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HELLO

my name is

PAN·KU

AFRO

GRAFF →

NOSE

SKINNY
CAP →

↑ 2H PENCIL

ARROW ↓

FERRARI·DINO
↓ 206/246

POETRY
ART
PROSE
PHOTO
GRAPHY

← AEROSOL
CAN

BUMPER
↓

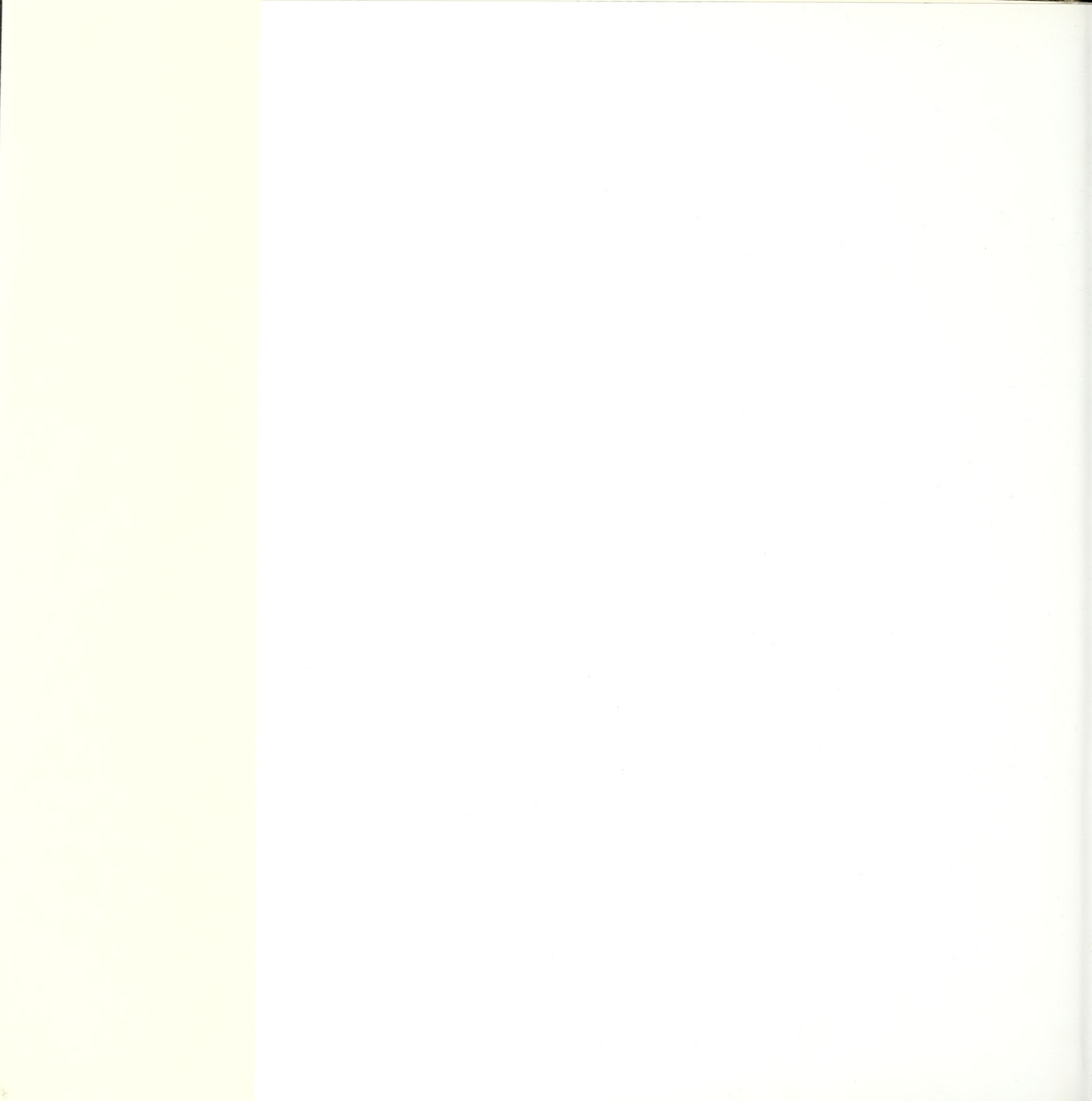
COMPOSITION
BOOK
↓

Compose

BLOOD



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SASHA



Photography

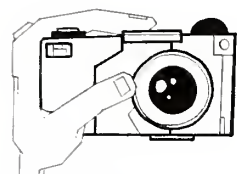
Johnny Louis

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THE POSSE'S PICKS

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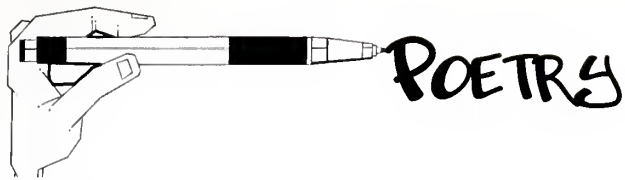
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"DEAD IN A SCENE"

"KILL"



INK PENS AND MARKERS
ON PAPER

MATE BY GREED

Photography



William Breim



William Breim

"BLOW, WINDS—"

Elgin Jumper

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER

Well, another hurricane was bearing down on South Florida.

Skylar Little Sky, a fifth-grader, and ten-year-old Native American, had just been picked up from Cypress Tree Elementary School by his mother, Wilma, and was being taken to his father Andrew's house out in Pembroke Pines. You see, it was his father's turn to have Skylar for the weekend, what with the recent separation, and impending divorce an' all.

He noticed sharp bursts of wind, debris, and rain on the roadways as they headed westward. He could hear cool, silver rain, as it pelted the dark, limo-tinted windows of his mother's glossy, black Escalade. By now, warm summer had perished at the hands of frightful fall and the year's hurricane season was brutally in full swing. Great storms were out there in the violent seas to the south all right, and poised were they to wreak nature's merciless havoc.

Spending the week with his mother had opened up his heart and mind to all kinds of interests. The world around him seemed fresh now, but hazardous, too. Up ahead, during a lull in the hard rain, several policemen had pulled over a black Chevy van, battered, and two dark-complected men in dark clothes, obviously the occupants, were being cuffed and shoved into a white with blue trim police cruiser.

"Mommy, are those Iraqis?" Skylar said. "You know, like the ones we seen being detained by our troops on T.V. last night?"

His mother giggled. "No, no, dear, that was just some faraway place we saw last night. It won't happen like that here."

"Oh," Skylar said. He glanced back.

At a red light, his mother looked up for a moment at the photo of her husband, Andrew, which was secured to the overhead visor. She shook her head once. She wiped a lonely tear away. Her mouth watered for a drink, but she quite knew where that path would lead her. Oh Lord, did she know.

"Mommy, guess what?" Skylar's dark-brown eyes brightened up like a just twisted-on

Edison light bulb.

"What, dear?" his mother said.

"We learned all about the great Indian wars out west. You know, the ones the Indians had with the United States."

"Oh really?"

"Mmm-hmm...W-was Wounded Knee a battle, mom?"

She giggled again, but abruptly fell silent. She shook her head no.

Skylar thought for a moment.

"Hey, maybe those people back with the policemen had car-bombs, or something like that! You think so?"

Skylar began shuffling through the assortment of papers in his gray book bag. He took out a drawing he'd done in mixed media that very day. Oh, he simply loved "Art Time," as his teacher referred to the days the class spent being artistic.

"Oh, look what I did, mommy!" he said.

It was a chaotic drawing: Dark clouds, lightning, rain. And on the ground were soldiers, evidently in tan and brown desert colors, who stood with deadly weapons, next to smashed up cars that had been set on fire.

"H-honey, why, it's lovely," his mother said, with as much tact as she could muster. "Why it's the hurricane and the war isn't it dear?" His mother was somewhat a diplomat at heart.

Suddenly, his mother slowed up to get safely by three cars that had stalled in the deep puddles, because of flooding on the street near his father's beige townhouse in the gated community of Windsong Way. She admonished him to stay out of those puddles. Those rains could very well pick up, she warned. The monstrous system was, indeed, barreling up from the southwest, out beyond the Keys, and was sure to make landfall by week's end. Meteorologists were calling for some rough weather, tough talk about systems charging South Florida and mandatory evacuations and ugly storm surges and huge hurricane eyes and the like. They were talking storm categories, with winds thrashing 150-200 miles an hour, winds and trees downed and transformers blown sky-high and malfunctioning traffic lights treated as four-way stops and Pandemonium with a capital "P" and about how most hurricane deaths occur after a storm has moved on. Then his mother apologized for all

the arguments he had been a witness to in the last few weeks leading up to the separation, all the domestic turmoil. At another red light, she drew Skylar in to her close and hugged him.

At last, the rains let up, but the clouds and trees were still being blown wild, quick-like, towards the northwest. Skylar was gazing at his room on the second floor of the townhouse. I wonder if Daddy's new girlfriend's here, he thought.

He put his drawing back in a blue folder, then back in the book bag. "Hey, maybe I'll add me, you, and daddy to the drawing as well, huh, mommy?" When his mother smiled a make-believe smile, there was another tear rolling down her face.

"Well, maybe it's not going to be that

aggressive a storm this time around, dear," his mother said.

"M-maybe." Skylar's voice was clearly shaken.

He took up his book bag, got out of the Escalade, and bid his mother a fond farewell. He caught the scent of new rain, impending rain. He brushed black hair out of his eyes with the back of his hand. He frowned, sad. Poor kids. He knew of other kids and parents who were experiencing their own wars of divorce. Then, at the front door of the townhouse, he saw his father, waiting for him. There were no cordialities attempted between his mother and father.

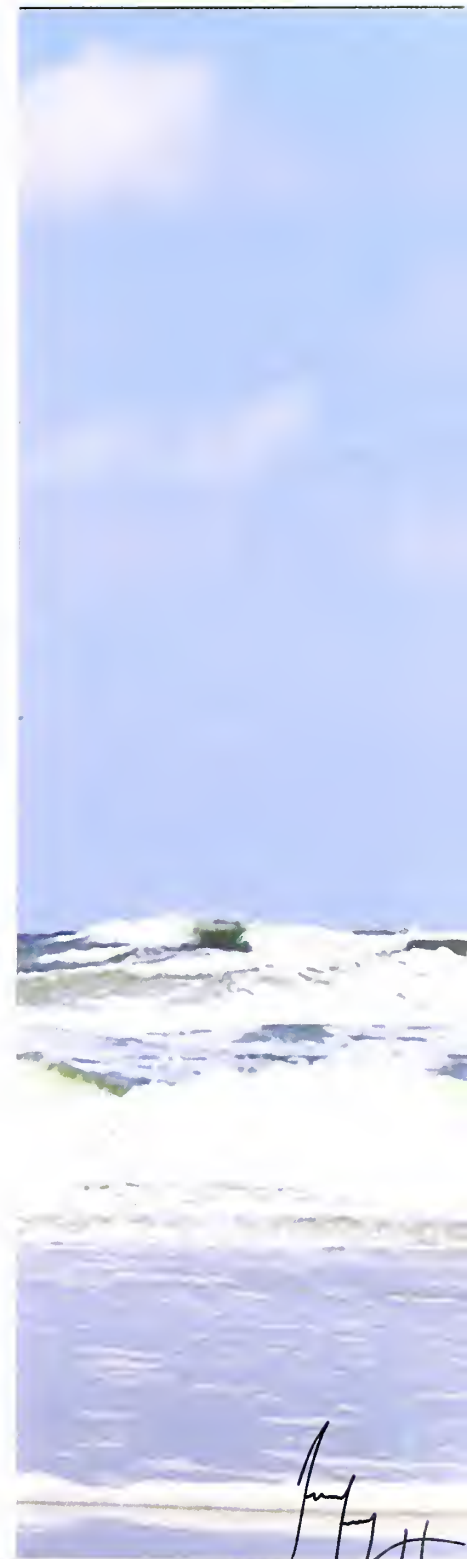
He realized at once a bitter storm was set to strike, and other fearful storms around the globe were yet raging out of control.

DIES IRAE (DAYS OF WRATH) #1

Photograph



Matthew Berns



CLOWN

RALL AGLUGILA



ACRYLIC PAINTING

Reincarnated Aphrodite

Unknowingly,
Unawakened she was
Strolling,
Pacing,
& Running
In a opposite directions
Making her way
in Crowded Stations
Burnt,
Bruised,
& Teared
Dressed well
but still feared
In pain
Grief,
& Sorrow
Lost Aphrodite she was
Searching Ambitiously
for her Apothecary
Carrying
Accoladed Gifts
of the Ones before her
Broken pictures of
Distant
Distinctive
Predeviced Visions
Forgotten Memories
Inherited Sorrows
Empress of
Denounced Crown she was
Locked
kept,
& Chained
Unaware of her life
before her
Fighting
struggling
grieving of
unknown emotional disguise,
Reincarnated
Exiled queen she was.

Syeda Warda Saeed



Handwritten signature

Innocent Child

Night time falls as shadows appear
Courage holds on consisting of fear
Sounds drum every beat of his heart
Explosion of anger received from the start
Every hit scars the soul's inner walls
Inside a terrified child who calls
For paternal hands to lead the embrace
Heart damaged, can never be replaced
No more will he accept abuse anymore
A knock pounds through the face of the door
Three digits dialed quickly into the phone
The knock elevates with a serious tone
Sirens alarm as the beast waits outside
Awaiting safety as he trembles then hides
A final end of a lifetime of pain
His innocent spirit no longer remains

Makeda Waterman

Goddess

Mother's heart stirs as innocence cuddles with sounds of the womb.
Baby is born, then baby branches out.
Bath time delight made clean laughs in orbit.
Fresh flowers broken down, ancient and preserved.
Sunflower fossils remain standing in
handmade wooden greenhouses.
Miniature adventures are colossal ventures
to the unpretentious and the juvenile.
Wildflowers plucked from pond's clay and
tossed into the boat unguarded.
Tiny Hands dipped in sand,
like spoons, collecting seashells.
Moccasin sandals kicked upsidedown near a white blanket on the grass.
Free-spirited child
chasing ducks and wading in the cool water.
It trickles around porcelain ankles
singing to summer.
Leaves float across the top like a dance and
the belly laughs of the child are as natural as
blowing wind through the trees.
A new generation is born,
the offspring of mother earth,
welcome.

Michelle Amie Kaplan



Michelle Amie Kaplan

Waking up in La Garita, Mexico

At 6 a.m.
ten Mexican relatives, my husband and I pile into
Tio Juan's rusty blue Ford pickup,
Set off down rocky roads.
The truck stops at a field of corn,
we pile out, walking carefully over
damp topsoil and wave at framers,
a huge mountain ahead of us.
We use a long stick to carefully
cross a stream, balancing wet, soggy
shoes on slippery rocks.
Five feet up the mountain, we feed hay
to Tio Wacko's cows, preparing
for the Sanchez family's traditional morning beverage.
In a tin bucket twelve glasses sit
along with crushed pure chocolate
and pure grain alcohol.
Each member takes a glass,
adds the amount
of chocolate that suits his liking,
then pours alcohol into the glass,
about an inch up from the bottom.
Tia maya milks the cow straight into the glass.
It forms a froth that sticks to the lips.
We gulp down the Pajarete.
Our tummies are warm,
we march back to the rusty old truck,
ready to start out day,
now that we've had a dose
of Mexican "café."

Maria Matienzo

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER

A Picture of Ned Christie

The Cherokee fugitive poses for an antiquated camera in the Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma. Long black hair, fearless eyes that stare out the confidence, no smile, and yet a dignity and grace, and light degrees of sorrow. The firm coolness in his right hand, as he holds the colt pistol blends with the proud way he hold the barrel of the Remington rifle in his left. No fear there. He wears a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, light-colored pants, with black leather belt and gun holster, the tainted fence behind him, for the forces attempting to fence his people in, end his life. Light and shadow poetry paint the picture here. A dominant society claimed he took the life of a lawman in 1887, hunted him five years, but, picture this, he never left his home. Constant gun battles, constant scrapes with death. But this man's no murderer. Far from it. Once a respected Senator for the Cherokee Nation, now firmly resolved, he prepares to defend his freedom. Determined to be who he is and looking the world square in the face. Once cornered a cannon and dynamite will blast him from his home where he will be gunned down and propped up for ghastly photo ops. It will be determined later that he had no hand in the killing that made him a fugitive in the first place.

Elgin Jumper

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER

PEACEFUL PATHS

Black and White Photograph



David Cacace



A GOOD WEEK

Paul Sohmer

His body arched upward at an almost impossible angle towards the heavens with only the passive restraints on his wrists and ankles keeping a part of him attached to his hospital bed. A loud eerie moan that seemed to come from his soul poured forth from a mouth taped to a breathing tube. Nurses and a doctor surround him quickly and start to work. "Doctor, BP is 300 over 200. His heart rate is almost off the scale." They inject something into his IV and minutes later he's calmed down. He sinks slowly, gently into the bed and falls back into a stupor that is only punctuated by an occasional murmur. I look at him and wonder if he'll live through my shift.

My name is Arthur Clarke. I work as a hospital deputy. My job is not that difficult. When a new arrest goes to a hospital, or if an inmate from the Broward County jail has to go to a hospital, a sheriff's deputy has to be present. "The prisoner that I watch could have charges ranging from something as simple as DUI, theft, or battery, to felony drug possession, rape, or murder. Our job is to keep their hospital environment like a mini-jail. We don't interfere with their treatment, and we insure that both the prisoners and the staff are safe and protected." When they get discharged from the hospital we take them to jail.

Some things that you see make you wonder about criminals and brains. The guy on the bed was here because he swallowed a bag of crack that he was trying to sell; this was after the Ft. Lauderdale police stopped to talk to him. He didn't realize that sometimes the bags rip and that crack can really mess up a person's heart. His latest episode was the third during my shift, and I was pretty sure that it wouldn't be his last. After he settled down I went back to reading a paperback. This was my Monday for the week so I had another four days to go. I wondered if the other four would be as interesting.

"You're not having a seizure so you might as well quit wasting your energy." We were in an E.R., and this was the third nurse who had said something like this to our prisoner. All the nurses had been walking by, and all had

witnessed him moaning, rocking from side to side on the stretcher and banging his head against the wall. I had finally stopped that by propping a pillow between the wall and his head. Now he just banged his head into the pillow. For the next twenty minutes as the nurses went by, they told him in various ways to stop faking a seizure. He finally did, glaring at the last nurse who had said that they would have to give him a shot to sedate him if he kept it up. This was a two-deputy detail, which meant that the prisoner had heavy charges. Having recently found out that he had full-blown AIDS, he had found an axe and chopped up and killed six people that he didn't like.

He didn't look like someone with full-blown AIDS. He was big, six-foot-two, and weighed around two-hundred-and-fifty pounds, no visible fat, all muscle. In the two days I spent with him he never spoke directly to anyone in my presence, he just mumbled and called people (including us) names. Right now he was running a high fever and refusing to eat. After three hours of tests he was moved into a room. Thirty minutes later we went to the operating room area, which is like an airport runway with patients waiting to get into the O.R. The doctors believed that he had acute appendicitis and were all set to perform an emergency appendectomy. They wheeled him away from us and into the operating room.

When the surgeon came into the operating room the prisoner sat up and calmly said that he was refusing an operation. The surgeon asked him if he was sure and he repeated the refusal. The exasperated surgeon came out, told us what was going on and left the O.R. area. We went back to the room with our prisoner. The nurses hooked him up with some IV's and we spent the rest of the shift listening to him mumble, punctuated by and occasional scream or yell, and it was usually about anyone and everyone in his life who had ever done anything to him. That included us of course. When I went home that night I was worn out, more from not being able to predict what he would do than from anything he did.

On my way Wednesday I had a new partner and the same detail. An hour into it we found out that our prisoner was being released. After we got the paperwork the nurse took the IV's out of him. We found a wheelchair and prepared to move him. He got up from his bed,

stood up for a minute, then quickly squatted down and let a large stream of diarrhea loose in a puddle on the ground. Then he flopped down into it and started rolling around, reaching up to grab at whatever he could pull down. We called the nurses and the first one to get there told us that he was faking a seizure and that we could secure him so that they could clean him up. I stepped on his shoulders and my partner stepped on his thighs. He was face down at this time and was worn out from his attempt to pull down his food tray (I had caught it). His gown was around his waist, and he was naked with only the gown and the yellow stain that came from his ass and draped around his legs and back acting as any kind of garment. Two other nurses came into the room. They had on full protective gear and brought some for the first nurse. She put hers on; I told myself to remember to clean my shoes later on. They used a suction device and wipes on him to clean off all the diarrhea and red-bagged everything. Then they gave him a fresh gown. Once he was cleaned up we cuffed him, put him in the wheelchair, then wiped our shoes off and red-bagged the wipes. After we got him to jail we left, grabbed a quick bite, and then took over a detail on a former body builder who had killed two people in 1979. His body was rejecting a lot of things right now thanks to steroids he had taken in the 70's; he had all types of cancers and was really shriveled. He had just come back from prison to try to get a release based on his cancers

My prisoner was in a lot of pain right now. She had been home when deputies arrived to serve a warrant for an old battery charge. She didn't want to go to jail so she jumped from her second story balcony onto the pavement below. No one told her that this was not the best way to escape. The jump was fine but in landing she broke both her legs and fractured her pelvis. Both legs were in casts and there was an iron rod separating her legs. The nurses had her on Tylenol 3, but it wasn't doing enough for her and she made sure they knew it. The warrant had a bond amount of \$1,000, which is not a large amount. She could have gotten a bondsman to bond her out for \$100 (and collateral) and been released from jail that night. I mentioned that to her when I was escorting the kitchen aid in with her dinner tray. If looks could kill my wife would have been collecting my pension the next day. I spent most of the shift reading a new paperback.

Both arms bandaged heavily, she was curled up in a fetal position in her hospital bed. She cried softly and would not look at either my partner or me when we had to go into the room to check on her. She had drowned her infant son in the bathtub the night before, the sliced up her wrists and arms before calling 911. I felt neither sympathy nor empathy for her. I've had a lot of hospital details where the person kills a child, then makes a piss-poor attempt at killing themselves before calling 911. When I say piss poor I don't mean there's not a lot of blood all over the place,

"Once he was cleaned up we cuffed him, put him in the wheelchair, then wiped our shoes off and red-bagged the wipes."

and "new evidence" from his attorneys. They didn't have much more than the cancers, but they were trying. He was quiet and watched TV the whole shift. He had put some photos of himself from his bodybuilding days on his portable tray, and I was pretty impressed by the photos, until I looked at the man and realized that this was the end result. Five hours went by quickly and we got home.

"Help me, help me!" she screamed. Soon she would stop screaming and start moaning. I knew that because she had been at it all night. My chair was in the hallway, but her door was open and there was no way I could not hear her.

they sometimes do that. I mean that they were successful with taking the child's life, but they can't seem to take theirs. They don't hit any major arteries or veins or even cut the right way, plus they usually wind up calling 911 before there's too much damage. The child is an innocent and it hurts me that this is so easy for them. We are sitting right outside of her room because during the last shift she started crying to the nurse that she wasn't a bad person and we shouldn't be there. After getting the sergeant's permission the deputies moved outside of the room. They were able to do this because there are curtains on the windows of the room that can be opened so that



the prisoner can be watched from the hallway. We only go into the room twice during the shift to make sure that the ankle shackle is secure, and we are ignored both times. I spend most of the shift talking to my partner about life, music, and the Beatles. It is an enjoyable evening.

