

# Vagabonds

Anthology of the Mad Ones





## **Vagabonds Vol. 2 Issue # 1 2013**

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**Letter of Introduction**  
**From Weasel, the Managing Editor**

It appears we have picked up another traveler. Let me be the first to welcome you! Underneath the pages, you will find that this anthology harbors a collection of work from people I call the “mad ones.” Those who are so dedicated to their art that the world believes they are a hot mess of crazy. We are Vagabonds, nameless ghosts who have flocked to these pages, wanting nothing more than to share our story with you. And it is not so often we get to take the stories from our palms to present them.

This is a growing project, and I cannot thank our contributors as well as our readers enough for making this stage possible. This is our second issue; an issue that originally was not planned to be seen for another long while. With much amazement I am proud to say that we are still sticking our thumbs out there for another ride, and I hope to have a lot more to come in the future. But for now, let’s give our artists the stage. Traveler, relax and enjoy this fresh new cluster fuck of a ride!

He felt as though his heart were a bomb, a complicated bomb that would result in a simple explosion, wrecking the world without rocking it. – **Nathanael West**



**Res Ipsa Loquitur by Valdon Ross**

## **Pass the Sugar**

### **Mitchell Dudley**

Sugar daddy attending his stable, sunny-side up, fluffy pancakes, alone at their state, reminiscing, a humble citizen with pockets stacked with greenbacks enjoying retirement, the loose waitresses flock. Sugar daddy, sly slick approach aiming for the next victims.

Sassy curls occupied by Latin girls. Saying a few words that light up under the roof, their hazel eyes lit up inside the dim lit room. The manager is a pimp, his charcoal shade lips and his options with the staff.

As she passes my table, Why does she secretly eye me, the dyed down blondie. If I can be anything I declare to be all that I can be, I wouldn't consider myself as her next victim. Nameless hearts been crushed down to dust and sprinkled like seasonings onto the cement; working ants, foraging, feeding their queen with organ debris of unnamed victims. From physical consequences to emotional scars this cycle of puppeteering with human emotions. Karma has the tendency to be inevitable.

Yesterday she was the young queen, as time beats its rhythm indirectly significantly. They once stood with pride as checklist standard vixens; now it's receding hairlines inclined, strands of gray pubic hairs, wrinkled dangling lips to both ends, hair weaves, faux braids, loose, chipped teeth healed bruises. The retained stress and drama suppressed by the vapors of weed.

Sugar Daddy's request, with passive aggressiveness, first class treatment, dining in, her goal is to be the over tipped waitress, his main interest is to ejaculate on the backside of any willing strumpet.

**Mary Magdalene**  
**Eliseo Tony Solis**

I carried her off the shelves,  
with her back upon my palm,  
to a moment for ourselves  
losing track I felt so calm.  
Beneath the eyes of many,  
she whispers through her covers:  
'The secrets for company  
and reasons for each other.'  
Regardless of our ages,  
we're always chasing after;  
deep breath between her pages,  
emerging through her chapters.  
Leather bounded resilient,  
she was there till I was spent.

## **To Wednesday, with Love**

### **FatimaHirsi**

At some point driving home from work I lost a piece of myself.  
I'm not sure if it happened when I stopped for gas or  
if it was when I passed the dancing man who asked for gold.

It may have been at the intersection of Collins and Abram Road,  
when the rainbow stepped out of my van,  
walked across the street, and stood on the corner  
with the intent of being sold to the darkest cloud  
who could offer the most rain.

I didn't stay to see who stopped-  
the me that remained wanted nothing more than  
to beat the train and be naked at home with hot tea,

entertained to sleep by the colloquy  
between a boisterous AC, a soft-spoken sink, and  
a neighbor's TV joining in through the wall.

Now, it's nearly midnight, and the misanthrope inside  
has successfully missed six calls and still not replied  
to the guy who wants more than exists to be given  
to him.

**Flying Through the Night**  
**Eliseo Tony Solis**

Remember taking each other deeper,  
nose-diving through every hidden valley  
synchronizing with the spreading river  
without crashing into the coming scene.  
Kamikaze-ing till the sun became a  
creeper, Tom cat peeping, two no sleepers  
gliding along in cunning company.

# Origami

Luke Prater

spread-eagled on snow  
exposed

floored moonlit chamber  
supine

flailing in loose paper  
cuts

red tape; caution tape  
black on yellow

white lie

neatly scored, immaculate -  
the perfect paper crane



**ShovanaThulung**

## **The Road to Awe**

### **Fatima Hirsi**

Patience had never known hurt,  
even when the other boys teased and sneered  
and shoved him into the dirt of the playground-  
he took their torture with the smile of a slave who tastes freedom.

One whole year since his mother died and  
not one tear had he shed. Not once did he cry  
for the woman who gave him his flower of a name.  
She was to blame for the lunches spent alone and  
the bruises he took home, but still he loved her  
too much to mourn an ending to her pain.

And then it was over. They came for him in the night  
just like in his dreams. He kissed his father goodbye,  
old man too covered in grief to feel the cold of another loss,  
and turned out the light of a life that had always felt just a little bit off  
before accepting the hand of a stranger.

