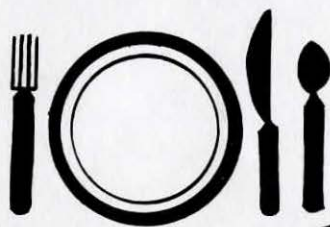
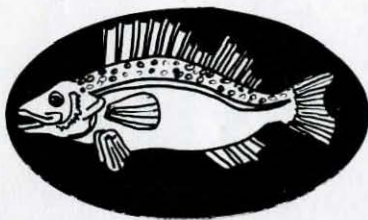


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Submissions of poetry and short fiction are welcomed from August 15-October 15 for the December issue, and from January 15-March 15 for the May issue. Issues are thematic and the December 1986 issue will deal with *SLEEP*. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No simultaneous submissions, please.

Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name masked so that beginning and established writers are read without prejudice.

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Maryann Calendrille

COLLECTABILE MEALS

Some come on wheels, others stand for hours,
Congeal while the quarrel ensues.
Stew won't mind but the more delicate
Salmon of your fear will quickly ruin.
The tips of asparagus, why leave to guessing?

This time you order big:
A Victory Garden soup with potatoes
Stiff in their pot,
And listen through the purr of steeping teas,
For the moment the omelette will set.

Who thought you'd be singing for your supper
Through meringue-stained cheeks
Across beet-red tables set with tell-tale spoons?
But it couldn't be simpler: The shine

Of egg-glazed loaves,
The vivacious loves you've warmed,
Like waffles, carefree and neat
Before they swoon and nearly drown
In the tears of a sugar maple.

While the bottle necks bend and bow,
Demure to the Reine de Saba --
The room, a repository of trysts and trifles,
Of failed souffles--the hopeful tomorrows
Where all elegance spins on the waiter's heel
And secrets lie in the residue of wine.

Maryann Calendrille

YOUNG HUNGER

---after M.F.K. Fisher

I UNWRAPPED THEIR RICH BROWN COVERS
Summer goes down like drops of sweet chocolate
Melt-in-your-mouth. Lust drips on the paper.
I can't forget our day on the swings:
The way you dance, the way you breathe and sweat
Through the heat. We welcome flies
A sign of fecundity, ripening peaches, a young boy.

AND THEIR TINFOIL AS SILENTLY AS ANY PRISONER
The boy reading, the boy wearing a red shirt, the boy
Licking an ice cream cone or peeling chocolate
Kisses one by one. Winking, zipping his fly
Which flew open when the blonde on the swing
Swung so high and left our young one in such a sweat.
This is how it starts, up in the air, down on paper.

CHIPPING HIS WAY THROUGH A GRANITE WALL
In her diary, red perfumed ink on pink paper.
It must be a crime spending six nights in a sweat,
Drunk and dizzy, asking the boy
To do everything now. His skin, like milk chocolate
Softens. She rocks him slowly, then suddenly swings
Around as if a ghost or a fly

AND LAY THERE BREAKING OFF THE RATHER WARM
Touched her leg. Can you catch that fly?
Or grab the ghost of your dreams by the hand, and swing
To the beat of the band? Standing in the chocolate
Puddle in the middle of the floor? Poor boy,
Left in the corner. Can he understand the paper-
Thin hearts of ghosts, the steaming sweat

Maryann Calendrille/Young Hunger

RUBBERY DELICIOUS PIECES AND FEELING THEM
Condensing on the windows, the salty sweat
On the back of his own neck? Those insistent flies!
Swarming overhead, sticking to the paper,
Sticking to each other as if at a Swing
Club. Members only, dancing in pairs: A boy
And a boy, or ten girls squealing, covered with chocolate

MELT DOWN MY GULLET
Sauce. They could just die from chocolate
Fudge. Hotter than butterscotch, boy
If we don't stop now our sweat

AND READING THE LUSH SYMBOLISM OF THE BOOK
May melt the sheets or sting
Our sores. At this club they wear crepe-paper
Hats, and every member jumps and flies

AND ALL THE TIME I WAS HOT,
Through the air throwing chocolate chips from little paper
Sacks, hitting the others who sweat
And sigh, longing to fly with the next nice boy.

AND ALMOST PANTING WITH FEAR,
THAT PEOPLE WOULD SUDDENLY WALK IN

AND SEE ME THERE.

Kate Dougherty

PASSAGE

Your best friends are leaving,
now they will no longer be
neighbors across the road,
on the bluff. Beginning again
the old way
we continue the continuum
old enough to know
has no beginning, et cetera.
Stop, mark passage
and honor the moment - a complex
simplicity and elegance
the stuff of life
only death delivers.

