The Red Wheelbarrow

Volume 5
Number 2

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The butterfly wanders.
Faye Bissell

THE PINK SCARF

like a
winter kiss
softly wrapped around
my shoulders.
I cover
my lips
with your pink
scarf feeling it
tighten
against my
breath.
Six
feet of
pink and
laughing
waving upon
the white
snow.

this edition is for
coot

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the typewriter ribbon
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Nick Bozanic

BEFORE NIGHTFALL

I walk out
past the fallen stones
fencing nothing,
past the knotted thorn apple
and the one immovable boulder,
dusk huddled at its roots;

I walk into the darkness washing over the hills,
flooding the fields, lapping against the steps
that fall down from the house where my wife
nurtures the one fire that feeds us;

I walk with the snow falling into my eyes
like so many seeds of light; I walk out
like any man whose life belongs to no one,
whose hands bear fruit, whose heart rises
red above the rivers flowing under his skin;

I walk out to the limit of the land I live in.

And I say:
let the winds that lift these fields
along the last row of saplings
at the edge of winter resound
in the empty barn of my throat;

let stars rise from my lips
to shape one constellation of song
to hang in the heavens
blackening, everywhere, above us;

let every living thing sing
just once, together, and for all
as the night comes down; let us shine.

Emily A. Percy

GOING SOUTH

I slouch in the back of a greyhound bus,
watch a fat lady snore,
a drooping petunia tucked behind her ear.
It is midnight.

Beyond my reflection in the window
a few lights glow through the dark pines
along Highway 41. A sign flashes past, etched
with bullet holes.

Inside, the fat lady is still asleep.
The aisle lights are dim and familiar, with
bits of conversation drifting back like cigarette smoke:

Harry in the nursing home
Hard winter this year
Back in Montana in '34
...the one in Little Falls...

An hour later
the bus pulls in front of a cafe.
There is a dog sniffing the oily asphalt.
Passengers stumble out, the fat lady
squinting in the brightness of a neon sign flashing
Truckers
Truckers
Truckers
Truckers

1 a.m.
Going south.
Dan Halvorsen

THREE ANIMAL POEMS
For G.S.

I. Little furry mouse
I hold him in my hand
Cut off his circulation
With a little rubber band.

II. Graceful little thrush
Alights upon my arm
Its tiny head I crush
Much to its alarm.

III. Little tiny rolls
For little tiny moles
In little tiny holes
Roasting over coals.

Chad Atkins

DRIVING NORTH

Following the distant beacon of a snowplow
I crawl north
along the snowbound roadway
toward Buffalo. Beside a barn
on my right
a gnarled orchard stands cold
and hard. And there is a tire
swaying from a squat maple, its leaves
evicted in December's chill.

The light snow swirls
around a stone house which stares
through dark windows
at acres of corn. Across the road
stalks stand frozen, silent
in winter's blood. From their gallery
of telephone wires
crows watch with empty black eyes
hungry for spring. I drive on

drinking coffee bleached by milk.
I find them that night in a dream
featherless and dead in the white field
at the bottom of my cup
Cathie Groves

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A TRAVELLING LOVER

If you want to be her friend, first give her a flower, one with a spiny stem that sticks to her fingers like a blade of grass rubbed the wrong way.
Next, unroll it before her eyes so she can see it is really a map.
Take her hand, guide it over the surface. Show her the rough places are really mountain ranges, rivers and highways.
Braid the flower into her hair, Tell her she will always know where you are.

III

At last he thinks of a woman undressing below him in the snow. Her skin is blue, her legs are crossed and long. When he reaches down darkness falls all the way from his chest. Inside one finger

he has written his name in blood.

Now he must bed down for good in the thought of this one woman cold and naked who begins to stir openly in her perfect camouflage like absence entering the eye of this storm.
The Snare

I

Tonight my father steps drunk into the snare,
is lifted in his fur coat
like a small bear
who upside down
feels only the weight of its tongue.

Alone in moonlight
he circles for hours on the palms of his hands, finds
by touch, the green bottle of wine upright
in snow. Already his eyes
are small pockets of ice a paw has pushed through.
And these are the tracks he follows
into the first few moments of sleep,
into a life now hanging by one heel
among the birches. This is the world
gone white at the edges of maps
where even wolves disappear in silence,
where my father's bewildered ear twists
to its own deaf center, calling home.

II

By morning
he is still alive, this noose
a last foothold turning his body
slowly in a light snow. He wakes
like a man whose skin has swallowed the cold, thin air
wintering in the heart of a stone.

Here,
shaking the light loose,
he dreams of dragging a sled of pelts across a field.
But always his one caught leg
keeps falling behind like an exhausted animal
too heavy to move on the crust. There is sweat
and a stiff wind carving a trail in his back, snow falling
harder in every direction but time.

Jay Frost

MOON PONY
for Siv Cedering

One day I built a moon pony
since none in the stables
would dare take such a long ride.

I harnessed him
with our father's leather;
saddle and bridle resting on the wall
since grandpa left us
and his farm.

I told the pony to click
his hooves and shout as he dove
off the cliff
at the edge of the woods.

