She elbows Curiosity out of her way as she takes a seat next to Jealousy on the train out of town. She carries her ticket in her right pocket in her left she keeps her spite no room for smoke rings and lavender she stuffed them away for this ride. She grips the neck of her guitar these red stained strings are broken Last night she shaped those strings into a flower Last night he showed her a room crowded tight with temperature making her stained glass eyes sweat She watched him argue with Consistency linger over Malcontent and brush off the most inconsiderate tact Until he searched for her The next morning she sat next to the alarm clock where he left her where he placed her He didn’t know she was taking the train out of town Sitting comfortably sitting next to Jealousy as Curiosity rubs it’s idle hands over her thighs as she reaches in her pocket for her ticket only to pull out spite
Sprinkles from the bag
that will never satisfy expectations
the credit card knows exactly what its job is for
Franklin wonders how he got stuck in a tornado of
coldness and dripping dignity
single file, the destination got broke in half
minutes turn into hours and the bag is nearly gone
the card is soaked with salvia and frustration
the holder is frantic and scratches blood of low self esteem
the bag is now ripped and brushes flakes of integrity

WHITE
Stephanie Phillips

Sprinkles from the bag
that will never satisfy expectations
the credit card knows exactly what its job is for
Franklin wonders how he got stuck in a tornado of
coldness and dripping dignity
single file, the destination got broke in half
minutes turn into hours and the bag is nearly gone
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the bag is now ripped and brushes flakes of integrity
DO YOU READ TO HEAR A HAPPY POEM?

Jason Atherton

Do you read to hear a happy poem?
Ha,
When politicians fight the wars themselves or send their own children to die
Or when Reagan’s war on internal weapons of mass destruction; Narcotics, takes precedent over
History’s and Bush’s war of Corporate Dictatorship.
I’ll put a smiley face in every o.
When the now forty year civil war called gang violence gets some attention from the pale leaders.
I’ll write a poem you can sing, hum, and whistle.
When children around the world starve for candy and nothing else.
The youth yell at the old, “No I don’ need a fucking palm pilot, video games, ipod, computer,
television. Distractions from reality. I don’t trust you Mom and Dad, you gave up on revolution.’
The religious believe in life. Their heavens murder.
I’ll write a happy poem, when mankind kills god and takes on the responsibility to forget about the
how’s and when’s of the world, and focuses on where it is going.
I’ll write a happy poem when womenkind kills man(truly unkind) for women have the wombs to nurture.
You and I will fucking skip and read a poem.

When you read in the lines
That I trust children; only: and in their eyes I see a happy poem
But I am a pessimist and see their parents eyes and know
My epitaph will be the only poem I ever write, and it will be happy
Because, even my family’s eyes are fucking closed.
standing in a curve of daydream, 
as the trail turns east into the sun 
small, lean bird
smooth and sheer as granite
drifts silent, buoyed by precision--
swift angles of wind and wings
collide in silver stream
to where the trail leads up
and over
memory and time
watch
lavender, sienna and auburn brush
swallow the world
below each step
a single mirage of sound
breaks
cottontail, ghostweed
and the rosewood know
just how to bend,
how to breathe
still
leaves bristle
a rolling wave of shine
see how the sun’s story
repeats a long shadow of self
to follow
into that place
where warm earth meets
familiar, sage-smudged sky
Dad fires up the Sprint car again
With brown shag carpeting between my toes
I hear the braying donkey down the street
Mom making tacos in the kitchen, says
“Coyotes dug up Mandy again.”
She hates the smell of rotting dog
I bolt outside to look for bones
In the driveway the engine revs, something pops…
Dad is swearing
Burning alcohol fumes, white and stinging, rise in the breeze
To diffuse through palm fronds above,
Swinging on my nose hairs, scraping my tear ducts
I squint and make my way past the pool,
And stop to pick up the plastic filter
Of a Swisher Sweet to chew on
Through ivy blankets engulfing the hill
Bits of black hefty bag chewed up by wild dogs
Scattered in shadows, her plastic coffin
Proof of Mandy’s remains upturned
But mom had reburied her
I return to taco promises
Gringo attempt at Mexican fiesta
I ask about a new puppy
She sighs into the seasonings and says,
“Go get Dad, dinner’s ready.”
WD-40 and Old Spice encompass his body
Fingers of Swisher Sweet smoke
Point to the garage
He’s in there wanting tacos
Already scrubbing off grease with orange grit
The sprint car is breathing and waiting for his return
I feel it watching me
“Dad dinner.”
We go inside…
To watch Wonder Years in crunching silence
what a beautiful world we have around us
such vibrant colors and masses
of wonderful creatures
that god has created for us
except for those pesky insects
the awful, disruptive mosquitoes
and parasites
the devil made them

