Dear Red Wheelbarrow and editors, as you may know, this is a cover letter. My name is Cody Williams and I have submitted three poems to the print. Enjoy please.

Poem submissions are titled Red Wheelbarrow Submission

Sledgeman

Poliock, the Sunburst Miscreant

Slow Orbit in Central Park

thanks.

Cody Williams (hemingway 1918-

Title: How to Write a Poem

na Davey is the Red Wheelbarrow

How to Write a Poem

Winter Skin,

Aaaaaaand

Voyeuristic God

Lucy Nepstad's Submissions 10/9/06
TJ 608-772-4859
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and thus the cover sheet was born
The editors would like to give serious props to Michael “Diggity” Delp for advising this edition of the *Red Wheelbarrow*, Lil’ Alex Ruesch for lending us his internet and forgery expertise, and most graciously, the outrageously def Queen Therese for keeping it real.

Much Love,

M.C. Cramer

&

The Notorious K.A.T.
so much depends
upon
a red cadillac
slick
with turtle
wax
beside the white
chicks

-Reginald O'Hare Gibson

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First you will think about the trees, and how the sky looks setting itself up nakedly behind and in between their leaves. Then you muse on the grass under your body and the intense crushing vacuum of your weight, your sole’s bitter mote since before the dawn of man, our longing to be pulled into the earth. It is the difference between gravity and levity. You turn to the mouth on the face on the body on the hart beside you, all hair and skin and smell, like a hot shower. You kiss and you understand the difference—this now, is levitation. It is being turned inside out, Pulled out through your mouth. It is some kind of root in your center. It is poetry.

My arms will not stretch around the world and hold it up, like my mother’s will. Each time my heart pumps so fast my body breaks, she sews me together.

I learn about flowers from the stems I break. I try to imagine a being without consciousness, and wonder if a tulip spreads because it knows it needs the sun.

I wonder when men decided to put a pattern on nature. We still do not understand that there is no math, no equation to the way things grow.

From my bed, Father Moon looks as big as my thumbnail, something I could pull down from the sky. I would wear him around my neck on a gold chain.

You showed me how to follow maps and water and the sun. I will always know where I am as long as I can feel the ground I walk on.
Two days before my 8th grade graduation, Crazy Martha, the mentally retarded adult daughter of an elderly couple who lived around the block from me, diverted from the route she had been taking since she was 10 years old (an endless pacing around her block, necessary to keep her muscles from going stiff). At approximately 3:45 P.M. on a Friday, close to finishing my final walk home from middle school, I saw her step into the road on Fairview Street. At exactly that moment, an R.V. hurtled out of a nearby alley out of nowhere, or as close to out of nowhere as a 7 ton motor home can hurtle, and crushed Martha flat. It proceeded to crash into a tree, this causing the engine to explode and burning the driver beyond recognition.

The R.V. was without license plates and appeared to be stolen, but was later discovered to belong to the son of dead George. It was identified by the owner's younger sister, accompanied by Tootsie, the Dalmatian, by a dated Wellstone! campaign sticker and a sign acquired by her father in his days of travel, a Woody Allan quote, that read, "More than any other time in history, man faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."
When it comes down to it, I have consistently failed to fit myself into any typical niche of “cool.” The fact that I’m the product of either Waldorf or Artistically-based private schools hasn’t helped either. It has become a problem. Often I find myself wanting to write about things I haven’t done and say I did. It’s easy to tell the story of when I walked down the highway and was approached by $25 in the hands of a man who asked how much it would get him, except for the fact that it never happened to me, only to someone I know. Likewise, although I have at various times, been approached by strange men on the bus, no one has ever followed me into Walgreen’s shouting, “Will you be my date tonight?” These are “cool” stories. They are reducible to a simple one-liner that makes someone else’s life look intriguing and quirky. It’s unfair that the people who tell these stories are often inherently mysterious as well—icebergs with underwater mountains I can’t see. I wish I were an iceberg, but I’m more of a demolition ball; a few momentous crashes and all that’s left is rubble.

I was a Waldorfian, or Waldork, until a few months past my thirteenth birthday. Going to school involved memorizing long poems, singing songs about mythical figures such as Loki and Thor, and over an hour of recess through eighth grade. My school was full of love affairs between parents and teachers, victimized women who

TOVE DANOVICH

The first time I saw Crazy Martha making circles around her block I was on my way to visit the kindergarten of a private school and see whether or not I wanted to attend. It turned out I liked the place and stayed there for eight years. As you might imagine, in that time a lot happened.

Locally, a man who had lived in the house across the street from me for 80 some years, I think he went by George, died from a stroke out of nowhere, or as close to out of nowhere as a death can be when you’re 80 some years old. Problem was he didn’t make out any sort of a will, so his 2nd wife got into a big legal battle with his kids from the first marriage. I don’t recall any specifics except that the wife walked away with most of the estate, George’s eldest son with the much disputed over R.V., and Wendy, his youngest, with Spot the Dalmatian, whose name was changed immediately because Wendy felt it lacked personality.

On a slightly broader scale, Paul Wellstone, who was running for Governor in Minnesota, died in a plane crash along with the mother of a few friends of mine and some other people working on his campaign. At a youth group lock-in a month or so later Luke Cloyd, the son of the woman in the crash, was warned that if he didn’t cut the crap and stop bouncing this basketball during a discussion we were having about community tolerance, his mother and father would be called to pick him up. To this he responded, “Good luck reaching my mother. She’s dead.”

Internationally, war and other world tragedies kept enough distance from home for me to remain disinterested. An exception to this was the particularly horrendous genocide in Rwanda, brought to my attention via my father, who was reading a book on the subject. I recall being distinctly tickled by the actual existence of “Tutsis” and, to my teacher’s horror, brought the knowledge to show and tell on the day that followed.

Kat Reece
I wanted “something better” for their children and New Age people who believed more
literally in the folk tales about Mother Earth and Father Sky than the first graders who
sang a prayer to them every afternoon before lunch. Almost no one knows that Waldorf
schools even exist and I grew up learning to immediately answer the familiar “Wal-
what?” with a reference to the salad.

Not to be unfair to my childhood, but it’s hard to explain anything about my
elementary school without making it sound like a cult. In first grade there’s even a Wal-
dorf initiation where all the old kindergarteners prepare to be inaugurated to grade
school status. We all dressed in white gowns and walked a labyrinth of wavering tea
lights until we were greeted by an eighth grader holding out a large rose.

The things that were cool to me growing up are completely unrelated to the
childhood standards of anyone I know. Girls weren’t allowed to wear makeup until 7th
grade and I was practiced in picking out shades that were just barely unnatural with
names like soft heather, calico, damson, and pistachio. At snack we all ate Luna and
Cliff bars, Fruity Booty, trail mix without the m&ms...anything you could pick up ex-
cusively at the health food store. No one ever had gushers or fruit roll-ups. The few
times I remember someone bringing such “mainstream” things to lunch, everyone else
watched them eat as if they were from a different species, like the expression on peo-
ple’s faces when Elvis’ hips graced the television for the first time. When I was eleven,
all the Waldorf fifth graders in Washington got together to compete in the Greek
Out there, in San Lorenzo, between the cobblestones and the heat, under temporary shade of stalls and stands reeking of leather, I push against currents of people. I see a man with a lazy eye and gimp leg, lightning in his eyes and brown stained teeth. The little Russian girl dragged along behind her mother, shoulder blades like wings protruding from her back. There are the boys who believe they are men, crowding around in a circle dressed in designer jeans and Armani sunglasses, saying ugly things about people who cut around the group and their private could of smoke. There are the old women in their linen knee-length skirts, low heels and nylon stockings, curled over with the weight of their grocery bags, eyes down. There are the gypsies, who I have gotten used to ignoring, floating through the crowd with cardboard signs with magazine cut-outs of children, chanting a memorized plea to the jingle of coins in a cup: Ho due bambini, per favore, abbiamo fame. I reach the corner and someone catches my elbow, fat old stubbly man who smells of sweat and fish. He tells me I’m beautiful and gives me half-pack of cigarettes, questions me before he lets go. I give the cigarettes to the gypsy woman, she thanks me, then asks for spare change, and I see, for a moment, the perfect machinery of living. There are coils and cords that weave and connect, in and out and between human hearts and the tight packed alley. For a moment, we are cards in a perfect hand, then shuffled and dealt again.

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Games. That year the cool people were the ones who could throw their discus the farthest, get their javelin to stick perfectly in the ground, and run with the most grace. We had gnomes, hand-sewn dolls and all the best dress up clothes to entertain us since any technology was strongly looked down on for the lower grades. I didn’t know top 40 radio existed was when I was in fourth grade. It was not normal.