The knife slips through the roast
past a whole clove of garlic
and a slender flap of venison
collapses on the plate.
You wedge it between the serving
knife and fork, delicately
place it on a guest's plate.
Then another slice, the meat
turns a darker red
with each new slice
and it ripples as does flesh,
the deer you killed
this year, behind your house.
Was it in the meadow
fogged into the hills and coast
one groggy morning indivisible
or, was it clear? Blue, cut
with invisible silver, sharpening
the air, September or October, under a fir
or near a grove,
was it in a meadow the deer fell?

Kate Dougherty/Passage

You shied telling us,
instead, you spoke
of the proper manner to skin
the carcass, dress the meat, a reverence almost
I felt the way you spoke,
your fingers stroked the air
describing the difference between
a wild pig's tough hide,
and the satin pelt of a deer
whose skin easily
slips off the body as does
I thought (the way your fingers moved)
water slides over a black
rock that is always moist, without
barbs, scars, signatures; a sigh
that comes from deeper than we know
and opens us, as if our chest bones
were not there ever.

You said one should gut the animal
the place it falls. The place,
I thought, he caught
sight of you. The transference.
Buck to you, then to the earth,
and now to us. And any other
you serve in this manner.
It must have been, from the first
the best came to understand--
understand hunter
you are the deer
the deer is you
and you pass it on.

And your friends bring their harvest,
wine from the valley,
Curt names the vineyard, the year
and lets you pour this
into my glass, releasing
more sense than I know

Kate Dougherty/Passage

in simultaneous splurts
but letting go in layers
as essence flows further, as song
and its echo sing alone
together, notes placed separately
in the air--chords; maintain
resonating with all
that's gone before
they go.
I once saw a man
take off the front of an upright
just for this, and his music
was Zinfandel. Exact luminescence,
light-bevelled through stained glass
jewelled-shapes, disappearing into darkness
until the final sound,
last note, wavering
I close my eyes, now
to hold it, even
the silence swallowed it
was sweet, of a cathedral
and lingering. And for this
we give a few minutes applause, a snap
in one grape's continuum,
one deer flicker, the exact
longitude, latitude, second
your great grandfather's fork and knife
rounded the Horn, themselves
carved antlerbone, passage,
choice and gift, the thousands
brought us here tonight.

Gary Fincke

SHOVELING THE BEANS

There were hundreds of replies,
but if anyone I knew had asked me
what I was doing in those boxcars
pitching loose beans through dust,
I would have said "working like
an ass." I coughed all summer.
I made money that way because
no long-timer would carry
the shovel inside. Nobody worked
my break; I hung out a window
and chased my breath by myself,
figuring, sometimes, how long
I'd last on that riverfront street
where everybody, waiting for the sun
to fall, bunched up in doorways.
Ahead of me was college; ahead
of me was a month more of bags
broken by travel toward Pittsburgh
where inhaling grime is expected.

I never saw the engine that pulled
those cars. They might have been dropped
from the sky because I understood
so little of what I was doing,
saving some dollars, deceived as much
as the first film audience who thought
their train was rumbling right out
of the wall at them. The locomotive steam
spilled up in clouds. One by one
those people saw their fundamental fears
turn dwarfish. All summer things shrank

Gary Fincke/Shoveling the Beans

until only my calendar was in that fog.
The last day I watched expressions
by the time-clock, searching for
the stunned look that would be settling
on whoever would shovel on Monday.
When I punched my card I recognized
no one, coughing, chilled, already gone.

Gary Fincke

THE VEGETABLE POLICE

No longer are we afraid.

We are protected by the vegetable police. Danger is controlled; the animals are kept at bay. Who would have thought these onions and beans had such power. Hiring them was a last resort. Raising the taxes to pay their salaries was resisted. At the town meeting, the citizen watchdogs rose to protest with lists of statistics. The crowd was nearly swayed until barking was heard. And fierce growls.

With corn and squash on every corner, we feel safe. For months, no guttural sounds or primitive roars have been heard. Walking is a pleasure. The children weave in and out of the tassled stalks. Complaints are few except those lodged against the narrow sidewalks, the laws against walking on grass or touching flowers. It goes without saying that there are no vegetarians. Meat is plentiful and vitamins are supplied. Although there is controversy about the tearing up of the roads and parking lots for planting, it will be done. We will find jobs closer to our homes. Our obsolete cars will be art objects displayed like imaginative sculpture in front of our homes.

Our only worry is winter. Already it is September. No one, it seems, thought of this problem in May. Reports of atrocities trickle in from the North. The community cynics are vocal again. Our climate, however, is temperate. When the police asked to be quartered in our homes until April, the request was granted. Only a few resisted. They have until October to comply.

Gary Fincke/The Vegetable Police

When we have prepared our basements, we will move downstairs and welcome our guests. They deserve the best we can give them. The soft rustling of leaves above us will remind us of safety and the planting we promised them in spring.

