A red wheelbarrow
A red wheelbarrow
Observation
The End of My Life Begins
Praise
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cover: Hirosuke Hoashi

artwork: John Salenger
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PEAS IN A POD
Alyse Ball

We like this eternal closeness of pea-skin against pea-skin;
may we never cease this immodest caress.
One tight row, every breath sucked in.
Only we understand this tunnel vision.

I think there are four of us here,
dangling like a strip tease.
But if we are five, one is a mute,
swirling himself in the toughness of his dreams.
He will be the first to see the farmer coming,
first to breathe the air of space.

Praise

A man drowned.
He hit the water
and his boat started
spinning.

He may have reeled from starlight
or memory... I had been in bars
filling dark spots, staring
into dancer's breasts. Somehow
I wound up watching
the sand pass beneath my feet, again.

When he yelled, I waded out.
He was beyond my hands,
and for a while
I just sat there.

Days later, someone swore
they saw a wife and child
by the shore, a dog sprawled
in the tall grass. I
imagined an empty barn,
phoned some friends.
We all told stories
around the card table,
giving thanks for the lives
we pretend to live.

Mark
Observation

Watching Anya watch the waves
silent, in evening light
she stands motionless, waves moving in, out.

Water ripples as you blow into the well,
watch shadows alter the light
on the circular walls.

Watching Brian watch the sky,
face tilted, moon white on his face,
he stands wishing on the stars.
They fall, he counts them.

Waiting, you watch wind push leaves
around in the street.
You listen to the sound they make
whispering on the asphalt.

Maria Hornbacher

At the Philosophers' Picnic, 1986

The two of us wade through murky water
picking up what bits of trash we find:
cans, bottles, a pair of lens-less glasses,
an old engine, oily and half-buried in the ground.
We want to reach the island in the center
of the lake, intoxicating with its
tangled branches, rotting logs.

We are almost halfway there,
the water up to our knees.
Our jeans cling tightly to our skin,
and my father calls behind us,
but I ignore him keep on walking,
shoes and socks in one hand,
mud between my toes.

I once saw a painting of Ophelia,
floating, dead, down a clear river,
water-lilies blooming by her body,
dress up around her thighs like a gauzy veil.
On the island, I imagine I am she,
half-close my eyes and part my lips,
lean my head back, pointing my chin
towards the sky. Sophie tries to talk
to me, tells me that she is going back,
that she is hungry. I am dead;
I say nothing.

As she splashes back towards shore,
I pretend that my father is gone,
that the island is safe,
and I am beautiful.

--Jessica Sklar
The Beltway
(495 around D.C.)
Sarah Segura

I'll run down the hills by the roadside
and feel the wind from each passing car.
I'll run between the dividers of the highway
and listen for the passing beeps.
I'll run my fingers through the pebbles of the shoulder,
and pick out the plastic McDonald's straws.
I'll run to a carcass of a lab
and crouch down and stare at its eyes,
the collar tight around its neck,
head curved toward its back, the legs
crooked, the body bloated.
I'll run along the enter and exit ramps for the beltway
and sit in the circle.
I'll run faster than the bumper-to-bumper five o'clock traffic
and laugh at the drivers.
I'll run past the "Drive to survive" signs
past the skid marks,
the burnt flares,
the broken guard rail,
past the shattered glass
and pick up a white barrette.

The End Of My Life Begins
After Mark Strand
For my Family

When My heart stops registering on the monitor, I am declared
legally dead. The nurse tries to cover my face with a sheet and I
know I should not resist her but I do. She gets annoyed and is forced
to pin the sheet to my scalp. They lift me onto a cart and wheel me
out to the car. I love limousines. On the way to the funeral home I
wave out the window at the Route Nine commuters. They do not wave
back. My coffin is nice, although I was hoping for something with a
sauna or at least a compact disk player. Maybe I should have been
cremated. Then I could have had my ashes sprinkled over Hollywood,
Graceland, the local pet shop. During the service I listen to the
music but they closed the lid so I cannot see anything. Instead I
talk to myself. What is a nice girl like you doing in a place like
this? Want to go get a drink later? How about those Celtics! I
change my mind when they start to lower me into the grave. I kick off
the lid and laugh at the shock I see on people's faces. My Uncle
Howard tries to wrestle me to the ground while my Cousin Sylvia
tackles my legs, trying to force me back down in the silent earth. I
feel myself grow taller, like Alice when she ate the left side of the
mushroom. I grow and grow and grow until the cemetery is just a
matchbook that I crush under my heel. I will run and fly and live.
The end of my life begins.

