

tablet

fall 2005



threshold

things & thoughts

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A year ago, this staff launched *Tablet* as the next step in *Asian Journal's* evolution. Established in the 1970s when Asian-American self-consciousness was just beginning to assert itself, *Asian Journal* had a more political dimension to its literary and artistic offerings. Now, three decades later and heir to a totally different set of minority dynamics, Columbia's multi-cultural community has begun to surmount more particularized racial politics. *Tablet* is the artistic and literary milestone to this exciting time in our generation's attempt to define itself.

Our own involvement with this journal mirrors the growth of this publication, for we now find ourselves at the threshold of significant cultural changes on this campus and beyond. Over the past three years, we have seen how merely serving the Asian-American community within these pages is not enough. Though rooted in subjectivity, art transcends boundaries of race, gender and identity. We have come to see that genuine art can overcome these phenomenological singularities. The voices and perspectives printed within these pages are a testament to this truth.

We are grateful to our advisors for their guidance, the contributors for their generosity and talent, and most of all to our faithful staff, who—despite our collective struggle to define “good art”—have consistently refused to compromise excellence within these pages. You have helped to uphold and realize our mission, and we trust that you will continue to make *Tablet* an important and beautiful publication. This issue is dedicated to you.

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& people

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fall
2005

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*Any opinions or views
expressed in this
magazine are those
of the authors/artists
and do not necessarily
reflect those of
Tablet's staff.*

the center of gravity

Horrific child
that I was, I liked to watch
ants blown from a table
simply out of my curiosity;

one by one
and over and over
I was a gust of wind
making them fly high;

hurriedly resuming
their work, no single ant
seemed injured
landing on a cold floor;

and I wondered
why they never
screamed, or why
it was never a fatal blow;

lately I have begun to see
the logic of gravity, how
even ants are compelled to live
deeply and quietly inside their wounds.

by
**Tomoko
Yagi**



Taylor

by Chris Glenn

Red String

by Tomoko Yagi

Perhaps a gentle embrace,
or a kiss on the cheek,
better still, a handshake.

When your hand leaves
mine, it will not differ
from how the red string

of a balloon loosens its knot
from my little finger, and
slips away, floating skyward

without a word of farewell,
only a gesture; as a rule,
when asked, I say, I let it go.



untitled
by Dan Taeyoung Lee

remember

There is a difference between "do not" and "cannot." You do not because you have a choice. You "cannot" because you don't. My father cannot speak Chinese. He does not speak Chinese because he cannot remember how. I ask him what he does remember from his childhood and he says he doesn't know. Then he tells me stories.

I cannot speak Chinese. I do not speak Chinese. I don't know. But I can remember.

I remember the steamer from Shanghai to Taiwan. The men shouted and the women pushed through the thicket of overturned carts and perspiration. My grandmother clinging fiercely to the two scalped tickets as the conductor made the last call to board the overcrowded ship. My grandparents fighting their way down to a tiny, dock-side porthole to say a final goodbye to my great grandmother, who was to be the guardian of the oversized bundle that was my father.

For a moment, everything was still. There was no time. There were no Communists. No war. There was nothing. Only suspension between outstretched fingertips. An instantaneous plunge a screech a firm grip a tug a pull a pop a swaddled baby in his crying mother's arms.

I can smell Taipei. Running outside in summer underpants to twirl in the hot rain of the monsoon, waiting for the wind to blow the ripened mangoes down and avoiding the deadly coconuts that fall from the swaying trees.

The shame and frustration of being sent out in the hall on the first day of 4th grade at Commodore Stockton Elementary to tackle Run Spot, Run, which was to become his Bible for the next two months.

Being a big brother. Going over to Aunt Judy's Boyfriend's house to retrieve her shoes, which she had forgotten when she left, enraged over an unfair game "Cowboys and Injuns." Returning home with 11 stitches from where the boy sliced him in the head with a toy gun as he turned to leave.

The 8th grade class picture. He, the shortest and chubbiest standing out in the far right corner, opposite his gigantic, pea-brained protector Rufus

who dominated the far left. The innumerable times the beloved hillbilly shielded him from shoulder checks and the taunts of "Sing-Song Chinaman" in exchange for help on math homework and bike rides to the train tracks behind school to throw brightly colored garter snakes and watch them explode.

He doesn't know that I remember. He can't (know). But he does tell me that I am nothing like he was when he was younger. He says I can't be.

My mother was a lot like my father. They were both young once.

The night when she and Aunt Carol were especially silly and their father especially cross. The four tiny hands pressed tightly over two quivering mouths. The ingenious idea of slipping the royal blue Bible into the seat of her underpants to protect against the sting of an inevitable spanking. The wet, aqua marine streaked sheets tossed in the laundry basket after falling asleep, still laughing.

A Sunday afternoon scrubbing off "Hail Marry" and "Blessed Muther" scrawled in pink chalk across the sun-bleached stone walls of the Baptist church.

Feeding Mommom's cigarettes, tin cans and used tissues to the wondering neighborhood goat. The disappointment after following the alleged alchemist around for hours only to find out that the enchanting myth about what came out the other end was not entirely true.

Winter. Searching for optimal digging sticks to flip the hibernating frogs nestled in the thick layer of jelly that had formed over the Cloverfield public pool. The birth of ingenuity amidst the death of life.

My mother does not look at me when she speaks, but I can tell by her eyes that she is smiling. Her eyes are focused on the things behind me-- things that I cannot see. I turn my head, but apparently they are gone. Long after her lips have stopped moving, her eyes have stopped smiling and the things have disappeared, I remember. Sometimes, when I least expect, imprinted in black rainbows on the insides of my eyelids.

by kristin seong

excerpt from

mneme

by Hao Tschang

The only thing that kept me going the next morning was an extra caf mocha cappuccino. I sat on the train, feeling the weight of my eyelids, trying to remember the last time that I had felt well-rested. I thought about Michael. Last night, I'd lain awake all night wondering what he'd been doing in my Mneme-dream. After a while, I couldn't tell for sure whether I had seen him in it or if I had just imagined it after the fact. Once 6 a.m. rolled around, I no longer cared. By the time I got in, the caffeine had done its work, giving me enough energy to get by.

I walked into the lobby and a familiar face greeted me as I got on the elevator.

"Hey, I heard about your promotion. That's really amazing for you." He had sandy blonde hair and a thin, angular face. He worked two cubicles down from me and I'd seen him just about every day for almost 2 years. I couldn't remember his name.

"Thanks a lot, man," putting on my best executive smile.

"It's a lot of pressure, but I'm sure you'll do great."

My smile thinned, as I started to see the jealousy and hatred beneath his obsequious smile and his underhanded congratulations. I remembered the quiet bitterness I had felt whenever one of my neighbors got promoted above me. I knew exactly the kind of bile he must feel in his throat as he smiled his broad, fake smile at me in the elevator. Suddenly, my smile came back, this time genuine with an edge of malice to it.

"I hope so. Hey listen, I've got some cool posters and calendars decorating my old cubicle. I haven't had time to clean it out. Help yourself if you want them. They go better with particle board walls than oak panel walls."

I watched his smile fade and start to crack as he forced out, "Thanks, man." Fortunately for him, the doors opened onto his floor and he walked out. I smiled my mean little smile even as I

got off and walked to my office, savoring the joy of saying exactly the right thing to someone you hate.

"Good morning, Mr. Castiglia."