Robert Fromberg

POSSESSIONS

I have given away my possessions.
Furniture to the Salvation Army.
Money to an ex-wife.
Friends were loaned books and records,
their return never mentioned.
The ten-dollar bill found on the
sidewalk handed to my companion
in one quick, unthinking gesture.
I wish to place these actions in the realm
of "human kindness," "the brotherhood of man,"
but there is no such premeditation.
All is beyond my ability to purchase.
Catsup and soup--two of the many
things I am now without.

John Gilgun

THE COSMOS HAS TEETH

"Queequeg no care what god made him shark," said the savage, agonizingly lifting his hand up and down; "wedder Fejee god or Nantucket God; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin."

-Herman Melville, Moby Dick

We have come together as we do every Sunday at 7:30,
At Dooley's farm, to discuss The Bible,
Specifically, The Book of Hosea,
Prophecies uttered around 740 B.C.

Many meals ago.

"Like grapes in the desert, I found Israel;
Like the first fruits of the fig tree
In its prime," Kevin reads.

Mary brings in food--cheese, crackers,
apple slices, peanuts.

The reading stops as Kevin, in his Big Smith overalls,
leans forward. He eats.

We all lean forward. We eat.

Outside, in the barn, the chickens lean forward
And their blood red combs, the reddest combs
in Missouri,

Dooley claims, lean forward with them, of course,
And the chickens eat.

And Dooley's collie leans forward. She eats.

Her pups lean forward, nuzzling. They eat.

In the yard, the elms lean forward.

They are eating the earth.

And the earth, which has been eating the sun all day,
Leans forward toward the moon.

It would devour it if it could.

"Your belly is your God," Dooley says,
Leaning forward in an attitude of reverence

John Gilgun/The Cosmos Has Teeth

Over the God called Wisconsin Cheddar.
It seems obvious to me that the Creator had large,
perfect teeth,
That the Big Bang was in fact the Big Belch,
And that the galaxies are in reality plates of
steaming roast beef.
But I don't say this.
For one thing, I won't risk offending someone's
religious
sensibilities,
And for another, I have been taught that it is impolite
To express profound philosophical truths
With my mouth full.

Ava Leavell Haymon

COMMUNION

The unseen bud of a swamp iris,
a skinny knot pressed between strap leaves,
speaks to me as a sister.

We share funny corkscrew molecules
that divide and divide, ever
hauling us farther away from stones or stars.

And how long ago did we separate, my sister?
on this time-line forever slamming doors on our heels?
My kind went off to kill before we eat

but you chose to stay rooted to one spot
(as they say) and not to eat the dead
until after they relax to dust.

Ava Leavell Haymon

SEEING TO THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE

And so we build another telescope
larger than we've ever built before.
Astronomers want to see
12 billion light years away--
quasars, space curve,
the unanswered questions
of the Universe.

They say it will record a single candle
at the distance of the moon
(Is the candle on a crooked table
bumpy with dripped wax?
Are there lovers
in the flickering light,
eating pasta heartily
drinking cheap wine
in straw-covered bottles?
Or do they quarrel
unable to shed their separate histories
pick at their salads
leave their lasagna untouched?)

Thomas E. Kennedy

FRIDAY FISH, AND CAKES ON SUNDAY

The sound might have been part of a dream, like the distant whisper he heard sometimes, calling his name across the edge of sleep: *Chris!* But he had heard it and been awakened, and as he lay there staring up at the smudged silhouette of a fisherman in a boat which the rainwater had imprinted on the ceiling plaster, he knew the sound had been made by his father: big belly, friendly moustache, brown eyes that knew what you meant.

He slipped out of his bed and stepped barefoot into the dark hall with its many red-brown doors. A single lamp was burning at the end of the darkness, and he saw his mother and his sister and older brother, Peter, in their light summer night-clothes standing at the window, looking out through the screen to the street. The boy padded along the runner to join them at the window. Over the sill, through the summer-smelling dusty screen, down the green-shingled slope of the porch roof, in the little concrete-rimmed patch of earth outside, a horse-chestnut tree grew. There, he saw his father on his knees, arms wrapped around the trunk of the tree, trying to stand up. He slipped down onto his rump again, grunted, stayed there. The yellow light of a street lamp shone across his face, which was smudged and bleary and dirty as the bottom of a shoe.

Chris's eyes opened wide. His stomach felt like it was moving very fast. "There's something wrong with him," he whispered, his throat thick and raw around the words.

"He's *drunk*," whispered Chris's brother, Peter, contempt splashing sourly off the last word. Peter was wearing only a pajama bottom, tied with a cord belt, and Chris noticed that a few curls of hair had

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

grown on his chest and beneath his arms, the same soft black hair that downed his upper lip.

"He could be sick," the sister protested. "He might need..."

"He's *drunk*," Peter said again.

