

# ABSENCE

PSM LITERARY & ART JOURNAL

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Spring 1997  
Volume 1 Number 1

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## 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.

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## 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.*

All inquiries should be addressed to:

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McKeesport Campus

McKeesport, PA 15132



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# Untitled # 1

*by Jenny Etinger*

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 mí, 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,  
dejándonos heridas.*

*Pero espárame,  
guardame tu dulzura.*

*Yo te daré también  
una rosa.*



# Absence

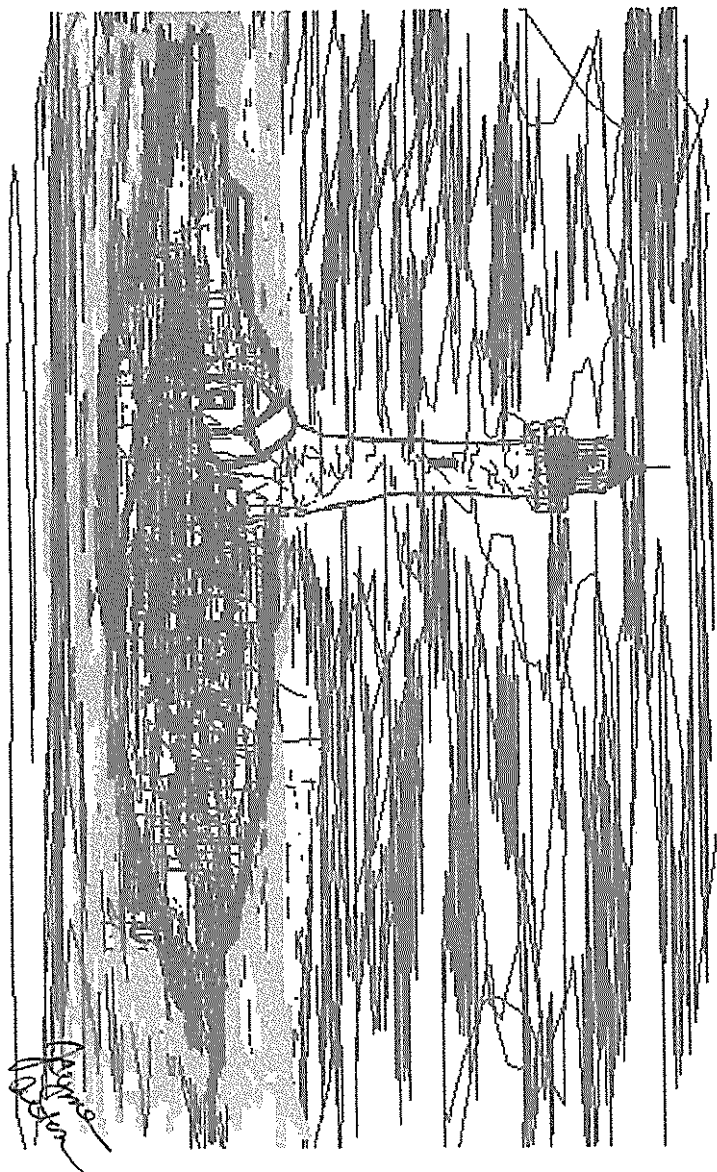
*English translation from Spanish  
by Laurie Rovidge*

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.

