theredwheelbarrow
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march 1985
scott & mage
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EDITORS' NOTES

Wendelin Scott: "The book I read was in your eyes." - David Byrne

Anita Mage: "Je est un autre." - Arthur Rimbaud
Susan Lamb: "A great ox stands on my tongue."
- Aeschylus

Peter Steadman: "Tiddlee-Pum."
- A.A. Milne

Buffy Stockwell: "Active listening provokes reaction which is not always pleasant passive hearing."
- Ned Rorem

Chris Wick: "My real dad is Walt Wick."
- Max Jones

Michael Delp: "I need to go fishing, until I need to return."
- J. Michael Yates

Homer Bass: "This school does that to people."
"I guess my feet know where they want me to go. Walk on down."
- James Taylor

"The Hair's real, it's the head that's a fake."
- Steve Allen

"There will be no nuclear war. There's too much real estate involved."
- Frank Zappa

"The angels wanna wear my red shoes."
- Elvis Costello

"I AM LONO."
- Hunter S. Thompson

"...what our species needs most of all, right now, is simply a future."
- Lewis Thomas
Caitlin Krier

Doing Laundry

Saturdays.
The sky's out of snow
so it just blows
what's on the ground
back up.

I look over at you.
We run to the basement,
hold hands,
watch the sheets
in the dryer
tumble over themselves.

Upstairs, we don't spread
them out yet.
We keep them bunched,
strip naked,
then dive underneath,
and unfold each crease,
releasing warmth
back into our bodies.
I. Jack

This side of the park, grass only grows yellow, seems. Grass has to be green before it's yellow so why is it, me coming here for three years now that it's always been yellow? Maybe it was green the year before I got here, seems that way. Stopped growing when I got here. Bet the yellow grass has got that guy down and why's he tossing crumbs? No birds. Never are, seems. Funny, don't care if there aren't birds, not even noticing. He's throwing them for himself anyhow. Why doesn't he eat them after he throws them? That's funny, why doesn't he eat them after he throws them? Maybe he does when I leave. Maybe I will when he leaves, this place could use a bird and I could use the change.

Never noticed him before, walking around tossing crumbs. Seen him, not noticed. That's a fault. Wonder if he's noticed me. Doesn't seem like. Just tossing his crumbs. Guess his age, twenty-five to forty, anywhere, kind of a generic man. When he turns around I'll look for his UPC sign. That's funny, on his butt. He looks so down. Something really should be done about the grass being so yellow, drive you crazy with headaches of downness. That guy's got one, I can tell, a headache he's so down. I can tell.

II. Phillip

It's his eyes, that's it. I've always felt that he's happy because of his eyes. You can tell a man by his eyes. You can keep it out of everything, think that you're hiding it but it's the eyes that'll give you up. He's so happy, it cheers me just to look at those eyes. Makes me know that there's something good enough to do that to someone, that's good. Happier than usual today, maybe. I don't think I've seen him so happy and where are the birds? Such a nice day I guess they're all flying around enjoying it. Well, when they get back all tired, won't they just enjoy these crumbs? Sure they will and that guy always sits on that same bench. I wonder if he comes to this side of the park for all the birds. Be nice to talk to him, find out what it

He would put his poems on microfilm and hang them on the walls of his tent. He had more than 45,000 of them and he added a new one every day.

One day he woke up and went outside and saw the sand. He saw his ex-wife, too. He invited her inside and pointed out his poems. She read not a single one but told him a disturbing thing. She said:

You
Are
Not
The
Last
Poet
Anymore,
Frank!

Franked looked at his 45,000 poems and then back at her. She said:

I'm
Pregnant!

Frank bit himself and listened. She said:

You
Are
Only
The
Latest
Poet
Now,
Frank!
In the middle of the desert lived a poet. He was the only poet in the world. There had been other poets. He was the Last Poet.

In the morning he would go out and walk in the desert and come back and write about what he had seen.

All he ever saw was sand.

His poems all began this way:

I
Am
The
Last
Poet
In
The
World.
I
Have
Seen
Sand.

is exactly that's so good to him. Be nice if he noticed me, wish he would. Why should he notice me, such a nice day the way the sun's making the tree shadows fall on the grass like that and they shake around when the wind comes, just makes your heart flutter to watch so why should he notice me and won't it be beautiful when the birds come back from flying around?

III.

"Excuse me, may I sit?"
"Yeah, sure...Not my bench."
"No, I guess not...nice day."
"Sure.
"You don't agree?"
"I just did."
"Oh...I guess so."
"Say, may I ask you a question?"
"Anything."
"Why exactly do you come here and throw crumbs around?"
"For the birds."
"Oh, the birds."
"Yes, aren't they wonderful?"
"What, the birds?"
"Yes, aren't they dear?"
"Dear? Well, I'd imagine so...I suppose."
"So, why do you come here?"
"For the bench."
"Do you like the bench?"
"Well, no. Actually, I hadn't thought about it. May I ask you another question?"
"Anything."
"Do you have a headache?"
"Excuse me?"
"Do you have a headache?"
"Well, no. I don't think so. No, I don't. It's been so nice meeting you, but I really must be leaving now."
"Must you? Well, good bye."
Kellyann Hall

When Grandfather Died

It was August, but grief hung over the house thick as a cloud streaking crooked paths on our faces. Only father's eyes were dry staring through a window in grandfather's trailer.

Later he left us at the food-laden table to wander among the surrounding blueberry fields. I followed him outside, hid in the foliage and watched him pick countless berries juice running down bleached knuckles staining white cuffs.

Turning away, I walked back my mind full of blueberries falling faster than tears.

My stop wasn't for another ten minutes. I contemplated getting off and calling my mom for a ride but I'd be too embarrassed to get off in Clifton since Mr. Worthington Pierce knew I lived in Montclair. No escape.

