Tide - Edition VI

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Abstract
Editors' Note - For some time now, esteemed Readers, there has been a considerable lack of Victorian verbosity and pomposity in the realm of student publications. Such collections are often too earnest and self-aware, and as a result the once respectable name of 'Youth' in the modern literary canon has become inglorious. The only way in which to remedy this situation is with a healthy dose of Ganderax. Consider this journal to be the first stride towards a new ideal. Both the prose and poesy found betwixt these stiffened covers shall be a golden orb of inspiration for a new generation of literary sensibility. Our band of jocund wordsmiths can feel no greater pride in a success such as this. Elementary! As the Tide ebbs and flows, let this be seen as the highest watermark: the one that claims the shoreline. In the name of Literature, Dr Dog Watson, Esq.
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In the name of Literature,

Dr Dog Watson, Esq.
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We'd circle like stingrays before you put it up; you'd spike me when I let you. You'd attach your brain-scan to our bedroom light, making our room glow in waves and wrinkles of cobalt. We'd lie back in our bed late at night and you'd show me where your memories were kept: inside the blue squiggles, you'd say, as you'd point them out to me on the ceiling like stars. That's where I remember us sunbathing, you'd say. That's the part of me that loves the beach. Right above our heads you showed me the growing shadow that would eventually envelop our bed.

At night you'd lead me down your cerebral hemisphere. We'd walk across the bedroom and visit the finger-like parts of your brain that washed across the room, projected by the bedroom light. This is when we had our first lunch, you said, pointing to an oval-shaped spot on the floor. Remember the seagulls that kept trying to take away my chips? I did, I said. The lamp became a lighthouse where we walked every Sunday afternoon. The cupboard was when you always let me have the froth on your cappuccino, you said. The bed was when we found out about the tumour; it sat in darkness while the shadow hovered ominously overhead.

I found a book, you'd say in bed, about art, about surrealism. You said it would help you understand how your perception of things would change. You'd read it and ask me what I thought découpage was. I said I didn't know,
that I didn’t have an answer. You said it was kind of like broken time, when parts of it became unfixed and meanings would change together, creating new ones. You tore out words from the page and placed them in a line on our bed. Découpage, you said. But I didn’t understand the sentence.

Time stretched when you put up another scan onto the bedroom light. A new black shadow hovered above the dresser lamp. I walked over and turned it on, eliminating the darkness. That’s when I met your mother, you’d say, pointing to the light. That’s when I’m meeting her. That’s when I’m going to meet her. That’s when I met her. You walked over and switched the lighthouse off.

While you’d sleep I’d get up late at night, lie on the bedroom floor and become lost in the sea cast by the light. I’d rest my head against the carpet and absorb the glowing symmetrical curves of the brain scan. It looked like an x-ray of over-stretched moth wings that had been pinned down against the light. I’d go back to bed and my hands would float across the ripples in the sheets to find yours. Our bodies would turn in unison, like a school of fish chasing to stay as one in the deep of the ocean.

You smiled like I loved, when you saw what I had done to our bedroom. I carved the sand like dunes on the floor, folded and smooth, and made sure it was high against the walls of our bedroom. We’d lie down at night in between the carpet of sand and the blue waves of wrinkles, where you’d ask me to tell you something about the beach. I tell you that sometimes it luminates after the sunset. That smooth pipis live hidden deep inside beaches, but wiggle up in the tides just high enough to kiss the surface of the wet sand. I tell you that there are beaches in the world with sand that makes noise when people step on it, but that it’s hard to find, to hear. Ship-oil pollution? you’d ask. Oil coats it, destroys its music, I’d say. Makes it unfixed.

I fell asleep in your lap as we lay in the folds of dunes on the floor, blanketed by the dim cobalt glow and woke to you motionless, with your hand immersed in the sand, like you had found something.
The lawns need mowing. Again. Mom told me to do them yesterday, but I got caught up playing football on the field ’til late. Jimmy Garland broke his nose. He got blood on everyone, but he got me the worst. Mom still hasn’t seen my shirt. I’ve hidden it under the wardrobe in my room, along with two bars of chocolate, three sticks of gum, a firing pin from this rifle I once found and a drawing of a naked lady. If Mom sees that shirt she’ll get mad, real mad. But I don’t think she will, because she hasn’t found the chocolate or the chewing gum or the firing pin or the naked lady. At least, I don’t think she has, because she’s never said anything about them. I’m pretty sure she would though—say something, that is. She would yell and yell, and take me straight to the priest where I would have to tell him what I’d done and he’d make Jesus forgive me, but only after I promise never to do what I’d done again. Otherwise that would be a sin.

Stupid Jimmy Garland. No-one likes him anyway. He is scrawny and shouldn’t have been playing football in the first place. If I had the rest of that rifle I would go find him, then I would shoot him. I really would. But I don’t have the rifle; I’ve only got the firing pin. I found that when I was with Ian McCrery and Mauve Benshill. We were walking through the woods because we heard that there was this dead stag out by the river. We were going to take its antlers. But we never could find the stag. I think James Bowler lied to us, but it didn’t matter because we found the rifle instead. And that was much
cooler. Ian McCrery saw the butt sticking out from a ditch on the side of the path and none of us wanted to touch it at first. But then I did; I picked it up. They dared me. It was heavy and rusted-out. Ian McCrery and Mauve Benshill both thought it might still have a bullet in it so I aimed it at Mauve Benshill. Nothing happened when I pulled the trigger. Anyway, we couldn't agree on who got to keep the rifle so we smashed it up and took different pieces. It was hard work. We beat it against the ground 'til the bits came loose. I kept the firing pin. I mean... I think it's the firing pin. It looks like a hook but I know for sure it isn't the trigger, because Ian McCrery took that, so it's got to be the firing pin. Maybe. No, yeah. It's definitely the firing pin.

If I don't mow the lawns today Mom is going to yell. But I don't want to. I don't want to do anything but go back to the field and play football. That's what we do every Sunday morning. Go to the field and play football at ten. Maybe if I just stay in bed she won't come up and tell me to do anything. She might not even know I'm in my room. The door is closed.

My room is full of things that I find. There isn't just the stuff I keep under the wardrobe though. There are things all over the place. Like, under my bed I have a few roman candles, a coin from another country, a snake's tooth and this black rock which I think has gold inside because there's gold specks all over it. Then over in the far corner you can pull up some of the floorboards, and under there I keep this metal spring and an eye made of glass. That's really cool. It's my favourite by far. But my other favourite things I don't hide. I put them on my walls. All my posters of the Patriots. And banners, I have lots of banners. I've even got a jersey up there. The Pats are the greatest team in the NFL. Well, my Dad says that they are and he has seen them play. He is from Boston, but he came to Canada when he married Mom. She got him a job here which he had for a long time but doesn't have any more. He got fired. Everyone got fired. Mom tells me this story all the time. She says it's so I understand. She also says that's why we live in such a bad neighbourhood.

I can hear her cleaning downstairs. Footsteps in the kitchen. I know she is cleaning because there are taps running and every now and again the pots go clang. If she comes up and asks me to do the lawns I'll just have to do them. I'll have to wear my long pants and my shoes too. You need to wear long pants and shoes when you mow. Otherwise you will run over a stick and
THE THINGS WE FIND

snap it in two, and then a piece will fly back and it will cut you bad. Except it's too hot for long pants today. Or shoes. That's why I don't want to mow. I want to go play football. Or go down the docks and jump into the water with Ian McCrery. We're not supposed to go down to the docks by ourselves anymore. Sometimes we still do, though. There are lots of people who just sleep on the ground there. Mom says that's another reason why we live in a bad neighbourhood, but I don't think so. Those people don't do anything wrong. They just sleep on the ground, and have cardboard signs and ask for pennies. One of them used to work with my Dad. I know so because he used to come around to our house for dinner. Now he just sleeps on the ground. He tried talking to me once but Ian McCrery and I took his hat, which was full of coins. That's where I found my coin from another country. My teacher says it's from Malaysia.

I can still hear Mom downstairs. And Dad too. I don't know when he got up but they are already fighting. They fight most mornings. I wonder if it's about the lawns. Or maybe Dad found my shirt. But I know no-one's found my shirt because no-one has seen the chocolate bars or sticks of gum, or anything else that's under my wardrobe. I would have seen them come in. I would have seen them find all that stuff... No. No-one has found my shirt. No-one has found anything of mine. Ever. Only I find things.

Like, Dad has this room. His own room. He calls it The Den. I'm not supposed to go in there. Neither is Mom. Only Dad, so he can play his jazz music really loud and spend time by himself. He doesn't know though; he doesn't know I've been in there. He wasn't home yesterday afternoon. Mom was up the road doing the groceries and she said she would be back in a minute. She said not to leave my room. But I did. And I went in there. I didn't like it. The room was dark because the windows had been boarded up and the only light came from a lamp on his desk. But I could still see lots of shelves, full of books and old model planes and superheroes and soldiers. There was one statue of these men raising a flag on a hill. It wasn't painted. It was heavy and made of metal. I nearly dropped it.

There were these other things in there too. I don't think about them much. I just... I just found them. I wasn't looking for anything though, I swear. Just looking around and that's all, not looking for them. I opened the top drawer. There was this box. The lid didn't lift up; it slid back. I didn't slide
it back very far but I still saw them. I saw... No. I don't like getting shots. Even though the doctors say it won't hurt, it still does... I don't know why my Dad had them in his room. I didn't want to look at them. Just put them back, I said to myself. Put them back. So I tried to, but the lid slid all the way open and everything fell out and this powder went poof on the carpet. And so I ran.

Mom and Dad are really arguing this morning. Louder than usual. I can hear him calling her a liar. Mom isn't a liar. I know so. But he is calling her things like bitch and slut, and f-ing this and f-ing that. Maybe he knows Ian McCrery and I took his friend's coin. Or maybe he thinks Mom did it. But I don't want him to call me an f-ing bitch because then he might hit me too.

Maybe if I mow, if I go down and do the mowing, maybe he won't be so mad. And then I'll give him the coin back. And I'll give him the firing pin because he likes war stuff. But first I'll mow. I'll get up, put on my long pants and shoes, and I'll mow. I'll even get the mower out myself, so he won't have to do it. And I'll just mow. I'll mow. I'll mow.

But I can't hear anyone anymore. No-one is yelling. Mom isn't crying. There are just footsteps coming up the stairs. Dad's footsteps.

It's already ten. Maybe...

Maybe I can go play football.
COSMOGENY

Sally Evans

I am pliable
    as beeswax
    rolled in his palm
or dropped mercury
careening across
    his body’s flat surface.
Molten
    newly rounded
    I await
    the gift of gravity.
I bumped down the aisle, groping for greasy plastic support. I was focused on the phone in my hand.

On train now, see you in an hour.
Too business-like.
On the train now, see you in an hour baby xx.
No, she'd hate that.
On the train...
I'll just call her when I get there.

I put the phone back in my pocket and looked down the carriage at the ranks of empty anti-graffiti print seats. I sat in one that seemed clean but my hand fell on the wet cigarette butts stuffed in the furry rainbow upholstery. I looked out the window.

All I could see were the lights of houses shooting past and my own reflection looking back at me through an oily smear where somebody else had leant their head against the glass. I heard footsteps behind me and pretended to watch the darkness outside as a man appeared in the reflection—blue jeans, white polo shirt, moustache—pacing down the aisle. Just as he passed by me his eyes intercepted mine in the glass and I looked at my feet, noticing the dirty newspaper for the first time. I glanced up in time to see him disappear, wallet bulging from the back of his jeans.

I wrestled the phone out of my pocket to check for messages. None.
The train groaned into a station. Wild giggles spilled through the hissing doors, preceding a couple who were a little older than me—twenty-five or twenty-six maybe. And drunk, trying hard not to show it, leaning on each other and breaking out in laughter at every stumble. I watched them until they were a couple of metres away, until I noticed the erection swelling under his tight denim shorts. Her eyes caught mine. Quickly turning back to my window, I heard the girl whisper something to him as they passed me and both of them snorted.

Back to the newspaper: *cryptic... across... puzzles... business.*

The drunk couple flung themselves into a seat at the end of the carriage, still giggling. I had to breathe in deeply and shut my eyes to control the rising embarrassment. The train’s electric engines whirred in my ears.

When I opened my eyes, the man with the moustache was standing in front of me.

‘G’day champ, do you know if this train goes to Sutherland?’

His eyes were tiny and dark, held in a permanent squint.

‘No, sorry.’ I didn’t. ‘Maybe those guys do,’ I added to be helpful, throwing a nod back to the drunk couple.

‘No worries.’ He winked at me, but turned and left the carriage.

I grabbed my phone. No messages.

Still have to catch another train from Central, then a taxi from Strathfield. Ring her now to see if she’s awake. No, don’t. Call her when you get there, like she said. Hope she’s not awake and I can slip in next to her and just sleep.

The train skated into another station. An excited squeal from the back of the carriage told me it was the drunk couple’s stop. They blundered out and I watched them clumsily dancing together on the platform before the train pulled away. He still had an erection.

