the red wheelbarrow
the red wheelbarrow
1983-84
Even though the Clover Bees received a scolding for being afraid because their pollination would produce no fruit, they had at least been willing to live in harmony with those around them. Because they had been tolerant, the gardener decreed that from now on, honey made from lavender blossoms would be the sweetest of all.

And though he'd earlier hoped to develop even more kinds of bees, he concluded three kinds were enough. Bees should have the privilege of no more variety than they would gracefully accept. And besides so much buzzing gave him a headache. So the gardener decided instead to concentrate on giraffes. Their necks would be long enough to allow them a right perspective, and he'd keep them speechless so they could never, never complain.
That spring all the bees went swiftly to their tasks. The Apple-Cherry bees went to the apple and cherry blossoms. The Clover Bees went to their Clover blossoms. When the Apple-Cherry Bees took a close look at the bees pollinating the clover, they made great fun of this third strain of bees.

"Apple honey is the best," said some.

"Cherry honey is the best," boasted others.

"Nothing can compare to Apple-Cherry honey," said many others.

And all of them laughed at the notion of any good thing coming from fruitless pollination.

"Third rate," they jeered, "definitely third rate."

Because there were so many more Apple-Cherry Bees than there were Clover Bees, the Clover Bees became very nervous and buzzed and muttered. They went to the gardener and complained, "You've made us bees but given us flowers from which no fruit can come!" "We're different from other bees, and there's no place for us." "We're fruitless...the other bees are fruits...we want to be fruits."

And the other bees also complained, too. They told the gardener, "Those bees are queer bees! We don't want them around us."

The gardener tried to persuade the three kinds of bees to get along. The Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossom Bees would not, however, let the Clover Bees into their hives. Because they had been so intolerant, the gardener refused to allow the Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossom Bees to mix any more. Their honey would never again be as sweet as it had been when they mixed.
their way was best. They wanted nothing to do with anything Apple Blossom. They'd been created first, and they were sure they were best. Nothing though, could dampen the delight of the Apple Blossom Bees at the first harvest of apples. Trees bowing with round, crisp fruit dotted the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbekanette. And the Apple Blossom Bees boasted about the hard, round fruit they'd made and said Apple Blossom honey would be the sweetest in all creation. In truth, the gardener was delighted with the Apple Blossom honey he stored away.

That winter, as he sat munching his toast and honey and staring deep into the blazing fire, the gardener decided that next spring he would persuade the bees to cross-pollinate apple and cherry blossoms. When he roused the bees from their separate hives and began to tell them of their season's task, they buzzed with suspicion and muttering. Bees accustomed to cherries wanted nothing to do with apples. Bees accustomed to apples would not willingly think of small, soft cherries. The gardener had been eating honey all winter, however, and his voice was so sweetly persuasive the bees did as they were asked.

The bees worked all spring and summer carrying pollen back from the apple and cherry blossoms. Apple Blossom Bees went to the hives of Cherry Blossom Bees. Cherry Blossom Bees went to the hives of Apple Blossom Bees. And they were surprised at how well they got along. And they were proud when the gardener told them that the honey they'd made by pairing up was the best ever. They were so proud, in fact, that they were sure no other honey could match it.

That winter, though, while he was eating toast and honey, the gardener decided that it was time to try still another flower and still another honey. He decided that clover was needed in the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Wahbekanette. Knowing how difficult it had been for the Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossoms Bees to accept a new way of thinking, the gardener decided to give them a season to rest from adjustment. He developed a strain of

Gwen Knighton

A Churchyard in Alabama
(looking for a tombstone and not finding it)

1
He isn't really dead.
He got tired of his family
one day, and left.
Maybe he went West.

2
He was struck by lightning one night.
He became invisible but he is still here.
He tests his wife's spaghetti sauce
(never as good as his) some nights,
and reads over people's shoulders in the public library during days.

3
One morning, he woke up and everyone thought he died.
So he turned himself into a pileated woodpecker and flew away.

4
He isn't here.
The California sun sets three hours late.
He flies into daylight, still hoping to see the spark in his daughter's eyes.
Open your mouth. 

Gwen Knighton 

Scat

The cords in your throat are tightly stretched wires; breath moves like a hammer. 

Make your body loose, open, and strong, limber fingers push keys to hammers. 

Breathe.

Scan black ink on pirated paper, hear the chord behind your eyes. Feel fingers fly over black and white keys, make melody over melody, weave your voice into chords. 

Don't think. Listen. Pick up a sound that feels good from a saxophone and speak its syllables. Squeeze your voice into a trumpet and try to doubletongue every note. Get higher and wilder until you spit notes faster than fingers could form them. 

Launch into a Dorian sea. weather the blues in a storm of tritones and minor sevenths. Land on an island of rest sighted by your tired throat, swept by breath. 

Tom Sudinsky

Parable for a lavender wheelbarrow

Once upon a time in a village situated between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbakanetta lived a wise and enterprising gardener. He so loved growing things that he not only developed rare and wonderful flowers, but he also worked to develop bees that could produce equally rare and wonderful honey from these flowers. 

First the gardener developed bees that would see and smell cherry blossoms. These Cherry Blossom Bees went out faithfully each spring morning looking for pollen. They returned to the hive at the end of each day, content because their task was complete and because honey from cherry blossoms was the sweetest in all the land between Lake Wabekaness and Lake Wahbakanetta. 

How proud the Cherry Blossom Bees were at the first cherry harvest. Trees bulging with sweet cherries dotted the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbakanetta. All during the winter, the gardener spread cherry blossom honey on thick toast, and he was very pleased. About February, however, he decided that next spring was the right time for a new blossom and a new bee. He thought and he thought, and he decided that Apple Blossoms were what the land needed. Within several months, he'd developed Apple Blossoms and Apple Blossom Bees. These bees would pollinate only apple blossoms. 

That spring when the Apple Blossom Bees saw the Cherry Blossom Bees busy at the cherry trees, they buzzed about the superiority of Apple Blossom Bee-ness. The Cherry Blossom Bees were equally sure
Amelia lays flat the raglan sleeve, draws around it, picks up the front to see how much the tuck will take. Six pieces traced in newsprint and not a stitch ripped from the blouse LaVerne just bought.

Making Do was her first lesson when she started working out fifty years ago. And when she was expecting (and waiting for John Moses to leave a wife), she learned that you lie in the bed you make. People do the best they can, she'd supposed then, hasn't changed her mind since, though her sisters long ago said to leave him, the kids cried the same.

Amelia turns off the TV blaring what John Moses cannot hear. Dead to the world in his chair, hands resting on doilies she crocheted by looking close at the neighbor's. Half-deaf when he's awake, sight in only one eye. And he's got the prostate.

Amelia covers him with the blue afghan, a broomstick design she'd spotted in Penney's. And she goes to her sewing machine, smiling at the pattern of things.

Julia Watson

Sketch

Although he wasn't tall, he was a long sort of person whose body seemed to wander the space it occupied. His hands smelled always of smoke and his slender fingers had wrapped around mine a hundred times before I realized how warm they were.

Three months had come to this one evening and the short lived spring was missing in May. The wind that blew his hair about was sharp and it was as though we were beginning again in the lingering winter that had been February.

Along the path we followed through the woods there lay a small sparrow, a few days dead, eyes closed with an easy passing.

