

miniMAG

issue83
you, the ghost



Broken Mug

Claudia Wysocky

It was a cold, clear day in the second week of April.

I remember that it was a Saturday and that I was in the kitchen making coffee for the two of us.

I remember taking the cup from me and holding it up to the light to see if it was clean. There was a smear of coffee on the rim, but the coffee inside was still clear.

I remember how the light shone through the coffee and made the liquid glow.

I remember how he stood over me then, and how my heart fluttered like a bird. I froze.

He took the cup from my hand and threw it against the wall. It shattered into a thousand pieces and I remember watching as they fell to the floor like rain.

I opened my mouth to tell him that it was his fault, that he should have known what he was doing, but then I remembered that it was me who did that to us.

I took the broken pieces of ceramic and put them carefully in the sink in case there might be some use to them later.

I cleaned the place I had thrown my heart at, cleaned the place I had thrown my soul at.

I swept up the pieces of my life, as dull and meaningless as the fragments of ceramic.

I carried them to the garbage and threw them in, along with the fragments of my body.



My beautiful Leah by PJ Harvey

Dorothy Lune

Have you seen this woman?
Her name is Beautiful Leah
Her features: chronic
nightmares, pretzel face,
needy— not for me, in my

arms or in her illness. Did
she come around here, sir,
black hair & brown eye?
If she isn't found by
late September Beauty will
set a trail of drupes for me.

She was not in love give it back it's mine it's me
your middle name Marion prints more posters
I mix the glue— follow me to a bus station plant
a nutcracker boy under the seats like a gust.

Drupes include:

1. PISTACHIO
a place to crash at during lunch

2. ALMOND

each line was a staircase

3. NECTARINE

I hope she isn't doing coke
without me— crude affection

4. CHERRIES

shiny like a blister

5. COFFEE

pushable buttons— I'm barred from the
church her family runs

6. APRICOTS

I forgive all her apologies

7. DATES

Beauty is someone that never left me

8. COCONUT

She cinches her lips in place of lies,
a strategy, that of tailor chalk.



Missing You

Lucy Rumble

Aching to touch,
to thread my fingers
through your hair.

Fleeting, dream-like
radiance brings prints
that scorch my thighs.

Shadows of before
we were strangers –
we will love again.



Shoegazing

Miles Macnaughton

Immortalized in black and white,
She lifts a hand to hide her hair
Behind a little snail shell ear.

A spritely grin in cold sunlight;
Her windkissed face is frozen there—
A long-gone lover still so near.

Hitman's Blues

M.P. Powers

The past

that lives in old faded photographs
old stomping grounds
and places of horror I frequented but never
felt like I belonged

The past

that brims with dead friends disembodied voices
twisted roads abandoned dreams
enters my room each night like a hitman,
his face bony, crescent-shaped,
his wings spread,
black, sharp-tipped wings drawing shade over me.
He has come for a love letter
I've left unwritten in my heart. He has come for a ring,
for paintings,
a knife to sever my fingers with.

The past that enters my soul each night

thinking it can take from me
the way it used to
when I was younger, when I cared too much
when I loved too little, or too recklessly,
exits me every morning
with those stupid wings folded, head down,
pushing a shopping cart of empty beer bottles
back into the past.



Rube Goldberg 1

Kit Terrel

I thought you didn't like me then
And then I thought about it too much
And then I didn't like you because it meant so much to me
And then you didn't like me because I'm an asshole to people I don't like
And then I hated you because I hate people that don't like me
And then you hated me because you saw who I really am
And now I fear you
And now you still hate me
And now I wish I'd never thought about it all

The Tibetan Numerologists of Appalachia

Toni Kochensparger

“The two kids—the brothers—just moved here, too,” Peter said. Arthur and Peter were seated at the end of a long table in the cafeteria, by themselves.

“I know a couple of the other kids,” Arthur said. “Like from class.”

“Friends?”

“No, I just know them,” said Arthur.

The boys didn’t share any teachers but found each other in the hallway, between bells. They each packed their lunch and spent the week, following the big game, bartering with each other for choice content. Peter’s dad never bought lunchmeat. Arthur had been sick of it for years.

“This place is kind-of alright, so far,” Peter said.

“You mean New Lexington or school?”

“Both, I guess,” said Peter. “We have a bigger backyard than in Logan. And school’s...I mean, school’s school.

“But this one has *you*,” Peter continued, picking up the second half of

Arthur's sandwich.

"Why'd you guys move out here, anyway?" Arthur asked Peter.

Peter looked away from Arthur. "My dad didn't really like the. I guess the crowd I ran around with. The other kids."

"Why?"

Peter studied the sandwich. "Who do you hang out with, besides me?" he asked, finally.

"I don't really hang out with anyone," Arthur said. "I guess I don't really like these kids."

"They probably call you *gay*," Peter said.

Arthur blushed. "I mean..."

