





Dear Writer,

Thank you for taking a look at Joseph Young's first book, *Easter Rabbit*. Some of the pieces included here were recently selected as the Editor's Choice picks at *Grey Sparrow Journal*. Others were published in *Caketrain*, *Lamination Colony*, and *Frigg*, among other fine journals. The *Deep Falls* section was written for an art exhibition that Joseph created with the cover artist, Christine Sajecki. These were printed on the gallery walls using wintergreen transfers. Other pieces are printed here for the first time.



Joseph's work, which he calls microfiction, is characterized by brevity, but that isn't the only hallmark. They also strike me, each of them, as lovely. And I notice a sincere emotionality behind the loveliness, even in a story as simple as "Light of No Understanding," which reads, in full:

He asked of her, Take this. She held it, turned it over, set it on her table.

What is it? Who is he? She? What did she think about it? It's fun to guess at answers, and it's fun to not know, and to not care to know. I have found that I can't read too many of these microfictions in one sitting; they demand too much care and attention. And they reward it.

*Easter Rabbit* will be released on December 15. I'm attaching to this PDF the complete book in its final format, and I'm grateful for any consideration you can lend. If you would like a hardcopy of the book, please let me know at [adam@publishingenius.com](mailto:adam@publishingenius.com). Joseph is available for interviews/prank calls. Please email me about that, too.



# EASTER RABBIT

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This book is a work of fiction and all details contained in it are drawn from the author's imagination. Nothing should be construed as real.

Cover painting by Christine Sajecki.

Book design by Justin Sirois and Adam Robinson

The following stories appeared in *FRiGG Magazine*: Occupation; Interruption; Exegesis; Pike; &1/4; Valentine; Biography; Cradle; Menlo Park; Oglala; Lease; Manifest. The following stories appeared in *Lamination Colony*: Constant Math; On Not To See A Bird; Incorporated. The following stories appeared in *Grey Sparrow Journal*: Fault; Grand; East-Eden; 80; At Last. The following stories appeared in *Caketrain*: Argot; Epistemology; Absorbance. The story Cardinal appeared in *wigleaf*. The story Another Thing appears with the permission of Adam Robinson. The story Lily appears in *Keyhole*. The original broadside of God Not Otherwise appeared as This PDF Chapbook #6 from Publishing Genius. Selected stories from Deep Falls appeared in *JMWW*. Deep Falls was a collaborative art project and show with encaustic painter Christine Sajecki; the show appeared at Antreasian Gallery, Baltimore, February 2008. The story Epistemology appears in the film *60 Writers / 60 Places* from Little Burn Films.

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*Easter Rabbit*



## *Sine*

A white line, across the cement, under the  
park, through the door, faint and hardly there,  
to its red center.

## *Marie Celeste*

The cup moons beneath her eyes were in decline. *You know the tsunami?* she said. *Except that all of it was ping-pong balls.* It was evening again already, pushed fingernails against the palm.

## *We Need Supper*

They tried force, one then another. I work, said one. Sex, joked a second. A certain movie, the third. The women at the other tables were like starlight, blue and keen, out of reach. The space among them, over the hot sauce and napkin pile, was the only true thing. Lonely, it said and, Why do we want? The men had no choice but to confront their silverware, the jabbing at and eating of small, masked admission. The evening wore on. Perhaps there was time. They needed some way out, through the jaws of their coffee cups or the last lowering of hands.

## *Oglala*

If I were to die . . . she said.

She left it at that, measuring the table with her arm, ribs to fingertip. He considered that future: like tall grass never stopping waving.

## *Constant Math*

Things he decided: ice was always bitter, time will append like cooking oil, he'd only been wrong once. That was as a boy. There was a girl, her small ear, purple in the mulberry tree.

## *Some Things Stand For Things*

The wind clung to him, his arms trailing strings of it as it blew. Across the narrow meadow was a man, one eye blackened out, the other rolling. The man gestured to him to come, that there was an opening in the hill. I can't, he shouted. It's too far. The man shook himself and spat. He'd known the type, these boys who would smother in the sun before taking a hand.



## *Lily*

The snake tasted the air. Among the cold shale, high desert night, were spots of heat, a rat, a small bird. The snake smelled them, alone, not alone, the bandaged feet of birth.

# *Girl*

The tadpoles flipped on the brown mud bottom. She dipped one out and held it near, seeing it in her belly, shaping arms and feet and a small, blond head. She set it back and stood, breasts out, arms up. The ducks in the weed, eyes hard like hungry boys, waited for bread. She would call, I hate you, or, I love you, and the ducks would scatter. She would do neither. The mud sucked her shoes, the minnows showed their silver stomachs and rolled away.