Across the street a light went on in the upper bedroom window of the Lions's house. Chris's mother clicked off her lamp, and as the family stood there in the dark, they saw a silhouette of two figures appear at the screen across the street, joined immediately by a third, smaller figure. Chris recognized the smaller figure as Chester Lions, who could do a handstand on the parallel bars and was stronger even than Peter. Chester had once fired BB's point blank from a yellow plastic slingshot at Chris's thigh. "Target practice," he explained. "You're the target," while Peter, walking alongside of them, read a Superman comic and pretended not to notice. It hadn't hurt so much, and Chris had never told, but ever since that day the boy had been unable to refuse anything that Chester demanded of him--lunch money, ball glove, apple--and an unpleasant familiarity had bred between them, as though in some sense ownership of the boy had passed from Peter to Chester.

Now the mother turned to her children. In the dim light her face was a mottle of pink and red and cream and purple, its features held sharply taut. She whispered tightly, "Peter, go down and help your father into the house. Quickly! The rest of you get back to bed. Right now."

Next morning was Saturday, and the house was bleak with silence, despite the cucumber smell of fresh-cut grass drifting in through the windowscreens. Chris lay staring up at the smudged fisherman silhouette, which in the morning light was the color of coffee with cream. Across from the fisher, a reclining sniper fired a broken rifle at a castle of

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

clouds. The fisherman's dark brown smudges of eyes regarded the sniper over his beard and moustache. Chris remembered his father kneeling at the tree like the drunken clown at the lamppost in the circus that everyone laughed at. But his father wasn't a clown; you weren't supposed to laugh. Chris had once heard his father say that he worked with clowns, at his office. He had told Chris's mother that one evening after dinner. "Those clowns. Those petty little clowns," he had said. She had been washing the dishes with her back to him, while his father sat at the table with a short, thick glass of brown whiskey which smelt like his whiskers when he didn't care to shave on weekends sometimes. "I don't know what they get out of it," the father had said. "Petty, small, little men they are. Petty. What do they gain? What?"

"Maybe you should do it right back to them," the mother said. "Maybe that's what they respect."

The father looked into his shot glass, his brown eyes considering, and the light in them turned slowly from flat brown to a paler color whose light was calm. "Then they'd really win," he said. "Then *they'd* be right." And raised the glass to his lips, grimacing after he drank and touching his side.

Downstairs, the sounds of rattling tableware and slamming drawers came from the kitchen where Chris's mother worked. The dining room was empty, the gauze curtains drifting in the dim light. In the living room, his father sat and read from a book with a cover whose color was a tired, muddy green. His face was pale behind the grey threads of his moustache, and Chris waited to hear what he would say, but he only looked into his book and said nothing. A noise in the alley drew Chris to the window just in time to see his brother, Peter, pedalling off on his Schwinn, a Black Phantom model, stripped down to frame and bare balloon tires. His teeshirt sleeves

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

were turned up on his slim biceps, and the bulge in his sock beneath his cuff-clip told the boy that Peter would be off to the Flushing Meadow swamps where, Chris knew, he smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes and played stud poker with some tough kids. In the backyard, his sister was sitting in a beach chair wearing sunglasses, her head tipped back so the sun would brown her face. Her mouth, in repose, slouched, stripped of its habitual smile. Leaning on the windowsill, Chris watched her, puzzled by the blankness of her face, a fearful blankness it looked like. He saw fear in her face now that her smile was removed. He didn't like it. His eyes narrowed, his jaw tightened. Her mouth looked ugly without the smile. She had cheated him.

He turned sharply from the window, went into the kitchen, where his mother had the silverware spread out on a cloth. Her hands, sheathed in yellow rubber gloves, were massaging a pink frothy cream onto a silver knife. Her face was set. "Hi," she said to him, a flat hard syllable. Her hands moved in rhythmic spasms at their work; he remembered watching them move in just that way once as she shucked corn for a birthday party. He could see in the set of her body, in the cleanness of the kitchen, the sparkle of chrome and tile and the harsh mirror of light shining off the glossy metal surfaces of the stove and refrigerator, that something had occurred which could not be undone, like a mortal sin, worse, a thing that might be forgotten, but not forgiven.

He wondered if this meant his father would no longer read to him. They still had lots to go in *Treasure Island*, and it was Saturday, time for the next chapter; they had left the boy last week hiding in the ship's apple barrel. He went into the living room again to ask, but his father was asleep in the big overstuffed blue chair with the muddy green book

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

open face down in his lap, his mouth slack, snoring faintly.

Beneath the sound of the snoring and the kitchen rattles lay a silence, a stillness that pressed in around him, at his ears, his throat. He looked at his father's sleeping face and remembered how it had looked last night in the light of the streetlamp, dirty, worn. A strange impulse rose in him: he saw himself striking his father's sleeping face with his fist, saw the stunned waking, struck him again, in the teeth, saw palms raised in defense, wounded eyes.