"Someone should have buried this," he said, stooping to move soft earth over the motionless animal. "What's gone should be forgotten."

"Don't touch that if you plan to touch me," I said, wrinkling my nose in a manner I imagined at the time to be endearing. He kept patting the dirt he had covered the bird with until it seemed firm, stable. He then rose wordlessly and continued walking.

I knew I was losing his attention and had to find a place to anchor him, a place to surround him with whatever had held him for so long. I left the trail and, turning back toward him, sat on the porch of a summer cabin, quiet with winter disuse. He watched me a moment then moved toward the porch finally settling, laid back inches from me. I wanted to lie with him but his arms were folded behind his head. His eyes followed my face and he said nothing, waiting for me to speak.
"I am ready to leave with you. I want to pack everything up and go. Just get out of here." We had talked about Canada, Ontario or B.C., it hadn't really mattered as long as it was open and we were on our own. But I had always put things off, avoiding anything definite.

"I am staying here," he said slowly, watching the movement of pine branches above him, "staying here with Anne."

I laughed a little. Jefferson was a small town. I knew everyone, even Anne. I touched him lightly, then pressed my hands harder to him. He did not seem to notice.

He rose quickly, a sudden sort of breaking away, took a few steps forward and turned back to me. "I want you... still. I want to spend time, to talk. I don't know. But I can't tell her I'm leaving. I won't tell her that."

He seemed taller, thin as always, and even without stepping farther away began to fade into the trees around him. The lake waves, fifty yards back and wind-driven, pounded above and about him. But it was me they were reaching for, me they would wash over.

"What about me? You said you'd wait until I was ready, until I knew what I wanted. I thought about crying. Wasn't that what such moments were made for? Pain pulled in gasps from your throat, irregular jerks of a rope as it runs rough through you.

"You said you would wait." I pulled my knees tightly to my chest and looked away, down the path we had followed here.

Loretta Randall Sharp

First Spring on Roosevelt Drive

1. The morning the spotted calf was born
Amelia who wore one-inch bows in her hair, who crowded into size seven shoes, saying it was the width she took, not the length,
Amelia who looked away when the neighbor lady nursed a baby that morning Amelia stared at the cow John Moses bought cheap because she was too old to breed.
The old cow's flanks wet Amelia's head, bent to nipples, caked and pink as tainted meat. And she lit into the house, scrubbed her clean linoleum, dark hair touching breasts, bound tight as the round cheeses kept in the wellhouse.

2. Outdoors, the kids heard Amelia stoke the stove. She marched to the chicken coop then, grabbed the oldest hen, gripping its neck in one hand, swinging clockwise twice... until the twist and easy give.
And she tossed the head, letting the rest of the chicken run.
Amelia dipped the dirtied hen in a scalding pot, singed each wing hair. Then two sweeps into the naked cavity, and the kids saw the clump of yellow eggs she'd been reaching for.

For lunch Amelia mixed the last powdered milk, set out brown bread and the stewing hen. She cut the rubbery eggs, ate each herself, saying only the old cow would come fresh in a day or two.
"I waited three months." He was watching me closely now, staring at me in a hard sort of way. "I didn't think this would happen. But I never said it wouldn't."

Holding myself as closely as I could, I began rocking slowly, back and forth. I expected the silence to make him speak. He said nothing.

"I guess there is a difference between wanting to want something and wanting to have it, I said finally.

"Hmm." He was watching his feet repeat a small shuffling motion to keep warm.

I released my grip on myself, allowing my legs to straighten, and leaned back on my arms. "Either you take me now, or that's it. It's over."

"I told you I can't."

I threw my head back, removing my eyes from him, letting him go. Once the rustling of his leaving ended, I stood and walked through the trees until the lake was clear to me. Lighting a cigarette, I used it up slowly, holding it beneath my palm and watching white air drift up between my fingers. Once I was through I held my hands to my face and smelled their smoke, surprised at the first sting of tears.
Time is one of the luxuries you choose to deny yourself, but between the scratchings of your pen look to the window of your cramped little room and let daylight draw your head back as though you were laying lakeside, talking quietly of simple things, letting loons lift over the water, suspended, unconcerned, above you.

And if you find your eyes holding shut catch hold of my sleeve, twisting the cuff as you did that day in the basement we managed to make parallel paths touch, if only for a crossing moment. Or listen to our voices and note the difference in talk among ourselves and words spoken to each other.

And if memory leaves you wanting allow your writing needed rest and turn again to me. Chances are I'll be standing in the door, studying the bowed head, the busy hands I have too much patience with, and wondering whether words or their careful construct have ever been for me.
How do I tell it
without those vulgar words
mother doesn't want to hear
why tell it at all
we have a niece there but she's
dead so it doesn't matter
anyway  it wasn't a war
That's where they have tanks  troops
sunlight  open fields
It wasn't a

He was at Khe Sanh
you know, when they came
(what actually happened)
I sent him a tape--wasn't it
Hendrix or maybe the Doors
Yeah  it was the legendary Doors
Absolutely Live

I saw him in a movie last week
Someone tried to make a war
movie but it wasn't

Kenny, who told you about the chest wound?
"Let's celebrate," she said.
"Celebrate what?" he asks.
"Oh, nothing, I guess."
They are silent for a while.
"Whatcha thinking about?"
"My grandparents' cottage."
"Oh?"
"Yeah. It's on this lake, and a dirt road leads up the hill to a huge forest." Her words are slow, he thinks, like an old woman carefully sewing pieces of material together. Up and down, up and down, her soft voice creates story after story for him.

"And deep in that forest between the paths is a tiny lake, no bigger than this room, with hundreds of flowers around it."

"Hmmm."

"I used to sit there for hours and my grandmother would get angry because I wasn't around to help clean fish or wash the dishes."

He watches her get up, light a cigarette, sit back down. She often hums to herself, swaying back and forth. Always something moving in her, he thinks.

"I once knew a girl named Corrie Lodewyk."
Night moves patiently in the city around us, knowing we all fall through its current soon enough. And smells are stronger than any memory of what we'll say standing in the street until morning. Unseen smiles and all lost laughter wait on our porch while we are getting ready and waiting for a ride that's always late. We paint on our same faces, to look as though we barely lived through last night's tunnel to Windsor and nowhere.

and in the hall, one half of a mouse named "Bad" still twitches in the cat's jaw. The other already dangles by a pin on your black boot.

Your offering to darkness, this emblem of our evenings, it is either not enough or nothing at all.

"Really?"

"We went to camp together. Used to sneak out of our cabin at two in the morning and ride horses bareback in the dark."

"I like horses."

She smiles at him. "Lie down. I'll give you a back massage."

They are in a one-room apartment, sitting on a single bed in the corner. She notices that the tapestries don't match. His is brightly-colored with toreadors circling a bull; the other, her's, is Oriental, pastel flowers and soft black lines of mountains. "I like this room."

"Did I tell you about the man I met this summer? He had this altar in his house with lots of candles. He lit each one, and we knelt together." Her hands are kneading his back, but she doesn't seem to notice, stares at the wall above him. "We chanted for almost an hour. It's such a cool thing. I felt so happy afterward."

So simple, he thinks. Things are always either good or bad. He closes his eyes.

