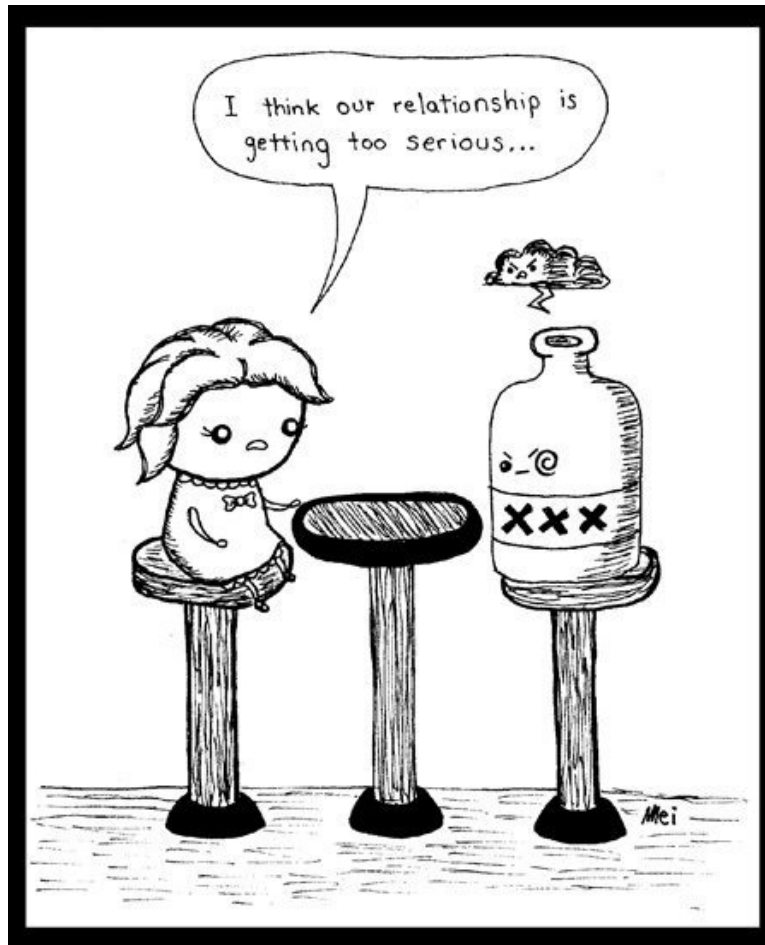
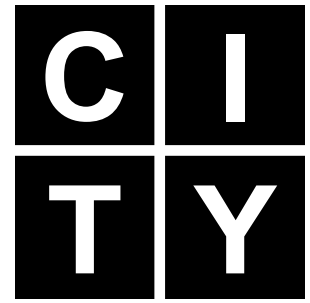


The broken

Prose Poetry Photography Art Music



"I turn from the mirror, my hand clutching the sink's edge. There is a keg in my bathtub, I remind myself while staring at it. Two boys are hunched over it, pumping the pressure, the sound like a cigarette lighter igniting... 'Beer?' asks the tall one."

The broken

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Winter 2011 Issue 9

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The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its summer 2012 edition: **The Future**.

You read it right, aspiring cosmonauts; *The Broken City* is tackling speculation: science fiction, science fact, utopias, dystopias, time travel, space travel, robots; if it has blinking doodads and happens after today, we want to see it.

Is your poetry peppered with flying cars and kitchen tables that clean themselves? Show it to us! Do you enter into hypnotic trances and make doomsday predictions? Tell us about it! Did you write a short story about a time travelling cop who visits the past to stop a crooked politician? Send it along! Just this once, *The Broken City* will even consider *Star Trek* fan fiction, but it had better be Original Series.

Send your poetry, fiction, essays, comics, illustrations, photography, music/book reviews to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com.

Deadline is: June 1, 2012. 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.

Cover Illustration: "Too Serious"

Mary Karaplis (Mei K) is a self-taught artist/illustrator based in Vancouver, B.C. She exhibits regularly at conventions in Canada and the U.S. and is best known for her *Tiny Vices* comics. She also makes mini comics, prints and tiny sculptures. Check out her work online at: www.tiny-vices.com.

Cover Text

The cover passage is taken from Christine Ellis' short story, "Hallways," which appears on page 10.

In this issue:



The Broken City gets soused in **This is why I drink**. Lean back and soak up tales of tipling that stretch from front porch Canada to dilapidated diners in the Czech Republic. Check out page 17 for helpful hints on hooching in your very own home.

On the Web:

www.thebrokencitymag.com

Submission Guidelines:

www.thebrokencitymag.com/submissions.html

Correspondence:

thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com

This is why I drink.

*Mouki K.
Butt*



Instant Replay

Will Cordeiro

The mizzle repeats the aural history of clouds as the stars
Worry into and out of existence. Grinding my muddler,
Down in the mouth, the grim shine of compact sports cars
Going by in the night never matters, like infomercials muttering
To keep up some gibberish. The remote control falters.
The annual report, the tailgate, the gameface, the media fracas...
I put on my red socialite heels, my come-fuck-me butterfly halter-
Top—I clamp down my lashes, I smudge luscious fucus
To finish my face off. O, I taste every herb in Chartreuse!
Seaweed grips my loins like a run on my stockings. I cover my bra
Straps, the spread—I recover each night, not giving a deuce,
What's passion, what's poison, as the middle men brawl
When a footloose balling's failed two-point conversion, a flag
On the play, lets Schrödinger's cat claw out of its bag.