When I get home I perform my nightly ritual. Walking into the house I go past my wife and into the children's rooms. I stop by the beds of all of my children. I give them a kiss and tell them that I love them. Only the youngest one

wakes up. He looks at me with eyes filled with sleep, gives me a quick hug, closes his eyes and is soon breathing gently. I then walk over to the living room where my wife is reading on our couch. I hug her and sit down next to her. She asks me, as she does almost every night, how my shift went. I tell her it was fine. And then I tell her, as I always do, that it was a good week. I mean it when I say it because no matter what happens out there, as long as my family is safe and everything is secure, everything is fine.

LIFE

Black and White Photography



Linda Pedraza

LOST

Black and White Photography



Johnny Louis



I like food

I like to eat grapes
and I also like crepes

I like to eat eggs
and I love chicken legs

I like to eat cold cuts
and I also like peanuts

I love to eat cheese
but I dislike green peas

I like to eat jell-o
but I do not like marshmallow

I like to eat cherries
and I love strawberries

I like to eat black beans
but I don't like collard greens

I like to eat clam
and I love wild yam

I like to eat potatoes
but not as much as tomatoes

I love to eat food
It puts me in a good mood

Nick Naim

Nervosa Anorexic

Nervous cannot describe the emotion
Of dying within one's own skin
Wasting away beyond skin and bones
My soul shrinking within
This hollow shell of a life I have concocted
A façade of strength and power
Lonely, yet never alone
I hide within my intimidating tower

I find comfort in the torment
Of haunting thoughts and manipulating minions
Shadow and secrets my consolation
Deceit and darkness my companions
Withering like the rose
I so desperately want to be
Instead of the Beauty in my dreams
The Beast is the reflection I see

Shame replaces contentment
For the body with which I've been given
Both acceptance and resentment
Are the motivations that keep me driven
To achieve that impossible goal
Of shrinking beyond recognition
So I can finally be acknowledged
And perfect by their definition

I feign happiness and security
While pain is festering within
I beg to be noticed
While flashing a simulated grin
I starve myself of nutrition
Yet feed on the slighted praise
As I beg for their permission
To continue this little "phase"

Kimberly Covert



give way to rain

Tori Meyer

where did you go
you used to be right here
the second steps right next to mine
the brilliant voice inside my ear
we grew better together but more alone
so different paths we took
you echoed inside your piano
i echoed inside my book
why can't we stop this sorrow
i'm trying to fight this pain
but it seems the only time i crack a smile
is when the clouds give way to rain

let the rain come down and bring me
and please I ask let it stay
let the rain come down and get me
let it wash redemption along my way
let it drop from the sky and nevermind why
we laugh till we fight and we love till we cry

where did i go
i remember it so clear
hoisted up in front of you
trying harder to disappear
i've been here too long it's tragic
cluttered with desperate realities
causing nothing but random heartache
and some friendship abnormalities
why can't we stop this sorrow
you're trying to stop this pain
and it seems the only time i crack a smile
is when the clouds give way to rain

i guess it's like that saying
that when it rains it has to pour
we should have boarded up the basement
and piled sandbags at the door
i feel the friction seething
between the water and our hearts
we know each other's lines so well
but can't play each other's parts

let the rain come down and bring me
and please I ask let it stay
let the rain come down and get me
let it wash redemption along my way
let it drop from the sky and nevermind why
we laugh till we fight and we love till we cry

where did it go
it was working alright
although it took a lot of effort
finding sleep at night
your face has better smiles
than the fake ones we have shared
my heart's seen too many miles
and your heart is always spared

let it drop from the sky and nevermind why
we laugh till we fight and we love till we cry
we grew better together but more alone
on those different paths we took
so you could echo inside your piano
and I could echo inside my book
why can't we stop this sorrow
we know how to fight this pain
i don't want to live my life with sadness
i want the clouds to part for rain.

NATURE'S TEARS



Photography

Cynthia Grunder Malaney



A TASTE OF FREEDOM

Matthew Berns

Excerpt from the journal I began writing by candlelight in the hours and days after Wilma.

No power for days, maybe weeks they are saying on the radio. This is supposed to be my cue to get angry and worried, and yet I'm not. On the contrary I feel almost thankful, for this storm has finally given me some small perspective on what life was like before TV and the Internet took over our lives. I walk outside to clean up more debris, and experience the most beautiful day I've ever seen, and one that I almost assuredly would have wasted inside as TV ads are incessantly crammed down my throat while reading the latest idiotic ramblings on some website.

Instead I take my dogs on a two-hour walk throughout my neighborhood and see more people enjoying the day than I have ever seen. I see families riding bikes, at least three separate football games going on with kids of different ages, and still others just walking as I am enjoying the weather. I spend my day talking with people I've lived next to for over ten years, yet have never met. "How many people would be inside right now watching the idiot box?" I wonder to myself, and in that moment I realize that my ninety-year-old grandmother was right when she said things aren't the same way they used to be

in communities. This place I live in is called an "experience the day," as there is nothing to do inside except lay down for a nap. People here have talked with their neighbors more in the past two days than they have in the past two years.

And why? Because normally everyone needs to be inside catching the latest C.S.I., or watching the last O.C., or drooling over the latest idiotic 'reality' show. Others have to get on the computer and stop an invasion of aliens, or a horde of zombies. We live our lives in a constant fantasy world, becoming so entangled in what's going to happen next to our favorite TV or game characters that we forget to go out and live our own lives. Well, this storm finally forced everyone to awake from the dreamlike trance we live our day lives in, and as it turns out, my old grandmother was right.

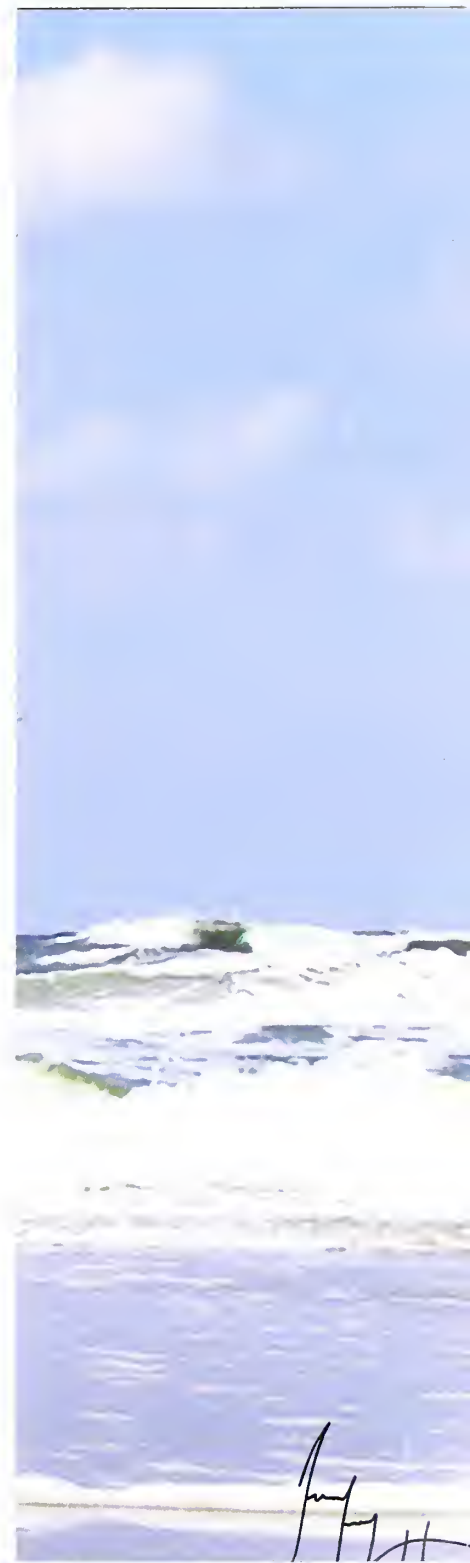
I say enjoy this freedom from technology while it lasts, because as soon as the power is restored, walking around will be replaced with Law & Order, the footballs will be put down in favor of game controllers, and we'll all get back into the same old routine—as the world literally passes us by.

Itself Humbled

Katrina passes by
the low land
apart from where the Superpower always speaks
of
freedom,
democracy,
human rights,
dignity,
the whole city sinks into the water
people drown
dead bodies are seen in the middle of the streets
Superdome itself humbled
heat in the day
darkness at night
the first Deep-South citizens on earth
they are thirsty,
hungry,
confused
and scared
wandering on and on...
a few helicopters hover over
looking for moving creatures
while the whole world is watching...

Thursday, Sep 1, 2005

Kim Nguyen Gewin



obZervation

Twindle spindle spin right round
as the kudzu caress the ground
amongst the noise the bellow of feet
pass through wreckage to bring heat
do radiators work with slithy ease
to hear the euphony aiming to please
as the wantons give not take
it is the bough that trees do make.
bequeathed from darkness comes forth the night
from a candelabra shines such light
above the sea glistens such stars
glittering sequence from earth to mars.

David Aaron Mack

Bend it like Geronimo: emails from paz

Kicking to time lapse, i unfold the eastern districts synopsis of a well delivered pass. Coach – “nah you not good enough” – fck em i see your in the sphericular vortex of game. Play none now, why ? i’ve disassociated my head from my body. Like when your reflex to attack is a simulteaous urge to sprint in a passage of time. Do ya Lag ? How fast is your mind travelling in respect to your body ? Shit if your thinkin these things you either shouldnt be playing coz your a daydreamer like after a good night out, or just unfit. So you see a Barmy can install a fragment of a trial well tuned to a drift in balance. Stable horse racing – a mere colony of financial dilusions were the boss seems to whip his owns ass in chuckle of whiplash. Fortnight ago i didnt dream of being on the news, but yeah now, gonna invent the revolving hand that spins your mind, you put it into the acupunctue pins of melodic tuned Tiibetian humming vocals and out delivers a one cent piece inscribed a paradigm for thought. Perhaps its nonsense, or an obtuse vertice of a snot infested spontaneous indulgence in fridge. Take it or leave it, apply or move on and redirect your consciousness in diagonal, nah thats trying to hard perspectives brother, perplex perspectives on visual stimulation. Dont let them push you around, the challenge is to re instate the model of thought into a crevice never before touched, with this spark you can ignite a dimension beyond the lunar sky, For to see is to be able to hear and to touch is to be able to see, be aware that all your bodily functions are synergistic and able to reconstruct situations in multifunctional abilities. Wait capsule is of muscle is pecilurity, strip any diseased or limping notions. Form stress release practises that coincide with a developed cognitive stance, and devour the prognosis, that go as DEEP AS FISH!

Daria Adamczyk



SECOND SEASON

Diane Larson

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER

Nora Clewis drives home from her 12 hour nursing shift at St. Francis Hospital and Nursing Home. She steers her five-year-old sea green Honda Civic with care. She can't help but notice that she is flanked by drivers, one man and one woman, who are nearly consumed by animated gesticulations. They are on cell phones. Nora breaks gently and rolls to a stop at the red light, trying to decide if it is better to be in front of or behind cell phone drivers. The arthritis in her hands and feet is acting up today. Damn these 12 hour shifts.

She was a beauty when she was 19, first runner up to Miss Illinois in fact, and now she is 40 years old, 10 pounds overweight, okay 15 pounds overweight, and worn out.

"I don't want to go home," she thinks. She has a sick feeling in her solar plexus. It is 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 23, and she is about to meet her first grandchild.

"This is not for me," she thinks.

"Oh, you are going to love being a grandmother," everyone tells her.

The feeling of dread increases now that she is one block from home, and she considers driving off somewhere, anywhere, but she is tired, her joints ache and her son and his family and her husband are waiting for her. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, there is plenty of cooking and baking to do.

She wants to cry out, "no, not me," but

"come meet John, Jr."

Nora steps inside, hangs her keys on the key tree by the front door, sets her big, white shoulder bag on the wooden bench in the foyer, and allows herself to be led into the master bedroom, the room she is giving John and his family for their holiday visit. Nora and her husband Allen have moved into the smaller bedroom for the weekend. Babies take up so much space, and she thought John and his wife would need a room with its own bathroom.

A four-month-old baby is sleeping in the middle of the queen sized bed, surrounded by pillows and dressed in a blue onesie so that the world knows he is a boy. All babies are cute when they are asleep, Nora remembers.

"Where is Alice?" Nora asks.

Nora had purchased two round trip tickets for her son and daughter-in-law, and babies fly for free.

Nora's husband, Allen, puts his arm around his wife's shoulder and says, "Let's go sit down. I made you some coffee." Nora is surprised at this show of solicitous domesticity and her dread increases.

"You mean Alice isn't here?" Nora asks.

John says, "Let's talk in the kitchen, Mom. We don't want to wake the baby."

"Certainly, we don't want to wake the baby." Nora follows the men into the kitchen.

"First, I need to change out of these scrubs," she protests and disappears for five minutes into the back bedroom. She strips off her durable sepia colored, reversible work clothes, the ones with pockets everywhere, inside and out, and throws them with force into the dirty laundry basket, the tumbling image of turkeys, Indian corn and pumpkins makes a colorful

Nora's husband, Allen, puts his arm around his wife's shoulder and says, "Let's go sit down. I made you some coffee." Nora is surprised at this show of solicitous domesticity and her dread increases.

instead she pulls into the driveway of their old, white, one story cement block home, nearly paid for. She lives in Hollywood, Florida. Her son, John, opens the door. Nora does not like the look on his face. He is guilty and a little scared.

"Mom," he says, giving her a bear hug,

splash. She kicks off her nursing shoes and flings open the closet, trying but not succeeding in anger management. She grabs her stay-at-home clothes off the hanger, pulls them on, rummages for shoes and disappears into the hall bathroom. Nora reappears in the kitchen, dressed in Capri stretch

jeans, sandals and an oversized white t-shirt, as if she were 19 again. She slides into her chair at the kitchen table, the one closest to the stove and the fridge.

Nora accepts the streaming cup of black coffee from her husband even though she should be taking a sedative, not more caffeine. She even accepts the plate of cheese and crackers that he offers, because she needs to take another 600mg Motrin for this damned arthritis.

"How am I going to lose 10 pounds if I eat after 7 p.m.," she chastises herself aloud.

"You look great, Mom," her son says.

Nora is having trouble with the child-proof lid on the Motrin and Allen opens it for her. This unusual attention to her needs only succeeds to increase Nora's sense of dread, but she must eat something, or the medicine will gnaw at the lining of her stomach and she doesn't need more pain.

John takes a deep breath and says, without preamble, "Alice is gone, she's not coming back. It is me and John Junior."

On cue, the baby lets out a wail from the bedroom.

Nora does not trust herself to go in to the baby and act appropriately, so she asks her husband where the bottles are. She knows the baby will need to be fed. John goes to tend to his son.

Allen hands her a Playtex Nurser from the fridge that looks half full and turns on the pan of water left on the stove to heat up the bottle to body temperature.

"So this is the modern way to feed the abandoned child?"

"Nora, come on, he is a cute little tyke, wait until you see him awake."

"Ah ha."

Nora's son appears, carrying a wide awake John Junior.

"Mom, this is my son. Junior, this is your grandmother."

Nora flinches at the title, but now at least she knows what to call the baby.

Junior is wearing a different onesie, this one with pastel sailboats on an aquamarine ocean background.

"Boy, does he make a mess," John says and wrinkles up his nose. He hands the baby to his mother as if she asks for the child, which she does not.

Nora has the bottle in her hand, however, since she is checking the temperature on her wrist when John appears. Junior settles right into the bend in her elbow and accepts the bottle hungrily, but as soon as Nora sits down the baby starts to fuss.

"Let's move to the living room," Nora suggests. Nora chooses the rocking chair that she had pulled out of the garage and polished for her daughter-in-law, the gone missing wife. Junior is placated with the rhythmic movement and drinks his bottle. John tucks some pillows under Nora's arm and under the baby. Nora pretends to ignore the child and turns her attention to her son.

"So?" Nora picks up where they left off before the baby woke up.

"What's there to say, Mom? Alice is gone. She left a note yesterday morning. I flew in today and thought I'd tell you in person. I used the extra plane seat for the baby, had him strapped into his car seat, it is safer that way."

"That's it, she just disappeared?" Nora finds this hard to believe.

"Do you want to read the note?" John pulls a piece of carefully folded loose leaf paper out of the back pocket of his jeans and hands it to Nora.

John,

I am with someone else, never did want to be a mother, sorry it did not work out, but I don't want to live a lie. I'll let you know where I end up.

Alice

Wow, pretty cold, Nora thinks. "I am sorry, son," she says.

"You should hire a Private Investigator, John, she can't do this to you," Allen says.

"She already has done it, Dad, and I don't have any money."

"What about your job at the post office?" Allen says.

"They fired me last week."

"Why?"

"I've taken too many days off. Someone has to take care of the baby, Alice is not interested, never was."

Junior starts to sputter and fuss and Nora puts him over her shoulder to burp but instead he spits up and the fuss changes to a cry and the cry turns to a wail.

John takes his son and Allen brings in a



washcloth and a receiving blanket to clean and cover Nora's shoulder, baby burping damage control.

I am afraid he needs another diaper change, John says, and he heads for the bathroom in the master bedroom where Nora has set up a changing table.

Nora cannot keep silent any longer.

"Allen, I told you that girl was no good for John and that they were too young to get married."

"Yes, Nora, you told me, more than once."

"Why didn't you try to talk some sense into your son?"

Nora is up, pacing the room. She is speaking in quiet anger, and her words come out like a hiss. "I told him he didn't need to marry Alice just because he got her pregnant. She was his first girlfriend, for Pete's sake."

"Sounds like you and me," says Allen.

"Yes, like you and me, except that abortion was illegal way back when and it is legal now."

Nora cannot seem to control her tongue, does not want to. Twenty years of resentment are out in the open and she is not turning back.

"I was 19 years old, just like Alice, only she had nothing going when she got pregnant and I was first runner up for Miss Illinois. Have you forgotten, Allen, how many modeling offers I had after I filled in for Miss Illinois for two months while she got over Mono?"

"Well, Nora, part of the reason you were so much in demand back then is because your tits got big and your appetite disappeared, morning sickness, temporary fix for the problems you had keeping your weight down and your bust line up, but it couldn't last."

"It couldn't last because we got married and I had a baby and then I couldn't take the weight off and then this damn arthritis got me. Who ever heard of juvenile arthritis?"

"So, your beauty queen career peaked when you were 19, what is so bad about that? At least you were a beauty queen."

John returns to the living room with Junior, wearing another onesie, this one in blue and white strips, like a jailbird.

"Do you want to hold him, Mom, while I heat up another bottle?"

Nora takes the baby and jiggles him up and down and he begins to root against the t-shirt that

covers her breasts. She puts him over her shoulder and paces around the room, not looking forward to another crying fit. He holds his head up and starts to coo and giggle and squeal.

"At least he is not afraid of strangers," Nora says, "which is good, since he will spend most of his waking hours in daycare until he is shuttled off to public school."

Allen looks at his wife in dismay. "Nora, you can't meant that. You heard the boy, he's without a job, abandoned by his wife with an infant to care for. We can't turn them out, our son, our grandson."

"We?" Nora repeated.

Tripping on my Ego

I am the soul child scattered through generations of a long family history. I am the essence of time logically bind, which feeds my inner mystery. I am the deliberation of salvation; Pressed to my ear and heart, like scattered shadows on the wall torn apart. I am the valued treasure of the new revolutionized nation which society feeds waste that most pick up, and it sticks to their mind like paper to paste. I am the aura of beauty concealed in a measurement glass. I am not what everyone sees, but they take in the perception that I am the misconception, of the jet model beauty queen. I am not easily misled into deeds or temptation; though I may look for the wrong satisfaction, instead of hoping for the gratification of the love thy self-vow. I am holding fast to god's unchanging hand. Sometimes it gets hard to stand on the threshold of a sinner man. While the sin in man engulfs the population strand. As man's sins advance form taking the earth by storm, now it is sin that strings the sinner man's life yarn. I am not so mature that I don't confide in innocence. I don't underestimate age to the point of ignorance. I am the cultivation of a mother's seed dumbfounded by her lover. I am he solar eclipse that comes every blue moon, the fog that disappears in the morning on a deserted lagoon. I am a maze in the shape of a heart, split at the top with two exits. Therefore most of the opposite sex doesn't know were to start. I am where imperfection lays; line up the make-up of the human design. I am beyond the average unknown. Sitting here with a pen and a pad I can truly call my own.

Elisha F. Thompson



MY UNIVERSE

JACK III



INK AND PENCIL

Ode to Miami

Part I

When I dream, I dream:

Mangoes and papaya seeds sprouting trees on every corner
The smell of guava pastries and café con leche
 Steaming from a mom's and pop's bodega.
In this city's heart beat, the metropolis of busy bodies
 Recklessly push and shove
To get to a minimum wage support system

When I dream, I dream:

The sun tip-toes across the eyelids of the sky
Only to intensify the heat of light
Well, polished vehicles decked-out and coded in candid colors.
Live roadways congested as far as the horizon stands.
Black thickened some smothers natural oxygen

Salsa and Samba music play loudly on a street corner
Rhythm and Blues blazes from another
Skyscrapers like buildings pierce through the clouds
Imitations of the World Trade Center

When I dream, I dream:

In color, bright vivid hues of shades of Florida Orange
And aqua water blue.

Part II

Where drugs cluster corner stores, every weekend
And misguided females walk the avenue
In search of their childhood

Dirty political scams take place in the city's government.
The job market is not sufficient,
And most natives feel life is not worth it.

Diversity is an adversity, because brothers are against brothers.

M-MUTILATED
I-INTOLARANT
A-AGITATING
M-MISJUDGED
I-ISOLATED

When I dream I dream reality
Where I live, but not where I would like to be
However, home in my heart
Miami.

Elisha F. Thompson



WAKE UP, THE



CHARCOAL ON

POWER IS OUT

MISAEEL SOTO



DRAWING PAPER



A Deeper Emotion Than Truest Love

A deeper emotion than truest love,
Is what I must articulate to you.
Within your presence, by Heaven above,
I am wrapped in your silver wings of truth.
Wish's wish is to wish for you, always.
Close to you I oh-so-overwhelming.
Like smiles that last forever and a day,
"Forever Love," is a line lovebirds sing.
'Tis certain you turn my world upside down.
Mocking birds, at last, become true songbirds,
That sing forth a love that knows no bounds,
That knows the love of love, and knows not hurt.
For all at once, your universe of love,
Is all that shall be, is, or ever was.