And as we rose
with his damp mane slapping
at my face, I saw that this
one flight might make him
strong and slender
a moon horse

so I ordered him down
fearing that if I let go
of the harness on the moon
he might leave
the gates of my heart.
Jim Tolley

THE INDIAN

My dog was barking as I turned, awakened, in the dark, letting the
blankets fall from the bed. My father wasn't home; I would have to
quiet the dog and let my mother sleep. I found my pants on the floor
and pulled them on. They were stiff and cold and I thought of snow.

"What's outside, dog?", I asked, of myself, really. He barked
again from the base of the stairs. I could see him, large and black
on the landing. I walked slowly down, a hand on the rail, and whis-
tled softly to him as he nosed at the crack beneath the door where
the wind swept in the cold. For the first time I heard something
scratching on the door from outside.

"Back, old Jim," I whispered, "let me in there." I pushed his
head back, and felt his teeth bared against my palm. With one hand
I tried to hold him back; his neck was tensed and he began to growl.
With my free hand I turned the doorknob. It had been snowing all
night, and the winds were high; I lost my grip and the door pulled
from my hand. It swung in hard, hitting the wall with a crack.

At first I couldn't see into the blowing snow outside. The dog
pushed past my hand and onto the front steps, and I saw a dark heap
at their edge. The dog barked and nipped at its edges tossing in a
whirl of spindrift. The thing stirred, then groaned, and I could see
that it was a man.

I rolled him over and grabbed tight the shoulders of his jacket.
He couldn't have been much warmer than I was, even though I wore no
shirt. His jacket was lightweight; he wore shoes, no boots. I won-
dered why he'd been out in the snowstorm; town was two miles down
the road one way, and only farmland, no houses, for two miles in the
other direction. Beyond that, there was only an abandoned mill and
the reservation. Becoming numb, I pulled the man from the drifted
steps over the doorframe inside, and closed the door against the storm.

He didn't move from where I had laid him on the floor, and was
quiet. I couldn't see him well in the dark, and I stood and flipped
the lightswitch. The lamp stayed dark, and I knew that the lines had
been knocked down by the wind. I found a candle from the dining room,
lit it, and set it in its holder beside the man on the floor.

Cindy Hecht

WALKING AT NIGHT

Late at night we walk
the gravel road. Our hands
search for warmth in woolen pockets.

Around our ears the air
cries and breathes like tears
escape our lips. We watch

the rise and fall of our shadows
on the gravel, the wind
like cold words passing between us.
tried to imagine what her next son would be like.

If I'm lucky, she thought, I'll have a daughter.

The snow melting from his jacket dripped onto the rug. The dog was sniffing the man's feet and legs, sking, as I was asking: Who is this man, where is he from? I turned his head to the candle, to see his face, and the ice in his hair filled my hands. I could see he was old and dark. His lips were blue with cold, and when he moaned again, they parted, and a gold tooth glinted in the wavering light of the candle. I knew who he was.

Once, in town with my father, I'd heard the men in the gas station joking about an old Indian drunk in the bar who they would taunt, telling him to "dance like your grandparents, Injun." Now that Indian lay on the rug before me. The men in town had told my father that the Indian's daughter was the reservation whore, and he took her money to buy his whiskey. Then my father's friends had laughed about how the man was "the richest Indian on the reservation, thanks to the gold tooth in his mouth." The men had laughed for a long time, my father laughing, too.

And my father had gone to town, again, tonight, to shoot pool with some friends he hadn't seen in a while. He could have decided to stay the night and sit out the storm; over a foot of snow had fallen since I had gone to bed. But I doubted he would wait, even if the winds weren't letting up. He was stubborn; my father would try to make it home before long. I thought of him coming back, and I wasn't sure what to do.

The Indian shook convulsively beside me. I folded the rug over him, wondering why he had been out. The men had said he was just a drunk; I supposed he had been to the bar again tonight and didn't know enough to stay inside until the blizzard blew itself out.

The Indian moved again; with his arm he pushed the rug from his shoulder. My dog sat up from where he had been lying on the steps, and growled. The Indian was mumbling, but his teeth chattered and I couldn't hear the words that slurred from his mouth. I put the rug back over him, and told the dog to be quiet.

"Town... Dr. Bacon," the Indian mumbled. He tried to stand, moving heavily as drunken men do. I pushed him back down, and he leaned against me. His arms were cold, but his breath was warm against my shoulder, and I could smell no whiskey.

"My wife..." he said, struggling to stand again. "She needs the doctor..." His hands were on my arms, shaking; the fingers were thin and the nails still a faint blue. "She coughs water from her lungs." He sat back on the floor.
As the Indian slumped down the dog trotted silently to the door, then stood stiffly, ears up. As I rose to look a pair of carlight beams passed the frosted windows, throwing sudden glare into the entryway. I covered my eyes, thought a moment, then blew out the candle. My father was home, and I knew if he found the Indian inside, father would force him out into the storm again, alone.