"O.K." I said.

"That sounds great! What's your phone number?"

I made up a number. I hadn't told him my last name so there was no way for him to look me up.

"So you'll call your dad and have him take the 7 o'clock 66 with me tomorrow. I'll be glad to meet him. I'm sure he's nice, if he's the father of such a good young man."

He patted my shoulder.

"Yeah, I'll call my dad tonight."

"You can tell him that he'll know me by my blue Yamakah. I always wear it on Fridays."

"I'll be sure to tell him."

I managed to survive until my stop by slowly taking my knapsack from the over-head rack, unpacking it in my lap, and checking the contents. He got off the bus after I retrieved the book which I'd dropped on the floor and kicked down several rows in front of me.

"Shalom," he said as he walked down the aisle, "See you tomorrow."

"Yeah, Shalom," I replied with great relief. I still religiously avoid taking the 7 o'clock 66 back from the city.
o'clock bus home from the city. Overlooking the stereotypes about intelligence, I did get a flush of pride, I'm human. I told him a joke I'd heard.

"Someone once asked, 'If the Jews are so smart, why did they pick the only country in the middle east without any oil?'"

He didn't get it.

"As a matter of fact when my son Albert was a Sophomore in high school, I sent him to work on a Kibbutz."

He asked me if my family kept Kosher. I said no, and told him that we're non-practicing Jews, but that we have been brought up to identify as Jews culturally. That made Mr. Pierce very happy.

"I have some Hasidic friends," he told me, "and I once had the honor of attending their sabbath dinner. It was an educating experience. What is your favorite part of the ceremony?"

I was stumped. I don't even know what they do at those dinners besides chant some prayers. I told him that I liked the traditional candle lighting ceremony.

"That's my favorite part too. As a matter of fact I'm Jewish, Homer."

Why did I tell him my real name, I thought.

"My wife is a born Jew and I used to be a Protestant. I'm a free thinker and I've been intellectually stimulated by the Judaic Culture. I converted two years ago. I'm hoping to have my barmitzvah this April. I'd like you to come."

No way, I thought. I'm not stepping into this stock analyst's life.

"I go to boarding school. I won't be home in April," I told him.

I thanked God.

"That's too bad. I'd like you to come to our Sabbath dinner though, tomorrow night. Sadie would love to have a guest. Especially a young one."

"Thanks, but I don't know how to drive yet. I couldn't get to your house."

"That's o.k., I'll pick you up myself, after work."

"Well, I'm eating dinner with my dad Friday night."

"He's Jewish, bring him too."

I almost said, 'he doesn't like W.A.S.P.'

"I'd like to but he lives in the city," I said instead.

"Have him take the bus back from the city with me then."

Deb Bennett

Eggs

Fresh, white shells formed to a unique shape. We know it's not right but never think about it.

The surface snaps, just an echo on the copper bowl. A second try cracks the perfection. In with the pure white and sun is blood. For a moment we feel guilt in the innocent miscarriage and realize who we are...
Rebecca Young

At The Movies

The screen comes alive:
blind Americans bomb villages
as old men stumble for shelter,
quick prayers on their lips.
I am bombarded with Cambodian faces,
the sad stumps of limbs,
eyes stricken like wounded deer.
When the pictures stop their assault,
I hurry with others to the outside light,
a child's cry in bloodied streets
screaming guilt to my existence.

"Worth more or less?" he said.
I could tell he'd used the joke at least since he was in
high school. He finished his name.

Worthington A. Pierce

I realized that his initials practically spelled
W.A.S.P.

"What's your name?" he asked.
"Homer."
"Now there's a name of unique character. You're the first
Homer I've had the pleasure of meeting."
He laughed as we shook hands.
"How does one require a name such as 'Homer'?" he asked.
"That's what my parents named me."
"Well then, I suppose that's true. You probably didn't
have much say in the matter."
He laughed again.
"I didn't like having the name when I was little because
I used to get teased about it," I said.
"Yes, it must have been hard for you as a young man, but
I'm sure that you developed personal fortitude. I believe
name-calling to be a crutch for those who have no personal
fortitude."
He said "personal fortitude" like those were the big
words for him. He probably had them written in big block letters
on a framed piece of paper which hung on his office wall. He
paused for a moment.
"Homer is a Greek name, though I'm Jewish myself," I
interjected.
"Ah, the Jews," he mused, "there is a people for whom I
have great respect. They, together as a people, are the strongest
and the greatest. I admire the Israeli people very much."
There he went, mixing up Jews and Israelis. A BIG mistake
around some members of my family, worthy of at least two hours of
heated lecturing on zionism. I didn't correct him.
"The smartest people in the world all crammed into a
country not much bigger than New Jersey. Surrounded by hostile
nations they manage to survive by their resolute toughness," he
continued.
That was pretty strange to hear from a W.A.S.P. on the 7
That night I was absorbed in the cars that were passing me outside of my window. When I'm on day-time buses I stare at the familiar sites as we pass through Pasaic, Clifton, Union, and Bloomfield. I was thinking about my father who I'd just gone out to dinner with. I didn't think I would see him again for at least a month. That wasn't all that strange once I'd started going to boarding school but for some reason I was getting sentimental about it. I didn't even notice who was sitting next to me.

"Where are you from?" the old man asked.

I didn't hear what he said the first time. I turned and looked at him. He was about sixty, near retirement. He had the worn out commuter look. I still don't understand why those businessmen don't ever loosen their ties, even when they get on the bus. It seems like they sleep in their suits sometimes.

"Where are you from?" he repeated.

His breath smelled of alcohol.

"Montclair, Upper Montclair."

