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Tide Edition 10

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Abstract
Feeling uncertain? Undecided? Unfulfilled? Take heart, the Tide 2013 team is here to relieve you of your existential burden – after all how hard could it be to raise a mood when we ourselves have risen from the dead (metaphorically speaking)? Yes, you might be wondering how in the name of literary promises you’ve come to be holding this glorious publication – fear not, gentle reader, this is no mirage produced by your overwhelming longing for literary completion, the truth that we are burdened to impart upon you is that you, yes you gentle reader, have been told a lie. The theme of Tide 2012 was indeed ‘Endings’. This was not done out of malice by our predecessors, simply out of misinformation, but we feel that this has allowed us to return stronger than ever. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Tide 2013 has returned heartier and with brighter plumage than ever before, and we will not be repeating the mistakes of the past – this year there is no theme. Ah but there is anxiety these days, gentle reader, for what will become of the publishing industry in this age of the Internet and downloads and electronic markets? Print publishing is an unwieldy and aging beast, lurching under the weight of new technologies and methods, but fear not. We are here. Small publishing is flourishing, and we of the Tide 2013 team have gained the skills to fly-kick the problems of traditional publishing in the (metaphorical) face. Trust us, and if you haven’t yet paid for this copy you’re reading, please do so (that’s a good part of the solution, you know, we have charts and everything). Ah, but you may be antsy about our lack of theme – does that mean we’re incoherent? Flakey? Disorganised? No. We may have no theme but we do have atmosphere. In the poetry and prose within these pages you will find pieces that lurk on the edges of esoteric knowledge (or so we might say if we were writing essays about them), and of course there is the spirit of indefatigable determination that has been integral to Tide throughout its iterations. Be comforted, gentle reader, and read on.

Authors
Nhat Dang, Tamara Davies, Caitlin Easton, Tayne Ephraim, John Glenn-Doyle, Mo Hawthorne, Tatum Holloway, Stephen Lyons, James Poole, Matthew Pritchard, Lucy Tierney, Amy Underwood, Errinn Urquhart, and Alyssa Wickramasinghe

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Feeling uncertain? Undecided? Unfulfilled?

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The Tide 2013 team
Throughout the conception of Tide 2013 our team has worked together across all forms of the process. To fund Tide we’ve busted trays and endured floods to bake cakes, sizzle sausages, and flog books. We’ve held trivia nights, sold chocolates, sold advertisements, negotiated donations, and raised money. For content we solicited far and wide, collated submissions, advertised entries; we’ve edited long lists, short lists, written rejection and acceptance letters, proofread and edited submissions and worked with the writers (as editors) to get the most out of their work. To design Tide 2013 we formulated and compared designs, negotiated themes, explored typefaces, page lengths, margins, compared themes again, solicited illustrations, and formatted pages. We worked together, made compromises, and kept working when the money wasn’t coming in with the deadline approaching fast. And now we pass it on to you and hope you enjoy the fruits of our labours.

The Tide 2013 Team:

Nhat Dang
Tamara Davies
Caitlin Easton
Tayne Ephraim
John Glenn-Doyle
Mo Hawthorne
Tatum Holloway

Stephen Lyons
James Poole
Matthew Pritchard
Lucy Tierney
Amy Underwood
Errinn Urquhart
Alyssa Wickramasinghe
I’m not racist but
all the trees in America look the same.
See me playing AFL in the dark
Darwin dreaming of
North Melbourne beagles
barking in the grandstand.
Snoopy’s in the doghouse
his crossword is too difficult
damn dark boxes
the words don’t fit together
& the solutions are in Malaysian.
But Snoopy don’t Sudoku
the numbers won’t get in line.
Make it so number one,
The next generation
won’t play by the old code
or respect the enterprise
of your captain’s classical training.
Trekking through Galapagos
Charlie punts hypothesis.
The anachronisms melted
but we still had the radio.
Microphone gaffs easy as ABC
harmless as the bark of a
modest Mauser. Lightning
over the archipelago, good grief
for people who love kite flying
& unseen little red-haired girls.

Socially static radio commentates
AFL & Brown. He’s a good man,
apparently. It’s hard to see the radio.
Charlie selects peanuts naturally
from the trail mix & wonders
was the swan or the kangaroo
here first? The crowd gibers.
Goodes marks &
Lucy holds the football.
Woodstock whistles,
when did the wattle
become a pest?
The bleeding eucalypts shelter
the trespassing black swan.
Kangaroos can’t go backwards
but they sure hate going forwards.
Men of ape descent
can’t tell trees apart.
These things are real.
I’m coated in the red dust
of Darwin’s wake.

John Glenn Doyle is a shameless self-promoter.
He lives in Wollongong.
THE RIVER

By Sally Evans

I’m watching Joanna. Joanna in her one-piece swimsuit, Joanna holding her breath for forty seconds underwater as she glides along, feet flicking, belly glinting silver like a salmon. Jo, coming up for breath without a splutter, lips funnelling the air like she’s waiting for a kiss. The water falls away from her, a curtain that drops from her hair into the river.

She’s fifteen, I’m eighteen. And I’m meant to make sure she doesn’t crack her skull open and drown, to watch her like a good big sister, even though she’s on the Year 10 swimming team and I hate the river. I’m waist-deep and refuse to take another step, even one closer to the shore, because the mud of the riverbed is still slipping and squirming under my feet. I look down but the murky water swallows me below the belly button and I can imagine eels, bug-eyed and blind, rolling around my ankles.

Jo’s only ten metres away. It might as well be a mile.

Then she dives beneath the water again, frog-kicking away from me towards the bridge, breathes, twists onto her back, and sculls through the dark shadow to the water on the other side. I watch the little splashes of her motion, the ripples that disappear before they reach me.

I take a deep breath and heave myself towards the shore. Jo in the water moves like a fish, but I’m all bovine, dragging myself up through the waterhole mud. I snatch towels and clothes and sunscreen into a messy armful and head up, towards road level.

On the other side of the bridge the water gets deep and the bank is steeper. So I pull on a t-shirt and shorts and walk out onto the bridge, past bunches of boys and girls perving on people down in the water.

Jo’s just below the surface, kicking along. The sun and water slice her body into shimmering segments. Jo, swimming towards a group of people, no, a single person, a tanned person, shirtless and stocky and nineteen. Jo, trapped in his arms and giggling. Jo, underwater, fish-kissing and blowing bubbles into his mouth.

Hooked.

Sally Evans is a poet and PhD student at the University of Wollongong.
That night
we walked down Hawker’s Road,
kept losing the dogs,
but their eyes would show
in the torchlight
or
they’d launch from the scrub,
Scotch’s fur bristled along her spine,
Ribbon’s smeared back on her head from sap
covered in
Spinifex and sticky-beaks
panting.
I turned the torch off —
you had never seen
so many stars,
so you kissed me.

Holly Buck is going to stay up all night saying mad scarlet
things such as Walter Pater loves.
I once spent an entire day on the water in a yellow-plastic canoe with my father. I was maybe ten years old, but it is difficult to remember. Especially now. He sat in front of me and did most of the paddling and we spent the whole day on the floodplain, from sunrise to sunset.

I remember floating through a landscape that I normally walked across. Steering the nose of the canoe between the gums, their slender trunks rising from the water like ankles from a bath. We paddled out for half the day. I saw places I’d never been before. When the sun was high above us we turned and made our way back home.

I remember looking down over the lip of the canoe, expecting to see my face reflected in the mud-brown floodwater, but the water was clear and I saw right through to a reef of sunflower crop. We passed over a barbed-wire fence and onto open pasture, gliding above the grass, which swayed below us, caught by the gentle current of the flood.

There are boats out on the harbor now as I sit on the balcony of my apartment. From up here I imagine looking over the edge of a yacht. What would I see if the water were clear? What hidden topography runs across the bottom of the harbor?

On the canoe that day, floating across the tops of fences, I looked back down to the terrain passing beneath us but the water was mud-brown floodwater again. It had changed state like a chemical reaction, or perhaps it had always been like that.

I take a cigarette from the pack in my breast pocket and light it, blowing a breath of smoke out towards the boats on the harbor. The balcony—the whole apartment, in fact—is empty except for me and the chair. Dark rings remain on the tiles where the pot-plants had sat, along with rust-coloured residue from the table-legs.

Cigarette smoke floats out over the edge of the balcony and disappears into the air. Another chemical reaction of sorts. A dilution, perhaps.
smoke travels through air until it becomes air. It seems parasitic the way one substance disappears into another. Ever-present yet invisible, spread so thin it appears not to exist.

I once cut myself in the bath, on the edge of a tile. Drops of blood hit the water like shiny black ball bearings but as they sank they opened outwards like parachutes and then began to fade and then they disappeared. They became water.

Generations become blood and blood becomes water.

One night, years ago, in a hotel room, I emptied a blue plastic thimble of milk into a glass of water by accident (the bench top was empty but for a glass and a teacup). The milk flowed into the water like smoke into air, floating down through the glass and twisting to the rhythm of some imagined current. With my finger I stirred the water and watched as the solution span into a murky vortex. Drunk, and out of alcohol, I lifted the glass to the ceiling in a silent toast and drank it.

That morning— the morning of the flood— my father had floated into sight whilst I stood on the verandah flicking bottle tops into the water below. With the sunrise behind him he lifted a paddle to me in greeting and drew his head back, inviting me into the canoe.

My aunt had come out onto the verandah and was standing behind me. I could feel her warm belly pressed against my shoulders.

‘Come down,’ my father said.

I climbed over the wooden railing of the verandah, lowering myself into the canoe. He caught me as my feet touched the hull and steadied me, his hands completely dry.

‘Don’t worry,’ he said as he pushed off against the verandah post. ‘I’ll bring him back later.’

