# Table of Contents

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November by Josephine Demme</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Dog by Colette Rosenberg</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Generation by Tyler Pager</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Old, Safe Place by Angaelica LaPasta</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death in an Empty Room by Jun Hyuk Choi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In A Barbie World by Colette Rosenberg</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadside by Gillian Goodman</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sublime by Josephine Demme</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And With a Whisper by Ryan Rosenberg</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfers and Their Hondas by Johanna M. Costigan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuccotti by Josephine Demme</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes by Amalia Mayorga</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angels Dying by Freya Dobson</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Young Man’s Excuse for Being Late by Peter Nadel</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank You, Come Again by Sofia Linden</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excerpt from Memories by Rachel Saunders</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary by Tyler Pager</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Symphony by Luke Meehan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snap by Dylan Etzel</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape by Eve Wetlaufer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oval by Annie Mesa</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly by Abigail Costigan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the Wash by Francesca LaPasta</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coil by Annie Mesa</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple Haze by Olivia Cao</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cheers to the wind,
and to those hairs on your neck,
that space of skin between your t-shirts’ collar and the place where your hat ends.
it sounds like nothing or like a train or like a shout or like a shower or like a wail.
my brother and his friends, they tip their heads down, look at their toes,
and make cups with their hands to light a cigarette.
and the times that I can walk forever.
Cheers to the nighttime and the flurries.

I have scratched myself raw, and bled.
The space on my back where you sometimes put your hand
is slowly throbbing. But I’m exaggerating,
it’s more of a dull pulse.

It’s November Seventh and it’s the first snow.
It’s November Seventh and it’s nighttime and the sky is grey.

The problem is that I’ve been going onto Google late at night.
And also that I keep making lists,
sewing them to my sweaters,
laundry lists and my mother says to come home safely.

Before, it was snowing heavy and fast.
Three cold spots landed on my face. I tasted snowflakes.
I was in the car and we were in the snow on the road.
When I stopped at the stop sign I stayed for a while to watch the orange flurries.

Later, on my porch, I wanted to stay and watch the sky
but my teeth were bouncing and maybe that’s the problem.

I think I’ll sew more lists to my sweaters.
It’s ten o’clock and that isn’t that late, sometimes I call that early,
but the space on my back where you sometimes put your hand
makes me feel lonely or something.

I tried to smell my skin today,
pick up a note of orchid or stale rain or clean sheets or dirty sheets
or something else that I can’t put my finger on
but my skin smells like it so it must be something.

I emptied my pockets and the backpack with the melted chocolate.
Half a book of matches, Evan’s letter,
underwear, three dollars and forty-six cents,
that lighter from the table at the goodbye party,
some lint and a bandaid.
An Old, Safe Place

by Angaelica LaPasta

You cradled me in old arms--
You even let me run through your halls once.
And I felt safe hiding in the back of the pews with the dirt
And the names of the dead etched in
And I liked the feeling of rebellion
When I laid myself on your body
And all your caretakers had left you long ago
And I smelt your sweet breath
And you were young again: the stained glass windows glowed with some heavenly incandescence.

And we were both young again.
Death in an Empty Room
by Jun Hyuk Choi

The frame hangs askew on a dingy wall
Shards adazzle; fishbowl lying on the floor,
The sallow goldfish palpitates with aimless eyes
Ambushed gun
Gazing from the pitch-dark corner

Ominous air from a crooked smile
overwhelms the sultry room,
Gradually tightening his throat
Leather shackles strap his mouth
Perilous nails penetrate his palms
There is nothing to allay his pain,
Once the irretrievable bullet hits
Ocean of blood inexorably gushes
His body goes numb,
He breathes in the breeze

In A Barbie World
by Colette Rosenberg

Roadside
by Gillian Goodman

you remind me of a mountain bike
that's ashamed of its training wheels
of splinters
of poor timing.
you are somewhere between a motorcycle
and a teddy bear
a bullet
and a bible
smoke rings
and sea stars.
I think you hide the bruises on your knees
so no one will know that you kneeled at confession.