The boy's legs were trembling as he stared at the sleeping man, and he spun away in the heavy silence, to the side door, out into the mild air, driveway pebbles crunching beneath his sneakers. On the corner, the recessed blackness of Nulty and White's Bar & Grill issued a smell of stale beer and mariscino cherries, smells he knew from the time his father had brought him in there and ordered a coke with 10 cherries in it for him and gave him three nickles for the juke box, while he sat at the bar and drank a big glass of beer with a little glass of whiskey. Chris had drunk three cokes that day and ate so many pistachio nuts that his fingernails were dyed red from splitting them, and his father had laughed a lot for a while, then got quiet again, and finally they went home where his father flopped down onto the sofa and snored, while Chris played with a piece of wood in a bucket of water, waiting for his mother to come home from her weekend with grandfather.

Now Chris gazed into shop windows as he walked. Down past a long row of yellow-brick shopfronts, catty corner to the place where the road curled up into the highway overpass, a small shop nestled beneath the leavy overhang of an elm tree. Chris stood so close beside the trunk of the tree that one of the tiny red ants traversing its grooved bark

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

found its way onto his sleeve. Laid across a wooden skid outside the shop was a very large fish, nearly as large as Chris himself. The fish's mouth was open, revealing a row of narrow, grimacing teeth. Its gill was open, too, torn open by a fisherman's gaff, revealing white soft blubber beneath its grey-black skin. The air was thick with the pungence of the fish's death, and a swarm of metal-blue flies were supping on its wound. The boy stared at the teeth, at the wound, at the circling cloud of flies, then looked to the road, to where the highway curled up over the street, toward the smokey sky.

On the way home, he passed Chester Lions, sitting on a fire hydrant outside the drugstore. Chester looked at Chris, and his lip cocked into a lopsided kind of smile, a knowing, mocking smile. A couple of the boys and girls leaning on the fender of a car parked along the curb sniggered.

"Hey, Chrishie," Lions said. "How's your old man?"

In bed that night, he humiliated Chester Lions publicly by doing a series of stunts on the parallel bars which put the older boy to shame; by splashing a glass of coke in his face at the drugstore fountain and saying, "I'll be waiting outside if you have the guts," and Chester would prove not to have the guts. Or Chester would mock and shove *him*, unfairly splash coke in *his* face, only to be amazed how quick and merciless the smaller boy's fists were. Or Chris would cast a milk bottle of fire through Chester's front window so that Chester ran out screaming in a shirt of flame, while Chris fired BB's at him (he could hear the cries of pain and humiliation as they struck Chester's body) and boys and girls looked on with admiration. When at last he slept, he was tangled in the damp sheet, his face sweltering beneath the pillow, hidden away

*Thomas E. Kennedy/*Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

from the smudged figures of sniper and fisher and castle on the ceiling.

Next day was Sunday. Mass. No breakfast till after church. All the children lined up by grades in the church courtyard. Sister Mary Immaculate clicked the metal cricket twice. Two clicks meant silence. The children stopped speaking. She adjusted the starched white frame about her face and clicked the cricket again and, class by class, from the lowest to highest, the children began filing in to nine o'clock Mass. The church was cool after the open heat of the courtyard. Chris sat in a pew toward the front of the church. Across the center aisle he could see his brother and, two rows behind, Chester Lions, both of whom were in 8B and would graduate the following week. The older boys sat with secret smirks on their faces, palms lifting from time to time to caress the sides of their ducktail hair-dos, adjusting their shirt collars to the proper tilt.

The priest climbed up to the pulpit, opened a large, ornate book, and began to read, his voice droning, punctuated by echoed sparks of coughing from the congregation.

"He filled two boats with fishes," the priest read and gazed down upon the people sitting in the wooden pews, "And all were amazed, and Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; henceforth thou shalt catch men.'"

Chris thought of a fish hook piercing the roof of his mouth. He covered his eyes. He swallowed and pressed the tip of his tongue protectively against the roof of his mouth and rocked gently in the pew, trying to close his mind to the image of the barbed steel hook tearing into the soft ticklish meat

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

behind his teeth, ripping open the fine webwork of chicken bones arching over his tongue.

After Mass, Chester Lions stood outside the church with an arm around the trunk of the oak tree that grew before the rectory. He called for an audience and when enough faces had turned to him, he assumed an expression of cock-eyed nausea and dropped onto his rump in the dirt. Among the observing faces was Chris's brother, Peter. Chris looked to him to see what he would do and saw lidded eyes, the curled edge of a malign smile. Chester Lions crawled up on the tree trunk again, fell with a thud, wrapped his arms around it, warped his mouth and said in a mock-drunken slur, "Peter, Peter, help me in the housh."

A few of the other children sniggered, and Chris's brother joined them, snorting and jerking his head as though with laughter. Chester Lions took a black plastic comb from his back pocket and stuck it under his nose like a moustache and rolled his eyes. "Help me in the housh, Peter," he slurred, and Peter giggled shrilly.

