



UNICORN

A Bi-Annual Publication
of Literature and Art

Loyola College of Baltimore

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Sweeter than the Stars

To face these walls
And climb into bed
Becomes a drudgery
When you are all
alone.

I'm teetering between
Earth and Hell.
I am a prisoner
Within my own
jail.

My insides drain
As each hour passes
outside your eyes,
outside your company.

I am grateful for
Your arms, but
Open, please open
Them wider and
don't be discouraged
if I fumble or
become inept.

I love you louder
Than the sun, brighter
Than the birds, and
Sweeter than the
stars.

Charles Graham

"Courtney's Sonnet"

Did not Theocritus to you once sing
Or Shakespeare to you a summer's day compare
Or Byron a thousand fragrant poesies bring
Or Maximillian others foreswear?

And yet you put them off my love, the why
Is but the myst'ry for which I seek a clue.
Why spurn you the singers and the bards of lay?
Why spurn those romantic and courtly true?

...Could it be they gave you but parts and you
Alone, but the total of every hue
E'er wanting all, not just the tongue, not the heart
Of human aspect and every part?

Mere petals—No. You wish the total flowers.
Your love's a demon. Your heart a man devours.

Michael J. Brzezicki



a non-sonnet

As a dancer I would dance a dance of
drumbeat feet pounding oaths of human trust,
I am called to love! I am called to love!
by unknown horns blown down from heaven's crust,
where drunken God bellows every which thing.
He sings! He begs dancers echo his mirth.
I am a man, knowing for sure nothing
beyond the shake of hips, the warmth of earth,
steel drums, crying babes, the wasting of time.
I dance to believe. I believe in loud
prayers, laughing verse, the pouring of wine,
fat moons, fat women, and the fat loud crowd.

Now where is one poised enough to lasso
that incredibly burning dynamo?

Chris Harig

Missing

Black and white palm leaves stripe the sterile hospital floor. Bombs blast as the bubble bursts in the I.V. unit. Tanks roar as Nurse Kimbel flushes the toilet in the room next door.

"Nurse!"

The squeaky cat-like sound of nurse's shoes approaches. The swinging door quickly flings open. Nurse Kimbel's cold young face appears.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Hanover?"

No metals, no awards, just the title of captain and the young thing can't even remember to add "sir."

"Shut the damn blinds. The stripes on the floor irk the hell out of me."

"Oh, I had no idea."

Nurse Kimbel saunters to the regulation-size window and quickly pulls the cord. The chopping helicopter blades fill the room. Captain Hanover jerks and winces.

"Is there anything else?"

"No."

"Could I bring you something? A glass of water or maybe a magazine?"

"No. I said, no."

"Very well."

Nurse Kimbel glides to the door. Her walk is so unlike the stark pounding of boots on parched earth. Captain Hanover watches her carefully as she leaves. Just because you don't hear them doesn't mean they're not there.

He stares at the tightly spaced cinder blocks on the ceiling. They are lined up in perfect formation, perfectly spaced. He counts them. All present and accounted for.

Captain Hanover leans over to the visitor's chair and fingers his dull green jacket. The cigarettes his wife brought him yesterday are bound to be in one of the pockets. He rummages through them. A slightly-bent unfiltered cigarette that must have escaped from the pack touches his finger. He pulls it out and leans further towards the chair to find some matches. As he leans over the chair, a quick glance at the floor reveals a fairly large cockroach...

"Eat it."

"There's a dead roach in it, sir."

"I don't care what the hell is in it, eat it. It might be a couple of days before we can get to something solid, soldier."

It didn't make much of a difference whether he ate it or not. It came right back...

"Mr. Hanover. I said, would you like me to bring you some lunch? It's about that time, you know. We don't want to get weak now, do we?"

The bright nurse's uniform bothers him. Her dark black hair is pulled back tightly into a small bun at the nape of her neck. It is pulled so tight that it pulls back the skin on her face.

She notices the crumpled cigarette partially hidden in the folds of the sheets.

"I'm sorry, but hospital regulations forbid the use of any drugs. I'll have to take your cigarette."

