned its illustrious pages, still... D.W. was at my elbow with the gin and tonic. "Joint?" questioned D.W. I opened my mouth to decline, but found that the first sip of gin had paralyzed my vocal cords. "I assure you that it too will be man-made," he added with an ever-widening smile, "here, try one." He shoved a tray of neatly rolled cigarettes under my nose and I reluctantly chose offering him the joint.

"Quite good, aren't they?" chuckled D.W. "We've concentrated the effect and removed nature's impurities." The doorbell echoed in my head. "Excuse me, won't you?" D.W. stepped briskly to the door, and I turned to the man on my right, offering him the joint.

"Every time you take on that reefer you're polluting one of our most important natural resources, that is to say, you, yourself." I opened my mouth to reply, then stopped with a blush and ground the roach into the top of the piano. The cinders burned red for a moment, then faded into the cold aluminum surface. "D.W.'s in his glory tonight--thank God it's one of his last." My eyebrows shot up in amazement. "Don't look so surprised! Haven't you ever gotten close to him? I shook my head. "The man fizzes." I smiled confusedly. "What I mean to say is that there's this obnoxious little noise that's always around him--he fizzes." I giggled. "It's true! He had an accident while researching for his book, Test-tube Gardens. He's been slowly dissolving ever since."

"Friends!" called our host from across the room, "please come to my dining room; I think you'll find our meal an adventure. The guests turned and walked toward the dining room. "By the way, sport," said D.W., walking up and slapping me on the back, "I've been wanting to talk to you all evening about some publicity work I need. I've heard you've done some writing." "I'm a poet," I said with a bit of venom. "Well, whatever," D.W. said, "I'll talk to you later. As he turned his back, I smoothed the lapels of my suit and glared at him, but my glare softened as I considered his remarks. Perhaps he had read some of my work and wanted me to write a poem glorifying the anti-naturalist movement. That, at least, would explain the invitation.

I took my place at the Dacron-covered aluminum table, where the meal was laid out in polyethylene petri-dishes and beakers, and was pleased to find myself seated next to the man I had met at the piano. "Help yourselves! Preservatives are the way to immortality!" spouted D.W. as he dished a large helping of a purple rock-like substance onto his plate. My companion tapped me on the shoulder.

"I suppose you'll be wanting to hear the rest of the story," he glanced surreptitiously at our host, who was pouring a green liquid down his throat. I nodded and he began: "Back in '51, D.W. was the boy-wonder of the Stonewaller Research Foundation's bio-chemistry team. He trained under Salz and Wolsey, all the time developing his anti-naturalistic theories. You've heard, I'm sure, of "Preservatives: The Way to Immortality." I nodded. "Well that treatise caused his split with Stonewaller. For years he was scoffed at by his colleagues. He turned to middle America then, and began to gather a following. He preached cheap nutrition and speedy preparation--he was the driving force behind McDougall's hamburger chain, if you remember. He caught the spirit of suburban America, converting an entire generation to anti-naturalism, and then, in '68, just before the Environmentalist craze hit, he reached his zenith: 17 weeks on the best-seller list with Test-tube Gardens! He was on the verge of a break-through on a vitamin enriched meat-substitute, when his lab was fire-bombed by 12 UCLA students. The heat caused a chemical reaction in his re-combined body, triggering the production of a cell-dissolving acid. I think it would be safe to say that D.W. is nothing more than a shell."

From the end of the table we heard a spoon clinking against a beaker.

"Ladies and gentlemen," droned D.W., "I would like to propose a toast to V. Quentin Fitznigel--the man who has so kindly consented to do our next great publicity campaign."
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Several hands pushed at me, forcing me to stand, and there were shouts of "Here! Here!" I was speechless with shock.

"You did consent, didn't you?" questioned D.W., knowing quite well that I hadn't.

"Well, er..." I started.

"Of course you did, man! I remember it quite clearly... You said 'D.W., old sport, I'd just love to spearhead that new...'."

"But, D.W...."

"I remember! You told me all about that wonderful magazine spread you had been planning..."

"But D.W. I never..."

"Why just before dinner you were telling me of that cute little jingle you had lined up for..."

"But D.W., I'm a..."

Webster gave a little belch and collapsed into the purple rock-like substance on his plate. "Poet," I finished under my breath, as I watched his dinner ooze around the edges of his head. I threw my napkin down and rushed to his side. The naturalist joined me quickly, his hiking boots clumping noisily across the space between us. He reached for D.W.'s wrist, feeling for an absent pulse. Several other guests joined us. "Dead?" I asked. "Quite. Let me show you something."

