The broken CITY

The best sushi in Windsor, ON
An ode to oysters
"My mother is like yogurt."
Achieve that wilted celery look
A guide to transit eaters

Eat this magazine.

Blueberries: the rock-and-roll rococo fruit • Bicycle Bert's Deep Fried Budgies In A Box
"I was determined to know beans." • Having a sex talk with your live-in foreign exchange student

Summer 2013
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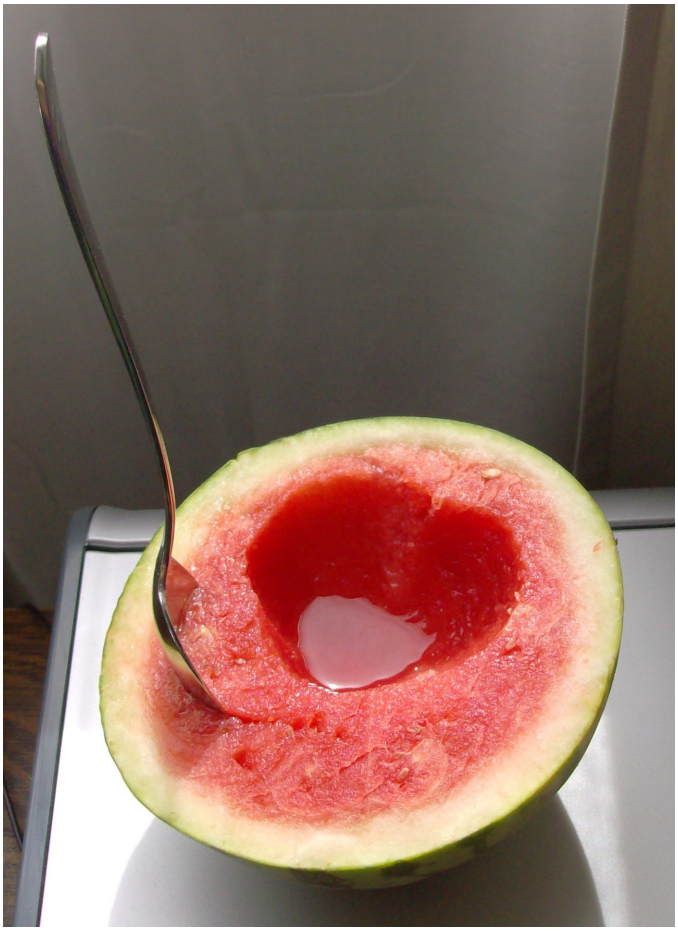

Cover Illustration

Mouki K. Butt

Masthead Photo

Ed Berger

In this issue:

Welcome to dinner. An inescapable theme weaves in and out of our food issue's submissions: eating's connection to memory. As Alex Lucier says in her short story, "Old School," "... food is about as close to a time machine as you can get."

The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its winter 2013 edition: **Turn on, tune in**.

No, eager readers, it's not an issue about psychedelics. *The Broken City* is appropriating a Leary-ism for a music-themed issue. Send your music-related poetry, fiction, essays, comics, illustrations, photography, music and book reviews to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com.

For this 13th issue, *The Broken City* will also be attempting to assemble a downloadable mixtape of contributor music. So, would-be rock stars, e-mail us one and only one .mp3 of original music. See the *Broken City* Web site for further details.

Deadline is: December 1, 2013.

How to Have a Sex Talk with Your Foreign Exchange Student Whose Father is a Pastor

Rebecca Lauren

1. Explain that this is *your* house. Well, yours and the mega-bank that took bailout money and used it to pay high-level executives while your mortgage hung in the balance and your credit card debt soared out of control. Tell him you'll own this house in 28 years, and if he has sex in this house and gets his girlfriend pregnant, he'll be a grandfather by the time this house is paid off. (This house does not have enough bedrooms for babies.)

2. Which reminds you, one of the things that drives you crazy about this house is the lack of a dining room. Set up the tray tables and begin chopping vegetables for your famous white bean soup. Sautee onions on the bottom of a pan. (This is not a metaphor for something sexual.)

3. Demonstrate how to slide a condom onto a banana. This *is* a metaphor for something sexual. Try not to think back to seventh grade when Mr. Miller did the same thing in the chemistry lab, except the condom snapped and flew across the room, and he threatened to fail anyone who so much as cracked a smile. (It's OK to laugh if this happens to you.)

4. Tell him that it's OK if his penis is not as big as the banana. Well, actually, have your husband make this point while you excuse yourself to stir the soup on the stove. Try not to laugh as it comes to a boil. Try not to let the flames lick the side of the cooking pot.

5. Give him the ultimatum: condoms or birth control. Better yet, both. When he tells you he plans to be abstinent, tell him that's a load of crap, but do it in such a way that he believes you understand his desire to be good. Have him taste the soup. Have him try to resist eating a whole bowl of it afterward, when the ribbons of saffron are added, the scallions grown pungent and bright.

6. Buy condoms. Leave them in a jar on the desk in his bedroom. Don't bother being discrete.

7. Agree to fly his girlfriend from El Salvador to your city for the weekend. Write a letter to the consulate, explaining that you are God-fearing people with ties to the church. Don't forget to freeze the soup for the church picnic. When the fat rises to the top of the Tupperware, graze it with a spoon.

8. Tell him his girlfriend will sleep on the couch. Tell him his girlfriend can help herself to anything in the refrigerator (bananas, condoms, etc.).

9. When his girlfriend sneaks up to his room anyway, remember that you did the same thing with your husband before he was your husband. Remember how much you tried to be quiet and pure. Remember getting rug burns so the bed wouldn't squeak.

10. Say a prayer for bodies. Say a prayer for your exchange student's sperm, that it doesn't swim too far from home, that it doesn't clasp too dearly to this new life before it's time to leave the old.

11. Get up in the middle of the night to make yourself a mug of soup to clear your mind. Act surprised when the couch is empty. When your exchange student and his girlfriend say they were just talking to each other in the dark of his bedroom, when their faces flush with vigor, choose to believe them.

12. Go back to bed. Undress your husband. Remember to be quiet.

Rebecca Lauren lives in Philadelphia and teaches English at Eastern University. Her chapbook, The Schwenkfelders*, won the 2009 Keystone Chapbook Prize and was published in 2010 by Seven Kitchens Press. She loves llamas and butter, but would never eat llamas with butter. She would never eat llamas at all.*

Generations of Beans

Cynthia Gallaher

"I was determined to know beans."
—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

After my widowed mother married a civil servant,
meat and mashed potatoes again graced our table.

She whispered to me, "Only the poor eat beans,"
yet we stored dried beans in our cellar, just in case.

Those beans sometimes did duty on picnic bingo cards,
Was what danced beneath accountants' fingers,

And enemies' boasts didn't amount to a hill of.
They're what I glued, along with

Red lentils, green dried peas, onto black
construction paper and oatmeal boxes in school.

My tongue forgot the cooked variety's taste,
but a 20-something trip 900 miles south

Lavished mouth's memory by means of
Cajun red beans' spicy punch on Rue Royale.

After wedding bells back north, I also heard my macro-Mexican
husband call our shower gift potato masher—a bean smasher!

