

FREE CHOICE

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# FREE CHOICE

STORIES, POEMS, MEMORIES



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# UNINTENTIONAL IRONY

*keg de Souza*

re: film crew outside gun shop

'hey I wonder what they're shooting over there?'

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# THE SPIRIT OF WAR

## *Gettarr*

A riddle inside a mystery inside a conundrum...

Sight, sound, a wind barely felt

Moved by butterfly wings and becoming a hurricane

At the end of the world

...

The anger of denial

Exploitation built up over generations

Calling for vengeance

Mistaken for justice

...

Drawing lines in the sand...

Murder at the heart of fear

And no end in sight

Eradicate the stranger

...

Xenophobic tunnel vision

Identity desperation

Survival and genocide

No end in sight

Insanity rules the world

...

Riddle inside of mystery inside of conundrum

Desperation confusion hatred vengeance they take our land take our resources destroy our culture and our religion bomb our cities kill our children and now they must pay.

Someone must always pay for the right to maintain our way of life...

Only one question left:

When does the killing end?

What is at the heart of war? Is it out of love that we kill each other?

When does the killing end? With the last man standing?

And when the last man dies-

No one will be left to carry on...

And the Silent Garden will carry on.

If we kill the killers

If we murder the murderers

Then we are the killers

And we are the murderers...

Freedom bought with a price? A conundrum that freedom is not free, but that it costs something to have..

He who rules the world must be responsible for every element within it...

A child dreams freely

Makes no judgments

Its spirit truly flies

Without anchors and weights or chains

Devised by the greed of insanity...

Give voice to the Silent Garden

Which will carry on when we have all finally killed one another...

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# NO TITLE

## *B. Laviolette*

Often, I placed my head under water as a child. In the ocean I'd stay near the shore but lay against the sand and wait for the water to rush over me. This is far less beautiful than it sounds because I would jump up coughing the water from my lungs. There always felt like room in the ocean for me to sleep. That I would just be a buoy on the water. Or that I would sink underneath and find a carnival of fish trying to battle with the seaplants.

Scientists say that we have the exact same percentage of salt in our veins that is found in the sea. Maybe there's an entire civilization inside those long tubes we break open so often. And we let out the salt and the fish and sharks. Or we drown the fisherman by letting the oxygen inside the blue veins and think nothing of it. No one worries about killing them.

If there are two frozen poles inside of us, and something to wash ashore to, what's to say there is nothing inside every drop of that. One galaxy after another. Even dead people, until drained, have an entire ocean in their blood.

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# TRONA

## *B. Marie Laviolette*

My father writes poems about the desert and I always struggle to follow the roads and the joshua trees to the homes and the mines and the slopes that he remembers from before my birth. He writes about men he used to know and I write about a nonexistent family we thought we had. My father is a joshua tree, for me. Where he sits alone in the desert and every now and then when you drive by them, it seems like they are coming so fast. One after the other, like they are a group, but they are solitary items scattered along through the dirt that expands for miles. I have touched both ends of the Mojave in a car when I was young. And I saw the snow in Arizona and we drove straight through New Mexico in to Texas where my father fed me a rattlesnake. We fed ducks in a pond in Oklahoma. We take easy drives, difficult walks, and we write about things that the other reads and we both try to understand at the same time.

He is a writer, even in a suit and tie. I've seen the house he was born in, much different from the desert we drove through where he was raised. There were trees in this neighborhood. Tall ones with leaves in shapes I'd never seen and it was a town in Illinois, where I had never been. When I meet his family, I can't picture him standing beside them but I see him in a corner nodding his head in agreement and laughing but not caring about what they say. He's thinking about a desert or

a far off place he never got to go. Or he's composing a story about people sitting around a table and he's uncomfortable but fine.

When I was nine, he put on a new face and I was reintroduced to my father. A writer, still, but a man I didn't know. He was angry and tired and very alone. He was a joshua tree only no one was driving by fast enough to make it seem that he was among a crowd. He stood quiet, looking out at rabbits and snake holes and tumbleweeds that get stuck beneath the trucks that don't stop in this part of the desert. They just keep going on in to Barstow. With this face, my father doesn't know how to talk but he smokes cigars and reads more than I see him write but I still see the compositions in his head and he's waiting for them to be clear to write them down. He scribbles now and then on yellow paper with a sharp-pointed pen that is black like octopus ink. He's not thinking about the desert now, but people, or long walks in places near the ocean. He's thinking about his children and how they don't understand what this face is but they try to get glimpses of how it works and how to keep it still and rested. His youngest is talking with the voice of her doll, his oldest is sleeping in his room for an entire day, the middle is coughing with bronchitis and making jokes about the blood in her mouth.

Prior to my eighteenth birthday, my father took off the new face and moved away on a plane. Just after my birthday he came back and packed his things and those of my younger sister and they moved away in a truck. I could no longer see how often he wrote or imagine the way they came together in his head. I stopped thinking about the joshua trees and the desert and I lived in a suburb and thought about going away to a place with an ocean. I had dizzy spells and sick blood and pills to keep me from crying or imagining an entirely different world. I would stay awake for days and write and think about yellow paper. I moved across the country and my father would call me each day and I could hear a hoarseness as though he was crying more than I did but only when no one would see. And I imagined the desert again when I slept in the bathtub at Christmas and I wrote about how my father was a good man with roads that hadn't been paved in decades. I wondered

if he still thought about the rattlesnake and the smell of sulfur on the drive through a desert in eastern California and if he would stop in the desert now or continue to drive past Barstow on to Arizona and if he would stop in Flagstaff if it was snowing.

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# A PRAYER

*James Cleeland*

Eamon,  
I  
lay in  
midhappynight,  
like lazy Fox Atewell,  
downin'  
m'self to  
the  
moist earth.  
And I thought it earth, so  
I  
slepty  
warmly in  
quackducksquealindownsleepbag  
after

prayin'  
for  
white nekked  
poet  
trash  
sufferers  
Amen.



