

The broken

Prose Poetry Photography Art Music



Still Life, Fast Moving



Grizzly bears on Skype • Tomcats on the town • A pigeon's tragicomic demise • A graveyard of Al Capone's cars • The return of our Blatant Propaganda section • Could we fit any more poetry in here??

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6

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Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER
Scott Bryson

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Sabrina Malik
Kat Wrobel

Visit *The Broken City* at www.thebrokencitymag.com to view and download issues, and read submission guidelines.

Cover Illustration

Mouki K. Butt is an illustrator and animator. She also enjoys making music, videos, and music videos. She currently resides in Vancouver, where nature holds city's hand, even though city can be a bit selfish at times.
<http://minorepic.net/~mouki>.

In this issue:

The Broken City examines the collision of nature and infrastructure in a knock-down, drag-out detonation of metal and plant life called *Still Life, Fast Moving* (credit to Toronto band Mean Red Spiders, whose third album bears that name). More often than not, nature and progress are at odds with one another, but once in a while, cities and the environment come together in a weird symbiosis.



The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its winter 2010 edition: *Found!* In this issue, we'll be examining discovery—both literal and figurative.

Did you find some torn-out pages from a saucy diary lying on the street? Scan them and send them to us! Did you write a grocery list that was inadvertently comical? Show it to us! Did a crop circle mysteriously form in your back yard? Take a picture and pass it along!

Aside from reports on specific finds, we'd also like to see your fiction, poetry and essays that deal with issues of exploration and discovery. Do you have a short story about a protagonist that struggles to discover an important truth about their character? Have you invented a teachable, foolproof methodology for unearthing the best finds at garage sales? Surely, you have some poetry about looking for gold at the end of a rainbow!

Please send your poetry, fiction, non-fiction, comics, art, photography, music/book reviews to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com.

Deadline is: November 15, 2010. Submitters will be contacted after that date, with news of acceptance or rejection.

Nothing that fits the theme? Send something anyway—there may be room for non-conforming work too.

An Open Letter to the Tiny Travelling Vampires that Suckled my Blood Whilst I Slept

Dear Ma Bedbug,

Fuck you very much for selecting me as the host of your family's bed-bug party, really I was honoured to be selected. And fuck you very much for making me have to throw out my bed—granted, I did buy it at IKEA, but still... it was firm and so delightfully urban. Oh yes, and before I forget, fuck you very much for appalling the hell out of my hot new girlfriend, as she was quite allergic to your nibbles, which would itch and swell to strange and frightening proportions on her soft back and neck. We mistook them for mosquito bites, unaware of you and your growing kin squatting in my box-frame. She's left me now, and so have you, but still, fuck you very much.

And I apologize for the vulgarity, it's just that months later, I still can't fall asleep at night. Still, I lie awake with flashlight in hand, convinced you are crawling up my leg, my spine. All because of that fateful night, when coming home from a weekend in Montreal, my girlfriend and I retired early, exhausted, car-lagged. And just as I was about to fall deep into it, you showed up and allowed your entire famished entourage (which had grown exponentially by then) to gorge themselves on an all-night buffet. I awoke, dreaming of spiders, many-legged spiders. That's when I felt you on my neck. I reached for you in the dark and felt you pop in my hand, only to see it full of blood after turning on

the light. Then I saw your children on my chest and my pillow and my girlfriend. About to paint the town gore with our blood! Needless to say, at that moment, your party was a bust.

And even as I write this I feel you on me, phantom vampire. Oh, where did you hitch a ride from in the first place? A late-night cab? My hotel room in Cuba? The office at work? The question will remain unanswered. The whole experience was so rotten I wouldn't even wish you on my worst enemy. However, I might wish you on my ex-hot-new-girlfriend, who has told like fifty people (mostly women), that I am filthy, infested with bed bugs and crawling with STDs. I believe she has even "tweeted" about it. How's that for a cock-block, Ma B? Huh?! How's that?! You and your brood have been eradicated from my home, but not yet my heart. My heart still rages for you, Ma, my eyes seek you out, Mag-Lite clicking on and off in the pitch of night.

Insincerely,
Matt Leslie

Editor's note: For the sake of Matt's future love life, it should be stated for the record that it's entirely possible that this is a fictional open letter.

Matthew Leslie has an MA in Creative Writing from UNB. His work can be seen in Misunderstandings Magazine, Echolocation, and QWERTY. If you're bored, check out his blog: <http://mmmlele.wordpress.com>.



sea-change

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham

they were milk and honey
paired and strong and swirling
at the bottom of the world,
staring up through
Atlas' quivering shoulders
as if they alone
knew about gravity.

They can't remember when they left themselves
in the midday sun to sour, and stew, and clot—

and the honey turned to acid
and festered—

they didn't want to talk about it
so they grew yellow, and corroded,
and had no choice but to leave
their burned exoskeletons sitting
in the sticky earth.

the pleasure of that madness

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham

Tragic Leontes, you have lived
within the earthen folds
of your nostalgia for too long;
your knees have cracked
with sixteen years of self-hatred.

They say your trembling hands
are bent in permanent prayer,
your eyes downcast as if afraid
one day you will have repented
enough.

They say you have not slept.
But in your dreams she reaches
to calm the tremor in your wrist
with a cool washcloth, a soft sigh—

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham is a student at New York University, and spends most of her time reading things, writing things, or thinking about reading and writing things. Questions, comments, vows of lifelong admiration, and hateful complaints can be sent to naomikrupitsky@gmail.com.

Grape Hyacinths on the Gorge

Sidney Bending

blackbirds play hide and seek in high-rise greenery,
black clam plummets to my feet—breakfast

green glint hummingbird spreads
her scarlet secret among the fuchsia

grape hyacinths huddle
in a coffee klatch of purple toadstools

willow branches streak beneath the stream,
papillion puppy inhales the trail of a mallard

red dragon boat drums past the white railings—
its talons synchronized

crimson camellias litter the pavement,
I hoard them in blue phoenix bowls and morning light

Sidney Bending is a retired graphic artist living on Vancouver Island, off the west coast of Canada. Her work will appear in five anthologies for the Canadian Federation of Poets. Several of her poems have won awards. She has been published in Red Berry Review, Island Writer, Kaleidoscope, Fission, and Frontiers. Sidney has been a member of the Victoria Writer's Society and the Heron's Quill poetry group.

From Banff, with love *Crystal Luxmore*

Hi baby,

I am sad
You no Skype me
You no love me?
I am like a grizzly
angry
and furry from not shaving
for two weeks.
Grrrr.

I need a distraction
a shiny, orange
love lion
to take away
the pain
of writing
someone into real
life.

Back to it.

woodchuck *Kathleen Jercich*

you are a shock.

the first time I see you,
snarfling your bow-legged path along route 13,
I blink four times to make the monster go away.

don't blame me.
I'm a west-coast fledgling,
wide-eyed and bit-lipped and new york city bound but
I have never smelled the soil.

since that first yelp I've seen you twice.
first: the only other on a sans-streetlight evening
I waved. you did the blinking.
the second
lured by the smell of salt onto too many winding roads
body left steaming and cutthroat in the damp

I thought by now I'd be used to east coast corpses.

Experimental Short Program *Crystal Luxmore*

I pedal behind
a winking ribbon of red lights
blurry
even Joe's Cleaners Alterations & Repair
looks angelic when drunk
on experimental, Aboriginal film

I slow to the rhythm of yellow light
whoosh
car passes

Green light
I pedal on air
turn down graffiti alley
across peat-coloured grass
under birch branch
burnt orange by the lamp's glow

like Beric's girls
I too
can be shaken
awake
by the spirit world

Kathleen Jercich is a student at Cornell University. Her writing has appeared in The Aurean, The Albion Review, and Sacramento News and Review. She is also the recipient of the 2010 Albion Review prize for fiction. At Cornell, she is the co-editor-in-chief of Kitsch Magazine and an active member of the Women's Resource Center Advisory Board. She is currently seeking a publisher for her first novel. For further samples of her work, please contact her at kjercich@gmail.com.

