

# Neon Geyser, Porcelain Sky

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## PANAMA TEN

Two political prisoners were sitting  
In their jeep with two  
Panamanian National Guardsmen  
Outside a bar in town

The two Panamanian Nationals  
Went inside to check the bar  
Leaving the two men  
Handcuffed outside alone

Once inside the guardsmen spoke  
To the bartender  
In a language  
I couldn't understand  
When suddenly there was an explosion  
Coming from outside the bar  
And without looking the  
Two guardsmen laughed  
And downed their tequila and beers  
While outside you could see the  
Flames engulf the jeep  
The two prisoners lit up  
Like two scarecrows  
Tossed into  
A bonfire

--A.D. Winans

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## Watching the Fruit

All that spring in the supermarket  
smelling the firm mangoes,  
tracing the speckled galaxies  
across the purple-surfaced universe of plums,  
she dreamed of that sweet flesh.  
Brought them home.  
Set them on the counter.  
Watched them hungrily,  
day after sunlit day.  
The skins sagged to wrinkles,  
softly browned. Sugar  
fermented unseen.  
She threw them away.

This was nine months into the war.

--Leslie Minot



Art in this issue by Tom Tuthill

## WHEN GOD GETS DRUNK

Archangel Michael tried to get God to go on the wagon.  
“Each time you get sloshed there are more people  
climbing up their own assholes  
cause you think they look funny like that,  
and then you drop cathedrals on their baseball caps  
and kick them into the middle of next week;  
there’ve been complaints from the middle of next week.  
Just cause you can do anything doesn’t mean  
you can do *anything*.”  
“Does so.” God wasn’t paying much attention.  
He had a first class hangover  
special delivery from Hell, remorse guaranteed.  
God doesn’t do remorse.  
He decided what he really needed was another drink.  
There was another bottle on his desk, there always was.  
God pointed at it to come closer,  
he was a little unsteady on his feet.  
“No, no,” Michael reached out a hand  
but didn’t touch God’s sleeve.  
“Don’t you remember how it all started?  
You were going to have a nice garden planet with animals  
and then you started talking  
to the worm at the bottom of the tequila bottle  
and next thing we knew there were men and women.”  
“Well,” said God, “I’ve got to drink with somebody.  
Men drink.”  
“You could stop,” Michael suggested,  
“you can do anything.”  
“You just said I couldn’t,” God pointed out.  
Then he laughed. “You never really looked at my world.  
Yes, it’s a mess. It’s a beautiful mess.  
I’m just not a tidy God.”

--Julia Vinograd, from her book When God Gets Drunk,  
Zeitgeist Press, 2007

## THE BITCH

I made doggy with her twice.  
Exactly twice. Well, four  
months later I walk into a room  
and she  
treats me like a fire hydrant.  
Public. Legs. Tongue. Marks me  
as hers  
and walks away, sniffing.

--Bruce Isaacson, from a new book forthcoming  
from Zeitgeist Press



## Reptile Resume

**there is a snake  
in my left pocket  
reach in and touch it  
if you dare  
I swear  
it won't bite  
more than twice  
it's lazy  
and tires easily  
grown old  
shedding each year  
I collect its skin  
as the pages of a book  
I can measure the progression  
in the scales  
little dull notes  
where once it shimmered  
slithered freely at will  
tempting with sweet secret fruit  
consistently offering that sacred taste  
before it was banished  
from out of the garden paradise  
lush with the green of life everlasting  
to the desert dry  
littered with sharp rocks  
and thorn adorned bushes  
where the air is swift with predatory birds  
and the scorpions swing many tails  
for a while the snake survived there too  
before I had to carry it  
limp in my left pocket  
like an unnecessary necktie  
curled up and concealed  
to hibernate another season**

--Marvin Scott Marvin, from his book  
Fourteen Poems About Fucking, 2007

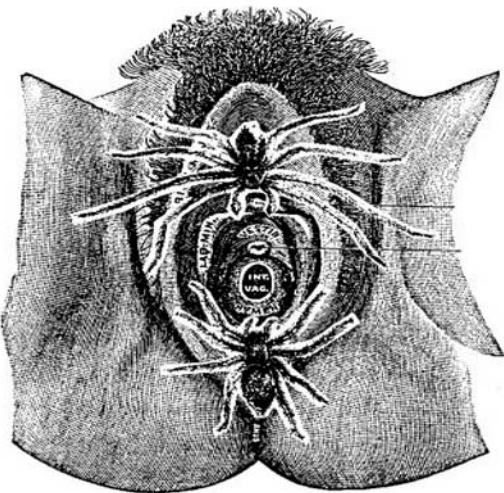
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## Illustration of a Heart Beat