"I know where you can buy one, real cheap. I need this one."

"Really, Mr. Hanover. You service men have such a sense of humor."

She takes the cigarette and her long painted fingernails wrap around it...

"Why don't they cut them?"

"Supposed to be unclean, I heard."

"Disgusting. My wife used to cry evry time she broke a nail. You'd think they have enough pain without askin' for it with them damn nails."

"You ask me, they can't never feel enough pain..."

"...so, I can bring you another pain reliever if you like."

Receiving no response, Nurse Kimbel creeps out of the room to bring lunch. Her legs are thin and feminine. Her small-boned figure is so very different from the large angular body of Captain Hanover. She could hide anywhere.

She's small enough to crouch in a tree or behind some underbrush and he would never see her. He knew he had better keep a close watch on that one.

Planes fly overhead as the air conditioner suddenly starts up. Captain Hanover looks above him...

"All clear, let's go."

The plane was drowned out by the sound of the pouring rain. The small group of men darted across the swampy clearing.

"Sir, I think the plane's coming back."

"Shut up and run."

Two, three, six men down. He should have never told them to go. But how could he have known any better with all that rain. Torrents and torrents...

"Oh! I'm so sorry, Mr. Hanover. I'll bring a rag to wipe it up. These glasses have such narrow bases, it just happens all the time."

A lonely hamburger, without a bun, a dish of chopped broccoli, a piece of lemon meringue pie and an empty glass fill the small hospital tray. Captain Hanover examines his rations. He couldn't complain. But his upper sheet is soaked. He chuckles to himself. They really can't do anything right. Always have to clean up after their own messes. Nurse Kimbel brings a rag...

"Where's Peters? I thought I told you never to go anywhere alone."

"I didn't, sir."

"Then where the hell is Peters?"

"We was walking, right? And I was talking to Peters, right? He was right behind me, see, and I was just gonna pass him back my canteen, right? When this yellow hand comes darting out from the green and goes around his face. Yeah, a yellow hand. And there was this rag, right? And Peters, yeah, he just falls down. Got dragged into the green. Tried to go after him, but man, I don't got nerve like some guys, boy. What good'd I be lying next to Peters. Be no good lying there like a damn stone, sir..."

The mess is sopped up, amidst endless excuses. Nurse Kimbel fusses over the spilled water. She pulls a pad and pencil from her uniform.

"Hamburger, check. Broccoli, check. Lemon Meringue pie, check. Oh, for heaven's sake. I forgot the bread and your new glass of water."

She flings what little weight she has against the door and the noises of the corridor come into Captain Hanover's room. The orderly pushes his cart of operating utensils down the hall. The scissors and scalpels and knives rattle in their tin containers. Captain Hanover ducks to avoid the machine gun fire.

With his water and bread, Nurse Kimbel brings in a pudgy, elderly man wearing a blue surgeon's uniform.

"Where's Frank?"

"I'm sorry. Captain Hanover, Doctor Winston has been sent abroad. He's young, you know. Our young men should be contributing to the cause..."

"Marcus Hanover, how dare you even suggest that my son...I'm surprised at you. Utterly shocked is more like it. He's not going."

"But Caroline, he came to me at the office. We had a nice father-to-son discussion. He is to be married, he has to make his own decisions. Can you pass the beans, son..."

"...and I've looked over your records, and I am sure I have a fair idea of what your treatment should be."

Captain Hanover glares at the fat, old doctor. How nice that the doctor has a "fair idea." The sagging triple chin must be accompanied by a pair of trembling hands. A quick glance confirms it. The report the old doctor is holding is shaking. He is unfit to treat Captain Hanover, let alone any other case.

"Hell of a hospital you run here, with all your doctors abroad."

Nurse Kimbel turns her back. Loud whispers are exchanged as Captain Hanover takes pride in his outburst..."

Twelve men standing at attention. A small but respectable company. Camouflaged faces make distinguishing one from the other difficult, but not impossible. McDuffy spits a wad of chewing tobacco onto the palm leaves behind him.