"Chrishie," Chester Lions said, looking at Chris, and their eyes met. Chester's eyes wanted something from him, wanted him to smile, to laugh, to laugh at his own father. The eyes were bright with the hunger for him to do that. He wouldn't. But the eyes demanded. He felt his mouth grin, and he was ashamed.

He turned away quickly, saw his father and mother at the foot of the stone steps leading from the church. His mother was handing money to a red-headed boy who sold newspapers from a plank and brick counter. Chris's father was watching him; when their eyes met, his father wrinkled his chin so that the shaggy underedge of his moustache covered his lips. Chris glanced at him in his shiney brown

Thomas E. Kennedy/Friday Fish, and Cakes on Sunday

suit, the point of the maroon tie curled up slightly over his big belly, the thick newspaper underneath his arm, comic sheets outward, and in the other hand, held carefully aloft, a white cardboard bakery box full of the cherry buns he always bought on Sunday mornings.

Chris turned away and fixed his eyes on Chester Lions, blushing now in the presence of Chris's father, his face sullen beneath his embarrassment. The boy snorted and swaggered across the street to the playground, followed by Peter and some others. When Chris looked again, his father and mother were halfway down the street. His father's legs looked very thin beneath the bulk of his brown shiney suit jacket. Chris was surprised to notice that his mother was, in fact, shorter than his father. He had always thought her taller. His glance moved amongst other adults coming out of the church, walking the avenue. He saw Billy Holker's father, a trim man in a bright beige suit, his jaws scraped clean, tan, trim bellied, his eyes a cool, friendly blue. His own father's eyes were the color of tea, thin brown. Tea like his mother gave him when he was sick. *There's something wrong with him.*

On the playground Chester mounted the parallel bars. Chris watched from where he stood outside the rectory. Chester rolled back on the bars on the undersides of his arms, kipped, and locked his elbows. With a single backswing, he was up on his hands on the bars, legs in the air, triceps bulging. Chris watched the grace of the movements, the balanced easy arch of his body, and he saw beauty in ugliness, and he was confused. Peter was standing with his hands thrust into the pockets of his black chinos, watching Chester perform, and he looked very small beside the iron bars and the sleek, sculpted arms of Chester Lions.

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Chris took a different way home, a long circle, past the earthy construction caverns of Gray's Field, up the gravelly slope and across the train tracks and down the other side, making the circle wider, wider, even though he knew there were cherry buns waiting on the kitchen table, even though he knew his father would be there waiting to read to him from Dick Tracey and Dagwood Bumstead and Rip Kirby and Mandrake. He walked through streets where people he did not know ate Sunday breakfast in the houses where he had never been; he walked beneath the shelter of strange trees, across the grassy expanses of parks that belonged to families to whom he meant nothing, to whom his face was strange, to whom he could be anyone, anything, whoever he proved himself to be.

Across the broad boulevard where sunlight burnt down over four lanes of traffic on each side of a narrow concrete island, glittering with chips of mica, a large red dog trotted free in a setter's stiff-legged gait, a hunting dog, looking preemptively about him, breathing with his tongue. Chris held back by a lamppost, but the dog paid him no mind, trotting past, looking, looking. Chris was standing in front of the Elks Club, two wide grey flights up, with a pedestal in center on which stood a stone elk, snout high and serious, craggy antlers tipped up into the sky. The sun was very hot, the sky a merciless blue, the clouds pure white and sharp. Looking straight off up the boulevard, he could see the great flat space he knew to be the cemetery and beyond that a brown haze he knew to be the river and the city. He thought of his father and mother at the dining table at home with their coffee and buns, newspaper sections spread out on the table, the empty plate and untouched cherry bun where he usually sat. The water ran on his tongue

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at the thought of the bun, the sugared cherry halves, the glazed sweet bread, brown on top, white in the concavity of the sides, the tall cold glass of milk. Always there was one bun too many, and always his father would ask, "Want to split it with your old man, son?" and cut it so all the cherries and jelly were on the side Chris got, and wink as he put it on the plate before him.

The heat baked his clothes so the sweat dried against his skin, and he heard a roaring in his ears of the cars and trucks and buses droning past, their hard rubber tires sizzling on the baking tar. Since Mass, he had been pressing the tip of his tongue against the roof of his mouth. He was dizzy. He closed his eyes and saw things: a fish with teeth, a fisher on the sea, catching men, gaffing them, tearing the flesh of their faces as his father's face had once been torn and caked with red-black scab when he tipped over a straight-back chair he'd fallen asleep on. *Drunk*. He could picture his father's face now, at this moment, looking at the uneaten cherry buns in the white cardboard bakery box, and he felt a hard pleasure in the lines of his own eyes and the set of his lips.

He looked across the wide boulevard. His home was on the other side of the world. Here, the stone elk stood on long, proud legs, snuffing the air, granite muscle swelling with grace, antlers challenging the sky.

