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Poetry
June, Oh, happy day of marriage.
January, what a cold month for birth.
But what warming, joyous effect hath birth
upon the heart of man.
Birth gives way to babe;
Babe gives way to child;
Child gives way to adolescence.
Where I stand, but 15 years upon this earth
Oh happy day of marriage recelebrated,
Recall these 15 years, my dear
What love!
Was the beginning a rocky road, and
hath we come so far since.
Recall 15 years? Marriage in warmth.
Birth in cold - June to January
but 7 months
conception to birth be 9
2 months lack, surely I have miscounted.
July, August, September, October, November,
December, birth in January.
Was my party not planned?
No. Car trouble, Encyclopedia salesmen
Surely not the miracle of life.
If the intention pleasure, not life
to create.
The participants refrain.
if the will not to obtain
then action will be taken not to obtain.

Brad Weidenaar
Sophomore
English major
A señor's psyche slowly sifts through sloughs of sadness,
His mind meanders, mumbling more and more toward madness,
Then silently it sits sideways, straddling a stool,
Muttering, mumbling, moaning

Over Orpheus' orphans
Motherless musicians
Gifted, gelded, groaning,
Past poor poets' prodigy pitted in pools
Of cold, cruel captors
Siezing sonnets from their hands
And ranting raptures
Of baleful, bawling bands
That run and roam
Hiding, hunting, fleeing the foam
of the mad militia's mouths,
Cursing, cussing, killing creativity.

Finally they flee, free. Maybe.

Sam Gesch
Junior
Spanish major
The Sounds of Silence

or

Confessions of a
Library Dweller

The scribble of pen on paper
Lingers crisply in deadened air
Hushed whispers their volumes build
Steady hum of air conditioners drowns out
Giggles and sputters from adjacent tables

A sudden metallic click of binders
Fills the air
9:00 p.m. coffee time at the SUB
A cloud of bodies
Lungs anticipating the sweet aromatic nicotine
Floods out the heavy glass doors

Yet I remain in my hard library pew
Pyramidal piles of textbooks
Await my direction

All is quiet now
Save the furious scratchings
Of my own chewed and battered HB pencil
After all, I have a poem to write.

Tim Antonides
Senior
English major
Great Aunt Martha's Couch

I would dash to Aunt Martha's any chance I could get to sing some psalms and eat sweet sugar bread she'd spread for me.

I would wander around her palace of antique furniture and pictures of ancestors yellowed with age. I would steal through the secret passages of the attic and cellar, imagining life in times I never knew.

My fancy and fascination revolved around Aunt Martha's couch, once an emerald green, sitting on top of her dresser, just the right size for my miniature dolls.

Aunt Martha would fold the top up against its straight high back and I'd peer anxiously inside to look at the treasures of old German letters, embroidered handkerchiefs, a broken string of creamy pearls, a tarnished locket, and I'd smell the scent of lilac that floated from somewhere inside. Quickly the time would pass and my wishing and playing would come to an end; the cows needed milking and the pigs needed feeding, and it was my chore to gather the chicken eggs.

So Aunt Martha would let me close the lid of her faded green couch, sealing her treasures inside, and silently I'd whisper the wish to be small enough to sit on Great Aunt Martha's couch.

Blanche Lang
Junior
English education major
Getting Behind the Wheel

When I turned 14 I borrowed a battered copy of the Iowa Driver's Manual from our neighbors, went down to the community center, and got my instruction permit. It was the best part of my birthday that year. That evening I kept taking out the small plastic card to examine it, to revel in the mystery of it all. Possession of this little card, in some magical way, allowed me to DRIVE!

The next afternoon, after school, my father took me out to "the range," a section of town composed of wide streets and empty lots that waited anxiously for houses with swimming pools and two-car garages. There he stopped the car, nudged it into park, and got out.

As I slipped behind the wheel the car seemed to grow in size. Our green 1973 Chevrolet Impala was so wide that on our yearly trips to visit my grandparents in California my sister and I could sleep quite comfortably in the back seat, fully stretched out. "Bessy" was not a small car by any means, and looking over the hood from behind the wheel gave me the impression of looking out over a vast green plain.