I told the Indian to sit in the corner, in the dark, and I straightened out the rug on the floor beneath the stairway. Then I crouched beside the trembling man, holding the dog back, and listened as my father came in the back door. He slammed the door, but I heard it bounce back open; he slammed it closed again. His steps were loud and slow as he walked from the kitchen toward us, and I realized suddenly that the candle was still set on the floor. Its wick still glowed at the tip, and I could smell its weak smoke. The three of us, the dog, the Indian and I watched silently, following my father as he walked by and tried the same lightswitch I had tried an hour earlier. He swore loudly, and I tightened my fists as he stepped toward the candle. At my side, the Indian held his head down in his hands. Then my father kicked the candle, and it rolled noisily in its holder until it hit the wall.

But my father didn't stop; he kept walking right up the stairs, cursing again. When he reached the upstairs hallway, and had closed the bedroom door hard behind him, I let go of the dog and finally stood.

I opened the closet door and took out my coat and boots, and one of my father's coats for the Indian. I helped him up, and put the coat over his shoulders; neither of us said a word. I put his arm over my shoulder and opened the door. My dog ran out ahead; snow was driving down.

I helped the Indian out the door and closed it. I half-carried him to the road, and turned toward town. The tracks of my father's pickup were already fading in the blowing snow. I could feel the Indian lift his head up; for the first time he spoke, but his words were lost in the storm. It didn't matter. I knew the sun wouldn't rise for hours, and the road hadn't been plowed all night. Ahead of us the black dog ran, searching for the best path. We all pushed ahead through the drifts, knowing the wind in our faces would fight us all the way into town.

door locked.

She sent Mr. Gifford up to talk to him.

"Tael," he called through the door. "Your mother has dinner all ready."

He listened hard but there was no answer. After several seconds, he gave up and went downstairs.

"We have to do something," he told his wife.

Tael sat by his window gazing out into the night. The moon rode high in the sky. Tael watched the shadows the trees made on the lawn.

He also watched the man that stood under the big maple tree. Occasionally, Tael could see a smoke ring rise on the wind towards the moon.

Tael listened to the wind in the trees. In the distance he could hear the mumbling of his parents. Slowly he raised the window.

He climbed out and hung for a second straight down from the sill. Then he let go and fell two stories onto the damp grass. A sharp pain filled his head and he felt as though heavy weights had been tied to his legs. The world looked hazy and the pain continued. He tried to cry out but his voice stuck in his throat. Then he felt Arcadia standing beside him. Arcadia touched his shoulder and Tael felt the pain melt away until it was all gone. It was hard for him to remember it.

He stood up and Arcadia took his hand.

"Let's go get that ship shall we?" Arcadia asked as he blew another smoke ring.

The funeral was short. Mr. Gifford wanted to bury their son quickly, he didn't want to miss the news. In her mind, Mrs. Gifford
the pungent odor of the smoke. It smelled like cedar. Slowly Tael sat down wondering why he didn't just run away.

Arcadia looked over at him and smiled. His face broke into a thousand wrinkles.

"I used to make up stories about the fishermen. Like that man over there." Arcadia pointed one long, narrow finger towards an old man bent over a cane fishing pole. "I bet he was a pirate when he was a young man."

Arcadia began to tell Tael a story about the man. Tael forgot his fear of Arcadia. He forgot about his mother and father, he forgot about school, he forgot about everything but what Arcadia was telling him.

It began to get late. Tael finally noticed the long shadows stretching across the water.

"I'd better get home," he said.

Arcadia got slowly to his feet. He knocked the ashes from his pipe onto the ground and looked at Tael. "I'll see you again young man."

Tael watched him walk away. Then he ran all the way home.

When Tael got home, his mother wasn't there. He found a note on the kitchen table:

Have gone to town - will be back soon.

Tael barely glanced at the note as he hurried upstairs to read. But Tael found he couldn't read. He kept thinking about Arcadia. No one knew much about the man. No one really wanted to. He was considered strange. But Tael couldn't forget all the stories he heard, sitting next to Arcadia and watching the boats come in from faraway ports.

Mrs. Gifford couldn't get Tael to come down for dinner that night. She was worried because he wouldn't come out of his room and he had the

Judith Shulevitz

IN WAKING
a translation of Juan Ramon Jimenez

Night, a black bull, lumbers away
its full flesh heavy
with mourning, and fear, and mystery.
It has been bellowing, monstrously,
at the sweaty terror
of all the fallen.

And day comes, newly wakened child
seeking trust, love, laughter-
young child who, in the far arcana
where the beginings find the ends,

stops to play for a moment,

not knowing

which meadow is light
and which is shadow-

stops to play with the bull

who runs away . . .
In his room Tael read about John Carter of Mars. He read late into the night making a tent out of his bedding and reading by flashlight.

At breakfast the next morning, Mr. Gifford talked to Tael. "You should take advantage of learning," he said, "Not everyone has a chance to go to school."

Tael thought about how on Mars they didn't teach you silly things like math and English. There they taught you how to fight with a broad sward and become a warlord. But he didn't say anything outloud, he just stared into his cereal bowl. Mr. Gifford took this as a sign that Tael was ashamed of his behavior and would try harder.

But Tael didn't even go to school that day. Instead he went down to the river to watch the boats come in. He sat along the bank and dreamed of being the captain of his own ship. He was so involved in his own dreams that he didn't see Mr. Arcadia sit down beside him.

