Something Rich and Strange
Journal of Fine Arts
Yeshiva University · Spring 2012
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# Table of Contents

## Fiction
- Through the Glass | Evan Schwarzboum ........................................ 35
- The Multicolored Power Ranger | Alan Dawidowicz ............................. 55

## Photography
- Pensive | Mati Engel .................................................. 6
- ‘Untitled’ | Aliza Slepian .............................................. 7
- ‘Untitled’ | Rachel Minkoff ........................................... 12
- Rays of Life | David Levy .............................................. 25
- Fishbowl | Ilan Regenbaum ......................................... 26
- Just Another Summer Flingle | Irit Greenboim ............................................. 27
- A Bubbled Dream | Ruthie Heller ......................................... 28
- The Pickup Truck in Neve Ilan | Dov Honick ........................................... 29
- ‘Untitled’ | Mati Engel ................................................. 33
- Flesh of the Danger Kid | Joanna Ross-Tash ................................... 38
- Woman on Bike | Nomi Gofine ........................................ 42
- iShadow | Fiona Guedalia ........................................... 50
- A Walk in the Park | Samantha Feldman .................................. 51
- El Gaucho | Gavriel Brown .......................................... 52

## Poetry
- Direction | Sruly Heller ................................................. 5
- Brevity | Arel Kirshstein ............................................... 8
- I am Gay | Arel Kirshstein ............................................. 13
- Something Poisonous | Avital Tzubeli ....................................... 14
- Three AM | Tali Adler .................................................. 22
- Up Here | Simon Goldberg ............................................ 23
- in the fields we used to play in | Jacob Appelbaum ........................................ 34
- Winged | Aimee Rubenstei n ........................................... 39
- Camels in the Mamshit Desert | Netanya Bushewsky ..................................... 40
- On the Trail Along the Schuykill River | Hannah Rozenblat .................................. 43
- Choked Under Wood | Libi Ben-Tzvi .......................................... 44
- The Djinns that Come Out of Tea Kettles | Avital Chizhik ............................................. 59

## Non-Fiction
- Nana | Chana Brauser ................................................ 9
- The Silent Summer of Boro Park | Sruly Heller ............................................... 18
- The Peanut Man | Hillel Goldstein ....................................... 46

## Painting and Drawing
- ‘Untitled’ | Jenny Goldstein .......................................... 16
- ‘Untitled’ | Mellisa Zehnwirth ......................................... 17
- Types of Self 1-4 | Yael Roberts .......................................... 30-31
- Familiar Places | Michelle Rakovsky ...................................... 32
- 72nd Street | Nomi Teplitsky ............................................. 45
- Self-Portrait | Mia Guttmann ............................................. 49
- Pineapple | Noa Peyser .................................................. 53
- Man and Nature | Jordan Chernofsky ................................... 54

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Direction
Sruly Heller

Sometimes when I sit still for an hour or so,
Nestled into a corner, computer open or book
Out, talking to friends, listening to writers, I can
Hear my insiders talking, faintly, so I listen closer.
The words become screams, the speech a yell,
I lean in, because this sounds important, my intestines
Don’t often try to speak. My back is curved, my posture
Yielding, sides yawning. My insides lean toward me,
I hear them telling me to run. Where, I ask. The response
Comes soon, just as the ache settles in Far.
Pensive
Digital Photography
Mati Engel
Untitled
Digital Photography
Aliza Slepian
The soul of wit
And poetry, imparts
Intensity,
So each word can carry the weight of minds
Through vast aromatic kitchens
Where saffron thought serenely simmers
And golden ideas ooze angelic steam.
She's a tall, thin, striking 20-something, bent over a notepad, daring quick upward glances every few minutes before ducking back down into a furious sketch. She's that elegant silhouette darting into fashion houses every so often, looking at the picture of 1940s chic as she struts down the runway.

Oh, but that's her, too—that shy, gangly girl clutching her portfolio, tucking a stray wisp of hair behind her ear, walking carefully through the bustling halls of Parsons School of Design, passing classrooms that will soon play host to some of America's most notable fashion designers. She's not really that shy, you know—but she's not really a city girl, either, and she's worried that instead of the breezy "hello" her fellow students expect, she'll let slip with a "hey, y'all" and brand herself the country bumpkin.

Ask her where she's from and she'll tell you "Atlanta," flashing a friendly smile. But then again, she's never really been good at painting the whole picture, though she's pretty darn impressive with an ordinary pencil.

But even her pages and pages of grayscale design won't tell you the story of her grandmother Ann (call her Bamba,)

She's a million unspoken words—but, she insists, so are you. She wants to hear your stories—what stories?

(though, if you want to sound like you really know what you're talking about) and her rather unusual transition from Austrian-homemaker to general-store-manager in nineteenth-century Oklahoma, before it was Oklahoma and back when it was still the stomping ground of American-Indians.

She's been told by many a model scout that those green-
or-are-they-hazel eyes are mighty expressive, but an arched eyebrow won't quite tell you all you really want to know about her mother, Sadie, the first woman (if you can call a fourteen-year-old girl a woman) to learn to drive a car in not-yet-Oklahoma Indian Territory.