Used when pintos swell deep pink and plump, only to give up under
pressure, turn creamy and fragrant under the soupy sway of garlic,

Onion, cilantro, cumin, all air-biscuit free with epazote,
and velvety folded with brown rice into corn tortillas,

And like mom, I store beans in basement cellar,
but also in cupboard's jars, to add to savory simmerings.

She visits, sees our humble kitchen,
but doesn't know our hidden grand prosperities

In great northern, black turtle,
cannellino, toscanello.

All-American Blueberries

Cynthia Gallaher

The Great Spirit, as always, creative,
plucked blueberries from outer space, say the native,
leaving tiny bright holes in each place,
to let bees beam them down, into bowls.

Stardust waxy bloom disappears in your hands,
and there loom berries, fully dressed,
in dark navy microfiber, pressed
beneath lacy underpinning.

Was it from the beginning,
that blueberries yearned to be
the rock-and-roll, rococo fruit,
one that zigs and zags in tastes.

Flavors of sweet noon
at midnight,
coolness of twilight at dawn,
dual worlds encased.

These silent sapphire islands are known to float
in tumultuous seas of whipped cream,
and hover like umlauts
to accent tossed salads, supreme.

Hold counsel throughout the pemmican-eating nation,
bespeak what makes dried buffalo keep,
between its own blue streaks
of preservation.

From ORAC to the Omega,
from Maine to Michigan, it's by this,
we lengthen our years, among deeply hued spheres
of blueberry bliss.

Cynthia Gallaher is the author of three poetry collections and the recent chapbook Omnivore Odes: Poems About Food, Herbs and Spices *(Finishing Line Press, 2013). Gallaher's poems in* The Broken City *are part of a new manuscript of food and herbal poetry called* Botanical Bandwidth*. Follow her on Twitter: @swimmerpoet*

Ode to Oysters
Megan Roberts

With butter
is the best, but what isn't?
Or with nose-opening
horseradish, a little dollop
on top of their rounded backs.

Saltine crunch, butter
and cocktail, layered and slathered
together, a drop of Texas Pete,
an apostrophe of horseradish,
and smash it all with an O
of jalapeno.

Oh oysters, I can eat enough
to make men uncomfortable;
Their eyebrows rise as I order,
A peck, rare.

I like the ones bigger
than a fat man's
thumb, the ones
other people pass on.

And I am tempted
to use the word *slurp*
here, but slurp doesn't
do the trick. The drinking of an oyster
is more like the way water
swallows a ship, the earth
takes in a body, or the way
a baby puts its mouth
around her mother's skin.

Imagine: within an old, scratched pan,
trailing the oyster on your fork
through simmering butter,
like a fish dragging
on a line in thick water.

Megan Roberts grew up in eastern North Carolina, so it's no surprise her poems and stories are rooted in the particular language and landscape of her home state. "Ode to Oysters" was inspired by many November nights shucking oysters with her uncles in Greenville, NC. It was previously published in The Southern Women's Review.

May Apples
William Kelley Woolfitt

In her mirror, she paints herself as the old cheat's
last plaything. Her wilted-celery-look. She must lean
full-weight against the Dutch doors that block her in,
budge both halves with her jelly knees and balsa wrists.

From the field, she harvests may apples and boneset,
that she might boil a cloudy tea for his sore joints,
veiny hands, fireless blood. He brightens, springs from his chair,
goes out to grain his prize silver-laced Wyandotte

rooster and hens, boasts to her about the fair, crows about
the spots and streaks of their feathers, and naps again.
From the woods, she brings thin poplar rods, peels the bark
to expose the white inner wood, lifts his snoring head,

hides the stripped poplar under his pillow, that he might be
cured while he dreams. He doesn't wake, sleeps open-mouthed.
In the closet, wire hangers scritch their irritation
as she swats them aside. Like madcap birds,

her hands snatch and flail, yank out some
sequined diaphanous thing and sail it around
her goose-pimpled body. She interrupts his shredded wheat,
pleads *give me a child*. He lowers his spoon, swallows,

dabs his mouth with the plaid napkin. *I'm not God*, he says.
She keeps trying; opens pots, tubes, and tins; chooses
pale whispery stuff to powder her forehead and cheeks,
scarlet like the poppies she planted in a tire.

William Kelley Woolfitt has worked as a bookseller and a ballpark peanuts vendor. He's the author of two chapbooks: The Salvager's Arts *and* The Boy with Fire in His Mouth*. His writing has appeared in* Cincinnati Review*,* Michigan Quarterly Review*,* Ninth Letter *and* Shenandoah*. He teaches at Lee University, in Tennessee. An earlier version of "May Apples" was published in* Southern Humanities Review*.*


Ed Berger

Red Notes

William Kelley Woolfitt

Tomatoes all day, he unloads the crates,
nozzle-washes each red Globe, each red
Bonny Best, feeds them through the box of steam.
Tomatoes all day, he lugs full buckets
to the buzzards on stools at the skinning tables.
His shift's a song that goes on and on, no dropped notes.

Melody on the upbeat, he strings the notes
while he fetches buckets, stacks the empty crates,
daydreams about *pies on a plank table.*
Melody on the upbeat, her chokecherry lips,
her lily-waist, kiss that blossoms through the steam
of peas and backbones in a pot, all the corn shucked.

Break-time on the stoop, work-shirts shucked,
the boys beg him to cut loose, pick the notes,
play "Worried Man Blues," play "Waking Dream."
Break-time on the stoop, the boys sit on crates,
offer him gum, a smoke, pickled beets.
Not today. He piles crates for a table.

His head throbs. His case on the crate-table,
he buffs his Gibson's sunburst body, plucks
one string, the cry of a fox, a small bruise.
His head throbs, and his hand. Not today. No notes,
no "Waking Dream." Horn-worm stung him, ate
into his palm. He dreams
he gets her to walk with him again, dreams
they find a keepsake for her vanity-table—
turkey feather, knotted grape-vine, antler, agate.
To get her to go, he'll bathe with a bucket,
scrub the pulp off his hands, sing the notes
he's strung for her, robin bright, fire true.

Fawns in the hollow, ruby wine, tomato blues,
notes but no song, brass check for every bucket,
each check a tooth that fell from the bashed mouth
of the mummy-men at the skinners' tables.
Tomato pulp on his arms, the hissing box of steam,
crumb of brick, his cotton mouth, busted crate.

Tomatoes all day, red Globes, stack the crates,
string the song, feed the steam, tote the buckets.
Her pie on his table. The keen of his notes.

An earlier version of "Red Notes" was published in Confrontation.

The Art Exhibit will End on December 32nd

Nancy Scott

Headline from Princeton online, Arts and Culture, 2010

Actually, the exhibit at the Swallow Gallery opened
and closed the same day. The police had to be called

to control the crowds trying to enter the gallery.
Featured was the work of foodie artist, Sherry Sorbay,

who has received national acclaim for her edible collages.
The lucky ones who made it into the gallery oohed

and aahed while free wine flowed. Then they dismantled
the art: cheddar cubes, grapes, hummus with olives,

followed by broccoli quiche and herb-roasted squab.
For dessert, they gravitated en masse to the north wall

of the gallery for lemon chiffon pie and raspberry tarts.
That food was cardboard cutouts proved to be no problem.

Several guests commented that supermarket varieties
are often tougher and more bland. Within a hour, nothing

was left, except crumbled napkins and frilly toothpicks.
The January exhibit will feature the work of Sicilian

collagist Sal Sarosa known for his stuffed mussels
and sumptuous meat dish, *farsu magru*, with melanzane.