The stone solidness of the beast calmed him. He laid his palms against the cool, hard, muscled leg, felt its hardness moving into his own arm. Again he saw his father's sad, wondering eyes as he stared down at the uneaten cherry buns in the box, as the cake turned dry, and the jelly hardened like a scab.

Nancy Lagomarsino

A LIGHT SUPPER

An old woman fixed herself a light supper and carried it into the sitting room. Placing the tray on the floor, she poured hot milk onto the bowl of rice and ate. Then she relaxed in her chair, promising herself she'd take the dishes back to the kitchen by and by.

While she dozed, the tray inched to one side as though arranging an escape. Surprised by such cleverness, she thought, "Perhaps it will take me along," so she curled herself around the tray and waited. Through the open window moonlight crept across her wrinkled face and the folds of her black dress...by midnight she and the tray had disappeared.

This happened on a night when the sky was perfectly clear.

Nancy Lagomarsino

CONDITIONS ARE NOT IDEAL

"I've asked you before not to serve chicken croquettes," Father complained at dinner. "They always remind me of termite mounds."

"Some gravy might take your mind off it," Mother suggested.

She poured a ladle of gravy over the contents of his plate, but when he took a forkfull he thought he saw a tiny insect foot protruding from the breaded crust. Was it possible his wife had served him termites after all? And even if she had, could he devise a test to determine whether they originated in the croquette itself or in the auxiliary gravy? These aren't the best laboratory conditions...but with care excellent results often can be obtained in the field.

Nancy Lagomarsino

SCIENCE AS A CULINARY ART

A fisherman netted a rare blue octopus hiding in an abandoned shell. Ignoring its scientific value, he carried it home to his youngest daughter who waited in her pinafore, implements poised. When she broke open the shell, the octopus slid to the floor like several lengths of clothesline. Quickly they caught it and fried it until its feet turned white. Then the daughter sampled a forkfull, chewing slowly with a thoughtful look on her face.

"Too bitter!" she pronounced and threw the contents of the pan into the fire.

On the floor the cracked shell gloated.

Nancy Lagomarsino

TANGERINE

I try to avoid them. All those locked compartments! But this one hangs on my palm like a fleshy handshake neither party knows how to end. With my thumb I dig into its skin, tear out one segment after another, each containing something different -- why else be divided? -- and pop them into my mouth, seeds and all. No use trying to distinguish among them -- it's difficult enough to untangle the web of string crisscrossing the entire surface, a defence so annoying it sometimes works. But not this time. I've devoured the whole thing. On my plate are the rind, pith, seeds, tissue and string to prove it.

Therese Mattil

THE COLD CUT

The courtroom was weighted with talk
of snow. *Eight inches by nightfall*, it whispered.

I worried the keys in my pocket, unwilling
to remove my coat for fear of comfort. The judge

mispronounced my name, the one I was giving
back. I let it go. Could he have been sincere

in wishing me luck? It was done in five minutes.
The deli breathed silent and stale, lettuce

rusting in the cooler. *Do you have any fresh?*
I hurried the man in his bloody apron. A pound

of cole slaw, an afterthought. *Looks like*
we're in for it, he warned, and I raced home

before the fear of ice could take hold.
Documents tossed in with the bacon.

The impending storm fell on me like guilt.
I unpacked my groceries. Then, an insistent ringing

and your distant voice recoiling: *I don't like*
what you did to my life. My life. I can't

worry for you anymore. A half-foot of snow
already, and the sun not even set. My staples

put away, these cold papers misplaced.

Therese Mattil

ON BEING LOVED BY A MAN WITH A GARDEN

Romance, I plead. You
bring vegetables.

Bouquets of broccoli sleep
in my refrigerator drawer, hidden
like the crystal vase I haven't seen
for months. I'll turn your love
into soup tonight, light candles
in my kitchen. I welcome

your gifts of snowpeas, crisp,
and sweeter than fine chocolates.
I'll place them in bowls on the fresh linen
of my bed, feed them to you late
at night, scattering calyx stars
on your thighs. Tomatoes, like hearts,

burst happy and full, explode
into kettles of sauce, spiced and herbed,
then frozen until the warmth of winter stoves
urges the blood to simmer, the spirit
to fire. Your passion with the earth

speaks quietly. Under the sturgeon moon,
I see your bent form hunting melons
and squash. The plumpest ones you give
to me. All summer I'll unwrap
leaves of lettuce and find heart.

Walter McDonald

MANNA INTERNATIONAL

These are the days of plenty,
years without locusts,
wind in the rigging of saplings
staked out and thriving.

Fat cattle are in our barns,
all fences tight,
a litter of pigs each week.
But let grain silos bulge,

the cows share stalls.
Maintain all barns
exactly as they are. Don't
tear them down for new ones.

Now is no time for leisure.
Go look for Lazarus
at the gate. If he's there,
invite him. If he refuses,

beg. If he dies
before we can feed him,
even our children
are doomed.

