Mission Statement

We, of ABSENCE, are committed to producing a quality literary & art journal which provides the opportunity for Penn State--McKeesport students to publish their original work of interest to our campus community.

Our goal is to encourage student participation in these fine arts of creativity. This journal is primarily for students, yet submissions from faculty and staff are also welcomed.

In ABSENCE lies the presence of pain, pleasure, dreams and realities in which we believe represents our sole existence. There always seems to be something missing in our lives. In ABSENCE, you may find what you’ve been searching for.

Take a walk inside and experience what you’ve been missing.
Editors’ Note:

We reserve the right to edit. Any piece of writing may be edited as much as we feel appropriate and we reserve the right to publish the edited version without prior approval. We reserve the right not to publish any piece for any reason, at our sole judgment. We may withhold printing the author’s name on sensitive personal writing if necessary.

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McKeesport, PA 15132
# ABSENCE

PSM LITERARY & ART JOURNAL

Spring 1997  Volume I  Number 1

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twisting through the never fields of thought and blue and light feeling the sun and moonlit pits going on for tides and reminding swirls of sugarwood ghosts sitting in the rounded red a box of blue and covered jazz with trumpets flashing angels wings through parks of souls that never sing but to the sky that welcomes babies in twilight’s arms that wrap through trees and up the stairs to kings court land and through the streets of captivating awes and clones that shine so bright you can’t help but glow
Ausencia
by Pablo Neruda, 1972

Apenas te he dejado,
vas en mi, crisalina
o temblorosa
o inquieta, herida por mí mismo
o colmada de amor, como cuando tus ojos
se cierran sobre el don de la vida
que sin cesar te entrego.

Amor mío
nos hemos encontrado
sedientos y nos hemos
bebido toda el agua y la sangre,
nos encontramos
con hambre
y nos mordimos
como el fuego muerde,
dejándanos heridas.

Pero espárame,
guardame tu dulzura.

Yo te daré también
una rosa.
Absence

*English translation from Spanish*  
*by Laurie Bovidge*

I have hardly left you,  
you go into me, crystalline  
or trembling  
or restless, wounded from me  
or overwhelmed by love, like when your eyes  
close on the gift of life  
that without end I give you.

My love,  
we have found each other  
thirsty and we have  
drunk all of the water and the blood,  
we find each other  
hungry  
and we bit one another  
as fire flies,  
leaving us with wounds.

But wait for me,  
keep your sweetness for me.

I will give you also  
a rose.
Wooden Toys and Calloused Hands

by Mia Petrilli

You cannot so easily see it in his eyes

His eyes are almost always reflective

His touch is of grace and beauty

He caresses her neck and gently strokes her body

His touch alone makes her sing the most beautiful melodies

Six Strings, settling between his calloused fingers

He possesses total power and control over her

She will only sing beautiful for him

This is where he gains his control

This is where he receives his gratitude.

This is where he is given his self-respect

Only with her, he is in his glory

For she is a part of him

She sings through his heart

She is the only one who knows all of him

Made of only wood and plastic

Made of only flesh and blood

They have become one

Then and only then it is all so apparent

He is completely transparent

Watch his fingers

for they have become his eyes
The Peach or the Pear
by Dave Frye

As you know,  
we must eat.  
But see although  
you can eat the peach  
you may also want to eat the pear.  
All are innocent  
both are sweet  
both are fair.

The choice can be hard  
to choose the one,  
leave the other behind  
to eat the other.  
Miss the experience of the one.  
But at the risk of emotion,  
one must choose  
or they get mad and rotten.
Emilio and the 61C

by Kevin Clark

Each pot-hole rattles windows
like rolling thunder.
This is a bus of five gazillion
pieces. Emilio, one of them.
His arm throbbing from the plasma sell,
Emilio shelters a single potted lily
green foil wrapped 'round a red clay shell.
Sucked up from a downtown wait,
the 61C took him in its maw and shut
pneumatic lips ... piishh, a vacuum seal.
It's redi-fare, a buck eighty-five.
"Transfer, please."
He takes the torn slip without intention
of anywhere else today.
Oakland-Squirrel Hill-
Duquesne-McKeesport,
It's pretty much the universe
on Port Authority's longest loop.

