Pathos, Winter 2008

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

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About Us:

Pathos is a student group at Portland State University and funded in full by the Student Fee Committee. Pathos Literary Magazine is published Fall, Winter, and Spring terms.

All writers and artists are PSU students and works were chosen anonymously by a submissions committee. To submit your creative nonfiction, short fiction, poetry, or art e-mail your submissions to pathos@pdx.edu.

For specific submission guidelines visit the website at: www.pathoslitmag.com.

We are currently looking for volunteer staff writers to go around town interviewing local writers and artists, do open mic and book reviews, and write articles that otherwise pertain to the PDX/PSU arts community. If interested please submit a sample of your writing to pathos@pdx.edu.

We also welcome all PSU students to become involved with our organization and the magazine. Shoot us an e-mail if you are interested in volunteering with us.
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Special Thanks to Emma Duncan
**March**

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| 20   | Blanford Parker  
Poetry Lecture  
Lewis & Clark College  
Manor House, Armstrong Lounge  
March 20th, 7pm |
| 24   | Ed Hirsch  
Newmark Theater  
Hosted by Literary Arts  
March 24th, 7:30pm  
$14 for students |
| 26   | Michael Sells  
Reed College  
Psychology 105  
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| 27   | Peter Everwine & Patricia Smith  
Reed College  
Psychology 105  
March 27th, 8pm |
| 29   | Michael Sellers  
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Psychology 105  
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| 30   | Lucille Clifton  
Newmark Theater  
Hosted by Literary Arts  
April 6th, 7:30pm  
$14 for students |
| 31   | Marjane Satraei  
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall  
Hosted Literary Arts  
April 7th, 7:30pm  
$20 for students |

**April**

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| 3    | Joanna Klink & Prageeta Sharma  
PSU SMSU 238  
April 3rd, 7pm |
| 6    | Lucille Clifton  
Newmark Theater  
Hosted by Literary Arts  
April 6th, 7:30pm  
$14 for students |
| 7    | Marjane Satraei  
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall  
Hosted Literary Arts  
April 7th, 7:30pm  
$20 for students |
| 15   | Rebecca Solnit  
PSU SMSU 238  
(Tentative)  
April 15th, 7pm |
| 22   | Dan Kaplan  
PSU TBA  
April 22nd |

Check out www.literary-arts.org for more information.
Talking to professor Julie Akers is like talking to a friend you never knew you had. Her warm and personable demeanor is one of rarity in a culture often emotionally numb to those around them. Akers is an adjunct professor in the theatre department here at Portland State University, as well as an acclaimed local director and a faculty member at Portland Community College and Clark College.

"By choice, I don’t work full time," said Akers, referring to her position at PSU. Despite her part-time status, this spry woman is an active presence around campus, directing such plays as Memory House set to open on April 11. A seasoned professional, she is not a new face in the theatre department at PSU, having spent her undergraduate time studying and working with many of the current faculty members.

“I am very comfortable in this department,” said Akers. “I love it very much.”

In 1988 she was a guest director and has taught theatre history, directing, acting and theatre appreciation classes. Akers has also directed over twenty academic productions and has over thirty professional programs to her name, including such works as the 200+ PSU Mainstage production of Aristophanes’ Lysistrata.

After finishing her undergraduate degree at PSU, she went on to gain her MFA in directing at the University of British Columbia. Later on she became a faculty member at New Mexico State University, but soon returned to Oregon, spending only six years there.

“When I was going up for tenure, I realized it wasn’t the place I wanted to be,” said Akers. “I needed to get out of the desert.”

She then went on to work at Willamette but left to return to PSU and Portland, a city she says she is very fond of. Professionally, she has enjoyed work on more politically charged pieces, directing shows like The Importance of Being Earnest.

“In the theatre, we are busy finding the truth.”

For Akers, directing has always come naturally. She credits, in part, an unconventional upbringing. As a child, she became an astute observer of human psychology though watching her mother’s changing moods and reacting to action, rather than words.

“Directing is not something you know you’re good at,” said Akers. “My eye and ear is keen; my ability to read psychology. I think that my childhood prepared me for my job!”

Akers was born in San Jose, CA, the daughter of an engineer and debutante-turned-housewife; Akers family was thrust into turmoil after the sudden death of her father at age forty-one from a heart attack. Unable to raise her ten children on her own, Aker’s mother let her move to Los Angeles with a neighbor. At fourteen, she then traveled to Asia with her older sister, who worked for an airline company based out of Japan that was bringing soldiers back from the region. She spent the next two years traveling around Southeast Asia on her own, wandering from country to country and staying with her sister and others who worked for the airline.

“One day I would wake up and say ‘I want to go to India,’ so I would just go.”

Following this stint abroad, she came back to the United States and enrolled in community college at Lane in Eugene. At eighteen, she finally moved to Portland and enrolled at PSU, thereby beginning her undergraduate studies. In her spare time she enjoys photography and spends a lot of time taking photographs up and down the interstate, which she travels on frequently for work.

“I have had an extraordinary life. It wasn’t what I expected sometimes. Things went bad, but the bad has made the good better.”
If, as Chuck Palahniuk says, Portland is a town made up of fugitives and refugees, then Charles D’Ambrosio has chosen the right place to call home. His second collection of short stories, *The Dead Fish Museum*, teems with characters that are dented, lonely and lost, who amble around the outskirts of town and stumble mutely into each other. Each of the eight stories has its own take on living as obsolete and expired and the resulting moods range from oddly charming to bled and depressing.

A few pages into the first story, “The High Divide”, you are struck by D’Ambrosio’s breathtaking phrasing. His narratives brim with natural, thoughtful imagery. His metaphors are left-field but faultlessly real. The language drops you square into a really secluded and precise world. D’Ambrosio seems particularly interested in detailing peculiar, lonely relationships between two people, especially couples and fathers and sons. He faithfully evokes their private, important tasks, and sketches the loose or outdated ties they’ve had to the normal world – marriages, periodic encounters with institutions, etc. Most of the time, you want to stay with them.

There is something really open and compelling about the adventures that can emerge when a life has forked from normalcy. But after a while, you start to feel like the stories all seem to be taking place in the past, flickers in a vast greyness. Oddly, D’Ambrosio’s beautiful writing is often what brings this sluggishness to the forefront. You’ll come upon a cracked-out amazing passage (“The ballerina spread her arms and levitated, sur les pointes, leaving the patio as her legs, ass, and back emerged phoenix-like out of this paper chrysalis, rising up until finally the gown sloughed from her shoulders and sailed away, a tattered black ghost ascending in a column of smoke and ash…”) and wonder why the stories themselves don’t carry the intelligent electricity so obviously present in the writer’s brain.