Liza Nelson

DEAR MOM

Not much to report. As usual
 someone else's mother is dying
 but I can no more imagine a shift
 in the weight of your life upon mine
 than I can these leaves will be gone
 by tomorrow. It is August
 and their hold weakens, but other leaves
 will take their place
 indistinguishable
 as they clot against the sun
 next July, and their greenness
 framing my view of the sky
 is what matters (all those summers
 you packed me off to camp and I refused
 to cry or kiss you as the bus pulled away).

I'll find it easier to talk
 to you when you have died,
 not that I'm wishing a death,
 but it is hard to admit what we feel
 while you're out there aging
 even faster than I am. The resentments I hold
 will be held against me
 soon enough. Last night I dreamed
 your only granddaughter
 was eaten by sharks while I watched
 safe on shore (I tell this on myself
 without accusation; your fin
 was not among the plunging backs), black
 all of them, as your hair in my childhood,
 my child's blood dyeing the sea
 the rusty shade you polished your nails.

Liza Nelson/Dear Mom

To be frank, someday you will die
and I may regret we haven't talked
(may regret this letter) but damned if I know
what we should be saying. So little pleasure
do I get from your pleasures, so much anger
at your voice before it speaks. You are always
beside me in the car, the windows rolled high,
the doors locked as we travel
from home to school. You are always asking
why I hate you. And I am always holding back
tears of guilt and rage that you have to ask.

By the way I'm an excellent cook now
though I didn't learn from you,
not even to boil an egg (except the one night
when I was ten and we discovered ourselves
alone. We sat in your bedroom watching old movies
and in the middle of the night
you took me to the kitchen where we made
Welsh Rarebit, yellow cheese sauce
melted over toast. You seemed to like me,
the awkward truth I juggled
but held on to) all those meals
I glared at you across filled plates.

Liza Nelson

PINK CANDY

At left the hospital where I gave birth.
At right a slender woman talking to her child.

As they step off the curb I invent their lives
Until the changing light forces me

Toward another destination. With the lawyer,
A kindly man, I split my meager death to come.

Clay pots and inlaid boxes to old friends,
The children to my husband. What is left?

Afterwards my perfectly good health turns panicky
In the parking lot. Empty cars staring as I pass,

A suspicious guard smirks behind his mirrored glasses
While I jerk the silver handle of my blue sedan.

Now the hospital's on my right. The same woman
Bends her head against the midday glare

And tries to hug her little girl who pulls away.
The woman reaches in a canvas tote, offers pink candy

The child refuses with a shiver of hate and desire.
Turning her back to protect a privacy

The traffic mocks, she years for the unspeakable
Through slitted eyes I know too well.

Suzanne Rhodenbaugh

OLD SOUTHERN RECIPE

I want you to know about grits
--it wasn't poverty.
My mamma had a wide bosom,
her calf muscles tightened
like in a younger woman
dancer. She had fine plucked brows,
eyes blue in every light. Tough,
she never cried. She's the one
got me ready for this life
like you would a chicken
for the roaster: wring the neck,
remove the head,
let it run a while
then pluck it. The quills of some tailfeathers
will stay embedded in the bumpy flesh.
Pluck it best you can
and cut out the giblets.
It's getting more fit to eat
now rub it with butter,
roast it slow. Boil the giblets
down for gravy. Sunday dinner,
sop it up. Go the the porch,
take up a picture of Jesus
mounted on a tongue depressor.
Fan a while. Mamma will cross her legs,
settle into what a drinker Daddy was,
or what a bitch Aunt Blanche has been
or how Lester caught *three* bullets
just when he was trying to straighten up
and do right TOO BAD.
She'll arch her foot to make a point.

Suzanne Rhodenbaugh/Old Southern Recipe

Your starched white cotton blouse
will start to stick to the small of your back.
Mamma loves to preen her feet
while she settles into her subjects.
She'll arch her foot again, hold it,
you'll cry aw let it go but you're
already in the belly of the beast.

David Williams

WHITE FISH

Baskets of silver eyes
in the market,
onions, tomatoes, peppers
of every kind.
Old cathedral dust
kicked up by a donkey.
Indian children
moving up a hill.
Here, you wrap
raw fish in a tortilla
and call it lunch.
Here, on Sunday
shadows on
the plaza pass slowly
as you shake your wrist.
Here, we choose our rings
of silver and put them on.
Wound forever to each other.
Carrying the flesh of the lake
on our hands.

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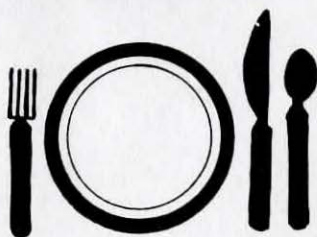
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Please submit no more than 5 poems and/or two pieces of short fiction (15 pp. or less). Manuscripts which are not accompanied by a SASE will not be read.

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