A roach coach, of smokers,
sleepers, shoppers, and
gardenia-drenched women
off to temple. Sacred Heart schoolgirls
in plaid skirts, bouncing
like boys in pants.
Emilio's dying for a smoke
but won't light up
like the anarchistic black dudes,
who sprawl the last three rows.
Rear of the bus,
prized position,
commanding nervous glances
but no eye contact from
Chatham College girls.

And Mr. Bus driver
just clipped that yellow-gone-red light
in front of a lazy cop,
who doesn't blink let alone chase
this tin can on wheels,
already twenty minutes behind
with its plume of black diesel burn,
as if to care about schedules.
Their accordion fold,
Read down for departure,
up for arrival.
Who knows when?

Rumble, shudder, shake
Yank on buzzer.
“Hey, man that was my stop!”
Express, baby
“Don’t go there this time of day.”
Moving.
Through Murray Avenue,
Blue exhaust Emilio
checking out Hassidics looking like black-suited
urban Rastafari, the Chinese grocery, the head shops,
Bageland.
To Greenfield, above the Parkway
where traffic chokes and balks at the tunnel.
Emilio sees it all.
Collar tight,
he unbuttons, rebuts, the top button.
His bench seat rolls left as the bus goes right,
tilting up and over the high curb
by the Giant Eagle,
a supermarket with cyclone fence windows.
*Iceberg Lettuce—19 cents a head*
*Folger Crystals—a dollar ninety-nine.*
And the horn, impatiently
bleating a double-parked Chevelle
into motion.
A serious bus which could just as easily push
that 1968 pile of pop-riveted shit right out of its way,
pretending to be polite.
Driver cursing under his breath.
Somebody says, “Ain’t that the house
where that man went berserk, shot his wife and children.”
“And then killed himself,” says an old woman in *babushka,*
making the sign of the cross.
Emilio looks over the shoulder of a guy
holding the sports section open,
his mouth wide like he’s found a bloodier deed
in the box scores.

And the 61C throttles down as it approaches
the Homestead high-level bridge
moving like the slow rust river.
Sinking down, down
Down past the meter maid, chalking tires.
Past the unemployment office
and a line that spills to the sidewalk.
Down, past St. Paul’s and dirty stained-glass epiphany.
Down, past the sleeping mill, cannibalized by salvagers.
Rust and ruin,
rail and road.
Past the Savings and Loan, the Leona theatre,
the Gas Station-Mini Mart,
the bars, liquor store, and plumber’s outlet.
River and race,
rage and rape.
To a corner in need of a street sweeper,
to a green-shuttered, frame house
on an intersection of inconsequence,
where Emilio steps off the bus,
letting the searing sound of engine fade.
Rain and rote,
route and roam.
OPPOSITION

by Heather J. Booth

TIME CAN BE SPENT BUT NEVER BOUGHT

SO LIVE LIFE TO ITS MAX

DON’T BE FOOLISH THOUGH

LOOK BEFORE YOU CROSS ITS TRACKS

IT’S ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

KEEP YOUR CHIN UP BUT KEEP YOUR NOSE DOWN

SMILE A LOT BUT REALIZE SOMETIMES IT’S O.K. TO FROWN

BE STRONG-MINDED BY STANDING YOUR GROUND

BUT NOT NARROW-MINDED BY THINKING

NO OTHER POSSIBILITIES CAN BE FOUND

VALUE THE GOOD BUT ACKNOWLEDGE THE BAD

IT’S WONDERFUL TO BE HAPPY BUT ALSO

NORMAL TO BE SAD
Wedding Vows

by Tyler Flynn

The woman paused
at the edge of the broad field,
shoes in hand, soiled and tired,
silky hair blowing gently across her stone-strong face,
still womanly in the evening light.

Before her set an orange glowing ball
behind the bumpy treed horizon which spread east and west,
full leafy branches reaching outward to each other
as roots slid
downward into the dark earth
pressing deep like thirsty fingers.

Above her moved
an ocean of twilight air
being pulled by the power of the setting sun
as it dropped below the horizon,
the dark night sky settling in.
its twinkling lights just appearing.