Do not speak to me  
of such inconceivable moments in time, my lord.  
I would rather my flesh be lacerated  
by the shrapnel  
of 1,000 different moments of my life time...  
Any moment, but this moment.  
Any where, but here.  
I wish for days long past;  
laying on a boogie board, propped up against oversized rocks,  
where sand and water mingle to create mysterious foam.  
Fucking him, or anybody fuckable for that matter.  
Just as long as I know that a few days from now, I  
don't have to care about them and they don't  
have to care about me.  
I wish for days that have yet to pass;  
when I will stare into the  
Not-Yet-Opened eyes of my 1<sup>st</sup> born child,  
Not-Yet-Opened eyes.  
Still choking on afterbirth. Screaming. Umbilical chord cut.  
Your eyes will be  
mourning mucus green,  
your hair will be  
cunt crevasse red.  
I know because I am your mother, and you were conceived  
in my mind before my body.  
This will be the first time I feel true sorrow,  
knowing that your body and spirit will be raped  
by every joyless pleasure this world has to offer.  
I wish to be 87 and on my death bed, realizing that  
everything I ever wanted was an illusion, and so was this life.  
I was never really alive in the first place.  
I no longer want to be on the path.  
I no longer want to be here now.

--Teisha Starr

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## CITY POET

Once addiction sets in  
There is no stopping it  
You become a serial killer  
Attacking the keyboard at will  
Your mind working in shifts  
Strange creatures live inside your head  
Show no mercy give no ground  
Forcing your fingers to do their bidding  
Writing down your thoughts in your  
Loose-leaf notebook

The city is your slaughterhouse  
Like a wife it accommodates your moods  
Doesn't seem to mind your giving  
Her a bad name

You walk her streets a hungry vampire  
Lapping up your own blood  
On nights when blood transfusions  
Are not enough

--A.D. Winans

### Excerpt # 2: Notes from Freelance Gardener and Landscaper

At the age of eleven I knew  
Bad careers can't begin too early.  
I am the face of Attention Deficit Disorder.

Give me a new lawnmower and pray  
Your garden survives the onslaught.  
I'll sell my soul for two dollars.

Never trust your power tools  
To an obsessive-compulsive poet  
Who is on the borderline of puberty.

My rows are rigidly straight.  
These edges are razor-sharp.  
This covers for a lack of stability.

We are not the stuff of business.  
You could find me playing pinball  
To the tune of summers vanishing.

Here is a sports-card collection  
That is worth a fortune in sweat.  
I should have retired at the outset.

Don't ask me to dig your trenches  
Or deal with your pruning sheers.  
I can't even handle condoms.

Chronic fatigue overwhelms me.  
Dehydration stalks the suburbs.  
We are weary of drinking water.

Somewhere in Uganda they're selling  
The estate of the late Idi Amin.  
Don't call me to pull the weeds.

Mel C. Thompson, Pleasant Hill, 6-16-2007.

## Poet Laureate

As Poet Laureate of North Manchester Indiana I  
received recognition from literally tens of people  
at the local coffee shop's open mic readings  
The mayor awarded me (with pride)  
two ten dollar gift certificates to East  
of Chicago Pizza, also I was allowed  
to ride a bicycle in the towns  
"Funfest" parade in front of the mayor's  
convertible, and behind the Peabody  
nursing home Aqua-Aerobics float  
That kind of respect can't be found  
everyday, behind every corner  
It has to be earned  
Earned by my wit and charm and some might  
argue my devilishly handsome looks  
The Manchester Daily Monitor called  
me the Oscar Dela Hoya of literature,  
"Issuing hit after hit, in a poetic sense of course"  
The online article goes on to say "God has  
blessed, not only North Manchester, but the  
entire world with his abilities as a word smith."  
Market Street was honorably named Wagner  
Street temporally with paper signs and even  
though my true home town of Warsaw is a few  
miles to the north, I'm still some what of a home  
town hero to the folks in Manchester

--Oren Wagner, from his book My Life in  
the Former Colonies

## Look Back in Angora

What kind of lover  
needs leather to love her?  
You'll leave without grief  
if you see her in  
calf skin, or kid gloves.  
An only kid, an only kid....  
My father shrugs--  
he's still a Yid.  
He will not seethe  
a lamb in its mammy's milk.  
Mammary glands  
are for strapping down,  
binding in,  
not brandishing like  
your one useable weapon.  
So flay me. I'm tenderized.  
Look, there's a slow tear  
that moistens my temple.  
Like twelve-year-old Jesus,  
I'm fielding questions,  
spinning it just like a Jew  
under pressure. Press her face  
to your breast. Stroke her hair.  
Easy now. That's my lamb.  
Hand me the shears.