Emily Jeanne Richmond
A Man Called Green

It was raining outside the tinted bus windows. Patches of dirty October snow blotched the brown grass along the roadsides. Desolate trees, stripped of autumn leaves, stood shadowless in reaped cornfields rolling by beneath a grey sky. This was the wasteland, the skeleton of fertile summer crops, a vast plane of dark wet stalks watched over by the rotting eyes of a forgotten scarecrow. It was in this land of blackbirds that I first and last met the man I now call "Green."

It was a year ago now, possibly more, he had flagged the bus somewhere between Saginaw and Toledo. I don't remember the time of day, or what I was wearing, although at the time I was working as a sales representative, so most likely a suit of grey or tan. What I do remember was when he stepped up onto the bus he was smoking, but not a singular cigarette, but two, hanging from his bottom lip. He wore an olive fatigue jacket dark from rain, and a large rimmed black hat, shadowing his eyes. He handed the driver a crumpled bill, and shifted the heavy pack he humped over his shoulder. He did not look about as he walked the aisle, and although there were many vacant seats about the bus, he worked his way pardoning himself to others as he bumped thighs and arms of sleeping people to the spot beside myself. With a deep sigh he fell into the plaid seat.

He immediately drew one of the cigarettes from his mouth, and with a gesture handed it to me. I remember he had very small hands, almost feminine, though it was the only small aspect of him. In the half-light of the bus he stood well past six feet, and the sleeves of his jacket stretched tightly across bulky arms. He removed his hat, revealing a short, shift-shape haircut, and with a smile he placed his hat gently on the head of a sleeping teen in the seat across from us. Turning to me I drew back at the sight of his eyes, milky blue-white, thick with cataracts. He smiled, nodding his head. I simply looked, my mouth hanging a slight jar.

"What's your favorite color?" he asked. His voice was raspy, warped or stripped, like threads on old copper pipe.

"Blue," I managed to blurt, my lip trembling, my forefinger burning from the cigarette he had given me a few moments before.

"That's too bad, a man who goes through life with a favorite color like blue, is destined to a world of hard times." The words rolled off his tongue in perfect rhythm with the wipers, cutting the rainstreaked windshield at the head of the bus. I said nothing, just held the paper in my hand like an infant.

Rising

This morning I awoke early,
laid in my warm white shell,
my chest rising and receding like waves,
watching the light dilute
cornered shadows.

This morning I stepped onto the frozen wood floor
and it stung my feet like jellyfish,
but because I didn't want to wake you,
still drowning in sleep,
I swallowed my cold cry.

This morning I sat on the porch,
sunlight spraying my bare arms,
and ate donut holes,
the powdered sugar sticking to my lips like sand.
I crossed my fingers, hoping you
wouldn't wake and find me gone,
evaporated, crystals of salt left on my pillow.

This morning I took my flippers and goggles,
jumped from rock to rock like a crab and
slid beneath the white crests,
holding breath in the nets of my lungs,
hair waving like seaweed around my
coral face.

This morning I swam in the sun,
the light washing away the sea,
thens tiptoed back to you
and kissed your pearly eyelids
with my mermaid mouth,
waiting for you,
your little clam,
to rise from under the heavy water.

Jessica Belle Smith
BEING PHOTOGENIC
Hether J. Selig
for my blood-father

1. Beyond the arched doorway, There's a blonde boy Slightly older than you. Have a seat and lose a checker game to him. Stifle your cries; The big voice will whine, "God damn you, little bitch." It belongs to a man Who smokes a sweet-smelling pipe, And makes love to a woman With hair parted in the center. He wants to take your picture. Remember, your nakedness is as soft As the sheepskin slippers he puts On your feet. You are beautiful with bruises.

2. It's late, and there are down Sleeping bags for you And the boy who always wins. The green one's for wetters only. The man is tucking you in Next to the blue and green candle. He gives sloppy kisses, always on the lips. Let the pine incense lull the fear From your belly, And the Kingston Trio will sing you A song about the man who Never returned.

thunderstorm raging outside a flickering blue windowframe.

"What friend? Cat got your tongue, got my eyes, that's what he's got of mine," he said, chuckling a little. I could say nothing. I was drawing blanks from a normally flowing barrow. All the sales pitches and quick words I had ever learned had left me, staring wide-eyed and naked into sightless eyes. "What...what's your favorite color?" "Green, how about another cigarette, that one looks quite smoked." "Ah...sure, please, why green?"