Hues of transformed light reflected onto
the fading clouds: flesh to pink to passionate red,
all painted together with cotton-soft touch
growing darker as they merged mysteriously
into the night,
an intimate embrace.

The skin on her tender feet
touched the fecund, living earth,
damp soil moving between her toes
as if she stood on a bubbling stew of fertility
which praised her beauty and labor.
As her eyes turned to the house
an orange glowing light behind a square window frame
beckoned her to enter and rest.

Thoughts of
stripping herself of worry
and weariness, layer by layer 'til true, beckoned her to come in.
She would submerge herself in the ivory arms
of the bath,
steam rising around and water
soothing her skin as her heart raced at the feeling
and the blood rushed to the surface from deep within her.
Between her fingers was a gold wedding band,
forever a reminder of days passed and to come,
of promises made and kept,
seeds planted and fruits yet to be harvested.

With the push of a gentle breeze and the pull of desire
she entered the house where her husband waited.
Perseverance
by Michael Fedor

There weren’t very many riots or protests after the Huxley Bill of 2008 was passed, making it legal for androids and humans to marry. The nation stood once again divided after several attempts to claim that androids had rights and deserved fair treatment under the law.

Jeana wasn’t an activist, she just did what she was told and worked diligently in her master’s mansion. Jeana was an android and a darn good one. She had been a model for four years, even though she didn’t look like it. From her head to her toes, she was constructed in the manufacturer’s image of beauty. Short, golden blond hair, delicate hazel eyes framed by long, black eyelashes, and sultry, red lips adorned her face. She was a slim female android, standing at only 5’9”, but had the sensuality to carry around her C cup-sized breasts. Her legs were athletic, given she could run or walk at a higher level than the normal human. She looked to be in her late twenties; exactly the way she was in the catalogue.

In her French Maid outfit, Jeana dusted the shelves and wiped down the books in her master’s study. To the back of the room, she extinguished the candelabra and laid the muff beside it. She gave a quick look over her shoulder and pulled one of the books on the shelf toward her.

Suddenly, an entire wall pulled away to reveal a secret passage. Peeking in, Jeana saw the long, dimly-lit cavern ahead of her. Sharply petruding stalactites marked the way down an escalating stairway. There, the cavern presented a darker side to the stately mansion.

Jeana made her way to the ledge that supported a large console of computers and high technological equipment. In the middle of them, sat a high leather-backed desk chair. Jeana stood there observing her master viewing television screens of the downtown street. It was only after five minutes that Jeana had the courage to speak up.

“My optic sensors suggest that overexposure to those television monitors will result in vision impairment,” warned Jeana politely. “Plus, it will give you a major headache in a dimly-lit environment.”

Jack Richards, who had been sitting in the chair, was the mansion’s owner and sole occupant. After inheriting a fortune from his family owning a professional football team, Jack invested in his hobby, voyeurism.

“First of all, shut off your French accent synthesizer program,” Jack asked while clicking off one of the monitors. “I don’t want to be nagged right now,” he continued.

Jack Richards was a tall, handsome 35 year-old guy. He had raven black hair, broad-shoulders with a two-day growth of beard on his chin, and muscular biceps. He wore a white button down shirt, his cuffs rolled to his forearms, his collar open, and it was neatly tucked into black trousers.

Jack spun around to face his android housekeeper. He kept a part of himself hidden from her in a silhouette of darkness. Whatever light was on him came from the terminals. Jeana could see him change over the time that she
knew him. She could see that he was becoming more reclusive as he watched the monitors of the city, downtown.

"There's going to be another demonstration tonight," said Jack.
"They're bringing in lawyers and specialists from all over for this one. And the cops are gearing up for the event too."

"So these anti-android humanists aren't going to give up, are they?" asked Jeana. "Some people feel threatened by what they do not understand, do they not?"

"No, I guess it is mankind's destiny to fear the things that are a little bit different from themselves."

One of Jeana's prime directives was to provide Jack with companionship and solace. Yet, Jeana was a more advanced android and she learned human behavior each day. She noticed that certain women would flaunt their bodies to their men. And she did just that. Seeing that Jack had taken this recent disapproval to the civil rights of androids personally, she was aware of the changes he had made towards her.