Occasionally, the stories reach for transcendence through forays into magical realism. These are some of the best sections of the book, as the passion and life of the characters gets an opportunity to rise to the surface. However, they are not frequent enough to carry it through some particularly sloggy bits.

Ultimately, reading the book feels like being 10 or 11 and coming over to a friend’s house after school. Maybe his dad is in the living room, drinking a beer, and there are a bunch of dusty soup cans piled up in the trash. You can recognize that there is something arresting about this stagnant tableau, and maybe it even calls out something in you, something familiar that you don’t acknowledge often enough. But eventually, you want to go home. And that is where *The Dead Fish Museum* falls short. D’Ambrosio’s sparkling and skillful writing takes you to a very specific place, but then it leaves you there, confused and directionless with a collection of rich experience.
Although most of us hip Portland college students are well aware of the phenomenon of the graphic novel, the general public still stands scratching their heads. The term “Graphic Novel” itself frequently either provokes the response, “What? Like comic books? For kids?” or “You mean pornography?” Despite recent film adaptations of Persepolis, Art School Confidential, and Ghost World the general populace remain oblivious. Though not exactly “underground” per say, no one’s really sure what to do with these books that mix sophisticated artistic and literary expression while working to bridge the gap between traditionally “low-brow” arts with the “high-brow.”

The graphic novel section is probably the smallest section in your local bookstore. Even at Powell’s City of Books, home to the used and out-of-print as well as shelves upon shelves of small press wonders graphic novels are shoved away on the back wall of the coffee shop, next to the “comic” section, which lumps together books of anecdotes (not seeming to make any of the lost souls wandering the aisle so much as smile) with compilations of “Rose is Rose” and “Garfield.” Though closely shelved, graphic novels are miles away and usually not at all “comic” in our modern impression of the word.

Chris Ware’s Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth is a perfect example of the complex and sophisticated work that graphic novels have been up to. It tells the tale of a disillusioned, horrendously awkward, baby-faced thirty-something (Jimmy) who reunites with his long lost father, an even more depressing figure due to his obliviousness to just how miserable his life is. Simultaneously the story of his identical, just as awkward and isolated grandfather growing up in the early 1990’s in an equally gloomy environment. Interrupted by what are assumedly stories from Jimmy’s elaborate imagination as well as varying surreal moments of Superman committing suicide, birds running into windows, etc.

The storyline is complex, yet seamless. It moves effortlessly from various timeframes and from one character’s point of view to the next in a way only previously achieved by the likes of Virginia Woolf. Repeated images, words, colors, buildings, etc. roll the past up with the present, giving us a view of the fragmentary associations and non-linearity of our consciousness.

The artwork is as intricate as the storyline, including cutout crafts so you can make a miniature version of Grandpa-Jimmy’s grandmother’s house; complete with the surrealistic giant grasshopper’s from Jimmy’s imagination.

The book definitely comments on the tradition of the hero character in comic books. Our protagonist, though he emanates golden light rays on the front cover and sports the same initials as Jesus Christ, is no superhuman. He goes to the toilet. He worries about being racist. He gets hit by mail trucks. His insecurities, sexual fantasies, embarrassing moments and clumsiness are all given voice. He is struggling, like so many disillusioned individuals, to live in a world in which Superman no longer exists.
I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Kevin Sampsell. Kevin is the head of the small press section at one of the biggest bookstores in the world; the downtown Powell's City of Books. If you want to circulate your ‘zines or books in the retail market you start with Kevin. He’s been in the small press game for eighteen years. So whatever stage you are in right now, he’s been there.

We sat in the café in the downtown Powell’s over a coffee and a couple of ham and cheese croissants on a beautiful clear day. The sun shown in through the window as the foot traffic on Burnside walked up and down on the other side of the glass. Kevin is a bit reserved in person; uncharacteristic of his poetry and prose.

Kevin started Future Tense Press in 1990 while living in Spokane, Washington. He loved to write and he printed his own chapbooks and ‘zines to give to his friends. After a brief stint in Arkansas he finally settled in Portland. The open mike and small press scene of 1992 shocked him. Young people his age were actively discussing, writing and reading poetry and prose. “It was more of a community here than what I had seen elsewhere,
even in Seattle.”

Burgeoning writers like Jeff Meyers who helped put together Portland's first Poetry Slams, and Melody Jordan, a regular at the X-Ray Café, were among the first people Sampsell published in Portland.

This atmosphere of creative writers revitalized his own drive. Small press publications all around the country published him. The first being Blank Gun Silencer in Wisconsin and then later, The Shattered Wig Review in Baltimore. Kevin's writings have even been taught in classrooms at Columbia University and Sarah Lawrence, as well as local schools like Reed and Clackamas Community College. While he publishes books by other writers on his own press, his own writing is now being published by other presses, and he wrote a series of articles last year for the Associated Press news service. His latest book is Creamy Bullets coming out soon from Chiasmus Press here in the Northwest. He has also written reviews and articles for several Portland magazines, from forgotten favorites like SnipeHunt and Tonic, to Willamette Week, The Oregonian, The Portland Mercury, and many others.

Kevin doesn't like to talk about his accomplishments. I had to push to get it all out of him, but eventually I felt comfortable that he listed most of what he's done. I then asked him what his favorite accomplishment is and he told me something entirely new. He told me about how he helped launch a couple young writers. I found out that Future Tense Books was the first to publish Zoe Trope's Please Don't Kill the Freshman. This book managed to catch the eye of HarperCollins and they signed her. This wasn't the only young writer he's helped. His small press also published Sarah Grace McCandless’s Grosse Point Girl, which was later picked up by Simon and Schuster.

Kevin told me,

"I like that I get to use my little press as a stepping stone. I feel it validates what I'm doing."

So what is the role of the small press in this world of big publishers? Well there are only six big publishing houses: Random House, Inc., Penguin Putnam Inc., HarperCollins, Holtzbrinck Publishing Holdings, Time Warner, Simon & Schuster, Inc. There are 3–400 medium presses and the rest are small presses. It is much easier to publish your work with a small press and online than to try for the Big Six. It is evident that the Big Six look at the smaller presses as a type of literary minor league. If a book does well there they bring them up to the show. Kevin said that the smaller presses are also more apt to take chances and work with authors. They don't feel as much pressure to sell a ton of books.

Finally, I asked the question: "What is your advice to younger writers that want to be successful in the literary world?"

