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The Broward Community College Student Literary/Arts Magazine





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Awaken

Photograph

Cindy Martin

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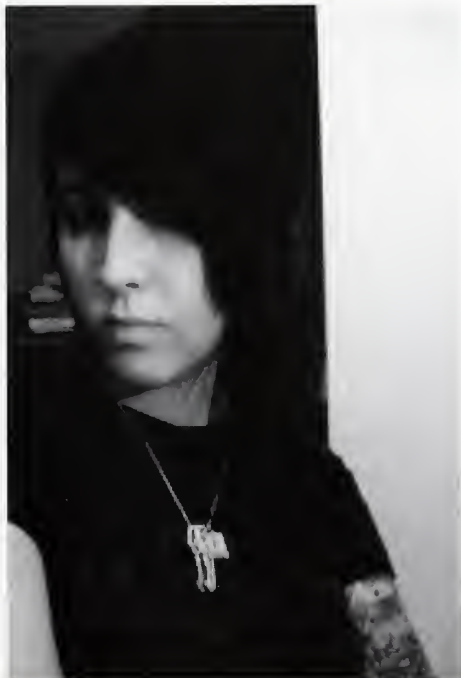
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Featured Artist

Veronica Malo



Featured Photographer (Cover)

Mindless Image

Stephanie Conner

The image cries out on every page turned and every channel changed,
This ideal of what a woman should be.
While the truth buried with the names of the slain,
Leaving the youth no options for expressing sexuality.

From her perfectly maintained mane stemming from the roots,
Fighting dehydration from lack of nourishment.
To the facial art work so intricate sometimes birthing mutes,
Those lacking intellectual encouragement.

From the low cut this to the high slit that,
Revealing more about herself than ever conceived.
To the painful stilettos, yet keep the image intact.
Only literal elevation is what should be believed.

The facial expressions of one held captive,
Though others may not see but they are merely eyeing.
No change on the horizon, no one daring to be proactive,
So she poses, ignorant to her denying why she's crying, yet slowly dying.



The Out of Body

Photograph

Barry Polak

A Night Full of Movies

Bobby Jefferson

It was *Friday the 13th* and I was *Home Alone*, I decided to call the *Girl Next Door*, since she had been on my mind for *40 Days and 40 Nights*. Feeling *Fast and Furious* I rushed to the phone to call my *American Sweetheart*. She informed me that her parents would be *Out of Sight* and that she would be *Home Alone 2*. I went to the *Barber Shop* to get cleaned up, and on my way home I ran into *Rush Hour* traffic. I almost got into a *Crash*, but managed to make it home safe. I got to her house and we cuddled on the couch, I saw the look in her eyes as if she wanted me to make her *Scream*, feeling like *The Lion King* I pursued my prey. About halfway into our *Foul Play* the phone began to ring. The mood is killed *When a Stranger Calls*. The phone stops, and we start where we were interrupted, I can feel my *Undercover Brother* begin to rise, the level of *Heat* rises and her parents are at the door, in a quick moment to pack away the *The Wood*, I just became a *Fugitive* being *Hunted* by this *Man on Fire*, whom I once thought would be the *Father of my Bride*.



Moonlight Becomes You

Graphite

Sarah Joy Porter

Forbidden Love

Michele J. Fievre

Our love was a full glass of Sangria.
Lust and desire simmered in this sensual,
sun-kissed summer cocktail. But the goblet
of passion crashed on the floor.
Scattered hearts. Shattered pride.



Holly

Lino Cut

Erin O'Dea

Teenage Bedroom

Michele J. Fievre

An old diary with a honeyberry-colored cover,
its pages green and wrinkled like a breadfruit.
June 11, 1993. Today, I met a boy named Xavier.

A dusty photo-album. Is that me in the pink shirt?
We sit in a canoe on Lake Azuei. There is a seacow
near the waterfall and a fisherman waves at the camera.

A bracelet in a shoe box. Both our names are carved
on the painted leather. Only mine is spelled wrong.
I told you it was bad luck.

A letter. I can still smell the Ultraviolet you sprayed
on the pages. *I love you, Michele. I love you.*
Maybe you meant it then.

Michele J. Fievre



“I think I’ve written my whole life. I was 16 when I self-published my first mystery novel in Haiti. When I moved to the United States in 2002, I joined Women Writers of Haitian Descent, a non-profit literary organization that encourages the development of Haitian women writers and fosters greater public awareness of their work. I became interested in fictional short stories and poetry. Writing in a new language was a challenge. When I enrolled at BCC, I was lucky to take classes from accomplished writers such as Vicki Hendricks, Christine Kling, and Barbra Nightingale. I also learned valuable lessons from teachers at FIU. I discovered that writing was not just an innate talent; it was an intricate craft that required patience and determination.”

-Michele J. Fievre

BRUSH WITH A STAR

Michele J. Fievre

“Clara, I’m so glad you’re OK!”

My best friend Jennifer gave me a big hug and kissed my cheek. We were at a small Caribbean restaurant. By the window, I could see merchants in front of the building, selling *fresko* and pistachio nuts, Haitian jewelry and crafts. Women with large and dirty straw hats, colorful aprons and big breasts displayed bananas and watermelons, while engaged in a heated battle against mosquitoes. The ferocious honking of the *taptap* was deafening, and I was overwhelmed by the greasy smell of the *kibi* and *pwason gwasèl* sold in the restaurant on Mondays. An American was chatting with the cashier, drinking lukewarm malta and staring at a small TV on the counter. A couple was listening closely to radio reports for the latest update.

“Flamboyant rap singer Axel Maksim, one of the most recognized personalities in Haiti, had been shot four times the night before.”

It was all over the news. Flamboyant rap singer Axel Maksim, one of the most recognized personalities in Haiti, had been shot four times the night before. His political association with *Lespwa*, the party of ex-president René Préval might have been the root cause of this tragedy. The attack had occurred while the star was leaving a concert for “peace and tolerance” in the suburb of Port-au-Prince. Fortunately, a Good Samaritan – moi – had spotted Axel on the road, lying in his own blood, struggling to survive. I had rushed the rapper to the nearest hospital in critical condition.

“You know how bad news travels,” Jennifer said. “I was told *you’d* been shot.”

She paused to order some lemon juice, and then continued, “So how is he doing?”

“He’s expected to recover from his wounds,” I said. “He underwent surgery during the night. There’s still a bullet lodged in one of his lungs. He’ll need a second operation.”

I was a big fan of Axel. He was tall, handsome, elegant, and had an exquisite sense of humor. On TV, his chocolate almond eyes sparkled, and when he smiled, dimples formed below his cheekbones. His

chin was gently defined, and his voice was soft. His dark hair hung down his back in long braids.

“I’ve heard he’s an animal between the sheets,” Jennifer commented. “How does he look in real life?”

What kind of question was that? For God sake! When I picked him up, the man was dying. Jennifer didn’t seem to care.

“Oh, God, Clara!” she exclaimed. “This is so cool. He’s single, you know. Maybe he’ll date you.”

She didn’t really mean it. Even though Axel was now rich and popular, Jennifer knew that my parents would never forget that the artist had been born in Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince’s poorest, roughest, and most dangerous slum of shacks, dust and ditches filled with human waste. Even the police did not dare enter the enormous shantytown, where young men armed with automatic rifles zipped around in stolen four-wheel-drives.

It was difficult to admit, but my parents and their “upper class” friends were repulsed by the “stupid mass.” Success and money did not change anything. You were born “lower class,” you would die “lower class.” If, at least, Axel was light-skinned... Then, maybe they would tolerate him as a *friend*. Light skin and straight hair were important characteristics in the eyes of the Haitian “elite.” Axel with his tightly curled hair was *too black*. Worse, he only spoke Creole, which was not even allowed at my house.

It was not only until a few years ago that I had discovered how deeply rooted intra-racial color prejudice was in Haiti. When I was in middle school, I had brought home a classmate. His name was Junior, which he pronounced Jinyò. Red light. I had invited him to study at my house because he lived in a neighborhood of Pétion-Ville with no electricity. He had to travel to a lighted public plaza every day to study for his classes.

Junior had made my family uncomfortable, just like a bad smell. I could still remember the shock on my mother’s face when he had entered the living room. She had been polite toward Junior but,

separating me from him, she had whispered in my ears, "What is wrong with you? Next thing I know, you'll be going out with our *gason lakou* (custodian). We raised you better than that!"

My parents pulled me out of that middle-school nine weeks before I was supposed to graduate and put me in a more expensive, American school to ensure that I would get the right acquaintances.

There was no denying it. The country spoke for itself. Anyone who was light skinned got the royal treatment, and men like Junior or Axel, with a darker shade of black, were expected to stay in their assumed lower class place. Light skinned blacks were considered bourgeoisie while darker skinned blacks were marginalized. They suffered institutional racism in a predominantly black population. When a rich high-school student had shot an underprivileged classmate the year before, the police had showed so little concern that they had closed their investigation within a week. Only when the mob had protested in front of the school had higher officials in town reacted.