Many people couldn't understand how anyone could fall in love with an android. Especially because it was known that an artificial life form was incapable of any kind of emotion. The humanists, those representing people opposed to machine-human relationships, often times quoted scripture and raised ethical questions to stop such behavior. But others, people rejected the use of personal androids because of the status symbol that it created.

Jeana tried to understand what her complex programming told her to do. She took a chance by embracing Jack around his waist. Trying to mimic what a human female would do in this situation, she looked up into Jack's eyes and moved even closer to him.

Jack couldn't hold himself back any longer. He returned with a romantic kiss that covered her entire mouth. They held that kiss for minutes, until Jeana pushed him on top of the computer terminal counter. Jeana rubbed her hands atop his powerful chest and began again to kiss her human master long and full.

It wasn't until shortly after that one of the computer terminals sprang to life and spat out a hard copy on paper. Alerted, Jack reached over and tore the paper from the machine.

"Hmm," he said sitting up and pushing Jeana off of him. "This is the information that I was waiting for."

Jeana and Jack were forced to stop what they were doing and got off the counter. Jack hustled to grab his long, black leather trench coat and got into his black sports car. He waved to his Jeana and sped for the downtown anti-android rally.

One of the speakers there, Rev. Nahjee Imfume, Ph.D., got up to the podium, looked around at the masses of people, and said, "Long since the days of the anti-cloning amendment of 1998, have so many masses of people come together to fight yet another wrong-doing in society."

"I have a vision!" he continued, "I have a vision that one day this nation will rise up to it's creed: 'that all mankind are to be equal'!"

The speech went on to decimate the android supporters. All the while,
Jack Richards had hid in the crowd listening to the hate speech. It wasn’t until afterwards that Jack confronted Rev. Dr. Imfume behind the scenes.

“Back in the nineties, people went out of their way to make themselves a part of the most oppressed group in this country. Then they tried to claim that they were subject to special rights and privileges,” stated Jack Richards.

“You’re one of them,” retorted Imfume. “Guards!”

“Before you send for them,” demanded Jack, “I suggest you stop appearing at these rallies. I know that you are a fourth clone of your original self.”

Imfume said nothing. From there on, he obeyed Jack Richards’ blackmailing orders.

Later that next evening, Jack sat at his grand piano while Jeana sat next to him. He played soft ballad for her and swore to her that there wouldn’t be any more discrimination and hate speech toward androids.

Please support the Defense of Marriage Act.
Spanish Dialogue
by Jonathan Lovel

MYSELF:
My heart is a tinfoil ball
tossed about by bored children

SHE:
My heart is an oversized ball of mud
tossed about by bored adults

MYSELF:
May I hold it
within my hands?

SHE:
Hell no! It’ll burn and chafe your waxy palms
and turn your dream car into a cart of corpses...
Untitled #3
by Jenny Etinger

There's a breeze that stings and surrounds
making all one with what it is
and in this state of breeze-which i am suspended
i hear the noises it creates
with all of the trees, that grow to the sun
like i am and have been
and pulling back the wind in hand--i'm feeling likely to blow away
political pollution preventer

by d alex

late night inspirations
late night television
a night with Lettermen
White Sox
Red Sox
Yankees take over
and dirty socks sux

what are sporks?
winter sports
jock straps
whether i did Butter Shots
26 times
watching Inspector Gadget
isn’t the reason
i slept with him
but i was mystified
satisfied
he fucking lied

highways merging
hiring virgins
fruit integration
herb infestation

“doin’ it well”
without his punk-ass
he got what he wanted
so there he lie
in swamp water thirsting for the one
leech him leech him
suck him dry
give it back
give it back to me
to me
lynch him now

i wanna know
why your voice is louder than mine
yet emptiness pours from within
ignorant fire feeding
off the pests
but you can’t take it back
can’t take it back from me
from me

hypocritical indigestion
hypnotized internally
pretend nothing happens

you don’t care
polluter in da house
“whatchya’ gonna do?
go AWOL!”
and Mike D doesn’t know it
but you are
Staff doesn’t know it
but you are
D.O.L. doesn’t know it
but you are
you don’t even know
that you are a victim
of your own crime
not theirs
not mine
a victim