Arcadia took out his pipe and lit it. "Hello Tael." Tael jumped. "Why aren't you in school today?" Arcadia puffed lazily at his pipe. "We...uh...we didn't have school today," Tael lied. Arcadia smoothed the rough material of his coat between his fingers. "I used to come down here too when I was a boy and didn't want to go to school."

"Well I have to go," Tael stood up. "I have to meet my mom somewhere."

"Your mother is a busy person. Sit down Tawl." Arcadia took the pip from his mouth and began to blow smoke rings. Tael smelled

---

Carol Zahn

**PSYCHE AND EROS**

One by one, the torches follow each other to sleep as Psyche watches the crawling shadows.

All day she has awaited a husband she knows nothing of; all day, wandering an empty palace filled with fountains, emeralds and faceless servants. Now, she is clean-skinned, silk-clothed, scented with jasmine. The last torch falters and she senses the stars flickering like a diamond-shot veil and the clasp of a warm hand on her shoulder.
"An adventurer," he said.
"Oh? That's not very practical Tael," she said and went on to the next boy who wanted to be a doctor.

At morning recess, Tael took his book and sat in the shade of an old lilac bush. He got so absorbed in his reading that he didn't hear the bell ring. When he finally looked up from his reading, the playground was empty.

Tael watched the clouds in the sky form shapes of fighting men and monsters. Soon he fell asleep.

Across the street, a man in a knee-length corduroy coat smoked a brown pipe and watched Tael.

When Tael got home that night, his mother was waiting for him with a note from his teacher.

"Tael," she said. "Why did you miss school this afternoon?"

Tael mumbled something about fighting men and tried to brush past her but she grabbed his arm.

"Tael, Mrs. Shaw says you don't pay attention in class. You're always staring out the window. How come?"

"I'm not made for school," Tael said. "Tarzan didn't go to school." He jerked free and ran upstairs.

That night Mr. and Mrs. Gifford talked about their son.

"Maybe we should take him to a psychiatrist." Mrs Gifford suggested.

"And have everyone think our kid is crazy?"

"We have to do something, George."

"I know Judy. I'll talk to him tonight after the news."

But after the news, Mr. Gifford got involved in a game show and forgot to talk to Tael.

Nick Thorndike

BOAT TOUR FROM BEAUFORT, S.C.

As we churned out of the dark harbor, I watched my sister, Lilly's, body pale against the railing. Her red hair dreamed in with the water; the night drinking at her eyes, as if it was the tide flowing on the sand.

When the boat passed Sumter Island, a boy could be seen riding an ox; a native, wandering into the forest, carrying his hoe. The palm trees flashed from the shore and I could hear the boy's footsteps padding under my chest.

Lilly's skin felt cold as I touched her arms. Quietly, her breathing swirled inside my ears as if she were falling; she, calling for her father twice in my mind.
Tex Hart

A GIRL GETS HER PICTURE TAKEN
(after a photograph by Sabine Weiss)

A small girl sits motionless
in a straight-backed, red velvet chair.
Her hair is black and long,
a single barette clasped behind one ear.

Her legs are crossed, a pleated skirt
falling in waves around her knees.
She does not watch
the yellow canary perched on her wrist,
or her other hand, limp
and crying in her lap. Closed fingers
hold secrets. She stares straight
at the camera, a scream building
from somewhere deep in her chest.
When her father tells her to "smile,"
she presses her lips tightly,
as a river explodes under her skin.

Wendy Caszatt

IT'S A GOOD LIFE

Tael never heard his mother come to his bedroom door. It is
debateable whether he even heard her tell him to turn out the light.
He was too absorbed in his reading.

Mrs. Gifford walked back down the stairs and into the living-
room where her husband sat in front of the television. The glow from
the screen made his face look unnaturally pale in the dark room.

"George, will you talk to Tael? He won't stop reading."

"Yes Judy, I'll talk to him." Mr. Gifford didn't take his eyes
from the television.

"Could you talk to him right now?"

"Not now Judy, not in the middle of my program."

"Well don't forget." Mrs. Gifford walked into the kitchen. Mr.
Gifford sat in front of the television and forgot about his son.

After his mother left, Tael got out of bed and turned out the
light. Then he climbed back into bed with his flashlight. He pulled
the covers up over his head, turned on the flashlight and started
to read again. He was right in the middle of a Tarzan adventure. He
could feel the dense jungle close over him. The crickets chirping
outside became the distant chatter of monkeys. As the moon rose,
Tael heard the roar of a lion. He and Tarzan slid quietly through
the trees to rescue people from the clutches of some evil African
tribe.

Tael drifted off to sleep still reading.