So I live vicariously through the stories of people around me and wish they were mine to tell. While my friends are getting roses from strangers on the street who tell them, “you are beautiful,” being mistaken for highway prostitutes, meeting gorgeous Brazilian men on the plane, going on road trips, going to parties, or simply being accosted by unwashed men on the bus—my life, in comparison, is lacking. I wish the things I enjoy were more exciting. Most of them involve simply sitting in front of my computer. I want danger in my memories, not the sore muscles that come after spending hours laughing at entire archives of web comics. My one opportunity to seem even slightly independent, driving the three hours to Grand Rapids a few days after I got my license, was ruined by listening to my boyfriend yell, “Red means stop! Red means stop!” at various intervals on the drive. As much as I wish I could be the female equivalent of James Dean, I am simply not that rebellious.

In the first days of leather jacket-disaffection, I would have been the “square,” the one who rarely likes to take risks. I refuse to order pizza because I don’t like talking

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Out there, in San Lorenzo, between the cobblestones and the heat, under temporary shade of stalls and stands reeking of leather, I push against currents of people. I see a man with a lazy eye and gimp leg, lightning in his eyes and brown stained teeth. The little Russian girl dragged along behind her mother, shoulder blades like wings protruding from her back. There are the boys who believe they are men, crowding around in a circle dressed in designer jeans and Armani sunglasses, saying ugly things about people who cut around the group and their private could of smoke. There are the old women in their linen knee-length skirts, low heels and nylon stockings, curled over with the weight of their grocery bags, eyes down. There are the gypsies, who I have gotten used to ignoring, floating through the crowd with cardboard signs with magazine cut-outs of children, chanting a memorized plea to the jingle of coins in a cup: Ho due bambini, per favore, abbiamo fame. I reach the corner and someone catches my elbow, fat old stubbly man who smells of sweat and fish. He tells me I’m beautiful and gives me a half-pack of cigarettes, questions me before he lets go. I give the cigarettes to the gipsy woman, she thanks me, then asks for spare change, and I see, for a moment, the perfect machinery of living. There are coils and cords that weave and connect, in and out and between human hearts and the tight packed alley. For a moment, we are cards in a perfect hand, then shuffled and dealt again.

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ALLIE QUILLER
My sister’s the only child
I’ve ever known who doesn’t
like eating snow. She’ll squint
her eyes and apologize
before she steps outside
onto a new layer drifted
from the sky. She worries
that the worn down soles
of her boots might hurt;
that bitter crunch
of walking must be the sound
of bones breaking.

She believes in fairies;
says their tiny bodes fill
the sky and float down
to earth on frozen water-
snow, each flake a silky
lace skirt. They bring
the cold, hold trees in icy
sleep until they shed
their skirts in the spring
and melt down into the soil
to live in the twisted homes
of flower roots.

I’m too shy to start most conversations. I’ve never put
effort into any instrument to be really good at something inherently cool like
guitar. I would be cool if I played guitar! I would be cool if I had any diagnosed disor-
ders! I would be cool if I were more aloof! More mysterious! I would be cooler if my
boots were thicker and fuzzier than yours! I would have been cooler if I had just had
normal snacks in elementary school or those tennis shoes that light up when you walk.
My mom said they were “too cheap” and wouldn’t buy them for me.

In Waldorf School, although we celebrated normal holidays like Christmas
and Halloween, we also had ones that most people have never heard of. There was St.
Nicholas day when everyone left their indoor slippers out overnight only to find wal-
nuts, clementines, and chocolate coins in their shoes the next morning. On St. Lucia
day, the third graders dressed in white gowns and walk in a procession through each
classroom, singing. One girl, usually the tallest, was Lucia, wearing a candlelit wreath
on top of her head while the girl behind her carried a pitcher of water in case Lucia’s
hair caught fire.

Each year in May we had a large festival at school. People brought potluck
food and flowers permeated every activity, but the focal point was a big maypole with
ribbons that each grade wove together in increasingly complicated patterns. Everyone
made flower wreaths to wear in their hair, and it was one of my favorite festivals until I
I overheard my mom talking to another parent about the significance of the maypole.

"You see, the men were the ones who went into the woods and chopped down a tree to use for the pole. The women dug the hole the pole was lowered into." Even at eleven years I knew enough to be disturbed that I was involved in something so graphically sexual.

The first anecdotes I collected came from riding the Milwaukee city bus. When I was thirteen, an eighteen year old boy moved next to me on the empty bus and started hitting on me. When he found out I was woefully underage, his first words were "Your parents wouldn't like you hanging around someone like me anyway. Stay away from guys like me and don't start smoking." It was awkward. Another time I met a man named Harry who showed me extensive wallet-size photos of his cats over an uncomfortable ten minutes as a reward for being polite. I saw him a year later on the same bus holding a faded leather wallet out to a tall brunette.

I just wish I had more stories like this. More comfort in weaving a fiction for my own life. I hear people talk about the adrenaline rush of sky-diving and bungee jumping and my first thought is that I'm afraid of heights. I want to infuse my life with lies, but I feel too guilty about being dishonest. I will never be the "reckless teenager" of so many health-class discussions.
SAM. But I'm not a soldier.

REMA. Yes you are. The Lebanese are all soldiers, Samad.

SAM. I'm only half a soldier. (Beat)

REMA. You are what you are. And there is true strength in you. My son is no coward.

(There is a sound like a foghorn, faint and in the distance.)

REMA. I think I heard something.

(She stands up, making a motion for the binoculars, but stops at the sight of the blood on the cutting board. She is momentarily dizzy but steadies herself by holding on to the counter top. She picks up the binoculars and crosses to the window.)

REMA. There is a ship.

SAM. What?

REMA. Samad, Samad, there is a ship!

SAM. Another Israeli warship?

REMA. No, an American ship, I think. It is bigger. No rocket launchers.

(Sam crosses to the window. She passes him the binoculars. He looks out.)

REMA. Call your Baba. Call him right now. (Beat)

REMA. Go on.

(Sam hands her the binoculars. He crosses back to the dead silkworm, crouches and wraps it in the dish cloth. His hand is bleeding freely.)

REMA. Please, Samad. Go call your father.

Mark Twain once asked, “Why shouldn’t truth be stranger than fiction? Fiction, after all, has to make sense.” To me, it is only the truths of other people that can reach such mythical proportions, but a friend once told me that it seemed like I grew up in an “Amish Fairyland.” No one else I know can spin wool on a wheel or had pet sheep and peacocks in addition to the usual dogs and cats. So why does it still seem so bland?

This past summer I was teaching a creative writing class to 7-14 year olds and on the first day I had them play “a truth and a lie,” people went around telling two stories about themselves and everybody else had to guess which one was a lie. I wove the uneventful story of walking down to my field to feed the sheep and watching my peacock, Shiva, display his feathers in the field. The two sheep eyed him from afar. Nothing moved until one of them charged at Shiva, whipping the bird into a mess of feathers eight feet in the air. He squawked and fluttered to the ground a few feet away. After a brief moment’s rest, the same sheep head-buttred Shiva again. That time the peacock learned his lesson and flew into one of the apple trees nearby where the Shetlands couldn’t reach him.

No one guessed that it was true and maybe that’s the secret: Not that I something I did was actually “cool,” but that it was different enough to be exciting. Maybe being the former Amish Princess of my childhood is better than being James Dean. He died young anyway. What is wrong with being warm in my pajamas while reading web
comics and drinking a cup of hot jasmine tea? In my room there’s a half-finished scarf that is 100% handmade: I raised the sheep that the wool came from, spun the wool, and then knitted it by hand to the length it is now. It’s not mainstream cool, but neither am I. It’s precious. I once heard two guys talking about a female friend who made one of them “feel like such a square.”

“Well then you should embrace being a square, Matt.”

“But I don’t want to be a—”

“Embrace being a square and make her feel like a triangle which has one less side!”

“But it’s a more stable shape!”

“Then make her feel like a hexagon or something.”

I will never be that stable shape, but I can still embrace being the square that I am. There’s something to be said for having four sides—rooms usually have four sides, kickball, the only sport I really played in Waldorf school, was played around four bases, books have four sides, and my laptop has four sides as well. Many things I love are square shaped, or at the very least quadrilateral, but they are often looked over. I notice the triangular, hexagonal, or circular houses long before acknowledging the existence of a simple four-sided residence. Different is more interesting, but that doesn’t mean it can’t still be home.
iPod, your Nintendo, your laptop— you do not know. When I was a little girl—

SAM. Not again.

REMA. I know you do not like war stories.

SAM. Mother.

REMA. You have no stomach.