He fished into an inside pocket of his coat, retrieving a pack of filtered cigarettes as worn as the bill he had given the driver. He handed me one, then placed one between his lips, the filter out, tabacco in. I watched as though I was watched a tired bull in the arena, waiting for the matador to insert the blade into the bull's twisting side. He drew a silver lighter from the same pocket, and working the action reached over and with ease lit my cigarette, then hesitating before lighting his own. He grinned. "Jesus man, weren't you even going to tell me." he said jokingly, rotating the cigarette in his fingers and lighting the correct side. I had lost my words again, this time in shame and wonder. I was cut off before I was able to think of an explanation. "Green is my favorite color because I could not live without it. People tell me the trees are green, and anything that makes such beautiful music with the spring wind through it's leaves, is something I can't live without. People tell me the grass is green, and anything that feels so delicate, frosted with cool dew on a fall morning, is something I can't live without. Green is everything around you. Green is in the taste of straw, when I would sit on fences as a kid. And green is in the strenth of cold well water in the hot summer sun. You see friend, green is my favorite color because I have never seen it, yet I know it will always be there. I can live without my eyes, but not without green, and neither can you my friend." He stopped, dragging on his cigarette. "I see." "I know you do," he said, breaking into a small laugh, "And that's my whole point." and he smiled.

At the next stop this man, the man I now call "Green", got off the bus. And I remember as the bus engine revved and pulled away from the small country depot, the man did not wave, but bowed in the rain, not as the defeated bull, but as the matador.

--Zachary S. Dean
For M. in the Appalachians
by Lisa Marie Priddy

You were the first one I ever wished it for
It seemed so natural, you wading upstream
above Abraham's Falls, your beautifully sexless
black bathing suit slick and smooth on your hips,
clear water rushing past your knees, around your thighs
feet curled over round dark stones, braced
against the current, pressed against the flow. I hoped
you would never turn back, that you would never
come out of the water to have babies or men

Small fish swam ripples around your ankles,
The reflection of sunlight
on the bottom of your chin, on your breasts,
The splash of your knees lifting out, pushing forward
against the water,
The slap of cattails on outstretched arms -
face shining like a newborn's, flushed and wet;
the doctor never picked you up,
never took you from the Mother
or washed you with his rough male hands -
the cord was never cut.

Strange how men seem to love that scar of separation,
like to kiss the soft stomach around it, maybe
put their fingers in it; fill the small hollow
with something like dominance, something like loneliness,
something like love - but you wouldn't know.
I almost believe your stomach is perfectly smooth.

I sat on my rock downstream from you, dry and far
from the water, a pucker of belly button
shown through my swim suit, my legs firmly crossed
because it's polite, hoping to watch you
disappear upstream. Retrace the descent of the water
back to the source, back to the contractions of Earth
that split stones into halves and wholes, and the water
that gushed through the cleft. The sisterhood
of sun and stars above you, the female curves
of the stones beneath your feet;
It is right for you to be this way.

In Season, Out of Season

1.
He reaches his hand towards
the wind, moving south.
Navigation is not the art of finding landmarks,
it is consistency,
the moss that always grows
on the northern side of a tree.
He grasps a branch, pulls himself upward
and looks into nests, wanting to
see something besides shells.

2.
Below him, a spotted dog circles the tree.
He studies it for a moment,
shakes the branches and sends it running home.
The sky above him extends as far as he sees,
Too close, he whispers. Too far.
There is no one in the forest but himself,
he is the only one left behind.

3.
When the snow comes, it is past midnight.
He still crouches on the branch,
wondering if he has been forgotten.
The ground below has frozen,
but when he sleeps,
he dreams of pushing the soil,
leaving deep handprints in the ground
while the birds above him move in v-formations,
leaving no mark in the sky.

--Marc Olender
warmth, but the escalating elevator caused great tension. She opened
the steel fence-like elevator door to his loft where nothing had
changed including him. With his back to her, he stood painting
fervently, unaware of her presence. Silently she walked towards him
and shot him twice. He fell instantly on his unfinished painting, a
painting that would undoubtedly become his most famous.

by Melissa Kellner

In Rio, a nappy haired boy
mounts the roof of an elevated train.
As the train lurches forward to the place it had been
he rides the steel-blue blur between barrio and downtown
up in the wires where the air is so good.

In Pittsburg, a confidence man
is sleeping with the manager of a gallery
who has the knack of smiling her way into backstage passes.
But as the train lurches forward to the place it has been
the ghost of illusory fathers
follows her backstage and through her lover's untruths.

In Paris, in New England, in Aberdeen, a man
calls the weatherline in place of falling apples and revolutions.
The confidence man knows them well
calls them marks
and books bets on the boy's chances to stay on his feet
while the gallery manager leaves him in bed
and watches the moon without smiling.
And this little guy in the back of the train says,
"Somebody should be proofreading all of this."

Somewhere in North America, a young man
stands in heavy traffic waiting for love or direction
until a long dark car slows
and cornflakes are thrown from behind tinted windows
and the boy falls
or doesn't
while someone is worried about typos and busy signals.
But somewhere on a busy street corner, the young man
laughs at cornflakes in the gutter
and the manager leaves the con-man wheezing in the dark
and the ghost of her father on somebody's backstage
having been renewed from within by her lover's full face.

