

The broken

Prose Poetry Photography Art Music



Issue 2: The Big Thaw

**Our writers emerge
from the winter –
slightly more wise
and slightly less sane**



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Joshua Hergesheimer is a freelance writer and photographer. He resides in an old house in Cedar Cottage, a neighborhood in East Vancouver, Canada, with his wife and their twins.

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Julie Kitzes is 20 years old and basically just loves to draw. She plans to go to school for a BFA, but in the meantime, is trying to make something out of her art without an education. She's always besieged with independent commissions and she and her husband Peter are working on a graphic novel. She can be contacted at j-penman@hotmail.com.

Christian Martius is a writer from the UK whose heart lies in Canada. When he isn't snowshoeing or riding his bike into trees, he writes short stories and cultural pieces. His stories have

appeared online and in publications based in London, Vancouver and Toronto. He also writes music, book and film reviews for various magazines and websites, including Popmatters, Capital Mag and Discorder Magazine. Samples of his work can be found at christianmartius.com.

Eddieson Okram is a film student and the author of an absolutely insane experimental fantasy/semi-semi-bio blog titled, "Faded jeans float across the blood red sky" (okrameddieson.blogspot.com). He is currently plotting an experimental teen movie and attempting to transcribe Picasso's paintings into literature. His e-mail address is: Okramnaoba@hotmail.com.

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The snowmen fight for every drip

Summer and Winter can undoubtedly be emotionally-charged seasons, so why not see what comes from an amalgamation of the two? In this edition, we present Winter in Summer — a collection of writings and photos that were created during, or inspired by, winters past.

Examining works that range from Marqus P. Bobesich's starkly sober poetry, to C.E. Pierre's twisted prose, seems to reveal that we're equipped with two major fallback positions during our coldest days: grudging acceptance or stir-craziness. Cheers to both.



Joshua Hergesheimer

A Big Move

G.E. Pierre

One of these days, I'm going to move to Hawaii, I really am. I'll get myself a surfboard and a — what do you call it? — a grass skirt. Oh, I can almost feel the sun on my back. I'll never have to see snow again! No more shoveling; no more winter tires and no more achy joints from the cold. All day, I'll lie on the beach getting bronzed and drinking exotic mixed drinks (pina colodas, or mai tais, or tequila sunrises, or, hell, a martini would do. I'm not picky). I won't be hideously pasty pale anymore. And I'll do aerobics three times a week — get rid of this cellulite. The well-muscled local boys who just happen to be walking by will offer to rub baby oil into my skin. I'll banter wittily with them in fluent Hawaiian, which of course, I'll quickly pick up. Will I move to Maui? Or perhaps, uh, that other Hawaiian island? Who cares, they're all tropical. Oh, mountains! Oh, beaches! I can see them now. Finally, I'll be able to say goodbye to the office! I'm so tired of these endless, mind-numbing days. Goodbye to my jackass husband; goodbye to this house I never wanted. Aloha!



office party

Marqus P. Bobesich

first thing she grabs, fresh from the shower —
her boyfriend's towel rod. in a manner of speaking.
the 3 or 4 bad choices laid out on the bed;
the grief of love that shows itself in circles
(below) the eyes.

"no worker shall engage in any prank, contest,
or feat of strength"
your favourite sign at work.
what we give off from the wrist
could be strong and
misleading.

Christmas crackers, spunked and pulled 'til death.
the devil's work, i tell you —
all that sulfur.

you must anticipate December
(now drunk with Bobby Dobbs)
you must sneak up behind it and yap it
firmly by the jaw —
this mass seduction,
this tricky emptiness of a ladder...
(your husband, is he here?)
to a star...
(no, he's not)
to a sideways leaning
tree.

The well-wishers

Marqus P. Bobesich

It has come to this — an empty house;
a bag of cupcakes from teenage girls
(so neighbourly, so young)
blowing smoke into their hands —
our lakes now frozen over.

"but don't mind the furniture
on the front lawn, ladies...
what we have here is a failure to
figure things out —
a killing of the old self,
and she could be wrong by morning."

The only thing we had in common was
that we loved each other;
how waking up beside one another might have
been a small, daily victory.

And now, unshaven,
the squinting,
the icing on your bathrobe.
And all her things (from the closet, from the sill)
left for garbage —
too afraid to come down the stairs on
their own, on their way outside,
to the light,
to the world of get up and gone.

In-box

Marqus P. Bobesich

Your heart brimming —
kissing that storm on legs;
her bathroom all lotions, potions, and creams.

