

M u d L u s c i o u s I s s u e S e v e n t e e n

[words by Joshua Young, Janey Smith, Jamie Grefe, Leia Wilson, David Tomaloff, Kenton K. Yee, Robb Todd, Alec Bryan,
Corey Zeller, & Rich Ives]

from **To the Chapel of Light: A Film-in-Verse**
by Joshua Young

INT. ABANDONED RAILROAD STATION – EARLY EVENING

further along, nobody ever knows what to do, so they ride the rails. these are the places the road sometimes swallows. there are farms without men or women just children to plow and cut their hands have become bricks shedding red dust into the fields like lady bugs or locusts. and all day they make sounds of swinging and pulling tools, only they make them with their mouths, 'cause everything else is so quiet.

sunsets call them to bed and they sleep as though there is no morning.

CUT TO:

The Heavy, Orange Book of Paintings by Ingres
by Janey Smith

I stacked the books randomly, tore them down and stacked them up again. I pulled out new books, removed others from the pile. Each time the bizarre, otherworldly fortress I raised changed from a flickering, shimmering, long, narrow mound, a pillar going up, gave an impression not of flesh but of a stick, as nothing more than a pole upon which to hang clothes.

I took off my shirt, then my shoes. I removed my pants, my underwear, my socks. I carefully placed the book of paintings by Ingres on top of my head. I stepped carefully back for a better look. The heavy book seemed to absorb all the colors of the room to create an area of startling clarity and stillness.

A clerk noticed me. And careful not to disturb me, turned off the lights.

I stared at it for a while, entranced. Saw what it was like without them. Saw it without the sun making the room big.

Black Blossoms, Stitches Like Flowers
by Jamie Grefe

Blossoming curls of grayish red prone under swollen clouds, meandering caws; how I call through an azure tint, await wandering nights and keep distance between us while you sleep. To console, I savor the haunt of familiar streams, hills and brooks to no avail. Simply to ask: How does one learn of your language? For, I swallow the blurred morning; and run to the horizon; - swim into swirling currents; quell your restlessness with encircling words and find a spattering of you in the grass.

So much unspoken - ;sewn words and this is how a voice travels: coiled wires, to satellites, among hubs of electric incomprehensibility: the mouth hovers over mountains. A leaden needle paints blue into your skin

to mark the world you've built without me; send vultures to drop flesh-crumbs into the palms of my wilting want and I shall eat them all. But, how many times have I been here? Near drowning in the flood of reminded moments: the frightful dark, bouquet in hand, curled up on the floor near the bed: promise to your ravaged self and know that I often remember to forget; on purpose, honey, dear, fawn, blossom.

with windows adjacent to the highway

by **Leia Wilson**

the poet says it is little more than a cage very airy very light chassis—eden is *here* in our imagination and mine is called summerlea and there is an ugly grey building with 1950's stucco: the high ceiling his arms modify the apartment the thought approved is lost: there is silence and gripping and silent gripping saying *i've now located my body and wondered also why i evacuated it*. lingering and shiny—there's frustrated touching touching frustratedly: and then—morning—city—

i'm in steeler country and all their fans are at the market in the fruit and vegetables—looking for something green to throw into the risotto for dinner: my heart is awake standing in direct sunlight, distracted by the buddha's hand near the grapefruit: how am i supposed to eat that. black radishes chinese okra bright yellow carrots faded yellow carrots purple carrots too dragon fruit. something tells me dragons didn't actually eat this fruit: we're wandering around the modernism art space downtown: no dragons here either—but pigeons—but there is water and sound and affect.

i am too afraid—of snow to make an angel—afraid it will eat me up, whole—the abstract: a quick—vivid—description standing outside in stocking feet. the door locked: cardboard cut outs: breasts stapled to them—real women as background content. i am afraid—of conductivity: *accretion*—the sticking together—of things to make some bigger things better: what is the thing we are making bigger: snowflakes—snowflakes: untaught fragments never intending symmetry—what never intends symmetry—lose the symmetry—refer acoustically to the constraint—*life*.

Sighs No One Collects are Songs for a Future

by **David Tomaloff**

We spent three days with buckets, removing water from the stern of the boat. We were becoming mouth to mouth, and at one with the sea. The man next to each man became that man's life vest and cipher and oracle to the world beyond this. Do you think this is normal? said a life vest to an oracle. If it is, said the oracle, it's surely lost on me. 30 brides died of exhaustion, buried to their knees on the shore. 30 days later, 30 children were born in that same small town. No one recalls a sinking, though some have sworn the children entered this world with sand between their toes, singing a sailor's dirge.