I turned away from the window just as the man with the moustache entered the carriage again. I grabbed for my phone so I could pretend to be distracted but my hand was still in my pocket as he approached. He smiled, but a twitch in his cheek contorted his face into a mocking grimace.

‘G’day matey, does this train go to Sutherland?’

‘I don’t know.’

He was already standing closer than I wanted, but now he put his hand on the back of my seat. He had rings on his fingers. My hand was still in my
pocket.

'Can I suck your cock?' he asked.

A coal train barrelled past on the other track, scissoring air and metal in a heinous shriek.

'Can I suck your cock?' he asked again.

'No, sorry,' I managed to say.

Why apologise?

The man leaned in over me, moving his hand from the back of the seat to my shoulder.

'You're not gay?'

'No, sorry mate.'

His hand squeezed lightly.

'Sure?'

'No, sorry.'

He left his hand on my shoulder for another second, lips forming a smirk under his moustache, before he straightened up and strolled out of the carriage. I turned back to the window. The tail of the coal train flashed past, sounding like a gasp of fright and for the rest of the ride I watch the stations and lights rushing through my reflection.

Another train from Central, then a taxi from Strathfield and I was waking her up.

It was only when we were in bed and she curled around me, one hand slowly reaching for my belt, that I thought about him again.
I dreamt you were perched on powerlines
and parched for fresh ideas. Your teeth
dry and yellow
made crinkling noises when you smiled.

I saw you as if in a mirror staring back through yourself
from a place of wisdom and wit like one who has seen God
and lived.

I dreamt you were static within a spiral as it rolled clean
around you,
time neither touching nor missing your surfaces
leaving ashy grey remnants of memory upon your bones
—just to suggest you'd been here before.
I heard you retell past lives, skipping great chapters of experience
like pages stuck together in the folds of your mind,
ripped from the easel
thrown to the fire
redrawn in another place,
at another time.
CALGARY (extract)

Kye Kocher

sublime disregard across the prairie

a blood reserve

Indian woman
dubbed

painting a fencepost photograph of

Omahkai-stow
IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE AND SOLITUDE

Tomas Ernst

Waking up to the dawn’s dew is nothing new for this tired, old bird. I’ve seen plenty in my twenty-year burrow under the canopy of Sydney’s prime green space: the dystopia that is Hyde Park. My world exists within the confines of what amounts to little more than two city blocks adjacent to the financial capital of Australia. I must have been born the ugliest duckling in the world. Tourists have no shame in this zoo, incessantly snapping photos as if this face was forgettable! Just when blissful ignorance sets in... something in the Park jolts me from memory to reality... a reflection in the fountain, over-zealous park attendants or skateboarding punks with nothing better to do.

It is the daylight I fear more than the dark. My fellow inmates and I revel in the cloak of darkness, out of sight from the judgment of those vile creatures that wreak havoc on our environment from dawn to dusk. Disguised in suits, socks and shorts, these creatures are the devil incarnate. Cricketers, park attendants and marijuana-toking hippies that think they’re John Lennon are prime nuisances, with no concern for the Park’s many inhabitants. For the most part, my pathetic existence does not register a blip on their radar. Dogs, however, are a different story. Council relaxed the bylaw on leashes; my entire world has changed. Those dumb animals chase anything that moves, and these days I’ve developed a severe case of arthritis.
I rejoice in the darkness, devouring, undisturbed, the goodies left behind. Twenty years of this life has left me with a nose for sniffing out the richest bounty—but even this beak runs afoul, now and again, of a shit-soaked diaper discarded by some reckless fool. Occupying a park full-time lends itself too readily to the cultivation of questionable odours; so much so, that I had to take flight. Those nearby Captains of Industry flexed their muscle to rid the Park of our obtrusive stench. It was the one and only time I dared venture out.

When I returned, the vile creatures had multiplied. Drawn by our absence. I played it safe, sheltering in a tree by day and scavenging at night.

One evening I found that another had made it out, and returned safely. She played hard-to-get for a while. The blackness of the night veiled my exterior, but aesthetics were secondary given our predicament. It wasn't pity that drove her to me. It was survival. There is strength in numbers and our stock was in short supply. She took no pleasure as we mated, a methodical disposition to her sex. It was awkward, purposeful copulation.

That was a decade ago. She never looked at me again. I didn't have the courage to try and so found comfort in the monotony of daily routine. Our one embrace was nothing more than the convenient necessity in the survival of our kind. Today there was an announcement about another Cull. I'm certainly not expecting a last-minute endangered species classification. The International Union for Conservation of Nature remains 'Least Concerned' when it comes to us.

Our legacy is a double shot of perseverance and abandonment. Solitude is our destiny.
HE has left her. She is folded on platform one in the torque of morning sun, staring haunted by the tar in relief like Mars geology. She is an alien in an alien place. A tiny gnat clings to a chunk of bitumen and rocks in the breeze, a lover’s waltz. Its shadow is monstrous. She hears an old Polish couple waiting by the stairs: ‘Where did February and March go?’ ‘Where did April?’

Eight-oh-five, and the blackberries along the lines grow and grow in time-lapse, impervious to Council spray. The pine saplings do not fit with the blue metal, clash with the copper piping running perpendicular to the jackhammer chisels through the sandstone cliff. Everything faces east, over the acres of native bouquet in entropy without cellophane or a bow. Moisture on the cliff face catches the sun and blinds like liquid silver; mechanically she raises a slender wrist and guards her eyes. He has left her this morning.

Now stretches out to a no-boundary condition. It is laid out along train tracks turning ahead without end. April is long gone behind her. She can turn in her seat and look back through a mist of years, to see him winking at her across crumbling classrooms and turning away, the electricity and the blush if her leg were to touch his accidentally under the plywood desk. Graduation. Her marks are excellent, her school shoes are polished. He has not passed. Almost in defiance he grabs her on the hall steps, full of hormones and bravado, defensive and embarrassed. She kisses him back with
a heart full to bursting with returned love, for Someone. And she holds him; on the flowered sofa in the back room of his father’s house she holds him, he talks, she pours herself into him until love spills over and splashes on the dusty floor and becomes the chimes on the back porch, the spider-webs on the windows, the cold air, the orange flowers on the yellow twill. He talks; his father, the fear, his mother, the distance: no love, no love for the little boy—so beautiful and talented if he’d only believe in himself and try. She held his hand. She kissed his cheek. She loved him enough for both of them.

A tiny rabbit is meditative in shaggy grass between the train line and the highway. He hops next to the only deciduous tree in a thirty kilometre radius. She holds her head in her hands, one elbow propped too high on the window sill, holographic tinting and scratched graffiti. Tink wuz here and Bandit. She thinks her feelings. Seeks them out) lays them flat in her mind but they won’t stay still. He has left her.

When they were twenty-one they moved into an old cottage. It had a fireplace. She bought metres of soft cotton and organza and sewed new curtains and pillow slips. He picked her flowers on the way home, daisies and fireweed pulled up by the roots, leaving clumps of dirt on the kitchen table. She unpacked her mother’s old cookbooks. She got morning shifts at the supermarket and took classes in the afternoon. He lost jobs. Retail, warehouse, office, labouring. He tried, he told her. The boss just hated him, it wasn’t his fault he was always late, he didn’t steal anything from the stock room. She believed him. In the dark of their little bedroom they lay together and whispered, the streetlight waving in through the leaves of the China Bell, through the folds and careful stitches of her curtains. The light waved over their bodies under the light sheet, indiscriminate, unknowing. They spoke of heaven and earth, the multitude of time, the afterlife, the future, the present and always the past. His past. He had so much to give the world, she thought. So much to offer. She loved him more and made secret vows to be more, give more and never hurt him as he had been so hurt before. She was so good, correct of deed and heart. The image of compassion and love—she clung to this more desperately, with more urgency than ever. She clung to him when he loved her, or to the light sheets when he stopped. The goodness—sustained her.

The tracks bend another corner. Besser blocks upon bricks upon concrete
May first

pass. Cyclone fencing, corrugated iron, Jesus Loves You, factory, bridge, scummy reservoir, bogan terrace, renovated terrace, park, crane, pylon, warehouse for lease, yellow pet shop, mauve adult shop, cream flats, blue sky, grey smog, she presses her knuckles into her eyes. The Polish couple are sitting across the aisle. The wife gestures with soft hands and the husband nods here and there at some point he agrees with. They speak in their own tone, a mumble to everyone else. Smiling at this, frowning at that. She realises she has been staring, and stops.

She woke up suddenly; before the sun, the bed was cold. White autumn dawn pressed on the window. She lay under scratchy wool and for a sleepy time simply allowed the Unusual to just be—unquestioned as in a dream. But the wardrobe was open, and all his things were gone, leaving a hollow in the wood—a wound, a void to Narnia or to nothing, with her things looking out stupidly from one side. He was making noise. She followed him with her ears. Slammed cupboards in the kitchen, something smashed in the bathroom, a long zipper, dragging something down the hall. She imagined a floor plan of the house as she tracked him with a dotted line showing where he had been, she imagined his tears still wet on a note that would explain everything. Until she heard the front door slam.

The tracks straighten out and stretch and slide underground and they all go down together. Her pupils dilate and suddenly she is facing herself in the black window.

She looks down at her hand resting in her lap. Soft and warm and apart. She strokes her limp hand, turns it over and holds it. It is quiet.

When she was nine and walking home from school she stopped to cross the road and looked right. Down the avenue, under a tree, a kitten toyed with an injured pigeon. She paused, and for the briefest moment wondered which animal she supported. Then ran, waving and hissing at the kitten. Delicately folding the pigeon’s wings so he would be comfortable, cradling him to her chest. Being frightened by his heartbeat—it was too fast—no heart could beat that fast. He looked at Nothing with his yellow eye. The light caught the silk colours on his neck and she held him still and turned her body—now magenta, now turquoise. He was softer than any of her toys. He grew warm against her chequered school dress. They were the same temperature. His heartbeat was slowing, soon it would be the same as hers.
But it got slower. And then she couldn't feel it any more. She stood on the cracked footpath and stared at him.

She is holding her breath. They are stopped in the dark. Manholes with safety-yellow handles are bricked out of the wall. Wires and piping run beside her, close for observation like an aquarium. Dust gathers in the mortar between the bricks, fluorescent lights blast out before and after her window. In the earth with the world above her. He has left her. He is gone. Involuntarily her lungs fill with air expanding into shoulders and stomach and she fills them 'til they ache and burn before exhaling everything at once. The train lurches, clumsy, some great jointed beast getting up.
LIKE CARS IN a parking lot, the two continents met with a bump. Instantly he felt himself thrust into the air; out of nothingness, he was born. He looked out upon the world from his four faces; one of them was much larger than the others. He tried to turn it out of sight, but he couldn’t because he was a mountain.

Occasionally cities grew on his lower slopes or in the valleys at his feet, but they never lasted very long. The same winds that brought the seeds of civilisation always brought back the ashes of its destruction. The trees were more of a problem: once one of them took root, it seemed, a whole forest spread overnight. Fortunately he learnt to spot the early warning signs of an outbreak and he grew adept at releasing a timely avalanche to pop the unsightly greenhead.

Over the years, he gained weight. The continents pushed apart, bickering over who had right of way, and the mountain grew larger and larger. His head broke through the clouds. Now he had a snowy white crown and the young mountains skateboarded on the grassy lawns of his lowest slopes. But his avalanches were good for more than just trees; he caught one of the rascals with a timely blow and fifteen skiers died. After that, the smaller mountains stayed away. So did the skiers.

The mountain grew lonely. The nearest peaks whispered amongst themselves, fearful of setting off his wrath if they spoke. Only the snow and
the wind kept him company. But they weren't good company, because the wind was an airhead—always happy to caress the mountain's flanks, but never around for breakfast—and snow is fucking cold.

Once, a mountaineer surmounted the mountain's peak. It had never been done before—with good reason. For a moment the mountain contemplated killing the hapless adventurer, but pity stayed his hand. Also, the bloody cold had got into his bones and his joints ached like nothing else. The mountaineer struggled his way up the mountain's smallest face, pitons hammering into the mountain's icy overcoat. He nearly slipped, once or twice, but regained his footing. Engrossed, the mountain put some popcorn on and settled in to watch.

The mountaineer was near the top now, reaching territory where only the wind had ever been before. Despite himself, the mountain started urging the mountaineer on to reach his summit, to do what no man had done before.

The mountaineer teetered underneath an overhanging crag, but somehow he hauled himself up. He had climbed the mountain.

'I have conquered you!' he exulted.

*Hang on, what's this about conquering?* groaned the mountain. He shifted his joints, and a small rumble of snow gave way on a lower slope.

'... I am the first to climb you?' he hedged.

*That's better,* the mountain replied with a sage nod that nearly threw the mountaineer away.

'Why do you talk?' asked the mountaineer as the sun moved through the sky.

*I am alone, adventurer. Don't you ever get lonely?*

But the mountaineer was gone.
The traffic lights had just turned green but the granny driving the small blue car in front hadn't noticed.