"McDuffy!"

"Sir."

"What do you think you are doing?"

"Spitting tobacco, sir."

"Would you spit the wad in your wife's lingerie drawer?"

"No, sir."

"How 'bout on your mother's roast turkey?"

"No. sir."

"Then what gives you the damn right to spit now?"

"War-time, sir."

"I don't give a damn about what time it is now, McDuffy. How the hell do you think you can go home and live a civilized-like life when you keep spittin' all over the place?"

Captain Hanover took pride in speaking his mind. He could say anything, anytime, whether other people found it appropriate or not...

"...and if we send your wife in to talk about the situation, do you feel you might reconsider?"

"What the hell."

The doctor waddles toward the door. He looks back to see Captain Hanover. You've insulted my long, hard-earned medical experience, he seems to be saying. But Captain Hanover merely grins a toothy smile. He used to smile like that to remind his soldiers, after a harsh command, that they had better obey.

"This way, Mrs. Hanover."

A brief survey, head to toe, always calmed Captain Hanover. A short pause at the legs. A longer pause at her goddess-like face...

"Let me see. Who's it of?"

"My wife."

"Your wife? You're kidding. She's a real good looker."

"She's damn beautiful. One look, that's enough. Find yourself your own doll..."

Mrs. Hanover's frown slightly changes that goddess impression of eternal bliss. She moves toward her husband. She reaches out her hand.

"Why the frown, Deb?"

"Why don't you let the doctor treat you?"

"I don't want pinkie shears for a stub."

"But there simply aren't any other doctors around."

"The hell there aren't."

Captain Hanover stares at his wife. The sparkle of her dark brown eyes soothes his anger, she is his greatest joy. He does everything for her.

"Yeah, I'll get it over with. Even grandpa, there, can mutilate."

"Oh, don't say that. When we get you out of here, everything will be fine. I'll take care of you and Uncle Sam will help us out and... well, everything will be fine..."

"...so don't worry. O.K.? Take your company the two miles and I'll meet you there. Come on, the Army'll take care of you, just follow orders."

"Wrong orders?"

"Right orders!"

"Sure, right orders for Disneyland. Nobody tells me what to do."

"Yeah? Well then go ahead. Walk home. Tell my mom I said 'hi'."

"Funny. Damn hilarious."

"You really got no choice."

So he watched a grenade blow off heads and machine guns make his leg air-conditioned...

"...I do promise to take the best care of you."

Captain Hanover nods. His only joy slowly leaves the room. He watches her curvacious legs cross, one ahead of the other, making a single straight line to the door.

Once alone, he looks at the stark white hospital walls. The sun has gone down and the neon lights burn his eyes. With closed eyes, he fingers the backboard on his bed. The bars are cold and smooth against his rough hands.

Susan Winter

"What was that dream?"

what was that dream?

you grew up, newly hungry for
a taste of that which almost seemed
to be life; that which lay before
you—through the windows of a past
I mimed in, and a child star shone
who generously gave me cast
—then left me on the stage alone.

you firmly slammed the door on recess,
pretzels, doughnuts, buttons, me— and
(casually always) took the pieces
of the child and buried them in sand;
just so they could be found one day
by someone—p'raps not you or I—seeking treasure midst his
play or smiling as he says goodbye.

you were no longer ageless, young
you suddenly had worn a path
beyond my lap; the notes once sung
were written; why sing the aftermath?
innocence lost herself in tears;
experience knew no words to spark
divinity in age-centered spheres,
so childhood suffered in the dark
and jaws of empty time were shut
upon an aged little you
with large blue eyes—still poet—but

you were alone, and lonely, too,
imperfectly. the well was dry;
where once had flowed the sping of truth
grew roses, wintry, and the sigh
of oldness cried of seeds and youth.

what was that dream?

you did return; you stumbled back
along the path; false self-esteem
had wearied you—the sky black
and full of lies, and could not wield
an axe of less noble deceit.
you tried to run: you could not yield
—not yet—to bitter or to sweet,
as images beneath the shore
reminded you of candy crowns
you had once liked—could like once more
by leaving loveless, lifeless clowns
well behind you in your flight
to buttons, pretzels and the sea
and treasures in the wiser night
of the child coming back to me

Marjorie Paoletti



The Rebel

Lashed to what, time?
Touch time, like naked flesh,
in love's brutal pantomime?
And what will you do
after you have died —
take time with you
down into your grave?
No, you are not tied
to time, not you, and rave
as you will, time is still time,
a timeless grave.

