CHRYSLIS

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Quality
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The quality of a voice
By the ear is not detected
But rather it is measured
By the hearts affected.

Iraq Sun
Barb Fernandez
A year,  
I’ve been searching for him.  
Trying to find,  
similar flora.  
One who would perfectly fill the ragged holes his roots left behind.  
He so carelessly uprooted himself,  
to go plant his root in other gardens.  
Never once,  
thinking of the precious ecosystem he destroyed.  
He stripped all the nutrients out of the soil.  
Dead, dead dirt.  
The land has been barren,  
devoid of life for so long.  
Even weeds,  
the only thing that would take root,  
struggle to grow,  
in the toxic soil.  
You are not him.  
You carefully,  
yet eagerly,  
filled the gaping holes.  
Smoothed them over with dirt,  
hiding them.  
They never existed.  
No one existed before you...  
The surface is raked,  
feeling ebbs back.
Top soil is turned.
You gingerly ease in your roots,
slowly winding your way down into the dirt.
You are not him,
and you never have to be.
He was a thorny weed;
you are an orchid:
beautiful,
different,
welcome.

**East of the Shoreline**
*Jorge Palomarez*

Running barefoot in the sand
With our eyes glued to the East
Where the waterline merged into the skies
A cool breeze on your face
Blowing through your hair
Challenging the sun to match your eyes
We were waiting for the sun
To illuminate our day
It's funny how we always knew he'd show
The radiating skies
Forewarned us he'd arrived
To fulfill our expectations with his glow

You somehow stayed behind
Seeking treasures in the sand
Observing all the waves had washed ashore
I was noticing the sun
Shinning on your face
Enhancing those expressions that you wore

Tender were our thoughts
We lived each other's dreams
Flourishing like seedlings in the Spring
Children on the way
Only strengthened all those dreams
With the promise of the pleasures that they'd bring

Something in the waves
Lured you ankle deep
Foam and sand made rings upon your skin
A shell had caught your eye
As it rolled to the water's end
Held its ground as the water went back in

You placed it on your shirt
You had cupped for all your finds
Treasures from the shoreline we had scanned
That would make your day
We turned and went back home
Retracing fading footprints in the sand

Those were the days
As I remember you
Somehow they got lost among the waves
Those were the days
As I remember you
Like the footprints the shoreline never saves
4:25 a.m. ET (Excerpt from Deleterious Tenement)

*Travers La Ville*

4:25 a.m. ET. A swoosh, oomph, clasp startled Sarah out of sleep and carried her from a French cottage with two elderly lovers sitting in the rain to a sweltering room and a pillow puddled with wet. The mouth-made lake swam across the freckled bluff that was Sarah’s right cheek. Slightly embarrassed, the redhead woman on the side of the bed closest to the window wiped her excess drool with a corner of sheet. Her Star Wars pillowcase was now a bog and the pungent stench struck her like a coarse comment in polite company, making her face wry.

She gave her fiery tresses a once over -- adding some coherence to a sizable rats nest – and took a sharp glance over her right shoulder to make sure Jack had not witnessed her slobbery debacle. The wall-side of the bed was empty. Once the state of waking-dream dissipated, Sarah’s memory of the night before came flooding back. In an instant, the fight; the promises broken; his hurtful words and falling asleep bitterly under a miasma of unresolve became a montage in her mind. Her heart sank when the final image appeared in a slow motion shot as Jack lashed out with, “You’re just like them. You’re a fucking capitalist robot who can’t think for herself. I hope you’re happy living under daddy’s thumb and in mommy’s shadow.”

She tried to stop the memory mid-sentence but she believed too much in the necessity for utmost honesty concerning memories. Sarah held no religion but her epistemology was as close to a guiding dogma as the young atheist could get. She knew that memory was based on perception and subjective but she believed
that the art of perception could be taught and if practiced by everyone, a “true” Human perspective could be documented. Sarah went so far as to pen her “religion” – which was really more of a philosophy – into an epic free verse poem (not as epic as in Paradise Lost, just epic for a journal entry):

16, July 2008
The Vessel
The vessel cannot guide itself and if left unattended, can be taken down stream by the current. Instead: the vessel must curb its appetite to go with the drift of things and train its oar to rudder among the trees.
When the vessel can make its way to the trees it is able to see were the true path lies.
Though the natural tendency of the vessel is to float with the current, it was once a tree before it was carved by time and lost its roots and out of need, learned to swim.
The Path is not the red clay on which you walk but the thoroughfare on which you arrive.