why you wanna
play yourself?
there ain’t nobody
gonna stand around
long enough
so check it
check yourself
a “Champion” is true

grateful you are that
S.S.T.’s are canceled
classes are canceled

God sniffs peppermint Sweet Breath

as you sit there
wondering why
Job Corps is canceled
and because of it
you don’t exist
take that to the grave
6 feet deep
can’t get no further
Braves knew nothing
but Paterno (A.K.A. Papa Joe) knows
oh
he knows
how to play the game
staying the same
you in or out?
identity crisis

eat those damn Tostitos
“here
try this”
vulnerable
conceited
drowning in your own stupissity
again
that’s enough
let me care
let me mentally smack you around
what are you doing
kid?
lose those cells again
ain’t you?

Smurfette style
a pompous worthwhile smile
Happy Days are here again

i’m “doin’ it well”
without you
ain’t I?
but they couldn’t
do it all
without me
because “i’m a kleptomaniac K-mart shoplifter”
WHAT LIFE MEANS
by Heather J. Booth

JOY, PAIN, LAUGHTER, RAIN
ALL PART OF LIFE'S COURSE
SADNESS, GLOOM, HAPPINESS, DOOM
JEALOUSY, SUN, HOPE, FUN
LIFE'S WEIRD TWISTS AND TURNS
INFANT, CHILD, ADOLESCENT, ADULT
STAGES OF THE LIFE
MUCH SLANDER AND STRIFE
HUSBAND AND WIFE
MOTHER, FATHER, SON, DAUGHTER
PRIDE, WONDER, FEAR, THUNDER
ANGER, LIGHTNING, DEPRESSION, FRIGHTENING
WHAT TO CHOOSE, WHAT TO LOOSE
LIFE MEANS ALL OF THIS

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Fences of Gold

by Mia Petrilli

Silhouettes dancing behind fields of gold

Rays of sunlight scorching the barren desert

Voices echoing throughout the fields

Come play with us Johnny, come play with us

We see the light shining in your eyes

Give us your romance

Give us your passion

Let our rain cleanse your soul

Feel its controlling force

Come to us

Feel with us

Touch the light surrounding you

Let us see your beautiful eyes

They are always glowing, and always beaming

Shadows are dancing beside you

Touch all that is not real

You possess all that is true

all that cannot be understood
Beyond sadness, beyond pain

Innocent of life

Innocence in living

Stay within these fences of gold

and forever you shall glitter

Through eternity the light will shine through your eyes
Seventeen
by Lon Barbour

Sick of it all
Wanting nothing more
then to just leave.
If I have all of
the answers,
Why am I so
confused.
Too many times,
Just wanting to leave
it all behind.
An unseen barrier keeping
Me rooted like
a plant longing for
Sunshine.
Desert of Love

by Dave Frye

Oh so dry
just let me lie.
I’ve walked for 13 months
and climbed over the humps
have seen no real water.
I wouldn’t know what it was for.

There were three times
where I thought I was fine
until I tried to get near
it was just what I feared
an oasis of illusion
just adds to my confusion.

My thirst has grown deadly.
Will I find what I need
or will I drown
unable to have found
a source for fire
for my deep desires.
EXTINGUISHING
BELTANE
by Anna Jo Percoe

Praise the mother, on her earth now lie
Beltane fires, never blazed so high
Celebration rising everywhere
new found Christians--righteous glares
Mother is trampled--in the dust
women carry her seeds of lust
Carnal desire for all to see
It can’t be HIM--it must be thee
Down through the ages, blaspheme her name,
patriarchal rulers, brand new game.
“Keep her in the hovel,” the men all sigh,
“raise her skirt, and we all will die!”
Woman, oh woman you evil one,
--know your place, bear my SON!
I’ll keep you safe here at my side.
Woman so evil, cycles with the tide.
Woman, oh woman we’ve conquered new sand.

