

the west 4th

February 2026

II, no. 2.

EVIL exists

in your HANDS, HOLDIN' IT, ENTERTAININ' IT
it will ONLY PERSIST
IT will ONLY LATCH ONTO YOUR BEING
UNTIL, after suffering, SHRINKING,
A RISE TO consciousness CEASES

evil quells itself

IF LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES

evil swells

IF offered MISGUIDED gentleness
RUN FROM IT IN OTHERS
LET IT GO in the WIND
CONFRONT IT in YOURSELF
TRANSFORM IT as the EARTH SPINS

evil exists

IT WANTS to EAT YOUR HEART OUT
THE CIVILIZED will HAND IT FORGIVENESS, OPINIONS
THE NATURAL KNOW to VANISH WITHOUT A TRACE
LOVING-KINDNESS will NOT SOOTHE IT
TAKE A LOOK, THERE'S AMPLE PROOF
REJECT IT in REPULSION
SILENTLY AS YOU HIT THE ROAD

clo-sure (klo-cher) n 1. a
ing: the condition
1. a

THE WEST 4TH

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Vol. II February 2026 No. 2

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Cover artwork by M. E. Link



From the Editor



I saw a few shows recently that I thought would be good to write about. On February 1st Alex Wolf, Sam English, Carter Sessions, and Maxwell Quinn played at Mathilde's, hole-in-the-wall north of Prospect Park (I think). Wherever it was, it was far. It took three trains to get there from Bushwick, which initially made me not want to go. But I slinked out of bed and squiggled inside of clothes, and each train arrived right when I was walking on the platform. So I took that as a sign that I was supposed to be going to Mathilde's.

And I'm glad I went. Alex Wolf began her show, in classic Alex Wolf style, by telling half of the crowd to shut up. And it worked. The little bar room was filled with Wolf's melancholia for the next 45 minutes, with only brief interludes between songs, usually short

introductions concerning the impetus for each song's subject or theme. For example, her song "Pretty Girls" was inspired by a man pissing her off, as are many of her other songs. "New Year's Eve," one of my personal favorites, is about deciding to not kill yourself. My favorite lyric from that song is "And we're getting into our very first fight." The subtlety, foreshadowing of it; knowing that more fights will come. I don't know, but to hear it sung in the midst of Mazzy-esque chords really makes you think about something. Anyways, I recommend seeing her next show. Just be prepared to donate to Gaza.

After Alex Wolf, Samuel English played. He began his show by asking "where's my fuckin' Chinese food." His set was interesting and unique, and quite good. For some reason I kept thinking he sounded like a mashup of Dave Matthews and Vance Joy. Dave Matthews for musical complexity and Vance Joy for a melodic, wide-ranging voice that goes all over the place. He might take offense to that comparison, but it's what I was thinking. English' music is quite fun to listen to, and I'm personally excited to see how it takes form with a full band, as he plans on doing soon. He's also a carpenter by day, and used to live in Atlanta. He also happens to have some poetry in this edition of The West 4th too.

Then Carter and Tom played together. What's to say? The banjo was sublime, their harmonies were quite soothing, and Tom's mustache was particularly captivating. I had the pleasure of playing drums with them a few days prior, and I can say that their music is very fun to listen to. Conducive to dancing. Parker and M.E. Link kept giving themselves Guinness mustaches during their set. Spirits were high.

Finally, Maxwell and Elijah played. Maxwell's voice ran over the place like a velvet sheet. He has quite a few bangers, attested to by Parker and M.E., along with a few other people, dancing furiously throughout his set. I saw him and Elijah play at Pete's Candy Store recently as well, and they sound tremendous together. One lyric that sticks with me is "I invented a new kind of milk / That's really good for you." Makes me laugh.

By the end of their set at Mathilde, M.E. Link started looking at the Boggle set in the wall.

Lastly, but not leastly, I saw Anabel Quinn perform at Pete's. She was playing her new songs, all of which will be coming out sometime soon on an EP. (or album? Shit! I forget...) Anabel packed the room. There was no talking, at least during her songs. Only an occasional cough, or a vape glimmering as a mouth bit on the other end. Her song were entirely captivating. They were insightful, some of them scathing, indicative of a deep watchfulness and observation, glaring at many people and indicting while, also, seeking to understand. The songs were not really melancholy, but they were feeling. She has a song about absent parents, about college, about a lot of things. Paired with beautiful backing guitars (by Maxwell and Elijah), her songs felt entirely fresh, and very much like they were products of many late-night sessions and re-writes. Or maybe they just came out naturally like that. Someone said to me, after the show, that it was the best show they've seen in months. I'm personally excited for this new chapter in Anabel's music career, as I think many of us are.

Here were a few thoughts from the night, recorded by other people:

Pete's is a hallway. How people crowd and stand at the back instead of filtering in is interesting.

I love the lights in this place.

Lead Lollipop

Brett Koppelman

Destination happiness is something that I have surely been a victim of for the majority of it. I think it is hard to not be in today's day and age. Comparing yourself to others is so readily available and addicting that it is hard not to indulge, at least for the duration of your daily shit. No one can see you in there. It seems everyone is more accomplished or more satisfied or more attractive or having more sex or making more money or having less sex. Sex addicts stand up?

Maybe it does not have to do with only this day and age. I am sure

The Mysteries of Life World

Reuben-Cohn Gordon

there was some white guy from Iowa in the 1950s who thought, once my wife perfects these TV dinners, surely that will be the day I cease from drinking half my bodies water weight in PBR to tolerate it all. This is the only day and age I'm familiar with, though, so I must speak in absolutes, therefore.

But, how can you rid yourself of this mindset completely. What can be accomplished without at least a slight sense of fear and anxiety about what will happen in the future if x y or z does not come to fruition in some way shape or form. If you imagine an individual who draws no satisfaction from working towards long term goals, nor has any concept of making them, and is simply in a state of being, unaffected by any life event regardless of size, you'd probably think wow I wish I was said individual. It is impressive. How is he not freaking out about his inevitable downfall. Or she. Their baseline happiness level is probably higher than yours. However, I don't think that means the goal is to rewire your own self into some perpetually coasting individual unaffected by failures and uninterested in the idea of sustained direction. It seems to me that failures are important and successes are important and goals are important and fear is probably pretty important in getting to the point you want to be.

Potentially, or maybe, perhaps, the idea is to fully define the place it is you want to be before subscribing to the destination happiness and going through the process of getting there, only to be disappointed once you arrive. Because if you deal with all the nonsense only to reach a new and improved state of misery, it would not be great. But you'd probably have a lot in common with the majority of Corporate America. Now, this raises the question. If your means to achieving consistent and relatively reliable happiness, or satisfaction, is not directly laid out in a high number of lucrative and or sustainable job listings, are you doomed for some level of misery? Are the majority of socially acceptable destinations somewhat mediocre? Does the tin man, in fact, have a sheet metal cock? *****

I discovered Life World, I think, by seeing it on google maps in that hinterland clubbing part of Bushwick and being sort of curious what it was. The website doesn't really explain in words, but aesthetically, the garish pictures and small ugly font that poets love makes pretty clear that it's going to be a big room in a warehouse where people do performance art.

I looked up past events and saw there was a hotdog eating contest where the goal was to eat only a single hotdog, but as creatively as possible. Hoping for a rerun, I kept an eye on the events, and a few months later saw something called The Courtney Report. I imagined this would be someone called Courtney reading a report about their life. Actually this is exactly what it was. When Sandra and I got to the venue, it turned out I was also right about it being a room in an unmarked warehouse.

Entering, guests were asked to guess the number of grapes in a jar. The winner would have a feature written up on them in the next iteration of the Courtney Report. This is, by the way, a monthly newsletter in which the titular Courtney Bush ruminates on whatever she's been thinking about, art she's been making, etc. This could be bad, but she's really funny and makes interesting art, so it's not. It alternates between tweet length observations and longer passages about e.g. living in the Best Western hotel while making a film, and crying while discovering a song called God and Guns n' Roses. It always begins 'it's okay if you don't read it'. You should subscribe. I won't tell you how, in order to preserve an air of mystery.

Each time Courtney gets 100 new subscribers, she performs the subsequent Courtney Report live, i.e. this thing at Life World. It's interspersed with performance art from friends, like a man crawling through the back of a folding chair. Noting that in the written version, the reader may choose a font size that suits them better than the default tiny one, Courtney urges the audience to vary the distance they stand from the stage until she is the preferred size.