I had almost walked right by without noticing the forty-something woman sitting at the desk in front of my office.

"Good morning.."

"Janet. Janet Wilkins."

"Ah. Good morning, Janet."

"You have two messages."

"Already?"

She smiled and shrugged, handing me two immaculately handwritten pieces of small lined paper.

"Thank you, Janet," I said as I went into my office and closed the door.

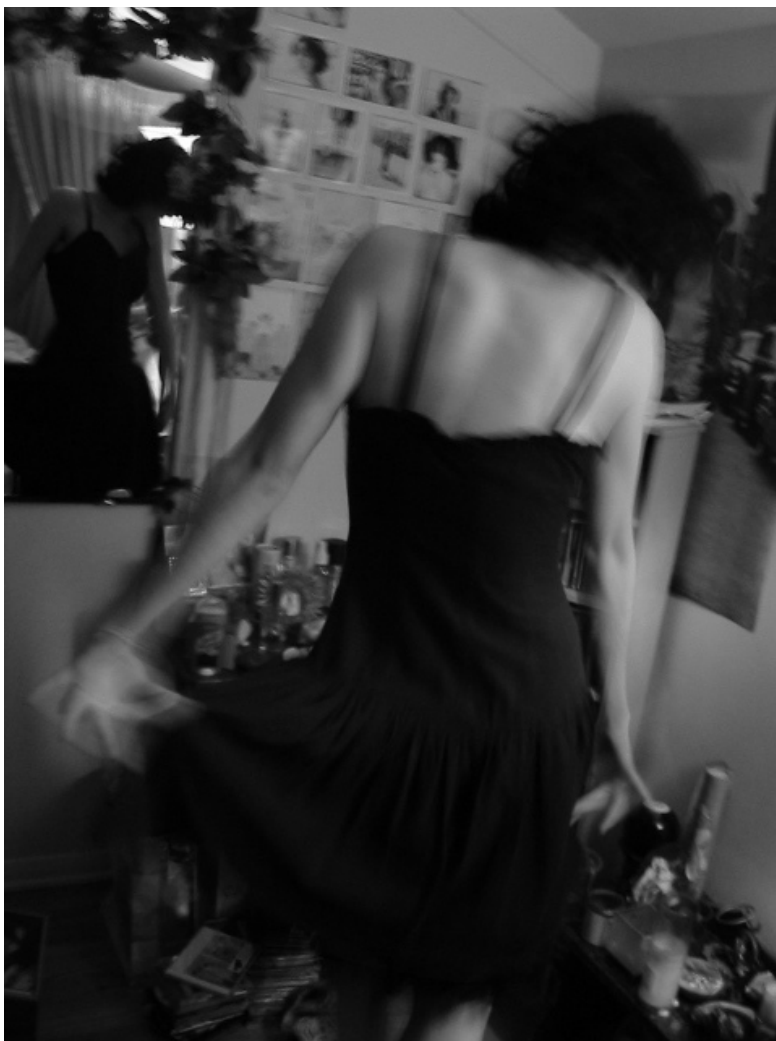
I had a 10 a.m. meeting with Mr. Richards, Vaughn's boss and now mine. Everybody had heard rumors that the new fund was going to be an extremely high pressure, fast-paced, high return hedge. Richards probably wanted to make it official that they expected the impossible from me. I had an extremely good track record on my recommendations. If Vaughn had taken all the recommendations I'd made, his fund would be worth 20% more. Evidently, Richards had been watching and expected me to work the same magic on an even grander scale. But as I sat behind my new mahogany desk, doubt swelled up inside me. My heart beat faster and my breathing became shallower.

Get it together, I demanded of myself. They haven't even asked you to do anything yet. Just calm the fuck down.

I felt at the vial in my pocket through the fabric, assuring myself that it was still there. For a moment, I wondered if I had time to go on a tiny little trip, a micro-Mneme dream. I shook my head back and forth, physically dismissing the idea, chasing away the temptation.

The other note was a message from Vaughn. He was going to introduce me to my staff at an

motion
by Cosmo Hammond



11 o'clock brunch meeting. There were some transfers from Vaughn's staff and promising new hires.

Great, I thought to myself, smug young hires right out of school and jealous ex-colleagues who'll still think they can call me Martin.

I sat back in my leather chair and held the Mneme vial in front of me. I sighed and closed my eyes, as I stuffed in back into my pants pocket.

"Janet," I said, holding down the intercom button, "I need some coffee."

I sat on my couch, staring out of the living room window. There were a few slivers of the New York skyline visible from between the neighboring buildings. Unfortunately, my apartment wasn't 50 stories up, the way my new office was. I thought about getting a new place, one with a better view. On my new salary I could

definitely afford it. It was too much hassle, I decided. Especially considering how little time I actually spent in my apartment. Still, at that moment, I couldn't escape how bleak the view from my window was. Sighing, I took out the little friend I'd been carrying around all day. I tapped out a healthy dose, snorted it and then spread out across my couch.

I look at the sky from my window. It's dark and I can see all the lights in the city. I can see the river and the bridge. The lights from Queens reflect on the river and I can see them shimmer across the little waves.

"Ready, Marty?" my Dad asks.

"Yeah," I say.

And suddenly, as if it had been waiting, a light shoots up from the river and bursts, shooting red lights in every direction, spreading in a big circle.

It looks like a flower made of red light. More lights fly up and explode, all different colors and shapes. One on top of another. My dad opens the windows and we can hear the booms. You can see the explosions before you can hear them.

"Wow." My lips form the word, but I don't say it.

There are so many shapes and colors. They're dancing. They light up and then they fall, slowly sinking towards the river. They look like falling stars. At least I think they do. I've never seen one.

"Alright people, I didn't give you guys this talk yesterday because I didn't think there was any point to laying down a lot of pressure before you were even settled in but now I have to make a few points. First of all, this is an extremely high-performance hedge. The rates they're advertising on our fund are going to be higher than any fund this firm has ever offered. This is an experiment, and we need to make it work. I need an initial portfolio pick by next week and I need an interest rate analysis by Friday.

"Second, I want a good atmosphere here but keep in mind, no matter how high your GPA at Harvard and no matter how long you may have worked on the same project as me, you're working for me. I don't want to be a hardass and I'm sure we can all get along very nicely if we all treat each other with respect. Remember, we're a team, we're not competing against each other." I had to fight a smile as I lied through my teeth. It was weird being the one delivering the teamwork spiel to a crowd of young, ambitious professionals, each of whom would gladly fire all the rest if it meant having my job.

"Alright," I said, as I clapped my hands together. "We're done."

I returned to my office from the conference room, taking an elevator up to the executive suite.

"No calls for fifteen minutes, Janet," I said over my shoulder as I walked into my office, shutting the door behind me.

I took out my cell phone, hitting the voice dial function.

"Sara," I enunciated.

"Hello?"

"Hello there."

"Martin?"

"Yeah. Can you talk?"

"Yeah, it's fine."

"Good. How were the extra two days at the

Bermudas?"

"Mmm, they just made my heart grow fonder of these fluorescent lights. Oh how I missed them."

I laughed, swiveling my chair to face one of the halogen lamps lighting my room with a warmer, softer light. "So... are you free for dinner tonight?"

"Hmm, I think I can move some things around."

"How about 10 o'clock at Bellucci's?"

"Sure. I'll see you there."

"Bye."

* * *

"So... what do you want to do now?" she asked, sweetly.