The next day in school, the teacher asked Tael what he wanted
to be.
William Pitt Root

ISLAND RISING FROM THE SEA

The sky is the color of the captain's eyes
edged by reefs his years
know to avoid
as we pull into the horseshoe of the harbor

Hills of white cottages rise toward carnations
wind gradually scatters
across its wide blue floor

The ship's thrumming engine is the only one
heard on this island
of donkey paths and stone lanes
Women's eyes glow with its power
as the men unload a week's good for the town
in a single hour their fingers
knotting ropes to wooden racks on the donkeys' backs
their legs knotted with muscle
dark backs rippling like the sea
The sweaty leather faces are strong with smiles like shells

Small fishing boats rock yellow and blue
Nets spread for repair
broadcast the rich scent of years of fishes
dragged shining like coinage from currents older
than Homer and as blind
and full of names

Grief and joy have made the women's faces wise
The bodies of the men are stout and hard
Their children play gracefully
among sunflowers and rocks

Life is long enough when
at the horizon
islands like this one are still rising from the sea

Melanie Drane

THE HANGING MAN
"But no one knew how long," by Larry Raab

No one knows how long
he waits for a crowd.
At the carnival I watch
him dance to a Marlene Dietrich recording,
floating past us in blue feathers.
For just a dollar,
he whispers,
you may come inside my tent.
Watch me, at two-hundred and thirty pounds,
hang from the ceiling by my tongue.
Outside the tent,
stars bubble into white froth
and the dancing man stamps
his blue heels and says,
From the ceiling, by my tongue!
He turns,
struts through the canvas flaps.
Yes, he really does it,
and as I leave the tent,
he is swirling slowly,
from a string
around his tongue.
William Pitt Root

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She does not watch
the yellow canary perched on her wrist,
or her other hand, limp
and crying in her lap. Closed fingers
hold secrets. She stares straight
at the camera, a scream building
from somewhere deep in her chest.
When her father tells her to "smile,"
she presses her lips tightly,
as a river explodes under her skin.

Wendy Caszatt

IT'S A GOOD LIFE

Tael never heard his mother come to his bedroom door. It is
debateable whether he even heard her tell him to turn out the light. He
was too absorbed in his reading.

Mrs. Gifford walked back down the stairs and into the living-
room where her husband sat in front of the television. The glow from
the screen made his face look unnaturally pale in the dark room.

"George, will you talk to Tael? He won't stop reading."

"Yes Judy, I'll talk to him." Mr. Gifford didn't take his eyes
from the television.

"Could you talk to him right now?"

"Not now Judy, not in the middle of my program."

"Well don't forget." Mrs. Gifford walked into the kitchen. Mr.
Gifford sat in front of the television and forgot about his son.

After his mother left, Tael got out of bed and turned out the
light. Then he climbed back into bed with his flashlight. He pulled
the covers up over his head, turned on the flashlight and started
to read again. He was right in the middle of a Tarzan adventure. He
could feel the dense jungle close over him. The crickets chirping
outside became the distant chatter of monkeys. As the moon rose,
Tael heard the roar of a lion. He and Tarzan slid quietly through
the trees to rescue people from the clutches of some evil African
tribe.

Tael drifted off to sleep still reading.

The next day in school, the teacher asked Tael what he wanted
to be.
"An adventurer," he said.

"Oh? That's not very practical Tael," she said and went on to the next boy who wanted to be a doctor.

At morning recess, Tael took his book and sat in the shade of an old lilac bush. He got so absorbed in his reading that he didn't hear the bell ring. When he finally looked up from his reading, the playground was empty.

Tael watched the clouds in the sky form shapes of fighting men and monsters. Soon he fell asleep.

Across the street, a man in a knee-length corduroy coat smoked a brown pipe and watched Tael.

When Tael got home that night, his mother was waiting for him with a note from his teacher.

"Tael," she said. "Why did you miss school this afternoon?"
Tael mumbled something about fighting men and tried to brush past her but she grabbed his arm.

"Tael, Mrs. Shaw says you don't pay attention in class. You're always staring out the window. How come?"

"I'm not made for school," Tael said. "Tarzan didn't go to school." He jerked free and ran upstairs.

That night Mr. and Mrs. Gifford talked about their son.

"Maybe we should take him to a psychiatrist." Mrs Gifford suggested.

"And have everyone think our kid is crazy?"

"We have to do something, George."

"I know Judy. I'll talk to him tonight after the news."

But after the news, Mr. Gifford got involved in a game show and forgot to talk to Tael.

---

Nick Thorndike

BOAT TOUR FROM BEAUFORT, S.C.

As we churned out of the dark harbor, I watched my sister, Lilly's, body pale against the railing. Her red hair dreamed in with the water; the night drinking at her eyes, as if it was the tide flowing on the sand.

When the boat passed Sumter Island, a boy could be seen riding an ox; a native, wandering into the forest, carrying his hoe. The palm trees flashed from the shore and I could hear the boy's footsteps padding under my chest.

Lilly's skin felt cold as I touched her arms. Quietly, her breathing swirled inside my ears as if she were falling; she, calling for her father twice in my mind.
In his room Tael read about John Carter of Mars. He read late into the night making a tent out of his bedding and reading by flashlight.

At breakfast the next morning, Mr. Gifford talked to Tael. "You should take advantage of learning," he said, "Not everyone has a chance to go to school."

Tael thought about how on Mars they didn't teach you silly things like math and English. There they taught you how to fight with a broad sward and become a warlord. But he didn't say anything out loud, he just stared into his cereal bowl. Mr. Gifford took this as a sign that Tael was ashamed of his behavior and would try harder.