My father got in the passenger’s side and settled into a position I knew was designed to appear relaxed. "Go ahead," he said.

The gearshift felt strange to me and the plastic knob on the end came off in my hand as I tried to coax the indicator to rest on "D." I jammed the knob back on and made another attempt.

The red needle bounced maddeningly between “L2” and “R” as my inexperienced hands fought the old transmission. Finally, with a sullen "clunk," she slid neatly into gear and I placed my hands in the ten and two o’clock positions, my foot glued to the brake, my neck and back already tense with effort.

I glanced around and was relieved to find no cars in sight. The long, narrow accelerator dared me to take my foot off the brake. Gathering my courage and trying not to look at my father, I moved my foot from the brake.
pedal to the gas pedal and pressed it down about halfway. The old car lunged forward as if its huge, hungry engine hadn’t lunched on this much gas in years. The acceleration took me by surprise and I felt control slipping from me. Forgetting where my foot was, I rammed it to the floor in a confused attempt to stop the car. The transmission, feeling the joy of being downshifted for the first time in its life, squealed the snow tires we still had on from winter. The speedometer read 40 miles per hour. Finally reason took over and I took my foot off the pedal, found the brake somehow, and brought us to a lurching stop.

We sat there for a while, both of us trying to appear nonchalant. I had my mouth open wide the way you do when you’re breathing hard and don’t want anyone to notice. I could see myself in the rear-view mirror and was surprised to find beads of sweat on my upper lip.

I learned to drive that day. We practiced my cornering, my starting and stopping, my signalling and backing up until I felt comfortable behind the wheel. But I learned more than to drive a car, though I didn’t realize it then.

After that first panicky episode, while we were both regaining our breath, my father looked at me and I heard for the first time the advice he has always given me. “Gently,” he said. “Gently. Be cautious. Don’t rush into anything foolish; we have all afternoon.”

John Van Dyk
Junior
Biology major
How To Eat A Peppermint In Church

Every good reformed Christian knows the necessities for a good church service: a few familiar hymns, a rather plump elderly woman wearing too much perfume sitting next to you, a crying youngster or two in the back of the church, a three-point sermon, and a good peppermint to make sure your eyes are open to observe all the afore-mentioned necessities. The peppermint may seem a bit "elementary", but once you consider it, you may reach the conclusion that there is quite an art to eating the church peppermint.

First, you must select the proper peppermint (one note of caution: NEVER select a candy with a wrapper). The wrapper's crinkling will draw undesirable attention. Most peppermints, of course, do not come wrapped.

Let's discuss some of the more popular mints.

The King peppermint is very popular. It has a strong, almost bitter flavor and a somewhat rough texture, and therefore serves as a great "waker-upper". The size of this peppermint is rather typical, but because of its unusual hardness, this mint will last through two points of the three-point sermon, depending if you are a chewer of mints or not.

Another popular "peppy" is the Wilhelmina. The biggest advantage of this mint is its size. The Wilhelmina is commonly known as the "Three-pointer"—unless your minister is long-winded, the Wilhelmina will last the entire sermon. This mint, like the King, has a grainy texture. The taste is somewhat sweeter than the King, and so may be preferred by those with milder tastes. But because of its large size, the Wilhelmina is rather conspicuous as it is being eaten because it protrudes quite noticeably from the cheek. This protrusion is a major disadvantage.

Along with these mints, one could choose more commercialized mints such as Certs and Lifesavers. These quality mints have an especially sweet flavor. However, these mints do not last long, only through the introduction of the sermon; thus, two or three mints may be required for one sermon. Based on this summary, you may choose one of the afore-mentioned mints or option for your own personal favorite.