See, to do that you'd have to be four years old, sporting half-hearted tufts of curly red hair, snuggling in a bed much too big for you and your little sister. You can't get over how warm her skin is, and how soft and, well, wrinkly, and you tell her this, adding that she smells nice, too, and she laughs, taking your little hand in hers and kissing you there, just like a princess.

To really meet her, you'd have to call her "Nana," and she'd have to call you her "grandbaby," her "precious sweet."

You'd have to be seven years old, with pages and pages of journal entries to your name all consisting of variations on a single theme: a desperate request for your very own dog. You'd have to be standing in a pet store one evening, holding the cutest little white puppy, and reaching on tiptoe to whisper into her ear, bouncing with excitement when she turns to your mother and says, "Oh, Lizzy, let her have that dog!" and then squealing your eternal gratitude for her heroic efforts the entire ride home as she laughs, turning to you and smiling.

You'd have to be the eight-year-old star at your first sleepover party, grinning as your friends crowd around her as she sketches the most beautiful girl you've ever seen just for you to color in, and you tell her and she laughs, asks you how anyone could be more beautiful than you.

You'd have to be ten years old, sitting at a breakfast table on a sunny morning, sucking on a piece of mango, mesmerized by this soft-spoken woman weaving her tales of a life you can't quite believe was hers, and you tell her so, and she laughs, as she ever so delicately peels the mangos she asked to pick from the neighbors' tree because you told her you really wanted one.

You'd have to be twelve years old, pulling open the door for her so the little bells chime, exploring the furniture store,
trailing in behind her as she tells you of her days as an interior designer in Savannah, the city you love to visit, but maybe it’s really just because she’s here, and you tell her so, and she laughs, taking you by the shoulders and introducing you proudly to the store owners and anyone else in the store, really. Savannah’s quite a small town, you know.

You’d have to be thirteen years old, sick of practicing piano (if you can call five minutes a week “practice”), so instead sitting by her side as she taps out the keys, playing music by ear and accompanying the sounds with her clear, strong voice, as you turn to her with a “wow”—because who knew she could play by ear!—and she laughs, telling you you’ll be there one day if you really work at it. But you know you’ll never get to her level (not at the rate you’ve been “practicing, anyhow) and really, you’d rather sit and listen to her forever.

To really meet her, you’d have to call her “Nana,” and she’d have to call you her “grandbaby,” her “precious sweet.”

This woman—she’s a million unspoken words, ahead of her time. So strong that you had to be a little bit older to hear those stories, before you could cry for the uncle you never knew and the years of pain she hid from you.

She’s a million unspoken words—but, she insists, so are you. She wants to hear your stories—what stories? You’ve only ever really gone to school, you guess—but she insists there must be more when she asks you how you are each day and what you did and who you met and what you did. It’s more than just small talk—she wants to know your life. She’s a good listener, really, maybe the best, and when she’s no longer living in Savannah, or with you, but alone with “the other little old ladies,” as she calls them, that’s when you want to talk to her the most.

You’d have to be nearly twenty years old, just emerging into the world, growing into yourself, until you begin to understand her. She’s ready to hear your stories, and she wants to follow along.
Untitled
Digital Photography
Rachel Minkoff
I am gay.

Arel Kirshstein

Did you expect more?
These three words
Are too powerful

And require nothing more.
Additions would contaminate
This reluctant trinity

Of semi-divine words.
Explanations are useless
And apologies futile.

All that exists
Are satisfying platitudes,
These cliché tautologies:

Declarations of identity
And tenacious self-hood
(No more complex

Than they appear)
Blurted out behind
Crumbling closet doors.
Something Poisonous
Avital Tzubeli

I have heard the words they said,
How beautiful they were,
Melodious and clear;
I listened carefully,
Wanted so much to say them,
To voice them,
To sound just as pretty;
But on my lips they
Didn't sound quite right –
A handful of lies,
deceitful words,
I guess I got the note wrong.

I have looked upon their smiles,
Admired their perfection,
Noticed how they shone of
Flawlessness,
The attention they demanded;
And I practiced in the mirror,
Tried it this way,
Tried it that way,
Till I was sure I had it right,
A perfect replication;
But just a step back
Broke my heart,
Cause on my face
That replica
Was an ugly, glaring fake.
Then I spent time
In their presence,
Basked in their magnificence
And felt that which
They knew I would;
The jealousy, the wishing,
The awe;
And I took the steps
To stand where they do,
And found that,
Discovered that,
The view from here is not that great,
Where the people look small
And real is but another word
And I can’t understand
The feeling I felt...

And I have tasted their
Delightful sugar,
Been addicted to it,
To the way it
Felt on my tongue,
Powerful, intoxicating,
Only to find out
It was nothing more
Than coating
To cover something
A lot more bitter,
A lot less sweet,
Something poisonous.
Untitled
Ink on paper
Jenny Goldstein
Untitled
One color linoleum cut on paper
Mellisa Zehnwirth
The Silent Summer of Boro Park

Sruly Heller

I was checking my Facebook, a frequent occurrence, when I saw a friend post a notice regarding a missing child, sadly also a frequent occurrence. What was less pedestrian about this particular alarm was where the child was from. The notice said “Leiby Kletzky, aged nine, failed to return from camp to his home in Boro Park.” Now, Boro Park is generally not a place where small children disappear. I would know, because I grew up there, and I couldn’t remember a single instance in which a child went missing. The big scary world of the ten o’clock news, before Mr. G. with the weather, that was where children went missing, children with different names, with different looks, in/from? different worlds. This was new; this was scary.