what amazing bodies
he’s made for us
strong and enduring
so intricate and precise
sensational and alluring
except for those pesky diseases
the terrible flesh eating cancers
the devil made them

what amazing companions
he’s made for us
beautiful women, handsome men
our bodies fit together like a puzzle
love between the two
he’s given us wonderful reproduction
for making babies in his image
except for those lustful temptations
the devil made them
I like the phrase "chainsmoking cigarettes"
I like the phrase much more than
I like chainsmoking cigarettes. Maybe that makes me an impostor
chainsmoking cigarettes just hits the spot sometimes
always having something in your hand to suck on, smoking
It hits the spot like an expensive cheeseburger
or a nice piece of ass
It's too bad that chainsmoking cigarettes makes my insides feel like
they are devouring each other because it's such a good image
Impostor
chainsmoking cigarettes in a pea coat and hip vintage sweaters
just like inspirational heroes it's easier to be
chainsmoking cigarettes while drinking
maybe I should start drinking more Great writers and poets
sat drinking coffee and
chainsmoking cigarettes on Benzedrine midnights.
So I sip my coffee while chainsmoking cigarettes and writing;
Benzedrine ain't around no more
Impostor.
Coffee, tea, red wine, whisky and cheap booze all go well with
chainsmoking cigarettes while looking hip in new thrift store clothes
in front of cafés and concert venues let everyone know what I am,
or want to be, or want to seem to be
Impostor.
Not everyone can be a visionary genius or Bodhisattva in the cold, windy night. But at least I can look like it.
Hip with coffee while chainsmoking cigarettes in the parking lot of a community college
Impostor.

CHAINSMOKING CIGARETTES

Eric Watson

chainsmoking cigarettes on Benzedrine midnights.
So I sip my coffee while chainsmoking cigarettes and writing;
Benzedrine ain't around no more
Impostor.
Coffee, tea, red wine, whisky and cheap booze all go well with
chainsmoking cigarettes while looking hip in new thrift store clothes
in front of cafés and concert venues let everyone know what I am,
or want to be, or want to seem to be
Impostor.
Not everyone can be a visionary genius or Bodhisattva in the cold, windy night. But at least I can look like it.
Hip with coffee while chainsmoking cigarettes in the parking lot of a community college
Impostor.
I walk in, looking for you.
Because I have spent the whole weekend
Looking forward to this.
Then I see you standing there, talking to him.
And I can’t tell, if you’re being nice
Or if you’re enjoying his company.
So I walk by and let my arm brush your arm.
Just enough so you will look
And know that I have just arrived.
Then I go and sit alone and watch both of you talk.
And I can’t tell if that was you, looking my way for help.
Or if it was you just scanning the room.
And Mr. Pacino has already asked you to dance.
He arrived much before I did and stole you from me.
So I couldn’t save you even if you asked.
But I never would have believed.
Even if you would have told me.
That Al Pacino would steal my dance partner.
Because I swear you like me better.
If they asked you. I swear you would tell them all,
That you like me better.
But for now, I rather dance alone, than dance with any other girl.
And watch Mr. Al Pacino,
In his 70’s suit and two left feet.
As I swear to myself, next week.
I’ll be here twice as early so that Al could never steal,
My pretty, blond haired dance partner away again.