(Sam stands up and crosses to the table. With his good hand he pulls a silkworm out of the box. It wriggles between his fingers. He squeezes. Rema gasps. It is as if she is the worm, as if there is some psychic connection between her and the silkworms that enables her to feel their pain as her own.)

SAM. You love your mother’s fucking worms more than you love us.

REMA. Don’t— no—

SAM. Some worms and a house and a city that hasn’t really existed since 1975.

REMA. Put it down, habibi, put it down and we will find some disinfectant and bandages, we need bandages— oh, let ummah think, we have—

(Sam squeezes it more tightly. It wriggles violently now.)

SAM. And your pride! More than us!

REMA. (Hysterically) Put it down! Put it down!

(Sam throws it to the ground and steps on it. Rema screams. There is a long silence.)

SAM. Don’t you get it, mom? Either way, Beirut is destroyed. Whether you stay or not. Whether you die here or not.
My father dreamed he invented fire
and held dominion over the other Neanderthals.
The women of the tribe picked lice
from the hair on his back
and the men brought him raw meat from the hunt.
In the evenings he ran naked with
the dogs; knew there was nothing more
terrible than him.
He awoke standing at the side of my bed
and he thought of when I was an infant
and he dropped me on my head
or when I was seven and hit him
so hard I needed nine stitches.
His dream-self would have howled with bloodlust
and set upon me with the dogs.
Moonlight flashed like snow off his forehead,
the soft bleep-bleep of his alarm downstairs
brought him back from the past of his dreams.
He patted my foot, walked downstairs, made coffee,
got to work, survived.
Rema sits down at the table. She grips the edge of it, as if to steady herself. She closes her eyes. Sam begins to cut the apple. A bomb lands far enough away that the impact doesn’t shake the kitchen but it is still deafening. Sam slips and slices across the back of his left hand. Rema’s eyes are still closed. Her only reaction to the sound of the bomb was a slight wince; it is customary for her.

Rema. Would you make your ummah some coffee as well? (Beat)

Sam. Mom?

Rema. Yes?

Sam. Mom?

(Rema opens her eyes. She doesn’t see his hand at first.)

Rema. What is wrong, angel? Angel, why are you looking at me like that?

Sam. Ummi.

(He holds his hand out to her. She gasps. He opens his mouth again but no words come out, only an animal-like keening.)

Rema. Your hand! Oh God, oh God... where is the, where is the... oh God, angel, oh God oh God oh God... (She is beginning to hyperventilate. Sam leans against the counter top for support.)

Sam. (Steeling himself) Calm down, mom. Don’t freak out.

Rema. But what can we do, habibi, we cannot go to a doctor we cannot go into the city there is no one and I do not know these things, about medications and-

Sam. Shut the fuck up!

above the scale of judgment unlit
Sagittarius lights up a chillum
forgetting his bow
finding laughter within circumstance
watching a wash of people dry up
with the last of its goers
glowing Jupiter,
watching the occasional runaway
or lost tourist
a bad time to be locked up
in it! Scorpio cried
you can see Mars tonight
but only from the outdoor observatory
directly left of Jupiter
with its motor-rotating platform
but maybe
Aries said
maybe if you run
really fast into the window
you will break through
and Mars is as good as yours
yes
Scorpio replied
or maybe your echo will just
find some kind of layered savior
from deep within this famous park

CODY WILLIAMS
with a badge

to take you away from here

and leave us here to loom

and simply orbit

a pace paused is

a pace nevertheless

as we here in

the night’s darker night

sometimes like to say

REMA. Why do you not trust your mother?

SAM. I know what you want to believe, ummah. But the fighting will never be over. Not really.

REMA. There will be a cease fire soon. They will rebuild, they have done it a million times before. (Beat) Beirut was so beautiful. I still remember her, even though I was small. Like a dream. White courtyards sparkling in the sun. Before the Kalashnikovs and chicken wire and dirty keffiyehs waving in the air. But she rose! And I saw it, Samad, I saw the resurrection. She will rise again. There will be diplomats dining on the marina, wind blowing from the Mediterranean, people milling around Martyr’s Square-

SAM. And how long until the house of cards gets blown down again? (Beat) I won’t leave without you.

(REMA can’t keep her hands steady. She slams the knife against the cutting board, hard.)

REMA. Fuck! (She covers her mouth with her hands) Oh dear, oh dear, I have woken Tagsy, oh I hope I have not woken her up-

(Sam stands up. He takes her hands away from her mouth and holds them in both of his.)

SAM. Ummah.

REMA. Yes, Samad?

SAM. Please, ummah. Please. Couldn’t you at least tell the truth? I knew you wouldn’t leave Lebanon. Not without a fight.

REMA. It is no problem, Samad. We will only be in Virginia for a few months at the most. (Beat) Would you please be a dear and chop this apple for ummah?

SAM. (Sighing) Sure.
REMA. Please, Samad. We must be kind to each other.
(Sam goes to the table and stands next to her. He puts his hand on her shoulder. They both look into the silkworm box.)

SAM. Do you think they know what's going on?

REMA. They are smart, my ummah's silkworms. They have lived through twenty years of war already. They know that this is nothing. (Beat) The Israelis will see sense soon.

SAM. Will they? (He looks her right in the eyes) Ummah. Why haven't you registered with the embassy yet?

REMA. What?

SAM. I called the embassy today, to make sure you were registered. Tagsy and I were, but you weren't. Why didn't you register yourself too?

REMA. Baba has to- what is the phrase? Pull some strings. He has to pull some strings first. Because I am not a U.S. citizen.

(Srema crosses to the counter top. Sam blows air out through his lips like a horse.)

Be still, Samad. It will be taken care of soon.

(REMA begins to cut an apple into slices.)

SAM. The first thing I'll do once I get to grandpa's house in Virginia is turn on the TV and watch an air raid take out another district. I'll see people running in the rubble and wonder if one of them is you.

(REMA's hands begin to tremble more violently.)

You were never planning to register, were you? (Beat) What did you think you'd do? Stick some shit in a suitcase and walk us down to the ships, then leave before we figured it out? You thought you'd trick us?

(REMA stops trying to cut the apple for a minute, takes a deep breath and resumes.)

There is a certain smell that radiates from the earth in Wisconsin. I'm not sure if it's too many cows, too much corn, or too many factories but it's different and unique. To me, it is the smell of the past, but that smell, when on the back of a motorcycle is enhanced to a degree that it fills my senses, overwhelms me. The dry leaves are more bitter, the industrial smoke sharper, and the farm runoff more pungent. It's the smell that makes me hold my breath, count to ten, in hopes that I can keep it with me.

When Wisconsin hits my nose, my accent loses its haughty Chicago air and makes me elongate my o's and even slip an occasional d for my usual sharp t's.

For twenty years my father had wanted another motorcycle. My mother had insisted that he get rid of his old Honda when they got married. It was no longer sensible to have long hair, wear leather, or play the bass when you were a married man. She explained to him that it was time to step up to the plate, quit drinking, and quit doing drugs if she was ever going to have children with him. He complied and even when I was born he resisted the urge to buy a bike again. He drove Volvos and even a Mercedes but whenever we drove through Wisconsin up to our cabins he would cock his head just slightly at the sound of a Harley, distinct in its low rumble and Twin-V engine purr. Our cottage in Oostburg, Wisconsin was my father's haven. I think he chose it not only for the panoramic views of Lake Michigan but also because whenever we drove

MEGGIE CRAMER
there we passed the Harley-Davidson factory. It was a ritual that when we passed it Dad
would start chanting, “Bow your heads! Bow your heads!” My mother would begrudgingly comply while I giggled in the back seat, straining my eyes to see the massive industrial village that housed the production, design, and warehouses for the entire Harley-Davidson corporate headquarters.

When Dad could no longer resist the urge to purchase a motorcycle I was ten years old. He had just been declared cancer-free and drove straight to that factory to buy a Harley. Mom let him, I think, for no other reason than she knew if we ever lost Dad she wanted him to be happy. At 48, he could no longer pretend that he was happy sitting behind the wheel of a foreign luxury vehicle. I was baffled at the motorcycle in its entirety. It was small, not the motorcycles you think of when you picture a Harley. It was a 1998 Sportster in candy-apple red and Dad treated it like a second child. I rode it as much as he did and there were countless instances where I would ask, “Dad, will you take me to my friend’s house?” and he’d reply, “Only if we go on the motorcycle.” I’d begrudgingly get on the back of the bike, but he’d smile and mock my annoyance.

“Man, your friends think you’re so cool!” he’d laugh, slapping the leather seat. “None of their dads drive a motorcycle, but you get to ride everywhere on it!” I’d roll my eyes and pull on my helmet, silently cursing him for ruining my hair.