The Pasta Maker

Nancy Scott

When Jimmy was twelve, he gave up the idea of raising
miniature horses—our yard a half-acre shy of city regulation.

His next venture—making homemade pasta. I like to think
the efforts of those agile hands, which cranked out strips

of flour and water, then draped them to dry on any
available surface—towel bars, hangers, railings—fostered

Jimmy's star as a wide-receiver. Billy, two years older,
tough act to follow on the gridiron, found fresh pasta

dripping from bars of his headboard, said, *This is crap*,
and would only eat boxed pasta from the supermarket.

The nightly competition began: two boys, two boiling pots—
one with fresh pasta, the other with store brand penne,

rigatoni, or linguine. Somehow they sorted out whose turn
to brown the meat and onions. Jimmy created prime-time

sauce and insisted on grating blocks of aged Romano.
To have kids who'll do the cooking, what a bonus!

Now Jimmy rustles up on moment's notice, sautéed orange
roughy, tilapia with fresh lime salsa, vegetable ragouts.

Homemade pasta? *Too many carbs*, he says. Shiny pasta-
maker, boxed and labeled, a dusty relic on the shelf.

Nancy Scott is the managing editor of U.S.1 Worksheets—*the journal of the U.S.1 Poets' Cooperative in New Jersey—and the author of five books of poetry. Her poems have appeared most recently in* Slant, Journal of New Jersey Poets, Verse Wisconsin, Raven Chronicles, *and* The Copperfield Review. *nancyscott.net*

My Mother Is Like Yogurt

Elizabeth Harlan-Ferlo

My mother is like yogurt: coolly viscous,
satisfaction's sour mouth. My mother
is solid where liquid's expected. Evenings,

we cut crescents to fill orphaned bowls, our
metal spoons steam shovels, backhoes. Whey
filled the canyons and valleys we made.

White yogurt: a mattress for plums, their skin
purple-black like my hair, sour flesh
pale as her skin. Or grapefruit, wedges

hunkered down under unsweetened
grain, lost bits skittering across the floor.
Her father buried his milk the same way:

bananas, skin splotched like the sleep
in that house, and honey, barely visible,
coiled over piled-up puffed wheat. At sea,

before fatherhood, he submerged himself
in gin rummy on a salvage ship scraping
Japanese waters, searching for what could

be saved. Every morning, my mother
carves cliffs in a cold bowl of cooked
rye cereal. My mother likes things that keep.

Elizabeth Harlan-Ferlo's poetry has appeared in Poet Lore*,* Valparaiso Review *(online),* Burnside Review, Anglican Theological Review*, and is forthcoming in* Relief*. Her essay, "Gathering Anyway," was a finalist for* Oregon Quarterly*'s Northwest Perspectives Essay Contest, in 2009. She holds an MFA from the University of Oregon. Read more at elizabethharlanferlo.com*

Planting Out Peas
Judith P. Robertson

In that summer of gray northern light
When fog settled like uncertainty over the barrens
And for days the sun hung black
She decided to plant out peas
Setting feathers, shells, and a tuft of fur
Into the undergrowth
Before thrice chanting a spell
Once heard in her grandmother's garden:
May your green fuse burn bright,
In emerald delight
And that thought filling immensity.

Now it takes a fair almanac
To plant out peas in bad weather:
A grammatology of straight stakes, long string,
A prayer for sunshine and a few good bees;
And against sure assault of lightning,
Bad wind and slow worms,
Even these bespeak frail countenance...

Remember that princeliest of creeping creatures all
Helix Nemoralis, the garden's great horned snail
Whose ancient back bears Mendelian memory
Of dominance and segregation
And whose even seven thousand teeth
Set in a soft-ringed vortex spiraling through viridian
Leave salt trails where tendrils once grew?

And so the gardener must be prodigal in her illusions
Planting out peas in a trellis of unblemished dreams
Whilst tending her well anchored harvest
With luxurious images and names
Like Mammoth Melting Sugar, and Little Marvel,
Early Onward, and Feltham First,
And populating each night's sleep with phantasmagorias
Of green shoots and emerald in a crown of shining leaves.

Judith P. Robertson is a poet, wanderer and painter who enjoys writing about and living between Newfoundland and Longboat Key. Her academic books and articles are widely disseminated. In retirement, Judith has turned her hours to poetry—"Planting Out Peas" is part of a manuscript-in-the-making called Geographies of My Imagination.

Old School

Alex Lucier

An airplane is gearing up to take flight in my living room. The near-ultrasonic whine is blood-curdling, and I am bent double on the floor, trying to reason with the source. "Jesus," I remark under my breath as the machine sputters and groans. "The thing sounds like me after a night out at Bungalow Six in Quito..."

"Why do you even bother with that thing?" My stepfather materializes in the door frame, severing my concentration. He starts toward me as the VCR grudgingly sticks out its tongue and I grab for it. "In a few years there won't be any such thing as a VHS anyway. Your kids certainly won't know what to do with one."

I tear the tape from the mouth of the VCR, a train of magnetic drool ribboning behind. "Call me stubbornly old-fashioned," I counter wryly, holding it up to examine the damage.

"It's Friday," my stepfather points out, as if this is in some way relevant.

"So?"

"So have you picked a place for dinner yet?"

Depositing the ruined tape on the carpet beside me, I think for a beat before getting to my feet and disappearing into the kitchen. A moment later, I return with three pairs of imported, hand-painted chopsticks. Ted sees them and beams. "Great idea."

*

I love vintage clothing stores and the way the polka dot sundresses and mink stoles make me think of clotheslines and comb-overs and wives having dinner on the table the minute their husbands arrive home from work and "Gee golly, Ma, this fried chicken sure is swell!" I'm not so naïve that I think it was really as rose-colored as all that, but I like to imagine being alive then, or in any time period simpler than our own. I also love wood-burning stoves and horse-drawn carriage rides. In literature, I'm partial to the classics—Charles Dickens and the Bronte sisters. When I write, I use a typewriter. There is something comforting about using tradition to revive an extinct era, to revisit a story you already know the ending to.

How many chefs, when asked what their death row meal would be, answer something uncharacteristically elemental, retro, even? A really good roast chicken and potatoes, meatloaf the way their mother made it, with ketchup and Saltines... always a dish that would have been a staple in the chef's house growing up—one which embodies a certain personal history. The smell of it takes him back to childhood, to standing on a chair, watching his mother brown ground beef in a skillet, for spaghetti sauce. The taste sensation hugs his insides, reminds him that he was once loved. The sensory triggers transport him in a way which is very physical, very real and very exclusive to food. No classic novel or fedora can do that. As far as vehicles for nostalgia go, food is about as close to a time machine as you can get.

*

2000: the year Chef Steve Rhee opened Koto Buki in a miniscule plaza unit in South Windsor. I was nine, swinging my hobbit legs from a high-top chair at the sushi bar, scowling at passing trays of nori-swathed unagi and salmon sashimi. I only ate Kraft Dinner and McDonald's chicken nuggets. Sandwiching me on either side were my mother and some-day stepfather. She'd been seeing him semi-seriously for about a year and had recently decided to expose him to the co-dependent, only-daughter imposition in her life. He was a lawyer and loved sushi. These were about the only things I knew about him at this point and I hadn't entirely decided what I thought of him yet. It was he who insisted we just had to try this little place off Dougall, in a strip mall between Food Basics and Value Village. "It's the best sushi you'll ever eat." Neither my mother nor I liked sushi, being strictly scalloped potatoes and Hamburger Helper people, but she didn't tell him that.