Elgin Jumper

Letter to the World

If I could ask one thing from this world...
I would ask for all my kisses to be long and deep,
And to keep and my goodbyes short and sweet.
I would ask of people to judge others not with their eyes
But, rather, with their hearts
For how can you truly see someone with blind eyes and closed minds?
I pray for forgiveness for my wrongdoings
But I do not regret them—
For I have learned someone of the most powerful lessons through pain
And found that to be my greatest joy.
I would tell the world to love... and allow yourselves to be loved.
But do not give in to love freely, or immediately
For it come slow and gradual like the shift of the seasons
And, at times, more breathtaking and compelling that them as well
To those who will not allow the arrows of love to pierce their heart—
You will never know the fullest joy or the fullest sorrow
You are the ones who live in a purgatorial winter,
Dreaming of roses that may dwell under the beds of snow.
I would also ask of the world to be real with itself.
For to deceive someone else is but to turn a part of yourself into a lie.
And lies are nothing but filth that live inside the heart yet to be processed by the brain
The truth will give you wings.
I will also say-time is money, but money is not time...
You will never buy back your youth... Enjoy it.
Childhood photos may fade, but memories shine.
Also, friends and family are the true riches in our lives... cherish them.
Treasure is treasure because of its value. Not all treasure is gold.
And finally- if I could send my letter to the world...
I would say to all those who have touched my heart—
The reason for my breath...
To those who have betrayed me—
Who have made me wear the crown of thorns...
Those who have been my shoulder to cry on—
And the ones who have been my reason for crying...
You have made me who I am... and for that I thank the world.

Ryobi Castellanos



[Handwritten signature]

BLACK IS ME

E.R. Bass

Hmm... How do I say this? Black and me go WAY back. As a child I never knew what Black was other than my least used crayon. My parents showed me a documentary of some people in white sheets who hated people like me: Black people. I couldn't understand why they ran around in white sheets and killed people just because they had skin like me. It was at the very moment that I realized: Ghosts ARE scary.

The next day in school, I saw people A LOT differently, and wondered if they wore white sheets and went out to hunt Black people, like my parents and me. I started having nightmares, a few nights afterward of them invading my house and taking my parents and my newborn baby sister away... to kill them.

"Hey, BLACKIE!!!" snapped a student from behind me. I turned to see a boy, who attended my class—stood next to me PE in—a Black boy—laughing at me with his friends, who were also Black... like me. "You so BLACK..." and the insults began. I couldn't understand, none of my 'white' friends and classmates said that to me. "I'm not black—I'm BROWN—you're just BLACK!!!" they insulted.

This torment continued throughout my entire childhood and ended sometime in high school. I hurry through the hallways at my high school to avoid being seen. Don't want them to realize just how BLACK I am... I get a note

jammed in my locker from some guy. "I think you're beautiful." I quickly crumble the paper and take out my books. What a joke!!! I can't be beautiful. I'm not light skinned or brown like my younger sister and brother. I'm too BLACK.

Despite this racial self-hate I endured in the streets, I never had to worry about it at home. My parents grew up with the same thing, mainly my mom. Dad, while growing up was considered 'red' which is just under being 'yellow' and right about being 'brown'. Then, there is 'high yellow' which is my people's epitome of 'fine.' Anyway, despite my Dad never enduring such foolishness, a few of his darker siblings did. He and his older sister dealt with ignorance the old fashioned way. And by old fashioned, I mean wait until after school and beat the perpetrator into a bloody pulp.

There was ONE incident at home dealing with my much lighter sister, Pamela. She was born so 'high yellow,' people thought she was mixed. When she entered elementary school five grades behind me, my classmates couldn't believe she was my baby sister. The usual question went something like, "You two have the same daddy? You sure?" Of course I knew what they were getting at, but Pam was oblivious. She wasn't raised to think she was better than me or anyone else just because she's light skinned.

However, a year or two later, Pam

encountered 'that crowd' or that kid who opened her eyes. They made her realize that her big sister, Erica, was 'BLACK.' And so, during one of our usual arguments, she snapped at me, "Shut your BLACK tail up! You old Blackie!"

I froze. I was so terrified. I couldn't believe, NOW she, too, is going to pick on me and call me 'BLACK,' 'BLACKIE'...

I had started to go spiraling down into a loathing for Pamela, when suddenly—SLAP!

My father, the non-disciplinarian, slapped my younger sister square in the face.

"Who taught you that? WHO?!" he yelled.

Mom was also irate. She had endured some really bad stuff in her childhood. She, even had relatives that cursed her for being so dark. "Booly," she called my Dad by his nickname. "Handle your child—I don't want that foolishness in this house."

It went downhill for Pamela there. It was the first and only time I had ever seen my Dad and Mom so irate. She was grounded until they said she wasn't, which translates to forever, ordered to hug me and tell me that she loved me, and forbidden to ever associate with 'the crowd' again. In fact, Mom showed up the next day at the school to enforce our number one family rule to the cretins that tried to warp Pamela's head. That probably gave them a shock to see our dark-skinned mother.

On a personal basis, Black is something I can't avoid, but it is easily dealt with. It took years of coaxing and encouragement from my parents and even Pamela, to get me to realize that there's nothing wrong with me. I am a beautiful person.

Another thing about 'Black' is how this changing society has viewed it. Back in the days of old and childhood fairy tales and folklore was being written, Black always meant 'evil' or villainous. Even in old cartoons and movies, Black was something usually the 'Bad' guy would wear. If a chick in a film wore too much black, you can best believe you were going to see a lot more of her, because she's probably the 'slut' who's going to get hacked next. It also didn't help that the usual bank robber or mugger character wore black and usually was Black.

But now, Black is über cool and hip. It's sexy. Now the good guys and the occasional 'anti-hero' wear black. In some movies, the whole

bloody cast will wear black, making simple-minded viewers of yesterday to actually pay attention to the dialogue. In video games, when you have a totally bad-ass character that's on your side, you best believe he will go insane, kill your girlfriend, and send a giant meteor hurling towards the planet (aka Sephiroth from the Square-Enix game Final Fantasy VII). The chick in black in the movie... well... you'll still see more of her—and she'll probably get hacked into bits.

On a young social level, you'll also come across people that act 'Black' because it's 'cool.' I can't tell you how many times, I've seen White kids wearing cornrows, Asian kids wearing dreads, and talking more 'ethnic' than relatives at a cook out. It's scary. Now, the n-word is used so frequently as a sentimental and bonding catch phrase, it's become numb to my ears as well as the people who say it, at least down in Fort Lauderdale.

Finally, the phrase, 'The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice' has been brought back to life. This also scares me. If another White approaches me with that tired line, I swear—I'm going to scream. And if another Black guy calls me 'Sexy Chocolate' or 'Chocolate Thunder,' I'm going to invest in a taser gun. Where were these guys when I was growing up in school? It's pretty funny, that word Black. Despite the depressing past, I wouldn't change the skin on my body for the world.



Unattainable Strangers

I walk through these caves
Of mind's deliberate ways
Encountering things
I don't know how to attain.
Judging my visuals,
Analyzing all these inner rituals,
I'm afraid of self value to be
More complicated than usual.
Lack of inner peace,
Striving for a higher reach,
I decide to concentrate
On how I elevate my energies
into one theme.
This theme is life,
As I think of it on this flight,
Through this cave of neuralgic impulses
Of an organism who is covered and disguised.
For limits are set by the mind,
And the mind has no limits,
Out of 10% we emphasize to be
What seems like a limit.
So what to fear,
Only those things that we are taught to be
unclear,
For this cave's limit
Doesn't know which direction is legitimate
For the destination
I've already lived with.
Afraid of rejection,
While encountering so many
With no identical connection,
I lead this journey in hopes
To crash into someone's attention.
As time circulates through my aging soul,
I keep on strolling through unknown roads,
Still not finding my way home.
For I keep on recognizing a few,
Yet I never seem to hang
My imprint I drew,
My self portrait into another's shoe.
Effort it takes,
To bring or take away,
Still I can't obtain
All the unattainable strangers
That lead through my cave.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

LAUREN VELAZQUEZ



PEN AND INK



PIERS AND PROM KINGS

Jessica O'Byrne

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER

Of all the awkward situations I have ever found myself in, the thing with the prom is probably the worst, before I had my stupid idea; I was the epitome of normal. Look up normal in the dictionary, and you would see my picture. Tall, a little nerdy, and always in desperate need of a haircut. I usually did OK in school, never the valedictorian or anything like that, and I had my group of friends. We liked to get together on Friday nights and play video games or hang out at the pier, if one of us could get a car. I even had a girlfriend once, in my freshman year. We were both ridiculously shy and afraid of each other, but we did the requisite hand holding between classes, the Saturday night movies with our parents taking turns driving. Her name was Maria, and she moved to Texas at the end of the school year. I still call her on her birthday, and she calls me on mine, some years.

When high school started to wind down, and I realized I wouldn't be around very much longer (having just received my acceptance letter from State). I began to think about my brother, David. Now there was a high school hero. He was twenty-three the year I was set to graduate, and still people were talking about him. His picture and name adorned most of the trophy cases in my high school, and there was even a framed senior portrait of him hanging in the front office—where all the valedictorians were pictured, my mother among them as well. In the gym, his name was tacked up two columns over from the place where my father's name was tacked under the words, VARSITY FOOTBALL TEAM CAPTAINS. I never played high school football, having lost my taste for the sport after a broken arm in the eighth grade.

These thoughts about David, they were running through my mind in school all day.

You see, keeping myself distracted in class is the only way I can avoid my head exploding most of the time. I remember it was Friday too, because all the spirit kids were getting ready for the football game, and because David had called me the night before. Part of his job description as perfect son has always been to designate Thursday nights as our bonding night—that is, he lends his manly insight to my boyish problems. When he was living at home, I would be allowed to stay up late on Thursdays and help him pack his gym bag for Friday night football (or baseball, depending on the time of year) and he would always offer me advice even before I could ask for it. Most of the time though, he'd be waiting for me with a detailed description of the party he was going to be attending after he hung up, how many girls he was going to hang out with this week, and how he was hoping to make the Dean's List again this semester.

It was all this thinking about David, and about this being the end of high school (and pretty much everything I knew), that made me want to do something dramatic. Sort of a last fling, the last ditch effort to make people remember me as somebody other than David's little brother... if that. As luck would have it, the very same day I was wondering about school (banging into lockers because I'm staring off into space) wondering what I was going to do to make my mark, an announcement came over the PA. Our class president, who is sort of a baby David except not half as nice or intelligent, was babbling on about prom. Prom is a huge deal at my school, especially this year because our homecoming dance got cancelled. Some idiots decided to redecorate the hall with toilet paper and silly string, and administration didn't take too kindly to it, but that's another story.

After he went on for about ten minutes describing this year's prom theme, Baby David began talking about nominations for prom king. This caught my attention because prom king is probably the only thing my brother David didn't accomplish in high school. Even though he made Homecoming court all four years, and he

was in the court for prom, he lost out to some jerk everyone called Dumbbell. Not that David seemed to care, since him and Dumbbell were the best of friends... but I remembered, it sure bothered me. And now, with Baby David saying anyone could be nominated for a dollar at lunch, I was thinking maybe this was my chance. Not just to get back at that jerk... but to make my own mark. In my family, everyone did something heroic or memorable in high school, my parents went to the same high school I did and they were Homecoming King and Queen. They both played all kinds of sports and were team captains a lot. And I don't need to get into my brother's accomplishments again. Next to all that, my sole contribution of having won a district title in golf last year seems sort of lame. Something obviously needed to be done... but could I be prom king? I wasn't even planning on going to the prom. I decided to call David at lunch and talk to him about it.

Of course, his idiot roommate (that same kid, Dumbbell) answered the phone and told me David was off tutoring underprivileged children, but he would be home later. Frustrated, I went back into the cafeteria. A long table filled with spirit kids was blocking the main entrance. NOMINATE YOUR PROM COURT was emblazoned on the wall over their heads. Gritting my teeth, I searched in my pocket for a dollar, but hesitated before handing it to the bored-looking cheerleader that was staring at me. I had never done anything like this without asking David first. But still, it seemed like something he would tell me to do. Ignoring my inhibitions, I stepped up to the table, handed the cheerleader my dollar, and said my name loudly. She just stared at me for a moment, as if she couldn't believe I was speaking to her. Swallowing hard, I said my name again. This prompted her into action. She wrote my name down on a piece of paper with a handful of others, took my dollar, and informed me that only the top two nominees would make it onto the final ballot. This was going to be more expensive than I thought, but at least I was on the list. I

just needed a few more nominations.

As I turned around to walk towards my usual table, an enormous crowd of giggling girls rushed the table. Waving dollar bills, they all breathlessly announced the name of Baby David while the bored cheerleader happily wrote down the name fourteen times. My stomach dropped into my shoes. No way was I going to make it onto the ballot. Discouraged, I walked towards my table and sank down into an empty chair. I had to figure something out. A loud beeping noise from my pocket informed me that David was back from tutoring and was returning my call. Breathlessly, I answered the phone and told him what I was up to. He was quiet for a moment, and then I heard a strangled choking noise. This quickly escalated into his world famous party-boy laugh, which I patiently waited out. When he was done laughing, he asked me if I was being serious, and at my positive reply, he resumed his laughter. Disgusted, I hung up the phone and buried my head in my arms. I knew I had made a mistake in telling David, because the next phone call he was going to make would be to my mother, and then it was all over because she was best friends with the Baby David's mother. There was no backing out now... unless I didn't make it onto the ballot. And then I had another realization... I absolutely had to be on ballot. Jumping up, I pulled out my wallet and began to dig through it. After a few minutes, the emergency twenty-dollar bill I always carried surfaced from among the random bits of paper. Carrying it to the table, I dropped it in front of the cheerleader and said my name again. Looking at me in shock, she put the money in the envelope and made twenty careful check marks next to my name. I was in the lead.

The next week was more of the same. Every day, I would wait until the end of lunch, and then I would walk over to the nomination table and give myself enough nominations so I remained in the lead. I think that somebody was doing the same for Baby David, because we remained neck and neck the whole time. It came as no surprise to me at the end of the week



when Baby David and I had blown away the competition (and probably funded half of our prom out of pocket), and it was our names appearing on the ballot, alongside some obscure girls. Although I was somewhat relieved, I was still terrified. Even if I was willing to spend over two hundred dollars to get myself nominated, that didn't guarantee people would vote for me. I had to try harder.

One thing I had inherited from my brother (and presumably, my father, since they are pretty much one in the same) is my hard-headed tendency not to give up on anything, no matter how hopeless it seems. If I'm backed into a corner with menacing gangsters threatening me with their bow staffs, you better believe I'll start climbing the wall... or trying, anyway. In this case, I didn't have to face mythical criminals, but I probably would have preferred to. In theory, my task was simple. I just needed to get more than half of the senior class to vote for me. I mean, Baby David couldn't be friends with everybody... not with that weird kid in Calculus class, or the girl that always sat alone at lunch. I had run for class office before (albeit unsuccessfully), and I knew what I had to do. My first target was, of course, the golf team. I proposed my idea to them at practice, and they all agreed that I would make a great prom king, and promised their votes. Ecstatically, I began a tally in my head—I had seven

I was at my breaking point the night we were to be presented to the school. It happened at the last baseball game of the year, on the same field where my father and brother had won so many titles. Maybe tonight I was going to win one more. Right before the first inning, one of the senior class sponsors walked out to the middle of the field and got everyone to stand up. As the noise grew, she read off the names of the two obscure girls, Baby David, and finally my own name. Smiling nervously, the four of us linked arms and walked out as rehearsed. Upon spotting Baby David, the crowd let out an enormous cheer, and he waved like a movie star. I began to sweat under the collar of my brother's tuxedo that he had overnighted (for luck, he had told me over the phone), and I dug the toes of my scuffed sneakers into the moist grass. Suddenly noticing Baby David's impeccably shine footwear, I wished more than anything I had remembered to ask David for his shoes.

After what seemed like an eternity under the blazing stadium lights, we were allowed to return to the cool sanctuary of the dugout. While Baby David peeled off his tuxedo to reveal the school baseball uniform, and the girls retreated to the stands to watch the game, I slunk off into the parking lot. It was Friday night, and I had the car. Since almost everyone in town was at the baseball game, I had the streets

Even if I was willing to spend over two hundred dollars to get myself nominated, that didn't guarantee people would vote for me.

votes bagged, not even including my own. Maybe this wasn't so hard after all. While nobody was surprised that Baby David was a candidate, everybody who knew who I was seemed to be in complete shock. Most people, however, simply didn't know who I was. I was beginning to get nervous. I became a wreck, wandering the halls mumbling to people I half knew about who knows what, begging bewildered freshmen to vote for me. I didn't know how much pressure I could take.

pretty much to myself. I sped down the dark two-lane road. When I got to the sandy road leading to the pier, I stripped off my jacket and vest and ran down the familiar worn and splintered planks until I reached the end. My first instinct was to jump, but I hesitated; prom was tomorrow night and I didn't want to wash the tux. Jumping into the filthy water would surely ruin the outfit, which wasn't even mine. I sat down on the edge of the pier and let my hands dangle, my toes barely skimming

the surface of the water. After a while, I picked up some of the rocks and began idly flicking them into the water, thinking. Tomorrow was the end, not just for me, but for most of my classmates. Monday started our last week of school, not even a week really. Just four short days of exams and it was all over. Senior breakfast on Friday and graduation on Saturday morning. The familiar feeling of terror began to overtake me. The fact that I had only one chance at this was making me crazy. Why didn't I go for glory more? Why did I play golf instead of football? I was built just like David; I could probably have been decent, maybe even great. Why hadn't I studied more? Tried to go to a better college? I was slowly coming to the realization that living under David's shadow had kept me back in so many ways, and I began to get angry. My whole life I was afraid to take even a single step without consulting him, only because I knew he had done it right first, but who was to say I wouldn't have done it right on my own? Trying to be prom king was the only thing I had ever done on my own, and I was beginning to suspect I was going to fail miserably. I didn't know if I could take the let down.

Sitting there on the pier, I began to consider my options. I could go home tonight, wake up tomorrow, get dressed, put on my tuxedo, and go to prom. That was the plan, the natural thing to do. I began to unbutton David's shirt. When I finished, I folded it carefully and placed it next to me on the pier. I could take off, go on a road trip. My parent's had another car; they wouldn't miss this one too much. And it's not like I needed to be here, since my grades were good enough that I wasn't taking any exams. I could have my diploma mailed to me, and never have to know whether or not I failed. I took off my sneakers long enough to pull David's pants off and fold them on top of the shirt, and then I quickly put them back on. I stood up on the pier, wearing only my boxers and undershirt, and looked at the shadow my body was throwing on the water. To my surprise, it looked just like David's had when he brought me here

as a kid. Tall, broad shoulders, neck just a little too long. The only difference was that where David had always stood proudly, taking up as much space as he could, I was always careful to compress myself as much as possible. Experimentally, I straightened my back and squared my shoulders. Anybody looking at me would've thought I was David.

But I wasn't, and I knew it. I knew if I went back, went to the prom tomorrow night, I would not only be disappointed, but also humiliated. I wasn't sure if I would be able to live it down. I tried to remember what had compelled me to put my name on the ballot in the first place; the memory of all the money I had spent stung me. That money had been the product of a long summer of bagging groceries, and it galled me to think how foolishly I had spent it. I turned and walked back to the other end of the pier. Spinning to face the water, I took off on an easy run. Really, I would have been good at football. I was a running back in the pee-wee leagues, and my long legs probably would have enabled me to keep that position. As I neared the end of the pier, everything inside me was screaming to stop. All of the years of being dared to jump... nobody had actually done it. We had stared into the murky depths with a mixture of contempt and fear; never quite sure of what was lurking below the surface. As I launched myself into the air, I suddenly realized, I was about to find out.



God at the Door

Every day I witness the guilty,
The innocent,
The old,
The young,
The remembered,
The forgotten,
Come to their end on this earth.
Yet, I am at the door.

I was at their side from the beginning,
To the death of my son,
To the fight of freedom,
To the First World War,
To the Second World War,
To numerous wars,
To numerous scandals,
To natural disasters,
And at the very end,
I will be at the door.

From as far as Indonesia,
To parts of Rome,
To the safari of Africa,
To the tragedies in New York,
I cradle the sick,
The wounded,
The desperate,
The faithful,
The confused,
And I willingly wait at the door.

When the great grandfather takes his last breath as he visualizes
4 generations follow the family business.
When the middle-age mother loses to cancer and can rely only on
Memories of her children playing on the backyard swings to comfort herself.
When the crack addict spent his last dollar to dispose of his
Pain and grief in a dark, dank alley.
When proud parents wipe away their tears for their first-born angel
Who is suffering mysteriously.

When a father has to explain to his children and wife that he may
Not come home in order to fight
The good fight against terrorism.
I will be there,
I will wait for you.
My children will soon be at peace
Oh ye with little faith,
Do not stop believing in me,
I know how and what you are
Feeling in your days of hell.
The day will come when
The door will open,
Trumpets will sound,
Angels will sing,
Glory, Glory,
Ye shall be redeemed.

I will bring justice to those at-fault
And reward the humble and righteous,
For I am your salvation and creator of humanity.
I feel your pain. I embrace you with my love,
And for those who have ignored me
Even to their last breath of mortal life, they
Shall regret refusing my love.
When you feel lost,
In doubt,
And alone,
Remember...
I am at the door.

Shantelle Harris



SH

SELF PORTRAIT

TORI MEYER



RELIEF PRINT OIL BASED INK

Mother's Rings

"An unhappy childhood is a writer's goldmine"
— Graham Greene

Will you marry me, Lori? My father asked.
It was 1949. *Yes Gib, I will but I need a ring.*
So they drove to the Twin Cities
where they'd met, introduced by Gib's cousin
at a Saturday night dance. *What a handsome
couple and so in love.* Lori chose
a modest diamond in 14 karat gold,
a slim band, diamond baguettes, size five.
Her delicate hands weren't made for milking.
Gib emptied his wallet, \$50.00 from bailing hay.
He saved her from a life on a farm.
It wasn't enough. *We'll make payments*
they told the jeweler.
They moved to the Windy City,
bought time with an empty purse.
Between eviction notices
they raised five children.
Gib worked three jobs.
It wasn't enough.
The Chevy was repossessed.
Broke and bankrupt,
they broke down,
were kind enough to take turns—
shock treatments schiophrenia mania
psychotropic drugs depression violence
all order was gone.
Lori filed a restraining order.
Revolving red and blue light
Chicago's finest at the front door.

Thirty-five years after the divorce
sorting through boxes
from my sister's attic,
we find my mother's wedding rings.
I turn the gold bands
thin from wear, around my finger.
I mine the gold of my youth.

Diane Larson

SOUTH CAMPUS WRITING CONTEST WINNER



[Handwritten signature]

Geisha

Painted face.
Silk black hair.
Similar eyes reflect,
shimmering light.
Those two red blooded
from which a nightingale's,
Song flow.
Framed in soft.
Covered in silk.
What lies beneath,
Is costly for those who,
Can pay the price.
All emotion masked,
Expressions are faint of reason.
Her beauty like cherry blossoms,
of the season, renewed each sun rise.
I love her, because I have paid
for her heart, and touch
Even for this moment,
I am billed for each stroke.