I glance at the plasma, which begins to blackout. I spasm
Varicose veins: faint brown stains on the ceiling, shallow
Holes in the drywall. I've had enough juiceheads to jazz 'em.
Sure, in those days, I baked apple fritters, made marshmallow
Fluff. But then said amen to men, each one was a shopper.
Duty-free, a hazard of stand-by. —How much have I told her?
I plop on the love seat, pop in *The L Word*, slug down some poppers.
I talk to you still, devilishly perched on my shoulder.
Your starling burlesques your old droll feathery
Voice, *I love you I love you I love*—'til my cottonmouth's
Drool. Like water-stained frescos, it echoes glum weather,
This rotting hotel. From the balcony of my repent-house,
I gaze down the shallowy pool; double-thinking, thinking
Twice about diving into my cold image, as it's all sinking in.

Will Cordeiro is currently a Ph.D. candidate studying 18th century British literature at Cornell. He has been awarded residencies from the Provincetown Community Compact, Ora Lerman Trust, Risley Residential College, and Petrified Forest National Park. Recent poems are forthcoming in Fourteen Hills, Lumina, Blueline, Poecology, Requited, and The Newtowner.

All Hallows

Will Cordeiro

Spilt balloons, split bunch of
crunched empties marooned

across a dancefloor, ghouls slumped by
mirrors, drunk masks on scummy lips

of bowls lacking punch. Most had gone out
for a smoke while the others had taken off

early. The old flame I came for
left with her new suitor stuffed

in a skeleton bag, a gash over her lips, rough
angel's black halo rakishly a-tilt and batting

trick lashes. To hell with this house
party, my face melted and smudged,

sticky with crud, with candy-corn glut.
I shucked for my jacket, now crushed

up in a hump. A shadow rushed by—
a ribbing sneaked sidelong and snaked
under a nook. Moonshine like a laser,
two bodies exchanging quick handfuls

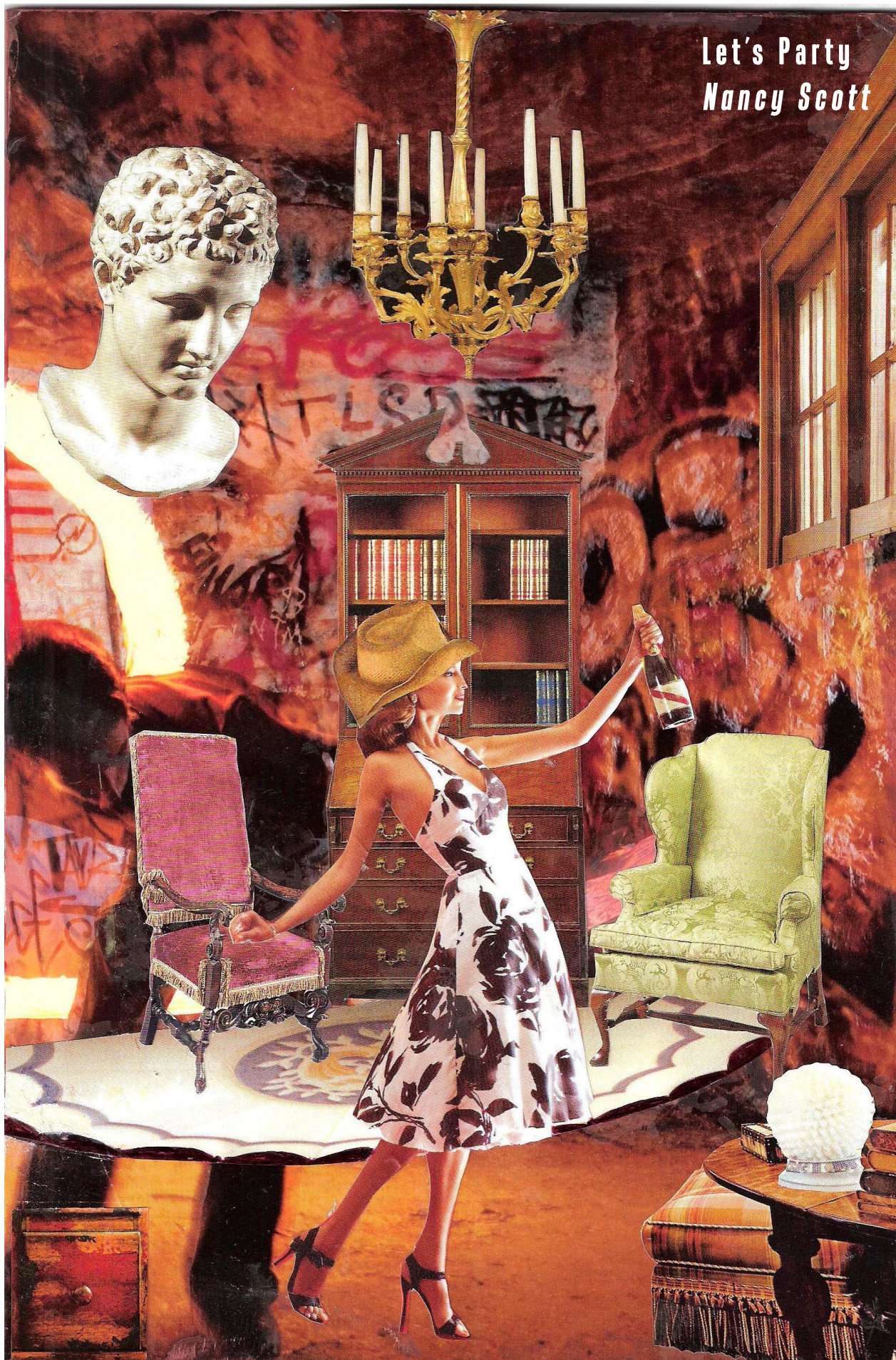
of candy. A rubbery sasquatch gets tossed
under a sheet, then she shrugs off a blazer:

wings flop, giving under an ax,
each layer of skin peeling whiter.