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# MISS FELLAHEEN'S BROKEN MACHINE

*Nibru Zoor*

*all characters and events in 'Miss Fellaheen's Broken Machine' are fictional  
and any resemblance to actual places, events or persons living or dead,  
is purely coincidental.*

...see a whisp of grey smoke arise – I was experimenting with electronic escalation of levels of subsumation. The reality slips and cartoon metaphysics of the cosmos is one vast entity that thinks. You have to consider that we're only made out of dust, that entity is organic, an elastic organism, techgnostic, fundamentally analogous. Deluding drugs and psychosis, hallucinated worlds, intoxicating in a world defined by entropy and decay. If the future had a slogan, see it weep and bleed fake humans, electronic opera, the trash stratum, what constitutes the authentic human being immersed in words.

...and showed how little truth there lies in the fact that for a man to live an exceedingly unfinished voyage entails a thoughtful look at the rest of humanity as cruel and cold as a pebble smoothed by the sea. The moment of connection.

The connected universes and the coloratura background, the dark sprawling city.

Superior drones, artificial intelligence; metal pipes and human limbs.

Space.

The brooding  
brick revolution, architectural idealism, love, quirks and surprises. Expansive sweeps of mandarin light, flood the wasteland. The wasteland, strange – in some ways more strange. Archimandrite Luseferous, 7,500 square miles and Vishnu, reporting Sir.

Hassan-I-Sabbath never left Earth the paradox is in the river.

Space.

The average American phraseology, pipe work thicker than a man in ganglia. The ketchup-red shelter above the cavernous Substation Project. A young, American beauty exhibits a cluttered kitchen, charred loaves of bread, orange chicken fat.

Remember him as a writer. Man changed his name and re-invented himself as Environment. The living and their ephemeral activities, freezing the passage of time. One woman wears the arms of her murdered fiction. A pumping demented electronic devotion. Leaving only the ghost of a man, a charismatic General amid the funeral marble of a New York museum.

A beautifully poised photograph taken after Earth, culminates with a dark classical ballet full of gods. Renegades have a prophet, inspiring Golems and demonic beings which rise out of 'Contemporary gallery', the Mother of literacy.

We went thoroughly through Act three today: I prepared my shoes before our constant islands. She knew perfectly well that He was a deeply generous, funny, intelligent, profoundly isolated man who wrote. Humans, on the whole, dust themselves, pretending the Play is more finished than it is. Mankind, or the part of it stranded on a lilting pathos, a final unfinished voyage with seething disorder, politely put the money in the slot. Arcades flicker and wink. A green, neon haze transforms the human figures into phantoms. The British coast is a siren's song. Technological dei ex machina that describes a swamp creature it holds emancipated.

Many die in a bad land beyond brilliant creation. The books work like the Israelites who escaped slavery in Egypt.

These days any man with a social conscience should be asking himself: sleep tomorrow, all men are not equal. Are Yoko's women, still the niggers of the world?

The most bland of domestic settings – four hours a day in front of a television.

...One of the most horrifying scenes in his f(r)iction, Environment carves intricate voodoo figures as to become a kind of psychological devastatingly poignant truth in the wind.

Use of disinformation.

...Being alone, being detached and being. Remembering Herbert Hunke "guilty of everything!". On a small banana-wood table, two closed books: Tezuka's Buddha vol: 2 and Joseph Conrad's 'The Nigger of Narcissicus', one open Leg Fetish magazine displaying a voluptuous American blonde wearing blue-seamed fishnet tights and white strappy heels. A dark-haired Japanese, hand-cuffed beauty, kneels ripping the fishnet crotch with her diamond teeth.

Ah, now Nathaniel don't you go making a cheap bed or buying cheap shoes – for sure, if you ain't in one your in the other! (somebody else's advise).

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# JEWISH HOLY DAYS

## *Gosia Wlodarczak*

I was born in Poland in 1959. All my childhood I lived with my family in Szczecin near North West border. Szczecin before WW II was a part German Prussia. My parents, like many others, settled on these terrains after 1948. My mother's family belonged to a big migration wave from Ukraine and parts of Poland, which after the war became parts of USSR. My father and his family came from Wielkopolska in search for better opportunities, new land to cultivate, fresh start (if it was possible at all with the luggage of memories and wounds from their recent past).

During my childhood I was living in a cocoon of naivety and happiness created by my parents, grandmother and great grandmother. No difficult memories, only happy stories from very, very far past... before the war. The war and socialist propaganda became a part of my consciousness at school age. We had it everywhere; in literature, history classes, in films, radio, TV.

I always have been dedicated reader. Through literature and history, through heroic Polish and Soviet propaganda films, through interrogating my family I started to picture my country differently— next to us should live other people, Jewish. According to the past, I should have them as next-door neighbours. I should have had a girlfriend Rifka, like my grandmother had.... But I had never seen a Jewish person in real (that is what I thought), and it concerned me.

My earliest encounter with anything Jewish was with my great grandmother's cooking. We had

been eating the challa, herrings in cream or vinegar, chicken soup, my grandmother favourite dish was minced fish balls in jelly and mine - dessert made of cottage cheese, sugar and dry fruits.

Szczecin's cemetery had got a whole section with Jewish gravestones but where were the living people who came to visit.

Since early eighties I had discovered books by Isaac Bashevis Singer. His stories of Jewish lives led in Poland before the war, lives rich in love, mysticism, customs and religion.

After I had immigrated to Australia, my mother started to talk about the family turbulent history. From our very personal conversations I learned that her grandmother, my great grandmother was Jewish, and my father's mother was Jewish too.