Using Mardi Gras beads as your rosary,
i think you turn your sleepy eyes starward,
your smokestack pipe-breath
pooling on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel
your late-night life vest
floating you to shore like a bobbing apple
dipping under
and under
the oil-slick waves speckled with big-city stars:
the ones that twinkle,
are planets
or maybe,
satellites
you remind me of a fist fight.
you remind me of a puppy.
you remind me of myself.

you hold up a mirror instead of a pillow and
when i try to punch
i get 7 years of bad luck bursting onto
my knuckles.
and you are teaching me patience,
the painful way
and you are teaching me guilty,
in a blameless way
and you got that
big bang
ice melt
wolf pack smile
and you got those
james dean
late night
seafoam eyes
i bet when you cry
it's like glass breaking
it's like ships sinking
you are
dangerous
dangerous
dangerous
And with a whisper
The pillow of packed winter air
stuffed with afternoon light and
the feeling I get
when fingers tangle to make
paper snowflakes –
drops like a wooden block between
my anchored knees

and I begin to know
that while I haven’t been breathing
as long as the awards plaque
on the stucco wall and while
I haven’t cradled trauma
in the pocket of my gut

that in the warm wooded corner
in the stone building
draping arms, carving hands

unspoken words
travel like a boxer’s loving fist
through my flesh and bones

Eye sweats crystalized stardust

Sobs softly suffocated in a mattress pad
Feels like dragging your two fingers sideways
up a sinking, towering
Dripping sand castle
When I was supposed to be noticing your browning hand on my absolved shoulder, I was listening to the bullshit, using my complimentary Apple store headphones to plug into the kinetic energetic prosthetic kick drum, listening to the bullshit. There was too much of it trapped within your Honda’s newly rusty doors, too much like enough to choke on, too much like enough to swim in and bathe in and douse your town in.

According to the wrinkles and instinctual advice in my grandmother’s forefingers, there is nothing like a pale and piercing gaze to make him halt like hell. I like to look out the window and spot flashes of flowers or thoughts of garbage trucks or segments of mail delivery rain on the window, paneless. And I like how dandelions are weeds kids like to pick, like to pluck. And then they’re scolded for the dirt on their knees. “Tristen, you’re dragging mud into the house!” And Tristen says the only thing he can say, “Mom, why would you name me Tristen? It’s like you wanted me to be a dunce.”

When the car is in motion and the radio is turned to Hot 97, I stare at the points of interest I can see from here, while we exchange quips and theories and silence haphazardly. Here, in the parking lot behind Denny’s, adjacent to the gas station at which you kissed me first, in the aisle where we picked up bottled Starbucks (4bucks!) frappucinos and joked about beef jerky, here, when the radio is playing “let’s talk about love!” and we have to talk about love and I have to sit, fevery forehead and all, never wanting to talk about love, and suddenly the window is useless and the shreds of strength in my voice just sound clueless and you’re putting the tension in gear and pulling out of what was left.

You’re a surfer and I love you that way. You don’t cut your hair when they tell you you should and I love you that way. You have accidental biceps and a heart that beats too fast and I love you that way. Your head is blonde which doesn’t match the rest of you. And I love you that way.

I just wish you had turned on your blinker before you veered spun sped away from the socket in your heart’s abdomen that said yes. That wanted yes. That emanated one loud, resounding yes.

We asked for one more chance when we needed two.
We asked for someone to listen when who we needed was you.
We asked for calendars full of un-exed boxes.
But the deadline was June.

Now, we’re
Losing faith in future
Losing faith in failure
We’re losing faith faster.

Surfers and Their Hondas
by Johanna M. Costigan
When I was supposed to be noticing your browning hand on my absolved shoulder, I was listening to the bullshit, using my complimentary Apple store headphones to plug into the kinetic energetic prosthetic kick drum, listening to the bullshit. There was too much of it trapped within your Honda’s newly rusty doors, too much like enough to choke on, too much like enough to swim in and bathe in and douse your town in.

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Sometimes
by Amalia Mayorga

I want a man to keep me warm, and not warm in the way sweaters keep you warm in the way a man holds a woman to melt her icy heart, warm in the way sweet apple pie taste against melting vanilla ice scream. Warm in the way his hand feels against her thigh on a cold November afternoon.

I want a man to keep me warm, you see and I don’t mean warm in the way warm soup feels on your throat after a bitter December Monday. I mean warm like those looks in the hallway that lift up every hair on your body and make you wish you hadn’t looked away so fast. Warm like a hand on your lower back that softly drags away as you make your way through the crowd.

I want a man to keep me warm, and I don’t mean like lazy afternoon naps in the sun.