Robert F. Whisler

fog, late zinnias

the fog lifts, swaying, delicate,
a water-color where there is no sense of time, just space,
a pewter vase of light.
you leave, saying how late, how
impossible.
I nod, dreams blooming bad
news, bad news, drowsing, not yet wondering
 what words,
or how much silence could be necessary
where there is no sense of time,
just space, a blue bowl
waiting to be emptied of its acrid ache,
its rot of stalks, its blossoms.

Gayle Elen Harvey

Samsara

the heart beats
the blood flows
the cells eat
the i knows

the blood chills
the heart ends
the cells starve
the i swims

the heart seeks
the blood still
the I hides
the cells fill

Thomas Dorset

House on Gibson Road

She stands in an attitude of worship in the center of the court, back arched, arms outstretched, face to the sky. Big, warm raindrops fall across her face and neck. Stately homes with manicured lawns form a semi-circle around her.

"I adore the rain!" she swoons, still facing the sky, assuming this posture of oneness with nature that she often assumes around me. I take no special notice. With my Honda 185 I make slow circles around her. I wait to go inside where she will talk baby talk like "yer my little sweetsie" and nestle her head on my chest. Or rather, I'm waiting for more than that. I have to be patient.

"Your tee-shirt's getting see-through," I call over the hum of the motorcycle.

She lowers her arms and glances at the windows of the shuttered houses on the court.

"Teach me how to ride the motorcycle, Steve." Her parents aren't home, the neighbors aren't watching. She throws her leg over the seat and her thigh squeals across the wet vinyl.

"Don't let the clutch out too fast or it'll jerk and stall out. Just go real slow, give it a little gas, and you'll be alright. Put it in first."

"Where's first?" She puts her toe on the tiny lever.

I tell her to get off right now, but she looks at the ground, purses her lips and gazes at me, not in the eye exactly, but first at my lips, and how could I refuse? The whole act wouldn't get to me so much if she didn't expect it to, I mean she couldn't **bear** to think I could turn down her sexiest pout.

"One down and the rest is up. First is down. Second, third and fourth is up. Be careful now."

She jerks a little starting off and makes a lurching circle around the court. Halfway across she calls "I can't get out of first."

"Why not?" I ask.

"Because I can't find second."

I want to smile but I don't. I run alongside her as she stops. I put her white tennis shoe on second gear with my hand, which is difficult because she's not helping any, but turning the front wheel left and right and sitting all lopsided. "All set now?" she smiles. I study her a second and jump to the other side of the bike, pull the kick-stand down and lift her off, just as it starts to rain. She is half-laughing, half trying to figure out how I knew it was going to start raining at precisely that moment. I didn't, but I let her wonder.

I jump back on and take off riding a wheelie, then halfway down the court I make a quick turn, my elbow grazing the pavement, and fly back up into the garage.

Becky watches me with her hand on her hips and whistles. "Look at my motocrosser!"

I'm swelling up inside but I unstrap my Belstar helmet with one hand and stroll across the sidewalk non-chalantly. My face is serious. We sit on the front porch and listen to the rain on the tan sidewalk. I look at her face. Her makeup is running in the rain. Tiny black crescents gleam under her eyes. Her hair is wet and frizzy. When she turns to me I politely look at something else. I think she catches it. Damn. I mean, she knows she'll never be a great beauty, but I don't want to rub it in.

Becky does surprise me sometimes, though. Every once in a while she comes downstairs with her gold hair shining and her face model-perfect. If she starts getting ready half an hour early, uses Pearl Drops, Visine, eyeshadow and some other things, (she told me this once) she really is awesome. And she comes downstairs gracefully, as if nothing's different, and smiles a certain way so that her dimple shows right into my wide eyes.