After selecting a peppermint, you must consider the proper place to store the mint until the desired time. If you have pockets in your attire, these pockets are the ideal storage place. One tip, though, is to store the mint in a different pocket than the collection money. It is unfortunate to place a peppermint in the collection plate by mistake, or to ingest a misdirected quarter. If your clothing does not contain pockets, you have several options. One is to find a friend or relative who does have pockets. Another option is to carry a purse, although this is rather undesirable for those of the male persuasion. A third option is to wrap the mint in a tissue and squash the mass into the your palm. But take care to place the tissue in the non-dominant hand so...
you are free to shake hands with the greeters. Once you have chosen a mint and have properly concealed it, we must discuss when to pop your peppermint. Wait until the minister actually starts his sermon. It is a rather unfortunate experience to start eating your mint during the reading of the Scripture, only to find a song is sung after the reading. Failure to heed this warning may result in either chomping noisily on your mint or singing a very soggy hymn.

Now it is time to place the mint in your mouth. Two main approaches may be used. First, the direct method. Retrieve the mint from its place of concealment, and place it in between the tips of your thumb, index, and third finger on your dominant hand. Do not place the mint too deeply in the grasp because this placement could cause difficulty in expelling the mint into the mouth. However, do not place the mint too shallowly in the grasp because this could result in slippage. After properly grasping the mint, casually bring it up to your mouth, lay it on your tongue and slowly and smoothly draw the hand away from the face as you close your mouth. While the movement is direct and easily seen, if it is done properly, the fluidness of the motion will not draw attention to oneself.

The second method is the cough method. The objective of this method is to ingest the mint without the knowledge of those around you through deception. To do this, first retrieve the mint. In this procedure, the positioning of the mint is crucial. Place the mint in between the thumb and the middle portion of the index finger, between the first and second knuckle. Press the fatty portion of the tip of your thumb against the mint, and clench the rest of your hand into a fist. After achieving the proper grasp, cough lightly. As you begin to cough, bring the clenched hand up to your mouth. As you cover your mouth to cough, quickly slip the mint into your mouth and clear your throat, but keep the hand in the cough-covering position. Only after you have completed clearing your throat, may you lower and unclench the hand.

These are the two most common procedures but personal experimentation may result in the discovery of new methods.

Now, enjoy the mint, but do not enjoy it so much that you make a loud smacking noise. Also, you must never chew the mint, resulting in a loud chomping sound. After all, the candy was “mint” to be tasted, but never seen nor heard.

Finally, there may be other ways to choose, store, and eat a mint; but it is my opinion that this article represents a rather accurate survey of the reformed method of peppermint eating.

Emily Kroese
Sophomore
Elementary education major
"Welcome to Riverside's 150-foot Colossus Ferris wheel. For your own safety, we ask that you please do not eat, drink, smoke, or stand up while the ride is in motion and please keep both arms and legs inside the car. Thank you and enjoy the ride," I said over the microphone for at least the thousandth time that day. Carefully, I pushed the brake lever to off and eased the gas lever towards me. The huge wheel-in-the-sky began to rotate, and I wondered to myself what two years of college had achieved for me if I was merely running amusement park rides.

I had never worked at a place like this before. The workers were a fairly even mixture of Hispanics, whites and blacks, and their religious views were a fairly even mixture of atheism, Roman Catholicism and evolutionism. I had not been raised in this sort of setting. Sioux Center contains eight Reformed or Christian Reformed churches for it's population of 5,000 people.

All the education I have ever received has been through Christian schools. I know all the Bible stories from creation to redemption, having learned them through the years from Sunday School to Theology 101. I know my church's disputes and agreements, traditions and changes, assets and liabilities. I know where my parents stand on issues such as women in office or children taking communion. I could read the people from my town, I could not read the people here, in Springfield, Mass.

Slowly I slid the last cars of the Colossus into position, allowing the smiling couple to exit. The queue line was empty. Steve Roundtree, the loader, jogged up the stairs into the driver's booth, plopping himself down on the metal desktop.

"Steve, why did you decide to work at Riverside?" I asked him, hoping for insight into my own questions.

"Oh, I saw an ad in a paper and decided to come to the States for a bit and pick up the American jargon. Besides, jobs pay better here than in Harrogate, England," he said. His British accent was beautiful. "You're from Iowa, aren't you? Why are you here?"

"To see something new and meet some new people." Easy question; people asked me that often.