Sarah tried to capture as many free thoughts and experiences in her journal as she could. Her favorite experiences to record were dreams. In an effort to forget about the fight from the night before, Sarah grabbed her pen and moleskin from the bedside and made her way toward the kitchen to jot down her last recent adventure through the subconscious.

From an onlooker’s point of view Sarah’s staggered walk from the dark bedroom into the living space, haphazard hair and AFI t-shirt looked like the opening scene from a George A. Romero film. She opened the fridge to find three bottles of Lone Star, soy sauce and three-quarters of a medium Meat Lovers from Giorgio’s. Deciding that her breakfast options were slim, Sarah grabbed a
longneck and a slice of pie. She set the pizza on a paper towel to buffer her meal from germs, twisted the top on the beer, took a sip and said, “I bet this is how Hunter S. Thompson did all of his best work,” before tossing the cap into the sink.

The cool drink was just enough to take the edge off the sauna that was her soon-to-be ex-apartment. She then perched herself on the counter-top, setting her beer down beside her, the laminate cooling her bare thigh as she removed the elastic band from her journal. She closed her eyes, inhaling slowly, and attempted to recall the textures and characters that entertained her mind as she slept. She exhaled with a smile and was pleased to remember the dream began with a grassy knoll and beautiful French woman. 4:35 a.m. E.T.

11, May 2010

I had a dream about a French Woman who was white and an American man who was black that knew French. They were very much in love. The dream picked up with them meeting on a rolling, emerald university mall – a non-descript university; of course my subconscious would have an issue with copyright infringement – and he was playing acoustic guitar while wearing a red ascot and a deep-v t-shirt that accentuated every muscle in his mahogany torso. The French woman sauntered up the walkway carrying an old fashion, leather book strap. Her skirt was black and empire waisted, a form fitted white camisole was tucked inside and a black cashmere cardigan covered her shoulders, the length stopping just past the bust. The French woman had sandpiper ringlets cascading to the nape of her neck with one spiraled column that ignited intrigue as it hung with sensual demure across her right eye. She was a vision. She was confident in her olive skin that ballooned into perfect rouge lips and ample bosom. I was privileged to watch the conception and birth of something beau-
beautiful all at once. The two strangers locked eyes and the American man began to play “Have you ever Really Loved a Woman.” The French woman twirled on the promenade to the black man’s rendition, singing where she knew the words. The black man smiled a toothy grin that seemed to do away with any sense of indifference I would hold toward the situation. The more I focused on the smiling troubadour, the more I wanted the French woman to fall in love with him and in that instant I became the French temptress. I commandeered her flawless skin and sandpiper hair for what seemed like a lifetime. I experienced the lasting gaze the black man gave her after they made love; the tender way he caressed her ringlets in the dark of their Parisian bungalow. I felt her joy of bearing his child and the sorrow of losing a son so young. He held my hand at the funeral and whispered gently, “I’ll never leave your side.” I knew what he said was a complete impossibility but the sentiment was most endearing. As we made our exit from the funeral, our feet stood still and a doorway emanating a pristine white light moved toward us inside the tiny chapel. The white light engulfed us and we walked through hand in hand onto a well-manicured lawn with two rocking chairs. The chairs, the lawn and the magnolia tree all seemed so familiar; like Texas; like home. The black man and I seemed to be both in our eighties now as we continued to hold hands sitting in the rocking chairs under the magnolia in full bloom. I heard the sky clamor above me and watched lightning set the magnolia ablaze. Rain began to pour intensely on our skin but the fire above us raged on. The black man squeezed my hand and said, “Don’t be afraid I told you I would never leave,” and then he was gone. I looked up just in time to see a falling magnolia limb bring my dream to an end.

I wish jack were a black man who spoke French or just a man at all.
The Know it Alls Jennifer Xiong
I’ve been called crazy. Perhaps I am.