Eric Maywar
She made her way through SOHO, past the galleries and hidden bookstores to his building. Jessica had lived there longer than any of his other women; this gave her a feeling of superiority, however shallow it was. There would undoubtedly be a young, naive beauty there now whom he was reaping inspiration from; perhaps he had taken another wife. Jess, as he called her, cursed him for being so typical, an artist who overindulged in liquor, women, and mindgames. Unfortunately, this attracted her to him; he never ceased in providing her with a multitude of feelings. This was more than she could say for the other people involved in her life. He wasn't conventionally handsome; if he weren't a celebrated artist women would not be so easily intrigued. Women's approaches toward him were stereotypically distict. There were those who were naive and struggling as artists, who had followed his career for many years with admiration. They were infatuated even before setting eyes on him and were easily charmed. These girls would fall the hardest and then be discarded the fastest. One group consisted of masochists who thrived on the damage he reaked, but he saw no challenge in them so they too were thrown out like the trash. Then there were the deceivers who played games of their own, assuming they'd climb artistically or socially with such a man. Their strategy never worked, obviously. The wives were always older than the mistresses, but the wives stayed with him the shortest amount of time. It was Jess' impression that he found pleasure in having an ominous wife somewhere; this was a less complicated escape from an affair he'd grown too bored to continue.

Jessica was none of these. He approached her in a men's clothes store to ask her opinion on silk ties. And, unlike all the others, she was not involved in the exclusive art world or had any inclination to do so. Instead, she was a writer. Jess would later see that she had been an easy target for him with her unassuming beauty, soft spoken voice, and easy laugh. She was sincerely attracted to him without knowledge of his celebrity status. Within a week, she had moved into his vast loft and adjusted her personality in accordance of his liking, while forgetting who she was. After some months, she lost all of herself to him, and her control and confidence slipped away under his tyrannical rule. Blaming him was useless but deserved. He played off her mind and fed off her tears with morbid pleasure. He convinced her that she was dependant on him, end he was her only need. The affair ended when her brother received a hysterical phone call from her late one evening. He flew into New York the next day and brought her home.

Home provided rest and pleasant childhood memories, but her thoughts revolved around him, the distance and abruptness of the affair's ending. So now she stood outside his building aware of what was inside. The familiarity of the building's empty lobby gave her
I.
This morning,
You feel the metro
Awakening your throat with its tracks.
You feel your wife beside you in bed,
A ghost as grey as the sky she has put
In a paper bag for your lunch.
You eat the paint from her lips,
Talk of little things.

II.
This morning,
You realize that she has always
Kissed you that way,
When she lifts her chin,
You see she has a name tag
"Hello, my name is .......
Sewn into the seams of her skin.
Her mouth plastic,
Teeth dull.
"Goodbye," you say.

III.
This morning,
You end in your escape at the bridge,
Fingers curving to fit the sides of your face,
Feeling your voice unclench like a great hand.
You see your wife's form behind your eyes,
She is damp like the wind,
Grey beneath translucent sheets.

Desiree M. Hupy

kitchen fire

I'm standing in the kitchen, mother's words melting together,
Pouring out like hot oil.
Looking for a wall to lend support, a corner to hide in,
I see walls fall away,
corners vanishing into their own shadows.
My weight moves around the room, but my feet sit still,
one side of me sinking into the linoleum.
I feel my head swaying, circling upward toward the light
which is laughing, open mouthed, inhaling fire.
Mother spoke, her words too loud for me to hear,
er her searching going nowhere, lost in the forest of my fears.
Her arms could not find me, nor did I see them
slipping through the smoke.
it seemed years until I clung to her sweater
and touched the hands that saved me,
those walls which stand through all my fires.

Doug Chapman
The Dream of Winter Without Snow
by Zap Ryter
for Mary Doezema

the deepest green explodes into fantastic flame
of orange, burnt sienna
the wild auburn hair
of trees
rakes the blue across the sky
everything disappears into sleep, syllables
slip into the slur of slow, sound dreaming, the slate
is swept
clean inside unwinding light
we awake into a winter
without snow, we
gather together our brilliance-born, we will ascend
and we
will not shed our leaves to fall.

I play

I play and invite the others in.
I play when my emptiness feels a little emptier, pouring notes into dark hole.
I play for hours at a time in a little room in a basement, driven into myself by my own imperfection.
I play to sing when my voice is not soft enough, because few tears are in frail words.
I play when I have need of the sweet soulful puereynance of rock and roll.
I play in free fall, changes climbing past me as I am slowed under the dream's dark water.
Believe me, when I play, my children sing of love and pain.