AL PACINO STOLE MY DANCE PARTNER

Jose Barajas
I WOULD RUN AWAY A LIFETIME

Alexandra Little

I would run away a lifetime
And watch *der tod* notch every hour
A different form of the little girl Plucking petals from a flower
the onset of a new semester
brings with it new faces
to put to the names
of the teachers
you have chosen
you may have selected
a certain class
because the professor is recommended
or maybe the time slot is just right
whatever the reason
these random monikers
were just ink on a schedule
and have now become real people
and they tell you things
like
old people still have sex
or
they are madly in love
or
even a family secret
and so we learn from them
lessons in books
and lessons in life
and we are all
forever changed
Naturally, she was a pale skinned beauty
Mondays were her day to shine
A fresh face of makeup, to accent her features
and a nice pretty dress, freshly scented with perfume
Her jet black hair would be up in a bun
And once close enough, her breathe stung of Listerine
her lips painted the color of rum
Yes, Mondays were hers'
She would saunter in poised full of grace
Gently setting into her usual place
Others filled in the circle of chairs that lined the four blank white walls
And we all sat tight for the show to begin
Her glassy eyes and nervous smile set the mood
same time, same place
over and over for Mondays to come
Wide mouthed pupils floating in a glazed sea of red rip curls
Her jaded weekend of plastered excuses
Was neatly hidden behind a taught exterior
She was fascinating, you see
tweaked out good looks
rebellious angry undertones
ability to articulate against pointing fingers
They would accuse her
but she pissed clean and looked marvelous doing it
Everyone knew, but no one could prove it
Everyone loved her, and she knew how to use it
Every now and then we exchanged glances and smiles
Partners in crime until the end of the mile
shady Mercedes some would say
I wonder if Monday’s are still considered her day?
ALAS, my mind has been raped!
Violated by bad poetry;
verse and meter poorly paced,
and rhymes of dubious quality.

Perhaps it was my own fault,
I may have been asking for it.

My mind may have dressed in
garments of poor diction,
pages of poor merit; my friends-
fantasy and science fiction.

I wonder who I call.
Maybe Oprah?

Though no one forced me to read it,
to expose my brain’s fragility
though still, from where I see it
it’s the author’s culpability.

After all, No one forced him to write it.
Prose at gunpoint would be more eloquent.

Perhaps I should just forget it
and block out another memory,
of sordid phrases, of remedial lit?
He only took my virginity.

Oh! Woe is me!
What publisher will want me now?
NEWS ABOUT MIDDLE-AGE

Mary Sagala Verleur

Tomorrow, I may die, never having known I was middle-aged at 20
 Completely cheated out of my mid-life crisis.

Chubby Staley was middle-aged at 8 years old when
He threw a beautifully orbiting Hammond Times
Newspaper onto my porch.
My black dog lunged. The chain was longer
Than either of them knew.

I have news for you, Chubby:
This dog bite will mark your middle-age.
There is a teenage girl speeding through an intersection,
Through a light that is red.
She will steal you from your twin, on your 16th birthday.

My older brother John was middle aged at
6 hours old.
My mother would have held him to her breast,
Let down her hair, and disguised him in her tresses,
Had she known.

Maybe I was middle-aged at 32 when I
Kissed my newborn baby girl’s wide, trembling lips,
As she wailed her song of life and love and longing,
Finding all of this and more in a drop of my milk.
Then again, maybe I have not even seen middle-age yet.
Maybe I will live to be 96,
Following the path of my maternal grandmother
Who eluded Death’s snares, year after year, as she
Buried her own husband and half of her 16 children.

And you, just 18, fresh and flawless as risen dough that has
Not seen the oven,
Perhaps you were middle-aged at 9
When you broke your right arm and met the ugly truth:
Your own flesh and bones would betray you.

And although you (like me) think you’ll live to be 100,
There may be a doctor waiting in a small, rectangular room
With dark news wrapped in an x-ray with no bow.

Or perhaps there is no doctor and you will become an
Old woman with thick, spotted skin,
Your face, a map; each line revealing its own story,
Toothless, you will smile on the front page of a
Newspaper Chubby Staley cannot deliver.

The headline will read:
“California Woman Celebrates her 110th Birthday!”
The diagnosis was shocking.
We kept it quiet.
The surgery was terrifying.
We huddled together.
The disintegration was inevitable.
We tried to be strong.
The death was a spectacle.
We buried our heads.
The first year was magnificent.
We got gifts.
The second year was rough.
We were forgotten.
The third year is devastating.
We still hurt.

