

# LOCUST FOUR

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## FOREWORD

Spring is here in the northern hemisphere and a new issue of Locust Magazine is online. Perhaps this year will be a lucky one. In spite of what was written in Locust Three Foreword, two issues of Locust will probably appear in 2007. Well, this doesn't certainly mean that 2007 will be *better* than 2006. An optimistic attitude is certainly appropriate for our everyday life, but so foolishly inappropriate for an artist or a poet. Nobody wants to question the illusion that there will always be sunshine after a rainstorm, and nobody wants to turn this bunch of sentences into the ravings of a disillusioned editor, but let's just take a look around or switch on the TV... Should you think that unhappiness is the essence of life, this wouldn't help you to live comfortably, but it would really be closer to the truth than you might imagine. So, the year 2007 will definitely *not* be better than 2006, but literary submissions in keeping with Locust tastes have remarkably increased this year, and this positive turn of events must certainly be acknowledged. Many thanks to all the poets and writers that keep Locust Magazine alive!

May 2007

**POPLARS**  
~ A Poem by Kristine Ong Muslim ~

Monet sees it this way:

Poplars move only if the foliage  
is dabbed carelessly  
with deliberate brushstrokes.

The best way to catch light  
is to use water.

**ARS BREVIS**  
**~ A Poem by Gary Beck ~**

Culture clutchers  
can no longer sustain themselves  
against the rude assault  
of omnipresent rap.  
Practitioners of the monotonous beat  
are far too aggressive  
for the fragile followers  
of the more delicate arts.  
The future of ballet, drama, painting  
will ultimately be decided  
by the raucousness  
of street performers.

**THERE WERE CHARCOAL HEATERS****~ A Poem by Joseph Hoats ~**

There were charcoal heaters  
under the floors in the whorehouses.  
The men would come and do  
their businesses and, sometimes, fall  
asleep and die from the carbon monoxide  
in the air that filled the room  
after the small woman left  
on quiet feet,  
closing the door.

The officer got the messages  
that such and such was missing from his post  
and turned up dead at the whorehouses  
in the mornings, mostly.

In the afternoons, he sat down  
to write to  
grieving mothers and wives  
about how their brave boys  
had died in the line of duty  
and how they gave  
the ultimate sacrifice for their country and so on.

Then he sent out another memo  
prohibiting soldiers from visiting  
local brothels  
or at the very least,  
sleeping there.

**ON NOT BEING ABLE TO LEAVE QUICK ENOUGH**  
**~ A Poem by Levon De Branch ~**

I remember one  
of my first actual jobs  
when I was growing  
up,  
working at a pet store,  
feeding the rodents  
and cleaning out  
dog kennels.

I figured why not  
get paid  
for doing something  
I enjoy anyway,  
caring for animals...

I remember  
I used to have to wear  
leather gloves  
when removing  
ferrets  
from the aquarium  
in order to  
replace  
the cedar chips.

It never failed.

Each time my hand

went in,  
it came out  
with at least five aggravated  
critters  
dangling from  
my fingertips.

Perhaps it was because I  
was messing around in  
their territory?

Perhaps they were  
simply  
showing off  
to their friends?

Perhaps, they just  
didn't much care for me?

Regardless,  
I was always  
thankful  
for the leather glove,  
which their  
teeth  
never once  
breached.

Unfortunately,  
I only lasted at that job  
for about a week.

Neither the protective  
leather glove,

nor the hourly pay-rate  
were worth my leaving  
work everyday,  
with mud on my hands.

I guess some people  
just have the knack  
for pulling bunnies out  
of hats.

What happened when I  
tried rescuing ferrets  
from an ocean?

A school of  
hungry piranhas  
trying their  
best  
to make me  
look and feel...

like a lunch hour.



**EVERY MORNING, EVERY EVENING****~ A Poem by Joseph Veronneau ~**

This is for me?  
he inquired  
mmhmm the other guy said,  
arms stretched upwards  
from the couch.  
I'll take it  
he retorted  
and drilled away,  
tossing the later limp body  
over his slender shoulder.

Pleased with his findings,  
he left them toward the curve  
of his tub  
as he bathed away awkward sorrows.  
All of their bodies different,  
yet so similar at heart.  
The daily grind was too monotonous,  
little companionship and too many  
vagueries to live off of.

He started showing up late to work  
nightly noises were reported,  
until one day while at work  
they searched his place  
and found his assimilated collection.

The quiet at night an interlude  
to a thud by morning,  
releasing the pressure between life and death.

