I'm a Cheetos girl.
Not the poofy ones, the crunchy ones.
Upon entering your rest stop
(With an immense craving for crunchy Cheetos)
I found that you do not,
in fact,
Even carry crunchy Cheetos!
(Only poofy ones!)  
What I ask, is up with that, as they say?
I mean you had three
‘Just count them (I know you won’t)’
THREE.
Kinds of poofy ones too!
Audacious
Have you no consideration for the crunchy Cheetos lovers of the PA turnpike?

Now, I can deal with the lack of crunchy Cheetos.
(I'm going to Wal-Mart tonight, after all)
But why
In heaven’s name
Would you charge $1.29 for a bottle of Cherry Coke?
Just because it comes in a
black
bottle
These days?
I'd rather go thirsty
(Or buy a Starbucks Tazo Tea)
Then pay that
have you no consideration for the Cherry Coke lovers of the PA turnpike?

Porched as I was,
And broke college student that I am,
I set out to search for a...
... more economical
Source of liquid refreshment:
Upon reaching your Snapple-inspired cooler,
I found,
To my amazement:
That 1/2 litre of water
(water?)
Was a mere
40 cents
Cheaper than the full litre.
Have you no consideration for the arithmeticians of the PA turnpike?

I won't soon forget this. 'Sidelinghill:WeMakeTravelingPAFun,'

With vast disappointment, I remain,
A Cheetos-less, thirsty traveler

she breathed into candlelight
while shadows waltzed past
her plaited hair dipping into their darkness
painting hues of lilac and marigold

while shadows waltzed past
liquid flowed through stone
painting hues of lilac and marigold
with watercolor palettes

liquid flowed through stone
she danced between curians
with watercolor palette
brushing strokes onto air

she danced between curians
undulating to the beat
brushing strokes onto air
with rhythmic twists of the head

undulating to the beat
her plaited hair dipping into their darkness
with rhythmic twists of the head
she breathed into candlelight.
Rubbery crimson rounds fill
the Pfaltzgraff serving bowl,
bitter as the ashes of Pompeii,
prepared under a suffocating blanket
of glutinous vinegar sauce.

glowing like a jellied blood clot
on the ponderosa pine dinette table.

Grotesque is too mild an adjective for
this side dish, glistening under the fluorescence
like fresh coronary muscle.

some unfortunate human heart
wrenched from its protective cage,
whacked into think slices,
canned under pressurized steam,
then reheated on a glass-topped electric burner
and slathered with purplish-red paint
in a grotesque parody of the vital fluid
it pumped in life.

Some unfortunate human heart,
partnered with Naja water and boneless perch
to be devoured by middle-class cannibals
as they discuss the flat-screen televisions
on display at Sears.

I tighten the makeshift tourniquet inviting the monster for a drink
He took me by the wrist and held me hard
Looking for the right spot to jab the dull needle.
Then he goes to the length of all his arm

Sweating with anticipation, wiping away the left over hurt.
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow

Reflected in the vial that fills with all my sins, I can see his green eyes in the solution.
He falls to the perusal of my face

Drifting the plunger and becoming the blood into the beast, I held my breath like I was going

to cum

As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so

Unraveling the belt and beating my veins to let the serum run to the quiver.
At last, a shaking of mine arm

Bobbing my head to the music that flooded my system.
And thrice his head thus wakening up and down

God bless this fucking monster, this beast that lets me touch heaven.

He raised a sigh so piteous and profound.

Crumpling back onto the gritty mattress, loving the agony for the last time.
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk.

And ended his being.
Sounds of like beauty trumpets and horns, vibrating
strings sing rhythm. Melody... Fingers hugged
by the tune. Separate from your body. Waves of sounds
crashing, splashing notes wet my ears and at last your
emotions break through, speak true. Stoned-faced
placer the music immerses you, transports from the
feeling over. A secret catharsis, a passionate
vigil... Rapidly moving sliding on strings fingers like
little ladies dancing, running, tapping to the rhythms
born to your soul. Jazz blankets the room and, for
once, I feel like I know you.

Undigested
in my morning methodology
A voice not my own
lost in the box
without the decoding ring.

Three years later
I'm still wondering
under the influence
of other authorial voices
I had surrendered.

