



RUNE

LITERARY MAGAZINE

Rock Mushroom Garden in California
by Kristen Lawrence



RUNE

**Robert Morris University's
Literary Magazine**
2012 Edition

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Things I Could Never Tell My 6th Grade Teacher

Angelique Arenas

I HATED your class.
I hated the way you never started on time.
I hated the meaningless lessons you never taught,
Math and science were never my forte.
I played sick on the days I had classes with you.
I told my mom I hated you.
I know you favored the boys,
They were always first for EVERYTHING.
I saw you smoking in your car,
Didn't anyone ever tell you that one pack of ciggies kills 8 hours of
your life?
I cheated on a homework assignment.
I tried to switch out of your class. My mother wouldn't let me.
I purposely spoke up when you told the class to quiet down.
I told the principal I hated you.
I told my favorite teacher Mr. Gritzer I hated you,
I think he hated you too.
When I had your class, I felt like the clock was never moving.
I thought you were as lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame
duck,
But a real duck that was actually lame.

I tried to leave your class during lunch once.
I couldn't wait for seventh grade.
I HATED your class.

The following is a journal entry.

I won't say from whom.

Samantha K. Wallace

March 2nd, 2011

2:36 pm – I want everything to slow down.

When I walk it's at a hurried pace. When I drive I find myself straining forward in the seat, like I can will the car to go faster.

Everything is too loud, colors are too bright, things move too quickly. I hold my breath and then I have to breathe quickly and unevenly to get it back to normal. Even as I'm falling asleep at night, I can feel my heartbeat in my ears like hummingbird wings.

I feel finely strung, too finely. If you stood next to me, you'd feel a steady hum, like the sound that electricity makes as it races through power lines. Or like a guitar string that's been tightened almost, but not quite, to the breaking point, and then plucked.

I want to scream, but to whom? How would they hear me? It's enough to drive you mad.

But...I'm not like you. I'm not like anyone. I'm not like anyone, and I don't know why, and I want to know why.

I don't want to burn like this all the time. I want to throw the brakes on this speeding train and then jump off. Let it crash, I want to walk away from it. I want to walk away and into the woods, to walk until I find a river, to lie down beside it and close my eyes. I want to breathe deeply until everything within me has slowed almost to the point of utter stillness.

And even when I finally let the sound of the
river carry me away for good, I want to
stay there forever,

until my breath leaves me,

until my body

turns

to

dust.

Walking down Las Cruces Road

(Taos, New Mexico 8/13/11)

Joanne Samraney

It was the road I wanted to walk
It looked deserted, but I heard music,
loud music, so I continued
in spite of the rattle of an old
black Chevy thumping past me.

I ignored the two young men
bouncing along in the front seat,
a cigarette hanging from the mustached
mouth of the driver, a Corona
spilling in his buddy's hand.

They looked sleazy alright
but harmless I hoped
as I continued to follow the music
reverberating from a house behind
an abandoned yellow school bus.

Scattered along the roadside,
old tires, a rusty hot water tank,
broken glass, smashed oil and beer cans
and bees hovering over
an uneven splintered fence.

And then I saw them, a man singing
in time to a lively Spanish tune
blaring through an open window
as he tossed laundry to a woman
with long dark hair, hips swaying
with each piece of clothing
flung across a frayed clothesline.

I'm always losing things

Roberta Hatcher

Car keys
Car
Love letters
Lover
The train of thought
The thread—

As if something about living
makes my palms sweat,
my mind go blank,
allowing objects
to slip away from me.

I used to say:
it's a zen thing—
a sign from the universe
to detach from the material world.

But carelessness lies far
from mindlessness,
its opposite.
The watch I lost
was a Christmas gift
whose absence on my wrist
was noticed.
Like a long hesitation before speaking,
meaning was attached.

Just last week I locked myself out again,
the keys forgotten inside.
Each time it costs a little bit more
to try to get back.