## *Menlo Park*

He gave her the light bulb, the glass gone pink over the years. I can drop it? she said. He nodded, and she held her hand from the window, the traffic moving stories below.

# *Epistemology*

He took her by the throat and squeezed. Motels, he said, they make me murder. She pushed him away and stepped onto the lawn. Lightning bugs lifted and fell, trucks on the highway busting the night. Shall we marry? she said, twirling her skirts. It was impossible to understand, the humid cloud of words.

## *A Millionaire's Time*

He conceived of trucking a pillar into his backyard, but he wasn't sure what he'd do up there. He thought he might build something, a motorcycle, from bolts and rubber and carbon steel, or he thought he might burn, hot red through the day, cooling orange as the night decayed. He would pray, of course, the hair in his heart still there, the horrifying itch that kept him wringing his hands as a child, but he desired a human payment too, the sex of motorcycle, the pain of skin, the worship of TV. Poor mendicant, he told himself, imagining grand torture, the lust of a crippled messiah.

## *At Last*

He chalked the walls, plumbing it square and blued. Finished, it was a spider making to the eye. They watched movies there, remembered themselves across the atlas of synapses.

## *The Willful Child*

Her doctor told her it was the bite of a brown recluse, the dime-sized wound on her palm. She believed this, knowing that if there were a god, he'd come to her as a spider. Of course, she knew there wasn't, and as the wound deepened and went purple, her heart refused to give it blood. She lay gaping on the bathroom floor, her hand the look of dead roses, her body an excitement of shudders. Help me, she told her father through the telephone, I'm sorry for everything I've done.

## *As Light Becomes St. Paul*

In 23 directions of gray, the girl puts her hand to the sharp building's edge, gathering together some long-standing anger. He watches her, the spirograph pigeons, waiting for the flush of blood to her throat that'll somehow be the signal for morning.



## *Pith*

When he checked the door that last time, it was open, malice leaking free like dry heat. Yes? he called and rattled the ring of keys at his hip. No, came the answer, the voice not unlike his lover, his mother, a wounded horse.

## *Where The Woods Is Darkest*

The filmmaker forgets his camera. He goes to the river instead, ice sliding by in blue sheets. On one is a man cooking over a pale fire. *Hey,* says the man, sliding by. *By the time this melts, I'll be in warmer parts.* The filmmaker sells his camera. He makes out for the desert, writing poems like sun under static.

## *Cartogram*

The green cuts to tan—textures of a grocery bag—the rivers bluer, counties wider. They opened out, out there, thoughts losing the yellow gridwork of cities, marked with the spare periods of desert towns. You are here? she wrote, across the legend, waiting 5, 10, 100 miles for an answer.

# *Light Of No Understanding*

He asked of her, Take this. She held it, turned it over, set it on her table.

## *Valentine*

There seemed to be impossible things, crossing the sidewalk, adjusting the birds, the smoke from a concrete pipe. He had a valve that was wrong, perched whitely among the viscera. He tried small and smaller tries.

With 400 miles of farmland they seemed forever resting under one tree or another. They showed each other things from their pockets, pointed to the cows sleeping in the dust. Of it all, it was her small shirt he loved the most.

## *East-Eden*

She worked equations—the body mass of athletes, ice skaters—her pencils blackening the pages. Through this, he dealt his cards. Hearts! he yelled, in the kitchen, to whichever neighbor or song might be playing.

## *The Love Of The Lazabout's Wife*

He watched the glaze of August from the steps, the dirty basketball boys and garbage trucks. Well? she said. What have you done? He could point to the dandelions he'd seen or the lakes he'd imagined, the hot cold water of want, but she would laugh and turn away. Didn't think so, she said. Still, there was more summer in her mouth than he would have known in a wild of work.



## *Eleven*

As she read essays, she plaited one side of her hair. You'd last forever, he said, up from his puzzle. The green light of some vehicle tracked across the ceiling.

## *Exegesis*

She sat flipping among his book, fingers glass-like on the pages. Funny then when she was cut, spattering blood on the girls' varsity squad. *Have a great summer!* it said, arrow inked up the center's skirt.

## *Diction*

It was easy to hear the word that turned through the table. It could sound like *death*, or *listen!* or *ridicule*, but it caught at the throat and stuck. The other words, those at the spiked green corners of her eye or the bittersweet planes of his mouth, were pregnant with it, its sons and daughters. They'd labor on, these people, without fruit it seemed, though in fact the table was sweet in the blossoms of it.