I laughed. "You're so transparent."

"Who? Me?" she replied, affecting a surprisingly convincing look of angelic innocence. Her rounded features lent themselves to an appearance of innocence and youth.

"Yes, you. You're just using me for my drugs," I said, pretending to pout.

"Don't say that..." she said, rising from the bed, holding the covers seductively over her chest. "I'm using you for sex, too. Not to mention the free dinner."

"Hey, I thought we were going Dutch."

"You're the one with the big promotion."

"And I'm the one with the green stuff," I smiled.

"I'll get you back when you give me the name of your guy and I have my own."

"Once I tell you about my guy, I'll never see you again."

"Have a little faith."

"In the morning," I answered. I slipped out of bed and rummaged through our piled clothes beside the dresser. "Ah ha!" I said, raising the vial over my head victoriously.

We both took our bumps and then we lay down to sleep. There was plenty of room for us to spread out on my king-sized bed but she snuggled in close, wrapping her arms around me. Sober, I might have objected but I preferred to just enjoy the warmth as I waited for the Mneme to kick in.

It's late. I don't know how late, but I know it's a lot past my bedtime. It's dark and I'm still mostly asleep. I must have dozed off in the car on the way home. Someone is carrying me. My dad is carrying me in his arms. He doesn't know I'm

awake. There are no lights on and he's trying to be very quiet. I keep falling back asleep.

But then I wake up again when he takes a step. Daddy is very strong. He won't drop me. I'm so tired...

We're in my room. He lays me down in my bed, gently. He pulls the covers over me. I try to say "I'm still wearing my clothes" but it doesn't come out. "Go to sleep," he says. I watch him leave through eyelids that won't stay... up...

I walked down among the cubicles, unannounced. It was strange; it had only been a week since I'd spent 10 hours every day in a giant, subdivided room like the one I walked through. Yet it already felt so unfamiliar and foreign. I felt my eyes twitch in response to the fluorescent lights, imagining I could see the high-frequency flicker that slowly drove you mad.

Dan had a file that I needed and rather than paging him to have him send it up, I decided I'd stretch my legs and take a walk myself. I had worked with Dan for the past six months. I liked him more than most people in this place. We'd shared more than a few laughs making fun of Vaughn at the water cooler and out at lunch. We commiserated about how he made me "Marty" and him "Danny." I was glad that he was part of my staff. It felt like we had a certain understanding. Things wouldn't quite be the same, but there could be respect between us.

"Oh my God, did you see him this morning? For fuck's sake, invest in some eye drops. He's looked like total shit lately." It was Dan's voice, coming from around the corner. I stopped and listened.

"It's probably the pressure," said another voice, fresh meat from Dartmouth.

"It's the fucking coke," laughed Dan. "He's totally out of control. I can't believe he got that promotion. There were 20 better-qualified guys. Oh well, he'll probably get canned—"

He stopped short as I walked briskly around the corner, my face blank.

"Oh come on guys," I said. "I'm not going to fire Johnson. He screwed the pooch a little but I can forgive."

Dan relaxed visibly. "Sorry, you know how we like to gossip," he grinned.

"Don't worry about it," I said, smiling thinly. "I just needed that Normandy Mining file."

"Oh sure, no problem." He turned and walked

back to his cubicle and came back with the file.

"Thanks a lot... Danny."

* * *

"What do you remember when you take it?" she asked, rubbing my leg with her bare foot.

It had occurred to me that she might ask this question sooner or later. It was like the Mneme-using couple's version of "What are you thinking?" Still, I had no better answer than, "What?"

"What do you remember? Where do you go?"

"I don't know. Why do you want to know?"

"You never talk about it."

"Neither do you."

"Okay, fine. Last night, I went scuba diving."

"When did you go scuba diving?"

"The summer of junior year of high school, my friends and I went to Australia. We dove around the Great Barrier Reef. It was amazing. So many strange, alien-looking things. They were beautiful. I felt like I was on another planet."

"Sounds like a good memory."

"It is."

I waited, knowing her well enough by now to know that she was not so easily sidetracked.

"What did you dream?"

"I dreamed that I was at home."

"Doing what?"

"Sleeping."

"That's it?"

"It's nice. I feel good. Safe. When I go back there in a Mneme-dream and just sleep, I sleep better than I ever do in real life."

"Do you dream about home often?"

"All the time."

"Where else do you go?"

"Nowhere, really."

"Really? Haven't you been to exciting places?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I'm on vacation with my parents."

"I guess you really like your parents."

"I did."

She paused, sensing the tension in the air. "How about college? You must have some pretty good memories from college."

"Sure, but I can remember those times clearly when I'm sober. I like going back to when I was a kid. It's so much sharper when I'm on Mneme... I remember so much that I thought I had forgotten."

"About sleeping?"

"About being a kid. I liked being a kid."

Naan onnu mey pannaley*

by Michela Carattini & Aditi Dandapani

Naan onnu kosburum ellam vittayn

I left everything for you
Saw your hand
In the marketplace
Slender, smooth fingers
In a sea of rough hands

My eyes crawled
Up your arm
To your face.

And now the shame
Of fifty-three minutes
The rough hand of another
Pushing me down against
The cold, shiny floor
My breath taken again
My eyes close
I imagine it is you

How can I prove to you?
I screamed, and you didn't save me.

Your hum-heated words
The buzz of a body possessed
The smoky flavor
Of a raging fire
Permeating at our door.

I was making you dinner, love
When I felt the knife cutting into my skin.
The *samosas* became the charcoal
10 Of my accusations.

We disobeyed our parents
Your eyes, your wrists

Cutting into flesh
Like a juicy orange melon
Brushing against each other
Accidentally
Or was it always meant to be?

You are my home
How can I look at you?
Left to contemplate
Your purity, your life

I believe you
I know you didn't ask for this
A stranger took my life and my home
Killed something inside
You will die with it.
How can I look at you?
I couldn't find you.

Where were you?

I wondered about
Those breathless nights,
About how enduring
A woman's love can be.

I believe you.
What can I do?

It's in their hands.
It's in God's hands.

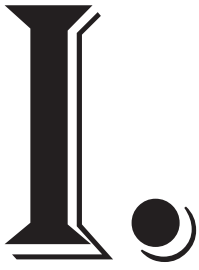
Naan onnu mey pannaley
I am innocent.

*Italicised words are written in Tamil. Translations are the lines that follow directly afterward.



STEPPE FUNERAL

by Jerone Hsu



by Halley Bondy

I've finally unpacked the meaning of it all. I've wiped away the yellow sheen canopy that girds the ultimate Truth. The Truth itself is not important, because all it did was give me tremors before bedtime, tremors that were no different than that hollow feeling between my ribs when I watched Samara emerging from the well after a 7 days warning. I'm the one who has to find my bearings again. I'm the one who must balance supply and demand, cheese and cheese substitutes, intake and metabolism, rationality and romanticism, creativity and money, the trash bin which is oh so much closer than the recycling bin. So much for the Truth, it defecates on all my binaries. But it never pays the bills or tells me I'm wonderful like clients and boyfriends.

I thought of writing a Truth manifesto, in which a small group of academics attempt to revolt against regimes of Truth because they were so fed up with thinking. In the end of the story they opt for lobotomies instead. Maybe I'll write it later, but I think I'd rather indulge a G rated fantasy I had when I was trembling under the force of the Truth in my bed one night.