The whispering is where it all starts

Adrianna Carbonara

Mumbling. Just ignore them. Leave them be. Don't do anything. *You know you want to. It's so easy.* Keep walking. Get away. *As if you could ever get away. I'm here to stay.* Cross the street. Almost home. Locks and chains. Nearly there. *They can't stop you. You can't fight it.* Stop talking. There's my door. Take a breath. *Look to the left. Perfection. Yours for the taking.* No. I won't. Not again. *Take a look at your hand.* Trembling yet again. Shake it. Loosen it. The pain soon begins. *You know how to fix it. How to fix the aching itch.* The knife's in my hand. Now it's time to begin.

Please. Please tell me all I did was dream. *Go to the bathroom. Look in the mirror.* Dried flaking blood coats the sink. Hitting the floor hard. Thumping. Why can't I stop? Why can't I fucking stop? *Because you know you don't want to. You love it too much.* Scrambling. I have to find it. Find the knife. *To do this again?* Lift my sleeve. See the scars. So many lives live forever on my arm.

The Power of Charisma

Nicole Blake

Charismatic haze
manipulate the waves of people
as they come to you
seeking answers, seeking safety.
Give them what they think they need
a person in which they believe
knowing one day you will terrorize their dreams.
The sane need not apply, your conscience is not necessary.
Send the people in daze to an untimely, open grave.
Guide them to your will, malleable, to your skilled hands.
Mold them to their doom, take it all
their happiness, possessions, loved ones, lives.
Lead them all,
they are sure to die.

Joined at the Hip

Madalon Amenta

Come on for crying out loud
I haven't treated you so badly

I eat only white meat
lots of fish, fruits and nuts
grains, greens and beans
low fat, low salt everything else—

maybe the occasional pastry
the once in awhile Dago red.

I haven't smoked for fifty years.

OK, I haven't joined a health club
but I park as far away as possible
from Whole Foods, libraries, Goodwill.
Sometimes I walk the six tenths of a mile
to the movies.
I run up and down the stairs at home.

I bundle up in winter
use sun screen in summer
take Silver Age vitamins
get routine flu shots, mammograms, pap smears.

I do my part, God dammit!

So what's with this pringling
in the fingers and toes
this creaking in the neck
this belching and farting
these explosive liquid stools
this systolic shooting through the top of my skull
this shortness of breath
this atrial fib
these intermittent fevers
these idiopathic parasthesias?

Listen, Kiddo
I'm not ready to give up yet
so can't you please try a little harder?

We've been together so long
Can't we still listen just a little longer
for the singing of the stars
for the sometimes chimes at midnight?

Roses

Judith Robinson

The simple rose,
born into radiance,
never hides
nor eludes her admirers;
not lulled
by thorn's protection
she doesn't even try;
dazzling, disarming,
she bursts forth
in briefest beauty
petals blushing
fuschia pink, carmine blood.

Rita Rose flashes
across dream-scapes,
supple in glitter
real enough
for old men lost,
long-gone from Hope,
for young men hot,
far-gone from Good Intent.
She undulates in reddest silk,
parts carmine lips,
flutters violet lids,
bends deeply into the camera,
rewards every bit of love she can.

Human All

David Adès

The driven—intoxicated with ambition—
who push and push at glass ceilings
through which they think they see

a different sun, the light of other stars;
and the stubborn who push simply
in order to push, chafing at restraints—

real or imagined—at doors, walls,
boundaries, the humming air itself;
and the weary who spend themselves early

and lie down defeated, as if with the lion,
as if with the lamb, heads resting in hands,
bodies against stone, the walls they stopped against.

All of them little *Houdinis*, tied and bound
in water-filled tanks, running out of air,
struggling to reach up and out, to reach

beyond, or broken in the struggle,
inspired by unknown promise as if to touch
the hands of life after death.

After the Battle of Caporetto, 1917

Joan E. Bauer

I have come to rescue you. -Benito Mussolini

Mules on the road, troops mud-slogged,
wet in their capes. Heavy guns drawn by tractors.

Where the Isonzo River flows from the Julian Alps
into the Adriatic—now Slovenia—
40,000 Italians dead or wounded.
280,000 POWS, 350,000 deserters or stragglers.

There were defeats before (and after)
but for the Italians, nothing like Caporetto.

A nation looked to a new Italy—
Who *dared* oppose the jutting jaw,
the black-shirt swagger?

*

Tua promessa. Your brightness—your splendor.