We drifted out away from the house and I looked back to my aunt. She stood in her pyjamas on the verandah, safe from the floodwater that lapped around the posts of the house.

My father paddled in silence as we made our way through this unsettled landscape. We passed landmarks that I recognised but couldn’t position on the map that I had constructed layer by layer within my mind. They appeared in isolation, out of context: a line of distant telegraph poles, a water tank, the top half of a tiny weatherboard farmhouse.

As we passed this cottage I turned in my seat, realising it was my father’s house. He paddled on through the flotsam of plastic bags and sheets of paper that were floating out of his front door and said nothing.

In the distance the sun angled off something metallic, blinding me. I looked down, my vision ringed with white light, and saw that the water had changed again: there were now wisps of a pale pigment floating through the mud-brown current, the two tones swirling into an eddy in the wake of the paddle-strokes.

‘That’s my milk,’ my father said. ‘From my cows.’

I looked up and saw a milk truck in the distance, the sun glinting off the huge metal tank.

‘Got stuck here the day before yesterday,’ my father said. ‘Couldn’t make it past the water.’

The driver must have returned to check on his truck and dump the fermenting contents only moments before we passed, for even as we floated by the veins of milk were slowly fading into the floodwater.

Like milk into water, the threads of my memory fade into some larger consciousness. I remember that day like I remember a dream: certain images are vivid one moment and the next they have disappeared—still present, yet spread too thin for me to make out. These images leave behind sediment, visible on some sort of molecular level, perhaps, but hidden from the scrutiny of memory.

If it weren’t for certain tangibles (sunburn, hunger, the feel of my aunt’s belly against my shoulders) then I might believe that it was a
fantasy. Floating between the half-submerged trunks of the gums was like floating through a dreamscape. A whole day spent on the water diluted my perceptions.

In the afternoon, on our way home, perhaps to convince myself that I was awake, I began to paddle. I couldn’t trust my eyes so I relied on the burn of my muscles to anchor myself to reality. My strokes came in an erratic and awkward rhythm—perhaps I was half-asleep. In front of me my father paddled with a mechanical regularity—dig, pull, rest, rest, dig, pull, rest—and as we passed the stranded truck, the milk long-disappeared into the floodwater, I began to match stroke with him, timing my movements to his.

down the road
from my house
a registered trademark
of the United States
lays in a park
used and re-used, once drunk
then inhaled
with a punch hole, a hose
no doubt for a local kid’s amusement
bewilderment
to get stoned
& sit beneath the eucalypt
fingering a bag of chips
like a child i think
of the money to be made
driving across country
for that ten cent refund in S.A.

Daniel Fudge is pushing his creative arts degree past breaking point but is confident he can reassemble it with a few nails and some PVC.

Jake Goetz studies creative writing at the University of Wollongong and is currently on exchange in Graz, Austria.
SAPPHO, I KNOW

By Kate Liston

The tower formed a mountain of flaming licks, papyrus catching up, up like pigeon flocks and with those words went mine, softly blazing out — to ash-dust on earth.

Caesar’s hand set his own ships alight, forced to watch his sea friends flail in fire and sink and tombs apart. I felt embers float above me — hot touch upon my face.

Perhaps he censored what rot he thought risky by burning books as he plundered the docks, nonchalantly bleating, “Sappho only wrote smut” — I rolled. Gold entombed.

Hid shock, feigned win, now ship-less and needing asylum, the arsonist fled. Word-bleed raw, the knowledge with charcoal scrawled, place of the cure of the soul — but few could be revived.

Kate Liston is from Pambula.

THE METRO

By Anne Maree Apanski

I begged you to ride with me to board at Revolution, my favourite, listen to that rolling thrumb so evenly tempered. A sailor without a gun pushed at our faces, asked for money. You kept staring and shook your head. Don’t show your tears, you said. Turn away and just listen: Tears like chandeliers, black goosesteps upstairs.

We alighted at Tverskaya with Mussorgsky where old friends begged in the damp underpass. We could see a mazurka or dance ourselves there, but you said no, there might be a bomb. It was over.

Anne Maree Apanski is a creative writing student at UOW. She works part-time as an education officer but considers herself a full-time writer.
RAW.
By Erinn Urquhart

ROT.
His hand hovered above the dead animal before he thrust a stick deep inside its open jaw. The girls surrounding him cringed and squealed, scurrying around like mice escaping a cat. He swung to face them, smiling, the dead rat skewered on the long stick. A breeze pushed the smell of the animal to their nostrils. The sweet summer day was filled with the stench of rot.

CHOOSE.
Curious, the little girl twisted the white cord around her neck.

DRINK.
He saturated the sour, yellow sheets with sweat. The air sank into him, pressing him further onto the mattress, and his head whirled with the silver fan on the ceiling. A metallic whir was all to be heard within the room. A tall glass of water sat untouched on the bedside table, a dead mosquito drifting on the surface, a woman’s fingerprints smudged on the side. The door was locked.

GOODNIGHT.
She falls asleep alone, on a stiff mattress with crusty off-white sheets.

WAVES.
The sky was black. Though the sand beneath their feet was firm, with every step they sank further into the Earth. The monotonous chorus of cicadas filled the darkness, and they could vaguely see by the sleeping lights of the city behind them. They stumbled through the dunes to the cold water crashing before them. All laboured breathing and cold sweats.

Erinn Urquhart is a red-headed 20-year-old with a love for words and creating.
MALL RATS

By Toby Lemon

Roy parked his rusted ’72 Corolla on the second-highest parking level and shuffled through the entrance of the IKEA superstore in mud-crusted crocs and beige Bermudas.

He bought a sausage sandwich (tomato sauce, no onion), picked a store map from the rack at the top of the escalators, and stuffed his pockets with stubby IKEA pencils.

Roy wandered through the displays, cross-sections of upper-middle class lounge rooms, kitchens, bedrooms. There were families, fathers, newlyweds.

In the living room section he found a plush armchair and sat in it beneath a mass-produced rendition of the Eiffel Tower, flicking through a cheap paperback pulled from a plain but functional wooden bookshelf. A dirty scraggly thing with wild eyes gave him a strange look and scurried away.

Roy was fifty-two, widowed, thrice divorced, no kids. His evenings were spent watching re-runs of infomercials on free-to-air television. Hand-held battery-powered fans, polyester slankets, two-in-one slow cookers. He was balding and smelt of spam.

Roy dozed off in the chair. People filed past in small clumps, tourists in an aquarium of suburban flat-packs and condiments. They paid no attention to Roy. It was as if he had become part of the display.

When Roy woke it was dark. The warehouse lights were off, there were no people, it was cold. Roy blinked. He couldn’t remember where he had put the map. He turned out his pockets, felt around on the floor, lifted the cushion.

Roy was lost.

Roy was hungry.

With outstretched arms feeling the way, he tried to find the way back to the store entrance.

There was a scurrying in the dark somewhere nearby. Roy froze. The scurrying drew closer. There was a sound like something sniffing.

‘Who is it? Who’s there?’ Roy said.

A cold and furry hand grasped his forearm like a vice. There was a voice in the dark, high-pitched and broken, smelling of bad milk.

‘So,’ said the voice, and sniffed the air again, uncomfortably close to his ear. ‘You’re lost, huh. What, took a wrong turn in the kitchen section? Dozed off waiting in returns? Lost your store map? If you want to live, follow me.’

Roy followed the voice, the soft scurrying steps, the rank odour. There were more of them: red corneas shining in the gloom. They lived hidden in the ventilation ducts, under the children’s display beds, high up on the flat-pack shelves where even the forklifts couldn’t reach. Join us, they said.

The days turned into weeks, the weeks into months. Somewhere between the living room and dining sections, Roy managed to eek out a survival on flat-packed gingerbread houses and leftover bread crusts. His hair grew matted and rat-like. His eyes adjusted to the gloom.

They bided their time, growing in numbers. Waiting.

Between stints in Vietnam Toby Lemon has worked as an animal psychologist, dental assistant, and guide dog.
WHY YOU SHOULDN’T PLAY WITH BOREDOM
In a distant land, amidst adversity and lessening relevance, a small villager named Jonah lived, breathed, and inevitably died a boring man.

However.

It turns out in a twist of events so inexplicable that any attempt to explain them has already been doomed to fail Jonah found a loophole in the pseudo-science time stream of reality and re-wrote his own fate to something more favourable than insignificant nothingness. With this in mind he decided to become a writer. In his fifty years of writing, however, Jonah failed to sell a single book and so in defeat sailed west to an island (except his compass was broken) and so ended up in the South of East where he unknowingly fathered his own ancestors and sealed his fate in a loop of nonsensical nonsense.

NO BIG DOYLE
‘Elementary!’ the detective exclaimed in a huff of explanation to the assembled crowd of expectant onlookers. ‘The butler did it.’

And after further investigation into the matter, it was conclusively proven:

The butler did.

STAR GAZING
Two farmers are sitting on a hill outside of town, staring up at a shooting star and wondering if they will ever see other worlds. At that moment the universe fails to do anything particularly remarkable and the farmers return home.

James Poole is best described as rage on a leash, a real zinger.
A SHORT FROSTED GAP
By Joel Burrows

Fluorescent fish bowls
dangle from science-fiction wire.
I sweep past them and the layers of
crusted buildings.
My wheel chirps the sound
of a cicada at this speed.

A muttering breeze
tales through my hair,
leaving me with a short frosted gasp.

The wind is tactile nostalgia.
The spry air feels like home.
But not the parts, I cringe,
not the parts I loathe.

Joel Burrows is an aspiring playwright and poet. He has been published in the UOW LitSoc Zine and has had plays performed at Ouscreen.