*Gosia Włodarczak 2005*



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# MR. NAUGHTY BOY

*Kim Nuzzo*

Where do I go from here? Is today a day of birth or a day of death?  
Imagination can dream either. Which door will it be? The sky doesn't  
care? My frozen eyes stare out a broken window as the bones of time go  
flying by.

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# ORANGINA

## *Ruby Xuequn Pan*

Again I fail my English test. Today Miss Chong make us do a Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar exercise. What happens is she give you a passage, and you are supposed to find all the Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar mistakes inside. At the start of test she say very loudly, There are Ten Mistakes In This Passage, and then you have thirty minutes to underline all the spelling and grammar mistakes and write the correct spelling or grammar on top of the word that is wrong. For punctuation you draw a circle if there's supposed to be a punctuation there but don't have. If the punctuation is wrong, like there's an exclamation mark instead of a full stop, then you circle the exclamation mark and put a full stop next to it. I don't know why but I can only find six mistakes. And two of them I correct wrongly so end up I got four upon ten. Which is a fail again. The girl who sits next to me, Shimin, always get eight or nine upon ten. Miss Chong make me sit next to her so she can help to improve my English. I like to draw pictures of Shimin's face looking like a pig or a donkey. But the last few mistakes usually even Shimin cannot find, because Miss Chong will always put in some cheem words just to challenge us. Tricky words that we won't know the correct spelling of, like "athletic" or "separate," so even if she spells them wrongly we also don't know.

My Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar is bad but I like to read. My favorite are magazines like 8 Days Every Week and Top of the Pops! I was reading Top of the Pops! under the table when Miss

Chong was talking talking talking about I don't know what again, something about either or neither nor and what is the verb agreement. I was looking at pictures of Britney Spears, can you believe she's pregnant? She looks so fat! Then suddenly Miss Chong was standing beside my shoulder and she confiscate my magazine. Damn bitch. Top of the Pops! is a magazine from England okay. Got words like "snog" and "nosh" inside that I never see before. And "twat." They never teach us these words in English class, they only teach us either or neither nor but no one talks like that in real life. So what's the point of English class? Waste my time only lor. And worst of all waste my money, because Miss Chong never give me back my magazine. I bought it with my own pocket money okay. I bet after class Miss Chong go and read it in the staff room for free. For the rest of the period I give Miss Chong my most chao bin look, and when the bell rings she come to my table and tell me I better stop having this attitude. What attitude? Then Miss Chong ask me to show her my textbook. Die. All the time she was talking I didn't do the exercise she was going through, I was drawing pictures in the blanks. I want to zao so badly but she was standing right in front of me, so I bo pian have to show her my textbook. Miss Chong give me her super angry look, and told me to stay back after school until I finish all the exercises she went through in class.

So because of the evil Miss Chong all my friends are watching a movie now while I'm in the library doing this stupid English textbook. If I don't know how to do in class, how will I know how to do on my own? Miss Chong don't know how to use her brain. The library is so quiet I can hear the sound of the fans squeaking. Lousy school with no air-con. When I study I like to go MacDonald's, then I can eat French fries. Before today I only came to the library once before, during our Sec One orientation at the beginning of the year. Only nerds like Shimin and her friends come here. There's a big group of them with their thick specs sitting in one corner studying. If they weren't so near to the librarian I would go and disturb them. Make one of them help me finish these exercises. When I push my chair back and stand up the librarian immediately look up from her book. Wah lau the woman got Sun Wu Kong ears or what? She keep looking at me like I'm going to do something bad

or what so I tiao her back, then I walk over to one of the shelves and pretend to look at the books. Damn it lah, how am I going to meet my friends? By the time I finish they sure go home already. Sian man. If I know anybody in a gang I would ask them to scratch Miss Chong's car.

The library got so many books I can't believe it. Nobody in my family reads books, we only read newspapers. My father always say no point to read so much, better make sure we do well in Maths and Science then can become banker or doctor and make lots of money. I don't know who is he bluffing. I know I'm in Sec One Express, which is the best stream, but my school is at the bottom of the rankings. And anyway I am near the bottom of the class. Fuck care lah. Miss Chong always say if we can make it to poly it will be a miracle. She say with our English standard so low how to make it to JC. We are only Sec One lor, I don't know why she's always talking about JC. But who wants to go JC and be a nerd anyway, I think when I'm older I will join Star Search and become a TV star. Or maybe become a radio DJ on 98.7 FM, DJs are so cool. Then Miss Chong will come and ask for my autograph, and I will laugh in her ugly face and tell her her English got no standard.

I'm so bored I pull out all the books with nice covers and flip through them. Who reads all this stuff? Probably all the nerds and stupid teachers like Miss Chong who have no life. So many trees died for nothing. Suddenly I saw this book with the title A Clockwork Orange. I got super excited, because my favorite color is orange. My schoolbag, my watch, my pencil case, all my stationary and even my pen color is orange. All my friends call me Orangina. I didn't think about having orange books before, what a good idea! When I take the book down from the shelf I see the cover is orange, which is a very good sign. But when I open the book to the first page I feel like a big gong kia. I don't understand anything. What the hell? Is this English? What is "droogs," "rassoodocks," and "flip dark chill winter bastard though dry?"

I don't know why but I like the sound of these words. I try to read the first page again. There are these boys called Alex, Pete, Georgie and Dim, and they are in a milkbar drinking... I bring A Clockwork Orange back to my table and sit down to read. I'm not sure about the meaning of every-

thing but I can guess what is happening. I never read such a crazy book before. In primary school I read Sweet Valley High, Goosebumps and some books by Christopher Pike. But even Christopher Pike never write about making an old man take off his clothes and hantam him, this woman at a shop they rob also kena, then got gang fight, then they whack this writer and rape his wife for fun... After I read the first two chapters I feel so sick I have to put the book down. I didn't know books have such things inside, I thought books were just full of boring crap. And I don't know why but the book make me want to read more, even if some of the things are so disgusting. Something is so exciting about it... So I pick up the book and start reading again, and I read and read until another terrible part where the guy Alex bring two girls home with him – uh oh – what's going to happen to them – when a shadow suddenly appear over the book. I look up and see Miss Chong staring at me.