Over the years, we returned to Steve's (we hardly ever referred to it as Koto Buki) innumerable times, often on a weekly basis. We garnered a fast and solid rapport with the owner and his wife, Theresa. She worked in the kitchen and made my chicken teriyaki when the order inevitably came in, week after week, year after year. My mother gradually adopted a palate for raw fish and the fat, starchy noodles swimming in broth called udon, though she still won't drink the sake. Despite the fact that I didn't eat 90 per cent of the menu items, Koto Buki quickly became my favourite restaurant—the one I would pick to take my friends to every year on my birthday. We would all sit at those little washitsu tables on cushions and eat chicken teriyaki and bowl after bowl of sticky rice while my parents gorged themselves on slimy yellow tail and seaweed salad.

It wasn't until I was much older

that I began to gain an appreciation for the institution Steve's was, and why it was packed for the dinner hour whenever we went. The pint-sized restaurant, with its soothing shamisen music and calligraphed wall hangings, served as one of the last surviving sushi bars dedicated to authentic Japanese cuisine and atmosphere. Vibrant rainbow rows of firm-fleshed, tightly-cellophaned fillets on display in the glass cooler were testimony to Steve Rhee's timeless commitment to freshness and quality in his product: electrifying neon pink tuna, the milder tangerine salmon, bright yellow tomago, deep, burnt ochre unagi, and coils of violet, suction-cupped octopi tentacles that always used to freak me out—imagining how they would latch on, all brilliantly opaque and uniform in colour. One would be hard-pressed to locate any funky coconut or blue cheese in his rolls. No contemporary onion-string garnishes or pineapple-mango mayo, either; it was kappa rolls and nigiri all the way—the way such things were meant to be done.

*

Too few people appreciate how a person's life can be turned on its head in their early twenties, so that they no longer know which way is up. Breeching my third year of university, I discover the post-teen years to be a minefield of precarious firsts to negotiate, and too many safety nets that turn out to be made of sand. On days when the ground feels particularly unsound beneath my feet, I feel I need the solace and security of the tried-and-true more than ever—the dark relief from the outside world that is the benefit of thinking inside the box.

It's been a long time since we've all paid a visit to Steve's as a family. My mom and Ted still go from time to time, but I, being an English Lit. major with a part-time job and full-time social life, regrettably don't get much of a chance to join my parents at meal time anymore. Steve has since relocated to a more spacious establishment—a converted British pub in Tecumseh which he's christened Akasaka, and we, of course, follow him there, caring very little about the extra 15-minute commute from our house in South Windsor. Steve's is worth it. Steve's is always worth it.

Steve's gaze gravitates toward us the minute we stroll through the door, and I hold up the chopsticks he brought us back from Korea one year—our own private gate pass. An appreciative grin unravels across his weathered features, stretching all the way up, beneath the brims of his old-world spectacles. He waves us in, his excitement at seeing us—all three of us here together to see *him*—as contagious as it is palpable.

We start by placing our drink order: the usual hot sake for Ted, a glass of Pinot grigio for Mom and a pot of green tea for me. This is filled and promptly followed up with the requisite miso soup and house salad that precludes every meal, whether you want it or not. I should rephrase: whether you *ask for it* or not. You always want it. As soon as the cloudy little bowl of miso hits the bar under my nose, I'm greeted by the salty, earthy aroma. I stir the contents delicately with my convex porcelain spoon, sugar cube-sized dices of tofu eddying to the surface of the saffron-tinted broth. The steam carries with it the smell of my first fumbling encounters with chopsticks. The salad, too, is exactly as I remember: fine threads of carrot and a light peppering of sesame seeds with a drizzle of sweet soy-vinegar house dressing, all over just a few modest shavings of fresh, crisp lettuce and cabbage leaves—just enough to really arouse your appetite for the next course.

Once this ritual is fulfilled, my parents move on to sushi (the "mystery roll"—Steve's choice). I default to the kitchen menu, ordering the beef gyoza to start, followed by chicken teriyaki with sticky rice. Although at this age my palate has expanded to include kappa (cucumber) rolls, tomago, smoked salmon and tempura shrimp, tonight I want to humour the more nostalgic tendencies of my character by indulging in a meal that is an exact replica of the one I had year after year for my birthday dinner—one that will transport me back to coloring on paper placemats and asking my mom to apply soy sauce to my rice for me, because I always poured too much.

We also order something new to share this time, for the sheer intrigue: something called the "Snowcorn roll"—cream cheese, crab, avocado and tomago, all rolled in nori and sushi rice and tempura-fried. "She'll like that," Steve promises, gesturing to me from his perpetual post behind the sushi bar. I assume he thinks so because it's deep fried and includes sweet things like cream cheese and tomago. A clandestine smile is all I offer in response. He has no idea how my palate has evolved, how I'd once eaten lemon ants in the

Amazon jungle and how one of my favourite dishes is raw tuna ceviche marinated in lemon juice (particularly good eaten street-vendor-fresh in the coastal fishing village of Puerto Lopez, Ecuador). No matter, the Snowcorn roll is sublime.

My gyoza arrive—pan-fried beef dumplings, crispy on the outside, bursting with juicy, tongue-scalding flavour on the inside. Exactly as I remember them—perfection in a browned and bubbly skin. The sushi bar is backed up so Steve sends a complementary California roll our way, "to hold us over." While we wait for our food, I watch Steve behind the counter, moving with the easy grace and dexterity of an artisan so well-versed in his trade it has become as natural to him as walking or breathing. I observe him skim his sushi blade through a buttery pillow of red snapper, hands composing sticky rice and nori as swiftly as Beethoven's over ivory.

After a short while, the waiter returns to relay that Theresa said I usually order my chicken teriyaki sans vegetables—just sliced chicken sizzling in a sticky-sweet sauce with a bowl of white rice; is that how I want it now? Unable to effectively stifle a snort of amusement, I shake my head no. "Vegetables are fine," I assure him.

"So, just as is?" he confirms. I nod, still smiling.

The chicken arrives on a heap of steamed bean sprouts and broccoli, with peppers and onions softened on the griddle, and I have to admit it might even be better this way.

After we finish our dinner and the platters are cleared, the waiter asks if we would like anything else. I reply in the affirmative; I always cap off meals at Steve's with a dessert of tempura bananas drizzled with honey. Like everything else, they are every bit as good as I remember, and evoke memories of the heart-stopping crash of a gong and a broken rendition of "Happy Birthday" performed in several disjointed Japanese accents. The fruit has the fragile crunch of tempura batter with a warm and creamy interior that isn't quite comparable to any other flavour profile. It's unique. It's old school.

I pass the dessert down the counter to Ted, who accidentally topples one of the bananas to the floor in his attempt to transfer it to his plate, and Steve hustles us an entire second order, on the house, despite the fact that we still have five whole bananas left at our disposal. We thank him and tell him how much we love the place, how much we love *him*, and I make a promise to return this year for my 21st birthday.