With a new love, gifts are in order —
at least a book on gambling,
or getting out of debt like a pro.

I have dreamt of an empty in-box,
that the next horse was mine,
that history was never meant as a personal thing.

And I awake, howling and hurling garbage
cans down the road again, as a 'fuck you' to all
the dents and mis-throws of heartache.

aluminum (siding)

Marqus P. Bobesich

sure, you made the right choice —
it's a lot less painting, I know.
should compliment the Christmas lights still dating
the same nail.

won't be knocking pucks out of practice,
though it gave the wall character
like the tiny hairs on my shoulders I got from you.

(at first I thought you
had us
just to do your chores.)

so what should we do for the next
billion years, while the seasons have at us,
and test our warranty?

and what to tell the grandkids
running on the grass I once cut —
their memories still a juvenile sugar.

(that we couldn't do it? that we couldn't bridge
the gap?)
with so much work still left for
them to do.

Drunken Toronto

Katherine Sunita

It had snowed the morning before — so lacy and
pure — and now, the morning after, the violins
and perfume faded, the party was over. The city
looked filthy and hung over. A virginal white
party dress stretched and stained and ripped to
reveal the most humid corners.

Walking down Queen Street — the sky the color
of drinks half finished, ice melted stale — the
street an ashtray spilled over a party girl's lap.
She, passed out, her eyes slit open, revealing
a slick of yellow — a wreckage of police tape
caught in a tree. I gently pull it down and at-
tempt to shake the lady awake. She burps and
turns over; I pull her party dress over her knee.

The host is wandering about slowly, disheveled,
raccoon-eyed, gathering up cloudy glasses, the
sun leaks through a tatter of cumulus.

There is a bum passed out beside the mailbox,
his package spilled out of his pants. I post my
letter and cover him up with Toronto's alternative
weekly — there is a noticeable difference in the
clarity of the air.

What you need, Fair City, is a good dose of the
hair of the dog that bit you. I wander into the
dark hole of a greasy spoon, order myself some
breakfast and a double shot of designer vodka.

It's time to start thinking about issue three. The Broken City is now accepting submissions for its Winter edition — *Take This Job...* We're looking for creations dealing with or inspired by jobs and working — the sad, the funny, the exciting, the depressing, the mundane and the romantic. Finally get a chance to tell your boss to "Shove it"? We want to read about it. Please send us your poetry, fiction, non-fiction, comics, art, photography, music/book reviews. Nothing that fits the theme? Send something anyway - there'll be plenty of room for non-conforming work too.



Curiouser and curiouser...

The Lawn Chair

Kevin Joinville

This room is fucking crazy! Why the hell is there a lawn chair in a classroom? It sits there, laying in a fetal position, pushed to the corner like a man who can't get erect. I guess its flower-printed fabric means one can place it anywhere because it comes with its own lawn. The flowers smell like summer in Florida. It's aunt Lisa in her moo moo, sipping on a Long Island iced tea, sitting on the lawn chair, sweating on the seeds, growing these very flowers. My nose falls off from the funk. Bacteria attacking it, eating down to the cartilage, growing noses of their own. I hate Florida.

It's Lisa's birthday tomorrow and I wish to pick her some flowers. She may like the ones that her own filth helped grow. She'd pick her own but her hands are paper-mache. I'll use my scissors and she'll give me a kiss on the cheek. She's getting older and I'll wonder if it's poisoned.

I can understand the books. I can understand the tables and the television. I can even understand ol' Barry Wallenstien on the chalkboard. But why is it that there are 16 chairs, not including the lawn chair, and only three coat hooks? Maybe I

can let that one slide. They must have designed it that way because of all of the topless people we have running around Hunter. This school has been featured in many medical magazines and journals for its topless student population. For every three people at Hunter with a top, there are 13 without. And by top, I mean torso. My friend Peanut has a body that is shaped much differently than mine. He has fully developed legs and his arms are attached at the shoulder to his buttocks. His head is fully developed as well. It rests just above his genitalia, which he claims makes masturbation very exciting. Sometimes I get jealous of him, until I remind myself that I can breathe much more easily than he can.

But what about these pictures on the wall? I feel like I'm in a real estate office. I want to trade this room for that two-story home in the center. At least it has a yard. I'll bring my new lawn chair and Peanut will bring the ladies. He never brings any for me though. None of them have any boobs, or stomachs, or intestines, or livers, or hearts. I like my ladies with a little meat in them. We'll have a hula hoop contest. I'll win of course, laugh-

ing the entire time as they try and spin the hoop around their knees. We'll stay there until the owner comes by and yells at us, then hop on our scooters and ride away.