I was away at the time of the disappearance, but I knew what was coming next. The calls for concentrated searches, the shomrim stepping in, the mass tehillim, etc. etc. The last time something like this happened, when a girl disappeared in the forest on a class trip, the wagons were circled, and she was eventually found not four days later. I even recall hearing about her engagement a few years back. That’s how these things usually ended. Quickly, and happily. Boro Park loved the happy ending as much as anyone, and so Boro Park was once again gearing up to manufacture another one.

It’s been a long time since I’ve identified with my hometown in more than a passing, distantly ironic way, but seeing how the community banded together in one of their own hour of darkness, I couldn’t help but feel pride about where I came from. No matter how far from the beaten track of 15th avenue I wandered, I knew then that there was what to take away from having grown up there. Boro Park, like everywhere else, had what to accept as much as reject, which can be hard to swallow for those who were rejected as well. There I was though, wishing I could be back there, joining in on the search,
as some of my friends and former classmates were. Till then, my only recourse was to monitor the search from my friends Facebook feeds. One advantage to having received a Hareidi Brooklyn education is that you can be sure the shomrim and proto-askanim I had gone to yeshiva with were posting info and progress reports nonstop, a lede for the black-hat world. They would post pictures of tables laden with food for the search committees, men with flashlights combing alleyways in Bensonhurst, boys on bikes scouring the underside of the elevated D train on New Utrecht. We all said and believed, that, like always, it’s only a matter of time. Everyone comes home here.

You all know what happened next. The shock of it settled over the city with a pall not seen since September 11th. Everyone knew someone from around the neighborhood who perished on that day, and by the end of this day, everyone knew Leiby Kletzky too. I could have said as much then, but I wouldn’t yet know how right I would’ve been. All I and everyone else knew was that this, this was the abyss. The hope generated by the revving up of the great communal labor

That’s how these things usually ended. Quickly, and happily. Boro Park loved the happy ending as much as anyone...

force, the hope that seeing every able bodied individual give of his or her time and energy to find Leiby, this hope blew out in the wind like so much litter from the search.

I came back to New York a few days after the funeral. I went to visit my father and brother that afternoon, my mind not particularly focused on the events that took place here within the past week. What grabbed my attention was how unbelievably still it was. The streets weren’t quiet really; they were completely desolate, save a few women coming home from 13th avenue, Miller’s Cheese and Satmar Schechita bags in tow. There were no children. This was unprecedented. This was scary.

Granted it was the summer, when the Chassidish families that as a whole populate Boro Park hightail it to Swan Lake and various other Catskills locales, but this was something else. Children owned the streets of Boro Park during daylight hours, and more often than not after, as well. Every child
grows up here playing on these streets, riding his bike, throwing around a football, losing incalculable amounts of punch balls in 15th avenue sewer drains. I was no different, except that I never went upstate in the summers, but there were a fair amount of those exceptions too. What we may have lacked for in manpower during the summer, we more than made up for in pure demon-summoning noise. You could be forgiven for thinking there was no difference in how many vile chayas ran around terrorizing passerby in July as there was in April. Except now they were all gone. The children were gone, presumably banished to the safety of their homes, the streets taken from them.

It’s funny really. One man takes a child from the streets, and then all the streets are taken from the child. It doesn’t add up, but it seemed the only solution, the sum of all fears. More than a child disappeared from Boro Park this past summer. The spirit, the sounds and sensations that let you know you were in Boro Park, as opposed to say Flatbush or Crown Heights, was gone. I would walk around the area where my

More than a child disappeared from Boro Park this past summer. The spirit, the sounds and sensations that let you know you were in Boro Park, as opposed to say Flatbush or Crown Heights, was gone.

father and brothers live many times in the following weeks, cataloging all the changes, trying to make sense of this new world order. Leiby Kletzky had lived in this area as well. His absence wasn’t simply felt, it manifested all the newly empty space that I walked, filling it with the mournful gravity that arrives in the wake of every violent loss of innocence.

“He knew him you know.”

The implications of this simple sentence hit me like a ton of bricks. I had wondered from the beginning what my little brother, 10 at the time, would make over the disappearance of a 9 year old boy from the neighborhood, but the news that they used to play together in the shul Friday nights was just a bit much. My brother, , had apparently picked his face out from the paper, back when they were still searching for him, and asked my dad: “Hey, isn’t that the kid from the Kemarna Shtieble?” Upon hearing the affirmative response, he did
what all small children from Boro Park are taught to do in times of duress, he said some Tehillim. Yossi was the one who suggested that he and our father should go to the funeral. My dad told me, with no small undercurrent of relief in his voice, that Yossi had handled the whole thing extremely well, his emotions not given over to the fear that gripped the community presently. We agreed though, woe to the land that has to test its children by such fires.