I play at meals, cup full o' coffee in hand.
I play Led Zeppelin albums while standing on my toilet, or hamster patrol, or "we're not home right now", or whatever secret game is called for.
I play when I feel the weight of all the roads I have traveled in my heart.
I play as the sun rises over the highway.
I play with Herbie Hancock, Kirk Hammet, Bird, Bartley Mulligan, Trane, David Mustaine, Sanborn, Gilmore, and Simmes
I play with Doug Tidesbek, Joey Gibralta, Pokey, The Post-Beatnik Rock Opera, Bad Boy, Lee Gregory, Sean, Lyndell, and Anthony
Believe me no one could ask for more wonderful playmates.

I play when I think about how far away you are, and how close you'll never be again.
I play hide and seek with officer Bob, looking over my shoulder to find yet another helicopter, the kind that whispers like a shark.
I play Rich's fantastic firewalking game, and because I see the kids who have followed us have "got it".
I play saxophone, flute, questions, frisbee, Blue Bossa, Mike Tyson's Punch-Out, Hideaway, Bach's flute Sonata in F, Solar, hackeysock, head screw, the stereo too loud, La Villa Strangiato, Havona, Ferling etudes 1-4, Nothing Personal and the blues.
Believe me, because I play for keeps.

Matt Reynolds
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Matt Reynolds
Story of the Screamer
(on the painting "The Scream", by Edvard Munch)

I. This morning,
You feel the metro
Awakening your throat with its tracks.
You feel your wife beside you in bed,
A ghost as grey as the sky she has put
In a paper bag for your lunch.
You eat the paint from her lips,
Talk of little things.

II. This morning,
You realize that she has always
Kissed you that way,
When she lifts her chin,
You see she has a name tag
"Hello, my name is ......"
Sewn into the seams of her skin.
Her mouth plastic,
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pouring out like hot oil,
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Doug Chapman
She made her way through SOHO, past the galleries and hidden bookstores to his building. Jessica had lived there longer than any of his other women; this gave her a feeling of superiority, however shallow it was. There would undoubtedly be a young, naive beauty there now whom he was reaping inspiration from; perhaps he had taken another wife. Jess, as he called her, cursed him for being so typical, an artist who overindulged in liquor, women, and mindgames. Unfortunately, this attracted her to him; he never ceased in providing her with a multitude of feelings. This was more than she could say for the other people involved in her life. He wasn't conventionally handsome; if he weren't a celebrated artist, women would not be so easily intrigued. Women's approaches toward him were stereotypically distict. There were those who were naive and struggling as artists, who had followed his career for many years with admiration. They were infatuated even before setting eyes on him and were easily charmed. These girls would fall the hardest and then be discarded the fastest. One group consisted of masochists who thrived on the damage he reaked, but he saw no challenge in them so they too were thrown out like the trash. Then there were the deceivers who played games of their own, assuming they'd climb artistically or socially with such a man. Their strategy never worked, obviously. The wives were always older than the mistresses, but the wives stayed with him the shortest amount of time. It was Jess' impression that he found pleasure in having an ominous wife somewhere; this was a less complicated escape from an affair he'd grown too bored to continue.

Jessica was none of these. He approached her in a men's clothes store to ask her opinion on silk ties. And, unlike all the others, she was not involved in the exclusive art world or had any inclination to do so. Instead, she was a writer. Jess would later see that she had been an easy target for him with her unassuming beauty, soft spoken voice, and easy laugh. She was sincerely attracted to him without knowledge of his celebrity status. Within a week, she had moved into his vast loft and adjusted her personality in accordance of his liking, while forgetting who she was. After some months, she lost all of herself to him, and her control and confidence slipped away under his tyrannical rule. Blaming him was useless but deserved. He played off her mind and fed off her tears with morbid pleasure. He convinced her that she was dependant on him, and he was her only need. The affair ended when her brother received a hysterical phone call from her late one evening. He flew into New York the next day and brought her home.

Home provided rest and pleasant childhood memories, but her thoughts revolved around him, the distance and abruptness of the affair's ending. So now she stood outside his building aware of what was inside. The familiarity of the building's empty lobby gave her
warmth, but the escalating elevator caused great tension. She opened
the steel fence-like elevator door to his loft where nothing had
changed including him. With his back to her, he stood painting
fervently, unaware of her presence. Silently she walked towards him
and shot him twice. He fell instantly on his unfinished painting, a
painting that would undoubtedly become his most famous.

by Melissa Kellner

In Rio, a nappy haired boy
mounts the roof of an elevated train.
As the train lurches forward to the place it had been
he rides the steel-blue blur between barrio and downtown
up in the wires where the air is so good.