The day where I have time and a patch of grass is the day where I will become obsessed with gardening. I absolutely cannot wait to become obsessed with gardening. There will be no rhyme, reason, or color scheme to my garden not for allegory but because, hopefully, I will be crazy by then. The whole city will know me and my dirty knees, the soil around my cuticles, and I will force them all to call me Crazy Ol' Green Thumbs.

"Green Thumbs McGee," they'll call me to my face, "A watched pot never boils."

They will be referring, of course, to the fact that I am staring at my pots of soil waiting for any signs of life.

I will send out Garden Party Invitations to my old friends. Everybody will feel consistently weird around me, so only the braver ones will show. These will be the ones who feel secure in their finances and networks, the ones whose lives have reached the point where charity, and perhaps whores, are the only roads they choose to travel. My inclination to include whores is a matter for another prose.

Attendees will indulge me and tell me that my garden is pretty, even though it is clashing, pest-infested, and overgrown. I will not notice the pity in their voices, nor will I notice when past lovers tour my garden with their new main squeezes and children, nor will I feel apologetic that my kitchen is a shithole and that there is no food in the fridge. I now feel inclined to say "They can all kiss my ass," but when I am crazy, I will no longer feel inclined to say that. I will only be staring at the lifeless soil. My ass will be firmly planted on my gardening stool, utterly unkissable.

I am debating whether or not to be a scary or benevolent crazy person, whether I will smile or proselytize. I think I'd rather confuse people and say repeatedly: "It's the only magic left," staring deeply into the pistils of my impatiens, which at first seems cryptic but is really very simple and stupid when you think about it, and since it's so simple and stupid people will wonder if I really am crazy or just faking it to escape the Truth.

But either way, I'll be unreachable. And people will stop trying to reach me after awhile. They won't care if I'm eating right, articulating my feelings, or if I'm entertaining them. I will soon cease to be a tragedy; people will begin to attribute my behavior to drugs to alleviate any feelings of guilt. But you'll have to run into me at the Home Depot, where you'll have no choice but to say hello and help me carry my peat moss. "Price check on weed-eater," the pimpled salesman will announce, "Ol' Green Thumbs is in the house."

When the entire Home Depot is raising the roof, whether in mockery or camp, I'll know that my Truth is purer than yours.

II.

It might be bile that turns the water iridescent. That's something you never get to see in a regular white toilet. The toilet here is chocolate brown. And the colors swirl under the sun rays.

Ah, the hours wasted for an unseen end. Nobody should know the contours of their toilet bowl as well as I do. I'm assuming there's poetic potential in its ridges, or in the fact that the bowl is so stationery and stoic and patient with me, renewing each and every time with a fresh receptacle. But my mind doesn't go there. It likes facts. And multidimensional prose. And Iridescence.

Roaming the earth as a narcissist has its ups and downs. We overindulge which leads to intelligent evolution, but it also leads to a considerable amount of purging for those few extra inches toward the fulcrum. Our organs pile around us like dead autumn piles. We have to crunch our way through the skin, scabs, and toenails to make it to the bathroom, which is already flooded with spit and vomit and toilet paper drenched in blood. We slip on the oils that are popped from our zits, and on the tears we cry for the love of the theater. We choke on the smoke from our lungs, and on the wasteful words we spout even when we're alone. We submit ourselves completely to anyone who has the audacity to love us. We've sucked too much in, and law requires an equal and opposite release.