I have so far been back to Life World twice. First to see I Can Steal Your Mother, where comedian Max Wittert fast talks through a self-illustrated slide deck about his life. A friend of mine said she had seen enough comedy shows about parental grief, but for whatever reason I haven't, and thought it was SO funny.

Second was this December to see The Trial of Modicut, which is a Yiddish musical about two puppet makers, who defend themselves in court from their LES eviction with their puppets. Cute premise, charmingly shambolic, live klezmer band.

I've been away from the West Village for a month or so, but am having a look at what's upcoming at Life World. Currently I see "The Life and Decht of Bertold Brecht", a show where you can throw tomatoes at comedians, and an unlabeled picture of a dog in front of a microphone.

I will see you there.

Untitled

Samuel English

Fuck this fragile place of employment
Beckoned on by the strain of our shoulders
So quick to have you ground beneath
The fortress of
“Opportunity”
They grant us
Fallow fields
Slop to drink
Paper to eat
Gass to breath
For any relief
We fly from ourselves
Unconnected from the day
We run the game
To create one space
Not as disgraceful
As the maw
To which we are fed

Winter Child

Alexander Pollock

I sit and mourn for a love I have not felt
I know it's name but I can't find it's place

And lay at night in the shadow of longing
A crescent moon who will not show it's face

Cause now I look at faces in the crowd
A sea of endless eyes
But what stares back I can not fully tell
They all are in disguise

Don't look away she is standing beside you
If not in life, than the corner of your mind
A statue fixed never moving, never leaving
A simple song to remember her by

I've seen so much but so few all this time
A feeling I don't share
I'm kept at arms length
Never get too close
Is anybody there

But now I'll go and I'll take on my burdens
A painless life is a life un lived
Though i am blind to the path that lies
beyond me
A winter child always has more to give

Dearest Devastation

M.E. Link

First time I obliterated
my own heart against
a brick wall of a man;
I painted my lips dark as night,
hucked on black leather boots,
(the same kind he wore),
and wandered Boulder's foothills
with a shimmering scowl;
hoping against every last
anklebone I ever broke
he would find me,
and take me for his own.

Conduit

Elijah Parrella

Hub cap on the side of the road
Ten paces up
ten paces to left
a little more to the left
The truest resting place for
a pothole induced roll
Slow down and come to a stop
Mixed into the styrofoam dandelion cat
den
Next to the baby
cocooned on his moms back
They shimie the curb between red lights
Puttering on their red igloo cooler
9 and 6
boy and girl
A family engine that roars when the cars
brake
Fuelled by ziplocked mangos, netted
quenepas, brown paper bouquets and
dripping bottles of water
They grease themselves between us
stopped at the crosswalk
When else are children supposed to walk
around in traffic?

PAIRS

Ellis Horn

the young lovers
are cool and shiny
like silverware

it makes me want
to put them in my mouth

i want a soul that is only happy
for other people's good fortune
but then i want a lot of things

a perfect piece of chocolate cake
good news every time i open my phone
pet names and inside jokes
for the guy at the comic shop
to think i'm a cool customer

belonging, when will i know you?
elusive little cat

Poetry P.S.A.

Parker Otto

Be a romantic
Write everything you want to tell the ones you love
It may be corny but what's wrong with that?
It may be sappy but what's wrong with that?
If they love you and you love them, say it
Say it with all your corny, sappy, romantic heart

This early afternoon, I chase intellectual pursuits.
This early afternoon, I have no inhibitions.
This early afternoon, I have a belt full-a-tools.
This early afternoon, I'm golden-intentioned.
This early afternoon, I gotta honnied spoonful-a-desire for you.
This late afternoon, I'mma fidgetin' wreck.
This late afternoon, j'ai le nez qui coule.
This late afternoon belongs to Lucinda's southerly accent.
This late afternoon, the world's sick too.
This late afternoon, are enough folks workin' on the mend?

Paeon

John Vincent Sardo

goddamn you 14th street
i hate your fucking guts
choking on the smell of chicken skin
i wish i was dust so, like abraham,
i can dance down your sultry sidewalk
and eat my french toast in the rain
and i will carry these gallons of gravy
to the very end of your very last
candy wrapper sunset
and maybe then
i will gladly lay down my lemon hands
if i just wasn't so goddamn horny

Needle

Henry Baker

needle of death
needle that I need
you are the napkin
that was forced onto me

i can't take a roll,
in the dirt
without you sweet love,
and I need you for me skin

watch it work through my
thigh
for a lonesome peanut
and how I need your love,
my wild man

at war with your kitchens
and at war with my blood
make me a bold star,
like Paris Hilton

my doctor, I'm baby
count your grandfathers
clocks
as you hand me his pearls,
oh Jesus of pokes

needle of death,
needle that I need,
you are my cane
created by we

An Afternoon

M. E. Link

Untitled

Samuel English

Why are we sitting here amongst quiet nothing
A dance of productivity
Out there is a city to seize
Streets boiling over from the sewers
Everybody is dirty from
The slavery
The chains
Thrown on uncounted millions
Far from home
Making so many objects we are populated with

The cloth and rag
New pleather bags
Sewn by ungrown fingers
They cry for mother
Behind walls
Under others
Beyond the call
Souls torn asunder
Empty husks left behind
Haunting us
Breath in the dust
Let it rust
Becomethe mus

Rough

Parker Otto

I love things that don't feel quite finished
I like Texture
Rough edges
Things that grip
The incomplete nature of things
Most things don't need to be properly finished
They just need to find a twin that will compliment and bring its best self
out to play, rough edges
and all
A glass of beer, sweating on a wooden bartop, showing its age by the day
A juniper tree, battered by the wind, still growing its branches in pure
defiance, met by lovers
exchanging kisses in its shade
Random pieces of cloth and wood and junk cobbled together into
something of use for that
moment in time, be it seconds or years
Her hands are rough
Rough from horses and carpentry and scraping by with the work those
hands can bring her
Let them be rough
With such longing, to feel those hands meet my face
Softly they move, tousling my hair, brushing my lips, wiping my tears,
bringing a smile
There's much more work for those hands to do and, when days is done
and hands lay idle, I
wish to hold them
Those rough, beautiful, unfinished hands

As Industry

Maxwell Quinn

I killed the guys on the other side and they killed me back.
I invented a new kind of milk that's really good for you.
I put a handful of dust in the air and made the magnet song louder.
And with its exhaust I cried a little less.
My arm fell off years ago my boy, this is Indonesia you're looking at.
I don't grow grass anymore I killed the spotted water violets. You'll
never see them again.
I'll miss the great horned owl's face but not the great horned owl.
That one put an end to my drip irrigation my drip IV contains a
thousand units of God knows what to trust.

Labor's Fruits

M. E. Link

Grief heavy in my breast,
til I drift off in a haze...
wishin' upon a mountain crest;
up, up, up, up & away...
Myself, a woman, I suppose...
for I ache, a bard said so in a tune;
fluid as a strait and gonzo-prone...
just as I'm wired to press my own bruise.
Just a kid, after all this time;
ah wanna hold myself with care...
amid wildish brambles of my child's-mind;
ah savagely on my skin do they tear...
Just what purpose does pruning prove;
will I bristle with scarlet liberty;
come autumn will I bear ample fruit;
even-so, who will be the one to eat?