Warmth  
up through his arm into every tissue and bone.  
Like his mother's laughter, alive and bright even through darkness.  
Patience knew

## **Lot Speaks of His Wife with Some Regret** **Greg Smith**

You can't tell a woman anything!  
I told my ornery wife not to look back  
But the uppity bitch didn't listen;  
When I called back to her  
She was rattling on so  
As gossipy women often do.

Soon, it was only my own footsteps  
To be heard after her last words,  
"I'm gonna turn around  
So I can tell Jacob's wife."

Whatever she saw, she saw alone  
And whatever it was turned her to stone.

We found her when we doubled back  
Months later. Still on that trail,  
She now stands a salt-licked monument  
In the sand next to an oasis,  
Mouth open in mid-syllable  
The way she was last in life.

Oh, yes, she's certainly thinner now, what's left;  
After the camels licked her so,  
She lost those breeder's hips.

I do miss her some.  
She kept me company many a night  
Out in the desert. Now,  
With only the stars for company,  
The moon to me doesn't seem so bright.

Ah, my loquacious love,  
If only you had listened.



**Something's Wrong**  
**Joshua Findley**

I quiver in cold sweats, when I awake  
To a nightmare of reality  
To find you  
Not by my side.

Uncomfortable, clawing at my own skin  
Just until the follicles unweave.  
If only I could keep you  
Underneath it always.

You're not there, beside my bed,  
Watching me sleep as normal.  
Your absence warrants my anxiety  
And dread to want to merely move.

As if it were  
Even an option at all.  
I can't feel your glare anymore.  
Oh, how it helped me slumber so.

So my skin weeps with sweat  
Just to sweeten the deal,  
And make the bitter sorrow  
Of your disappearance not so sour.

I would fear I may die today,  
If only I could feel at all.  
I may slip away into oblivion,  
Until into my arms you return to stay.  
The feel of anything important  
Alongside nothing of the kind,  
Die and subside.  
Everything and nothing.

All at once,  
And not at all,  
Simultaneously synchronized  
With the upwards fall.

1-2-3 Heaven.  
Hopefully soon,  
I hear the angelic,  
And beckoning call.



## **Sugar Daddy by Weasel**

**Poverty in the Window**  
**Emily Ramser**

A man is napping  
sleeping in arms of fleece  
and knitted rope // hammock//poverty  
across the street from my suburban town home  
I watch as he packs it up, rolling, rolling  
each morning when the sun shoos him  
back to bridges and street corners

**a car ride with my best friend**  
**Carlos Espino**

we laughed  
as we judged  
this world to be doomed.

it is too late to stop climate change.  
it is too late to fix our governments.  
it is too late to educate the masses.  
it is too late to unseat the oppressors.  
it is just too late!

we laughed.  
we laughed at the bleakness.  
we acted brave about it by laughing.

I'd like to think  
that deep inside;

we both wept.

# **Hai Karate**

## **William Tribell**

I remember as a child  
Seeing the tall men  
In the airport  
With their machine guns  
As I was rushed  
From gate to gate

Now they are not there  
But some how  
It's even more ominous  
Less honest  
Foreboding

The airport used to be  
Soft, easy jazz  
Maybe  
A mildly meandering bass line  
Fingers snapping time  
Now;

A sight to see indeed  
Like a passing  
Through a penitentiary  
In step - a woeful dirge  
One walks the line  
With slip on shoes

And an x-ray

## **Trash**

**Matthew J. Nielsen**

Painful on our porches,  
late lessons learned,  
overcast without sun.  
Cellophanes from cigarettes  
crinkle, blowing past  
bottle caps bent in half,  
their usefulness expended.  
Salty, shameful stench  
emanate from drainage ditches  
inhabited by amphibious denizens  
and dead, decaying leaves,  
like half-remembered dreams.  
Faceless, lean conundrums  
briskly bike by  
to destinations unknowable,  
while worry-faced widows  
clutch their ancient purses  
to their fallen bosoms.  
Friday's paper is transfigured  
to today's trash.  
The news is now three days passed.

**Today (Remix)**  
**Tybalt Maxwell**

He sits across from me at the back of the bus, one foot resting on a bar with his knee drawn to his chest. His head rests tired on the glass beside him, scrutinizing the bits of landscape illuminated by oncoming traffic.

The brows of his reflection are furrowed, his fingers twitching like proboscises on his raised knee. He whispers something I cannot hear before slouching back into his seat with his knees spread.

He notices me, his head rolling on its rest to ponder. Opening his mouth he hesitates. “Hey,” his voice is half a cough, tumbling from his tongue and falling flatly on my ears. “Can I bum a cigarette?”

## **Competition**

### **Weasel**

Pandering is a bitch when the sun is angry. Eggs no longer fry in the asphalt, but sweat from the body steams as it collects in a pool beneath the cracks. He stands at the street corner, waving at the traffic—sometimes dancing to get the slightest attention. His sign mingles and twirls amongst the scratching noises of tires against concrete, buzzing hums and clicks of new and lemon automobiles. On few occasions his work is slightly paid off with a few quarters, dimes, nickels, and a huge weight in pennies; though there are the rare events when the human soul is nice enough to toss a dollar to him.

She sat across from him, her eyes leering at every jerk, squat, jump and dance move he could think of as she took large breaths from her cigarette. This was her country. Before the entertainment marched in, she ruled every little weed through the cracks of that street corner. Queen B, “Queen Mothafuckin’ B.” Her eyes grew fierce as her pile of change was low. It seemed the Wal Mart of the homeless had finally come to smoke her off of her throne.

