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Liz Harbaugh
Editor-In-Chief
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Editor’s Note

It is very nearly impossible to properly introduce Digressions. The purpose of this publication is a far cry from solid sentences, structured styles, and standard subjects. Last year, a small group of administrators, professors, and students gathered together to create a forum to showcase student creations. We believed there was... more lurking in the minds and imaginations of students; that an education should provide for not only future success, but also present expression; that students hungered to explore new ideas and new methods of expressing their uniqueness and unity. We were correct.

And so, it is with pride, pleasure, and provocation that I introduce the second volume of Digressions. Here you will discover the consequences of answering an implicit challenge—knowing that this publication exists, can you refuse the invitation of self-exploration? Will you decline now the temptation to see the products of your peers displayed? Or, will you join us, and begin your own digressions?

Liz Harbaugh
Editor-In-Chief
Frosty Morning In Sandvik, Sweden
Almost

I’ve been slayed
by subtle
intricate
daring
things
that you do
or wish you could
not suppositions,
but the longing
I see lurking
behind your eyes
eyes that once shone special
For me
eyes that crippled me with their Hungry,
yet adoring gaze

You went traveling one day
packed up your eyes
and ran away
I was left with nothing
then a gift fell down
and split my head –
You had managed to scrawl on paper
our lil’ feat –
The time each one of us
almost felt something
good
now that gift is typed and covered
and the whole world can read about
our
almost
affair

maire cuneo
Feminist Requirements: Love Me

Don’t love me for my breasts,
Or the warmth between my thighs.
Don’t love me for my legs,
Or the softness in my eyes.

Don’t love me for my hair,
Or an empty-headed act.
Don’t love me for passivity,
‘Cause you know I’ll “take it back.”

Don’t love the way I flirt with you,
Or the way the others stare.
Don't love me for my singing voice,
Or because you know I care.

Love me.

Love my active spirit,
My sense of what is just.
Love my idealism,
My ability to trust.

Love my time with textbooks,
My burning desire to know.
Love my conversation,
My hatred of what’s low.

Love my separate social life,
And how I do not need.
Love my conscience in a fight,
And that I’ll never plead.

Love me.

liz harbaugh
He passed her the note at recess. It took him a week just to write down exactly how he felt about her. How his knees weakened every time he saw her. How her mama knew exactly how much blue magic grease to put in her head without makin’ her hair all nasty lookin’. To him, that was amazing. Everyone noticed that about her, she was the only girl in Mrs. Johnson’s class not to have a head full of lint, or a face shining like fatback when the sun got hot. Dang she was pretty too. You can always tell a cocoa butter baby. Her skin was not only smooth and soft, it glowed. Kinda like a Hershey bar. She had a pretty walk too, she swaggered like a boy, but gave a lil’ twist to it. He could watch her walk all day. Candy curls swaying back and forth, her starched plaid uniform didn’t stand a chance up against her walk, when she dipped, and twisted, it went with her. And her shoes! While the others girls wore tore up, dull lookin’ mary Janes, her shoes were shiny, always. And on PE days she wore saddle locks. The white part stayed that way too. God, she was pretty. Her daddy got Indian in his family so her hair wasn’t nappy, and her features were strong. Others boys said she looked mannish, but they’re stupid, she was beautiful. Damn, how long does it take to read a note?

“I like you, Do you like me?
Check ________ Yes Or ________ No
Love,
Johnny”

That’s what the note said. It took him a week to write. He passed it to her at recess, it was now lunch time.

****

Look at him over there, why he stare at me so much? He always starin’ at me like somethin’ wrong with him. Stupid boy! My daddy said all boys are stupid anyways. I shoulda told on him when he almost shoved me down at recess tryin
to make me take a folded piece of paper. I didn’t want to, I though somethin’ nasty would be in it, like snot or a lizard. Boys are dumb like that. But then I read it, what he like me fo'? I neva even talk to him because he always lookin’ at me. Hmmmm, Tasha did say he was the best lookin’ boy in our class though. I guess that’s true, now that I look at him with all the other boys. I heard his daddy owns a barber shop, I never knew that before I asked Tasha, that’s why his hair is cut so nice. Not crooked and ashy like the other boys. Hell, I didn’t even know his name until I read the note. Johnny, there are too many dang Johnnys around here. I guess he’s a good one though. Johnny and Nevaeh sittin' in the tree, k-l-s-s-l-n-g. I can hear it now. That the last thing I need, bad enough other boys say I look like a man. It’s not my fault, momma said I got daddy’s strong jaw. She said it was his jaw that she fell in love with. Forget them, boys are dumb anyways. Tasha is too for likin’ boys. That’s why grown folks says she a fast tail now. Hmph! Stupid boy, stupid note. Why does he keep starin’ at me? I don’t wanna be fast tailed like Tasha, she let boys feel up on her with their dirty hands. My momma says ladies always keep their dresses clean, and down. But he did say he liked me. No boy has ever said that. They say I look mannish.