Kevin, who has had a limited college career and is a self-taught writer, looked down and smiled, or maybe it was a smirk, then he told me, "If a person wants to be a writer or have a literary life you have to surround yourself with books. Promote yourself, be a hustler, hustle yourself, surround yourself with literary things, literary people, go out and see readings, book fairs, meet other writers or even readers... and then maybe take a writing class."

That is exactly what he has done most of his life. He is proof of the wisdom in his words. He is publishing, writing, editing, living and breathing books. He takes his role as Small Press Champion seriously.
You start with a relatively normal childhood. Maybe even too normal. In elementary school, you eat glue like the other children. But perhaps, enjoy it more. You look forward to recess, but anticipate sitting on a bench next to the teacher, eying her large purple birthmark, as the highlight of the afternoon.

In middle school, you gain a little weight and try out for both band and soccer. You get stuck as goalie, but you don’t mind—less running. Flute lessons don’t pan out. Instead, you develop a deep fear of marching and little bald men with sticks.

In high school, you are hardly noticed. Aside from the “gym shower incident,” you don’t stand out at all. And even that is forgotten by eight period. By your senior year, you manage to be on a first name basis with exactly seven people. The boy from Bosnia sometimes sits with you at lunch. He never wants to “do something” on the weekend and always pronounces your name wrong. Every year in the yearbook, adjectives like “nice” and “courteous” appear under your big bold name, which is spelled with an extra “l.” After all, your name is traditionally spelled with two. But you don’t bother to correct the yearbook committee. James Besto—the president of yearbook—used to ask you to show him your privates in kindergarten.

When you stand to receive your diploma at graduation, your mother, by herself, makes up for all the absent cheering. Like the interval of silence between crashing waves, your name is accompanied by a quiet steady hush, interrupted only by her obnoxiously speedy clapping. But you thank your mother afterward. After all, she did take time off from work.

The summer following graduation is one of incessant e-mails that begin, Ten Reasons Why _________ is the School for You. An increase in paper-waste around the house drives your mother insane. Envelopes containing brochures to colleges all over the nation line the counters and the kitchen table. You shred them to line the bottom of Pete the Parakeet’s cage. After all the essays you forget to write and all the forms you fail to fill out completely, you decide to take a year off. College can wait.

In fact, college can wait indefinitely. You eventually discover that you can piggyback your neighbor’s cable. College becomes no more than a ten-point word on the Scrabble table—twenty, if you’re on a double square.

Eventually, your tenth year high school reunion will have come and gone. The energy exerted over the event will have consisted of one glance at the bright pink post card followed by briefly deliberating between not going, and not going and instead getting out your senior yearbook to reaffirm this decision. You never do find your yearbook, forgetting you donated it to the Goodwill.

You soon find that you can’t stay up as late as you used to, scanning the internet for “interesting” jobs that don’t require a degree. Your mother calls you once a week to check in. There’s always someone at the church who would be perfect for you, if only you’d let her set something up. You tell her that miniature golf stopped being fun when you were thirteen and threw up your corn dog and churro somewhere between the windmill and the fairy tale castle.

You buy a cat and name him after that handsome man on Days of Our Lives—the one that’s been in a coma for the last twelve episodes. He pees on the carpet at first, but with a lot of help from 101 Tips for Training Your Cat, you get him to pee right into the toilet. No excess mess for your unbelievably un-messy life.

Kinko’s was an accident. You had just come in to make copies. The manager marveled at how creatively you had put together a missing cat flyer. His number one night shift clerk had had a nervous breakdown just the week before and so you were offered the job on the spot.

Now, eleven and a half months later, you stare at the plaque hanging crookedly above the microwave in the break room, your Hot Pocket making its pathetic, wobbly rotations. In the photo, the collar of your turquoise polo shirt is stubbornly curled under on one side. You wonder what you did to deserve such a prestigious award. You wonder what you do at all. You wonder if anything you do really matters. You wonder if you remembered to turn your stove off this morning.
Ballet
Conor Martin
The Unintentional Hip Movement
John Petrina

_left, right, left_

Davis walked down the city block without much grace or outstanding character. Preceding a meeting that morning, he proceeded to work in a timely manner. This was an important meeting for him: a possible raise in pay by a whole seventy-five cents, more responsibility, a whiter collar. In his way, he felt positively about the whole thing – working my way up the ladder. It was during this thought that it happened. It was an unexpected hip movement that came suddenly in the midst of static steps along a damp and cold, cement-cracked street.

POP! It didn’t really make a popping sound, but that was sure how it felt, and for one complete step, his rigid demeanor loosened, his step swaggered. For a single stride... a strut had occurred. With a look of dismay, Davis stopped and grabbed for the location of the spasm. Had it dislocated? Was hospitalization required? After a brief physical examination: a pat up and down his body, all seemed well physically.

Hip movements were not something Davis was accustomed to outside the solitude of his home, while in his socks-and-boxers listening to the Dirty Dancing soundtrack or Barry Manilow.

And even then, hip movements were jerky, more like pelvic thrusts. Never as well coordinated and natural as they were in that moment, on the damp sidewalk at the corner of Broadway and Jefferson.

Davis wondered how women and flamboyant men arrived at work on time – the inefficiency! The walk was awkward at first: the assured jive of his lower half, juxtaposed against the wide eyed, slack jawed, look of what the fuck? stamped across his face. But soon his shoulders loosened, his face evened, his neck held erect. The walk was in full swing. Davis glanced over his shoulder. Raised his eyebrows, something surely was not right about this

My Breasts
Anna Marie Brown

_My breasts are a majestic set, they rest_ Upon my sturdy chest as coupled thrones Of plush; inviting guests for soft caress Two palaces as smooth as river stones.

Or, side-by-side, two robin’s nests, whose bright, Perched, oval eggs suggest two nipples, rounded Peeking up; two mounds of earthy flesh alight With all the woven warmth of home. Two crowns With two red jewels inset; vanilla cakes Which give ascent to berry peaks, a fine

Dessert; two winters on which daylight breaks, Two snowy hills to climb, and rest at wine. Arresting stretches of softest Romanesque

My (towers, flowers, secret powers) breasts.

Living Alone
Bryan Beck

_He battles the days like a dog gnawing at a bone that is too big. The bone is hard, and maybe it will never crack, but the dog keeps at it, driven by a hope that there will be something fulfilling inside, clamping down its teeth, twisting and struggling until it is impossible to tell which one is about to break._
situation. That’s when he noticed the glances from women, nods from men. Suddenly through the array of eyes, Davis pinned down the source of the swagger. It was not a physical ailment, but a psychological one. Confidence.

He had heard of this attribute in movie stars, successful business people, and men with attractive girlfriends, but never had experienced it in himself.