Donville Reynolds

Perfect Perfect Night

The full moon glows on a navy blue night
Its light reflects off a rippling lake's water
Resting on a rock, a heron cleans his wings
As the fish swim calmly below the surface
Crickets chirp their love songs
And the grass is cold and wet
The night completes our triangles of love
When you and I kiss
On this perfect night
The world has frozen and only we can move
I cannot smell the air
I only smell your skin, your breath, your hair
I would not, could not dare
To try to find what could compare
For you are Venus
I am merely Bacchus, drunken and perverse
Stumbling with fate to fall upon your feet
I kiss your divine toes
I'm enslaved to your majestic ankles
The owls holler hoots
What they are saying to us is "yes"
The earth is so correct
Us being here is right
We have made this perfect perfect night
Our spirits are copulating
Inoculating our hearts from harm
The moon shines on the goosebumps on your arm
And the hairs that stand on end
Are saluting us and what we have
The moon shines jealousy alone on two lovers
The stars will never meet her for a moment
The rock becomes vacant as the heron flies away
And the fish keep calmly swimming unaffected
The crickets chirp their love songs
The owls sing along
As you and I remain kissing
On this perfect perfect night

Mark Steven Burd



August Wind

Where are you, the wind?
May I hold you a little while?
then and there,
you are nowhere.

Where are you, the wind?
May I hold you a little while?
Oh, I miss you so...
then and there,
you must be somewhere.

Where are you, the wind?
then and there,
Oh, you blow up my hair
whisper into my ears

then and there,
I try to catch you in my small hands.
Oh, you kiss my mind
cool off my sweaty face.

Tonight
comes the full moon
then and there.
I am all alone
holding...to
The August wind.

Friday, Aug. 19, 2005

Kim Nguyen Gewin

TREE OF DEATH

Black and White Photograph



Johnny Louis



Johnny Louis

LEAVING FRANKLIN

Katherine Foley

I reached towards the earth and swatted away the blades tickling my ankles. My bare feet sinking into the grass, I plopped down absorbed by the huge sponge. Laying back I closed my eyes and listened to the crickets singing their ode to nightfall. The tidal wave of grass swayed over my body, swishing back and forth. It hadn't been cut all summer and it gave the neighbors reason to complain, but I loved the lengthy comforting blades and hated that summer was coming to an end.

No more than 15 feet away my house proudly stood. Built in the early 1900s on civil war territory it has watched me grow from summer to summer, baby girl to young woman. Seventeen years of nurturing the house stored memories and harbored resentments.

My father came from generations of Tennesseans. He was born and raised in Nashville and at some point moved to the nearby town of Franklin where he met my mother who was visiting from Venezuela on a foreign student exchange program. Her and my father fell in love and she never returned home. She said my father was enough family for her.

I was born in Franklin and raised mostly in Atlanta, Georgia where we moved after my mother passed away. Every summer we'd return to my father's homeland. It didn't take long to become my homeland, though only a few short months were spent there every year.

Everything about Franklin enticed me. I knew every inch of our home and land. The creak of the hardwood floor, the charm of the crystal chandeliers, the smell of the threat of rain, and the endangered dirt roads were nothing new to me and excited me. But I would leave soon, not return to Atlanta. I wasn't much for the city. I would leave Franklin behind too, clenching to memories by the fistful. I'd head west.

I enjoyed the summer eve that awaited the day to come. I said goodbye to the crickets and grass and prepared my goodbyes to my childhood sanctuary. I dwelled in my nature-made haven interrupted by the screen door of our house opening, an unmistakable creak in need of oil. "Mary!" a woman's Southern drawl called out.

Her high-pitched voice rose to a holler "Mary! Damn it! Get in here girl!" I sighed and lay still in the waves of grass.

My stepmother was a young southern woman from Georgia. I don't know that she loved my father, but she took care of him. Time had taken its toll on my father and though she didn't like me much I was glad she took care of him. Haila was ready for me to move out the day she moved in. At seven-years-old I was the mirror of my mother. My black hair, dark eyes, and brown skin were all from her; I only inherited my father's height. Haila resented that my father saw my mother every time he looked at me. She refused to call me Maria, my mother's name, and insisted Mary was more appropriate. My father married her the year after my mother died, the year we moved to Georgia. My mother had died giving birth to my baby sister who didn't survive. The same house that watched my family grow watched it fall apart.

The screen door flung open again and I could hear Haila stumbling around the porch. "Girl, get in here!" Her tongue tripped over her words. "One more night," I reminded myself under my breath. "Comin' Haila! Just makin' sure the gate's locked," I shouted back in the most sugarcoated voice I could muster up. "Well, hurry up!" Haila screeched back. The screen door shut and I could hear her drudge up the stairs and I knew she was done with me for the night. I scuffled home. I ran my finger tips over the stray wheat that had drifted away from the nearby crops and made our back yard their temporary home. I approached our old wooden porch, built by my ancestors. I had spent endless summers sitting on the porch watching the towering wheat fields being demolished by my father's many workers. They would hack down the wheat and prepare it for milling and distribution. Though I had seen this process several times I was always amazed how tall the wheat had grown by the following summer. I stopped and looked at the peaceful night. The tall grass continued to sway, waving goodbye, as if it knew it would soon be cut. I would always carry Franklin with me. I entered my home and shut the door behind me.

SOLITUDE



Black and White Infrared

Cynthia Grunder Malaney



[Handwritten signature]

THE ALBINO KING

Deirdre Frampton

The battle continued on even though I was no longer a true part of it. I kept my eyes closed, not waiting to see our defeat. The pain that I had kept at bay flew to the front of my mind and all I could think of was the fact that every part of my body screamed in agony. The slash of the sword of the last Lally warrior I had been fighting burned my right arm. I could feel my blood leaving my body. Yet – yet it was not a life threatening wound. What had me here, lying face down on the ground while my warriors, my friends fought on was the fact that I had to rally my people! A thousand years of waiting could not end in defeat!

My body fought my spirit as I began to force myself to a kneeling position. The muscles in my arms and legs quivered from the movement. I hated the weakness in them. “Birthright! You are fighting for your BIRTHRIGHT!” The words were forced from my blood stained lips. I knew that I was covered in blood that I had spilled. I raised my left hand, my sword hand, I still had my sword. I did not lose it in the fall, clinging to it was my only way back to the path for which I was bred.

I could hear the battle roaring above me, the clash of swords, metal upon metal, the screams of men as they destroyed each other. Why! Why did the Lally so violently defend what was rightfully mine and my people? A thousand years they have kept it from us, but now, finally, was the time for retribution. “Focus, I must focus, find a way out.” I inhaled, filled my lungs with the air around me and looked at surrounding for the first time.

The cave into which I fell was completely without light except for the haze of blue to my left. I focused my senses and forced my legs to respond as I walked to the source of the blue light. It seemed to my mind that I had only walked a few yards, my body knew that it was a lot more

distance, but here it was right before me, finally – my birthright!

I looked down on the small amount of the blue liquid substance that rested in an indentation on a rock no bigger than a drinking bowl. I could feel the energy emanating from the liquid, pushing away every living thing, preventing anything from coming too close, except me. This was why it took a thousand years of selective breeding to arrive at me, the albino King of the Pel people, Drinker of the Sacred Water, Bringer of Power and Peace.

I knelt, placed my lips upon the stone bowl and drank. My skin raised, if I had any hair they would be standing straight, but that too was why I took so long to come. The Drinker of the Sacred Water had to be albino and hairless to withstand the energy of the Water.

I felt the liquid racing throughout my body changing everything! Oh! The power! It raised me off the floor, lightening bolts shot from hands and feet. I shone like a million stars. My wounds healed themselves, my muscles strengthened a thousand times over. I lifted my right hand, twisting and turning it and saw that lightening shot out from my finger tips burning the walls of the cave making the rock red hot. All I could feel was the endless supply of energy within me surging to be free.

As I floated upon the lightening bolts that escaped from my feet, I realized why the Lallies fought so hard to keep me from finding the sacred Water. As I became more and more one with the power I had consumed, I realized that, I, beyond any other man was holder of life or death to all, no other held this kind of power, no other could; I had drunk all of the Sacred Water. I was no longer King of the Pel, I was a god!

I wondered as I moved back towards the battle that was no longer war at all, who was I going to be, Enslaver or Peace Bringer?

Raisins in the sun

Grapes withered by time
Blistering intense heat
Raisin's its creation
Waterless passionate bursts of flavor

Blistering intense heat
Dry dusty sky
Waterless passionate bursts of flavor
Lying helpless in channels

Dry dusty sky
Once green and moist
Lying helpless in channels
Now black and parched

Once green and moist
Forgotten forever
Now black and parched
Moisture a necessity of the past

Forgotten forever
Raisin's its creation
Moisture a necessity of the past
Grapes withered by time

Steve Naim



Steve Naim

How to Make Soup

"Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon"

— *The Dalai Lama*

First, be in the mood to chop, coarse or fine
According to desire stored up—
Gather plenty of onions and garlic, cutting board
a knife. Peel and dice, don't rub your eyes.
Food that matures underground knows strength and release.

Find a heavy-bottomed pot, lightly coat
with oil, pre-heat over medium flame.
Stir and sauté these pungent edible bulbs
with wooden spoon, gently
until light passes through them.

Cut up. Add to the mix, young green zucchini
delicate yellow crook neck squash
selected from the corner stand
to honor the essence of summer.

Have ready purple cabbage, orange carrots
German kohlrabi or Mediterranean kale.
Choose Irish potatoes or broccoli florets
trimmed from the stalk, Spanish pimento peppers
Chinese pea pods, add, stir as mediator
between leaves and seeds, roots and flowers
a disparate convergence of culture
temperament and taste.

Fill the pot with water hot from the tea kettle--
stir, simmer, stay close, pull up a stool
breath in the steam, let the molecules nourish
add parsley or basil, oregano or chili
black pepper or curry--pinch, pour
shake, dash, turn off the heat, it's done.

Good soup is like good sex--lots of
simmering and sweat. Ladle a bowl for the cook,
another for the cook's beloved, who says,
"Finally, you let me belong to you."

Diane Larson

IN THE YELLOW WATER



Photography

Adriana Uribe



La Mujer...

La mujer salió de la Costilla del hombre...
No de los pies para ser pisoteada,
Ni de la cabeza para ser superior,
Sino del lado para ser igual...
Debajo del brazo para ser protegida
Y al lado del corazón para ser Amada...
No hagas llorar a una mujer...
Porque Dios cuenta sus lágrimas

Nixzaliz Vargas

Calle El Libertador

Las calles gritan por su libertad,
Y los vagabundos pasean encadenados,
Rogando a los que pasan por dinero.
Los transvestís maquillados,
Anticipan la noche desconocida.
Y los borrachos fastidian a las putas por servicio sin pagar.
Carros corren a los semáforos rojos,
Sabiendo el peligro que lleva la noche,
Y los pecados que ofrece el Libertador.

Katherine Foley

UNTAMED WARRIOR

(A subtle war of unspoken voices)

Cynthia Sirianni

Maiara's¹ blood flows thick with the mystery of her ancestry. On her mother's side, her grandmother was a Paraguayan Guarani-speaking Indian. Her grandfather was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Polish immigrant. On her father's side, the past is unknown, except for the Italian and Portuguese surnames and a seldom-told story about being descendants of a captive Tupi Indian girl.

Her father's mother told the family that this Indian woman was caged and tamed, then later married to her great-grandfather. Maiara had always found the retelling of this story offensive, as if the young Indian girl were no more than an animal to be tamed; as if their true ancestor was the man who married her. *Is it racism, that some children and ancestors are hidden in the culture, not spoken of directly, but made to feel obvious and less worthy for their obviousness?* Of course it is, but no one would talk about it. Her Indian grandmother herself was shameful of her heritage and never spoke of the family's past to her children.

Mamelucos, mesticos, and a more degenerative adjective, *bugre* were used to refer to Indian descendants. Around town, parents would proudly show off their children's skin color, if

lighter than the others in the family. The ones with darker skin would go to the Brazilian beaches, disguising the color with an even darker tan—typical of a prolonged expensive vacation.

But of them all, Maiara is the darkest one, with her long, straight, jet-black hair, stern but wild gaze, and deep black innocent eyes. Many of her features are European, but the aura around her screams "Indian." She was always very conscious of it, but always felt strangely comfortable with it, too. She has heard and seen rejection from birth; and while some would think that these insults would hurt her, such words themselves made her stronger. It is as if the very blood that is in her veins has a power of its own that always drives her to fight for what she thinks is right.

The more she saw and understood that prejudice, the more she wanted to defend her Indian genes. This is why Maiara today says to others, "I'm Indian," with so much pride. This pride is her weapon in this war. Sometimes she thinks she can feel, in her thick and thriving blood, those two women uniting their hands, and proudly calling forth all her ancestors to watch the free-spirited warrior they have made.

¹ Woman of wisdom, the wise woman, in Tupi.



EMOTIONS

LAUREN VELAZQUEZ



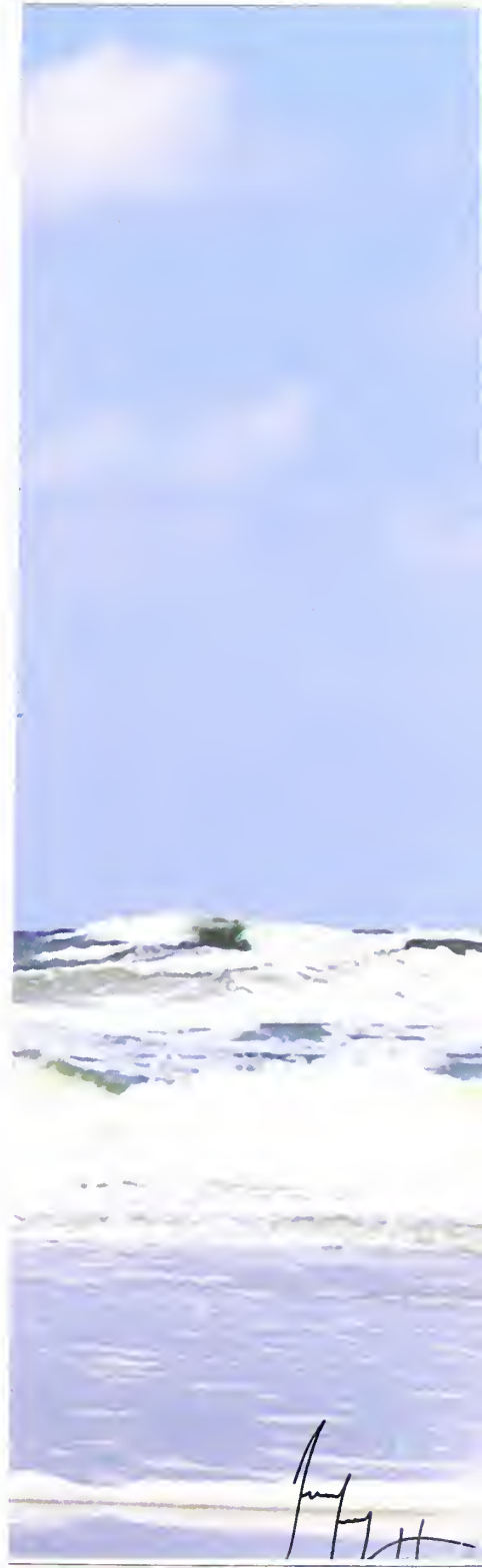
WATERCOLOR WITH PEN
AND INK

"GLAVA MAN"

MOHSIN RIZZI



LINOLIUM PRINT



My Angry Anti-Somatic Newsletter

Is it me, am I the only one who can take those bi-focal rims off and see?
The devastation is obvious in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.
So is the procrastination of the federal governments' restoration movement.
Bush had to have been preoccupied hosting a tea party with Saddam,
 You know?
Chatting over the rising prices of crude oil

He must have been in a meeting with the governor of Massachusetts
To discuss a new phase of action that would allow newly-wed men,
 To have children 'A' sexually
Bush must have been too busy polishing his platinum putters,
 To turn on the television and watch black people dying in the street

Some grounded six feet under, not just from Katrina, but
 From hunger, diseases, and not to mention heat strokes

FEMA shunned the reports that could have resulted in a quicker arrival.
Still in search of individuals to sue for fraud after Hurricane Ivan

A day late a dollar short
Somewhere along the line Louisiana wasn't included
 In the massacre of the Gulf Port
75% of the black population didn't have enough support.
I'm sorry Mr. Lawrence Dunbar,
African Americans don't wear the mask anymore, we simply hide behind it.
The aftermath of Katrina was a mere WAKE UP CALL

Now I don't mean to offend, I'm simply speaking from within.
If I step on some toes, or bruise some hearts,
 That is just my way of getting your attention.
I'm sure you realize the words I speak aren't quotes
 From a Robert Frost digest
Hell, T.S. Elliot read this and called me a hypocritical nut.
And Edgar A. Poe stated, "It's a work of genius."

He even gave me a neat idea for a title.
"My Angry Anti-Somatic Newsletter:" dedicated to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Elisha F. Thompson

War of the Proud

Fight your war away from us who don't care for politix
Who couldn't give a damn about your righteous governments
Who want a life free of fearing national attack
Afraid of having bombs and missiles pointing at our backs
Leave all of us who don't care what you're fighting for
Leave all the families who have lost their children to your war
Leave all of us who don't care why you all disagree
So you can then put our lives in direct jeopardy.
Everyone has their own war, we don't need to have yours
Sometimes it's hard enough to take what life endures
You fight your stupid war for money, power, land, and pride
And build your national treasury on the thousands who have died.
People of the world will suffer while you fight for dollar bills
Sitting on your mountains while we fight on the hills
We don't need no more troubles, We don't need no more pain
Each man has his struggles, Each man has his gains.
We are all here together, We should all get along
No one person's better, No one person's wrong
Fight your war away from us who never wanted war
Have your little battle on someone else's shore
Destroy your little planes, Sink your little boats
Destroy the land of everything and make sure nothing floats
Have your war and let the dust settle down worldwide
So you can have your dirty money, power, land and pride.

Ryobi Castellanos



[Handwritten signature]

P'AN KU POSSE



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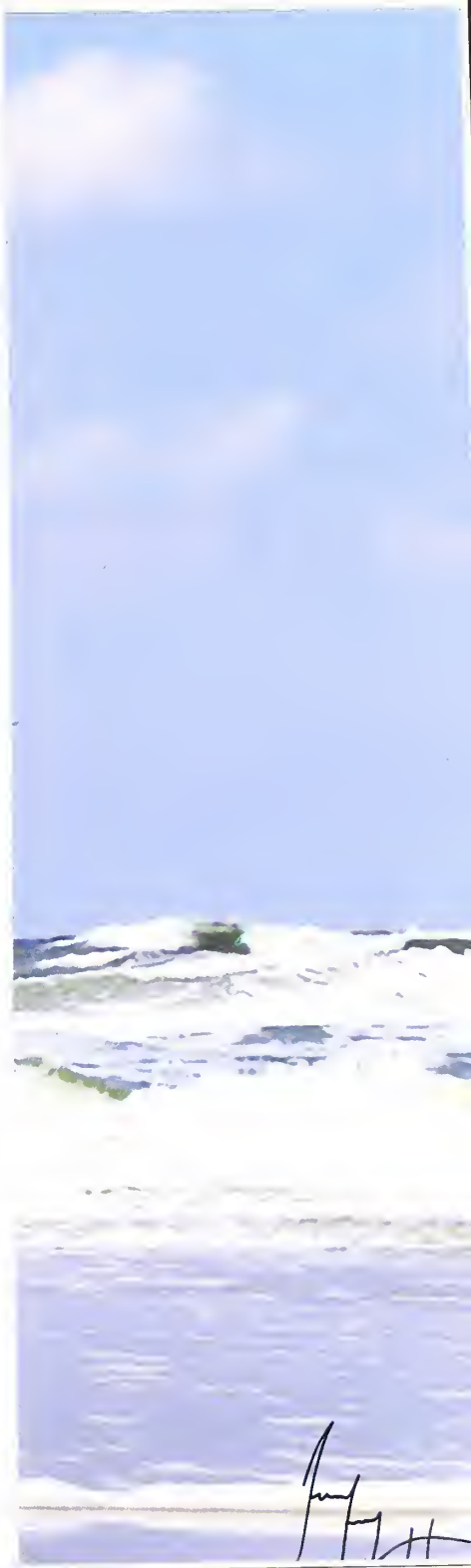


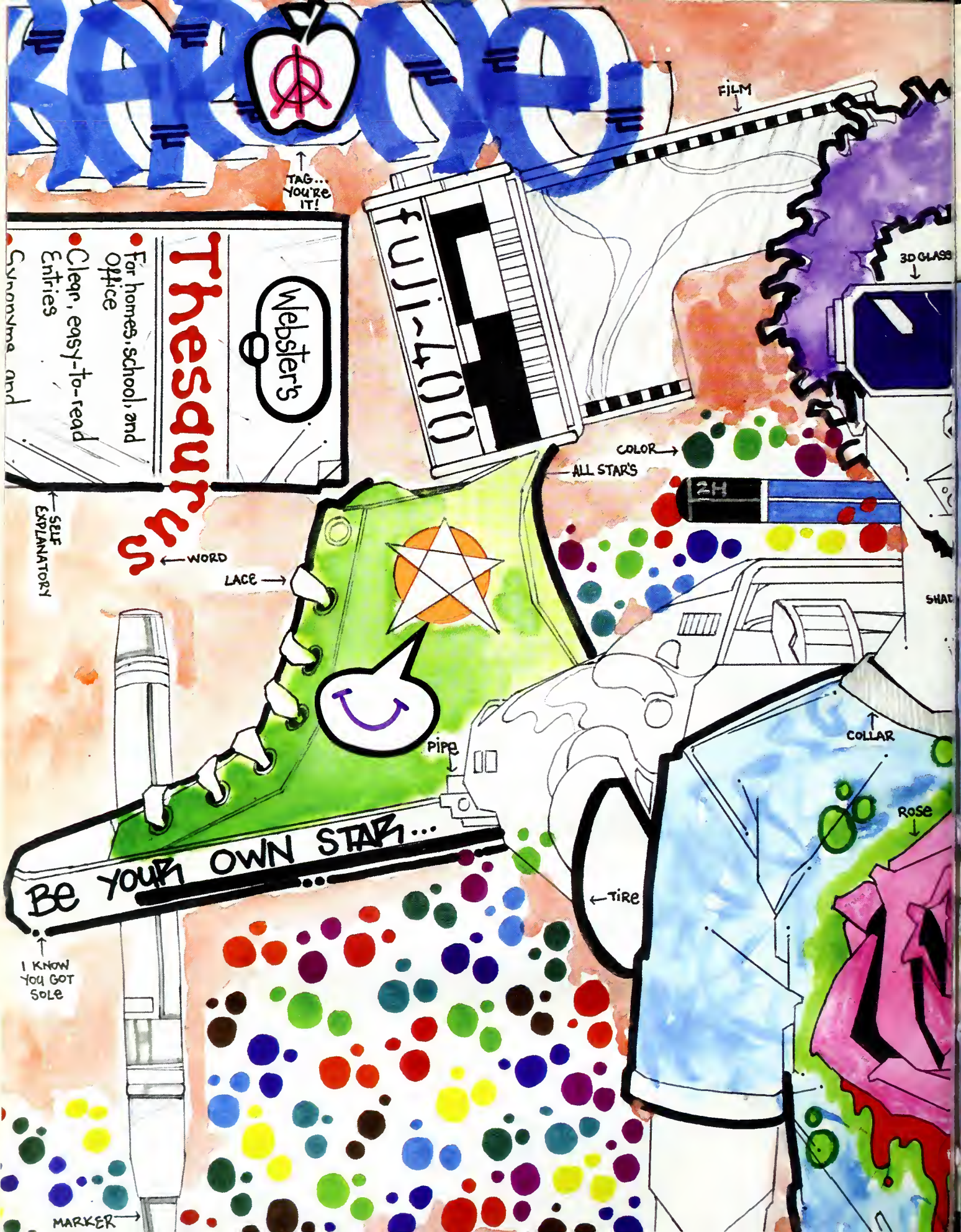
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WANTED
BY ORDER OF SHERIFF ELLINGHAM





Webster's
Thesaurus
• For homes, school, and office
• Clear, easy-to-read entries
• Synonyms and

Fuji-L400

Be YOUR OWN STAR...