untitled, st. mark's chapel
by Dan Taeyoung Lee



Charlottesville

BY B.W. RODYSILL

Your almond drop shoulders

Slide softly

Wet limbs drip in the rain

Simmer, crackle in the light

Skin red blonde as a mandarin orange

Folding layers around tigers

And out of the forest

You're a smoke stack

Paper-thin in the breeze

Inching slowly,

Sliding toward the escalator



wind up

sage

by ian

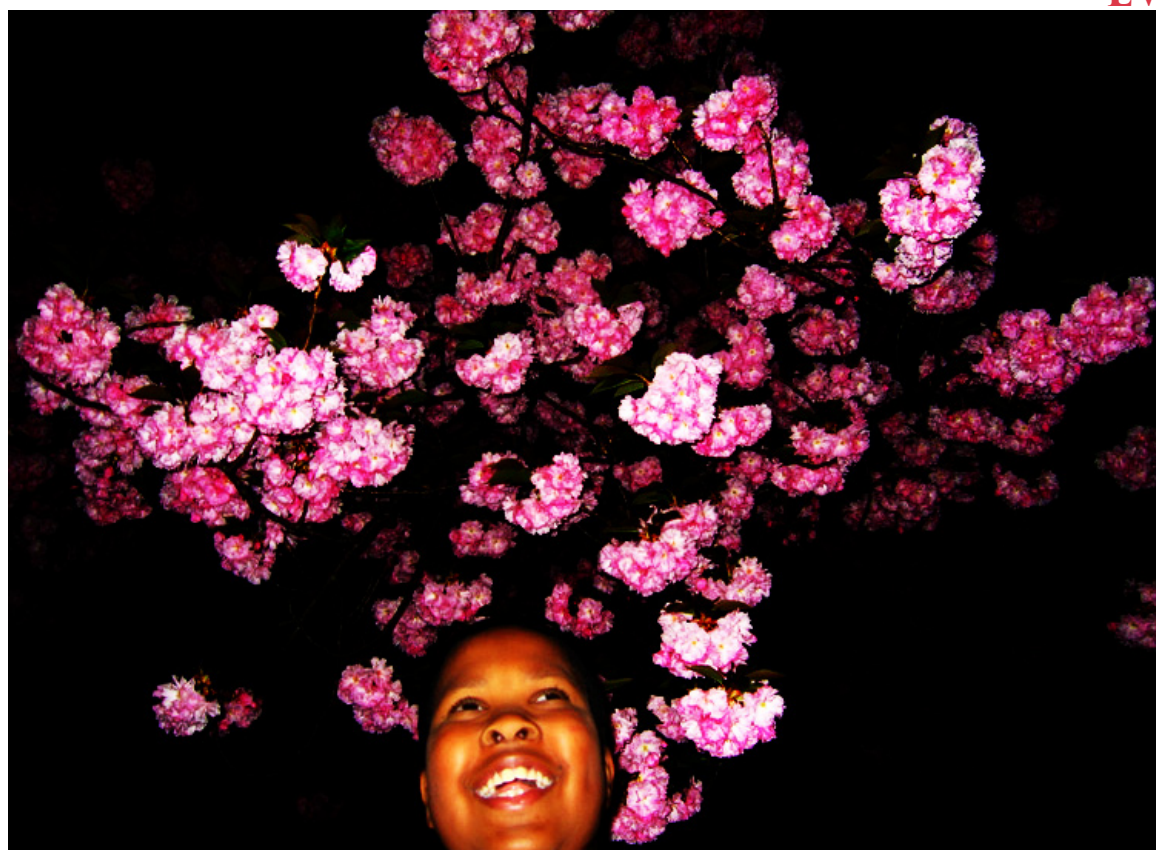
schnepper



DETAILS

BY CHRIS GLENN

EV



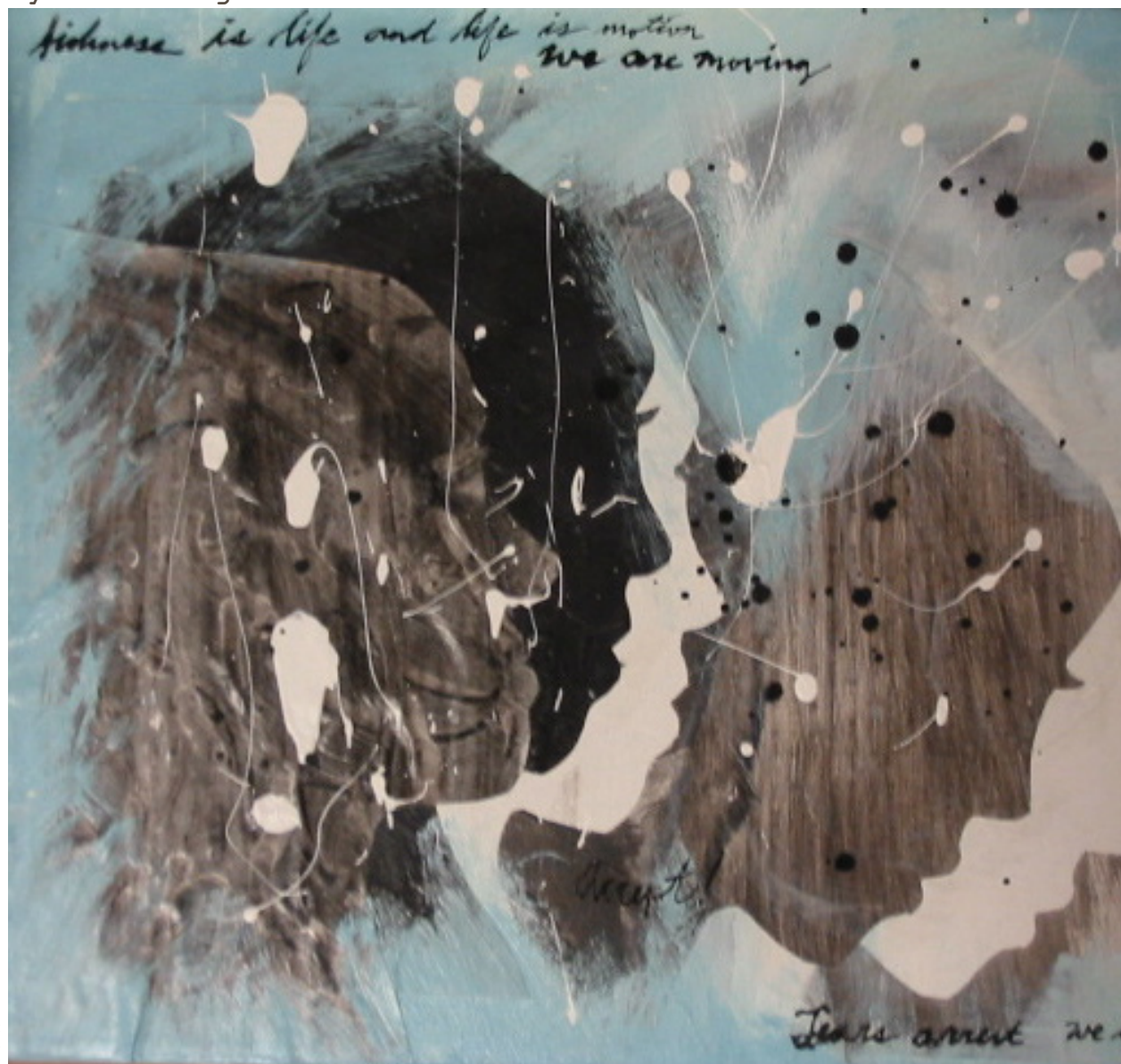
A Poem
Beginning
with a Line
from the
Shi Jing
(The Book of
Songs)

By Yi-Sheng Ng

You cast me a papaya, I returned a lump of jade.
You weigh my hands as the hands of a housewife,
Pondering the shortchange of the grocer.
Coming home she will lay us on plastic,
Break us both with her husband's knife,
Declare the flesh as orange-sweet or tough
Like volcanic glass, fit for rats and red-haired devils.

One seed in the husk has fifteen facets
And will buy all the cuisinarts she could carry.
It is omega, to cut the teeth
With the nails of unknown lovers.
The other seed will fall through the kitchen crannies,
Sprout home in the weekday dirt
And yield a fruit that will burst to the touch before haggling
With ripeness.

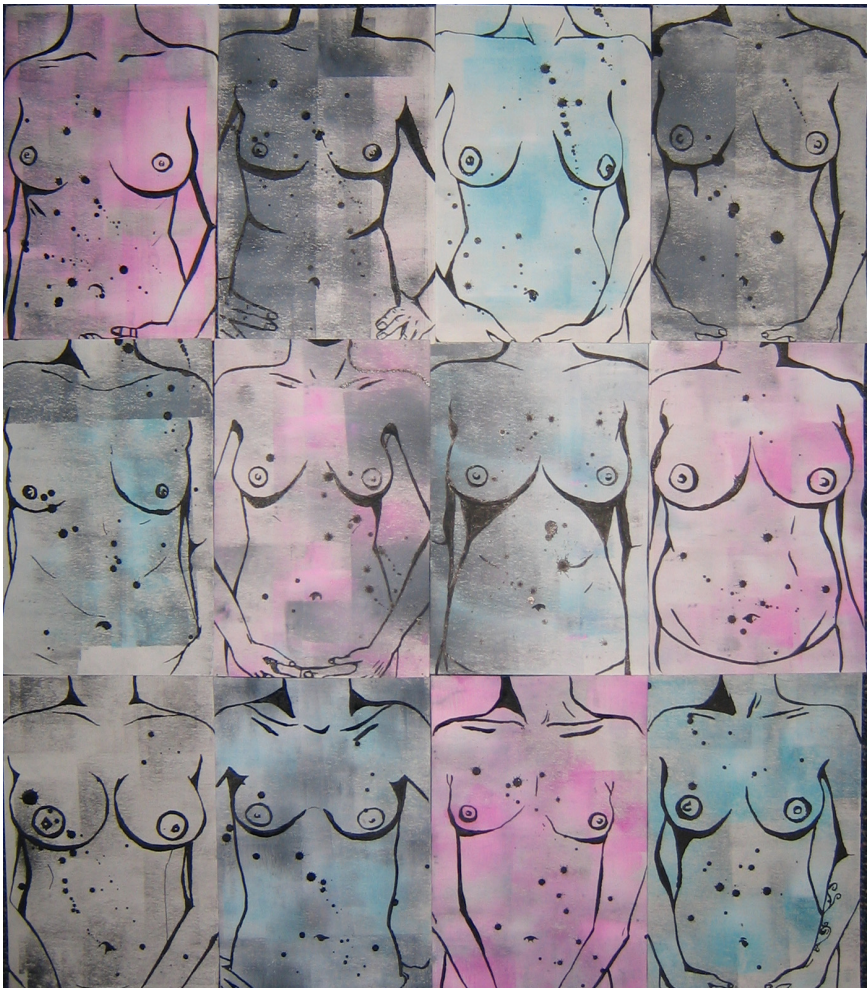
untitled
by Elena Megalos



untitled
by Cosmo Hammond



Breast Series
by Elena Megalos





Night
by Ivan Iannoli



Light in Dark
by Ivan Iannoli

Breakfast for Two by Doug Silver

Her skin was smooth as evening, lips the color of jealousy. She carried herself with the faith of an entourage. I blinked at first sight. Blinked again and another was by her side. He was blonde with a blue drink; a handsome boy, but there was room for two at her table. And although we had yet to meet and fall, I wanted my seat back, to feel her gaze come last call. A journey through dusk, not of competition, I hurt to experience the volition of a strong woman. To be the pride of her bedside scantily covered in a dawn colored shawl. As I sleep, she'll touch my face and remember to tell me I need to shave. When I wake, she'll be eager to send me for bagels because she knows I know what she likes, because she knows I care to care for her. So I'll dash off as she drifts back to sleep; but not to the place on 116th, we don't like them. "Please, sweetie, go to the one in the 80's that use the plump raisins, you know, the guys who are reckless with their cinnamon." Of course, I won't take the subway; stretch out this vindication, I nod at couple's arm-in-arm. Slip a coy smile to those nursing off lonely nights and forlorn lives, those who used to be me. Yet, content on an anecdotal evening, the blonde-blue boy, gin and no fizz, sits in my seat. He impedes on forever, in the shadows I blinked.