She'd moved in two weeks after they met; it would be a year this September. He wonders what kind of things she'll remember about him. ("I met a guy on this bus. We didn't have much to say, but I liked him.")."...We'd get high together and take walks in the park, swinging and climbing trees.") Had he ever earned a single patch in her crazy quilt of stories?
"Remember that gypsy fortune teller at the spring carnival?"

"The one whose grimy-looking little kid sat on her lap to listen?"

"Yeah." They began to laugh.

"I zee a moonlit beach and young love!"

"This one's boring. Mom, tell us the scary one about the rare, fatal disease."

"Boy, she was mad!" She hugs him, and they roll together, laughing.

"She didn't give up, though."

"I have here a scarf, is very lucky, was my grandmother's—only six dollar."

"You should've bought it. She was so poor."

He stops laughing. "It was gaudy, and her poverty is none of my business."

She goes back to massaging him and is quiet.

"The loons are back. I heard them down by the lake last night."

"Really."

"Tuesday I spent all day down by the water."

"Hmmm."

"Wait. Don't you think..."

"Jesus Christ, earlier you didn't care if your shirt hung down to the floor and now I suppose you want to go home to mother. But he didn't say it simply out of selfishness.

"No," she began slowly. "I would say yes. It's just that I don't want to miss you. I mean, you are just passing through. She had lost that look of practice.

"Don't think so much," he said and stepped towards her. And she decided not to because his touch was so simple and he meant it. They both heard the bus pull up.

"Well," he said, "I gotta go," and turned to the door. "And stay away from that old pervert." She watched him cross the dark street with an easy limp. He didn't turn around again.

"I will," she whispered. But he was already on the bus. He sat in the last seat, lit another cigarette, and wondered how long it took to get to Minneapolis.
"How tall are you?" she said without intending to change the subject.

"Six something. I'm not sure...want one?" he said, taking out a cigarette and holding it across the counter.

"Yeah. Thanks. Jesus, this is awkward." She walked around the counter and stood beside him, pulling a lighter from her pocket. "When I'm back there," she gestured toward the cash register, "I feel like I should know exactly what I'm doing; the party to be held responsible."

He knew what she meant.

"Here." She held the flame up to him. "My mother taught me that; the customer always comes first!"

"Oh really," he said, raising his eyebrows, "were you waiting on another customer when I came in?"

"Oh god no!" She wasn't embarrassed. "That was Jim, the owner. He's always making passes at me."

"And you don't take him up on it?"

"Not quite. He must be at least 50; not exactly a big turn on."

He grinned and put out his half-finished cigarette in a green glass ashtray on the counter, then reached for hers. She didn't pretend not to understand.

"Come here." He placed his arms around her, deftly pulling her close. His breath was soft, as if he had a lot of time. Two minutes later she pulled back abruptly.

"I had gotten pretty high. It was barely raining out. Instead of water falling, it seemed like the bottom of the lake was a great sponge, like air bubbles were being squeezed out of it and busting at the surface."

He laughs, knows that she will go on and on until late into the night and she tires. Then she will stroke his face quietly and make some childish observation before falling asleep. Once it was, "Your ears are small." Another time, "It's neat the way those veins in your forehead form a perfect "Y." It's like your head is always wondering." But it is she that is always questioning. It is she that will always be stitching fragments of herself together, into him.
John Hiemstra

Jazz Concert
for Jack Kerouac

Jazz tonight
in the school chapel—
If was there, Jack,

Ken Werner found it,
shoulders bobbing
leaning to his piano
playing out down and up,
hands falling into keys.
Hunching his back,
pushing forward in his chair,
he had it—

had it so strong, so good,
up off the chair,
swaying.

Melodies flowed and flew.

Looked up,
people walking out,
or just sitting still,
as if nothing were here—

"You're cute, you know." He took the cigarettes, and she laughed as though she'd heard this too many times from people who didn't mean it.

"So, why are you here in the middle of the night anyway?"

"Oh—just waiting for the bus."

"To where?" She was looking him over; black leather jacket and a crew cut.

"Suppose I'll get off in Minneapolis. I used to have some friends there...oh-this," he said noticing her glance and reaching his hand towards his hair.

"Just got out of the Army. Three years was too fuckin' much. They really wanted me though—said I had a good military mind or something." His laugh was slow but not hesitant. He seemed strangely honest only because he obviously didn't care how he seemed.

"How old are you now?" She leaned forward with her hands on the counter and he glanced into her loose shirt. She wasn't wearing a bra.

"Nineteen. What about you?" He continued to stare at her breasts. She noticed but didn't move.

"Do you really want to know—I mean, should I lie?"

"No. Tell me."

"Sixteen. Yeah, I know...jail bait right?"

"Statutory rape." He wasn't laughing but his thin lips were slightly tilted, and he shifted his weight loosely to the left.
Deirdre Kovac

A Dangerous Place

It wasn't a dangerous place. But the night had come down full of possibility. He waited at the corner of 7th and Witness, leaning against the brick shell of a burnt-out theater. The fire was years ago, yet the air still smelled of ashes and screaming pedestrians. It was almost four in the morning and everyone had locked themselves in warm, yellowed houses. The bus for Duluth stopped here. He put his cigarette out on the sidewalk and looked over at the all night party store across the street. No one seemed to be having a party that night and the faded neon lights were only weak announcements. He knew that if he went over to buy some more cigarettes, they would probably accuse him of stealing, but he didn't have a better way to waste time, and he decided to test the possibilities in a Chicago-slum-dawn. His heavy black boots echoed into silence and too-distant laughter.

There didn't appear to be anyone around until he heard an annoyed voice from the backroom.

"Stop, I think I have a customer. Just go home, will 'ya." She was obviously younger than she wanted to be. Her eyes were tired but curious when she noticed him flipping through an old Playboy.

"Can I help you?"

"Uh, yeah. I want a pack of Marlboros."

"They're over behind the counter. Come with me." Her walk was smooth but practiced. She brushed her hand deliberately on his back as she passed. "That'll be 98 cents." She held out her hand. He had exact change for once.
It was too much.
I ran out, into the night
to look for you.
You and Cassady, with a bottle of wine,
beckoning down a damp alley,
another San Francisco street,
another club on the docks,
more jazz.
more IT!

But I was still here, at school.

People walked away,
without word or smile,
"I'm sorry, but I had work to do."

What has happened, Jack?
Nick Bozanic

The Flood

One spring the Susquehanna left its bed
and sleepwalked, stumbling
over coops and sheds,
across our lot and through the cellar door
before it passed out cold
against a stack of rotting boards
my father stashed
for some dim purpose all his own.

And while he cursed,
and mother mouthed her Baptist prayers,
I dared myself to wade
out
where trees torn free
like wild horses reared
and plunged and disappeared
beneath the flood.

I stood
waist-deep in water, wondering
at the river's careless havoc,
its manic will,
and wished myself away on it,
made its desire mine:
to tear the world out by the roots,
restore pure chaos to its throne
and wash the earth of order.

I was of the river's dream
and lost to any other,
until dusk
and a wind of angry voices
called me back.

I walked
across the drowned fields home,
my numbed legs trembling now
and slow,
my vision dark.

John Hiemstra

Letter

For a time now,
I've wanted to walk with you again,
dering green branches
or down rusted train tracks and long grass
in the afternoon sun. I've wanted
to share another bottle of cola champagne,
another crushed croissant.