I was sometimes ashamed of having educated parents with such ignorant attitudes. Somehow, I hadn't been poisoned; I considered myself to be open-minded. Axel was my idol. I didn't care about his background or the color of his skin. I didn't care that he was a self-proclaimed "rasta" with thick hair. I would definitely date him. Now that I lived on my own, I probably could go against my parents' wishes. I could go with what was in my heart. If my parents could not tolerate the mass, they should probably move out of Haiti, and go live in that huge house that they owned in Pembroke Pines, Florida.

A waitress brought us two glasses of lemon juice along with sandwiches. Jennifer would not stop asking questions. "Does he know who brought him to the ER? Will I get to meet him?"

I replied with mono-syllables, still thinking about Axel. If I were to date him, I would probably have to choose between my family and my boyfriend. My mother would scream and yell at me for a while and then she would cry. She would *never* want me in her house again, and she would never come to my house either. Maybe my dad would kick Axel until he broke his collarbone. Or maybe he would pay someone to kill the singer... Yeah, he probably would.

"I know you are in love," my godmother would say, "but the world isn't all happiness. There are so many problems already that marrying into another class would cause hassles. Those people are different from us. Besides, where would you live? In

Cité Soleil? Not everyone will accept your marriage. You will have those people against you for the rest of your life. Marry someone respectable."

It wouldn't matter if Axel treated me with utmost respect and cared about me. I would be disowned for disgracing the family. Could I tolerate becoming an outsider? Could I tolerate the embarrassing statements? "Those people are all like that." "Those people always lie." Would others see me as "ruined" if I dated him? Would my friends think that he didn't love me, that he was only trying to climb the social ladder?

Then I thought about the wedding. My parents and their friends would probably not show up. I would be all alone on the day that was supposed to be the happiest of my life. I could suddenly visualize my mother-in-law chewing with her mouth open, speaking with her mouth full, licking her fingers, holding her fork like a shovel and stabbing the food as if it was going to walk off of her plate. I imagined Axel's great aunt eating off my plate without permission and his Uncle Jean making slurping noises. Wasn't it the way that people from a shantytown behaved? They would interrupt me when I talked and remind me that I was *just* a woman. They would hug me and put their greasy fingers in my hair, while shoveling the food in like it was their first meal in a week. I could see Axel's family spitting out food they didn't like and sharing indecent jokes in booming, croaking voices. Some guests would probably smell like the inside of a dumpster.

I was stereotyping, wasn't I? Maybe I wasn't as open-minded as I thought I was. Maybe I was no better than my parents. In fact, while my imagination was running wild, I could feel the repugnance that my parents had tried (and apparently succeeded) to instill in me toward the "people." It surprised me at first and I felt ashamed of myself. I realized that I could never be proud of Axel in front of my friends and relatives. What would happen when he'd say "comment vas-ti" instead of "comment vas-tu"? I would die of embarrassment. I could hear the whispers behind my back. I could even smell the cheap cologne of the fat woman Axel would eventually have an affair with.

Later, when Jennifer asked me (once again) how it was to brush with a star, all I could think about was a man eating with his hands. I pictured that same man stealing a whole turkey at a wedding reception, while I sat alone in my wedding dress, listening to the ramblings of deranged minds.

Ride

Jessica Francois

As I laid my eyes on him
all I could think was
I wanna ride

He was beautiful in a sexy, mannish way
He had flawless black skin
a gorgeous body
I wanna ride him

He was known to be fast
He took the ladies' breath away
He had momentum and knew how to make it last
Damn! I wanted to ride

The way he maneuvered his body
He had elegance, style, and grace
He wanted to get personal
I had to ride

As I climbed on top of him
No protection necessary
I had to have the rush
I wanted to ride
No interruptions

I could feel his strength under me
making me want more
than life itself

As I began to ride
I felt my body tense up a little
It felt good to be on top
I was in control
I could feel the wind in my hair
the tears in my eyes
as the adrenaline rush hit me hard

I wanted to go faster
I wanted more

But right before my eyes
I could see
a stop sign
It all came to a screeching halt
I had to ease up on
my Harley
or Mr. Davidson as I like to call him



Love Me Backwards

Drypoint

Erin O'Dea

Hannah Roberts



BRUSHING TEETH

Hannah Roberts

Slow, dragging steps to the sink. Fling open the medicine cabinet, wondering how much effort it would take to knock the door off its hinges. Fumble for the necessary tools. Shut. Pause to study the mirror: red eyes, wet face. Back to the task at hand. Grip the tube, squeezing it all out into the open. Smother the toothbrush in pasty goop. Inhale the minty, not unkind fragrance. Here we go.

A thrust to the mouth, swishing bristles on bicuspid with passion. Too much ferocity and the gums start to bleed... calm down, focus. Even breathing, even strokes. You've got time. Probe into the most neglected recesses - almost gagging, pull away. Everything has been uncovered. Let it loose.

Once the head goes down, banishing the resurfaced to the sink. Spit again, for good measure. Turn faucet, close eyes, and bring water to your face - splash it on the walls, unheeding. Reach to the right - a towel, a friend. Bury your face in its cotton depths. Resurface to gaze down the drain. All of it. Gone. Forever. Flee the bathroom on light feet - feeling so much cleaner.

"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself." - Henry Miller

JUST A GIRL IN THE CHECKOUT LINE

Hannah Roberts

She paused in the aisle, unsure where to turn. Choosing the left, she strode to the refrigerator case, flung the door wide, and savored the refreshing feel of the cold air within. That was what she needed, something to chill her. To numb her to the pain. She viewed the options critically, then chided herself for bothering. She swiped two bottles of Heineken and shut the door.

Twenty-four quick steps to the pharmacy counter, with the bottle caps digging into her right hand. Taking inventory of the first shelf: pain relievers. Second shelf: allergy medication. Third shelf: aspirin. She grabbed for the largest bottle, forcing herself to ignore the cost. What did it even matter anymore? People got laid off all the time, and her penny-pinching wouldn't be of any help if she was next. Mom would have to find another way to make ends meet, because in this world you had to fight for your own. You couldn't depend on getting anything from anybody...even if your life depended upon it.

She held the items to her chest and joined the line, anxious to pay and leave. It was a long wait, even for a Friday night - did none of these people have anywhere to be? She surveyed the crowd ahead of her - a melee of rundowns who seemed to believe that happiness comes cheap and in edible form. Her head began to shake out of pity and habit, until she realized - in horror - that she fit in perfectly. She'd turned into one of *them*, hugging her drugs of choice to her bosom. She caught her reflection in the glass on the window, and gazed disgustedly at the lines on the careworn face. What happened to the ambitious girl with the ever-present smile? Was her mother's insistence that she was worth something a bald-faced lie?

No. It was that *man* that had taken everything from her, left her scarred and confused. She'd been so innocent - but did he care? And the whole time demanding to be called "Father"...until he got bored, and left Mom with the family and the bills. And now Jake, who said he'd never leave had disappeared into thin air. Was getting love from a man as futile as getting happiness from a chocolate bar? Her eyes wandered back to the quickly diminishing line in front of her. They rested on the young man in the green polo shirt, then the biker with the snake tattoo. Were they

all the same? Wolves ready to pounce on her and rip away every last vestige of her purity and innocence?

The biker produced a five-dollar bill in exchange for his beef jerky, and walked out of the automatic door and into the night. She placed her groceries, her last resort for comfort, on the checkout counter and fumbled for her wallet.

"I'm going to need to see some I.D. for this."

For the first time she noticed the cashier, a bent man with salt-and-pepper hair and a lined face that made hers pale in comparison. He held the beers in one hand, beckoning - not unkindly - with the other. His nametag bore the label, "*Hello, I'm Richard.*" Richard...of all the bitter ironies. She quickly handed him her license, fidgeting as she wondered what this man must be like. A good citizen, no doubt, who always loved his wife and kids and was respected - even with a job like this. Why couldn't her father have been a decent, hardworking man like this?

Suddenly, she realized that he was looking at her license with his wrinkled face in an expression of disbelief mixed with horror...and a hint of longing.

"Is there a problem with my license Mister?" she forced herself to say. "I'm going to get it renewed next month..."

The old man liked up with moist eyes. Green eyes. Like other eyes that she had known and dreaded, eyes that she dreaded when they grew stormy. Her brain refused the information, but then, he said the one word that confirmed the deep terror in her soul.

"Lisa...?"

The room spun. How could *he*...? She ran out the door as if drunk, not stopping until she'd made it all the way to her car. She unlocked the door and crawled into the back seat, shutting the door and crumpling into a ball. Sobbing, she whispered, "Oh God why..."

Thoughts in a rush, she began to rationalize: I can get away. I need to go home. I don't ever have to see him again.

It was then that she realized that he still had her driver's license.

FALL

Hannah Roberts

Seven P.M., October thirteenth, and the Indiana air is crisp. She strolls along the sidewalk, alternately admiring the colors of the leaves and the color of her new boots. Financing her college education is tough, but every once in a while she rewards herself with a splurge.