Each return to Steve's is a visit to history, both personal and cultural, an experience of a dying breed. He never fails to do things exactly right, exactly the same every time, just as sushi chefs have done for generations in the Far East. He remains fearlessly loyal to the old school genre of cooking in the hostile face of the contemporary, keeping the modest flame of tradition alight on its waning wick despite the blinding brilliance of modern fluorescents.

Before we leave, he passes one more complimentary palate-cleanser over the sushi bar. Steve's tomago—once I finally surrendered to his insistences to try it, after six or seven years—is easily the best I've had anywhere. It consists of a sweet omelette custard (yes, eggs), cooked until firm and sliced into thin strips, then twinned to a block of sushi rice and wrapped in nori, so it resembles nigiri. It's a common enough dish, duplicated in sushi bars across the city, and indeed the world, but at Steve's I've always found it to be a little sweeter, a little more tender, contrasting beautifully with the salty bite of a delicate soy sauce bath and melting on your tongue like the most buttery cut of foie gras. I haven't been back since without ordering it.

Alex Lucier is an English Literature/Creative Writing major at the University of Windsor. After graduation, she hopes to travel the world in search of fodder for travel and food stories. When she's not writing or riding horses, Alex is cooking up a storm and developing recipes for her blog: closetgourmet.wordpress.com.

Stan's Famous Smoked Meat

Roy Berger

The gauges read 185 degrees. Near-boiling water was drenching and burning my hands and arms. I hadn't eaten in a long time. I stuck my head and half my body into a loud mechanical monster box. People were yelling and shouting orders at one another. My only thought was of killing Bicycle Bert. I freed a twisted fork from a stainless steel spinning spray arm, smacked the belt, wound another strip of cloth around a broken hose clamp and got the gear teeth moving again. The conveyor belt of dishes reengaged. I faced another eight trays of thick, white plates and cups. I stacked dishes. I made sure the tube sucking liquid soap out of a 20-litre bucket didn't have an air block.

I wiped my hands on my apron and started twisting and turning empty barrels into the basement lift. The interior wood paneling was black-grained, having been splashed by garbage barrels for 70 years. I rode it down. When the doors slid open, I inhaled. It was dark. There were bare, low-wattage bulbs here and there. The concrete hallway was lined with wooden vault doors with massive fridge handles. I moved the barrels into the sunken grease pit for later.

I had to get some pickles. To the left and right of the aisles were wooden flats and skids. Guys lay on them. They wore white uniforms. They were newcomers to Canada. They lay with their arms drawn across their foreheads, their bodies collapsed for a 15-minute break, India, Pakistan and the Philippines a dream behind them. Welcome to smoked meat freedom. I don't know what they left but they must really have wanted to be here.

I found the correct wooden door and plunged a plastic bucket into a waist-high barrel of pickles soaking in brine. My breath came out in a fog. I plunged my arms up to the elbows, searching in the freezing brine, grabbed loose pickles and filled my bucket. Upstairs, I emptied my bucket into the pickle barrel by the plate preparation station for the waiters and then continued sorting silverware.

They were running out of salad plates. It was an immediate nightmare. Waiters were yelling and fierce. I started selecting, rinsing and hosing down another run. As I pushed the trays into the dishwashing machine my wrist was sprayed with searing water.

I'd have a lunch break coming to me at one in the morning, switch to janitor duties, bust my balls and then grab the first subway home at a quarter to six in the morning. Unless, unless I was in jail. If Bicycle Bert came to Stan's, on my shift, I'd be in jail for having jumped ten feet in the air, over a half dozen body guards, to repeatedly plunge a butter knife or cheap dessert spoon into the man's skull while I gnashed at his throat with my broken teeth. If Bert didn't come in, I would have to pressure spray the floor mats in the grease pit with almost-boiling water at 4:30 in the morning. I was hosing down mats in the grease pit because of Bert's budgies. His idea for a franchise, called "Bicycle Bert's Deep Fried Budgies In A Box," was my idea. He stole it when we got drunk together one night. Came with dipping sauces, too—an Australian recipe. I only ever got so many good ideas. He was a rat bastard. I thought about the leash he used on the pet poodle he took for a walk in Westmount.

After blasting grease and stink and crap off the mats I'd get to mop down the massive floor and drink a Cherry Coke on a wink from the supervisor at break.

*

The waiters were ogling a pair of bread delivery truck drivers that had sat down to some specials. They elbowed each other in the ribs and pursed their lips. They were standing behind the chrome doors, staring through the glassed portholes. They harassed the chef for hotter French fries. "Limper than Pierre's dick," shouted Gaiton. He held up a thumb and forefinger full of sagging fries from the take out tray, pouted and pressed his wrist against his hip.

Two other waiters were separating loose change to give to their busboy, Gill. He was dumping unpleasant-looking mixtures of porcelain and half-eaten food onto the brilliant, scarred sheet metal in front of me. I'd hose it down and push the leftovers into a garbage hole.

"Did you hear what that bitch did?" Gill threw some broken, wet straws into the garbage.

"What?" I knew by bitch he meant Mrs. Stan. She was one of the owners. She was 300 years old and about as mean as that suggests.

Gill looked up. "She reached into my bus cart, picked a pickle off a plate. She said, 'It's perfectly good.' Then she dumped it back into the pickle bucket. Put it right in!"

That was the plastic bucket I so lovingly refilled. At 95 cents, the

waiters pretty much served one with each meal. Gill knew; we all knew. The owners should be in prison or at least sentenced to work here.

Randy came zooming by, circling my area. "Here."

He smacked down a thick smoked meat sandwich on the soap shelf behind me and disappeared. Like a ninja cutter, he was back at his take-out station weighing slices.

I grabbed it. I walked behind the fridge and began cramming the entire sandwich into my mouth. By the time I got around another fridge and the toaster table I had swallowed the last chunk and wiped mustard off my lips. Anyone caught eating was docked three hours pay.

"The insect control guys were here again. They were complaining of an infestation in the offices upstairs." Gill pointed his chin at the area.

"They are insane. Stan's—they're all on the pipe. Whore-running crack heads. There are no bugs," I said.

At four in the morning, while the night manager was making book with his street buddies, I would go into the bar and stack the glasses and change the waste buckets. After carrying out trays and lining all the glassware up on shelves, I would take three or four good, sopping, used pieces of fruit garnish from old Singapore Slings. Then I'd sneak up the narrow stairwell leading to the offices and tuck these tired, rotting garnishes into the recessed holes of empty anchor bolts that I'd found behind the fire extinguishers mounted there. Fruit flies and gnats circulated along the ceiling.

*

The horrible employee's washroom was downstairs, beside the filthy lockers. I went around with a black felt marker and wrote on the walls. "For a good time call..." I scrawled local phone numbers for various unions in place of some other impure contacts.

By 4:30 in the morning, Gill and I were stacking thick, heavy, rubber mats against a smeared and blackened cinder block wall. We hung them on hooks. Gill took aim. A blast of near-boiling water shot out of the nozzle. A hot, moist fog of mould, oil, spilled pop and dirty footsteps filled the air. Ancient grease and the empty boots of a thousand dish pigs before us sank into our lungs. The water drained into the St. Lawrence.