Davis saw the florescent white man in mid stride on the opposing street corner turn into a blinking:

DON’T WALK

He knew what this meant, and came to stop with the rest of the law abiding citizens. Among them was a woman: tall, leggy. Possibly by chance, possibly by this new, unknown force, Davis began to look the woman in the eyes, as if to pull them from their unintentioned meander, to focus on his face. The meeting was brief, but held for a moment longer than one typically would. Scanning each other’s faces as if to have this conversation:

–I noticed your walk and animal confidence.
–I noticed your unintentioned demeanor, and your legs. And I summoned this look from you.

The gaze broke, both individuals attempting to again look unintentioned—unsuccessfully. Their eyes met again and they smiled as if to laugh. The crowd at the corner began to move. The white walking man was back. Damn the white walking man! They moved across the street, in-stride with each other, looking ahead. Keeping one another just outside the corners. Davis felt the woman distance herself from his side, she was about to turn! Davis kept straight, his neck urging to her, his feet unmoving from his path to work, to his important meeting. He felt her warmth leave his side as they reached the opposite corner. He stepped onto the opposing sidewalk, and knew this was their last moment. Unless.

left, POP, right, POP stop turn.

Green Living
Matticus Arelius

Primitive black and white lenses have been nailed to my eyes.

I have six billion people sleeping next to me, strangers in a lucid dream of confidence; of hydrocarbons in a bedpan dried in the desert of the next life. My mouth is around an exhaust pipe like a pornstar, combusting in insanity:

“ashes to ashes”

I’ll smoke the mark of the beast, rolled up during the conflagration of the apocalypse; when we piss in our mouths and light our children on fire; when we’re wrapped in plastic and drowning in insecticides; when we shave our bodies and slither back into our mother’s vagina:

“welcome home”

Our failed Holocene, Paleolithic minds trapped by uranium. Paradoxes of the human condition scribed in the clear-cuts of genocide; a tribute to this plague of simplified capacities; viral Oroboros.
She said,
“Innocence and aggressiveness
are just different side effects of the same
affliction: Education—
either too little or just too much.”

She was a street-wise, 

pennywhistle female,
sel-taught, not a big fan of (capital L) Love.
You’ve seen her—cow hide, royally skewed afro,
the Zulu walk, the rhetorical beauty majestically
emptied out for a lunch of 3 chocolate moonpies.

Piccolo, wood flute, fife, recorder,
the Long Cock—
such a simple instrument.

“Ha! The little soldiers, released,
sail ships across the ocean to a land
of hopes and dreams...”

But in this case, uninvited, they brought with them
a host of other dreadful things—a microcosm of ancient
challenges, apartheid, the Burn.

“I swear, I always gave others the gift of safe sex.”

She’s living in the “Red House” now,
and doesn’t look back, looking forward to
years of no children, PBS documentaries—tributes
to women who shouted in unison the songs
of The Revolution: I can choose, I can choose, I can choose.

“Freedom means taking responsibility for our own lives.
There is no Grand Author.”

Oh, Freedom,
Oh, freedom,
Oh, freedom,
Oh, freedom

Oh freedom reign over me.
We lived in the museum. Or that's where we have lived as long as I have thought about it. I decided to give account of my days so I am better at asking questions to the mothers. Like right now where I figured out I have a reflection of the concept of “museum”, which makes my living situation extra-ordinary, a museum is an unusual house you could say. A museum involved display cases, which this one has. Cases, with dull and occasionally flickering lights, showing off objects; one shows a tiny person crafted out of mold (or maybe something failed that was supposed to preserve the exhibit, because it looks really diseased), some show chunks of metal that have a look that makes them seem heavy in a suffocating way, and others are so crammed with plants they look like a hidden doorway into a world made of them. There other areas that are separated off with faded red ropes. These areas look like fields coated in brown and gray mud, shrouded in darkness, because the lights are not on. We see objects like really stiff people, shuffling rocks, and trees move in the darkness sometimes, but the mothers told us to avoid those areas. We don’t listen to everything the mothers tell us, but usually do when it seems to involve danger.

I should talk about “we”. We have decided we are sisters or twins like the mothers. Sometimes in dingy bathroom mirrors or reflective display cases I think I am looking at my sister and talk for several minutes before realizing. Sitting for hours probing each other with fingers we have found not a bump or hole that is different in our two bodies. We are like reflections that fell out of the mirror.

I woke to a sound between a choke and a chuckle last night. Searching the area around the room in which we slept, I found a solid piece of feces. This was not from us. We have thin and watery disposal as the result of our diet, and we leave it in the tubes in the alcoves inserted in the wall. We have often wondered where these tubes end and whether overflow will ever be a problem. But the mothers say we are being silly. But the finding and the chuckle means one thing. That “grandfather” has returned. We move each night to get closer to our new store of food and I think partially for this reason. We fear “grandfather” and do not understand his actions. Our map is reaching its end so seeing the mothers was an event on the near horizon anyways, but in this light we should probably go today.

Then she was sick. My sister leaned against me and then collapsed despite my attempts to keep her up. She groaned and sweated and after a time released green bile in convulsive sobs. She would not answer my queries but I gathered that the pain was centered in the stomach or lower. I arranged her a sleeping area, with a small can of water and some food. I would have to go ahead quickly and get the help of the mothers. I could not be sure if the sickness was a result of our recent food stores or the visit of him.

I talked like we do when we see our mirror images. But instead of stopping I can continue with empty babble echoing in these chambers. We are never apart for long and we always talk. Intricate webs of babble that would be impossible to transcribe here. We discuss things we learn from the mothers, sensations in our bodies, display cases, and things I can not even source to our surroundings.

The mothers sense us and tell where to look for them. A slight rattling in the pipes or whiff of smell almost half-sensed, these are the clues that we follow until we enter their new chambers. They move constantly also. I wonder why I am only aware of these hints when we seek them out. Maybe they always beckon to us. It’s possible they never want us to leave their side, but they never say so.

I find a tiny glass bridge over the stream.
It is like I am walking on air or water, I can barely trust my feet. We are forbidden to reach in those rapid waters and pluck out the pale fish. We have decided “Grandfather” must eat them and we have decided this is unfair.