Rounding the corner, she sees a man who seems deep in thought. So deep in fact the he is oblivious enough to walk right into her. Her purse spews its contents all over the grass, and the man comes to - muttering apologies, he scrambles to pick up the fallen items. He first reaches for the gum. She's a bit picky about this - it's always Dentyne Ice Spearmint. She'll rarely accept anything else, because she finds comfort in the familiarity. She regards new people with the same air as gum: one of suspicion and distrust. Next he hands her the wallet - it seems dated, with her high school ID card and a picture of her ex-boyfriend. Truth be told, sometimes she'd rather dwell on the past than appreciate the present. There are only a few small bills inside - she doesn't have much cash to spare, and she's terrified of credit cards. She loves her floral checks, and frequents the stores that accept them. Her mother has always taught her to rely on checks - too much cash and she'll get mugged. He passes her the makeup bag - full of essential parts of her identity. There is the bronze foundation, her first real clue to her heritage. Noticing the difference between her mother's complexion and her own, it wasn't a total shock to find out that she was adopted.

The mascara was only used when she had the complimentary tissues - she hoped this bout with homesickness would end soon, but in the meantime she could never count on a day with dry eyes.

Finally he gives her the keys: passport to her life. The key to her dorm, with the roommate who didn't understand her. The roommate who went off and partied while she cried in her bed. Some days she wished she could take that key and lock out the other girl, along with the rest of the world.

The car key - she had such a love/hate relationship with that hunk of metal. Sometimes with the radio blasting and the windows down, she could almost pretend she was back at home, picking her sister up from swim practice. But when the car was in the shop and the repair bill came, she found herself bemoaning this thing called "adulthood" wondering whether she could turn in her license. Then she could be a little girl again, one who needed to be driven everywhere. Satisfied that everything was back in her possession, the man straightened awkwardly.

Giving her a sheepish look, he confessed, "This is going to sound strange, but... I feel like I know you."

"I first became interested in writing when I was given the chance to write for a student newspaper in junior high. I realized what power words have - even among middle-schoolers. In high school, I wondered how my classmates could hate English, while I loved it. I don't think I could pick a favorite style of writing, but I enjoy witty poetry and flash fiction. I'm hoping to become a screenwriter. The arts are the flesh's connection with the soul - math and science tell us what we are; the arts tell us why we are. Brain integrates with heart, and we present our works, proclaiming to the world, "This is me." It's also an interpersonal connection: universal themes resonate with everyone, it's part of being human. My story is that of so many others... we are variations on a theme." -Hannah Roberts



Luis

Graphite

Katherine Cooper

Goodbye Daddy

Renee Sahatdjian

The strong hands I remember from my childhood
Lay across his chest
Slightly crinkled at the fingertips
The rosemary hiding their rapid fading

Strong hands making hot cocoa with mini marshmallows
Strong hands writing my sick notes
Strong hands lifting me over strong shoulders

The stench of erosion took the breath away
Leaving salty tears in its wake
Empty darkness consumed a half-opened eyelid
A cruel mistake
A grotesque awakening

Black covered a sea of mourners
The strong had fallen
The rotting flesh laying in the wooden box
Symbolized what could not yet be spoken

My childhood was over.

Ode to a Gambler Daddy

Catherine Barrett

“Where is your father this cold, cold night,
Though we’re in a tropic zone,
The car is gone – he’s out of sight
And your mother’s all alone.”

You’ll find him yonder in Pompano Park
The horses are running tonight
And though his ante might be small
He never gives up the fight.

Trifectas, quinnellas, sing in his heart
Like Irish melodies
And nothing can stop him from being there
Like a wino -- he has a disease.

“Doesn’t he care that his sisters and brothers
Have come from the North for awhile”
No, my friend, they’ll have to wait
Till the horses have run their last mile.

“Surely he’ll be here to carve the roast
When Thanksgiving Day draws nigh”
I fear not – you see – Calder’s open
And his hopes are running high.

“Surely he’ll be here on Christmas Day
To celebrate the Yule.”
No, my friend, the track is fast
I know it does seem cruel

That he should desert family and friends
For a horse that is fast or slow
But see him smile, he has such flair
Losing at Pompano.

A Family Who Drinks Together

Marines Alvarez

Café is the smell of my family
and my cup, cold in my hands, lulls
me to a place where I can hear them
sneaking between shouts of *Español*
and their broken whispers of English,
gossiping about newly divorced *tias*
and my 80-something grandfather
who has illegitimate children in three
countries. Not allowed at the grown-up
table, I sat with my sisters, all of us
staring as they savored every drop
of coffee and scandal, gently nudging
us away saying we were too young
to have it yet.

Now exiled to the land of learning,
I long for the fragrance of hot caffeine
daddy's cologne hiding in his beard,
the simplicity of early school, and
notes excusing anything: *To whom
it may concern, please excuse
my daughter from life.*

Instead, my head hangs above a book
education on lined paper, surrounded
by the smell that hasn't aged a day
and the memory of their conversational
song, the bass of my father's subdued
laugh, mother's crashing cymbals
and the drum roll of hands slapping
the table in amusement.

Sitting there, Indian style on my bed
dressed in cartoon pajamas,
pretending to be a grownup,
my childhood is in this cup's cold aroma.
I'm old enough to join the gossip table
have a drink and a few things to say
but I'd rather go back to those days,
when the clank of the charred coffee
pot was nothing more than an excuse
to sit together, if only for a while.



Marines Alvarez

“As far as I remember, my father was always writing, usually on really random places like napkins and business cards. He would read me bits of his stories and poems, and they always seemed witty and incredible. I don’t know that I ever “started” writing. It’s just always been in my life. I mostly write poems though. I dabble in short stories, have worked as an editor for a newspaper, and recently started writing copy for a watch company. On the whole, I think the arts are necessary, but sadly under-appreciated, especially amongst people my age. I think everything I read, not just poetry, has an effect on me especially because an element of my writing is always fictionalized. All authors, all writing inspires me whether it’s because I want to strive to achieve what they achieve or because I want to avoid the mistakes they made.” -Marines Alvarez

The Tree of Hearts

Marines Alvarez

A sickly green withers on the bare ground,
more weeds than grass, more dirt than weeds,
fruitless fruit trees planted by once little hands.
A faded, red block of concrete separates dead
nature from the dead residence, chipped beige
paint and a worn-out screen door that groans
when pushed by wind. A metal shed houses
rusty tools and a broken door, an olive green
clothes line bows under the weight of the sun’s
rays. An undersized grapefruit tree peels way
with time, age, beaten by storms, unable to lose
the carved names of someone’s forgotten loves.
Brittle branches reluctantly prop up a tree house
hidden openly amongst insipid leaves, haunted
by a departed childhood, whispering their story
to anyone who will hear. Three sisters, it says,
listening to the call of crickets when mommy
had nothing nice to say and daddy couldn’t
say nothing at all. Nothing lives here now,
not the critters or sisters. Bitter memories
crowd the place, make it hard for anything
to survive.



Untitled

Photograph

Linh Nguyen

JULIE

Jamie Franks

Ever since before I could remember, I have lived my life in a tank. I take nourishment from feeding tubes implanted in my arms and throat, I breath through tubes placed in my nostrils. Much of the time my eyes are closed. They believe me to be in a constant stasis, unfeeling, unknowing.

They don't know how wrong they are. I hear everything they say, I hear the gasps of wonder and the jeers that I am the product of inhumanity when college students come to study. Late at night when the lights are off and most have gone home, I hear secrets that the scientists spin off of me. They think they speak to the soulless husk of a person.

I know very little of the world outside of the serene sterility of the lab, but I know many things of what immediately surrounds me. This is my existence, there is no other for me. I do not grow bored or tired. I simply sit here in my liquid prison and I listen.

Sometimes, when all of the secret-spewing scientists and the cleaning staff have left, I allow myself to open my eyes and I take in the blurry forms of the objects that make up this little world. There are other tanks, some have small dogs of foxes, others have birds, and still others contain large fish. They all float in true stasis, but none are like me. I am the only human. There are glossy black tables and clean, white tiled floors. On the tables are many instruments and containers made of glass. These contain various substances, many of them mixed with my blood. I know this, I have heard them say it, I have felt their extended needles drawing the precious substance from my veins. It doesn't hurt, there isn't much that pains me.

During some of these curious nights, I get the empty feeling that I believe can be described as loneliness. I cannot relate to life forms in the other tanks, they sleep, and I cannot know if they are here for the same reason that I am. There are no scientists in these long hours, though all will come back when

morning comes. They always come back.

What am I? Who am I? You may be wondering. They call me Julie, I don't understand why. Perhaps it gives them comfort to personify me. I am special, they tell me, thinking that I do not listen. In blood and body, I am special. I am immune to all known sickness, I don't know what this means. Some people see me and are angered. They say it is wrong to rip a newborn child from her mother's arms.

I don't know what a mother is, I can't tell if they are referring to me until the scientists speak back. "Her blood could hold the solution to cure anything!" they argue. Still they argue further. They say my "mother" died of the immune system deteriorating disease known as AIDS. They say I was born without the deadly virus, they say they've injected me with numerous sickness, including the AIDS virus.

And still, each virus was killed off quickly each and every time.

"This is my existence, there is no other for me. I do not grow bored or tired. I simply sit here in my liquid prison and I listen."

I still do not understand.

Years pass, I know of years because of the colorful calendars that the scientists put up at the beginning of each new one. They

marvel, they stare at me, mouths agape. I have not aged since I passed eighteen years of life. People with flashing machines called cameras, and bigger heavy black boxes also called cameras come in vast numbers.

"Look at Julie."

"Come see Julie"

"Julie, lovely Julie..."