But Tael didn't even go to school that day. Instead he went down to the river to watch the boats come in. He sat along the bank and dreamed of being the captain of his own ship. He was so involved in his own dreams that he didn't see Mr. Arcadia sit down beside him. Arcadia took out his pipe and lit it.

"Hello Tael."

Tael jumped. "Why aren't you in school today?" Arcadia puffed lazily at his pipe.

"We...uh...we didn't have school today," Tael lied. Arcadia smoothed the rough material of his coat between his fingers. "I used to come down here too when I was a boy and didn't want to go to school."

"Well I have to go," Tael stood up. "I have to meet my mom somewhere."

"Your mother is a busy person. Sit down Taw."

Carol Zahn

PSYCHE AND EROS

One by one, the torches follow each other to sleep as Psyche watches the crawling shadows. All day she has awaited a husband she knows nothing of; all day, wandering an empty palace filled with fountains, emeralds and faceless servants. Now, she is clean-skinned, silk-clothed, scented with jasmine. The last torch falters and she senses the stars flickering like a diamond-shot veil and the clasp of a warm hand on her shoulder.
the pungent odor of the smoke. It smelled like cedar. Slowly Tael sat down wondering why he didn’t just run away.

Arcadia looked over at him and smiled. His face broke into a thousand wrinkles.

"I used to make up stories about the fishermen. Like that man over there." Arcadia pointed one long, narrow finger towards an old man bent over a cane fishing pole. "I bet he was a pirate when he was a young man."

Arcadia began to tell Tael a story about the man. Tael forgot his fear of Arcadia. He forgot about his mother and father, he forgot about school, he forgot about everything but what Arcadia was telling him.

It began to get late. Tael finally noticed the long shadows stretching across the water.

"I'd better get home," he said.

Arcadia got slowly to his feet. He knocked the ashes from his pipe onto the ground and looked at Tael. "I'll see you again young man."

Tael watched him walk away. Then he ran all the way home.

When Tael got home, his mother wasn't there. He found a note on the kitchen table:

Have gone to town — will be back soon.

Tael barely glanced at the note as he hurried upstairs to read. But Tael found he couldn't read. He kept thinking about Arcadia. No one knew much about the man. No one really wanted to. He was considered strange. But Tael couldn't forget all the stories he heard, sitting next to Arcadia and watching the boats come in from faraway ports.

Mrs. Gifford couldn't get Tael to come down for dinner that night. She was worried because he wouldn't come out of his room and he had the...
As the Indian slumped down the dog trotted silently to the door, then stood stiffly, ears up. As I rose to look a pair of carlight beams passed the frosted windows, throwing sudden glare into the entryway. I covered my eyes, thought a moment, then blew out the candle. My father was home, and I knew if he found the Indian inside, father would force him out into the storm again, alone.

I told the Indian to sit in the corner, in the dark, and I straightened out the rug on the floor beneath the stairway. Then I crouched beside the trembling man, holding the dog back, and listened as my father came in the back door. He slammed the door, but I heard it bounce back open; he slammed it closed again. His steps were loud and slow as he walked from the kitchen toward us, and I realized suddenly that the candle was still set on the floor. Its wick still glowed at the tip, and I could smell its weak smoke. The three of us, the dog, the Indian and I watched silently, following my father as he walked by and tried the same lightswitch I had tried an hour earlier. He swore loudly, and I tightened my fists as he stepped toward the candle. At my side, the Indian held his head down in his hands. Then my father kicked the candle, and it rolled noisily in its holder until it hit the wall.

But my father didn't stop; he kept walking right up the stairs, cursing again. When he reached the upstairs hallway, and had closed the bedroom door hard behind him, I let go of the dog and finally stood.

I opened the closet door and took out my coat and boots, and one of my father's coats for the Indian. I helped him up, and put the coat over his shoulders; neither of us said a word. I put his arm over my shoulder and opened the door. My dog ran out ahead; snow was driving down.

I helped the Indian out the door and closed it. I half-carried him to the road, and turned toward town. The tracks of my father's pickup were already fading in the blowing snow. I could feel the Indian lift his head up; for the first time he spoke, but his words were lost in the storm. It didn't matter. I knew the sun wouldn't rise for hours, and the road hadn't been plowed all night. Ahead of us the black dog ran, searching for the best path. We all pushed ahead through the drifts, knowing the wind in our faces would fight us all the way into town.

door locked.

She sent Mr. Gifford up to talk to him.

"Tael," he called through the door. "Your mother has dinner all ready."

He listened hard but there was no answer. After several seconds, he gave up and went downstairs.

"We have to do something," he told his wife.

Tael sat by his window gazing out into the night. The moon rode high in the sky. Tael watched the shadows the trees made on the lawn.

He also watched the man that stood under the big maple tree. Occasionally, Tael could see a smoke ring rise on the wind towards the moon.

Tael listened to the wind in the trees. In the distance he could hear the mumbling of his parents. Slowly he raised the window.