Jessi John Vincent Sardo

jessi please don't tempt me
when you know i'm tired and weak
and though it's been a week since you've
seen me
know that i may wait for three more
if it means i'm not caught
in your loving grip again
because your smile is so sweet
and your coffee is so bitter
baby please just leave me
here in my lonely corner
for today i am cold and catatonic
but i think i will be okay

Focaccia

Elijah Parrella

I don't really care for it
It's a sloven and greasy bread
That tires the arms of the dishwasher who has to scrub the oil out
of the pan sheet pan it was born in
And stains the brown paper you wrap it in
Bread on its own is not supposed to stain things
that seems unnatural
backwards if anything
It's what you put inside of bread that does the staining
Sausage and peppers
Mayonnaise
Bacon
Melted cheese
A well dressed bunch of arugula
Rare roast beef
a fried pork chop
Ketchup
These are reasonable things for which if you do not pay attention
will splotch your favorite faded blue denims
And muck up a white shirt
But I agreed to that risk when I signed up to eat a sandwich
The bread shouldn't compound on that

These lines of reasoning may be hacked away as unserious, childish,
or stemming from a lack of palatal refinement
but ask yourself
Would you want an umbrella that was already wet when you
opened it?
A condom with the sperm on the outside?
A dishwasher that used soap and beer instead of soap and water?
Nobody wants that
Bread is a protector and keeper of thoughts
It should contain that which it has been asked to contain
Buttress that which it has been asked to buttress
And offset the fatty indulgences it houses with an airy, glutinous
crunch
This all seems very reasonable

God knows what you'll have to trust in here.
I'll beat the eggs until God yells at me.
I'll kill all his sons until he shows up.
Maybe that old terrible boat will finally burn.
They're wearing green now, if you spot them you should turn
around.
If I catch another fish, we can go home.
I'm sorry that I missed your birthday party. I had to clean my leaches
so they'd be ready for the day. Here!

Carmilla Unbound, Part III

by Caroline Foster

Our knight was becoming as nervous as he was enticed. He looked the woman squarely in the eyes, noticing they now took a lighter, yellower hue than before. Her lips curved slightly into an inviting smile. His heart pounded in his ears and his body—he was a knight, he could not do this here. He quickly pulled his eyes off of her and glanced around the room to see if any other patrons noticed his salacious encounter, immediately feeling his heart drop. The alehouse was now empty. Where there had been a throng of boisterous men and women drunkenly singing their way through bawdy German songs were now empty tables and benches, pristinely clean without a single trace of the previous patrons. The candles were all fresh, as if they had just been lit, and there wasn't a speck of dirt on the solid fir floor. Furthermore, the room was cloaked in a deep, deathly silence—the type where all you can hear is your own blood rushing through your body. The knight gingerly turned his eyes back to the woman. Her smile had opened, and her white teeth now bearing red stains like those on her lips. She had tightened her grip on his thigh. That same scent of strange, wrong decay, now returned, and he realized all at once that it emanated from her.

“Let me tell you a story.”

Our knight, now decidedly frozen, felt his breath catch in his throat as if it had been stolen. Her grip on his thigh was solid and suddenly cold. Glancing downward, he saw that her hand was no longer covered by a thick, beige leather glove. Instead, it was bare—deathly, transparent white with the forms of veins shooting through it, but no color to indicate blood—and tipped with fingers longer than any he had ever seen. Each finger hosted a long, sharp, jagged nail tinged slightly red, the same shade that stained her teeth. Feeling himself begin to tremble, he brought his gaze back up to her face. She stared at him intently through her yellow-flecked eyes, mouth open and smiling as if savoring his panic. All at once, she moved closer, and placed her other, cold, white hand between his legs. Our knight inhaled sharply.

“These mountains can be treacherous,” she began. “It does not do for a woman to be alone in their shadow.” She sighed, exhaling her ungodly scent into his wide eyes. “But, such was I.”

The road was long, and I was meant to return before sundown. The end of the sun shone brilliantly across the path—I remember this well. You must know how that dazzling prince is put to bed each day, bursting with such ferocity to make his presence known before he returns below. It was in this finale that I spotted Her. A wisp of hair flying behind the tree line, eyes turned back to me for only a second, an invitation outstretched. I don't remember how long I followed Her before the night fell, but I knew I was far from any road. Things were not true in that place...

At this, she silently moved her hand from his thigh to the side of his face. Its iciness gave him a momentary shiver, and her skin felt for all the world like polished glass—like the flesh of the unnatural cadaver he had encountered in

the ice below the mountains. He supposed he wanted to shatter her and run, but his limbs stuck firmly in place as if divinely compelled.

“Until she took me down to the forest floor, perhaps even below.” One of her sharp, jagged nails scraped slowly across his cheek while her other hand began to slide up and down, making our knight gasp softly in pleasure. “Would you like to know what She did?”

At this, she removed her claws from his face, brought a nail to her throat, and carefully slit the fabric covering it right down the middle. “She gave me heaven.”

Our knight watched in horror as the fabric fell away from her neck. Its absence exposed two deep circular gouges, pulsating with what must have been the irregular rhythm of her heart. Around them, the porcelain flesh had putrefied, some areas purple and swollen, others a dull green or gray, sloughing off in thick, wet flakes with each pulse of the wound. An infernal heat emanated from it, creeping around our knight's face. He could feel his own quick pulse hammering in his throat and between his hips.

“Such a beautiful sight to behold,” she quickened the pace of her hand below. “To see the face of God and know that you are bound by Her.” Her other hand returned to its place on his cheek, then slithered back to firmly grasp his hair. He obliged her, tilting his head back as his breath became heavier.

“So many of your rank have had to be taught,” the image of the frozen body in the Templar coat flashed over his eyes. “And many more shall be soon—” His eyes now closed, he felt what must have been her wet, red tongue sliding up his throat and below his jaw. He was nearing the summit, and he did not want it to stop. Her thick breath now filled his ear. “—that you will find no God on this land but I.”

His release came with the most vigour he'd ever felt just as her sharp, stained teeth tore into the flesh of his neck. He let out a cry of ecstasy, feeling warmth spread through his body and combine with the hot blood pouring down his shoulder. He opened his eyes, but his vision was a blur. The flames of the candles in the empty alehouse were now roaring, reaching nearly to the ceiling in his murky sightline. His pleasure still coursing through him, every drop of blood in his body surged in its vessel like a thousand ants fleeing the rain, making his skin buzz. He felt the jagged coffin nails of her teeth sink deeper into the side of his neck, ripping through every fiber while her tongue worked feverishly to suck down the current of blood now gushing from the wound. He tried to cry out again, to make any sound at all, but the air he released seemed to be quickly swallowed by her. The only sound he could hear was an infernal squelching.

All at once, the pain arrived, and every inch of him was on fire. It seared and radiated with each beat of his heart, scorching as it went. He began to convulse like an animal in the throes of death, desperate for a relief, but she was stronger than him. One of her hands firmly gripped his shoulder, pinning him with an unimaginable force to the rough wood of the bench, while her other bore into his abdomen, instantly crushing organ and bone alike. Her serpentine fingers grasped something inside of him. He felt his skin begin to tighten

around him as if his entire body was swelling—but he was not swelling. No. This occurred to him at this moment, the only thought he could produce. He was being drained, and his flesh becoming a vacuum.

This pain, there was something about it. It felt—complete. It was all at once a sharp agonizing pulse and a low, dull ache that caressed his body. Not like the ache of pleasure, but stronger. It was pure, and it was the only real thing he had ever felt. He was born of it, made of it, and right then, it was everything. Holy, he thought. He remembered for a moment the visage of the man he found in the snow. Eyes impossibly wide, jaw torn and ragged, but—yes, he had sworn he'd been mistaken and pushed it away, but he could see it now. There had been a smile on his face.

Our knight never made it to the Holy Land. Nor did any of his company.

It wasn't until two days later that they were all found splayed about their camp, mangled and still. The local Styrians told each other it must have been a bear or a wolf that had done such carnage, but those who had come upon the scene knew better. They knew that every body, every limb ripped in two, every jaw torn from every face was entirely bloodless. They muttered to each other about the devil's work and agreed to remain silent for the sake of the town, but not one of them would ever forget.

You see, when I came to on that alehouse bench, alone, mutilated, dripping in blood and ecstasy, there was a single thought in my mind—I was insatiably hungry. I remember staggering through the empty midnight street holding my cold entrails close to my chest lest I lose them. I remember smelling my company and hearing the blood course through their bodies from a mile away. And I remember what my company's Lord tasted like.

I tried to find Her once, you know. I searched the Alps from Francia back to Marchia Austriae for a number of years, stalked village after village, read book after report after paper to find a single glimpse of Her anywhere. I suppose She does not want to be found. Perhaps She's in me, somewhere in my soul, I don't know.

How long has it been? I think I am coming up on seven centuries now. I have seen such things you would not believe, even at your learned institution. Things rise, things fall, lovers and friends are born and die in a matter of minutes, and everything begins again, and the sun also rises. The ache of my body has long since become an agony, a cage, and I cannot escape. Each step, each movement, each word is anguish. This is not the heaven I thought I would reach. I am so tired. I am so hungry.