When I found these
scattered pieces of you,
and for a time,
I tried to put them back in place.
But you had changed,
and I had been too long
to see your new shape.

From afar, I saw you
dancing in the fields,
said you were happy,
and turned away again.

But now,
when windows might as well be pictures
for I can not open them
and I choke on the mustiness of my room,
when even waves
and grass and soft earth
feel alien to my bare feet.
When even these poems have become stale,
and the glass will not break,
and I can not really breathe,
except this sameness over and over,
I want to find you again.
To come running with you on the beach, 
and to sit, 
breathing deeply, 
and watching the sun set on the water.

You are close enough now 
for me to seek your hand with mine again, 
twine my fingers with your hair. 
Yet, 
your head rests too quickly on my arm 
and I know I am too late.

Read this in a year, 
and pretend that I wrote it then, 
when we were far apart. 
If I can find the trees again, 
I will come to you; 
perhaps we could sit among them 
and tell each other of our selves.

Nicole Cordrey

Ashes

I know, I know. 
These walls will 
ever become familiar 
and I will 
ever see your face open 
across this dim room. 
go ahead, 
burn this page 
but remember; 
these words 
have come to rest 
in the grey matter 
of your eyes.

They will haunt you 
in shadows. 
Remember; 
warped records, 
shattered glass, and 
burnt bed spread 
fragments under ice. 
Touch these words. 
Swallow them, 
inhale them, 
like smoke.
"It put back in its place and let it do its job."

"Sure. Will grow it into place in trent phares."

"Us let go. You bet."

"You bet."
The suit came off and was placed in the closet. The faded overalls felt comfortable.

"I'll have to think of something fun to do tomorrow."

Mr. Peters was feeling sleepy and young. He fell asleep in the soft chair.

The moon came up shortly. Its beams shot through the window and spotlighted the musty box on the bench. It seemed happy, too. The light was interrupted by a silver ship outside the window.

"The sonic status display indicates is it in there."

"Try to stabilize the ship, you bet."

"Hard with the psi-gyro missing."

"Portal open."

Like the eye of the camera, the door spiralled open.

"Back am I."

"Got you it?"

"You bet. The cibernetic components reformed it into a functional construct."

"Huh?"

"Was having it a little fun."
When he reached the ledge that the boy was on, he righted himself.

"What's a fine boy like you doing in a place like this?"

"Old man...I mean Mr. Peters?"

"Quite all right, my boy. Now shall we leave this place?"

"H...how?"

"Here, just wrap your arms around me. All set? Good. Going down?"

"Yiiikes."

And down they came to the cheering mob. The fire department had come and gone. Mr. Peters had things well in hand. A worried mother rushed up and thanked Mr. Peters and pulled her son after her.

"Mr. Peters," the well-dressed man was saying, "you are a hero. The city owes you a great debt. One that can never be fully repaid. This can only be a start. Please accept this city key as a gesture of our appreciation."

"Thank you, your Honor, my fellow townspeople."

The crowd cheered.

In the apartment the man pulled off his black shoes. They would have to be resined tonight. He took off his amazing hat and put it in the box on the workbench.

Graham Lee
The Gyro-Clock

"Out look Scarsa. Going you too low. Hit you that planteid."

The sleek silver ship warped out of the multi-verse. A triangle of stars was all that remained of the translation.

"Miss I it by a quandle of parcees, you bet."

Going you too close. Up pull, up pull." His zarks quivered in fear.

Scarsa's faces gleamed with delight at his co-pilot's condition. "Okay, you bet."

He reached out to the charging capacitors. The blue and green planet was fast filling the ship's visor.

"Hate I to say this, you bet, but have we a problem."

"What?"

"Seem controls to have fused."

"Let here me help."

The two pilots wrapped their arms around the controls and yanked.

It gave. The ship rocked back, jerking upright, away from the planet. Everything that wasn't tied
down scattered to the aft of the ship. Somewhere from within the ship a small shining part slid out between the stressed hull. It fell towards a small suburb just outside of Chicago.

"Was that a close on, you bet."

"Yeah."

"Hey, you, get up. You can't sleep here."

The policeman poked his night stick into the old man's side.

"Huh, oh yea, yea. Sorry officer. I'm moving along."

"See that you do."

The man stood up, and raising the collar of his coat, walked into the wind.

Kids were playing ball in the park. As he walked by, they all teased, "Hey, guys, look. Here comes old man Peters. I wonder what he's invented for us today?"

Two ladies saw what happened and one said, "What was that all about, Judy?"

"The old man? Oh, he's just the local inventor."

"Local inventor?"

"Sure, you know. The Benjamin Franklin type."

"Look at him up there. The clown."

"You knew he'd take the dare."

"Give me the fiver."

Mr. Peters overheard his conversation.

"Why, those young bullies. We'll see what we can do about this.

He started pushing through the crowd.

"Excuse me. Pardon me, please. Thank you."

The man stepped over the low railing surrounding the building and looked up. The boy stared down. He pushed his hat down firmly and straightened his coat. He jumped up.

"Hey, what's that old man doing?"

"You there. Move away from there."

"No. Wait. Look. He's climbing the wall."

"No way, lady, he's just walking up."

"It's impossible."

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"Call the fire department."

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"That's too bad."

"I guess. I don't know. Every neighborhood has one."

"Yeah, sure."

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While he was walking across the street a metal object caught his eye. He checked the street both ways and then bent over and scooped up the twisted piece of metal. He looked at it and then rubbed his eyes with his free hand.

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"Good," he said.

The stairs to the third floor were worn smooth. His footsteps echoed up and down the stairway shaft.
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He pulled out a wood box the size of a shoe box and placed it on the long, wood work bench. He reached above his head and tugged at the string. The lightbulb lit up the area. He wheeled around the oak stump he used for a stool and sat down and began talking things out of the box.

"Oh, I remember you," he said, fingerling the face of an old grandfather's clock.

morning, Mrs. Hart. Isn't it wonderful to see the sun out again?"

"I...well...yes it is."

"Good day."

"And a good day to you, Mr. Peters."

Heads turned as the old man walked down the street. Stars touched on the faces of passersby.

"Let's go by the ball park."

The ball park had a white picket fence on the side facing the street. Kids had poked out the knots in the fence to get a free look.

"What's that noise?" He turned to look.

The noise was a car. A kid car. It barrelled down the road, leaving blond hair in its wake. The kids were laughing and screaming and not paying attention to what they were doing.

The car screamed towards the puddle left by last night's rain. It hit the deep puddle dead on, sending a shower of muddy water at Mr. Peters.

The man saw it coming, and right before the car hit the puddle, jumped up and back.

He seemed nearly to float. The man was afraid he would clear the fence, but he didn't. It worked as planned. His feet went up and stuck to the fence, and he stayed there parallel to the sidewalk. He smiled lightly and tapped his hat on a little tighter. He sure didn't want that to drop off.
had bought it on impulse but never had a practical occasion to wear it.

"Wow, what an idea. Paul can wait. This can't."

He opened the hat box and lifted out the top hat. The velvet glistened into light. Then he did something rather unusual. He lifted the hat and placed it over the box.

"Perfect."

He removed the hat and bent over the workbench. Careful adjustments had to be made.

V

The sun was hot that day when Mr. Peters walked outside. Under his arm he carried a hat box wrapped in some old paper from Don's meat market. He turned the corner and walked towards the business district.