Queen B jolted up from her the edge of the sidewalk, stabbing her cigarette into the ground as she lifted her body righteously. Her feet dug into the street as she walked across to greet him, the cars stopping in her grace. She grabbed the man by his collar, punching him in the stomach. The groans hurled from his mouth as his body tensed and jolted forward. “Listen mista, you doin’ this work too fast. Givin’ people like me, hard workin’, a bad rep.”

The man started to collect himself, his eyes staggering into his normal vision, no longer blurring out the faces or streets in front of him. He slowly started to raise himself, taking heaves of breath as the pain throbs against his body. “At least I’m honest, lady,” he responded dryly, his hand pointing to her sign which told the world she was very sick and she needed help. God Bless was always a nice touch to a largely religious population. Queen B grew furious as she drove her hand across his face, leaving a few minor scratches along his cheek. He turned back to her, letting the sun smooth and caress the stings, “I’m not homeless, and I never was. I’m only broke.”



**Plain Humanity by Emily Ramser**

## **The Day After the Blast**

### **Joshua Findley**

At the epicenter of a destroyed city, lies ruins of rubble covered in graffiti. Here, are buried bits of buildings and fortresses turned to a fodder of fine powder. They tell tales of tumultuous times of vandals and terrorism in the city, an aerosol warfare where bombs were dropped on the tops of lofts, to the sidewalks over the sewers. On that day, once the colorful cloud cleared, all that remained were glowing artifacts of artisans, and abstracted paints smeared. Corporate constructs now victims of artistic assassins that lie in coffins covered in colorful canvas. The drips forever drop and mix together run rampant with a fixed finite of finesse. Raining down from an atomic mushroom cloud of O-Zone and frozen ash, comes forth the fallout of empty paint cans alongside rusted Porsches and broken down, dust covered minivans. If you listen close enough, you can hear their empty shells hit the side streets and tin roofs of the back alley dive bar dwells, producing naturally orchestrated lost lyrics without the beats. This is where imagination sleeps. Though painted in desolation, this is where the true artist retreats.

**61 HWY Gray and the Fever Shake'n On  
Down: It Must Have Been the Devil  
William Tribell**

Through the bottom  
The Mississippi hills  
Cotton and peas  
Chicken and hogs  
Riverside Hotel  
No more riverboat blow  
Rocking chair  
Diddley bow and stomp  
Hard times  
Easily remembered  
Still make'n a day  
From door to door  
Four pecks in a bushel  
Four bushels to a gallon  
To roll the dough  
Juke and jive  
To shake the jelly  
Live and die  
Come'n around  
Good time people  
For hope and heaven  
Hole in the meadow  
Soggy forgot  
Misplaced and blue  
Done and gone

# **Who Are You**

## **Matthew J Nielsen**

I am  
the vagabond  
screaming in the subway,  
the dead  
girl in the forest,  
and the beheaded  
enemy general.  
I am the tsunami survivor.  
I am the stray cat.

I am  
the single  
shoe on the roadside,  
the toe  
of a cripple,  
and the screech  
of train brakes.  
I am the penny in the dryer.  
I am the peace in the evening.

I am  
the heir  
of an heir, of a millionaire,  
plastic bottles  
in the landfill,  
and the rotten  
chocolate in the box.  
I am the spit of a cobra.  
I am the famine mother.

I am  
bacteria  
in your intestines,  
the hated  
elected official,  
and the chatter  
on the night bus.  
I am the hoot of an owl.  
I am a blood test.

I am  
the grin  
of the old wolf,  
the beaten-  
stupid orphan,  
and the blank  
page in the guestbook.  
I am the ice in the glass.  
I am the rays of the sun.

I am  
the sum  
of all fears,  
the culmination  
of all prayers,  
and the prisoner  
of a life sentence.  
I am everything and nobody.  
I am everyone and nothing.

**Rant: Acts of Catastrophe**  
**Joshua Findley**

A relaxing atrophy ensues, and the rest of what I could feel hibernates out of the way and into refuge. My being lies arrested in destitution, yet my soul stays somewhat safe inside this borrowed body. Ticking away with a tangible heart, awaiting Father Time's exhaustion, or whatever biological clock it's set to, unstable and at any minute able to fall apart. I am just a seed in Mother Earth's womb waiting to be sown. Will I sprout and spawn today? Or will I just wilt and waste away? I have been beckoned and have become a colonial cluster of fungal seaweed adrift and rifting outward with a lunar push upon a wave break. I'm an act of catastrophic color, bleeding out from an oceanic reflection of a sunset on the horizon of an atomic blast engulfing the distance. All is awake and disintegrated simultaneously in an instant without resistance. The painted wake of destruction permeates a masterpiece of silhouettes permanently etched upon the shore sharing memories of a perfect world preserved and petrified.

This is ground zero for my soul's nebula. There, radiates 10,000 kilotons of supernova in thick proportions, chemically chain reacting nucleic distortions.

Thus these remaining endorphins contort and mutate to poorly piece together a chronological mosaic, portraying my self-discovery's endeavor. My recovery results to a revolting result of transcendental perception. The enlightenment I thought once was has now all been deemed a misconception.