“Suzanne, what are you doing?”

“Improving my English. This is a really good book, Miss Chong.”

“Did I ask you to come here to read?”

Silence.

“Did you finish the exercises I asked you to do?”

Silence.

Miss Chong pick up the English textbook and flip to the page of the exercises. Then she throw the textbook down on the table. The librarian and all the nerds look up in surprise. Miss Chong look a bit malu, then she bring her face close to mine and look me in the eye.

“Suzanne,” she says in a stern voice, “You better buck up, you know. You're only in Sec One and your attitude is already like this. How are you going to get anywhere in life? I asked you to stay back to complete today's exercises, not read a storybook for fun. If you continue with this behavior I will have to take you to see the principal. You will stay back every day until I see that the grammar section of your English textbook is completed. The library closes in one hour. You had better try to get something done before I return.”



I stare at Miss Chong like she is an alien talking rubbish. Miss Chong sigh and turn to go back to the staff room. I watch Miss Chong walking out the door, and I feel like screaming. I'm in the library, you know, I'm in school, I'm not doing anything bad so why can't you just give me a chance? Why can't you sit down and help me? Why don't you ask me what I really want to do with my life? Why you always tell me that I'm wrong, that I fail English? Miss Chong, you can make me stay back every day but I will read whatever I want. I won't do your stupid exercise, I will make up my own. I can write my own English, I don't care about your find the mistakes in Spelling Punctuation and Grammar, take your evil red pen away. I have rainbows in my eyes and I can sing a thousand stars exploding. My pen is orange the color of fire the color of the sun not clockwork and it will burn a hole through your cold white worksheet, through your exams, through your report book that says nothing about who I am and what I dream about. All your letter grades and numbers melt and turn into a dazzling orange you can't ignore, an orange that will swallow you, chew you up and spit you out, an orange the color of a school bus that grows wings and takes to the sky, its engine collapsing into a heart with a thousand strings extending throughout the earth to whoever might need them. I hold on to one of the strings, and fly.

## NOTES

- This piece is written in Singlish, which is the patois spoken in Singapore. The vernacular is a mixture of English, Chinese, Chinese dialects such as Hokkien and Malay.

- “Orang” means “person” in Malay, and “gina” means “girl” in Hokkien. According to [www.filmsite.org](http://www.filmsite.org), the word “Orange” in the title of Anthony Burgess’ novel derives from the Malay word

“Orang,” which Burgess picked up during his stint teaching English in Colonial Malaya in the mid-1950s.

•“Cheem” means “complex, profound or beyond one’s understanding” in Hokkien, a dialect spoken by Chinese people from, or with ancestors from the Fujian province. The majority of Singaporean Chinese descend from immigrants from the South of China.

•“Chao bin” literally translates from Hokkien as “Smelly face.” The term refers to an angry expression.

•“Zao” means “leave” in Hokkien.

•“Bo pian” means “no choice” in Hokkien.

•“Wah lau” is a colloquial exclamation that expresses frustration.

•Sun Wu Kong is the name of the Monkey God in Chinese mythology, who was reputed to have ultra-sensitive hearing.

•“Tiao” means “to glare” or “to give a dirty look” in Hokkien.

•“Sian” means “bored” in Hokkien.

•“Poly” is short for polytechnic, which is the equivalent of a community college in the American school system.

•“JC” stands for junior college, or pre-university. In the Singapore education system, students attend 6 years of primary school and 4 years of secondary school. After secondary school, students choose between 2 years of JC leading up to a GCE ‘A’ level certificate and usually university entry, 3 years of polytechnic leading up to a diploma, 2 years at an Institute of Technical Education leading up to a skills certificate, or specialized arts schools that offer diplomas in the fine arts.

•“Gong kia” means “dumb kid” in Hokkien.

•“Hantam” means “to hit with force” in Malay.

•“Kena” means “to have something (usually unfortunate) befall you” in Malay.

•“Malu” means “embarrassed” in Malay.

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# FUN WITH PRONOUNS

*Ruby Xuequn Pan*

ME

How to begin to tell you about where I come from. A small dot on the map of the world. In terms of operational principles, very much like everywhere else: if you're white you're likely to do well, if you're brown or black odds are the odds are against you, if you're yellow you'd better learn to speak good English and be prepared to work hard for a decent living. I'm yellow and I speak and write good English. I've worked hard – not with my hands but with my head. I can solve for X, find the square roots of imaginary numbers, integrate and differentiate complex equations without understanding a thing I'm doing.

How to show you what it's like to grow up in a well-ordered schizophrenic post-colonial city. Spend most of your childhood worrying over your grades. Read books by Englishmen and Englishwomen. Fantasize about boarding school, fairies, gingerbread and gollywogs. Watch TV with the maid until your parents come home from work: Chinese people crossing the sea to build a new nation from scratch in *The Awakening*; Malay people dressed as cats in *Aksi Mat Yoyo*; Indian people singing, dancing, rolling down hills in Bollywood movies; Ang Mohs saying "YoYoYo" on MTV. Watch

less TV because you have to stay back after school and run laps around the basketball court for being overweight. Have your friends laugh at you for being in the Trim and Fit Club.

Hang out at malls everyday in secondary school, shopping for hip street clothes even though you have to wear a uniform. Develop an addiction to bubble tea. Sit for hours in fast food restaurants because there's air-conditioning. Do countless Ten Year Series to prepare for the Cambridge 'O' level exams. Watch Hollywood movies like there's no tomorrow. Cry like your life ended when you fail your maths test. Buy things when you are angry, buy things when you are sad, buy things when you are happy. No money to buy things then watch TV.