(In some corners of Italy,
your portrait remains—)

'Indulgent' toward professors, you read Socrates
and Plato.

But your feet proved wingless in the free fall.
Knave or fool?

A noose of regrets.
Sumptuous tears. The rusty knife,
the moldy prayer book, no use.

No apologia, only the claim:

I am crucified by my destiny.

Calloused Castle

Brenna Wandel

Past the dilapidated bridge
through the overgrown forestry
behind a decrepit, steel gate
It barely stands, worn by wind and rain
the wood rotting incessantly,
blackened by a great blaze from the past.
Windows shattered by children
while the area around it remains untouched
as though it shall remain
still
silent.

The Old Train Bridge by Kaylee Smith



Action by William Ryan



Untitled by Brett Carb



Vineyards in Napa Valley by Kristen Lawrence



You once rode your bike down devil's hill

(after D.A. Powell's [you'd want to go to the reunion:see])

Laura Smith

you once rode your bike down devil's hill skidding
your training wheels off. falling

over your handlebars, the pebbles
scratching messages into your face.

you ran barefoot through the backyard
and didn't even remember to dodge the pollen

picking bees burying their noseless faces into white flowers.
into free grass. we watched you climb the

monkey bars, swing violently upside down, fell onto the concrete
left a red mark on the back of your head that

never went away. where did you get the energy?
crazy straws, Lucky Charms, Flintstone vitamins

you caught that fever and it ballooned your spirit
it floats above you, out of reach.

you have stopped grabbing at it. jumping for it.
you let it hang over you and remind you what you once were.

brave girl where have your dresses gone?
brave girl turned tomboy.

tomboy turned pretty girl. girl afraid of bees
and tire tracks. girl who spends her days

at the bottom of the monkey bars. you traded
in your soiled dresses...you ran

from red berry patches and red coated creatures.
Revlon, Altoids & bug-eyed sunglasses are your new tools

you step carefully and only behind another.
you write phonetically and shamelessly squeal incomprehensible
words

and would you save another if it was required of you?
would you remember how to run in the woods?

or would the mud take you down before
you could reach onto that balloon and float away safely on your past?

Rape

Nichole Schmitt

It's March. I'm so sick of the bitter cold and lonesome dark nights
I can't wait to get out of this hell hole
I have mid-terms tomorrow and haven't even studied
finally, my 8 long hours are over. I'm free, or so I thought
I step outside, I close and lock the door behind me
someone grabs my arm with an intoxicating grip
as I scream, he covers my mouth; all I can taste is his leather glove

I can barely breathe as he throws me into his red Pontiac
he is yelling, no screaming at me
I sit, I wait, I wonder
as he continues to drive behind the building I work in
I think about how I can get away
maybe I can jump out
but his grip around my neck is so tight, it's almost unbearable
he has a gun, a glock
will he use it? what the fuck do I do?
my heart drops, the tears in my eyes should be pouring out, but
nothing does
I'm frozen in this moment, nothing makes sense

he parks the car and puts the ice-cold glock to my left temple
"If you scream I'll fucking kill you!"
he rips my clothes off as if I was his crack
he grabs my breasts, and then forces his dick inside
every bone in my body aches as he presses into me
is he going to kill me, like the women on the 5 o'clock news?

he finishes inside of me – the sick fuck didn't use anything
a car is coming, the bright headlights are blinding
he throws me out of the vehicle onto the concrete, still naked
I run back to my car as fast as I can, faster than ever

that son of a bitch is still with me today –
twenty-two years later
I look at my daughter, my everything
she is perfect in every way imaginable
she is a part of him.

The Intolerable Conditions of the Ordinary

Emily Maeder

A young woman walked along a wooded path, hands in her pockets
and eyes to the ground. And the universe asked her,

"Why so sigh?"

"Because there's no point," replied the young woman.

"No point to what?"

"Life."

"Oh. Well who told you there was supposed to be a point?"

"There has to be."

"But you just said there isn't..."

"I know. That's the point."

"I don't understand."

"Without meaning there's just no reason to keep on living."

"How about the journey?"

"The Journey is long and tiring."

"The trees? The flowers?"