The bell rang at the end of classes. He almost had a heart attack when he saw her looking for him. She spotted him by the water fountain outside. He watched as she walked his way, her uniform still clean, her shoes still shiny. Damn that walk, and her hair. Her hand opened with his folded piece of paper inside of it. Did she answer it? She’s smiling at me. My God she’s pretty.

“I like you, Do you like me?
Check _____ Yes Or _________ No
Love,
Johnny
Maybe,

- Neveah.”

angel polk
Laughter falls out of the sky
Enveloping that which was cold
Anger emanates like thunder,
Amongst those who hold thoughts of old.
Anger rears its ugly head,
What was lost, is now found dead.
The curvature of His seductive smile
Could cast me not, this time, into denial.
Ending fears of betrayal- deceit-
Downcast hopes for the loves we keep
Holy lovers gone astray,
Thoughts of old, thoughts gone away
Summer has ended, love fades now
Summer is gone and so art thou.
lookout
What is Loneliness?
Loneliness is the feeling that you don’t belong
The feeling that nags you in the pit of your stomach
It’s the unidentifiable ache you feel when you laugh at someone’s joke
Like something is missing, something you can’t find
Perhaps a source of comfort, if only you had the guts to look

Loneliness is the result, my consequence
For cutting myself off from the world in fear of saying good-bye
For it was better not to worry about needing a friend who wasn’t there
But at the time you didn’t realize the debt you would have to pay
That guarding your heart would not limit the pain
And in the end, loneliness was a far worse fate to endure

For it is a feeling that never goes away
It lies in the eyes, eyes with no tears
It’s in your voice, your smile
It builds up your whole presence
No matter the pointless commitments you distract yourself with
It is there, deep inside of you

Loneliness is the reality that grows and increases with age
If you have not figured it out yet, loneliness is me!
A Life-Altering Moment

Off the coast of Maui stands Weston College, 300,000 square feet and 4 stories tall, surrounded by tons of green acre to the right and to the left, the hot sandy beach of Hawaii. One of Weston College’s most known residents is athletic scholar Cody Dallas - tall, dark, and blonde - all the natural qualities for Maui’s local playboy. He is a man with a mission, a man who will break all the rules to bed his next mark. There isn’t a day that goes by that the entire student body is not talking about Cody and his latest conquests. Infamous stories involve the gym stadium, the woods during a camping trip and the principal’s car. This time Cody has his eye on Ally Carter, dark-haired beauty with emerald green eyes. She is president of the Student Government and very independent, not feeling she has to be fulfilled by the love of a man.

Ally opens her locker as her friend, Sierra, shouting her name from down the hall, approaches steadfastly.

“Hey, have you seen the latest issue of the Spectator?” Sierra inquires of Ally, holding the paper in front of her. Ally places her books in her locker and then remarks flatly.

“Let me guess? Cody Dallas on the cover, caught with his trousers down yet again with another bimbo.”

“How did you guess?” Sierra returns the sarcasm with a coy smile. Ally does not take the question lightly, shoving the locker door from her view.

“How did you guess?” Sierra returns the sarcasm with a coy smile. Ally does not take the question lightly, shoving the locker door from her view.

“Please tell me what it is that the whole female population sees in this guy. I mean, what is the notch count up to now? Sierra spies the cover. “Well, he does have killer assets. Ally grimaces a look of utter disgust, “I’m going to pretend that I did not hear that come from your mouth. Now can we please change the subject, I think Cody Dallas is the topic of far too many conversations already.”

“Well, are you still planning on going to the party at Club Reuters tonight?” Ally tilts her head to the side, contemplating for a second.

“I don’t know.” She returns her attention back to her locker and grabs her Governmental Science book. “I have a lot of work to catch up on tonight.”

“Come on, you’re always studying. It’s been a while since you’ve actually gone out and partied with us. Mel and Keesha are really looking forward to seeing you.”

“Well, we do go to the same school. Surely we can commune during lunch or something.” Sierra gives her a look of disappointment.