6:00 AM
By Adam Carr

It’s a good hour to be cracking open a cold fresh morning,
the dew has kept it frosty and my hands without gloves are as numb as
blades of grass not moving in the wind nor text messaging,
nor avoiding work emails. I want to be as the grass while the morning
passes rich
and crisp across my tastebuds, while there is no poignancy swirling in the
breeze,
can’t hear it nearby in the traffic, can’t see it reflected in the glass.

Adam Carr is a 23-year-old poet/video game developer whose work has appeared in many respected bonfires. www.adamcarrlit.com.
There comes a time when you realise that even if you dropped everything right now, handed in your resignation, kissed your partner on the cheek and shipped off to Florida for a life of nothing but cold water and rigorous training montages, you still wouldn’t achieve your dream of becoming a combination of Astronaut and Olympic gymnast. When you realise that certain body tissues have congealed to the point where you’ll never be able to do anything even remotely impressive on a set of still rings. Your resume just doesn’t have the ‘right stuff’. Your one-line career objective is woefully pedestrian. Plus, you have the blood pressure of the angry dad in a badly written sitcom and throw up at any G-force exceeding one. Besides, there’s the latest Game of Thrones to torrent.

You realise you won’t ever get to be the equivalent of Michael Collins, Apollo 11 bronze medalist and the first man not to walk on the moon. The closest you’ll get is trying to catch a Space Food Stick in your mouth while on a trampoline. But stay positive! I have for you an exciting business opportunity. The solution to our earthly ennui is obvious. I’m talking, of course, about a black market moon rock. If we all pool together we can get a tiny gram of titanium-rich basalt to call our very own. I’ve even done the research. Everything that follows is true, except for two obvious exaggerations – they are clearly marked.

Now, Reagan personally chipped 270 gift rocks with his bare hands! from the samples shoved into the boots of the Apollo 11 and 17 landers. He then sent them to each US state and any country he wanted to brag to. Roughly 180 of these rocks are currently missing. Some simply get misplaced, others get ‘borrowed’ by governors and diplomats who then swear they’ve never seen them, and some are just lost in more volatile countries – Gaddafi’s government had two and (surprise) no one can find them now. Sometimes NASA interns set up elaborate heists. And the rest... well, we’re talking a buyer’s market here.

We’ve got a few options. Here are a few shining examples of investment pioneers that have gone before us. If we can find one lying around, that would be quite a bit cheaper. Otherwise, the going rate is between five and ten million US dollars, but I’m sure we can kick-start a Pozible account for that or something. I mean, really, a moon rock! Have you seen the crap that gets funded on those websites? But if we want to lower our setup margins a little, the rock Ireland was gifted is now sitting unclaimed, having accidentally been thrown into the Dunsink landfill after a museum wing burned down. It’d be about as difficult as finding a charred grey needle in a charred grey haystack, but it has been done: after the Transportation Museum of Alaska burned down in the seventies a kid allegedly fished Alaska’s Apollo 11 rock out of the rubble. I say ‘allegedly’ because he’s now suing the state of Alaska to either give him official ownership of the moon rock or compensate him for the forty years he’s been looking after it.

What do we do with our moon rock once we’ve bought, stolen, or bargained for it? Well, we bask in its glory, I guess. The bad news is we can’t ever flip it for a profit and try to buy a bigger one as though our rock is a renovator’s dream in Tempe. That’s because there’s been an ongoing series of sting operations called Operation Lunar Eclipse which sends undercover NASA investigators out to try and buy black market or counterfeit moon rocks. They caught a 71-year-old woman in California
two years ago trying to sell what might have been a real moon rock. For 1.7 million. In the car park of a Denny’s franchise restaurant.

They also caught Alan Rosen in Florida trying to sell the actual moon rock that was gifted to Honduras for ten million dollars. Now, Alan Rosen was smart because he talked a Honduran ex-colonel (who'd stolen the rock) down from five million to fifteen thousand and a truck. However, Alan Rosen was also critically stupid. He wasn’t caught by a wiretap or some awesome NASA spacesuit and dagger work, instead he was caught because he answered an ad in USA Today that said ‘MOON ROCKS WANTED’. Somehow he was shocked to find out it was a setup. You can read about the five-year court case the US had to pursue to claim the rock back so they could re-gift it to Honduras, if you were, say, the kind of person that riffles through legal databases obsessively. Just search for ‘United States of America v. One Lucite Ball containing Lunar Material (one Moon Rock) and One Ten Inch by Fourteen Inch Wooden Plaque’ – it’ll pop right up.

A million dollar donation will allow you to see the rock on Tuesdays. However, I’d prefer cash in these uncertain times.

Luke Rule is too preoccupied to write about himself.
Night had chased Pat to bed, the days grew dark early now it was winter. His mother had said goodnight and was downstairs to internet date under soft yellow lights. When Pat woke next there was someone in the room with him, lit only by moonlight. The bedroom door was ajar. The someone was standing by the window.

‘Hey, buddy, how you doing?’ this intruder asked, his voice soft. Pat sat up, rubbed his eyes with a balled fist. He tried to see the man’s face but it was covered by a shadow. ‘Who are you?’

‘I’m your dad. Don’t you recognise me?’

‘Not by the moonlight,’ Pat said, and reached for the lamp.

‘Wait,’ the man said, ‘Sorry, buddy, you can’t turn the light on. Here.’ He moved closer to the window and put his face to the glass. The moonlight was stronger and the face was illuminated by it.

‘I don’t recognise you.’

‘That’s sad,’ the man said, and moved from the window. ‘Sad you don’t know me. Don’t worry. We can get to know each other.’

‘Does mum know you’re here.’

‘Yeah, she knows,’ he said, and Pat could tell he was telling the truth by the honest tone of his voice, or maybe by some other innate instinct he was unaware of possessing.

‘What do you want?’

This returning dad moved round the bed and sat on the chair nearby. Pat could’ve reached out to scratch his stubble. It was white in patches by the moonlight, though maybe it was yellow under others. Pat felt an affinity with this man, wondered if he’d come home to teach him to shave his hairless chin. One day his own stubble would maybe glow white under this light.

‘It’s about a man who was a conquistador. Do you know what a conquistador is?’

‘No.’

‘They were the Spanish who conquered South America.’

‘Tell it.’

‘Okay.’

South America smelled of fish, spread as they were across the beach, tangled in seaweed that had been spewed forth from the ocean during the last two days of storms as if to expel a parasite. To the soldier lying amongst this sandy slaughterhouse it smelled no different to Cadiz, and no different to the hold of the ship, and if it were just from smell alone he would have sworn his fleet had arrived back on the shores of Spain. But the world was foreign when he opened his eyes, and grew more and more so as he staggered to his feet and walked from the beach into the trees. Those trees, none which even a trained botanist could have labelled from his textbook. The soldier camped that night under some piece of nature unknown, burning it too, and while he slept he never knew that in an ever-closing circle around him crept huge beasts like cats but cats with a taste for killing a man while he slept. They came upon him, two panthers that were black as shadows cast by moonlight, and as he clambered to his feet the first one took a swipe at his chest with its claws, and had he not been so afraid of this foreign land he would have died that instant because he would have removed his armour before laying down to sleep. Instead he was unharmed, and in a moment he was saved by a native woman brandishing a flaming log from the fire that sent the panthers back into the night. They couldn’t talk to one another, but they communicated. She was Tamaya. He was Javier. Though he didn’t understand her, he trusted this woman who had saved him, and let her lead him through the trees until they came to a city, more a town, where he was seized upon and
taken to a temple that was stained in blood. At the top he could see the ocean again, and smell it too, and if he hadn’t smelt the blood as well then he could have closed his eyes and sworn he was home, but he didn’t close his eyes and so he could see a shape on the horizon that was so familiar it beckoned him like home. They took him inside the temple and showed a gem set into the wall, made him touch it to feel its warmth maybe, and then they took him outside again, where Tamaya had been brought up the steps to show Javier what was to be done to him, how he was laid down on a stone to be killed. Before anyone could kill him, Javier drew his firearm, previously concealed, and brandished it like a flaming log before the panthers. He had to demonstrate its power, then he had to seize Tamaya as hostage and have her lead him to the beach to reunite with his brethren, who welcomed him especially well when he told of the riches nearby. They conquered the town, riding over it with horses and guns of liberation, and then they filled the temple with gunpowder to release the great gemstone from where it was set into the wall. To Tamaya, they left the treacherous woman amongst the ruins, and gave no punishment but the mediation of her conscience, for she was the instigator of her own damnation.

The story was over, and so this dad stopped talking. Pat could probably see his teeth by the moonlight. The teeth were perfect, and Pat thought on the gaps in his own teeth. To have a dad like this man could mean maybe his teeth would be perfect one day.

‘What do you think of the story?’
‘I like Javier.’
‘So do I. You know, I’m a little like Javier.’
Pat could see it. In those shadows his dad’s face was that same face. He could see this man facing the odds, and he hoped that this man would win like Javier.

The man continued, ‘I also think your mother is like Tamaya. They are very similar.’

Pat thought about the story. He dressed his mother as Tamaya and could see her the same. Maybe he would not under daylight, by daylight he saw the mother he knew best, but he could see her as so by the moonlight. In the moonlight all stories were true. Yes, he could see it.

‘What about the gemstone?’ Pat asked.

The man smiled now. ‘I’m glad you asked. Where would Tamaya hide the gemstone in this house? There’s no temple here, but there is always treasure.’

Pat shrugged. ‘Mum hides stuff under the laundry sink, in a box.’

The dad reached out and patted the kid on the head. ‘Good lad. You’re a true conquistador, just like your dad. Stay here and guard the beach.’

Pat stayed for a long time, and he thought about horses and tall ships until he was dreaming about them. When he woke it was because of some birds making sounds on the other side of the window.