Morning Air by Taylor Marcus

"Morning air makes me sick," you said
when I picked you up for brunch
at a quarter to twelve.

You took the passenger seat, and as always,
propped your elbow on the console,
projecting your arm like a twisted skyscraper
into the empty fields through the window.
A rusty tractor sat in disrepair
feet from the side of the road.

I followed the maze of veins
on the back of your hand
with the pillows of my fingers
and told you to relax,
it's going to be a good day,
and we'll have some coffee soon.

[with cookies, letters, hands, and
sometimes a photograph]

by autumn giles

We fly through the city
snapping pictures. We are not empty
grocery bags groped and flattered by
the wind. We are not caught
rippling in the trees. We are
small children gawking manycolored pastries.

(and it is endearing when sometimes a child may slip something –
perhaps the greenfrosted corner of a halfchewed cookie – into her
pocket without you noticing and later when you find it you know why
such a thing would need to be saved. and this also happens underneath
sofa cushions.)

And also with hands, when you realize
what they are for. You mentioned
that we ought to save
our letters. That when we are famous (or have
failed famously) that people
may want to read them. (but, I know
better, know that letters
are always about open-mouthed light sockets
wanting bulbs and
howling
bankless
rivers.)

I would cry all the time if I lived
in the city, you say. A woman
slinks unto the train and says
godbless godbless God.

20 And by this she means
I would rather not be dead.

2005 I can't look at you
when you gag your bag for change.
I'll ask you to stand in front of vulgar pink neon,
so that I can take your picture.



home

by dan taeyoung lee

123-26-092004

Australian-Hispanic American with Italian-Irish background raised in Germany

by Michela Lynn Carattini

1. On my birth certificate

It says My father is white

He says Because people didn't treat Hispanics too well back then.

2. You think you are better than your father She says

Because you are blond and blue-eyed They say

You might as well be German.

3. She can't be your sister

They say

She looks too different from you She says

Yeah, like they would know.

4. White, not of Hispanic origin

It says Or Hispanic

I'll say Because I didn't fit the demographic too well back then.

Returning Home From Valleyfair. Late August. 1988

by B.W. Rodysill

Yesterday, in a Davis Cone painting, I saw myself, sitting in the car with the sunset
returning home from Valleyfair, 1988.

Past video stores and police cars, through parallel light,
silo mountains in the shadows.

Across the marshes of the Minnesota River,
past the old ferry bridge,
sky pink and blue and tired.

Outside, slurping ice cream at Dairy Queen on Old Highway 13.

Lights from the signs as bright as the sky.



sinks of
ar khangai

By jerone hsu

Floral patterned down comforter tucked to nose.

I shuffle out for the eighth time,
gingerly place my ankle-socked feet onto the wooden floor,
and slowly make my journey to the grey mammoth
the closet becomes at night.
I run my fingers along the crack of the doorframe.

I hear the winter maple branches scratch against my window,
fluttering their gangly mocking arms.
They snicker in their knowledge.

I walk in and hear murmurs of my mother through the wall of the closet,
As if her voice were trapped inside, buried several feet under.
And I stumble:

We had just fallen
Clutching our red winter hats to our heads
Red because our mother could see us
Winter because we could see our breath
And I lay there confused by the landscape that I saw.
Together we walked and once again
attempted the climb back home.

I ran along streams, flirting with falling,
“The rivers are from years of sobbing,” my sister tells me.
She clutches my pink-mittened hand and pulls me down.
“You’ll find mother in those waters you know”
“I know,” I told her.
I began collecting pebbles speckled with red.
“Those are gore pebbles” she said.
“I don’t understand” I replied as I wiped the red streaks with my mitten.
“They taste like mother.” she said and ran across.
I chased her through unfamiliar fields until the sky shook,
our father’s wrath not far behind us.
My mind turned black.

The room was laced with yellow light as I woke up,
in the doorway of the closet.

FAMILY

BY DIANNA NG

FICTION #1

End of Riverside Drive

by Liz Ferguson



by B.W. Rodysill

To a Younger Brother

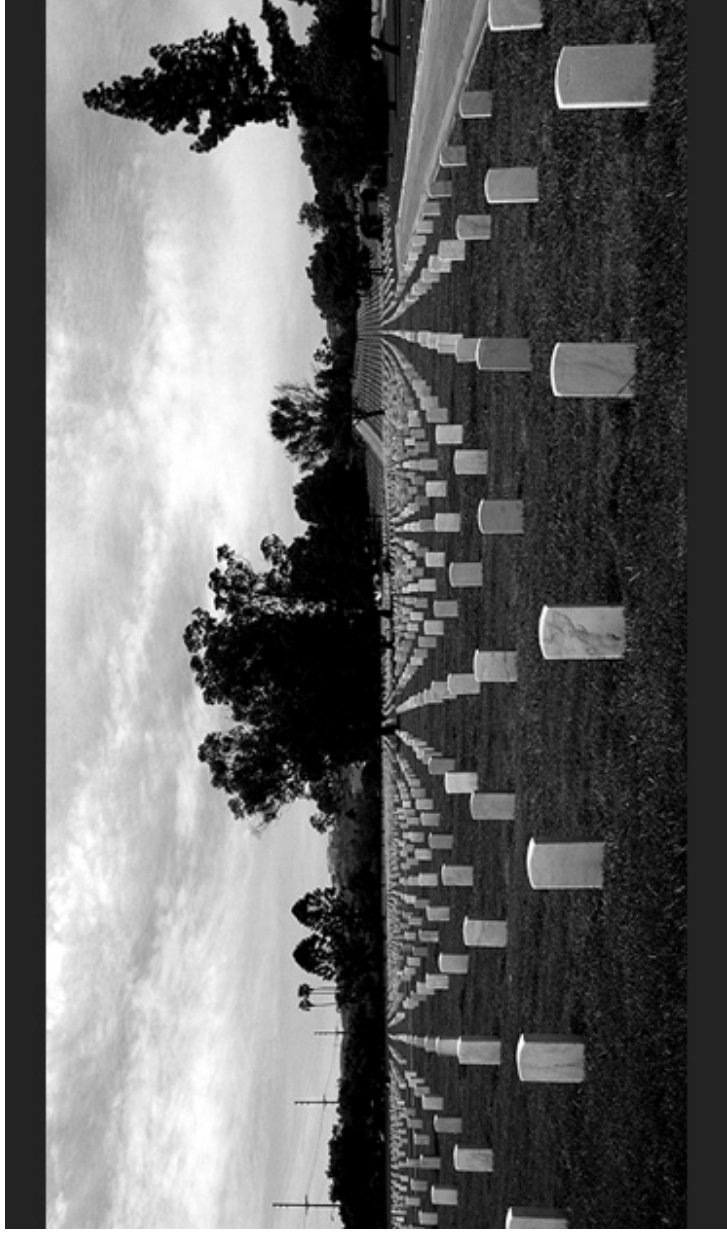
Did you forget about
The waves?