Homo-sapean reincarnate.

Repeat process.

Repeat process.

Repeat process.

Repeat process.

**the lie and how i told it**  
**Carlos Espino**

i liken  
the state of my life  
in the right now  
to having moved out of a house  
that was in desperate disrepair  
and is no longer standing.

perhaps it was too large  
for me to keep track of the upkeep.  
or maybe it was too small  
to bother keeping up.

whatever the reason

I now find myself in a new house;  
quite large  
and very different from the one before.  
what will happen  
I can't honestly commit  
to answering.

all I can do  
is hope desperately I can grow into it,  
and pay the bills

on time.

## **Mechanical**

### **James Steele**

When the wasp flew by her head, Suzan did nothing. She had just come home and was focused on cooking dinner. She switched on the stove, filled a pot with water, boiled noodles, heated sauce and ate spaghetti. She then crawled into bed and fell asleep.

The next morning she awoke. The wasp was still flying around the apartment. A second wasp joined the first and flew in front of her face as she walked to the front door. She didn't notice. Her head pushed them away, she slipped on her shoes and walked out the door.

At the factory, Suzan took the piece of metal from one machine, loaded it into the other, pressed a button, let the machine do its thing, removed the part and placed it in the bin. She repeated the process 600 times.

Twelve hours later she walked through the front door. There were five wasps flying around her apartment. Suzan walked straight through their miniature swarm to the kitchen. She filled the pot with water, turned on the stove, fetched the

ingredients, made more spaghetti, showered and went to bed.

Suzan woke up. Ten wasps were flying around her apartment. She walked through them, dressed, and drove to work. She repeated the same motions 600 times, returned home twelve hours later. Now there were twenty wasps.

Suzan came and went. Came and went. The door opened and closed. She woke up, went to the factory before the sun was up, walked back through the door when the sun was down.

The wasps had built a nest in one corner of the ceiling. A thick cloud of yellow insects flew through the apartment. Her apartment was a subwoofer set to a low, droning hum. Suzan didn't see the insects or feel the sound. She merely walked through them as she crisscrossed the kitchen. She ate dinner and then walked to her bedroom. The bugs made way for her. They crawled on her body for warmth at night. Her body responded to the stimulus by not rolling over while she slept. The wasps in turn got used to leaving her when it was time to wake up.

Suzan left for the factory again today. The dense cloud of wasps wandered up, down and around the apartment. They built more nests. They sought out prey both inside and outside. At work, the machines did what they did.

Suzan parked her car, opened the door and marched inside. The wasps parted for her. She made food, ate, showered and went to bed. The wasps slept with her. The machines got along just fine.

**Today**

**Tybalt Maxwell**

On the train I rest my head against the glass, looking out at fields of tall winter grains. They wear November's kiss of snow like small white hats, all of them standing together to wave goodbye.

My digits spread along the pane, filling the spider-web cracks that reach up to the sky. Lazily we cross the quilt of so many farms, my form curled and leaning in the snug carriage seat. The shuttle rocks gently as it saunters down the track, with dappled dreams flitting across my eyes, a light giggle, and so many white caps waving in the breeze.

“It is going to be strange living there, I think, but I think it is also very exciting. There is going to be lots of new things there, like music and dancing. I am very excited to see the new music and dancing.

When I visit last time there was a girl drawing on the concrete. She had a sign that said ‘Hello, I am Cho the Chalk Chick’, and she drew this big picture on the ground and the people had to walk

around her, but they would put coins into this little hat.

They had this big train there, and people would play their music on the drums and guitars. It was very loud but also it was exciting, the big train and the big noises.”

I can see it with my hand, the big noises and the drums. Each finger stretched laps at the glass, excited for today.

## **Fate's Design**

### **Sendokidu**

A fondled dream, so coddled blindly in the breast  
of a Seer, drew a crowd for lectured clouds.  
It bid them hark, to bequeath to them a nest  
of knowledge from staff of Light. The Dark was so loud.

A man so old, to follow this speech a world  
ago, approached this dream in utter defi-  
ance. With sword held high above, he scoffed and hurled  
an insult laced with unerring blasphemy.

A shrill of anger flowed from the mouth of Fate,  
the blow of multiple paths too much to endure.  
Alas, the once sought Sovereign saw this. To sate  
the reverence's thirst, an end must be procured.

A staff and sword collide to denounce the lie.  
With blood and stroke, the two in life deny.

## **The Carpenter**

**E.M. Cooper**

The carpenter walked through the forest on the first day of fall. Life stirred at the sound of footsteps traveling the path of crimson and gold. Birds were the first to greet him that morning, welcoming their kindly neighbor while they tended to their nests. The squirrels paused as he passed them by, their heads turning and ears twitching at the crunch of boot over dirt and dew-laden leaves. He paused and closed his eyes for a moment, letting his ears fill with the gentle trickle and tumble of the creek lapping against rocks. With a satisfied nod, he resumed his morning walk. Over the forest, a light breeze rustled through the trees, carrying with it a faint whisper.