"Do you go to school?" he questioned.
"A college. Is it religious?" he asked.
"Yes it is," I said.
"So, you believe in God and heaven and hell
and all that sort of stuff?" he said.
I do, all that sort of stuff," I echoed.
"I've always been curious about a certain point. Now, I don't believe in God, I believe God is in each of us and we are our own Gods. I also believe that heaven and hell do not exist. You believe in heaven and hell, right?" Steve said.
"Yes."
"Do you believe only a certain amount of people go to heaven?"
"Well, I feel that those who believe in Jesus Christ's salvation are saved. I don't believe that there's a specific number necessarily," I said.
"I don't believe in Jesus Christ, or heaven, or hell, so where do you think I'll go when I die?" he asked.
I was getting nervous. These were not the questions I had been taught to answer in catechism. If he had asked, "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" I could have easily spewed out the entire answer to Hiedelberg catechism question and answer number one. No, he had to ask hard questions, condemning questions, questions without simple answers.
"I don't know where you're going," I answered, not looking at him.

"Come now, it must say where those apart from your religion will go. If I do not believe in heaven or hell, where am I going, according to your religion?" Steve said, his mouth drawn tight and his eyebrows up.
I heard the wind pushing against the bars of the Colossus, some one hundred and fifty feet up in the air and wished that wind was clearing my head instead.
"According to my religion? According to my religion. In order to be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ's death as atonement for what you've done wrong and believe you received this salvation through grace," I hoped he wouldn't push the topic. He did.
"You said that before. If I asked you right now, 'Where will I go if I die,' would you say heaven or hell?" He stared directly at me.
"You're not dead yet," I said.
He casually stood up from the desk and shifted his weight to his left foot; the one closest to me. "Right now. If I were to jump from this one hundred and fifty foot ferris wheel, would I go to heaven or hell? Tell me," he said.
"According to my religion," I said, looking out the window, away from him, "I would have to say you would go to hell."
"Really? You think that about me? You
think that about all unbelievers?"
He shifted his weight to his right foot,
winding his fingers through the handle of the
door.

"No. We don't walk around the park looking
at people and condemning them to hell. It's
not like that," I said loudly. I rolled my
fingers into a fist, and pounded the air in front
of my shirt pocket.

"But you think I'm going to hell."
"Well."

"You do," he said, pausing. "F--- you." he
turned and stormed out the door and down the
stairs of the booth.

We had guests to load on the Colossus Ferris
Wheel. Steve took his spot and walked the
guests to their designated cars. I started the
wheel.

My thoughts rode with the ferris wheel,
circling around my mind like one of the cars,
unwilling to stop. I condemned a man to hell
and he erased my entire life with two words.
Had I been wrong? Had I been taught wrong?

Were my parents wrong? Who was I to say
something like that to anyone? Why hadn't I
been taught to answer that question soothingly
instead of condemningly? I had screwed up—or
had my parents? Someone had.

I became angry as I rewrote our
conversation in my mind. It wasn't my fault
that I believed these things. I had been raised
that way. It was ingrained in me. Maybe I
was wrong. How could my parents and
teachers have done this to me?

As I viewed our conversation from his
angle, I resented my background and what I
stood for. I was a minority here which I had
never been before, and minorities must keep
quiet or face the wrath of majority. I blamed
my parents for not exposing me to this sooner.
I look back now and blame myself.

I couldn't lay the blame upon my parents. I
had accepted these beliefs to be my very own.
I deserved them and now will file under
experience those harsh two words.

Chrissy Struyk
Junior
English major
I have a younger brother out of state who I decide to call one late Saturday morning. He’s a senior, attending a small Catholic college a few hours away, and lives in an apartment with five other guys. It’s eight weeks into the fall semester and he should be studying for mid-terms. I suppose out of either brotherly love or plain curiosity, I find myself dialing his number. But it’s not he who picks up the receiver.

Hello, the voice says. A girl’s voice, and very familiar.

Hi, is Bryan there, I say, more interested in who the girl might be. I’m sorry, he’s not, but do you want to leave a message, she says. From the propriety I sense in her voice, I know exactly who she is. She’s an old high school girlfriend. We had a few differences in opinion and things didn’t work out. Now, almost two years since I’ve seen her last, she’s dating my brother’s roommate.