A glossary I don't know how to begin to parse:

The difference between going to

Keming Primary School Bukit Batok Secondary School Ngee Ann Polytechnic

versus

Raffles Girls' Primary School Raffles Girls' Secondary School Raffles Junior College Harvard University.

Where to put "lah" in a sentence.

Which one is the real Katong laksa stall.

Why bus fare hikes cause more public outrage than electoral walkovers.

What is: Baby bonus. The Water Issue. National Service. The 5 Cs. Al-Ameen and Al-Azhar.

Family as the basic unit of society. Maid abuse. The Merlion. The Esplanade. NDP, EDB, PSC, HDB, HUDC, TOP, GST, SBS, MRT, PAP, countless acronyms that stand for why you should never, ever take anything for granted, because nobody, nobody owes you a living.

YOU

I expect you come from someplace very different.

I want to know everything about you.

No, not that polite conversation here's the story of my life in two sentences kind of shit.

That's for strangers.

I'm your friend.

You can trust me.

I promise.

Tell me all your dirty secrets.

Tell me what you long for and what you would do about it.

Tell me what's stopping you.

Tell me what you dream about at night. Don't leave out the dreams that terrify you.

Tell me what it feels like to be in bed with someone you love.

Tell me what it feels like to be in bed with someone you do not love.

Tell me what you think about when you masturbate.

Tell me about all the times you cried alone and wished to be found.

Tell me what you would do if you were sure no one was watching.

Tell me about all the times you've laughed and felt guilty afterwards.

Tell me about all the people you have done nasty things to in your head.

Tell me when you have been cruel and enjoyed it.

Tell me when you wanted to be punished.

Tell me what you would rather be doing with your life.

Tell me what you regret and know that you can never change.

Tell me what you pray for.

Tell me the solution to all your problems.  
Tell me your last wish before you die.  
Tell me how not to judge you.  
Tell me to listen like you were God speaking to me.  
Tell me I could be you and you could be me.  
Tell me to try and understand.  
I can promise you nothing.

## SHE

Funny how the simple addition of the letter “S” opens the pronoun up to

- 1) Getting catcalled on the street
- 2) Having people mistake your breasts for your eyes
- 3) Having the small of your back become public domain for tipsy party guests
- 4) Receiving special favors from strangers like rides and free meals with ambiguous gestures of gratitude expected in return
- 5 )Monthly breast exams, menstrual cramps, birth control, that lovely invasive procedure known as the pap smear
- 6) Other invasive procedures such as date rape, I was just jogging in the park rape, I thought you loved me like family rape, I don't feel like it honey rape, Weapon of Mass Destruction rape
- 7) More unique experiences in the years to come, including: pregnancy, childbirth, domesticity, “working motherhood,” hot flashes, hysterectomies, hysteria
- 8) Of course some the above only apply within a certain cultural framework, in other settings



there are also the privileges of: special initiation rites, veils to protect her beauty, operations to restore her virginity, honor killings, etc.

She's still young. She doesn't know what she's doing. She's still her mother's daughter. She's still fresh from her first big love affair. She has an inkling of what it might take to raise a child with someone she loves. She's belligerent about her right to wear small, short skirts, but also terrified by the power and danger that something so ridiculously simple might invite. She wants to pop her gum in the face of middle-aged men. She wants to be free of her mother. She wants to do all the things people tell her she can't do, like write books, be your own boss, have as many lovers as she wants, find a cure for cancer, join the army, be President. While raising four babies at the same time. Sometimes she wishes she could hide under the safety of a chador. She wants to tell you she's more than tits, ass and a pretty face, even if she goes to the gym regularly to make sure her respective body parts are nice and taut. At the same time she wants to be ravished. She wants to be looked at like your favorite flavor of Ben and Jerry's ice cream, but only because you will love ice cream forever. If youth and a little bit of beauty might be granted clemency for stupidity, then let her keep dreaming that she is powerful and immortal.

**HE**

This is Indian Territory.

Inconceivable that

The same large hands a baby might nestle in

The same strong hands that beat other boys up for being bullies

The same friendly hands that grab shoulders to say playfully, tag, you're it!

Might be the same hands that force their way under blouses and skirts

The same hands that have the strength to hold a woman down against her will

The same hands that say in sign language, access denied to the Old Boy's Club.

There must be a way for us to be friends.

There must be a way for us to be different but equal.

There must be a way for us.

He's sitting by his computer, lonesome, reading old emails stashed neatly in a folder with her name on it. He's thinking about calling her but doesn't have the courage. He's afraid she'll hang up on him. That he might hear another man's voice on the other end. He curls up in bed and thinks about all the women he's loved and lost. He has no regrets; he is filled with regrets. He doesn't want to be like his father, that old has-been. He wants to carve a path on his own, to make his mark on the world, to pee on a tree. Sometimes he thinks that if he owns a swank apartment, a flash car and has a career that brings in close to ten thousand a month everything will be perfect. His mother will be so very proud of him. And yet sometimes that all feels so very empty. He doesn't know what he wants except maybe to take care of someone and have someone take care of him, in all this madness and joy that is love and life. This is why the curve of a woman's hip holds so much promise. If he buries himself deep enough in her bosom, maybe he will be safe again, maybe he will find his center, maybe he will have the strength to start all over again.

US

Words the tin drums of our century, firing up the war dance against the unknown and the unnamable. Phrases like “Axis of Evil” like they popped out of some garish cartoon, where anvils fall on smiling animals only the animals spring back to life while people do not. Never Again. Save Darfur. In Rwanda you had your race printed on your identity card so you could always tell the difference.

How difficult it is to come together these days.

How uncomfortable.

How violent.

How dangerous.

How beautiful.

What a realm of infinite possibility.

Let's try to stay together. Let's put our differences aside.

Let's work on communicating.