I mean warm like forehead kisses in front of your doorstep, warm like the feeling you get when the roller coaster finally drops and comes to its end, and you can’t believe you actually did it.

I want a warmth that crawls up my spine, and sips up the black liquid in my heart. I want the type of warmth that loves me and stays up late, that will be there in the morning. I want the type of warmth that takes me in full swing, Body and soul.

Angels Dying
by Freya Dobson

Saliva stained each side of a notebook. I watched a raindrop fall from your nose. The mosaic pieces on her face shattered her reflection. The waves keep kissing the shore, and like a stamp pied of ants we arrived on stage to pry open our eyelids with a wrench and hammer our souls to a bucket with holes. She held her cigarette like a loaded gun, as if every time she inhaled, small golden bullets pelleted into her lungs. He was the only boundary, her beautiful boundary. Peeking her head like a child, longing for the girl she used to be.
A Young Man’s Excuse for Being Late
by Peter Nadel

It was at that moment everything began to move. The wardrobes, the chairs, and even the highly decorative sconces on the wall. Everything from the bed sheets to the load bearing pillars buried deep within the white washed palisades. All except the man in the middle of it all, Jonathan Taylor. Taylor was a rather drab man. Many men were like that these days, drab, drab and more drab. Taylor was rather confused because while everything moved, he started to defy gravity. His levitation gave him a rather large concern for his well-being. He knew not why nor the nature of his surroundings and was annoyed because he had a meeting to attend the very same day. He could not be late.

While thinking about his predicament, Taylor’s alarm clock began to play a jolly mariachi tune instead of its normal three tone blare. The clock moved towards Taylor, nudging up against his side. The clock seem to have an unending adoration for Taylor, the clock loved him more than anyone ever could. With mariachi still playing, the clock followed Taylor’s ascent to the ceiling. He tried, then, to move to the wardrobe and retrieve his suit.

This seemingly simple idea was harder than expected. He had to “swim” in the air, again a hard task, because it was like moving through a semi-viscous liquid. Taylor seemed make slow progress in comparison to the sprightly movements of the clock, which literally ran circles around him. As it past Taylor noticed that he was already late for the meeting. The task of getting dressed was made more difficult by the fact that this wardrobe was a naughty wardrobe indeed, and no matter how hard he tried, he could not obtain the handle of the wardrobe.

Taylor was at it for five minutes, grasping and lunging for the sweat laden handle. What made the task so difficult was the aforementioned characteristic of the wardrobe. It flitted away and seemed to giggle at the very concept of being opened up and examined. Finally, Taylor was able to extricate a gray suit from the mess which his life, or least his bedroom, was quickly becoming. Through a series of progressively uncomfortable positions, Taylor was dressed and looked half way descent, well I mean for a man whose entire being transcends a major force of quantum mechanics. He swam to the doorway and he exited the room.

It was at that moment everything stopped. Even Jonathan Taylor fell to the ground with a thud. The clock clattered against the floor and the wardrobe dropped with no signs of promiscuous activity. Dazed and quite confused, he began to experiment. He put one foot in the doorway, then another, then a hand, and another. Only when Taylor put his whole body into the door did everything begin to move again. Taylor, not wanting anything to do with this oh-so-interesting phenomenon, left to go to the meeting, because at that point he was already late for it.

Thank You, Come Again
by Sofia Linden
“Molly!” Shera, my sister, yelled.

“Shhhh!” I urged, pressing a finger against my lips. We were creeping around the lilac bushes, the scent wafting into our noses. As we crawled, our tiny shoes left a trail of mud stains along the grass.

“Hum, I wonder where Molly could be... oh well, I’ll just sit here next to this bush,” Dad exclaimed. A giggle exited my lips and I smiled, holding a pair of binoculars to my eyes. I looked through them, and right over my dad’s head. He jerked up, and all of a sudden his eyes were enlarged inside my binoculars.

“Hello there!” He smiled, lifting me off the ground and spinning me in circles until I couldn’t laugh any longer. As my feet touched the ground, Shera stood there, jealously on her face.

I punched her arm, “Oh, loosen up!” I yelled. Her eyes started tearing, and she began to run away. Before she got far, Dad scooped her up, drying her tears and yelled, “You didn’t think I’d forget about little Shera, did ya?”