My wrists and ankles are bound in heavy iron shackles. Four deputies sit with me armed with twelve gauge shotguns. Three of them wear sunglasses, the kind that look like mirrors, where I can only see my cold blue eyes instead of theirs. Next to me on my right, I see one deputy with warm cedar brown eyes gape into mine with wonderment and horror. He tries not to show that he fears me, but even he knows that he isn’t hiding it well. His left forefinger twitches over the trigger of his shotgun as his left hand trembles. That worries me, thinking he might jump the gun, but I also find it funny. I can’t help but smirk to myself.

The ends of my shackles are linked to the floor of an armored transport vehicle. I can feel the vibration of the roaring engine, and the tires that roll across the cold grit concrete pavement. The floor and the walls inside the armored truck are heavily coated in gray iron sheets. The two benches, including the bench I now sit on, are like planks of forged cold steel. The deputies remain vigilant with their hands clasping their shotguns. The two sitting across me from won’t take their eyes off of me, if they have any behind their glasses. When I look hard enough I can almost see my eyes as their own, staring back at me.

Inside the truck we’re all wearing uniforms. The deputies wear lightly tanned shirts and pants, hiding behind their stripes and guilded badges. I alone wear a white jumpsuit with bold printed numbers for everyone to see, and the only thing we have in common are our black pelted shoes with our rubber soles against the
cold steel floor. The deputies also wear round caps on top of their crowns as if they were halos, and I have only my shortened dark brown hair sitting on my scalp.

On the cold floor, beneath the bench opposite of me, there lies a shiny quarter. Usually one would occasionally find a faded and neglected copper penny face down on the ground and not bother to pick it up. I stare down at the sparkling coin. It is illuminated by the elongated light bulb on the ceiling of the truck. The coin is face up on heads. As my eyes fix on the date it was minted, I can’t help but remember that it was the year of my birth. I see the face of the founding father bathed in shined silver, with the ever so popular phrase... no... Slogan, printed beneath his shined nose, “IN GOD WE TRUST.”

I feel the wheels slow to a stop. I hear the muffled voice of the driver from behind the forged wall, “We’re here,” he shouts. The ranking deputy to my left lifts himself from the bench and stands. He stares down at me with my eyes as his own and says, “You’re going to Hell mister.” Perhaps. If there is such a place. He turns to the bolted doors of the back. The two deputies across from me remain cautious. The deputy to my right struggles with the keys on his black leather belt. The keys cling and jingle as he fiddles. He finally clasps the keys in his right hand, and now it begins to shiver, as if his hands were dry and shriveled. He crouches down to the lock that binds my shackles to the floor. His hand shakes as he tries to penetrate the lock. He finally releases me.

The driver’s voice calls from behind the bolted door. The ranking deputy shouts, “Ready!” The eyeless deputies clasp their hands on my arms and lift me off the bench. As I face the door,
light begins to seep through the center. The light is both cold and artificial. It is not the divine light of the sun.

The doors swing open. Flashing light pours in. I am nearly blinded. I can hear the flashing snaps of cameras, the ends of ink pens that scrape across note pads, and the relentless chatter of a sea... no... a cesspool of people. The deputies force me down from the truck. I now enter the stream splitting the crowd in two. On both sides are journalists, camera men, reporters, whores. To my right are oceans of signs and handmade cardboard slogans. They say, "Fry Him! Gas Him! Hang Him! Stone Him! Murderer!"

There are continuous shouts that ring my ears. They tell me that I will die, and that they would laugh. I thought I was the sadistic one. Microphones reach out to me to like tentacles emerging from an abyss. I am asked questions, like "How many people have you unofficially killed," and, "Are you glad for what you have done?"

To my left are screams and shouts of praise, excitement, wonderment, and worship. They say, "We love you!"

I am both hated... and loved.