It called to the carpenter; a plea to stray from the path. He continued on his way, for he only heard the wind. Another voice joined the murmur, begging him to listen. He could not hear them, for their voices were too soft. The winds returned once more, carrying the fallen leaves of the forest as they brushed past the carpenter. Vivid splashes of red, brown, and yellow overwhelmed his vision as the quiet duet quickly grew in number. More cries joined the choir until their words echoed through the woods, urging the carpenter to answer

them. He heard them at last and listened to their words. The winds died as the din calmed itself and told him where they waited -- deep within the woods through paths unknown to the carpenter. They wished to meet him.

With their guidance, he stepped off the path and went deep into the forest. The whispers faded when he emerged from the brush and entered a grassy clearing. In the center stood a great tree, its limbs naked, withered, and worn by the passage of time. Having never seen such a sight before, the carpenter approached the tree in awe. When he placed his hand on the ancient bark, the voices returned in a frenzy of sound, surging into his mind and drowning his senses in unknown tongues. He ripped his hand from the tree and fled the clearing, sprinting as fast as he could towards his cabin and locked himself away for the night.

The carpenter returned to the tree with his tools on the second day of fall. He set them on the ground and closed his eyes before reaching out to the gnarled wood a second time. He heard nothing. The tree's rough bark scratched his wrinkled hands, etching its storied history onto his skin. The carpenter pulled his hands away and picked up his axe. He bowed his head and apologized to the tree before hacking into its flesh. The voices responded

with wailing shrieks as his axe tore into the tree, their pained howls threatened to engulf him once more. Their cries were silenced when the tree came crashing to the ground. He bundled as much wood as he could carry and returned to his home.

The carpenter stayed in his cabin on the third day of fall. He sliced into each piece of wood, dissecting the remains as he searching for what spoke to him on the first day of fall. By nightfall, he had heard no whispers. He heard no murmurs. Only silence -- nothing. The carpenter retired for the night, weary and defeated.

The voices returned to him that night. Many whispered in the tongue he heard on the first day, only a scant few spoke his. Their tone was measured, devoid of any joy or bitterness as they spoke of the tree and what the carpenter had done on the second day. Hearing their tale, the carpenter learned that these voices were the ancient spirits that once dwelled in the forest and inhabited the tree he had cut down. Upon finishing their account, the spirits then gave the carpenter a task. Before he could ask their intent they faded from his mind, leaving him alone with their lingering words and his own troubled thoughts. He awoke from his fitful slumber early the next morning and

approached the pieces of wood resting on his workbench.

For three days and nights, his hands carved and sliced through the wood with care, making skillful incisions and precise cuts, whittling and chipping pieces away as the spirits instructed. Slivers of wood fell from the formless lump he cradled in his nicked and splintered fingers. As time wore on, the shapeless piece of wood began to change into something more.

Tools fell from weary hands on the seventh day of fall. His tired gaze fell upon his creation: a small wooden figure created in the likeness of a young man. It lay on his workbench, pointing at him with a stubby finger. The dim lighting inside the cabin fell behind the carpenter as he rose, his shadow hiding the knowing smile on the doll's face. The voices fell silent while he admired his work. Satisfied, the carpenter set the figure on the table behind him. It watched him as he began to work on the next piece.

# O Venerable Question!

## Sendokidu

In my hand, I found a curved weapon laced  
In dust. Raised it high, I did, and slashed  
Through boundaries never meant to be touched.  
So easily the seams part, the sickle far from dull.

Procreator of dreams,  
Saboteur of the weak.

What will be mine destiny?  
Will I share the fate of fools?

O trickle of life, guidance be given to you.  
Do follow the path we made; save Lord Geb  
And his nurturing peridots. Forgive us, for  
The scythe had yet to grace us these veins.

Administer of faith,  
Assailant of hope.

Could I glance into light for myself?  
Was this coil thus barren of purpose?

Finality, we humble serfs beseech thee.  
For our grasping hands that fail the Divine,  
Deliver unto your pawns that which we so  
Long for. Let this curved sword shatter once.

Tormenting sanctum,

Do you find joy in our search?

Corporeal butcher,

Why must ye flay our name?

So tired am I of this wretched game of guessing



Valdon Ross

**As Lost As I Get I Will Find You by Valdon Ross**

## **In Baudelaire's Company on New Year's Eve**

**Greg Smith**

Drinking Guyanese rum and coke, reading Baudelaire,  
I hear the pop, pop, pop, pop of firecrackers  
In the distance as the New Year begins.  
Here on the sleeping porch  
on a warm, humid night,  
with neither friend nor lover near,  
I drink a toast to a festive time past.

Out of the darkness, rising above the music,  
the noise of neighbor's street fiesta, Baudelaire's voice  
speaks to me of exotic perfume, intoxicating tamarinds,  
of guilt and stubborn sin.  
First the fireworks, and then after—  
  
--the silence.

**GO!**

**Brian McHugh**

I met them at 6:30 p.m. and by 6:45 we were screaming down the highway. It was dark out, rush hour traffic while weaving through cars. We had agreed Butch would go first, and as par his tradition he insisted on being stoned. The windows were rolled up. Butch held the steering wheel with his knees while he lit a joint. It went around clockwise – Butch, me, Sunshine, Allie-Lee and Sparks.

The cars on the highway, each one was dark, dark and identical to the car before it. The drivers weren't happy. Identical hundreds of faces, cheap suits and ties and baggy eyes, scowls frozen on their faces. Inside the dark cars dim circles of light illuminated only frustrated frowning faces.

