

T A G V V E R K

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Two Pieces

Uche Nduka

Buck

in the beginning was the scrap & the scrap was with fiddlehead. i want to make it clear that i'm not being led by my nose. not seeing the results you want from your minor religious riots? skeleton, asps. see where the sunrise takes you. utanniki just got a whole lot harder. ganglia, ganglia arcing, no punches pulled in getting tangled. not walking a straight line & coughing up blood. from prow to prow Death gives you the key to unlock the fountains. antiheroism helps you question who you really are. the minotaur walks you halfway home. abductors fail. blocking it out because it was traumatic & i was a mess. the great hoedown. a condition of perpetual longing. don't start me talking on/about dangerous liasons. the fuck you in a thank you the thank you in a fuck you. autocorrect is a puppet-show. i long to move inside of you. keeps a paper bag. waits in line for Polaris. no bag is big enough to carry your destiny. you float above secret agents. i can't hear anything without hearing you first. everything on the shelf falls to the floor. better to be unfastened & ungloved. the cobblestones that yawned. starside seashell. i know little of the cindering of your comings. help keep our thoughts sorted. have you forgotten you are a glorious weirdo. video diaries & Hollywood double features. banished except for a costume malfunction. stutterflower's imprint on the frequencies of liquid triumph. are we friends because of the riddle of nowhere. got left behind. gone unreckoned with. tried not to remember the third eye of the screen. no turns but wacks. boomerang astronauts zombie soup affidavits. a look at the portfolio on the previous page. night-shifting with forklift.

To Drill

A sky sipping the night twisting her trunk refusing to drop the subject. Glassblower. Splash. Place is out-of-joint for me. Space is out-of-joint for me. Time is out-of-joint for me. Glockenspiels, humidifiers and how much drama they bring. Loving, unloving, the seesaw playing dolls. Like the anchor of cake, girls & essays. Wherever there is a trumpet there is a broken head. The shapeshifter & other headaches. There is no I without a You. I am the happiness of America. Did I serve you divorce papers by writing poems. Your rambling had a big impact on me. Witch-hunt intelligencer. To ensure commute & delivery. The comfort in being solitary nor was it ever known to have been in a lineup. Fucked up inside sources. A marigold's pocketwatch. Weird having kids in this dystopian apocalypse. You have to wade across these prank punk phone calls. To decanonise despair. Infidel spacing out. The task of this language is to reinvent me each time I speak it. Other victories swap couriers. Aside from using a moniker. I run out and greet the whisper between your knees. Desserts rise seek light or flight. This is a charged space. Mess with time while it runs out. Spanks, when it spans, in its own rail. Old lace, that is, eyestance. Worth thinking of as defined by peristyle.

Three Pieces

Sade Murphy

49. Husked out hornets are falling out of trees. Damn unicorn gorging on cucumbers and tiger lilies. Watered down grape cocktail in a mason jar weighing down napkins splotted with schizophrenic script. I'm packing you possession on the front porch. You have a big ass for an old man and too much subjunctive protohipster imperforated earlobes. Spread your lids. You have to open your eyes sometime.

64. I am stalking you. After work you catch a bus to Jackson and when you get under the rude lights of the casino marquee you blush a golden beet pink. You place your beanie babies atop the slot machine. They emit a dead spin plasticity. Happy and poorer than you might think. Aubergine cotton candy hair crawling out of a casket. Death is a deal breaker, full of loud melancholy ricocheting off tabernacles. I cannot stand to be away from you but I cannot absolve you of your sins. I am sorry.

33. Humming to black and white British people projected optic maroon angels pinching your side burned sunburned love handle. Do the French inhale for me and peel the camel hair shirt from the exquisite corpse of charity. Impressions of and impressionist and impressed I am under every street light shooting cannonballs of fleeting fireflies carouseling at three thirty. Envy is an umbrella against a sandstorm of affection. You rest somewhere between queue and ewe savagely pretentious retrieving letters from the recycled rubble.

Kan du rekommendera en exterminator?

Paul Cunningham

He-man, human peppered and salted. Young ones. Fanged ones. Fånga och släpp? A game or two? *No slapping*. Not just a slap or two. *A slap isn't good enough*. What harm ever came from a release-ending game? Something more lethal. Need them a gift for their gabbing. Need them their rat-a-tat-tat, those råttor. We need to wreck those thick-tailed insects. Insektsmedel, for those meddling ones. Tiny meddling ones. Need to leave 'em gegging on my klibbig. Clinging for life, pitfälla after pitfälla. Must fail, they must. Mustfälla. Fälla after fälla. Well-svältded meat fälla, those fellas. Krävning cravings. Toxisk risk, manipulated spinal discs. Rigged ryggmärg. A wholesale must-fail. Mustfälla. Down on their luktfri. Luxury B-B-Q, not free. Snabbverkande, feeling snob-toxic. Legs flailing. A wholesale must-fail. Prisoner legs. Sounds like a syrsors sax. Sounds like rats on their backs. Gagging, gegging. Thank you for your patronage.