Eating Worlds

Wes Solether

We traced mud and grass across the valleys of our palms.
The lineage held maggots and worms near garbage cans.

Below us the dusty rugby players ran lines around the orange ball.
The world churned and above us the sky tried to catch up
like a bleached, black sock in the dryer.

We plucked sugar cane stalks
and plopped them on our tongues just to hear them shriek.
When you smiled, the survivors slapped our heads in retribution.

It was about this time when the goldfish
ate the crab in the aquarium that was
supposed to mean something.

During the summer, embryos spilled from shell on sidewalk
and sizzled a burning tan. The stain ballooned outward
year after year until a newer sidewalk was born.

We hugged like we wanted to be one person.
Our atoms flirted and prickled into the ground.

Dark hair swallowed halfway up your
arm, I was a wooden tennis racket
gathering dust in the garage,
and you were a tumbleweed in Chicago.

the hummingbird that caressed my cheek

Luminita Suse

gazed at me while I read a text
on the cell phone
over and over
again
grief hauling seas of salt
in hollow eyes
each feather
a sigh
and hummingbirds, of all creatures
know it isn't worth standing still
for emptiness

Luminita Suse is a resident of Ottawa. Her poetry has appeared in Bywords Quarterly Journal, Ditch Poetry Magazine, The New Stalgica Hymnal, several anthologies edited by Ascent Aspirations Magazine, Sage of Consciousness and elsewhere. She received third place and an honourable mention in the 2007 CRPA Flat Signed Poetry Competition, two honourable mentions in the 2009 OPS Open Heart Poetry Competition, and an honourable mention in the 2010 OPS Emerging From the Shadows contest. One of her poems was shortlisted for 2010 Descant/Winston Collins Prize for Best Canadian Poem.
www.luminitasuse.com.

Summer in Toronto

Natasha Barber

Red's for life, when it's hidden
the sharp streak cuts like a dagger
bold brazen breast diamond
nestling into gray
spots of white, rimmed with raven
round eyes dart

a melodic drone drowned
by the mechanical whirl
of an electric grass cutter
snipping at sparse blades
buried in cement

black dust spews forth
from cars churning past
molten asphalt mirrors
the strength of the sun

*First line from Mary di Michele's
poem "La Couleur de la Chaleur"*

Natasha Barber lives in Vancouver, BC and is currently working on collections of poems and short stories. She holds a master's degree from the University of British Columbia. Her love of words and respect for their power is evident in her belief that words can either trap us or set us free.

The Other Side

Kimberly Dmitruk

Follow me;
there's a street where we can dodge cars.
They only go fifty, fifty-five,

nothing you and I
can't beat.

Follow me;
the gravel will cut our bare feet
and we'll scream in delight.

The grass is brown from the sun,
burnt,
not greener on the other side.
It will itch when we get there,
and our arms will burn red
and itch too.

Come on

follow me!
There are so many of them,
so many cars.
We can chase them like lazy dogs
and bark like mad at their escape.

Cars, cars, we'll chase cars
on our way to the other side,
and I'll get us both killed and laugh
before we ever get there

and everything will be

poppies

red poppies.

Kimberly Dmitruk is an aspiring (or shall we say, craving) writer, and sometimes also a struggling one, depending on the day. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan and is currently based in Ann Arbor, MI where she does her best to write poetry and short fiction. She can be reached via e-mail at kldmitruk@gmail.com.

Bridgewatching

Ruth Urlacher

the ambassador at night
lights up like christmas

a neon north star
nebula bright

but it makes dark spaces darker

when i dream
of that prohibition icon and
the rum runners under her skirt

i can see the sky
through the ghost
of michigan central station
as i throw myself over her side

swan dive into the tea stain
of the river
and sink to the bottom
with the ghosts of the good old days
where i wait with the skeletons
of Al Capone's cars

in the morning Chinese families come
and fish me out again
tossing me indifferently over their shoulders

i lie belly up in the grass
gasping for breath

Ruth Urlacher moved to Canada from the UK in 2006 when she heard that her birthday falls close enough to Canada Day that she would sometimes get the day off work with pay. This is only the third time she has ever been published, but also the third time this year. Ruth enjoys good beer, awesome vegetarian food, and Ultimate Frisbee, though not necessarily in that order. Though it causes her great pain to do so, she currently resides in Windsor, ON where she is an Anthropology major at the University of Windsor.

Alex Garant



Worm World

Tammy Stone

I'm sitting on the dresser eating an apple, my first one in a year. Apples grow best in the cold but food is global now. My fingers are sticky. I'm a jumble of features, I can feel it, my watery eyes and lips cracked from the wind. My own hands look strange to me.

When I'm done, I put the core down and watch it start to oxidize. Rust is not brown, it's more like dark gold, a royal colour, like purple and silver, and of course, royal blue. Apples aren't royal. Maybe that's why I like to photograph them this way, because I don't like gold jewelry, but this is the real meaning of gold. I won't photograph this apple. I ramble on to myself. Why can't apples be heavenly, just like anything else?

The golden rust covering it begins to look less shiny and more like the cavernous surfaces of rocks, speckled and expansive. Like a galaxy. The apple starts to grow. Bits of it begin to reappear where moments before it was eaten away in chunks. I watch as a colony of ants make their way up the dresser and inch their way toward the apple, which is now the size of a melon. The ants stop before making contact and begin to circle around the apple. They make a thin, winding border between the

base of the apple and the rest of the dresser. The apple begins to tremor and my first reaction is to run for cover as if an earthquake has started to erupt. But there's no movement under me. If there's any source of movement at all, it's the apple itself. As I watch, the entire dresser begins to shine, and the ants take on a toxic, acidic appearance, as though unidentifiable rays of colour are reflecting off their hard, shelled backs. I think I can hear them singing, a low accumulation of baritone voices beginning an adulatory incantation, like the chanting I hear wafting over from temple compounds when there's been a death, slow and ongoing, trembling into loud oration.

The apple continues to grow larger. I face it head-on but I have nothing to say. I will a scream into my mouth but it doesn't come out.

The dresser won't be able to support it for much longer; apples aren't meant to be this size. My eyes rest on it. Watching the apple grow might not be the only thing worth doing, I have so much more to eat today, to stuff inside of me, but I'm also sitting here surrounded by the thin walls of a tropical bungalow I don't remember entering, and I can't take my eyes off it, so part of me wonders if this wasn't why the apple started taking on these proportions. Is the apple growing for me or for the ants? It never occurs to me that this is a strange question, that the apple is either growing just because, or in such a way that joins me, the ants and itself into the same corroding fold of experience. My mind starts to wander. It flies into the firm but breakable bits of the apple, through the sulfuric sheath now covering it and headlong into the depths of its sweet whiteness.

Not wanting to rest where it's sweet, my mind has wormed through the whiteness and heads for the seeded, bitter region. To do this is hard work. Sweet thoughts spin around on their way in. I think about madness and how it rushes through people in a way that makes them blissful and free. It's something like the open road. It's the knowing of things

that can come right at you and bite you but leave you with opaque, magisterial sights after the sizzling slows to a whisper. The bright yellow sun hits you, but this is a caress. You turn your eyes away quickly or close them and watch the little particles dance under your eyelids because you don't want to avoid the sun. These are good sweet thoughts. They don't cushion you because sweetness does not lie in protection. Sometimes you forget this. I let my thoughts rest in the softening core of the apple. It's the sweetest place; it's the most embracing space on earth because it has nothing to do with time. It's like your love.

The ants retreat, first by crawling along the circumference of the table, and then by trailing down, away from the table, along the linoleum floor and though the crack of the front door. The cat that found me two days ago and wouldn't leave the room as long as I remained hidden—it has also disappeared. I wanted it here with me but it's hiding somewhere outside where the ants are. The apple, though, tells me that this is what it means for something to assume the properties of something else right in front of you. A few months ago, when I was still trying to learn, a teacher told me that focused meditation leads to unimaginable transformations. I only got as far as seeing the circular head of a nail I was staring at for a few harsh minutes turn into the shape of a broken heart, literally a mangled human heart. But I'm not thinking now, I have to

stop this train of thought. Thinking is not what you do when faced with something that has come to sit on a dresser in front of you and grown to these monstrous proportions.