The car was stuffy, hot, filled with drifting wisps of smoke. Butch passed me the joint. 'You ready?' I asked him. He exhaled a lingering cloud, wreath of smoke around his head.

‘Wait for the music.’ He said.

Traffic wasn’t heavy, but, at 90 MPH the cars came up quick, most unexpectedly. The tires echoed going through cold overpass. Tension rising in the music. I could see Butch mentally noting pattern of the cars in front of us, how they spaced out. The engine humming faster, deeper, I could see the speedometer, 95...100, and at 110 Butch applied the cruise control, cranked the music blaring simultaneously yelling Go! ... as he squeezed his eyes shut and I hit the timer...

Flying blindly down dark highway passing cars on right and left, Butch gently guiding roaring missile round the bend— a car! coming up quick but we don’t tell him, we can’t spoil the fun – quickly coming close to taillights bumper stickers in our sights – and Butch yanked the wheel to the right, changing lanes in just the time. He knew the car was there the whole time. Highway now into a straight-away, Butch blindly feels it out, gets the car straight and keeps it there, a car to the right holds the horn swerving to the other lane, Butch in reaction

begins drifting, drifting to the left, eyes shut and drifting into traffic on the left...

‘Open!’ I yelled. Butch opened his eyes, saw where we were too close to the car and brought us back to the lane, away from the cars so close to our left. Butch smiled wide, thrilling me with his bursting eyes.

‘What—a—*rush*.’ The music was winding down. ‘How long?’

‘Fifteen seconds.’

‘Pah! Who’s next?’

‘I’ll go!’ said Sunshine. She passed Allie-Lee a plastic pint of vodka and positioned herself to climb into the front. I held the wheel while Sunshine and Butch switched. Every 50 feet, on both sides of the highway huge billboards stood. ‘*We sell this! So buy it!*’ said one. Another, ‘*You aren’t happy, without this!*’ ‘*Be yourself. Be, Glamore!*’ proclaimed a still-life, a woman modeling basic red t-shirt and plastic smile.

‘I hate those things,’ said Sunshine. She settled in behind the wheel. ‘*Be different! Buy*

*Glimmore!*’ proclaimed a still-life, a woman modeling basic off-red t-shirt and unctuous smile. Sunshine complained, yet she knew, she knew there wasn’t a road to take without them looming. The engine hummed to 95 and cruise-control was then applied.

‘Ready?’ I asked. Sunshine grinning flicked the headlights out, drew a deep breath, shutting her eyes and shouting Go! ...

Dark missile coming blind round gentle curve, a car in front of us Sunshine swerved, over a lane – wait a moment – and back again, narrowly missing the other car’s front-end. The car she cut off blew a horn. A bullet in the dark, she quickly pulled ahead of them.

‘Oh! She passed!’ went Sparks, sitting forward in his seat. We were all sitting forward in our seats. This was the only reason we ever had.

The highway straightened, Sunshine smoothing out along with it, dark missile hidden in the night, fleeing between unknowing cars. The lane ahead of us empty of taillights, up

ahead a car to right – Sunshine jerked the wheel into the lane behind the car going goinggoing closer to the car and was inches from the bumper before jerking to the left again, opening her eyes. Big beaming smile and her excitement-glowing eyes. ‘Did I get close?’

‘Yes!’ chorused the rest of us, laughingly.

‘23 seconds,’ I said.

‘Personal best.’ Sunshine dancing in the driver seat.

‘I’m next,’ I said. Me and Sunshine switched. ‘What if we turn into a burning flaming wreck tonight?’

‘What, is there suddenly some importance to your life you’re worried about?’ Allie-Lee gibed, sounding intentionally pathetic.

‘Good. I’m going one-fifteen, thirty seconds. Ready?’ I flicked the headlights on. Deep breath, shook out my arms. Stomach sick, filled with thick-blood nervousness. Go! ...

Roaring blind through midnight void,  
seeing nothing feeling all, vibrations of an  
engine churning burning down the highway blind  
and guessing, barely knowing where the other  
cars may lie, hoping, not knowing – possibly I'll  
steer us by. Gently straighten out the wheel, drift  
left a lane and keep it straight, hold it straight...

... A pressure behind my eyes wanting to  
burst, wanting me to open them but the burn, the  
burn builds with the pressure in my heart and  
stomach the longer I keep them shut – heart  
thumping echoes in my chest – rising risingrising  
in my throat with the tension and numbing fear  
of not knowing not seeing what is coming and  
the pure thrill of tempting the unknown for that  
moment of escape, this moment of escape –  
barreling into uncertainty because it's only there  
where you might chance to free yourself from  
imposed order and begin anew. To choose your  
future. Flying madly through the dark because  
everyone else lives in the daytime. Plunging  
forward through lovely chaos hoping to come  
out alive. For a moment to feel alive – I didn't  
know where I was going and it thrilled me filled

me with the feeling of living ecstasy barreling madly through the darkness hands gripping sweaty the wheel and tempting lust of keeping my eyes shut longer, knowing I need to look but swept up in the surge and the increasing thrill of keeping my eyes shut longer, just a little bit longer to feel the anxiousness building in my heart my chest shaking not giving a fuck, the rush of not knowing, not caring, the anxiousness, the skin-tingling – I realized I couldn't remember the pattern of the cars. It's okay, they'll let me know if I'm close....