The man first stopped at the bank and then headed to the clothing store. Parsons was having a spring sale. He knew what he wanted. It did not take long.

Fifteen minutes later a gentleman dressed in an old-fashioned tuxedo walked out of the clothing store. The tux was a modest silk black. The shoulders were snug, and the white frills shone bright in the sun. A quarter inch of white cuff extended at the wrists. To top the whole affair off, a stunning black felt top hat rested itself on his head.

Mr. Peters felt and looked like a million bucks.

Mrs. Hart was standing at the corner. As he walked by her, he tipped his hat and said, "Good

The man set it on the bench and continued to remove pieces of clocks from the box. There were dials, big hands and little hands, gears and more gears.

He reached out to the peg board and unhooked a medium screw driver and picked up a gear. A slow whistle came from his lips. It must have been a show tune he had heard before.

Outside the mist was rising from the streets. Twin head beams from cars paced slowly up and down the street.

The sky had turned black over the lake but turned a pale pink over the city. It never got dark in the big city.

Sleep overcame the old man. Sometime in the pink night the lights in the house flashed off and then moments later blinked on.

The sleeping man nodded and turned his head to a more comfortable position.

A screw began unscrewing itself from the connected gears and wires and faces and hands. It popped out all the way and then dropped with a small "clink" to the table top.

Gears rolled on the table, marching in unison to be fitted together. They climbed on top of each other and assembled themselves into a mass of machinery. Slowly it evolved, compacting itself into an intricate unit.
"Honk. Honk!"

Mr. MacMurrry was downstairs, wanting to get in to deliver the mail. The landlord must have overslept, but he'll get up to let the mailman in.

The horn blasts woke the old man. His arm stretched out, knocking some spare parts off the table. They clattered to the floor.

"Yawn, must have fallen asleep. I can't remember finishing it this far. But it sure looks dandy."

He picked it up and winced at it in the early sun. Gears stuck out here and there, turning the sun into a thousand shining pearls.

"This looks like the switch."

He pulled down one of the long, smooth, black, metal hands. "Click, whirr, sssss." Everything moved in perfect synchronicity. The old man was delighted. He danced around the room, holding the box over his head.

He laughed joyously and danced a great jig. In his delighted haste he didn't notice the loose-bundled carpet directly in his path. And when he did, it was too late.

He started falling naturally enough, but then he started slowing down. He got close to the floor but never hit it. He just stayed there a moment and then, like a rubber band snapping back into shape, he started to float back upright.

"What in the world?"

He set the box on the floor and backed away. His eyes widened and his mouth gaped open.

"Whoa, nothing like that's ever happened to me. It's the box. It must be."

The man got down on his knees and approached the box on the floor like a cat eyeing a mouse.

"I must'a made some kind of gyro-something or another."

He picked it up in his hands and looked at it from all sides.

"I've done it. I've really done it. Ya-hoo! But this is no time for dancing. I have to take advantage of the position I'm in."

The man swept everything off the work bench. Screwdrivers, clock parts, and odds and ends fell to the floor. He blew away the dirt with a breath of air and carefully placed the box down.

"Okay, now what? Take it to Larry down on the corner? No, that won't do, he'll take advantage of me. Ah, that guy I met at that convention last year. What was his name? Pete, nah, Paul. Yea, yea, that's it, Paul. Let's see where did I put his card?"

Again the man went through the apartment searching for the card. When he reached the closet, he found...

"The hat."

He bought the hat in the 1962 New York World's Fair. It was one of those slick black top hats. He
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down scattered to the aft of the ship. Somewhere from within the ship a small shining part slid out between the stressed hull. It fell towards a small suburb just outside of Chicago.

"Was that a close on, you bet."

"Yeah."

"Hey, you, get up. You can't sleep here."

The policeman poked his night stick into the old man's side.

"Huh, oh yea, yea. Sorry officer. I'm moving along."

"See that you do."

The man stood up, and raising the collar of his coat, walked into the wind.

Kids were playing ball in the park. As he walked by, they all teased, "Hey, guys, look. Here comes old man Peters. I wonder what he's invented for us today?"

Two ladies saw what happened and one said, "What was that all about, Judy?"

"The old man? Oh, he's just the local inventor."

"Local inventor?"

"Sure, you know. The Benjamin Franklin type."

"Look at him up there. The clown."

"You knew he'd take the dare."

"Give me the fiver."

Mr. Peters overheard this conversation.

"Why, those young bullies. We'll see what we can do about this."

He started pushing through the crowd.

"Excuse me. Pardon me, please. Thank you."

The man stepped over the low railing surrounding the building and looked up. The boy stared down. He pushed his hat down firmly and straightened his coat. He jumped up.

"Hey, what's that old man doing?"

"You there. Move away from there."

"No. Wait. Look. He's climbing the wall."

"No way, lady, he's just walking up."

"It's impossible."

"It's a miracle."

It was easy going for Mr. Peters. He had found a straight path to the boy. The path was lined with windows. On the tenth floor a pretty blond secretary looked up and then dropped the cup of coffee she was carrying. Mr. Peters smiled and tapped his hat with his right hand.
When he reached the ledge that the boy was on, he righted himself.

"What's a fine boy like you doing in a place like this?"

"Old man... I mean Mr. Peters?"

"Quite all right, my boy. Now shall we leave this place?"

"H... how?"

"Here, just wrap your arms around me. All set? Good. Going down?"

"Yikes."

And down they came to the cheering mob. The fire department had come and gone. Mr. Peters had things well in hand. A worried mother rushed up and thanked Mr. Peters and pulled her son after her.

"Mr. Peters," the well-dressed man was saying. "You are a hero. The city owes you a great debt. One that can never be fully repaid. This can only be a start. Please accept this city key as a gesture of our appreciation."

"Thank you, your Honor, my fellow townspeople."

The crowd cheered.

In the apartment the man pulled off his black shoes. They would have to be resined tonight. He took off his amazing hat and put it in the box on the workbench.
The suit came off and was placed in the closet. The faded overalls felt comfortable.

"I'll have to think of something fun to do tomorrow."

Mr. Peters was feeling sleepy and young. He fell asleep in the soft chair.

The moon came up shortly. Its beams shot through the window and spotlighted the musty box on the bench. It seemed happy, too. The light was interrupted by a silver ship outside the window.

"The sonic status display indicates is it in there."

"Try to stabilize the ship, you bet."

"Hard with the psi-gyro missing."

"Portal open."

Like the eye of the camera, the door spiralled open.

"Back am I."

"Got you it?"

"You bet. The cibernetic components reformed it into a functional construct."

"Huh?"

"Was having it a little fun."
"It put back in its place and let it do its job."

"Sure. Will grow it into place in trent phares."

"Us let go. You bet."

"You bet."
To come running with you on the beach,  
and to sit,  
breathing deeply,  
and watching the sun set on the water.  

You are close enough now  
for me to seek your hand with mine again,  
twine my fingers with your hair.  
Yet,  
your head rests too quickly on my arm  
and I know I am too late.  

Read this in a year,  
and pretend that I wrote it then,  
when we were far apart.  
If I can find the trees again,  
I will come to you;  
perhaps we could sit among them  
and tell each other of our selves.  