The world is round in the Fatherland.
Smash the injuns, and it’s all ours
because we’ve got the strength and power.
Violate Mother, rape her land
rip her offerings from her hand.
Plunder and pillage, never satisfied
‘til red man beated, scalped and died.
Travel and conquer this crying soil,
make your money from the black man’s toils.
Beaten and screaming, hung from a tree,
“it don’t matter, he ain’t like me.”
Raise your children to love THEIR land,
praising God, with their blood on hand.
Woman, oh woman YOU evil one
Know your place, bear me a SON!
One hundred years pass, the time--still then,
Who has the power? --Still white men.
Now it's countries warring to be free,
  the feminization of poverty.
Still won't let us in their schools,
the world still plays by their rules.
  "Oh, women deserve equality,
now run and get me some coffee."
Forest barren, no clean air.
  "Tell me, are you wearing underwear?"
Equality IS almost here.
  "Now rub my neck, be a dear."
Grabbed and groped, it's a woman's sin,
Beltane fires never burned so dim.
Call Waiting

by Kevin Clark

“Living alone, huh? You’re a real 90’s kind of guy,”
the telephone lady says.
I’m ordering my new phone service.
“No, I don’t want call waiting, caller ID, or voice mail,”
(a package for the 90’s guy I ain’t).
When I surrender my zip code
she notices it’s downtown Pittsburgh and says,
“Hey, Pittsburgh, that’s where I am.”
Being considerate, being circumstantial,
being hungry,
I ask her out to lunch.
I am still without a dial tone,
that pulse of connectedness,
but Ma Bell thanks me for the offer
and assures me she’ll
give me a ring,
being the 90’s kind of woman she is.

For Bell Atlantic
Customer Service
Rep., Toni Cambell
Epicure
by Laurie Bovidge

The waiting, while I hunger.
The wanting, my need grows greater.
The waning, time folds into itself
--the famine of my eternity.

I crave your substance,
delicacies of your essence.
Your ambrosia runs through
my barren blood--
fills my hollow heart.

Your voice feeds my spirit,
your hands nurture my senses,
your gaze sustains my solace.

Your soul--my inspiration.
Your being--my fuel.

--Without you, I starve.
The Exchange

by John Goshay

One September evening brought a new species, different from humans, into a sinful environment. The specific mortal came from a low-income family, which made him deviant to other neighborhoods, but similar to this one. Once here, he adapted fast. His name was Greg, and he and his family were without food.

Greg ran up the street to the corner, tripping over a half-covered sewer lid.

"Slow down, boy!" A man yelled out.

"What?" said Greg. "Hey, do you know where I can get a gun?"

"Flash's house," said the man. "You want to sell, boy? I'll pay you."

Greg refused. He then headed up the street to a house near the playground. He glared at the facade of the building near the playground which featured pictures of different sports. Greg walked up some steps, grabbing the railing with his left hand. He figured this was the place the man had told him about; Flash's house.

It occurred to Greg that in order to get a gun from this person, he might have to do something. He had no money. He rang the doorbell, uncertain what this person might ask him. A woman answered the door.

Greg's neck snapped back, "Is Flash here?" he said.

The woman stood in the doorway barefoot, her right foot covering her left. Her toenails were painted and she wore shorts and a shirt that read, "Crime Incorporated."

"I'm Flash," she said.

Greg's eyes widened with surprise.

"You're Flash?" he gulped.

"Yes, I am. And unless I'm wrong, you're Greg, right? The new boy in the neighborhood," She smiled. "What can I do for you, Greg?"

A lot, Greg thought, but kept it to himself.

"I need a gun," he blurted out.

Before she could respond he added, "I don't sell drugs or use them, but I rob people for their money. Because I'd rather rob people than kill them slowly. Still, I almost did kill somebody once. It was an accident."

Flash said she got the point.

"Here's the deal," she said in a soft voice, "Rob somebody with a twenty-two that I'll provide you, and I'll give you a tech nine. But you got to make it worthwhile. You got to get me a hundred and fifty dollars."

"One fifty!" Greg's eyebrows slanted.

"One fifty and no less," she said. "Take it or leave it."

Greg thought a minute.

"Okay, deal," he said.

The exchange was quick. Greg put his hand on Flash's door and opened it, just a little. Flash passed him the twenty-two.
Four hours later, Greg stood behind a thick thorn bush, watching the street light go red to green, over and over. He thought about Flash. Nice looking lady, but a shrewd business woman.

Finally, a man got near enough and Greg pounced. He shoved the twenty-two below the stranger’s hip. I hope he doesn’t run, he thought. I really don’t want to shoot him. Just want the money.