Gill was fading. He was thin as a rail. He was in his fifties, illiterate, using crack and living in a downtown rooming house. He hadn't slept well the day before because the loan shark he owed 275 bucks to had taken his mattress for being late. He had borrowed 150 dollars the week before and it had almost doubled by last night. He'd gone to the bar first, before paying, and then had nothing left to pay with. His girlfriend would get a cheque tomorrow and the guy would be waiting.

"See. Here. And here." He lifted the back of his shirt and trouser leg to show me the bruises on his kidney and calf where he'd been kicked. Gill was haunted but liked to dance in the taverns with his girlfriend and was a very popular singer in certain poverty-stricken working class bars.

*

Stan's Famous Deli was famous. It had been on the same spot since about World War One. They'd been paying the bare minimum wage, altering schedules, avoiding paying holidays, shorting overtime, laying off and crush-

Root Vegetables

Elizabeth Harlan-Ferlo

Little treasure beasts, little planets, their enamel skin
peeled back, they orbit the cutting board

in evening's kitchen. Lemony rutabaga, and peppery,
top-stained turnip, burnt by the beet

whose gravity pulls them all in. Strange meteorites,
they might, like in some B-movie surprise,

rise up sudden in humming formation, a hologram
vision of what the walls hide of the sky.

The parsnip, an albino comet, streaks to narrow
against the knife. And stripped of its dusty skin,

celeriac is a fist scarred with winter's craters.
The stove hood's light is no match for their glow.

The grater hovers, pockmarked dark tower,
to shred a galaxy for the hiss of sweet oil.

ing dreams for generations. On the other hand, they served the finest smoked meat sandwich in the world, fueling the dreams of many generations and rounding off so many late-night madcap schemes. Its walls were lined by shelves filled with massive, glistening, jars of bright yellow and red banana peppers and so-sweet cherry peppers. Waiters in black bow ties served trays of cherry cheese cake and steaming black coffee.

I stared at a wall full of framed celebrity photographs. Most of them were signed with fond memories. I remembered the Gulf gas station that used to be on the other corner.

When the time came, I knew the city columnists would carve out glowing tributes. I thought this while I wiped and cleaned the insecticide off the walls leading upstairs. I replenished the rotten fruit from the night before. I whistled and looked forward to a Cherry Coke. We'd have a smoke and a Coke while resting our elbows at the dessert counter. Gill was a Separatist. I was a Federalist. We talked to each other about politics, as if our views mattered to the outcome.

A few months earlier, the night chef quit in a rage. He tossed his spatula during a rush and walked out. Everyone looked around. Who was going to cook? "Yes, just like Horatio Alger, this is it," I thought. I ran to the stove, grabbed a flipper and a field rise in rank. Within hours, I discovered that the job didn't pay more. I returned to washing dishes. The waiters had to double as short order cooks. Chef returned after three days.

*

Gill and I turned a couple hundred heavy chairs upside down on to the table tops and started at opposite ends, mopping the marble floor. As we moved towards the cherry soda fountain, we knew we could pause for a break. We'd smoke a couple of cigarettes. We'd consider what work was ahead and how to split it up. We'd eyeball some weirdos on the other side of the main street plate glass windows, make comments or just burst out laughing and pointing at the idiots.

One evening during supper rush, this older guy from India was standing in front of my station. There was a little audience of suits watching me. Everyone in the kitchen seemed to know him and were smiling and waved to shout hello. He was pointing at me and the dish washing machine. He was with three other men, also from his home country. They looked very distinguished. They were his relatives and he was showing them the spot where he stood and worked for 12 years to support them and pay for their immigration. They achieved their dreams while he washed dishes.

"Holy smokes," I thought. I really hoped that they would treat him fine and not squeeze him out of their reindeer games because they had risen in class. I looked over at them and did sense their awe and respect for him. To do a job like that for them for 12 years...

One night, near closing, I was supposed to push out the bus cart and clean off the rest of the tables. There were a few people left. I stood by the port hole at the 'OUT' doors and watched my old student council presidents. They were laughing, eating fries and discussing affairs of state. I waited until they left.

*

Gill and I pulled on our straws and leaned with our backs against the soda counter. Since winter was here, there was a lot of salt on the floor. All this salt meant the crappy old string mops would drag a lot more and be heavier. We drank some more soda and finished up the floors.

On the subway ride home, the car jostled. I could feel a stolen smoked meat sandwich that Randy cut me move in my pocket. I'd eat it just before I went to bed. Gill: I felt guilty about his tomorrow. Those mats were heavy and I was pretty sure he was going to do them by himself. I could hear his cursing.

I read comic books until noon, then slept.

I woke up at my normal time and checked the clock. My shift started in an hour. It didn't matter. I looked at the phone and disconnected it. Not phoning in, maybe that was the best part. I went back to bed and pulled the thick wool blankets tight around me. I felt comfort. It was over. Anything else lay ahead.

Roy Berger has published in The Montreal Review*,* Cannabis Culture Magazine*,* Brick *and* London Free Press*, among others. He's the author of two novels:* 2012 Rabbits and the Happy Apocalypse On Shortwave Radio *and* Cloud City Colorado In 1880 - Too Far West*, both modestly priced for Kindle: amazon.com/Rabbits-Happy-Apocalypse-Shortwave-ebook/dp/B005CBFR9G | amazon.com/Cloud-City-Colorado-1880-ebook/dp/B006S63IRC*

Gourmet Cooking

Barbara Biles

Darlene looks beyond the edge of the campus to the gulls floating over the nearby river, then reaches for the gold-plated knocker. She is arriving early to help prepare the bastilla and other Moroccan dishes.

She prays that his wife will not appear on the other side of the door and her prayers are answered. He greets her with a modest grin and she scrutinizes his dark blue eyes, looking for signs of ill winds blowing from within the stuccoed house. She looks past the long hair and beard to see a woman with shapeless blond hair.

"This is my wife Joan. Joan, Darlene."

Joan reaches out with an awkward formality. Darlene notices an almost imperceptible tic on Joan's cheek.

Immediately Joan says to her husband, "I need to talk to you privately. I can't go through with this."

There will be other guests later in the evening: the Donaldsons, both film critics, Jack Kendrick from the History department and others Darlene has not heard of.

Before he talks to Joan, he takes Darlene to the kitchen to start her on a search for spices, and tells her how he loves to have food out and simmering all day long. He inhales deeply as if aromas have already filled the air.

Darlene studies her professor's list and surveys the door full of spices, seven narrow cradled shelves. She has just barely become acquainted with oregano and basil on late night pizza binges. She shakes an envelope out of the saffron bottle and carefully unfolds it. She spreads the torn envelope with her finger to reveal a rusty red powder. There is something of the smell of ketchup here, she thinks, then rejects the idea as entirely unsophisticated. The label says it's ground stigmas from a fall flowering plant, guaranteed to impart old world flavour. She tries the cumin, which has a flatter, slightly bitter aroma, yet the cumin bottle boasts that Cleopatra had her cooks add a pinch to the rich sauces she requested for Mark Antony. Darlene inhales again and is disappointed. Not her idea of an aphrodisiac.

She hears bits of her professor's conversation with Joan. "A way of strengthening a marriage... it's a new world. Work with her on the bastilla... you'll see." Then they discuss the drinks they'll serve. Joan thinks brandy for an aperitif and he suggests a chardonnay with the couscous. Darlene has just learned to mix her ginger ale (ginger ale being the choice for childhood illnesses) with a little rye.