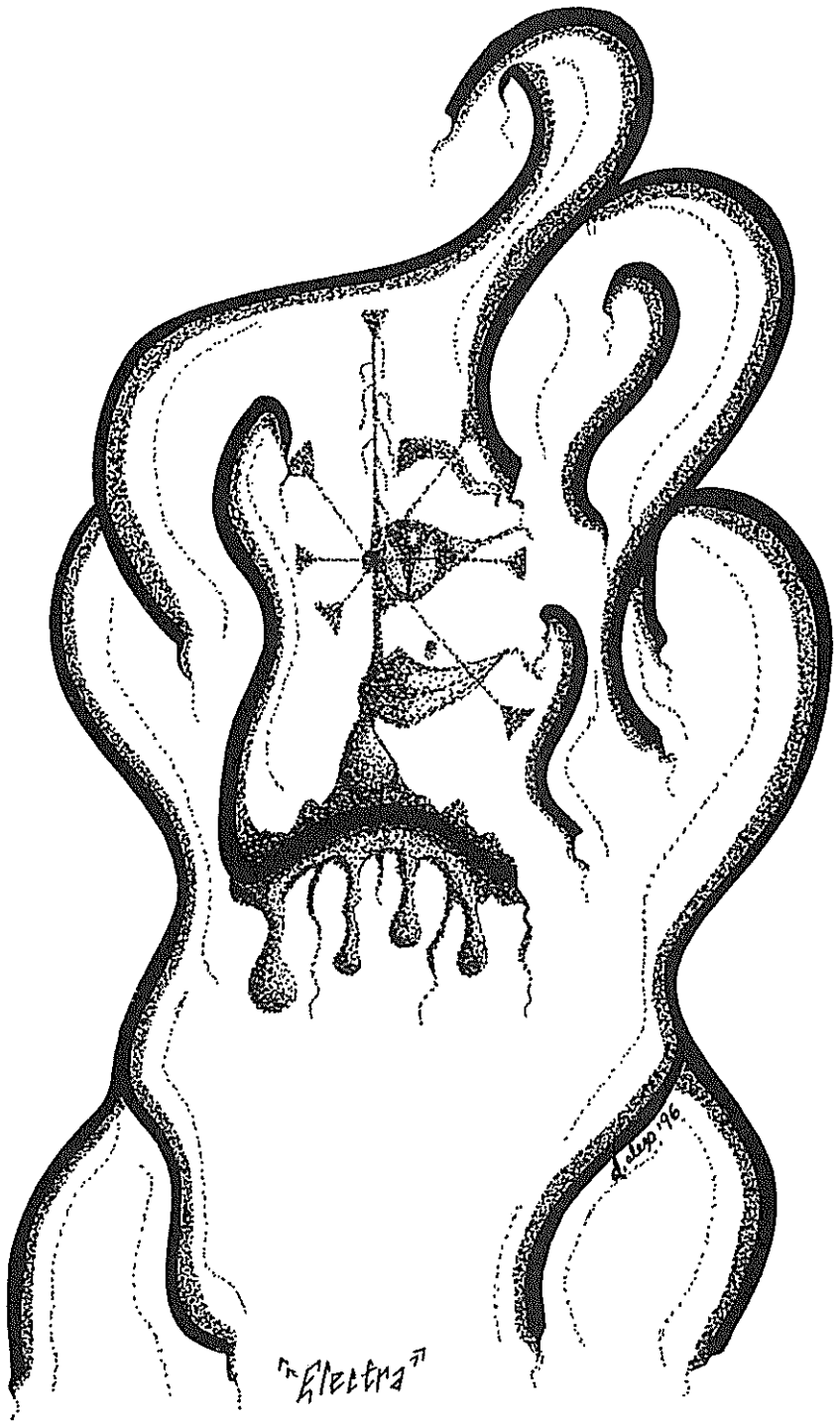
And Mr. Bus driver  
just clipped that yellow-gone-red light  
in front of a lazy cop,  
who doesn't blink let alone chase  
this tin can on wheels,  
already twenty minutes behind  
with its plume of black diesel burn,

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, rebuttons, 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 Chevella  
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 protruding 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 sprung 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.

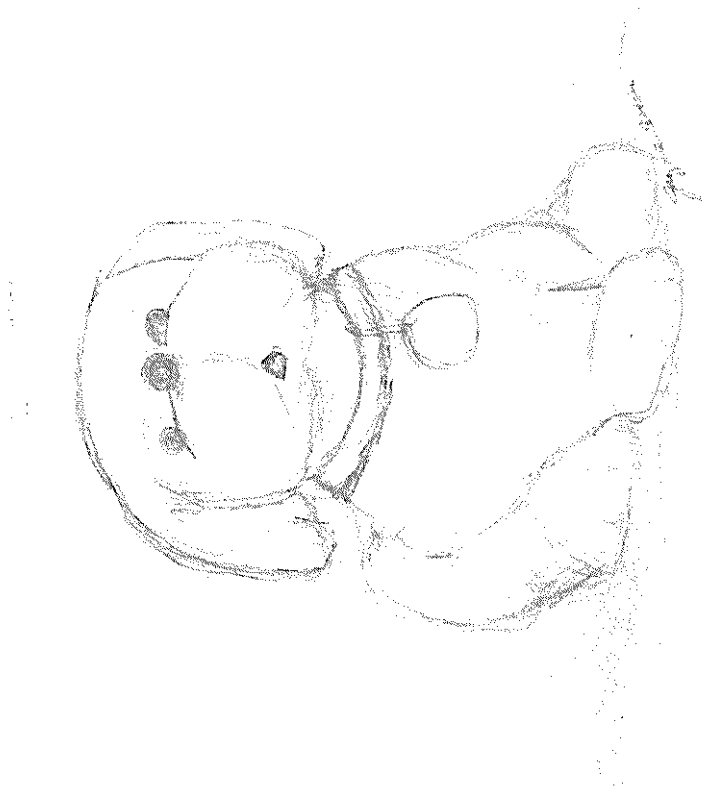
"You're one of them," retorted Imfume. "Guards!"

"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

# 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  
'till 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.



BROADWAY



*Handwritten signature or mark*

# 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  
pimpin' 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 uncomfot 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 Yoo-hoo  
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!

festered 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 handshear 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



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2. All work must be original.
3. We cannot return writing submissions, so be sure to keep a copy for yourself. Artwork may be returned by request.
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