'Fucking move!' Dad yelled, beating against the steering wheel of our new van.

Mum looked away from the window, her eyes narrowed. 'Well that's impressive: profanity and impatience in only two words.'

'Give it a rest, will you?'

Beside me, Jack was hunched over his Jumbo Colouring Book, tongue between teeth, as he tried to keep his crayon between the lines of a cartoon clown. I went back to combing Rapunzel Barbie's cropped hair. I had cut it two weeks ago—it seemed the right time.

Dad brought our car right up to granny's bumper. I glimpsed, on top of her shopping, a hobby-horse.

When I was small, Dad and I once played cowboys in the backyard while we waited for Mum to get home. The sun warmed our backs as we cantered full-pelt after Toby the naughty maltese terrier.

'Faster horsey! Faster!' I urged my two-legged pony.

Dad replied with disgruntled neighs and snorts. I screwed up my nose.

'We'll never catch him with that attitude!'

It was only early afternoon, but already pink plastic chairs were lined
up by the back steps where we'd played 'bus drivers' and a tea-party lay abandoned under the tree. Two prams also sat by the garden shed; in them our dollies rested. After a few more laps around the swing set Toby decided he'd rather sleep in the long grass by the back fence.

'I think I heard the phone ringing,' Dad puffed and put me down. When we got inside, however, there was no message.

The car lurched. 'Jesus mate—use your bloody indicator!' Hot Macca's coffee exploded from the foam cup in Dad's hand, soaking his lap. 'Shit!' 'Jonathon, calm down!' Mum fished some napkins from the glove-box and dropped them across Dad's pants.

A sharp honk from behind made us jump. I turned and saw two teenage girls, in a boxy red car, wearing big sunglasses and sneers.

'So sorry to hold up the party, girls!' Dad waved at them without turning around.

Jack turned to inspect the girls for himself. 'I don't think they can hear you Dad.'

Finally, it was quiet enough that the radio could be heard. A man with an odd sounding voice sang slowly and sadly: just call my name out loud and I'll be there, yeah, yeah. I thought it sounded like a CD that Mum used to play in the evenings.

I remembered one night when I'd sat at the breakfast bar with my homework spread out on the scuffed counter-top. My parents were doing the dishes. Mum was scrubbing the remaining pasta sauce from the sides of the bowls and Dad was drying off the cutlery she'd just placed in the drainer. Music drifted from the stereo on top of the fridge.

Dad dumped a bunch of forks in the drawer. 'Dance with me?'

He reached into the sink and pulled Mum's hands out. Water trickled down her arms and splashed onto the tiles as they twirled on the spot. His arm was around her waist and his other hand held hers. They looked just like Cinderella and the Prince—except Mum was in tracksuit pants.

Dad buried his face in her neck and she shrieked with laughter.

'Shhh,' he told her, 'you'll wake the baby.'

They laughed again, though more quietly.
Jack kicked the toe of his light-up sneaker against the fuzzy grey car carpet. ‘Do we have to see the clipboard lady?’

Mum looked at him with her serious eyes. ‘Yes, we do, because we need her help, Jack.’

‘Why though?’

‘Because Mum and Dad argue too much,’ I whispered.

‘Lilly,’ Dad’s eyes locked on mine in the rear-vision mirror.

‘Jason from school said his parents argued. They got some really cool thing—a  di-borce—and now he gets twice the Christmas presents!’ Jack flashed the incomplete smile the tooth fairy had yet to pay him for.

Dad brought the car into the left lane. ‘Nobody’s getting a divorce, mate.’

‘Bet that’s not what Cassandra was told,’ Mum shot back.

I sat up a little straighter in my seat. ‘Hey, isn’t that Jack’s teach—’

‘Shit, we’re out of petrol!’

Nobody spoke again until Jack spotted the big yellow board of the Shell station.

The car jolted to a stop beside the petrol tanks as Dad yanked up the handbrake and thrust open the door. He strode around the front of the car, scrunching up the wet napkins from his lap and shoving them in the bin.

The station was empty except for the maroon car opposite. In the backseat a boy with a nose like a cabbage-patch doll and a sideways cap squashed over his corkscrew curls flattened his face against the window, taunting me. His parents were studying the directions that the station attendant pointed out on the map unfolded across their bonnet. I stuck my tongue out at the boy and turned to the advertisements in the shop windows. Jack, who’d seen them too, stuck his head out the window.

‘Dad, can we get Twisties? They’re two for one!’

Dad nodded. He placed the grotty-handled hose back and strode through the glass doors, past a black and white dog lapping water out of buckets with bunches of flowers in them. Jack waved his hand in front of my eyes.

‘Wanna wash the windows?’ He pointed at the black buckets with the squeegees beside the car.

‘Not today, Jack.’ I nodded to Mum in the front seat.

All I could see of her was a length of blonde hair, but I knew she was
looking down. Her hands clutched her worn brown wallet. I saw our family portrait inside. Dad's hands rested on Mum's shoulders. Jack and I sat beaming on either side of her and in Mum's arms he sat. His small, dazed eyes were the only ones not looking at the camera. Our baby brother Sam had gone to live with the angels just before Christmas; the doctors couldn't make the cancer go away.

After Sam left, the arguing started. At first it wasn't so bad, but one night two weeks ago I woke in the darkness to their screams. I'd been dreaming, of what I'm not sure, but I didn't even know I was asleep until I heard their yells and I opened my eyes. It was late and the only light in the room was from my night-light. Its soft golden glow touched the ears of my teddy bears and a slice of carpet.

'How dare you blame me for this!' I heard Mum shout. 'What did I ever do?'

'Nothing! That's the point! You wouldn't eat or sleep, you barely spoke,' Dad bellowed.

'Our son died Jonathon. And all you could say was... was—'

'I didn't know what else to say. You were so distant.'

'I was right here and I needed you; the kids needed you. But you weren't worried about us.'

'I needed someone to talk to.'

'Sounds like you got a bit more than that!'

'Well at least I was getting it from somewhere!' There was a crash as something shattered against the wall.

'You crazy bitch! What the fuck are you doing?' Dad's voice was full of anger.

'Get out!' Mum screamed.

'Mummy! Daddy!' Jack's frightened whimpers punctured the shouts.

'I'll—' Dad began.

'No, just go.' The staircase creaked as Mum climbed the first steps.

'But—'

'Please—just leave.' I could barely hear her, but the sadness in her voice made my heart cold.

There was a long silence and then a door slammed. The staircase creaked
again and minutes later Jack stopped crying.

The next day I found the shards of a white dinner plate heaped in the bin. The only sign of the argument was a dent in the dining room wall peppered with china dust. When Dad came home in a new silver van, the dust was wiped away and a photograph was placed over the dent.

The sound of the car door opening startled me. Mum got out, closed her door and walked around the front of the car. She hopped into Dad’s seat and woke the engine. As she steered the car towards the exit, Jack looked up from his page.

‘Mum! Wait, you forgot Dad!’ He turned in his seat.

Following his gaze, I saw Dad standing expressionless by the bowsers with the Twisties clutched in his hand.

‘Mum?’ Jack’s eyes shone with unfallen tears.

Mum waved to the man behind the wheel of the sports car who stopped to let her into the traffic.

‘You know what Jack, I don’t think I want to see the clipboard lady either.’ Mum’s tone was cheerful, but her voice sounded a little too high, a little too wobbly. To me she sounded broken.
A man's game
for Alan Wearne

The blue-esky sky falls
and fills the tidal charcoal flames
with another piss-poor performance.

Rodger tenses. Charlene breathes—
a man's game.
His words wait, protest
inside his schooner hand
throb­bing
with tepid luck and lukewarm taste.
A punter runs again.

Charlene lingers
near the fading jasmine.
Tossing tears
over the cracked plum fence.
'He's gone,
won't be back 'til mornin'.
The TAB's swallowed him again.'
So she nails
his mango-tango Speedos
onto the tin-shed door.
Dry idling

Adam Formosa

and you told me
the best place to
hide a traffic light
is amongst the lines
in the street directory
to crease the pages into pyramids and fold corners sharply
and conceal green first because it’s easiest to recognise
red will leave orange so tuck it in the spot where
words turn upside down and fold and fold
until you reach the point where I saw
you paused at the intersection
between the switch to red
and the swift gestalt
of a changing
light
Here's one I know you'll love. When I saw it I just squealed with delight! And hubby can use it too.'

The Tupperware lady held out the new Plastitech lunchbox as fifteen sets of cold-cream and mascara-ed eyes blinked in simultaneous awe. They clasped their patent leather handbags with Max Factor fingers and knew all their carefully saved pocket money was as good as spent.

The presentation ended and the women applauded, more to the plastic wonderland in front of them than to the smiling Tupperware lady. Joan, a slim, immaculately dressed woman sitting to the back of the circle, was overcome with the thrilling energy in the large airless sunroom. None of the women in her Ladies Club had ever been to a Tupperware party before and they had been looking forward to the occasion for weeks. Plastic was so terribly exciting!

The Tupperware lady took her position beside the display. Everyone forgot their decorum and rushed forward, each wanting to be the first to place an order. Joan was jostled to the back of the crowd. She was glad she had remembered to apply Protex to her underarms that morning. She did not want to offend anyone as they stood in such close proximity.

Joan bought two Deluxe storage sets before eating a slice of cream sponge-cake from the tea table. She was watching her figure but she'd recently started taking American Slimming Tablets, so she knew she need not worry. She was
about to have a second slice when she realised that her husband would be home in just two hours. She apologised to the ladies and left quickly.

At home, Joan rolled out the pastry for the shepherds pie and grimaced. She had seen Dr Stevenson earlier that week and he had confirmed her suspicions. Joan was pregnant. She was of course delighted with the news. What decent woman wouldn't be! But she was nervous about telling Henry, stifled by the thought that he would not be as welcoming of the idea as she was. Joan corrected herself and smoothed out her frown lines with her fingers. Henry certainly wouldn't want her looking like that. And in any case, she should count her blessings. Her problems were paltry compared to the hassles he went through at work.

As the pie was baking Joan wiped down her laminex benchtops and waved a feather duster over her pristine living room. She rushed to her wardrobe to change her dress to one of dusty pink, which did wonders for her complexion. She put a ribbon in her hair, touched up her makeup and applied a squirt of Gemey Perfume to her wrists and neck. Henry was due home in ten minutes!

Joan took a deep breath and checked herself in the mirror. The dress cinched her waist perfectly. The Slimform Latex Girdle she was wearing was worth the argument with Henry over its price tag. Her lips were alluringly lovely. Her hair had an enchanting sheen. Her face was radiant—the glow of expectancy! She smiled to herself and rushed to pull the pie out of her new Belling Streamline Electric Oven.

As Joan set the table she thought of pleasant conversation points to introduce at dinner. She could talk to Henry about the new Gary Cooper film she'd like to see. She would laugh charmingly at his clever workday anecdotes. She could introduce the idea of fatherhood by telling him of the Dawsons' new child. She would not tell him about the Tupperware. Or the baby.

With the steaming plates in position, Joan placed a vase of jonquils in the middle of the table. How gay it looked! What a brightener to the end of his weary day. Joan stood by the door with her back straight to show off her figure and waited. Perhaps Henry would notice the newly formed curve of her stomach. That would be an ideal way to reveal her secret to him. Words were so hard to find.
Maintaining good posture, Joan passed the time by imagining all the products she could buy for her new little one. She would only feed her baby Gerbers Baby Foods, because ‘a good beginning is so important’. Joan hoped to have a girl. Then she could dress her in frills and buy her a Terri Lee Linda Baby Doll. She could paint the spare room pink all by herself, and fill it with shiny new white furniture. Henry would be so impressed with her handiwork that he would not mind the cost. She made a mental note to pop into Macys in the morning and inspect their new baby range.

Almost an hour passed before Joan gave up her position. She assumed Henry had been kept back late. He worked so hard. There was no point in wasting any more time, so she opted to complete some odd jobs that had been piling up. She scrubbed the cigarette burns out of the coffee table with linseed oil. Then she rubbed talcum powder into the greasy Brylcreem marks on Henry’s pillowcase.

Feeling her morning freshness wilt, Joan slumped into her chair and mended a broken wine glass with clear nail polish. The hearty dinners were now cold and congealed. The sight of them made her stomach turn. Surely Henry would be home soon. She checked herself in the mirror again and reapplied her No. 22 Escapade Lipstick. She looked pale and insipid and felt a headache coming on.

At ten o’clock Joan gave up waiting. She packed away the dinners and dressed for bed. Removing her carefully applied makeup and resetting her hair for the next day, she just positioned the last hair pin when she heard the car in the drive. Joan rushed for her No. 22, put on her dressing gown and opened the door for her husband.

‘Honey, I’m home,’ Henry slurred as he fell past her. His eyes were peculiarly red and his breath smelt odd for the third time that week.

‘I don’t feel so good.’ He groped Joan for support, making it difficult for her to keep her clavicles even. She hoped he would feel their little girl, but his hands did not stray from her chest. Perhaps in her excitement she had only imagined the baby bump. After all, she was not that far along.