Joan adjusts her glasses and squints as she tries to concentrate on the recipe. "I've never used filo sheets before."

"Don't worry about that now," he says. Start with the chicken."

"I like to know everything before I start."

"Trust me," he says. "I'll go get the wine."

Darlene shrugs her shoulders and waits for Joan to make a move. Joan is also a professor and works with laboratory rats at the university. She keeps careful data sheets and Darlene knows she has a reputation for the reign of terror she inflicts on her graduate assistants. Right now, she looks defeated by bastilla.

"Go ahead, Darlene. You probably know something about this."

"No, I've never done this sort of thing." She reads the recipe. "Brown the chicken in oil. Oh, we need onions. Heart, liver, gizzard. Eew."

"You have to cut up the chicken first."

"I don't know how."

"I'll do it," says Joan. She clears out the innards, then grabs the butcher knife and begins with the thighs, cutting fiercely through to the ribs. She works quickly, hacking, stretching and pulling, and sometimes slicing cleanly.

Darlene is surprised at the abandon with which Joan is attacking this chicken. She expected her to be more precise, more clinical in her dissection.

"He really is a special man," says Joan. "Very unique!"

Darlene pours oil in the pan and heats it on the gas stove. They throw pieces of chicken in and flinch with the sizzle. Joan grabs the handle and begins to shake the chicken, but most of it is already stuck to the pan. Her cheeks are flushed and shaking at the same time. Darlene passes the tongs and Joan pries each piece away from the bottom.

"I'll chop the onions and heart and all that stuff," says Darlene. "We have to cook it in the pan once the chicken is browned."

"So, you are doing very well together," says her professor, now back with the wine.

"It's all a matter of opinion," says Joan. "Alright, what's next?"

"Uh, add the spices, some water and put the chicken back in," says Dar-

lene. She turns and smiles and studies her professor's eyes. He reminds her of John Lennon.

He puts a lid on the pan. "Just needs to simmer for a while. Let's have a sherry."

Darlene tried pot for the first time the week before. She sat with other students, feeling raunchy and loose, sharing a joint and listening to *Abbey Road* on cassette while cartoon images formed in her mind.

Now the smell of Morocco wafts through the air and he puts a record on. "Miles Davis," he says. "*Bitches Brew*." Sherry is poured from a crystal bottle as Darlene sits at the end of the plush green sofa. She takes a sip and is taken aback by the burning sensation as it spreads downward from her lips. She looks straight ahead, uncomfortable not having a chicken to deal with.

Joan chooses an upright, firmly-padded brocade chair while her husband sprawls his legs next to Darlene. "I don't like seeing the two of you together," says Joan.

"You've just spent the last hour or so together and you're getting along just fine."

"I said I don't like seeing the *two of you* together."

"Hey. I'm here for you. I haven't left."

Darlene lets the sherry ride up on her lips and sizzle there for a while. She pulls her knees up close to her chest, rests her bare feet on the sofa and presses closer to the end of it. She studies the raised velvety swirls on the sofa. She follows a path from one large button to the next and traces the roped edges of her cushion. She finds a frayed edge on her jeans and straightens each thread so they all run in the same direction. She realizes, for the first time, that her professor is wearing brown leather sandals. The straps weave in and out across the top of his foot and his long, gangly toes protrude in an unseemly manner. He and Joan are talking but she doesn't hear what they're saying.

"I'm going for a walk," says

Mashed Potatoes

Ellen Roberts Young

"... are to give everybody enough."
—Ruth Krauss, *A Hole Is To Dig*

So there must be gravy
and a decision about who's to make it.
Thanksgiving celebrates acquisitions,
mergers: his family's sauerkraut,
her neighbor's homegrown squash
will be replicated for decades.
Four burners heat six pots
when the niece comes in to make
macaroni for the youngest ones
whose urgent hunger cider and celery
cannot satisfy. A lump in the potatoes
proves they're real. The masher
blames distractions, so many
people in the kitchen. The gravy maker
stays focused while other pans
change places, the drawer
at his elbow opens, closes, opens.

Ellen Roberts Young is a member of the writing community in Las Cruces, NM. Her chapbooks Accidents *(2004) and* The Map of Longing *(2009) are published by Finishing Line Press. Recent journal publications include* Common Ground*,* Slant*, and online journals* Untitled Country *and* qarrtsiluni*. She blogs at freethoughtandmetaphor.com.*

Joan. "I need to be alone."

"She'll be alright. You'll see," he says to Darlene. "Come, we're going to make a salad together. Radish and orange salad."

"Really?"

"You'll like it. First, we'll put on *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky." He surrounds her easily with his arms. He strokes her hair.

Darlene thinks of singing along with Mick Jagger and gyrating under strobe lights to driving rhythms. Instead, she hears the whirling and booming and trilling of music, along with pulsating drums. Her Professor pulls her close and runs his hands up and down the inside of her sweater. She wonders what Joan knows about Stravinsky's ritual dance and pulls away from him.

"The salad," she says. "I want to make the salad." She heads back to the kitchen and grabs two navel oranges and holds them out to him. "What do we do?"

He flashes an uneasy smile and takes both oranges in one hand. "You peel them by layers."

"How?" She wonders how you peel an orange in layers when for her they come in sections. Onions come in layers.

"I'll show you." He takes a sharp, pointed knife and begins by slicing off the end, just missing the orange flesh but neatly removing the white fibre. He pulls off the rest of the peel and a bubble of juice oozes from one section.

"So now you have sections," she shrugs.

"Not so fast. First you take off the outer membrane." He holds the paring knife as she imagines a surgeon might do. With the point, he separates the membranes from the flesh, then gently yanks them apart. He removes the stringy core, then with a broad grin puts a section with sweating juices into his mouth.

These are not neat little layers, she thinks, but she giggles as he offers her a section. An orange has never tasted so good.

They are startled by the strains of a Strauss waltz and by Joan. "Can you believe that a hundred years ago this piece was considered licentious?"

Darlene envisions the aristocracy dancing with polished decorum. But lords and ladies were allowed their mistresses and lovers, were they not?

"I'll have another sherry," says Joan, and the professor pours one for himself as well.

"I think it's justifiable that you invited the Donaldsons this evening," Joan says to her husband.

"Why is that?"

"Well, since we're moving in new directions, I might as well tell you."

"Tell me what?" He is attentive.

She takes a good swig of sherry. "Stan and I are not just friends. At least we weren't last year."

Darlene studies the two. His pants are too short and his hair is greying and bordering on stringy at the back. His eyebrows have lowered and become rigid. Joan is like a hissing cat, in charge of her doorstep. She asks, "Didn't you know?"

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying that we did it together."

"I don't believe you. You're just being vindictive."

"Well, yes. But I'm also telling the truth."

"Then why didn't I know?" He demands, "Where?"

"On the river bank. Coming back from a walk. You guys had gone on ahead. I didn't think you could handle it if I told you. Was I right?"

"Jesus," he says and slumps into a chair.

Darlene, now even more anxious, waves a bunch of red radishes. "I'll prepare these if you tell me what to do."

"There's a grater," says Joan with a new level of confidence. "Clean them and grate them coarsely."

"And that's it?"

"Yes. Then you just add the oranges, sugar and lemon juice and mix it all together. It really is quite delicious."