A month and a half later, the general feeling of fear and mourning have started to subside from Boro Park, but its streets have yet to be reclaimed. They will be soon, by that other great signifier of Boro Park, the endless rows of bright yellow busses, carrying children to their various cheders and bais yaakovs. Once the busses start filling up eye-lines and lane-spaces, the great stillness that defined the last six weeks of the summer will dissolve, but the fears of every mother and father who send off their precious cargo will not. This year, everyone will feel the weight of one less child being sent to school, and they will take heed of it when they collect theirs in the evening. Even my little brother, about to start taking mass transit will feel it, because, for one extra year at least, my father will be there at his stop, waiting to pick him up.
Three AM

Tali Adler

Ceaselessly swapping secrets in a language composed by
An ever-changing combination of words and sounds:
Sighs and moans and stifled screams,
Its lexicon traceable in the freckled constellations
Embedded in the night sky of a lover's skin.

Though he whispers his hidden fears,
Murmurs of suffering, supplication and surrender
His lover stays silent,
Insensible
to devotions.
It is to be expected:
Two bodies wrapped in tangled sheets
Cannot be replaced by one beneath a prayer shawl,
And an incorporeal God has no skin
From which to divine the magic words.
Three AM
Tali Adler

Ceaselessly swapping secrets in a language composed by
An ever-changing combination of words and sounds:
Sighs and moans and stifled screams,
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Insensible
to devotions.
It is to be expected:
Two bodies wrapped in tangled sheets
Cannot be replaced by one beneath a prayer shawl,
And an incorporeal God has no skin
From which to divine the magic words.
They say we’re lucky up here
With a sky watching over us
And the banks lying beneath us
They say ‘we never really wanted anything’
But to fly.

They watch us
Sometimes, perturbed
When the sun turns a friendly smile
To a friendly neighbor down below
They squint, and shrug
They dream, and then they watch us.

Again, and again, and again.

But I don’t know why they envy us
It’s colder here
Often I hear
That those who can’t keep up
Die out
And then they fall and join the living
Down below.

Not a thousand screams of untold misery
Would cross your heart
And ever make you understand
What I miss down there
Along sunken streets and frozen stares
Along the banks where rivers bend
And hearts intertwine against the beating drums
Of never-ending youth.
I am a prisoner of my own scripted soul
A passenger on a train to never, ever land
Where thoughts and friendship matter and abound
Interact, engage, and run with steeping courage
And dream.

I've oft longed for the water I cannot taste
The boys I could not know or even love
The girls I could not befriend or even touch
When lightning strikes I wish they would only watch
As I stumbled on my rhythm and tried to match its track
Only to snap my wing and dive backwards.
Behind the glowing sun
Of distant melodies and temperatures
Around which the earth I never knew
Spun around, and around.

Dizzy, I'd become
But it'd be worth it.
For once upon a time a villager
Would stop in his existence and look up
Into the heavens
Into the moon
Into where my breaths could intersect with his.

Coldly, tearfully, eternally.

I think of this and other wishes
And then I tilt my feathered body askew
Feel the rush of the imminent storm glide by
And remember that I'm soaring in the sky
In search of never, ever land
High, high above the banks
Where villagers and boys and girls
Dream coldly, tearfully, eternally

That they could do the same.
Rays of Life
Digital Photography
David Levy
Fishbowl
Digital Photography
Ilan Regenbaum
Just Another Summer Fling
Digital Photography
Irit Greenboim
A Bubbled Dream
Digital Photography
Ruthie Heller
The Pickup Truck in Neve Ilan

Digital Photography

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Types of Self 1 and 2
Monotypes
Yael Roberts
Types of Self 3 and 4
Monotypes
Yael Roberts
Familiar Places
Oil on canvas
Michelle Rakovsky
Untitled
Digital Photography
Mati Engel
in the fields we used to play in

Jacob Appelbaum

in the fields we use to play in
we left hints of treasure, long deceased
tell me son can you imagine
running, running through the tall grass
bare feet massaging the gentle dirt
knees stained with green, in pain, but never stopping
dizzy so you fall to the ground
lazy so you watch the clouds
knowing the ghosts will haunt you
knowing you won’t forget
the days you spent
foraging for arrowheads in the unforgiving sun
screaming with your heart at your best friend
waiting for the call to storm the yard
waiting for the rain to part ways
so you can recite hymns from your hero’s plays
wielding a twig you call a gun
until imaginary death makes the game too solemn
and your imagination grows too sick, too gruesome
then your mother yells your name
and she warms your cold heart
and from now on you learn to start
your sentences with please and thanks
yielding to manners and common sense
except when climbing your neighbor’s fence
scolded for eternity
which turns too quickly to yesterday
and this is why you hear me say
“in the fields we used to play...”
I sometimes like to run more but also sometimes even like to climb up the slide even more. Daddy says never to run up the slide but I don't always listen to Daddy. Daddy says not to leave the icky top of my yogurt on the ground too but I always do too. Daddy sometimes gets scary when I don't listen but then Mommy gets in the way.

Daddy is so tall. Like maybe 5 feet almost. He's so strong. He could probably lift a horse if he wanted. Once we were waiting in line at the grocery shop and he asked me to watch Mom's purse for a minute and a big man with a scar on his cheek came and stuck his dirty hands into Mom's brand new pocketbook. Then the man looked up at me while he ruffled around in the bag. He didn't have very many teeth. Guess his Mom doesn't take him to the dentist like mine. Then he said something I think "hey pretty girl" and then I heard Mommy scream and she grabbed the purse from the big man. They were tugging at it and I cried.