The man drew a knife from the pocket of his jeans, unfolded it and knocked a few clumps of earth from the blade. He pressed it into D.W.'s back, and I noticed an inscription on the handle, "UCLA '68". The skin opened easily, and he pulled it apart, allowing a green foam to ooze out.

It reminded me of leaves late in August, just as their color peaks before their Autumn death. "Damn! If that isn't a good line!" I said half aloud. "What did you say?" asked the naturalist. "Oh nothing, nothing."
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Random Notes II

i Free will
   outshines men
   After Laura
   follows unmasked dust
   riding clouds
   she escapes
   celebrating
   emotional memories.

ii behind many vulnerable brothers
   the waiting salmon make shows,
   fishing for others
   its like

iii get rescued steelhead
   100 friends thumb the road
   and break
   evening thrown
   into land
   taking the trick.

iii Why
   were
   whole
   lakes
   where
   you lie
   following the scarce
   call
   of the sea.

iiii it
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   if
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Jay Frost

The Runner

The sun is slicing itself into center sky, giving me more light, and I still can't find that mark. It has to be close; posted on a tree, hung from a limb, or just launched up out of the ground somewhere. The woods are deceiving. I keep turning, thinking I hear something or see a marking. Wind's furious, kicking the air out of me as I run. It could have blown the sign over. Turning leaves cover the forest halls now. Maybe the sign is covered. It could've been stolen, too, but I've got to expect that--I'm a runner.

Back in Public High they would've stolen it. If there was any way to slow you down, screw you up, mess up what damn little sense of direction you had left, they would've done it. That one kid, Coley, over from North High, he was that type. The type with big, brown, sad looking eyes. He'd wait 'til you trusted him, and then he'd turn around and knife you. It was everyone though, at least it seemed, right down to the coach. One way or another they'd bring you out like a draftee, and if you were like me, make you leader across the mine field. First year that was my job.

Running was no problem. I seemed to be built for it. I was fast as hell in gym, and the kids and coach, Coach Haul, pushed me about the team. "Just a little training..." he'd say, waving his hands like flags. But as it was, without training, I was pretty strong. I used to take a train out and go hiking on some mountain trails far away from town. I did it just to get away. Maybe running would be the same.

Passing through these woods I wonder how I ever managed to do it. A long haul, and then into a school with no runners. Not that I mind or anything. People who are -artistic- they're usually more sympathetic. But here I am running again. And I have to.
Jay Frost

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The first time I ran was at the tri-meet; Knute Rockne High North, and us. Our team herded into the bus and trucked over to the North field. I sat alone then, in the back, way over to the left. They all had their suits doubled up under their arms like footballs, and their eyes set kind of close. It might have been determination, but I think they were scared. North was damn mean when it came to sports.

One thing that stood out about the place was the lawn. They had the damnedest field I had ever seen, but the lawn was so strange. It was so green. The school was a normal abrasive, red brick one. We got off, funneled right through the double doors, down the tiled hall, passed some football murals, and jogged into the locker room. It was a normal one; shiny blue lockers, worked over locks, and long benches to rest on. It didn't have separate shower stalls, just the large square kind. Like ones in concentration camps. It was only walking out, dressed in full uniform, to some windows in front, that got me going again. Crushed the butterflies dead in my stomach. The whole outside was a rich green. Lawn stretched out in a large semi-circle island next to the runway for buses and administration. It was capped by scattered sprinkler heads that ran almost synchronized; where one stream stopped the next would begin its sweep. Across the street there was a small lake, with floating birds and a few kids throwing left over lunch to them. It was then the coach called me back.

Wait! A mark! No, my mistake. Not much shows up in the leaves now anyway. Can't let my concentration break too much. The mark has gotta be close by.

Everything is brown here. No rich greens like my first run. They say winters are horrible. Especially the late ones. It's already mid-November. I just keep slapping my legs, hoping they'll warm up like that first time.