"I live there too. I've lived there since I started working in the city, twenty-two years ago."

"Oh really? What street do you live on?" I asked.

"Edgemont road."

I told him that I used to go to Edgemont School. He said that he lived only a couple hundred yards away from the school and that his kids had gone there for lower grade school too. We knew some of the same teachers.

The subject turned to his job. He told me that he was a Stock Analyst. I know someone who is an official on the New York Exchange. I told him the guy's name. He was impressed that I knew someone so prominent. He asked me what I wanted to go into, and what my parents do. I told him they're divorced. That line, "they're divorced" always throws older people. At first they seem like they want to say they're sorry, but then they remember, "This isn't the fifties, everyone is divorced nowadays." I could tell he felt badly anyway. I asked him what his name was. He took out a little pad and a pen and wrote in the middle of it:

Worth
Max Jones

Wolfe's Lesson

It was the end of the summer, and Fred's college loan hadn't come through.

"What's the sense? What's the sense?" he kept yelling while pacing around the house, throwing his arms up and clutching the piece of paper in his fist, that mean and vicious lump of pulp that read: "We regret to inform you...". It would've been graduate school and, probably even more important than that, it would have been something to do for a year. Just something to do to use up a little bit of life.

I was almost eight years younger than Fred, but I considered him my best friend.

And returning from the kitchen with a cold bottle of Beck's Dark, Fred was looking happier, and old Mr. Harring was out back, sweating over a hot grill and cooking hamburgers for his factory pals, not worried about Fred, because Fred was a good kid and a twenty-four year old son can take care of himself.

"What are you gonna do?" I asked him, and he answered me quickly.

"First, I'll drive out to Pennsylvania- I can make three hundred bucks just doin' it... and it's for Jacobson, who you know I can't stand, but he's got money, and even though you know he can't stand me, he'll pay."

I only nodded and tried to read the newspaper. His trip didn't excite me~ I wasn't going. I had to go back to school.

"It'd be kind of fun too. I'd be driving a truckload of sailboat parts. That's all. It's not really the money, it's just that it'll give me some time to think," he said.

"And see the country," I added.

"Yeah, and see the country."

"Then you'll come home."

He started to agree with me but stopped himself. "You can't go home again," he finally said. "You ever read that?"

"Read what?"

"You Can't Go Home Again by Thomas Wolfe. You've never read that?"

Now I saw it coming. Fred loved to read and when he found out that I hadn't read one of the "classics", he would harp on me

When she slumped into herself
he sat down next to her,
watched the sky,
how each cloud was pulled apart in the wind.

The digging lasted into darkness.
He lit the lantern and dug down until he could not see her hulk beside the grave.
He dug in the fear
that it would not be deep enough,
that he would finish too soon,
crawl from the hole and roll her over the edge,
winching her down with the truck,
let her come to rest easy,
discover he could only fill her in up to the neck,
and he worried that he would dream of her there,
locked in a kind of standing,
her head and eyes pointed up at the stars.
When he found her, she was already down. He leaned to her head, heard the slow roar coming out of her lungs, enough liquid in there to drown a man, and he lifted her head, only once, ran his hand over the long line of her nose, then let her back down.

The barrel slid easily into her ear, as if it were a finger, and he said later, how he wanted then to whisper something to make it easier, but racked the single shell, then let his finger slip past the trigger, brushing it slightly.

until I did. Even at parties, Fred would drink a little too much and make me feel terrible guilt for not having read something. On one of these occasions, I remember him refusing to speak to me until I'd read The Great Gatsby.

"You've got to read Wolfe," he said, "Hold on a second, I'll find it for you," and by this time he was up off the couch and on his way to his bedroom, leaving me sitting stupidly in an old wingbacked chair. He was gone longer than I'd expected so I decided to go find him.

I walked through the kitchen and down the creaky hall to his bedroom, where he was choosing paperbacks from his shelves and then flinging them on his bed in a pile. I asked Fred what he was doing, since the pile was now spilling onto the floor in front of me.

"These are books you have to read," he said. "I'll let you borrow them until we see each other again. But you've gotta promise to read them."

"Fred, I'm not going to have time to read all these books," they were now all over the floor and there were hardly any left on the shelves. Fred stopped chucking the books and then, realizing what he'd just done, laughed at himself, and I joined him.

"Yeah, I guess you're right," he said, still smiling. "But you'll have to read You Can't Go Home Again at least.

I told him that I would and he knelt down on the floor to begin looking for the book, searching through all the others. He finally found it and got up.

"There's one great part in here, about the drunken beggar on horseback. Here, I'll read you this paragraph," he folded the front cover over the back of the book and read aloud:

"And the great Goethe, accepting the inevitable truth that human growth does not proceed in a straight line to its goal, had compared the development and progress of mankind to the reelings of a drunken beggar on horseback. What was important, perhaps, was not that the beggar was drunk and reeling, but that he was mounted on his horse, and, however unsteadily, was going somewhere."

Fred put the book down on his dresser and looked at me, smiling.

"So you see, what Wolfe is saying, or what he means is that it's okay for you to reel off your course. I mean, Max, I know you're not sure what your goals are yet but you'll do okay, just
Anita Mage
Lake Stones

1
On the windowsill
the lake stones bathe
in distant sunlight.
I pick one up,
like a thief's knife.
There is the depth of a lake
in a jewel.