End of Transcription

'...and Leaves Hung Long Upon the Bough' by Jacob Prince

... disintegration of the day upon the evening. "See there, see there, the garden green," en regardant le centre ville deux femmes s'apparaient portantes- squirrels of black fur installed themselves within the wiry branches of the overlong shrub assailed more and more often by the bitter winds rising out of darkness (of the year, and of the night, and of the sentiment). Bruised orange red of the crippled high tree. Acrid black wood-dust smoke gushes from twisting brush-pile furies far away.

Weaving is that bitter wind in parks across Midtown. Bryant Park jokes at engagement with the season of hardship by cheap facades for two-bit stall-hawkers. The homeless will crumple into tunnels, into trains; cruel ice, that ancient spectre, that crone with nails filed, stiff from rigor mortis, will seize upon us glinting silver and the weakest and the least prepared will die. It was all foretold, then, upon the wind. "Where often we did walk."

The joys of summer have unwoven into this. The convection currents of the Northern Hemisphere run less merrily and the Labrador coasts blow frost upon the city to remind us that we have settled at the Southern Edge of the Northern World. These things are holy and a blessing. God, less the cornucopia, less the vineyard hill, less the wheat field, more the glacier. "The fairest flower ever seen,"

Arnold was aware of the things that he had let pass him by in the first week of the cold snap. Hands plunged, straining in the golden torrent and he had heaved but lost the friction. In cold wind, the Earth has placed her hands upon her temples in sorrow. The summer had only ever been a lie. The sweet Titan Gaia led through assurances and tainted promise into indulgence of the flowers and fields under the favorable winds and calming warmth. She blooms, she smiles, she holds, she loves, and yet despite this paradise there is a change. Some slip in the summer catches. An incomprehensible misalignment of circumstances. The symphony of summer, the conductor's wand, every movement played to form but the band is all awry and the day feels un-achieved and the chance is slipping past her, and it's cold. Twisted metal smolders after cars crash violently in silence."Is withered at the stalk."

A tailor takes the measurements for a suit of fine cloth. His customer has chosen wisely, having weighed the linen options practically and with taste. The piece will be one of importance to his customer, and so, the tailor rises to his craft. During the evening, during the day, while the store is open and is closed, the tailor cuts his precious angles, sews his precious lines, tosses fabrics out across the table and whips them back. He has never felt more precise, more honed. His age has only brought him mastery and he knows the suit will lend itself to a lengthy span of successful professional years.

Having purchased it, the customer is satisfied. Driving down a country lane on his commute to work, face freshly shaven, hair sitting better than normal, tie positioned well

on his breast, sporting his new suit of fine cloth, he thinks to heighten his pleasure by opening the windows. A fierce gust ravages the cabin, tousling his hair and scattering papers everywhere. His client's documents are ripped from the cabin and into roaring sky. Lunging to secure them, the customer shatters his rearview mirror, tearing his suit and ripping flesh of his arm to spurt thick blood across the cabin. He is a relentless professional and performs the meeting anyway, having had no time to change. His eyes are shining at the clients from black pits of horror and rage. His arm is poorly bandaged and he is forced to change the bandages in front of them. The well-chosen suit hangs ragged from his blood-stained flesh. His work quality is very low, having had no access to his papers. He stumbles over his words. Rather than get stitches, he allows his flesh to bleed out until he dies later that evening. Last words: "I should have used the A/C."

"It's ok," Arnold thought. "It's ok, it's not a big deal. I'll just start smoking cigarettes, I think, and spend more time looking at the change in the color of the evening sky as I watch the horizon. Not sure that anything else would've suited me so well anyway."

You have forgotten that our God is also of disdain. Love in a harsh wind. Love in too cold weather. Love in the frozen breath that steams out of vital lungs. Love in an upturned collar. Love without shelter. In hiding yourself from suffering, you have forgotten yourself and the nature of our God.

Jackson at the Pond

by Maxwell Quinn

Hey Swan! You been good? Are you doing alright?

Ah! Those fucking guys don't mind them! They don't know what the hell they're talking about, don't let them get to you.

How's this water, huh? Looks fucking disgusting. God, I wouldn't touch that if I were you. But if I were you, if I were you, mannnn you don't wanna know what I'd do if I were you.

I'd like, spit around and fucking, make sounds and shit, like, really loud.

I'd fly into a kitchen and just start splashing around like, making a mess in someone's kitchen hahhaa!

Agh! You know I don't like you pecking me like that man! Fuck! Stop it man you know I'm just tryna hang out.

You know what you really need? Better friends. Yeah I don't think these guys here really care about you. Look at them they're just over there ignoring you.

You need more people like me, more people to talk to, you know.

Ah man, you know I worry about you. I do man, I worry if you're doing alright over here.

You got a girlfriend? Haaaa I'm sure you do, you Mott. But I'm worried you don't know how to treat a woman. How to really care about someone else. You mostly just splash around all day. You gotta take her out to the movies, you know, take her out to dinner. You gotta have a good time with her, Mott! You can't just splash around over here and expect something. Expect that someone's gonna want you. You gotta get out there man!

Look at me. Look at me, you gotta get your shit together man. I'm serious. I can't have my friends just wallowing around like this, it's a bad look for me!

If I'm honest, I get a little embarrassed sometimes just sitting here with you. Spitting around this pond, there's more to life, Mott!

You ever have a linguini with clams? With the steamed clams and shit and the fucking, the fucking shallots and garlic and everything? Oh man Mott, you gotta have it!

And you probably never played a sport in your life neither! There's so much you can learn from sports. You can change your whole outlook and everything,

I mean really see things you've never seen before.

I knew a guy, he used to wade around, just like you! And he dropped into a game once with some real nice players, I mean, real good players with serious promise, and you know what happened to him? I never saw him again! He must have gotten picked up by a... an agent or something, and he's out there now playing for good money and learning all kinds of things.

Mott, you gotta help me quit smoking. You're complicit you know! You let me go on, smoke after smoke and you never do nothing about it!

Untitled

by Coleman Hicks

Do you have any idea where your son is tonight?
He said he was staying over with Abe.

Dan was in front of the television on the sofa, a white glow cast across his half-prostrate body. The room was dark besides this light.

Abe's mother just called, and apparently he told her that he was staying over here tonight. So I ask again, do you have any idea where your son is tonight?

I guess not.

Dan takes another swig of his beer as he says this, not looking up from the television.

You're unbelievable. I'm going out.

Helen takes off her wedding ring and puts it on the dresser, swings open the front door and slams it behind her.

Reports coming in just now, Police are still on the lookout for a Joseph Murphy who is still reported missing after forty-eight hours of searching. The seventeen year old was last seen at Wichita Creek, any information can be reported to 888-743...

He takes another swig.

~~~

Hey idiot, do you have any idea where we're going?

Shut up.  
Did all the fat go to your head or what?  
Sh-shut up, we're almost there. I swear it's right up here.

Abe was sweating a large black stain down the back of his shirt.

Hey I think this is where your mom gave me a handy once, Abe, right back behind this tree.  
We're almost there. And shut up!  
I think I see it.

Shane was holding the flashlight. He pointed the beam down to a mudbank by the edge of the water.

Holy shit Abe, you might not be as retarded as you look.

Shane stepped down the bank to get closer. He was right next to it now, crouching in the reeds.

What'd you see Shane? Maggots or something?  
No.

He took the blade out of his multi-tool and poked it.

He's fresh.

Abe was really sweating now.  
Hey Shane, don't kill me for saying this, but-but doesn't he kinda look like your dad?

Shane thought for a moment. He grinned.  
I've got an idea.

~~~

Helen stumbled through the front door and past the television which was still on. She came loudly up the stairs and through the bedroom door and into the darkness.

Guess where I was tonight.

No response from the brown head of hair on the pillow which she addressed.

I fucked Ellison.

No response.

Yeah. You just keep lying there and thinking to yourself how you're just nothing to me. She hiccuped.

No response from the body that lay underneath the sheets.

Hon' would you quit talking up there?

He turned the TV up and took another swig.

II

Dan zipped down the tent and looked at the two blow-up camping mattresses.

Well, shit.
What? Did you finally find your dick?

Helen was pulling from a flask and sitting on the tailgate.