They rattle forwards out of the dark sides of rooms when we enter. We wonder why they must announce their presence in this way; we are already in awe of the mothers. Their chairs are perched on treads and are crisscrossed with pipes, tubes, glass bulbs filled with green liquid, and other blemishes that mar their spotless metal skin. The mothers themselves look like stretched and empty sacks of skin pulled into the rough shape of a sitting human, with a rude orifice in their faces around which peeks the faint glint of eyes. Imprisoned in the apparatus of their chairs we wonder if they ever moved like we do. When they speak it’s in the buzzing distant tones similar to the ones that are produced when we push the buttons on the display cases, but we are attuned to the utterances of the mothers and we can listen. We sit and listen for hours with the occasional proffered question. They give whole worlds of knowledge that we can only connect to in an abstract way, unlike the concrete things they tell us about survival here, which we learn by physically acting out the lessons and making it to each new learning session. But they never answer the question of why we are in this forgotten place being taught by the mothers?

We talk about sickness, “Grandfather”, and too many other things to remember from. I feel like a puppet being held on thin cottony threads, like the spiders make, while I stand there being talked to. They decided sickness will have to work itself out as will his return; they have greater concerns. I walk away from their chambers and over the glass bridge with fuzziness in my head, like a ball of dust catching the glimmer from a shutting door.

Sometimes I feel my skin will stretch and swoop like the mothers. Maybe we will be invited to share their thrones someday. I am walking through an area containing enormous ankle bones roped off in display areas. They hang in the air as if supporting an invisible multi limbed giant. I discover the water tin overturned and my sister’s bedding thrown in a corner. She is gone and the dust is unsettled.

The silences. Those we shared seemed more than when we talked and learned. There is not a sensation, or place on the body, that we have not shared; that we did not know. Did she and the “Grandfather” share such silence? Did her white hands reach into the holes in the “Grandfather”? For the “Grandfather” was surely filled with holes, just as she was surely walking with him. One tried to imagine the mothers ever touching. How did their hands not scatter on the winds like paper in the hallways? Those suffocating stretched frog skins with their horrible, vacant lack. Their incessant teaching of us must be for some purpose? Obtuse expressions must hide some frenzied fear, some doubt about their failing and becoming another exhibit; unmarked and unexplained. This disappearance was the first sign of distress in our pampered and coddled years. Should I distrust the very things that taught me the words to articulate this distrust? For they taught me words and concepts that seemed to float alone there in the darkness. What images could I associate with them? Now “suspicion” had an image, a blanket left alone on a dusty floor.
Lately I have been scanning the horizon.  
Lifting my eyes in parking lots, intersections.  
Like a string in my gut, attached to some other corner of the universe, pulls up my spine.  
Says look, look – you are in a valley.  
You are in a pit and you can’t see out.

One month ago, I was in MinVody.  
Standing in the middle of an empty runway, a clump of passengers. A domestic flight – distracted Russians on either side.  
And I took one last survey of the Caucasus, those surreal cathedrals that, nevertheless, had never seemed fake. Those days, I would look up suddenly to find them peeking in on me, crags so strikingly out of place, but there, looking ancient, but not old. I felt alive then, living in this city surrounded by 5 mountains.  
Cradled in the knowledge that, yes, life can reach a peak, yes, there are strong lines, bald delineations, you are one among many, you come together but you stand apart.

Today, Portland’s hills roll out like tickertape, on all sides until you’re tangled and disoriented.  
They are far away no matter where you are, their furry green standing righteous, as if planted. I can’t imagine what’s beyond them.  
I can only imagine wandering into the forest and getting lost.
I'm lying in the grass plucking at its green, cool blades. In southern California it is perpetually summer so I'm enjoying the absence of its glaring orange eye.

"This is so nice Cin, being with nature and its breezy trees. I love it when it's overcast. I swear I'm living in the wrong place. I need to be in a temperate climate where there are forests like in that Peter Murphy video "Cuts You Up."

"Yeah, I don't know. I hate being cold. I get leg cramps."

I notice her chipped red nail polish surrounded by her angry cuticles. Her lacquered lips are perfect though and even her neck and chest are powdered a dazzling white. We cultivate our ghostly complexions and it is quite a feat in this town where everyone is tan.

"It's been a long time since we were with the dirt and the grass. It's like we were freeway people for a while."

I watch her perfectly drawn lips as she is speaking. They remind me of Madonna’s lips. Her teeth are rounded and oh so familiar. I remember when they had braces and she still has those little white spots that come and go. We call them freckles and we think maybe they are from a mineral deficiency.

She continues, "It's like we were always on the go. You know, to Venice Beach or somewhere that’s 24 hours, to the porn store, whatever. Wherever there were bright lights and people."

She exhales a billowy plume of smoke.

It's so atmospheric. I'll probably remember this when I'm old, our glamour and ever-present clouds of smoke.

We like to joke of ourselves as little old ladies, sitting on our porch in our rocking chairs drinking iced tea. I can't imagine us ever growing apart.

"Can a bird fly with holes in its wings?"

She lights two cigarettes and hands me one. I take it before I ask her what she means.

"Well I was in the back yard and there were a bunch of crows on the fence. They had holes in their wings. Big holes." Her green eyes consider my reaction. She has a tendency to think she is boring and it doesn't matter that I regard her as the most fascinating person. I must be showing sufficient interest though because she continues.

"I told my sis Chrissie about it and she said it was impossible. Birds can't fly around with gaping holes." She lays out her books, then stacks and shuffles them like cards. We're in good company. There are books of the Egyptian dead, Atlantis, Joseph Campbell, and a spiritualist book from the 20's called, The Boy Who Saw True.

"Gaping?" I tap my ash with excitement.

"Like they're tattered or missing feathers or what?"

"I could see the sky through them Linda. There were big holes and the birds looked sort of... oily. All I know is that I don't like those kind of birds."

She looks vulnerable. Even though she could look divinely vulgar, like a street-wise vamp, there is a girlish quality to her. I love the contrast.

"Well, aren't they Saitya Sai Baba's birds? What sort of god conjures ash and candy? It seems more like a demon's trick to me. And remember when I saw that crow eating a dead pigeon?"

She nodded and I envisioned a skeletal tree filled with crows, Saitya Sai juggling urns at its base, his eyes twirling madly. I shudder and lean towards her. I'm sitting Indian style now, as is she. Our Speech 100 teacher Kat, says we mirror each other, that it's a sign of closeness or attraction. We were the class example and while the teacher was pointing us out, we both re-crossed our legs.

Large white Shasta daisies and mustard yellow tiger lilies nod their heads in unison, fuddled by the breeze. An occasional person walks by us to use the restroom but other than that we are alone and it is exquisite. We need alone time. That is why we are ditching class and across the street. We're in a meadow dotted with a few trailer-like buildings.

"I feel like something's gonna happen." I
rip at the grass and leave little clumps.

   “I know”, she says. “The air is buzzing.”