Let's negotiate a compromise.

Let's build trust.

Let's keep working on it.

I love you.

You love me.

Why should things be so difficult?

The United Nations, The United States of America, European Union, North Atlantic Treaty

Organization, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Former Soviet Union and the Newly Independent States.

## THEM

There's this story about them. About these people who live amongst us but who are clearly completely different. It's easy to tell. Everything about them is a disturbing color. They carry out blood sacrifices that stain their hands pink. They eat things no normal human being would even dream of going near. They gather from time to time to make strange noises and move in a lewd manner, as if they were under the influence of evil. Or perhaps they are creating evil; who knows the meaning of their behavior. Who knows if they even have a unified system of meaning at all. They're savages. They are nowhere as sophisticated as we are. Nowhere as civilized and moral and rational and loving and kind and wise and did you know they eat their babies when there's a drought, have three wives at a time and cut off the toes of young boys to mark their transition into manhood? They're too much. They're too many. They threaten our well-being. Our values. The cornerstones of our existence and our community. Let's not even begin to talk about the birds, bees, flowers and trees, when it's hard enough to have to live on this earth with them.

## IT

And then there are the dogs and gay people. Friendly, loyal and self-effacing to a fault, because they want so badly for people to like them. Don't leave (me) out, please. There has to be space for more than just (he) or (she). If (you) give (them) an inch they will take everything from (us) so

don't even offer a sliver of hope. Here is the edge of understanding. Here is the city limit do not cross. Beyond is the unspeakable, the inconceivable, that which is beyond, that which encompasses everything, that which is self, other, good, evil, true, false, rational irrational, right, wrong, yes, no, me, you, he, she, us, them, it,

**GOD.**

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## SALT & VINEGAR, SIR?

### *Cleeland*

In Whitstable, Kent on a clear night, one can sit eating fish and chips while looking out over the shimmering sea front towards Clacton-on-sea. On returning to lodgings one can open a book and start to read 'Journey to the End of the Night'. In Whitstable, Kent on a clear night, one can eat fish and chips while looking out over the shimmering sea front towards Clacton-on-sea. On returning to lodgings one can open a book and start to read 'Journey to the End of the Night'.

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# ME POEM IN M' PURSE (I LOST ME BOOMERANG IN DE BUSH).

## *Cleeland*

I k'ep thinking to myself there's some really decent people in the world!

(like Kyle meknows)

I haven't met any yet - though I plan to.

And when me see her

me wanna be a making something in dat there bush.

Nibru Zoor. 21.00hrs 29/08/2006

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# SING ME A STORY

*alanna simone*

Summertime rolls into the white fog-  
September in the rain.  
Right now I'm a-roaming,  
going out of my head thinking about you.  
I love a man in uniform.

When I go out with artists,  
Talking shit about a pretty sunset-  
All over the world, young americans.  
Young liars.  
Everybody wasting my time.

I would walk 500 miles up a hill backwards  
Get back groovin' with you  
Into the divine, wunderbar Berlin.  
A thousand hours rated X

Harder, better faster stronger  
I forgot more than you'll ever know.  
I would for you.

Of course, off the record  
You offend in every way  
I hate the way you love  
Seven ways to fake a perfect skin,  
You wear it so well, liar.

I do not want this.  
As you said, love will tear us apart.  
You were right.

The way you look tonight  
Pictures of you, your silent face  
Never let me down again.  
I will turn away,  
Look back in anger.

I still haven't found what I'm looking for,  
Got fucked up along the way.  
I can't hardly stand it-  
There's more to life than this.

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# EN VANLIG DAG PÅ BUSSEN.

## *Bruno Bran*

Godafn. Det är jag som är bussen. Alla passagerare färdas från en punkt till en annan så länge bussen går. Men busslinjen ska läggas ner. En ny linje ska öppnas och ingå i ett framtidsprojekt. Då får jag leta upp en ny buss, förena mig med den nya karossen. Det ska väl gå bra.

Utanför fönstren: scouternas lokal, Länkarnas hus, sjukhemmet, kyrkogården. En livsvandring.

Man får höra mycket.

-Jag älskar dig.

-Hur mycket?

-Det är väldigt mycket.

-Exakt hur mycket?

-Jag har faktiskt inte vågen med mig!

-Kolla på mobilen då!

Regn, blåst, tomma hållplatser. Stropparna för stående passagerare hänger ner som tomma snaror på galgar.

En salongsberusad manlig passagerare söker uppmärksamhet från en prövad medelålders dam.

-Vad är det som säger pftong pftong pftong? Vet du inte det? Pftong pftong pftong! Va? Spikarna i likkistan med spikpistol. Nej, inte ser du ut som en råtta. Vill du ha lite ost? Inte tycker jag att du är en kossa. Ah, var snäll och ge mig lite mjölk. Nej, jag har aldrig sagt att du är en gris med stort tryne. Jag har bara sagt att du trynar länge på morgonen. När solen såg dig, nöjde den sig inte med att lysa på dig, utan doppade först sina strålar i honung och guld. Du och jag i en halmstack. Det vore rena katastrofen.

Svar från en mobiltelefon:

-Sköterskorna är upptagna. Var god dröj kvar.

En osynlig, stum sång går mellan alla tidigt på morgonen:

Något lite fint  
kan vi väl få höra,  
något lite fint  
som inte vill förstöra  
det som vi i livet  
drömmer intensivt  
när vi här tillsammans  
åker kollektivt.

Ute är det dimma,  
dis, och vi förstår  
att det nu är regnet  
som på rutan går.  
Asfalten är slipprig,  
modd och smuts och slask.



Naturen har lagt in oss  
i en liten ask.

En hemlös åker med runt runt på ringlinjen. Jag ser honom varje dag. Jag vet vem han är. Han får kuponger av socialen. Varje dag sminkar han upp sitt liv och berättar för dom som vill höra på.