The bungalow begins to shake all the way up from the stilts it is leveled on. I try to balance myself. The apple begins to acquire a rectangular shape and becomes crystal white again, capped in green. This strikes me as a statement the apple is issuing about itself, as if to say, I am apple even though. This can't last, I think. This isn't how things work out.

I stand between the apple and the rest of this breezy little room when suddenly, a mangy dog flies in through the window and, with an uncharacteristic amount of energy, leaps at the apple, which awkwardly tumbles to the ground. There is a big roar.

The apple has gotten so big that its essence is no longer pliable. The dog, it turns out, had nothing to sink his half rotten teeth into and falls to the ground, dead next to this thing that is now an amorphous combination of green, white and gold.

I never stopped looking and it takes one day for the apple to disappear, and when it does, I can't for the life of me remember what it was like to have it here alongside a dog that never whimpered even once, this apple that grew and left and asked for no transfers.

Tammy Stone has authored an array of conceptual and compositional word combinations and formations. Many of these have been published in magazines, journals and newspapers internationally. A near obsessive chronicler of how people live in, are affected by, and make use of their specific environments, Tammy uses fiction, creative nonfiction and photography (www.blurb.com/search/site_search?search=Tammy+Stone&filter=all) to tell her version of the story of places and the stories they contain once her imagination gets involved. She is also working on her PhD, about the nature of observation in the documentary film and everyday life.

A Field **Rose Cook**

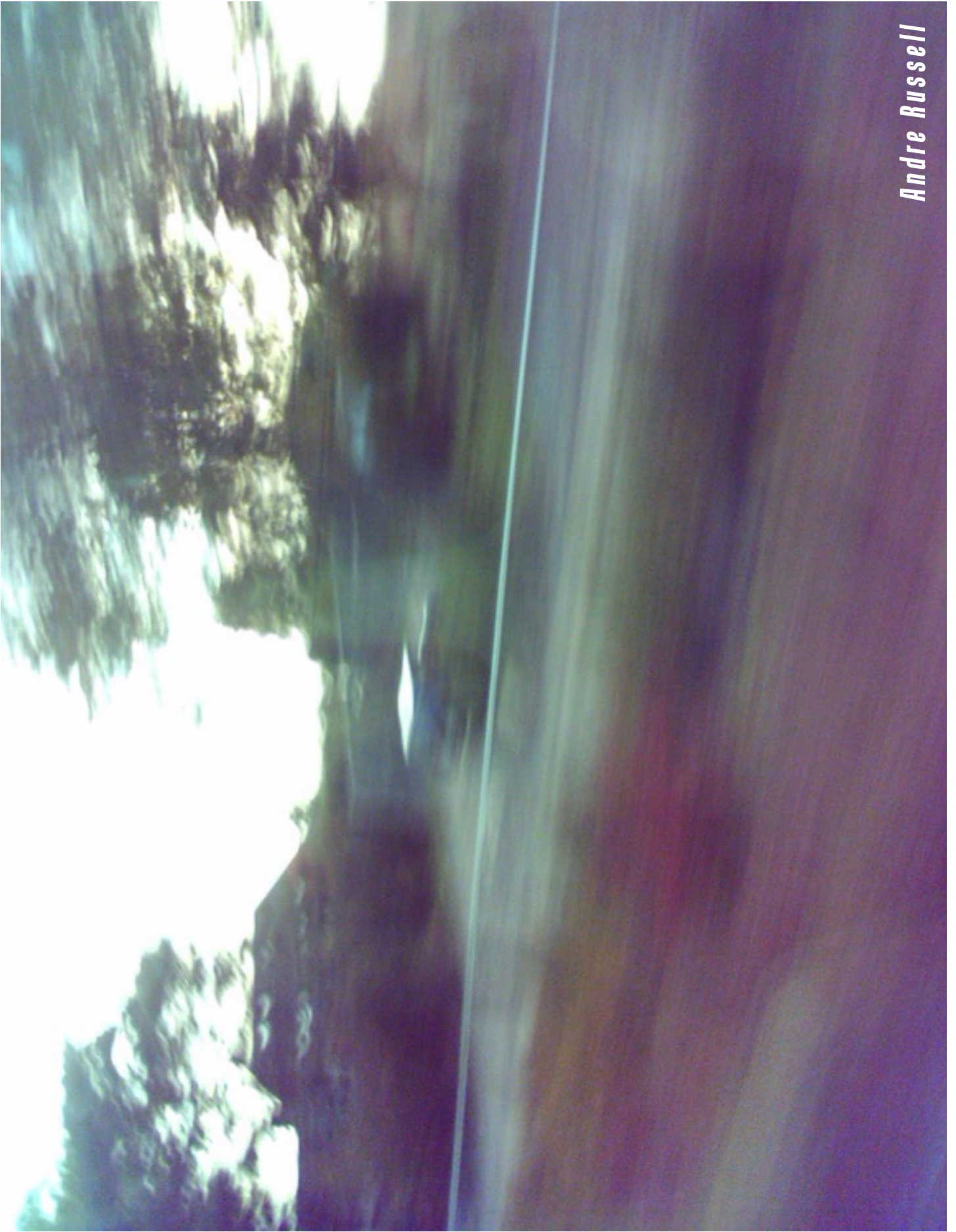
I am touched by the man who bought
a field, so he could sit in it and watch it,
gaze upon it, sleep in it sometimes.

He did not want to do anything to it,
but simply make relationship with it—
his plot of land, the edges, hedges,

birds and flowers, leaves and trees,
the sky above, day sky, night sky,
the moon, the rain, the whispered wind.

Rose Cook is one of the southwest's best-loved poets, having performed in venues from London to Falmouth. She co-founded the popular Devon poetry and performance forum, One Night Stanza, which helped many people find their voice. She is a reminiscence therapist and runs creative writing workshops based on the use of memory. She is currently working on a project that uses memory and journey—the idea of circumnavigating territory, mapping it with text and image. In 2009, HappenStance published a collection of her poems called Everyday Festival and Oversteps Books published her full-length collection Taking Flight. More details at: www.rosecook.wordpress.com. E-mail: roseandtom@tiscali.co.uk.

Andre Russell





The Glass House
Andre Russell

There's a glass house on the lake shore at the edge of the city at the end of a cul-de-sac. I discovered it on one of my many bicycle expeditions. This was a fortunate dead end for me; though I had to backtrack, the discovery of the glass house was well worth the effort.

The glass house can be seen from the commuter train. If you didn't know the house was there, you might miss it while on the train. Moving west, it appears for a flash from behind a wooded hill, and moving east, it's a pleasant surprise at the end of a row of aged houses.

The glass house has been destroyed. Though the house still stands, its isolation was its life. Now, the

waterfront path has encroached upon it. Other houses have disappeared and yet its privacy has been ruined. For the house to remain, it needs to fence itself in, but that would be like a crutch for a dead body.

I have dreamed of what it would be like to wake up in that house, filled with sunrise reflected on the surface of a seemingly endless lake, at the edge of the city. Sea birds gorging on schools of fish, the train passing by, filled with people who don't see the house, or the sunrise. Commuters asleep in their seats, with their headphones, blackberries, mp3s, romance and fantasy, and propaganda from the free newspapers to enclose their minds. And the house, and the sunrise, melts away all those other man-made fictions, with truth, blinding, transparent truth.

Andre Russell's only real goal in life is to become self-actualized. Everything he does is a means toward this goal. This explains why he can't stick to anything: for fear that the path to self-actualization is somewhere else or with someone else but himself.