He climbed out and hung for a second straight down from the sill. Then he let go and fell two stories onto the damp grass. A sharp pain filled his head and he felt as though heavy weights had been tied to his legs. The world looked hazy and the pain continued. He tried to cry out but his voice stuck in his throat. Then he felt Arcadia standing beside him. Arcadia touched his shoulder and Tael felt the pain melt away until it was all gone. It was hard for him to remember it.

He stood up and Arcadia took his hand.

"Let's go get that ship shall we?" Arcadia asked as he blew another smoke ring.

The funeral was short. Mr. Gifford wanted to bury their son quickly, he didn't want to miss the news. In her mind, Mrs. Gifford
tried to imagine what her next son would be like.

If I'm lucky, she thought, I'll have a daughter.

The snow melting from his jacket dripped onto the rug. The dog was sniffing the man's feet and legs, sking, as I was asking: Who is this man, where is he from? I turned his head to the candle, to see his face, and the ice in his hair filled my hands. I could see he was old and dark. His lips were blue with cold, and when he moaned again, they parted, and a gold tooth glinted in the wavering light of the candle. I knew who he was.

Once, in town with my father, I'd heard the men in the gas station joking about an old Indian drunk in the bar who they would taunt, telling him to "dance like your grandparents, Injun." Now that Indian lay on the rug before me. The men in town had told my father that the Indian's daughter was the reservation whore, and he took her money to buy his whiskey. Then my father's friends had laughed about how the man was "the richest Indian on the reservation, thanks to the gold tooth in his mouth." The men had laughed for a long time, my father laughing, too.

And my father had gone to town, again, tonight, to shoot pool with some friends he hadn't seen in a while. He could have decided to stay the night and sit out the storm; over a foot of snow had fallen since I had gone to bed. But I doubted he would wait, even if the winds weren't letting up. He was stubborn; my father would try to make it home before long. I thought of him coming back, and I wasn't sure what to do.

The Indian shook convulsively beside me. I folded the rug over him, wondering why he had been out. The men had said he was just a drunk; I supposed he had been to the bar again tonight and didn't know enough to stay inside until the blizzard blew itself out.

The Indian moved again; with his arm he pushed the rug from his shoulder. My dog sat up from where he had been lying on the steps, and growled. The Indian was mumbling, but his teeth chattered and I couldn't hear the words that slurred from his mouth. I put the rug back over him, and told the dog to be quiet.

"Town...Dr. Bacon," the Indian mumbled. He tried to stand, moving heavily as drunken men do. I pushed him back down, and he leaned against me. His arms were cold, but his breath was warm against my shoulder, and I could smell no whiskey.

"My wife. . ." he said, struggling to stand again. "She needs the doctor..." His hands were on my arms, shaking; the fingers were thin and the nails still a faint blue. "She coughs water from her lungs." He sat back on the floor.
THE INDIAN

My dog was barking as I turned, awoken, in the dark, letting the blankets fall from the bed. My father wasn't home; I would have to quiet the dog and let my mother sleep. I found my pants on the floor and pulled them on. They were stiff and cold and I thought of snow.

"What's outside, dog?", I asked, of myself, really. He barked again from the base of the stairs. I could see him, large and black on the landing. I walked slowly down, a hand on the rail, and whistled softly to him as he nosed at the crack beneath the door where the wind swept in the cold. For the first time I heard something scratching on the door from outside.

"Back, old Jim," I whispered, "Let me in there." I pushed his head back, and felt his teeth bared against my palm. With one hand I tried to hold him back; his neck was tensed and he began to growl. With my free hand I turned the doorknob. It had been snowing all night, and the winds were high; I lost my grip and the door pulled from my hand. It swung in hard, hitting the wall with a crack.

At first I couldn't see into the blowing snow outside. The dog pushed past my hand and onto the front steps, and I saw a dark heap at their edge. The dog barked and nipped at its edges tossing in a whirl of spindrift. The thing stirred, then groaned, and I could see that it was a man.

I rolled him over and grabbed tight the shoulders of his jacket. He couldn't have been much warmer than I was, even though I wore no shirt. His jacket was lightweight; he wore shoes, no boots. I wondered why he'd been out in the snowstorm; town was two miles down the road one way, and only farmland, no houses, for two miles in the other direction. Beyond that, there was only an abandoned mill and the reservation. Becoming numb, I pulled the man from the drifted steps over the doorframe inside, and closed the door against the storm.

He didn't move from where I had laid him on the floor, and was quiet. I couldn't see him well in the dark, and I stood and flipped the lightswitch. The lamp stayed dark, and I knew that the lines had been knocked down by the wind. I found a candle from the dining room, lit it, and set it in its holder beside the man on the floor.

Cindy Hecht

WALKING AT NIGHT

Late at night we walk
the gravel road. Our hands
search for warmth in woolen pockets.

Around our ears the air
cries and breathes like tears
escape our lips. We watch
the rise and fall of our shadows
on the gravel, the wind
like cold words passing between us.
The Snare

I
Tonight my father steps drunk into the snare,
is lifted in his fur coat
like a small bear
who upside down
feels only the weight of its tongue.