Pat got out of his bed and went to the door. He pecked down the corridor, looking for a Spaniard dad on a horse. He went to the stairs and climbed down them, waiting to see Incans in death throes. He checked the kitchen for barrels of gunpowder. He found none of these. All he found was Tamaya in the lounge room, panicked eyes darting back and forth above her gag and bonds. And Pat could hear the birds that had woken him. They were singing as the sun came up.

Late at night Cameron Brown will stop his microwave with a second to go so he doesn’t wake anyone up. He’s that guy.
The baby has just drifted off when the phone rings, penetrating the deep quiet that descends at this hour. Laura follows it down the hallway and, as she often does when she’s home alone, hesitates before picking up.

‘Hello?’
‘Laura?’
‘Yes.’
‘Laura Lee?’
‘Who is this?’
Silence.
‘It’s Kieran.’
‘Kieran! Wow, how are you?’

He doesn’t respond. The line hums softly, a hollow sound, and briefly she imagines it stretching off into the night, stretching all the way down to St. Kilda where Kieran sits alone, breathing just loud enough for her to hear.

‘You’re in Old Bar,’ he says finally.
‘I am,’ she replies, trying to remember the last time they spoke. ‘I tried to call you before I left. I’ve tried to call you a few times since, but I can never get through. You changed your number or something.’

He laughs softly. ‘I lost my phone, and your number with it. I’m always losing things.’

‘Well,’ she says, smiling, ‘how are things? I would’ve contacted you on Facebook, but of course, you’re still too cool for that.’

He laughs again. ‘Things are okay. I’m low on battery.’

She pulls up a chair by the kitchen table and gazes at the darkness beyond the window. Behind her in the living room, the television flickers, ghostly and silent. ‘It’s been two years,’ she says, still trying to summon a definitive last moment from their time in Melbourne together, a time comprised of late nights, live music, too much alcohol, too many drugs and, on occasion, mornings spent waking up next to one another.

‘It’s been more than two years.’
‘Yes,’ he says. ‘And you’ve got a baby now.’

She pauses, wondering if there’s a hint of pain or resentment in his words. ‘A girl. Poppy.’

She pauses, wondering if there’s a hint of pain or resentment in his words. ‘A girl. Poppy.’

‘After Iggy Pop,’ he says. ‘Good choice.’

She laughs. ‘Speaking of, how’s the band?’
‘Well, the Stooges are starting to get on a bit, but Iggy looks as good as ever.’

‘Stop it,’ she says, still laughing. ‘You know what I mean. How’s Dane and Spiller and the rest of the guys?’

An odd clinking sound echoes down the line, and it takes her a moment to realise it’s ice rattling in a glass. When Kieran speaks again, after a long, awkward silence, all the humour in his voice is gone. ‘That’s a thing of the past. We broke up a while ago now.’

‘But you’re still playing, right? Still writing songs?’
‘I guess so,’ he says. ‘You’re married now?’

‘Not married,’ she tells him, glancing at her watch and working out how long it’ll be before Joe gets home, wondering what his reaction would be if he walked in now. ‘He’s a good guy Kieran. You’d like him.’

‘Of course,’ he says. ‘I don’t doubt it.’

‘I wish you could’ve met him. But, I don’t know, it all happened so quickly, and you were on tour, and I couldn’t reach you to tell you I was leaving.’

‘Is he there with you?’
‘He’s at work.’
‘Where does he work?’
‘The bowling club.’
‘Old Bar Bowlo,’ he says, his voice softening.

Out in the street the headlights of a car sweep by, illuminating the stillness that settles each evening. Laura runs her hand over the cover of a
book on the table and thinks back to Kieran’s eighteenth, recalling vague images of a yard glass and disco lights and the club’s bright blue carpet.

‘How long since you’ve been back here?’

‘Jesus,’ he says, ‘don’t ask me that, I can’t remember.’ And then, after a long pause, he asks, ‘What’s it like there now?’ But judging by the tone of his voice, what he’s really asking, or what she imagines he’s asking, is:

‘What’s it like to be back there now, as an adult, in the streets we walked when we were kids? The bus stop? The beach? That place in the dunes where we lost our virginity, ten or twelve or even thirteen years ago? What could that possibly be like?’

‘It’s nice,’ she tells him, her voice steady and composed. ‘Still the same, a few new shops here and there, but you know quiet, peaceful, a little boring maybe. But we make do. I take Poppy for walks down the beach. Sometimes I pass by your old house.’

For thirty seconds, a minute even, she waits for his reply, her words slowly dissolving in the static. She realises he’s not going to say anything.

‘You should come back here, Kieran.’

He lets out a strange noise, caught somewhere between a cough and a laugh, a sound that lacks definition but implies something deeper.

‘Just for a visit, at least.’

‘Look,’ he sighs, ‘my phone is probably going to die soon.’

‘Where’s your charger?’

‘A friend’s place.’

‘A girlfriend’s place?’ she says, trying to lighten the mood.

‘Not really. He pauses for a moment, and Laura hears the faint click of a lighter. ‘So look, it’s been good—’

‘Wait!’ she says. ‘Come on, keep talking with me. Like old times.’

‘Like old times,’ he says, ‘but not really.’

‘Tell me about the band. What happened? Are you still giving guitar lessons?’

‘Not anymore. I’m pouring beers a few nights a week at the Cannibal Club.’

‘At the Cannibal Club? Really? You guys used to pack that place out.’

He exhales long and hard, and Laura can’t help but picture him standing in a cloud of cigarette smoke, staring out at the city. ‘Yeah, like I said, like old times, but not really.’

‘It’s not so bad,’ she tells him. ‘There’s nothing wrong with a job like that.’

‘I’m twenty-nine next week,’ he says. ‘Did you know that?’

‘Of course I did,’ she says. ‘I haven’t forgotten your birthday. It’s exactly one month before mine. I tried to call you for it last year, and I would’ve tried to call you this year too.’

‘Yeah, well, I’m fucked if I know the answers, Laura.’

‘What answers?’

‘Your baby,’ he says, ‘Poppy. What’s it like?’

Instinctively, she turns and looks down the hall, listening for the baby. ‘What’s the baby like? Is that what you’re asking?’

‘For you? I mean, what’s it like for you?’ He stops, searching for something. ‘You must feel like you’ve really done something. Something special.’

‘I don’t know Kieran, I don’t really think about it like that. It’s just something that happened, and I love her, sure, but... you don’t think about it, you just do it, you know?’

‘What about him?’ he asks.

‘Joe?’

‘Joe. What’s it like for Joe?’

Laura runs her fingers through her hair, trying to understand what he’s getting at, trying to reconcile the cool, intelligent person she’s known for so long with the voice on the other end of the line. ‘It’s the same thing, Kieran. I don’t know what to say. He loves her. We both do. You should
visit us and see her for yourself.’

He laughs. ‘You know, I really thought we’d be young forever. I
did. The way we lived our lives down here. But I guess that’s the proof.
Poppy’s the proof.’

She opens her mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

‘The band too,’ he says. ‘Mum and Dad moving to Queensland. It’s
all proof.’

‘Proof of what?’

‘Proof that there’s no secret. That’s the secret, isn’t it? You lose things
and you don’t get them back.’

‘I’d love to see you again,’ she tells him, ‘I really would.’ She wants to
put her arms around him, calm him down. ‘Come visit us. We can walk
the baby, have a drink or two. It’ll do you good.’

‘That’s it but, isn’t it?’ he says. ‘It all just becomes a thing of the past.’

‘Promise me you’ll come see us.’

‘You lose things,’ he says again. ‘You lose things an—’

His battery dies there, just as the baby wakes up, crying, and Laura is
talking to no one when she says, ‘But you find new things too.’
Only amateurs believe in sorrow: 
Heartache is the commonest banality
Stop your pity-play

Choose:
Fury or insanity

Fuck bathos

Don't settle for ordinary

The canal is littered with wounds, lurking just below the murky white of your eye

Know-nothings know nothing

So break the bridges where they stand

Take them to your necropsy

(Smile if you have to, just get them in)

Don't you think I know what she is? Sequined nightmare

She eats people whole

She says

I only see left-handed guys

They keep you off-balance

Then when I'm bored of that

I only see right-handed guys

Of course

I only see guys when

I'm tired of women which is almost never

I want to study her like something dredged out of the water

Purpled & ripe she can't be still

I have to catch her up

She's a nightmare chased by a monster

I will eat her alive
I want to plant myself
on that slab
where the boy’s ghost might linger
concrete stained:
glime brains
blood black
all trodden in
she beat me to that place
where some boy found posthumous fame
in grainy security shots
in a six-o-clock inset frame
wasn’t he tall
& handsome
do well, go far, if only he-
except
what the hell?
why not just say he probably
was just as fucked
as all of us
he was always aimed at this place

give me this day
this place & this pit
give me her
some time a hundred years ago
maybe
here was a garden
now acid-filled, bile-washed
in-the-dark
who cares (who can even see)
tendril, creeping up stone
who knows (& who could tell)
poison or fruit
solanaceae have both
you have to taste to know
iii.
I'm the ghost in the back of your skull
leaving teeth marks where
your neck
joins your shoulder
forget me
why don't you?

I'll be right here

minimum safe distance
is my breath
on your throat

tell me I'm not here

iv.
desire is here
    a phantom sleeping
    half-submerged in fear
& lucid-dreaming

I wonder that
    the stars
don't fall together
    in their violet bed

I wonder that
    my mortal vantage
can predict their arc or
know their ancient light

heliocentrism is a way of saying
I know where you'll be tomorrow
v.
when did tomorrow
become a threat?

here we wait
on the rib-bone of this city
catching the air
even they rest
even resting
they can’t be still
struggle to take up
the same space

I could watch
the light-polluted sky
let the rest turn
the going-in &
the coming-back
time passes
no matter what you do

where’s the waste in that?