2
Damp sand, the water licks
round, flat stones.
We skip them
across the lake, bursting
the surface into ripples.

3
We wade out to where
the bottoms of our rolled-up jeans
get wet. The best ones are
at these depths,
sparkling darkly under water.
We carry them to shore,
hidden in our shirts,
lay them on the steps,
where earlier that day
we watched the sun
spill diamonds into the lake,
brighter than any stone
beneath the surface.

don't worry about it. You'll end up all right. Just be sure to
find them eventually, or you'll end up like Jim; twenty six years
old and working full time at the carwash. But you can take your
time for a while, at least."
Fred was right, or rather, Thomas Wolfe was and it did make
sense. At that point I really didn't have any long term goals. I
was only sixteen, and here was Fred, always stressing the
importance of goals and personal fulfillment, now telling me that
it was okay to approach life in this relaxed sort of way.
I took the book back to school with me that fall and read as
much of it as I had time for. I didn't hear from Fred until the
middle of October when he sent me a card.
"Max, I thought I'd drop you a quick note before I write you
a long letter that deals with important things. I just got back
from Pennsylvania yesterday. I applied for a loan for next
semester. Didn't get it. I won't be able to go until next fall.
I'm staying here for a few days, then working in Milwaukee, and
to quote Kerouac, "digging the streets of life" and doing my
monkey dance (sorrowful-like). Don't get too intense about
school. Easier said than done, because knowledge and the
gathering of it is supposed to be intense! I'll write more later,
Fred."
He did write more, but much later. I didn't hear from him
until December, when I found out he was working in Tampa, Florida
for AT&T ("They think I'm a career man, but little do they
know...ha ha ha"). He said that he liked the job and the money
was good, but it wasn't what he was looking for. The last time I
heard from Fred, he was back in Milwaukee, teaching a government
course to what he called "virgin-minded undergrads", but again,
he stressed the fact that this was only a part time thing and he
was only doing it until he "saved enough money for next year's
tuition."
For some reason, I felt compelled to go back and read the
Drunken Beggar on Horseback section of the book. After reading
the last line of that paragraph, the line Fred had neglected to
read aloud, I understood him. "Must the beggar reel forever?" and
I thought about that question that Wolfe asked, and I wanted to
ask Fred what he thought about reeling forever.
It is 6:30 a.m., the alarm rings clear.

It is 6:30 a.m., the alarm rings clear:

...and counselors prepare to troll the deep.

...and counselors prepare to troll the deep.

Tired boys pile out of cabins into dawn. This morning there is a lost swimmer.

Tired boys pile out of cabins into dawn. This morning there is a lost swimmer.

I wade, slowly into the water, beneath my feet, the sensation of smooth rocks beneath my feet, my thighs disappear into the calm of numbing cold. Leaning forward I fall into the water, sinking through water, cool against my skin; gentle currents pull me into the depths.

I look up through a tunnel of darkness like looking back in time. The sun breaking over the horizon is distant and I feel none of its warmth.

Sometimes I think I was born just to die. But my mind clears when I realize: I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut. I guess I'm a fool.

And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep.

I read today: "I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut." "And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep."

"I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut."

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"And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep."

"I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut."

"And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep."

I am: tired, dirty, thoughtless and cold.

My mood is red.

My soul is black.

My communication, blue.

And I read today: "I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut." "And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep."

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Sometimes I think I was born just to die. But my mind clears when I realize: I can make a difference in the world by writing.

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"I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut." "And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep."
Chris Wick

I'm Yelling Each One Of These Words

January 22, 1977

Dear Dad,

Right now -
sitting at a wooden table
with Berryman
a writer who works hard
despite tired eyes.

The last day
of the first semester
I am strange.

I have completed all
I had to do.
I have satisfied my teachers.

Right now -
I don't know if
I'm all right.

Susan Lamb

Winter

Lake ice,
a flame of flat white.
Thick trees black at night.
Lights—street lamps really
--steel grown into trunks.

Air is death-cold,
tears at lungs
--they bleed white onto ground
until flesh cracks creek ice
and slides under,
slipping fast to an ashen sea.

"White blood?"
the mirror contemplates.
--nothing is red at this time of year
"What of the sunset sky?"
--the sky sucks the colour
out of blood before night.

"Blue lips,"
the mirror says.
--I am not part of me;
there is something here,
flesh slipping away,
leaves' shadows
sinking under snow.

When will I light up
in flame so hot that it freezes
blood, bones and flesh
to white ashes?
and sink into earth
like a fall shadow
or a cedar root,
to freeze,
burn?
Anneke Campbell

Class

We're reading Night:
in which a sixteen year old boy
watches his world turn to
ash.

It's a leap from the heat
of those ovens to this room,
and you, my students of the same age,
labor with my question: What
values are by the boy's survival
affirmed? Your attention flickers
until suddenly your seven pair
of eyes pull outside to watch
a squirrel negotiate the snow.
Grey-brown and small, he hops a slow
trail through the drift, laboriously
causing all that snow to shift. At last,
white-crested and triumphant,
he scales the bare trunk of a birch.
You applaud, and in your pleasure
appear stalwart as a squirrel,
hardy as winter.

Then I remember ash, our lives
fragile as a solitary snowflake
flitting it's trail into the hot center
of my hand.
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Other passengers started to chatter, opening the windows to breathe fresh jungle air. "Gracias a Dios" the black woman sighed with relief. She returned to her crocheting. The conductor continued to sleep. Memories of carnations, polished oak, and organ music came to Allen's mind. He stared out the window trying to convince himself that the black bag, which would join the caymans in the muck at the bottom of the lake, contained only a badly decomposed body.
There were, for once, empty seats on the air-conditioned train coach, but Allen let the other passengers take them. He preferred the economy coach, where windows were kept open and the jungle growth, which threatened to swallow the scar of laid track, could be heard flapping against the train sides. It had been four months since Allen had heard any sound louder than this train whistle, carried any burden heavier than his torn backpack filled with insect parts, mango pits, and bat droppings. His hair which he no longer found necessary to cut, was pulled back and held loosely in a rubber band. Through open windows, he scanned trees for hanging sloths and listened carefully for the bellows of the caymans.