I remember the first time I ever killed anything. It was my pet dog. A black Doberman I called Charlie. I was thirteen years old. I loved to play with it, but then one day my mother told me that we couldn’t afford to keep and support the dog, and that I had to give it away or sell it. One night in our back yard, I brought a shovel with me and Charlie. With only the moon as a source of light, I got Charlie to lie down, raised the head of the shovel over his neck, and thrusted down, severing his spine. I carefully removed a patch of grass, buried Charlie underneath, and placed the patch back. I later told my mother that Charlie ran away because he didn’t want to be given up.
The first person I ever killed was a man who broke into my home. He was a drug addict searching for money. He had a knife. I could see the needle marks on the crook of his arm. He was pale, thin, and weak. He had me up against a wall at knife point. He threatened to kill me if I didn’t tell him where I kept my money. I pointed out to my kitchen drawer, then, he rifled through it. He found seven-hundred-and-thirteen dollars, and balled it up in his hand. I was piss-broke at the time. He put his blade under my neck and said, “Thanks,” with a most dreaded grin that I found unbearable to tolerate. After he turned to leave, I savagely leapt on to his back, tackling him to the floor. I clapsed my hands on his head and repeatedly beat it against the white tile. Blood poured out of his head and filled the cracks between the square tiles. I then flipped him on his back, took his own knife, and staked it into his upper chest. His hands clapsed at my face as he tried to resist. His smirk faded into nothingness, and his face had become blank. His blood was smeared on my face, and the bills he had stolen were stained in blood. The blood inked into the bills, inking, “IN GOD WE TRUST,” in blood red.

No face ever haunts me, they are simply remembered.

Across my country I have taken the lives of its helpless victims. I have been called crazy. I have been called a god. I have even been called the Devil. The sweeps of my knives were like brushstrokes, painting walls and floors, and the squeezing of the triggers in my palms were like launching rockets and fireworks into eternity. Upon every life I had stolen, my name grew. I was both worshiped and feared in my world. I had indeed… become a god among men.
If there is to be only one thing for me to regret, it’s getting caught. Now, I am being brought before a jury of my peers to be judged before Man and God. I am being brought up the white marble steps past the Roman columns, leaving behind the ocean of lights and chatter. More armed policemen now surround me. My attorney rushes from the entrance to my side. He wears a dark brown suit with black leather shoes, and a tie that would look better on road kill. He carries a black leather briefcase with polished gold locks, and on his left wrist is a faux gold Rolex constricting his tendons. He has spearmint green eyes that hide behind his thick black framed glasses. The first time I ever laid my eyes on him, the first phrase to strike my mind was, “Shit-brown rat.” As he walks beside me he yammers about keeping proper appearances and playing the victim. I block out his annoying chatter.

The deputies force me through the arched marble entrance. The court house resembles a monastery. It has light brown shined marble floors, and white alabaster walls. I am escorted to the entrance of the courtroom. It has a thick coating of brown polished wood. It almost looks like cedar. I’m being marched down the aisle of polished benches, towards the defendant’s desk. On my left I see fanatics practically bowing to me, as if I were Christ reborn. One of them has striking resemblance to Charles Manson, minus the swastika. Their faces are full of wonderment, excitement, and desire. Many fanatics have always been fascinated with mass murderers, serial killers, and death in general. Now I’m the new fad. They practically praise my crimes as if they were pieces by Picasso or Jackson Pollack. There’s a woman with dark eye-shadow wearing a white t-shirt. In black bold print the shirt reads, “KILL ME BABY.” I’ve been made into a product, even by my own fans. To
my right there is a sea of faces. Emotionless, grieved, saddened, horrified, all faces stare at me, both fearing and loathing the very sight of my pale face. All I do is smile back at them. I see an elderly woman faint from the sight of my grin. Two people catch her as she falls back. My attorney sees my grin. He warns me that I should stop. He worries that he might lose appeal because of a smirk.

The deputies place me in the swivel chair behind our desk. They seat themselves behind me on a shined wooden bench. Their blank eyes penetrate the back of my head. One of my fans behind the deputies leans over the wooden guard rail towards me. He says, “You’re a fucking artist man. Everyone should kiss your ass.” The ranking deputy shoves him back. My attorney at my left leans towards me and whispers in my ear. He checks to see if the deputies can hear him. He whispers that I should cooperate by ‘massaging’ and ‘playing’ the system, that I should appear innocent for the ‘insanity plea.’