These are the things I hear, and still the years pass. The first group of scientists pass on, a new group of younger ones replace them. The animals in their tanks have all died by now, I am the only one left. I still have not aged, more complex thoughts begin to run through my mind. 'Why am I here?' 'Is this the purpose I was created for?' 'Who am I really?'

Thoughts such as these trouble me, never before have I questioned my existence. I find myself opening my eyes more and more, careful not to let the scientists see. I always somehow know when they aren't watching me.

Time marches on, the second group of scientists are gone, and another new group replaces

them. "An immortal," they say, "We have found an immortal."

I wonder what this means. By this time, I am wondering what it is like to be free, to breathe the air outside of my tank, to be dry and warm and comfortable. To wear clothes. I wonder about love, the wondrous emotion that many of the scientists who speak to me have spoken about. I have taken to lifting my hands to press against the cool glass that binds me in the late hours of the night.

And still, as always, time passes and passes, scientists come and go. I have counted two hundred years. I still haven't aged. I still haven't changed.

The group of scientists now are beginning to grow uninterested. Spans of days begin to pass before I see them again, soon, it is weeks and I lose all track of time, there is no flip the calendar pages. Weeks turn to months, months to years, I suppose. Until finally, no one ever came anymore. I am alone, so alone. Sometimes, I cry, tears are hard to discern from the already cool wetness of the water that surrounds me. I bang upon the glass prison, I scream, I yell.

But no one ever comes.

And here I still sit, alone, cold, and yet never aging. I wonder how long it will be until someone finds me again....



Light Reflection

Photograph

Veronica Malo

"My interest in photography comes from the way I perceive the world. I like to show others what I see. I want to project to others the emotions that certain moments can bring along. I feel that most of the time we are so involved in our everyday routine, that we don't take one minute to observe the wonders around us." -Veronica Malo



Diana and the Beach

Ink and Permanent Marker

Westley Cedeno



“I have been drawing all my life. It is very cliché to say this, but as much as other artists say this, with me it is all to be true and I have the childhood portfolio to prove it. My interest in drawing started off as being a coloring-book kid with my Crayola crayons in hand in the early 80’s. I loved coloring in my coloring books and one day I decided that I had the ability to create my own. My love for drawing only grew greater with age and by the time I was ten I had already made the decision that this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I proceeded in being a rebel graffiti artist throughout my middle, and high school years... I have made plenty of money with the graffiti art from painting wall murals to airbrushing clothing, cars, and beyond. The range of media that I work in is very vast and I am all self taught minus a few classes taken here at B.C.C. I have self taught myself how to use all common traditional media such as pencils, conte crayons, colored pencils, charcoal, soft and oil pastels, pen and ink, prismacolor markers, water colors, acrylic brush painting, traditional oil painting, spray painting, glass etching, all forms of airbrushing including mural work for interior and exterior, and automotive applications. My

two new greatest additions that have consumed my early twenties are the digital arts and tattooing. I had the opportunity of apprenticing for an incredible tattoo artist/business man/street hustler in early 2004 and picked up the trait quickly, and strongly to produce work out of the shop. The digital media was first started somewhere back in 2001 and is what I spend mass amounts of time on in the present. I work heavily, and am self taught with friendly help from my life mentor Disko in the Adobe Creative Suite, digital painting applications, and 3D application programming. The 3D world is what’s newest to me and I am enjoying educating and pursuing my creative dreams and endeavors through it as with all digital media. The ultimate goal is to one day launch a clothing line similar to Marc Ecko’s, and see to have affiliation working with the film world and keep strong ties to my roots, especially with airbrushing, oil painting, and tattooing. Traveling around the world on laptop as a freelance graphic designer/illustrator is definitely on the agenda too. My job title at B.C.C. is part time Student Life Graphic Designer and a wonderful position it is. Having the opportunity to work where I go to school is fantastic and I have had the opportunity of educating and creatively growing like no other. I am responsible mainly for advertising all on campus events including major events like the B.C.C. Comedy Show and Latin Heritage month. I work with various on campus clubs and organizations to develop logos and various graphic applications.”

-Nick Lopes



Self Portrait 2006

Drawing

Nick Lopes

Oppression Kills

Sarah Joy Porter

There is no noise when my soul is crushed,
No angels moan and cry or gnash their teeth,
Only silent pressure, so I will be dumb and no one will know.
There is a giant hand that rips and tears at my belly,
And makes my tears ache till they flow.
I can feel the pulp rushing from my veins,
And this beast that squeezes me like a breakfast citrus,
Won't stop until the juice runs down his hand.
Silently I watch as a burial shroud unfolds over my corpse,
And time will keep unfolding because they will forget,
But bearing this weight makes me shutter and moan,
Until the pressure inside me overcomes the pressure around,
And I throw the lid of my coffin away from my body,
So angrily that the earth moves away from above me,
I cry and dance when I feel my feet pound the grass.
Every bone, every muscles resists as I rock my body,
I want to break free, and run from this shroud that is killing me,
But it will chase me and mock me.
Every day I wish my shroud would melt to hell,
So the heat when it hits the flames will light rockets,
That will shoot through the earth and blaze into the air,
Then everyone will see as they fall and dissolve into ashes.
But for now I make horrible noises when I scream silently,
"I choked, that's all, I'm fine," I say,
And the cows will go on grazing and I will go on warring,
Sometimes I will bang my head against the glass,
Just to feel the lump rising and know that I am alive,
"Why is this window broken? Your soul is not crushed,"
But it is crushed, and drained and lies drying in the heat,
And no one can know it, not even I.

Separation Anxiety

Sarah Joy Porter

This was once upon a time;
Will it end in never more?
This isn't happily after all
But a bloody, reckless war

Her spirit cries for answers
Searching prying, groping, cursing
Crimson blood falls from her eyes
Tear drops giggle at her hurting

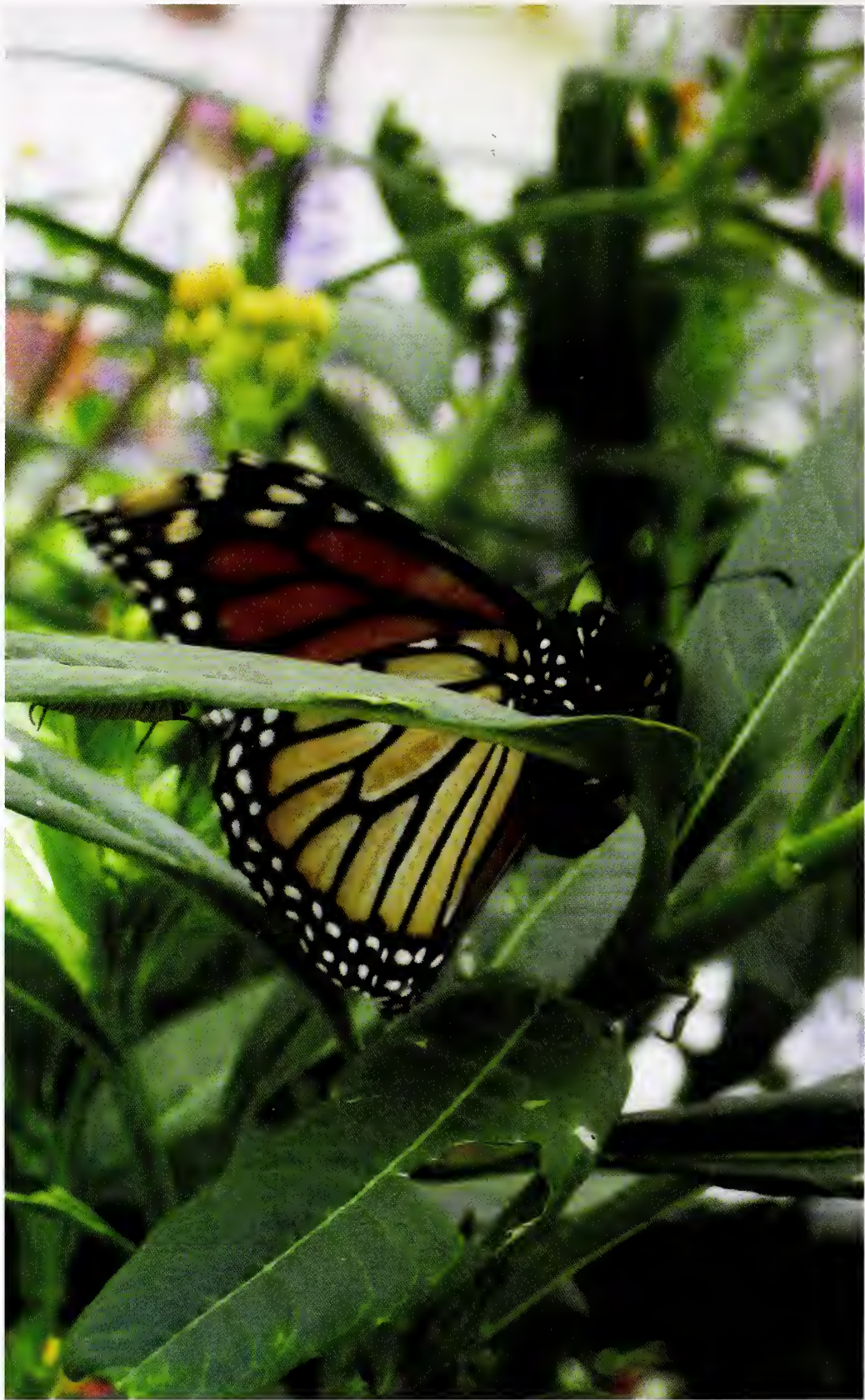
But Fire swept reckless through grass
And it snickered in her ear
You haven't tasted pain
Until his kisses disappear

This twisted crippling emotion
Will it leave for her no peace?
Will she transcend her human?
And find her un-human release

The fire laughed heartily at this
And shoved her to the ground
Survival does not think of love
When fighting not to drown

She can't speak for his emotions
When her heart is in such turmoil
She can't pull daggers from his heart
When she knows he's never loyal

The drops of pain to her, incessant
Pound and burn away her flesh
But they drip life's sweetest honey
What is revealed is raw and fresh



Metamorphosis

Photograph

Veroncia Malo

“There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it’s going to be a butterfly.”