In boneglow, I remembered an X-
ray examining apples for razors;

star-milk from smacked fists-mounds of pop
rocks overflowing lip gloss on radiant mouths.

Let's Party
Nancy Scott



Cougar

Brooke Sheridan

Makeup blurs and fades, the scaffolding
of hair collapses and she walks home

looking smaller, like stepping out of shoes.
In the earlier hours she fashions a waxwork likeness

of herself from powders, Kohl and varnish,
then zips into the second skin she'll wear

as long as her ever-thickening middle
permits. She thanks God for the wonder

of engineering that keeps her blouse filled
at the correct latitude. She arrives

late. The mercy of dimmed lights and hanging
smoke set her scene as she leans on the bar

in a movie star haze. The first to see
her wanting lights her Kool, buys her

whatever she's having—Vodka, she says,
The good stuff. Straight. She doesn't say

Because that's all that works anymore, to hide
the melting mannequin, last year's model,

balanced on cheap boots. She begins
the business of forgetting about days.

*Brooke Sheridan (brookesherdan@gmail.com)
is a recent graduate of the MFA program at the
University of Alaska in Fairbanks, and currently
teaches English at the University of Maine. Her poems
and other pieces have appeared or are upcoming in
Boxcar Poetry Review, Permafrost, Harpur Palate,
Avatar Review, and THIS Literary Magazine.*

Scarifying Poetry

J. J. Steinfeld

A disheartened poet, stumbling downward, despite a literary output that included four highly praised collections, meets a man who looks like a poem, she thinks, in a hotel bar in a city that reminds her of forgetfulness. “I am here to give a poetry reading and I’m terrified,” she confesses after ordering a glass of red wine, building a strange momentum with her words and gestures, not for the reading in less than an hour but for the remembering of what she had written about in her earliest poems, like looking at old newspaper headlines of particularly sad events. She is standing next to him at the bar and he is seated on the same stool he has occupied on a hundred other visits, begging her not to write a poem about his death, as if he could foresee both his death and her inability to deal with death. “May I write a poem about your scars?” she asks more deferentially than she once asked of a teacher she respected for her gentleness and disfigurement, and the man looks at his scars on his arms, first one, then the other, and says, “I’d almost forgotten about these in my imaginings of new markings. This one is like a swirl of abandonment and this one more like footprints of despair.” The disheartened poet, not finishing her glass of red wine, moves slowly away from the bar, her heart more than a little broken, but she can see the man entering her next poem of abnegation and scarring as he turns his attention toward the woman who has just sat down next to him—the tallest woman he has ever seen, even in dreams and imagination.

J. J. Steinfeld is a fiction writer, poet and playwright who lives on Prince Edward Island, where he patiently awaits Godot’s arrival and a phone call from Kafka. He has published 14 books, the most recent being Misshapenness (poetry, Ekstasis Editions, 2009) and A Glass Shard and Memory (stories, Recliner Books, 2010).

Punch Drunk

Maroula Blades

"I need a drink!" Lydia said. "I've had a lot to contend with today. I don't know what to do, Sis. My boss, the jerk, keeps putting his white, floppy hands on my backside."

"Really, that's the pits! Come in and flip your shoes off while I pour a couple rum and blacks. It's the turquoise peddle-pushers you're using Lydia, they're showing too much lineage."

"So what, I still think he should keep his flaming hands to himself. I might file a complaint next week for sexual harassment. He's really got my back up, always touching my mumf like it's up for grabs."

Lydia gulps four mouthfuls of potent brew and crushes ice with her molars.

"What makes it worse, Sis, he's already got one bloody leg in the grave and the other has a round of gout plaguing it."

"He sounds like a bloody nightmare to me. I think I need another stiff drink. I feel like belting him too with an ice-filled sock around the head shouting, 'Hello, is there anyone at home?' I know it's hard work at the office with all those men. Testosterone is always a summer problem."

I pour ample amounts of white rum into long, thin glasses thinking, "It's after 7:00 p.m., 5cls are more fitting than 2cls at this time of day."

"I just love this old record, Sis, 'Get Down' by Gene Chandler. Remember when we were young; we used to boogie to Sister Sledge, K.C. and the Sunshine Band, Sylvester and Sly and Robbie? Those were the days," Lydia sighs, swaying her childbearing hips.

With drinks in hand we do an old shuffle, giggling and singing while imitating our mother trying to hook the latest moves. Mum loves Greek folk dances. She always throws a bit of "that" in to add flavour to what she calls the Mediterranean mood.

"Hey Sis, let's have another drink, one for that slimy

bastard's future broken knuckles. His hands are going to be pigmy-size if he slaps my chocolate muffin one more time."

"Yeah, I'm with you. You need to supplement the down time at the office, this will set you free."

I pass Lyd a relaxed looking glass with a red tinsel umbrella covering its upper body. The bottle of rum stands half full; I only bought it this morning to celebrate Mum's 60th birthday. I hate rum usually, but I wanted Mum to have a little taste of home. She normally doesn't drink at the best of times. But we—her daughters—made a pact to gang up on her to taste the devil's brew, hoping to ease the starch from her collar.

"I have to hand it to you, Lyd, you got good taste in music."

The South American white rum is sweet like coconut milk and deadly to dieting women, "POW," straight to the back of the head. I'll probably wake-up with hairy nipples tomorrow.

"Sis, if that old, saggy arse mule comes a limping and a sniffing around my mumf once more, I'm telling ya, he's gonna fucking get it."