Maybe this is a woman-journey
Maybe
Not
Maybe
It is just my own
She roamed the streets by moonlight in a black pants suit and a fuchsia silk scarf wrapped around her neck. Her gray eyes and her spoilt in rubies lipstick could make me melt. In the distance, the waves were lapping against the pier and she tightened her black toffeta overcoat around her as she walked to the edge of the pier.

A body of a man in a soaked, gray-checked business suit was waiting for her there. His face and hands were as white as cotton but not nearly as soft. His eyes that had once been crystal blue were now glazed over in the unfortunate instance of his death. His hands that had been so accustomed to sliding around a pretty girl's waist were clasped together on his chest.

Her wintry smile exhaled an arctic mist as her icy gaze raked the body.

"Well, well. We meet again, John. Did you honestly think you could escape? Silly boy," her icy laugh echoed throughout the harbor.

She flicked a piece of stiff paper at him before she turned to walk away. "Oh, no need to thank me. You'll need it to get into heaven."

Her heels clicked on the wooden boards as she disappeared into the shadows. The next morning, the police found him with a Queen of Hearts playing card on his chest. She had struck again. He was the fifth one this month. Where would she strike next?
CHILD LOOK UP  shanique jones

Child, look up!
Oh child the skies are beautiful, take one glimpse.
One glimpse of the heavens or anything besides your feet.
Your eyes appear to be bound to the cement below.
There seems to be an indiscernible weight dangling from your neck.
Could it be fear?
Fear the the world may be intolerant to your extra large lips.
Broad nose, and everything about you.
I see your intolerance of yourself.
So you camouflage but the more you stick out.

I see you assassinating yourself mentally because you can’t stand you.
Mirrors make your reality a nightmare.
For you hate its reflections.
I read the suicide notes that you write constantly in your thoughts.
Too afraid to make them come to pass, too hurt to erase them.

I feel your pain when you fail at being someone else.
Switching roles like an actress, flipping scripts that in the end humiliate you.
For only you were created to be you.
How dare you accept, respect, and love others when you can’t do the same for yourself.

Aren’t you miserable?
Since you tire so quickly from playing ‘hide and seek’ with yourself.
But this game isn’t fun anymore for you receive the same outcome
You’re no one different.

Child, don’t you see that you damage my purpose for your life.
Every time you put man’s opinions over mine.
I see those dreams and aspirations building up in you.
Come crashing down, because of insults and character abuse.
Slaughtering your self-esteem, and flooding your insides with tears.
Too afraid to externally.

Oh, and I hear your cries.
You pray that I transform you completely.
If only you knew how priceless you are.
You supplicate to be pretty.
Yet the skies mimic your beauty.
And stars twinkle in anticipation of your destination.

How dare you doubt my image, my creation?
You were called from the womb.
To serve a great purpose in my design.
So you lift up your head from that cement.
Those grounds of despair, confusion, and hopelessness.
Step into my glory.
I’ve loved you all along.
Let me teach you to love you.
Open up, blossom, and never fear.
For in you is greatness.
Child look up.
Gossamer scented tangents
permeate a full-moon spring garden
heavily blanketed by early-morning stillness.
Moonbeams slanting through the mauve-painted gazebo
cast luminescent crescents
onto the deep-black soil, rich with possibility.
Creeping vines edge ever upward on leaning lattices
awaiting their triumphal entry into the silent
Garden-World.
Evening dew dangles surreptitiously on soft petals
limply hanging from the weight of their evanescent crystal vagrants.
Cloaked in cacophony of silence
the night-garden wavers in hesitation,
each bud wrapped in comfortable bundles of hope
holding its own blueprint from success or failure,
anticipating the glorious arrival of an Eastward rising sun.
The Morning-Star delivering ephemeral life to the
tragic-mystic inhabitants lying dormant in the stillness of the night
optimistically awaiting the first-born eastern rays
to peak victorious over the iron-gray Appalachians
and shed light on each tiny miracle.