She’s not yet aware that it’s me on the other side, and I decide to be devious. It suddenly dawns on me just how long it’s been since we spoke. I think I’ve missed her.

How’s the biology major, I say.

Who is this, she says, apprehension rising in her voice. Her college is smack dab in the middle of a big city, and like I once told her, crazy people live in the big city. But she’s a smart girl. That doesn’t matter, I say. She says calmly, It sure does if you want me to leave a message. Really? Really.

I say with craft, All right then, could you just tell him that his brother called to say hi and that I’ll call...

Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh! she says, and I start to laugh on the other side. She says, I could’ve sworn it was you. Seriously, as soon as you started talking. How are you?

I’m doing all right.

And your studies? Just fine, I say, the and your studies ringing in my mind. She has always been personal, concerned. And it was always genuine. I try to be just as concerned for her.

How are you, I say.

She says, Really good. But I’ve been busy, very busy.

There’s a short pause. Then she says, Are you keeping out of trouble. I say, Of course. I’m in grad school now. There’s no time to get into trouble. I hope you’re behaving.

Of course, she says in the exactly the same way she would have if I had...
...distance creates gaps between people which can only be erased by hard work, patience, and the ultimate nemesis—humility.

I'll keep that scholarship? You don't have to work as hard as I do.
I can tell that she intended to say this line as softly as possible, maybe just for laughs. But even if you intend to use both tact and honesty, sometimes it doesn’t work. She’s hit a soft spot.
Is that so, I say, confused and utterly surprised that we’re already arguing.
Yeah, she says, You don’t have to study the way I do and you know it.
How could you say that?

I just know.
Oh, you just know?
Yes. I think I do.
I say, You don’t even remember what I do.
She says, Sure I do. You’re in grad school part time and you teach theatre. And in your spare time you write poetry and everyone thinks you’re so good that everything you write is...is divine. You even think so yourself.
The last line cuts. I don’t feel anger yet, but my confusion is furthered and I subconsciously question whether or not I should be hearing this. Time and distance creates gaps between people which can only be erased by hard work, patience, and the ultimate nemesis—humility. You even think so yourself.
The line cuts, but I’m silent on the other end because there is some truth to it. Her silence tells me she is questioning her right to have said it. After a short silence she says, I’m sorry.
It’s all right, I say.
She says in a higher voice, I’ve been so high strung lately. I’ve been so beat down.
After another pause I say, The last thing you need is some guy making fun of you.

She laughs softly at that, and I picture how she looks. Maybe she’s even holding her hand over her mouth, like before. But I’m not convinced things are straightened out.

I say, I was always that way. Whenever you got excited about something, I always had to go and make fun of it. I must have teased the snot out of you.

You did, she says in such a way that it makes me laugh.

She says, Like the time we played co-ed softball for St. Peter’s and I was playing second base and I missed the ball. Two runs scored and you called me names. Names.

I say, I can’t remember.

She says, How could you forget. The other team’s sponsor was that pizza joint up town—Mr. Lunch. And you yelled from the outfield that Mr. Lunch’s team was out to lunch, and you almost started a brawl.

I say, And I called you names that game?

Yes, you did.

Like what?

She says, I don’t want to say them again.

I say, I remember now, but I was just teasing you—I was just teasing.

I know, she says, But I couldn’t handle it. I never could and I don’t think I ever can. If there was one thing you should’ve learned it was that I can’t be put on the spot. Even with my best friends, I can’t be placed in a position where I don’t have control. I don’t know how to react.

Suddenly, I want an answer. Perhaps it’s because of something euphoric, like intricate details, like pictures and exact moods or feelings we associate with our history—the smell of a dentist’s office, a failed test that no one ever found out about, or how you felt when the phonics teacher told the entire class that you couldn’t read—all these projections and experiences we pull into ourselves and keep because, whether good or bad, painful or estatic, they carve and shape us into what we want the most in our lives—a sense of self-identity. And now, talking to her on this phone, some of my history and my feelings for her have come back, and I remember a void that was never filled; an answer to why we had to stop seeing each other.

What are you saying, I ask her. Are you talking about us?