DECEMBER

Christina Berke
**ALL NIGHTER**

Jeffrey Shook

What is an all nighter?
Is it 5 hot shots
4 rockstars
3 refills of dark roast, please to the top
O’ don’t even try and gip me, because I know
I’ll be back tonight, tomorrow, and the rest of my life
so back on task, let’s get the essentials
2 packs of cigarettes
wait I quit, but mid terms, ugghh
one night so many papers
I stare at a blank white screen glowing brighter
Just another asshole yelling out
What you gonna write about sire?
shut up you, now to drown out
turn on music, choose a style
make lists, and of course sort piles
When bored
always stack books alphabetically according to titles
you’re only half in, you’ll never make it to finals
Not again! Must Focus
Deep Breath
(take breath)
If procrastination was honored I’m sure I’d take an Oscar
I think about migration narratives
but my mind begins to wander
From Death to women to Conan O’Brien’s Late Night
Recover now only 3 more hours till sun light
So then it hits me, and boy does it hit hard
Confinement, that feeling you never want
When life hangs in the grips of a clock
I pocket the present and doubt on a future
Filled with self hatred, A gun against my head
And I am the shooter.
A big case of the fuck-its sets in
with a nice side of drama
Can't forget grades,
academic probation,
Oh and what about yo’ momma,
Your head takes cheap shots
as it places your decisions on a firing line
in front of your hard working pops
I said Shut the fuck up!
deep breath, you can do it!
Just stay on top
because according to Lewis Carroll
simply start at the beginning
and when you get to the end stop!
The vet said it was normal for the puppy to be nervous. Groomers refused us. My dog snipped and snarled. Company stopped visiting. Large arcs were made around us when we went for a walk. Now his pill every morn is given with a treat. The neighbors no longer avoid. UPS again delivers with confidence. I carry my canine from room to room.
**THE MILLION DOLLAR GIRL**

Joseph Lewis

13 pounds, 7.3 ounces
what a fat baby I was!
I really filled out that crib!
I did, I did, I did!
A Chair Crusher since the womb.
Since then, my childhood, my adolescence, my adult life
all a blur of glucose and cottage cheese skin
Lard Ass or Fat Ass, they'd say
A Gelatinous Glob of Gluttony, they'd call me.
Beef Brigade or Pig Pirate, they'd say
They did, they did, they did!
But now, look at me now!
I'm no longer a Fat Whale Bitch.
Oh, look at me! Check me out, please!
Just look at me! Look! Look! Look!
Just look at my pale, dead skin!
No more dimpled canyons of cellulite
No more sagging sacks of glucose!
No more inflamed clusters of cholesterol!
Flap Jack Tits or Pork Beast, they used to say
A Spoon and Fork Operator, they used to call me
Glutton Hound or Cholesterol Fiend, they used to say
They did, they did, they did!
A-head-on-a-pillow-
can't-tell-if-there's-a-body-underneath-
all-the-blankets, I'm finally skinny!
Look at me! I said look at me!
Look! I'm not a fat corpse!
I don't fill out this coffin!
A dieting and exercise plan, they used to say.
Anorexia or Bulimia, I couldn't decide.
Cremation was not an option, they used to say.
I wouldn't fit in their oven.
Extra large coffin, special order, they had said.
Closed casket, they used to say. Who would want to look?
But one day I wondered, when they take out my organs,
can they slim me down?
Wide Load or Tuba Luba, they used to say.
A Slop Gobbling Warthog, they used to call me.
Hog Thomson or Fat Bear Pig, they used to say.
They did, they did, they did!
Oh Beauty Mortician, I said.
When you throw on the blush,
nip and tuck my chins, all 3 of them.
Oh Beauty Mortician, I said.
when you wrap me in a plastic dress,
tummy tuck my spare tires, all 8 of them.
Every nook of cellulite,
every hiding hint of glucose,
every speck of cholesterol,
destroy it all! I said.
Take out my fatty organs! I said.
Take out my stomach, my intestines,
my heart and my brain.
Back to 13 pounds, 7.3 ounces,
my weight loss goal.
Butterball or Doublewide, they used to say.
A Sloppy Flop Top Tits, they used to call me.
Tubby Blubbonson or Hot Hog Breathe, they used to say.
They did, they did, they did!
Lift my drooping cheeks
and trim my sloshing thighs, I said.
I'll make you the favorite
of a thousand necrophiliacs, he said.
And he did, he did, he did!
I mean, just look at me!
Look at me, damnit!
Just fucking look already!
Oh Beauty Mortician, I said.
Tell everyone about it.
Tell everyone about my
million dollar makeover.
And he did, he did, he did!
They begged for an open casket.
They did, they did, they did!
They begged to see me.
Me, the million dollar corpse.
Yea, that's what they called me.
They did, they did, they did!
They called me
The Million Dollar Corpse.
EXISTENTIAL
Jason Atherton