Did you think
Water stood still
In the sea?

The possibility
Of change
Allows the moon to breathe,

Fills in
The tidal holes
The worry in your dream.

UNTITLED



BY DANIELLA ZALCMAN

My Summer

by Carlos Hernandez

Judy says “I think there’s some amount of insight you can get when you find God. I think that people can learn to live their lives with joy and hope when they realize that God is always with them.” I say “yeah” but I think “how strange.” Here’s a Chinese girl, or woman—I can’t say which because she acts like my equal but she’s seven years older – from California, who’s talking to me about God. We’re sitting in a rock club, the first I’ve seen or heard about in Taipei. She’s sipping from a tall glass of grapefruit juice and wearing a red tank top and I’m sipping some good old-fashioned American Coca Cola while wearing a scowl. In between songs the singer of the band goes “duibuqi, ta de xian huaile,” or “sorry, his string broke,” and it gives us a chance to talk a bit.

“I’m a songwriter,” she had said the day I met her. “It’s interesting to meet another musician.” “Yeah,” I had replied, “that’s interesting.” I met her on the night that she came to look at my apartment. She was looking for a place that was conveniently located, so I knew outright that the place, which was up on a mountain at the edge of the city, would be wrong for her. But I had to show it anyway; I was going to go home in a week and a half. On the bus ride up to the place, I filled her ears with my talk of growing up and independence and sort of related it to music – you know, how making it on your own all the way around the world seemed sort of like making it in the world of music, how you had to be strong and independent – the stuff a nineteen-year-old child might think. As it turns out, Judy was less

of a ‘songwriter’ and more of a soon-to-be pop star, who didn’t want to hear about “making it in the world of music.” Still, she seemed to be impressed. She had a producer and everything, but she still asked what that thumping and clanking sound was in the song I showed her, and I said “that’s me banging on the table... and there are some coins on the table.” She had said, “I don’t know if I’m prepared to be in front of the cameras,” prematurely because her album wasn’t even done, “because my Chinese isn’t so good,” and I said “at least it’s better than mine.” We tried practicing on each other, but it felt awkward. She had asked “women shenme shihou hui dao?” or “when are we going to get there?” Because we had been on the bus for quite a long time, and she was getting very wary of the fact that the apartment was so far from the MRT station. “Just a few more minutes,” I said a few times and a few times more.

Later that night Thomas asked, “so did you bang her?” and I could only respond with “god, that’s not the point.” The point was that I had met someone, anyone, and that in itself was an achievement. I had walked her down the mountain from the apartment that night, after showing it, as well as some of my music, to her, still trying to peddle my way into her bankbook. “The view is really nice,” I said, “but it’s so inconvenient,” she said. The winding paved road with no double yellow line stretched for half a mile before us. She explained to me that it’s not safe for a girl to walk around at night, and I said that I’d never had a problem and she told me it’s because I’m not a girl.

The string is fixed. They launch into a pretty cool but pretty formulaic rock song. I respect them, at least, for playing something that you don't hear every day in Taiwan: Rock. The lyrics are filtered into my mind through a hefty language barrier, and they sound like "girl, love, go." "I didn't used to be Christian, if you can believe that," she said. I couldn't. "I only found God when I was in college. My roommate was really religious, and if you'd asked me, I would've said that I couldn't ever be like that in a million years," she laughed. I wonder if in a million years I'll be so optimistic. I said "Let's go outside."

I was sitting in my apartment a few weeks back, staring at my broken, distorted television. I was watching a distorted Edward Norton talking to a distorted Anthony Hopkins in Chinese, and wondering what I should do about my hunger, because there weren't any places on the mountain to get food. I considered going down to Ximen, thinking that the vendors would be out soon. I considered waking up Thomas, thinking that maybe he could come with, but then I changed my mind. It's not worth it, I thought. I can make some more cheese and crackers, drink a can of Kirin Ichiban, watch Distorted Brad Pitt scheming with Distorted George Clooney in Chinese, and refrain from doing anything that requires effort.

At about noon on some Friday, I was bending over to remove my shoes before the watchful eyes of the young woman who oversaw the computer lab at school. She dressed nicely

and had sleek black plastic-framed glasses, and might even have been considered a hipster, if she changed her hair and moved to New York. I kept thinking that her wrists may hurt even worse than mine, because of the days spent overseeing the computer lab, making sure everyone's shoes are off, and taking the single kuai for printing out a sheet of paper and putting it in a little change tin behind her, and most of all typing typing typing. Then I was sitting at a computer, behind another white person, and looking at my watch. I figured that the messages I sent to my friends were actually traveling back in time, because they received them twelve hours earlier, as they were about to go to bed Thursday night, and the thought only added to a growing sense of isolation.

See, not only am I as far away as I can get, but I'm also hopelessly stuck in the future.

On some Sunday, Distorted Edward Norton says to his wife "wo ai ni," and I think about how hungry I am, and how the only food in my apartment is lots of crackers and cheese. I'm able to shamble from my chair and overcome the rush of blood to my head before Thomas emerges from his bedroom, shirtless, and says "how has your day been?" to which I can only reply "pretty dull." Because as the days pass me by, I realize the sort of duality of loneliness, the pendulum between crippling fear and crippling boredom. I say fear because at eleven at night in Taipei, when the wrong bus takes you to a place you've never been, it's very difficult to find your way home; and I say boredom because, well, 48 hours of watching television you can't

understand hardly seems constructive. I think to myself that it's really hot outside, and that I haven't even really spoken to anyone since, I guess, three days ago, when I had class the last time. Thomas says "we're probably getting some valuable life experience." I say "but the bugs are gigantic." "Later, when we go home," he says, "we'll look back on it as the best thing we've ever done," and he's mostly right; except all I know is that reading David Sedaris is the only thing that keeps me from trembling as I sit on the MRT, the only thing that occupies my mind from the constant reminders that I'm no longer in friendly New York.

I had come to the rock club in the first place because Judy had told me that she would be performing, but to my disappointment, she didn't. "The lineup is all full," she said, and this is after I had taken the MRT out for an hour to be here on time. I'm the only one here with her. When I came in, the girl in front asked, in English, "would you like a table?" and I responded "I'm waiting for someone," but she clearly didn't speak English very well, and pointed me to an empty table in the corner. I ordered my Coca-Cola and sipped it politely, trying hard not to be noticed, until Judy arrived with a "sorry I'm late," and with a grapefruit juice in hand, "for my voice," she said. She smiled at me like a mother would at her child.

She didn't tell me, when we first met, that she was working on an album that would be released in stores and everything, that she'd be on the radio and maybe even MTV, like all the other pop singers, and I was too much in awe to tell her that I actually couldn't stand Taiwanese pop. Her producer, she explained, was also a good friend of hers that I should meet. Maybe he would like my stuff, she said, though it was clear she didn't mean it.