- Buckminster Fuller



Winged Wonder

Photograph

Amanda Leigh Conrad

“If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change.” - Buddha

Mailing Address: 6

Adelard Gasana

8 hours then descend into Amsterdam,
But No time to enjoy the pleasures of the infamous country.
Catch the next plane off to Paris,
But the city of romance will not be the final destination.

For the place desired is not famous for its drugs, women, sex, or love.

Into a timid mini-car,
Shake, left, right, Jolt another right, 3 hours more.

To a town that phantoms into the mountains, High,
Overlooking a glacial lake.

Ask a local to find this town, a simple street rather.

Above an unimportant wine valley.
Deep into the crisp air unattainable in the States.
The Ferraris will echo,
A sign of nearing the journey's end.

Into mountains, courting the bright moon lit nights.
Towering over a place Charlie Chaplain spent his last days.
A place of mute existence.

NO city noise, NO police sirens, NO Ambulance screams.
NO Fame, NO misfortunes, just freedom to be.

Only amicable peace.
Overlooking this silent arctic lake, with a name not to be recollected.
Calmness will be in the air.

A place worthy of retirement, if known of its existence.

A Street, a town, a city, not desiring a mark on any map.

Where you'll find me.
The doors will already be unlocked.

Mailing Address: 6, Promasens, Switzerland,
Lost somewhere outside Lausanne and Fribourg.

Between Silver Rails

Steffen Besada

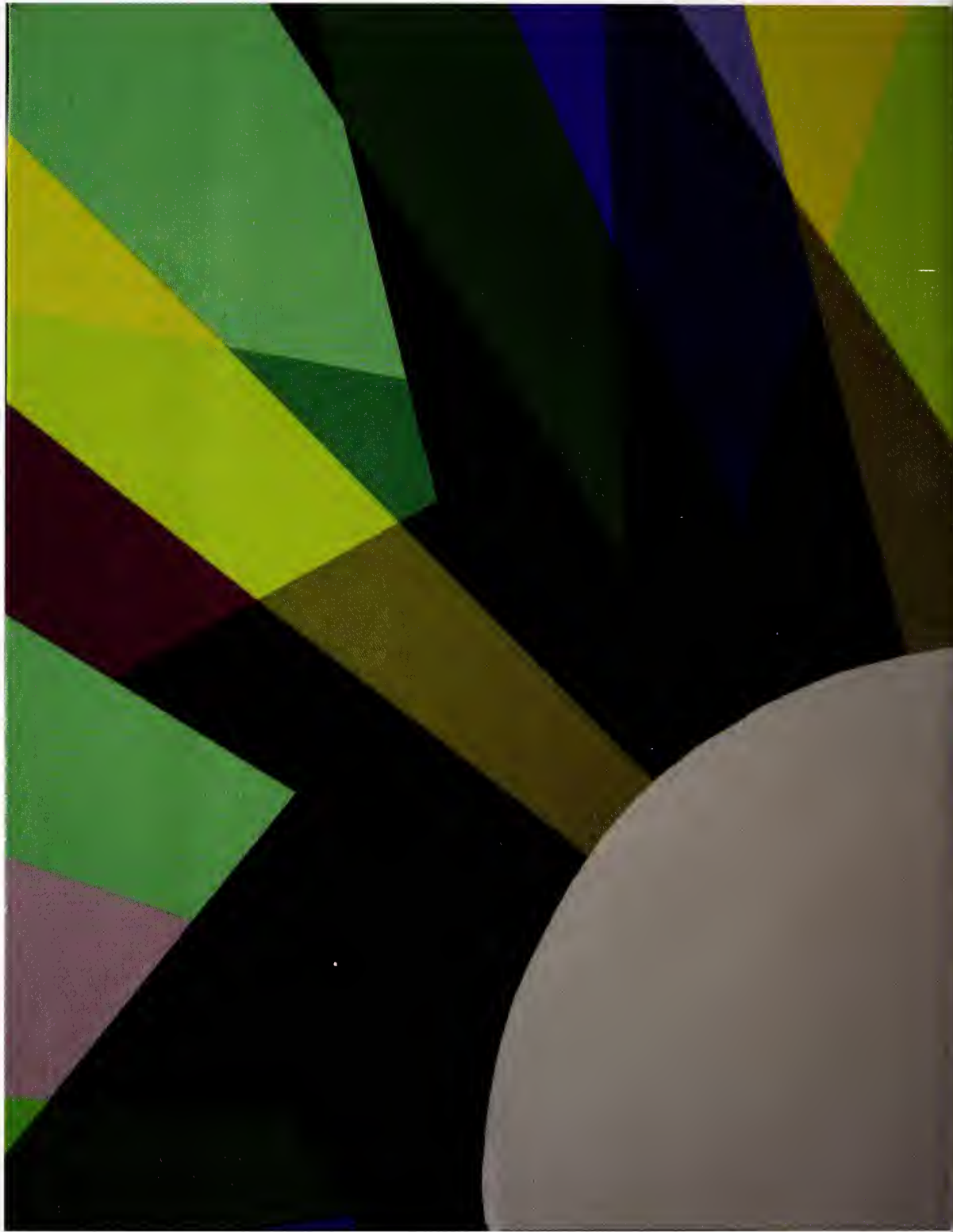
He's there as he usually would be, on his hunchback, eyes closed, body tense, as if holding on to something he has no intention of letting go. His arms bruised from banging on the silver rails that enclose him. On the inside of his dangling bicep, a three and a half inch strip of veins pump in and out with no muscle to shield them. The unsteady movement of his hand holding the spoon from Parkinson's disease stained his faded blue hospital gown near the top with chocolate. His wrinkly thin skin pulls tightly to fragile bone, his jaw open for inhaling shallow breaths, while illness emanates from his pale face. No smile escapes the chapped lips that feel nothing but pureed food, neither a cry released from the broken hip that torments him. His crunched body shrivels up slowly, as though he were out in the sun drying from constant pressing heat. What is left of him or what has been taken away is of no real concern. The shoes of life he walked this earth were mostly tailored by his own hands.

Patio Chair

Natalia Szenkman

I fell out of a chair,
I scraped my knee.
Mouth full of lawn,
elbow full of dirt.
And I laughed.
Sometimes
laughter is the best medicine
for a hip full of bruises
and a heart torn in two.
I picked up the chair
and sat back down.

It's going to be ok.



Noche

Acrylic on Canvas



Melanie Mosquera

Dia

THE EXTRAORDINARY

Jamie Worthington

You want extraordinary? Don't look to art and literature. These are types of creation used to express, to escalate, to illuminate, sure - but we turn to these to ESCAPE the ordinary. Finding beauty in a still-life means getting out of your own life, and reading is a release from the world outside our imagination. These are a way out of the everyday.

If you truly want the magnificent from the mundane, look around. Pick it out of your own sensory perceptions. Make it. Be it. Seek it. Your favorite novel isn't amazing, but the single mother who is in your Mon/Wed ENC class who works two jobs to support her children and is still attending school to better her life - she is amazing. The server who brings your lunch, who smiles sincerely and hopes you deem him worthy for a meager tip so he can continue paying his ailing father's medical bills, or the struggling entrepreneur who is trying to break into business against the odds of big-name competition so he and his partner can afford a house and to build a life together. The recent immigrant who is held up and back-checked at every bureaucratic turn for proper credentials, identity, green card, right-to-exist papers stamped in triplicate, just to get a job. The victims of the Indonesian tidal wave and of the hurricanes who are rebuilding, the survivors of the Holocaust, the refugees from Darfur, the homeless yet hopeful, the tired, sick, maimed, hated, bereaved, assaulted, fighting, poverty-stricken, ill, and yet not giving up. The humanitarian efforts around the world, the people who donate their time and energy to the cause of alleviating human suffering and injustice, the activists who push for equality for ALL and nothing less, no compromise, those who actually live LIFE rather than just live, or worse - let life go altogether. It is in these stories, this everyday drama of existence-under-pressure that you will find the absolute beauty of humankind, the extraordinary.