The train ride to work and the hours he spent collecting and studying in the jungle were great relief after the monotony of corn fields he had passed on the way to his university job back in Indiana. He was glad to be free of the text books and white coats of research biology. It was good, he thought, wiping a grubby hand across his face, to be away from laboratory sterility. Below the sleeves of his polo shirt, his arms were tan and dotted with black fly bites. The white skin on his left wrist had become less prominent since he decided he no longer needed a watch. The train was never on time, anyway.

A local scientist had offered Allen an assistant's job when he first arrived in this country, but he had turned it down. He was proud to be as unrestricted and as penniless as the natives on this train. The conductor was asleep, stretched out over two seats. He rarely awakened in time to collect the fare. He was glad to be free of the text books and white coats of research biology. It was good, he thought, wiping a grubby hand across his face, to be away from laboratory sterility. Below the sleeves of his polo shirt, his arms were tan and dotted with black fly bites. The white skin on his left wrist had become less prominent since he decided he no longer needed a watch. The train was never on time, anyway.

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Allen thought of the dozens of stories he had collected to tell his family—being chased by a tapir or that night he spent alone in the jungle when the trees were so dense they blocked even the moonlight. He had written several letters and even sealed some but he never mailed them. He knew his mother, who counted the offering every Sunday morning after church, would only shake her head if she read the letters and wonder how she could have raised a savage.

A black woman, crocheting across the aisle, eyed the backpack on the seat beside him. "Cuidado," she said, leaning over to scoop up a tarantula that had escaped from under the nylon flap. Allen smiled his thanks as he took the spider from her. He remembered how threatening the eight hairy legs once seemed, but now he stroked the tarantula's black fur as though it were a kitten before replacing it in its jar. The black woman told him to watch out for the spider's jaws; the poison could injure. She shifted her legs to face him comfortably and began telling a story about her cousin. The woman spoke boldly as though she had known Allen for years, but did not introduce herself. He was relieved, though, never holding much worth for any social formalities.

The train suddenly jolted, the wheels screeching, as it slowed to a stop. Murmurs spread through the coach; no signs or cement shelters indicated a regular stopping point. The jungle was clear around a weed-covered lake; on the shore, a fisherman stood, waving wildly to the engineer. His rowboat was pulled far onto the beach, empty except for a plastic garbage bag on the floor. A couple of men left the engine and walked towards the boat, but stopped abruptly before they were twenty feet away. Their faces contorted with looks of disgust. Slowly the stench wafted in through the open train windows. The murmuring grew louder, and a few hurried to raise the windows. A biologist, Allen recognized the odor of rotten flesh. Passengers at the back of the coach relayed the fisherman's conversation to others onboard. "Se ogar," they whispered. Allen deciphered scattered phrases: "...she's drowned...", "...many days..." He looked with horror at the dark bag on the boat floor.

The body must have been small—the bag barely covered the bottom of the boat. He wondered whose mother, wife, or daughter the woman was. Maybe her family still waited up late at night for her return. Tonight, he thought, someone from the railroad will send word. He wondered about funerals in this country and pictured an open-air chapel filled with hibiscus and bird of paradise flowers, a simple plywood coffin near the altar.

The coach was becoming very stuffy, but other passengers shouted protests as Allen opened his window. The repulsive smell and sounds of arguing filled the train. The fisherman was trying to load the bag onto a train car, but the engineers pushed him away. They pointed back to the lake, waving their hands in front
Jungle Rules

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We're reading *Night*: in which a sixteen year old boy watches his world turn to ash.

It's a leap from the heat of those ovens to this room, and you, my students of the same age, labor with my question: What values are by the boy's survival affirmed? Your attention flickers until suddenly your seven pair of eyes pull outside to watch a squirrel negotiate the snow. Grey-brown and small, he hops a slow trail through the drift, laboriously causing all that snow to shift. At last, white-crested and triumphant, he scales the bare trunk of a birch. You applaud, and in your pleasure appear stalwart as a squirrel, hardy as winter.

Then I remember ash, our lives fragile as a solitary snowflake flitting its trail into the hot center of my hand.
I'm Yelling Each One Of These Words

January 22, 1977

Dear Dad,

Right now -
sitting at a wooden table
with Berryman
a writer who works hard
despite tired eyes.

The last day
of the first semester
I am strange.

I have completed all
I had to do.
I have satisfied my teachers.

Right now -
I don't know if
I'm all right.

Susan Lamb

Winter

Lake ice,
a flame of flat white.
Thick trees black at night.
Lights—street lamps really
—steel grown into trunks.

Air is death-cold,
tears at lungs
—they bleed white onto ground
until flesh cracks creek ice
and slides under,
slipping fast to an ashen sea.

"White blood?"
the mirror contemplates.
—nothing is red at this time of year
"What of the sunset sky?"
—the sky sucks the colour
out of blood before night.

"Blue lips,"
the mirror says.
—I am not part of me;
there is something here,
flesh slipping away,
leaves' shadows
sinking under snow.

When will I light up
in flame so hot that it freezes
blood, bones and flesh
to white ashes?
and sink into earth
like a fall shadow
or a cedar root,
to freeze, burn?
John Coyne

Lost Swimmer

It is 6:30 a.m., the alarm rings clear; tired boys pile out of cabins into dawn and counselors prepare to troll the deep. This morning there is a lost swimmer.

I wade, slowly into the water, the sensation of smooth rocks beneath my feet, my thighs disappear into the calm of numbing cold. Leaning forward I fall into the water, sinking through water, cool against my skin; gentle currents pull me into the depths.