COLOR
ALL STARS

3D GLASS

SHAT

COLLAR

Rose

TIRE

I KNOW YOU GOT SOLE

MARKER

TAG... YOU'RE IT!

FILM

WORD

LACE

SELF EXPLANATORY

3



Jimmy H. H.





"MIMI"

JOHNNY LOUIS

P'AN KU

SPRING 2006 ISSUE

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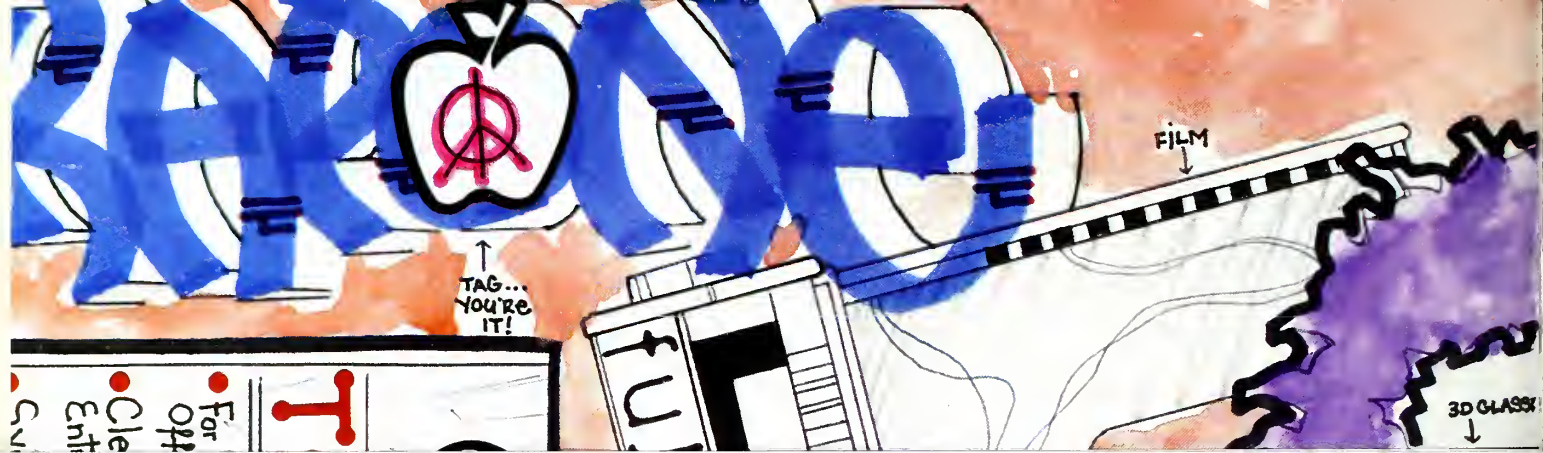
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The wRites of Spring Robert Meeker Memorial Writing Contest is funded by a grant from the BCC Foundation.

Cover

Man Looking Ahead	Johnny Louis	
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The Spirit of the Age (Food Poem for Gatsby)

ELGIN JUMPER

The table is set, a snack is served: cold chicken surplus
and two bottles of ale. Not the baked hams, pastry pigs,
and turkeys immersed in golden darkness that was served
to the partiers last night. Of course, this was way before

the marital discord. Candlelight flickers dark gray desires,
orange-yellow glow. She pleasure-seeker, bon vivant
wealthy, without a care in the world. She reminds him so
of Daisy Buchanan, radiant, with smooth epicurean airs,

amidst airs sophisticated. She's taken aback by how wet
her palate feels. Champagne bliss, as well, washes down
her mansion nights. Oh, they're food-obsessed, to be sure,
taste and ambience frolic within their hearts and they gaze

apprehensively into each others eye, beneath the chime
and spill of chandelier rain. She pours cool Mint Julep,
from an exquisite decanter, into a sparkling wine glass
no larger than a finger bowl. She savors rich decadent

moods, and thus laughs and plays in the sweet sounds
of splendor, or the yellow glint of moonlight on the window,
the lawn in deep blue beyond, or the dawn. And if Fitzgerald
were present he'd capture the spirit of the age just like that.

Autobiography

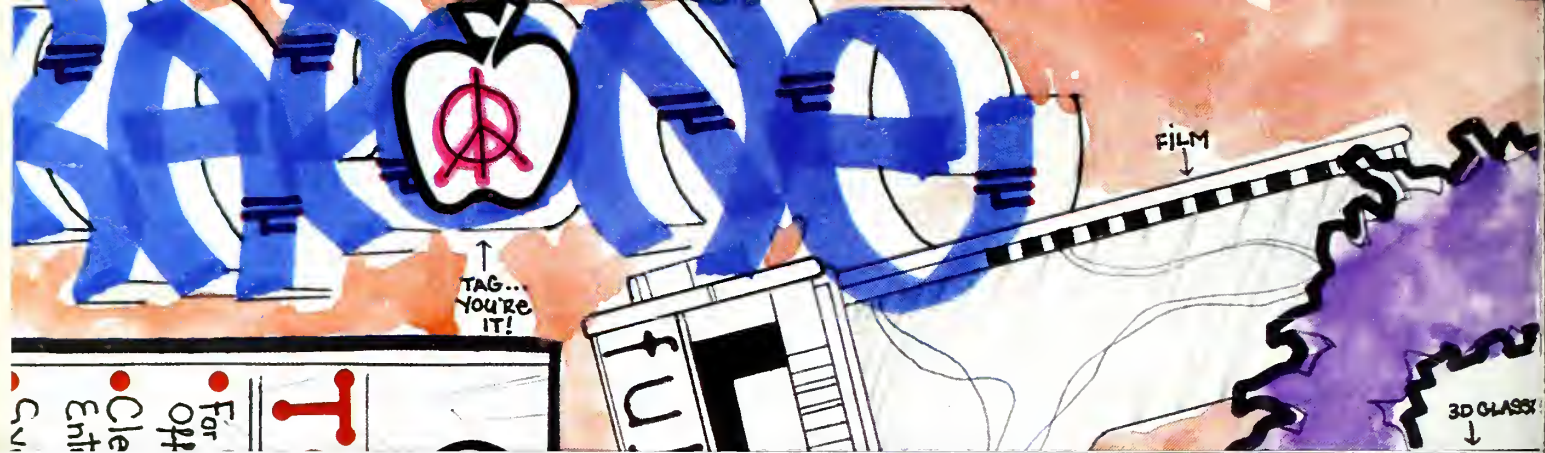
JANETT SERRANO

You could crush me
Like lapis lazuli
And Picasso's heart-
In his descent into blue

And that painting you so admire
The old man and his guitar
Strumming his way out of
loneliness-
Into oblivion

If I were that old man
And these words my notes
Would you admire my effort?

I would follow Stein
And write your autobiography
To include only me



Stairway

Cynthia Grunder Malaney



Ghost Phone

MICHELE-JESSICA FIEVRE

You'll find vinegar and fresh lemons in the fridge.

"Is that what we're having for breakfast?"

Ricardo was questioning the piece of paper on the kitchen counter. Jasmine could hear the bubbles of hunger bouncing against each other in his stomach. She rubbed her chin and raised her shoulders.

"No," she finally said. "I think that Aunt Edna means that we should prepare ourselves the frozen turkey that she bought last night..."

Ricardo opened the fridge with the hastiness of a stray dog searching a garbage can. No bread. No eggs. No fruits. The only things that actually abound in the fridge were green fungi and spoiled lettuces.

"Well, let's boil some water for the meat," Jasmine said.

"How difficult can it be?"

She believed that the ingredients mentioned in the note were to be used to clean the turkey. But was that before or after they broiled it? Ricardo looked in the cabinets for spices but all he found were empty cans of tomato soups. The water from the sink was lukewarm and yellow.

"You know what?" Ricardo said. "I have a few dollars. Let's get some French bread and cheese from the boutique down the street. I think Mom was crazy to leave us with Aunt Edna."

Jasmine agreed. The only thing in life that Aunt Edna really cared for was green and white with a purple lace. The plant was kept in the coarse sand and peat of a wine-colored pot that matched the deep red of the flowers on the long bendy stalks. Edna smiled at it, whispered to it, encouraged by its unpromising indifference. She would probably caress the waxy scales and the green veins of the carnivorous plant if it wasn't for the certitude that the Red Pitcher, repulsed by her passion, was only waiting patiently to trap and digest her fingertips.

The children would sometimes hear Aunt Edna talk to her *chéri* in the middle of the night. The Indian legend says that

to drink water from a pitcher-plant causes forgetfulness. That would explain why Aunt Edna often confused Jasmine with her mother Becky and asked her for piano lessons. Jasmine's mom was the music teacher. She never visited Edna and blamed it on the hideous plant. "I can't believe she put this evil creature on Grandpa's desk!" she would say.

The famous "desk" was a small straw table on the veranda. Grandpa, who had been the editor for a popular magazine in the 60s, would sit on the floor and write his articles at that table to gain inspiration from it. At that time, a straw table in Haiti was very chic and Grandpa had been honored to receive it from the President himself. Nothing remained of the magnificence of the piece of furniture. It was now covered with black spots and shared its existence with a predatory guest.

"I need some fresh air anyway," Jasmine said.

Their parents were on a trip in New York, so Jasmine and her brother Ricardo were spending the summer in the old family house with Aunt Edna. Ricardo was sixteen, only two years older than she was, but there was something about his glasses that made him look like a college student. In addition, Ricardo had a wonderful tan and was shaped like a football player.

On their way to the *Déli*, they passed a rundown house. Jasmine remembered stories that Grandpa used to tell her. There had been a terrible fire in the 80s. Two people had died that night. By the time the firefighters arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Louis-Jean had deeply inhaled the deadly wind of the flames. No trace of their daughter Lorraine. Rumor had it that a secret passage leading out of the house might have saved her life. It wasn't unusual for important political figures under Papa Doc's regime to build emergency escapes. But where was the young child? Twenty years later, the question remained.

Lorraine was a fading memory but the house, gray and wrinkled, still stood at the corner of Rue Wilson and Ruelle Lanasse. Its yard was a wild-plant bog, crammed with decayed

vegetation and drowned ants and moths. Only stray dogs and raccoons ventured in this place haunted by the rage of Tonton Macoutes.¹

The Déli was just across the street from the Louis-Jean house. They had just ordered two pâtés chinois when Ricardo pointed out an antique shop right in the corner. Jasmine was not especially interested in antiquities, but Ricardo promised he wouldn't take long.

When they entered the small store down Rue Wilson, they were greeted by a happy man with a long white beard. Mr. Lindor looked just like Santa. Only he was black and wore a gwayabèl shirt with abako jeans. A strange assortment of heteroclite objects

laid on high shelves or round tables. For some, they could be all junk, but for

others they were a Pharaoh's treasures. Old typewriters competed for space with porcelain vases, old-fashioned hats and vintage jewelry sets. Jasmine was intrigued by the collection of old figurines hanging on the walls.

Ricardo calmly perused the room. Suddenly, something drew his attention to the corner of the shop. This something was a very old candlestick phone with a number ten stamped in the rear of the lug holder. The boy stood open-mouthed. This phone... His grandpa's phone... What was it doing here? Ricardo touched the object with a shiver. It couldn't be. But it was. He recognized the stains of nail polish left by his Mom on the terminal cap years ago. He knew these teeth marks on the wire. They were his.

"I see you have good taste!" Mr. Lindor says. "The Western Electric 10 made its appearance in 1899. This model was used with a magneto."

"I know this phone," Ricardo whispered. "It was my grandpa's... I remember it perfectly."

"Well, I don't know. It has been in the shop forever. I don't even remember where it comes from."

Jasmine's heart was a stress ball in the hands of a nut-head.

She did not like the idea of getting something from the shop. She remembered all these stories that Grandpa used to tell her about lost objects. How they were to remain unfound so Larèndyab, a machiavellic spirit, would not get mad. Jasmine could picture her grandfather in his rocking chair made of wood and stray, in the backyard, under the flamboyant tree. Grandpa would light his pipe while the children shared kenèp and mango fransik and Grandma shelled the green beans. "Always pretend that Larèndyab has fooled you," Grandpa would say. "Otherwise, she will come after you..." But the phone had not been lost, had it? Grandpa had probably thrown it in the trash because it had stopped working.

Mr. Lindor looked just like Santa. Only he was black and wore a gwayabèl shirt with abako jeans.

"How do you know it's grandpa's?" Jasmine asked, looking closer at the phone.

"I would recognize it among hundreds of others," Ricardo answered. "Look at these stains! Look at these teeth marks! How much do you ask for it, Mr. Lindor?"

"To tell you the truth, Ricky, it's not for sale. I had almost forgotten its very existence! Just take it home, boy!"

"Oh, Really, Mr. Lindor? Thank you! Thank you so much!"

Once back home, Ricardo decided to install the phone in the room that he shares with Jasmine.

"If it works, great!" Jasmine said.

There was only one phone in the house and in order to talk to her boyfriend Maurice, Jasmine had to sit right next to the Red Pitcher, under the scrutiny of both the plant and her aunt Edna.

"Let's see," Ricardo said.

The connecting cord was broken but Ricardo was a handy man. There Dad was an electrical engineer for EDH and Ricardo often helped with outside jobs in the poor areas of Port-au-Prince.

"OK, we're gonna need some duct tape," Ricardo said.

He tried to explain to Jasmine something about the connectivity of the yellow filaments but after a few minutes, he

finally understood that she was not getting it.

It was eight at night when Ricardo finally gave up on trying to repair the phone. "Nothing," he said. The phone was useless.

"Let's look at the bright side," Jasmine suggested. "We get to keep it as our own souvenir of Granpa."

Ricardo could still not believe that this beautiful antiquity had been relinquished to the back of the shop down the street. What an abomination! It ought to be in a museum.

Aunt Edna was still out. The children were hungry once again but night time in Port-au-Prince wasn't safe. They microwaved popcorn and sat in front of the old TV set in the living room. That's So Raven was on. Raven and Cory Baxter were being chased by a lunatic babysitter.

"I can't believe we're stuck here for two weeks," Ricardo said with a sigh.

Suddenly, he felt as if he was being watched. The room was dauntingly dark and the Red Pitcher blended in the shadows.

"Do you hear that?" Jasmine asked.

"What?"

Ricardo turned off the TV. It was a ringing sound and it seemed to come from upstairs.

"A phone is ringing."

Instinctively, Jasmine grabbed Edna's receiver, next to her. The girl heard the dial tone.

"It's probably coming from the neighbor's house. There isn't any other phone in the house."

But the ring was growing louder. An alarm clock? No. It was definitely a phone. An old phone. Ricardo decided to go check their room. Jasmine followed him. She wasn't psyched by the idea of staying alone in the dark. They revealed their presence. The door of the bedroom was open and on the night table, the old phone was ringing.

"Hello?"

"You should come over," a voice said.

The whisper gave Ricardo the chills. He couldn't figure out the sex nor the age of the person on the phone.

"Who is this?"

"It's Lorraine. Is Ricardo there?"

"It's Ricardo."

It was a girl. Most likely a young child. She paused. "I did not recognize your voice. Are you coming?"

Jasmine had a puzzled look. Who was calling? Ricardo felt uncomfortable. The voice had a je-ne-sais-quoi that sounded like a threat. Was it some kind of joke? Was it a wrong number? Someone asking for Ricardo. What a coincidence!

"I think you have the wrong number," Ricardo said before he hung up.

"I see that your genius has resuscitated the phone," Jasmine observed.

But Ricardo's voice was thinner than a whisper.

"Look!" he said.

She followed his stare.

On the floor, a cord rolled like a snake. Disconnected. The phone wasn't even plugged.

"Remember the story of Larèndyab?" Ricardo asked.

Jasmine nodded. "You think that Larèndyab put that phone in the store?" she wondered.

That night, none of them fell asleep, waiting for the phone to ring. Aunt Edna came back at dawn. They could hear her talk to her plant.

The phone rang at 8 o'clock in the morning. Jasmine picked it up with trembling hands.

"Hello, Jasmine," the voice said. "Are you coming over?"

"Who's this?"

"It's Lorraine."

Jasmine's heart was bouncing against her chest.

"Where are you?" Jasmine asked.

"Home. You know where I live. You were right across the street yesterday. You did not come over to say hi."

Jasmine grabbed the whole phone and pressed it against her

*The whisper gave Ricardo the chills.
He couldn't figure out the sex nor
the age of the person on the phone.*

heart like a precious baby. She pulled the cord to make sure that the phone was in fact haunted. You were right across the street yesterday. Jasmine thought about the girl who had disappeared years ago. Her name was Lorraine.

"Are you coming?" the voice said again.

Jasmine hung up. A knock on the door startled her. It was Aunt Edna.

"What are you doing, children?"

She stopped. Her eyes became bigger than bowling balls and, for half a second, Jasmine thought that her aunt was having a heart attack.

"Where did you find this?"

"At the thrift shop," Jasmine explained.

"Throw it out of the house," Edna cried. "Are you out of your mind? It belongs to Larèndyab!"

She grabbed the phone and threw it off the window. They heard a bang as the phone landed on the sidewalk.

"We used to own this phone," Aunt Edna said. "But it was never really ours..."

She explained that the machine had been originally bought in France by Emmanuel Louis-Jean, a wealthy politician under Duvalier Regime. When the phone stopped working, Emmanuel sent it to a repair shop. The owner of the repair shop lost it. In the meantime, Emmanuel died in a fire. The owner's wife later found the phone and sold it to my father. But the phone already belonged to Larèndyab. It was cursed. Their grandfather soon realized that and brought it back to the shop.

"We are cursed," Edna lamented. "Larèndyab will not forgive this family twice."

They felt as if they were being watched. Something intangible was growing in the room. A feeling that changed their legs into rubber. They heard her coming up the stairs. Her steps stamped their hearts and drew their breath away. Edna wasn't sure what Larèndyab would look like this time, but she could easily imagine her with waxy scales and green veins. They would be trapped like mosquitoes. They would take months to be digested.

Nonsense

AMANDA GORDON

Let's rhyme nonsense
Let's word play
Let's gallop and fritter our hours away
Let's walk on the ceiling
Let's fall up the stairs
Let's pretend that we haven't no worries nor cares
Let's reverse all the street signs
Let's steal all the left shoes
Let's march pencils to Denver and align them in queues
Let's be irrational
Let's act insane
Let's ignore all the questions and refuse to explain
Let's dress like pink poodles
Let's roar like a bird
Let's tell all the ridiculous stories we've heard
Let's act like puppies
Let's chase squirrels in the park
Let's run around in a circle and bark
Let's end this poem
Let's sing a song
Let's laugh and be happy all the day long.

Hombres y Zapatos

TAHIZ MALU

Such a high variety.
Vintage, stylish, sophisticated and hip,
Supportive, unsupportive,
Athletic, disposable,
And of course the cheap ones that don't last.

The ones you must have,
And the ones you live without.

The
oh
oh
oh
so
long
shafted
and the
short and stubby

Searching for the perfect ones,
To toss them when worn out.

High Heels

Cynthia Grunder Malaney



The Search for the One-Armed Stripper: A Love Story

DARREN COHEN

*Small Change got rained on, with his own .38
and nobody flinched down by the arcade...*
—Tom Waits

"I heard they have to put a mattress off to the left of the stage, because sometimes she tries to swing around the pole from the wrong side," said Happy.

I was just doin' a line and wanted to laugh at that, but the thought of how pissed everyone would be if I blew our night all over the back of the limo kept me under control. I had just gotten three pens from E.Z., and we were just finishin' up the second one. He sold coke packed in ballpoint pens. It made the stuff harder to find if you were searched, I guess. It was also really easy to take a hit on the go—and when you were coked up, you were always on the go. E.Z. was proud of the fact that you could still write with his pens, 'cause he always left a little piece of the ink tube at the point.

Hap had just won a grand playin' the poker machines at Zippy's Bar & Grill, the place where I poured drinks, and we had a tradition. Whenever one of us hit big we got a limo and some blow. But this time for some reason he wanted to take half my regulars along for the ride. He was stringin' em along with this crazy story about the love of his life, some stripper. For the past month he had been talking about this mythical stripper—I'm pretty sure he made it up—that he met one night while out tweakin' balls. He'd been up for three days. The only details he could remember were that he fell head-over-ass in love in one of the sleaziest dives he had ever been in—and that's sayin' a lot. So now he had about eight of us cruisin' all the nastiest titty bars lookin' for this stripper with the "handicapped accessible" pole.

"Life is o-o-one big party." That was Hap's catch phrase. He'd say it when he was flyin' high, but mostly he'd say it when he was miserable. And then he always shrugged and put his hands out to his sides, palms up in a what-can-you-do gesture. I

wondered, not for the first time, what his real name was. I don't think any of us knew, and for some reason, I never asked. Vegas is so transient; you keep even your best friends at arm's length. Nothing lasts.

He kind of looked like crap tonight and I wondered how long he had been going before he showed up at the bar earlier.

I remember one time Hap was at the bar and we were doin' shots. Me mixin' us all kinds of crazy drinks, sometimes makin' 'em up as we went along. He wanted me to make him a Flaming Dr. Pepper and so I did.

"Lemme light it, lemme light it," he said, and me so drunk it never occurred to me that maybe this wasn't such a hot idea. But I handed him the lighter and watched as he lit the shot, his hands shakin' the whole time. It took forever. He gets the 151 lit and carefully lifts it up with his right hand, puts it over the glass of beer, and drops it in. The he grabs the beer with his left hand and starts chuggin', his right hand up in the air like a magician that just pulled a rabbit out of his ass. He musta spilled the 151 'cause I see that his right hand is in *flames* and he doesn't even know it, he's still chuggin' away. There's a moment of panic and I try to warn him, but then the image of him just sittin' there oblivious while he chugs his beer like some drunk-ass Statue of Liberty gets me, and I bust out laughin'. I'm actually tryin' to warn him while I'm literally doubled over laughin', but I can't speak. I'm feelin' bad about not bein' able to tell him, but at the same time, I just can't stop laughin'. Then he musta felt it or seen it 'cause he's wavin' his hand around and tryin' to put it out. I forget how he finally got it out; maybe he poured beer on it or sat on it. I apologized and told him I tried to warn him but I just couldn't get any words out. He was pretty pissed 'cause he's a masseur and he needs his hands for work, but he wasn't hurt that bad anyway and he soon forgot about it. His hands are strong and no one can beat him at arm wrestlin'.