I opened my eyes.

'It's beautiful,' said Butch.

The billboards had disappeared. The road was empty. A one-lane, empty road. On the right side dark and wet woods, crickets and the gentle rustle of leaves as the car rolled slowly along. On the left was a beach, white sand drenched in the silver-bluish light of the full moon. Waves breaking softly at the bottom. The windows were down and we could hear the waves breaking;

smell of the cold salt air and the gentle breeze damp on our skin.

‘Where are we?’ asked Sunshine.

‘I don’t know,’ I replied.

‘ – ‘cus I like it.’

‘Let’s stay here awhile,’ said Butch. ‘We’ll be alright. We don’t need to go back.’



## **Led to Sea by Valdon Ross**

## Biographies

**E.M. Cooper** - My name is E.M. Cooper and I am from the Puget Sound region in Washington State. Writing is a personal hobby of mine and I like sharing my works with others. I hope to improve myself so that I can become a better writer and that my works can be an enjoyable experience to those that read them.

**Mitchell Dudley** - My name is Mitchell. I am originally from North Carolina, a very small town with limited resources and opportunities. I consider home a black hole, because there's a slim chance of making it out if you don't have a plan. I enjoy creating art from scratch (from the beginning), whether it is writing poetry, or short films. I am learning to accept failure, because it can only make me stronger, though we all know that this is easier said than done. I have created an independent production label for my portfolio called MindSteady. I am honored to be accepted and have my poem published in the second edition of Vagabonds. For the people who are chasing their dream(s), please continue your path of diligence, it isn't easy, but it's well worth the attempt, that's if your heart is in it..

**Joshua Findley** - My name is Joshua Findley, and I am 25 years old from Houston, Texas. I grew up an only child raised by a single woman and for as long as I can remember I have always had a problem with racing thoughts, or as some would like to call it an over-active imagination. Often times I have found it difficult to cultivate some sort of order or finite thought process, but I have, over the years, developed ways to keep my mind on a level plane, and it is art. You see I have always been extremely creative in the sense of environmental adaptability, finding ways to settle my mind and body into being comfortable, no matter where I go. Through my love of creativity, and the way the mind works, I have come to find other loves in Graffiti, Street Art, Abstract, Contemporary, Retrospective, musical, and most of all writing. Writing helps me channel whatever energy I may be

feeling into something productive. With it, I can bend time, manipulate pasts, dust off memories, or make new ones. It's something of value and tangible to grasp on to. I can mentally take out of my mind what I do not need, or that which is of detriment to me, and spill it into a spiral, and put it away forever, or relive it later if I want. In a nutshell, writing to me is how I keep my sanity in an insane world.

**Fatima Hirsi** - I come from the water. After much travel I've found myself in Texas for quite an extended visit. I'm an anthropology student who works in a used bookstore and breathes words. I write before bed. And in the shower. And while I drive.

**Brian McHugh** - Brian McHugh is currently holed up in a cabin in Canada gouging his eyes as he writes a novel. He's originally from New Jersey, and abides by the idea that if the world is your home, than where ever you are you can't possibly be homeless. After he finishes his first novel, he plans on going to Ohio to save up some money (not expecting much from the book) so he can hitchhike for a while, and more than likely he will find himself in Los Angeles. He keeps a currently defunct blog titled The Wanderlust Misfit and is planning for its revival once he's finished in Canada. Brian expects his writing to improve tremendously, because if he looks back in twenty years thinking 'Damn, that was the best stuff I ever wrote,' he is sure he will be drunk and flipping burgers in his hometown. He enjoys literature, traveling, existentialism, astronomy and is often motivated by a writhing discontent for contemporary society. He's been desperate to find others with similar motivations, ideas and interests, and is totally thrilled he got into Vagabonds.

**Tybalt Maxwell** - Tybalt Maxwell is a minimalist writer from Toronto Ontario. His work can be downloaded for free through his Lulu here: (<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/TybaltMaxwell>). His interests include sleeping and eating sometimes. His biggest influences are Yume Nikki, House of Leaves and Winnie the Pooh. A few people have said that he isn't awful.

**Matthew J. Nielsen** - Matthew J. Nielsen has been writing poetry since 2005. He recently began submitting his works to publications following a surge of prolific writing in the last few years. Waxing and waning through patches of dark, humorous, bittersweet, and nostalgic moods, he has written in many styles and has used many voices. Matthew experiments with blank verse, found poetry, limerick, haiku, beat, and other forms. He counts among his inspirations Charles Bukowski, Hunter S. Thomson, Ovid, beautiful women, wise drunks, old dogs, nature, mistake, and calamity. A native of Massachusetts, he currently resides outside Raleigh, North Carolina, following a few years spent living in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He has worked many jobs, including: landscape installer, security guard, plastics mixer, warehouse clerk, metal scrapper, mini-golf attendant, greenhouse laborer, envelope sorter, and retail drone. This is his first appearance in any publication, other than in court records.