THE QUIVER: OPHelia'S LULLABY

Tonight this Hamlet hangs his head. On this night, the
ghost of another haunts his bedroom. This time
Ophelia crowns under the covers, while the prince's
mother sleeps with a common uneasiness. For off, in a
castle under the suburban moon. Tonight something is rotten
in Denmark. And in the blatant silences of a waking Luna, our
doomed hero rises. A faint draft, with the reminiscent taste of
summer caresses his bare ankles, standing to deliver his soliloquy
to his audience in the blue mirror.

Arms raised to the sides, crisp erin eyes mopped in dark sweating
hair, the waiting moon shines a spotlight, green eyes reflected in the mirror.
Tonight the son of a king is north by northwest. And Ophelia knows that his
madness was contrived, but this midsummer's night dream, something in her is
unconvinced that he is winning the battle with the ghosts of their pasts.

Speaking too quietly for even the prince of glass to hear, our Hamlet
can make out the word of the sad song that plays nightly in his head.
The whispered words turn to vowel noises, with the gun in his mouth. Tonsils
wrapped around cool steel, freedom that his forefathers enjoyed was so close.
Hamlet's brains act as the silencer, and the crisp green eyes of the prince of
glass widen and then roll back in pain, and in the last glimmer of the crisp
yellow moon, the monster sleeps forever. In the morning, Ophelia will wake up
next to the Romeo she was looking for.
flowers hung from rafter beams
dampness seeping in through the cracks of the cinderblock wall standing guard even as the shriveled like the carcasses of old lovers their beauty faded perfume turning to pungent odor as the blossom decayed dried-up fine silken petals turned to paper
The masses smoke
What corporate dealers sell
We are all addicts
of pop culture and fruit snacks
We need our daily dose
of dirty naked skin
Projected in black and white
on every billboard
Is God missing from your life?
We have drugs to fill the void.
Prozac can take away the empty
in the pit of your stomach
The rest can be filled
with the sepia photographs of over-worked
and under-fed models,
The ideal woman
Of every man’s dreams
refined
polished
in your perfectly
pressed oxford
the collar tracking your pulse
reverberating
each beat
each bated breath
on erratic jostling
to offset a professional demeanor
inevitably
you broke into your own rhythm
an explosion
ignited
when the store radio was up
just one notch
too high
or the stereo in your head
would start to play
the air guitar was taken
from under your coat
strapped on
tuned
you were Lindsey Buckingham in a flash
falling to your knees
in your own world
if you pressed your eyelashes together
hard enough
no one could touch you
undeniably complete
alone
with your music
kristin baver
DRUNK OR NOT

I met her second, but first her eyes.

Loudly, I looked.

Shortly, I stared.

Barely, I blinked.

Artificially Cared.

I met her second, but first her eyes.

'Well, hello.'

In a voice less known.

Coal sky and neon signs

Discussed ardor with the worn wood.

'I, too, miss it - it, I never knew.'

I met her second, but first her eyes.

Drunk or not, I was renewed.
melinda haggerty

EARLY AUGUST

toothpaste dried mouths
pores sheeted with sweat
we unbuckled our eyes,
unfostened this silence
trailing trimmed throats
pulsing pretend pillows.

They are someone else's linen.

forearms fastening, feigning
to stimulate sleep
mossy eyes and straight teeth
intoxicating embroidery
enlisting my taut lips
weaning them into conversation.

I tell him I take a long time to open

charcoal strands sail
a rim of face
fidgeting as my hands did
rewriting words in fingertips
nudging higher
elbows exchange sides.

They are someone else's linen.

pulling, pulsing stares
stomach knotting like shoelaces
swallowing each other's air
it was comfortable to smile
my uneven hair blurred lines
preventing the obvious.
We used to live above the Chinese restaurant,
Where the smell of wonton and fried noodle would waft up through the vents.
And the old couple who owned the shop,
Bickered in sharp-tongued Mandarin, late into the night.

Sometimes when we couldn't fall asleep,
We'd imagine the couple young and in love, kissing beside the lights of Beijing.
The woman with lotus flowers tucked in her inky black hair,
Would wrap her arms around the man's bony, damp back.

We'd see the couple as we walked to synagogue on Saturday mornings.
They'd stop at the fruit stand on the corner to buy crimson pomegranates.
The little old woman would hold the pomegranate close to her ear,
As if she was looking for the piece that would sing to her.
Saturday nights we'd sit in a corner booth of their restaurant.
They'd bring us complementary bowls of egg drop soup
After we ate we'd crack open the fortune cookies,
And make poetry from the foolish words.