"The trees are colorless to me and the flowers smell like sulfur."

"Bacon?"

"Bacon just makes me fat and sadder."

"Then there is no pleasing you," replied the universe.

And it went away.

Jumping

Rebecca Ferraro

I throw my head back with the movement.
Close my eyes as the sun paints shadows
inside my eyelids...

Red,
 black.

Red,
 black.

I hear you whoop beside me
& laugh,
reaching out blindly for your hand
as you swing past...

...reaching for mine.

The chains creak
Back,

Forth,

Back,

Forth.

Higher.

A breeze blows hair into my face;
 I shake it free.

The smell of asphalt,
freshly cut grass,
deodorant working overtime.

The taste of summer on my tongue:
yellow, waving daisies, soaring butterflies.

I open my eyes again,
search for you and see the empty swing next to me.

WHOOSH

You soar through the air and land on all fours.

I can hear the children playing.

A ball hits the chain link fence, a dog barks in the distance.

Perhaps it's time to let go,
to not be afraid anymore, shut off like a forgotten toy chest.
In spite of my lack of grace,

 a series of flailing arms and legs,

It's not the tripping and f

a

l

l

i

n

g

that hurts most.

I take a deep breath and get one good swing before I arc through the
air...

Angel of Pain

Sarah Brown Weitzman

He prefers cloudless days
when his own milky blue hue

is less likely to be noticed
as he plummets down like a stone

into some unsuspecting life.
How much better that tragedy should come

when it is least expected.
Odd how little has been written

about him for he attends almost every birth.
He misses the ancient long wars, battlefields

centuries before anesthesia.
He knows all the serial killers

by their first names
but it is their mothers he visits.

He used to think the Inquisition
and the Nazi concentration camps

were the high points of his artistry
but now there are research laboratories

where the shrieks of monkeys
and dogs fill him with pride.

Even better the elephants and lions
in circuses whose despair

broods silent and pacing. He hails
modern inventions like napalm and PCB.

He scoffs at those ineffectual guardians.
He believes he alone understands life's purpose.

SAT Questions

Jay Carson

Going up the Rangling Road
I see an infestation of bamboo
that threatens all the other vegetation.
This is serious,
my gardening friend tells me.

A
I suggest a herd of pandas:
Set them loose at the top of the road
near the nice duplexes that could house pandas.

And let them eat
all the way down to the ice cream store
for an arranged reward slake—
the bamboo looks kind of dry.

B
*No, my friend tells me definitely
for two reasons: it's not
the kind of bamboo they like,
and there aren't enough pandas
in captivity to form such a herd.*

Answer the following questions:

1. Ignoring the ice cream and the gardener's attitude,
does it matter if either A or B are true?
Why or Why not?
2. Why does China
have all the pandas?

80 Loden Lane

after Yusef Komunyakaa

Joanne Martin

I am eight.

Mr. Buteyn is my third grade teacher, and each day starts by checking to see if the hair on his face has changed.

Mrs. Shoemaker, the fourth grade teacher, is pregnant.

Every day she comes in with her stomach growing and I feel kind of embarrassed for her.

We know this means she's had sex.

My sister and I ride the bus to school with the Mercy girls.

They are high school students being shipped across town to private school.

They get off after us. Stacey, the blond,

is the ringleader. She likes to sit in the last seat

and put on lipstick—for twenty minutes. Scotty and I like to annoy her by sitting there first. Scotty is my friend I guess

but he is whiny. All he talks about is how the Titanic sank.

It was because a man challenged God. That, and they hit a big ice cube.

Plus, he burns ants with magnifying glasses.

This is better than the boys in my apartment complex

who throw the frogs against the wall.

I wish I knew how to save them.

The man across the parking lot plays loud music.

He watches the boys but doesn't stop them.

Last night I had a crazy dream/ about a chick in a black bikini

She looked so good, she couldn't be real/ I knew she had to be a magic genie.

Mom doesn't like me to sing his songs but she won't explain them either.

All my music education comes from my neighbors. I know when to hold em

(and when to fold em) because of Kenny Rogers

and Mrs. Ames. I think my neighbors are pretty good

except for the man who ordered a case of Turtles for the school fundraiser

then forgot to pay for them. I even like the college guy

who built the snowwoman with breasts, holding a beer bottle between them.