The Great Pittsburgh Fire (1845)

Amanda Reynolds

The Irish washerwoman wandered away from the kettle's
flame to get clothes, and with several weeks without rain
it didn't take long for embers to waft and settle
on the roof of her hut. The reservoir empty from the strain

of sun and drought, no water came from the hand-pumped
engine. The flare that began at Second and Ferry soon became
the burn that took Colonel Diehl's house and jumped
right through the cotton factory's doors to take aim

at the Third Presbyterian Church. When the cornice caught
fire, the men chopped off the steeple to save the building,
while "all the salt of Sodom" in wagons and carts was brought
to keep the warehouses of coffee and sugar from flaming.
It's said that Mrs. Maglone was one of only two who died
along with Samuel who went back for the piano he left inside.

*Amanda Reynolds received an MFA from the University of
Florida and a PhD from Florida State University—both
in poetry. In 2010, she published a chapbook, Degrees of
Separation, with Pudding House Press. She currently lives in
and writes about the city she loves: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
For more information about Amanda, check her out at:
<http://sites.google.com/site/ajreynoldswriter/>*

CityForest Sidney Bending

red cedar trunk skyscrapers
underbrush of bistros and boutiques
yellow cab migration

After the trees had fallen

Erin Chapman

This will be the first hymn to the fire of the seeds,
a steady flow and refrain
of riot and arrest.
Suited in patience and choice,
the foundation jumped according to
the generation—
If it were pre
or post
or if caution were necessary.

The elk chew their
mouthy portraits
on the skins of the birch and I
yawn, pacified, such a mammalian
response.

We need more trees
they cried
But without the water there
was not much point and he taught me
that smokey ash can be used
like dry soap.

*Erin Chapman has a master of arts degree from
the University of Western Ontario. She has recently
completed her first novel and is currently working
on a short story collection. Erin was a finalist in
this year's Writers' Union of Canada's Postcard
Story Contest for her piece, "Walls."*

Coyotes

Wes Solether

The coyotes are coming back to Illinois.
Car horns and beeps are replaced by the sound of deer hooves
against marble hotel floors.
At night, bats and owls flourish and clamor for attention.
Chicago covers its buildings in flowering toupees,
a shaggy head of climbable vines.
Farmers pick burdocks from the soil pocks in the concrete.
The street is hungry,
waiting to be cracked into green bouquets of parks.

Anyone who says that the city can't be home to a sustainable ecosystem
simply wasn't thinking far enough ahead in time.

The coyotes are back in Illinois.
They travel in packs now,
picking off the weak people that don't keep their ears to the ground.
We seem to have an understanding with the pack nearby
and leave them leftovers in an old dish by the front porch.

Outside our window, the bony skeletal structures of the city
are serrated knives against the hills.
Weeds are slowly poking through our defenses
and, every day, we turn our heads to the rising sun
to hear and receive a sermon.

Further on, beyond the window,
God is holding a quintet of galaxies between his fingers
and unfurling his fist.

Craving adventure during the cruel Chicago winter, Wes Solether recently went into the mountains of Washington to grow an awesome beard and defend himself against cougars with only small woodland creatures as weapons. Of late, he has been published in Clementine Magazine.

safekeeping birds

Luminita Suse

it's true, I can kill a bird
every time I shut my eyes
no need to deny or blame
circumstances, someone else

I let the most precious soar high
even when it makes no sense
but gravity doesn't change sense
when metallic birds of prey lift off

nothing lasts
mountain spines implode
when magma bites into their soles
closing eyes doesn't forestall

sooner or later
the phantasm will dare fly through
viscous retina, fatigue is natural
regret, useless

how many times
have you seen a tarred bird
survive?

Oxford Geranium

Alan Patrick Traynor

You shift the world
With your words
Salacious pearl
Voluptuous Geoid
A raw frenulum
Of black leather
Clasping pink mammilla
Oh Oxford Geranium
Forget not your hat,
Xochiquetzal's
Black bowl
Dripping milk
From skin and bone
To the lips of
The Amazon mouth

Alan Patrick Traynor is a native poet, artist and musician of Dublin, Ireland. Having traveled the heartland and coasts of America for nine years, he accumulated a vast musical and literary understanding of culture and creativity. He arrived back home to Dublin in 2009 to begin an Information Technology degree but found painting and poetry much more stimulating. Alan has played in various improvisational bands and has studied jazz guitar for the last ten years. Creating poetry and bebop compositions are the two things that keep Alan rising from his springy coffin every morning! Alan can be contacted at: traynor_alan@yahoo.com. Web site: <http://alanpatricktraynor.yolasite.com/>.



Russ

A Pigeon Dies

Ian Mole

Four pigeons strut and flutter
in a deadly traffic tango
pecking at a crust and each other.
They make me smile
but when I look again
there's only one of them.
Crushed and dying
its tragicomic head looks briefly bewildered
and then glides to the tarmac in a soft hush.
Buses and trucks soon flatten it
into a feathery spaghetti.

Ian Mole is a 56-year-old Londoner who hails from Sunderland in northeast England. He has had a number of poems published in British magazines, and for a while, had two displayed on London's famous red buses. He has a weekly column on an award-winning Web site devoted to Sunderland Football Club: www.a-love-supreme.com. He has worked as a teacher of English to overseas students for 20 years—mainly in London, but also in Crete and Poland—and he occasionally promotes gigs.



Russ

City

Terri Ross

City leaves the urban life, packs up his kids and city wife, and stops for a latte before the three hour drive to the country. He trades downtown lights for starry nights and replaces urban sprawl with open spaces beneath an artist's palette of sunrises and sunsets.

He'll gladly forego the late night glow of a computer screen and fatigue that goes with a done deal. City much prefers a serene evening of star gazing and the amazing glow of a milky moon. Burning the midnight oil never illuminated a summer sky in the concrete jungle.

City pauses to wave goodbye to the dogmatic league he calls colleagues in the dog-eat-dog daily grind because he's headed for a place where dogs eat kibble. He leaps from the corporate ladder into a 4x4 heading down a mud-puddled dirt road to a place where horsepower means it's powered by horses.

He stops at a gas station for a fill-up and watered-down coffee in a Styrofoam cup while the kids load up on junk food like it's their last meal. City wife waits in the car and decides to make a call, but when they all come back she's barking profanity that would make a cowboy blush because the landscape is blocking her signal.

City willfully sacrifices the city life's luxury of convenience and instant gratification. Tomorrow he'll spend a lackadaisical day of catch and release that begins with a brisk misty morning listening to the languid loons' haunting warble. That is, until his family catches a mid-day case of cabin fever that can be treated but not cured by an afternoon in town.

City feels the city melt away as the air becomes charged with a tang of hay and manure. Amber fields and cattle herds roll past as the dregs of daylight cast the surroundings into silhouette. Calloused hands call it a day after a day of hard work. City knows about working hard, but city smarts don't stack a wood pile and City smiles ...

... because he's city smart.

Finally the truck turns off the county road onto a long and winding gravel driveway that leads to their country getaway—a three-story luxury dwelling overlooking a private lake. City informs the local charged with caretaking that company's coming this weekend.

“Don't forget to stack the wood pile.”

City and his city family file into their weekend getaway from the way they live five days a week. He pours himself a cappuccino and listens to the kids complain about being bored while city wife says she never wanted the country life.

And that's why City plans to turn this piece of paradise into an inn.

Terri Ross is a writer and doll artist. She resides in a small town just south of Haliburton, ON with her husband Bill and their perpetual two-year-old (dog) Buddy. Terri and Bill own and operate a bakery during the summer months, which leaves the winter free for Terri to pursue her writing and sculpting. You can visit Terri's blog at terriross.blogspot.com.

Tomcats In Town

Corrigan Hammond

Call the yipping a song of coyotes—yipping—yipping in the streets, in the gardens of the houses, of the houses gone to seed.

And them dogs gone back wild. Got wild in their howls. Move down the big path of wind, come up where the gusts turn out the thin dust from their cracks in the land.

Pretty cats is sleeping in the cat houses. Lulled asleep to the mongrel barks and the wind screams and the six-mile siren echoes under the discarded moves of the discarded moon above the land of the discarded lulls.