Alone in moonlight
he circles for hours on the palms of his hands, finds
by touch, the green bottle of wine upright
in snow. Already his eyes
are small pockets of ice a paw has pushed through.
And these are the tracks he follows
into the first few moments of sleep,
into a life now hanging by one heel
among the birches. This is the world
gone white at the edges of maps
where even wolves disappear in silence,
where my father’s bewildered ear twists
to its own deaf center, calling home.

II

By morning
he is still alive, this noose
a last foothold turning his body
slowly in a light snow. He wakes
like a man whose skin has swallowed the cold, thin air
wintering in the heart of a stone.

shaking the light loose,
he dreams of dragging a sled of pelts across a field.
But always his one caught leg
keeps falling behind like an exhausted animal
too heavy to move on the crust. There is sweat
and a stiff wind carving a trail in his back, snow falling
harder in every direction but time.

Jay Frost

MOON PONY
for Siv Cedering

One day I built a moon pony
since none in the stables
would dare take such a long ride.

I harnessed him
with our father’s leather;
saddle and bridle resting on the wall
since grandpa left us
and his farm.

I told the pony to click
his hooves and shout as he dove
off the cliff
at the edge of the woods.

And as we rose
with his damp mane slapping
at my face, I saw that this
one flight might make him
strong and slender
a moon horse

so I ordered him down
fearing that if I let go
of the harness on the moon
he might leave
the gates of my heart.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR A TRAVELLING LOVER

If you want to be her friend,
first give her a flower,
one with a spiny stem
that sticks to her fingers
like a blade of grass
rubbed the wrong way.
Next, unroll it before her eyes
so she can see
it is really a map.
Take her hand,
guide it over the surface.
Show her the rough places
are really mountain ranges,
rivers and highways.
Braid the flower into her hair,
Tell her she will always
know where you are.

At last he thinks of a woman
undressing below him in the snow. Her skin
is blue, her legs are crossed and long.
When he reaches down
darkness falls all the way from his chest.
Inside one finger

he has written his name in blood.

Now he must bed down for good
in the thought of this one woman
cold and naked
who begins to stir openly in her perfect camouflage
like absence
entering the eye of this storm.
Dan Halvorsen

THREE ANIMAL POEMS
For G.S.

I. Little furry mouse
I hold him in my hand
Cut off his circulation
With a little rubber band.

II. Graceful little thrush
Alights upon my arm
Its tiny head I crush
Much to its alarm.

III. Little tiny rolls
For little tiny moles
In little tiny holes
Roasting over coals.

Chad Atkins

DRIVING NORTH

Following the distant beacon of a snowplow
I crawl north
along the snowbound roadway
toward Buffalo. Beside a barn
on my right
a gnarled orchard stands cold
and hard. And there is a tire
swaying from a squat maple, its leaves
evicted in December's chill.

The light snow swirls
around a stone house which stares
through dark windows
at acres of corn. Across the road
stalks stand frozen, silent
in winter's blood. From their gallery
of telephone wires
crows watch with empty black eyes
hungry for spring. I drive on

drinking coffee bleached by milk.
I find them that night in a dream
featherless and dead in the white field
at the bottom of my cup.
Nick Bozanic

BEFORE NIGHTFALL

I walk out
past the fallen stones
fencing nothing,
past the knotted thorn apple
and the one immovable boulder,
dusk huddled at its roots;

I walk into the darkness washing over the hills,
of the fields, lapping against the steps
that fall down from the house where my wife
nurters the one fire that feeds us;

I walk with the snow falling into my eyes
like so many seeds of light; I walk out
like any man whose life belongs to no one,
whose hands bear fruit, whose heart rises
red above the rivers flowing under his skin;

I walk out to the limit of the land I live in.

And I say:
let the winds that lift these fields
along the last row of saplings
at the edge of winter resound
in the empty barn of my throat;

let stars rise from my lips
to shape one constellation of song
to hang in the heavens
blackening, everywhere, above us;

let every living thing sing
just once, together, and for all
as the night comes down; let us shine.

Emily A. Percy

GOING SOUTH

I slouch in the back of a greyhound bus,
watch a fat lady snore,
a drooping petunia tucked behind her ear.
It is midnight.

Beyond my reflection in the window
a few lights glow through the dark pines
along Highway 41. A sign flashes past, etched
with bullet holes.

Inside, the fat lady is still asleep.
The aisle lights are dim and familiar, with
bits of conversation drifting back like cigarette smoke:

Harry in the nursing home
Hard winter this year
Back in Montana in '34
...the one in Little Falls...

An hour later
the bus pulls in front of a cafe.
There is a dog sniffing the oily asphalt.
Passengers stumble out, the fat lady
squinting in the brightness of a neon sign flashing
Truckers
Truckers
Haven

1 a.m.
Going south.
THE PINK SCARF

like a
winter kiss
softly wrapped around
my shoulders.
I cover
my lips
with your pink
scarf feeling it
tighten
against my
breath.
Six
feet of
pink and
laughing
waving upon
the white
snow.

this edition is for
coot

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Faye Bissell

YELLOW

Through the green and rising green the butterfly wanders.
The Red Wheelbarrow

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