Mo Hawthorne is an utter jerk. Hobbies include teevee, insomnia, and arguing with people on the internet.

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After The Rabbit Proof Fence - πO

Gaddafi shared power with rats
renamed calendar months with rat names
Augustus Caesar was renamed Hannibal rat
the Libyan Fat Sand Rat living in war-torn sandy deserts
political party rats who left creates executed rats
rats who spoke to foreign rats became 3-years gaoled rats
young rats cut off their fingertips to avoid being fighter rats
Muammar rat ordered puppet-rats to assassinate critic rats
living a solitary life in his burrow the Fat Sand Rat killed all dis-sidents
Muammar rat pushed life expectancy of rats from 57 to 77

“a home for all Libyan rats” what a rat thing to say
these animals are very intelligent and are diurnal, active always
rats who steal have their rat-limbs severed off
adulterous ratties is flogged and flogged and flogged
the gay Fat Sand Rat create 5-year gaoled ratties
all rats must be Islamic rats
dictator rats of 42 years become killed in rat sewer but
the Libyan Fat Sand Rat has complex burrow systems
although Mo’tassim rat is killed days before
rats have secret chambers in their complex rat burrows
where ratties nest

and breed.

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LIBYAN RAT PROOF FENCE

By Kate Liston

Kate Liston is from Pambula.
People rushed past with jackets pulled over their heads, or walked calmly beneath muted umbrellas, while I stood motionless on the street corner as the rain soaked through my jumper. I wanted to run to the stairs that led beneath the streets to the underground mall with its heating and coffee shops, but it was already noon. Another five minutes and then I’d get a coffee.

I saw him heading towards me. He was hugging his chest through a woollen, green jumper as the rain splattered him.

‘Hi,’ I said.

‘Hi.’

We both shrugged and held out our left hands to shake. There was a tingle in my fingers as we shook, maybe. It might’ve been my imagination.

‘We should go inside,’ he said. ‘Get a fucking coffee.’

We descended into the warmth of the mall.

‘Trains?’ I asked.

‘Yeah, delays. Sorry I’m late, I wasn’t bailing.’

‘Didn’t think you were.’

‘Of course not.’

It was dry downstairs and we dripped water on the cream tiles and headed for the food court. I ordered two long blacks with a tiny dash of milk from the coffee shop while he got a table under the skylight that pitter-pattered with rain. The barista looked at him, then me.

‘Twins?’ she asked.

‘Sure.’

I didn’t want to talk first, so we drank our coffees in silence. He had longer hair, a shaggy bulk of it, and fuzz was growing thick on his chin and jaw. His eyes were bloodshot, the cuffs of his jumper had frayed, and he’d even somehow managed to tan that lily-white skin of ours.

‘They’ve got tanning beds where you are?’ I asked.

He laughed. ‘I’ve actually been outside in the last five years. You haven’t, I’m guessing?’

‘Not really.’ I tugged the jumper’s sleeves over the back of my pale hand. ‘I don’t know where to start.’

‘Yeah. You’d think this’d be less weird, right?’ He started turning the coffee cup on the spot.

‘How are you?’

‘Fine. You?’

‘Fine.’ I finished my coffee. ‘Where’d you go? I’ve been wondering, man. It’s a whole... fuck, I don’t know. Some fucking Frost poem come to life.’

‘Yeah.’ He looked down at his own empty cup, fidgeting with it. ‘I haven’t been anywhere in particular.’

‘Figure that’d be the case.’

‘Yeah.’ He paused to think. ‘Right after the split, I just... caught the train. First one out of the city. Then the next one, and then the bus over the state border. And that reminds me...’ He reached into his back pocket for a wallet and started tossing notes onto the table. ‘Two hundred, two twenty, two seventy, and ... two ninety.’ He shuffled them into a neat pile and pushed it towards me. ‘All square.’

‘You didn’t need to.’

‘You would have.’

It was true. I stuffed the money into my trouser pocket. ‘Thanks. So, you’re interstate?’

‘Uh-huh. For the first month I was on my own. But then I met some guys who were doing the same as me, sleeping rough, working crap. They were coming from all over, young and old, all kinds of backgrounds and jobs, like bankers or steel workers. Except for this one guy, maybe nineteen. I think he’d been doing it all his life.’

‘Jeez,’ I moved to sip my empty coffee cup, but caught myself. ‘You still doing this?’
‘No. I scraped enough for a fake ID so I could apply for a bank account, get into places, you know?’ He took out a drivers licence and passed it over. I read the name and laughed.

‘Fucking hell... This is exactly what I would’ve put. Exactly. It’s like —’

‘Bizarro.’ He shrugged. ‘Been like that a while now. What’s happening with you?’

‘Not much.’

‘Like that’s gonna fob me off. How’s the life? How’s Mum and Dad?’

“They’re fine. Dad had another back surgery. And Mum’s still... You know.’

‘Rest of the family?’

I opened my mouth, and stopped, and couldn’t start again.

‘What happened?’ he asked.

‘Grandpa.’

‘Oh.’ He slumped back in the chair, dazed. ‘When?’

‘A couple of years.’

‘Fuck. I didn’t know — How’s Dad? How was Dad, I should say.’

‘Fine at the funeral, but he was a wreck for a while.’

‘Fuck...’

The rain stopped, so we decided to walk a few blocks north to a good pizza place that was still around from five years ago. The smell of fresh rain lingered, earthy and pleasant.

‘It’s been ages since I smelled this,’ he said, looking about. ‘Not much rain where I am.’ He bit his lip. ‘What happened to Addy?’

‘Uh, we broke up. About two months after ... after you left.’

‘Fights. Bickering. Silent treatment, complete pig-headishness. One day we both just got sick of it.’

‘I missed Addy, that first few months. The talking.’

‘And the other stuff.’

‘Yeah, of course.’ He paused. ‘Actually, no, it wasn’t even that. I missed having someone to talk to. Where I was, I couldn’t tell people where I came from, why I was on the road, not even my name.’

I didn’t know what to say.

‘What about now?’ he asked. ‘Girlfriend?’

‘Yeah, actually.’ I smiled. ‘Zoe. We, uh, live together. Year and a bit.’

We got the same odd looks at the pizza place, but it was a whole two minutes before someone asked if we were twins. This time he smiled and nodded, and the server bustled off to bring us a large pepperoni and a couple of beers.

‘What’s she like?’ he asked, and I smiled without meaning to.

‘She’s nice. Fun. Pretty. She’s a counsellor, works with at-risk kids and stuff.’

‘Religious?’

I raised an eyebrow. ‘How’d you know?’

‘You remember year ten, and what’s-her-face with the red hair?’

‘Oh yeah...’

‘And at TAFE, on the first day, there was Tamara with the chunky glasses?’

‘God, we have a type, don’t we?’ I laughed. ‘Fuck, I’d totally forgotten.’

The server brought our beers. We drank them down quickly and ordered two more, we’d finished those too by the time the pizza arrived. I set my first slice down on a paper plate and started cutting off a corner while he just chewed into it, a piece of pepperoni falling onto the table.

‘Look at mister fancy-pants,’ he mumbled through the half-chewed dough and cheese.

He told me about the road, about Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the Whitsundays, Darwin, Alice Springs and Broken Hill, about jobs in pubs,
mining gigs, and the time he survived for three months playing guitar in Rundle Mall.

‘You learned guitar?’ I asked.

‘Yeah.’ He wiped a hairy arm across his mouth, getting off the cheese grease and tomato sauce. ‘You didn’t?’

‘No. I just ... didn’t find the time, I guess.’

‘I met this girl.’ He grinned. ‘She’d stop by every day, back when I had a ponytail. I think she was into hippies. She worked at a radio station, and on a lunch break she let me into one of the studios so I could listen back to myself.’

‘And then you fucked her.’

‘Shut up.’ His smile faded. ‘For the life of me, I can’t remember her name.’ He folded his arms. ‘What do Mum and Dad think of Zoe?’

‘I dunno. I think they get along, but it’s Mum and Dad, they’d be polite with a cactus.’

‘So nothing’s changed. Where do you work?’

‘Oh, I’m at this crappy petrol station café thingy. Serving tables and stuff. Decent money, I can buy books and go out sometimes.’

‘With Zoe?’ His voice caught on her name.

‘Yeah. You okay?’

‘I’ll be fine.’

‘Yeah, I know what that means. Mate —’

‘Don’t mate me,’ he hissed. ‘We’re not mates. We’re fucking ... we’re accidents,’ He cradled his head in his hands. ‘Five years, and all I can think is that I wish I’d lost that fucking coin toss.’

‘I wish I’d won.’ There was a sore lump in my throat.

‘I don’t know your Zoe. I don’t really know Mum and Dad anymore, do I?’

My bottom lip quivered. ‘I wouldn’t know how to live on my own, in the ... I don’t know, in the fucking wild or what-have-you.’

‘It’s easier than you’d think,’ he said, faking a smile. ‘And hey, you’ve even got the same three hundred.’

‘From you.’

‘Well, from you.’

‘I think sorting out the semantics would make our heads explode.’ I paused a moment. ‘We haven’t changed, have we?’

‘No. Don’t think we have.’

I paid out of the two-hundred and ninety dollars. We walked back to the train station and barely beat the fresh rainclouds, water spilling down the concrete steps as we descended from the street into the station and bought tickets. He was heading west; I was going south.

‘This was good,’ he said.

‘Yeah.’ I smiled, faintly, and we shook hands. ‘Should we do this again?’

We were frozen for that moment, in the middle of the train station, hands clasped as oblivious commuters filed around us.

‘Right,’ I answered myself. ‘Dumb question.’