Darlene hears voices, but not words, coming from the other room. The music has stopped. She hears her own grating of radishes and likes the rhythm of it. The chicken still simmers and occasionally spits sauce onto the burner. She smells the onions and ginger that are enhancing the chicken. She looks at the checkerboard floor and the white, enamelled cupboards and pretends this is her kitchen. She imagines herself sharing wine and conversation around a candlelit table. She offers up a serving of her chicken and egg mixture, encased within delicate layers of filo pastry and topped with almonds and sprinkles of cinnamon and sugar. She plays her choice of music, probably a piano concerto. She wears a long, white cotton gown and lets her hair tumble down her back in soft curls. She is barefoot and the guests are beguiled by her combination of innocence and sophistication. The professor, and even Joan, glow with admiration for her.

Darlene looks out the windowed back door, sensing movement there. The colony of gulls with their black wing-tips and unhinging jaws are still cruising the area, just outside the kitchen. She opens the door and hears them wail and squawk, defying her piano concerto. Drawn to the spruce and the budding poplars along the banks, the birds sail down to the river's edge, testing the frigid waters and previewing

spots for nests—the young ones courting, the mature ones re-establishing monogamous pair-bonds. Instead of her imaginary gown, Darlene fingers the familiar cotton-spun tension of her blue jeans and walks to the edge of the bank, surmising the location of Joan's adulterous spot. She scrambles through dead grass and brown, thorny roses, then slips and slides down the muddy bank. The mud feels smooth and certain, the air smells of spruce and mouldy winter leaves. She alternately runs and slides and stumbles, picking up speed, scraping her backbone and scratching the skin on her arms and hands.

The river moves swiftly from spring run-off. It bubbles and foams at the edges. It carries ducks and geese heedlessly through minor swells and around unpredictable bends. She continues on until she reaches a narrow pathway. Houses are no longer in view. She follows the path, with mud oozing into her shoes. She reaches a fork with a wider path heading gently up the bank, and comes to the main road that encircles the campus. She catches her breath and looks at the new crop of high-rises on campus, as an alien might. Voices, innocent and serene, sing "Blowin' in the Wind" and she quickens her step. The smell of pizza is in the air.

Barbara Biles is a University of Alberta graduate. She lives in Calgary. Her stories have appeared in several magazines, including The Windsor Review, The Antigonish Review, The Toronto Quarterly, Frostwriting, Qwerty, The Nashwaak Review, The Raven Chronicles, FreeFall *and* Turk's Head Review.

Rose Poon

Public Transit Eaters
Mouki K. Butt

This issue, we asked contributors: They say 'you are what you eat.' If that's true, what are you?

Ed Berger: I am a potato, grounded and quite presentable after a good scrubbing. Dress me up when I'm hot or when I'm cold, in a variety of toppings, butter is my favourite, and I'll be at your side, if you choose. Don't worry, when my eyes begin to bulge and my skin goes wrinkly, I'm growing old. Put me back in the ground, eyes facing the heavens and I'll be born again.

Roy Berger: I don't know how much I am of what I eat. I don't trust that the food hasn't been modified and had its genes psyched, sliced and spliced with creepy, weird, unsuitable things. Perhaps I am the memory of a good meal. I don't think I've had real food for decades. The real food is probably freeze-dried and buried in our territorial Canadian vaults on Mars. See you when the lights go out.

Barbara Biles: I am oranges, lemons, yoghurt, onions, potatoes, ice cream, apple crisp, peach cobbler, cucumbers, carrots, yams, scones, granola, shortbread, smoked cheese, chicken, lamb chops, beef stew, ham, cinnamon, basil, thyme. I am a stirred pot: a sweet comfort, an acidic challenge, a pungent lament, a homey vision and a savoury soul.

Mouki K. Butt: I am a mountain of sweets (cakes, candy, chocolates, pudding, pastries, fudge, doughnuts, jalebi and ice cream) that is holding a slice of pizza in each hand.

Cynthia Gallaher: Lately, I am a green smoothie. A chiropractor at a recent health expo gave me a "reading" and recommended I blend fresh spinach, celery, cucumber, dill, parsley, olive oil and water in a blender each morning. I've ordinarily imagined a smoothie being fruit based, with vegetables going through the juicer instead, but a green smoothie retains all that valuable fiber. My skin's never been more vibrant and I've lost a few pounds, too.

Elizabeth Harlan-Ferlo: Without a doubt, I am baked goods. Especially brownies and pie. I am, "You can think with the [refrigerator] door closed!" I am every few hours throughout the day, a ruminant. I am crumbs between the couch cushions and in the keyboard. I am oatmeal out of a beloved mug with a broken handle with berries from the garden, balanced on the steering wheel on the freeway commute. With cloth napkin. Also, baked goods.

Rebecca Lauren: As I child, I could not get enough butter. In mashed potatoes, I'd create a gully for its melting. My corn-on-the-cob was so immersed in it that it would drip down my chin like unruly holy oil. My mother said I would marry the first man who could stand to watch me eat with such abandon, and she was right. In many ways, I have become this butter—warm, bright, so much salt and husk.

Alex Lucier: If it's true, what they say, that "you are what you eat," I think I must be a s'more: classic, low-maintenance, basically sweet with a warm, gooey center, and—given a Caramilk bar—the potential for creative greatness. Still a small child at heart, there are few things in life I enjoy more than a backyard bonfire.

Megan Roberts: Oysters are messy. If we're being honest, they look like boogers or loogies, so it takes a certain bravery to eat an oyster. It takes a person willing to make a fool of themselves. It takes a risk-taker to eat an oyster. You never know exactly what's inside that shell. There could be a live crab, a bit of sand, or a pearl. An oyster-eater is a gambler.

Judith P. Robertson: Judith loves waking up to the aroma of freshly-brewed Auntie Crae's coffee (roasted in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland). On the side: salty goat's cheese (made by a textile artist up the Southern Shore) and two buttery poppy seed bagels, piping hot from the wood-burning oven at Georgetown Bakery in St. John's. Pair that with a few slim volumes of poetry, a loving partner and a view of the fog rolling in, and Judith is in heaven.

Rose Poon: I am a pineapple bun, a Cantonese sweet, a fragrant and soft bun-like pastry that's popular in Hong Kong and

Macau for breakfast and at tea-time. It's called a pineapple bun because of its sweet, crunchy, pineapple-patterned top. It's typically filled with a custard or red bean paste, but sometimes it is not. It is my childhood snack, which says a lot about me—sweet and soft!

Nancy Scott: Last week, I was a crown roast of lamb on the pink side. On Tuesday, I puffed up like a spinach soufflé. Today, lemon meringue pie with a graham cracker crust. Ah, to reinvent myself in this land of plenty's no trick for me; not so, for those always the peanut butter and jelly.

William Kelley Woolfitt: I am West Virginia pepperoni rolls, Chibougamau blueberries, and a lot of mashed potatoes with gravy.

Ellen Roberts Young: If I am what I eat, I am sweet and sour, hot and cold, wet and dry.
If I am what I eat, I'm a chemical hodge-podge, no longer fully natural.
If I am what I eat, I am part plant and part pig.
And the microbes and bacteria? Are they part of me? Are they eating me? If so, I must be part of them.
The words I chew on, indigestible, remain themselves.

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