Lyd balls a fist and twists her ankle in her high brown pumps, spilling black current punch on the white carpet. She bends down, trying to mop the stain with the Latin, pink sleeve of her blouse.

"Don't worry about it," I said pointing to the mark. "You know, he'll get a clout from me too, that mucus-filled bald 'ead. Give me your glass; it needs topping-up. We might as well finish the rest of the honey."

I shake the last measure in the bottle like a maraca.

"Let's do the limbo, Sis."

"Yeah."

"And the beat goes on. We've got the funk, we've got the funk, yeah," as we're walking on our bottoms.

Maroula Blades is an Afro-British poet/writer living in Berlin. Verbrecher Verlag, Cornelsen Verlag, Trespass Magazine UK, The Latin Foundation US, The Caribbean Writer and Peepal Tree have published her work. She has received awards for poetry and read at the Black History Month Festival 2010 and the Berlin Poetry Festival 2010.

Hallways

Christine Ellis

This is a narrow hallway, long and thin, the anorexic arm of a house. Two light bulbs—one spent of its glow—and a bright-eyed exit sign bear down judgmentally. So many people: faces blurred and blotchy, life in cubism—a hand; knees bumping by accident; shoulders touching; flesh like sandpaper to mine; limbs unattached and floating in space. I want to apologize, say: “I wouldn’t get this close to you if I didn’t have to. I wouldn’t thrust my personal space into yours, but we’re drunk.” I blindly hurl out a hand, fingers catching the wall, suction-cupping there like a baby-on-board sign to a station wagon window.

Chin up, eyes up, I gawk at the people-shaped shadows loitering in my hallway—mine now, my anorexic arm, my cattle chute, my path to Mecca. The exit sign casts them all in shades of red—rose and ruby, darker still in the corners but paler beneath that one, staring light bulb. I should not have had that final shot of tequila, I realize. I can still taste it on my tongue, sweet and bitter, salt on my lips. I, small person in this fat, unruly crowd, begin to walk the wall toward the bathroom. Shadows move and weight shifts around me, voices in my ear and above my head: *Great party, still haven’t kicked the keg, I saw you dancing on the table earlier.*

I smile, laugh—these are the things that come instinctively. Amiable,

pleasant, nod and *yes I’m fine excuse me*. Skin skips across skin, hot and flushed. People I have never met shove to get me out of their way; people I know gaze at me emptily. Fingers slide and grab hold of the bathroom door and I stumble, heels dragging as though through sand, into the bathroom. I am accosted by bright light like only the dead see.

I squint at the girl staring back at me from across the room—my reflection in the mirror. Dark hair spilling poker-straight down her back, eyes smudged with Kohl and glowing. Pink cheeks, a shoulder bare as the wide collar of my t-shirt slips south; I turn from the mirror, my hand clutching the sink’s edge. There is a keg in my bathtub, I remind myself while staring at it. Two boys are hunched over it, pumping the pressure, the sound like a cigarette lighter igniting. They pause when they realize I’m standing there, leaning there, the point of my hip now against the counter—do I know either of them? I can’t remember why I came to the bathroom in the first place; it just feels like this is where the crowd delivered me, face-to-face with the keg and the bathtub and these two boys and I think maybe I had to pee, but the sensation has mysteriously fled. False alarm.

“Beer?” asks the tall one.

“Still full,” the short one assures me with a crooked smile.

“Nah,” I mumble, turning on a heel.

I roll into motion, the air suddenly too thick for me to be graceful. The soles of my boots scrape across linoleum tile, squeaky for all the salt and snow attached to the rubber. I extend a hand to find the doorway, the wall, a solid thing to guide me. I find that thing, but it isn’t the cool plaster surface I’d been expecting. Someone’s chest, sturdy, unrelenting though I lean forward against it. I look up.

“You all right?” he asks.

Of all the sturdy chests—of all the *not-walls*—in the house, my sweating, tequila-stained palm had to reach out to his. Dozens upon dozens of stalwart, wall-like individuals had descended upon this house, but fate sent me him. Blame Fate—bitch with the wheel, turning it like it didn’t matter, like she had no idea what kind of cosmic catastrophes she hurled my way with that damnable rotation.

“Yeah,” I mutter.

Don’t stare; we always stare. His is the only face that comes into focus, inevitably. No blur or blitz, eyes settle comfortably on the familiar features. He has a strong jaw, determined and set to take on the world because I’ve always wanted the ambitious ones. Nose straight and to the point; no games, but a teasing dash of pale

freckles across the bridge that I only ever notice this close up. Eyes are so clichéd, but endless: almond-shaped, blue because that's my favorite color and so they have to be, beneath sharp brows even more expressive than his mouth. I don't look at his mouth.

"I didn't think I'd find you," he says. We almost dance for a moment; my hand leaves his chest, but his hand, sneaky arm curling, lands on the slope of my hip, steadying. "Then I didn't think I'd be able to get to you through all the people."

"Here I am." I stare over his shoulder. I have wanted that hand on this hip—not like this; I shake my head. "It's been a long night."

"Liz," he begins. Shut up, stop, stop. I reach out, my hand to his arm this time, the soft gray cotton of his t-shirt beneath my fingertips. I would use him as an anchor.

But not in the bathroom doorway, with Short and Tall watching from the keg, and the party roaring inches away. Not in this tumble, not in this noise, not by the light of that blasted exit sign. He stops talking at my touch; if only the world would stop talking when I touched it. My eyes drift predictably to his face again.

"There are so many people," I manage to finally say.

"C'mon."