‘Take care.’

‘You too.’

I broke the handshake and headed for the escalator going down to my platform, feeling a tingling between my shoulder blades that could only be him watching me. Later, my train grumbled south along the coastline, I watched the movement of the water in the afternoon sun and imagined I was heading east, or north, or west. Anywhere else.

Paul Pearson is a published writer, Creative Arts graduate, Browncoat, podcaster, functional alcoholic, time traveller, Hufflepuff, book ninja, zombie pimp, devious romantic, and Magnificent Bastard.
‘Do you want some tea?’ Sam asks me for the fifth time, and again I smile
and shake my head.

Passive aggression is an evolutionary necessity. Without the ability to
subtly express anger, the human race would have rattled itself to extinction
long ago. I know this, yet I still do not enjoy the offering of beverages as
a form of aggression. I don’t know how to respond. If I finally snap at
him, I will look like the aggressive angry dweeb, which is not exactly how
I wish to present myself in front of my dear guest Ashleigh, whom I am
currently trying to charm with my wit and big head. She has finally agreed
to come over, and I feel as though it could be a very good night. It is not
cOMPOnoy to easy to charm someone using one’s big skull as an asset but I am doing an
admirable job.

‘Did you know that it has been historically considered that those with
larger heads are believed to possess superior intelligence?’ I say.

But I’m subtle about it, I don’t explicitly refer to me, I just say it
conversationally and know that she will subconsciously put the two
abstract pieces of information together. I know how women work.

‘That’s interesting,’ she says, uninterested and watching Big Brother
on TV. ‘Did you know that if you took a 16 gigabyte memory stick back
in time, to the sixties, and sold it, you’d be a millionaire?’

I don’t not know what she means by this and wonder what she is trying
to imply. Does she not know that we are flirting? I frown at her and she
notices, looks confused. I force a smile and try to move things forward –
but I do not know what to say.

She shivers slightly, and thankfully this gives me a chance to act like
a normal human. I know these chances aren’t limitless, so I say: ‘What’s
wrong? Cold? Do you want a jacket? Do you want one of my jackets?’

I feel like I may have emphasized the ‘my’ a little too much and she
looks at me a bit funny, perhaps guessing that I want her to take the jacket
so that then I can go to her house to reclaim the jacket and thus force my
way into her life. To my disappointment, she says, ‘No.’ But she presents
a chance for continued interaction when she says, ‘I’d really like a hot
drink.’

This is of course a great opportunity for me, and I remember Sam’s
earlier words, promising tea and passive aggressive goodwill.

I call out, ‘Sam, is there any tea, mate?’

‘We’re all out of tea, sorry guys.’

‘Coffee?’

A pause.

‘Nope, all out of that as well.’

I look at Ashleigh with a confused expression on my face, as if I’m
trying to say, ‘What a nutcase,’ knowing that she would have heard him
offer me tea minutes ago. She does not react, however, so perhaps she
did not. I stand up and walk into the kitchen. Instinctively I understand
that getting this girl tea is of the utmost importance.

Sam and I have not been getting along particularly well as of late. I
don’t know why we thought it would be a good idea to share a flat. But I
hope he brings home a girl one of these days so I can stuff it up for him.
That would bring me great joy.

‘I know there’s tea, Sam, give it to me.’

He looks at me confused, but I can see a smile in his eyes. Sam has
been a horrid person to me ever since I accidentally used his toothbrush.
He messes with me, and with an ever-increasing psychotic hatred. I
think about threatening him, forcing him into giving me the tea, but he
is physically superior to me, and my evolutionary need to survive long
enough to reproduce causes me to look away angrily and start searching
the cupboards. The tea isn’t where it usually is. Of course it isn’t – that
would be too easy. I keep looking, barely noticing when Sam leaves the
room. I’m far too focused on my mission.

I look in the cutlery draws, all through the fridge and the freezer. I
even look through the cupboards again, checking inside each instant soup packet and breakfast cereal, hoping for tea-bag salvation. I begin to sweat and a single tear comes to my eye (possibly a reaction from the amount of dust and mold in some of the previously excavated crevices of the kitchen) that I quickly brush away. I look everywhere I can think of, to no avail. I reassure myself that its only failure if you don't try.

It’s become eerily quiet in the lounge room. I stick my head in and find it is empty. Confused, and wondering if they had gone to the same place that the tea has gone to, I begin another search, this time around the house. I notice that Sam’s door is closed. The sounds emanating suggest that Sam possesses superior woman-charming genes to myself, and that he is currently passing them on. I frown. When I’ve heard enough, I retreat back to the kitchen, not knowing what to do.

I peel a banana and open the bin. The teabags are in there. Great.

Llewellyn Horgan likes the simple things, like bananas and TV. Not too long ago he learnt how to spell his name and things have been improving ever since.

LONG AND THICK
By Matthew Pritchard

The first thing I notice about Lydia’s father is how big he is. Everything about him is just large. Burly. Thick. And then there’s the beard. If you were to pass him on the street you’d think that you’d just brushed elbows with a wizard. His hair charges downwards over his shoulders in a thick, rambling clump, like the ivy that swamps the side of his house. The beard blends seamlessly into it giving him the look of a wooly mammoth in disguise.

“Liddy!” he bursts out, and wraps his arms around her.

“Hi, Dad,” Lydia giggles as he plants a hairy kiss on her forehead.

“This is Ben.”

“Harry,” the mammoth says, and my hand is suddenly engulfed in the tight, meaty grip of a manly handshake.

The exuberant Harry waves us into the house, a little abode absorbed by luscious trees and bushes. After battling through the wood and tendrils we’re inside.

He offers me a beer and I accept. Lydia gives me the tour and before long it’s time for dinner. Sitting in front of me is a plateful of comically large vegetables.

“Grew ‘em myself.” He glows, motioning to the veggie garden out back. Most of the vegetables out there are twice the size they should be. Everything around here is just... bigger.

“So, Ben, what'd'ya do?”

I’m zoning out with my eyes fixed on an outrageous eggplant.

“I’m in public relations.”

I look up at Harry and try to smile as I talk. He is focusing on his vegetables. A chunk of eggplant gets stuck in his beard.

He doesn’t notice it.

It just hangs there. Caught in the wires of the wizard beard.

Should I say something?

No.
He’ll notice.
But he doesn’t.
This must happen to him all the time. How does he handle it? How can one man handle being so... so... hairy?
He chomps away at the vegetables and soon enough little bits join the once lonely eggplant. He chats to Lydia, something about work and life and blah, blah, blah (that beard!).
“What about you Ben?”
“Hmm?”
“What type of life does a PR man lead?”
“Well at the moment I really just handle (your beard) a lot of paperwork. My department is responsible for keeping (beards) the image of (that luxurious spread of hair) the company safe and stopping any possible (shaving) issues with our public image.”
He says something in reply but I just can’t think. How does he get it so thick? I haven’t shaved in three weeks and I barely have peach fuzz going on! Is it because he’s manlier than me? Am I not manly because I can’t have the beard of a crazed pirate and the silver hair of a wizard? Oh god, they say a girl is attracted to someone like her father... My face will never look like that! NEVER!
“What? You ok?”
“FINE!”
Shit, that was loud.

Lydia looks at me dubiously then kisses me on the cheek. I kiss her back and she giggles.
“Stop! You’re all fuzzy. You need a shave.”
Oh, thank god.

Matthew Pritchard is a creative writing student. He prefers to write script, but occasionally experiments with prose or poetry when nobody’s watching.
I don’t know the meaning of the Daily Telegraph
rolled like my eyes when I see your headlines
but I know what I mean when I say
pour me a coffee that doesn’t taste like the midnight dew
of a lifelong winter,
and know when you say three dollars fifteen
it means you want some of my finest numerals,
my prize stock, pastured and grazed inside every ATM
and frequently sent to slaughter
to achieve a taste in my mouth
not unlike dredged riverbed.

Is it wrong to want to sleep outside in the cold?
Is it wrong to leave my family heirlooms on the side of the road,
grandma’s favourite xylophone in a cul-de-sac lined by near identical
homes?
Wrong to pull the tiles from my rooftop and make them regular stones?
I can’t wade to the waist in a pond and feel the mud
between my toes through all the expensive rubber soles
I own, and I’ll not be seen in a public
meeting place for ducks in anything
but the finest designer clothes—
is that the right way to behave?
I know the difference between leaving the house and going home
is the trajectory I approach the corner store from;
where I have faith there will be a candy bar special;
a deal that started long before I was born
and will continue long after my credit card is overdrawn
and I am buried beside it
beneath a small patch of lawn
outside the Australian Taxation Office, and I swear

on your headlines I will die a slow death by deficits,
the slowest I can
because no one else in the world
will worry about my savings account once I’m gone.
9:00 AM I am blinded by your headlines!
Every article about America conceals
a gun beneath a serif font,
and the way you spread your pages tells me the world is overrun
with gossip and glamour
and there’s no regimes buckling at the knees,
or famine enough to go round for anyone
on this planet of bountiful trees and underpopulated cities,
and standing in this corner shop with a heart full of roof tiles
and eyes full of your harsh morning sun
I can see clear to the heart of the problem:
I am not the sum of my choices,
but the product of my inability to choose
between a Crunchie and Snickers.