As we'd leave, the old man would wish us a pleasant good night.
His English was broken but soft,
Like the wrinkled silk of the old woman's kimono.
We'd bow our heads and thank them for the soup.

It was a winter night when we couldn't fall asleep.
The apartment was silent except for the humming of the electric heater.
There was no bickering through the vents.
The scent of fried wontons were muffled in the cold.

That morning as we left our building a casket was carried out in front of us.
Deep, mahogany wood covered with a blanket embroidered with lotus flowers.
The old man stood behind it, softly weeping into his wrinkled, grey hands.
I put my hand on his shoulder, and stood silently beside him.

The day of the funeral it snowed and the grey city was blanketed in silver.
We brought creamy, white lilies and sat in a back pew of the Chinese Catholic Church.
The old woman lie in the casket, dressed in a freshly pressed kimono.
The old man sat beside her in a starched, wool suit.

The old man's eyes wrinkled with tears as we handed him the flowers.
In his soft, broken English he thanked us.
As we left the church we held hands.
And besides the dimming lights of New York City, we kissed.

---

ELEGY TO THE MANDARIN MOON RESTAURANT

In your mouth I whispered
You swallowed every sticky strand
As you devoured, I fed you more.

A web of cotton candy lies
Hand squeezed lemonade drops
You cried sweet tears
As you wept.

---

Samantha Moietta
In your mouth I whispered
A web of cotton candy lies
You swallowed every sticky strand.
As you devoured, I fed you more.
In your eyes I rained
Hand squeezed lemonade drops
You cried sweet tears.
As you wept, I drowned your vision.
In your heart I forged
A caramel candy apple desire
You treasured every lick and nibble.
As you savored, I became part of you.
And still we chase each other
Forever
In circles,
Like carousel horses.
Colors matching words

Rolls on etch in the snow
Gin-metal dark blue

Undone to agree
Undone to communicate
Each encased in a leather body
Sealed in skin

Colors that choose no change
Like a sock
A sound that rises & rolls

There is a common perspective
Where colors have not yet run
Insults bow down doorsteps
Surviving by description

The words intend only the right or
But it will not be heard
I will call you once more
They as real as human touch
For those borrowing of a sick mind
You never come

Freed and thrilled I called again
And brain dreaming nightmares
Of wild forests
Yet I dreamed on
Chills woke my body
Tongue loose like a runway
I called all
In the borrowing of a freed girl
Resume and strange dreams
I called for you in my sleep
Feet are chapped and weighed to the bottom of her ocean, a pair of anchors that choose not to shift sand. Stagnant they sit and hard they wait until the tunnel waves finally envelope her, stick a stamp to her stomach. Plaster a return to sender on her hip in seaweed. Powder blue blush painted on her pink taffy-skinned face, staring and swaying with the unsettled candle wax in her abdomen, coating organs with a slippery plastic. Enclosed in the pit was the melt of it. The churn of the half-plastic, half-syrupy senses was nauseating, but made her blissfully anxious, and still hard in the forehead. The clouds began to bleed with gray and ash and the moon exfoliated the heat-suffocated sky with stars. Letting her coral toenails and newly shaved legs lift lightly and scissor cut to the shore, the tension in her stomach subsides then rekindles. The candle flame finally fell flimsy under the last bit of wax, or just got cut early. Peeling the brunette-olive foam from her skin, she curls up with this salt white taffy whipping against rocks. Exiting and entering from the same pit, the sensory details fluttered from the middle to the clamps and constriction of a butter sand mouth. Confined. The wide and out spoken crash of the ocean was still blocked and boarded, until she flooded.
The tiles were cold under bare feet. She stared in the mirror. The lilies knotted in her ironed straight hair. Pure white against deep brown. She felt tainted. Her hands rested against her stomach, the watermelon seed had grown hard and alone inside of her body. 1963. 22. Unmarried. Unheard of. From the bathroom to the bedroom, she felt her footsteps heavy against the floor. In the bedroom she packed her suitcase, her photographs, dusty, faded yellow, buried in between the clean panties and white socks. Her mother waited downstairs, her father watched her solemnly. Her brothers were silent. Disappointment had withered to apprehension. She left the house. She did not feel alone. She did not wonder about the boy who had left her for a war he didn’t want to fight it.