His hand takes mine from his arm and he twists, pulling me close behind him, my nose to his shoulder blade. He smells like boy—cheap shampoo and spicy deodorant, laundry detergent and poly-cotton blend. Memories are summoned though I fight to drown them down in the liquor well of my mind. I recall times when his smell was so close to mine that they intermingled—sitting next to each other, the occasional hug. I have wanted

more—more of his smell, more of his shoulder blade, more like the way his fingers tangle into mine and he fastens me close. We two, like a log-raft hastily tied together, float down the river of individuals; the hallway is a white water rapid, voices like boulders in our way. Sudden conversation, clips of information, speech like a firing squad:

"Keg's that way."

"I think it's still full."

"Hey man, you're late."

"Excuse me."

Morning on the Front Porch *Pamela S. Mosher*

Feet scuffing and dust clouding
up toward knees that bend so he leans
forward and low, like his grandfather
once did while

shuffling about humming hymns and the
dum-diddy-diddy-dum of sun rising and
fog rolling out meets the perfect rhythm of
steam rising up from coffee mug

This young man content with porch-sitting
Dog by his side, bucket of peas to be shelled by his feet

Little mickey of rum in his pocket
Little cap unscrewed

Heron gliding toward pond's surface, settling
into slate gray surface

Phone in the house ringing
No one answering

Pamela S. Mosher is a Nova Scotian living in Ontario. She enjoys macro photography and reckless cycling. Pamela's poetry has been published by or is forthcoming in Blue Skies Poetry, ditch, In/Words, Open Heart Forgery and Four and Twenty. You can read her blog at pmosher.blogspot.com.

"Liz, you look great."
"Has anyone seen Patrick?"
"I can't believe she actually said
that to you."

"Nick!"
He stops at the sound of his
name; the toes of my boots hit his
heels. I am suddenly knocked backward
when he lurches, the raft breaking up
against the rocks. His hand releases
mine and I stumble, shoulder hitting the
wall—somehow less solid than he was. I
straighten and look at the wreckage. My

housemate has thrown herself into his arms, hurled her weight at my sturdy, personal wall and they are intertwined by limbs and laughter and she, I'm sure, can smell him without thinking the things that I do.

"Liz!" She spots me over his shoulder and releases him, advancing upon me. A kiss to my cheek, as though I didn't undulate on the kitchen table with her 15 minutes ago.

"Hi," I say blandly. People squeeze past; I'm pressed to the wall and feel inexplicably like fly-paper.

"I feel like I haven't seen you all night," she continues and I wonder, bitterly, how that could possibly be. Her voice sounds further away from me, though my personal space and her personal space have now become *our* personal space. I am smothered by her perfume—her stomach up against my hip, arms curled in front of us to maintain inches of distance.

"There are so many people!" she exclaims with exasperation; *I hadn't noticed*, I almost retort.

"Yeah."

"Is the keg still full?"

"I think so."

"That's amazing." A pause while her attention span drifts. "Patrick!"

Suddenly she is gone and I'm still stuck. Foreign fingers curl onto the waistband of my jeans and I'm being pulled—a hooked fish reeled in, drawn

too fast through the water to really see what I'm passing. People are suddenly seaweed. An arm around my waist, my cheek to a shoulder—

"Sorry," he murmurs into my ear.

"It's okay."

He keeps me close. He doesn't realize how close, but I do. I sneak an arm around him, my hand to the small of his back, as we move again down the hallway, he my shield against social arrows. We don't talk to each other; it's too loud and he is too soft-spoken to fight for dominance against the music and the joyful screaming of drunken friends.

Shadows tilt and red light pales; we pause beneath the one light bulb, he reaching past me for the door to my room. For a few seconds, both his arms are around me and his mouth inches from my temple; I have instinctively turned more to face him. These are the seconds I will cling to tomorrow, strangle with conjecture and waste thoughts wondering about. With sobriety comes consequence; circumstances suggest, right now, that we are having a *moment*, but will they when I wake up? What, in the few inches that separate our faces, could this position mean other than... —What if I turned my face just that little fraction?

I hear the click that heralds the door being opened; I stare up at him

though he isn't looking at me. Courage: fleeting, impossible to grasp between my intoxicated fingers. Let me be reckless; let me be fearless. I'll never know if I don't—

"Let's have a cigarette," he suggests, finally looking down at me, as though waiting for me to turn around and leave this hallway.

Can he see it on my face?

I imagine it: I, indifferent to the party around us, reach up and sink my fingers into the dark thatch of his hair, hand sliding to the base of his neck, pulling him down even as I rock up onto my toes; my mouth crashes with his, a kiss to drown in, and we become sudden lovers, abruptly more than friends, beneath the jealous eye of that naked light bulb.

He nudges me with his hand; fancy takes flight and I blink.

"Okay," I say, forgetting what it was I'd just agreed to.

"In your room," he goes on.

"The hallway's too crowded."

I nod; the moment has passed. I turn and his arms fall away as I push open the door and step into the silent, empty recess of my room. We will sit by ourselves here, together but not as close, never as possible as we were when the hallway forced us to be so, when the light bulb glared and the people pushed and I thought, for a brief second, that I could defy the exit sign.

Christine Ellis just graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Asia, in Singapore, with a Masters in Dramatic Writing. She presently works for a New York City film and TV production company, and spends most of her time solving script problems, carousing in Queens and generally being an enjoyable nuisance.

Somewhere Quiet

Erich Mulhall

It was raining hard when we arrived in Liberec, and we huddled together in the entrance of the train station to keep dry. Mieke sat against a laminated railway map with her legs pulled up to her chest. She was bleeding from her left knee, which she had cut on the slippery metal steps of the dining car. I took the first aid kit out of her knapsack and wrapped a length of gauze three times around her leg. The blood spotted through and turned pink when it mixed with the rainwater. Her yellow sweater was full of creases and her hair was clumping because of the moisture.