But then Daddy ran from the fruit section. Even though he was so tired from running all the way there he beat that guy up. First he took his right hand and jammed it in the man's face and probably the rest of his teeth fell out. Then he punched him in the tummy so hard three times and then when he smashed his head into the other guy's head the other guy ran away like a little girl.

Daddy helped Mom up from the floor and put his arm around her. He was shaking his hand and then wiping off the blood on his painter jeans. Mom's face was all red and she was breathing a lot and I think I saw her wipe her eyes.

"Honey, you okay? You could've gotten hurt there. Come
here. It’s gonna be okay. I’ll take care of you.”

Daddy was rubbing Mom’s shoulders really softly and then he remembered that I was there too. When I saw his eyes I shrugged my shoulders and shuffled over. He put his arm around me too. Daddy’s always there to protect us. He’s so strong.

Last time when he got home from work was the scariest time. I think it was the first time I saw him use the knife or maybe the second.

We walked up the hill from the park to my house like we always did on Tuesdays. We can’t do that now though because Daddy’s gone to the Big House. That’s what Mom calls it. It’s okay though because most Tuesdays I go to visit him through the glass and I get to talk to him on the phone and hear about the flowers and plants in his room in the Big House. Daddy says he sleeps near nice guys but none as nice as Mom.

Once when I was talking to him through the glass he told me he was sorry and he never means to hurt me or Mom and he loves us very much and he’s gonna come home soon because they’ll let him out soon because he’s innocent. When Daddy smiles at me it’s hard not to cry.

Daddy looked up and Mom tapped me on the shoulder and nodded. We walked together down the long red hallway. Mom squeezed my hand tight and rubbed it too and when we heard a loud buzz a fat man with a gun opened the bars so we could get to the car.

I was looking out the window and watching everything go by so fast. Mom was staring straight ahead with both her hands on the steering wheel real tight and without bending her elbows. The trees and grass and street were all like one outside. I can’t believe Daddy’s in jail. None of my friends’ Daddies are in jail. But I guess their Daddies don’t hurt their Mommies. Daddy’s so strong. Maybe too strong so he can’t control himself. I guess that’s why he’s in jail though, because he hit Mommy too much. Last time when he got home from work was the scariest time. I think it was the first time I saw him use the knife or maybe the second. I’ve seen Mom cry before but never afraid. I think she thought Daddy was gonna kill her that night.
We got home and finished dinner and I went straight up to bed. Mom didn't say much at dinner. Only maybe that the chicken's a little cold. And that even though Daddy's not home I still need to eat broccoli.

I was lying on my back and staring at the ceiling. Then I rolled around and then I lied flat on my tummy. I guess my pillow didn't shush my crying because Mom came in and sat on my bed.

"Honey, you okay? Come here. It's gonna be okay. Daddy's coming home real soon, okay? Daddy's a good man, he never means to hurt anyone. Soon he'll come back and then you won't have to cry anymore."

I put my head on my wet pillow. Maybe if Mom knew nothing was okay she would understand why I was crying.
Flesh of the Danger Kid
Digital Photography
Joanna Ross-Tash
Winged

Aimee Rubensteen

You play the butterfly
I whisper, I’m the wind
pushing you away
you draw me in.
Chills.
Hug my every cloud
a sea of stars tickles my lashes
when I close my eyes
sun is curious as you flutter
and I awake from blue
and your wings have opened
you flew away
after I rain my eyes run charcoal
you try to wing me back
now I’ve blown away
lingering
in the distance.
I’m wrapped up like this scarf around my neck.
We’re listening to music that makes me feel contained in my happiness.
The banjo picks away at my soul and glues pieces back together harmoniously.
For a split second I see a gesture juggling and then a wave of music notes crashes over him and washes him away.
A line of dirt swirls through bright green grass like mint chocolate chip ice cream.
Wash it down with milk and honey.
Colorful patches of red and yellow rock climb the velvet sea in front of me and hold on for dear life.
My silk covered knee presses into the handle that presses into the chair hosting the girl with the large headphones in front of me.
A square tunnel through a green hill shows the view from the other side and a tree crouches over with back pain.
“Damn at my old age, I should get paid to stand.”
Piled up mountain scenery fades in shades of gray towards the future where we assume the Earth still stands.
“What if it just stops, what if it just ends?”
“But it doesn’t,” Max said.
The window glares at me for calling it names and shines the sun in my eyes like an optometrist in a doctors office with a tiny flashlight gripped between finger and thumb, and a knowing smile that says, “Now the other one.”
But there isn’t any other one, just me.
And with my legs crossed loosely and purple nail polish crusted in the wedge between my nail and flesh, I offer only myself.
If it’s not what you want then move along.
Just like the Bedouins in the desert wedge between two stones.
We pass them as they pass us and if we both move at the same time and speeds in different directions that it be like we’re not re-
ally moving.