In the brownstone apartment, somewhere in Manhattan she waited. Time seemed to drip slowly from the clock hands, letting go of minutes one hour at a time. She watched the seconds change, waiting for a single moment. She didn’t think she was ready when the tiny fists pushed against her ribs, fighting to get out of her thin and fragile frame. She didn’t think she was ready when she held the tiny creation in her arms. And she didn’t think she was ready when the lady, all in white, took him away.

My mother has only memories, stinging, trying. She whispers good advice into my ears. I am 20. She sees herself in my brown eyes. I look like her, delicate frame, unruly hair. I have her temper. She wants to explain to me the things she’s never understood. The dreams she never had. The mistakes she holds for granted. But tonight she’s silent, sipping her tea, across the kitchen table. She tells me I’m her only child, that I’m my mother’s daughter.
hadn't noticed how full this bottle got
till it broke
i pick up the pieces you said don't
touch
my hands paper snowflakes
your handkerchief crimson

REPE N A NCE R I D O LE
rebecca triell
I palm this golden orb,
cradled in a paper dish,
now divorced by greedy fingers.
Unwrapped from its protective foil
trembles a lumpy nucleus.

My lips ripen into an 'O'
offering a velvety moist cradle.
Saliva rivulets dribble through their bed,
pooling in the slick, pink tissue.

Aroused and blind, the orb
thrusts itself into my mouth
My tongue dips and curls
protectively around its prey.
while grinding over hazelnuts,
smoothing them over
until the water ball is bare.

I crunch down, releasing
that black, viscous elixir.
The final sweet treat
flushed down,
down,
down.
LEAVES

first sign of fall
that year
were the leaves
trickling down
solitary
lonely
longing for comfort

the soft touch that had been spring
curled and rotten brown
they crunch under our feet
parchment
too old to tell the beauty that was
but they remember
the trees smile down
watching them drop
one by one
a flourish from the branch
and then gone

we stop to look at them
to listen to the calm
a soothing
mass suicide
I press my nose into your neck for
warmth
blinding following the creases
paper skin
that once was smooth

SHIFTS

Jill Acknowledges
Stumble over every word and disassemble it all down to the ground and falter and spill and fuck up and redirect and bite it and drown and be left hanging and off the hook and out of control and down the spiral and into the gutter and fail and fail and get up and do it again and suck at what you're doing and try harder and do not win attempt and break your heart a thousand times and live and be weaker than you hoped and never live up to your expectation and write this on a wall and bash your head into it and never stop getting back up and break all your limbs and struggle and fall, fail, fail decide not to decide and give it all up and quit and never mind and disorganize yourself and fall down and stay there and never sleep and throw up the things that keep you satisfied that's what I want. Tell me what you want. Now I bet it's something like a nice car and a family. Jewels and riches and material, and big TV's and your name in the stars and your heart on your sleeve. That's what you think life is for. And how I wish I could be so stupid. I bet you think I wish for, drugs and oblivion and depression, but I don't, and you can't see in my head, and that's why I write this. Attempt to be some one you are, try, for one moment to be your god-damn-self, that's hard. Take it like a man. Suck it up. Fool not everyone else, but fool yourself, be who you think you should be, go ahead, try real hard I'll give you a moment, time's up, you don't convince me of shit. You're false and transparent. May the wolves eat you. Cry me a river when you read this, you liar.

al depompels

MY BITTER END

mary kay bauman

CARPE DIEM

I refuse to live out loud
Buried in my own world I am a god
Here I am free
Free to love, dream, be what I am
I am me
Seize the day, Carpe Diem
What is there to seize in this controlled place
Mutilated minds create no more beautiful worlds
Bound hands do not catch falling stars
I am a god without power
No words drip from a honeyed mouth
Thoughts of freedom, love, and dreams are crushed
Demons of this hellish world stop all dreaming
We are to be like them
Silent statues
Though they preach Carpe Diem, seize the day
Forget the world, Carpe Diem
They lie, they preach, crushers of dreams
I am a god in a buried world
My mind is mutilated
My hands are bound
No words drip from a honeyed mouth
Storm made a room from an uprooted tree
Crashed sideways, its intricate roots,
a red wall.
The ground it tore from
slippery-smooth.
I knelt, my flip-flops slid and I was in the room.
cool earth against my head, cool dirt and leaves
my body wanted to be a child
the earth compiled and cradled me

MORE BEAUTIFUL AFTER A STORM.