Nicole Cordrey  

Ashes  

I know, I know.  
These walls will  
ever become familiar  
and I will  
ever see your face open  
across this dim room.  
go ahead,  
burn this page  
but remember;  
these words  
have come to rest  
in the grey matter  
of your eyes.  

They will haunt you  
in shadows.  
Remember;  
warped records,  
shattered glass, and  
burnt bed spread  
fragments under ice.  
Touch these words.  
Swallow them,  
inhal e them,  
like smoke.
Nick Bozanic

The Flood

One spring the Susquehanna left its bed
and sleepwalked, stumbling
over coops and sheds,
across our lot and through the cellar door
before it passed out cold
against a stack of rotting boards
my father stashed
for some dim purpose all his own.

And while he cursed,
and mother mouthed her Baptist prayers,
I dared myself to wade out
where trees torn free
like wild horses reared
and plunged and disappeared
beneath the flood. I stood
waist-deep in water, wondering
at the river's careless havoc,
its manic will,
and wished myself away on it,
made its desire mine:
to tear the world out by the roots,
restore pure chaos to its throne
and wash the earth of order.

Lord I was of the river's dream
and lost to any other,
until dusk

and a wind of angry voices
called me back.

I walked
across the drowned fields home,
my numbed legs trembling now
and slow, my vision dark.

---

John Hiemstra

Letter

For a time now,
I've wanted to walk with you again,
under dripping green branches
or down rusted train tracks and long grass
in the afternoon sun. I've wanted
to share another bottle of cola champagne,
another crushed croissant.

When I found these
scattered pieces of you,
and for a time,
would not admit them.
I tried to put them back in place.
But you had changed,
and I had been too long
to see your new shape.

From afar, I saw you
dancing in the fields,
said you were happy,
and turned away again.

But now,
when windows might as well be pictures
for I can not open them
and I choke on the mustiness of my room,
when even waves
and grass and soft earth
feel alien to my bare feet.
When even these poems have become stale,
and the glass will not break,
and I can not really breathe,
except this sameness over and over,
I want to find you again.
It was too much.
I ran out, into the night
to look for you.
You and Cassady, with a bottle of wine,
beckoning down a damp alley,
another San Francisco street,
another club on the docks,
more jazz, more IT!

But I was still here, at school.

People walked away,
without word or smile,

"I'm sorry, but I had work to do."

What has happened, Jack?
Deirdre Kovac
A Dangerous Place

It wasn't a dangerous place. But the night had come down full of possibility. He waited at the corner of 7th and Witness, leaning against the brick shell of a burnt-out theater. The fire was years ago, yet the air still smelled of ashes and screaming pedestrians. It was almost four in the morning and everyone had locked themselves in warm, yellowed houses. The bus for Duluth stopped here. He put his cigarette out on the sidewalk and looked over at the all night party store across the street. No one seemed to be having a party that night and the faded neon lights were only weak announcements. He knew that if he went over to buy some more cigarettes, they would probably accuse him of stealing, but he didn't have a better way to waste time, and he decided to test the possibilities in a Chicago-slum-dawn. His heavy black boots echoed into silence and too-distant laughter.

There didn't appear to be anyone around until he heard an annoyed voice from the backroom.

"Stop. I think I have a customer. Just go home, will 'ya." She was obviously younger than she wanted to be. Her eyes were tired but curious when she noticed him flipping through an old Playboy.

"Can I help you?"

"Uh, yeah. I want a pack of Marlboros."

"They're over behind the counter. Come with me." Her walk was smooth but practiced. She brushed her hand deliberately on his back as she passed. "That'll be 98 cents." She held out her hand. He had exact change for once.

---

string bass jaunting down IT,
hunched low over strings,
nodding head next to hands,
picking out those right notes together--

soprano sax man solo
climbing high
and holding on------
a pure high soprano sax scream of joy and IT.

Where were you, Jack, drunk in the streets and clubs, finding bop and jazz and IT?

I wished for you, for someone, for one hip 'spade' to yell 'GO!'--
No one did.

Haddad had it,
skimming cymbals snare
sticks jump back forth
flying until it was too much,
hands sticks
no difference now.
Eyes closed,
smiling white,
face shining with sweat,
and arms going,
reaching all around,
farther
and farther--
John Hiemstra
Jazz Concert
for Jack Kerouac

Jazz tonight
in the school chapel—
It was there, Jack.

Ken Werner found it,
shoulders bobbing
leaning to his piano
playing out down and up,
hands falling into keys.
Hunching his back,
pushing forward in his chair,
he had it—
had it so strong, so good,
up off the chair,
swaying.
Melodies flowed and flew.

Looked up,
people walking out,
or just sitting still,
as if nothing were here—

"You're cute, you know." He took the cigarettes,
and she laughed as though she'd heard this too many
times from people who didn't mean it.

"So, why are you here in the middle of the night
anyway?"

"Oh—just waiting for the bus."

"To where?" She was looking him over; black
leather jacket and a crew cut.

"Suppose I'll get off in Minneapolis. I used to
have some friends there...oh-this," he said noticing
her glance and reaching his hand towards his hair.
"Just got out of the Army. Three years was too
crackin' much. They really wanted me though—said I had
a good military mind or something." His laugh was
slow but not hesitant. He seemed strangely honest only
because he obviously didn't care how he seemed.

"How old are you now?" She leaned forward with
her hands on the counter and he glanced into her loose
shirt. She wasn't wearing a bra.

"Nineteen. What about you?" He continued to
stare at her breasts. She noticed but didn't move.

"Do you really want to know—I mean, should I
lie?"

"No. Tell me."

"Sixteen. Yeah, I know...jail bait right?"

"Statutory rape." He wasn't laughing but his
thin lips were slightly tilted, and he shifted his
weight loosely to the left.
"How tall are you?" she said without intending to change the subject.

"Six something. I'm not sure... want one?" he said, taking out a cigarette and holding it across the counter.

"Yeah. Thanks. Jesus, this is awkward." She walked around the counter and stood beside him, pulling a lighter from her pocket. "When I'm back there," she gestured toward the cash register, "I feel like I should know exactly what I'm doing; the party to be held responsible."

He knew what she meant.

"Here." She held the flame up to him. "My mother taught me that; the customer always comes first!"

"Oh really," he said, raising his eyebrows, "were you waiting on another customer when I came in?"

"Oh god no!" She wasn't embarrassed. "That was Jim, the owner. He's always making passes at me."

"And you don't take him up on it?"

"Not quite. He must be at least 50; not exactly a big turn on."

He grinned and put out his half-finished cigarette in a green glass ashtray on the counter, then reached for hers. She didn't pretend not to understand.

"Come here." He placed his arms around her, deftly pulling her close. His breath was soft, as if he had a lot of time. Two minutes later she pulled back abruptly.

"I had gotten pretty high. It was barely raining out. Instead of water falling, it seemed like the bottom of the lake was a great sponge, like air bubbles were being squeezed out of it and busting at the surface."

He laughs, knows that she will go on and on until late into the night and she tires. Then she will stroke his face quietly and make some childish observation before falling asleep. Once it was, "Your ears are small." Another time, "It's neat the way those veins in your forehead form a perfect 'y.' It's like your head is always wondering." But it is she that is always questioning. It is she that will always be stitching fragments of herself together, into him.
"Remember that gypsy fortune teller at the spring carnival?"