We're frozen in motion.
And for the hundredth time this month I smell something funny because someone can't handle their lunch, but if you can’t handle beans then don't eat them.
I'm not saying you'll end up alone, but if you keep going on like this I might have to leave.
I hear those hotels in the Middle East are pretty cheap.
Who stays there? Do they plan it? Like, “Man, wanna stay in a shitty hotel in the middle of the desert and pretend we're in...Las Vegas?”
The electrical poles on the side of the road beg for my attention, but I just look back and think, “Damn those looking menacing. I wouldn’t wanna have one for a teacher.”
Because I still can't help relating electrical poles to the Holocaust and as much as I'd like to try I can't help but bring that topic up in the most—unfortunate times.
Because even I know one of New York's top selling magazines still has a bias—not even Time will tell the truth. Like time people tick, fortunate for us when it gets mad it doesn’t explode yelling, “THAT was the straw that broke the camel's back!”
I don't ever wanna be that straw, but if I had to be a straw, I'd wanna be deep inside a strawberry milkshake from Burger Burger. The only real old fashioned fast food place left in between Banff and Calgary. A secret oasis saved for all the sweaty snowboarders high and on their way home.
We smoked in the parking lot, because at Burger Burger everyone knows you only eat shit like that when you get the munchies. But my hunch is, the police need a place to go when it gets rough too.
The two of us, we’re gonna love this—you and me content in our velvet seats.
Thank G-d your iPod surged back to life; like the rebirth of Jesus, you've saved us.
Though I have to say, I'm not digging this Country twang, when suddenly you lean over and whisper in uncertainty, “Who's moving? Us or the ground?”
And I say, “Neither,” 'cause I know we're sitting still, but I can't help but smile at your sincerity.
We'll be there in six hours from now, riding camels in the Mamshit desert, and I'll pray I won’t be that last-unsuspecting-straw. 'Cause if I could, I'd make you happy all-day-long.
Woman On Bike
Digital Photography
Nomi Gofine
On the Trail Along the Schuylkill River

Hannah Rozenblat

Living you forget
that there are winding trails
overlooking rivers
through grassy hills
That there are spring breezes
and that your hair loves to play
with the warm wind
That baby geese are yellow and fuzzy
And their mama and papa stand guard
That sun showers can kiss
your upturned face, outstretched arms
That the embrace of nature is filled
with light, color, the smell of the sea
That the wind ripples the river
and the sun gleams off its waves
That life is not defined by time
but by your soul’s song
And then you feel it all
and wonder why you don’t remember
ever having truly lived before.
Choked Under Wood

Libi Ben-Tzvi

Choked under wood, covered in streaks
Of time’s marking hands in the build-up of weeks
And the build-up of months into build-up of years
Into build-up of dust on the old and antique

A small black book, the black now a mild
Shadow of gray, book the size of a child’s
Warm open heart that will shutter and close
In time with his age, with the clock as he grows

Its readers once opened its pages and there
They found that its curling white pages were bare
They put it aside and forgot to look back
As the shadows divided, unfurled into letters
And spelled out a story

The story we look for when we scan racks,
Search straining shelves and tall book-stacks
When we roam the library to find that one book
With the story that’s perfect...

That’s perfect for now—and for all the now’s that make up forever
That’s perfect for the me I was 10 years ago
For the me I will be 10 years from now
And for you
A story painted along the imagination that’s always been
banging around on the insides of our heads
Though we’ve lacked the words to draw it out

The little black book was given one look
And condemned to rot in a corner with time
It ages, grows weary with time as its giver
Heavy with words that it waits to deliver
72nd Street
Ink on paper
Nomi Teplitsky
Amidst the hustle and bustle of the great city of New York, on the corner of Sixty Sixth and Broadway, is a peanut vendor.

Every morning, as the sun hits this busy intersection of the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the peanut man prepares himself for the day of work ahead of him. He wheels his small but sturdy pushcart onto the corner he has come to know so well. The cart’s loud mixture of yellow, orange, and white stripes stands out like Polaris in the dark night sky. Branded across the flamboyant stripes is the word “nuts” in big, black, bold, block letters. An enormous tree-like umbrella hovers above the peanut man, protecting him from the elements; it provides shade from the scorching hot sun on midsummer afternoons, and keeps the peanut man dry as toast in the midst of heavy April rainfalls and post New Year’s blizzards.

Soon after the peanut man sets up shop, rush hour begins. Streams of people begin pouring out of the high rises that line Broadway and its parallel Columbus Avenue. With piping hot cups of freshly ground Starbucks coffee in one hand,

[T]he peanut man prepares himself for the day of work ahead of him. He wheels his small but sturdy push cart onto the corner he has come to know so well.

neatly folded Wall Street Journals in the other, impeccably dressed power-suits, pressed shirts, and overpriced ties race past the peanut man to the recently refurbished subway station on the corner of Sixty Fifth and Broadway.

Some of the passersby are sucked in by the sweet, heavenly waft of the nuts that fills the air for a two block radius.
The salivating customers approach the peanut man and ask, “How much?” While vigilantly stirring the syrupy, honey-covered, roasted peanuts, with his small metal scooper, sticky from previous days of work, the peanut man instinctively replies: “Two dollars a bag.” The hurried customers shove their hands into their Armani pockets and extract two faded dollar bills. The peanut man hands them a small, greasy brown paper bag, half-full with his prized culinary concoction. Before he can finish his “Thanks, come again,” the customers grab their treat and dart off to hail one of the thousands of bright yellow taxi cabs running wild in the city streets. Below the peanut man the cement sidewalk trembles from the vigor of the mile-long subway cars shuttling people to work. Surrounding him the hurried, screeching vehicles and hordes of buzzing job-bound New Yorkers create a cacophony of sound and dizzying mirage of color. Unfazed, the peanut man stands stoically behind his precious cart, intent on eking out a living.