“Come on, you know that’s not the same. The girls miss hanging out with you and so do I. I was hoping this party would be a chance for us to change that.” Ally face loses a bit of its color and glow as she sighs within, hesitantly approaching the subject.

“This party is really important to you, isn’t you?” She asks.

“I think so.”

“Then I’ll go.” She says with as much enthusiasm as she can muster before Sierra blindsides her with a quick hug. Men, Cody Dallas among them, interrupt their embrace as they march through the
hall rooting for the Titans. “Oh great, here comes the playboy.” “Looking good, Cody!” surrounding girls shout. He flashes a smile. “With fans like you, I can’t help it.” Ally overhears and gives him an evil stare, amazed by his conceited gall. Just then, Trisha Heckler, Cody’s latest conquest and head school cheerleader, passes through the hall. “Hey Trish, phenomenal.” He says, flashing her a smile. Her face is cryptic; no sign of anger or pure excitement as she approaches Cody and his boys with the latest copy of the Spectator. “Name the time and place, and I’ll be there.” She smiles, blows him a kiss and marches off, strutting her behind. Cody and the guys clamor around and watch as she darts off. Ally feels a churn in her stomach at the scene. “I guess some people just have no self-respect, but that’s her problem, I have a class to get to. I’ll see you later.” “Yeah, at Club Reuters.” Ally hints onto the reminder and gives Sierra a slight grin and then brushes past him. Nick shivers. Ooh! Was it me or did a cold front just pass through? “You can’t please them all.” “And he has most of the girls eating right out of his hand. How do you do it?” “It’s all about the confidence, Jesse. A real woman likes a man who takes charge and is not afraid to show what he has to offer.” Cody remarks in a cocky fashion. “Well, if you keep bedding them the way you are, soon there won’t be any fish left in the sea.” “I can always move to another school, hell, another country. But you’re right, my latest conquests have been a little easy, cheerleaders and sorority girls.” “So what are you going to do?” Nick queries. “Pursue the unexpected. There is a party at Club Reuters tonight and I hear Ms. Carter is going to be there.” Cody grins. Nick and Jesse pause for a second before breaking out in laughter. “You think you’re going to get Ally Carter to put out? You have game, but not that much.” “You both were just singing my praises a minute ago and now what? You doubt my powers of persuasion?” Nick and Jesse smile at one another. Nick then makes a wager. “All right, fifty dollars says you come back to the dorm needing a cold shower.” Cody rises to the occasion. “You’re on because one hundred dollars says that a few minutes alone with Ally Carter and I’ll have her doing things she can only imagine… well, that she could have only imagined.” Following Cody’s declaration, the bell sounds and he and his friends head for class. ***** The bright afternoon sun was finally going down and evening was approaching, slowly but surely. Outside Club Reuters, cars were
pulling up left and right into the parking lot. Some of the latest arrivals were already near drunk as they stumbled out of the back seats of their cars, hanging onto their dates with dazed looks in their eyes. Inside, the dance floor is packed with guests, their bodies and movements illuminated by the spectrum of colors shining down below them. The spectrum of blue and red gives the dance floor an almost disco feeling as the loud, pumping sounds of “If I Want To” by Usher plays in the foreground. Near the bar, Sierra along with her two other gal pals, Keesha and Mel, have been waiting for about half an hour for Ally to show up. “Where the hell is Ally? I thought you said she was coming.” “Don’t worry, she’ll be here.” says Sierra, attempting to justify Ally’s tardiness. “She’s probably having car troubles or something—” Mel growls, jerking her head back. “How many times have we heard that before?” Keesha chimes in, “Mel is right, Sierra. Lately, all Ally can think about is her next study group or SGA or some other life shattering commitment and we’re the ones left out in the cold.” She narrows her left eyebrow, turning halfway and placing her drink on the bar. “Well, guess what, we’re sick of it.” She grabs hold of her purse and starts walking off. “Ally’s not the only one with commitments. Let’s go, Mel!” Mel gives Sierra an apologetic look, and then follows Keesha’s lead. Sierra shouts out to their backs as the space between them widens gradually. “Oh come on guys—guys!” She groans, throwing back her head and sighing in exasperation at the ceiling. Meanwhile, Ally approaches the entrance of Reuters, her hair falling down against the back of her red dress. As she nears the entrance, her insides wrap in knots and her knees begin to feel weak. “What was I thinking agreeing to do this?” She says to herself as she takes that first step inside the club, hearing Britney Spears’ “My Prerogative” playing as she spies a gang of students scattered everywhere, making out and getting drunk, some even undressing right before her eyes. Turning away, across the room, she catches sight of Cody in his loose blue jeans and black flannel shirt playing pool and scoring shots of beer. “Great, could I need more of a sign that this was a bad idea?” She tells herself as she turns around, preparing to head out the door, but Sierra mysteriously jumps out in front of her. “There you are.” “When you said party, I had no idea this many people were going to be here.” She looks nervously at the scene around her. “Come on Ally, you’re smart. When there’s a party, people are going to come.” “Yeah, well, this isn’t my scene, so I’m going to say my hellos to Keesha and Mel and then I’m out of here.” “Keesha and Mel got sick of--” Sierra starts to explain, but catches sight of Cody across the room, who is shooting beer caps with Jesse and Nick. “You’re leaving because Cody is here, aren’t you?” “I cannot see myself having fun with Weston College’s resident playboy right in the vicinity. So why don’t you direct me over to Mel and Keesha so we can play a ten minute catch-up before I
leave."