Driving through the Illinois suburbs is nothing like driving through Wisconsin. The moment you pass Milwaukee on I-94 the scenery is completely different. The large...
SAM. I wasn't trying to— (Her lips begin to quiver. He sighs) I'm sorry.
(He turns his t-shirt right side out.)

SAM. Have they taken out the roads between dad's house and ours?

REMA. No, not yet.

SAM. Why won't you let me watch the news?


SAM. The ships are evacuating us to Cyprus, mom.

REMA. Of course, habibi, but after we arrive in Cyprus we will take a plane-

SAM. Let's get out the door first. (Beat)

REMA. I will ride the metro into D.C. and we will paddle on those little paddling boats in the tidal basin. By the memorial of Jefferson. You loved those little paddling boats, remember?

SAM. It's gonna be awkward for you, isn't it? Living with dad's parents again?

REMA. There is great affection between your grandparents and I, Samad.

SAM. With Katharine there too?

REMA. The American? (She laughs) I do not care about his little American. I am his wife. I am the one he takes to houses and apartment complexes start to grow further and further apart and the fast-food joints become dots in the rearview mirror. Dad and I would stop before we got too far out at a burger joint called Kopps, a local establishment that sells the best burgers this side of Lake Michigan. They're round and flat and the size of a grown man's palm— huge. Dad showed me the farm where the cows that made our burgers were "grown," as he said. I chewed and wondered if the burger I was eating was a relative of the cute cow in front of me. It didn't bother me, though, because Kopps burgers are just that good. The cheese is straight from Green Bay and the beef from down the street. I'd get mine with ketchup, Dad with fried and raw onions. I was always thankful we were on a motorcycle after he ate that burger; the smell in the car could almost be deadly.

With full bellies Dad and I would hop back on the Sporty, him first, steadying the bike under his legs, then me. I'd grasp his leather jacket, put on mine, then pull on my helmet, which matched the motorcycle to a perfect hue. Dad would give me a good smack on the head to make sure it was "protecting me enough." Then he'd turn the key, kick the clutch, and we'd be off.

Dad hated the highway. The hour and a half on I-94 were his least favorite but until he discovered the back roads of Kenosha and Racine the massive, four-lane expressway was our only option. Once we got past Kopps and the Milwaukee skyline was behind us, he took exit 17A to Waukesha and we were in a completely different landscape.
Gone were the skyscrapers and mirrored windows of the industrial city, in its place were miles of corn, wheat, soy, cabbage, and of course, cows. I knew Dad had discovered this route without me, on one of his weekly trips with his HOG (Harley Owners Group) buddies on Sundays. They would spend anywhere from three to eight hours on the back roads, discovering new trails like pioneers, the chrome of their Hogs casting sunlight on the fields.

On this particular trip, Dad was practicing for his Road King certification. A Road King is one of the leaders in a HOG ride. They ride in the front, the rest of the pack fawning out behind them, making hand signals for left and right or warning the rest of the group of any upcoming road kill (a real hazard to a motorcycle, an errant raccoon can cause a pretty nasty spill). Dad had spent weeks creating a route that none of the other members had ever taken for their test and even on this ride, the last we’d take together, he still hadn’t perfected it. There was too much time on the freeway, not enough on the back roads. He wasn’t satisfied with the turns or the scenery; there was too much monotony. He wanted vibrant colors to shock the other riders; he wanted something no one else had ever done.

The smell of gasoline mixed with the odor of Wisconsin swirled around us as we leaned through turns. Dad wouldn’t allow me to bring my iPod on trips, he said that it ruined the atmosphere and the roar of his engine was music enough. The Dyna (his new bike) was larger than the Sporty and I had more room to stretch my legs and lean

SAM. Mom, I know you don’t want to see him with Katharine, but-

REMA. Samad! (Beat)

SAM. What?

REMA. Please just fix it, your t-shirt. Please.

SAM. Why?

REMA. Because it would make your ummah happy, okay?

SAM. Where are your bags, mom?

REMA. They are in my room. Where else would I have them?

SAM. Why?

REMA. They are in my room. Where else would I have them?

SAM. Please, mom.

REMA. Your t-shirt-

SAM. Mom, chill.

REMA. Please do not be impatient with me.
SAM. Can't bring the laptop or DVDs. Embassy website said only 30 pounds. Kinda sucks.
(Sam sits down on the floor, his back against the kitchen counter, hugging the pillow to his chest.)

SAM. You gonna bring your silkworms?
(Rema doesn't respond.)

SAM. There's probably not gonna be room for them in our luggage.

REMA. We will see.

SAM. The marines won't let them on the ships.

REMA. We will see, Samad.

SAM. Have you started packing?

REMA. Of course I have. Yes.

SAM. The silkworm box probably weighs 30 pounds all by itself. Are you gonna-

REMA. No, habibi. My silkworms do not like Virginia. (Beat)

SAM. Have you talked to dad?

REMA. (Overlapping) Your t-shirt is inside out.

SAM. Dad says he can pull some strings at the embassy, get us evacuated early.

REMA. How soon is he able to take you?

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REMA. I am not worried. I am sure Baba can take care of it.

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The rows of corn along the back roads of Wisconsin are dizzyingly hypnotiz-

The route leading up to the cottage was filled with sky and trees, throughout
most of it we'd never even get a glimpse of the freeway. Dad stopped very rarely, and
usually only for things like farmer's markets in little towns or to let me off to stretch
my legs. We usually continued our silence when we stopped, if only to keep the mood
right for the ride. After almost three hours we'd arrive in Oostburg to a warm welcome
from friends at their cottage and Dad would shake his own hands out, drape his jacket
over the bike, and take off his chaps (yes, he had leather chaps, yes they were custom
made, and yes they said 'Bill' on the back of them). Art and Liz, our friends in Oost-
burg, would greet us with bratwurst and non-alcoholic beers (for Dad) along with new stories of their war-protest or of home-schooling their two sons. I'd sit quietly, glancing back at the bike every once in awhile, still reluctant to break the silence.

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He had brought two Road King patches, to be placed on the leather vest all HOG members wore, to the wake. One was placed in the casket with Dad and the other was given to me.

After my father died, our house was filled with grieving friends and family doting over my mother and me. Occasionally, I would go out to the garage and sit on the bike, feel the leather under my black funeral dress, and picture the ride with him in front. Three days later, when the crowdedness of death had died down, I got a call from the Kenosha HOG head saying they were planning to continue with it, make it a memorial. I was reluctant to let them go through with the ride, afraid that another leader wouldn’t understand the heart my father had put into this ride, wouldn’t appreciate the hours he spent getting lost then finding his way back again.
CHARACTERS

SAM DARWISH, 17, her son. In boxers, flip flops and an old t-shirt turned inside out. Very Anglicized; it's clear that he grew up in America from the blunter way in which he speaks and carries himself. His hair is mussed up; he looks disheveled.

REMA DARWISH, 45, tragically beautiful but far too heavily made up, wearing a silk robe, kitten heels and a gold cross on a chain around her neck. Her mascara is smeared under her eyes. Her hands shake. She speaks with the slightly Francophone accent of an upperclass Lebanese woman. She has the fragile elegance of a politician’s wife; a Middle Eastern Jackie O.

CHARACTERS

SETTIN: A kitchen in a house in downtown Beirut. There is a table with a TV and a bottle of Xanax on it. There is also a large cedar box on the table full of silkworms. A

PHOEBE RUSCH

"The dawn made of lead is still advancing from the direction of the sea, riding on sounds I haven’t heard before. The sea has been entirely packed into stray shells. It is changing its marine nature and turning into metal. Does death have all these names? We said we'd leave. Why then does this red-black-gray rain keep pouring over those leaving or staying, be they people, trees, or stones? We said we'd leave. 'By sea?' they asked. 'By sea,' we answered. Why then are they arming the foam and waves with this heavy artillery? Is it to hasten our steps to the sea? But first they must break the siege of the sea. They must clear the last path for the last thread of our blood. But that they won't do, so we won't be leaving. I'll go ahead then and make the coffee."

- Mahmoud Darwish, Memory For Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982

SEPTEMBER 12TH was an exceptionally cold Sunday and Mom drove me up to the ride with most of Dad’s leather in the back seat. We arrived at Uke’s Harley Davidson, the meeting place for the group, to almost fifty motorcycles in the parking lot.