"The one whose grimy-looking little kid sat on her lap to listen?"

"Yeah." They began to laugh.

"I zee a moonlit beach and young love!"

"This one's boring. Mom, tell us the scary one about the rare, fatal disease."

"Boy, she was mad!" She hugs him, and they roll together, laughing.

"She didn't give up, though."

"I have here a scarf, is very lucky, was my grandmother's—only six dollar."

"You should've bought it. She was so poor."

He stops laughing. "It was gaudy, and her poverty is none of my business."

She goes back to massaging him and is quiet.

"The loons are back. I heard them down by the lake last night."

"Really."

"Tuesday I spent all day down by the water."

"Hmmmm."

"Wait. Don't you think..."

"Jesus Christ, earlier you didn't care if your shirt hung down to the floor and now I suppose you want to go home to mother. But he didn't say it simply out of selfishness.

"No," she began slowly. "I would say yes. It's just that I don't want to miss you. I mean, you are just passing through." She had lost that look of practice.

"Don't think so much," he said and stepped towards her. And she decided not to because his touch was so simple and he meant it. They both heard the bus pull up.

"Well," he said, "I gotta go," and turned to the door. "And stay away from that old pervert." She watched him cross the dark street with an easy limp. He didn't turn around again.

"I will," she whispered. But he was already on the bus. He sat in the last seat, lit another cigarette, and wondered how long it took to get to Minneapolis.
Night moves patiently in the city around us, knowing we all fall through its current soon enough. And smells are stronger than any memory of what we'll say standing in the street until morning. Unseen smiles and all lost laughter wait on our porch while we are getting ready and waiting for a ride that's always late.

We paint on our same faces, to look as though we barely lived through last night's tunnel to Windsor and nowhere. and in the hall, one half of a mouse named "Bad" still twitches in the cat's jaw. The other already dangles by a pin on your black boot.

Your offering to darkness, this emblem of our evenings, it is either not enough or nothing at all.
"Let's celebrate," she said.
"Celebrate what?" he asks.
"Oh, nothing, I guess."
They are silent for a while.
"What's thinking about?"
"My grandparents' cottage."
"Oh?"
"Yeah. It's on this lake, and a dirt road leads up the hill to a huge forest." Her words are slow, he thinks, like an old woman carefully sewing pieces of material together. Up and down, up and down, her soft voice creates story after story for him.

"And deep in that forest between the paths is a tiny lake, no bigger than this room, with hundreds of flowers around it."

"Hmm." 

"I used to sit there for hours and my grandmother would get angry because I wasn't around to help clean fish or wash the dishes."

He watches her get up, light a cigarette, sit back down. She often hums to herself, swaying back and forth. Always something moving in her, he thinks.

"I once knew a girl named Corrie Lodewyk."
Cathi Winslow

For My Brother Who Skipped Vietnam And Went Directly to College

How do I tell it
without those vulgar words
mother doesn't want to hear
why tell it at all
we have a niece there but she's
dead so it doesn't matter
anyway it wasn't a war
That's where they have tanks troops
sunlight open fields
It wasn't a

He was at Khe Sanh
you know, when they came
(what actually happened)
I sent him a tape--wasn't it
Hendrix or maybe the Doors
Yeah it was the legendary Doors
Absolutely Live

I saw him in a movie last week
Someone tried to make a war
movie but it wasn't

Kenny, who told you about the chest wound?
Julia Watson

Lost for Words

Time is one of the luxuries
you choose to deny yourself,
but between the scratchings of your pen
look to the window of your cramped little room
and let daylight draw your head back
as though you were laying lakeside,
talking quietly of simple things,
letting loons lift over the water,
suspended, unconcerned, above you.

And if you find your eyes holding shut
catch hold of my sleeve, twisting the cuff
as you did that day in the basement
we managed to make
parallel paths touch, if only for a crossing moment.
Or listen to our voices and note the difference
in talk among ourselves
and words spoken to each other.

And if memory leaves you wanting
allow your writing needed rest
and turn again to me.
Chances are
I'll be standing in the door, studying
the bowed head, the busy hands
I have too much patience with,
and wondering whether words or their careful construct
have ever been for me.
"I waited three months." He was watching me closely now, staring at me in a hard sort of way. "I didn't think this would happen. But I never said it wouldn't."

Holding myself as closely as I could, I began rocking slowly, back and forth. I expected the silence to make him speak. He said nothing.

"I guess there is a difference between wanting to want something and wanting to have it," I said finally.

"Hmm." He was watching his feet repeat a small shuffling motion to keep warm.

I released my grip on myself, allowing my legs to straighten, and leaned back on my arms. "Either you take me now, or that's it. It's over."

"I told you I can't."

I threw my head back, removing my eyes from him, letting him go. Once the rustling of his leaving ended, I stood and walked through the trees until the lake was clear to me. Lighting a cigarette, I used it up slowly, holding it beneath my palm and watching white air drift up between my fingers. Once I was through I held my hands to my face and smelled their smoke, surprised at the first sting of tears.
"I am ready to leave with you. I want to pack everything up and go. Just get out of here." We had talked about Canada, Ontario or B.C., it hadn't really mattered as long as it was open and we were on our own. But I had always put things off, avoiding anything definite.

"I am staying here," he said slowly, watching the movement of pine branches above him, "staying here with Anne."

I laughed a little. Jefferson was a small town. I knew everyone, even Anne. I touched him lightly, then pressed my hands harder to him. He did not seem to notice.

He rose quickly, a sudden sort of breaking away, took a few steps forward and turned back to me. "I want you... still. I want to spend time, to talk. I don't know. But I can't tell her I'm leaving. I won't tell her that."

He seemed taller, thin as always, and even without stepping farther away began to fade into the trees around him. The lake waves, fifty yards back and wind-driven, pounded above and about him. But it was me they were reaching for, me they would wash over.

"What about me? You said you'd wait until I was ready, until I knew what I wanted. "I thought about crying. Wasn't that what such moments were made for? Pain pulsed in gasps from your throat, irregular jerks of a rope as it runs rough through you.

"You said you would wait." I pulled my knees tightly to my chest and looked away, down the path we had followed here.

Loretta Randall Sharp

First Spring on Roosevelt Drive

1. The morning the spotted calf was born
Amelia who wore one-inch bows in her hair, who crowded into size seven shoes, saying it was the width she took, not the length.
Amelia who looked away when the neighbor lady nursed a baby that morning Amelia stared at the cow John Moses bought cheap because she was too old to breed.
The old cow's flanks wet Amelia's head, bent to nipples, caked and pink as tainted meat.
And she lit into the house, scrubbed her clean linoleum, dark hair touching breasts, bound tight as the round cheeses kept in the wellhouse.

2. Outdoors, the kids heard Amelia stoke the stove. She marched to the chicken coop then, grabbed the oldest "hen, gripping its neck in one hand, swinging clockwise twice... until the twist and easy give.
And she tossed the head, letting the rest of the chicken run.

Amelia dipped the dirtied hen in a scalding pot, singed each wing hair. Then two sweeps into the naked cavity, and the kids saw the clump of yellow eggs she'd been reaching for.