## *A Brace Is Not A Couple*

At the back of the store, beneath shelves of porcelain cats, were bags of confetti. Some look like guts, she said, and red spaghetti. He wouldn't make the obvious rhyme, though he saw through her eyes the rising birds.

## *St. Avia's Epistle*

Wet pills of dirt at the grass's white radicle, the  
half-worm breathing consonance, eat me, find  
me, want me.

## *Pike*

The bridge was broken, just a causeway for squirrels, though underneath girls made promises to boys. She pointed them out, named them by their best feature—*hair* or *eyes* or *breasts*. A year ago, this time on open water, he'd named her too.

## *Absorbance*

On the eraser board she wrote blood, crossed it out, wrote tears, pushed her hand through it, wrote lachrymal ducks. She turned to her students. They were already bored by her, her dry hysterics, except for a tiny Nepalese girl. Ma'am, said the girl, rising from her seat, about to cry out or laugh, her labshirt breast stained Coomassie blue.

## *Easter Rabbit*

Can you save me? Yes. Put your head down.  
I'm afraid it'll hurt. It will. No one wants it.



## *Biography*

There is a price. It's on the back. If you turn it around you'll see. It isn't expensive. Everything's okay.

## *The Gossipers*

The red sweater of her sat with cups empty. Do you want him? said her friend. No, she answered. Just his voice. He, not so far away, spoke. In this way, they invented a machine, her gilt wheels, his explosions. It ran into the night, across several years. Friends regarded it with amusement and teeth. He sat with the red sweater of her. The sun beside you, he said. I know, she answered. Who would invent stories against them?

## Loss

She burned the shirt in the backyard, the green smoke an ugly whiplash, the buttons popping.

*I still don't get it,* he said.

*What? That I have one less shirt?* The fire was pale, shining on her arms.

## *10 Thousand Things*

The man moved over the city like a small dog, heedful in scent and strikingly gray. With each step his palms signified old men and children, their stoops, held at the center level of circulation.

## *Parallax*

She holds up a triangle she's made of polished wood. Like it? she says. He has to keep his hands from pulling apart its delicate joints, built in the far corner of her room, brought to bear in this crowd. No, he says, and they look at him, these people he has.

## *The Idealist*

The lake drained to mud, the oars and barrels and cracked dinnerware drunken among the new weeds. If there's quicksand, she said, would you pull me out? He shook his head. I'd go down too. And then which of us would bear our future children? She laughed, already up to her knees.

## *Trespass*

He took a glass of ice water into the women's bathroom. She squatted next to the dirty bowl, sweat on her nose. *Please*, she said, this stranger, this sick girl.

## *St. Sebastian's*

His foot had ached for months, a slow stab, heartbroken pain. *There's nothing wrong with it*, said the doctor. The remorse of a red handkerchief stuck from his lab coat pocket. *Of course, that doesn't make it unreal*. He thanked the doctor and went to the park, the low bubble of children, the pale, beatific mothers.



## *Incorporated*

His hands were covered in correction fluid, blotched white to the wrists. The man at the next desk watched over his computer screen, speaking slowly into the phone. With each jab of the brush, the photograph withdrew. Business proceeded.

# *Manifest*

She crowded it, hawking its colors, lengths. *It's awful*, she said. *How bad it is is tragic*. It was a tower of cups and strings, motherboard, throat of a large bird. He stood in the ozone of her disgust. He took her mouth, kissed it, held it.

## *Maude Gonne Is A Bomb*

She swam to the first sandbar and stood with the lake-waves at her knees. A boat with three boys idled by. He heard the word fish and skin and she laughed. She waved to him before turning out, arms angled for colder water.

## *On Not To See A Bird*

The noodles boil to paste, blacken, catch fire. She comes home and throws the pot into the snow, a hissing startled crow. Upstairs, she finds him asleep, eyes clenched to the plumes of acrid smoke. She slides beside him, has dreams—acres of corn-stalk, winter rag—pinioned by the wing of his arm.

## *Fault*

He saw her at the crumbled line of spring, the quaver-headed jonquil in their bed. She smelled of paperwhite and tan. They posted *Caution* to protect her beauty, signed the plot, the vows, the earth-moving machines.

## *Grand*

The earth broke and they stood looking, the soaring backs of the crows. He thought he might drop a penny, have them carry it over the desert like a red egg. She thought she might drop herself, wind sliding up her skirt like a friend's hand.

## *Thrift*

Her face fresh from the barber was small and fragile, a bulb of milk ready to be broken. It's irresponsible, he said. You can't throw money after love. But the room was in her eyes and all the street outside.