The nipples were fascinating. The beer

shockingly forbidden. I thought it was clever

but Mom asked Dad if we could go ahead and buy the house now.

Untitled by Brett Carb



Dancer

Michelle Wolniak

I wish I could say I was a dancer,
who held my head high,
my back straight and eyes steadied,
focused on what's in front of me.
Smiling and laughing at all the right times,
turning heads with every twirl and twist,
that my soft yet defined body makes while
I shimmer in the bright lights of a
dark theater stage and lightly spin,
mesmerizing the enchanted faces of my audience.
At the end of my show, I take a short bow
and bask in the applause of my adoring fans.

Instead, I was born with two left feet,
forced to barrel through the world,
keeping my head toward the floor while I
break glasses, fall up steps, and trip
over my own stumpy legs.
Making sure my eyes are lowered when I
run into strangers and apologize,
receiving no second glances in return.
Struggling to maintain my dignity, my pride,
trying to walk a simple straight line into
the comforting and protective darkness,
where no one can see my clumsiness.

Sticky Beer Bottles (Original)

Rebecca Lindberg

The innocent softness of a rabbit's fur
Lay draped across a wood chipped table.
The eight points of a strong buck's rack
Presents itself; anchored to the egg wash walls.

The double barrel of the Savage
Leans propped behind the tin dented door.
The lethal rounds, awaiting their chamber
Reside uniformed within their box.

The God's word, sheathed in black split leather
Nestles itself beside ripped pages of Field and Stream.
The bottles of dry sticky beer
Remain stuck to the clouded glass table
Inside this apartment
Where I am too
Stuck.

Casualties of War

Jay Massiet

I still hear the Sounds of violence,
Feel the Quakes of incoming,
Taste the Acrid smoke of expended rounds.

While I sleep, it will come—
dreams, remembrance
invading, seizing
my unconscious Mind
lingering, seeping
into my wakeful thoughts.

I look at Him,
his eyes return,
darkness, the sun ceased,
the reaper signaled,
his cloak falls around Us.

Something's wrong, can't wake up.
knowing what's going to happen
I've Lived this
many times before.

Trembling, telling myself it's just a memory,
don't have to be here anymore
my mind's eye stuck
same as the real ones
that Fateful day.

Something hit him, then he fell.

Too many emotions explode inside
not sure which to choose
until his fall complete,
like an Autumn leaf
from the tree of life.

Yelling his name.
not responding.
my heart Races.

My sleeping body shakes, sweats.
call his name again.
I miss you, I say
to a Fellow Casualty of War.

Nightmare fades,
fear creeps into empty spaces
left by dreamy anger and sadness.
scared to return to sleep,
Dream will come again.
Rage, Torment
two I choose.

Marley

Michael Battisti

Sometimes my dog can be a real asshole
Like last summer when she killed that baby mole
She parades around the house with her black lips and nose
And her ears that fold down like little Doritos
When she's bored she likes to poop on rugs—the watery kind
And of course the occasional stealth hump from behind
I can hear her tiny feet clicking on the floor all night
Like she's planning her next move, or which one of us to bite.
That bitch is constantly barking as if she's singing an endless cry
But really, she's speaking the devil language to my mom and I
She is really annoying, but she smells like popcorn when she sleeps
And she let us paint her nails once with some polish from The Biebs
But the one thing that keeps me from going for the kill—
She gets more excited to see my face than I know any human ever
will.

White

Kevin Finn

Clothe me in white.

In that place of beauty, the
end of all beauty – a distended

belly, a grain of rice, *hunger*.

Like this land's thirst,
we're not so different.

I wake as the sun rises.

The planet is covered
by shadow.

The world is blinded by light.

Rune Literary Magazine

Rune is the literary magazine of Robert Morris University.

The magazine accepts poetry, artwork, photography, creative writing, including short fiction, dramatic writing, and creative non-fiction. Rune accepts submissions from the Robert Morris University community as well as artists and writers from the surrounding Pittsburgh area and beyond.

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The House of Winter by Heidi Hickle



Iron Man by Ryan Williams