Dammit woman, the goddamn kids snuck off.
Some father you are. What a great trip. Take the kids camping.
Goddamnit you think you're better than me? They're your fucking kids too.

Dan stood up and rubbed his forehead. The setting sun was turning the sand and brush around them a dull maroon.

We better go fucking find them.

~~~

It stops and the door to the red bus with the flowers painted on it opens. They get out. Spike is smoking a cigarette as he steps to the ground. Long thick hair which hangs down to his bare chest. Dark round sunglasses that will stay on for the duration of the night.

Oh my god. What took you so long? I've been waiting here for forever.  
Jess, hey. Sorry we're late. We were, like, held up and shit.  
Hope it wasn't too scary out here in the sticks.

He grins and she shoves him.

Yeah whatever. Did you bring it?  
I didn't bring it man, she did.

They look back to a ragged girl who is leaning against the bus. Rifling through a canvas knapsack.

Don't worry, I got it.  
They smile.

~~~

Do you hear that?
What.
It's like, singing or something.

Dan shines the flashlight away from the path and towards the dunes. A whooping and wailing can be heard, some kind of chanting. The two of them begin to walk up the sloping earth where slowly a bacchanal scene creeps over the edge of the sand.

There around the roaring flames of a great conflagration can be seen the five of them, their daughter and the burnouts and a strange interloper between them. They are screaming and crying and laughing as they jaunt and spin and hold each other's hands, flying and twisting in some morbid celebration. The smallest among them is at first glance a hellbeast or a daemon, the body of a child and the head of some fiend. A bleeding eviscerated mutant. Terrible commotion. Some hellion in the thick of it.

What the fuck is that.

Jess?

I think it's our kids.

Oh my god.

Helen pulls from the flask.

Dan approaches and shines the light on the boy, naked but for the coyote head he wears and the oozing skins that drape him like shamanic dress.

After a brief pause the lunatics start singing again. Some ghastly wicked song. He starts again to dance.

III

The china in the glass cabinet vibrates with every speaker thump and clash from the revelers as they throw themselves into the walls and furniture. They lift up the smallest among them over their heads and drive him like a sledge into the kitchen table which shatters and collapses. The most riotous among them are fighting in the front yard or fucking in the parent's bedroom or careening themselves into anything breakable. Most of them are simply jumping to the music and drinking and snorting whatever can be found or fished from pockets or coatsleeves.

Jess looks up from the living room coffee table and sees a man walk through the front door with a brown herringbone blazer and a yellow striped tie.

Shit is that the cops?

Jess looks back down and begins rolling a dollar bill into a tight straw.

No its just Mr. Ellison.

Oh shit Mr. Ellison! Dude I haven't seen you since like, fourth period!

He grabs Spike by the head and shoves him to the side and walks forward into the living room and stands in front of Jess where he takes out a little bag of powder and kneels down and takes a dollar bill from his pocket and rolls it into a tight straw.

~~~

Mr. Ellison is zipping up his fly in the family bathroom. What the hell is that sound.

He follows the muffled noise of banging and choked yelling to the bathroom closet. He unlocks and opens the door to find the little brother bound and gagged with duct tape and zip ties.

~~~

Jess wakes from the halfdead delirium scumdream to the earthquake sound of fifty feet hitting the wood paneling and tile floors at the exact same time, one second apart.

Thump Thump Thump.

They carry the little boy on their shoulders like an emperor in triumph.

Shane Shane Shane.

They're chanting and calling and reeling to the music with the boy on their shoulders and he is wearing a very loose brown herringbone jacket and a yellow striped tie and he is smiling and they are chanting and blood drips from his hands and he is smiling and they are chanting.

Shane Shane Shane.

Loveless/Loving/Loved

by Dagny Rebhan

All I wanted was to be loved. To be a first love, a second. To be the last, and wedded. All I want is to be loving. Is to be love. So I shoot it out of me and it beads like sweat in the sun, running over my temples and under my arms. I breathe for it, reach for someone. Only to be left panting, perpetually a state of recovery, never one of ready. I want love to whisk me off the street and take me to its place of worship. There I will sit and ponder what it is to love, as someone who has never been loved. Loose and whorish and ran-through. Pruned to perfection, carried on a silver platter.

I want love drunk and sweaty and scream singing.

I want it quiet and caring and falling down mountains.

Is love found in the heat of sex? Hot, hot pain climbing up my back. Hold my neck, don't stop. And lick, love; swallow, spit it out clean. The athletic endurance sport of pretending you are fine and good at this thing when really you are not. A brain tease. A nerve block. What is sex without love, and what is love without sex? How can a body that rejects sex ever find itself calm enough to welcome love? Haven't I done enough; haven't I braved enough; haven't I healed enough? Oh, girl, why can't you cum.

Is love found in the early morning wanderings of two drunks on a beach? Where words and their meanings are trivial, the game is how much one can hear while remembering nothing. Nothing but the wake of an eerie peace haunting them the next morning. Wit and wronged and washed up. Where words are said without thinking, and moans are kept for waking. Is love a secret for inebriated blood, and is it really better when you're drunk? Is love only written about when we are high, and loss only realized when the low gets sorted?

Is love a mirage I've made in my brain? Is it my great fault in my great life that I will always love someone more than they love me? Is love meant to be found by spending a day with them? Is love to be run after, or do I let it pass to me? Is love to be fucked? Is love to fuck?

Can I get out of it?

I think I know all there is to know about love. And yet, how much can one know when they have never ever been loved or in love? I fear it is too late to be someone's first, and yet whoever I end up loving will be mine. Love is a power grab if you're hungry or a survival state if you're unprotected. Love. Love. Love. The more I say it, the more it means. Have I been in love? It's embarrassing if I have. Does love laugh at my openness, my naiveness, my youth? Is love to blame for the mind games I play when I must say no? I

cannot help but love. And yet I am so bad at it. Cannot help but notice the way a curl sits upon a forehead and how you look at me. Careful but not. But maybe there is nothing in your brain that calls you to love me. Maybe I have made it up. I am afraid. I love too much, I am too much, I see and feel too much; it destroys me. I am so fragile in love. So like a leaf in the wind, I worry the moment I *become* loved, the minute I find myself *in* love, it might just shatter me into a million pieces.

Loving

All I am is loving. As an act, as a breath, as a desperation. Slightly pathetic but beautiful. I weave a story of love tripping over and under my words like roots growing up over solid ground. I am loved, and I am loving. A choice, a commitment, a commandment. Where yearning is prayer and love is god.

I want to hold love. Kiss it and feel it and, and, and. Love it. Go. Quickly run over mountains, skip the troll at the entrance, reject the rules of the underworld, climb the tower. Let me love. Let me find it, let me stay with it, and reach for it. And let it be big and beautiful and everything. I feel like I'm living through fairytales. Like I am set to face a sobering of reality I cannot bear to hold. Let me live drunk and dizzy staring out at love's face like it is the only thing in this entire room.

I deserve love even when my body rejects it. Like a bruise hit again and again, my body holds a pain that is so foreign to love. So hard to love. I know it is hard because I have tried and failed for many years. Loving is a sickness to the pain that haunts my bones. It creeps inside slowly and makes me weep, over and over again. Like a crack that has been filled in after many years. The relief makes me double over, pouring the poison out. Loving is found when you look at my body like you do. Soft and kind, as if I am not simply the sum of my non-working parts. Love and sex are not two sides of different coins; they are one and another kicking and screaming along with the ride. Loving is the perpetual sniffing of the wine, raising it to my lips, thanking god, and swallowing it down, the taste of it dancing on my tongue.

Tongues and lips and spit and sweat and whispering.

A hand cupped into my hip, the sound of your breath as you sleep. Loving is felt when you run a hand over my body after knowing its flaws. As if the hair and its history, the scars and their stories, the pain and its body are not something to run from. As if my need to pluck and prune and perfect is not necessary. Do you know what that means? Love is held in the molecules that quench my thirst. The rushing of a wave, the current under my feet, hearing gravity call us to the center of things. We fold over and over into each other.

You and me and
me and you and
you and
you and
me me me and
you.

And you.

Somersaulting and cartwheeling through questions of life. We unleash our wrath on the world. Tantrums and crying,

weeping and laughing, and the slightest question of insanity. Loving makes us ignorant of our time. Days, months, years flow by as if in a single moment.