"I got forty hours this week," I say. The corner of her mouth turns down. "Listen, Beck, we can use it. Once we get that house, you and I are gonna need every dollar we can get."

Her face changes as it always does when we talk about the house. "That's true," she says.

We watch a slug peek out from its house under the mulch in the front bushes and retreat again.

"Do you have to work tonight?"

I nod.

"Manager say anything else to you about a day job?"

"No." I throw a pebble at the slug's front door. "I might take a job at the warehouse."

"At the warehouse? Why? You can't get promoted there, can you?"

"More money though."

Becky puts her head in her hands. I have a sudden vision of me behind a mahogany desk talking into a dictaphone, plagued by secretaries in tight dresses.

She sneezes.

"Bless you."

I see me in a damp warehouse catching freight in my bulging arms and whistling at secretaries. It doesn't really matter. As soon as she gets out of school she'll get a good job. Sometime in the vague future she'll sell her stories, be written up in The New York Times Book Review. (She'll buy me a Corvette and shake her head if I complain that it's really her money, although she'll be bringing home more than me. Beck would probably buy herself a little MG to make me feel better.

I can see it parked in the little stone driveway of the house on Gibson Road, the one we want to buy. The FOR SALE sign is gone. The shutters are up. The lawn is cut. And on the front lawn in a lacy dress—a tiny girl with Beck's blond hair.

Becky snuggles up next to me on the porch of her parents house. "What do you want our kids to look like?"

I think a second as if we haven't discussed this twenty times at least.

"I want a blond girl with your brown eyes!" she jumps in.

"My hair and your eyes! What about you?"

It occurs to me that it doesn't matter all that much, that we'll be happy whatever we get. Becky. I want to say, you dream too goddamn much.

"We'll take anything we get," I say, looking past her to the Brody's dog sniffing in the bushes.

Becky sits up straight and I can feel her staring at me, but I will not look her in the eye. A lump settles in her throat. "I know that," she says softly. "Anything."

I look at her now, quickly, because she cries a lot and it breaks my heart. I'm sorry I said it.

"You know," she says, looking down the court, "as far as schools go, I think we should pay the extra and send them to private school, don't you? Then it's easier to get into a good college. Can you imagine what it'll be like when they tell us they're getting married? Oh, I can see your face!" She throws back her head and smiles a smile that makes my whole body relax, like I'd been straining and didn't know it.

She lifts her hands, places them palm to palm, and tucks them between her knees. She lays her cheek softly on my arm. "If we had a boy and he wanted a motorcycle when he turned sixteen, what would you do?"

I don't even have to think about that one. But I look at my tennis shoes and stall a little bit, pretending to mull it over. When I finally pick my head up she is nose-to-nose with me and says the words exactly as I do: "Say no." We laugh so hard the Brody kids come out onto their front porch to see.

Laura Brookhart



BAUHAUS BEAUTIFUL

I hate flowers,
Their curves disturb me.
I only like things that are
Functional.
My creations are pure, stark function.
My building is square and efficient,
With no frivolous decoration.
Buildings with tall marble columns and deep
Wood panels
Should be torn down.
They represent inequality. Beauty is inequality.
Our society would act like a great, stamped out
Machine, if there were no homes made of hand
Crafted field stone and oakwood timbers.
Everyone would inhabit preformed flat,
Square, stressed concrete flats..
They would have no adornment.
Block after block, mile after mile,
Everything would be equal, numbered,
efficient.
No paint, no fluting, no trees, and no flowers.

Joseph Garland

"Mescalito, tu esta un hijo de tu madre..."