Joan helped Henry remove his crumpled suit and tucked him into bed, handing him a bowl into which he promptly threw up. Gingerly she climbed-into bed beside him. Henry’s face bore unsightly stubble. His teeth needed brushing and when Joan breathed in she felt that a little Lux would not go astray either.
PLASTIC

‘Goodnight dear,’ she whispered over his retching and switched off her Tiffany bedside lamp. Henry dropped the bowl and it smashed on impact with the floor. Joan knew how to scrub vomit stains out of carpet, from an article she had read in the Ladies’ Home Journal. Struck by an urgent desire to clean, she attempted to rise and attend to the mess, but Henry stopped her.

‘Leave it,’ Henry growled as he climbed on top of his wife and pushed up her nightgown. As her husband pounded into her, vomit spittle at his lips, Joan wondered at the usefulness of her Tupperware purchase, for the new plasticware would not break as china does.
QUETZALCOATL’S SACRIFICE

Jessica Lloyd

What our porous bones have not swallowed
muddies the sand into thick blood-cement
that slathers rehydrating eyes as they bloom
but does little to slake the thirst

of our newly-mined throats.
From jagged edges emerge
first fingernails to drag our yowling maws
across the sunburnt dirt

toward our Fountain.
Sallow skin gathers in fistfuls,
feathers gaunt that survived our plucking
scrape fresh gullets, suckling

horripilating teats slashed raw
by cuspids to draw forth
vital nectar.
We sup

’til our just-honed abdomens paunch
and, grown, our cravings sate.
Then, spines erect and lips dabbed clean,
our motleyed bodies rise complete,

shadows shrouding final throes
of His arid shell.
The shrunken Hummingbird;
our eternal blooddebt.
Hide and Seek

Genevieve Tait

Bright white froth, chaotic marble of turquoise and blue.
A gentle rumble, a growing roar.
Rhythm and turbulence; a pattern of paradox.

A sea of rainbow umbrellas crowds my sight: a cluster of polka-dots, colours, stripes and swirls, a constellation of exotic flowers in the sand. The wind runs energetically around my ankles, whipping between the umbrellas, turning towels into sails, hats into frisbees. The scent of salt rests on the air, teasing my nostrils. I can almost taste it on my lips.

I clench my feet, feeling the sand grind and crunch between my toes, a delicious massage. The heat from the sun has turned the sand into a rug of warmth; I want it to engulf me in its grainy silk. Walking towards the shoreline, it gradually hardens and cools as I approach the water. As a little flow of chaos approaches, I timidly extend one foot in expectation of the cool water's disorderly caress. It is surprisingly warm, tickling my toes as it swirls the sand from around and beneath them. As the water runs out, I feel the sand slowly swallow my feet, like a silent, patient predator.

My excitement growing, I take steps further into the surf, releasing my feet from the quicksand beneath. As I wade deeper the water begins to slosh
Tide

about my legs, spitting and squirting at my stomach, prickling my skin with tiny salty bites. I prepare to dive under the frothy turbulence that tumbles towards me, clenching my body in anticipation of the cold cocoon to come.

Gasping for breath, I surface, my whole body alert and tingling with dark cold. The sunshine filters through the biting dew that hugs my skin.

Out past the breaking waves there is a gentle quiet. Tiny stars appear in the corner of my eye, darting quickly through the crest of a wave. Just as quickly as they appear they are gone, just a flicker, silver secrets of the sea. The waves lick and slide by my body, the sun quivers in the sky. Melting into the rhythms of the gentle ocean, I tell myself I will go back, I promise I will go back. But for now I will hide in the velvet deep of this quiet giant.
A cold and cleansing chill allows my dream
To fill the depths within my mind. A dread
Precedes the violent act and frightened scream:
My holy light is now alone and dead;
In daemon's eyes. My fear for what is done
Describes an avalanche of darker days.
The daemon's prey, I pray I'll not become
For I am still alive in many ways.
The daemon does pursue his playful role,
allowing me no time to find my strength
And fortitude. Within his strict control
I toss and turn, alone again at length.
Yet soon the night will surely break to dawn,
And in his light the daemon will be gone.
I was sitting in the back of the car watching an angry cloud-shark chasing woolly clumps around the sky when we got the news. Mum put her hand up to her mouth, which she always did when something took her by surprise. Then she started to cry and Dad got a bit angry, either because he couldn't understand what she was saying or because he didn't like being distracted when he was driving and Mum was crying pretty loudly.

'Dad's died,' Mum said after a while. It confused me for a second because Dad was driving the car, but then I remembered that Mum called Grandad 'Dad' as well.

I can't remember much about Grandad except that he always wore shorts, even in winter, and that my sister once told me the fuzzy things growing out of his ears were pussy willows. I wondered how he could hear anything with them in there and whether the rest of the tree was growing somewhere I couldn't see.

'Oh,' Dad said to Mum. I could tell that he felt like he should say something else, but this was really serious and Dad never knew what to say when something serious happened.

Mum made me wear a new dress to Grandad's funeral. The tag made me itch and I had new shoes that gave me a blister. Mum told me I wasn't allowed to
GRANDAD

pop it, but I did anyway.

I hadn’t been to any other funerals. Mum said it was a Solemn Occasion, so I had to promise not to talk until afterwards.

Grandad was at the front of the room in a casket. Mum kept telling Dad not to call it a coffin because that sounded morbid. I didn’t know what morbid meant but it was fun to say. I kept repeating it to myself until Mum told me to stop because it was inappropriate.

The lid of the casket was open. Grandad’s skin looked like it was made out of the soap Mum used to clean stuff with, but he didn’t smell like soap and I wasn’t allowed to touch his face to see if it felt hard.

After the funeral, lots of old ladies came up to hug me. Some of them kissed me on the cheek and a few of their faces felt prickly like Dad’s when he hadn’t shaved in a while. One old lady brought my sister and me some sandwiches, and we ate them under the table and looked at everybody’s feet.

Mum cried again in the car on the way home and her make-up made the skin around her eyes look black. When we got home, Dad made her a cup of tea and I told her I thought her eyes looked nice that way.
THE PITS

Arcadia Lyons

the worst would be  
being sent to hell  
by accident  
a trainee entered your name  
into the wrong column  
a minor clerical error  
that'll go unnoticed for eternity  
and your eyes  
too pure to look upon evil  
fused open forever  
looking for the day  
god will rock up  
with his skeleton key  
and stack of golden pardons
Fifty-four seconds

Gilly Grundy

The train from Amsterdam Schiphol to Leiden Central runs side-by-side with the train from Haarlem to Den Haag for one and a half miles before parting company. Both trains travel at one hundred miles per hour and cross paths for precisely fifty-four seconds.

Jack Hall was on the Schiphol train. He earned his living as a lyricist and was on his way to Webster University in Leiden as a visiting artist. At least if the creative writing students lacked talent, working as a lyricist could be a paying option for them: it had been for him. The pale blue shirt was a mistake. Dark patches hollered sweat from his armpits with gaping mouths and he'd have to keep his jacket on all day, no matter how hot it got. He regretted the necktie too—he'd brought it especially because it was embroidered with musical notes and the lyrics to Paul McCartney's Richard Corey, based on a poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson. He'd hoped it would lead the class into a discussion about the links between poetry and lyrics. Now he realised it made him look like a bit of a knob. Jack looked out of the curved train window; its shape created a floating reflection of each passenger about a metre away outside the train, like ghosts keeping pace with their corporeal bodies inside. He stared at his own ghost. It seemed to be judging him, too.
Jack watched as another train swung into line with his. Like beasts in a converging stampede, the carriages aligned and kept pace with each other. He noticed a woman in the carriage opposite and by a strange coincidence of fate, she was reading the same book as him; he recognised the blue cover with the white boat and orange tiger onboard. He held his book up to the window, catching her attention with the movement.

The woman looked up and, seeing the book, bestowed an effortless smile on Jack. She gave him a thumbs up and then a thumbs down. He held his hand flat and then rocked it to say he thought it was 'so-so'. The woman nodded in agreement, her auburn hair bobbing enthusiastically against her cheeks. She reminded him of someone. An old college girlfriend perhaps? No... not a girlfriend... a classmate he'd admired for many years from a distance.

The woman bent over some papers on the grey, plastic tray-table pulled down over her lap. Jack watched her, the moment stretched out and he assumed she was pretending to do paperwork in order to avoid his gaze. Then, she held a piece of paper up to the window. On it she'd written, 'I'm Jen'. There was that effortless smile again. Jack looked down at the red plastic folder resting on his knees. In it were photocopies for the students of his most famous lyrics. Thirteen copies. There were thirteen students.

Jack took out one of the sheets of paper and a pen. He wondered what a student might think if he handed them a photocopy with 'I'm Jack' scrawled on the back of it. They'd think he was a right tit, scribbling his name in huge letters over the back of his work like a five-year-old with a new crayon.
Fifty-four seconds

(00:16)
He looked up at the woman; she was smiling expectantly. He'd be a fool to pass up an opportunity like this.

(00:13)
He should just write his phone number. Then she could call him and they could meet at a station on the way back. But what if that copy went to some hot eighteen-year-old student and she thought he was slipping her his phone number? What if she started harassing him with calls in the middle of the night? Students were impressionable and, after all, he was a famous lyricist. Of course, he could just scribble the number out afterwards...

(00:00)
When I was eight I knew all the countries of the world, even the ones that don’t exist anymore. I knew their capital cities and flags. I’d spend hours in my room looking at the poster on my wall, quizzing myself every second day, making sure I didn’t forget like my times-tables. My teachers and parents expressed delight, but a forty-year-old me would just shake my head.

When I was nine I did a school project on Switzerland. I made a life-size Swiss flag to go with it and explained that it was the exact inversion of the emblem used worldwide for hospitals. That seemed important somehow, that the same two colours, turned around, could mean such a different thing.

I guess it was and it wasn’t.

A decade later I was watching Portugal play the Netherlands with a beer, my best friend and twenty bucks on the game. I remember seeing van Nistelrooy on the bench; the country’s best striker sitting there, never getting a minute’s play when they needed a goal.
My whole childhood was spent in inland Australia, and whenever I went to the coast—for sport, to visit family, eventually for uni—I would stare at the grass and the hills. I imagined I was in England or Eden, with even the most innocuous lawns flourishing with untamed grass and thriving plants. It was like another world. There was always this single patch of road where I realised we had changed over.

If there aren't any clouds the sky is luminous, like you could screw it off and it would be a perfect crystalline night.

I had a trampoline until I was seventeen, and I was pretty good at it.

If you jump as high as you can (for an olympian about ten metres, for me maybe six) and are young and stupid and competent and confident and a little bit brave, you can experience the terrible magic of real freefall. Get up to height, lay back perfectly flat and close your eyes. Closing your eyes is important to get the true, firehose-adrenaline experience, because if you haven't done it right you're not going to know until you hit the bar or the floor with your skull and spine.

When I was twenty-two I spent the night at my girlfriend's place more than my own, and it seems like a holy pulsing sphere of memory, where nothing is wasted, just swirled around, stretched out like thin clouds. Each memory is exponentially sharper and deeper the closer it is to her room (always neat), her bed (too soft, but spacious), or her arms (female-strong and slender with lots of soft hair). I woke up in those sheets so many times.

And when I was twenty-four I learned a lot about the brain, and what a freeway crash could do to it. The last thing I ever saw was a shitty minivan.
Which is a story all to itself. The current story continues when I realised that I was forgetting colours. Someone said green and I thought ‘green’ but one day I realised I didn’t know what the word meant any more. I could remember objects, and sometimes knew what colour they were, but I simply couldn’t remember the colours themselves.

For months I talked to doctors and psychologists, who were quite interested in me.

‘And what colour is a cricket ball?’

‘Red. Or white in a one-day match. I keep telling you, that’s not the point.’

‘I know,’ they’d say, and I’d wonder what their facial expressions were.

Then, slowly, erratically, one-by-one they came back to me. Given in an instant, hustled through the door by deep memory, filed in some backwater of the brain. I latched onto those memories—whole, startled, but fixing every detail in my mind, and seeing the one thing each time that was spectacularly coloured. It wasn’t just blue or red or green; it was that colour.

I’d stopped going to the doctors, taken their farewells and good lucks before I realised something: yellow.


It’s been eighteen years, and I know for sure now I’ll never get that colour back. When people talk of it I nod and link it to things I know are yellow, but I don’t know what they’re talking about. And it makes me wonder if anyone does, but it’s not something that really worries me.

It’s not important. It’s strange, that’s all.
The girl lobs a tennis ball to the boy over a street lamp as it flickers on; New York precipitates out of dusk. 1947, the post-war exhalation: streets are swept, milk is powdered, children play ball in an empty plaza.
THE WORLD AROUND me is snivelling. I can hear the tears falling through the fresh leaves outside my window and my cough is getting worse. Actually, it's more of a hack that gets louder when dusk comes in from the east. But the world despairs and I sit like a slab of smooth marble with no distinguishing features, no grubby fingerprints to show that I am touched. I sit, waiting for the dark. We are things of motionless, overcast nights.