-Jag ska till teatern. Jag ska på audition. Framföra en performance. Jag vill inte avslöja för mycket. Men så mycket kan jag säga, att innan pjäsen är slut, kommer den unga kvinnliga huvudpersonen att dö. Mord är absolut nödvändigt om man ska fånga ett intresse. Blod på tapeterna. Charkuterithriller. Det gäller att anlägga ett våldtäktsperspektiv på människokroppen. Det är det enda som går hem. Jag lägger ner stor omsorg på kläderna. Jag fäster stor vikt vid slipsen. Gärna ålderdomliga skor, men utan rokokospännen. Jag frånsäger mig spännen. Kanske det ser ut som ett fattigdomsbevis att min kostym är i minsta laget, men det är helt avsiktligt. Det ingår. Det tillhör karaktären. Man har ibland frågat mig, varför jag inte har någon humor. På detta har jag ett svar: All humor är relativ. Jag kan vara rolig jag med, men det är ingen som skrattar. Titeln på min performance är "Fågelskrämmans memoarer". Första repliken: "Redan som ung sökte jag kontakt med fåglar."

Den något berusade mannen öser på i örat på sin kvinnliga medpassagerare. Han berättar om officersfrun i Nazityskland som av misstag gick in i ett koncentrationsläger i tron att det var en järnvägsstation. Hon kvarhölls och avrättades för att ingenting skulle avslöjas.

-Vi kanske befinner oss på en transport av terrorister, på väg till Guantánamo!

-Den stannar väl vid Kyrkbytorget?!

Svar från en mobiltelefon:

-Sköterskorna är upptagna. Var god dröj kvar.

Den påstrukne:

-Det är många luckor i tidtabellen. Jag tänker öppna egna busslinjer. Köra svart! Titta där! Där

var det en som inte hann med. Såg du? Tänk om jag hade kommit där med en egen buss strax efter och sopat upp vid hållplatserna! Va! Ja, jag la väl på nån krona mer, kanske.

Ja, passagerarna surrar:

-Ingenting, bara en värld som gick under. - Slappskaft! - Fåfångans testiklar. - Jag blev så förbannad, att jag skulle ha kunnat döda en hel häst. - Munväder som dödsbålen i Hamlet. - Han ser ut som en folkdräkt. - Jag tycker lönen är bra, sa chefen. - Ett svin inom rimliga gränser. - Han har ett öppet samvete. - Alkoholfritt i nattvarden? Är du inte riktigt avlad? - Jesus hade varit helnykterist, om han hade kunnat se in i framtiden. - Kunde han inte det då? Alkoholfritt vin i kyrkan, det är ju som horhus utan sex. - Människor är vackra när dom inte är smutsiga. - Crime passionel? Hur det uttalas? Det ska du inte försöka dig på, din lille plutt. Du som har tungan långt ner på magen.

Ett yngre par sitter bredvid varandra, men det är inte bra mellan dom. I synnerhet mannen verkar sprickfärdig av något han till slut måste säga:

-Jag har tänkt på det man kallar nödlögn. Kanske du var strängt påpassad som barn och fick stryk om du gjorde något förbjudet. Då kanske du tog till en lögn för att slippa straff. Jag vill verkligen göra klart för dig att du aldrig någonsin behöver ljuga för mig. Du behöver aldrig vara rädd för mig. Ändå har du ljugit. Nu kunde det förstås vara så här, att din lögn kom till inte av rädsla eller för den delen avsikter att tillskansa dig fördelar, men att den var en signal om din strävan att avskilja dig från vårt förhållande. Att du vill lämna mig, men inte fullt ut är beredd att ta beslutet. Att du uppsöker krogen och sängbotten tillsammans med någon annan och av bekvämlighetsskäl förklarar din frånvaro från vårt gemensamma hem med att du suttit uppe halva natten med Karin och pratat om förändringar i administrativa ledningsgruppen på jobbet.

-Nu får du faktiskt hålla käften.

-Och den andre, vem är han? Eller dom? Är det en pålitlig permanent kontakt? Eller bara en armé av raggbögar?

-Håll käften!

-Tillfälliga inkontinenta akutintag av lustkänslor som vilken annan drog som helst!

-Hållkäftenhållkäftenhållkäftenhållkäftenkäftenkäftenkäftenkäftenkäftenkäääääääften! Märker du inte att förarn kör på tomgång för att han ska kunna höra vartenda ord som du säger?

-Som "jag" säger? Ha! Som "jag" säger?

-Kan du då inte va tyst nån gång!

-Ska "jag" vara tyst? Ha! Ska "jag" vara tyst!

-Ska du sälja ut oss till hela ringlinjen? Är det vad som är meningen kanske? Vet du vad du är?

-Vaddå? Vad "jag" är? Vaddå? Va?

-Du är svartsjuk! Det är hela saken! Erkänn!

-Va? Svartsjuk? Jag?

-Du är girig och paranoid, precis som en svartsjuk. Jag har varit ute med nästan varenda en av dina kompisar i din schackklubb. Fick du så du teg nu då! OK! Föreställningen är slut! Nu går det bra att trampa på gasen igen!

Svar från en mobiltelefon:

-Sköterskorna är upptagna. Var god dröj kvar.

Ja, det är en vanlig dag på bussen. Får jag ställa en fråga till dig där. Hur blir man kannibal?

-Det är inte något som man blir, utan man föds till det. Möjligen kan det ta lite tid innan man blir medveten om sin inriktning. Det är en kallelse, en talang.

-Finns något moraliskt perspektiv?

-Absolut. Det idealiska är ju om någon erbjuder sig frivilligt. Men konflikter förekommer. Konflikter i samband med det kannibaliska är inte annorlunda än livets övriga konflikter, ur vilka uppstår föreställningar om ont och gott. Ah ja, håll med om att det var enklare förr. Då vi var amöbor. Då kunde vi göra vad som helst som det mest naturliga. Döda, äta, leva och dö. Man åt varann och drack varandra till. Och hur man än gjorde, så förökade man sig.