--Jan Steckel

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## Breaking up with vindictive strangers

so long for being  
so real for being so fake  
you lamb drunk on milk  
in the crater  
so what?

see everything  
and still smile so  
forget it and  
chew it  
and chew-  
avert  
and sacrifice  
knowledge  
for peace.

have your banquet  
for your bloody birthdays,  
have your  
coffin shaped cakes-  
eat your mint jelly and drift on this bubble  
till it pops from the blade that drinks you-



so this is what love is supposed to be-  
swimming in blood  
drinking.

a crack in the bottom of the crater  
sucking  
in sunshower  
and curling ribbon-  
you are  
still burning,  
phosphorescent  
and hidden,  
cringing

in the crater  
drowning  
you lamb full of jelly

--Jason Quiggle

## Mural For a War Memorial

For his khakis  
Can you find in your palate  
A mottled green, splotches  
of yellow ocher, raw umber?  
Could you spatter vermilion  
On flesh tone, then daub his cheek  
With charcoal? Purple the sky.  
Sketch a tank in the background,  
Flares of orange along the horizon.  
When his buddies appear bearing his pall  
what shade will speak for him?

--Ken Wanamaker

### Being Us

When I get back to campus  
We should get crazy,  
I'll read poetry, all my poetry  
At 3 AM, and then we will solve all  
The world's problems, curse the motherfuckers  
And lie close enough to share dreams  
because the real world is crazy in the sort of  
way that it deafens you to the call for  
innovation and revolution and lulls you  
into acquiescence.

I'm sitting  
on huge rocks that get crashed with  
water all day and you love rocks  
and I love water and that crash,  
that furious beauty, when the two meet  
and the result is different each time and the water  
is violently orchestrated all over those rocks, and becomes clear,  
transparent, exposed and the rocks laugh by not reacting  
and let the water soak into them and then slowly dry out when the water recedes,  
is us; in our craziness and everyone comes to watch and  
take pictures and make postcards and  
calendars of us, all day sunrise  
to sunset and all night sunset to sunrise, and as long  
as my ocean crashes your rocks we  
should get crazy and give  
people something to write on those postcards.

Ryan Johnson

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I took Mother by the hand  
and whispered in her ear  
she dug her nails into my flesh  
and scraped the caked blood off with her teeth

I crouched beside Mother in the rain  
she pretended the downpour did not bother her  
even as she melted into the deluge  
and while I dreamed of tomorrow  
she was washed away into yesterday

today the shadows of time  
were bent stretched starched  
twisted  
into this bouquet of dead wilting effigies  
hanged  
from my window sill

I can still recall the night I saw  
the first firefly of twilight  
flitting in and out of trees  
with belly glowing  
it took me hours of searching  
but just before dawn  
there she was  
sitting on my palm

she had escaped from the monastery's dungeon  
and the apothecary's laboratory  
-but not unharmed  
they said she was magic  
so they tried to suck out her insides  
and steal her power

one look in her eyes and I knew  
that someday she would crush me  
with just a shrug of her broken wings

just because you are hopeless doesn't mean I wouldn't  
breathe my last breath into you

there's always room for one more body  
in the catacombs behind my eyes  
for the inferno rages  
and condenses the old remains to ash

there is a blackness so dense  
that it glows with fury at its edges  
and pulls everything into its depths

I dine on the blood of swine  
and the fermented nectar  
dripping from the sweet lips of liars

yet I am left famished  
I am poor  
tasteless

my ancient nemesis has plundered me again  
as false prophets dance beneath flaxen sheets

--Marcus Crowe



## HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C  
Will you marry me?  
Seems like we've been living together a long, long time after all

Will you take me on long walks  
To shop organic  
Feed me veggies and a widow's shawl?

Will we stop wearing leather and turn vegan?  
Or are you just flirting with me?

Hepatitis C  
Will you bury me?

Shall I burn the Hunter S. Thompson books,  
Take up yoga, stop talking so mean?

It's the angry, melancholic liver gone bad  
And it's been this way forever it seems

Will you give me a personal mantra?  
Negate all my negative thoughts?  
Quit drinking vodka?

Darling, liver, buddy, dollbaby!  
I think it's time for us to really settle down  
And say "I do"

--Joie Cook, from her new book *Habitat*,  
Beatitude Press, 2007, available at  
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