It was so easy then. I did a couple of stretches the Coach had shown me and watched as the others stared down opponents with sniper eyes. I didn't know whether to laugh or not. A couple of the jocks hassled me. One on my team spit on me, then turned to friends for approval. Before I went up the starting line I got an idea. I wanted to use starting blocks. "Starting blocks?" the Coach wheezed. "How are you going to sprint the six-hundred?" He let me, anyway. The others, without blocks, sort of giggled. "When he says 'get set,' count one-two," the Coach had told me, "then run." I positioned myself and listened. One, two, I called to myself. The first time it worked. I sprinted. I won. In the stands, one kid looked down at me, he was pretty old, he smiled and nodded in acceptance. I saluted back. That was the first time I remember seeing Coley. Even then I noticed those strange, fat, old eyes--deep brown.

I'm trying to follow a path. Up ahead there's a stream break. Maybe I've gone the wrong way. In a race like this it seems a matter of feeling your way through. I just passed another route a couple of minutes ago. It didn't look right. There weren't enough breaks in the brush. The stream is just ahead now. I'll hurdle it.

The next season was easier to step into. As a junior my reputation for that one event launched me into stardom. But even with the added acceptance, I felt out. During the meets, as the season ran on, Coley always seemed to be in the stands. The first time I really met him was at the next tri-meet. We charged off the bus and jogged down to the North field. All with our suits on. I carried my shoes in a track bag. While the rest of the team began to warm up, I ran down for a drink at the radio building. The fountain handle came off in my hand without surrendering a drip. Three guys, led by some shorter, kind of tired looking kid, surrounded me. The leader looked up at me and said, "I'm Coley. I've been watching you, man. You run like your ass is on fire." "Thanks," I said. It was embarrassing, but I couldn't think of anything else. "Watch your ass, man," he warned, "mean dudes here--bastards." He smiled and walked away. I tried to slip the handle back on.

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Two suspended. It's hard to put it together now. Just the last
day. The big run. I think it was the mile.

Something national was being cooked up. People were making
bets. Coley came up as usual, before the race, but looked a little
strange this time. His friends formed around him and me--taut--like
a barb wire fence. I was against one of those red brick walls. His
brown eyes hardened like cooling glass, and his friends, eight of
them, looked brain washed.

"You shouldn't run, man," he said, rocking.

"Why?"

"It's a heavy race."

"Yeah."

"A lot rests on this race, man. A hell of a lot."

All I remember is busting through now. Like he had pulled a
knife on me or something. I just ran through them. I don't know if
I hurt any of them--couldn't turn around to see. Like today. No
time to look back.

A minute ago I could've sworn I saw something. It could've been
the sign. I'm bending over a little now, taking slow breaths. My
stomach is beginning to cramp up. The ground is rich brown, with dry
leaves netting the hall like traps. Though I feel myself pumping
hard, as hard, even harder than before, I can't really hear my gait
anymore. It can't be just pain or I would've lost sense in the mile.

I can still feel how soft and firm my shoes felt when I slipped
them on. Standing on the line I almost began to forget about the
close call with Coley. I bounced for a minute, loosening up, getting
comfortable, then fell into my running stance. I grinned hard.
Crouched, up a little, fingers tensed, "get-set," one-two, and I
ran. No false start. I started fine.
Two suspended. It's hard to put it together now. Just the last day. The big run. I think it was the mile.

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A kid from North was beside me, trying to keep pace. Poor kid, I thought, when I start running he'll stop smiling. I heightened my pace. But there he was still and halfway through. I couldn't figure out how. My feet were really feeling sore now. Beginning to sting. I looked down at the front of my shoes and I was bleeding. I was bleeding all over my shoes and onto the track. I was bleeding. "Oh god, oh god," I yelled. It was glass and cotton. Broken glass at the toe of my shoes, padded with cotton so I couldn't feel it 'til I began. They went inside my track bag. They must have.

Just then the kid from North tricked me—he stepped on the side of my foot. My left foot. He was on my right side. I fell down. I hit the clay track and rolled once like a tank hitting a deep trench. Only a hundred yards to go. Damn. My feet were pouring now. I tore off my shoes and ran. "No!" I yelled, sprinting like a madman. Fifty yards, and I was close. I had to win.

In the back, the public was as expected. First a scream from a cheerleader. Then my parents stood, my fathers arm wound tightly around my mother. Coley was driving out the driveway on the other side of school, and smiling as his hands strangled the wheel. He didn't see me get up. The team behind me charged ahead.

My heart beat hard. I could feel the glass working its way in. I had never worked that hard before. "No!" I screamed. I forced my body limp for speed. I aimed way beyond the line. I couldn't even see the kid from North anymore. I couldn't see anything anymore. I sprinted. I sprinted.