When the early morning commotion subsides, the peanut man can be found observing the window display at Barnes and Noble. His dark eyes peer over at the seasonally decorated showcase which markets recently published popular works, from The Help to Social Media for Dummies. As customers step out of the revolving doors, laden with newly purchased prose, the aroma of the peanuts engulfs them like a heavy fog. To the satisfaction of the peanut man, many cannot resist the seductive smell of his delicious treat. Unequivocally more pleasant than the rush hour patrons, the book buyers acknowledge the peanut man with a smile, as he nods to them in return and hands them their purchase. They thank him and continue on their way as they enjoy the contents of their little brown paper bags of indulgence.

Midday approaches. Burly construction workers in rugged jeans and hard hats break from their morning of mixing cement and welding steel for nearby sites, whose bottom floors

Burly construction workers in rugged jeans and hard hats break from their morning of mixing cement ...[t]he addition of our hero’s savory peanuts to their simple sandwich lunches adds a significant boost of flavor.

something Rich & Strange | Creative Non-Fiction 47
will likely become GAP clothing stores. The addition of our hero's savory peanuts to their simple sandwich lunches adds a significant boost of flavor. Likewise, after making their way down from rickety planks of wood, suspended one hundred stories in the air by nothing more then what is hopefully sturdy rope, local window washers saunter over to the corner of Sixty Sixth Street for a dose of delectable saccharine snacks. In search of something to satisfy their sweet tooth, these manual laborers opt for the reasonably priced nuts, as opposed to supporting neighborhood bakeries whose prices are as high as the surrounding buildings on which they work. The peanut man likes to give his midday customers an extra scoop or two of nuts.

As the light of day diminishes, tall, metallic lamps flood the streets of the Upper West Side with bright light and the area around the peanut man remains vibrant. Sedentary professionals bursting with pent-up energy transform into active work-out machines. Men in loose shorts and sweaty t-shirts, women donning skin-tight leggings and tank tops, pound the pavement with their Nike running shoes, circling the peanut man on their nightly jogging routes to and from nearby Central Park.

The peanut man glances over his shoulder diagonally across Broadway at the renowned Avery Fisher Hall where the New York Philharmonic begins to play melodiously, playing against a backdrop of honking taxis and booming buses outside. He notices long white stretched limousines and Mercedes sedans transporting suburbanites to the symphony. Local apartment dwellers race towards the venue as well, just in time to take their seats before the musical tapestry ensues.

As the night wears on and his inventory and customers fade, the peanut man closes the large overhead umbrella and empties out the leftover peanuts from their molasses-covered metal bowls into his burlap sack. The peanut man calls it a night and heads southwest to Forty Third and Eleventh, towards the vendor's garage. With his multicolored pushcart in tow, the weary peanut man drifts off into the night and heads home.
Self-Portrait
Ink on paper
Mia Guttman
iShadow
Digital Photography
Fiona Guedalia
A Walk in the Park
Digital Photography
Samantha Feldman
El Gaucho
Digital Photography
Gavriel Brown
Pineapple
Acrylic on canvas
Noa Peyser
Man and Nature
Acrylic on canvas
Jordana Chernofsky
"Judah, you still awake?"
Jacob whispered the words into the darkness. They were
in the bedroom they shared, the two brothers, in that warm
time right before you fall asleep.
It was the night before Judah's wedding. They had shared
this room for the past 20 years, since Jacob was born. They
spent their childhood together in this room, and tonight they
would share it one last time.
"Yeah I'm still up," Judah sleepily replied. "What do you
want?"
"Nothing. I was just checking to see if you were awake."
They lay there in silence, Jacob lying on his back, staring at
the ceiling, watching shadowy images appear and evaporate
with the direction of his imagination; Judah on his stomach,
his head turned to the right facing the wall, his eyes closed,
trying to fall asleep.
The room was silent with a strong breeze coming through
the window in the October night.
"Remember when you used to make me tell you what hap-
pened in the cartoons on Sunday nights?"
"What?" Judah asked, with an older-brother tone indicat-
ing his annoyance at the childishness of his younger brother.
"You know, back when you had school on Sunday, but I was
still in kindergarten so I didn't. I would get to stay home and
watch the Sunday morning cartoons. When we would go to
sleep that night, you would make me tell over what happened
in all the shows."
Judah gave no response.
"Come on, you don't remember?"
"I do remember, I'm just trying to sleep. It's late. Good night."
Jacob continued to stare at the ceiling, and then let out a
small laugh.
"Remember how you used to bribe me by saying you would
tell me Power Ranger stories from shows that I had never
seen? You know, from cartoons that you had seen that I was too young to remember? You would tell me these crazy stories about different color Power Rangers I had never even heard of. Remember?"