I heard her sing only once, while I played guitar at the rehearsal for the show she didn't do. "Holy father," her song went, in a peppy G Major, "here I stand." It was upbeat, and possibly even uplifting, but I was more focused on the fact that I was probably a better guitarist

than the guy who was actually in her band, and yet here he was correcting my fingering.

So we go outside. Her friends finally show up, around the corner, and she talks to them in Chinese. I mostly understand. "Ni cong na li lai?" her friend asks me, and I say "mei guo." She tells them she's not playing after all, that she's sorry to have made them come out here. They say goodbye after a few minutes and leave the two of us again. She continues her discourse on Christianity for a few minutes, and I enjoy at least the opportunity to have someone to talk to, but after a little while I can tell that the conversation is winding down. And I know that it's the last time I'll ever see her. So I say, "let me walk you to the bus stop," and she smiles and says "Okay."

A week after that, on my last day in Taiwan, I rode the train up to the northern tip of the island with Thomas, and we sat on the beach for a few hours. The beach was surrounded by green mountains scattered with Chinese temples, and the water wasn't too cold. It was such a clear day that we could practically see Japan in the distance, though we knew it was probably our imaginations, and we talked about what we would do the next time we came. "I'm going to miss this place," he said, with the kind of fondness that only selective memory can conjure, and I said "yeah, me too."

We watched the waves come closer and closer, and I imagined the land getting smaller and smaller, until there was nothing left, until the city of Taipei was just a memory under a hundred feet of water. Girls were running around in big wet t-shirts, too modest to wear just bathing suits, and little children buried each other in the sand. Couples were out sitting under umbrellas, afraid of getting suntanned, laughing at each other, and taking pictures. "What are you doing tonight?" asked Thomas, and I said, "I don't know." I looked down at my feet, an inch of green water swirling around them, buried my toes in the sand as far deep as they would go, and thought "one inch closer to home."

Daddy told him he wasn't good enough.
Daddy told him he wasn't tough enough.
Daddy told him he'd never be enough.

Breakfast Banter

by Doug Silver

He didn't like to hunt because he thought it wrong to kill,
Not wanting to take life merely for the thrill.
Canvas and stage fronted his vainglorious naiveté.
But father said, "Don't be a fag, that shit will never pay."
"Dad, I'm not gay, I just like these things."
"Life isn't only football games, beer, and boxing rings."

And for the first time it was said:
"Why couldn't I have a real son?"
Cut were all ties to sworn love.

Entered his studio, marinating in rage;
Trampled "The Diggers" and slashed "Two Dancers on Stage."
Years of work, thousands of hours,
Oceans of tears beauty devoured.

He dreamed back to his father bragging of the young man as his pride.
He ignored that, for so long they lived in one house, on opposite sides.
Work and wish he dropped into a barrel with a final leer, unpeeling kid-gloves,
Lit matches one by one, until he made smoke and ash of this unpaid love.
He watched hope burn, a son moved on,
The well dried up when he felt his worth gone.

Home he went to a full liquor drawer,
Swallowed a scotch as he counted his flaws.
Toasted to fanatics
And lives held static,
The nights forced to sleep in his car on swallowed tears, vomit, and plaid,
As well as day's wasted sanctioning him as Dad.

On pent up feet, he found father's study.
Two heads over the mantle ran bones to putty.
His answer hung high atop that wall,
He looked around for a reason, but there was nothing to recall.
Stuffed-eyed brothers stared at him, what was he but one of them?
"I can't wait until father finds me, won't the neighbors just condemn him."

Hand on handle,
Thinking, "Mom, I'll be there soon."
Finger gripped trigger,
For sticks and stones to which he wasn't immune.
Barrel touched memories,
Not posed and frozen like photograph's lies',
Mouth proud at his head,
From this hit, he won't cry.

A last swig stolen, and he fulfilled.
Dropped, loose, elastic will,
Onto forgotten tears and jaded beliefs.
He lay dirty red, within distance of relief.
Cursed with kin, cast with scorn,
Still alive, for himself he mourns.

talent

Halley Bondy is a senior at Barnard College. She is majoring in anthropology and minoring in women's studies.

Michela Carattini is an Australian-Hispanic American who grew up in Germany, and enjoys writing poetry in many languages. A psychology major in the School of General Studies, she hopes to combat violent sexual crime as a forensic psychologist.

Aditi Dandapani was born in Madras, India. She is a junior at Columbia University and has studied Western classical, pop, and Indian classical (carnatic) music. Her interests include singing, tennis, travelling, languages and math.

Elizabeth Ferguson CC '07 is from California, majors in Art History, dines and ditches, and wishes she made more art.

Autumn Giles is a Barnard senior.

Chris Glenn is an amateur photographer studying Political Science at Columbia. He keeps a log of photos at 114th.net.

Cosmo Hammond enjoys art projects and his eternal muse, lilly cutrono.

Carlos Hernandez is not a writer; he is a musician. To hear his music, you can use the internet. He is from Brooklyn New York, but does not wear any t-shirts that say "Brooklyn" on them.

³⁰ **Jerone Hsu** likes art.

Ivan Iannoli: I don't give much forethought to the act of photography. If I do, it's a sort of offset preparation. I'll take an idea, maybe a phrase or an interaction, and I'll hold onto it

for a while. When I've got my camera in hand, I don't make any moves to transfer that notion to an image; but sometimes, when I'm lucky, a translation occurs natively, without force. Often it doesn't. Either way, it's worth it. Photography is, so far, the best way to remind myself to recognize subjective, intuitive experience. Without a reminder, I'd forget, and then I'd be less content, and we don't want that.

Dan Taeyoung Lee: Listens to suede, my bloody valentine, and bill evans. Shoots with rangefinder cameras (some born before he was). Is inspired by henri cartier-bresson and andre kertes. Likes the sour taste of film and developer.

Hao Tschang is generally untalented but we published him because we felt sorry for him. Pretend it's good.

Taylor Marcus likes to drink seltzer, to wear black tee shirts and jeans, and to talk about the same subject for days, though that subject is subject to frequent change.

Elena Megalos is a sophomore from Venice, California. She is an English major in the creative writing program who would love to write and illustrate children's books some day.

Dianna Ng enjoys tea, papayas and punctuation.

B.W. Rodysill is a published poet who is, by all accounts, absolutely insane. He plans to spend the next year traveling throughout Europe writing music and poetry, trying to find something bright.

A recent graduate from Penn State, **Ian Schlaepfer** is still recovering from those four years of bacchanalian magnitude. With

his newfound free time, he focuses on the impending comfort of his social security. The commute between his art job in downtown Manhattan and his charming hovel in Jersey City devours his remaining time. However, his creative agenda couldn't be stronger. He lists contributing to the Tablet as a given, and schedules everything around this fine publication.

Ren Shujoe returns with a vengeance!

Doug Silver is a senior in the writing program. He grew up on Long Island but, luckily, escaped and now lives in Manhattan year-round.

Tomoko Yagi wishes to use this opportunity to thank Columbia for providing her with an experience that taught her the pleasure of poetry. She currently resides in Japan, reading mostly Jack Gilbert, and more Jack Gilbert, and never enough of Jack Gilbert.

Daniella Zalcman is an insufferable shutterbug who can always be found carrying at least one and sometimes as many as four cameras simultaneously, depending on her spirits. Sometimes, she thinks she sees the world more clearly through a lens than she does through her own eyes, which are terribly nearsighted and not very useful anyway.

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