Up ahead now, I think there's the mark. I'm not close enough to tell yet. I think I'll stop a minute to catch my breath.
Jack Driscoll

Snowblinded While Hunting

It begins at a distance,
the hare gone white across these acres
of snow, the dog still barking.

And the hunter, on skis,
follows down the white tunnel
of his eyes. It’s the chase
that keeps his blind ligs churning, his hands
in love with each red cartridge
in his vest. But there is a field
clearing itself of light, always blue, always
changing. And when the stars come out
and the cold wind enters
the stitching of his eyes, he thinks:

wolf-bone, snow-owl,
the frozen mouths of men
open, staring into the ground.

He unstraps the rifle from his back,
feels, for the first time, the springs
in his wrists, the weightlessness of iron.
All night he circles
at ten below. He knows
he must never stop, must poke the ash under
his eyes into small flames. Just before dawn
he imagines
taking the lost dog into his arms, almost sees
the searchers spread out in a V, their long flashlights
moving toward him
from under the pines. His stiff coat
cracks, the small windows of his hands
open and losing heat.

Suzanne Warmack

A Case of Self-Indulgence

The painter guards his work
in a small penthouse studio:
canvas stretched and leaning
against the dark wall, a small bottle
of gin among tubes of color—
one open jar of turpentine.

Behind thick glasses, his eyes
swallow the curve of the woman’s body
as she sits motionless
in a hard wooden chair. His strokes
are smooth, the warmth of her body
rising calm under the blue lights.
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Once there was a very fat man named Mr. Bidune, who shouted at children and kicked small dogs. Everyone hated him, but he hated them even more. As an accountant, the only thing he didn't hate were numbers, and he didn't like them much, either.

One night, after shouting at the neighbor's five-year-old son and kicking a fox terrier, Mr. Bidune looked out his bedroom window at the sky. For a moment the smog layer of the city parted and Mr. Bidune caught a glimpse of a star. It was the moment he'd been waiting for--he quickly made his wish.

"As a vastly talented and great man unjustly stuck in this hideously unappreciative city, I merely wish for the reward that I know I truly deserve."

Mr. Bidune stood at the window, waiting for a magic wind to sweep him off his feet and carry him to an island in the South Pacific, where Polynesian princesses would pamper him for the rest of his days.

After an hour or so the wind hadn't arrived yet, so Mr. Bidune walked to his bed, the floor sagging under his weight. He rolled his enormous body into the bed; he was exhausted, and fell into a deep, deep sleep.

The next morning he rose at 7:00. Wrapping himself in his extra-extra large robe, he went downstairs for breakfast. After eating enough to make a troop of boy scouts sick, he put on his grey tweed suit and picked up his brief case.

He opened his front door slowly, keeping an eye out for the large pack of small dogs that chased him daily. But as he looked out the door, he saw that his front yard had disappeared!

Overnight, a tree fifty feet wide had grown from Mr. Bidune's yard, leaving no trace of what had been there before. The tree was so tall that its top branches were above the smog. On the trunk, a message had been carved into the bark. The message said:

**CLIMB IT, BIDUNE**

Now Mr. Bidune, being plump, had no intense desire to physically exert himself by climbing the mammoth tree. But the possibility that this tree was the bridge to his reward intrigued him, so he started climbing, leaving his briefcase on the ground.

After about one hundred feet of huffing and puffing his way up the tree, a mockingbird landed on a branch near Mr. Bidune. The bird immediately began to mock him.

"Hey, fatso--having trouble escaping the force of gravity?"

"Quiet, you insignificant little excuse for a bird. Can't you see that I'm climbing the tree of my destiny?"

"I know that; I also know who you are. But do you know who I am?"

"No, I do not, and I can't say that I care. How do you know who I am?"

"Part of my job. You might call me 'The Guardian of The Tree to Your Destiny.' I'm supposed to test you with three questions. If you answer all three correctly, this tree will lead you to your reward."

Visions of Polynesian princesses hula-ed into Mr. Bidune's head.

"What are the three questions?" he asked quickly.

"One at a time," the mockingbird answered. "The first question is:

What is the beauty of a caterpillar?"
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"That is much too simple," Mr. Bidune replied. "The beauty lies in the fact that the caterpillar's cocoon can be taken from it and used to make silk, a very valuable commodity. A modest investment in caterpillars can turn a high profit from the silk. The beauty of the caterpillar is that he is a low risk, high yield investment."