   I want something to happen. I’ve always wanted something to happen. In high school Cindy and I would make up apocalyptic scenarios. We would plan on where to meet if we were separated. This of course, would preferably happen during school, anything to relieve the torture and tedium of enforced socialization.

   There is a raucous uproar coming from the parking lot. I smile mischievously, “Let’s go see what the hub bubs about.” I smile because it sounds like crows.

   We walk to the parking lot where our two cars are the only ones. Cindy refers to them, “I wonder what they’re talking about?” I smile at her. I hear the clip clop of our stiletto boots.

   “Well lookee here.” I say.

   There is a trailer in front of us. The field where we were lounging is to the right. The crows are feuding in the field to the left. There is a black, chaotic roiling of feathers. I begin to notice a pattern. As a group they all rise and land on one of the many grassy humps then start to hunt and peck amidst the scraggly green.

   “There’s always a straggler. Cin, there’s always a straggler. What’s going on?”

   “Oh.” She is casual, “There is something not right about that bird.”

   It’s true. There is one bird that tries to saunter up unnoticed by the others. It has a herky-jerky quality, its head low to the ground, its feathers shaggy. For a moment it assimilates, pecking for worms, pecking for acceptance, but then as a mass, the crows turn on it harshly, shrilly, and flee for another grassy mound.

   Cindy is nodding, eyes intent upon the scene. My eyes return to the bird. The longer we stare at the bird, the less it seems like a bird.

   “I need to get a better look.” I start to approach the flock. They aren’t noticing me. “It isn’t moving right.” I mutter.

   Cindy startles. “No Linda.” She moves towards me.

   There is a tangible strangeness drifting in curls around us. I see the sun dapples on the cement in the lot. I feel like a naturalist as I approach the birds. I feel disassociated.

   The flock Is it a murder? turns on the bedraggled bird one last time. It spins towards them, exhausted with the charade, and hisssssssssss, its neck extends gray and bald like a buzzard’s.

   Oh my god, its neck is too long. I look back at Cin. Her mouth is open and she looks dazed. Maybe they were pecking at it. Like that seagull they put a spot on to prove that others attack you if you’re different. No, that’s not it, it’s not right. It’s not a bird.

   Hisssssssss. It blusters up. I no longer want to approach. I am still as the bird lands on a bare branch of a miniature tree. It cranes its head straight up, Craww, hisssssssss, and then little red tufts on stalks unfurl like a crown.

   “Oh my god, Cin, do you see this?”

   There is silence so I turn around and she still looks dazed almost vacant and I ask, “Cin?”

   “Oh yeah, what?” annoyed.

   “Did you see the bird?”

   “Yes. It had pom poms.” Her speech is drawn out and slightly slurred.

   “What do you think? Did it escape from a zoo?” My heart is rapping like a cheap hammer on tin.

   We are now standing next to each other looking at horizon. There is a plane coming towards us. There is no sound. We are in a vacuum. I know that the plane is approaching us in particular. Yeah that’s crazy Linda. It won’t make it past the trailer. It’ll swerve off to the left or right.

   I don’t remember walking back to join Cindy. We stare and the plane grows larger in its silence. It is moving very fast. It is now over the trailer and I can’t believe that I can see every little detail. It is maroon and gray and the finish is matte, nothing metallic about it. It’s strange and too simplistic. It’s wings are like Popsicle sticks in design and the windscreen is a flat black. I couldn’t see anyone flying this ludicrous farce of a
plane.
It is now directly over us and I strain to see every detail to memorize this. I am horrified because the belly is so smooth.

"Cindy, where do the wheels come out? How is it supposed to land?"

"I don’t know Linda." Her smile is stiff and her dyed hair glows blue black. I realize that is dark. Just like that. One moment it was early afternoon and when the plane passed over us it became dark.

I’m distracted by this observation. “What time is it?”

Cindy looks at her watch. “It’s eight. How is it night now? You know Linda,” she is walking to her car, “I’ve gotta go.”

“But what happened?” I don’t want her to go. “What just happened?”

“I don’t know.” She sounds finished with the subject.

“But Cindy, really, how can you just leave?

How are you gonna deal with what just happened? There is an explanation and we have to figure it out.”

“Linda, there are lots of weird things that happen. They happen all the time. You have to file it away. Put it on the shelf where all the other weird things go. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Her tall form swayed to the left, to the right, and then she was in her silver car. The slam of a door and the start of engine and I realize I am alone. I light a cigarette for comfort. I like to look at the craggily faces in the ember. I guess I could do research on birds, maybe the school library? There was that loose peacock in Fullerton. Maybe it was a blimp. They don’t make sounds do they? Do they need pilots or wheels? Probably not. What about the missing time though?

I find comfort in the traffic lights. The mundane tick of my turn signal.

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Evan Furey Knows No Fear
Laura Kate James

Seem car crash, plane crash, ship wreck train
Pilot’s hand to stick to yoke,
Captain’s to the wheel.

Seem street king sleep in cardboard box
Family in their sheetrock hell,
Daddy in the dime.

Seem convict’s pickaxe fissure stone
Lover dazed with suitcase blues
Trade diamond for a train.

Seem pilgrims ‘neath their steepled cell
Jesus for a copper coin,
Cowboy on his cross.

Seem sailors slouch, hold ballast fast
While carbon clouds spit acid rain,
Deny Bethlehem.

Me, I’m ‘tween the lion’s jaws,
Molars mocking spine and skull,
Breathing just for fun.

Herr Dokter
Linda Rand

He traced his finger down the road with its slight satin grab that traveled between her breasts and plunked down into her navel for a leisurely sip.
He sought a crevice of heat beneath the cooling delta snuck down around the bend and like a helicase snitch he unzipped her into halves skin now an encasing cornucopia spilling forth the ripe wet harvest of her inner fruit the dense firm plums of ovaries dark and frosted,
half a placenta, fat and rich as liver escaping from a weeping womb now a lonely cloister with its cervix chaise lounge and lachrymose cushion trailing tendrils like ivy draping bracelet piping for his wrists
Now his hands come away cleaned and scraped with bleach.
The hottest season of the year had settled conspicuously between the drying dirt and conversations about the impending situation of the environment. People put ice in their coffee. Blankets were being folded and forgotten about while stubborn old men died naked in chairs or rusty beds. With each passing day, a toast would be made, a small celebration of another fiery defeat through the ashes of paper and plant.

The pain was acute. Hidden amongst the dusty wool of a rectangle covering smaller wooden rectangles, a thin sharp pin boastfully waited.