## *Should They Offend*

When she gave up speed and the sky turned back to blue, she realized most of all she needed things in her hands, stones she found in the street, a dog's tail, the legs of men. Forever she'd been tied to the eyes: Feed me or cut me off, said her hands, I am starved. Whatever she touched became clean.



## *A Wish*

A pebble sank for 3 days through 3 miles of water. It passed between the skeleton of a whale, in which a school of orange fish lived. When it reached the bottom, it wouldn't move again, missing terribly the sailor's hand.

## *Set*

Ever have one of these? she says. She's holding a green candy, hard and exquisitely square. No, he says, falling over and over and over.

## *Ascent*

She stood weeping on the cement, behind her the million pounds of the city, the 10 thousand legs and lungs, before her a dirt field, broken blocks, a blue thistle nosed by a beautiful dog.

## *Interruption*

Afterward, her eyes started sharding the light, the view from the front door a modern cathedral. That dog is 47 types of brown, she told her husband. His forehead broke into 21 worries, though perhaps he only studied the faultless ceiling.

## *Another Thing*

40 hinges—Hospital, churchyard, window, the  
dock, the dock, a mile of cherry water.

## *Lease*

The wall had 4 switches in some arrangement of off and on, a single light. Click! she said. From the dark, she laughed. Click! she said again, but there was just black, in some arrangement of silver.

## *Cradle*

It was rock bared by rain. *Here*, she said, indicating a slot of the thinnest soil. *Do we sleep here?* The red valley, like the draft of her hip, startled him from below.

# Argot

The mice fought in the ceiling, squealing in rage. *Sure it's not rats?* he said. She plodded through her novel. *Rats would sound like cats. Cats like elephants.* The rain in its waves seemed white and holy.



## *Cardinal*

*I've never been south*, she said. They lived in Bloomington, the road the black row in soy-fields of birds. *Only north. Or east or west.* Noon fixed dust like snow.

## *Hardly, Not At All*

For a couple months he saved the dollar that came from the bottom of her purse. It did not smell of pencils and coins, it had not known her naked.

*&1/4*

Here, he said, setting a quarter on the back of her hand. The coin was aglow, having spent winter under the ice out front. She touched the ribbon of its hair, the tropic motto.

## *Occupation*

She said, You look thin.

To what question she addressed, he—his red sweater on the bright day—couldn't guess.

# *Deep Falls*



## *History Of Encaustic*

Someone had burned a candle, the wax spattered on the cement, pills of it in the trickle of the river. She lifted her arms and shouted, *It's later than you think!* laughing at the echo. He watched her feet rise and fall, marking so little in the yellow silt.

## *Lapse*

Her hand was small enough to thread the fence, touch the bug that held to the wall.

—, she whispered, as it fell. *What?* he asked. *What?* she answered. She turned her head, her neck a bracket for the dropping day.



## *Ark*

The river swelled beneath the stone, covered his shoe. He followed at a distance, one print on the dirt, the shape of her watered in the moon.

# *The Long Daylight Night*

The three walked up from the stone walls and trees, 4 AM. Their hands smelled like paper, water, bridges, glue. They said goodnight and stood there, jaws shining, teeth bright, going nowhere.

## *Synecdoche*

She went back through the trees, calling her dog, the dump of tables and chairs. On the far bank, the train. *Here*, it called. He sat among a ring of blue mushrooms, face to the sun.

## *Radio Show*

*You're bleeding*, she said. *I know*, he answered. *It was that broken cement.* The *Closed Road* sign made noise with the wind, a thrush in the pot-hole. *Need this?* she said. She held out her hand, a napkin, a small sketch of his ear.

## *Mineral*

The mountain of salt picked up the headlight and cracked it to a thousand cubes. *Do they mine it?* he said. *From the ground?* She paid no attention, taking her pulse, blood pushing against the pressure of her thumb.

# *Ascension*

*How many animals, she said, you think live in this woods? How much flesh?* They thought of the birds, the rats, the snakes, the deer, the thousand bugs piled over the ground, squeezed among the leaves.

## *Dramatis*

The column fed the noise of the highway exchange, 50 feet above, to her ear. *What's it sound like?* he said. *Ants*, she answered. *Chewing a tunnel through porcelain*. She shrugged, the slow fission of the silent day.

## *Track*

Around back, the women who mail porn smoked cigarettes, dropping ash into black puddles. They blinked and shuffled as she raised a hand. *Hey*, they said, the band of trees tipping near.



## *Tabula Rasa*

A man cut into the rotted cement with a hunting knife—I WANT—gathered up his garbage bag and dirty coat and shuffled on. She put her finger to the empty space, closed her eyes.