"That wasn't exactly the answer I had in mind," the mockingbird said. "I was thinking more along the lines of a butterfly."

"My answer's close enough," Mr. Bidune cut in. He commenced climbing again, nearly stepping on the mockingbird as it sat on the branch. Up and up Mr. Bidune climbed; limb by limb, bough by bough.

After what seemed a long time, Mr. Bidune stopped to rest. He looked down, over his huge middle, to see where he had been, but he was so fat that he had to look straight out to view anything but his stomach. And there, straight out on the end of a limb, was the mockingbird.

"We meet again, Bidune."

"Unfortunately," exhaled Mr. Bidune.

"Tell me," the bird mocked, "what is it like to live your life as a sphere?"

"Is that the second question?" Mr. Bidune retorted. "If not, then don't waste my precious time."

"All right then, I won't waste your 'precious' time. The second question is: What is the one thing in your past you most regret not having done?"

"Another simple question. I regret that I never developed any kind of relationship with my dear grandmother; I never really got to know the old gal. When she died, she left a sizeable estate, and I didn't inherit anything."

The mockingbird looked at Mr. Bidune.

"That answer's a touch off base, I'd say--"

"It was close enough," interjected Mr. Bidune. He returned to climbing. From beneath he resembled a grey tweed hot air balloon rising toward the clouds.

Mr. Bidune had not climbed far when another message, carved into the tree, appeared. This one said:

HALFWAY POINT

"I'm halfway there." thought Mr. Bidune, and once again Polynesian princesses hula-ed in his mind. He started climbing with renewed vigor.

After a few feet, though, he noticed that the tree was getting thinner and beginning to bend under his weight. As he continued, the tree bent more; soon Mr. Bidune was not climbing vertically, but crawling horizontally.

Realizing that shortly he would be heading down, Mr. Bidune turned his wide body around and began to move backwards. Sure enough, the tree bent further, allowing Mr. Bidune to shiney downward.

The mockingbird appeared again.

"Greetings, Bidune. You know, you might make better progress if you just tuck in your legs and roll the rest of the way."

"I will ignore that," said Mr. Bidune. Am I nearing my reward?"

"Oh my, yes! You're two-thirds of the way there. You only have to answer one more question."
"That is much too simple," Mr. Bidune replied. "The beauty lies in the fact that the caterpillar's cocoon can be taken from it and used to make silk, a very valuable commodity. A modest investment in caterpillars can turn a high profit from the silk. The beauty of the caterpillar is that he is a low risk, high yield investment."

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"Quickly, then--what is it?"

"The final question is:

If you were given a million dollars to use to save humanity, how would you use it, and how would it help?"

"The simplest question of all," Mr. Bidune answered. "I would have my broker put the money into blue chip stocks and live off the dividends for the rest of my life. This would help save humanity by setting an example on how to save yourself. If everyone saves himself, then collectively they will save humanity."

"Mr. Bidune," said the mockingbird, "I believe that is the worst answer you've given so far."

"It's close enough," snapped Mr. Bidune. "Now be gone as I take my reward." He quickened his pace downward. Unfortunately, he could not see below himself; his waist blocked his sight. He could only anticipate his landing, which occurred quite quickly.

"Am I here?" asked Mr. Bidune, still holding the top branch of the tree. He shuffled his feet around, making sure that he had really reached the ground.

Mr. Bidune then let go of the tree. As it swung into the air, he realized that he had made a mistake. Mr. Bidune saw that he was standing on the only piece of solid ground in view, and it was only big enough for his feet. He was stuck in the center of a dark swamp, and he could see hungry alligators begin to move in the reeds.

"Bird!" Mr. Bidune shouted. "Bird, where are you?"

"Directly behind you," said the mockingbird, calmly perched atop a nearby cattail. "May I be of assistance?"

"This can't be what I deserve! This isn't my just reward... is it?"

The mockingbird didn't answer.

"Bird," pleaded Mr. Bidune, "I was to get to Paradise!"

The mockingbird lit from the cattail, and circling once over Mr. Bidune's head, said: "This is close enough for you."
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The mockingbird lit from the cattail, and circling once over Mr. Bidune's head, said: "This is close enough for you."
Nick Thorndike

Yosef Esmeram,
The Writer

"He sits...
Playing with horrible unspeakable secrets."
Gregory Kuzma

This cold night,
Yosef Esmeram watches
the white ball of his light
dripping on the screened window.