We'll ride all the way back to Hunter and I'll show Peanut the craziest fucking room in the school. I know the first thing he'll notice, because he's goth and red is one of his favorite colors. He goes really wild with the stuff. He's got 20 tattoos on his legs and all of them are of confused vampires trying to suck the blood out of neckless and torsoless virgins. It's both sick and funny. The first thing he would notice would be the red corsage taped to the blackboard. I remember that corsage from a few years ago. My dumb cousin Billy Hill bought it one night in Florida. I accompanied him to the flower shop. The saleslady told him how lucky she would feel if a nice young gentleman like him would give her a corsage like that one. He gave her a childlike grin, that only an idiot can, paid her and we left. The way it's placed on the chalkboard reminds me of the sad feeling I had knowing the corsage's final destination. It represents the actual path it

took up the driveway, out of the car, through the grass and to the lawn chair. Billy said, "Common Ma. Here's yer cersagee. Now let's git to the prom." Billy in his rented tuxedo, constantly scratching the crotch. Aunt Lisa in her best moo moo and prettiest bow. Do I want to know what ever happened to those two?

I look back at the picture of the house we just fled. The owner is outside, on his porch, in front of the barbecue with a wife beater on. He looks around. I understand he needs something to sit on but I don't know why

my thoughts keep coming back to this damn chair. It's so out of place it makes me want to force it to conform. The floor is kind of green — reminds me of Kentucky blue. The lights on the ceiling are so bright I could catch a tan. If I sat on it, I would burn.

I can force it to be lost in the ocean. I hop into the battleship over my left shoulder and become captain of the S.S. Holy Shit. Looking at Peanut, I say, "I told you this room was weird." He's afraid of the water since he naturally sinks. I couldn't have better feelings for her. She

makes a man feel loved. She provides food, she gives purpose, she allows a man to triumph over nature and to prove himself in battle. I swim every day just to be naked with her.

We sail next to the homes. I retrieve the lawn chair from the water and tie it to a cannonball. A man taking a cannonball to the gut: Is that automatic or deautomatic? Is he imagined as Homer Simpson, quickly looking up and shouting "D'oh" before it hits, belly-fat jiggling as it does? But that is where this chair belongs. In that home. Away from these students.

My Little Story Machine *Christian Martius*

There's someone new in the group. A new hairstyle amongst the heads stands in the kitchen at your party. If we move a little closer — maybe get near to him — we might hear some of his words.

This was the same person who climbed into the backseat of your taxi. They pushed you up towards the door handle until it embedded in your side. The driver would only take four but the extra passenger was persuasive and he changed his mind. That new dimension to the group, that additional amount of space, those few extra pounds

forced you into union with a car door.

He's leaning on your fridge freezer now, playing with the label on his beer bottle. He'll wonder where to put the soggy paper in a couple of seconds; it has already played out in your head. You lift the dustbin lid like you never noticed.

It's a big gathering. Away from the kitchen, people you know are sitting in the lotus position on the floorboards, waiting for an empty chair. There's somebody in the bathroom every thirty seconds. The toilet flushes

and the people talk. There's music on the stereo and there are words. Those little stories are recurring again.

In the collective mainframe of us, there's an archive of stories. Some reveal who we are and some try and reveal who we are. Some are more entertaining to the teller than the subject and are only told for the benefit of their own amusement. You wonder what is really being communicated here, when those familiar tales appear once more.

Your own stories, you are sick of telling them, but given the

right stimulus you can't help yourself. It's a reflexive action. It's part of you now. An affliction ignited from an unknown place; you only know it is happening once it has started and by then it is too late. The story has to be told. It doesn't help that there's a new person here, a fresh quarry to excite us, one that hasn't yet been ruined by our continuous narratives.

One of your friends walks up to

the fridge freezer and introduces himself.

"Hi I'm Mr. Anecdote from the Yarn family."

"Hi I'm Mr. Fridge Freezer."

Your ears are burning. In the atmosphere above the clouds of cigarette smoke and repeated sagas there's an original conversation to be had. Mr. Anecdote learns that he's the new boy-

friend of Ms. Fable, one of our oldest friends.

"How did you meet her then?" he says. It is the question on everybody's lips.