Fragile our reality
Is nothing
But simple symbols.
The Alpha Bit,
Is
Lie-ing around our lazy minds
The ones with a soul, a government, a god, a love, aaaaalll of a fraction of infinity that do not add up to one thing with out a letter.
Language is god’s God, your mother and father, your hatred and worship: my self, is just a word, lying around my sloth vibrant thoughts. Fucking with our heads with a fertile phallus and womb in which everything exists…
Outside of the words, is what we are: no thing…
Or Nietzsche miss spoke to my eyes (maybe I should have kept reading.) In stead of burning all my books and bridges, and falling in love with Opiates and my self- only: I am the tortured artist, addict, exist essentialist; until I find the bravery to commit suicide, and prove I am nothing more than a person, a name, a word, a couple of letters.
(Fast) Food.

Nichole Hansell

Five minute lunch break
Two minute drive thru

One hour of feeling sick

Next time
Make a sandwich

Spend ten minutes

Live ten years

(Happy) meal.
Someone told me today
I look like Jesus
I’m not really sure why, it seemed preposterous to me.
Perhaps it is my Jewish descent
But no, I’m an Anglo
Totally void of any spiritual beliefs.
Perhaps it is my affinity for wine
Not the good stuff, but
The kind you share with a homeless man as he stands on the corner and
curses the sun
Then maybe I give off a divine light
An aura, a presence
But that sounds so vague it might as well be an essence.
I could be a madman
Standing on a mountain
Shouting to the masses
Look at me, and
Worship me.
But I’m not mad, despite my best efforts.
Is it my ideals?
Do I represent some kind of threat to the establishment?
No, I don’t get out enough to start revolutions.
I guess, maybe, it’s the long hair and the beard
Appearances are, after all, very important.
My Sperm Donor always had a funny way of putting things
I'd ask him questions about life
about growing up
Why?
Because he seemed to know everything
about everything.
1st grade I asked him
Why is Farmer John’s grass so green?
Well, you see, there is a giant wood chipper, except for grass
he put Kermit the Frog’s family in it, and out comes perfectly
green grass, some Kermit and water that’s all grass needs
Really? Really.
The grass looks pretty, I’ll water my grass everyday.
2nd grade we were at a restaurant and I was eating my fried cheese
A fat lady limped by, everyone gawked
If you keep eating shit like that, you’ll look like her, and you’ll die real sick
I spit out my food
No one wants to die a bad death
3rd grade, friends of the family had a gathering for 4th of July
Everyone tells me I look beautiful tonight!
Of course they do sweetheart
Why do I look beautiful?
Because you look like me
He did have nice thick hair, good skin, and nice eyes
4th grade I got chosen to do the DARE graduation speech
Mom and him sat right in front
He pulled me aside on my way up
Good luck...you better do well...
What if I blow?
That’s okay if you do...
I felt relieved.
...except, Mom and I will stop loving you
I nailed the speech
Everything brown tastes like chocolate kiddo
But what about steak? That’s brown and it tastes like...
No steak is pink on the inside, well, good steak at least
I let it sit in my head
What about poop?
What about poop? he asked
Well...people say things taste like poop and that means it tastes bad
Have you eaten poop?
No
Then how do you know it doesn’t taste like chocolate?
He was right, I never ate poop so how would I know.
5th grade I got chosen for the school play.
I’m scared. I can’t act who am I kidding?
Fake it till you make it
But won’t people catch on that I suck?
No because if you pretend like you don’t suck
They’ll believe it.
I got a standing ovation.
8th grade I went to a party, my first real party
I smelled him
That sweaty smell, like baked basil, but bitter.
It smelled like his backgammon nights with his buds.
It smelled like when he’d tickle me till I’d pee in my pants.
It smelled like him staring at the ceiling
trying to convince me of animal shapes in the cottage cheese stucco
It was white on the outside, and brown on the inside
Everything brown tastes like chocolate.
But not this. But I got it. I got him.
I love you
Really?
Really.
feast of bounty
despread upon
lengthy boards
trail of souls
proceed slowly
with vacant eyes
plates laden
with
the rise of
sustenance
eyes diverted
I say
God loves you
and such
but who am I
to
speak
for
God