Now Only Nightmares

Sean Kilpatrick

My wife ran sniffling into my room.

Sleeping together became a mockery of our bodies' fading potential.

"My favorite singer's on TV with a nail in her face."

"That's what's expected of us, honey."

"But I've stepped on bugs tending to my garden."

"Believe they'll step on us back. The earth thirsts."

"The products we enshrine come from torment."

"Humanity's first sin was to place itself above sweatshops."

"I'm an asshole for existing. I can't shit back the crops I take with enough speed."

"Crops are property and so is your shit. The sky is the barcode we'll retire in."

"But I can only add myself to the serial number of a gun."

"I think that means your sheep count you."

"The rain here burns my skin. Chimneys wad over with Santa's carrion."

"We all have freckles from pollution. A factory's present bears tasty cosmetics."

"My fur used to be so red the forest couldn't find it."

"You had gorgeous fur from an exotic mom and we sold them both."

"I want to wield myself deep between my options."

"People are just toll booths for the cancer they can no longer purchase."

"Will the animals we were once capable of loving return to us?"

"An animal never returns the corpse of its master."

"Can't control a little girl because you're the modicum?"

"I don't need anything anymore, except to suffer in proximity."

The Mule

Barrett White

A cartoon mule runs across the desert. Well, sort of running, more like traipsing along, more like a seizure, bouncing itself through the air. The mule has a sick face. The mule is in pain.

The mule has fibromyalgia. The mule has an IV attached to one of its legs, the metal stand with pouch of life-giving nutrients bouncing alongside it, its back hooves kicking the pole back, making the line taut with each thump. The mule is foaming at the mouth, its eyes swiveling, unsure of where it is going. It runs off the side of a cliff, its hooves treading in air. It looks down suddenly. The mule's eyes pop out, boinging, horrified at the ground so far below. The mule falls.

The mule continuously attempts, while staring at itself in the mirror, to administer a clown nose to its snout. The red foam ball falls into the sink again and again. It simply does not want to cling.

The mule takes a woman out on a date. The woman is wearing a tight pink cocktail dress. The woman is pixelated, obscured to protect her identity. In the middle of the desert, a white tablecloth. Pinot is poured by the mule, who learns grabbing things with hooves proves difficult.

The pixelated woman is not impressed with the zucchini lasagna. The mule thinks there might not be a second date. The mule drives the pixelated woman home in its Ferrari. Dust clouds billow behind the tires as they drift, screeching into the sunset.

The mule opens its mouth. A voice that is not the mule's comes out: "THE TYRANT IS THE CHILD OF PRIDE." It fumbles for a match.

The mule wears a hard hat. It enters the tiny apartment after getting off its 12 hour shift. The mule is a construction worker. It goes to remove its vest. Its pixelated wife is sitting on the couch in the den, watching an episode of Dr. Phil. She does not even greet the mule. The mule struggles to take off its neon vest. The mule sighs. It goes to the kitchen and opens the freezer door. It takes out a box of frozen jalapeño poppers. It arranges the jalapeño poppers on a plate in a circle. It places the jalapeño poppers in the microwave. It estimates that 3 minutes and 30 seconds will be an adequate time to set the microwave to, to properly heat the jalapeño poppers, on high. It presses in numbers and hears the microwave begin to hum. It places its hooves on the counter, and waits.

The mule digs a grave. The mule stands in the grave. The mule begins to laugh. It maniacally hee-haws. A light rain begins to fall.

The mule is featured on a cable TV judge show. The plaintiff is the pixelated woman, who is suing the mule for an enormous amount of money, pain and suffering. The mule fiddles with its paperwork, wheezing through an oxygen mask, handing loose change and some receipts to the bailiff. The bailiff is an ex pro-wrestler. The bailiff transfers the mule's wad to the judge, who probes it judgmentally. The judge snaps at the mule for not paying attention. The judge flickers as a skeleton for several moments. The judge strikes the gavel down, in favor of the plaintiff. In most episodes, the judge rules mistrials.

The mule, in utter stillness, bounces on a trampoline. It holds its crutches high into the air.

The mule's medical bills are skyrocketing. The mule is sitting at a flimsy kitchen table in an one room apartment, papers scattered, a half-empty bottle of booze. The mule puts its head in its hooves, not knowing what to do. A shoulder angel mule and a shoulder devil mule appear, hovering over the mule. They bicker quietly while the mule listens. They brandish harps and pitchforks, slightly cussing. Frustrated with their argument, The mule waves its hoof behind it, scattering the angel and devil into puffs of smoke. The mule wipes its teary eye with a bank statement. The housing crisis really screwed the mule over. Big time.