Moses greeted our Volvo with a smile, opening the door for my mother and me. Moses is a huge man. From first glance he is incredibly intimidating. He is at least 6’3” and 220 pounds (fat, not muscle) with salt and pepper grey hair and a long beard. His coon-skin cap is almost always on his head and I don’t believe he owns anything but leather jackets. As Mom and I walked up to the growing number of members Mom began to cry but I was too loaded down with leather to really see. The members helped me zip on Dad’s chaps, pull on a Harley sweater, a leather jacket, his leather vest, two pairs of gloves, and a facemask. After I was suited up, Moses led a prayer and all of the members mounted their motorcycles.

I was assigned to ride with Moses on his Road King, the biggest bike Harley makes. It is equipped with a radio and speakers along with a special headset system that allows the driver and the passenger to speak to one another. I refused to wear the headset. A Road King doesn’t just have a sissy bar; it basically has a Lay-Z Boy for the rider. Forty bikes revved their engines and headed off with Moses in the front, being the replacement for my father. Every member of the group had on a black armband to represent a “brother” lost, they wore them when they lead the funeral procession and I wore one with them that day. At the funeral, I wanted to ride with the HOG members
but my mother insisted on me riding in the limo. I watched out the tinted windows as
the black bands flapped on their arms and thought of how it was the biggest funeral my
county had seen in ten years, how over 100 motorcycles were leading the hearse, and
how happy my dad would’ve been not of the size, but of the roar of engines that led the
crowd.

Driving along the route I had vaguely known weeks before, the scenery was
different. It was cloudy and most of the corn had been harvested, the fields were bleak
and filled with snapped-off bottoms of stalks. But the trees were on fire. The seasons
were changing at full speed and when we were off the highway the oaks, maples, and
elms bloomed with colors. The startling differences between the red, orange, and yel-
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were far enough off for them to remain motionless as we passed. The farmer’s markets
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stopping to stretch my legs. I glanced at the empty lots where the vegetable and fruit
carts once stood and wished I could search them for the jams my father always bought,
or the summer squash my mother loved. Dad had always bought as much produce as he
could stuff in the saddlebags and even made me carry a watermelon one ride. In the
emptiness there was a sorrow, which was reflected back to me.

When the moon is full
I feel lusty, and I remember dreams
about men with hearts like pomegranates.
I dream that you and I are children in Nazareth
walking down the road behind Samson.
When he found that lion, the hive inside,
we sucked blood and honey off our fingers.
The bees nested in your hair,
and I knew then as I woke
that all the love in you
was a gift from God given
with no circumstance.

You and I one day
will watch temples fall,
and while those tigers that trained so hard
to jump through circus hoops
dance in the dust, you will know
to cut open the hearts of the dead
and feed their children the only seeds
that will not leave a bitter taste
on their tongues.

Lou Lou Ford

For Phoebe Rusch
that, at times, have seen like colorless shapes, and you have not known them.

Someday a person you’ve loved for years will glisten for a moment in the dark as they ask you, what’s beyond your body, what makes you try any way.

Tell them you stand on the edge of a shore, ready to be consumed by a new kind of wave — strange, faceless, and silent.

About forty-five minutes before we were to reach Oostburg Lake Michigan announced its presence with startling blue, overwhelming the horizon. Dad had said the ride before that this was his favorite part of the ride because for miles it had been nothing but corn and trees, but in that moment, when the water shows itself, it makes the ride worth it.

The weather changed and the sun pushed its way through the hanging clouds. It never cleared up completely but when we arrived at the launch point Dad had planned on stopping at for a photo-op there was enough sun to warm our faces but the wind still blew at our backs. All forty of us dismounted and took a picture in front of the lake, me in front. If you look at that picture today you’ll see a girl in front of forty burly, Harley men with hair poking out in every which way, tears running down her face. The moment we had arrived at the lake I had began to cry. Lake Michigan was a sacred place for my father, even more so when he arrived on a motorcycle. If it was warm enough we’d strip off our jeans and jump in the water, shaking out our tired legs and planning our ride back. The day of the ride was too cold to jump in, but the waves splashed in behind us and hit my father’s leather chaps, leaving behind large water-marks. I cried because I’d never ride up to the lake with my father, would never plunge underwater to rinse myself of the Harley smell, and never truly feel that connection with anybody again. Inhaling once more before mounting the bike, I stretched my legs, pulled on my jacket and slapped my own helmet to make sure it was still protecting me.
When we arrived at Art and Liz's they already had bratwurst cooking and a cooler (one of the ones my dad sold) filled with non-alcoholic beer and soda. I peeled off my layers of clothing and laid them on Moses' bike, following behind the herd of hungry men. With the waves behind us and the smell of Wisconsin in the air, I sat along with my dad's Harley brothers, glancing towards the lake and the motorcycles.

My father grew up in Wisconsin on motorcycles and had given me the same thing. Whenever we traveled together on the back of a bike there was an undeniable connection between the landscape and the smell, the water, us. Driving through Wisconsin by myself, in my SUV instead of on a motorcycle, I ignore the trees flashing by because their presence is never the same. The HOG group goes on my father's memorial ride every year, though I can only bring myself to go occasionally, when I am ready for the continued emptiness I feel, despite the longing to regain that connection not only with the Wisconsin air and my motorcycle, but with my father.

Why do we talk? Because we want...Having the fewest wants, I am closest to the gods.
Socrates

These past few days had me noticing the red in everything; flagging down desire as what strangers must see it as—fresh tomatoes that sit untouched on the windowsill, anticipating flies.

No, that is not your house, and you don’t have to speak for the pot-bellied children that hang loosely on the television like little bunches of rope.

Everyone reaches out, light dodged in their palms, and we only think of what we want—our words have seemed so small as to disappear like curls of smoke.

But when you wake up to rainstorms, and the water seems to pull at the fences that separate your house from the next, you will find yourself with a hand in your pocket, and another in the dirt.

Perhaps you will wish to find a but, some small presence to soothe the spaces between your fingers,

Lucy Nepstad
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I feel lusty, and I remember dreams
about men with hearts like pomegranates.
I dream that you and I are children in Nazareth
walking down the road behind Samson.
When he found that lion, the hive inside,
we sucked blood and honey off our fingers.
The bees nested in your hair,
and I knew then as I woke
that all the love in you
was a gift from God given
with no circumstance.

You and I one day
will watch temples fall,
and while those tigers that trained so hard
to jump through circus hoops
dance in the dust, you will know
to cut open the hearts of the dead
and feed their children the only seeds
that will not leave a bitter taste
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REMÄ DARWISH, 45, tragically beautiful but far too heavily made up, wearing a silk robe, kitten heels and a gold cross on a chain around her neck. Her mascara is smeared under her eyes. Her hands shake. She speaks with the slightly Francophone accent of an upperclass Lebanese woman. She has the fragile elegance of a politician’s wife; a Middle Eastern Jackie O.

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SETTING: A kitchen in a house in downtown Beirut. There is a table with a TV and a bottle of Xanax on it. There is also a large cedar box on the table full of silkworms. A

PHOEBE RUSCH
burg, would greet us with bratwurst and non-alcoholic beers (for Dad) along with new stories of their war-protest or of home-schooling their two sons. I’d sit quietly, glancing back at the bike every once in a while, still reluctant to break the silence.

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It is clear from the quality of the furniture, state of the art appliances and marble counter tops that they are very well to do. There is a window SR. It is dark outside.

(REMA is sitting at the kitchen table watching an Al-Jazeera broadcast. Aerial footage of a bridge being taken out by an Israeli rocket. Rema swallows two Xanax dry. She fingers the gold cross on her neck, closing her eyes. She hears a rustling movement coming from the box and opens her eyes, leaning over the silkworms.)

REMA, Do not worry, my angels. The fighting will be over soon. Ummah would not leave you. (She crosses to the counter top, takes some mulberry leaves and puts them in the silkworm box. She sits back down. She hums quietly to the silkworms for a minute. SAM enters carrying a pillow and listening to his iPod. Rema flips off the TV. Sam takes out his ear buds and puts his hand on her shoulder.)

REMA. Salaam, angel. (She looks at his jaw) Did you do that while shaving?

SAM. Couldn't keep my hands steady.

REMA. Is your sister asleep?

SAM. Yeah. Nyquil knocked her out. Did the embassy call yet?

REMA. We are still waiting.

SAM. So you tried to call them?

REMA. Yes, habibi. They are not answering their telephones. Have you packed all of your things?
SAM. Can't bring the laptop or DVDs. Embassy website said only 30 pounds. Kinda sucks.
(Sam sits down on the floor, his back against the kitchen counter, hugging the pillow to his chest.)

SAM. You gonna bring your silkworms?
(Rema doesn't respond.)

SAM. There's probably not gonna be room for them in our luggage.

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back on the sissy bar. There is a quiet calm that overcomes the passenger on a motorcycle, a mix between the hum under your seat and the whizzing scenery around you. I would let my mind wander and relax, allow myself to sink into the closeness with my father, the bike, and the world around me.