I look up through a tunnel of darkness like looking back in time. The sun breaking over the horizon is distant and I feel none of its warmth. And I turn toward the darkness where no one can search, to become the lost swimmer.

I am:
tired, dirty, thoughtless and cold.
My mood is red.
My soul, black.
My communication, blue.

And I don't know - why I write, talk and sleep.

I read today:
"I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut."
I guess I'm a fool.
To think -
I can make a difference in the world by writing.

Sometimes I think I was born just to die.
But my mind clears when I realize:

We were all born to die.

Love and life,
Chris.
Anita Mage
Lake Stones

1
On the windowsill
the lake stones bathe
in distant sunlight.
I pick one up,
like a thief's knife.
There is the depth of a lake
in a jewel.

2
Damp sand, the water licks
round, flat stones.
We skip them
across the lake, bursting
the surface into ripples.

3
We wade out to where
the bottoms of our rolled-up jeans
get wet. The best ones are
at these depths,
sparkling darkly under water.
We carry them to shore,
hidden in our shirts,
lay them on the steps,
where earlier that day
we watched the sun
spill diamonds into the lake,
brighter than any stone
beneath the surface.

don't worry about it. You'll end up all right. Just be sure to
find them eventually, or you'll end up like Jim; twenty six years
old and working full time at the carwash. But you can take your
time for a while, at least."

Fred was right, or rather, Thomas Wolfe was and it did make
sense. At that point I really didn't have any long term goals. I
was only sixteen, and here was Fred, always stressing the
importance of goals and personal fulfillment, now telling me that
it was okay to approach life in this relaxed sort of way.

I took the book back to school with me that fall and read as
much of it as I had time for. I didn't hear from Fred until the
middle of October when he sent me a card.

"Max, I thought I'd drop you a quick note before I write you
a long letter that deals with important things. I just got back
from Pennsylvania yesterday. I applied for a loan for next
semester. Didn't get it. I won't be able to go until next fall.
I'm staying here for a few days, then working in Milwaukee, and
to quote Kerouac, "digging the streets of life" and doing my
monkey dance (sorrowful-like). Don't get too intense about
school. Easier said than done, because knowledge and the
gathering of it is supposed to be intense! I'll write more later,
Fred."

He did write more, but much later. I didn't hear from him
until December, when I found out he was working in Tampa, Florida
for AT&T ("They think I'm a career man, but little do they
know...ha ha ha"). He said that he liked the job and the money
was good, but it wasn't what he was looking for. The last time I
heard from Fred, he was back in Milwaukee, teaching a government
course to what he called "virgin-minded undergrads", but again,
he stressed the fact that this was only a part time thing and he
was only doing it until he "saved enough money for next year's
tuition."

For some reason, I felt compelled to go back and read the
Drunken Beggar on Horseback section of the book. After reading
the last line of that paragraph, the line Fred had neglected to
read aloud, I understood him. "Must the beggar reel forever?" and
I thought about that question that Wolfe asked, and I wanted to
ask Fred what he thought about reeling forever.
When he found her, she was already down. He leaned to her head, heard the slow roar coming out of her lungs, enough liquid in there to drown a man, and he lifted her head, only once, ran his hand over the long line of her nose, then let her back down.

The barrel slid easily into her ear, as if it were a finger, and he said later, how he wanted then to whisper something to make it easier, but racked the single shell, then let his finger slip past the trigger, brushing it slightly.

Michael Delp
Shooting The Horse for Jim Tipton

until I did. Even at parties, Fred would drink a little too much and make me feel terrible guilt for not having read something. On one of these occasions, I remember him refusing to speak to me until I'd read The Great Gatsby.

"You've got to read Wolfe," he said, "Hold on a second, I'll find it for you," and by this time he was up off the couch and on his way to his bedroom, leaving me sitting stupidly in an old wingbacked chair. He was gone longer than I'd expected so I decided to go find him.

I walked through the kitchen and down the creaky hall to his bedroom, where he was choosing paperbacks from his shelves and then flinging them on his bed in a pile. I asked Fred what he was doing, since the pile was now spilling onto the floor in front of me.

"These are books you have to read," he said. "I'll let you borrow them until we see each other again. But you've gotta promise to read them."

"Fred, I'm not going to have time to read all these books," They were now all over the floor and there were hardly any left on the shelves. Fred stopped chucking the books and then, realizing what he'd just done, laughed at himself, and I joined him. "Yeah, I guess you're right," he said, still smiling. "But you'll have to read You Can't Go Home Again at least.

I told him that I would and he knelt down on the floor to begin looking for the book, searching through all the others. He finally found it and got up.

"There's one great part in here, about the drunken beggar on horseback. Here, I'll read you this paragraph." He folded the front cover over the back of the book and read aloud:

"And the great Goethe, accepting the inevitable truth that human growth does not proceed in a straight line to its goal, had compared the development and progress of mankind to the reelings of a drunken beggar on horseback. What was important, perhaps, was not that the beggar was drunk and reeling, but that he was mounted on his horse, and, however unsteadily, was going somewhere."

Fred put the book down on his dresser and looked at me, smiling.

"So you see, what Wolfe is saying, or what he means is that it's okay for you to reel off your course. I mean, Max, I know you're not sure what your goals are yet but you'll do okay, just
Max Jones

Wolfe's Lesson

It was the end of the summer, and Fred's college loan hadn't come through.
"What's the sense? What's the sense?" he kept yelling while pacing around the house, throwing his arms up and clutching the piece of paper in his fist, that mean and vicious lump of pulp that read: "We regret to inform you...". It would've been graduate school and, probably even more important than that, it would have been something to do for a year. Just something to do to use up a little bit of life.

I was almost eight years younger than Fred, but I considered him my best friend.