I think it was the fifth or sixth titty bar of the night. I can't

remember. Chelsea was looking good, as usual. Her legs long, her hair red, her attitude impressive. She worked with me back at the bar and whenever she had a few drinks in her, she either got naked or talked other drunk girls into getting naked. The customers loved that! I used to love it, too, until we became friends. Now it kind of irritates me. I can't figure out if I'm jealous or just protective. Either way, I don't like it.

What I mean about attitude is like this: One time me and her were cruisin' in her car and we were all drunk. We were dressed to impress, her in a sexy red silk dress with lots of lace and me in a black suit. We looked pretty damn good if I say so myself. "Wanna do some whippits?" she asked.

"Sure."

So we went to a nearby supermarket and bought a bunch of cans of whipped cream. Then we went back to the car and hit those cans until they were done, giggling like idiots the whole time. She picked one up and sprayed me with it and the next thing I know we're both covered in flat whipped cream.

"Let's go get some more," she said. So we go back to the place we just left, dressed to the nines and covered in cream and laughing our asses off and the cashier thinking we're nuts. We bought all the whipped cream they had and went back to the car.

Round two. Then she says, "Let's got get some birthday balloons and do them."

"That's just helium," I say, laughing. "That won't get us high." But when Chelsea gets an idea in her head there's no denyin' her will. So back in we went. We go to where they keep all the birthday cards and balloons and stuff, and we ask for 30 balloons. Some lady fills them all with helium while Chelsea laughs and jokes with her. That's one thing about Chelsea. She loves to talk to people, and she always knows everyone's name. I mean we could go to some diner somewhere for breakfast, and chances are she knows the waitress' name and the names of her kids. Unusual around here. No one ever seems to ask her about herself, though. She always keep them talking about themselves, and you can tell they love the attention. *Starved* for it.

So we go back to her car, *again*, and the balloons wouldn't all fit so we had to set most of 'em free. They left Vegas goin' straight

up, never lookin' back. So we're sittin' here in her car, and we can't even see out the windows cause of all the balloons, but she drives slowly around to the back of the store, tryin' to peek out around all the balloons. She's afraid the cops will notice us sittin' there in a carload of balloons all drunk. We park in the back. We each grab a balloon and start huffin' on it. Then we start talking in these high-pitched munchkin voices and laughin' like morons.

In the titty bar, Ole Blue Eyes was comin' from the juke, singin' My Way. Chelsea was sayin' how Sinatra hated Sid Vicious' version of the song, and how can he sing a song about being a nonconformist, and then hate Sid's radical version so much?

"Hypocrite," I said, because I think it was expected of me. Then me and Chelsea went in to the men's room to do a bump, and that's when we found Happy. He was sittin' on the floor propped up in the corner, and I knew right away he was dead. Not passed out. Dead. He had his hand over his heart and I could see there was a bag clutched in his fingers. Maybe not his first love, but it was his last love. I wondered if he had any family. We both looked at him for a few minutes, not sayin' anything. Then we turned around and walked out. Fast.

I told the others to take the limo and go home. No one asked where Hap was. Me and Chelsea walked back to Zippy's to get our cars. The sun was out, and it was brutal. No windows and no clocks in Vegas clubs. Wouldn't want the marks to know what time it was—they might go home!

There were some people setting up tables in the parking lot at Zippy's. They were always around somewhere, these guys, always tryin' to get signatures for some cause or other. This time it was smaller classrooms and educating kids about the dangers of drugs or some shit. I fished around in my pocket for that last pen, took the clipboard from the dude, and me and Chelsea signed in. Then I stuck the pen under the clip, and we went to our car doors.

I decided to break some unspoken rule. We were standing at our car doors talkin' over the roof. I fidgeted with my keys.

"Where are you from?" I asked her. Her eyes were all red and wet from crying. She smiled, and then she began to tell me about her hometown.

Insomnia journal: Midnight Shield

TODD GREGG

Tired eyes, tired mind, and horrid thoughts.
The body urges me toward slumber,
even begs for it.
Such incessant begging is defeated by the mind.
Thoughts are restless and unabating.
They circle around in painful progression.
A single thought, a single glimpse at anything
brings my mind into a spiral of remembrance.
The memories are not of pleasure.

The television pulsates with colors and sounds,
keeping the thoughts at bay.
The computer being diligently typed upon,
tucks them away.
The escape gained by these vices is absolute and unyielding.
They are like a phalanx shield, thick and un-breaking.

nightsong

KARLA YVETTE

these nights end arbitrarily.
as if someone has allotted a window of time, displaced.
(a contortionist, in white, who hides against the clock face?)
we bend too—and fold.
our hands create a
strange juxtaposition, but our
goodnights escape this tangle.
weightless, they unhinge from
gravity and escape into the
atmosphere before they can be heard.

we sleep together but our dreams are divisible
into an unending arena of dimensions
that lack a unifying bridge.
my dreamgods offer actualization
(at the expense of suffering).
your dreamgods offer nothing.

i fear these dreams will overripen into madness,
because their experience cannot be mediated by intellect.
the nightsong of alienation is the nightsong
of the universe is the nightsong
of the infinite
in which we are alone
like particles of light
falling through an empty world.

Tempest Rose

KRYSTA NORONA

NORTH CAMPUS WRITES OF SPRING CONTEST WINNER

A young girl tentatively emerged pushing open the door of the public restroom. She did not look around; her eyes remained glued to the ground. Her face expressed all of the shame she felt. The rising heat tinged her cheeks a pale red, a slight burning sensation along her skin. She bent her legs inward but knew it was a vain attempt. Nothing would stop it. The monthly visitor had arrived.

Everything was virtually deserted with only a few pedestrians sparsely dotting the sidewalks. The streets were devoid of any passing vehicles. All of the surrounding homes had their windows boarded up with plywood or sealed with shutters. Patio furniture and other outdoor items that couldn't be tethered down were brought inside the houses. Everything had fallen into a hush since the passing of the storm. It had been only an hour since it came through. During its passing it had left behind it a trail of destruction. The sky that had been darkened with the storm was now numbed to a somber gray. Wetness hung thick in the air.

The cool atmosphere failed to abate the heat in her cheeks and she buried her face in her hands. This had not been the first time. She has had her period before. This fact only served to emphasize her shame. A high school freshman already and still she had slipped!

Ducking into the restroom seemed to be nothing more than a haven of false hope. She had no pad or tampon on her and the restroom had no toilet paper she could use so could not plug up the flow. To make things worse, she could not get the water to run. The plumbing, for one reason or another, had not been working. She couldn't even wash off her pants.

The girl knew it had to come, of course. But it was always unpredictable and seemed to come whenever it wanted. That, too, she knew was supposed to be normal. All of this she had heard from her mother a couple of years back, and learned in those sex education classes. But there was something to it, something

she failed to grasp. It was as if every girl who hit womanhood developed this sense that warned her before the dam broke every time. She must've been looking the other way when someone was handing them out.

*'I have the guts to be outdoors **right** after a storm, but I can't even handle my own period!'* The young girl thought bitterly.

She could remember being in school in one of her classes, sitting awkwardly off to the side in a corner of the room. While doing her work she spied a group of girls tightly knit together out of the corner of her eye barely speaking above whispers. She remembered watching them, staring at them longer than she probably should have been. At some point she noticed a faint look of surprise ripple over one of their faces. That one girl had slipped something discreetly into her tiny purse, got up, and left the room. A little while later that same girl had returned and rejoined her friends, continuing as though nothing had happened. The very picture of womanly poise and control.

There had been a burning resentment then. It was as if they were closing her off, shutting her out of their circle of knowledge. All of the answers she needed could most certainly be found with them. Surely they experienced their own periods and by then had found ways to effectively deal with it. They knew the feeling they needed to know. They knew all about that female sense.

The young girl could get nothing from this. Whatever that feeling was she was left to seek it out herself, stranded in the middle of an infinite nowhere. The others had sought their shelters. She was left to face the tumultuous storm raging around and inside of her alone.

She could not remember when she had started walking. Whenever it had been she was now moving, her feet pulling her away from the restroom. It took her a moment or so to realize that she was headed down the sidewalk towards her street. Going home might be a good idea; her family must've no doubt noticed her missing. They would become worried.

For some reason the girl remembered a conversation she had with her mother a year ago:

"I can't control it."

"Of course you can," her mother told her, rummaging through the cabinets in the kitchen, "It just takes a little time, that's all."

"I should have it by now. I've been having my period for a year already!"

"You need to be patient."

"I can't!" she flung her arms helplessly. "I can't! How many stained pants and close calls am I supposed to have?"

"Puberty isn't easy, I know. You'll just have to see it through, try to weather the storm."

"I've tried! It's like every time I think I'm doing all right there's this wind that knocks me down, or something. And every time I try to get back up I find myself right on the ground again. I can't do this!"

"You're going to have to face things worse than a little wind," her mother took her hands, "I can tell you what you should know but I can't make you understand that way. This is something you're going to have learn on your own."

Tears blurred the past image from her mind, burning her eyes. She used her sleeve to wipe them away, realizing a little too late that she could've used her sweater to cover the seat of her pants. She was so ashamed at this point that it did not seem to matter. Nothing could possibly bring her any lower.

Along the way the girl noticed a certain bush that pressed itself against the chain link fence. One she had seen many times before. It was a rosebush planted by one of her neighbors. She stopped next to it studying the array of red roses. To her disappointment she noticed that the storm had blown a great deal of them to shreds. Petals were strewn about the walkway, some floating in puddles. Before their demise they had been proudly erect flowers bursting with rich, saturated reds nestling in their emerald bed. Now their beauty, which had been too fragile to stand against the squall, was tattered.

But the storm had not taken all of them. There, resting in a far off corner of the bush, was a lone rose. It was an awkward

thing with an odd shape. One side of its bud was dented inward keeping it from being as fully round and open as the others. Its hue was not as deep. This rose seemed but a whisper of the color it should have been. There was nothing bold about it. Some may not even notice.

She remembered this one. A while back the girl remembered walking down this way before, her neighbor working on the bush. He had been pruning the plants. While passing she had taken notice of a tiny bud in the corner. It had not bloomed yet. Even in that stage it had been very small. The bud was a pale little ball that seemed buried beneath the splendor of the bush and other roses. She was lucky she had even noticed it. Her neighbor had seen her staring and, too, caught sight of it as though only for the first time. He had gathered the thing between his fingers and said, "This one will be a late bloomer."

It had blossomed wonderfully. No longer was it hidden under the layers of leaves. In her mind she imagined the process, saw it pushing past it all, revealing itself to the world. It had survived the transition and became something beautiful. And it had even persevered through the storm. The tempest winds had tested it, tried to blow it clean off. But it had failed. The pale rose had tiny tears in its petals, yes, but did not sport these as wounds. They seemed more like a badge of honor. It had stood against the power and chaos.

The tears still spilled from the girl's eyes but they did not seem so bitter now. A modest smile graced her face, brightening her expression. The embarrassment that had hung on her shoulders seemed to lighten and subtle warmth filled her.

She heard a voice and turned, seeing her brother and two sisters at the end of the walk. They had no doubt gone in search of her. They waved and motioned for her to follow. The young girl took one last look at the pale rose before going.

Maybe there was hope yet.

Strangling the Incubus

SARAH K. SMITH

NORTH CAMPUS WRITES OF SPRING CONTEST WINNER

if you come for me now,
beware. i am changed.

give your Tar-Baby a kiss.
every memory conjured, every
cobweb plucked into puppetry
will only trap you further.
everything you asked for,
curling your neck with the
piano wire of my convictions.
lungs fat with death,
ears filled with slammed doors,

will you know my laughter?
have you reckoned much
the price of manipulation?

if you come for me now,
beware. i am changed,

and waiting,
with everything you asked for.

The Interview

SIERRA LANE

I pay my tab with cash. My honey-brown hair falls around my face as I look down at my silver-banded watch that I bought to accent my olive-colored skin. One last glance at the time, and I think about my job interview in the morning. *Seven hours, before my chance at getting a real position.* I push off the hard wood barstool and head for the door. The smokiness of the bar is cloying, and I feel refreshed by the cool blast of crisp fresh air as I push the heavy door open. The darkness of the night is a distinct change from that of the bright orange city nights I'm used to. Not even the moon to light up the night, stars hidden behind foreboding clouds. I reach into my purse and grab a stick of mint gum.

A light rain begins to fall as I climb into my dark blue Honda Civic. The car still has that new car smell, and the plush leather seats I splurged on welcome my tired body. The drive out here to this part of Tennessee had been a long one from the comfort of my Indianapolis apartment, but the opportunity was too great to pass. *I might be in hickville, but I have to start somewhere.* My head feels a little fuzzy, but the ride to the motel is only ten or fifteen minutes, and I noticed on the drive here, the route is sparsely populated. Shifting Nelly into gear, I ease out and begin the trek to Polk Motel.

As I drive, I fumble with the radio stations. I search for something that isn't country. 97 Rock, out of Knoxville, was the one with just

the right song for my mood. Lynard Skynard's "Free Bird" was about halfway through, and my favorite part is the very end when the tempo gets faster and faster, so I listen with an eager ear. Tapping on the steering wheel, I move my head back and forth while making imitation guitar sounds with the music. The rain is starting to fall a little harder, but my buzz keeps my calm as I

drive.

Bap-bump-bam. My eyes focus forward as I grip tightly to the steering wheel. *What was that?* I ease on the brake, and bring my car to a skidding stop. I fiddle with the seat belt and door handle, struggling to get out of my car and see what I hit. *I hope it didn't do any damage. And I hope it's not a dog.*

It's not a dog. Or a cat. I see the shiny reflection of the blue and white rain slicker first. Blonde hair shouts out in its intensity, matted against a hidden face appears in the dark night. I don't see any blood. *Thank God.* I come closer and call out to her. She does not answer. I creep closer, feeling sick in the pit of my stomach.

"Hello? Are you okay? Hello?"

Shit. I crouch down next to her. She is enveloped by a citrusy smell. *Sunflowers. I hate that perfume.* I ask her again if she is okay. She still doesn't answer me. I reach through her knotted hair that is becoming more and more wet in the falling rain for her neck to try to feel a pulse. *She's alive.* I feel better knowing that I didn't kill her, but it's late, it's rainy, and I'm drunk. *She's alive, so I don't think I need to stick around.* She doesn't seem to be breathing all that well. I feel fear and guilt tug at me while I try to decide what to do. *Maybe I can just pull her over to the side of the road so no one else hits her.* I hate myself for even thinking such a callous

thing. Sweat begins to form on my rain-cooled skin. *Maybe I should bring her to a hospital. Wait, I don't know where any hospitals are.* I've

never even been here before today. I know where the motel is and The Daily Press, that's it. *I can't stay. If I stay, I'll get arrested.* I look her over again, inspecting her lean body once again for blood. Though I can't really see her face, her skin is smooth and has the appearance of milk and I think she's young. Realizing I've been standing there in the road over this young girl much longer than

I feel better knowing that I didn't kill her, but it's late, it's rainy, and I'm drunk.

I should, my mind clicks back to the task in front of me. *That's it, there's no blood. She'll be all right. I need to get out of here before someone sees me.* Getting up quickly I pull her off to the side of the road and lay her up on the embankment, so that she looks like she is leaning on the hill, rather than unconscious. I look around to see if there is any damage to my car or anything else that might connect me to the accident. *Accident. That's what this was. Just an accident.* My passenger side headlamp is cracked, but that's all I can see. I don't spy anything else on the slick road that shouldn't be there. I run back to my idling car, get in and jam it into gear. Fish tailing as I take off, my heart is pounding and my mind is racing. My palms are wet on the steering wheel, but I don't know if it is from the rain or from the panic within me.

I drive as fast as I can, but stare endlessly into the black, wet night ahead of me. I try to concentrate just on the rest of the drive until I spot the motel's marquee after what seemed like an eternity. Still shaking, I pull into the motel parking lot and park in the back under some trees. I turn off the engine and just sit there for a moment. *What did I just do?*

The walk from the car to the motel room is long. I feel sick in my stomach and wonder if my drinks are going to come back up. Thankful for the darkness of the early a.m., I hide in the shadows on my walk back to the room. The room has a faint antiseptic smell, like lemon Lysol, that turns my stomach even more. *What if I decided not to go out for a drink? Why couldn't there have been a closer bar?* The "whys" and "what ifs" start filling my head as I take off my wet clothes. *She's okay. She'll be fine.* I curl up on the sagging bed, unable to stop shaking. I try to get comfortable under the scratchy sheets before falling into a fitful sleep.

The alarm rang 7:30 a.m., the noise pounding in my head. For a moment, only thoughts of the interview fill my mind. Then I remember. The girl. I turn on the television for the local news and listen intently, wondering if there will be anything about it on

the newscast. *You're just being paranoid.* Twenty minutes pass, and the newscasters go from top stories to weather to sports, and I feel relieved. Chills leave me for the first time in hours. I take a hot shower, and start preparing for the job interview, confident that everything will be all right.

I arrive for my interview precisely at 9:00 a.m. The office building is old and musty smelling, but it's a smell I've grown to love. The dark-haired secretary greets me cheerfully and brings me right in. I shake hands with the man I hope to be my boss and we sit down. He is an older man, perhaps 58 or 60, but with a brilliant smile and eyes that seem full of warmth.

"Hello. I'm James Harris, President of this little operation."

He chuckles at his own joke, since his little company has no

The alarm rang 7:30 a.m., the noise pounding in my head. For a moment, only thoughts of the interview fill my mind. Then I remember.

less than fifty-some employees. Yet he tells me how he likes to have his hand in the hiring, rather than leaving it to a human

resources department. He explains how he started the company, where he wants it to go, and the kind of people he likes to have work for him. As he speaks, I look around his office and notice a small 13-inch television in the corner, set to the local T.V. news.

"You'll have my youngest daughter, Ella, working with you. She's immature and a bit undisciplined, but I'm sure a person with your experience can teach her responsibility."

I'm not sure if he has just made another joke or if he is serious, but either way, I'm up for it.

"You'll also be working with Francine, my niece. She is fresh out of college and hungry as a tiger. The two of them couldn't look more alike, but are worlds apart in work ethic."

About ten minutes into the interview, his secretary breaks in with an urgent telephone call for him.

"Excuse me, Miss. Everyone always thinks that their phone call is urgent." Mr. Harris says.

"Not at all, Mr. Harris. I understand. Would you like me to step out?"

"No, that won't be necessary. One moment, please," he says. He picks up the telephone and begins to talk. His jovial face falls. He looks pale, almost white, like the motel's sheets I slept on the night before.

"Honey, what is it? What? I can't understand you. Are you hurt? I'll be there soon."

He hangs up the phone, a grim look on his face.

"Is something wrong, Sir? Would you like me to come back at a more convenient time?"

"No, my daughter, Ella, the one I just told you about. She's crying uncontrollably. She says I have to come home now. I can't make anything out she's saying."

As he starts to say his good byes and tells me I have the job, I notice a breaking story on the television behind him. He isn't watching, and the volume's down, but one look at the scene and I know what they are talking about. The newscaster flashes a picture of a young girl, Francine Harris, on the screen and then cuts back to a police officer making a statement.

Thoughts of the accident come flooding back to me. Terror wells up inside me. My hands had started trembling, but I don't remember when. I try to get up from the chair, but I become light-headed. I grab the handles of the chair for support, hoping Mr. Harris has not noticed my demeanor. I feel my stomach twisting in knots and I feel like throwing up and shitting at the same time. Sweat starts to form on my head, and I still have been able to get my legs to coordinate with my brain and move me. Swaying, I slowly make it to the door. I know I have the job, but I no longer want it. My throat is dry and eyes are wide. I feel drugged as I continue down the hall toward the door. Every part of me wants to take off like an Olympic sprinter, but my legs will barely budge. I pass the secretary without looking at her and continue down the hall back to the parking lot. *I'm leaving. I have to go. I'm leaving before... before they find out it was me.* I'm looking at the ground as I walk across the lot until I am on top of my car. It's then that I see there is a lot more damage to my car than a broken headlamp. It's then I see the dent in the hood. And as I get closer, it's then that I can see blonde hair tangled in my windshield wipers.

Salad

SAMANTHA MERCADO

Along the wood
Board, I
Cut and slice
Dicing carrots with much
Ease.
Fine or thick the slices vary
Green and wet the lettuce is in, a
Handful of croutons.
I add
Just enough cheddar cheese, a little
Kale for variety
Large plumb tomatoes
Macadamia nuts too
Nuggets of chicken, but I don't
Overdo.
Palm in some pepper to
Quench my
Rare need for
Spice
Toss the salad
Until it's just right. Drizzle
Vinaigrette or a splash of
White vinegar will do
Xtra
Yummy with
Zesty Italian too

Broken Glass

Mark Anderson



rain

ALEX EISENHAUER

Well, it's raining again
oh, how you cascade and conquer
so simple, serene, and satisfying

crisp and refreshing
rejuvenating
repetition never despised

each drop that hits is like a
corresponding synaptic spark
in the brain

like a soft snare with constant rhythm
unexcited
but never loops or repeats

a wet reminder of our existence
a melody of moisture and colors
intensify, diversify

though the sky is grey
but who looks constantly upwards
until you arrive

the true sound of infinity
near and far

everfalling drops are like
granules of sand
falling in an hourglass
and we easily lose track of time
staring into the beyond

a shower for the spirit
you can stand outside, arms outspread
and truly feel clean throughout

smells enfragate
invigorate
of earth and flower and leaf

a smattering and splattering of crystals
purifying and clarifying
returning fertility to the world beneath

The Rain in Spain

C.A. CRAIN

On Thursday morning Summer came
and bleached the floors of my room in Madrid
The men set up their stalls of fruit
'neath the billowing trees and the cobblestoned red
Wayfaring dogs lay at the foot
where the sweet-skinned bushels of berries were put
And I, with coin and concession, down came
toward the heavy, soaked breezes of citron and 'cane

Two mangoes were purchased for fifty-a-piece
from the man with the face carved from bottle of gin
I sat at the Door of Alcala to dine
Sabatini adorned with fat pigeons and ink
While guitarras and ballads got lost in the wind
my teeth down did sink in the soft perfumed rind
and the flesh of the fruit in my fingernails fixed
Sweet Pomona, my darling, I thank thee for this!