The rows of corn along the back roads of Wisconsin are dizzyingly hypnotizing. The perfect symmetry and geometry of their planting lulls one to sleep, which you cannot do on a motorcycle. The corn paired with the constant vibration from the motor under me would usually force Dad, on long trips like this, to slap my knee a few times when he felt my head falling forward or my body becoming too limp to move with him on turns. In order to keep myself awake I would focus on wildlife, birds, horses, cows, the occasional deer, I would dream that Dad and I were going cross-country on the motorcycle, a father-daughter team clad in leather (myself in a little lace as well).

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REMA. Samad! (Beat)

SAM. What?

REMA. Please just fix it, your t-shirt. Please.

SAM. Why?

REMA. Because it would make your ummah happy, okay?

SAM. Where are your bags, mom?

REMA. They are in my room. Where else would I have them?

SAM. Gets its act together.

REMA. Yes. Thank you. (Beat) It has become so quiet. Why is it so quiet? (Beat) Do you think we should take Tagsy down to the shelter again?

SAM. We’re fine.

REMA. Are you sure?

SAM. Please, mom.

REMA. Your t-shirt-

SAM. Mom, chill.

REMA. Please do not be impatient with me.
SAM. I wasn't trying to— (Her lips begin to quiver. He sighs.) I'm sorry.
(He turns his t-shirt right side out.)

SAM. Have they taken out the roads between dad's house and ours?

REMA. No, not yet.

SAM. Why won't you let me watch the news?


SAM. The ships are evacuating us to Cyprus, mom.

REMA. Of course, habibi, but after we arrive in Cyprus we will take a plane-

SAM. Let's get out the door first. (Beat)

REMA. I will ride the metro into D.C. and we will paddle on those little paddling boats in the tidal basin. By the memorial of Jefferson. You loved those little paddling boats, remember?

SAM. It's gonna be awkward for you, isn't it? Living with dad's parents again?

REMA. There is great affection between your grandparents and I, Samad.

SAM. With Katharine there too?

REMA. The American? (She laughs) I do not care about his little American. I am his wife. I am the one he takes to houses and apartment complexes start to grow further and further apart and the fast-food joints become dots in the rearview mirror. Dad and I would stop before we got too far out at a burger joint called Kopps, a local establishment that sells the best burgers this side of Lake Michigan. They're round and flat and the size of a grown man's palm—huge. Dad showed me the farm where the cows that made our burgers were "grown," as he said. I chewed and wondered if the burger I was eating was a relative of the cute cow in front of me. It didn't bother me, though, because Kopps burgers are just that good. The cheese is straight from Green Bay and the beef from down the street. I'd get mine with ketchup, Dad with fried and raw onions. I was always thankful we were on a motorcycle after he ate that burger; the smell in the car could almost be deadly.

With full bellies Dad and I would hop back on the Sporty, him first, steadying the bike under his legs, then me. I'd grasp his leather jacket, put on mine, then pull on my helmet, which matched the motorcycle to a perfect hue. Dad would give me a good smack on the head to make sure it was "protecting me enough." Then he'd turn the key, kick the clutch, and we'd be off.

Dad hated the highway. The hour and a half on I-94 were his least favorite but until he discovered the back roads of Kenosha and Racine the massive, four-lane expressway was our only option. Once we got past Kopps and the Milwaukee skyline was behind us, he took exit 17A to Waukesha and we were in a completely different landscape.
there we passed the Harley-Davidson factory. It was a ritual that when we passed it Dad would start chanting, "Bow your heads! Bow your heads!" My mother would begrudgingly comply while I giggled in the back seat, straining my eyes to see the massive industrial village that housed the production, design, and warehouses for the entire Harley-Davidson corporate headquarters.

When Dad could no longer resist the urge to purchase a motorcycle I was ten years old. He had just been declared cancer-free and drove straight to that factory to buy a Harley. Mom let him, I think, for no other reason than she knew if we ever lost Dad she wanted him to be happy. At 48, he could no longer pretend that he was happy sitting behind the wheel of a foreign luxury vehicle. I was barned at the motorcycle in its entirety. It was small, not the motorcycles you think of when you picture a Harley. It was a 1998 Sportster in candy-apple red and Dad treated it like a second child. I rode it as much as he did and there were countless instances where I would ask, "Dad, will you take me to my friend's house?" and he'd reply, "Only if we go on the motorcycle." I'd begrudgingly get on the back of the bike, but he'd smile and mock my annoyance.

"Man, your friends think you're so cool!" he'd laugh, slapping the leather seat. "None of their dads drive a motorcycle, but you get to ride everywhere on it!" I'd roll my eyes and pull on my helmet, silently cursing him for ruining my hair.

Driving through the Illinois suburbs is nothing like driving through Wisconsin. The moment you pass Milwaukee on I-94 the scenery is completely different. The large parties, I am the one who can quote Khalil Gibran and Mahmoud Darwish and speak five languages. I am the one who can write poetry and sing soprano and dance and drink Pinot with the French delegates and keep his seat in parliament. I am his wife. She is... she is nothing. Nothing but some business in the bed. He can have his little American. (Beat) He is almost an Anglo anyway.

SAM. Because he didn't grow up during a civil war? Because his parents had enough sense to evacuate Beirut in '75 when they got the chance? Because they moved to Virginia where things are safe and normal? Please, mom. Please.

REMA. Why are you always calling me mom? What is this mom?

SAM. Okay, ummah.

REMA. Ever since your dad had us move back to Beirut, it is always mom this, mom that.

SAM. Okay, ummah.

REMA. It was his idea to move, not mine. You forget that.

SAM. You hated those boats. You didn't like paddling. You hated getting wet, and you hated the Potomac River. I had to beg for hours to get you to take me. You hated riding the metro. So dirty, habibi. Oh so disgusting. Things are not this way back home, back home everything smells of rose water and jasmine and the people they are so lovely, in Beirut things are becoming beautiful again, they are rebuilding, I wish we could visit, or go there to live- Never mind that Tagsy and I didn't speak Arabic. Never mind that the war had only been over for six years. Never mind that-

(Reema stands up abruptly, almost knocking her chair over. There is a long silence. She tucks an errant strand of hair behind her ear.)

SAM. Sorry, ummah.
REMA. Please, Samad. We must be kind to each other.
(Sam goes to the table and stands next to her. He puts his hand on her shoulder. They both look into the silkworm box.)

SAM. Do you think they know what's going on?

REMA. They are smart, my ummah's silkworms. They have lived through twenty years of war already. They know that this is nothing. (Beat) The Israelis will see sense soon.

SAM. Will they? (He looks her right in the eyes) Ummah. Why haven't you registered with the embassy yet?

REMA. What?

SAM. I called the embassy today, to make sure you were registered. Tagsy and I were, but you weren't. Why didn't you register yourself too?

REMA. Baba has to- what is the phrase? Pull some strings. He has to pull some strings first. Because I am not a U.S. citizen.

(Samacrosses to the counter top. Sam blows air out through his lips like a horse.)

Be still, Samad. It will be taken care of soon.

(REma begins to cut an apple into slices.)

SAM. The first thing I'll do once I get to grandpa's house in Virginia is turn on the TV and watch an air raid take out another district. I'll see people running in the rubble and wonder if one of them is you.

(REma's hands begin to tremble more violently.)
You were never planning to register, were you? (Beat) What did you think you'd do? Stick some shit in a suitcase and walk us down to the ships, then leave before we figured it out? You thought you'd trick us?

(REma stops trying to cut the apple for a minute, takes a deep breath and resumes.)
with a badge
to take you away from here
and leave us here to loom
and simply orbit

a pace paused is
a pace nevertheless
as we here in
the night's darker night
sometimes like to say
(Rema sits down at the table. She grips the edge of it, as if to steady herself. She closes her eyes. Sam begins to cut the apple. A bomb lands far enough away that the impact doesn’t shake the kitchen but it is still deafening. Sam slips and slices across the back of his left hand. Rema’s eyes are still closed. Her only reaction to the sound of the bomb was a slight wince; it is customary for her.)

REMA. Would you make your ummah some coffee as well?(Beat)

SAM. Mom?

REMA. Yes?

SAM. Mom?

(REMA opens her eyes. She doesn’t see his hand at first.)

REMA. What is wrong, angel? Angel, why are you looking at me like that?

SAM. Ummi.

(REMA opens her eyes. She doesn’t see his hand at first.)

REMA. Your hand! Oh God, oh God... where is the, where is the... oh God, angel, oh God oh God oh God... (She is beginning to hyperventilate. Sam leans against the counter top for support.)