"No need, Keesha and Mel left and I'm starting to think they had the right idea," she says with a look of discontent in her eyes as the eye shadow brightening her face begins to lose some of its glow.

Ally is caught off-guard by the remark. "What?"

Sierra barks, "This was supposed to be a girl's night out, but you're so wrapped up in your dislike of Cody Dallas that you're ignoring everyone around you. Two of your oldest friends just left feeling as if they meant nothing to you, but you're too busy cringing at the sight of Cody to even care."

"Well, I showed up, didn't I?"

Sierra voices in a light tone, "Yeah, but it might have been just as good as not showing up in the first place." Her cellular rings. She looks down at her cell and sees Keesha's name popping back at her. "I better answer this." She then walks off into an area where she can get better reception.

Ally sighs heavily and walks up to an available bar stool. Cody notices her at the bar as he breaks away from his pool game. He decides that it is the perfect time to make his move.

Clearing his throat as he approaches, he asks, "Can I offer you a drink?"

"Mr. Dallas, twice in one day, I must be lucky," she remarks flatly. Cody catches her sarcasm, "Is it me or do you just talk to everyone that way?"

She pauses for a second and then strongly states with a smile, "It's you." She turns away from his glaring stare as the bartender approaches.

"Can I get you and your date a drink?"

"He's not my --"

"We'll have a glass of wine," Cody remarks, cutting her off as he pulls up a stool next to her. The bartender pulls out a bottle of his finest and pours them both a glass.

Ally reclines back in her seat, bewildered by what just took place.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"I figured a glass of wine would loosen you up, release all those tensions that you're feeling."

"Really? I would hate to think you were stupid enough to believe you could get me drunk and make me one of your next conquests?" She says with a slight smile.

"I wouldn't dare think that, Ms. Carter. I know that you're much too smart for that." He returns the smile as the bartender returns with their wine.

Ally takes her drink and flashes the bartender a smile, "Thank you!"

She then turns back to Cody as Sierra returns from her phone call.

"Well, I'm glad you were able to keep some company while I was gone."

Quickly rising from her seat, "I was actually waiting for you. Cody just helped himself to a --"

"It doesn't matter. I have to go, Keesha and Mel are having a bit of car trouble." She says with a bit of a sting to her tone as she adjusts her purse along her shoulder.

Ally puts down her drink, "Well, I'll go with you." Cody takes the opportunity while no one is watching to slip a dose of Rohypnol into Ally's drink.

"Not necessary. Besides I don't think Keesha and Mel are really in the mood to see you. Good night!" Sierra then traipses off, leaving Ally with a feeling of abandonment. Cody walks up behind her, hand-
ing her the glass of wine. “Well, I guess there is nothing keeping you from sharing a few minutes with me.” Ally turns to him with an evil glare, but he doesn’t back down. He picks up his glass and taps it against hers. “Join me, I’m sure a few little sips will make you feel a lot better or at least help numb some of the pain.”

The smell of the wine so close to her, inching closer and closer to her mouth, she can taste the grape-like flavor coursing down her throat. Ally, although hesitant, is unable to refuse the offer.

“All right, I might as well since I’m here.” Cody watches as she takes the first sip and then follows her lead. Cody then walks over to the table where they were previously sitting and pulls out a seat for Ally, she joins him without any objections. It isn’t before long that Cody calls over the bartender for another round.