Mr. Fridge Freezer smiles and his eyes go all misty. "Well actually, it's a funny story..."

You pour yourself another glass of wine and listen.

The Adventures of The Bastard

Eddieson Okram

CHAPTER ONE: ADVENTURES OF THE BASTARD

(DEDICATED TO ALL THE TASER VICTIMS)

Today — as I was about to go to this interview — I was having trouble staying awake, so I took some coffee. I didn't know it at that time, but this coffee was no ordinary coffee.

It was the coffee from hell!

As I drank this coffee and turned on the TV, I stumbled upon a strange channel — a channel that was broadcasting a reality show from hell.

The Devil was on TV! He was frantically searching for some-

thing. After wrecking his room, the Devil exclaimed, "Hmmm... I seem to have misplaced my coffee!" and that's when I realized that I had the bastard's coffee!

Suddenly, things started exploding inside my head, corroding my already corroded lungs and impaling my thoughts with violent colours! It was painful, but I had an interview, so I just dressed up and stepped out into the open.

As I went walking down the street, a bastard looked at me, so I freakin' puked on his face. He ran away, crying for help but totally helpless, as the gastric juices from my vomit started dissolving his face with respect-

able speed!

I cared not.
The day was hot.
I was just a dot.
What absolute rot!

I got into the subway station, but had to stab the freakin' annoying ticket officer with a ticket, as he was pissing me off with extraordinary dedication. Yeah! Sliced his arm right off with the god-darn ticket. What're they gonna call that? Paper cut amputation?

The subway train was freakin' crowded. Half of the people I was traveling with, I suspect, were aliens, so, I got out of the subway, which is a dark, tunnelistic place filled with people

with tickets, day passes, and stuff. I stepped out into the open and immediately felt like a bloody rose shoved into a bucket of shit fertilizer!

I checked the address I was supposed to go to for the stupid interview, but suddenly realized that I couldn't read any more! That goddamn coffee had turned me into a freakin' illiterate with extraordinary murdering skills!

Enough time wasted thinking about this and that, and this and that, again! I moved on; I was getting late.

A lady walked by wearing a purse made of skunk fur. It lightened my mood and immediately cured my sinuses! I was tempted to pinch the purse, as it seemed to create a force field between the lady and everybody else, but I was getting late, so I kept moving. Very soon, I came to the freakin' place where I was supposed to take my goddamn interview.

Good, about bloody time, I say!

I guess I was a bit early because the doors were locked. I kicked my way in! I suppose they aren't going to think much of me when I show up for the interview, covered in blood and reeking of skunk, without the ability to read. Especially when I've just busted open their doors, but what the hell! I can hear sirens wailing outside... so

much violence nowadays!

How do you suppose a decent guy like me can survive in such a hostile world?

CHAPTER TWO: NEWS-PAPER CLIPPINGS!

Let's forget the bastard for now and go to another scene — a scene where a man, whom we shall refer to as "the narrator," stands on a deserted sidewalk. He stares into empty space and, drooling like a madman, murmurs:

A little girl is skipping along down the street. The soft, summer breeze catches in the sails of her hair, projecting dreams and sunny hills.

Familiar streets winding up and around her carefree little head.

Humming an ancient tune, passed on from mothers to daughters, she floats with a yo-yo in her hand and nothing on her brain.

"Oh what a beautiful day it is today. So beautiful I could die!" she exclaims, storing the scenery in her head and the mood in her heart.

Then, something on the sidewalk distracts her. She bends over and finds a torn page from one of the local newspapers. She can't read yet, for she's too young but, for some rea-

son beyond my understanding, she stands there gently caressing the yellow, aged newsprint, tears running down from her flaming eyes.

She shakes her little soft fist at the heavens and, throwing the newspaper clipping down, she walks away, growing an inch taller with every step she takes until, at last, she grows as tall as a full grown adult and then, suddenly, a spark erupts in her head...

Her hair, strangling the air... Her scream, screaming a family of screams... Bursting into flames, a flame, she goes...

Off she goes... Sliding into thin air, she goes off...

NARRATOR: *(still murmuring to himself)*

Strangely, I watched all this without feeling insane. In fact, for the first time in a very long time, I felt sane. Out of curiosity, I walked over and picked up the torn newspaper. Here's what was written on it: *(the narrator shakes a piece of newspaper clipping as he says this)*

THE BASTARD GUNNED DOWN!

The infamous residential psycho, lovingly referred to as "the bastard" by the town folks, was

gunned down yesterday at the town's entertainment centre.