Adam Carr is a 23-year-old poet/video game developer whose work has
I asked a friend for a story with a twist:
something with a voyage and a captain,
but not some Star Wars, Star Trek reboot.
Something new that no one
had seen or read before.
Something with drama and a good sense
of pacing. Without needlessly sensual
sex scenes with a generic twist,
“Oh no, hold on, skip the foreplay:
My love interest is the captain!
His brother’s other mother is the only one
with enough know-how to reboot
the computer!” “No,” he said, “how about
instead the next blockbuster sensation:
I’ve got an idea, this one’s
a heist. A pirate’s arm is twisted
and he is forced to become a captain
of a crew of about six. But that was before
they took casualties, and crew became six (minus four).”
He went on and on. The pirate angle was booted
while our protagonist became the captain
of some reluctant explorers who had no sense
of direction, attaching the prefix of ‘SPACE’ to every twisted
noun or verb anyone
could conceivably think of. One
character’s purpose seemed only to fore-
shadow the twist
anyone could see coming. Another, a ‘boot-
ilicious’ SPACE-babe with a pair of sensational
‘laser guns’ pointed at the captain
at all times. By the end I think the captain,
who is the only one
left, loses his sensibilities
with the (now deceased) SPACE babe, for-
nicates, and then leaves his boots
behind, running naked into a SPACE twister.
Frankly the whole thing’s before its time with one
too many subplots and a necrophilic captain whose bootilicious SPACE
babe’s
origins twist is rubbish. In all, a whole heap of nonsensical nonsense.

James Poole is best described as rage on a leash, a real zinger.
DEAD RAT WEDDING
By Toby Lemon

The rat has drowned.
I dig a hole beside the tub.
Wed rat to earth.
Do you, drowned corpse
Take this hard soil
As your matrimonial bed?
I do! I do!
And do you, shoveled ground
Vow to cover over
In sickness and in health
These brittle bendy bones?
Yes! Yes!
I shovel in the drowned rat
Sweating post-nuptial tears
Like confetti.

I'm leaning against the railing about thirty centimetres away from
the glass. I could reach out and touch it, the only thing between me and
thousands of litres of water, but last time I did that the security guard
yelled at me. I don't want to get kicked out; I'd have to find a new
favourite place.

The floor is black, the ceiling is black, and the only light is shone
through the water. It casts dancing shadows over my bare arms and face,
and tiny little fairy lights are pressed into the floor, outlining the edge of
the circular prism. I suppose that's to stop people tripping over their own
feet, but it's not very good at its job. I've seen many people trip over and
bump into other people in here, especially children.

I usually come in on weekdays, to avoid children. Well, their parents
really. Parents are notorious for ruining the magic. The whole reason I
like it here is for the magic.

It's two o'clock on a Tuesday and I've only seen five other people
since I entered about half an hour ago. The security guard, a couple
walking through who seemed much more interested in each other
than the fish, a business man who'd fallen asleep on the blocks in the
middle of the room usually reserved for elderly or lazy people, and a guy
probably a year or two older than me who'd walked in ten minutes after
I had. I've seen him here a few times before. We've acknowledged each
other's existence with a smile, but we've never talked. We're both here for
the same reason, to bask in the solitude, and we have a silent agreement
not to interrupt each other.

I turn back to look through the glass behind me. Larry the Great
White slinks past and I watch him for a while, smiling. He sneaks around
a rock formation, passing a catfish and a couple of rainbow fish, before
floating over an anemone and scaring the clownfish that parents often
(wrongly) call Nemo so their children will pay attention to him. It's okay
though: I know his real name is Jefferson. Larry turns around and swims

Between stints in Vietnam Toby Lemon has worked as an animal
psychologist, dental assistant, and guide dog.

AQUARIUM
By Caitlin Easton
out of sight. We must seem boring to him, big dark blobs that do nothing but stare at him all day - no wonder I only see him that close to the glass on a rare occasion.

I involuntarily look down at my watch, and sigh as all the things I was supposed to have done by three o’clock crash back down into the forefront of my mind. I take one last look at the glass, a portal to a much simpler world, and contemplate touching it again. But I shake my head quickly and turn around, leaving before I ruin the magic.

Caitlin Easton is a Ravenclaw, whose obsessions include: strawberries, hugs, and the power of words.
My ancestry is where all oysters meet, beginning their knife fights.
Whenever you leave the country a little bit of my oyster-ness goes with you.
Any Ghazal makes my right hand twitch and my left hand orbit the earth. At every mailbox I simply hum the tune of an infinite sadness. You could never leap from a cloud onto a higher cloud, that’s not your way. Many women like you turn into broken piano keys that later fix themselves.
Sometimes one ocean can become another and not be noticed. Men cannot do this. A match will stop burning before it is gone completely.
Each and every Ghazal makes a fish of me, a tiny fish with one dorsal infinite eye.

“Sophie! Where’s your brother? Tell him to go get dressed.”
He’s flopped on the couch, the television on, The Simpsons Christmas show.
“Get up, we’re going to church.”
A disapproving grunt is all that answers her.
He snaps the TV off And rolls out of his nest.
Afternoon evaporates, the plastic tree lights up.
A chain of tiny suns wink in and out of life.
Sophie watches them dance.

“Why do we have to go?”
“Jesus. It’s his birthday. Besides, it’s just for an hour then we’re done for the year.”
Catholic guilt addressed.

Matthew Pritchard is a creative writing student. He prefers to write script, but occasionally experiments with prose or poetry when nobody’s watching.

Gregory Zorko studies at Plattsburgh State University.
A statue of a miner stands in the centre of town
and dons different clothing for every occasion.
But most of the time he stands proud in his flanno
and footy shorts. Celebrating and immortalising: the bogans.
Defying authority and over-indulging in
beers, bongs, and cigarettes; the bogans run my home town.
Hell, some might say the statue is a celebration of me.

One time the hippies came to town and pitched their
tents on the ovals all in protest of the coal mine.
So we got high and walked down to cause a ruckus.
Here we made false friends with the out-of-towners
who said to ‘be quiet’ because it was their campsite.
But these were our ovals, our childhoods,
our place to be ‘happy in our hoodies’.
Suddenly we were filled with a sense of protection,
of pride — all for a place we’d always claimed to hate.
So righteously we sat down and became entranced
as the oppositional hippie tap-tap-tapped on his tambourine.

Let’s not forget the hotel parties. Crazy nights in our
very own refuge: an abandoned, half-built, concrete
building in the middle of the bush. We’d build a massive
bon-fire, take a tab, or two, and sip casually
on a two-week-old cask of warm goon, straight from the box.
The boys would bring the wheelie-bin-boom-box down
and we’d lie on the flat roof, feet dangling off the edge
and watch as stars spun.

Our memories have been built with mates
as foundations, and we’ve all built ourselves from this town.
I’m always glad I have great mates, for in this town of:
drugs, booze, monotony, and quite a few dick-heads,
we’re all we’ve got. I guess that statue does celebrate us,
since it exudes the Burgh bogan spirit that we keep alive.

The Burgh: my home town.
It frustrates to the point of suffocation.
It is the only place where I’m free to be me.
We’re trapped in liberty here.
But trapped, nonetheless.

Sometimes Amy Underwood opens her mouth with the hope that her
thoughts will become audible without having to speak.
The sky was a perfect shade of blue. All around were trees that offered no shelter because they’d lost all their leaves and hadn’t yet been able to replace them. Every now and then the wind would pick up, literally, catching under the papers I was reading and tossing them to the ground.

The sun was warm but the sleeves of my jumper ended just that little bit too soon, as though a constant reminder that I should have bought a bigger size. I was thankful when the wind dulled to a mere breeze that just drifted above my head and through the shelter-less trees. Every so often the sun would shine through amidst the clouds and warm me, just for a moment.

I was on my second cup of coffee for the day when I noticed an older man with his own coffee cup inspecting the tables as if trying to find the perfect one to sit at, passing those he deemed unsuitable before finally seating himself a few tables away from me. Now happily settled in, he put his hand deep into the pocket of his coat and took out a letter. My curiosity was captured, why was he opening this letter here? I tried to put myself in his place and wonder why I might transport a letter in my pocket with the sole intention of reading it elsewhere.

I imagined him receiving the letter earlier that day and after seeing whom it was from, being unable to bear reading it then and there. He wanted to rid his mind of the uncertainty that was encased within the envelope, as though pretending it didn’t exist would make things better. He pocketed it and opened the bills instead because they would certainly be more delightful.

Perhaps the letter was from his daughter, the one who never asked him how he was or how he was going since his wife had passed on, but instead she asks for money; complains he’s not taking care of his only daughter when he denies her.

Or maybe his wife is still alive, but she has run away with another man and now she’s sending him the divorce papers. There could be a return address on the back that shows she’s now living in the posh part of town, the part that he could never in his wildest dreams afford. Surely that is something that he couldn’t bare to be alone to read.

Maybe he hoped that the letter contained a cheque for a million dollars, or a surprise holiday to a destination he never got the chance to visit. Perhaps he wanted to be around other people so he could reassure himself he wasn’t dreaming.

I watched him open it. He tugged at the paper until there was a clear gap for him to pull out the contents and unfold them onto the table. There were a couple of pages appearing to be a hand-written letter. No one hand-writes letters anymore. He smiled to himself as the read the first few lines and seemed to settle into his happiness. He read through them, taking caution with each word, pondering as he took it all in.

When he had finished, he tucked them back away into the envelope and sat at his table smiling to himself for a little longer. I wanted to know his story, to hear the things that he had seen, to ask him what moments in his life had brought him here. But most of all I wanted to know what was in the letter and why he had brought it here. As he got up, he turned and saw me looking curiously at him. He winked at me and continued to smile, as if he knew I was waiting for a similar letter myself.

Lucy Tierney is a third-year creative writing student at UOW and hopes that one day a writing career will magically appear.
There’s a cephalopod in my ribcage, 
it’s tentacles wrapped through my organs like the ribbon on a Christmas present.

The suckers cling to every surface, leaving rings of salt on my thighs... would you lick them clean if I let you see my scales?

I’ll sing you an ocean from my siren throat, worthy of a sailor’s weeping wail.