Whenever I go looking for pens they wriggle away into hiding places no human has ever seen. Look! There's one! But it is just a plastic eyeliner tube. Or the discarded, chewed up lid of a BIC. Or those fat Textas you only buy for a one-off job then discard and find months later, dried up. No good for jotting down creative thoughts worthy of rolling off the tongue of Humbert Humbert: those thoughts come with sleep, like rainwater trickling gently down flower stems and into our minds. We have no choice but to push back the blankets, let the cold air touch the dry skin of our thighs and write down the sentence of phosphorous God has dripped from heaven.

Downstairs a man is crying into a sofa cushion about the girl that slipped out of his slimy grasp. His silent sobs shake the foundations of my house. Far away my ex-boyfriend knows nothing of the baby my sister lost in-vitro. He works nights for less than award wage, but I have already grieved like a widow and I no longer hate. My lack of hunger has shrunken me. In
the mirror my arms look thin and more like wax; I am starving but I don’t mind the feeling.

I have had my fill of cheap wine for the week and I tear up when I come home from walking the streets with others like me. Wrapped in second-hand coats with unwashed hair and flushed nose tips we walk onwards in the dark: under by-passes, along paspalum-strewn railway tracks. Smashed glass clinks under our feet. Onwards ’til three or four o’clock in the morning. The coming daylight makes me sick.

Under the desk my pet rabbits have pressed their bodies together to form a heart-shape. The old one licks the younger one’s cheek. I will bundle my blankets and lie down with them in a moment. I just have to finish this page. My fingers are frozen from the cold; we can’t afford to have the air conditioner on. If we did, all the warm air would float upwards, up into the bedrooms, the wet bathroom, the crawl space, through the mildewed beams and cracked roof tiles to dissipate into the sky, taking with it the fragrant, heady perfume of pathos.
‘WAIT... UP...’

Taylor doubles over with his hands on his knees as he stops to catch his breath. His words fall flat against the pavement, the prancing figure ahead of him oblivious to his protest.

Sarah reaches the fence and turns back to look at him, her braids whipping against the sleeves of her white tee-shirt. ‘Come on, Taylor!’

Taylor marvels at how Sarah never seems to tire. Her motto in life is ‘Why walk when you can run?’

Taylor is not good at running. He is overweight for his age, although his mother always tells him it’s just baby fat. Taylor tells her that he is not a baby, that he’s eleven years old, but his mother just smiles and hugs him. Taylor’s father always tells him he should be more athletic, that he should join more sports. Taylor doesn’t tell him that he is never picked for sports teams.

Sarah grins and scampers up the steel fence as if she were a monkey, dropping lightly to the other side. It takes Taylor three attempts to reach the top, and he knows as he lands that he does not look as graceful as she did. However Sarah pretends not to notice and, skipping, leads him towards the factory.

He takes a second to breathe in the humid air before he chases after Sarah. Looking up at the slate-grey sky, he wonders when the menacing clouds will make good on their threat of rain. It is a hot summer.
‘I found it yesterday,’ Sarah says with a smile when he finally reaches her. She is standing beside a dark metal door. ‘Look, it’s unlocked!’

‘Are we allowed to be here?’ Taylor asks nervously, knowing that Sarah doesn’t have the same concept of the word ‘allowed’ as he does, but wanting reassurance anyway.

‘Of course!’ She looks around at the deserted buildings. ‘Everyone’s gone home now anyway. No one will mind.’ She opens the door. It looks dark inside, but she doesn’t falter. Instead she holds the door open for him, then turns her head so that their eyes meet. He sees the hint of a challenge and knows he can’t refuse now. He can never refuse a challenge from Sarah. To do so might risk losing her respect. Or her friendship.

He follows her inside.

They are in a high-ceilinged room filled with shadows and piles of lumber that look black in the gloom. The windows set high on the walls allow only the slightest amount of weak sunlight to enter from outside.

‘Is this storage?’ he asks. His voice is oddly muffled.

‘I don’t know. I just know it’s a really cool place,’ Sarah answers, rushing towards a nearby pile of lumber that rises toward the ceiling in a large stack.

Taylor gazes in admiration as Sarah jumps with amazing agility onto the first protruding plank. He doesn’t have to ask to know that she will climb to the top.

She turns back and with a call of ‘Race ya!’ begins to climb. Taylor’s heart starts hammering even before he reaches the wood pile. His only thought is to keep up with Sarah.

They make it to the top almost at the same time. Almost. Taylor knows that Sarah has reached it first. She finishes before him with everything. But she turns and smiles widely again. ‘I think it was a tie!’

‘Yeah!’ he grins back at her. Sarah never brags.

Taylor watches her as she dances on top of the lumber pile, her features blurred with shadow. Her laugh rings out loud and is lost in the humid air.

The top of this wood pile is narrow and a gap of about four feet separates it from the pile beside it. Taylor gazes at the gap, then walks towards it. It makes his knees weak to see how far down the floor is. He knows that sooner or later Sarah will think of jumping to the next pile.
‘Watch this, Sarah!’ He looks back to make sure she’s watching, then takes a deep breath and leaps. For a second he thinks he won’t make it, but then his feet touch solid wood and he relaxes. Muffled clapping from behind him makes him turn, grinning again.

‘Now you go,’ he says, beckoning her over. He knows as she stands there at the edge preparing to leap that she will jump higher than him, farther than him. Still, he has done it first this time. He has been the brave one.

For a brief instant, as Sarah bends her knees to spring, Taylor wishes that she won’t make it. He doesn’t really want her to fall, he doesn’t really want her to get hurt, but he doesn’t want her to make it either. He doesn’t want her to do everything better than he does.

Sarah’s legs straighten as she jumps, and then her foot slips.

He doesn’t even quite see how it happens. All he hears is Sarah yell in shock as she disappears between the gap. Yell, not scream, because screaming is too girly for Sarah. Then Taylor hears a thump and a crack and suddenly the air is filled with screams that don’t sound like Sarah, sobbing screams that are distorted by the acoustics of the building, screams that sound so unearthly that they make the hair on Taylor’s arms stand on end.

‘Sarah!’ he yells as he rushes to the edge of the wood pile. He sees her lying on the ground, one leg twisted at an odd angle. A pool of black is spreading around her.

Her screams fill the dark lumber room. Taylor bites his fist.

I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean it I didn’t mean it——
H E P I C K E D T H E s k u l l u p.

He'd been poking it with a stick for a good five minutes, trying to pry the jaws open, tapping it to hear if it sounded hollow. It gleamed white; the only dark stuff clung to the bottom of the skull, around the back where the spine was still connected. He pushed at it, trying to look underneath. A vertebra broke with a loud snap. He jumped and the skull rolled on the hard-baked creek bed, settling face up, mouth wide open in protest.

He'd broken it. He'd pushed too hard and broken it. He felt terrible, like he'd not only broken the skeleton's neck, but he'd broken its all-round sense of skeleton. He'd reduced it to a scattering of old bones. It was like the time he smashed his mum's porcelain elephant into a hundred shards. The guilt of stuffing up through his own idiocy had been there too, along with a growing terror of what would happen when his mum came home. He'd tried gluing it back together with that gluggy paste they handed out in school. It hadn't worked. Maybe if he just turned the skull over, propped it back into place between the shoulder blades...

He picked the skull up. But he didn't put it back, not right away. He held it a while, studying it. Once it was in his hands it didn't seem like such a strange thing. Two eye sockets, a hole full of broken shards of boney stuff where the nose should be, and a full set of teeth. Some of them had shiny
tops, like silver, and one of the big ones at the back was black. He poked it with his fingertip and it jiggled a bit.

The real surprise was how light it was. He could hold it in one hand—hell, he could prop it up on two fingers and a thumb. He could have easily tossed it up and caught it if he'd wanted, and he might have tried if he wasn't afraid the jaw would fall off. He lifted it high, holding it against the orange glow of the setting sun. He decided that it looked better like this, a complete head by itself, away from that jumbled mess of bones and clothes spread for metres down the creek bed. No, much better like this. He was glad he'd snapped it off. He lowered the skull and looked at the orange ball sitting between the humps on the escarpment. It was getting late; Mum would be wondering where he was.

He decided to take the head home with him.
FREIGHT

Arcadia Lyons

adrift on a raft of white goods
lashed together with their electrical cords
dishwasher stacked with paperbacks
dog-eared journal in the single-slot toaster
assorted pens in the kettle like irises in a vase

some nights I sleep in the fridge
the shelves emptied out
my toes tense against the storage guard

other nights I sleep in the washing machine
looped taut around the rotor
dreaming that I’m milk being stirred into lavender grey tea

most nights I dream I am a whale’s heart
beating nine times a minute
each protracted convulsion thuds for miles

I awake stiffer than my blanched towels
fingers rigid like clothes pegs

I throw myself into the ocean and split
into a thousand different islands
letting the breakers dump their concern on me
There once was a guy named Elfie
who saw the world in perfect clarity.
But the world did not agree with how Elfie saw the world.
He thought:
Why take a boat when one can ride their upside-down umbrella?
People laughed when Elfie took a year out to count the stars.
He ate all different coloured flowers
because he believed they would give his world every layer of wonderful.
He collected all the glitter on planet Earth
and covered the city with it
so everyone sparkled in the day
and twinkled through the night.
It all made perfect sense.
Today Elfie is lost in the sky
and dreaming of yesteryear
when everything seemed far brighter.
He steps through traffic as if oblivious—
so caught up in his nostalgia of what was once his misunderstood ideal.
Now, Elfie is weighted with just enough reality to know
that lightning is not God's disco overflowing on Earth.
Elfie's umbrella has been hung on the hat stand awaiting rain
and the stars remain unknown.
Today glitter is tucked safely away in small plastic jars
and there is no stitch of sparkle in his city.

In years to come Elfie will look fondly on his days of youth,
so abundant in freedom and naivety.
He will long with a heavy heart for his flower-eating summers
where wonder had beamed from his every pore.
In years to come, Elfie will think himself lucky
to have caught just a little more of life
than the average human being
and know himself blessed
to have painted a slightly brighter world
for his memory to enjoy.
MY GIRLFRIEND CALLED and said she needed to talk, so I went to her place. After we discussed the pros and cons of breaking up, she quickly became my ex-girlfriend and kicked me out of her house. I wondered why she had needed me to drive over at ten o’clock at night when she could have dumped me over the phone and concluded that she must have wanted the dramatic moment of doing it face-to-face. I shrugged my shoulders and walked back to Ruby, my thirty-year-old red convertible Volkswagen.

I was driving towards home, trying to find my way through the infernal maze of identical bungalows that make up suburbia, when a young woman ran in front of me and forced me to brake to avoid committing vehicular manslaughter. Before I could get a good look at her she moved out of the glare of the headlights and poked her head inside the car through the passenger window, causing me to jerk back in fright.

‘Help, I’ve just been attacked!’

Her face was framed by a mess of long blonde hair and her mascara had run down her cheeks, making her look like a hysterical clown. I stared at her for a second, still shaken as I struggled to process this unexpected turn of events. She didn’t look dangerous, but the overactive part of my imagination pictured myself naked in a dark alley missing a kidney if I let her in. I looked at the road and back into her eyes, which were wet and bloodshot.
‘Get in,’ I said as I opened the door for her. She clambered in and sat down. She was followed by a big white pit bull that curled up on the floor by her feet. ‘Holy shit!’ I exclaimed. ‘Uh... is the dog coming with us?’ The blonde looked apprehensive. ‘He’s mine,’ she said, as if it wasn’t obvious. ‘He doesn’t bite, I promise.’ I started having second thoughts. I looked down at the dog and it met my gaze with a pitiful expression. ‘It’s just, it’s not like there’s a seatbelt for him, and... and what if he wanders around between the pedals and the gear stick while I’m driving?’ ‘Oh, he won’t,’ she replied. ‘He’s a good boy, aren’t you, Cujo?’ Cujo responded with a whine. ‘Okay then, where do you want to go?’ I asked, flustered. ‘Just take us into the city, please.’ I put the car into gear as she leaned forward and gave the dog a scratch behind the ears. The next fifteen minutes were silent except for the rushing wind, the grunting rattle of the engine and the occasional pathetic whimper from Cujo. The blonde looked around, taking in her surroundings. Her eyes drifted across the curiosities that made up Ruby’s interior and I imagined she was using them to make inferences about me. She looked at the crook-lock on the floor next to Cujo, which I only put on the steering wheel to keep the crook-lock from being stolen. Then she glanced behind her at the splotchy purple towel on the back seat, used to mop up oil spills. She examined the glove box that was kept closed with duct tape, and the cassette player with the loose wires hanging underneath after shoddy installation. Stroking Cujo’s fur, she whispered reassurances to him and trembled in the warm night air. ‘Thanks for stopping,’ she said eventually. ‘S’alright,’ I replied, feeling awkward. ‘I’m Natasha,’ she continued. ‘I’m a walker by trade.’ A bit late for dog walking, I thought, glancing at Cujo. ‘So where am I taking you?’ I asked. ‘Are you sure you don’t want to go to the police?’ ‘No,’ she said quickly. ‘I’m just down the next left at the lights, anyway.’ I squinted ahead to see where she was pointing and slowed to a stop in front of the glowing red arrow.
'My brothel's the big white house on the right. You can't miss it.'
So not a dog walker, then.
'You know, for your trouble, if you like,' Natasha began, 'you could come inside and I could give you a blow-job.'
I blinked a couple of times. I was sure I heard her correctly, but how was I supposed to respond? It definitely didn't feel right to accept free fellatio from a prostitute for giving her a lift after she'd been assaulted, even if I was interested. As weird as it sounds, I also didn't want to seem rude or offend her by declining.
'Ah... that won't be necessary,' I said finally, my voice wavering slightly. Natasha looked at me, perplexed.
'Are you gay?' she asked.
'No,' I replied. She studied me for a moment.
'Are you sure?'
'Yes.'
'It's okay if you are, you know; one of my cousins is gay.'
'I'm not gay,' I repeated.
'I prefer girls myself, to be honest,' Natasha went on. 'They tend to growl you out a lot longer, and they know the terrain better, too.'
I tensed in my seat and tried to make the lights change colour through willpower.
'Sometimes though, you just want a nice big, hard—'
'Green light!' I announced, turning fast into the street.
A little way down the road I spotted the house Natasha described and pulled over. A long silence passed. Natasha stared out the window at the house while I worked up the nerve to say something.
'Well, here we are then,' I said, smiling sheepishly.
'Yeah...' Natasha said absently. She reached for the door handle, then stopped and turned back to me, her brow deeply furrowed.
'Can I ask you something?'
'Uh, sure. What?'
'Why did you let me in the car?' she asked. 'I mean, I don't want to seem ungrateful, but why do that? Why take a risk to help someone you don't even know?'
I tried thinking of the answer, but I honestly didn't have one. Despite the
risks, there only seemed to be one choice and it never occurred to me to do anything else. 'You asked for my help. What kind of person would I be if I left you there?'