Ja, det är en helt vanlig dag på bussen. Här sitter ett annat yngre par. Han hör henne säga:

-Jag älskar dig.

Han omfamnar henne, alldeles lycksalig. Men han är lomhörd. I själva verket verket sa hon:

-Jag älskar Frej.

Vita Frun, en ung bleksminkad kvinna med utseende av 1700-talsporträtt kliver på.

-Vad jobbar du med? frågar jag, fast jag vet.

-Jag har en...fotoaffär.

Ja, det kan man ju säga. Nu är det inte vilka foton som helst det är fråga om. Det har gått bra för henne. Hon har blivit sin egen. Kompletterar verksamheten med live. Anställda. Inte vilka kunder som helst. Samhällstoppar. På en nivå man inte trodde. Det är smart och charmigt med den här enkla ytan. "Vita Frun Foto" på en liten mässingplakett. För att komma in måste du kunna koden eller du har först stämt möte. Den hemlöse lever upp varje gång hon stiger på.

-Jag skulle vilja engagera dig till min performance.

-Är du en idiot?

-Nej jag ska på audition. Jag vill att du ska vara med. Säg "goddag". Var lite bussig. Säg "goddag".

-Goddag.

-Goddag, goddag. Jaså du åker också på den här bussen.

-Jag brukar inte åka kommunalt. Men jag förlorade ett vad.

-Vilket strålande väder.

-Javisst. Om man tycker om höstrusk.

Svar från en mobiltelefon:

-Sköterskorna är upptagna. Var god dröj kvar.

-Jag tycker vi tar om där, säger den hemlöse. Goddag!

-Är du en idiot?

-Brukar du åka kommunalt?

-Javisst. Om man tycker om höstrusk.

-Ja inte sant, vilket härligt väder! Vad sysslar du med?

-Jag har en...fotoaffär.

Nu är det så, att maffian inte är så förtjusta i expansionen av hennes rörelse. Nej, dom vill få stopp på den. För ändamålet har dom engagerat två CIA-poliser, som också brukar åka med den här bussen. Ja, nu ser jag. Där är dom. Dom står längst bak och låtsas studera travprogrammet. CIA letar efter en flykting som ska föras ombord på ett plan. Flyktingen satt här nyss. Det var han som låtsades vara en berusad man. Nu har han stigit av en hållplats innan CIA steg på. Ni hänger med? Huvudobjektet är alltså inte i sikte. Men titta där! Extraknäcket står där och flamsar med en lodis. Nu tar fan bofinken, väser den ene till den andre på engelska. Diskreta knivmord är deras specialitet. Det här är en piece of cake. Sakta, sakta tränga sig fram. Så ja, ingenting förhastat. Här går det undan, sa snigeln i utförsbacken. Precis när de fått upp sina knivar (dom sticker alltid dubbelt) ser den hemlöse vad som håller på att hända. Precis när de stöter in sina knivar står han i vägen och segnar ned död. Panik överallt. Agenterna får hals över huvud ge sig av därifrån med oförrättat ärende. Törs dom ta samma buss igen nästa dag? Eller plan B, vänta vid olika hållplatser?

Den lomhörde:

-Den djävla idioten!

-Men han dör ju! Ser du inte! Men gör nånting! ropar hans kvinnliga sällskap.

-Jag?

-Du sa ju att du var läkare!

-Ja det kanske jag sa.

Svar från en mobiltelefon:

-Sköterskorna är upptagna. Var god dröj kvar.

I morgon är det åter en vanlig dag på bussen. Det kommer att bli känt för myndigheterna vilka gärningsmännen var och vad som var deras egentliga uppdrag - ett nattutvis av flyktingen. Och

utrikesministern kommer att få frågan hur det känns.

-Jag är skakad. Det är allt jag kan säga.

-Har regeringen gett svensk polis rätt att överlämna en misstänkt till främmande makts organisation?

-Nej, men information om vad svensk polis kan göra. Och i den informationen amerikanarna har fått har de fått helt klart för sig vilken maktindelning vi har i Sverige.

-Har ni en kommentar till påståendet att de båda tjänstemännen samtidigt har förankring i maffian och vid det aktuella tillfället ämnade eliminera en prostituerad som befann sig på samma buss som flyktingen åkt med?

-De uppgifterna är fabricerade och dessutom osanna.

Jag ska strax säga adjö till er. Åh. Där sitter ju polismannen som ledde spaningarna och som tvingades släppa de skyldiga. Hej. Hör du, hur kändes det?

-Inget vidare. Det slarvar alltid litegrann när man lägger locket på.

-Vad gör morgondagens polis?

-Han spejar ut mot havet, fälten och de stora skogarna och tänker tankar som bygger upp ordningens skönhet. Finns Gud? Finns livet? Finns kärleken? Finns jag? kommer han att fråga, innan han sätter sig i sin luftkonditionerade framtidsbil medan han känner en ödmjuk makt växa inom sig. Jag är polis, tänker han. Men han är inte riktigt nöjd med kläderna. Lite för mycket av vaktmästare eller sotare. Han vill ha något mera tigt.

-Kommer alla att tillhöra SÄPO?

-Det ska bli lättare i fortsättningen operera under falsk identitet. Förklädda polismän ska bekämpa brott, men för att kunna bekämpa brott måste de ibland begå brott. Men de ska naturligtvis inte begå brott, utan de ska bekämpa brott.

-Vad vill du säga till alla busspassagerare?

-Busslinjen är ett säkert, tryggt, effektivt och billigt kommunikationsmedel. I framtiden kommer de bussar som finns kvar att köras av polisen.

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### TRONA 17

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