Loving is ranted about over stupid pillows. Is forming my mouth into words I'd never thought I'd say. Unknown words, silly words, words that can't possibly capture the feeling in my heart. Loving is letters where I spend the entire time trying to write what I know when what I know is unwritable.

Loving is worry. Is too soon. Too sudden. Too much of me. Too thought over and pondered. Too left in another's mouth. Loving gets stuck in my saliva and is swallowed down, buried in my throat, thoughts stampeding out of the gate, my hands fail at its task. It nestles in my heart as I nestle in your arms. Loving is "the many ways of using a ten-pound note." Is cigarette smoke, childish excitement, and kangaroos. Is a story that starts with me and ends with you. Oh, how I would write my way into lying with love again. Into lying with you again. Hear a loving breath emerge and let me trace your spine again. Loving is holding so much and still being weightless.

And with that love (you) stays. And with that love (me) leaves. And with that, we part. Hoping and praying and saying more than we planned, and also not nearly enough.

The gape loving opens in me as I leave it, creaks my bones yearning for an answer. It pounds in my head like an alarm clock, wakes me out of my drunken stupor. Like a child holding their breath, my eyes go wide searching for it. For something to fill it. For something to do with it all. I find you in everything, and the openness, the breath, the pounding just grows more. Eyes creaking, I look out over this hazy place. Grey and malnourished of love and hope and love's laugh. The streets ring empty, and I can hear the beating of my own dead heart like it is thunder. Love has been gone for a brief moment, and I am already worn down. I lay in bed wondering why my body collapses, why the world seems wasted.

Loved

All I am is loved. In throw blankets and guitar tutorials and letters that say too much and mean the world. I am loved in nothingness. In heaps of sadness and grief, and the worst loneliness you could ever imagine. I am loved through screens: text messages and FaceTime, and "What time is it there?" and "Are you asleep yet?" Love has whisked me off the street, and I have prayed at her feet. Love has told me no a million times and has said yes only a few. Love is something I can do at my leisure, following me wherever I go, leaving a trail of words in my wake.

Love is found in peaches and kiwis and dream journals. Love is found in train rides and looking glasses and sculpture museums.

Love is everywhere, but I am adamant about getting it the way I want. And because it is not the way I want, I believe there is none of it. Love is frustration and flailing and waiting for the time to be right.

Love is held in a friend's home. In soirées and olives and stories shared at a dinner table. Love, while difficult to find, is held in a stuck place. In the continuation of the constant, where nothing feels as if it has or will ever change. Love is change. In the hardened hopes of one who wishes, prays, for nothing more. Love is held in screaming matches and asking, "Do you want to keep me in your life?" Love is exhaustion

and work, and sometimes, most times, does not feel like love. Feels like shit and muck and walking through molasses. Like a parking ticket on a five-degree day. Love is felt more easily in raucous drinking, but its sting feels worse sober.

Love is in the room I isolate myself in. Among the self-hatred and doubt it rests. Makes my eyes misty and my body shake. I am loved in places that feel like I could never be: my brain, my pain, my selfishness. I am even when I am alone and have convinced myself, once again, that I am a terrible person. I am loved there. Would you believe it? Love is, sometimes, the only way I continue.

Love is not one feeling but a multitude, making us loose and whorish and pruned and perfected and sexy and silly and brilliant and funny and desperate and magnetic and open and sealed and damaged and safe and hard to understand and curious and devoid and full and everything. And every thing.

Love is a contradiction none of us want, but we all crave. I am fragile in love. So much so, I know love breaks me. Love cracks me open and builds me up again with the knowledge of those who have helped me to become whole again. And perhaps, love doesn't let us close again. It leaves fractures in our fortress that make us a bit more open each time. At the end of my life, I don't want a fortress. I want to have loved enough that all that is left is air for the openness to pour through.

Proposal

by Chandra Prakesh

I was born and raised in this city. Manhattan shaped me—the schools, the streets, the subways that never run on time. I'm 23 years old, and on the day this story truly began, it was my first day as a master's student at NYU.

That morning, I took the local train. Like every other day, it was late. But I wasn't worried. I had started early. Still, time inside the subway moves differently—slow, heavy—like that planet in *Interstellar*, where minutes cost years. I made it to class on time. Life went on.

Days turned into weeks. Weeks into months. Assignments. Quizzes. Exams. The routine of a normal guy—living under his parents' roof, watching movies late at night, playing online games, dreaming without knowing what I was waiting for.

Then one day came—like rain in peak summer.

I was on the train with my friend, switching lines to get home. A group boarded with us. One of them knew my friend, so they started talking. I glanced at the group casually ... and then I saw her.

She was laughing, alive in her own moment. One Air Pod in her ear—music playing only for her. Her hair was dark and shining, flowing like a waterfall from her head to her shoulders. Her eyes... they reminded me of lotus petals—soft, deep, impossible to ignore. When she smiled, my entire world lit up. And yet, in her world, I didn't exist at all.

She got off at 116th Street. I stayed on till 125th.

That night, sleep never really came. Only her face did.

The next morning, I learned she studied at the same university—NYU. All this time, just another class, another hallway away. Through mutual friends, I learned more about her. That evening, with my friend standing beside me like fate itself, I introduced myself to her. I owe that man more than he'll ever know.

At first, we talked about classes. Subjects. Grades. Slowly, those conversations turned into movies, random thoughts, meaningless things that somehow meant everything. The subway that once felt endless suddenly felt too fast. Like the MTA had secretly installed F1 engines just to steal time from me.

She always got off at 116th Street. And somehow... so did I.

Just a few extra minutes. A few extra steps. A few extra heartbeats.

I never told her how I felt. She saw me as a friend. And I was afraid—afraid that if I spoke, I'd lose even that. Seasons changed. Time moved on. And before I realized it, it was the last day of my course.

I knew one thing clearly. If I didn't say it that day, I might never say it in my lifetime.

That evening, we got off the train and walked toward her home—like every other day. But the universe decided to pause.

The sun was low, painting the sky gold. The clouds were pale red on one side, dark on the other. The wind moved gently, like it was careful not to interrupt the moment. No traffic. No noise. Just birds, sky, and silence. It felt like the world was holding its breath.

So I gathered every bit of courage I had left.

"I want to say something," I said. "I've wanted to say it for a long time... from the very first moment I saw you."

She stopped walking. She listened.

"I feel good when I'm with you," I continued. "And I don't want these moments to end. I want to spend more time with you."

She looked straight into my eyes—like she could see through me. My pupils widened. My heart raced like I'd just finished a marathon, breathless, unstoppable.

And then, with nothing left to hide, I said the only truth I had been carrying all along.

I love you.

Visiting the Museum With My Friends

by Jon Swiss

The flow of successors in the capitalist field is what enables it to sustain itself, for an ideal larger than itself—success—becomes the central authority to the entire machine. God in capitalism becomes success. Prayers become investments. And priests becomes entrepreneurs.

Anyway, I could not bring myself to rob anyone. In perpetuating such a thing would I be, if we wish to cohere to the political philosophy of Rawls, or more acutely, Kant's conception of morality, single handedly destroying the whole world. But I was broke and very hungry and not thinking straight.

Now, selling drugs is a different story—so long as they are clean. Once, when I was a younger man and needed money, I asked my friend to lend me an ounce of weed. Let me just say that within a month or two I was selling out by the pound and even became his dealer.

Even though I have a lot of experience under my belt, I am still quite innocent, which perhaps is not such a good thing, as good of a thing as it can be. I wish sometimes that I was able to be less innocent. But then again, not really. I am proud of my kindness and naiveté.

Anyway, eventually my friend, Eric, invited me to go to the Whitney Art Museum with him and his girlfriend, and then five minutes later, my other friend, Steele, invited me to go to the MoMa with his girlfriend. I thought that that was a funny coincidence, and as it turned out the exhibitions were timed in such a way that I could go to both museums, which I did.

When I arrived to the MoMa, Steele was not yet there and so I started rolling myself a cigarette, but right as I went to smoke it he appeared and so I put it away and we all walked into the place. He was excited to see an exhibit presenting the artist, Ruth Asawa, who I basically found to be unimpressive.