Closed-down breeze is heading east through town. Big tax culled dead the poisoned leaves in the poisoned acres of the tobacco fields due west of Babylon. The free-moving mutts set up camps there in packs, in the worn-in ruts from the ghost farmers' king-Cat trucks. Like transients. Like nomads. Moving. Looking for Canaan.

I got a full body'd mojo to that sound. To that sound of the dogs—that hounding midnight, that hound-dog roar. I want see the leaves melt to smoke in them oven-houses, Indian-brand Tobacco kilns. Powless. I want to feel the black hands that touched the leaves pull the unrooted stems from the earth and then wait for the coyotes to prowl the wasteland.

Cat got an electric buzz quiver. Got an urge to run his claws down the thick wound spiny emery board—aint never batted no mouse around. Declawed thing. Purrs himself to sleep—dreaming of being a mutt—dreaming of rawhide boots, rawhide bones—putting shit-kickers on, and kicking through the dead wind

blowing back the ghost town to barren parts, bare bones and periphery heckles. Dreaming of the culling sound of engines out in the wasteland.

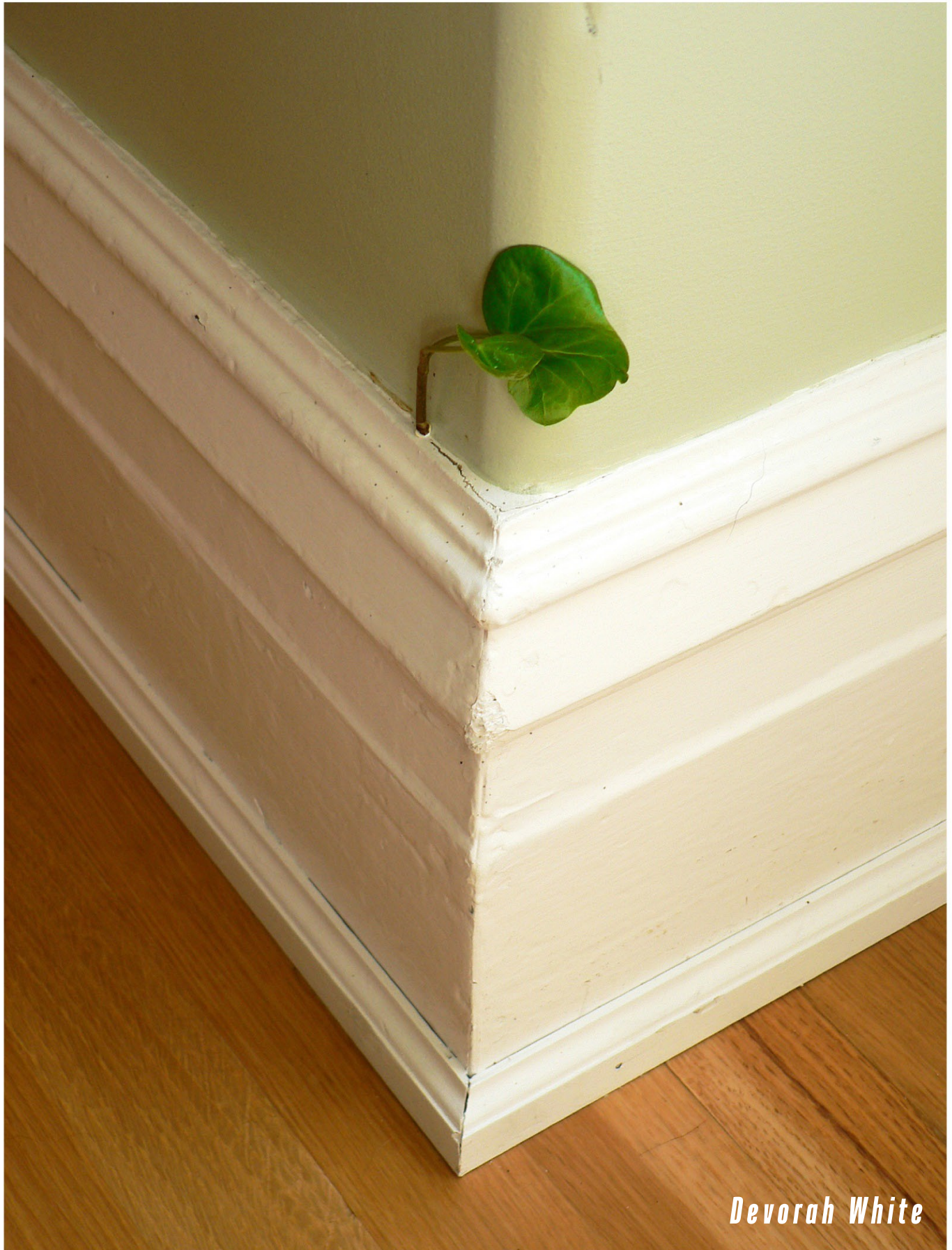
Mean dog, the size of a bear ambles out of the shadows, into the growling fears of town. Don't see no one. Don't see nothing. Just the wind. Barks once. Barks to silence. Prowls. Moves through the gardens, through the lit-up windows of the quivering houses. Cat there in the window watches. Meows. Figures he ought to be a hound dog. House-bound thing. Hound looks at him. Cold hungry in the wind. Reckoning on something. Nobody ain't sure of what—just shivering in the cold moves of the wind. Supposing someday maybe he could be one of them tomcats in town.

And tomcats talk to one another. Says: 'little kitten over there, you ever been to the periphery?' Tomcats is free. Got claws. Got claws like driving nails. Dig them into the ground. Dug into dirt. Aint gonna move no tomcat nowhere. See, tomcat moved out once to the bare bones bare land. Saw where the dogs sleep—where them restless bodies roll over against winds, against rains. Came back figuring that they is gonna ship off all the kittens when they shut down the place—move them out to Jerusalem maybe when they let the Babylon burn. It'll just be the hound dogs and the tomcats then. And ugly face mutts don't want that. Gonna yip couple times at the moon. Gonna move on. Leave the tomcats imagining the periphery barking, getting off to dreams of wolves in the night. Calling the wasteland the promised land gone to seed.

Corrigan Hammond is a recent graduate from McMaster University. While there, he worked as the music editor for the McMaster Silhouette. His poetry has been featured in anthologies by Ferno House and in Steel Bananas. He is also a regular contributor to the Hamilton Review. To read more of his work, go to www.corriganhammond.com.