Natasha smiled, satisfied, then opened the door and stepped out, Cujo patting after her. She hovered by door for a second, then turned back and leaned inside the window.

'You know, no one would have known if you just drove off,' she said.

'Take care of yourself, Natasha.'

I watched as she walked to the house, Cujo following close behind, before starting the car back up and heading home. During the drive though, something bothered me: why the hell did the hooker have a dog with her?
LUCAS WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN what to do if he hadn't had so much experience with hangovers. Waking to the painful light seeping through his heavy curtains, he allowed himself a minute of immobility to assess the severity of the pain that he was likely to experience. Deciding it wouldn't be intense enough to keep him horizontal, he rolled away from Carol's side of the bed and pushed himself upright.

He had been out with the snooker boys the night before, sneaking drinks into the poolroom with practiced ease. After winning two games and losing a third, he'd downed enough New to start ordering his main vice: gin. He had probably harboured a mild concern about his alcohol consumption to begin with, but after the first few games, caution had been abandoned.

As he stood and discovered he was still wearing pants, he wondered if he had driven home after all. It wouldn't be the first time.

His first recollection occurred in the kitchen as he watched his bacon sizzle away. Carol hadn't bothered to leave him the customary angry letter before she left for work, and had left no breakfast out for him either. She had probably planned to use the bacon for something, but his stomach was of more immediate concern than any scolding she might give him later. The memory that fought its way to the surface of his beer-stained brain was of
closing the garage door. That meant he had once again driven home drunk, and that Carol would have already checked the car for damage. He wondered briefly if there was any to be found.

An experienced alcoholic, Lucas expected the pile of scorched meat on his plate to make him feel better. He had just sat down in his recliner to eat it when the doorbell rang. Looking up at the door, Lucas decided to ignore it and turned his attention back to the pile of pig on his lap. There was a thump on the door as he speared the first slice of bacon and raised it towards his mouth.

'Mr Cooper? Police!' a voice yelled through the closed door. Lucas sighed, looking once again at the door. Shovelling the bacon into his mouth, he stood and shuffled across the room. The doorbell rang again.

Vaguely aware of the fact that he was naked from the waist up, he pulled the door open and winced at the unfiltered sunlight. Two police officers stood on his veranda, their car parked in his driveway.

'Lucas Cooper?' asked the first cop, a giant of a man wearing clichéd aviators beneath his police hat. The woman behind him stared up at Lucas with an expression impossible to read in his state, despite her uncovered eyes.

'Yeah,' Lucas croaked in reply. 'Come in, and shut the door.' Turning his back on the officers, he shuffled back towards his recliner.

'We believe the accident occurred around two-thirty this morning,' the spokes-cop said. Lucas considered this for a moment, and swore to himself.
Danny usually went home around two, and dropped Gary off on his way. Lucas himself left soon after as the two men made up half their group. It seemed he hadn't hit the garage wall after all.

'It was on Haigh Avenue, about three blocks away,' the cop said.

'Haigh Avenue?' Lucas repeated. The street was not normally part of his route home, but the name called forth his third recollection. After having a few drinks, Gary had taken Lucas aside and warned him: 'There'll be a cop on Hannah Place, mate. Go round on your way home.'

Lucas had obviously heeded the warning and taken Haigh.

'The vehicle mounted the curb and ran her down from behind. We believe she was killed instantly,' the female cop spoke up for the first time. Lucas's eyes slipped away from the cops as another memory reasserted itself. Lucas had been driving when the gin bottle slipped from his lap and bounced off the gearstick. He had tried to snatch it up before too much of the booze poured out, momentarily forgetting that the lid was on. Leaning into the passenger's foot-well had caused him to pull on the wheel and veer up the gutter.

'So... what happens now?' Lucas asked.

'The body has already been identified,' the male cop said. 'We can take you to the hospital if you'd like, or we can stay until someone arrives. Some people don't want to see the body right away.'

'What?' Lucas stared at the cop.

'I guess they can't deal with it. Sometimes being married makes it too hard to let go right away. No one will blame you if you can't bring yourself to see your wife in that way.'

'I want to see her.' Lucas did the best he could to shake the stupor from his head. 'I have to see her.'

'All right. We'll wait here while you dress.' The cops stood as Lucas did, and watched as he staggered into the hallway. Comprehension didn't hit until he reached the bedroom; eventually, it was the sight of Carol's pyjamas still folded on the end of the bed that brought back the final memory.

'No you bloody won't take the car,' Carol spat, tossing the plate down in the sink and turning on him. 'You're going to the bar. You're going to be drunk. You'll drive home and kill somebody.'
'It's not your car, Carol. I'll do what I want with it.' Lucas stood from the dining table, ignoring the plate that held the uneaten scraps that remained after dinner. 'If walking is such a great idea, you do it.'

'So I have to walk to Ellen's place? You want to drive home drunk and force your wife to walk home alone late at night? Fine. I'll stay here.'

'Fine,' Lucas answered, sliding his hand into his pocket and wrapping it around the car keys. 'See you later.'

'Pig,' Carol muttered as Lucas left the dining room.

Pretending not to hear her, Lucas shook his head at her next statement: 'Like I'm going to stay home. I'll walk.'
As I walk through the streets the air is cold. The council trucks have just driven by, collecting garbage from bins that lie symmetrically up the street. The smell seeps through and hits the street like a mustard gas bomb. I make my way up the hill to the train station.

Due to its new renovations, the station looks decades ahead of its surroundings. Every piece of metal lights up like a traffic jam in the city at night. The elevator is as smooth as skiing on a powdery slope; you have to listen closely to even hear the sounds of the engine hauling passengers up the shaft. As I make my way to the platform I am greeted by several information screens that instruct me about the next move necessary to get to my destination.

I don’t know whether this is a comment on my life, but one of my favourite parts of the day is using the ticket machine. It’s great! It has hundreds of fares available, so you can buy a ticket to just about anywhere with no fuss, and it makes sounds that remind me of the hours I spent playing *Pod* and *Space Invaders* as a child.

After I push several buttons, my total fare appears on the screen and I open my wallet in search for some coins. I find none and give a loud sigh as I realise my smallest note is a fifty. A lady next to me reading the paper hears me and raises her head over her page. The question at hand now is this: do I put my fifty dollars into this machine, which will result in me receiving
forty-five dollars and eighty cents change in coins, or do I go up to Dale the stationmaster and buy my ticket off him? As I am pondering the question, I look over at Dale who is sweeping near the ticket booth. He is staring at me.

'Oi mate, come over and buy the ticket off me, I'll break it for ya yeah?'

This statement totally epitomises all of my interactions with Dale the stationmaster. He says everything in a way that makes me cringe. He is a man of about forty-five. He is always underdressed, even for selling me a ticket. He makes easily-offended passengers very easily offended. As he walks to the ticket booth door I see his short-shorts. They are constantly being eaten by his thighs because they are at least two sizes too small. Whenever I see him walk, the top of his arse slowly appears as if it were the rising sun on the Japanese flag.

No matter what time of the year it is, Dale always wears a layer of sweat on his face. This is highlighted by his thinning hair, side-parted and combed so none of it sits on his forehead. His ears stick out away from his face, and faint dots can be seen on the lobes. I presume it's because he had a Guns and Roses or Metallica stage and had piercings. His moustache is lighter than his hair and reminds me of pictures I used to see of my father in the eighties. The strands of Dale's beard seem to move in any direction they want.

He approaches the seat where he sells tickets. He is short. As he lowers his chair so his feet can reach the ground his man boobs put massive amounts of pressure on his beer belly. This puts pressure on his buttoned shirt, which slowly begins to open so that the ghostly white of his gut is put on show for all to see. By the time he is seated and ready to go I am impatiently waiting with my fifty dollar note in hand.

Although we have met many times over the course of his employment, he still greets me like a stranger.

'Hello mate, how are ya today, where is it that you're going?'

Despite the fact that he knows exactly where I am going, he acts surprised when I say I would like a return ticket to Central. He acts even more surprised when I tell him I have a concession card.

'Concession! Oh—okay, a concession to the City, all right then, well do you mind if I have a look at your card?'

I reach for my wallet and give him the card for the sixth time this month. He looks at it as if he were doing a Sudoku puzzle. He even turns it around
to inspect the barcode. He pauses for a while and stares at the emblem on the front.

'University! Well how about that. I have a niece at TAFE or college or some type of university. It's great, isn't it?'

I give him a reassuring smile and look up to the computer screen to imply that I am in a rush and don't have the time to discuss these pleasantries, which I have unpleasantly been through with him time and time again.

'Okay then, the code, the code is...' Dale reaches for his trusty sheet in search of the code for a concession return to the city. 'The code is... okay Cabramatta concession, nah, that's not it. Coniston concession, no, Canberra concession, can you get a Canberra concession from here? Oh, ha ha, sorry that's Caringbah, ha ha, I'm a donkey. Okay! Here, Central, and the Central code is... 808!'

He punches in the code eight-zero-eight into the machine. The price that comes up on the screen is double the amount I normally pay; it is obviously the full fare price. Dale can see by the look on my face that something is not right.

'Okay, well that's not it, what have I done wrong here...'

The train is leaving in two minutes; I have given up on catching it. I would never want to undermine his position as stationmaster; I don't have it in me. As more people start to cram onto the platform behind me, waiting to buy a ticket, Dale becomes more nervous and clumsy.

'Okay, okay, where are we... Concession, 809! Ah-ha!'

Dale pushes the buttons and my ticket prints. I give him the fifty dollar note. By the time he gives me the correct change, the train has passed. I walk away cursing him under my breath.

As I am sitting down near the ticket booth, I hear the lady who was after me in the line having the same problem getting her ticket. I stare at Dale fumbling around with his sheet, trying to find the code for Thirroul. Just as I had, the lady becomes more and more distressed. She suddenly bursts out a sly remark that the whole platform hears.

'I think a monkey would have a better chance at giving me my ticket.'

With their faces turned away, people on the platform laugh under their breath like a bunch of year-six girls in maths class.

I have my own little giggle and look at Dale. He is still struggling to give
the lady her ticket and is so stressed and embarrassed that a drop of sweat falls onto the ten dollar note she has given him.

As he gives the lady her ticket, he says with fake enthusiasm, "Thank you for your patience miss, you have a real nice day!"

The lady's eyes roll towards the tracks as she walks to the end of the platform.

I study Dale for the remainder of my seven minutes at the station. Although he seems isolated, he looks quite happy within himself. By the time my train pulls up, people are buying tickets from the machine and he is sitting reading his paper. I assume he is looking at the comic section. He laughs so loud that a lady gives him a disgusted look, but he really doesn't seem to mind.
Sick and tired of working your arse off at a low-income job? Starting to feel like life is no longer worth living? Do you find yourself pondering the meaningless existence that has become your daily routine? There is a solution. A means to an end, you could say.

Generation Y has the key to an easier life: stop caring. Stop worrying about the consequences; just go out there and live. Read on to find out how to fight the mundane. We will give you a simple step-by-step guide to becoming popular. You will soon find inner peace and gratification. We want you! Join us today and see why Generation Y is better.