And returning from the kitchen with a cold bottle of Beck's Dark, Fred was looking happier, and old Mr. Harring was out back, sweating over a hot grill and cooking hamburgers for his factory pals, not worried about Fred, because Fred was a good kid and a twenty-four year old son can take care of himself.

"What are you gonna do?" I asked him, and he answered me quickly.

"First, I'll drive out to Pennsylvania- I can make three hundred bucks just doin' it... and it's for Jacobson, who you know I can't stand, but he's got money, and even though you know he can't stand me, he'll pay."

I only nodded and tried to read the newspaper. His trip didn't excite me- I wasn't going. I had to go back to school.

"It'd be kind of fun too. I'd be driving a truckload of sailboat parts. That's all. It's not really the money, it's just that it'll give me some time to think," he said.

"And see the country," I added.

"Yeah, and see the country."

"Then you'll come home."

He started to agree with me but stopped himself. "You can't go home again," he finally said. "You ever read that?"

"Read what?"

"You Can't Go Home Again by Thomas Wolfe. You've never read that?"

Now I saw it coming. Fred loved to read and when he found out that I hadn't read one of the "classics", he would harp on me.
That night I was absorbed in the cars that were passing me outside of my window. When I'm on day-time buses I stare at the familiar sites as we pass through Pasaic, Clifton, Union, and Bloomfield. I was thinking about my father who I'd just gone out to dinner with. I didn't think I would see him again for at least a month. That wasn't all that strange once I'd started going to boarding school but for some reason I was getting sentimental about it. I didn't even notice who was sitting next to me.

"Where are you from?" the old man asked.

I didn't hear what he said the first time. I turned and looked at him. He was about sixty, near retirement. He had the worn out commuter look. I still don't understand why those businessmen don't ever loosen their ties, even when they get on the bus. It seems like they sleep in their suits sometimes.

"Where are you from?" he repeated.

His breath smelled of alcohol.

"Montclair, Upper Montclair."

"I live there too. I've lived there since I started working in the city, twenty-two years ago."

"Oh really? What street do you live on?" I asked.

"Edgemont road."

I told him that I used to go to Edgemont School. He said that he lived only a couple hundred yards away from the school and that his kids had gone there for lower grade school too. We knew some of the same teachers.

The subject turned to his job. He told me that he was a Stock Analyst. I know someone who is an official on the New York Exchange. I told him the guy's name. He was impressed that I knew someone so prominent. He asked me what I wanted to go into, and what my parents do. I told him they're divorced. That line, "they're divorced" always throws older people. At first they seem like they want to say they're sorry, but then they remember, "This isn't the fifties, everyone is divorced nowadays." I could tell he felt badly anyway. I asked him what his name was. He took out a little pad and a pen and wrote in the middle of it:

Worth
The screen comes alive:
blind Americans bomb villages
as old men stumble for shelter,
quick prayers on their lips.
I am bombarded with Cambodian faces,
the sad stumps of limbs,
eyes stricken like wounded deer.
When the pictures stop their assault,
I hurry with others to the outside light,
a child's cry in bloodied streets
screaming guilt to my existence.

"Worth more or less?" he said.
I could tell he'd used the joke at least since he was in high school. He finished his name.

Worthington A. Pierce
I realized that his initials practically spelled W.A.S.P. .
"What's your name?" he asked.
"Homer."
"Now there's a name of unique character. You're the first Homer I've had the pleasure of meeting."
He laughed as we shook hands.
"How does one require a name such as 'Homer'?" he asked.
"That's what my parents named me."
"Well then, I suppose that's true. You probably didn't have much say in the matter."
He laughed again.
"I didn't like having the name when I was little because I used to get teased about it," I said.
"Yes, it must have been hard for you as a young man, but I'm sure that you developed personal fortitude. I believe name-calling to be a crutch for those who have no personal fortitude."
He said "personal fortitude" like those were the big words for him. He probably had them written in big block letters on a framed piece of paper which hung on his office wall. He paused for a moment.
"Homer is a Greek name, though I'm Jewish myself," I interjected.
"Ah, the Jews," he mused, "there is a people for whom I have great respect. They, together as a people, are the strongest and the greatest. I admire the Israeli people very much."
There he went, mixing up Jews and Israelis. A BIG mistake around some members of my family, worthy of at least two hours of heated lecturing on zionism. I didn't correct him.
"The smartest people in the world all crammed into a country not much bigger than New Jersey. Surrounded by hostile nations they manage to survive by their resolute toughness," he continued.
That was pretty strange to hear from a W.A.S.P. on the 7
o'clock bus home from the city. Overlooking the stereotypes about intelligence, I did get a flush of pride, I'm human. I told him a joke I'd heard.

"Someone once asked, 'If the Jews are so smart, why did they pick the only country in the middle east without any oil?'"

He didn't get it.

"As a matter of fact when my son Albert was a Sophomore in high school, I sent him to work on a Kibbutz."

He asked me if my family kept Kosher. I said no, and told him that we're non-practicing Jews, but that we have been brought up to identify as Jews culturally. That made Mr. Pierce very happy.

"I have some Hasidic friends," he told me, "and I once had the honor of attending their sabbath dinner. It was an educating experience. What is your favorite part of the ceremony?"

I was stumped. I don't even know what they do at those dinners besides chant some prayers. I told him that I liked the traditional candle lighting ceremony.

"That's my favorite part too. As a matter of fact I'm Jewish, Homer."

Why did I tell him my real name, I thought.

"My wife is a born Jew and I used to be a Protestant. I'm a free thinker and I've been intellectually stimulated by the Judaic Culture. I converted two years ago. I'm hoping to have my barmitzvah this April. I'd like you to come."

No way, I thought. I'm not stepping into this stock analyst's life.