He Eats

by **Kenton K. Yee**

The une dégustation, a foie gras mousse, was even creamier than the wife expected. She had not fed the husband, a young lawyer, since their wedding. "Mmm Mmmmm!" She was going to give him a baby at last. "We'll give our baby the best," she said.

Earlier that year, a farmer straddled a fat mulard between his knees and fed a thin tube down his throat. The pump did its job in three seconds – twice a day for three weeks.

Months before that, the duckling that would become the fat mulard between the farmer's knees went for a swim with his mother. This duckling asked too many questions. "That's a good question," the mother would say when she didn't know, which was often. Today, she said, "I heard they feed you well, more than you can eat."

The duckling had hatched three weeks earlier. The parents celebrated with grass.

“We’ll baby our gift,” the mother said.

He Brushes His Teeth Just to Call Her

by Robb Todd

Knuckles like elephant knees. Pink bends to white bends to pink. Ridges and grooves from weather and knives. Lines of ink on a palm — a sign, a tickle. Sips of Sazerac. This pair, bone marrow and marmalade.

Chewing the Crying Egg of Birth

by Alec Bryan

The junkies play Russian roulette, the constant bums settle near the orange conflagrations, pillars of black smoke cough into the black night, the discarded papers float in eddie wind, and a man sits alone, talking to the egg he is about to put in his mouth.

The junkies play with needled conflagrations, injections of bile, pillared, black smoke, the consistent bums rattle paper holding week old news, the wind hammers against the eroded night jackets, and a man sits alone, the egg talking to the mouth it is about to enter.

The play staged under the bridge had junkies playing Russian roulette with needles of black bile, the constant bums warmed their hands with conflagrations of orange flames emitting pillars of bile, black smoke, the night coughed black into the air, the wind hammered eddies into compacted circles to blow the week old news around, and a man sits alone, bereaved of his family, caught a train and entered a town he knew not but that it had a name and bridge where life would be played out by characters not unlike him.

Life worked its way into the Russian veins, the conflagration heated the bums constantly, and the pillars of black smoke coughed black life into the black night, while the life of the man sits alone, burying itself into the corner, into the cracks and crevices of skin on the sullied hands, sullyng the egg about to enter his mouth.

The Russians play roulette with the junkies, while the black bile is injected into the veins, the bums, constant, throw their hands near the orange conflagrations while the orange conflagrations pout out pillars of black smoke, while the night coughs out black night to stifle the black smoke, and years of news is tousled around in the eddies of wind, and a man sits alone in a corner.

II

by Corey Zeller

Burned in places. How the skin rises like bread here and there. How it doesn't. Just like the first time you disappeared. Your bag in an empty room. No note. And much later you find me. You give me a picture you've made of a tree. All those swirls of roots. So terribly shaded. Terribly dark. And you ask me to keep it for you. Safe for you. A lyric from a song scribbled in the bottom corner. And maybe it is a real song but I know it will always be like this. That I'll never bring myself to ask for more.

and we know the cold sky and kneel with it/ in the morning the fields/ grapevines/ a wood stove/ your grandmother coming to kick me out again/ walking on the block that faces the factory/ driveways cracked and overgrown/ fire escapes painted green/ a highway/ how I heard your name in everything passing/ everything passing/ your name/ and I taste the cold green of the world/ I fill with earth/ the war/ all the accidents unappeasably happening/ but still I never meet you/ where you should be/ where I am/ and where you are might as well be/ everywhere that is not/ and the alarm clock sounds/ you laugh/ three years of answering emergency calls/ call after call in the office/ row after row of answering/ answering/ all I have to show for my life/ your life/ answers

How it gathers hard in the stomach. Boils there. Sorrow. Like wax in an old pot. That one you used to fill with candles. How you slowly learn that the body will not be replaced. Will not be revised. And do you remember when that was all the light we had? When the scissors fell from the counter? You nearly fainted. And I saw a window reflected in the round bulb above your mirror eight times. I wondered how it coiled like that. How it spiraled. And I moved the box you put over the trashcan to keep the cats out. And it's amazing, it's horrible, this body will not be replaced.