In Pittsburg, a confidence man
is sleeping with the manager of a gallery
who has the knack of smiling her way into backstage passes.
But as the train lurches forward to the place it has been
the ghost of illusory fathers
follows her backstage and through her lover's untruths.

In Paris, in New England, in Aberdeen, a man
calls the weatherline in place of falling apples and revolutions.
The confidence man knows them well
calls them marks
and books bets on the boy's chances to stay on his feet
while the gallery manager leaves him in bed
and watches the moon without smiling.
And this little guy in the back of the train says,
"Somebody should be proofreading all of this."

Somewhere in North America, a young man
stands in heavy traffic waiting for love or direction
until a long dark car slows
and cornflakes are thrown from behind tinted windows
and the boy falls
or doesn't
while someone is worried about typos and busy signals.
But somewhere on a busy street corner, the young man
laughs at cornflakes in the gutter
and the manager leaves the con-man wheezing in the dark
and the ghost of her father on somebody's backstage
having been renewed from within by her lover's full face.

Eric Maywar
For M, in the Appalachians
by Lisa Marie Priddy

You were the first one I ever wished it for
It seemed so natural, you wading upstream
above Abraham's Falls, your beautifully sexless
black bathing suit slick and smooth on your hips,
clear water rushing past your knees, around your thighs
feet curled over round dark stones, braced
against the current, pressed against the flow. I hoped
you would never turn back, that you would never
come out of the water to have babies or men

Small fish swam ripples around your ankles,
The reflection of sunlight
on the bottom of your chin, on your breasts,
The splash of your knees lifting out, pushing forward
against the water,
The slap of cattails on outstretched arms -
face shining like a newborn's, flushed and wet;
the doctor never picked you up,
ever took you from the Mother
or washed you with his rough male hands -
the cord was never cut

Strange how men seem to love that scar of separation,
like to kiss the soft stomach around it, maybe
put their fingers in it; fill the small hollow
with something like dominance, something like loneliness,
something like love - but you wouldn't know.
I almost believe your stomach is perfectly smooth.

I sat on my rock downstream from you, dry and far
from the water, a pucker of bellybutton
shown through my swim suit, my legs firmly crossed
because it's polite, hoping to watch you
disappear upstream. Retrace the descent of the water
back to the source, back to the contractions of Earth
that split stones into halves and wholes, and the water
that gushed through the cleft. The sisterhood
of sun and stars above you, the female curves
of the stones beneath your feet;
it is right for you to be this way.

In Season, Out of Season

1.
He reaches his hand towards
the wind, moving south.
Navigation is not the art of finding landmarks,
it is consistenc,
the moss that always grows
on the northern side of a tree.
He grasps a branch, pulls himself upward
and looks into nests, wanting to
see something besides shells.

2.
Below him, a spotted dog circles the tree.
He studies it for a moment,
shakes the branches and sends it running home.
The sky above him extends as far as he sees.
Too close, he whispers. Too far.
There is no one in the forest but himself,
his the only one left behind.

3.
When the snow comes, it is past midnight.
He still crouches on the branch,
wondering if he has been forgotten.
The ground below has frozen,
but when he sleeps,
he dreams of pushing the soil,
leaving deep handprints in the ground
while the birds above him move in v-formations,
leaving no mark in the sky.

--Marc Olender
BEING PHOTOGENIC
Hether J. Selig
for my blood-father

1.

Beyond the arched doorway,
There's a blonde boy
Slightly older than you.

Have a seat and lose a checker game
to him.

Stifle your cries;
The big voice will whine, "God damn you, little bitch."

It belongs to a man
Who smokes a sweet-smelling pipe,
And makes love to a woman
With hair parted in the center.

He wants to take your picture.
Remember, your nakedness is as soft
As the sheepskin slippers he puts
On your feet.

You are beautiful with bruises.

2.

It's late, and there are down
Sleeping bags for you
And the boy who always wins.

The green one's for wetters only.

The man is tucking you in
Next to the blue and green candle.
He gives sloppy kisses, always on the lips.

Let the pine incense lull the fear
From your belly,
And the Kingston Trio will sing you
A song about the man who
Never returned.

thunderstorm raging outside a flickering blue windowframe.

"What friend? Cat got your tongue, got my eyes, that's what
he's got of mine," he said, chuckling a little.

I could say nothing, I was drawing blanks from a normally
flowing barrow. All the sales pitches and quick words I had ever
learned had left me, staring wide-eyed and naked into sightless eyes.

"Wha...what's your favorite color?"

"Green, how about another cigarette, that one looks quite
smoked."

"Ah, sure, please, why green?"