Crystal Luxmore





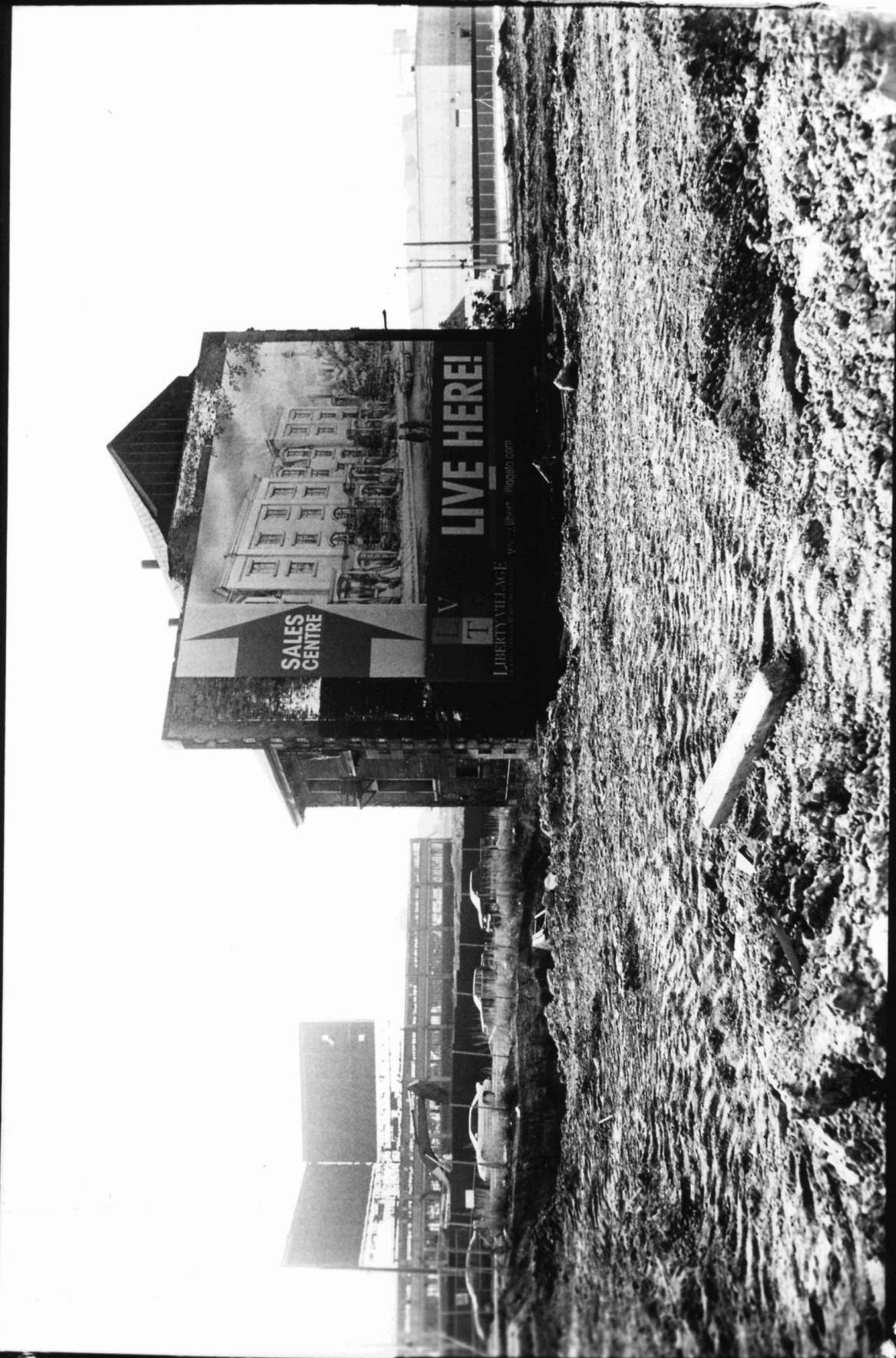
Devorah White



Devorah White



Devorah White



Candid Camera

Thomm Quackenbush

When I told you that the future wasn't a fascist dystopia, I may have been speaking a bit prematurely.

You had a small cold—nothing worrisome, just some sniffles—but you decided that nasal decongestant was a necessity were you to be the least bit useful for the rest of the day. Nothing on the shelf was quite right—you know from experience, having spent your teenage years with a chronic case of hypochondria and undiagnosed allergies to animal dander and dust—so you picked a plastic card for Sudafed and brought it to the pharmacy. It would do the trick without making you a drugged-out zombie.

Before continuing, I would be remiss if I did not point out that the young woman ahead of you in line picked up a controlled substance, a psychotropic that would be worth a bit on the street. The pharmacist gave this to her with little more than a second look at the prescription, certainly without actually affirming that she was the patient to whom this medication was prescribed. You have no doubt you could have brought it to the counter and said you were picking it up for your girlfriend. When you hand your plastic card in, the woman behind the counter demands your license, then meticulously types in not only your name but ostensibly every single character on it. She even criticizes your picture (almost a decade out of date), as though you would use a fake ID to get a box of twenty-four nasal decongestants. Since this process makes you more than a

little uncomfortable, you joke with the pharmacist that you are now going to be on some sort of watch list and won't be able to buy decongestants for a month. She looks over the tops of her glasses, her mistrust renewed, and affirms that what you've said is exactly correct. She thinks you knew that you would be forbidden the pleasure of buying this \$3 box of tablets for thirty days and almost denies you. For the privilege of buying a completely legal box of cold medicine, you are now on a list.

Her fear was that you would use the pseudoephedrine in the tiny red tablets to distill a drug called methamphetamine, also known as ice, speed, crystal meth, and simply meth. As drugs go, it is apparently a highly addictive one that tends to result in its user's death. Not being the drug-using sort, you derive the majority of your knowledge of meth from public service announcements when the television stations could not otherwise fill up commercial time and want to fulfill their apparent obligation to society. Meth is somewhat easy to make in one's home, or, since you buy into the propaganda, trailer. It apparently leads to tooth loss, rapid weight loss, occasional explosions, and the willingness to prostitute oneself for more of the drug. You have no idea how to create it and don't particularly care to know, beyond the fact that it seems to involve a lot of heat and flammable material. And now you are on a list of potential meth users that the government may pore over at a

whim.

While this one incident bothers you, what galls you is how indicative you find it of a decline in privacy in America. You recently read a statistic that the average person is filmed 200 times a day, largely without their knowledge or consent. There are signs in front of most stores, warning that anyone entering is subject to filming on security cameras; this passes for a threat and a promise, as a way to waive any legal stickiness resulting from this voyeurism. Seeing these signs, your continued entrance constitutes consent according to the law. You understand the purpose of these signs in stores, for the most part. They wish to prevent theft and even a dummy camera is liable to make someone paranoid enough that they won't stuff a frozen turkey in their purse. You find the fact that many stores secretly film you in the changing room, that they legally can and have released this footage for public consumption in videos titled "Hottest Dressing Rooms, Volume 7," reason enough to just estimate your size when making a purchase, however.

There are also cameras on the streets, most everywhere, in cities. These cameras carry no warning, so you really do not have the foggiest idea when a casual stroll can lead to your being entered into a database and cross-referenced against suspected "terrorists"—a word that lost all meaning around the time that the government began creating dossiers of anyone who was not explicitly in favor of their policies. You went to a protest

when you were ten or twelve, so you might already have one. In a world where you can carry more memory in your pocket than you first three computers had combined, it is all too easy to save a hundred million records of innocent people for one that may actually be guilty. Years ago, while you were passing through a police station's inner sanctum because you had been mugged (no hidden cameras helped you there), you saw that a bulletin board was covered with pictures of your classmates, giving one another handshakes. You understood that the police assumed this was a gang sign and not simple the sort of greeting ritual created among high school friends. You further understood the angles from which the pictures had to be taken and realized how lousy Main Street must have been with cameras, all filming constantly in hopes of getting one incriminating frame for this wall. You then went out of your way to find the cameras, look straight

at them, and wave. You definitely have a dossier, though they may believe you are a mental patient.

If the cameras were not enough, one can be stopped and searched by the police at their discretion. As such, you have heard, witnessed, but not experienced the pleasure of random bag checks that encompass everyone on the street. It would be slightly different were it that the police had a credible threat, but they tend to just wait in a subway station or on a sidewalk and detain anyone who happens to be passing so they can be searched and frisked. You are welcome to walk away, but they will decide that declining a bag search qualifies as suspicious behavior and that can result in your arrest on trumped up charges. If the police care to, it is easy enough to contrive a reason to hold you long enough to dissuade you from exercising your constitutionally given rights. You spoke to an officer? No, you spat at them,

since microscopic particles of saliva left your mouth. You walked away when they were speaking to you? No, you interfered with police work. They won't be able to hold you for long, especially once the castrated media gets word of what happened, but they only need to scare you into submitting.

While the conceit had been that one was innocent until proven guilty, the talking heads now say with full sincerity that you shouldn't be worried about the government treating you as a potential suspect for every crime since your conception unless you have something to hide. It seems to you to be the height of un-American thought to be told to grip your knees and think of England (who are increasingly treating Orwell's 1984 as a manual), though these groups are likely to lob the same accusation back at you for questioning the behavior of your democratically elected representatives.

Thomm Quackenbush is a writer and teacher in the Hudson Valley of New York. He has previously been published by Cave Drawing Ink, The Journal of Cartoon Overanalysis, Associated Content, and Paragon Press. He is currently shopping around the first novel of his urban fantasy series and looking for an agent. He writes and edits (<http://www.xenex.org>) and gets oddly delighted when the hit count jumps. He can be contacted at thommquackenbush@gmail.com.