As far as the staff at the centre are concerned, the bastard was supposed to do a job interview. He apparently showed up early, and, upon finding the doors locked, kicked the door in!

Then, he proceeded to take pictures of himself sitting on the manager's chair with his cell phone. After that, he proceeded to go through all the porn in the manager's desk!

What's porn doing in a manager's desk?!

We know this as a fact because the cops burst in while he (the bastard, of course!) was doing exactly what was just said.

Some folks joke that the cop shot him because they thought that he was holding a shotgun, while in truth, he was just jerking off! Haha! But that's just a joke! Others say he discovered some top-secret documents, and therefore, had to be shot. Strangely, the bastard was apparently shot on sight, for no reason whatsoever!

The officers involved are suspended and under investigation at the moment, but law experts tells us that the maximum penalty that the cops may get is a brief suspension, and they may also lose their job if convicted of irresponsible shootings, but that, as we all know, isn't going to happen.

Isn't irresponsible shooting just a polite way of saying — I don't know — "BLOODY MURDER"?

A letter was found later on, in the bastard's pockets. It was addressed to his little kid sister. In the letter he was telling his sister that he was going to go clean, brush his teeth every day, try to remain sane (he had a mental sickness, and was, apparently, on medication) for longer periods of time, and get a decent job, for her sake.

NARRATOR: (The narrator resumes his crazy ramblings... frankly speaking, I'd like to shut this guy up with a brick to his head. My ears are bleeding already!)

I wonder who this "bastard" guy was.

Was he a quiet introvert, or a raging lunatic?

Maybe, he was just someone trying to live for once.

Who knows? I wonder...

I wish I'd known this guy.

What really went down that day?

And how come there's this song playing at the back of my head?

A silent soundtrack of a thousand wailing souls, drowned in an undercurrent, an undercurrent of raging thoughts and feelings.

Flooding my eyes!

Flooding my...

Oh god!

I can feel...

(ssshhhh! Dear readers... be quiet, for, at this moment, I think the narrator has felt my fingers hit the keyboard!)

OUTRO:

Well, who knows?

Outside it gently snows...

Lonely wind slowly blows...

Another soul silently bows...

THE END?



This issue, *The Broken City* asked contributors: *What do you do to survive the winter?*

Joshua Hergesheimer: I try to capture the changing slant of winter's light.

Kevin Joinville: Survive the winter? Why would I need to survive it? I thrive in the winter. It's an entire season of night! A season where the empty streets are populated by imagination alone. The time of darkness is what breeds creation. There's nothing to bring light to during the summer; it's too happy on its own. The summer doesn't need us. The winter needs the mind because the winter is a meditative state where the only thing that exists is the mind. It's beautiful!

Julie Kitzes: Surviving the summer is more of an issue for me. I come from Alberta, so I'm used to the snow and cold of the foothills. I grew up making the best of it by sledding, snowboarding and playing with my snow-loving dog. Also — a reason to like the winter — no mosquitoes.

Christian Martius: Minus-40 is a daunting number for a Londoner embracing Canada's largest city. I'm waiting for the new experience of ice crystals forming on my beard and preparing for a weather-protected subterranean life dressed as a walking sleeping bag. Luckily, the clear blue skies of a Canadian winter are a welcome visual relief from the pitch-black or grey winter world of London. This winter, I'll be living under an expensive sub-arctic duvet and warming my girlfriend's frozen toes in my armpits.

Eddieson Okram: Well, first of all, let me tell you, taking showers with a blanket on isn't going to help one bit! I know because I've tried it, believe me! The first thing needed to ensure survival in winter is to get your lazy ass off to work, on time, every morning during the summer. That would ensure that you aren't reduced to a jobless/homeless man, rolling around in the snow, when winter comes. However, the most important and fun way to survive the winter, is to keep company with friends. They'll help you survive not just winter, but hell as well. You also need to wear thermals and stuff. Just because you're with friends and have a job, doesn't always mean you can roll around in the snow in a bikini, you know.

C.E. Pierre: For the first eight months of winter, I'm always excited to see the snow and to get to drink hot chocolate again. As the season drags on, though, the cold sets into my bones and the only way I can maintain my body heat is to whine constantly.

Alisha Trigatti: Survive the winter? I love the winter. I think the better question, especially in the middle of downtown Toronto, is how do you survive the 45-degree, smothering, stifling, life-sucking humidity of summer?

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