Jamie Worthington



“My interest in writing stems from my love of reading; when I was young, I read to escape, and I found that reading other works, of all variety, gives me a deeper connection to our collective human condition - understanding comes with reading, and a greater sense of unity is inherent in understanding. Once you've experienced a facet or an insight to a foreign piece of human culture, you (more often than not, if open-minded) find that the difference isn't really divisive, and on the deepest intimate level, you can identify. This ties in to my overall perspective of the arts; textbook definition: art reflects culture. Extend that -- culture is everything we make, and everything we do. It is vast and ever-changing, just like the population, and there are countless idiosyncrasies and unique, beautiful perspectives to encounter and contribute to. It all joins together in one great tapestry; the function of art, in my opinion, is to connect us, and formulate peace and unity in creation. Art is a form of revolution, it ignites and carries it, signifying change in culture as quickly as a new style or genre is born. Overall, it's all contingent on perspective; art is both universal and deeply individual.” -Jamie Worthington

A SINGLE MOTHER'S RESUME

Takenya Quamina

It's 5:45, you wake up to a beeping alarm, screaming for you to begin another day; another day of hustle and bustle, and everyone getting on your damn nerves. You pause for a second, thinking of an excuse to tell your manager why you're not coming in today, tomorrow, and the next day after that, but resist the urge and think maybe another day when I can come up with a better lie.

You take a 15-minute shower and dress; it's 6:00 A.M., you wake your two kids up. Your four-year old daughter thinks she's a princess, (which she is) so she insists on wearing her princess costume to day care today. You let her know that big girls wear the clothes that their mommy buys with their hard-earned money and when she comes home she can be the princess of the universe if she wants. She looks at you and pouts and puts her clothes on, and for a split second you think she might have cut her eyes at you.

You hurry and change your one year-old son, even though you're running a couple of minutes behind. You can't help but look at how cute and adorable he is. Then you think to yourself, damn I make some cute babies! As he's looking up at you he's smiling with his two little teeth in his mouth, and the expression on his face makes you think that he knows exactly what you are thinking. You clean him up and put his little clothes on him. Today he's rocking a cute little shirt that says *Mommy's Little Man*, and he really is.

You make oatmeal and English muffins this morning. Your little girl insists to have coffee - instead you give her orange juice without the pulp. Your little man is trying to eat the oatmeal with his hands which he accidentally gets on your new red DKNY blouse.

It's 7:00 already so you clean the kids up and sit them down in the living room. You turn the television on channel 2 and *Teletubbies* is on, but you change it to *The Big Comfy Couch* instead, because of all the negative rumors about the characters cross-dressing.

You hurry and change your tainted blouse, and select a crème New York and Co. turtle neck. It's 85 degrees out today, but the show must go on, and all of your other clothes are dirty. You grab the car keys, purse, diaper bag, book bag and oh yeah the kids.

After everyone is strapped in the car seats, you head to *Stepping Stone Day Care* on 31st. Miss Tasha meets you at the door. You hand your babies over for the day, but for a second you wish you could just go to a park and spend the rest of the day with them. You let Miss Tasha know that your kids' father is going to pay the day care dues for this Friday, and you make a mental note as soon as you get to the office to let him know that the check he writes better not bounce or you are going to bounce your foot up his ass!

You kiss your babies and let them know you love them. It's 8 o'clock and you have thirty minutes to get to work. Traffic is backed up and you're annoyed. You realized that you forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer for dinner tonight. You hear your favorite song on the radio, *Baby Momma* by Fantasia; you turn the volume up and begin singing the song. That song represents everything you are going through as a single mother, from raising you kids, having no money at times, and having a babies' father who doesn't give a shit. But through it all you have your faith, love, and your beautiful children, and you wouldn't trade it in for nothing in this world. When it's all said and done you start another day to add to your resume.

“The appearance of things change according to the emotions and thus we see magic and beauty in them, while the magic and beauty are really in ourselves.” - Kahlil Gilbran



Color of the Land

Digital Photography

Johnny Louis

“If the stars should appear but one night every thousand years how man would marvel and adore.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson



Presence

Digital Photography

Mark Anderson

P'an Ku

Who Am I

Candeece Denise Mallo

Who am I ?

Do you know who I am?

Do you know what I have been through?

I am a future doctor. Your future friend,

I am the person sitting in front you

Wishing you wouldn't make fun of me.

I am the girl that cries every minute of every day because no one likes me.

I am the girl that everyone feels pity for,

I am the person that wished to be someone else. I am the girl that wants to be loved.

The one that wishes love would come her way.

I am the friend that people do not know about.

I am the girl that cuts her arms and legs to take away the pain.

The girl that has no father and a mother that does not understand,

The girl that wants to help, but no one wants her help.

I am the girl that puts a cover over her body to show no hurt has come.

I am the girl with no emotion on her face, who refuses to show hurt was there.

I AM THE GIRL PULLING THE TRIGGER TO END ALL OF MY PAIN

The Blues

Jamie Worthington

It's depression

A rainy 3am and you missed your dose of Prozac.

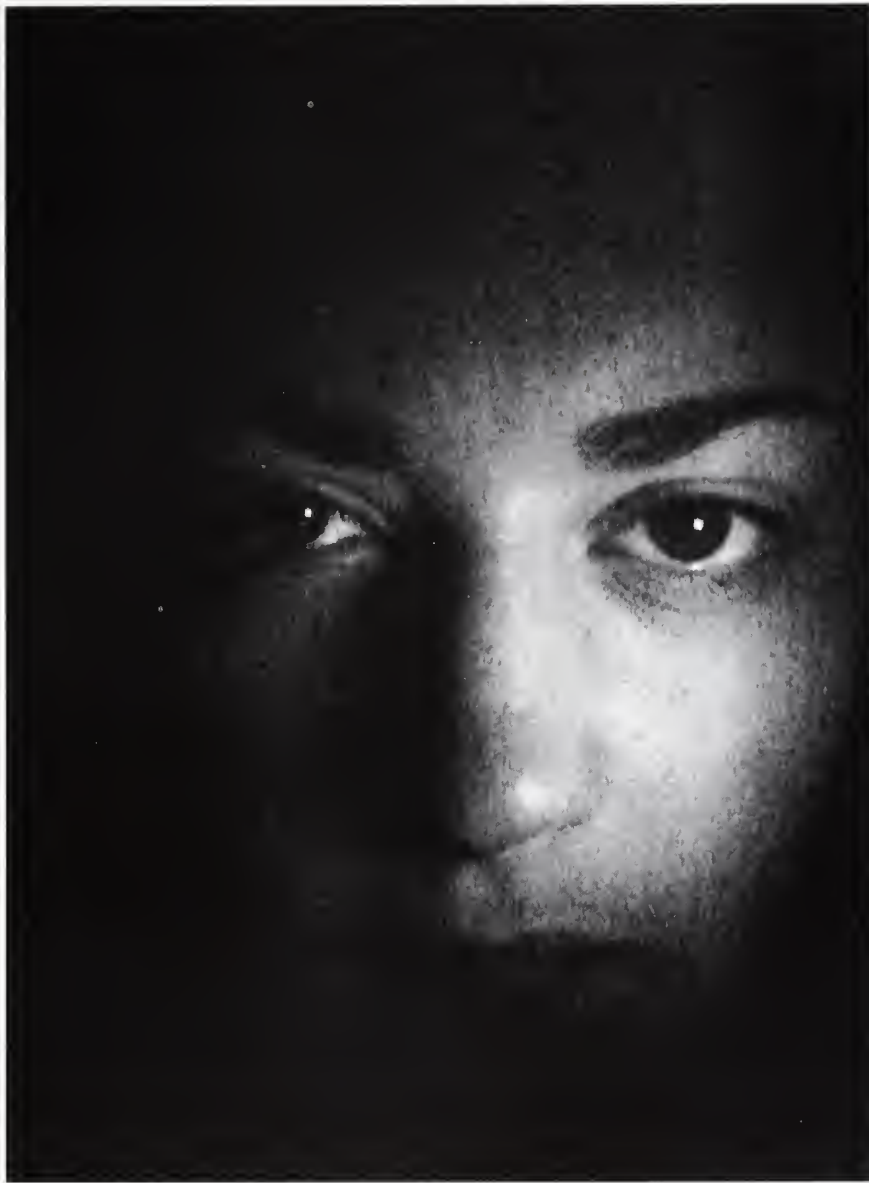
It's that quiet time, that late-night of the soul when you can't help but introspect on all your troubles, and your sorrow flows out like a solo, trembling trumpet keeping time with your tears and the gentle, shaking sobbing that no one else will hear.

It's being lost on your own streets, the back alleys of your mind where painful memories lounge like drunkards without hope and buried anger waits to mug the last bit of comfort off your back.

It's the moaning of the beaten, left-for-dead victim of a hate crime. The grieving of the widow losing years of love with the loss of life; the whimpering of a lonely child whose mommy's never coming home. The wounded soldier, the war-torn villager, the "broken, bruised, and bleeding," the man who lost a fortune and the woman who never had one - there are endless stories like these.

It's the sound that fills the blackness when our distractions are taken away, when we're confronted with our vulnerability and reminded of our mortality;

It's the individual strain in the human tragic song.



Pick the Red Ones

Maria Furtado

The way you hurt yourself
Is like no other cruelty
You might feel tempted
To practice.

Being as it is
A ceremony of secrecy
No one calls 911.

You stand there
With all those roads
To recovery ahead of you,
Absolutely unsure
Of the kind of shoes you should wear.