Nobody was out. No witnesses to see what happened, only God. Greg snatched the man’s wallet and pushed him away. Frightened, the stranger ran. Greg opened the wallet with his two thumbs.

"Dang!" he said. The wallet held a hundred and ten dollars.

Greg’s stomach growled and he thought about spending that money. He wanted to get something to eat. But he thought he should get something for his family to eat instead, but he wanted that tech nine even more. So he looked at the twenty-two in his hand and decided to rob again.

He walked the street, cracking a small smile.

“Two robberies in one night,” he said to himself.

There was no fear of the police. They didn’t care what was going on. A hundred and ten dollars and he only needed forty more.

He was determined to do it again. Only this time it could be more dangerous. His earlier victim might have gotten in touch with the police. He paced himself up a small hill. A blue light flashed and sent him running. The cops, he thought. But it was just headlights reflecting off a blue house.

The sun had set an hour ago and left a shade of darkness in the sky. Greg saw a lady up the street walking with no hurry. He ran up to her. Greed and anger overcame him. His heart froze and his blood temperature dropped. Greg slowly raised his weapon to a higher altitude. He was about to lunge toward her.

Then out of nowhere, bullets intersected the block’s corner. They cast small shadows on the walls of buildings for less than a third of a second. It all happened so fast. The bullets made different entrances and exits through Greg’s body like drains without a cork. Greg folded on the ground as the bullets made a crease in his body.

The night air contained the smoke from a nine-millimeter. The man who held this gun was the one who’d been robbed before. The lady screamed and ran down the street. The stranger placed the smoking gun by his side and shook his head.

So I guess the man got in touch with the Reaper rather than the police.
machete
by d alex

"sweet dreams are made of these"
nah
street dreams
get it right
what’s up with that?
Nas don’t want no white trash
buying his dope beats
but ain’t that song off The Eurythmics?
they white

missing a verb
wrong contractions
shelter shelter
me with your words
doesn’t make any sense
innocence
substance of a prejudice

digging a pencil into
hard wood tables
walls
note scratchin’
"Dave wuz here"
or
"Shannon iz a ho"
just like
Madonna’s nose pickin’
it ain’t a pretty sight

sparkle sparkle
let me shine
your world is beautiful
not mine
make me into one of your
Barbie dolls
these beauty bits i share
can get you anywhere
except toothpaste does it best
on those zits
didn’t you know?
it’s true too
piss on your feet in the shower
and you don’t have fungus no more
hour after hour
they sit over there
primpin' and curlin'
that wacked hair
primpin' and mackin'
that bitch over there

beyond their years
not their time
but Cindy Crawford
oh Cindy Cindy
come get near me
so versatile
all the while
she's hard core--concrete
everyone else turns obsolete

"Truth or Dare"
was the way that game
was played
ended up "I kissed a girl"
maybe maladroit
even discomfort existed
never knowing that
she could have crashed lips
with Phil
it would have tasted like
Sugar Smacks
saltwater sweat
he's hooked on crack

dire propensity
results in absolute profanity
that is
if you told her
what you really think of her
never realizing
"mmm...it does go well
with the chicken"

who is the man
who is the man
who
is
the
man?
the one who's got
rusty-ass chocolate Yoohoo
it maybe be ecru
but it sure ain’t
straight up Hershey

don’t give me no lies
pleasing me otherwise
can you just give it?
no more playa’ hata’s
insecurity
undoubtedly
is the reason
he fucked with me

The Antique Boutique
straight from the city
New York New York
what about that?
anticipating
a new kind of lacing
down the streets
is an ice cream man
sweet candy too
he doubt played you

i’m the keeper keeper
you’re the loser
“it’s got a funky beat
that i can bug out to”
don’t you know it?

taking it back
i sure got that
notion
romantic disposition
that he can’t handle

bad vibes
in our lives
generalizing generosity
punctuated purposely

no more Transformers
breaking down your shitty alphabet blocks
make it something elastic
turn it inside out
if you have to
but don’t show me that stain
all-purpose-good-for-nothing
“can’t get no satisfaction”
lingering in your breath
isn’t going to help
take it out
take it out now
use the bleach bitch!