He fished into an inside pocket of his coat, retrieving a
pack of filtered cigarettes as worn as the bill he had given the
driver. He handed me one, then placed one between his lips, the
filter out, tabacco in. I watched as though I was watched a tired
bull in the arena, waiting for the matador to insert the blade into
the bull's twisting side. He drew a silver lighter from the same
pocket, and working the action reached over and with ease lit my
cigarette, then hesitating before lighting his own. He grinned.

"Jesus man, weren't you even going to tell me."

he said jokingly, rotating the cigarette in his fingers and lighting the
correct side. I had lost my words again, this time in shame and
wonder. I was cut off before I was able to think of an explanation.

"Green is my favorite color because I could not live without
it. People tell me the trees are green, and anything that makes such
beautiful music with the spring wind through it's leaves, is something
I can't live without. People tell me the grass is green, and anything
that feels so delicate, frosted with cool dew on a fall morning, is
something I can't live without. Green is everything around you. Green
is in the taste of straw, when I would sit on fences as a kid, and
Green is in the strengih of cold well water in the hot summer sun. You
see friend, green is my favorite color because I have never seen it,
yet I know it will always be there. I can live without my eyes, but
not without green, and neither can you my friend." He stopped,
dragging on his cigarette.

"I see."

"I know you do," he said, breaking into a small laugh, "And
that's my whole point." and he smiled.

At the next stop this man, the man I now call "Green", got
off the bus. And I remember as the bus engine revved and pulled away
from the small country depot, the man did not wave, but bowed in
the rain, not as the defeated bull, but as the matador.

--Zachary S. Dean
It was raining outside the tinted bus windows. Patches of dirty October snow blotched the brown grass along the roadsides. Desolate trees, stripped of autumn leaves, stood shadowless in reaped cornfields rolling by beneath a grey sky. This was the wasteland, the skeleton of fertile summer crops, a vast plane of dark wet stalks watched over by the rotting eyes of a forgotten scarecrow. It was in this land of blackbirds that I first and last met the man I now call "Green."
It was a year ago now, possibly more, he had flagged the bus somewhere between Saginaw and Toledo. I don't remember the time of day, or what I was wearing, although at the time I was working as a sales representative, so most likely a suit of grey or tan. What I do remember was when he stepped up onto the bus he was smoking, but not a singular cigarette, but two, hanging from his bottom lip. He wore a olive fatigue jacket dark from rain, and a large rimmed black hat, shadowing his eyes. He handed the driver a crumpled bill, and shifted the heavy pack he humped over his shoulder. He did not look about as he walked the aisle, and although there were many vacant seats about the bus, he worked his way pardoning himself to others as he bumped thighs and arms of sleeping people to the spot beside myself. With a deep sigh he fell into the plaid seat.

He immediately drew one of the cigarettes from his mouth, and with a gesture handed it to me. I remember he had very small hands, almost feminine, though it was the only small aspect of him. In the half-light of the bus he stood well past six feet, and the sleeves of his jacket stretched tightly across bulky arms. He removed his hat, revealing a short, shift-shape haircut, and with a smile he placed his hat gently on the head of a sleeping teen in the seat across from us. Turning to me I drew back at the sight of his eyes, milky blue-white, thick with cataracts. He smiled, nodding his head. I simply looked, my mouth hanging a slight jar.
"What's your favorite color?" he asked. His voice was raspy, warped or stripped, like threads on old copper pipe. "Blue," I managed to blurt, my lip trembling, my forefinger burning from the cigarette he had given me a few moments before.

"That's too bad, a man who goes through life with a favorite color like blue, is destined to a world of hard times." The words rolled off his tongue in perfect rhythm with the wipers, cutting the rainstreaked windshield at the head of the bus.
I said nothing, just held the paper in my hand like an infant.

Rising
This morning I awoke early, lay in my warm white shell, my chest rising and receding like waves, watching the light dilute cornered shadows.
This morning I stepped onto the frozen wood floor and it stung my feet like jellyfish, but because I didn't want to wake you, still drowning in sleep, I swallowed my cold cry.
This morning I sat on the porch, sunlight spraying my bare arms, and ate donut holes, the powdered sugar sticking to my lips like sand. I crossed my fingers, hoping you wouldn't wake and find me gone, evaporated, crystals of salt left on my pillow.
This morning I took my flippers and goggles, jumped from rock to rock like a crab and slid beneath the white crests, holding breath in the nets of my lungs, hair waving like seaweed around my coral face. This morning I swam in the sun, the light washing away the sea, then tiptoed back to you and kissed your pearly eyelids with my mermaid mouth, waiting for you, my little clam, to rise from under the heavy water.
Jessica Belle Smith
The Beltway
(495 around D.C.)
Sarah Segura

I'll run down the hills by the roadside
and feel the wind from each passing car.
I'll run between the dividers of the highway
and listen for the passing beeps.
I'll run my fingers through the pebbles of the shoulder,
and pick out the plastic McDonald's straws.
I'll run to a carcass of a Lab
and crouch down and stare at its eyes,
the collar tight around its neck,
head curved toward its back, the legs
crooked, the body bloated.
I'll run along the enter and exit ramps for the beltway
and sit in the circle.
I'll run faster than the bumper-to-bumper five o'clock traffic
and laugh at the drivers.
I'll run past the "Drive to survive" signs
past the skid marks,
the burnt flares,
the broken guard rail,
past the shattered glass
and pick up a white barrette.