***

Fast forward an hour later, after three or four drinks, Cody lures Ally outside into an isolated area in the woods. As they trudge through the woods, you can see the moonlight from the crescent moon peering through the open area of the bushes. The ground below them is still quite wet from last night’s rain shower and Ally is barely able to keep one leg firm on the ground as she stumbles across the quicksand-like area. They finally start to slow down as they reached a dryer area of the woods.

“What are we doing out here?” Ally asks, looking at the scene around her as she finds herself able to stand up more firmly. Trekking behind her, “I though a change of scenery was in order.” He grabs her by the hips and starts kissing the back of her neck softly. “How does that feel?” he inquires, his breath warm against her neck. Smiling with joy, “It feels like heaven, it feels... like I had too much to drink.” She pulls herself away from his binding touch, feeling a bit disoriented as she tries to back away for some air. However, she missteps and trips over a branch lying aimlessly around, which causes her to land flat on her back. Cody smiles, looking down at the sight of her in the evening light as he gradually lowers his body over hers.

“You’re way ahead of me, baby.” He slips his tongue in her mouth, massaging it against hers. She does not fight the advances until he casually slides his right hand up her dress.

“What are you doing?” She says in a light tone, trying to move her body, but unable to because his upper body had her pinned. Cody adjusts his body a little, moving a strand of hair from her face, “It’s okay, I’ve brought protection.” He then moves back down and starts massaging his tongue along her neck and working his way down. Her body subdues to the euphoric moment, but her brain is saying no. Eventually as his tongue begins to loosen the straps of her dress around her shoulders, she mutters no. Zoning out her refusal, he pulls her dress up revealing her silk-laced panties as he lowers his head just below her waist. Ally again repeats, “No, please don’t.”

“It’s okay baby, you’re going to like this.” He tells her as he un buckles his pants and flashes his pearly whites as he slowly relinquishes her of her panties. Ally finds herself unable to move or tear his hand away as she feels the silk of her panties
slowly sliding down her legs like butter on a knife. As Cody finally relieves her of her shield, he begins to align his body back along hers, halfway removing his own underwear as he starts to enter. Ally squirms at the action taking place before her eyes and tries to move, desperately trying to guard her sacred temple, but his body was like pin needles locking her to the ground. She shouts out no and tells him to stop, but caught up in his own gratification, he continues, increasing in speed.

Tears begin to flow out of Ally’s eyes as she continues to cry out, “No, Get off me! No! Get off!” The words echoing throughout the isolated area as Cody continued, not yet reaching the climax. Her screams, however, caused the bushes around to tremble and Cody could feel the pitch of her screams piercing his ears. Finally, looking down and taking a moment away from his own gratification, he could see vivid in color, Ally’s face, red with tears and full of pain and anguish at what he was doing. He felt sick as he saw himself hovered over her like some beast, his action slowing as his body gradually begins to unpin her.

After a moment, he told her to go, his voice so full of shame he could barely look at her. Her legs quite numb, she got up as fast she could, pulling down her dress, sharing a brief look at him before running off. Cody sat there the rest of the night thinking about what he almost did.

***

The sun rises again and a new day has dawned. Jesse and Nick approach Cody at his locker, grinning about the details of last night.

Nick pats him firmly on the back. “Hey Codster, how did it go with Ally last night, eh?” Jesse adds on, “Yeah, I bet it was sweet. A perfect ten, huh?” Cody turns away from his locker and spies Ally walking over to hers. She can see the shame in his eyes as his regretful gaze lingers on her. After a few moments, she breaks the contact and continues on her way.

“What was that?” Nick asks. “Nothing.” Cody reflects softly in that moment. “Man, you look like hell, she must have wore you out.” Nick stresses. Cody clears his throat and pulls two one hundred dollar bills out of his pocket, placing one in each of their hands.

“What is this for?” Jesse asks. “Idiot, he struck out. Man, I can’t believe it. You and Ally didn’t…” “No, not even close.” He says, catching a glimpse of Ally walking off to her class.

Cody turns back to his locker and grabs his gear, as he tries to grab his water bottle as well, a little black book falls out to ground. He catches sight of it and bends down to pick it up.

As he gets up, he hands the book over to Jesse and Nick. “Well I won’t be needing this anymore.” He says with a heavy sigh. “I’m done!” He then heads out to the football field. Jesse and Nick look at the little book and find the name of every girl that Cody has ever bedded and rankings next to them. “Charlene Ramsey… 5/10, Deirdre Holloway… 7.5/10, Gabriela Defolio… 2/10, Trisha Heckler… 9.5/10, Ally Carter…life-altering.”

earl tinsley
simplicity
Orange and black streamers hang loosely from the terraces lining the streets in a Mexican village. Children run wildly in the streets with skull lollipops and various other candies. I weave through the hoards of people toward a little restaurant. No one sees me. I am invisible to them. Ghostly. But then again, they do say if the shoe fits...