**WHAT I SAW WHEN I THOUGHT  
I WAS HAVING A HEART-ATTACK**  
~ A Poem by Zachary C. Bush ~

Dead-ends and other street signs  
led me towards the last exit  
highway-horizon turning pink  
pussy into brown meat crackling  
and popping on a stove-top hot  
flashes of my girlfriend expecting  
blue-skin babies to wash-up silently  
with the red-stained tide across a country  
road layered with black-ice frosting.

**TWO POEMS by Jeff Crouch**

\*

**PIÑATA BELLE**

the birthday girl in her costume  
with gold crown, yellow dress  
blindfolded for the contest

the broom handle with both hands,  
she lurches at the jerking Belle—  
thwack and whack and miss and oops

as her brothers tug the rope  
Belle goes down and up and in  
and the birthday girl swings

for her birthday wish, and swish—  
soon the wounded Belle releases  
candy as she rips to pieces

\*

**LETTER BOX**

ballet of balance  
    each odd angle, slant  
right, left  
pivot  
    on the tip  
each liquid ornament  
each letter  
    pressed  
to palate

**FOUR POEMS by Devin Davis**

\*

**THOUGH**

stabbed,  
the cracked black  
leather jacket of planet earth.  
the rain gang  
softened, & off it came.

\*

**MAY**

walking  
the long block,  
early one suburban morning,  
a touch of butterscotch pine

& honey.  
a hummingbird,  
just chased from the wire,

welcomes a taste  
before me.

\*

**YOU'RE A BASTARD, BORIS PASTERNAK**

this girl is  
...drooped; and you  
have a hold of her—your in-

fidelity.  
drape the gray, heavy  
wool coat; and lead

undercover of the canopy;  
and cloudhead.

the breasts are wet  
—prepared...

news is  
like the rain  
coming down

on rabbits...  
& frogs croaking...  
the arboreal hardness...

leaves...  
that immature sapling,

broken  
through  
ground.

\*

## WEREWOLF

silver spoon,  
lucky charms  
—are there teeth?

the mother...her

child do not look  
at each other...

faces, blank  
...turn

away...  
from coming sun  
—toward the wheel,

eye five.

baby am, and  
pm mommy  
...approach

the howling  
school.

fall is nearly here;  
and the moon, almost full.

**TWO PROSE POEMS by Zachary C. Bush**

\*

**ILLUMINATION**

The Ferris wheel spins—yellow, orange, and red against the night. Her palm is sticky from ice cream dripping over the cone. The -mell of hot dogs and funnel cakes thicken the air. A carnie shouts, “Double or nothing!” Her lips taste cotton-candy sweet. We look up at heat lightning filling the sky. The Ferris wheel keeps spinning—our whole world is now.

\*

**THIS IS WHAT WENT DOWN BEFORE SHE TURNED ME INTO STONE**

High-noon sun filters through bulky drapes, illuminating the motel room a rot-green. Medusa reclines, naked and wet, in a red chair near the window. With a white towel wrapped around her head, her hair slithers down her long neck like black snakes, threatened. She spins a ring on the table, taking deep drags off of a Virginia Slim that teeters between her lips as she asks, “Did you think this would suffice?” The cigarette smoke curls up in thin spirals from the glass-ash tray nearest her right hand, shaking. And the ring spins faster, blurring into a magnificent cloud—a hundred shades of silver.

**SHOPPETTE****~ A Prose Piece by Mark R. Drost ~**

The dwarfing doorframe, with its exposed view of peppery canes and savertwists, was a warming welcome from out of the knelting wall of cloud above. Teresa and her friend IceCream stepped straight in, leaped high, anchored her hands on the counter, her bum plopping right down among the licorice racks. Pops turning from corner to corner of her mouth. Cherryumbrella going slow down her throat. Red gel slipping over her lip, coming off the chin, slicking her cheeks. Then the swaths wrap themselves back over her face, around her head, over her eyes, coursing down her ribs, sticking her, belly-up, to the counter. IceCream leans forward, lip droops, her perspiration thick as wax hitting Tere's belly with a spat. Lacrymose dribbles fall from Ice's falling lids, dabbing and quickly falling down around Tere's concave. Then Ice falls on Tere, and she feels like ice, cold burner tiding off the gum from T's body, leaving her in a Santa-colored pool, rippling over the side