The mule has always wanted to do a TED talk. When snoozing on its futon, the mule dreams it is wearing a turtleneck, drenched in PowerPoint light, receiving applause with gracious waves.

The mule is standing on a sand dune. The sky tears like plastic above it, emptying anvils onto the mule's head. The mule smushes. The mule squeezes out from the heap, circular and flat, like a pancake. The mule opens its mouth. A glitchy voice that is not the mule's comes out: "NO GUTS, NO GLORY." Everything awwws, fades black. Credits roll. Each role of production credited to the mule.

Two Pieces

Emily O'Neill

Now Here/Nowhere

If there are misdeeds and little bones.

If a letter can whither, if an outrage is a principal.

If three or more are together

all this certainly makes a shade.

A shade. A little calm. Refusing to believe

nonsense, we are getting nowhere.

That is a pleasure which will continue.

What is the use in a violent kind of delightfulness

if there is no pleasure? There is some venturing in

refusing to believe nonsense. (This is not true.)

The question does not come before there is a quotation.

This is the best preparation for three and more being

together, to be somewhere else. A little calm is so ordinary,

not irritating, and there is sweetness.

In between a place and candy is a narrow foot-path.

A little called anything shows shudders. A little lace makes boils.

It is not irritating—the narrow foot-path,

the somewhere else, the violent

delightfulness. We are calm

now. (This is not true.) If anybody is sleepy,
let him go to sleep. A temptation is an exclamation,
so easily churned and cherished. The more violent,
the more sweetness. Slowly, we are getting nowhere
and that is a pleasure which will continue.

If anybody is sleepy, let him go to sleep.

all text culled from John Cage's Lecture On
Nothing and Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons

Questing Beast

I'm scrubbing milk from my silver boots when I see it
winging from the corner of my eye—

the Questing Beast

willful (they say) /

bored with stillness,

nicknamed un-catchable as

a breaking wave

& before I can find reason not to

I'm running full pelt on my bad right knee,

knotting a gray-lunged decade into a snare /

here's your net, butterfly

here's your daughter, Pelican

now come & bleed quiet

while I fish in your throat for the one wish

a girl makes when she's been robbed

of childhood:

give me back the shoulder throne I rode

(Athena sprung from your skull & steering

down River Road until it turned Columbus

roll away the stone / come back to me

us both

Avenue past muddy reservoir & became our bastard home)

limping & sorry,

but my own

I am imperfect & unwilling

& running still, fists full of feathers & wind /

there's no space inconvenient for my shame

you are dead & I hate it / if I catch this vanishing creature long enough

to ask my myth back into being

children begging father feed me

the milk will spill a second time

to disarray: a nest of graceless

feed me / starve yourself

so I'll always be

& all will return

singing

Contributors

Uche Nduka is a Nigerian-American poet & essayist. He is the author of ten volumes of poems that include *Chiaroscuro*, *Heart's Field*, *Ijele*, *Nine East*. Some of his poems have been translated into German, Dutch, Romanian, Spanish, Serbo-Croat. He presently lives in New York City and teaches at Pratt Institute and CUNY.

Sade Murphy a poet and artist from Houston, TX. They do not have an accent. Sade is the author of *Dream Machine* (co-im-press, 2014), a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and a Master Artist with Silk Creations in South Bend, IN. This fall they will begin pursuing an MFA at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Paul Cunningham founded Radioactive Moat Press in 2009. He is a former assistant editor of Action Books and currently works as an editor for *Fanzine*. He is the author of a chapbook of poems called *GOAL/TENDER MEAT/TENDER* (horse less press, 2015) and an e-chapbook, *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* (Pangur Ban Party, 2010). His writing can be found in *Bat City Review*, *LIT*, *Tarpaulin Sky*, *Spork*, *DIAGRAM*, and others. His poem-films have been screened in the MAKE Magazine Lit & Luz Festival, Seattle's INCA: The Institute for New Connotative Action, and at Museo Universitario del Chopo in Mexico City. He most recently received his M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Notre Dame.

Sean Kilpatrick is published in *Boston Review*, *BOMB* (forthcoming), *Columbia Poetry Review*, *New York Tyrant* and *Vice*. He wrote *Anatomy Courses* w/ Blake Butler.

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Emily O'Neill is a writer, artist, and proud Jersey girl. Her recent poems and stories can be found in *Cartridge Lit*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *Profane*, and *Vector*, among others. Her debut collection, *Pelican*, is the inaugural winner of Yes Yes Books' Pamet River Prize and she edits poetry for Wyvern Lit. You can pick her brain at <http://emilyoneill.com>.