festering fatherhood
teary-eyed transition
mama told you
never to listen

sensuous scents
purple polish
he notices these little things
“What perfume are you wearing?”
“looks like you just
kissed an astronaut”
love your lips
tantalizing hips

defensive tactics
rubberized drastics
beating down the Pirates
i anxiously await
“The phone is ringin’...”
oh my gawd”
don’t want to miss this commercial
Damon Stoudamire is in it
he went to U of A back in ‘94
well i was there back then
but not no more
because i’m here instead
thank the world i’m not dead
then i couldn’t be
an Absolut ad collector
wouldn’t it be sin?
if it were my idea
i’d win

suspecting success
creating cosmopolitan
virtuous variety
recomposed rarity
"something's got to give"
i've lead it long
long and hard livin' without
Lloyd the tight-ass noid

how could i make this mistake?
Joe DiMaggio was #9
no
Joe was #5
Roger Maris was #9
he was just as good as Babe Ruth...
because he beat his record
bet you didn't know that!

"caution:
do not enter when flooded"
Green
by John Beatty

I have a nickel...hmm...two for a penny spearmint green balls or spend the entire amount on a lime green popsicle which always made your fingers sticky...no matter your technique or degree of carefulness...choices...life was full of choices...

A tiny bookshelf filled with ancient dust covered books...worn...tattered...many with dirty green covers...discouraging all curiosity to discover what lies inside...

Small boys playing alone all day in green woods...with trees loaded with green crab apples...eat one and you would get "carly marbles"...a mystical ailment which would turn you green with stomach pain...

The fields of childhood...where green formed the backdrop for multicolored windflowers...grass and leaves sacrificing their own identity to pronounce the beauty of isolated pink, yellow, or blue flowers...

The back shed with forest green trim...paint peeling from two dirt covered small windows...irregular...misformed...odd shaped...belonging to the shed...giving identity...character to the structure...

Sweat...strain...hands blistered by hours of snipping green grass with a small handsheer in neighborhood lawns...three...four hours of back-breaking labor for one green dollar...the grass soon came to respect the will-power of a fourteen year old boy with his hand-propelled mower...

And now...a lifetime later...green pens etch memories onto the white pages of a journal...so that years from now...someone who remembered the man...could read...remember and perhaps understand why he found peace in green places...
This Is Us
by Tyler Flynn

This moment of still quiet
transforms what was
the status quo
into what we don’t know.

We’re expecting nothing,
because nothing has ever happened
until now. A cool breeze
changes the feeling of things.

In this room I’ve pored over
our story, our mystery,
then closed my eyes.
I locked desire away
until it wasn’t alive
and I could rest again
at night. But now quietly
a voice speaks to me:

let it live, love,
let it fly.
Rock & Roll Baby
by Heather J. Booth

Rock & Roll
It gets to my soul
It’s part of me and how I always will be
Thank you Doors for breaking us through
And Stones for giving us some satisfaction
   Floyd for helping us learn to fly
   Zeppelin for leading us up the stairway
   These are all legends that will live on
   Long past the days we are all gone
The Mac told us don’t stop thinking about tomorrow
   To quote Neil, “Rock & Roll Will Never Die”
Broken Child
by Dave Frye

My soul is torn.
A heavy dead weight
that drags behind
is pulled by me
by ropes that pierce the flesh.
My containing skin is strained.
I wish I could breathe
by slicing off my skin
tearing off my flesh
so that my soul
can burden me no more
and I can walk free.
BLACK
by Mia Petrilli
Absence of all color
a nothingness
an emptiness
a mystery
Walls of darkness
Pathways of deception
A color existing only
when no other colors are present
All are taken away
BLACKNESS
Absence of all light
hiding behind all that is known
covering the soul
BLACK
So frightening
So intimidating
So calming to those of us
that survive being encompassed by it
ABSENCE
PSM LITERARY & ART JOURNAL
Spring 1997 Volume I Number 1

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6. Your work must be appropriate for a literary & art journal; i.e. no class reports, personal interviews, news articles, etc.

7. Typed submissions receive the most favorable consideration. If you cannot type it, then please print carefully in ink. If we can't read it easily, we can't print it.

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