I’ve been called crazy. Perhaps I am, but what about him? What about my fans? Aren’t they crazy? They must be to defend me, and what about the rest? I have committed atrocities that would disturb cattle slaughterers. I am not the only one to have been swept away in my new world, and to have placed myself at the seat of God, so why fixate on me? I may bask in the attention, but I never asked to be idolized next to the Beatles.

There is no argument that the main stream media have made a frenzy of my work. Their cameras are set up all around the court room. They feed live images to a world that both loves and loathes me. Both sides have pressed their scalding brand on me. If I am to be found guilty, and eventually executed, there will be wit-
nasses. They will all watch me as the needle pierces the crook of my arm and spew its venoms into me. They will all watch me die. Why? Because they will all fucking love it.

My attorney wants me to plead guilty by insanity, and I call him insane. I am guiltless.

The room falls into silence. The courtroom guard announces the entrance of the judge. He enters from the side entrance. The media cameras fix on him. He wears a black gown like a death shroud. His head is shaven. He has dark eyes like two deep black wells dug into his pale face. We all rise for his entrance. He seats himself on the towering pedestal of polished oak. He tells us to be seated. He now stares at me as if he were reading my blue eyes. He asks how I plea. I respond, “I am not guilty your honor.”
First published in 1948, Shirley Jackson’s chilling short story, “The Lottery,” shocked readers with its depiction of a small, rural American town’s annual ritual of stoning one of its citizens to ensure a plentiful harvest.

The “winner” of the lottery is Tessie Hutchinson, a mother of three, and she does not go down without a fight. Her protests of “it wasn’t fair!” go unheeded, and though a few in the crowd muse about the possibility of abandoning the ancient ritual, for now, the tradition is upheld. The genial crowd transforms into a murderous mob.

Responding to clamors for an explanation of her story, Jackson said "I suppose, I hoped... to shock the story’s readers with a graphic dramatization of the pointless violence and general inhumanity in their own lives."

San Jacinto College Central student Rachel Bryant produced a graphic novel version of “The Lottery.” The estate for Ms. Jackson has granted Chrysalis permission to publish Ms. Bryant’s graphic novel in this issue.
Hey, Mrs. Delacroix!

I was washing the dishes, and I noticed the kids were gone, then I remembered what day it was and came a-runnin’!

You’re in time, Tessie!

Oh! There’s Bill and the kids! See you later!
Thought we'd have to start without you, Tessie!

Wouldn't have me leave the dishes in the sink would you, Joe?

Allright folks. Let's get this started.

-hehe-

GIGGLE

HA HA
Anybody ain’t here?

That’s right! He’s broken his leg! Who’s drawin’ for ‘im?

Me, I guess.

Wife draws for her husband.

Dunbar!

Clyde Dunbar!

Dunbar.

I’m drawin’ for m’ma and me.

Good fellow, Jack!

Glad to see your ma’s got a man to do it!

Watson boy drawin’ this year?
We all remember the rules, right? I'll read the names—heads of families first—and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without looking at it until everyone is called. Let's start...

Allen  Clark  Dunbar  Hutchinson

Bentham  Delacroix  Harbur

Well! Go on up there, Bill!

Titter  Giggle  Chuckle

Overdyke

Pack'o young fools is what they are, Adams! Nothing's good enough for 'em.

There's always been a lottery! I've been in it 77 years!

Watson

Overdyke

"Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon." Things've changed....
It's Bill
Hutchinson.

Bill.

It's Bill.

Hutchinson's
got it...

Bill.

Bill.

T-you didn't give
him enough time!
Everyone saw!

Don't
be a bad
sport!

We
all took
the same
chance!
Any other Hutchinson sons?

Don and Eva! Make her choose!

Shutup, Tessie!

Daughters draw with their husband's family. You know that, Tessie.

No. Just Bill Jr., Nancy, Little Davey, Tessie and me.

Anyone else, Bill?

Got their tickets, Graves?

Yep. Right here, Summers.

Allright. Bill, drop yours back in.
DRAW AGAIN, Hutchinsons...

- I - think we should start over again...

... open 'em ...
IT'S TESSIE...

Show us her paper, Bill...
Come on! Come on, everyone!

Come on! Hurry!

I can’t run at all!
You go ahead, I’ll catch up!
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