Many Faces

Graphic Art

Marlene Leslie

The Rage

Jade Brown

A bottomless rage builds inside
A malevolent force that drives men to kill
Having no bounds,
No end
No chance to make amends

Fiery, fierce, red eyes pierce the dense, desert air,
As that monstrous rage consumes the soul of men
Like a drifting black smoke,
It seeps into their hearts
And grows and gnaws with insane claws.

As the black hawk lands,
The anger descends,
And the sands of time shift,
Towards the prairies' end

The battle begins,
The prairie winds seek to westernize the east,
As the pungent stench of indifference pollutes the air
The steel, cold hands defend the ambivalent heart.

Oh demon of men!

The holy vs. the satanic
But as the battle rages on
And the blood mixes
It becomes unclear
Just who is demonic and who is angelic?

YANKEE

Kenneth J. Leon

Yankee.

That's what they call me.

For the first few days it annoyed me, but I got used to it.

The beaten Mercedes cargo truck bounced around on the old weathered road. I sat there in the back bed, looking down at the World War II-era Simonov SKS rifle in my lap, while the other men sat around me, chatting with each other.

I've been in this land for twenty-six day, eight days longer than I should have. By now I should've been in Germany, on an R&R leave with the rest of my group, but I stayed. They have no idea where I am now.

I don't have much of an idea either. This country came into existence only a month ago and it still has no government, no control, no peace, not even a name. It is just a stretch of territory, several hundred miles wide, with Russia to the north, and Georgia to the south. At least, that's what I remember from the objective maps I saw before I had arrived.

A cloth roof covered the bed of the truck, and the wind blew through it causing the cloth to ripple and flap about on the sides. The five other men around me were all armed. They had AK-47s, pistols, grenades and all of them looked eager to fight.

I liked out through the gap in the cloth at the back of the truck to see the rolling countryside. The morning was dimly sold and gray. Rain was imminent.

"Yankee," a gruff voice said.

I looked over to see Andrezej sitting across from me, offering an extra clip of 7.62 mm ammunition for the Simonov.

"Take it," he said in English with a heavy Russia accent.

I nodded and took it from him, slipping the cartridge into my coat pocket. I still wished that I had taken my equipment before I left my regiment.

I studied the Simonov. This thing was an antique. There were spots of rust on the metal parts of the rifle. Black tape had been hastily wrapped around the stock, holding the gun together. I had never held or fired one of these rifles before, and all that I knew about it was what I had been taught in training. It was semiautomatic, one shot for each pull of the trigger. Russian made, it had been issued to soldiers during the Cold War. I could

remember seeing the Viet Cong with these guns in a war movie once.

I looked back up at Andrezej. He looked disheveled but alert, inspecting his weapon.

"So where are we going?" I asked him.

"A town in the hills," he replied simply.

Another man said something to him in Russian. I only understood a few words of it and I caught my nickname. A smile appeared on Andrezej's face and he replied back to him, causing everyone except me to roar with laughter.

Andrezej looked back at me grinning.

"We're going to meet someone who can help us," he said.

I started to feel nervous. Something was going to happen today.

Andrezej noticed. "Feel like backing out Yankee?" he challenged. "You don't have to be here. This is not your fight."

For a moment I really thought about it. What *was* I doing? I was a US soldier. I had disobeyed orders. I had no right to be here and if caught, there would be a good chance that I would be put in front of a federal court.

But I had to stay. We were in the middle of a civil war, with several contenders vying for control of this territory. I had to help. If it meant helping Andrezej and his group get this place on its feet then I was going to.

"I'm not backing out," I said quietly.

His face remained impassive.

"Tell me again," he said slowly, "Why do you want to help us?"

I looked around. Everyone was looking at me, as if they sensed that something was amiss. They still didn't trust me.

I took a deep breath. "The people here...the civilians, I want to help them."

"But your country doesn't," Andrezej replied spitefully. "They took their soldiers and left us to fend for ourselves. They don't care that our people are dying."

"I can't speak for my country," I said.

He was silent, studying me. I spoke up.

"I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe in your cause," I said.

He didn't respond. A voice called out, as the driver in the truck's cab yelled something over the rumble of the diesel engine into the back bed. The men

perked up. Andrezej said something to a comrade, then yelled back to the driver. They spoke too fast for me to pick up what they were saying, but I understood the words, "Stop, stop!"

I could hear the sound of the engines downshifting and the truck slowed to a halt a moment later. Andrezej jumped up, assault rifle at the ready. He quickly climbed out of the back of the truck and I watched as the other men followed suit. For a moment I hesitated, then I got out as well.

The skis had grown even darker and I could feel small drops of water on my skin. A cold wind blew, causing the leaves of the trees that lined the road to rustle. The men took cover, staying close to the truck and keeping watch.

Andrezej slapped me lightly on the shoulder.

"Let's go Yankee."

I looked at him, confused.

"I thought we were going to a town," I said wincing at the shakiness in my voice.

"We will,"

he said looking down the road.

I followed his gaze to see a car; an old soviet-made sedan parked a short distance away on the side of the road. I stared at

it curiously, becoming tense. I watched as two men got out of the vehicle and began to walk towards us.

"Come on," Andrezej said to me. He started walking towards the approaching men. I followed slowly. The Simonov rifle felt like a weight in my hands, and the cold breeze chilled me to the bone.

"Who are they?" I whispered to him.

He said nothing. He didn't even look back at me.

As we neared closer to them, my heart started racing. The two men were unarmed, but they looked unkempt, threatening.

Without looking at me Andrezej whispered, "Wait here and keep your weapon ready."

And with that, he kept walking towards the men. I stopped, watching in silence. My mouth felt dry and my grip on the Simonov grew tighter.

Andrezej released his AK, letting it hang under his arm on a shoulder strap. He shook hands with the two men and began to speak with them. I couldn't hear

a word they were saying. It wouldn't matter anyway because I wouldn't understand it.

I studied my surroundings. There was a forest of trees on both sides of the road. There could've been fifty soldiers around and I wouldn't even know. I suddenly felt very exposed. I raised the gun, and kept my eyes peeled, my nervousness making itself known. I looked back at the truck, it was very far away.

Andrezej was chatting almost leisurely with the two men, smiling and relaxing his pose. One of the men said something to Andrezej who nodded and reached into his pocket, pulling out a wad of currency.

Then with his other hand, he quickly gripped the handle of the AK-47 that was on the shoulder strap.

The flash of flame from the barrel came first, before the sound of the gun firing I ducked down, crying out in fear, only to see one of the two men Andrezej had been talking to gripping his stomach and falling onto his back. He writhed on the ground in pain, blood all over his stomach and hands.

"As we neared closer to them, my heart started racing. The two men were unarmed, but they looked unkempt, threatening."

I watched as Andrezej stuffed the bills back into his pocket, then grabbed the other man by his shoulder. He turned the man around so that his back could face him, and gave

a kick to the man's shin, causing his leg to go out and to fall to one knee. The man screamed, but Andrezej shouted louder, grasping the man by the collar of his jacket and pressing the barrel of the gun to the back of the man's head.

I could hear Andrezej yelling "*Shut up! Shut Up!*" over and over again. He said something else causing the man to quiet down. Andrezej began to speak more quietly as the man whimpered. The man responded to Andrezej, who shook his head and pressed the barrel against the back of the man's neck.

All I could do was watch.

Andrezej said something now, louder this time. He shouted at the man and the man shouted back in desperation. Andrezej shook his head, hitting a switch on the side of the rifle and sticking it out in front of him.

"No..." I said.

Another shot, and the man was lying down on the road, next to his dead comrade.

Suddenly I felt lightheaded, the world had begun

to spin now and the color had drained from everything. The rain pelted my back and my head. My stomach convulsed and I could taste the bile at the back of my throat.

I could see Andrezej now, checking the man's pockets, seeing what he could find. After filing through his wallet, he stood up and started towards the car.

This wasn't right, I shouldn't be here.

I got to my feet and took a few steps towards the bodies, gripping the rifle with my right hand and holding it down by my side. Andrezej was peering into the car through the passenger side window. After a moment he pulled the door open.

He shook his head, "It had to be done."

I sputtered, almost choking in my rage. "What do you mean 'It *had* to be done'?"

"They were traitors to our cause."

His men came up to us and he said a few things to them. He passed the bag to another man and barked orders to the rest. I watched as the men pulled the limp bodied back to their car.

"Yankee, my words still stand," he said to me. "You don't have to be here. You have a home to go to. This country is my home and I am only doing what I can to make everything right."

The men shoved the bodies into the car.

"I felt a rush as I turned away from him and began to breathe heavily. I couldn't get enough oxygen and my heart was racing."

When I got closer I could tell that the one who was shot in the stomach was still alive. He twitched and moaned, looking over at me. I felt a rush as I turned away from him and began to breathe heavily. I couldn't get enough oxygen and my heart was racing.

"Yankee," an urgent voice behind me said. Andrezej was running back to me, carrying a black sports bag. He motioned towards the victims. "Help me with them."

I stepped back and as I stared at him, I could feel nothing but anger.

"Why did you shoot them?" I said coldly.

He didn't answer me. Instead, he waved towards his men and I glanced back to see them coming towards us.

"They were not our allies," he said.