Our motto will be: Generation Y don't we care? Because we don't!

We can teach you all you will ever need to know about Generation Y. Happiness is only a generation away.

Step one:

From a young age Generation Y has been told, through the media and the home, that they can have it all. This generation has a strong sense
I don't think I know everything, I just know more than you do

of entitlement. Striving for a quality of life known only by the rich and famous, wanting the best and thinking they deserve it makes Generation Y ambitious, with high expectations. Arrogance is key. The fundamental step to transforming yourself into a member of Generation Y is adopting the I-don't-give-a-shit persona.

You should also claim that you know absolutely everything there is to know about anything. But note: there is no point knowing a lot about any particular thing. To keep up this visage you only need to know a little about everything; if you don't know something, simply pretend you do.

Step two:

Pay attention to all details—no matter how minute—of your friends' lives. You must constantly arm yourself with topical discussions for the next week. A good way to manage this is through Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or some other kind of self-promotion site. Although this may sound easy, it is vital that you follow the next steps as precisely as possible, for any blunder could result in a downgrade of your social status—this is almost too devastating to think about.

Once you have created your profile you must update it with current blurbs about yourself. This is the first thing people will read about you so you must make sure it is as interesting as possible. Remember, there are thousands and thousands of people on these worldwide stalking sites and you must appear completely different to all of them. If you are having trouble with ideas, check out a friend's site and paraphrase what they say. You will be judged on your appearance so make sure you have an abundance of self-promoting photos. Add as many people as possible to your friends list. The more friends you have, the more popular you are and therefore the more likely you will be accepted onto other friends' lists. Now sit back and watch your friend status grow. Routinely change the ranking of your top friends; watch as they compete for your attention.
Tide

Step three:

Abrevi8 evrythin. Time is of the esence 4 this Genr8n. Wit the drmatic increas of teknology u mst lern 2 take shortcuts. Growin up in the age of teknology has ment nealy evry kid has a pc. Unlike the slo readn genr8ns of the past, GenY is completly computa liter8. Terms like ROFL & OMG can B gr8 time savrs. Usin em in evryday contxts can provide amusmnt by frustr8n baby boomrs & GenXrs.

Step four:

Learn to smoke. This is a major symbol of social status. If you don’t smoke, you can’t be quitting! Smoke everything. If you can burn it, smoke it. Once you feel like you are reasonably addicted and your lungs are heavy with the grungy weight of tar, try to quit. If you can quit straight away, you obviously weren’t addicted enough to begin with. Try again.

Smoking has become an international symbol of bad-arse—we all like a little danger in our lives and smoking gives us this hit. Contrary to popular belief, the age restriction was not introduced for the safety of kids but instead to increase their popularity at high school. Having this age limit provides underage smokers more bad-arse than ever thought possible.

Step five:

Use sentence fillers. It can be a challenge trying to speak before you get a chance to think. Living in such a fast-paced environment is no help either. Handy sentence fillers like ‘like’ and ‘umm’ are great tools. They not only give you that aura of Paris-Hilton-esque vagueness, but they also give you time to invent a lie. Note: this aura is genius!

Evolution is a natural change for the better, so it’s only logical that this Generation be bigger and better than those before (obesity may be on the rise but we blame our parents). Generation Y are building a platform of success! Don’t miss out, join us today! Here are some testimonials from reformed Generation X-ers:
I don't think I know everything, I just know more than you do

John Simmons, a born again Generation Y from Bank West says, 'After I accepted Generation Y into my life, I felt like a gap inside me was filled. I was no longer searching for an answer, I had found my purpose in life. Generation Y has given me the strength to succeed.'

Carly Markenson, a born again Generation Y from Qantas says, 'After my divorce my life felt empty and meaningless. That was until Generation Y spoke down to me and led me to the greener grass: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of Generation Y is eternal life, Amen.' (Romans 6:23)

This pamphlet is only a starter. If you are committed to becoming the best Generation Y-er you can be, call us now.

The future is in your hands!
FLYING TOWARDS THE SUN

Eleanor Blaxland Ashby

Tears spear behind me
as I travel through space and time,
neon blue and blanch white,
hands outstretched—
darling, this is the closest we’ll ever be...
hold tight.
THE CENTRE OF the trampoline sinks with her weight as she climbs onto it, standing first on a wooden chair to step onto the fraying mat. Grey spiderwebs and the shells of dead beetles are pulled between its metal springs, and their hoarse stretch is loud in the large backyard as she leans back to lie down, belly swollen like a globe. The fine hairs on her forearms collect static and she looks at him, long and sad.

He sits on the chair. It's painted vermilion, but the paint is chipped. He faces her with his knees apart, leaning forward. He's shirtless, glowing, with blisters on his shoulder and peeling skin. His lips are chapped and he sucks a cigarette between them, the smoke hanging sourly in the air when he exhales. He pinches at the skin across his shoulders and the base of his neck. The edges are flaked and red, and he pulls at them with his fingertips. White flakes collect in the creases at the back of his neck.

It's his second day out of prison and already he's burned himself in the sun. She wonders whether the next layer of skin will be any different. She'd love to see it flushed and smooth, but it never is. Every time he gets out, he's sunburnt within days, back inside within months.

She picked him up from prison. He was in for six months; the last time they saw each other her belly was still flat, and it was the middle of winter. Now they're in the sweaty heart of February and their words melt like ice.
cubes on their tongues before they can spit them out.

There's not much to say. He drops his cigarette butt into the grass where it glows for a moment, then dies. The last time, it was a break-and-enter on her parents' house. The time before that, he stole a car. She knows she shouldn't be here with him, but her parents haven't spoken to her since the break-in. He lies his elbow across the springs, puts his hand on her stomach. The skin of his palm is cracked and warm.

In this moment, there's an unwilling complicity. They stew as the heat drains from the afternoon, not knowing that a month from now, his skin will have finished peeling, and the next layer will be no different. He'll get caught with cocaine stuffed in the pockets of his jacket and go away again. Her belly will deflate to deliver a stillborn, and when he comes out again she won't be there to pick him up. The trampoline mat will fray and the red paint will peel from the chair, and when he gets out, someone else will live here.
TIME WASTING
A variation on a theme by Dransfield

Lachlan Williams

i
the last death is boredom
the calibrations leave you
one by one and regret
becomes the least of many points

ii
when all that you have been
and known becomes an afterthought
the least regret marked down
by death is merely
one part of a puncture

iii
in this part of the world
regret becomes a puncture/death
the least of many boredoms
marked down when all is known

iv
that death's merely a flavour of regret
is marked by the hype of afterthought
a miscalculation where all the world
becomes a needle-point
BREAKING THE EGG

Jessica Dendy

A strike: the walls fracture.
Another. I feel the membrane tear.
Foundations peel away.
I am becoming

new as a hatched Cockatoo,
missshapen, all skin. Eyes evident
but veiled in veiny film. Heart evident
(but encased in a rigid structure)

beating, separate from the shell
of my parentage. I peer
over the crest of this nest
onto Wollongong and beyond.

Testing my talons on each
branch of this life. I will soon
work up the courage
to step off into the sky.

There’s one; there’s the other. They’ve seen me. With hot tongues they hurry over. They want relief, swimming, they say. Maybe, but not yet. Learn some patience, idiots. Not convinced, they try guilt through harassment. The big one barges into me. The little one sits and waits for eye contact. Go away. Leave me alone. They look at each other, pause, take a few steps and look at me. They sense my intention to go for a walk and interpret that as swimming. Charlie whimpers. Ed barks. They urge each other in an out-of-control spiral of excitement and jubilation. They’ve become a salivating mass of expectation. Later! No—now! Charlie beats his tail on loose aluminium siding. He has good tempo. I take one in a head-lock, the other by the tail. They don’t like this. Charlie pulls away. The beat continues. It’s always the same. Canine consistency.

I hear the gate close behind me and check if one slipped out. They usually don’t. Charlie is standing in the yard, the tall black electric gate between us. On his haunches, focusing through the black bars with bulging, beady eyes, he growls. A warbling, guttural lyric: impassioned and urgent. The lunatic jester. I step from the driveway onto the road. A short, sharp, defiant bark
—one last try. Come on... come on, please! I turn the corner. A quick glance over my shoulder. Still there, calculating little fucker. Beady eyes following me.

Half way up Dennett Road I know he's still there. Pink snout roasting. I feel what he feels. There's nowhere to hide. Turn back? For a hat and sunnies maybe? No. No distractions. Home is cool and dark. Going home means staying home. No. My prickling skin reminds me of life in the tropics. A life of eternal heat. No rush today. Tomorrow might be cooler. Or not as humid at least. Around here, the heat is different. It's seasonal; people fight it. Put a hat on, have a drink and get on with it.

Dennett hill lies ready. I look to the crest. Even air finds the heat too much, wincing and writhing among parked cars and kids on bikes.

A black skater catches up near the top, riding middle of the road in great long strides. It's arduous and sweaty, especially wearing all that. Does he ever worry about being stronger left than right? Too much asymmetrical effort creates imbalance. Does he alternate? Between hills? Picture left thigh thick and heavy, the right thin and normal. Madness. I'd swap regularly. On this hill, definitely.

Last left turn before it starts. I wonder if it's the same. Signs, colours, kids with tatts. I see my feet approach and land on the blue-grey tiles of the mall. My steps are small and measured—or are they deranged and huge? My green and black patterned thighs rise in front of me. But they don't belong to me. I streak past shops, centre stage, in great unco strides. It's a black and green blur. Control becomes shared; I get balance. I also get utterances and composure and their avowed terror of public disgrace. They're thrown in. Just like that. Degradation without escape. One square of blue-grey mall tiles per two steps. Is that normal? It's usually one per three. I must be hurrying. Am I? No. There's no reason to hurry anyway.

Wait! Didn't I just walk past this shop? Just then? It looks familiar. So does violin-boy over there. Bloody Vivaldi. Last time it was Ludwig. Vile Vivaldi. Vivaldi sucks. In the shade of the clock tower kids and teens gather with crushed-ice drinks. Standing awkwardly in their satellite groupings. Allegiances and furtive glances.

Wait! There it is again. The shop. That Dollar Saver shop. Saw it just then, I'm sure. With rows of milky-clear plastic storage bins with your choice
PHYSIC

of six colours for lids, piled high and completely covering the front windows. Black, red, purple, orange, green and blue. Either I just walked the block or I haven't moved since stopping. Think. The shop. Did I walk past this particular shop just now or have I been standing here the whole time?

A short-cropped blonde with fire-engine lips walks behind me. She sounds out words as though talking to an idiot. Each word deliberately. I hope she's not talking to me. I check; she has an assistant holding a large black diary—all, pimplly and withered into submission. Certain in manner, uncertain in size; or uncertain in manner, certain in size? She was—no, they were—walking behind me. Now she's over there! Down the other end, where I first turned into the mall. A black pants-suit and high heels. Don't get in trouble with that one; do something wrong and she'll stab you with her pointy foot. And not a hair out of place. Blah, phooey. Yum. But gross.

Two cops, male and female. They look familiar, not to me, to each other. Two helmetless heads casually ride by laughing. They are too engrossed in their violations of each other. No tickets today, for anyone. I wonder if staff sergeant knows. Black skater is back. Coming opposite. Another infringement. Rattling over blue-grey mall tiles. He's soaked—must've gone for a swim with clothes on. Wet stovepipes. And still on his left.

A loner in the mall's quiet midst. Grey head down and a resolved stoop, towing a red shopping trolley. She is calm urgency incarnate. Unaffected by hellish squeals. Unswayed by beauty. Unflattered by pretence. Fatigued yet resolute. She times encounters perfectly, not changing direction, only speed, often slowing some metres in advance to allow the errant pedestrian.

*Ivan.*

A dead-straight trajectory. She bores straight through the crowd. Constantly tracking threats. A shock—those skateboarders always come out of nowhere. But still no sideways glances, no eye contact.

We approach each other. She orients imperceptibly, picking up a scent. Closer. Deliberating, ruminating. Now only a few metres. Our eye-lines cross. Unsure and halting, I search. We are side-on, outside the chemist with the blue facade.

*Ivan.*

Watching through an iridescent glint her gaze envelops me, her trolley angled awkwardly, obstructing. I waiver. Does she know? How does she
know? So calm and resilient.

Ivan.

I feel my eyebrows arch. She scans me. Then I know; and she’s gone. Underway. No sounds, gestures or hints. Gone.

Ivan.

Relief.

Ivan.

A bench seat invites a reboot.

I saw him blink and—

Her burnt-orange dress and red trolley: not a great combination.

Open your eyes. Ivan! Open your eyes. Come on, I know you’re in there. Come on darlin’ Ivan, come on, stick with me buddy. Ivan, sweetheart please open your eyes.

Blue-grey tiles lay under black blotches of gum, dried goolies, tarred cigarette butts and other shoe-borne filth. Waiting forever for more layers. Different layers.

Open your eyes.