Myriad of people surround me, ready to celebrate the holiday. Halloween. The night of all Hallows. The night of the dead. They say tonight ghosts roam the streets of this ancient town. I know they are right.

I watch the woman I am meeting sit at her table. It’s almost funny how much the two of us differ. She is angelic, and well, I’m… Just use your imagination. I walk toward her, plotting in my mind. Many people would think what I have in mind for her is savage. Pretty little head, perfect skin, such an angel I will destroy. Reaching into my pocket, my sweaty hand feels the cold metal. Sharp, hard ready. She turns and smiles. I smile, waving with my free hand. She seems peaceful. Again she turns, ordering an iced tea for me. I see her reach into her purse and pull out a mirror. She checks her perfect self. The music around hangs thick. Everything is perfect. The metal in my pocket has warmed. I take the final steps towards her and lean over kissing her on her cheek. I take her hand with mine and with the other I pull from my pocket the metal. She gasps, slipping the ring on her finger. The union of our souls is unusual, but opposites do attract. Halloween in Mexico surrounds us as we disappear into the festivities.
Asian Flowers

nicolle garber
Who will cry for you?

The life you lived wasn't very long,
And the odds were against you from the very inception
of your mother's conception.
And her womb wreaked havoc, seemingly to reject
you.
But you refused to die; you wanted to survive-
In spite of all the drugs she pumped into your life line.
You didn't have a chance.
Not a chance!
Not a chance!
You died too young to even find yourself romance,
And with no one had you ever really danced.
Your mother cries you know, but it's not for you-
It's for herself; she's worried about how she cannot find
herself a man.

Now that you're gone; may your soul rest in peace.
Who will cry for you?
For you?
For you?
No one remembers you any more.
You were just a face, and a news report on the tv.
I'm numb, to your kind of tragedy I cannot relate any-
more.
I'm not even saddened by your awful fate.
Your mother cries you know, but it's not for you-
It's for herself; she just found out, she's pregnant and
she doesn't know the dad.

I didn't even know your name; but you were a young
black man-
And not bad looking either.
Now, you're just a number in a growing statistic called,
EXTINCT!
Lord, such a title for what was a promising life.
Hey, you see your brother?
He crossed over too, you know.
He was killed, just the other day.
I don’t know what to say;
What to say?
What to say?
Don’t even know the truth about that, guess I have to
go with the words of the cops.
Still, your mother cries you know, but it’s not for you-
It’s for herself; she just found out, that the baby, it’s go-
ing to be twins.

Bang! Bang! Bang!
Another kid dies; nobody cries.
Supposedly, it’s drug related.
You and I know that it’s a lie, and that kind of story we
no longer buy.
In our communities, you notice?
Everything is drugs related.
Drugs related!
You and I know that you didn’t die because of drugs.
You died because you were black.
Word, somebody says that it is a fact.
Tell me, if everybody sells drugs, then who buys?
And to whom is the great message of ‘Just say no’, go-
ing out to?
It blows my mind. It makes me think.
By the way-
Your mother cries you know, but it’s not for you-
It’s for herself; she just found out, she has a few days.
She’s dying from AIDS.
A Siren of the Sea Clutching my Pearls . . .

What is this thing inside me . . .
aching
breaking
rejuvenating
    again and again
Incessant nagging at the mind
and wrenching of the heart
my strand of pearls slapping against the skin
bruising, echoing
like her words
like her eyes
like my hands between her thighs
where I want to go
without hesitation or communication
don’t touch me, I need you
I cringe at your presence,
but can’t stop thinking of you
as you’re gone
What we have is the Ocean:
my eyes a storm surge striking your heart
my waves crashing up against
your soft, sweet sand
I fall back, go deep and cold
your winds lick at my skin
and wake my blood
your current pulls me back in
The white water is us –
rearing up
suspended
pure, powerful, poetic
spinning, then falling
crashing, then rising up again
i can’t get this out
the shame and the anger
the fear and the fury
it’s swollen inside me
the way he wanted it

i can’t let you in
the people around me
who love each other and me
i’m scared they will break me
the way he wanted it