“Ooh! I must have been drifting off,” I said, startled looking at my watch. only five minutes... “Well that’s one way to kill some time, ‘ay dad,” I say, turning to a wrinkled man lying in a white bed.

“Of course it is...” I lean back against his pillow. His steady breath goes back and forth and his stomach wows. Moans of sorrow fill the quiet halls... but the words still bounce around in my head, making me cling to the memories even more - I won’t give up. The moist air penetrates my skin and I shiver. Shaking my head, I remove the thoughts that fill my being and focus my energy - I won’t give up. On a television screen in the other room comes a faint voice, and as another memory calls for my attention, I allow it; for a moment in a daydream.

“Hey stop it!” I joked with Matt, as he opened his mouth again for another silly comment about our science professor. He popped a finger in and out of his lips, stuck it in the air, and said: “Seems to be a 1% chance of snow in summer, in such a fake English accent that it made me fall into his arms in laughter. He held me for a moment, stared into my eyes and bent down, obviously trying to kiss me. All of a sudden I thought the whole thing through too much, so out of nervousness I just started laughing, and he flipped me back up, whirling me into his arms, and plopped me into the car. We drove around and around the parking lot, yelling obscene verses of random songs or quotes that our history teacher happened to say all the time.

His crappy car finally slowed to a stop in front of my house, and I opened my door, and walked me up to that stone house which at the time I couldn’t recognize.

“Wait,” said Matt plucking a lilac from the bush, “for m-lady,” and he handed the sweetest smelling flower on the sweetest smelling bush to me. Suddenly a voice came from behind, “hey lovebird! Time to let me take your daughter back...sorry but curfew is curfew.”

“Of course sir,” Matt nodded, “Well, happy birthday my beautiful lady.”

“Happy birthday my beautiful lady.” I replied, giggling. All of a sudden I flung myself up, snatching a kiss that I held until my father pried us apart, and shoved a dazed Molly back inside.

“No dad! he’s amazing!” I twirled around in circles, letting my dress fly out.

“Certainly with those lips,” Dad stared at me, raising his brows.

“Sorry honey,” he sighed. “I’m just concerned. You know how older boys can be.”

“Hows?”

“You know...”

“Matt’s different! Dad, just do me a favor, and please trust him...give him a chance to impress you!”

“Honey.”

“Daddy... Mom would understand.”

“You mother wouldn’t. She never did. That’s why...” I could hear his voice trailing off.

“Dad...I’m-I’m sorry...it doesn’t matter. Mom’s probably over seas, where she’d rather be.”

“Honey, your mother and I...we just didn’t...I’m sorry if it’s hard.”

“No, don’t worry about it,” I replied. A long sigh exited my father’s lips.

“Okay,” he lifted his head, “Matt can come over for dinner.”

Five more minutes must have passed since I last opened my eyes. They flicker awake, as I stare back at the endless ceiling. The white ridges in the texture of the ceiling form shapes of flowers, leaves bouncing around in the sky of a nature lit human creation. I turn a groggy head toward my dad, his face older than I remember, more fatigued.

“With all that sleep you’ve been getting, seems you should have fewer wrinkles,” I sigh. Who am I talking to? I know he can’t hear me. Why kid myself? But I bet he’s still inside somewhere - who are you kidding, there won’t be—- Not don’t think that—I won’t give up, my dad is here now—barely- and that’s all that matters. I shut down my mind, trying to close my eyes, ignoring the thoughts that bombard my imagination. Thinking of what to do. Trying to sleep, trying to dream of an easier time seems too obscure, and I sit up.

“Hello Miss Molly, how are you today?” Asks Martha, my father’s nurse, as I walk down the hall.

“About as well as every other day.” I say as she walks into my father’s room to give him his meds. A hall window is open and a grim rainy day fills the air, making everyone inside the hospital look like hovering shadows. Moans of sorrow fill the quiet halls... but the words still bounce around in my head, making me cling to the memories even more - I won’t give up. The moist air penetrates my skin and I shiver. Shaking my head, I remove the thoughts that fill my being and focus my energy - I won’t give up. On a television screen in the other room comes a faint voice, and as another memory calls for my attention, I allow it; for a moment in a daydream.

“Sorry. My bad, I was talking to your mother on the phone, you know how she can be,” Dad began as we walked to our rusty old station wagon.