## *Yellow*

The water falling smelled of ammonia and copper, slick as grease. Trapped in an eddy, swinging toward the edge, the banana was fluorescent, a crescent of sun. He was close enough to hear the graze of her breath, trapped at the edge of inertia.

## *Truck*

Along the gutter ran a black rat, feet in the fallen leaves. As he reached to tell her, the still broke.

# Moses

A baby lay asleep in its carrier, among weeds, the mother shaping letters and faces on the wall. He watched the sprayback drift, speckle the ailanthus red. *She has the legs of a soldier*, she said.

## *Disclose/Agape*

She found a wire cage holding the skeleton of a bird. She brought it to the road and opened the wire door. On the cement, with the bones, she spelled a subtle word.

## *Red Crane*

They stood in its lee as the snow paperwhited the sky. *It smells of honey*, she said. It did, the gearboxes and grease, the black iron hook. He thought he might climb its tower, look out, bird's eye, new white view.

## *Priest*

Through the window they saw the palms, the oranges, a red cat sitting buddha on the floor. *It's just glass*, she said, meaning the difference between inside and out. He nodded, a cruiser trolling by, the redheaded cop.

## *Narcissus*

A boy stood to his ankles as the water and weeds of plastic curled by. *He'll be dead of leukemia*, he said, regretting already her smile, the blade of her shoulder, the lily of her eye.



## *Overpass*

The lips were gray, the skull shown through at the temple. They left it there, only reluctantly, mesmerized by the failing light.

*End*

They turned right, off the road, left the smell of the river, the miasma of history. They looked at their hands and forearms for dust and scars. *Well?* she said, down the long blue lens of his sight.

*God Not Otherwise*



## *First Certainty, Ailanthus Tree*

It was the kind of city he might bear, the river,  
the beautiful sidewalks, the pregnant dogs.  
He'd watch the flies and in their wings find  
things like braided water. *See that tree*, said a  
boy. He followed the arm, up the trunk, to the  
crown. *Yes?* He waited, sharp for completion,  
the short ash of the sky.

## *Second Certainty, Physic*

To begin with, there was the girl in the gold dress, the angle of her collarbone in the heat. There was the man in the red jumpsuit too, steady hands on the wheels and levers of things. Both were fixed, imprinted with light against the backdrop. He felt himself shimmer, knees unbuckle, the sun's neat sugarpill.

## *Interlude*

### *One*

At 4, the crew forgot the shovels. None of them would notice. They'd eat dinner, nearly holding to their forks.

### *Two*

The woman unlocked the glass door, the fragile moment she smelled books.

### *Three*

They fought, the blood from her nose washing the boy's feet.

## *Third Certainty, Heartbreak*

Under the stairs a bottle stood. It took the light of the afternoon and cooled it, green and powdered. He saw it through his parted feet, the red-cracked boards. It ignored him, hard beyond glass, still beyond touch.



## *Fourth Certainty, Right Time*

He shared a cigarette with the dentist, who'd just pulled a tooth, the nurse from next door. *I have a man inside*, she said, *with a tumor in his eye*. They stopped, marked the quiet of the suffering train.



## 5 Lines Baltimore

A warehouse slid into the street, shuffle of yellow brick beneath the stoplight, no cars, but in the stone a man's cane, a gull's blood.

From the rich wood of the confined attic the bats decanted, circled the turrets, a mugger with one eye rolled on the sky.

*He walked beside the red pole, deep cut, black line.*

A box of toys blew over, rain whipped the porch rail, a boy skinny and wet fed his cat through the window screen.

The steps were white cakes, green roses of beer bottles and dead flowers, a woman feigning sleep on the sidewalk.



CHRISTINE SAJECKI is an artist whose encaustic paintings frequently involve dialogue with literature and with writers, especially inspired by the open space and generosity towards the human experience found in Joseph Young's microfiction. Her paintings and animations have shown in many venues in the United States and Europe. She currently resides in Savannah, Georgia. Visit her website at [csajecki.com](http://csajecki.com).

JOSEPH YOUNG lives in Baltimore, Maryland. His work has appeared in *Lamination Colony*, *FRiGG*, *wigleaf*, *Caketrain*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Mississippi Review Online*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and *Smokelong*. He has written on art for a variety of magazines and newspapers, and some of this writing can be found at [www.BaltimoreInterview.com](http://www.BaltimoreInterview.com).

He is fond of collaboration and has created art exhibitions in concert with a number of visual artists. Visit his microfiction blog at [verysmalldogs.blogspot.com](http://verysmalldogs.blogspot.com).