He is writing another book
instead of opening letters
from his mother, piled
beside his desk. Yosef scrapes
at the burned circles under the sill;
it is this room

that he writes about, the buildings
across the street slumping
over each other like drunkards. Below,
the police car floats past.

His hands are like staircases,
weak and sagging as he soaks them in the sink
washing the inked skin away.

His eyes smoldering with book print,
Yosef sinks into the folds
of the mattress in the corner.

His silence comes in dreams
that persist in the whine of a vacuum
cleaner next door.
Nick Thorndike

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that persist in the whine of a vacuum cleaner next door.
Peter Colson

Silent Listening

It's winter
In the field near Oakwood Lake
I stand a snowbank
around my knees
Closing my eyes
I listen for those
things that are not there

The wind has stopped groaning
in the hawthorne bushes
dead in the branches
The Little Betsie
drawn like a sheet over rocks
a still lake
Birds have lost their song
in sleep cold dreams of winter

I turn shivering
through snowdrifts
talking and whistling
to hear myself alive and not
alone.
Peter Colson

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Peter Colson

Snowy Fields

In mornings
Far down
in white valleys
Field between woods
Coyote pups romp
in the drifts
Hunting idling shadows of eagles
That will stoop from above
Through high still skies.

Screaming reach
through the trees
Those pups who watch
silhouettes grow
down upon them
Snatched from warming snowbanks
Leave behind yelpings
for parents to follow
to a swirling of snow
in the middle
of an empty field.

Doug Stanton

Cesura

All I'm sure
of is
that I kept
going
back and
forth, listening to
the blueberry bushes
rustle
under your
shoulders,
thinking, why am
I studying your
pale ear, and
lying in the
sighing, knee-
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Doug Stanton

Sitting With a Girl From Texas

She has beautiful knees. They bend
Like two waterfalls into her shoes; her hands
Soft as geese, each finger a neck
Tugging north over her legs.

At night, on her neck
There is the sound
Of metal galvanizing, my thumb sniffing
And swaying above a trough of hair.

We lean our eyes
Back, float in a warm stream, buff
Ourselves upon the tops of weeds
Looking up at a fault in the moon.

***

Her backbone rides
Like a length of dry cedar
When her eyes move
Move. Throughout the dim woods

In her ribs, animals walk and mew
To each other, her breasts resembling
The faces of owls, across flats of sand.

In a wind, at midnight, cowboys gather
Water from a hole dug with the butt of a gun.
They peer in close
With their dirty arms. Look at everything: the sagging
Reflection of whiskers in dark water which knows
We will all go blind if we do not, blinking once hard-
Eyed into darkness, as if into
the throat of a dying animal.
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Stacy Spencer

Canoeing In Canada

I Late August in the Quetico National Forest, here
I enter the Indian past; this wilderness
Supplies the weary with the clear water of these lakes.
Centered between the distance of roads and towns,
Only the white tails of airplanes reach
Out to touch its shores.

The pull of my paddle resists
These black depths, my arms straining,
My eyes squinting against
The glare of water and white
Rocks piled high by the receding glaciers;
With cupped hands I drink
Over the gunwale of my leaning canoe.

II As I bear the weight of my own
Pack across this portage; my feet taking
Hold of the rocks, I think
Of the voyageurs, following
Countless Indian paths; their north­woodsmen voices filling the early mist
With charts echoing from the cliffs.

III Tonight the full moon follows the same arch
As the sun. I will leave Lake McKenzie
Behind, my metal canoe scraping
On the rocks of the northern shore.
The water and woods are calm;
As an Indian I sleep, my back flat
Against the sweet cover of moss.
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   - Emily Dickinson

Lisa Tennyson: "One ought not to tempt people to read poetry who would much rather read books about the instantaneous photography of horses."
   - Thomas Mann

Jay Frost: "I'm no good at being noble Ilsa, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that."
   - Bogey, Casablanca

Karen Baum: "Speech lies halfway between thought and action, and often substitutes for both..."
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Jim Tolley: "I feel like I have my head in a vise."

Pete Colson: "The Ode to Code. Naturally I highly recommend it."

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E. M. Breen: "I might say that the writing is smooth and agreeable and some of the pages very apt and charming. You have talent—which is the equivalent of a soldier having the right physical qualifications for entering West Point." - F. Scott Fitzgerald

Jack Driscoll: Where light/at evening crosses/the lawn/ like nothing you had imagined/in this life or any other.
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