Ivan! I want you to try and stay with me. You’re in the hospital. Can you speak? No? That’s ok. The Doctor’s on her way. We thought we’d lost you. No no sweetie, don’t close your eyes. I know you want to sleep but stay with us. The Doctor will be with you in a minute. She’s coming to see you first. It’s important darlin’ that you stay with us.

Each week the newsagent holds my paper aside. But I always check the display copy first. Queue behind young gamblers with wrinkly necks. Systems, scratchies, stakes and stillness. Except for the cash register that is. Such investments must quiet the soul. How much? On what? Money doesn’t come easy you know!

Large brown eyes in a large brown face.

Hello Ivan. My name is Doctor Price. I’m going to ask you some questions, but first I’d like to check your wound.
Imagine a world ruled by dinosaurs. Something is about to go wrong, but nobody knows it yet...

The problem with end-of-the-world movies is that the world never actually ends. There are floods, fires, meteors, nuclear holocausts, zombies and alien invasions, but the good people of Earth always defeat the space-men, always deflect the comet and always make it to their bomb shelters in time.

So when the world really did end, all the good people of Earth could do was drop their jaws in surprise.

Andy stared at the green seagull, and the green seagull stared at Andy. Andy could tell it was a seagull, despite the greenness, by the look in its eye. Other birds were hunters, only becoming scavengers by necessity. Not seagulls. They were born to this life, learning to steal chips from the hands of unsuspecting picnickers before learning to fly. Evolution had prepared them; it knew what was coming.

And Andy knew, and the green seagull knew, that millions of years of evolution had been leading to this moment. The green seagull turned its attention from Andy to the sandwich in his hand.

Andy had spent weeks making this sandwich. Collecting ingredients, storing food, staring at it through long, dinnerless nights but saving it, until it could all be combined to create, from a random assortment of old food
scraps: a sandwich. He liked to think this was what distinguished him from
the green seagull as human. It was hard to tell these days.

It had taken humanity a long time to admit that something was wrong. It
started with the rubbish. When finding banana peel in your fish dinner
became normal and children started digging up nuclear waste in their
sandpits, humanity tried to dispose of the garbage by shooting it into space.
But it had become increasingly obvious that someone was sending it back.

Attempts made to contact the aliens were in vain. It was at this point the
world's scientists combined their intelligence, built a spaceship and got the
hell out of there, leaving seven billion panicking homo sapiens behind. A
meteor casually destroyed their spaceship a few months later. Back on Earth,
everyone had stopped panicking. They were dead. In fact, two years after the
departure of humanity's greatest minds, only one human being was left alive,
and the only thing that stood between him and death was a sandwich.

Imagine a world ruled by intelligent apes. Something is about to go wrong, but
nobody knows it yet...

The green seagull flew at Andy. He dodged sideways with a speed and grace
that neither he nor the seagull had anticipated. Then, sandwich grasped
firmly in one hand, Andy grabbed a large stick from the ground with the
other and swung it through the air, hitting the diving bird with a thwack.

The green seagull gave a squawk and, defeated, flew off into the distance,
dipping and ducking in the air as it went. Andy watched it fly away with
grim satisfaction, then sat back down on his pile of garbage, and ate his food
scrap sandwich... which turned out not to be such a smart move after all. In
the morning, when the green seagull returned, it had something much better
than a sandwich to feast on.

So the human race disappeared after only a few thousand years of dominance.
Life went on, and mankind got its due mention in history. So, in a way, this
really is another nearly-end-of-the-world story, except the world only ever
ends for some species.

Now this time, imagine a world ruled by green seagulls...
THREE MORNINGS

Sally Evans

i
saturday
pressing her mouth so close
to the rise of his jugular
that she can barely inhale.
breath warms his flesh
gums them together.

ii
fucking in the early morning
stretches out the night’s kinks—
a tandem salute to the sun
and quick downward-facing dog
to start the day.

iii
waking up
my body is soft
and my mouth feels
like warm bread.
you kiss me
and make coffee.
i’d percolate with you
but this morning
i’d rather stay in bed.
SONG OF COMPLETION
Waapanswa Nkoti (Lone Rabbit) of the Karekka-Illinois tribe

Eleanor Blaxland Ashby

Take my body
oh great winds
and infinite sky.

You will be here
many generations
after I die.

Grass bends,
the buffalo move on from the plain.
The heavens sigh.

I rest on hard earth,
my mother,
for the goodbye.

The world's waning…
This place
is where I'll lie.

I feel you spirits—
you inhabit space
and time.
SONG OF COMPLETION

You blow through me
like feathers
in a wind chime.

You keep me alive.
My mind is
as sharp as my eye.

Visit the innards
of my soul—
which is I.

Please don’t linger
with the creatures
and cacti.

Take me up
in your arms.
Bring me high.

Lift me
above the mountains
where the birds fly.

Allow me to lie
beyond those glow-worms
of the nighttime sky.

I listen to the power
of the land,
with no reply…

The wind is forever blowing,
saying nothing.
I have no desire to know why.
LUKE STARES AT ME. 'Red's gone,' he says and swallows hard.
I kick at the muddy ground. It seizes my gumboot, releasing it with
a reluctant slurp.
'It's all right, we'll find him.' He wheels his bike over and I shuffle up
between the handlebars; we can't find mine.
Mum is wrestling a soggy mattress out of the caravan. Wet circles peek
out from her underarms as she heaves it onto the roof of the car to dry.
Water sprays up Luke's back as the wheels cut through puddles as deep
as my shins.
The whole caravan park is like the garage sales Dad used to take us to,
all the inside things thrown out for everyone to see. Plastic chairs and milk
crates make islands in the muck.
We try a few rows down. Red loves it there. An old couple even made
a dog bed for him in the corner of their annexe. Luke knocks and I wait
behind, studying cobwebs in the flyscreen. No one answers. He opens the
door and dirty water gushes out, smelling sharp like piss. The taste of hot
'He's not here.' He pinches his nose between his fingers. We head off
towards the school because that's where everyone has been told to go.

Kev's car turns onto the road towards us. Luke brakes, dragging his heels
AFTER THE FLOOD

against the ground. The car eases to a stop alongside us.

'Where are youse off to?' Kev takes a drag on his smoke.

'Can't find Red.' I try to dodge his stale breath.

Red was Dad's dog. Kev hates having anything of Dad's around. He used
to kick Red in the ribs. I didn't say anything about it or he would've kicked
me too. Kev sleeps on Dad's side of the bed now. His snores sound
different, like something is broken in the back of his throat.

'He's probably dead.' Kev tosses his smoke into the puddle at our feet as
he drives away.

'Fuck him.' Luke kicks off again. I try not to cry.

We ask around. No one has seen him. People cluster under musty blankets,
muttering consolations.

'Did you hear?'

'Missing two...'

'Over near Skinner's Creek...'

'Just awful.'

A woman is crying. She looks funny in the small chair, spilling out over
the edges like the top of a cake in a pan. People in orange uniforms are asking
her questions and I feel bad because apart from losing Red the flood is kind
of exciting.

From up on the hill the river looks dark, like bags under sleepy eyes. Red
could be anywhere. I lean back into Luke, gripping the bars as we ease down
the road towards the bridge.

The water is still high enough to lap at the railings. Orange tape blocks
the road where pylons have fallen away. Luke ditches the bike and walks right
through the tape. I edge around the side. There is a tiny gap left between the
bridge and the shore. A piece of red metal juts out from the water. It takes
me a second to realise it's the back of a ute.

'Oi, look over here!' I point at the tip of a brake light.

'Shit.' Luke disappears.

I can hear shouting and the slamming of car doors. A man in an orange
uniform comes down beside me.

'What is it, mate?' he asks.
‘The back of a ute.’ I point again. The man pulls a radio from his pocket. ‘Reckon we’ve got a fatality down under the bridge.’ That’s when I realise someone is probably still inside.

The man in orange is with the SES. He makes us go back to the caravan park, says we shouldn’t be around here because it’s too dangerous. ‘Do you reckon someone’s dead?’ I ask Luke. He doesn’t reply.

As we turn onto our block a dog barks in the distance. Luke sprints towards the van, his tyres slipping in the mud. I jump off and run. The door is locked but someone is inside.

‘Mum, open up!’ I bang my fist against the door. Kev stands there, wiping his hands. ‘I’m sorry boys.’ He throws a bloody towel on the bench. ‘I found him over behind the stadium.’

Luke pushes me into the van and I see it can’t have been Red barking. ‘Wasn’t good, I’m afraid. I had to put him out of his misery then and there.’ He doesn’t try to hide a smile. ‘Strangling them is the easiest way.’

Red is on the floor, a black cord tight around his neck. The hot vomit comes out so fast I don’t make it outside.

His fur is still warm and other than the bloody ring around his neck he doesn’t look hurt. We bury him near the oval. Afterwards we sit and watch the cars crawl out of town. A tow truck goes past with the red ute on the back and I wish Kev was the one who’d been trapped inside.
LAST REMARKS

There are many barbeques and bake sales bound within these pages, and if it weren't for packet cakes, sausages and mystery-flavoured fizzy drinks our work would never have come to fruition.

Like previous Tide generations, we worked hard to raise the revenue necessary for publication, endured sleepless nights to meet (or nearly meet) deadlines, and tried to be tolerant and diplomatic when negotiating differences of opinion. We learned the rudiments of graphic design, commissioned illustrators, and sweated over the choice between Bembo and Garamond: no Times New Roman here.

Tide was a labour of love, and we loved. What you hold in your hands is, we feel, worthy of its predecessors: a collection of exceptional prose and poetry.

If it sounds like we're a little fatigued by the experience, that's true. There have been disagreements and moments of crisis, and at times we despaired. But we pulled through, and in the end the work is its own reward; nothing of any worth comes easily.

We sincerely hope you enjoyed the sixth edition of Tide.

The Tide team
2009
THE TIDE TEAM

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MATTHEW EGAN [watch this space]

TOMAS ERNST relocated from Canada to Sydney three years ago. He spends his time advancing economic development programs in the Pacific Islands. In between travels, Tomas tries to find time to pursue creative writing.

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OWEN EVERITT is Nanabusch and inga kor pa isen.
Jade Fisher is lethal at eight months, and I do mean lethal.

Adam Formosa is a first year Creative Writing student born in the Gong nine months after Argentina defeated Germany 3-2 to win the 1986 FIFA World Cup. He is also prone to making things up.

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Joshua Handley rocks!

Patrick Harrison is a third year Creative Writing student at UOW. He has been published in AustralianReader.com, Tertangala, and the upcoming anthology The Stack. He is a writer, musician, gamer, student politician, sometime poet and celebrity pharmacist.

Michael Hodges could not possibly be described in three lines; he's a person and he writes stuff. If you want to know any more about him, you'll have to ask him yourself.

Sarah Jobson won't worry; it's not that kind of a kiss.

Kye Kocher is currently studying English Lit. at the University of Calgary. Nature is his first love, although he doubts it returns the sentiment.

Jessica Lloyd believes in writing by hand. She owns more notebooks than anyone else she knows, and can't wait to read her novella 'Pearl'. She just has to finish writing it.

Arcadia Lyons and tigers and sometimes bares. She enjoys long walks off short piers and candle-lit housefires. She has a good sense of hygiene and likes striking women. Call now.

Harry Matthews's favourite book is To Kill a Mockingbird. O Lord, how he hates mocking birds.

Rachael McGuigan is a fourth year Creative Arts/Law student at UOW. It's said she's quite a catch: 22 and still all her own teeth. Pity she's taken, boys!
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

James Money was born in Wollongong, but spent the majority of his life in Darwin before enrolling at the University of Wollongong to study Creative Writing. Previously unpublished, James is currently in his penultimate session of study.

Arno Muskens has long luxurious hair.

Belinda Nielsen is dreaming about Strawberry Fields...

Elisa Parry is in her second year of studying a Bachelor of Creative Arts and a Bachelor of Media and Communication Studies. Creative Writing is her passion; Advertising and Marketing is her fallback plan.

Vincent Pendergast has tried his hand at a number of genres—horror, fantasy and science fiction included—and has been published by Nossa Morte and Shimmer magazine.

Elizabeth Smith is currently completing a cultural anthropology degree at the University of Calgary. Last year she won the university's Lane Creative Writing Award, and she is now working on her first novel.

Genevieve Tait is hoping, since working as an unpaid intern for the past year, to—some day soon—get paid. She's not optimistic. Her obituary will probably read the same as this bio: unemployed.

Peta Thomas thinks you should agree with her when she's talking at you!

Keeley Van de Haar is currently studying Creative Arts and Arts at Wollongong University. She spends her time working on children's novels and finding tasks that keep her drama students engaged for more than thirty seconds.

Lachlan Williams has written poems, plays, prose, press releases, news reports, feature articles, acknowledgements, apologies and bios. He trained at UOW and lives in Katoomba.

Jessica Wilmot is a disgruntled waitress, angry at the hospitality industry and looking to make her way in the world of words.

Jessie Warren is not an author. She was born with a red pen in her hand, which she imagines must have been quite uncomfortable for her mother.
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