Framed, were the graduate school recommendations which she received from various professors and they called her all sorts of wonders and that she was something revolutionary. They were very well written and were perhaps my favorite part of the exhibit. I liked the contrast between reading her praise and looking next to me and being disappointed. That being said, the exhibit had this one cool painting which she made, representing chairs, using amalgamations of small squares, like mosaics, to form them and their corresponding scene. But other than that I did not care much for the exhibit.

I pretended to find her work interesting, so that my friends would not consider me pretentious and think me to be a hater, but if I am being frank, I did not understand her work very well. Perhaps this was why I did not like it.

I told my friends, "See ya guys, i'm going to check out the Picassos and the Matises," and I did just that and we all said

goodbye. Walking down to the exhibit I ran into my and Steele's other friend, Gideon, who studied Art History in school and I consider his opinion valid.

"Did you know Steele is right back there?" I said, pointing behind me. "Yes, we were just texting." He said. "I want to show you guys the Wilfredo Lam exhibit."

I told him that Steele was going to be a while. Gideon sighed and made a face. "Ugh." He said. "I don't really get it." I said, talking about Asawa, hoping to find agreement in Gideon, who's opinion, as I said, I find valid. "I do, but I don't like it." He said. I gave him some hits from my pen and left him to see the Picasso's and whatever else.

This next exhibit was one of the coolest things which I have ever experienced and actually expanded within me a new curiosity for physical art.

First of all, entering into the exhibit I was greeted by George Braque's, *Woman holding a Mandolin*. I immediately fell in love with it. Then my brain and perception was exploded by the beautiful and magnanimous work by James Pollock entitled, *She-wolf*. What a piece that one was to behold. I contemplated it for some time and left perhaps higher than I already was. I was next unimpressed by Dali's most famous painting, which was very small and actually did not interest me very much.

Quickly was my brain once again exploded by none other than Picasso's, *Girl in front of a mirror*. I really loved the painting and studied it for a long while. I am sure that Wallace Stevens, one of my favorite poets, loved this piece as well, for we see a beautiful woman, perceive in the mirror that which she perhaps is not.

To quote Stevens, "A tune beyond us as we are, yet nothing changed by the blue guitar." And here do we see the girl's self beyond herself looking into the mirror: herself, quite different from that which is actually there, to mean, that which is the physical world.

But Picasso makes it clear that even this physical world is not that which it might seem. The woman, as the woman, looking into the mirror as a fantasy world of her own self estimation. While it was not my favorite, I found it to be a true masterpiece, and out of the hundreds of paintings which I saw that day, was only one of the three which I encountered.

Stay tuned for the rest: Jon Swiss, The Giovanni Safarella Brand

My Friend Capital

by Jack Kontarinis

A young man moves to a disgusting trash-heap of a city, one that is also beautiful in its rage and its night-bellows, garbage trucks screaming through philosophic and pood alleys, trying their hardest to wake us up bleary eyed and remind us of the shit we stuff in bags and send to the fire, miles away and impersonal and probably in New Jersey.

But if this city were a body then I would be in its lower intestines, only possible moving up towards the more pretty and thoughtful parts if something goes horribly wrong, but otherwise most likely to be shit out sometime soon, depending on my nutritional makeup and the fiber intake of this intellectual and shitting city. I am laxative, hear me bubble!

And it is here, in the intestines, that I meet my friend Capital. Of course, I have known him a long time, molested by his fragments and convulsed by his hallucinations since birth. And we have a strange friendship. How many of your friends have tried to give your family and EZ Pass into poverty, low-toll specialties to slice through Repossessions, Audits, Federal Taxes, somewhat unharmed, but definitely scarred? But I love him, too, try as he might to drown me.

It's in this city that I really get to know Capital. I've spent years pruning and fostering our friendship, on my knees in front of old misers and some of Capital's better, closer friends, and god damn my knees are, or might be permanently mutilated from so much groveling, but Capital is not a fair weather friend, so grovel and kneel I must.

When I get to this city, Capital is on my mind. I hadn't seen much of him for a long time, being a poor, deranged pseudo-intellectual in the Drunk Tank for four years, lied to about the outside world and full of the knowledge of underemployment and how to take a Customer's Order. So I get to the city and get on my knees, praying to Capital.

Where can I find you? I miss you, please call me back.

And Capital, benevolent and insane as he is, returns my call one day and I get a job.

And I start to see Capital a lot more, thank God, because I missed him, even though I still don't see him as much. Personally, I mean, because of course I still see him everywhere. And it makes me jealous, because I want to be Capital's best friend. I don't want him through middle men and misers and Customers anymore, I want to tell Capital what to do, how to be liquid, how to diversify. My holdings, you see, my holdings, God, liquidate Customers, please!

Capital laughs at me. Through a pink smog haze on the cholesterolated artery of this stinking cadaverous city I see Capital's newest best friend, some new megalithic behemoth, straight glimmering steel and glass, miles high, like stairs ascending to Capital Heaven where only Capital's Fellacites may go one day. The Structure giggles at me through the stinking rotten alleys of the intestines, reflected in puddles of piss, shimmying scraps of tinfoil and needles, Capital's ex-wives and deranged half-cousins screaming at dumpsters while I walk.

"Well, this World will Mend one day..."

I won't call myself one of Capital's slaves, no one is truly, you just might think you are one. Really, though, I might be too harsh on my old friend. Capital is sometimes very nice to me and lets me do fun things, like when foreign sand is stuck in my toenails and when Waiters ask me to repeat what I just said because I say things too nervously. Capital lets me do a lot, actually!

I just don't want him to be angry at me and send his Repossessors after me again, because losing my things makes me sad, and I simply don't know what to do with myself without my things. When Capital gets mad at me and I lose my things, All I want to do is make him happy again, and a lot of the time I am still on my knees. Because my Friend Capital is an asshole.

Untitled

by Jackie Beck

My second floor room is stacked brown boxes, piles of cotton and Jean, silky sheets, hanging dust whispering "the walls aren't clean." The quandary: when you return to Brooklyn, you will live one subway stop away, East.

I've turned away from to dos and towards a cigarette day dream. I'm laying shirtless in jeans on lavender smelling sheets, drinking the wooden floor boards and the flaking crown of the ceiling, and I'm dreaming about Z.

Through the window my eyes meet the brown and green leaves on the peeling Eucalyptus outside and we wave in solidarity of our poetry.

I turn onto my side to immerse in the memory of the night we met Z, I'd arrived at Purgatory too late. You and the band were standing side by side out front chatting discreetly. You had just finished playing your set. Something about you and your band was mysterious. As if each of you was keeping a secret. When Frank introduced us, or was it Hector? I didn't notice the argyle velvet walls and powdered-blue-satin-sheets between us immediately, and I didn't feel the static electricity until the night our finger tips touched in the pizza shop off mcdougal street, but I did feel something.

Me, Hector and Frank had been chalantly up to the usual, drinking beers and smoking cigs on the picnic bench when I saw she was searching for something on the ground. When someone asked what she was looking for, she replied, "My heart diamond fell." or was it "Im looking for a heart diamond." No, maybe she said, "I lost the gem to my ring." Okay so I can't remember how she described it, but I know she would have crafted the line of words with a laconic tongue and a poet's pen. Each word would have been perfect, chosen. Each word speaking the intention into existence, but lovingly so, gently leading the word from before to the word up ahead.

Whatever it was, I immediately started looking for it, this thing belonging to Z. "Is this it?" Crouching below the crowd, I rose from the black asphalt, a pink heart diamond cradled in the crevices of my wrinkled palm. "YES!" Z, exclaimed, and in that moment there, outside Purgatory in the dark dream of a Bushwick Summer Night a conniving cupid knocked me out cold.

I felt as if I was now lost somewhere on the ground going unnoticed but not unfelt. "Dude I can't believe you found it. Thank you." I guess I had to find it. I didn't know why at the time. I do now, understand, how metaphorically insane it was that you dropped your heart on the ground, your diamond heart, and I found it. Months later, I felt so lame having not recognized the subtle significance of your heart falling onto the sidewalk then.