Akai

Lauren Velazquez



Too Much to Drink

Chris Cutro



ghosts in earthly colors

KARLA PUMPIDO

i.
there is a sadness about you.
like the misery at the end of the block
that waits patiently, late into the night.

like the sadness of a woman whom
you had once believed redemptive
(despite acknowledging disillusion as inescapable).
the sadness of them-alone and wounded -
crumpled against your mexican tiles.

the same sadness behind our sunsets
in motel rooms, when we pressed our
bodies together attempting to
merge and merge.

the sadness of your memories
or the sadness of time itself, retiring rapidly.
when the two become indistinguishable.

the sadness of these poems,
folded up in your jacket pocket.

ii.
your claim as it was the years of drugs and drinks
and waifs with huge, euphoric eyes
that were breaking out of their
heads like downtown lights.

you claim they have left your brain
pale as a roman ruin.

still, i can hardly include you in that New York
miscellany of dark men and women.
junkies baying together on the sidewalk
and beautiful prostitutes in calico boots
a strange portrait of the dispossessed, the paranoid,
the true poets of a broken world.

i imagine you sitting at the bus station,
with a ticket home, though that was nowhere.
the lives of strangers lashing out -
quiet, generalized anxiety
like suppressed violence in a jailhouse.

years away
i wait for you to come staggering out of the night.
 (waiting)
while you crushed the streets of the country
ricocheting through america, from one end to the other
with a gram of heroin riding in your left pocket.
 (waiting)
while you read Bukowski in a jail cell in Connecticut,
learning that the sin was not as important as
the opportunity for redemption -
 but quickly unlearning that upon release.
 (you had never been a philosopher,
 but you had always been a junkie.)

iii.

you did appear eventually,
but barely -
with the same mad love that occurs only in mad people.

animal love that exists in the chest,
the stomach, and thighs, and that feels
like the beat of a drum.

feels like darkness dropping down around the head.
a darkness in which men forget they are human
and become ghosts in earthly colors,
vanishing
 hands
 and mouths
 and limbs.

Self-Portrait

Erin O'Dea



Angela's Back

Adriana Uribe



Daze Inn

RACHEL WALKER

The pounding inside your chest quickens as your pulse begins to soar. The adrenaline surges through your veins as butterflies well in your stomach. Nervous? High? Both? Your saliva fades away and your tongue feels like sandpaper rubbing against the roof of your mouth. Your entire body is pressed up against the paint chipped door of room 119. The humidity of the night seeps into your black leather pants. The beads of sweat roll down your chest as your stringy blonde hair clings to the side of your face. Do you feel any remorse? Or are you relieved? Your whole body shakes and twitches as if you're caught in the middle of an earthquake. But the ground is still. You tremble on your own.

Your beady red eyes frantically look around; you hope no one's there, but no one is ever there. The run down streets are still tonight and every move you make echoes across the parking lot of the Sunset Motel. This place has been your home before and it'll be your home tonight. You took the key last time; you knew you'd be back again. Your plastic fingernails scrape against the wall as you turn the rusty knob. Slowly but surely you pry open the dingy hotel door. The screech of the hinges ricochets off the walls and fades into the night. Breathing in a sigh of temporary relief, you disappear behind the door.

The shamefully tiny room might as well be a jail cell. Everything in the room is chained down; the 9" TV, the night stand, and the lamp with no light bulb. There are two twin beds, but no pillows. Their floral bed spreads stick out like sore thumbs in the otherwise blank room. The walls are painted a sickly off white and the entire area feels tarnished by age. You are repulsed by the stench of sex and mildew radiating throughout the air; it becomes obvious that the maid has not been here in days. But you don't care. Anything will do.

The box springs screech under your weight as you collapse on the tiny bed. You toss your high heels aside and undo your corset-like work clothes. You've been dancing all night long. Exhaustion plagues your muscles. Degradation plagues your mind. But where are you in the end? What do you have to show for yourself?

You stare in the mirror across from the bed, but you don't see yourself. No, the person staring back at you is nothing. She is less than a person. She is nothing but a pile of frail skin and bones with black coals for eyes and straw for hair. Her lips, doused in red, form a permanent frown. And her eyes, lined with black, keep looking around even though she's trying so hard not to look around. She's worn down; can't you see you're worn down?

But there are no breaks and sleep can't come easily. And so you reach for all you have to show for yourself; what all your work goes into. Your plague; your obsession; all that is good and all that is bad in your life. You know your addiction has its hands wrapped around your throat. But what can you do about it? You chase the high. You crave the high. You need the high.

And yet you deny that it's ever happening. You trick yourself into thinking that others don't know what you're doing. You try to hide it. You try so hard to hide it. But it is so obvious when you come crawling out of the bathroom with your eyes dilated and blood dripping from your nose. Even now, isolated in an empty room, you still sneak off to the bathroom to feed your addiction as if to hide it from yourself. But you can't escape it. No matter how hard you try, you can't escape it now.

And you know in your heart of hearts that this is not the life you would have chosen. Think back to the five-year-old version of yourself when you had big blue wandering eyes and a crooked smile. Was this the future you had in mind? When the teacher

*You chase the high.
You crave the high.
You need the high.*

asked you what you wanted to be, was this what you told her?

But look at yourself now. You lay on the first bed you've seen in weeks, but still sleep eludes you. The poison twists with your mind and rushes through your veins. Your heart is pounding so hard that it is about to fall apart at the seams. Your vision becomes hazy and smeared. You can't tell up from down or down from up as figures blur together. Your stomach contorts into knots, tangling up your insides. Your temperature soars, but you're so cold. Curling up under the covers, you can't warm up. Your toes turn to icicles, but no matter what you do you can't thaw them out. You wrap yourself in a web of sheets and comforters as sweat forms on the surface of your skin; yet, on the inside you're frozen solid.

Sunlight filters in through the windows, but you don't notice. Days and nights just seem to blur together. Time has lost all its bearing with you. You live in a perpetual state of nothingness.

The motel manager enters the room. You just lie still on the bed, hiding in the covers. You think that if you don't move, he won't notice you. But you don't think clearly, of course he notices you. The lanky man's voice makes him seem more intimidating than he is in reality.

"Wa-what are you doing? You didn't pay for this!"

You don't move.

"Do you hear me? Get out!"

He reaches over and strips the covers from your back. You manage to wipe the morning from your eyes, but your body still lays limp against the bed.

"What's wrong with you? MOVE!"

You finally manage to stand up. Your legs feel like jell-o, but you keep your balance. He stares down at you and you just stare back at him with no expression on your face.

"You need me to call you a cab or something, where are you going?"

"Nowhere."

Destinations just get in the way.

Karen Village, Thailand

Students of Professor Jendlin's Art Class



This is the outside of a public latrine. This entire Karen community shares a space in this one washing-up area.

Man and His Wife

Kevin Gallagher



Zombie Brunch

JEFF CRAIG

Your delicious bloody dripping entrails
tastes like the finest spaghetti and meatballs coated in parmesan cheese
Sloppy larynx from your neck
is much like a juicy hot dog coated in sour kraut relish mustard and ketchup
Your dismembered elbow joint
reminds me of a Cordon Bleu
The blood from your opened veins
is like chilled red wine to my lips
Your nipples
like spicy pepperoni
Your beefy calf muscles
are like the giant turkey legs at Disney World
I AM A ZOMBIE

The Dinner Fish

MOHSIN RIZVI

The ocean snaps photographs
As the westward moon hangs
Low in the sky

A dodge Bronco '86
Rattles by
Father grabs my arm tight

"Be careful when on a bridge"
He instructs me as his hands
Return to his fishing pole

Massive, huge hands nurturing
A glistening thread of web
That disappears into dark water

Lazy puffs of mist escape his mouth
As he drools hopes and dreams
On my 8-year old ears

"Tomorrow I start working"
He mumbles to himself
His eyes dim with thought

"Soon we'll have a home
You'll have a room and a yard
The family tensions will ease
Soon, son, we'll find peace"
"We will never fall
this hard agai—"

A fish struggles against my line
Caught and helpless
My father leaps into action

As he pulls and lags on the line
He looks at me with swollen eyes
And smiles from ear to ear

"This fish is going to be dinner
Your mother is going to be happy
Things are going to be great
We're on our way up again"

My father lifted his head
As dinner came to eye level
Twitching on the line

Open-mouthed eyes watching
As I gently removed the hook
From its dislocated jaw

"It's a good catch" father said
As he took dinner from my hands
And sunk two fingers under its gills

With his thumb pressed behind his neck
My father cracked dinner's spine
Like he opened a can of soda

Life shot from dinner's neck
Swam down its body
And poured onto the grey cement

The moon bounced off its lifeless body
As it slid from my father's hands
To the burgundy water of the paint bucket

"You just wait son" my father boasted
Clapping his hands to scatter the blood
"One day, we'll be millionaires"

Drawn in the Sand

Carolyn House



beachnik

ALEX EISENHAUER

Windswept hair traversing behind rolling dunes
Strolling with pocketed hands, drawn, drifting in the breeze
I can taste the sour sound
Wild reeds and grass outreach for legs
Speckled sand biting my back
Gleaming warmth from high above, despite cool winds
No buildings to drown me out
Just a road of infinite sand and surf

The Stash

DARREN COHEN

"Papa, can you sign my report card? I did really well, see?" Humberto scrawled his signature across the bottom of the paper, barely looking at the report. Her face fell, and Humberto berated himself silently. He put his arm around her.

"I'm very proud of you, Celia." She smiled and he kissed her on the forehead.

"I'm going to be studying with friends in a little while, Poppy. They are picking me up soon."

He waited until Celia had gone with her friends hoping she hadn't seen how nervous he was. He wiped his damp hands on his jeans, and when he was sure she was gone, he went to his bedroom. His wife was in the shower. He went quickly to the laundry basket and dug through the dirty clothes there.

At the bottom he found it. He knew he would have to find a better hiding place. On Mondays, Marguerite always did the laundry. He didn't know what he would do if she found out what he was hiding. What would she think of him? She would probably leave him, he thought. Pulling the worn old book bag out of the basket, he ran downstairs and out of the house. The book bag was his son Juan's, who was now away at college. Back home, in the old country, Juan would have been a farmer, as he himself had been. But here, things were different. Juan would need an education if he was going to get anywhere in this country. What would Juan think of his father if he knew what his old book bag from high school was being used for? But if his son would be able to make his own living now, shouldn't Humberto be allowed to do the same? He didn't want to have to rely on others for support. He was 53 years old, but he was after

all still a man, wasn't he?

Once outside on the street he avoided the bus, because he knew too many people and didn't want to have to answer any questions. As always the billboard was still there next to the road that said, "If you sell drugs in this neighborhood, you *will* go to prison," but he avoided looking at it. The picture of the stern looking cop with mirrored sunglasses seemed to look down on him disapprovingly. He had seen the picture many times before.

Coming to this country had seemed a fantastic adventure, at one time. There was unlimited opportunity here. He had envisioned a bright future for himself and his family. But now he

realized that sometimes you had to do things for success that you never thought you would do. Sometimes you had to swallow your pride.

He avoided the bigger roads, where he was most likely to bump into people he knew. He

walked quickly, but tried not to look hurried. Fear gnawed at his belly. Every time he saw someone his face flushed with guilt and shame. He kept praying he would not run into someone he knew. Soon he was in a different neighborhood. It was less likely he would run into someone he knew here.

There was the building. For a moment his fear bordered on panic, and he thought about running, forgetting the whole thing. But then he thought about his rent, and his little girl. He thought about her crestfallen face this morning. With new resolve, he quickened his gait and entered the building. He would do this. He shifted the book bag from one shoulder to the other. Somewhere inside was a room he was supposed to look for. It was in the back somewhere, he had been told, where they would be

Fear gnawed at his belly. Every time he saw someone his face flushed with guilt and shame. He kept praying he would not run into someone he knew.

guaranteed some privacy.

Suddenly, he saw his daughter, Celia. What was she doing here? Frantically he headed up a nearby stairway, praying that she would not look up from what she was doing.

Once at the top of the stairs, he saw it. He knocked timidly on the door. A man opened it. Head down, Humberto felt his face burn hot. Sweat prickled the back of his neck. But when he looked up, the man was smiling warmly.

"Humberto?" Extending his hand, the man said, "I'm Gary. Welcome. Come on in." Humberto took his hand, hoping the nice man wouldn't notice his sweaty hands.

Hesitantly, he followed the man into the room. When Gary's back was to him, he quickly snatched his cap off his head. There was a table and a few chairs. This is where everything would take place. Out of the public's view.

"Have you brought your stuff?" Gary asked, gesturing toward Humberto's bag.

Slowly Humberto pulled the book out of his bag: *Laubach Way to READING Skill Book 1*.

They spent an hour and a half together at the table in the private room of the public library, but soon it was over, and after some handshaking, some thank-yous and confirmation of "Same time, next week," Humberto walked back out into the public area of the library, feeling good.

As he went downstairs, he saw Celia again, reading quietly to herself. He walked over to her, smiling. She looked up at him as he approached, surprised but delighted.

"What are you reading?" he asked her.

When We Were Sisters

MICHELE-JESSICA FIEVRE

We sat together on the battered
earth, against the bloody
walls. The marbles and the knucklebones
bounced to the rhythm of the wooden

hammer on the conga drums. We
laughed at the priest and his sacred rattle
and hid in our pocket some of the cornmeal,
the wood ash and the coffee-grounds.

The peristil was our playground. Our
vèvè was a hopscotch pattern traced
with powdered red brick behind the sacred
pole. In our pantheon, you were

the sensuous Erzulie, the goddess of beauty,
in your silk dress with fresh flowers. I
still can't believe it was you that night
on the earth, who writhed belly-down and hissed

fiercely. That night when they dressed you
in crisp red dress and washed your hands in
flaming rum. They waved a machete over your
head and make you chew a cigar.

They cracked a broiled egg that you swallowed
whole—like a snake. You never saw my tears.
Now I seat alone with my marbles and knucklebones
and you belong to Ogoun.

Glossary:

Knucklebones: Children's game played with goat or pig knuckles.

Vèvè: Ritual design traced on ground of peristyle to invoke a specific Voodoo spirit.

Muerte...

Adriana Uribe



Silent Rant

GUILHERMO TAVARES

You call me the boy in the wheelchair,
But I don't call you the boy who can walk.

You hold the door for me, and I thank you,
But for staring at me, I do not.

All you think of is what I can't do
And of what I can, everything's extraordinary.

You don't realize that I use
All my muscle 'cause of it.

Ever heard of Stephen Hawking? He's a genius,
And even he needs help with the door.

It's a wheelchair, I'm not deaf,
I hear the whispers as I pass.

We cross paths and we smile
But your smile says "I'm sorry."

But I'm not, I thank god every day
For I see life much better than you.

You think of what I can't do
And I think of what I will do.

Jealousy

MORGGIANA ORTIZ

As long as I could remember I was the only one who would sit on his shoulder, or would lie on his chest to hear his heartbeat. Everyday I would wake up knowing I was the only girl in his heart, the only girl that knew that Wednesday meant going to the park and being pushed on the swings. Besides my mother, I knew no one would ever love him the way I did, and still do. My relationship with father was great. He was more like a friend and, as always, I got my way. Even as a child he treated me like an adult. But soon that would change.

Like any other Tuesday, I jumped off the bus, hoping that I hadn't missed "Saved by the Bell" or any of Urkel's antics. But something was different in my scenery. My mom's car was in her parking spot. I questioned that in every single way. I looked at my Barbie watch, and I knew she wasn't supposed to be home. I simply couldn't understand, but I panicked; did something happen to her? To my dad? Or was it simply a slow day at the store and she got sent home early? I went up the usual 13 steps, finishing it faster than my typical time. I took out my keys which had at least 6 key chains and made more noise than a 5 o'clock traffic jam on a hot summer day. I slipped the key in its hole, turned the door knob and entered the familiar apartment I had grown up in. The smell was the same, of fresh flowers from the supermarket. The furniture was all in the same place. But my dad was on the phone. All sorts of ideas ran through my mind. I tried to ask my mom, but she wouldn't say anything to me.

"Okay then, I hope to talk to you soon too... I love you too, princess," he said in a raised voice on the phone.

All of a sudden I froze. I felt like the earth was crumbling into little itty bitty pieces.

"Who was that!?" I asked in a tone that wasn't suitable for a little girl.

"Morggie, we need to talk. Remember we once spoke about you having a sister, and then you put your fingers in your ears and ran under your bed?" asked my dad.

"Umm...maybe. I'm not really remembering much these days," I commented to him.

He started nodding his head and looked at my mom hoping for some help.

"Morggie," mom said, "You need to understand that your dad has another daughter, and even though she's not my daughter like you, she still holds a place in his heart, and she's coming to visit him very soon."

"Fine, but I'm not sharing my toys," I said to the both of them. Days came and went, and we later on found out she wasn't given a visa to come visit us from Panama, and I thought I was home free. But that's when things changed. My dad felt bad that she couldn't come, so he went on shopping sprees for her. I was angry at him for not putting her to the side, and for my mom not defending me and telling him to love me more.

A couple of months passed, and every once in while I would hear her name come out of his mouth, but things mainly went back to normal. But deep down inside I was jealous. I just couldn't understand why he couldn't just be dad, until one day.

He asked my sister to send over some pictures, and once he received them, he sat me down next to him. We compared my scrapbook to hers. We had the same number of birthday parties, and even the same taste in dolls. I even remember her having a similar watch to my Barbie one. However, one thing stood out. In all of those pictures I had my dad next to me and she didn't. She had lots of uncles and cousins, but not her dad, and that must have hurt her. I realized at that moment that I should have never been jealous of her; she was the one that had every right to be jealous of me, and to ask her mom why he had to have me too. From that moment on, I picked up the phone every time she called instead of hanging up, and I even stopped calling her names.

Thoughts on a Drive to Death and Recollection

MOHSIN RIZVI

Tires shriek like nails on a chalkboard
Two gunshot pops as they finally give in

The car flips
I'm tumbling
like socks in a dryer
oh shit, there's the

W
A
L
L

Choked into consciousness
By the stench of burnt rubber
Filling my nostrils with reality that
Something is terribly wrong

A ruby waterfall pours from my head
Pooling with the blood oozing from my naked femur
Before running down to collect on the car floor

It's oh so obvious
that I'm going to die

I'm going to die, and
I'm totally unprepared

Who should I think of?
What should I remember?
Will life really flash before my eyes?

My mother is going to be pissed

Like when I got caught stealing

And she beat me with a hanger
She cried the whole time.

Innocent tears that always hurt the most
Streaming down her face as her frail soft hands
Fell upon my cheeks; bringing out the blushing red

Her desperate acts of petty violence
Her helpless efforts to save her lost boy

She hit me to attack her own failure
A failure now slipping from her hands
Falling into the depths of a slumber
From which one can't be woken for school

Ma, This scarlet silk floats across my face
Draping my body with the urge to sleep
This liquid cocoon of death

Ma, please don't cry no more
Know that I'm smiling for you
Like a sun, your hopes have burned us both
But now things grow dark and cool

Ma

every one of all these things...

growing very dark.

and so very...

cool.

Ma.

Self-Portrait

Mark Anderson



Dictatorship

LORENC BASHA

I was raised in Albania, a communist country where the money did not have value and freedom of speech was prohibited. This made me care more about my family and relatives. At that time, nobody was permitted to leave the country or have a car, unless you were working for the state. The only broadcasts that we were allowed to watch were local television, and the whole nation was totally isolated from developed countries. Liberty did not exist.

In November 1985, my uncle, who was a general practitioner, was arrested and sent to jail without even having the right to get a lawyer. According to the judge, the reason that he was convicted was that he had said in public, "Our hospital does not have sufficient drugs to supply all the patients," and this had directly offended the leader of the dominant party at the time. Sending him to jail affected his wife, his kids, and all his relatives greatly. The teachers and the other children repeatedly harassed his kids and me at school. We were considered no good by society, and this started to interfere with our daily lives. I remember many times, my cousin coming home with her eyes full of tears because her teacher did not give the grade that she deserved, or her brother and I feeling sad and crying because our friends could not play with us anymore, as their parents would not allow them to.

About a month later, on a snowy day, my brother and I were returning home from school. The trees looked like they were bare, and where leaves had previously been, now snow covered them instead. All we could hear were shoes crushing the snow, and the vague voices of students returning home as the strong winds blowing towards us overpowered them. Walking among these other students made us feel worthless as a result of what had happened to my uncle, but it made my brother and me stay closer together.

As we approached home, we saw a swarm of police cars in front of our building. People were standing on their balconies and behind their windows, trying to see what was happening. A big

crowd had gathered in front of our apartment, and many more people were approaching, as if the colored lights of the police cars invited them. My brother and I started running to find out what was going on. As we finally managed to pass through the crowd, we saw our mother, who was standing on the side of the hallway, watching my father and some of his friends loading a white truck with our furniture. My older brother walked towards my mother.

"Are we moving out?" he asked, looking towards the truck.

"Yes!" she responded distressed, rubbing our heads and pulling them towards her body.

Tears started falling from her eyes, sliding down her cheek. It was clear that something was going on. I had never seen my mother that desperate. Up until that moment, she was always calm and looked happy.

My brother and I went upstairs and started carrying down boxes and anything we could grab. As we transported our belongings to the truck, I saw one of the officers approaching my father.

"Faster, faster! We don't have the entire day!" he shouted waving his baton.

"We're trying!" my father responded with a look that had more to say, "The furniture is heavy, and it's only three of us!"

We were thrown out of the house and sent to the countryside just because our uncle was in prison. The state, at that time, would punish everyone who went against the regime. That was one of their ways to keep people fearful of retaliating against the leaders.

Completely gloomy from this event, my father, mother, brother and I got on the truck and left the city with a hope of returning one day. I will never forget the faces of the people looking at us as if we were criminals. As we drove away, I watched in the mirror, the buildings disappearing one by one, and with them everything that I knew until then.

Spotlight

CARELITA WHITE

It's dark.
I'm dark and nobody sees me.
It hurts. I hurt but nobody sees me.

Then the lights come and I'm wet with
Salty humiliation and neglect.

I scream; it's loud but there's silence.
No response.

I'm bleeding, being drained of all
That is me. I look but there is nothing.

I hear it; mean and mocking.

The lights are blinding now.
I can no longer see but I feel it,
Like a wall of ivy, stifling,
Choking, and laughing. I pray
For darkness to be my shield but
It grows and grows. Then darkness
Comes and I'm left to pick away at
What remains; scorn, hate.

Fruits and Vegetables in an Abecedarian

PATRICIA LYVIA LOLO

Apples red, green, or yellow so deliciously tempting
Bananas rich in potassium while Blueberries are not even blue
Cherries, while exclusive in the tropical when coconuts are ordinary
Dangleberries are succulent shrubs, but not berries
Elderberries and Eggplants both look so old and don't taste good
Figs, fruits that can be hermaphrodite or female
Grapes make wine and guavas make jam
Honeydews are sugar rich that's why bees suck on them to make honey
Indian corn or maize, cereal grains native to the Americas
Jelly Beans are kids' favorites because they're not real beans
Kiwis, the fruits are Chinese; the birds are from New Zealand
Lemon and Limes fight about who makes better lemonade
Mangos, beautiful and juicy; only one will get you full
Noisettes, French for hazelnuts, even small and round have lots of proteins
Oranges, gorgeously orange and a great source of vitamin C
Plantains are bananas older brothers
Quinces, bright like gold, sour to eat raw but good for jelly
Raspberry sweet, red, and tart, in the late summer
Strawberries, they taste better in dessert
Tomatoes are good, but tisanes tea restores health
Ugli fruits, rough and wrinkly on the outside beautiful in the inside
Vanillas, we always want more, in extra, cake, ice-cream and more
Watermelons, originated in Africa, what a luscious fruit!
Xemenias, yellow and round, these are wild ones, you better go hunt them.
Yams, from Africa, so not yummy, but great substitutes for potatoes
Zucchinis or courgettes, Italian squashes, low in calories, but lots of vitamin A.