**THROAT GUM SUGAR BLOOD SUN****~ Prose by Ryan Hicks ~**

Woke up Tuesday at 7:15am. Reminded myself why I set the alarm clock: an interview at Friendly's. I roll off the mattress to the wood floor, line my feet down and get to the socks, the pants, undershirt, shirt, shoes. Then I go downstairs, look at the food. I can't eat. If I eat the food, I'll have to shit at the interview, and that would make for an uncomfortable situation. I go back upstairs, into the bathroom. In the trashcan is the toothpaste, it's still got a bit in there, but the cap is off, too bad. I put my head under the running faucet, run my fingers under there, stand up, watch the mirror. I leave the house feeling awake. It's two miles to Friendly's on foot. I cross the street east to hide from the sun then get walking. Kids, mostly black, are walking in uniforms in front of me towards school. Soon I get to the avenue's intersection, make a right on to it, watch the sun watch me. The sun, it's not even yellow, it's white. And it's hard, burning and watching me, pissed off at me a human waiting at a red light. There's a few more red lights, a mall north, people in cars passing around towards work. Tuesday means work, Tuesday means work. Sun's out, clouds aren't, Tuesday means work. Tuesday makes us feel bad. I pass smokers waiting for the bus, old men on drugs and canes (they're on their way to buy lottery tickets. They have a few years left), pass a library, army recruit center, then get to a gas station. Inside the clock's broke, I buy gum, I dislike gum but I have to chew it, my breath stinks. Then I get back outside to walking, stuff two pieces in my mouth, it's made of sugar. My armpits are sweating, my red shirt soaks it up. I get to the boulevard. It smells like gas and work, then the light goes green, I cross, and there it is:

FRIENDLY'S.

Inside, "hello sir," the lady says.

Hello back.

Table, no. Manager here? Interview. OK.

I sit down.

I straighten a paperclip in my pocket. Then here comes the guy.

HELLO, I'm Ryan, I wanted to follow up on an application I put in.

OK, HELLO, let's sit over there and talk.

What do you want to do? he asks.

I look at him, he's got two chins but he keeps his head up high so that you can only see one, and he's smiling, he's got two thin lips open halfway and teeth behind them, his hands are out on the table; my hands are out on the table while my neck and talk beat him like a penis.

"Yes yes, well I want to WORK, do anything, I'll do it, I want to clean and bus boy, dishes? I could be a uh waiter too. I never did before, but I could train, ok?"

He nods back.

I'm about to talk at him more. Instead, he starts with: "OK, well you could learn to wait, it's not hard, this is an ICE CREAM PLACE, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

"Uh huh." I HAHA. I think, I should have said 'yes', then HAHA. He smiles back. He keeps talking, I shift a foot under the table. His fingers are moving, he's shifting, resting his hands above the seat, scratches one of his ears, his jaw stops.

"What?"

"I said do you have good people skills."

"OH YES."

"Good then, listen I've got a full staff here, but we're looking for one or two motivated individuals to help about. If you're not pulling your weight I'll let you go, this is a no joke place," hand in my pocket, I poke the paper clip, "so what I'll do is get in contact with you. I'll pull your application, ok?"

"GREAT, ok, that sounds GREAT."

"OK."

"YEAH GREAT."

"OK."

"GREAT GREAT GREAT."

I eat the paperclip, I shake his hand, my neck nods, gets rubbed, GREAT, I get out, there's the street, sun, mall, me walking, throat bleeding. What's my throat going to look like? Will it tear my intestines apart? A truck moves over on the pavement, on to the pavement overont othepavemen tbeepsbeergutgetsoutin dianwithab eergutbeergutf uckwalk stothewstand feet clap feet clap bus picks people up, sunsunsununny Tuesday. Cross south. UNEMPLOYMENT office, go in lady, everyone in there, guys go FOOTBALL YEAH, hear about that shit? Lady asks if I have social security card but I don't, the paperclip's poking out, jamming updown, I walk through the glass. Door, mall's to the north, go there get job? No,

feeling bad, throat's bleeding, go anyway, talk hello job? Feeling GREAT.

Suddenly feeling fine. The earth's spinning the sun higher.

Something nice: today, in this sunny city, I have not stepped in any dog shit. I stop in a diner, they say they have the best coffee in the world, better than Paris and better than Tokyo's. And Nevada's. Nevada in coffee is good, because when you're done fucking in a brothel you'll want some fucking coffee! Lady gives me it, and it's the worst coffee I've had in years (this writer especially wishes to point out that this irony is in fact true: the coffee on all accounts was horrible, flat, watered, warm, scentless, and the cream and sugar added little to the taste. Then the eggs came, the eggs sucked, they were pushed under potatoes and the potatoes weren't potatoes, the rye-bread was hard and small despite its under-toasting), then I finished eating, tipped the lady good, it's not her fault, and she's old. I take a fork and scratch my chin with it, then it nicks against something (a pimple?), and you know how that is, I wanted to take the fork right then and end the life of everyone inside the diner, burn the eggs eat them vomit over the register, find the revolver under the counter and go hunting out there. Because some motherfucker is going to get it! For this scratch!

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