Mexican Drinking Song

We climbed into my brother's beat up Ford Fivehundred,
His never-again smiles and all-too-frequent rib-jabs
More a nuisance than the glass bottle bums and
Cigarette strays crowding the front seat. The car
Roars and squeals like a dying leviathan under
The neon smiles glowing beside winking windows
Of countless Boozaramas and throat-emporiums.
Our destination: BAR. A glowing gargoyle perched
Above the door, the sign a guide or concession?
A cloud of disillusionment hides all but the most
Offensive, but the beer is cheap. So my brother says.
So we drink, in mute celebration.
Each courage-in-a-glass, each breakneck bottle
Joins its brethren, until I stumble, all voices distant,
Behind him to the street, weekend insanity everywhere.
A fog hides the night's ritual revelations. Pig-eyed
Marines dance on my head, to the tune of yesterday's
Birthday cake making its untimely reappearance.

Thos. C. Termini



Grandmother's Poem

We used to visit my great-grandmother,
my mother's father's mother.
She was ill with something—
I never knew what.
But we used to visit her on Saturdays,
my mother and me—
going up the stairs to an apartment
that smelled just like an old relative,
warm, but old and soft.
I'd watch television
and stack dominoes on the bureau,
while my mother and grandfather
made lunch—opening cans of
chicken noodle soup.
I'll never forget chicken noodle soup.
In the kitchen, I'd sit next to
a bin of potatoes.
There were always potatoes there,
but I never remember eating potatoes.
And there was one of those trashcans
with the foot pedal.
I'd sit there quietly and
wait for someone to use it
and hear it squeak just like on TV.
And then sometimes we'd come on Sundays
—my chance to read the comics
from the other newspaper.
I would sit on a big
red vinyl hassock.
Later she went to live
in a florescent white nursing home.

We'd visit her there too.
along with the other old ladies,
and I'd try not to think that
they were old and would probably die.
We'd stop at the machine
and buy her mints and Newport cigarettes.
I'd press the button and pull the knob
and carry them to her.
Then something happened
—she didn't get out of bed very much.
And one night at home
our phone rang.
My mother talked softly.
In a couple of minutes they told me,
but, by then,
I already knew.

Brian Lyles

Black Confession

The Black band around my neck
Is interrupted by a white square.
But everywhere else I am dressed in blackness.
Waiting in my box for confessors anxious
To repeat their sins.

Bars of light from the door
Paint a visor on my face.
The panel slides open, the fumbblings begin,
"Bless me Father for I have sinned."
Listening to black words.

My mind wanders from the scene
Of silk, lace, and perfumed hair.
Roaming to places beyond the vaulted ceilings,
To find truth that will end the need for healing
These endless sinners.

I dwell on what is
Only to know what was.
Textbooks of pages, Plato, Wells, and More,
Do not yield the answer, to the lure
For a spiritual panacea.

Muslims chant.
Buddhists squat beneath blossom trees.
Poets struggle for the light, fearful of
criminal's sentence

Of blackness, as I erase it from Christians with
my penance.
To sin again conscience free.
Footsteps again. Words
Of despair for a father lost.
"O Father, can thou tell me when this search ends?"
No answer can I give, true knowledge I pretend.
As I finger the black Beads.

John Herzich



Resort

It is the time of the day when the setting sun brings out the richness of every color on earth and everything is more so. Slue is now a spectrum of indigo and sapphire, while red is now coral, peach, and spirals of salmon-brick. The harshness is gone from the glare of the noon-day sun which brings forth the intensity of the color, texture, and artificiality of everything below it. The brassy metal of Schwinn bikes, the nubbiness of the terry-cloth jogging suits, and the plastic yellow, blue, green wheels of the rollerskates are now mere memories of the day's activities. Imperfections are gone from the faces of the harassed vacationers. The lines, the demarcations from unblended foundations of straw-hatted women, the strain and sorrow are erased. Everything is erased, soothed, or mellowed with the sinking glow of orange fire. Even the sunburns are still tender and alive with heat that will surface later tonight.

As I walk to the beach I notice that the chips of plaster from the boarding house next door are not as decadent and stark as the morning and midday sun made them out to be. The grain in the boardwalk slats is telling stories now with the last sparks of sun slanting on them. An old woman sits on a bench with a white sweater cape and white shoes that tie around a set of swollen calves and ankles. She sits quietly. I know she is staring at nothing, but it seems she is absorbing everything. The sand flies with their piercing stings are gone from the beach. The "white trash" and mafia are all eating dinner with their damn unlicensed dogs. It is safe to walk along the ocean.