**Luke Prater** - Luke lives in rural England with a Mac, a guitar or two, a silent fridge and a brain that won't switch off. His poetry has been published in several places online and in hardcopy. Twitter: @Lukes\_WordSalad [www.lukeprater.com](http://www.lukeprater.com)  
[www.facebook.com/LukePratersWordSalad](http://www.facebook.com/LukePratersWordSalad)

**Emily Ramser** - Emily Ramser is a high school author living part time between North Carolina and California. She has been published in The Crocodile Journal, Spinozablue, VoxPoetica and a few other online journal. She also works with Stage of Life as a featured blog-ger and on the team of Impact magazine. She wishes to be published so that she might touch the world with her words and tell all the stories of the world.

**Valdon Ross** – Valdon Ross is the name by which some 10,000,000,000+ individual human cells are collectively known. Knowing that his organism is in a constant state of death and rebirth, he finds the idea of believing himself to be a singular, static entity laughable. Nonetheless, together the consciousness of Valdon Ross and the cells of his organism arrange words and

symbols with the aim of purging the shadow of our collective consciousness by destroying the fragile delusions humans cling to for security. Beyond focusing his creative energies into word-smithery, Valdon dabbles in the crafts of black magick guitar voodoo, mystic soul-glimpsing (psychology), and spray painted exi-stencil-ist street art. Breathing and gazing at the stars on the back of his eyelids while seated in front of a wall is his favored way of distracting himself from the fact he will someday die. For no reason at all, he laughs like a Mad Hatter and smiles like a Cheshire Cat.

**Sendokidu** - Well... What is there to say about this fox? I'm a poet, to say the least. Wouldn't say my nectar is as potent as most, though, as I'm still learning the craft. I love to write about nature and higher concepts, as it is where I find the most inspiration. In such, I find a balance within my writing in the form of music, wherein I've been featured twice.

**Greg Smith** - Greg Smith teaches creative writing at San Jacinto College South. His creative writing teachers in graduate school were Texas poet Jim Linebarger and Texas author A.C. Greene, author of [A PersonalCountry](#). Greg Smith is published in [150 Years of Texas Poetry](#) edited by Billy Bob Hill. He is also published in [Concho River Review](#) and [New Texas 92](#) as well as in an arts magazine titled [Thoughtcrime](#).

**Eliseo Tony Solis** - I am a student at San Jacinto College and had my poetry published in the South Campus literary journal, *Threshold*, spring 2012. I was also part of that editing committee, having the pleasure of sitting quietly while my work was being criticized and picked apart. I've had a few years of experience as a pipe fitter, working in Shell Deer Park, Lyondell Channelview, and AirLiquide Ingleside. My writing began to develop a few years ago after unleashing my suppressed self while on a wild goose chase with my inner child.

**James Steele** - James Steele is a writer in Ohio. He is often asked to sum up his life's story in a single paragraph. James is very depressed by how easy this is. His work has appeared in the Magazine of BizarroFiction, Allasso, Different Worlds Different Skins v.2, Fiction andVerse, Tall Tales with Short Cocks v.2, Planet Magazine, and JohnSkipp's Demons anthology. His bizarre action/comedy novel, "Felix andthe Sacred Thor," is published through Eraserhead Press.His blog is <http://daydreamingintext.blogspot.com/>

**ShovanaThulung**-Learning Film Photography in Nepal during 2006 really inspired me to see world differently. I began working with photography more extensively through magazines and modeling agencies. Initially I was interested in photography because of my modeling and fashion business. I then came to United States for my advance study. I am now seeking undergraduate degree on Healthcare administration at University Of Houston Clear-lake. Photography have been my continuous companion and helped me explore culture and people here. I work for models and fashion industry in Houston. I do fashion and art but I let myself open to any style and directions. Currently I am very inspired by vintage fashion and environmental issues. I like to frequently reinvent my creative approach to my work. I find my inspirations through architecture, philosophy and fashion. My images are little slices of me...

**William Tribell**- William S. Tribell grew up in rural America; he was a difficult child. He has been living in Europe for the past few years, where he doesn't sleep much and the television has no subtitles. William's work has been published in journals and magazines around the world and online. Many of his poems recorded spoken word and with instrumentation can also be found online. His favorite color is green.

**Weasel** –Weasel is a writer, and founder of the anthology Vagabonds. Holding a Bachelor's degree in literature, he works for two colleges, and heavily promotes the anthology. Weasel has been accepted in many publications, some of which include: Houston's Harbinger Asylum, San Jacinto College's Threshold, Di-Verse-City from the 2012 Austin International Poetry Festival. Along with those publication's he has released two chapbooks: Byzantium: The Last Rights of Nowhere, and The Sound inside Oneself. Both are currently available.

<http://systmaticwzl.tumblr.com>

# Let's Play A Game!

Greetings Traveler!

Hopefully you've enjoyed our collection of artistic madness. Perhaps you've even been a bit inspired yourself. In case you have, we have a game that we'd like you to join us in – the story dice. Below is an image of randomly rolled dice. Each die has a symbol on it – what does it mean? Well that is for your imagination to decide. And this is where it gets interesting. We'd like to read the story you see in these symbols. So grab a pen and jot it down. Share with us what you see in the story dice. After you write your short story, send it to us. Let us know it is a story-dice short and we'll pick the most compelling to publish in the next issue.



So tells us, dear traveler, what do you see?

Send submissions to: [hitchingpoets@hotmail.com](mailto:hitchingpoets@hotmail.com)