Gratitude to this abecedarian some fruits and vegetables became great friends.

Pakistani Peanuts

Mohsin Rizvi



Cake or Death

SHANNON NEIGER

Do you ever wonder what would happen if you were given the choice, "Cake or Death?"

I have. After watching a British comedian's original skit, "Cake or Death," I questioned if there could be true meaning behind the satirical comedy show.

In the short humorous video clip, the roman inquisition blockaded a village of people. The villagers were presented an inexcusable life option, one being cake, the other being death. Most of them, of course chose cake, and were able to move on happily, devouring a delicious piece of cake. One person actually remarked, "Uh, death, please. No, cake! Cake! Cake! Sorry. Sorry...!" Surprisingly, he was given another chance at the question, only to be smarter the second time and chose the cake. (The quote is taken from a website. I couldn't actually remember the exact words he used. If it were up to me he would have said something like, "Yeah, Death looks good, I'll have that.")

I ask myself, if this situation were in my real life, what would it truly be like? What would be my Cake, and what would be my Death? I consider if I have ever been put in a position when I accidentally chose the wrong answer, only to have realized quickly thereafter I picked poorly, leading me to a life-changing mistake.

After long consideration, I think I found one such moment.

It is the summer of 1996, school just broke out and many of my friends and colleagues are anxious and excited to begin their few months of freedom. I leave the school grounds; throw my books in my car, roll down my car windows and head off, feeling the hot wind slap my face, flushing my cheeks. I sing aloud with the radio, not caring if anyone can hear my rambunctious, elated voice, as I travel down one of South Florida's three-lane boulevards.

I soon arrive in front of my true love's driveway. The driveway is part of a quaint Tudor style house that sticks out amongst Florida's prepackaged new construction. I jump up at the sight of Paul through the first floor window, and quickly run

to meet him at the door.

"The year is over, finally!" I shout.

He nods his head in agreement, kisses me sweetly on my forehead, and we enter the house in search of potato munchies and other delectable sugared snacks.

Paul is my first love. He is the first boy I ever opened myself fully to, and he is the one I engulf my life around. Paul is attractive, being six-two to my five-five, giving him a towering appearance over me. He has a soft dark brown hair, not too long and not too short, with hypnotic almond-brown eyes. He has a certain way about him, the way he carries himself, with an air of confidence I haven't really seen in many boys my age. Paul is two grades higher than me and this was his final year. He is ready to make the big leap to a university.

We decided we would stay local, this way we could continue to be close to one another. Paul and I would both attend the nearby college, and then when we were ready, travel together somewhere abroad. We dreamed about Italy being a great place to study, with its grand museums and friendly culture, imagining ourselves walking down the rich condensed streets of country for away. I didn't think anything of it when Paul graduated this year.

While we try to snuggle on the cool, grey toned, suede sofa in Paul's front living room, I notice a folded piece of paper, resembling a letter, lying innocently on top of his square coffee table. (The coffee table, circa 1990, supposedly is an art creation, and has the most grotesque piece of furniture I have ever seen. It has worn-like creatures creating four S's as legs and the top are puke green. I always told Paul his parents had very, very strange taste.) I can faintly see an etched symbol imprinted on the inside of the letter. My mind begins to question the meaning of his solitary, formal letter.

Paul continues to laugh with the television, and I keep staring at the letter. What could it be? Did his parents join a country club? Does the cable bill now come in fancy lettering? The

suspense beckons my unwilling hand to reach for it. As my hand gets closer, the seconds seem to move slower, until it looks like my arm is turning into plastic, deeply stretching down a long narrow, blurry corridor.

I finally bring the letter close to my chest, and with Paul now engrossed in a Pepsi commercial, I begin to unfold it.

"Mr. Paul Bryant, Congratulations! You have been accepted into Brown University..." I mumble. I continue reading the words aloud. It catches Paul's attention.

His cheerful face changes to mixture of defeated sadness and horror movie fright. I stare at the letter, then at him, speechless. I feel confused, disoriented, as if I took a ride on a circus spinning wheel; like the carnival rides you enter in, get your face practically sucked into the back

of your skull, can barely walk off, and leave half-blind with dizziness. Paul's body wavers in and out of my emotionally muddy vision.

Immediately I feel the shock, then comes the brief moment of fear. My hair starts to sweat and my hand swells tighter around the letter. It is the fear of losing him, my planned life, and my safe future. My pulse quickens and my shoulders rise.

While the fear is cultivating, a rush of sadness moves in. It would have been easier if I knew about the letter the right way. Why would he hide this from me? Doesn't he love me?

But anger quickly follows.

"What is this?" I demand.

"I wanted to tell you about the letter, Corinna. I was afraid."

My taste changes, saliva starts to build in my mouth, and I feel like I'm spitting up blood. I stand up to gain a false sense of strength. I can't stop yelling. I feel like a crazy person. I start pacing around the dying-plant-colored coffee table.

"Stop it, Corinna. Stop! Come here. Please talk to me."

"Talk to you? What were you planning on doing? Were you just going to wait until you had these damn, brown boxes building

around your room? Seeya!"

"No it's not like that. I was planning on tell you. It's more complicated than that."

"Damn straight it is."

My pacing quickens, like a camel being chased by gunmen in the Australian plains, around Paul's coffee table. It is not helping my nerves. I begin hyperventilating, and envision my self as an old, lonely hag in fifty years, pining over my lost soul mate. My face is covered with salty water, and I sit down begrudgingly onto his parent's quirky, primary colored, asymmetrical armchair.

"Ok. Tell me everything." I say.

Paul begins to explain that he applied to a few Ivy League colleges only for fun. He never expected any of them to respond

favorably. How excited he is that he can go to Brown University and his parents will foot the bill. He says he wants to keep our relationship going,

that it means so much to him. He will fly back and forth as much as possible and help me to do the same. Paul speaks the words and I barely hear them. They glide over me like a stingray in a shallow reef. I know what he is saying, and I can interpret every word, but I can't face them. The life I know feels shattered, torn out from my rooted existence, and thrown into an unknown alternative universe.

When he finishes, complete with numerous apologies, I look at him, into his deep brown eyes, and begin to laugh. I am laughing so hard my sides are aching. My body is repetitively shaking in large up and down motions in rhythm to my laughter. Paul is looking at me with bewildered eyes. He probably thinks I need to be institutionalized. I don't care. I just keep on laughing. I laugh myself all the way into the bathroom, leaving Paul rattled on the couch.

I feel as if I took a drink of the bottle Alice in Wonderland drank from, making me seem big, so big that the bathroom turns

Immediately I feel the shock, then comes the brief moment of fear. My hair starts to sweat and my hand swells tighter around the letter.

miniscule, like a dollhouse. I wash my face a few times and grasp its round, fleshy shape in my hands, staring at my ruddy complexion in the mirror.

"Oh, Corinna, what have you gotten yourself into?" I say aloud to my reflected self. "This is not what you had in mind for your life. It all seemed so perfect once. Now, that life is over." Glancing at my watch, I realize the day has gone by, yet time feels like it took a vacation from its regular pattern. What am I going to do?

I spend a long time in the bathroom. Paul knocks on the door a few times. I don't answer. I need time to think. I have choices to make.

My head swims with emotion as I contemplate my life. I find myself sitting on the oblong shaped toilet bowl, the seat turned up, and my bottom being swallowed into the plumbing abyss... Memories become unwanted flashing images, like a flock of obnoxious pigeons dancing across my eyes.

I remember the moment I lost my virginity to Paul, The slow sounds of REM played in the background (REM is a musical group, with Michael Stipe as lead vocalist. Their music has both soft and upbeat rhythms, and a lot of their music has deep meaning behind it). We started out on the bed, my body tightening with fear of not knowing what was going to happen. His eyes reassured me that everything was going to be fine, Even for the first time, the passion grew more intense, and somehow we ended up on the carpeted floor, moving together in a sequence of rhythms that merged our bodies into uncontrollable unity. When it ended, I felt release and a foreign closeness to another being I never discovered before. It felt right. It felt safe.

We could look into each other's eyes, never uttering a word, letting a sea of emotions communicate between us. Hours have been spent in his bedroom, the generic grocery store night light in the corner illuminating our space.

I remember the times when I was angry with my parents for their improper life habits that intruded on my growth. I would hide my anger with sadness. I would shut down. Putting up the façade was my specialty. Paul could see right through it. He knew how to break me open and comfort me, never telling me what to do, just being there. Words would sometimes flow from his lips, but not obtrusive advice. It would be sweet words of love and warmth. He always knew how to handle me.

Where is my life going to go now? Should I stay with Paul? Should I let us attempt a long distance relationship? Or should I end it now, knowing that these types of things rarely succeed?

Over an hour goes by in the bathroom before I finally emerge. I start to search the house for Paul, only to find him lying in his

bed, his arms folded over his eyes. I sit down beside him, remove his arms, and smile. He props himself up a little and looks at me with relief. I pet his hair for a minute in silence, and then I begin.

"Paul, I love you. I will always love you. But I think it is best for us to end our relationship."

Paul looks dumbfounded, as if a wave of hard ocean flushed out his coloring, leaving behind an empty vessel.

"End? It's over? Why?"

"Because I think it's for the best, for both of us. You have a future to follow and I shouldn't be part of that. I want to see you flourish. You are going to college for God's sake! That is an incredible experience."

I slide down on the bed to allow Paul to pull himself up to a seated position. He barely can push himself up. He looks like he wants to wail, so loud that the silence is even more deafening. His reaction sends pains to my chest and stomach. Needing to continue my explanation, I force the pain deeper inside.

"You have so many experiences ahead of you. I don't want to be a burden for them. And even though I know you will fight

Should I let us attempt a long distance relationship? Or should I end it now, knowing that these types of things rarely succeed?

me on this, I would be your unwanted anchor. You will make new friends, be able to date different women, and feel free to explore everything.”

Paul disagrees with all I say, and I watch the tears fall down his smooth, perfect face. I tell him that our lives are now different; our plans have changed. He doesn't want to hear me say the words this time, as if we have exchanged places; I am the one with the bad news. I hug him, I kiss him, and we wrap our limbs around one another for the last time.

He follows me to the door, hiding his eyes, his remorse; but I need to look at him once more, the boy I love. I say my goodbyes within my own head and walk away.

Driving down that same three-lane boulevard, I turn the obnoxious radio off, and I can barely see the road through my watered slits for eyes. I quickly need to pull over and curl into a fetal position in the front seats. I feel lost, stranded, abandoned.

I made a terrible mistake. I should have stayed with him. It would have worked out. I know it would have. I made a terrible mistake. He would have been faithful to me. I would have had a wonderful life with him. How could I be so stupid? I made a terrible mistake.

My inner voice cannot stop. I can't shut down the thoughts of regret about the incorrect choice I made. It takes three days for me to rouse myself from my room. My mother feels sympathetic and holds me when I let her. For three days I can't sleep, eat or move. Every last inch of my will is needed to pull myself from this hellish state and relinquish the negative draw I so easily cling to.

The summer moves slowly. Each minute of sun is a painstaking remembrance of reality. I grow as a different person, a new self with a slightly hardened, guarded wall around me. I have let him go.

“Cake or Death?” that is the question. Did I choose Death over Cake, or did I not have a choice? Could I have been given another chance? Why didn't I run back to him? Could I have had

my cake? Would it have been a cake filled with yummy insides or would it have been stale and crumbly?

I might never know the answer. When presented with the question, “Cake or Death?” this memory came to mind quickest. Was Paul my Cake and was my decision to leave him my true Death?

There are many others who can probably tell a more intense “Cake or Death” life tale. There are even those who, in the true literal sense, cannot even be here now to tell their unfortunate story.

All I know is something died in me that day. A piece of me was left behind in the Tudor-style house in South Florida. A part of me will never be regained after I let him go. I thought it

would get easier; these emotions are simple to come by. Perhaps for some, they are. For me, it has been a long, arduous journey. I may never find that innocence again, that first love.

There is a reason why people call it first love. It has a feeling of lightness and air, a smell of spring blossoms no supermarket air freshener can duplicate. I do believe innocence can

be found in the most unexpected places. My life has been blessed with many pure moments after my first love experience. These moments have come to define me. They have become my soulful building blocks, somehow making even my short life with Paul, also a small piece of cake. Maybe all decisions are both Cake and Death. It is definitely for me to decide, or is it? Cake anyone?

“Cake or Death?” that is the question. Did I choose Death over Cake, or did I not have a choice?

No Hablo Ingles

PERSIDA PORTUONDO

When I first came to the US, my first answer to every question was, "No Hablo Ingles." I felt like I had just arrived from a different planet. The day my mother signed me up for school, I remember crying like a baby even though I was nine years old. My mother and I stood in the office waiting for someone to help us. I sat on a chair with tears in my eyes, and patiently waited, grabbing on to my pink backpack. My mother was finally called, but then quickly realized she needed a translator.

After a long registration process, I was finally walked to my new classroom. The teacher did not speak Spanish, so I got really scared. She looked at me with a smile on her face and pointed at my desk. As I walked between the rows, I felt all eyes following me to my chair. It got so quiet, you could hear a pin drop. I felt the day going by very slow and boring. Months later, I still felt like the first day I walked into class.

One day the teacher assigned a report on different jobs and their responsibilities. I had to do an oral presentation in front of the class. It took me days to complete the assignment because I had no clue where to begin. When the day came to present the report, I was so nervous I could not sit straight. The teacher began calling names in alphabetical order. When it was almost my turn, I began to shake like Jell-O, and sweat like I had just caught fire.

Finally, my name was called. I stood up, and stared at my report in my hands like it was something I never saw before. I was speechless for what seemed an eternity, and I was so nervous I could not say a word to save my life.

My teacher asked, "Persida, is there a problem?" I turned around, and with a nervous voice said, "No, teacher, it's ok."

I began reading my report explaining the hostess position, but instead I said "hostage." The entire class laughed hysterically like they had just heard the funniest joke ever. I did not know what to say, so out of nervousness I began laughing as hard as they did. My teacher saw the embarrassment all over my blushed face. When one of my classmates told me what it meant, I understood

what had just happened.

The boy sitting behind me shouted, "She wants to be a hostage. That's so funny!" They all began to laugh again, but with less intensity. I began to feel more embarrassed as the comments continued throughout the classroom.

My teacher said, "Enough now. Let her finish."

At that moment I felt like quitting, but I finished my report with my strong accent and lone pauses. I felt hurt after being embarrassed in front of more than 30 classmates. I got home with tears in my eyes, and told my mother what happened in school that day. As I told my mother the story, my eyes got watery.

She said to me, "Don't worry about that, you will forget all about it in a few day." She gave me a big hug and a good night kiss. I went to bed with my eyes swollen like I had just cried for days. It did not seem like a big deal to my mother, but I felt like never going back to school. I started thinking about my close family and friends I had left behind. For that instant, I regretted being in the land of opportunity. That feeling would not go past that evening.

The following morning, I went back to school, and to my surprise, made new friends. I had just become popular for not speaking proper English. The girl sitting in front of me had never said a word to me until after that day. All I knew about her was the back of her head and her long, black, braided hair.

She turned around and said, "I speak Spanish too, and I can help you if you want." She was my lifesaver, and we became good friends. I began to feel like part of the class since I had not made friends until that incident. After making friends, I began to feel at home with a better understanding of a different culture.

Cold Morning

ROBIN WILSON

Flake-dusted ground
Like confectionary sugar
On French toast in the morning

Lifeless vegetation droops
Wilting in a sad state from
Dropping temperature

Icy cold steel
Too hard to sit
As few visit here in January

Once alive with commotion
Rustling of leaves by squirrels
Now silenced
They are gone in hibernation

Barren landscape amuses
No one because we are all warm inside
It will be warm again
Life then returns to this place

Dear Dad

EBONY PARAMORE

The bible says that we should “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land.” Keeping those teachings in mind, I ended up with several drafts of what I’m about to say. I have become tired of being depressed over this issue that so many men and women experience in today’s world. I’d been depressed because our relationship had become a great disappointment to me. I remember how as child, I had the utmost faith in you. You were my hero even though I didn’t get to spend time with you daily, weekly or even monthly. I had so much innocent love for you though you continued to ignore me—your only child. You continue to blame this on mom. Saying you stayed away because of her temper and the fact that you two could never see eye to eye. She was well aware of the things you would say to me concerning this yet she never said negative things about you. She would always tell me that I’ll understand better when I get older. She was right. The older I got the more the picture became clear. It was clear that you missed the greatest love of all. That’s the love between a parent and a child. You missed it because you were too busy trying to avoid me thinking every time I called for you all I wanted was your money, when in actuality all I wanted was a relationship with my dad. It’s sad to say that even after I’ve become an adult you still don’t get it. You still have the same pattern of thinking. I have decided that I will no longer try to get the point across. I will no longer seek a traditional father-daughter relationship with you; I’ll instead focus on my children and learning by your example of how “not” to treat them. Thank you for this lesson dad. It’s the only real thing you’ve given me that has any worth. I’ll be praying for you...

Cherubs

Chris Cutro



De Profundis (From the Depths)- For Alan J

JHENELLE JOHNSON

A crimson stream flows through the darkened woods,
Black moths fly above its frigid waters.
Pan plays a mournful tune, an ode to lost sons and daughters.
A song sung under a whimsical moon.
Gone too soon,
Gone too soon.
Time's ruins are hidden behind clouds bereft of silver linings,
Atropos's golden scissor has come into play.
Oh but for a sip of sweet nectar,
Oh but for a taste of ambrosia, the life giving food of the gods.
To live now,
To live now.
A final dance with the wind of olden days.
Pirouette through finely woven dreams.
Breathe, that final breath, so sweet like sun warmed peaches.
Now you see,
Now you see.
No light, no sounds, endless midnight abounds.
Shadows crawl within, Charon awaits
To take you to your final resting place.
No Applause,
No Applause.
What awaits thee?
The Elysian Fields maybe.
Or will your providence be that of Tantalus.
Doomed to endless torture.
Abundantly empty.
What will it be?
Just wait and see.

My Uncle's Buddha

Charlie Grau



A man in a white shirt and dark pants stands on a beach, looking out at the ocean. The scene is captured in a soft, slightly blurred style, with the man's reflection visible in the wet sand. The background shows the ocean and a bright sky.

Walking on Water

MARIA MATIENZO AND GRANT ABRAHAM

Cerulean seas catch light reflections
as the greens and teals of waves
bleed together
then crash on the ocean shore.

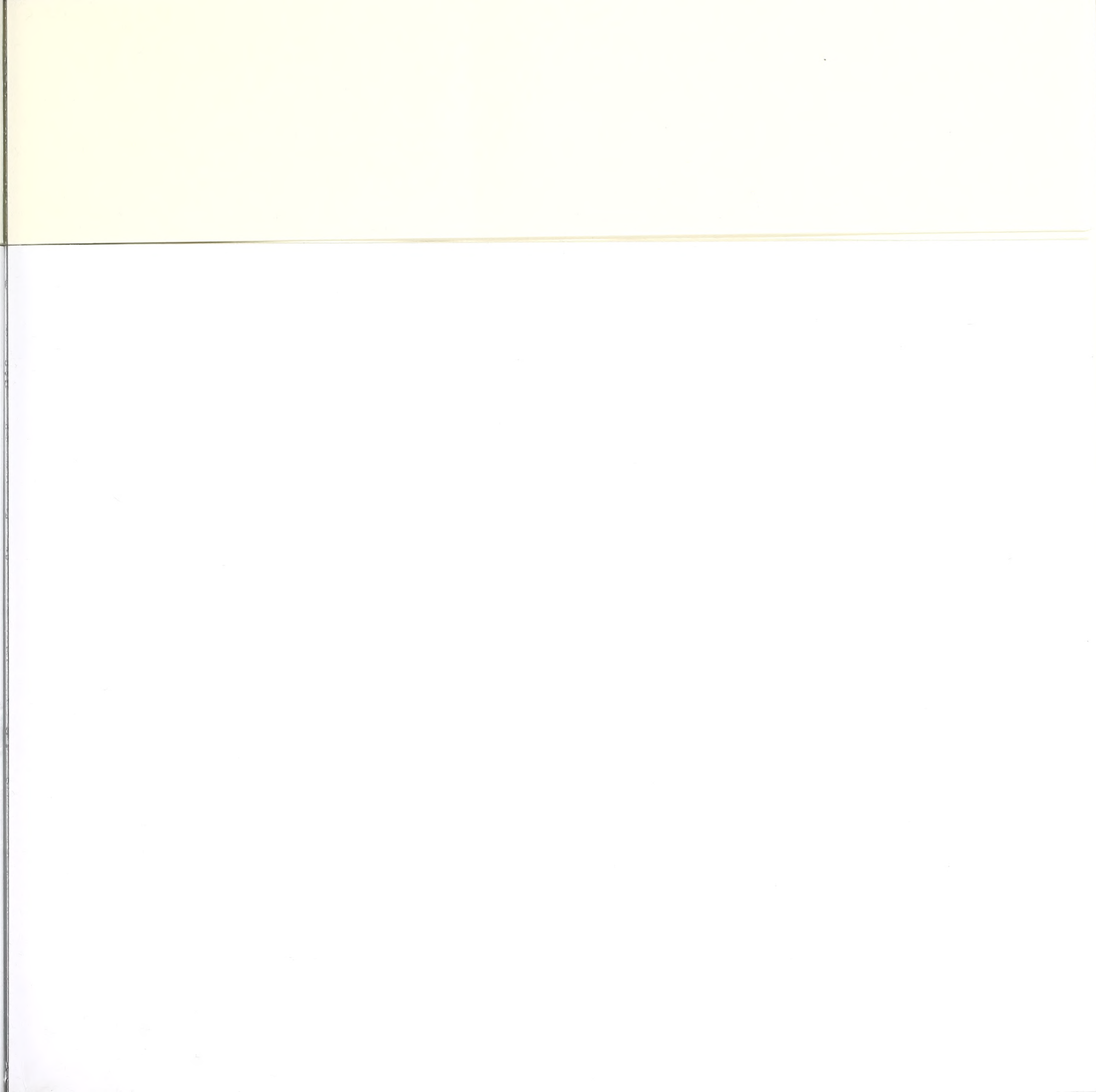
A man stands in deep thought,
the bottom of his jeans soaked
with the salt of the sea.
He fights the tides.
He does not want to leave.

The brim of his hat
absorbs the sunlight,
as clouds float in and out of view.
They take the shape of his life.

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