Vibrations from footprints lightly lay upon the ground and sang with the procession. A fan hissed and twirled, unable to compete with the motor gurgling past in a cloud of brown led. By the time it struck the passing left foot, the sound of steps was at an overwhelming volume, suffocating attention pressing against plaster walls. Nothing else and that moment were still, in a choking balance.

Sitting on the toilet with urine nostrils he looked at the hurting stamp: a small incongruous shape of a vibrant hue stained the bottom of a now imbalanced corpus of moles and sweaty limbs exhaling gases and an increased current of red fluid from the hammering of a thousand tiny men within the aorta-cage of young someone. The already dried shape drew the sound from his ears and arrested forward thought, then:

In a Las Vegas hotel room during a miscounted calendar day.

The cool foreign air that wheezed through the metal gums of a wall increased the heat and moisture that migrated metrically towards hipbone and away; towards and away. The arch of a spine reflected in the Windex mirror of a sliding closet door and the uneven, soft and forgiving excess of skin lively against pimply hips. After-sex, looking like a half melted candle blown out only minutes before. An ink of blood unremarkably arranged near the lower stomach. Her eyes turning wet, children’s cough syrup, bubblegum. Flushing cheap tissues and strands of hair away with a hygienic thumb and forefinger.

The fountains of Caesar’s Palace sprayed thirsty tourists.
You go to New York. You’ve heard so much about New York. You’re not entirely disappointed, but you do wish it was a place you hadn’t heard so much about before, as if something so huge and magical could be kept a secret from your rural Northwestern ass. You think about how having such a wish makes you feel kind of hipster-y. You think that’s ridiculous too. You are still in New York. You wander around with your heavy backpack filled with things you no longer have a need for, because you are in New York, and you now know you could be fine with the clothes on your back and the wallet in your pocket. You haven’t smoked for years, but one of the first things you do is buy a pack of cigarettes. You smoke your cigarette. It tastes fitting and delicious. You walk through Tompkins Square Park. You think about the community it used to be for the homeless in the ‘80s, and you watch level-headed stylish-but-not-flashy mothers push strollers along the concrete. You finish your cigarette and throw the butt away in the trash because your rural Northwestern ass has become an eco-conscious urban Northwestern ass. You realize you never extinguished the butt, and you turn around to see a smoking trash can. You...
contemplate running away before frantically rooting through banana peels and soggy cardboard in a futile attempt to defuse the offending stub. You find a half-full bottle of soda and pour its contents throughout the can. The smoke stops. You breathe relief. You look up. No one has noticed you. You continue on. You don’t light another cigarette. You go to the Life Café. You remember Rent. You don’t go in. You regret it later. You go into a coffee shop on 12th Street, and you read the Village Voice. You are enjoying yourself.

You’re in another coffee shop, more midtown. It’s later in the day. A girl walks in the door. When you look up, she sees you. She smiles. You wave. She sits down besides you. She asks for your name. She tells you she likes your skirt. You almost tell her you got it at Buffalo for eleven dollars, and then you realize what a useless, useless thing to say that is. Instead you tell her thanks. You have a conversation. You notice her eyes are red. You wonder if she’s high. You find yourself talking a lot, almost against your will. Your mouth begins to hurt. You are surprised to learn she’s not a native New Yorker. You realize you’ve assumed everyone here is a native New Yorker. But she’s from North Dakota. You tell her you had a stepbrother who went to the university in Grand Forks. She nods. The conversation stops and has nowhere to go. You nervously shift your headband. She tells you she likes the blue bow on top of it. You thank her. She tells you she’ll show you around the city. You are excited. You tell her you’d like that.

You are smoking another cigarette on the fire escape of her fifth floor apartment. You watch a family in a living room from the building across the street. You shift your headband again. You look at the time to see it’s almost two in the morning. You have been in this apartment for five hours. You have been in New York for thirteen. It has seemed like a week. Your stomach complains from the alcohol and junk food you have put in it, with the help of the girl from North Dakota. You look into her apartment to see the couch she has made up for you. You think about the number of foreign couches you have slept on over the years, in contrast to the amount of foreign beds. For a few drags of the cigarette, you are bitter. You listen to the city. Your bitterness begins to fade. It’s draining to keep up. You think that there are worse things than meeting an amazing person and spending a night with them and sleeping on their couch, as opposed to the Penn Station bench you were planning to crash on with your backpack for a pillow. You finish your cigarette. You stay outside. You’re glad you came in October. Your light coat is perfect. You contamplate what you will do tomorrow before you board a train for Long Island. You will visit a second cousin in Rockville Center you’ve never met. His name is Devin. A rush of exhaustion floods through you without warning. You realize you’ve been up for over twenty hours. You slouch your way in and onto the couch. You remove your skirt and tights and put on pajama pants. You eye the door where the girl from North Dakota is sleeping. You are glad you met her. You set your alarm for seven hours in the future and hunt around for a recycling container for a beer can you discovered in the couch. You find one easily. Your eco-conscious Northwestern ass feels good for meeting with an eco-conscious Northeastern one. You switch off the light and lie down. A cat jumps on you from nowhere. Your extinguished cigarette butt lies placidly on the fire escape outside.
The pinwheel hangs
from the car antenna
for wishing like we did
with dandelions
when we were kids
when we were too young
to realize
adults aren’t super heroes
but monsters sometimes.

We each
heal with each mile
of this drive,
knowing where
each of us began
in long sleeves to hide the scars
on hot days in third grade,
in locked rooms
and down the basement stairs.

Now
the sun never sets
for more than a minute
on the television screen
behind our eyes,
where the highway disappears
into the yawning two mountains
as they collide
in the sex of the landscape,
in the heart of the painting
beats beats beats
the wings of two blackbirds
just outside the windshield
where our eyes paint
the lines on the road
where the past explodes
and blurs with the fence posts
as the horizon is a pair
of arms wide

I’d rather burn along this desert pavement
with you and five bucks and no home
than live another day in quicksand
reminiscence,

we are the heroes
of our own young epic,
we are the stars of this film
and this falling night sky

watching the pinwheel spin, and taking turns
blowing on it.