Shoulda stayed in the woods

AJ Buckle

Brown mud from black boots on my mother's white coffee table.	She tells me that she just cleaned up. And that I should leave so she can clean again.
Everything so clean in the city and there is no room for natural beauty.	"Take a hike!" My mom tells me. "I just did mom. There's the mud"

AJ Buckle—the son of an English major and a forensic chemist—was born in Halifax in 1985. He has been in love with poetry and prose since encountering “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” in grade school. His influences include Charles Bukowski, Jack Kerouac, comic books, and people he meets on the street. Some of his poetry can be found in his blog, The Hunter’s Diary. He currently lives in Ottawa where he’s studying to be a high school English teacher and working as a supervisor at a call center. (“Sorry, everyone”).

This issue, The Broken City asked contributors, “How long would you last, living alone in a cabin in the woods, and what would finally make you return to civilization?”

Natasha Barber: The sun sparkles and dances on the percolating ocean as a cool breeze sweeps through the cabin. Moist air, laden with scents of the earth, triggers a shiver that bolts up my spine. Nestled in the couch placed before an empty hearth, a book is splayed open on my lap. I’m in need of pencil lead, food and chopped wood, but my book has not ended. I recall something from Girl Guides about being able to find edible foods in the forest, but after boiling some pine needles to make soup, my stomach twinges. Packing up my books, clothes and other belongings, I prepare for the water taxi to return me to flushing toilets, running water, hot chocolate and croissants—i.e. a coffee joint where I can settle in and finish my book. First, I need to stop by an office supply store to purchase pencil lead.

Sidney Bending: June 8, 2010 at April Point Fishing Lodge and Spa, Quadra Island, BC: Five killer whales breach in Discovery Passage as the sun sets over pink-snowcapped mountains. I nibble on pistachio encrusted praline torte with candied orange, accompanied by a live jazz trio. Tomorrow my indulgence will be a hydrotherapy soak, seaweed wrap, and hot beach stone massage. I have not come for the fishing but watch 28 eagles fish from a sand bar just 30 feet from the marina. This is as close to “a cabin in the woods” as I am ever going to get. I chose to live in the small city of Victoria for the theatre, opera, symphony, and the closeness to ocean and forest. I do walk by the water (beach, cliffs, gorge) every day and watch the sunset over the evergreen hills from a bentwood rocker in my livingroom.

AJ Buckle: Spending time alone out in the woods is something that I’ve always wanted to do. I’ve always found the first half of Jack Kerouac’s *Desolation Angels*—where he spends time alone in the high Cascades as a fire lookout—really appealing. It’s like the Romantics always said: going off to the woods is a way to confront yourself. That seems like something everyone should try. But the thing is, being someone who writes from experiences, being alone out in the woods might get a little tiring after a while. There are only so many ways you can write about moss growing on trees, or how water rolls off of a rock (unless you’re Robert Frost). A few months, maybe a year, would probably be my maximum. It’s not the loneliness that would get me; I’d need to get back to people to be able to write.

Mouki K. Butt: I would not last long alone in a cabin in the woods, but the fear of getting lost while attempting to leave might keep me there longer than I would like. I might last until the snack foods that I brought with me run out. I might try to gather some edibles from the woods, but would inevitably end up making myself ill. I’m able to make myself ill by concocting recipes out of foodstuffs that I buy at the grocery store, so this isn’t a far stretch.

Erin Chapman: I would probably last three days, although I don’t want to underestimate my abilities. There are many important variables to be considered, after all, such as the location of the cabin, including its proximity to mountains, lakes, waterfalls,

and wildlife (dangerous or otherwise), the time of year (I suffer from allergies), the cabin’s bathroom facilities and its electrical equipment or lack thereof, and of course, whether or not TV is just beginning, in sweeps, or in finales, or if a new season of Project Runway is about start. All of these things considered, and based upon the current direction of the wind, and assuming we’re working off of the lunar calendar... three days.

Stefan Chiarantano: My visit to a cabin in the woods could last two weeks, perhaps three, maybe four weeks in total. I wouldn’t want to overdo it. I’d stay until the silence and natural beauty of my new environment permeated my consciousness and left me with a lasting impression that would resonate within me over time. Then, I’d pack my bags and make my way home to the city with its tempting offerings of secular pleasures and comforts, which I couldn’t do without for an extended period of time.

Rose Cook: Now, you don’t say where this cabin is, or if it’s stocked with nice food and tea. If this is a comfortable cabin (food, tea) then I would last happily for several weeks with my camera and notebook, getting to know the trees and plants, the wildlife that live there, their daily and nocturnal activities. I hope the woods are filled with birds. I have a growing passion for trees and birds. Especially owls. I hope there are owls. What would make me return to civilization? Facecream, shampoo, family, the Internet, work.

Kimberly Dmitruk: A cabin in the woods would seem a utopia of sorts, but only, I think, for a few weeks. I like to consider myself solitary by nature: I dislike Internet social networking, can’t be held on the phone for more than a few minutes, find small talk intimidating, and, out of shyness and a reluctance to relinquish privacy, find myself closely associated with very few people. Every now and then, this is a great disadvantage, but having been a nervous and timid child, I find these habits hard to overcome. Still, despite my solitary affectations, I sometimes have a longing to be around people—not to interact, only to be in the vicinity of other humanity. My venture into the woods would likely be curtailed by a need to visit a quietly humming coffee house, to walk down a crowded street, to observe people going about their private, quotidian lives.

Alex Garant: Assuming I have an unlimited amount of Art supplies to entertain myself with, I could stay isolated for few months, however, it’s hard to imagine a life without my family, my supporting boyfriend or my dogs. For me, creativity emerges from happiness and positivity, and I obtain this emotional satisfaction from the people I love. My artistic development does not feed well on darkness and isolation, but it blooms under the influence of shared laughter and cheerfulness.

Corrigan Hammond: Upon returning from any misadventure to an isolated cabin in the woods, the surest way to accurately determine how much time I spent there would be to take the total

number of days in my account and divide it by four. Take that number, multiply it by .5, subtract seven, and then add 13 for good luck. For instance, if I told you two weeks, then you would know I almost made it eight days—which, incidentally, is about how long I figure I could survive in the wilderness before becoming bored and returning to civilization. All of that math would probably do me in.

Kathleen Jercich: I really do love the outdoors, so I think I could spend about a summer's length of time alone in the woods—provided, at least, that I had a decent supply of reading material and an iPod charger so I could listen to my esteemed collection of Radiolab podcasts. I am a vegan, though, so the whole hunting-one's-own-food thing might be a bit hard to enact. I'm also slightly addicted to overpriced soy meat. After a while, therefore, the despair prompted by eating nothing but peanut butter and the occasional dandelion would drive me back to the welcoming, air-conditioned arms of Trader Joe's.

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham: I happen to really enjoy both being alone and cabins in the woods, although I'm not sure how long I would last alone *in* a cabin in the woods. I'll say a couple of months so I don't feel too wimpy. Really, it would be a matter of books and food—I like both of those things too much to last without a large supply of each.

Matthew Leslie: I like to think of myself as a bit of a 'woodsman,' so right off the bat I'd say I could easily last for months, maybe years, alone in a cabin. Solitude, birds, fresh air, campfires, paperbacks, green stuff everywhere. Yeah that's my shit. Like Kerouac in his fire lookout. But sooner or later I'd start thinking about Bigfoot. And ancient Indian burial grounds. And I'd start fixating on these things and before you know it I'd be freaking out and convinced I was being tracked by a Sasquatch and haunted by the Wendigo. So then I'd kill a chipmunk or a raccoon and bury it and wait to see if it comes back to life like Church in Pet Cemetery and then I'd probably never be able to sleep again, so I'd have to come back home to the city and start doing meth again.

Crystal Luxmore: Providing there was a ready supply of food, I would savour three months of peace, serenity and no e-mails. After that, the love—and sexual healing—my boyfriend so aptly provides would lure me back.