"I don't mean it in a *bad way*," Peter said. "Like, I wouldn't care if, I mean, that's just what kids who are like that usually do. It's, like: low-hanging fruit."

"They call me that, too," said Arthur.

There was a pause. Then they both laughed.

"That's funny," said Peter. "You're funny."

"No one here thinks I'm funny," said Arthur.

"That's because you don't talk."

"I don't really have anything to say to anyone."

"What about jokes?"

"I don't usually make jokes. I kind of...tense up when I try to make jokes. And they're always making jokes about me. So I feel like...like, by the time I think of something to say back, it's too-late."

It went on like this until the bell rang. And then the next day. And then the day after that.

"So, are you going to invite him over for your birthday?" Arthur's mom asked, cigarette debris bubbling in bacon grease.

"Maybe," Arthur said. "Can I?"

"I don't see why not."

Arthur was about to turn fifteen. The plan had originally been for the three of them—Arthur and his mom and his grandmother—to go to the

movies, but it looked as if that was going to change.

“Can I invite a couple other kids?” Arthur asked. He’d gotten friendly with Marcus and Cal. He’d started to learn how to really play the game.

Arthur’s mother smiled and shared a look with his grandmother who had, for the first time in Arthur’s memory, forgotten to keep scratching tickets.

“Not that many,” Arthur said. “Like just like two or three more. The guys who hang out when I’m over at Peter’s.”

“My, my, my,” Arthur’s grandmother said. She returned to her scratch-offs. “My, my, my, my, my.”

“Thirty-three! Twenty-one! Sixty-four!” Peter shouted. The sun was already beginning to drain from the sky. It was September and they’d been at it for hours.

“Hike!”

Arthur made his way up the stairs to Peter’s room. By now, he was used to the house, and used to the routine. He’d even met Peter’s dad, who seemed to approve—if begrudgingly—and the two of them were allowed a door-open study session most days of the week until eight o’clock, when Peter had to have his homework completed and be ready to help his dad in the garage and Arthur got on his bike and went home.

Peter appeared in the doorway to his room, holding his dad’s radio.

“Your dad said you could use that thing?” Arthur asked, surprised.

“He’s working late tonight,” said Peter. “He said he’s got some kind of meeting.”

“What do you want to listen to?” Arthur asked.

Peter fiddled with the switches on the machine. “I was thinking,” he said, “that you could show me some of the music you like.”

Arthur blushed. “I mean, it’s mostly, like, country.”

“Okay,” said Peter, handing the radio to Arthur. “Play me that. Play me some country.”

Arthur felt a nervous tingle but tried to be brave. No one he knew, besides his mother and grandmother, liked country music. He took a small breath, then flipped a switch on the radio to FM. Then he dialed-in to the country-western station and closed his eyes. He turned up the volume.

A deep voice and a swell of steel guitar filled the room. Arthur didn’t open his eyes and Peter didn’t speak. They both just sat, listening.

“I like it,” Peter said to him, finally.

Arthur opened his eyes. “You do?”

“Yeah, I do,” said Peter. “It’s cool.”

Arthur tried to hide his smile.

“Can we dance to it?” Peter asked, suddenly.

Arthur studied Peter, carefully, confused, “What do you mean?”

“I mean: will you show me how to dance to country music?”

“Right now?”

“Yeah. Yeah, right now. Right here. In this room.”

Arthur didn’t know what to think. And then he was standing. And then Peter was, too.

“I don’t really know how to dance to anything,” Arthur said.

“There’s no wrong way to dance, really. Right?” asked Peter. “We can just make something up. We just have to...you know: move.”

The steel guitar swung around them like wind. Then Arthur began to sway—slowly, at first—and Peter swayed, too.

That was all they did—was sway—for a long time, for the rest of the song. When the next one came on, they started to move their arms, in the air.

“This is Reba,” Arthur admitted.

“It’s pretty,” said Peter.

“She’s real pretty, too,” said Arthur.

“I think so, too,” said Peter. “From your shirt.” And then Reba’s voice got a little louder.

And then the boys danced a little closer.

And then Peter kissed Arthur on the lips. And for a minute, the whole world stood perfectly still.

To Be Continued in Issue84

All Aboard

Nancy Machlis Rechtman

As I board the train
I realize that the car I've chosen is full
So I jostle my way to the back
Brushing past the families with cooing babies
Swaddled like sweet downy ducklings in their parents' laps
And a tsunami of grief floods over me
As I force myself to turn away.

The train jerkily starts moving
And I stagger like a newborn colt
Past the avalanche of strollers that fill the aisle
My emptiness as palpable as a heartbeat
And I'm acutely aware of the stares of the other passengers
Piercing my armor of indifference.

When I get to the end of the car
I stop
Unable to find the strength to stand on my own
But there is no place for me here
So I struggle to pull the door to the next car open
Praying that there I can sink into oblivion
And I enter.





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