“I don’t care how mother can be,” I say as she walks into my father’s room to give him his meds. A hall window is open and a grim rainy day fills the air, making everyone inside the hospital look like hovering shadows. Moans of sorrow fill the quiet halls... but the words still bounce around in my head, making me cling to the memories even more - I won’t give up. The moist air penetrates my skin and I shiver. Shaking my head, I remove the thoughts that fill my being and focus my energy - I won’t give up. On a television screen in the other room comes a faint voice, and as another memory calls for my attention, I allow it; for a moment in a daydream.

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“You mother wouldn’t. She never did. That’s why...” I could hear his voice trailing off.

“Dad...I’m-I’m sorry...it doesn’t matter. Mom’s probably over seas, where she’d rather be.”

“Honey, your mother and I...we just didn’t...I’m sorry if it’s hard.”

“No, don’t worry about it,” I replied. A long sigh exited my father’s lips.

“Okay,” he lifted his head, “Matt can come over for dinner.”

“Don’t be upset about the one thing that Lauren happens to be good at because when you find what you’re good at, you will get so much further.” Raising my head, I wiped away my and kissed Dad on the cheek.

“Thanks Daddy,” I smiled. Pulling my sweatshirt over the clothes that would never look good on me in a million years, I made my way inside, brushing past the sweet smelling lilacs on the way.

Excerpt from “Memories” by Rachel Saunders
As my chafed hands, dance across ivory
The Ivory Sings, to my fingers waltz
The emotions of the Dance and Song,
Soar and Plummet,
like the rise and fall of the Rome.

The Vibrations Serenade the room, with
Joy and Despair.
Souls run into the Abyss
Climbing the walls of Jubilation;
Hurtling to the great depths of Misery

The Sword and the Rod of Asclepius is
A song and dance’s dominion
Crying for Power
To move its souls
Chasing the coveted palace
of its desired emotion

A Patrician and Plebian
Both equally Powerless
To the wrath and seduction
Of thy Dance and song.
Frankly, I did not despair when I shot a man. The cold metal click flowed out of my hand naturally. Moist dirt shifted against the harsh touch of my shovel. Minutes later, as I surveyed my work without anxiety, a boy with curly red hair and freckles, white sneakers, an Iron Man t-shirt and red, cargo shorts, visited me.

His sneakers made a pop in a puddle, so I turned. Having resolved to shoot anyone who was a witness, I swiveled my torso and loaded the barrel. Soon freezing in shock as I perceived his age, his stained, matted hair, and his chapped red lips, and I gaped in horror as I saw his red blindfold.

That was just it; this was what destroyed me. What crippled my certainty that I could kill one more time, the ultimate befuddlement as to whether or not he was in fact a witness to the black burial. Had he heard the body rumble into the ditch? Had he smelled the dried blood amongst the black beetles?

I don’t remember if I fired. More importantly, does he?
Your laughter is the powder underneath a butterfly's wing. Small and light, it's glitter without the shine.

Coincidentally, within the scientific community, this powder is referred to as scales. Laughter can be scaly. Your laugh sounds like freshly cut grass and the small, tinkling scales of the Styrofoam in the snow globe your absent father gave you for your eighth birthday (which happens to be in July) as they float from the top of the orb down to the eternally smiling, forever mid waddle, penguin's flippers.

My laugh sounds like the exhaust pipe of an eighteen wheeler on moving day and the internal dialogue of a pessimistic schizophrenic, scaly in the same way your grandmother's dentures can be when she forgets to clean them in a fizzing glass of Fixodent.

Laugh at everyone, laugh at everything. Look in the mirror and laugh at yourself laughing. Laugh at old memories alone in dark classrooms; force people to question your sanity. There is only one rule. Never touch a butterfly's wing.

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Butterfly
by Abigail Costigan

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Sometimes you look kind of sad,
Like you've been through the wash a few too many times,
And you got sort of wrinkly,
And you don't fit quite like you used to

But maybe it's better,
Cause sometimes I feel like my skin is too tight,
Like it shrunk,
When I was trying to wash all the bad memories out,
Now I'm stuck.

You can't go back,
When it's something like that,
And it is,
But I'll try to iron you out,
If you'll attempt to stretch me out,
And in the end,
It might be worse,
But you just look so sad,
And sometimes I feel so trapped.

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Through the Wash
by Francesca LaPasta

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Coil
by Annie Mesa
Purple Haze
by Olivia Cao