i can’t let this go
the need for the changes
the knowledge for others

NO

see, you try to follow a pattern
you try to order your life so it makes sense
you try to order your poem so it makes sense
but this ruthless violence
  cloaked in masks of love
  or the guise of anonymity
  or the crafty hand of friendship
it steals in and bubbles up
the knowledge, the bruises
  the shattered cheekbones and vaginal walls
  the broken dreams and psyches and spirits

we can’t be orderly when we talk about that
we can’t be neat and precise
when we talk about shredded feelings
when we whisper in the dark secret places
when we refuse to look inside our selves

we don’t want to see this
how do people do this
this quest for power
over men and women
this need for dominance
   for control
   for submission
this overly inflated
this power hungry
this beast who comes in the night
   with hands gentle but cruel
   with hands hard but familiar
   with soft lying whispers
   with harsh deadly threats
with a smile as a friend
   with a bellow as a stranger
with a chemical to knock you out
with a knife to shut you down
this beast
will try to break you

but you will not break
not this time    no
not this time
now we stand up
now we join together in defense of ourselves
   and each other
now we unite and say
   as men and women we will not allow this
we will take back our nights and our lives

shed the shame
unburden
love yourself

support the survivors
honor the victims
fight for change

liz harbaugh
Ducks

paul saneaux
So, I am now the transparent “freshman.” I am again a participant in a whole new degree of feudalism. We build this pseudo society which we determine by classes, and then we are expected to climb up this latter of servitude until we reach the top. This roof of lateral expectance is only marked by success. Are we not allowed to fail—or do we have to fail to succeed? Or is success just an illusion by which we create superficial motivation in order to drive our sloth selves to meet our, or their, expectations. Ugh, life is like a bad novel by Michael Crichton; either we save the world from a mass pandemic by little microscopic electronic viruses, or we’re the bad guy (which can be the little electronic viruses). Conformity sucks. Yet, we all do it (Can we “do” conformity? Hm). The truth is that we are in a panic state of subconscious denial. “Oh no, I failed, I suck, BOOM there goes my confidence. But wait! There is success! There is hope! Now I have to succeed because everyone is telling me I have to!” Of course, it’s not at all that colloquial. But this does become our basic motto that we set ourselves to exist by. The truth is, or my truth is, that life is more than just, “Hungry? Have a Snickers,” it’s about the details. The sum of the each part is definitely larger than the whole. Can you say cliché?

Little things matter, EVERYTHING MATTERS! We have to be something, to be something else. Nature tells us this, economics tells us this, history tells us this and so do strippers. To be a mother you have to be a woman. To have a decent consumer market we have to be demanding and supply the needs of those demands. To be Hitler you have to be an asshole, and yes to be a stripper you need “just one look, because it’s worth a thousand words.” Some of these “details” are controllable, some aren’t—the point is, we gotta eat. Or, we can’t only eat a Snickers to satisfy our undying hunger...sadly no one will let us and of course, we won’t let ourselves. I wonder if I can just walk knowing that life will just set itself. Pessimism is the human condition, and I strongly intend to leave it that way. So many people make pathetic attempts to change the world of its conformity. But if we did that, then wouldn’t the world just be the same novel all over again? Or would it be a Dan Brown? Damn, I’m a little electronic virus.
Lay Down

Not for want of anything, but everything played splayed I've laid down something strange Where's your velocity, Atrocity I fucking hate your mediocrity So I take it into me, myself and I when you cry as you sigh Don't be shy as I rub up against your thigh utterances from your lips the movement and shape of your hips This wretched thing with pleasant demeanor walking stalking Lust A violent thrust & gust of wind and light Take flight, my mind Take this my heart I'll help you start with a tear for fear of being near Take this my heart but leave me my soul You can't fill me up and make me whole Gnashing teeth I go down, deep into something strange Laid down on top of me

maire cuneo
“Did you receive the package?” The voice was electronically modified for safety reasons. I never knew if I spoke with a man or a woman, or the same person each time.

“Yes. I’m looking at it now.” My voice was also being modified and I wondered if I sounded the same as the voice I heard.

“Alright, the first page has the picture and profile of the man who is your target. He is a high government official who is beginning to propose changes for America. He is to be silenced before any of his radical ideas get picked up by others. The next page has the directions to his location for this weekend where he will be on a camping trip. You have his lot number and expected time of arrival. Everyone who is with him must be taken out as well, guards, wife, everyone. That is why the pay is so high. You’ll also find plane tickets out of the country leaving that night. You will be contacted when you can return. Do you accept the proposal?”