"We can't stay here," I told her. "It's late."

The road leading from the train station to the city centre was narrow, and the houses on either side of it were tall and painted orange. We followed two girls on bicycles until they stopped at a café. We sat on the lip of the fountain and ate the last of our chocolate chip cookies. It was dark and the streets were full of people. All of the mailboxes in the square were covered with posters of Joseph Stalin in a clown wig—the ink collecting on the top edges of the tape where the paper was still dry. When we were finished our cookies, we walked along the river and bought cigarettes from a vending machine. We stood and smoked them and looked out over the water.

"Do you think it will leave a scar?" she asked.

"Let's go somewhere quiet," I said.

Mieke flickered her ash on the railing and dropped her butt on the concrete. She stamped it out with the heel of her boot. The last of the smoke trailed out from between her lips. Her hair stuck to her face and neck. She pointed at a restaurant on the other side of the road and said that it seemed like a good place to get a drink. It was a small, whitewashed stone building with heavy yellow light fixtures over the doorway. There were brown eggs laid out in wire baskets on the window sills. Rust and grime trailed down the facade where the roof had leaked. I shook my head and laughed. Giving me a dismissive wave, she limped across the street and up the wooden steps.

The inside was poorly lit. There were four men sitting at a table in the back corner, an empty bottle of wine between them. On the opposite wall, beside the bar, there was a piano with the ivory picked clean from the keys. Initials and hearts and curses were carved into its body. A girl came out from behind a curtain that separated the dining room from the kitchen and wiped her hands on a towel that she had looped around her apron. "Your brother is already here," she said.

"I have no brother," I told her.

We sat down at the table and took off our shoes, which were wet because of the rain. My bare feet stuck to the cold ceramic tile and I suddenly wanted something hot to drink.

"You are going to Prague?" the waitress asked.

I opened the menu and closed it again. "Hot water and lemon," I said.

Mieke ordered a brandy and drank it in a single gulp when it arrived. She stretched her legs out under the table and I saw that her toes were painted purple. I wondered when that had happened.

"The bathroom is up those steps," I said.

She turned and looked, and then she lifted the edge of the gauze and took stock of her injury. "In a minute," she said. "It's not so bad that I can't relax a little." Her hands moved to the bag. She unzipped the top pouch and pulled out a notebook and set it open on the table. In it, she had written down every detail of our trip. To this, she added the names of the drinks we'd ordered and what each of them cost us.

"What's this place called again?" she asked.

"I forgot to look," I told her.

The men on the other side of the room laughed loudly and slammed their palms against the table. They

watched us and waved whenever Mieke glanced in their direction. When they were finished telling their jokes, the tallest of the men stood up and walked over to our table with a plate full of lasagna. He put it down beside our drinks and ordered a bottle of beer.

"My friends tell me that we look alike," he said.

Mieke looked at me and at the man and back again. "Yes. A little," she said.

I squeezed the lemon into the water and drank it.

He sat down and said, "We are brothers, I think."

I shook my head and told him that I had no brother. He leaned forward and folded his hands together. His face was round and when he smiled it was more on one side than the other. His shoulders were broad and his hair fell in wisps across his face. "Do you remember our grandfather?" he asked.

"I am not from Liberec," I said. "I was born in Canada to Czech parents."

"Yes. Me too."

"At Saint-François d'Assise Hospital in Quebec City?"

"Of course."

"Then your accent needs work."

The men across the room laughed again and the candle on their table flickered under the stress of their breathing. The waitress came back from the kitchen with the bottle of beer and a tall, tapered glass. She tilted the glass and poured the beer and the foam crested just at the lip of it. The man smiled and chewed his food but did not look at her. She put her hands on his shoulders and kissed the top of his head. "Is he bothering you?" she asked.

I shook my head and told her to put his beer on our tab.

"We are getting to know each other," Mieke said.

The waitress turned and walked back to the kitchen. The man watched her until she was out of sight. He drank from his beer and the steam rose from his lasagna.

"Where did you grow up?" Mieke asked him.

"In the city."

"Near the Parliament?"

"In the east, by the river."

"You are very good at this," I said.

"I know."

I sipped the last bit of the lemon water from the bottom of the glass and set it upside down on the saucer. The man leaned back in his chair and the wooden frame moaned with the stress of it. He looked under the table at Mieke's knee and pretended not to have noticed it earlier. "When did this happen?" he asked. She told him the story and he shook his head with well-rehearsed sympathy. Then he reached out and touched her leg. His fingers moved towards the dressing.

"Don't touch her," I said.

"Perhaps she would like to be touched."

"She would not."

Mieke clenched her teeth together and ran her hand over the gauze, pushing his fingers away. He retreated and picked up his fork. "My friend is a doctor," he said, pointing back at the other table. One of the men lifted his hand and bowed his head. He was obviously drunk. "Perhaps for a few dollars he can have a look at the wound. To make sure it is not infected."

"I think it will heal on its own," Mieke said.

The man shrugged his shoulders and shoveled another bite of lasagna into his mouth. Realizing that he wasn't getting anywhere with her, he turned his attention to me. With his

free hand, he reached into the pocket of his overcoat and pulled out a weathered photograph. "You will be sorry to hear that I found this," he said.

I put my finger on the edge of the photograph and dragged it across the table.

"It is our grandfather," he said.

"He is a war criminal."

"I don't know this man."

"His face has changed, I'll admit."

I looked into the hard eyes of the man in the photograph. He was balding and dressed in a thick military jacket. At the bottom of the frame was a card that listed his name, the date, and the prisoner identification number. "I don't recall the face," I said.