But how could I have known? Maybe the Hennessy that appeared in and out of your tote bag everywhere we went that one night after Parlor. We had walked over to Washington Square from Reggio's sitting at the fountain and I was taking photos of the empty pint of Hennessy floating on the water. A half-drunken pint of Hennessy appeared in front of my face, a half smirking Z behind it, maybe should have said something. Maybe the hives she had the day before she left for Nashville. She told me she fell into some poison oak at Maria Hernandez Park. There's poison oak at Maria Hernandez? She kept itching, and from the corner of my eye I kept staring at her

itching. I had to borrow money from my buddy in Tucson to buy the movie tickets, I had never taken a woman on a date, and I felt like a creep because she didn't know it was a date and I was too confused to decide if it was or wasn't a date yet myself.

Message:

Z, Do you have a crush on me ?

yes.

Z, Are you with him ?

Sometimes.

The kiss

She surprised me. Drunkards we were at the Sackett Funeral, Clyde the cellist bought the bar and we drank it. I think that might be the luckiest night of my life. Z wore her favorite brown cowboy boots and showed up with a bag of paint cans. We tagged the painted wall, the one behind the fence across from the bar. We had to crawl under the chain links into tall wet weeds to get to the wall. She tagged the wall with her Cowgirl-skeleton-head, I could barely walk, she saw me, I was dragging the red spray with confident aimlessness across the center of a perfectly painted art. When we crawled back to the street side, I said something slick and thought I'd gone too far, came off too strong, when her boots took off. I had been attempting non-chelant, chasing whiskey with room-temp Modelos. But wires were getting crossed. I got all unsure of myself and tried to leave. I thought I was gone. But I was coming down the stairs to the train and my close pal Mac was coming up. I couldn't believe it. How could I leave now? So we headed back to the funeral together. I went straight for the band. I ceased fighting and started dancing. There I was with myself in the chant, and the calm. I let my head hang, my limbs loose and long and I sang and shouted merrily. I'm home, I thought. I let my eyes float to find Z at the back of the room in the crowd, hand to her chin watching the men make the music like she's known to do.

When the music faded and the people went home, I didn't know you were standing in a corner that I was heading towards. And when I landed in front of you I knew what you wanted and I gave it willingly.

A Love Letter that I Found on the Street in Williamsburg, on my Way to Pete's Candy Store

by Anonymous

To my love,

Who thinks her beauty can be concealed by a night's old mascara but whose majesty only shines forth even more. My love bubbles and burns like an expectant volcano and teems out every time I'm in your glorious presence.

Love,
(unreadable)

Afterthoughts
Parker Otto

Beard

Brown eyes

Chest

Tousled black hair

Green eyes

Painted legs

Deep moans

Quick breaths

Loving so intense it makes your brain go dead and your body electrify with sensation

Two points, to moments connected with thread

****Merchant's Letter****

Sir,

Your letter to me, d'd le 18 of December, 1665, is to be remember'd, wherein you informd me of your comming shipment here to Halifax of divers goods, viz. cornmeal, chint bramport Indian, Candian furs, well met, and divers other goods, which are all awaited with much anxiety, truth be told.

Your business here, sir, is carrying on as God intended, and there is not much in the way of accounts, etc., to be reported, as all is in good order since you hath left us here last Spring. You need not worry. Besides, there are certin persons here of the weaker sex that doth miss your presence, one might say much too much so. Best let not Mz. Cock here of this, hup!

But, sire, besides jest, I might add that, if it may please you, to send along, in your next ship, divers Indian herbs, and perhaps even one of the famous Healers that you hath informed me of in times past, if this may not bring to much trouble to your lordship. For there now be many men amongst us here that hath fallen ill, with gripping and Fever, and it remindeth me not a littel of the plague itself, God have mercy. I am lothe to give credit to Savage witchcraft, but divers womenfolk heer do say that the Savages hath found various charms and methods to bettering the fare of those plagued with such sicknesses. Forgive me, sir, for indulging in such heathenish thoughts, but, one might say that Halifax hath fallen on dark times, and if you may show us a littel of God's love and Charity through a weigthy hull in the next ship, wee might be obliged to name one of our Muddy Streetes after youre lordships onner. Cocks Alley, hup!

Your loving friend,

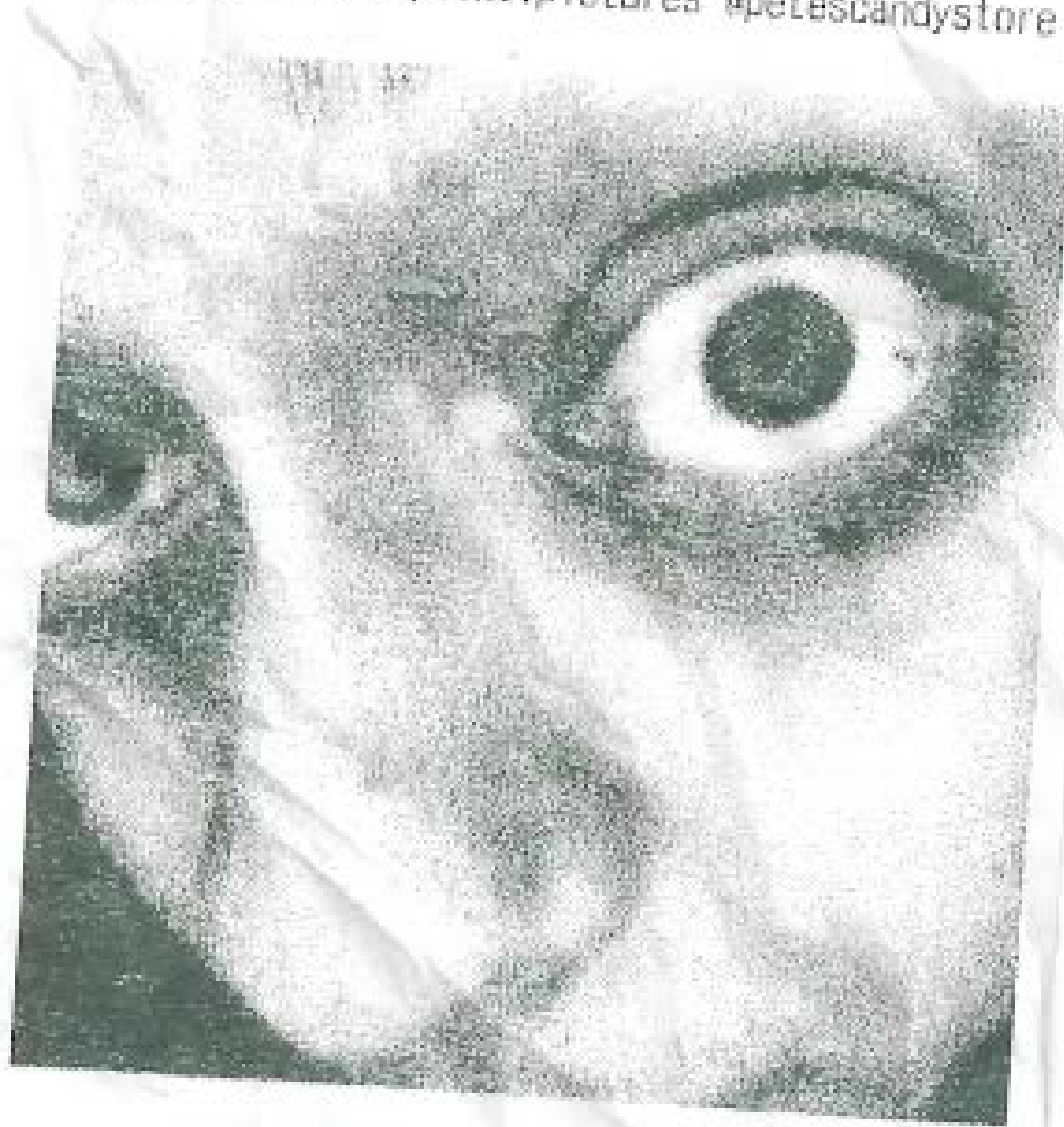
George Wilson Esq.

D'd le 19th December, Halifax.

P.S.: If thou seest Hilda, pleas give her this box of divers memarabilia, as a token of our friendship and past conquests. And the Hozeander, your most beautifull ship might I say is now heading back to New York, I say she left here Sunday last, god send her a prosp'rs v'age. Gratias deo.

Pete's

taken on @checkpoint.pictures @petescandystore



scan to reveal the full photo:



a note from someone who was here:

"you're doing just fine :)"
from: harrison - 6d

scan above to add your own note!