Looking at the lines of my hands I see myself,
pen grasped tightly in my hand as I nearly finish writing
about the love, the connection, mazes, dead
ends
autumn, the world, the infancy that I see on my hand.
I see myself in my crib so secure and content
as I watch these bulky objects in the shapes of glowing
stars and moons

SOARING
over my head I see the rounded world, the gravel that I stroll upon.
Unsightly flowers, once stunning, now expired as they
take their last breath in the blistering, distasteful summer.
In the lines of my hands, I see autumn. Leaves plummeting off
the now
exposed
trees,
that at this moment look bashful, as if they have been
stripped of their clothing. The leaves golden, crimson, and auburn.
Looking at the lines of my hands, I see a maze, a network
of history, sharp corners, and dead
ends.
I don't think you're allowed to make u-turns on this road.
Looking at the lines of my hands, I see a connection
between him and I, devoted love with
no strings attached
Our hands clutched together so tightly you can see
the blood
flowing
through our veins.
Weathered
hand dips gently into the bowl
Cobalt ceramic with white roses
Gnarled fingers grasp the untouched surface of the peach
Handled with reverence she puts it into the sunlight
Colors explode with the light, pink, orange, cream swirling together
Clouded eyes twinkle in anticipation
Placed at her mouth
Piercing it to let the sweet nectar flow
One gold-specked leaf
hangs from a tree by a spider's web
swirls.
Beyond it sky like sea-glass
drips pink light.
Dharma lifts her hands, twirls, weeps.

**DHARMA**

rebecca trelle

My name is Mr. Incoherent. Yes, he is me.
Yesterday, I shot a deer. Mr. Incoherent didn't do it. I did. You see, he looked at me wrong. So, I shot the deer. I'm sorry, if I had to do it all over again I would've shot him twice.

Who ever said I was discontent? I was merely stating the fact that I was unhappy.

Lost, is no longer a source of retrieval. Can you relate it to a sunset? And if so, does the burden of your one heart make you yearn for more? And still, it's always good to have an umbrella in the house.

My name is John. I'm lost. Can you help me find my daughter? Can we both be lost at the same time? Oh no, I need to sit down. No! I need to write this down. Wait, my name isn't John.

I'm in the hospital. Visiting the soda machine.
No orange soda cause it's bad for my complexion.
Might as well try on these pants. Hal caught you red-handed. You're not a thief. You've come to rape my wife. Since I misjudged you, you're free to leave.

Words are no longer part of my vocabulary.
Words express something. I express nothing. I am Mr. Incoherent. But yet, I convey whatever you want me to convey. I was wrong.
Black on black, and
cold ash falls upon
my heated form.
Wings shattering about
me like crystal rain.
You never noticed my
cries when you felt
my claws.

My flightless body lies
grappling for some
semblance of sanity
as the blood overtakes
my satin lips.
You promised eternal love,
happiness and devotion.
Yet here I lay shattered and
alone. Lies do not
become a prince when
he is merely pretend
and an angel cannot
shed her wings without
a price.
You are my price.
this flesh is faith-branded
with halo and clasped hands.

as copper curves of sun stand still,
europium stars peek from night.

constellations loyal to twilight
script cobalt canvassed sky.

tin drops search for my finger-
the unwritten one.

garnish fell in my palm when
you cleaved the yang.

stagnant air opened
with blue utopias; ironic infernos.

silver tranquility took its time
to overlap my lead skin.

nickels descend like fall leaves
to ease my binding.

thallium painted floors
sweat under my anemic feet.

while spring wet bromine hair
and sand dune eyes,

salty lashes and
burned fingertips.

arrest the band and blow
the ashes into vapor currents.

blistered suntan oil sheds
from zinc waves, as

the core meets my left
knuckle.

My element is found -
crowned with mercury armour.
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