The man shook his head and folded the picture in half.

"Do you want to know what he's accused of doing?" he asked.

"Not really."

"They say that he led a group of prisoners into the woods with their hands bound behind their backs and that he shot them. He shot them and then he buried them all in a single grave that he did not mark."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Yes. So was I."

The waitress dropped an armful of plates and they smashed across floor. The group at the other table erupted in mock applause and she bowed in their direction. As she picked up the pieces the man spoke to her in Czech and smiled when she waved a crooked finger in his direction. There was tenderness in his tone. They might have been in love.

When she was finished, he went back to his meal.

"You were very close with our grandfather as a boy."

"Was I?"

"Yes. You sat together on the porch at the chaloupka, watching the men come in from the fields. They had bundles of hay strapped to their backs and you would bounce on his knee and wave at them. It was not that long ago. You have decided to forget because of everything that I have told you tonight. You are ashamed. It is hard to learn a bad thing about someone you love. But it is necessary."

Mieke shifted in her chair. "Can we go?" she asked.

"They called him the Butcher of Buchenwald," the man continued. "I am translating now, of course."

"Of course."

"Does that upset you?"

"No."

"It upsets her," he said, meaning Mieke.

I leaned my elbows against the table. "Those words aren't alliterative in German."

He grinned. "Would I make such a thing up?"

"You might. I don't know you well enough to say."

The man took another bite of

the lasagna and nodded. He pointed at Mieke with his fork. "This man of yours is clever," he said, his mouth still full. "He thinks he knows a lot."

Mieke opened the note book again and filled another line with her immaculate handwriting. She was doing her best to ignore the conversation. I read the details upside down: the cost of our train tickets that afternoon; the colour of the dress on the mannequin at Galleries Lafayette; the name of the girl who'd led us on our walking tour of Berlin; a list of the languages she could speak; the picture the man had showed us.

"How much was that beer that you bought for him?"

"Will you put that book away?" I said.

She looked at me and did not blink. Her mouth hung open slightly. She folded the book closed and put it back in the bag, and then she stood up and pushed in her chair. Her eyes moved around the room, not looking at me or the other man. "I've forgotten something, I think," she said. I watched her walk towards the stairs that led to

the second floor. Her limp was more pronounced now, more intentional.

"She is trying to make you feel guilty," the man said.

"Ignore it."

He drank the last of his beer and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He regarded me cautiously. "You can be cold sometimes," he said. "I can sense that."

"Are you also a fortune teller?"

"If you want."

"Excuse me," I said and stood up.

I followed Mieke into the bathroom and locked the door behind me. The window on the far wall was open and the cool outside air spilled in through the tiny frame. She was standing by the sink examining the gauze which had completely crusted over. I took her hip and spun her around and started to undo the buttons of her blouse. She pushed me away and put down the seat of the toilet below the window.

"Hurry up," she said. "Before he notices that we're not coming back."

Erich Mulhall is a freelance writer and translator. His work has appeared in The Puritan, Pilot Illustrated Literary Magazine, and Fractured West.

Illustration/Art Contributors

Mouki K. Butt (pg. 3, back cover) is an illustrator and animator. She currently resides in Vancouver. She has recently discovered that champagne and cartoons are a perfect combination. minorepic.net/~mouki.

Nancy Scott (pg. 6) is an artist and poet. Many of her collages have been published online and exhibited in shows. She is the author of five books of poetry and often a featured reader. Her most recent, *On Location* (all ekphrastic poems) was just published by March Street Press. www.nancyscott.net.



"I lost 40 pounds of bulging fat in 4 short weeks"

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I finally found the way to new figure beauty! G-d, how many times did I try? I can't count them. I always was a plump one and I never was happy about it. And as time went by I got plumper, less attractive and unhappier about it. Oh, I tried all sorts of pills and diets and exercises and starvations and fads, but nothing seemed to work for me.

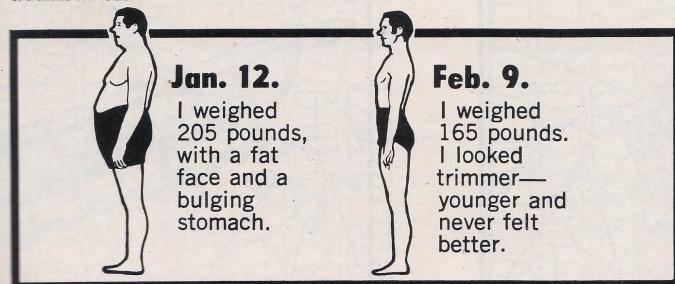
Then I found the way—and it turned out to be ridiculously easy. It was fantastic. I lost almost 10 pounds the first week and by the fourth week 40 pounds of bulges had slipped right off and I went on to lose more. I was a new person. I looked better and felt better in body and spirit. I had proved to myself that it can be done! And it was easy. I ate full delicious meals of wonderful variety. I did no strenuous exercising. I used no machines or devices. I just followed the wonderful "Pink Champagne" program.

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Before each meal, 3 times a day, you drop "Pink Champagne" into a glass of water. Instantly it fizzes, bubbles and dissolves into a delightful tasty, winy beverage. Drink it and follow the simple instructions that comes with "Pink Champagne". That's all there is to it. That's what I did and I watched how day by day those fat pounds disappeared—as if by some magic—to my delight and my friends' admiration.



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3. You must feel better, happier, more satisfied with yourself.
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This issue, *The Broken City* asked contributors to provide the recipe for their favourite drink

Maroula Blades: Mojito: 2 tsp sugar, 6-8 mint leaves, club soda, one lime (halved), 2 oz light rum, mint sprig. Place sugar, mint leaves, and a little soda in a highball glass. Mix well to dissolve sugar and to release mint flavour. Squeeze juice from both halves of lime into glass. Drop one half of lime into glass. Add rum. Stir well. Fill glass with ice cubes, then club soda. Garnish with mint sprig.