I don’t know, she says.

I say, I think you do.

Well—I guess—it’s been years since we’ve
talked and you’ve gone your own way and I’ve gone mine, and I never expected you to call this morning.

You’re beating around the bush.

No, honestly, I’m not. Let’s not talk about it. Geez, think about it. The last time we spoke was at your sister’s high school graduation.

We went out for coffee after that, I say. That was fun, she says.

Now the silence is almost too much. It sits heavy between us because she’s just said something so far from the truth. That night, after coffee, we talked and I wanted answers so badly, I would’ve paid for them. I wanted to know why she had called it off six months before. That evening was not fun. Not at all. I shook her and yelled at her and she cried and wouldn’t let me console her. She called me an insensitive bastard.

Maybe I was.

It’s been so long since I’ve spoken to her. We’ve gone our own ways and our priorities have changed. At one point, her reasons for ending our relationship were vital to me. I had to know why. But with time comes an unexplainable healing, and most of my memories and feelings, over these three years, must have slowly diffused through my mind, and slipped out.

But now that feeling is back, a restless spirit. I want answers in a big way.

I say, It wasn’t fun at all. I was ruthless.

Maybe.

But you remember why. Right?

She says, I guess so.

You guess so? You only guess so?

All right, I remember why.

Good. The word snaps from my mouth and she strikes back, awkwardly.

Don’t yell at me. Don’t you ever yell at me again.

I’m not yelling, I say.

Yes you are, she says, Why are you so uptight? Why are you so upset?

I time my answer perfectly because I know it will be climatic. I feel my facial muscles curling into a sneer. I hiss every word, each syllable clear and concise.

I say, Because you know something I don’t know.

I think the line beats her down, destroys something in her, and convinces her that she no longer has a choice but to cooperate. Even though it’s been this long. Although she’s strong, she also has a gentle disposition,
something I respect. She can’t explain herself well at times, and I picture her eyes rolling as she searches for words.

I whisper, Where did I go wrong? Just tell me.

She says, I can only remember a few things. It’s been years you know?

She sighs and I hear the blow out of her in a muffled gust.

She says so softly that I can hardly hear, You had no respect for me.

Yes, I did.

No, you didn’t. You thought it was stupid if I cried during mass. You told me that sewing was for old women and you told a few of your friends about my father.

She whispers the bit about her father, as if someone was listening in.

That was along time ago, I say.

It still happened, she says.

I say, I guess you’re right.

She says, And now you think you’re self-righteous enough to tell me that you understand, that you were always just kidding around...

But I was, I say .

What?

I was usually just kidding around.

She says, But even if you were, how was I supposed to know that? One night you would call and then you wouldn’t for a whole week. When my father got sick, I kept thinking Where are you?... Where were you? Huh?

I don’t answer and she says, I was just a girl. You messed me up.

I was just a kid, I say.

The realization of what I’ve just said hits me hard. During this whole conversation I’ve dug my own grave, and in the process brought back memories that should have been buried for good. It’s her turn to bite back. She waits for a few seconds.

She says, That’s exactly it. And I got sick of it after a while.

Geez, I say.

She is dead quiet on the other side, maybe even dazed at how blunt she’s been.

I don’t know what to say, I tell her.

She says, I should go.

I want to tell her that I’ll write her, that I wish things could have been different. But I don’t. Another silence follows and this one is the last.

Good-bye, she whispers, and I suddenly think of the hundreds of miles that separate us.

Click.

I decide that although it might be another two years before I talk to her again, I’m going to do something to remember her—even if she never hears or reads about it. Maybe in the process I can even forgive myself.

I look outside and spot a family of ducks, like phantoms, flying V-shaped over the sun’s rising bow.

I pull out some paper and a pen.

I sit still for a moment and then write:

\[
\text{It’s early morning,} \\
\text{Are mallards migrating} \\
\text{in the state you’re in?}
\]

I lean back in the seat, closing my eyes. I go over the first line, letting it flow slowly, then quickly, then slowly again. I’ll end up struggling with it, like I do with every line. I’ll struggle until I figure it all out.

Dirk Schouten
Junior
English major

20 Canon