"I go to boarding school. I won't be home in April," I told him.

I thanked God.

"That's too bad. I'd like you to come to our Sabbath dinner though, tomorrow night. Sadie would love to have a guest. Especially a young one."

"Thanks, but I don't know how to drive yet. I couldn't get to your house."

"That's o.k., I'll pick you up myself, after work."

"Well, I'm eating dinner with my dad Friday night."

"He's Jewish, bring him too."

I almost said, 'he doesn't like W.A.S.P.S'.

"I'd like to but he lives in the city," I said instead.

"Have him take the bus back from the city with me then."

---

Deb Bennett

Eggs

Fresh, white shells formed to a unique shape. We know it's not right but never think about it.

The surface snaps, just an echo on the copper bowl. A second try cracks the perfection.

In with the pure white and sun is blood. For a moment we feel guilt in the innocent miscarriage and realize who we are...
It was August, but grief hung over the house thick as a cloud streaking crooked paths on our faces. Only father's eyes were dry staring through a window in grandfather's trailer.

Later he left us at the food-laden table to wander among the surrounding blueberry fields. I followed him outside, hid in the foliage and watched him pick countless berries juice running down bleached knuckles staining white cuffs.

Turning away, I walked back my mind full of blueberries falling faster than tears.
In the middle of the desert lived a poet. He was the only poet in the world. There had been other poets. He was the Last Poet.

In the morning he would go out and walk in the desert and come back and write about what he had seen.

All he ever saw was sand.

His poems all began this way:

I Am
The Last Poet
In The World.

I Have
Seen
Sand.

is exactly that's so good to him.

Be nice if he noticed me, wish he would. Why should he notice me, such a nice day the way the sun's making the tree shadows fall on the grass like that and they shake around when the wind comes, just makes your heart flutter to watch so why should he notice me and won't it be beautiful when the birds come back from flying around?

III.

"Excuse me, may I sit?"
"Yeah, sure...Not my bench."
"No, I guess not...nice day."
"Sure."
"You don't agree?"
"I just did."
"Oh...I guess so."
"Say, may I ask you a question?"
"Anything."
"Why exactly do you come here and throw crumbs around?"
"For the birds."
"Oh, the birds."
"Yes, aren't they wonderful?"
"What, the birds?"
"Yes, aren't they dear?"
"Dear? Well, I'd imagine so...I suppose."
"So, why do you come here?"
"For the bench."
"Do you like the bench?"
"Well, no. Actually, I hadn't thought about it. May I ask you another question?"
"Anything."
"Do you have a headache?"
"Excuse me?"
"Do you have a headache?"
"Well, no. I don't think so. No, I don't. It's been so nice meeting you, but I really must be leaving now."
"Must you? Well, good bye."
I. Jack

This side of the park, grass only grows yellow, seems. Grass has to be green before it's yellow so why is it, me coming here for three years now that it's always been yellow? Maybe it was green the year before I got here, seems that way. Stopped growing when I got here. Bet the yellow grass has got that guy down and why's he tossing crumbs? No birds. Never are, seems. Funny, don't care if there aren't birds, not even noticing. He's throwing them for himself anyhow. Why doesn't he eat them after he throws them? That's funny, why doesn't he eat them after he throws them? Maybe he does when I leave. Maybe I will when he leaves, this place could use a bird and I could use the change.

Never noticed him before, walking around tossing crumbs. Seen him, not noticed. That's a fault. Wonder if he's noticed me. Doesn't seem like. Just tossing his crumbs. Guess his age, twenty-five to forty, anywhere, kind of a generic man. When he turns around I'll look for his UPC sign. That's funny, on his butt. He looks so down. Something really should be done about the grass being so yellow, drive you crazy with headaches of downness. That guy's got one, I can tell, a headache he's so down. I can tell.

II. Phillip

It's his eyes, that's it. I've always felt that he's happy because of his eyes. You can tell a man by his eyes. You can keep it out of everything, think that you're hiding it but it's the eyes that'll give you up. He's so happy, it cheers me just to look at those eyes. Makes me know that there's something good enough to do that to someone, that's good. Happier than usual today, maybe. I don't think I've seen him so happy and where are the birds? Such a nice day I guess they're all flying around enjoying it. Well, when they get back all tired, won't they just enjoy these crumbs? Sure they will and that guy always sits on that same bench. I wonder if he comes to this side of the park for all the birds. Be nice to talk to him, find out what it
Caitlin Krier

Doing Laundry

Saturdays.
The sky’s out of snow
so it just blows
what’s on the ground
back up.

I look over at you.
We run to the basement,
hold hands,
watch the sheets
in the dryer
tumble over themselves.

Upstairs, we don't spread
them out yet.
We keep them bunched,
strip naked,
then dive underneath,
and unfold each crease,
releasing warmth
back into our bodies.
"I guess my feet know where they want me to go. Walk on down."

- James Taylor

"The Hair's real, it's the head that's a fake."

- Steve Allen

"There will be no nuclear war. There's too much real estate involved."

- Frank Zappa

"The angels wanna wear my red shoes."

- Elvis Costello

"I AM LONO."

- Hunter S. Thompson

"...what our species needs most of all, right now, is simply a future."

- Lewis Thomas
Susan Lamb: "A great ox stands on my tongue."
- Aeschylus

Peter Steadman: "Tiddlee-Pum."
- A.A. Milne

Buffy Stockwell: "Active listening provokes reaction which is not always pleasant passive hearing."
- Ned Rorem

Chris Wick: "My real dad is Walt Wick."
- Max Jones

Michael Delp: "I need to go fishing, until I need to return."
- J. Michael Yates

Homer Bass: "This school does that to people."
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the red wheelbarrow

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