For lunch Amelia mixed the last powdered milk, set out brown bread and the stewing hen. She cut the rubbery eggs, ate each herself, saying only the old cow would come fresh in a day or two.
Although he wasn't tall, he was a long sort of person whose body seemed to wander the space it occupied. His hands smelled always of smoke and his slender fingers had wrapped around mine a hundred times before I realized how warm they were.

Three months had come to this one evening and the short lived spring was missing in May. The wind that blew his hair about was sharp and it was as though we were beginning again in the lingering winter that had been February.

Along the path we followed through the woods there lay a small sparrow, a few days dead, eyes closed with an easy passing.

"Someone should have buried this," he said, stooping to move soft earth over the motionless animal. "What's gone should be forgotten."

"Don't touch that if you plan to touch me," I said, wrinkling my nose in a manner I imagined at the time to be endearing. He kept patting the dirt he had covered the bird with until it seemed firm, stable. He then rose wordlessly and continued walking.

I knew I was losing his attention and had to find a place to anchor him, a place to surround him with whatever had held him for so long. I left the trail and, turning back toward him, sat on the porch of a summer cabin, quiet with winter disuse. He watched me a moment then moved toward the porch finally settling, laid back inches from me. I wanted to lie with him but his arms were folded behind his head. His eyes followed my face and he said nothing, waiting for me to speak.
Gwen Knighton

Scat

Open your mouth.
The cords in your throat are tightly stretched wires;
breath moves like a hammer.
Make your body loose, open,
and strong, limber fingers
push keys to hammers.
Breathe.

Scan black ink on pirated paper,
hear the chord behind your eyes.
Feel fingers fly over black and white keys,
make melody over melody,
weave your voice into chords.

Don't think. Listen.
Pick up a sound that feels good
from a saxophone and speak its syllables.
Squeeze your voice into a trumpet
and try to doubletongue every note.
Get higher and wilder
until you spit notes
faster than fingers could form them.

Launch into a Dorian sea,
weather the blues in a storm of tritones and minor sevenths.
Land on an island
of rest
sighted by your tired throat,
swept by breath.

Tom Sudinsky

Parable for a lavender wheelbarrow

Once upon a time in a village situated between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbakanetta lived a wise and enterprising gardener. He so loved growing things that he not only developed rare and wonderful flowers, but he also worked to develop bees that could produce equally rare and wonderful honey from these flowers.

First the gardener developed bees that would see and smell cherry blossoms. These Cherry Blossom Bees went out faithfully each spring morning looking for pollen. They returned to the hive at the end of each day, content because their task was complete and because honey from cherry blossoms was the sweetest in all the land between Lake Wabekaness and Lake Wahbekanetta.

How proud the Cherry Blossom Bees were at the first cherry harvest. Trees bulging with sweet cherries dotted the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbakanetta. All during the winter, the gardener spread cherry blossom honey on thick toast, and he was very pleased. About February, however, he decided that next spring was the right time for a new blossom and a new bee. He thought and he thought, and he decided that Apple Blossoms were what the land needed. Within several months, he'd developed Apple Blossoms and Apple Blossom Bees. These bees would pollinate only apple blossoms.

That spring when the Apple Blossom Bees saw the Cherry Blossom Bees busy at the cherry trees, they buzzed about the superiority of Apple Blossom Bee-ness. The Cherry Blossom Bees were equally sure
their way was best. They wanted nothing to do with anything Apple Blossom. They'd been created first, and they were sure they were best. Nothing though, could dampen the delight of the Apple Blossom Bees at the first harvest of apples. Trees bowing with round, crisp fruit dotted the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Lake Wahbekanette. And the Apple Blossom Bees boasted about the hard, round fruit they'd made and said Apple Blossom honey would be the sweetest in all creation. In truth, the gardener was delighted with the Apple Blossom honey he stored away.

That winter, as he sat munching his toast and honey and staring deep into the blazing fire, the gardener decided that next spring he would persuade the bees to cross-pollinate apple and cherry blossoms. When he roused the bees from their separate hives and began to tell them of their season's task, they buzzed with suspicion and mumbling. Bees accustomed to cherries wanted nothing to do with apples. Bees accustomed to apples would not willingly think of small, soft cherries. The gardener had been eating honey all winter, however, and his voice was so sweetly persuasive the bees did as they were asked. The bees worked all spring and summer carrying pollen back from the apple and cherry blossoms. Apple Blossom Bees went to the hives of Cherry Blossom Bees. Cherry Blossom Bees went to the hives of Apple Blossom Bees. And they were surprised at how well they got along. And they were proud when the gardener told them that the honey they'd made by pairing up was the best ever. They were so proud, in fact, that they were sure no other honey could match it.

That winter, though, while he was eating toast and honey, the gardener decided that it was time to try still another flower and still another honey. He decided that clover was needed in the land between Lake Wahbekaness and Wahbekanette. Knowing how difficult it had been for the Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossoms Bees to accept a new way of thinking, the gardener decided to give them a season to rest from adjustment. He developed a strain of

Gwen Knighton

A Churchyard in Alabama
(looking for a tombstone and not finding it)

1
He isn't really dead.
He got tired of his family
one day, and left.
Maybe he went West.

2
He was struck by lightning one night.
He became invisible
but he is still here.
He tests his wife’s spaghetti sauce
(never as good as his) some nights,
and reads over people’s shoulders
in the public library
during days.

3
One morning, he woke up
and everyone thought he died.
So he turned himself into
a pileated woodpecker
and flew away.

4
He isn’t here.
The California sun sets
three hours late.
He flies into daylight,
still hoping to see the spark
in his daughter’s eyes.
That spring all the bees went swiftly to their tasks. The Apple-Cherry bees went to the apple and cherry blossoms. The Clover Bees went to their Clover blossoms. When the Apple-Cherry Bees took a close look at the bees pollinating the clover, they made great fun of this third strain of bees.

"Apple honey is the best," said some.

"Cherry honey is the best," boasted others.

"Nothing can compare to Apple-Cherry honey," said many others.

And all of them laughed at the notion of any good thing coming from fruitless pollination.

"Third rate," they jeered, "definitely third rate."

Because there were so many more Apple-Cherry Bees than there were Clover Bees, the Clover Bees became very nervous and buzzed and muttered. They went to the gardener and complained, "You've made us bees but given us flowers from which no fruit can come!" "We're different from other bees, and there's no place for us." "We're fruitless...the other bees are fruits...we want to be fruits."

And the other bees also complained, too. They told the gardener, "Those bees are queer bees! We don't want them around us."

The gardener tried to persuade the three kinds of bees to get along. The Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossom Bees would not, however, let the Clover Bees into their hives. Because they had been so intolerant, the gardener refused to allow the Apple Blossom Bees and the Cherry Blossom Bees to mix any more. Their honey would never again be as sweet as it had been when they mixed.
Even though the Clover Bees received a scolding for being afraid because their pollination would produce no fruit, they had at least been willing to live in harmony with those around them. Because they had been tolerant, the gardener decreed that from now on, honey made from lavender blossoms would be the sweetest of all.

And though he'd earlier hoped to develop even more kinds of bees, he concluded three kinds were enough. Bees should have the privilege of no more variety than they would gracefully accept. And besides so much buzzing gave him a headache. So the gardener decided instead to concentrate on giraffes. Their necks would be long enough to allow them a right perspective, and he'd keep them speechless so they could never, never complain.
the red wheelbarrow
1983-84
the red wheelbarrow