"Oh yeah, I do remember," Judah replied. "Yeah, I would make those stories up. It was so easy. You would forget them so fast, that I would just repeat the same ones like every two weeks. I can't believe you fell for that."

They lay in their beds, not needing to look at each other. The darkness made the room one big space of nothingness. All they needed was to hear each other's voice. They lay there quietly for a few minutes, or maybe it was an hour. Suddenly Judah spoke out.

"Remember the multicolored Ranger? That was my masterpiece. You loved to hear about the multicolored Ranger."

"Are you kidding? Of course I remembered him," Jacob responded into the darkness. "That's what you would use to get me to talk when I was too tired. You would tell me that you had a story with the multicolored Ranger. After hearing that, I had no choice to but to tell over all the cartoons from that day."

"Yeah, you fell for it every time. Oh man, remember how I used to tell you that he was rarely on the show, and that's why I had so few stories with him?" Judah spoke as the memory was coming back to him, like he was experiencing it happen right then, for the first time. He could picture the two of them, lying in the same room years ago, talking in the darkness.

And then the multicolored Power Ranger was called, and he quickly joined the others. His animal would come out of the ocean. But he was really, really powerful, so they only called him when they were in trouble. But once he joined them, they were unstoppable. His weapon was this long stick that could be used as a sword, but it could also shoot lasers at the bad guy. So this time, they called him, and he was about to shoot his laser when... Jacob? Jacob? You sleeping? You there..."
room. They agreed, but he never moved in.

"Judah can I ask you something?"
"Yeah, sure what's up?"

Jacob was still staring at the ceiling. He didn't need to face towards his brother. It was just the two of them in the darkness.

"Are you nervous?"
"About what?"
"The wedding."

Judah lay there silently, his eyes still closed as they had been the entire time. In the darkness and stillness of the room, he took his time to answer. And when he did, it was just one word. "Yes."

Jacob had so many things to say. There was so much Jacob wanted. But more than anything in the world, what he wanted most right now was a multicolor Power Ranger story. That would make this night, the last night, perfect.

"Judah?"
"Yeah?"

He heard himself say it in his head.
I love you, and I'm scared of losing you.
I don't want you to leave.
Can you tell me a multicolored Power Ranger Story?
"Never mind. Good luck tomorrow."
"Thanks," his brother replied.

In the darkness of the room all pretenses were placed aside and truth was plainly spoken. Unable to see one other, but knowing it was just the two of them, it was the time when they could ask each other anything. What was spoken during this time was never acknowledged during the day. It was a sacred time, and it would stay between them forever.

Jacob was angry at himself for not having the courage to speak. "Well, it's getting late and you have a big day tomorrow, so, good night," he said, into the dark void.

"Yeah, good night," Judah replied.

The time passed by very slowly. Jacob fought the fatigue with all his might. He didn't want to let this night end. But there was no fighting it.

"Jacob," Judah whispered, "you awake?"
The Djinns that Come Out of Tea Kettles

Avital Chizhik

The young Arab who pours me mint tea on a June day in the Christian Quarter -- and whom I will later see several times, and then on the last day discover that he and his magical shop have disappeared -- he reads me with one stolen glance.

He places me in his polished jewelry shop beside sterling pomegranates turquoise necklaces imported rugs for herds of tourists, and has a barefoot little Ahmed bring me tea on a silver platter -- or is it tea? perhaps it's poison? -- and pours for me, out of a gleaming tea kettle, his mother's garden in Tiberias and the gossip of the Jerusalem shuk and travels in Greece and Russia and France and the way that Muslims do things and what are you studying? The tea is sweet and his smile is kind. -- he's deceiving me. Foolish Jewish girl, sitting down with a young good-looking Ishmaelite. Ay ay ay. --

And your family? traditions? and philosophy? and love? and war? The tourists exclaim over young love -- they think I'm Arab too. My cheeks turn orange like the caviar Mama serves at lunch -- Cousins, uncles, and shopkeepers come and go.
ahalan shukran salaam aleikum.
   -- perhaps it's a conspiracy?
no no, but he smiles so kindly, this Ishmael,
surely he's no enemy to you, Isaac --
pencil-thin nephews run in and throw shy smiles.

He pours for me Turkish coffee with cardamom
and instead of cream
he offers words like
'preserve' and 'honor',
Little girl, you want to be a woman,
I know from your eyes,
yaa ayin,
   -- like that Amr Diab song They play in Their grocery shops--
but only a man of fire
can make a woman out of a girl.
   -- what does an Arab know? Leave me be, please --
The men you have seen,
walla, not men.
   -- stop it please stop --
They have not brought out the fire of your eyes.
   -- what are you talking about --
You burn inside
like the blue of flame
   -- nonsense, utter nonsense --
and suddenly
his eyes, black, cling onto mine
and I feel hot, quickly look down,
because it's not the sun nor the tea.

Inshallah,
a man will come
he will melt you with his touch,
make you his most prized vineyard --
Ach, don't roll your eyes at me;
are you listening, young girl?
Here, drink some more tea.
I will have Ahmed bring more.
Drink drink!
To life, as you Jews say
And to your eyes.
Ya ayin, habibi,
yaa ayin.
Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! Now I hear them—Ding-dong, bell.

William Shakespeare. The Tempest, act. 1, scene 2, lines 397-405.
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