SAM. (Steeling himself) Calm down, mom. Don’t freak out.

REMA. But what can we do, habibi, we cannot go to a doctor we cannot go into the city there is no one and I do not know these things, about medications and-

SAM. Shut the fuck up!

above the scale of judgment unlit
Sagittarius lights up a chillum
forgetting his bow
finding laughter within circumstance
watching a wash of people dry up
with the last of its goers
glowering Jupiter,
watching the occasional runaway
or lost tourist

a bad time to be locked up
in it! Scorpio cried
you can see Mars tonight
but only from the outdoor observatory
directly left of Jupiter
with its motor-rotating platform

but maybe
Aries said
maybe if you run
really fast into the window
you will break through
and Mars is as good as yours

yes
Scorpio replied
or maybe your echo will just
find some kind of layered savior
from deep within this famous park

CODY WILLIAMS
My father dreamed he invented fire...and held dominion over the other Neanderthals. The women of the tribe picked lice from the hair on his back and the men brought him raw meat from the hunt. In the evenings he ran naked with the dogs; knew there was nothing more terrible than him. He woke standing at the side of my bed and he thought of when I was an infant; and he dropped me on my head; or when I was seven and hit him so hard I needed nine stitches. His dream-self would have howled with bloodlust and set upon me with the dogs. Moonlight flashed like snow off his forehead, the soft bleep-bleep of his alarm downstairs brought him back from the past of his dreams. He patted my foot, walked downstairs, made coffee, went to work, survived.
SAM. Not again.

REMA. I know you do not like war stories.

SAM. Mother.

REMA. You have no stomach.

(Sam stands up and crosses to the table. With his good hand he pulls a silkworm out of the box. It wriggles between his fingers. He squeezes. Rema gasps. It is as if she is the worm, as if there is some psychic connection between her and the silkworms that enables her to feel their pain as her own.)

SAM. You love your mother's fucking worms more than you love us.

REMA. Don't- no-

SAM. Some worms and a house and a city that hasn't really existed since 1975.

REMA. Put it down, habibi, put it down and we will find some disinfectant and bandages, we need bandages- oh, let ummah think, we have-

(Sam squeezes it more tightly. It wriggles violently now.)

SAM. And your pride! More than us!

REMA. (Hysterically) Put it down! Put it down!

(Sam throws it to the ground and steps on it. Rema screams. There is a long silence.)

SAM. Don't you get it, mom? Either way, Beirut is destroyed. Whether you stay or not. Whether you die here or not.
I mean it can't still be home.

In my room there's a half-finished scarf that is 100% handmade: I raised the sheep that the wool came from, spun the wool, and then knitted it by hand to the length it is now. It's not mainstream cool, but neither am I. It's precious. I once heard two guys talking about a female friend who made one of them "feel like such a square."

"Well then you should embrace being a square, Matt."

"But I don't want to be a--"

"Embrace being a square and make her feel like a triangle which has one less side!"

"But it's a more stable shape!"

"Then make her feel like a hexagon or something."

I will never be that stable shape, but I can still embrace being the square that I am. There's something to be said for having four sides—rooms usually have four sides, kickball, the only sport I really played in Waldorf school, was played around four bases, books have four sides, and my laptop has four sides as well. Many things I love are square shaped, or at the very least quadrilateral, but they are often looked over. I notice the triangular, hexagonal, or circular houses long before acknowledging the existence of a simple four-sided residence. Different is more interesting, but that doesn't mean it can't still be home.

REMA. (Overlapping) Go with your father and his American whore! Go to the country that sells Israel bombs then comes in to save us in their nice white uniforms, oh yes, very nice! So safe! So normal! Go to football games, go shopping in shopping malls, go pretend that she is your mother. She cooks normal food. She speaks good English. (Beat)

SAM. God, ummah. God. Is that what you think this is? (Rema crawls over to the dead silkworm. She begins to weep.)

REMA. Why, habibi? Why must you do this? (Sam kneels beside her and reaches out to her with his good hand. She slaps him. He recoils, holding his cheek.)

SAM. Why do you have to do this? (Beat)

REMA. My baba died in Damour. Your grandfather died fighting for Beirut, fighting to save what he loved. Like generations upon generations before him. He was—what is the word? Disemboweled. The Muslims, they disemboweled him. My baba. I was eleven, habibi. By that time I had seen so many dead bodies I would not even turn my head if I saw a pile on the street. (Beat) You do not know war. I do not want you to know, I do not want you to ever know what it is to hear a bomb go off, to hear a sound like thunder that is people's last breaths and go on brushing your teeth, or making your coffee. But my blood is in this country. My life is here. Your blood is elsewhere, Samad. You must leave without me.

SAM. But ummi, I- I can't. I love you too much. I'm sorry that it's all going to shit, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but—

REMA. Shhh. (She holds out her arms. He buries his face in her shoulder.) I need you to go on without me. I need you to be as brave as my baba, and his baba before him.
SAM. But I'm not a soldier.

REMA. Yes you are. The Lebanese are all soldiers, Samad.

SAM. I'm only half a soldier. (Beat)

REMA. You are what you are. And there is true strength in you. My son is no coward.

(There is a sound like a foghorn, faint and in the distance.)

REMA. I think I heard something.

(She stands up, making a motion for the binoculars, but stops at the sight of the blood on the cutting board. She is momentarily dizzy but steadies herself by holding on to the counter top. She picks up the binoculars and crosses to the window.)

REMA. There is a ship.

SAM. What?

REMA. Samad, Samad, there is a ship!

SAM. Another Israeli warship?

REMA. No, an American ship, I think. It is bigger. No rocket launchers.

(Sam crosses to the window. She passes him the binoculars. He looks out.)

REMA. Call your Baba. Call him right now. (Beat)

REMA. Go on.

(Sam hands her the binoculars. He crosses back to the dead silkworm, crouches and wraps it in the dish cloth. His hand is bleeding freely.)

REMA. Please, Samad. Go call your father.

---

Mark Twain once asked, "Why shouldn't truth be stranger than fiction? Fiction, after all, has to make sense." To me, it is only the truths of other people that can reach such mythical proportions, but a friend once told me that it seemed like I grew up in an "Amish Fairyland." No one else I know can spin wool on a wheel or had pet sheep and peacocks in addition to the usual dogs and cats. So why does it still seem so bland?

This past summer I was teaching a creative writing class to 7-14 year olds and on the first day I had them play "a truth and a lie," people went around telling two stories about themselves and everybody else had to guess which one was a lie. I wove the uneventful story of walking down to my field to feed the sheep and watching my peacock, Shiva, display his feathers in the field. The two sheep eyed him from afar. Nothing moved until one of them charged at Shiva, whipping the bird into a mess of feathers eight feet in the air. He squawked and fluttered to the ground a few feet away. After a brief moment's rest, the same sheep head-butted Shiva again. That time the peacock learned his lesson and flew into one of the apple trees nearby where the Shetlands couldn't reach him.

No one guessed that it was true and maybe that's the secret: Not that I something I did was actually "cool," but that it was different enough to be exciting. Maybe being the former Amish Princess of my childhood is better than being James Dean. He died young anyway. What is wrong with being warm in my pajamas while reading web
overheard my mom talking to another parent about the significance of the maypole.

"You see, the men were the ones who went into the woods and chopped down a tree to use for the pole. The women dug the hole the pole was lowered into." Even at eleven years I knew enough to be disturbed that I was involved in something so graphically sexual.

The first anecdotes I collected came from riding the Milwaukee city bus. When I was thirteen, an eighteen year old boy moved next to me on the empty bus and started hitting on me. When he found out I was woefully underage, his first words were "Your parents wouldn't like you hanging around someone like me anyway. Stay away from guys like me and don't start smoking." It was awkward. Another time I met a man named Harry who showed me extensive wallet-size photos of his cats over an uncomfortable ten minutes as a reward for being polite. I saw him a year later on the same bus holding a faded leather wallet out to a tall brunette.

I just wish I had more stories like this. More comfort in weaving a fiction for my own life. I hear people talk about the adrenaline rush of sky-diving and bungee jumping and my first thought is that I'm afraid of heights. I want to infuse my life with lies, but I feel too guilty about being dishonest. I will never be the "reckless teenager" of so many health-class discussions.
My sister's the only child I've ever known who doesn't like eating snow. She'll squint her eyes and apologize before she steps outside onto a new layer drifted from the sky. She worries that the worn down soles of her boots might hurt; that bitter crunch of walking must be the sound of bones breaking.

She believes in fairies; says their tiny bodes fill the sky and float down to earth on frozen water-snow, each flake a silky lace skirt. They bring the cold, hold trees in icy sleep until they shed their skirts in the spring and melt down into the soil to live in the twisted homes of flower roots.