The End Of My Life Begins
After Mark Strand
For my Family

When my heart stops registering on the monitor, I am declared
legally dead. The nurse tries to cover my face with a sheet and I
know I should not resist her but I do. She gets annoyed and is forced
to pin the sheet to my scalp. They lift me onto a cart and wheel me
out to the car. I love limousines. On the way to the funeral home I
wave out the window at the Route Nine commuters. They do not wave
back. My coffin is nice, although I was hoping for something with a
sauna or at least a compact disk player. Maybe I should have been
cremated. Then I could have had my ashes sprinkled over Hollywood,
Graceland, the local pet shop. During the service I listen to the
music but they closed the lid so I cannot see anything. Instead I
talk to myself. What is a nice girl like you doing in a place like
this? Want to go get a drink later? How about those Celtics! I
change my mind when they start to lower me into the grave. I kick off
the lid and laugh at the shock I see on people's faces. My Uncle
Howard tries to wrestle me to the ground while my Cousin Sylvia
tackles my legs, trying to force me back down in the silent earth. I
feel myself grow taller, like Alice when she ate the left side of the
mushroom. I grow and grow and grow until the cemetery is just a
matchbook that I crush under my heel. I will run and fly and live.
The end of my life begins.

Emily Jeanne Richmond
Observation

Watching Anya watch the waves
silent, in evening light
she stands motionless, waves moving in,
out.

Water ripples as you blow into the well,
watch shadows alter the light
on the circular walls.

Watching Brian watch the sky,
face tilted, moon white on his face,
he stands wishing on the stars.
They fall, he counts them.

Waiting, you watch wind push leaves
around in the street.
You listen to the sound they make
whispering on the asphalt.

Maria Hornbacher

At the Philosophers' Picnic, 1986

The two of us wade through murky water
picking up what bits of trash we find:
cans, bottles, a pair of lens-less glasses,
an old engine, oily and half-buried in the ground.
We want to reach the island in the center
of the lake, intoxicating with its
tangled branches, rotting logs.

We are almost halfway there,
the water up to our knees.
Our jeans cling tightly to our skin,
and my father calls behind us,
but I ignore him keep on walking,
shoes and socks in one hand,
mud between my toes.

I once saw a painting of Ophelia,
floating, dead, down a clear river,
water-lilies blooming by her body,
dress up around her thighs like a gauzy veil.
On the island, I imagine I am she,
half-close my eyes and part my lips,
lean my head back, pointing my chin
towards the sky. Sophie tries to talk
to me, tells me that she is going back,
that she is hungry. I am dead;
I say nothing.

As she splashes back towards shore,
I pretend that my father is gone,
that the island is safe,
and I am beautiful.

--Jessica Sklar
PEAS IN A POD
Alyse Ball

We like this eternal closeness of pea-skin against pea-skin;
may we never cease this immodest caress.
One tight row, every breath sucked in.
Only we understand this tunnel vision.

I think there are four of us here,
dangling like a strip tease.
But if we are five, one is a mute,
swirling himself in the toughness of his dreams.
He will be the first to see the farmer coming,
first to breathe the air of space.

Praise
A man drowned.
He hit the water
and his boat started
spinning.

He may have reeled from starlight
or memory...I had been in bars
filling dark spots, staring
into dancer's breasts. Somehow
I wound up watching
the sand pass beneath my feet, again.

When he yelled, I waded out.
He was beyond my hands,
and for a while
I just sat there.

Days later, someone swore
they saw a wife and child
by the shore, a dog sprawled
in the tall grass. I
imagined an empty barn,
phoned some friends.
We all told stories
around the card table,
giving thanks for the lives
we pretend to live.

Mark
He who loves with passion lives on the edge of the desert.
East Indian Proverb

The young girl who only because she was walking arm in arm with her sweetheart looked quietly around.
Kafka

One must always be drunk... on wine, on poetry, on virtue according to taste.
C. Baudelaire

But such is the irresistible nature of truth, that all it asks and all it wants is the liberty of appearing.
T. Paine
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