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A Moment of Weakness

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By: Michelle Snider

You breathe deeply
The salty mist ripples through, ruffling even the tiniest of hairs
on your body
Waves silently crash against unseen walls
encompassed in an alabaster glow dancing
on the alternating hills and valleys; I can see

the paleness of your face projected
on the moon
Well-worn, perfectly positioned craters of age
constantly watching, waiting
for that impetuous glimpse of weakness basking
in the subtle waves of contentment.

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What Was It?

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By: Michelle Snider

A flash in the adjacent bunk bed lights up the pupils
of your eyes; You breathe it in
all of it
The stale nicotine smoke wafting into the air, the old
man in the corner rocking back and forth whose forgotten
what it's like to feel, the arm-crossed guerrilla
door frame laughing at the choice you didn't know
you were making - freedom or hell, the tiny insignificant hand

that counts your life away, the picture you hide
under your pillow
from the wandering eyes of other horny men

Lying on the paper-stuffed mattress
soaked with the stench of a thousand lifeless men before; you can imagine
her eyes an inch from your nose, chest rattling
as her body rubs your face, to hold her in
gentle restraint beneath the covers
the warmth of your body heat
mingling with hers, to hear her whisper in your ear
those three powerful words that make it
all okay

Your eyes open

What was it that was so important to accept this as a way of life?

You don't remember now.

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On Being A Man

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By: Eric Hagen

I've been told not to do this,
Rather I should be filling
my pages
with comparisons of football scores,
Pornography,
The latest hardcore training for mass muscle gain.

Being led to believe that penning
word to page in this manner
may lead to an urge towards interior design,
Speaking with a lisp,
Looking fabulous.

Truth be told I hate football,
Large sweaty men tackling one another,
Ending with vivacious rounds of
Ass-slapping
To let each other know it was a good game.

For 14.95 per month
You can see full length
Videos of barely legal holes being filled
by Viagra-injected, freakishly large cock,
Sweaty palms fumbling keyboard and zipper.

In the latest muscle magazine, I hear
I should be very concerned over my six-pack.
That photos of spray-tanned,
veiny behemoths clad in pastel g-strings
should make me want (to be) a man.

Yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure
of scribbling words,
carving raw material into poetry.
I suppose I must face the accusations of being
Homosexual.

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Sal(a)vation

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By: Eric Hagen

Preacher spoke on holey underwear,
Relaying a story about dressing in the dark,
And where a message of love and tolerance should have been
He inserted, like some gilded phallus, damnation.

I'm hanging out with Grandpa and Jesus,
Parked on a busted couch in the alley behind LaRosas,
We're passing time and joints, primo.
In discussion of life, the universe, everything.

I apologize to JC as he passes the J
For all the blaspheming I've done over the years.
He laughs, "Man, I gotta hand it to you, you pretty fucking creative,
You should write that shit down."

He asks where it all went wrong,
The Holy Wars, the molestations,
Why the hell people think he's white
And why that should matter anyway.

Grandpa shakes his head, unsure of if he disagrees or if the THC is kicking in,
"Boy, wouldn't it piss them holy rollers off to know you's a Mexican!"
We all laugh until we cry,
We laugh until it hurts.

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Heaven's Sentinel

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By: Kaleb Hoffer

Through a third eye I keep
seeing you, albeit, subconsciously.
Your discordant key-ring hymn
never cues me off. Heel-to-toe creaks
on concrete have made nothing wiser of me.
Nothing, not even the nearly-silent rustle
of denim abrading beneath your knees
readies my composure for its cut-off.
Not your interrupted glide, and legs that bend
in such a way they liken you to the assured foal,
nor the modest gleam of your dark-set shock,
which seems to thrive more nimbly
than any bean or hokum stalk.
In your presence I'm bound by invisible tendrils,
as I can only suffuse in-view of heaven's sentinel.

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The Inconsequential Cardinal

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By: Brittany Gabbard

The Northern Cardinals flaunt
Their plumage. But one passerine bird
Sits solitary in lower hierarchy, amongst
The skeletal branches of the buckeye tree.
He watches the other red birds pass seeds
A gesture of affection, tokens of their court
But He sits alone, inconsequential.

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Unrest

By: Jamie Moore

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Even dying didn't make her happy,
though she went to great lengths to accomplish it.
Her anger clung to her corpse,
apparent from the moment
when moving her heavier-than-should-be body
from the gurney to my table
my hand, caught beneath her,
pulled against the cold porcelain.
The blood blister was a grand thing.
It throbbed the whole time I worked.

She fought the process
harder than someone dead should;
refusing to let the fluid in
and forcing it out where it should not have leaked.
She swelled.
Of course she did.
Stealing from her family
the illusion that she was only sleeping.

Her multitude of cuts
required nearly an hour of stitching.
No tidy sliced wrists for her.
I smoothed wax over the sutures
and carefully blended makeup to hide the sheen.
She looked good when I was finished,
for a swollen, dead lady.

As I lowered her
into her casket, pretty and trimmed with lace,
she lashed out at me one last time,
slamming the lid on my head
and adding my blood
where I had washed hers away.
She left me with scars,
tokens for what I took from her.

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Uninvited Guest

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By: Jessica Bell

It came a week before Christmas.
An uninvited guest demanding
to be fed; to be entertained
while exercising unrestrained access.
Its name clung to the air
as fog trapped in the valley;
thick and bitter, we choked
on the damp reality.

Quickly it captured her body
as ivy strangles a garden. Straining
she struggles to shake free
from the increasing intensity
of its grip. Tangled
in tumors; trampled by treatment;
she falls still. Cancer
becomes a four-letter word.

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