FAIRY SKIRTS

My mom said they were "too cheap" and wouldn't buy them for me.

In Waldorf School, although we celebrated normal holidays like Christmas and Halloween, we also had ones that most people have never heard of. There was St. Nicholas day when everyone left their indoor slippers out overnight only to find walnuts, clementines, and chocolate coins in their shoes the next morning. On St. Lucia day, the third graders dressed in white gowns and walk in a procession through each classroom, singing. One girl, usually the tallest, was Lucia, wearing a candlelit wreath on top of her head while the girl behind her carried a pitcher of water in case Lucia's hair caught fire.

Each year in May we had a large festival at school. People brought potluck food and flowers permeated every activity, but the focal point was a big maypole with ribbons that each grade wove together in increasingly complicated patterns. Everyone made flower wreaths to wear in their hair, and it was one of my favorite festivals until I...
Out there, in San Lorenzo, between the cobblestones and the heat, under temporary shade of stalls and stands reeking of leather, I push against currents of people. I see a man with a lazy eye and gimpy leg, lightning in his eyes and brown stained teeth. The little Russian girl dragged along behind her mother, shoulder blades like wings protruding from her back. There are the boys who believe they are men, crowding around in a circle dressed in designer jeans and Armani sunglasses, saying ugly things about people who cut around the group and their private could of smoke. There are the old women in their linen knee-length skirts, low heels and nylon stockings, curled over with the weight of their grocery bags, eyes down. There are the gypsies, who I have gotten used to ignoring, floating through the crowd with cardboard signs with magazine cut-outs of children, chanting a memorized plea to the jingle of coins in a cup: Ho due bambini, per favore, abbiamo fame. I reach the comer and someone catches my elbow, fat old stubbly man who smells of sweat and fish. He tells me I’m beautiful and gives my a half-pack of cigarettes, questions me before he lets go. I give the cigarettes to the gipsy woman, she thanks me, then asks for spare change, and I see, for a moment, the perfect machinery of living. There are coils and cords that weave and connect, in and out and between human hearts and the tight packed alley. For a moment, we are cards in a perfect hand, then shuffled and dealt again.

ALLIE QUILLER
wanted "something better" for their children and New Age people who believed more literally in the folk tales about Mother Earth and Father Sky than the first graders who sang a prayer to them every afternoon before lunch. Almost no one knows that Waldorf schools even exist and I grew up learning to immediately answer the familiar "What?" with a reference to the salad.

Not to be unfair to my childhood, but it's hard to explain anything about my elementary school without making it sound like a cult. In first grade there's even a Waldorf initiation where all the old kindergarteners prepare to be inaugurated to grade school status. We all dressed in white gowns and walked a labyrinth of wavering tea lights until we were greeted by an eighth grader holding out a large rose.

The things that were cool to me growing up are completely unrelated to the childhood standards of anyone I know. Girls weren't allowed to wear makeup until 7th grade and I was practiced in picking out shades that were just barely unnatural with names like soft heather, calico, damson, and pistachio. At snack we all ate Luna and Cliff bars, Fruity Booty, trail mix without the m&ms...anything you could pick up exclusively at the health food store. No one ever had gushers or fruit roll-ups. The few times I remember someone bringing such "mainstream" things to lunch, everyone else watched them eat as if they were from a different species, like the expression on people's faces when Elvis' hips graced the television for the first time. When I was eleven, all the Waldorf fifth graders in Washington got together to compete in the Greek
When it comes down to it, I have consistently failed to fit myself into any typical niche of "cool." The fact that I'm the product of either Waldorf or Artistically-based private schools hasn't helped either. It has become a problem. Often I find myself wanting to write about things I haven't done and say I did. It's easy to tell the story of when I walked down the highway and was approached by $25 in the hands of a man who asked how much it would get him, except for the fact that it never happened to me, only to someone I know. Likewise, although I have at various times, been approached by strange men on the bus, no one has ever followed me into Walgreen's shouting, "Will you be my date tonight?" These are "cool" stories. They are reducible to a simple one-liner that makes someone else's life look intriguing and quirky. It's unfair that the people who tell these stories are often inherently mysterious as well—icebergs with underwater mountains I can't see. I wish I were an iceberg, but I'm more of a demolition ball: a few momentous crashes and all that's left is rubble.

I was a Waldorffian, or Waldork, until a few months past my thirteenth birthday. Going to school involved memorizing long poems, singing songs about mythical figures such as Loki and Thor, and over an hour of recess through eighth grade. My school was full of love affairs between parents and teachers, victimized women who...
Two days before my 8th grade graduation, Crazy Martha, the mentally retarded adult daughter of an elderly couple who lived around the block from me, diverted from the route she had been taking since she was 10 years old (an endless pacing around her block, necessary to keep her muscles from going stiff). At approximately 3:45 P.M. on a Friday, close to finishing my final walk home from middle school, I saw her step into the road on Fairview Street. At exactly that moment, an R.V. hurtled out of a nearby ally out of nowhere, or as close to out of nowhere as a 7 ton motor home can hurtle, and crushed Martha flat. It proceeded to crash into a tree, this causing the engine to explode and burning the driver beyond recognition.

The R.V. was without license plates and appeared to be stolen, but was later discovered to belong to the son of dead George. It was identified by the owner’s younger sister, accompanied by Tootsie, the Dalmatian, by a dated Wellstone! campaign sticker and a sign acquired by her father in his days of travel, a Woody Allan quote, that read, “More than any other time in history, man faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.”

\[\text{Image: A painting of a Buddha statue.} \]
First you will think about the trees, 
and how the sky looks 
setting itself up nakedly 
behind and in between their leaves. 
Then you muse on the grass 
under your body 
and the intense crushing 
vacuum of your weight, 
your sole’s bitter mote 
since before the dawn of man, 
our longing to be pulled into the earth. 
It is the difference 
between gravity and levity. 
You turn to the mouth 
on the face on the body 
on the hart beside you, 
all hair and skin and smell, 
like a hot shower. 
You kiss and you understand the difference— 
this now, 
is levitation. 
It is being turned inside out, 
Pulled out through your mouth. 
It is some kind of root in your center. 
It is poetry.

My arms will not stretch around the world and hold it up, like my 
mother’s will. Each time my heart pumps so fast my body breaks, she 
sews me together. 

I learn about flowers from the stems I break. I try to imagine a being 
without consciousness, and wonder if a tulip spreads because it knows it 
needs the sun. 

I wonder when men decided to put a pattern on nature. We still do not 
understand that there is no math, no equation to the way things grow. 

From my bed, Father Moon looks as big as my thumbnail, something I 
could pull down from the sky. I would wear him around my neck on a 
gold chain. 

You showed me how to follow maps and water and the sun. I will always 
know where I am as long as I can feel the ground I walk on.

Helen Spica

Jenna Davey
so much depends
upon
a red cadillac
slick
with turtle
wax
beside the white
chicks

-Reginald O'Hare Gibson

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Cover Art — All those fine individuals who submitted cover sheets to the Red Wheelbarrow.

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Sports — Kat Reece
How to Write a Poem — Jenna Davey

So much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
Chickens

-William Carlos Williams
The editors would like to give serious props to Michael “Diggity” Delp for advising this edition of the *Red Wheelbarrow*, Lil’ Alex Ruesch for lending us his internet and forgery expertise, and most graciously, the outrageously def Queen Therese for keeping it real.

Much Love,

M.C. Cramer

&

The Notorious K.A.T.
Dear Red Wheelbarrow and editors, as you may know, this is a cover letter. My name is Cody Williams and I have submitted three poems to the print. Alexa Langrock enjoy please.

poem submissions are titled

Sledgeman

Poliock, the Sunburst Miscreant

Slow Orbit in Central Park

thanks.

Cody Williams (hemingway@tj

na Davey is he Red Whelbarrow

How to Write a Poem

Winter Skin,

Voyeuristic God

Out of the Woods

Clyde Ras'71

Helen Spica

Red Wheelbarrow Submissions

The People You Meet Underground (Poetry)

Underground Ghazals I-III(Poetry)

driving on the 131 Back From Grand Rapids

and thus the cover sheet was born

Lucy Nepstad's Submissions 10/9/06
TJ 608-772-4859
nepstadis@interlochen.org

Red Wheelbarrow Submissions

Submission From Chase Yurga-Bell
My Father's Dream
Molly Francis

TJ Dorm
San Lorenzo Ma.
Letter to Jesse Jam
Bedside Manner

Davey

How to Write a Poe

Winter Ski,

Aaaaaaand

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Titles-

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