Ian Mole: I've actually experienced something akin to this as I once spent five weeks by myself in a remote house on the Darling Downs in southern Queensland, though I had my cat, King Tubby, for company (we watched distant thunderstorms together). I did pop into the nearest village for a beer now and then, so I imagine that would count as gross cheating. I think I could last in the log cabin for around a month before the mystery and lure of the city, specifically the desire for some contact with the beautiful riot of mankind, would have me hurtling towards the nearest metropolis.

Thomm Quackenbush: As long as I had something to write on and with, I would have little trouble subsisting on grubs and tree roots (perhaps mixing them into a protein-rich smoothie) for about a month. I've taught gifted kids at Vassar survival skills, which is to say that they taught me how not to abjectly fail to survive, so the basic skills are there, even if I haven't roughed it anywhere that did not have a flush toilet within a mile. I would come back, not

because I ran out of supplies—I'm not kidding about that grub and root smoothie—but simply because I missed interacting with people. Or possibly, I would return clad in bear skin, quite insane, and try to start a Discordian shamanism cult. Hard to say, really.

Amanda Reynolds: Is there a Whole Foods within walking distance? No? Well, I'd last about as long as my yogurt and granola last. Then I'd be hoofing it to the nearest market. Is there wi-fi? No? Then I'd last a few weeks. Does alone mean without pets too? Yes? Then I'd last about a week. If it's hockey season, can I watch the Penguins? No? Then I'd never have gone to the cabin the first place!

Terri Ross: At my home, I can already hear the coyotes and wolves baying in the bush that surrounds the small town I live in, and I've had black bears on my front deck, so I could probably last living alone in a cabin in the woods until one of two things happened: 1. The cacophony of frogs I keep hearing are only in my head. 2. I run out of toilet paper because I can't decipher leaves to save my life.

Russ could last maybe two months living in a cabin in the woods before snapping. He enjoys the noise, excitement and the hustle of the city too much to stay any longer than that.

Andre Russell: I would never return to civilization. I love cycling in the country and dream of living out there as opposed to visiting out there on my expeditions. I used to think that it would be unbearable—living out in no man's land. I guess I'm growing up or I'm just sick of all the toys and egos.

Wes Solether: I think I could last a long time in a cabin alone, but the lack of human contact would probably drive me insane. I would eventually scare some hikers and kids would tell terrifying stories of my existence. I would only return to civilization if the beautiful scientist sent to study my behavior somehow fell in love with me. She would pledge to reintegrate me into society and the next few months would be remembered only through a series of funny montages dubbed over with "Wild Thing" by the Troggs. When I finally learned how to use a spoon correctly, I would walk hand-in-hand with my love back to the city, preferably at sunset. I would land a Lifetime movie based on my tell-all book and a survival show on the Discovery Channel. In other words, I would be set for life.

Tammy Stone: This question came to me while I was doing a ten-day silent meditation course, nestled in the hills of Thailand, a few kilometres from the Burmese border. It doesn't get much more cabin-in-the-woods than that, especially because I was there for the expressed purpose of doing nothing but observing the subtle sensations of my body and curbing the ferocious tangents of the only companion I had: my own mind. Despite repeated pleas with myself to escape, I persevered and already feel nostalgic for Noble Silence, my eternally numb right leg, and reminders of why we're stuck in our horribly/wonderfully addictive, misery-making patterns. So, I would say that I could survive for 11 days at a minimum, but at this stage in my spiritual development, could last 13, maybe 14 days tops. What would I come back for? I'm a sucker for life, addictions and misery included, so I'd come back for all of it, but especially to see pink: where's this delicious, plastic colour in the woods?

Luminita Suse: Alone in the cabin, tilted between quiet and wild. The forest is a click away and I'm unable to wander. The rain drums on the roof. I've finished reading the last book. The fire crackles in the stove. Memories cling to temples like snowflakes drifting over the mountain ridge, in August, high up in the Carpathians. We had hiked for ten hours, yet no sign of a cabin. Here, I paraphrase Forest Gump: the mountain is a box of chocolates, you never know what you'll be getting. So, we set up the tent in the nearby valley, ate canned tuna, crackers and chocolate. Next day, I woke up to his indecently shaved face. He said I smiled while sleeping. Then we committed a sweet morning crime, just like in a good love movie. Speaking of which, I am off to rent a bunch of films and get more chocolate.

Alan Patrick Traynor: The funny thing is that I view living alone in a cabin in the woods as very civilized! I guess it's a case of who visits and stays over for dinner, and buckets of red wine. I would rather have Bo Derek in a granny flat attached to the cabin—happy now! So, I'm guessing that I might last until I expire if the conditions were slightly east of alone. Although, I'm sure I would find a river nearby and hopefully catch a Thoreau-friendly salmon to advance my sporadic autodidactic knowledge base.

Ruth Urlacher: Due to a prolonged stint doing phone tech-support,

I have a great appreciation for things that don't talk, so I think I would last at least a couple of months before the cabin fever set in. My return to society would probably be triggered by running out of peanut butter, closely followed by severe thrift-store clothing withdrawal. What would finally get me out the door and back to real life, though, would be the realization that if I were to die alone in my cabin, my body would then be scavenged by the local forest creatures. I really don't like it when things eat my face.

Devorah White : My own parameters: The cabin is cozy, comfortable, but sparse. There is no electricity—no phone, computer, or electronic communication equipment. My one piece of technology might be my camera, and I'd hand-crank the battery to charge it. (I'm pretty sure I could survive without the camera too). I would have food, and thus, would not be forced to hunt, but would attempt to grow a garden. I would have a stack of books, and plenty of paper and writing/drawing implements. In this situation, I could last a year—long enough to experience and enjoy all of the seasonal changes and surprises. I think I'd also welcome the challenges of staying warm, providing water, and maintaining a sane perspective! I would then return to civilization only because I really love having a few special folks with me to share all the hills, valleys and chaos that life offers.

Photographers/Illustrators

Stefan Chiarantano is an emerging writer whose other passions include photography and film. His inspiration comes from the city of his birth, Toronto, which holds his memories and identity.

Alex Garant is a French Canadian artist currently residing in Toronto, ON. She won her first art contest at the age of seven and graduated with honours from art school in 2001. She has illustrated children books, poetry books and novels, and has participated in snow sculpture festivals. On top of being part of the marketing team of an important Canadian company, this portrait artist is now focusing on oil painting, expressing her vision of unconventional beauty in a series honouring fighters and the MMA culture. www.alexgarant.com. alexandragerant@gmail.com.

Crystal Luxmore hails from the north shore of Lake Superior, has taught English in Japan, pimped biomass in Europe, and now writes from her boyfriend's couch in Corktown, Toronto. The poems included on page 5 were inspired by a stint at the Banff Centre as part of the Emerging Aboriginal Writers Program. Her work has appeared in Toronto Life, The Walrus, the New York Times and the Toronto Star. Sometimes you'll find her leading gaggles of gob-smacked school kids or visitors around the city as part of Walk T.O., a walking tour company she co-founded.

Russ grew up in Fonthill, ON and moved to St.Catharines, ON after high school, where he began to develop his interest in photographing urban decay. He moved to Toronto a few years back to look for work but instead found an even larger pool of decaying factories and buildings to photograph. These are his first published photos. Currently, Russ is in the Yukon shooting abandoned mine sites, ghost towns and shipwrecks. He likes to work alone as the work is often dangerous and dirty. It also allows him to work at his own pace. klondike.coyote@gmail.com.

Now in her sixties, Devorah White has more time to use photography as a meditation on the chaos of the universe. She is an avid hiker and lover of outdoor spaces who uses the camera as a means to focus (with peripheral vision) on the ways in which humans and other species connect (or disconnect) with each other and with seemingly non-living elements. She lives on the BC coast, but her favourite place to explore is the desert; rocks, so exposed, reveal their ancient stories if one listens. She has recently self-published a photo essay of her experience with diabetes. krindle@shaw.ca.

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www.thebrokencitymag.com
thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com