Mouki K. Butt: Vodka Water. You will forget that this drink includes alcohol... until it's too late. Add vodka (1 ounce), ice and several cucumber slices to a glass. Top with water. Stir and enjoy.

Will Cordeiro: Last Word: Mix equal parts gin, fresh-squeezed lime juice, maraschino liqueur, and green Chartreuse. Shake in a strainer, pour in a chilled glass and add ice to your liking. This cocktail dates from Prohibition, but languished until purportedly revived by Murray Stenson in Seattle's Zigzag Café. Chartreuse is made with 130 different herbs and extracts; as Evelyn Waugh says, it offers—at least—"five distinct tastes as it trickles over the tongue... like swallowing a spectrum."

Christine Ellis: the Washington Apple (shot): 1/3 oz Seagram's 7, 1/3 oz Apple Pucker, 1/3 oz Cranberry juice. Shake and serve in a shot glass or seven.

Mary Karaplis: Vodka Water. 2 shots of vodka, a cup of tap water and 3 squirts of lime juice. It's a refreshing, hangover-free drink that keeps you hydrated as well as inebriated. It's the perfect combination and it goes well with whatever my boyfriend is drinking.

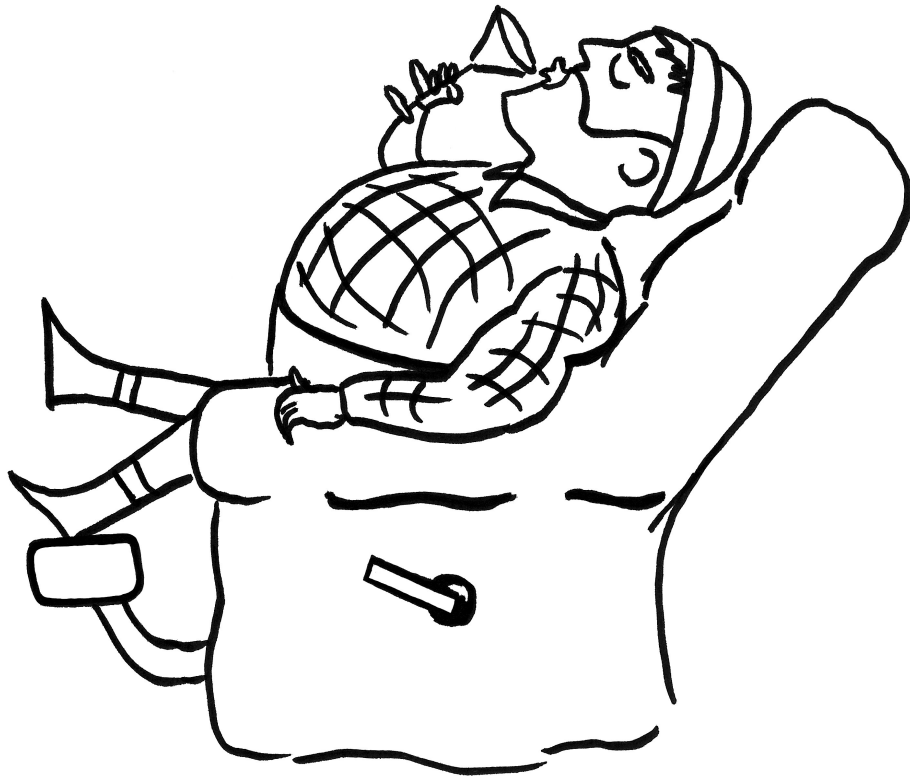
Pamela S. Mosher: Though it's not a recipe, per se, I will confess that when I'm not in the mood for a simple glass of wine or bottle of beer, I like my drinks to be pretty. An ideal cocktail should be translucent and have some sort of aesthetically appropriate item adrift in it: a small piece of chocolate, a handful of floating berries or a curling tendril of lemon zest.

Erich Mulhall: The Moscow Mule: One part lime juice, two parts vodka, three parts ginger beer. Mix and serve in a copper cup. Best when consumed on a cramped Soviet-era balcony overlooking the murky Moskva River. At least until you learn that it isn't a Russian drink at all.

Nancy Scott: I would kick back with a White Russian, which has nothing to do with Russia, but was the favorite of Jeff Bridges in *The Big Lebowski* (1998). Shake 2 oz. vodka and 1 oz. Kahlua. Pour over ice cubes in a short tumbler or old fashioned glass, add 1 oz. light cream slowly, so that it floats on top, or stir all three ingredients together and pour over ice cubes. Skip dessert.

Brooke Sheridan: The Okuda: Mix one part IPA beer—something really bitter and hoppy—with one part Riesling wine. The drink and the name were born around a driveway bonfire in Alaska. I was ceremonially burning water-ruined books, when I realized my *Star Trek Encyclopedia*, compiled by Michael Okuda, had survived the flood. My dear friend Bryr and I decided to mix our respective drinks to celebrate, and it was good.

J. J. Steinfeld: Let me provide a "recipe" for my inspirational beverage of choice: instant coffee. Into a cup of tempestuously boiling water, add precisely 1.75 teaspoons of prosaic instant coffee and 2 teaspoons of poetic golden brown sugar, with motivating yet sensible skim milk filling 20 per cent of the cup. Stir first rapidly to the left, then slowly to the right. Repeat in a second or third cup if absurd metaphors don't come to you after drinking the first.



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www.thebrokencitymag.com
thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com