I leave reality behind as I make my way to the water's edge. Sinking and pulling my feet through the oyster white, cool sand with its rainbow conch shells, colored echelons of purple stain and pink traces. My white sweat jacket is moist with the sea mist and is pushed up at the elbows into folds

exposing turquoise silver jewelry purchased during the impulse of night's carelessness. Seashell pink nails set naturally with white moons at the end of my hands—hands that are terra-cotta colored from the sun's glow and soft from the sand's friction.

I come to the beach at this time to be alone and forget my problems and past. Perhaps to explain what it is that I do not know. The calm of the warm air, the whole atmosphere releases me from what is expected so I run and write bad words in the wet sand where the water, like a conscientious citizen, can erase them. I can laugh insanely at thoughts that fly through my head. I know I am most beautiful at these moments, because nature opens to let me glide in and she adorns me with rich color in my face, fire in my eyes, and the gracefulness of a cat. A sensuousness overtakes me because I am taste, touch, smell, vision and sound, not the body that just responds to these senses.

Walking along the surf, the cuffs of my speckled, grey sweatpants and feet become victims of frothing sea foam. From the knee down I seem to be sugar-coated with sparkles of crystalized, wet sand. The sun is glistening honey falling from a spoon into a waiting mouth, moist and primed with anticipation of the deep night. My hair is loose and damp, and flies about my head like stars around a galaxy. I lick the salt spray from my lips that are burned from the harshness of the day's sun. Just for one moment I believe I am in a big room—not outside. It is tremendous and it takes my breath. I am scared, but then I realize I am on the beach. Now, however, I am not so sure.

I leave the water and go to sit on a marine blue life boat. I dig my toes into cooler, moist sand and glare out at infinity. My smallness scares me. I realize that there is something that creates and destroys and the horizon stretches its lips into a straight line. The waves are white teeth that smile at me and tell me not to fear.

I walk along the shoreline now. The square condominiums mark my mileage. I begin to imagine that all my old boyfriends are running after me. I see their faces, individual expressions. their frowns of concentration. They are trying to catch up with me, but I am too free. I just smile and walk easy. It is the only time that I can ignore them, here on the beach. I never look back at them even when they start calling my name and saying how much they love me and want me. I should run, but their images are no match for my spirit. I think of all the times they told me they loved me. I visualize a kaleidoscope of scenes where their eyes are moist and my heart is stopped. It is at this moment I spot the jogger.

Like a bad cliché, he spoils my meaningful thoughts with his presence. I hate him for existing here, at this time of my discovery. I hate myself more for noticing his body. He stops at the water and bends over to catch his breath. I see a long back bone easing into a pair of maroon gym shorts. He turns. I look away, but seeing me he comes closer. He begins a dialogue. "Catching the last rays before dark...?" I wonder why he is talking at me instead of to me. I hear myself responding on cue to his questions of my setting, my plot, my character, and my conflict.

"Beth... from Baltimore...vacationing...like the beach at this time...just relaxing..."

"Maybe we could go to "Resorts" later...back to my place..." I begged him silently to say something I had not heard before.

"You know Baltimore isn't that far from Philadelphia. Anyhow, you're worth the trip."

My roommate and I are having a party next week... Three kegs... How 'bout you...?" I noticed he had one foot on a clear disc of a beached jelly fish. Nervously, without realizing, he was grinding the mold of crimson starburst to a pulp. Climax.

"Excuse me, I have to uh...go." His mouth is opened in shock for he is not used to the rejection. I feel nauseous for I am not used to giving the rejection. The script was not followed. I could only see it against the truth nature brought to me on the beach.

I walk back to the boardwalk. I linger one moment and then climb the steps. I bend down to wipe the sand from my feet. All that is left behind is a smoke grey residue of the once oyster white sand. The sun is gone and so is the old woman.

Beth Finglass

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