Watch, those human feet on my coral reef, those shards of memory will spit you wide open and I am not the only one who is starving in the sea.

Marcella Yakalis studies at Plattsburgh State University.
the refrigerator hums as
flows its electricity
through veins

the house creaks as it
settles in its foundation
like a grandfather settles
in his old leather chair

the wind whips across the window pane
as it goes on its way,
with no idea where it’s headed
and no memory of where it’s been.

a heart beats,
like a drum in the distance,
buried in my chest,
echoing -ing -ing -ing
in my ears.

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hub-dub -dub -dub
hub-dub -dub
hub-dub
there is no such thing as silence.

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Lauren Lewis studies at Plattsburgh State University.
CREATED DIAMONDS

‘Do you like it?’ she asked.
‘How much did it cost?’
I saw her chest fall at my question and I knew I’d blown it. Her shoulders dropped and she folded her arms around herself, covering her newest purchase.
‘Enough. I can afford it.’
That sexy lilt in her voice, the one she only gets when she finally notices how attractive she is; that’s gone now. My big mouth has blown it away, just when we finally managed to match our hectic schedules. She looked like I’d steamrolled all of the confidence out of her as she stood in our bedroom, lights on for a change, in a little black lace lingerie set.
She had posed when I’d first entered the room. Purposely candid, she had risen from a bend so the sheer fabric of her underwear stretched over her curves. She’d spun with a slow writhe of her hips, hands resting against a thigh and a waist, full breasts on display, pushed up in lace; just for me. Most likely hundreds of dollars, just for me.
Now I saw her eyeing her old flannel dressing gown, fidgeting from foot to foot awkwardly.
‘Ari, you don’t need to spend money on those things.’
Her blue eyes snapped up at me, furious. ‘Well I’ve realised that! Next time I’ll surprise you in sweatpants. Five bucks from Kmart, does that fit your budget?’
Shit. ‘No honey, I just think we could have-’
‘Used the money better, I fucking know. You and the fucking money!’
Arianna snatched up her dressing gown and wrapped herself tightly, covering the tiny scraps of lace. How could she have spent so much money on something so small. We had been saving for three years, so we could finally afford to become Mr and Mrs Browning, but she just keeps - buying.
‘Honey please-’. I edged toward her, reaching out to stroke her hair.
‘No! Do not touch me!’ Her glare cut deep, ‘That shouldn’t be too hard for you.’
Hard for me? Of course it was when we both come home bone tired and it’s my fault we can’t make the deposit for the reception. That doesn’t mean I don’t want her.
My fiancée dropped onto our double bed, curled into a corner,
‘You haven’t tried anything for months. I was just trying to, you know, encourage you. Make you interested in me again.’
She twirled her plain steel engagement ring around her finger, the tiny created diamond barely flashing in the light.
I just stood there. God I’m tired of being so inarticulate around her.
I want her all the time. She’s the most stunning woman I’ve ever known.
If I could just make as much as her. I mean she’s used to having money, her family are rolling in it, and I barely make four-fifty a week. How am I supposed to give her everything when I can’t even afford to buy her the ring she deserves?
‘Really?’ she whispered, looking up at me.
Did I just say that out loud?
ALWAYS THE SENSIBLE ONE


I looked over at the phone singing beside me for what was possibly the tenth time today. Nick looked up from behind the counter, where he was making tea. He looked about ready to throw the phone at the wall.

‘She’s never going to stop.’

I glanced over at him, his hair was still wet from the shower and his forehead was crinkled with annoyance. Turning back to the mobile as it buzzed toward me on the cushion, I knew he was right. So I plucked up the phone and hit the answer button.

‘WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU’RE NOT GOING!’

I whipped the phone away from my ear as my mother raged.

‘YOUR SISTER HAS WORKED SO HARD FOR THIS AND—’

‘Hi mum, it’s so nice to hear from you.’

Her choked gurgle made me smile slightly before she regained her steam.

‘Don’t you get smart with me Arianna; don’t act like I’m the one in the wrong. Really how could you not be coming with Vada is finally getting better?’

‘How could you choose a fitting over your baby sister?’

She droned on with the same crap she gave me every time. How Vada needed me there and how I should be more considerate of her mental condition. How this was her biggest project yet! How Vada wanted her big sister to be proud of her. How it was all ‘that Browning boy’s fault for turning my eldest against the family!’

I lost it. ‘Will you shut up for ten seconds and listen to me for a change! I’m not going to her screening, I’ve got a fitting for MY WEDDING DRESS! You know the wedding that’s on in THREE WEEKS! You remember that? Remember my own mother and the maid of honour aren’t coming to the fitting AGAIN because said maid wants her family to take a whole day to swoon over how deep and artistic she is. Fuck That! If I miss this they’ll sell my dress, so I’m fucking going!

And before my mother could emit one more outraged squawk, I hung up. Nick cuddled me closer and kissed my shoulder gently. I leaned back and breathed in the smell of him; warm tea and cinnamon. The tension slipped from my shoulders and I sighed.


I threw my phone at the wall.
EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

‘Do you understand what is happening?’ the girl in front whispered to her friend.

‘Nah,’ he replied, ‘It’s just some artsy BS.’

Vada sat behind the two in the theatre, her short film playing out on the huge screen, the smell of popcorn filling the air. The glow from it ghosted down onto the audience, lighting up their reactions for her to see. Vada only came to her screenings for that part, to watch everyone watch.

‘Ah,’ the girl hissed, ‘It’s written in art-school wank-enese, an ancient dialect.’

But these idiots.

Usually Vada was fine with negative feedback; not everyone could like everything. What she did expect was respect, but they weren’t even paying attention. The most important part was coming up and now they’d have no context to understand it. And they would blame her.

A car sped past on the screen, a bittersweet classical tune playing over the top. She’d begged Nick to take time from all his cake tasting to whip something up, and he’d come through for her in the end. The car pulled into the driveway and the music sped up, violins flashing as Joey, the leading man, climbed out and walked toward the door, quick close up of the poker chips he slid into his pocket.

‘Oh so edgy, so deep. This one’s a real original.’

The girl covered her mouth at her friend’s commentary, pulling his hands down as he grew too enthusiastic.

Vada sighed. She just knew that when those two got home, they’d jump onto their laptops and write up some scathing review on a public forum about how her film was shit. Oh, the scenes made no sense, and the characters had no justification for their actions. Whoever made this has less talent for film then I have in one finger. Meh meh meh hate hate.

‘Who the fuck gets mad about his wife buying lingerie? Seriously!’

‘I would if she looked like that.’ Both of them snickered under their breaths.

Another viewer a few seats away smiled in their direction, quietly agreeing with the two. And they were the people who would ruin her show. If an educated film critic writes a review, with analysis on key themes then he’s too snooty. A know-it-all, detached from real life. But if those two post some venomous quip on Tumblr everyone will believe them. Because that’s “real”.

‘Do you think we can just leave?’

‘I think it’s almost over. We’ll sneak into another one after; get our money’s worth.’

Vada glared at the back of their heads and fought the urge to crack their skulls together. They had missed the confrontation between the main characters. The crux of the story ruined. The credits would start to roll any second, her name to reappear again and again. Vada Marenti, Director, Costume and Set Designer, Lead camera, Head editor.

They’d have a name to go with their insults. She didn’t think her self-esteem could take much more. So as the final scene played and the two rose to leave, Vada dropped her gaze to the floor, reaching down to fiddle with her satchel until she was sure they had left. And just as they did, the room burst into applause.

Alyssa Wickramasinghe’s name takes up too much space. She’s surprised her story fit around it.
I wish I’d known you when I was five, filled my childhood with your laugh, your tiny hand holding tight to mine while we huddled together in adult-proof hiding spots, when parents tried to send us to bed.

I wish I’d known you when I was fifteen, filled my adolescence with your smirk and shared experimental kisses during skipped classes and midnight sneak-outs with no words spoken about it the next day.

I know you at twenty, filling my life with your eyes, hands, lips, and smell. I want to freeze time with your arms wrapped around me and my head against your neck where it’s always belonged.

I wish to know you at eighty, sharing my final days with you, your tired hand holding tight to mine when we’re huddled between old sheets, pressing wrinkled kisses to wrinkled skin and remembering a lifetime spent together.

Caitlin Easton is a Ravenclaw, whose obsessions include: strawberries, hugs, and the power of words.
Dirty fingers trail across cool metal
as the sun burns the ground below
and heat rises in disorienting waves from the blacktop.
No wind blows to cool flushed skin,
too hot, even for the cicadas.
The once green grass lies shriveled and dead.
Nothing to see but air.
Nothing to hear but the sun.
Nothing to smell but silence.
Nothing to taste but heat.
Nothing to feel but the cool metal links of an ever present fence beneath dirty fingers and the first drop of rain from a cloudless sky.

Lauren Lewis studies at Plattsburgh State University.
Civil war under scalp
still rages after
wallflowers dredge up
vacant gems touched by
dark things.
Cold memories
and out-of-body stargazers
wash in like the tide’s
suck and clinching rock.
Ghost stories from old lovers,
told under secret moons
in a dodgy share-house
and a shoebox flat,
kindle weight
from subtle horrors of
lurid truths.
Reptilian dance teacher
snake tongues under spotlight
while two jackals slide
over each other in search of
another easy meal.
These figures in the murk
pulp like waves
against skull walls
their faces washed-out
and plastic.

Their Eyes Like Wild Birds
By Paul Chicharo

Behind them jeering,
boisterous hyenas
whoop and giggle in the dark
flinging catcalls and whistles
through chain-link.
A clarinet player walks home
with a keyed fist.

An existential postcard enthusiast killed by daffodils in “93/
a firm believer in the fact that “happiness is not expired milk.”
— Sinto saudades de vocês.
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