You spot that moment and hand it to me
as a photograph
that we can tack on the wall
of a motel in the middle of nowhere
where none of the yellowed
photos reside,

where we talk about
how much we love
all that we love
instead of talking about

all the different ways
we used to know
the world
would end.
The motion.
It all reminds me of the motion.
The get up and go, the strut, the swanker, the casual I’m on my way, the I can shake my booty all damn day.
The motion ahead and straight to a T
the fumbling awkwardness of my own uncomfortable me. The skippity-step filled with an anticipant, a participant
of the best kind. The one who wants to be there, the one with an open mind.
But I’m sure closure can be a good thing too.
And the motion.
The shuffle shuffle, weighed down by fresh shampoos and everyday uniforms.
An observation of the tip top buildings reminds us of the weight that bars down on the lowest low souls.
On the bottoms where no one likes to go.
We know it. We can see. Even though I have to look to you not me.
But It’s the saunter that makes us all feel good
like the world can slow down the way we always think it should.
Stricken by our own alternate projection.
That standup stiffness of our uncouth bodily erection.
And the motion keeps on rolling like it never really began, it rolls with the lonely and the lost and the bland. It’s mostly because none of us stop moving anyway so why would the motion? But it also moves for itself.
Its not just about we the rollers, no there is internal rhythm that keeps it real. That’s why it’s all so perpetual, so inevitable so holistic and true.
Breathiness is for bad songs not the internal groove.
Not to mention the grind and out of mind roll and tumble that comes from the way you say hey to your own friends, the lovers of your soul. The unabashed, unrestrained.
The only people who make you see real people make you feel like real people make you want to dive in losing the confines of strategic soundness.
Now that’s the motion.
So wound and bound by self until the explosion of a kinetic encounter with another’s motion makes the rhythm stronger, solid, filled to overflow. The motion takes hold
And there it goes, it all keeps rolling and we’re the rollers and we’re in the groove.
Farmer’s Market

Now that I have a baby, I’ve been forced to become a morning person. On the plus side I get to shop or shove my way through the farmers market Saturday morning with all the other early risers. I love that smell of kettle corn and beautiful flower arrangements. The rainbow of fruits and vegetables look good enough to eat. I can only afford the free samples right now and helped myself to what I thought was a cookie. The woman behind the table said, “ma’am, those are doggie treats.”

“Will they kill me?” I asked
“Well, no,” she hesitated.
“Then it’s fine.” I said as I took another.

Free entertainment is provided by random musical performers and on this day it was the “one man band” guy with various instruments strapped to himself like a suicide bomber ready to ignite. I too was strapped with my kid dangling from my stomach, thinking the only thing I use to strap on was a dildo, now look at me. Toddlers gathered around the man with their own tambourines and horns to add to the clatter they called music.

“Are there any requests?” the one man band guy asks the shorties.
“Shut up!” the one who could talk yelled.
“I have a request to shut up,” he giggles into the mic, “any other request?”

“Purple People Eater!” Another little one shouts as we got rockin.

Out of nowhere an elderly man who was either drunk or crazy joined the toddler mosh pit dancing and singing. He got his hips going and butt bumped an elderly bystander who lost her balance and stage dove onto the pit of toddlers and like London Bridges “they all fall down.” Parents went in to claim their screaming kid from the dog pile of pampers as the old guy was nowhere to be found.

Crafters

You take a hipster who crafts some funky handbag made out of bicycle tires you get a Craftster. I try to avoid the hipster scene because well, I’m not hip enough I guess. Truth is I just don’t have to try so hard. A Craftster I may tolerate because I like to craft. Now that I have all this time on my hands and I’m scary poor I do what all creative stay at home moms do and that’s try to make money selling crafts then forcing my friends to buy my stupid shit. So I took all the whinnie the pooh hand-me downs and dyed them black then sewed anti-war patches over the chubby crappy bear.

I had heard the Craftsters were holding a bazaar in the park near my dorm so I emailed the head Craftster and asked if I could set up a table. After not receiving a reply I decided in true D.I.Y form I would just set up my own table which was just a clothes line tied between two trees with onesies hung with clothes pins a few yards away from coolness.

The head Craftster spotted me marched over with her scissors cut my clothesline, “YOU CAN’T HANG THINGS FROM TREES, IF YOU HAD A PERMIT YOU WOULD KNOW THAT!”

“THAT’S MY LIFELINE YOU JUST CUT BITCH!” I snapped back, “JUST SO YOU KNOW, I’M JUST TRYING TO BUY PAMPERS AND MEDICINE FOR MY BABY. LEAVE ME ALONE!” I say as I re-hung my line.

Next thing I know the cops show up and ask me if I have a permit. “No I don’t have a permit, I also don’t have any weapons of mass destruction.”

“We’re gonna have to ask you to leave, if you don’t have a permit.”

I packed up my stuff and the Craftsters clapped singing, “Shananana Hey Hey Heeey
Gooooood-Bye.”

I flipped them the bird and rolled my stroller right into a man. I looked up and there stood my ex-husband, Jack.

“Is that really you? What are you doing here?” I asked thinking, “am I in the Twilight Zone?” Jack has been living in Pittsburgh for the last year.

“Shopping for tomatoes at the farmers market,” he replied as if it were no big deal.

“No, What are you doing in Portland?”

Jack proceeds to tell me that he had a nervous break down and had just been released from the loony bin. He thought he’d be better off living closer to his family. I introduced him to my son and he walked me home. “So, do you want to have sex?” I asked.

“No, I’m good,” he says.

“What you still have that girlfriend? That never stopped you before.” I said thinking, “what a trip, Jack was always a sure thing.

“She is still in Pittsburgh, I’m not sure what’s going on, I’m just trying to get my shit together.”

“Is it because I have a baby?” I asked pondering why all of a sudden he doesn’t want me. “Well it’s actually the meds, I feel great now, but lost all sexual desire.” He says happily.

“Good for you, now leave, I’ve had enough rejection for one day.”

Oh Shit!

My mom tries to play “pass the ass” with me, where she sniffs the baby’s ass then passes him to me and says, “Do you think he pooped?”

“I’m not a dog, I don’t sniff ass,” I reply holding up my hand blocking the pamper coming at my face.

Then mom bravely sticks her finger into the diaper to confirm.

“Look I know when I was a baby (thirty-one years ago) diapers were held together by a flap that once you tore it from the diaper, plastic would stick and whether or not I shit myself you had to change me because the flap would no longer hold. Today a Velcro like material holds the diaper so we don’t have to do the scratch and sniff game.”

As advanced as the diaper has come over the years, there is still a risk of malfunction as I found out while riding the bus recently. I was holding the baby, butt facing out when he ripped a big boy fart. The woman sitting in front of me turned around.

“Excuse me,” I said as if that rumble was coming from my ass. The baby made a few grunting noises then a stream of yellow projecting baby shit squirted everywhere; down my shirt, on the back of the seat in front of me and all over the floor.

“Oh, Shit!” I said literally.

I heard a licking noise and looked down to find a service dog for the blind man sitting behind me LICKING the baby shit off the floor! I didn’t know whether to be disgusted or grateful. I patted the Golden Retriever and said, “Good doggie.”