and we know the sound of teeth rubbing against a rubber ball/ the bottom of a door against a rug/ how a man leans against a tree in a movie/ waiting/ how the leaves fall about him in slow patterns/ matted on the road/ and what was the name of that movie/ the detective was looking for a girl/ but the girl kept turning/ into a different girl/ then a different girl/ so he put the phone off the hook/ he heard the beeps coming from it hung there on the floor/ he sat at his desk and stared at a computer screen/ he stared and began to write/ a word formed/ hook

You say it'd be funny to have a hook hand. Like a pirate. A war vet. And a transformer had blown out. You could hear the humming of a generator all over. But a soft light came from somewhere. You tell me to look. You tell me to put my arms out. And I see the link of our arms silhouetted against a brick wall. Like when a kid takes scissors to paper and makes a long link of figures holding hands when they pull the paper apart. How I can never figure out how to do that. We were in the shadows. Missing so many links of hands. So many figures. So many parts.

we know someone painted XOXO on a pane of glass outside/ in orange/ like how a finger had scrawled tiny hearts on my rearview mirror/ I'd wondered who and why/ said who/ and remembered us trying to catch our breath in the woods that day/ saw myself in your brown eyes because the sun was like that that day/ orange leaves puffed on the trees like the chest of some kind of bird/ an orange bird/ and now an orange leaf rolls through a puddle/ a tiffany lamp is showing in a neighbor's window/ wreathes everywhere/ and now you're coming to the door/ keys jangling/ a brown bag in your hand/ XOXO

XOXO. That yellow light that fills the yellowed, autumn trees and holds. The graffiti on a wall you dreamt of. How the actors kissed and whispered to each other on the screen. How the audience couldn't hear what was said. Is that like our not said? Are we the audience? These new projectors are amazing. I look up at the projection booth and nobody is working it. The machine working on its own. Images shifting over images. Reels turn. Are there reels inside?

we know it/ August is over/ but the images/ find gaps/ in their sequence/ as I sometimes find you/ as I first found you/ the yellow light/ holding/ the leaves I tossed at her/ are back/ on the trees/ blossoming/ opening/ all the leaves before I knew you/ gone/ happening/ shedding into leaves closer to you/ years closer to you/ and we are by the open bedroom door/ I see us in the mirror again/ undressing/ and how many leaves have gone between us

Boys in purple aprons sweeping up for the next showing. The lights are on. The theater is empty. The theater is filling. A film starts. It never began...

but we know how it ends/ like lyrics of a song we knew together but was never written/ the years you disappeared/ years I did not know/ I was looking/ what you must have heard in the cots of that prison/ in the body that lay next to you, breathing/ did you ever hear me/ in a sigh/ a cough/ in the trembles and thrusts above and below you/ in the snorted and shot-up/ in the sirens and bass of cars passing/ in the space of time between each song/ in the cash registers opening while waiting for change/ in the flick of lighters and matches/ in friends, gone now, laughing/ the dwindling applause

I think I said it. Did I tell you? The line of us stops with us. That the body cannot be revisited. Revised. XOXO. Yes. We know. The body. Burned in places. How the skin rises like bread here and there. Missing

so many links of hand...

And the show is starting. The screen is

so many figures

growing

so many parts

missing. smaller. the screen is. missing. I'm watching. the movie. the movie. is missing.

the movie is missing. it is missing its parts.

Comfortable Shoes

by **Rich Ives**

The mistake is not the wing of light emerging from beneath the hairline at the back of the student's neck, but the window that allows a real world to be seen.

The ventilator mounted at the top of the student's straining head has proved fortuitous. The wet transient frame, which was provided for his thoughts, has been removed to a lower order. There is some question whether anything derived from its ethereal reach can remain in the basement unrestrained. The student does not think more highly of his comfortable shoes for marching down to the local sea, nor does he resist suggestive provocations involving his remaining wing.

The student's thought would appear to fold over at the center, as if for mailing, but it cannot be received by those most wishing to entertain it. There would appear to be an arm fragment involved in its eventual depletion. The wooden key may be the last remaining clue to the participation of any degree of safety.

The locator was poured into the student's temporary receptacle and activated. Some of those who had preceded were reluctant to return. It is not clear whether this was due to the desires engendered during the program or the aberrations resulting from its departure. If we cannot open the wishes of those departed, we must secretly adjust the glass roads and weathered window-frames so as to suggest these impulses might actually be contained.

It has been suggested that a degree of resolution might be achieved by sharing fluids. The absent ones shall be required to participate. It's what the student feels so the student puts it on. I'm not going to investigate the reasons for this.