I took another look at the check. “I do,” and hung up the phone. I packed only a few necessities for the trip to Australia. This was the first assignment where I was told to leave the country and so a wave of nostalgia coursed through me as I looked with misty eyes around my one-room apartment. I knew I would not see it again for a long time. To keep myself occupied I decided to go check the camping site, which was about an hour from where I lived.

There was a ranger stationed at the entrance, but no fence around the premises. I drove on and parked at a motel about five miles away. Using my compass and a map of the park I hiked for about two hours. Shifting my path when I heard voices getting too loud I eventually came to a campsite clearing and found the number by the dirt road. This was the correct one. I stood in the center, looked up into the trees, and spun around. I found what I was looking for to the north, a big old oak with lots of branches and
a dense layer of leaves. I climbed up to scope it out and quickly located the ideal spot. I arrived back at six in the morning to set up. I had to assemble the rifle from pieces I kept in a backpack to evade suspicion. I double checked that the suppressor was on properly, because I wanted to avoid all the other campers being alerted to the events. Then I just waited.

The car pulled up, driven by a bodyguard. My target stepped out of the passenger door which was the side I was facing, then a woman from the back driver’s side door. The target went to his back door and to my horror out popped a five-year old little girl. The woman who came around into my view was very pregnant. I froze, but my mind whirled. This was the reason I had to leave the country that my informant deliberately left out.

I was stuck in a bind. If I didn’t follow my orders I would be marked for assassination. The thought of just wounding the little girl crossed my mind but I dismissed it as unmerciful. I had lost my parents and was thrown around from one foster home to another. At the best ones I was ignored, given just enough food and water to survive; at the worst I was a slave, forced to do everything from laundry to sexual acts. I could not let her live only to be sent into that life. I would have to kill them all, but I was hesitating. My mind and my heart were at war for control of my trigger finger. I don’t know how long I spent like that until I realized I was crying. Reason had won. I dried my tears, aimed, and pulled the trigger in four rapid successions. They didn’t have time to realize anything was wrong. I packed up my gun and left. I would take that plane to Australia, but I wouldn’t come back, I would not do this again.
Journey to Enlightenment

luis nicola agular
You always thought you were right. You always thought you had the answer.
Well, here are some of the things you thought, that are wrong.
You thought that I went to the Police to spite you. Wrong.
You thought that I had you admitted to the Psych Ward, to make you sorry. Wrong again.
You thought that I left you to make you hurt. Absolutely wrong.

I went to the Police because you held a knife to my throat. When I tried to leave you that night, you grabbed my arm in the kitchen and pulled out a butcher’s knife. I kept my hand held fast on the door leading out. I held it there for the whole time you screamed in my face with the huge blade scratching my throat. I thought I was dead. When you dropped the knife and started crying, I was frozen while trying to pry my hand off the door knob. While I was in the car, I hysterically tried to start it. I could not hold the keys with my right hand, for it was still molded in the position as if trying to open the door. I went to the Police in hope of rescue. To what purpose? The police only arrested you because of the knife. It seemed to take everything they could not to laugh in my face. I mean, faggots deserve this, don’t they?

I signed the paper work for the Baker Act and had you admitted to the psych ward because you attempted suicide. I found you in the bathroom with a razor blade slicing your wrist. I will not let you blame me for this one either. I do blame myself for signing the papers to let you out. Your family demanded that I let you out, and stop toying with your life. Toying with your life? I was too ignorant to know what to do. So I let you out, and allowed the abuse to resume.

I left you to find myself. I was so caught up in your world, that I had no idea who I was. I left home to live with you. I did not know what it was like to be with
a man. You were my first and that gave me a terrible idea of what a gay relationship was supposed to be. I spent two years with you and your beatings, because I thought that is what love required. I know now that what I thought was wrong. I know now that what you thought was right, is totally wrong.

It took my mother to release me from the hell that you held me. After I tried moving out that last time, you beat me in the back with my picture frame. So I left everything to you. You not only stole my youth, you took everything I had owned. Thank God for my strong and supportive family. They taught me that I did not deserve this and that I did not have to take it.

In case you are wondering what I am doing now, I’ll tell you... I am taking everything back that you stole from me. I am taking back my dignity, I am taking back my self-esteem, I am taking back the part of myself that you tried to kill, yet only made afraid. I am here to give everyone hope and the reality check that this is not how things have to be. I am here for those who are afraid to speak. I represent those who are able to stand up, be strong, and speak out without shame. This is how I am taking back my life, and all of those nights.