"They weren't even armed!" I yelled, "You murdered them!"

"We do believe in peace," he continued, "But blood must be shed now in order to achieve it. It is only going to get worse before it gets better."

I couldn't respond. I was at a loss for words.

The rain had started heavily now, washing the blood off the road. I could barely feel it.

"It's not safe here. We have to leave now if we want to reach the town by nightfall. You can go with us if you want, but they know you are an American, and they know you are with us. Your chances of getting out of this country alone and alive are slim."

The men had come back now, and Andrezej had sent them to the truck. He looked at me for a moment in silence and then finally walked away. I stared at the blood on the ground, then over at the car. My eyes then went up to the dark skies.

I took a deep breath and started walking back.

An Uncertain World

Emily Moorhouse

Through complex thoughts I ponder on life and my being
But the searching eyes of my mind do not bring me to seeing
How in an omnipotent, supreme being can I believe?
How a never-ending universe can I conceive?
With all that is known, mankind is still met with strife
While attempting to explain the universal uncertainties of life
Could it be that there is no ultimate truth to be acquired
That I will never feel the confirmation I desire?
Might no extent of my thoughts or consultation of history
Uncover the secrets beneath all of these mysteries?
Must I accept a realization that there are no answers to find
Keep enduring these questions that torment my mind?
Where all else is not understood, perhaps one concept is clear
In a world devoid of certainty, one is flooded with fear



A World Apart

Photography

Emily Moorhouse

“There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child.
There are seven million.” -Walt Streightiff



Tina Koenig

"I've been an artist, creative director and professional writer for twenty years. I've always admired great art in all forms. These are all things I'm interested in: love, art, science and obsessive characters like hermits. I try to write good fiction, short plays and, on occasion, a poem or essay. Often in my work, visuals and quirky action come along with the dialog so I see myself heading in the direction of more playwriting and perhaps screenwriting. I've always been concerned with matters of aesthetics in music, the visual arts, and literature. The arts generally enhance one's experience of the world and other cultures. I feel grateful that I have not only the ability to appreciate great art but to involve myself in the creative process. Fine art at its highest level causes a transformation in the reader, listener or viewer. It sheds light on an essential truth. In the case of painting and sculpture, it may represent the pinnacle of craft and inspire awe. If I see a play or painting, or read something and feel exhausted following the experience, and exhale loudly, I know it has affected me in some way. Ultimately, how one interprets and responds to art, and what determines great art, is a very subjective experience. All good writing inspires me -- poetry, fiction and non-fiction. So does going to museums, the theater, eavesdropping and living."

-Tina Koenig

THE WEDDING FAVOR

Tina Koenig

Carl adjusted the lens' aperture settings on his Hasselblad camera compensating for any stray-light reflecting off the Tahitian waters. He carefully positioned a black accordion shade ensuring that his large-format shots would be spot on as befitting his reputation as a world-class fashion photographer.

He hated shooting seaside. The sand and salt damaged his equipment, breezes lengthened the sessions and the damn renegade reflections—he couldn't control anything. Tough. Other people had it tougher. These would be the best shots of his life. He owed that to the clients.

Even though the format was less forgiving, he preferred it when clients requested 2 ¼" square negatives instead of the new digital formats because it meant they understood the craft of image making.

The couple, Emmie and Daniel, was having a small wedding at a resort on Moorea, one of the many islands dotting the South Seas. Family members from both sides flew in as did forty close friends.

As Carl fidgeted with his camera, the wedding planner coaxed the bride and the groom toward a sandy spot between a stand of palm trees. The trees jutted out over the ocean providing a dramatic backdrop for their formal photographs.

Keeping tabs on couple's appearance and posture was a fashion stylist. Emmie's hair was arranged in a partial updo leaving lingering blonde curls cascading down to the middle of her back. The stylist reinstated stray hair blown by the slight breeze, glossed Emmie's crimson lips and applied loose powder to her face cutting bright spots. She touched up the eyeliner on Emmie's wide-set aqua eyes, carefully curling her lashes every so often. The bride wore no veil.

If Carl said the folds in Emmie's wedding gown cast shadows that were too strong, the stylist rearranged the fabric until it was satisfactory. She brushed sand off the slacks of the groom's trousers. As Carl called out changes in position, the stylist gently folded Emmie's fingers into the groom's palm, or around a bouquet of marmalade and white roses. She tilted Emmie's head by placing her palms on either side of her face making ever-so-slight changes in its angle--backward, to the right, or to the left. She would then make parallel the bride's shoulders using gentle prods.

When the bride stirred, so did the five million dollars worth of jewelry she wore. A five carat pear-shaped diamond rested just above the plunging sweetheart neckline of the wedding gown. Its discrete chain, made of diamond encrusted platinum links in the shape of nautilus shells, complemented the wedding planner's theme of the tropics. Earrings with a similar motif hugged the bride's lobes.

Emmie was glorious--as dazzling as any of the fashion models and actresses Carl had photographed. Her choice of a canary yellow gown, its box pleated skirt as broad as the sun itself, triumphed against the coral white sand and sky. Equally striking was the groom--although his jade eyes and bleached hair suggested more of an open collar print shirt with short sleeves rather than the black tie and tails he was wearing. Carl, in fact, was the only person dressed appropriately for the weather in a straw hat and Bermuda shorts. A day's growth of beard remained on his face after the long flight from London. His shoulder-length hair was stringy; he desperately needed a haircut.

The couple smiled over and over again--the bliss of the day radiating from their bodies. The fluidity and grace with which the couple allowed themselves to be choreographed by Carl and the stylist was inspirational. Occasionally one of the bride's heels would get caught in the sand causing her to stumble. Carl's assistant found a piece of half-inch plywood to place on the sand hidden beneath her gown. She never once lost her composure, and simply leaned on Daniel for momentary support.

It was clear that Emmie and Daniel had practiced the modeling exercises Carl had given to the wedding planner. The couple had rehearsed their smiles for friends and family members so they could learn how to *feel* which expressions looked the most attractive as assessed by those watching.

To help the couple synchronize the timing of their expressions, Carl had devised an audio system which beeped just as he was about to squeeze the shutter release. It worked well and he obtained wonderful shots except when someone blinked and he had to start over. Despite twenty years of experience, this was the first assignment where the models' body language gave no warning of approaching blinks. On the upside, neither the bride nor the groom complained of the sun being in their eyes.

While Carl took his pictures, family members and guests complimented the beauty of the bride and the generosity of the jeweler for donating the gems adorning her. The photographs would later appear in a national magazine as part of a special wedding supplement. A major cosmetics company had paid for the entire affair.

The photographs were Emmie's parents' idea. They wanted a memory. And even though Emmie and Daniel would never see the pictures; they agreed to pose.

Born sighted, Daniel was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa when he was seven years old. Neither of his parents were afflicted, but it was in the family. Genetic studies determined that the RP was on his father's side but nobody knew about it because his grandfather had died fighting in World War II.

Emmie suffered occipital lobe damage in a car accident when she was sixteen and the growth of scar tissue impaired all vision leaving only a slight ability to differentiate between light and dark.

A Braille teacher in New York had introduced them.

When Carl leaned over for a few minutes to change the film pack, the best man shouted over to Daniel, "Hey, you be careful walking out to the honeymoon bungalow because a narrow bamboo plank is the only thing separating you both from the bedroom and stinging coral below."

Even though the crack was menacing, everyone giggled.

Carl keeps a photo of Emmie and Daniel in his wallet. Whenever he is shooting a celebrity whose requests start amplifying into commands for no good reason other than they're used to getting away with abominable behavior, he pauses, takes out the picture, and says, "Let me tell you about this couple I shot in Tahiti." It shuts them up.

A BISHOP'S TALE

Tina L. Koenig

The home Maam kept for children like Nellie was a comfortable and clean two-story stone building. But Maam was nearly sixty-five and couldn't keep after an infant too. It wouldn't be much longer now--a few weeks at most. She and Maam had been counting the months since Nellie managed to slip away with John Willens, the butcher's son whom she hadn't seen since.

"Hoe ver is dat van hier?" Nellie said when the bishop, who arrived that morning, mentioned America. Maam translated, "How far is that from here?"

"On the other side of the ocean," he replied to Maam who translated the words back into Dutch.

Nellie was not so simple-minded that she couldn't understand what the bishop wanted. He wanted Nellie to give him her baby so he could give it to someone else. He spoke some broken Dutch and she *heard* him say she was too childlike to care for a baby.

The bishop had told his congregation that he was traveling to Amsterdam to research early Mennonite communities, but he was also interested in the pregnant girl. Even though it was the 1980s, the old world Mennonite traditions in Holland might shun an illegitimate child. However, in America, adoption had become expensive and complicated; couples snatched up available children faster than late October corn. He had a particular couple in mind.

"No," Nellie yelled. She rushed out of the house in the direction of Mrs. Thurman's farm.

"Let her go," Maam said to the bishop as he rose from worn leather quilted chair.

"She's forgotten a coat," the bishop said. "Does that happen often?"

Maam wasn't very strict. Some individuals might even say she was careless. But she alone had taken on the trying mission of raising the community's orphans.

Mrs. Thurman lived in a white wooden farmhouse with a tin roof surrounded by fields filled with tulips, horses, and cows. The other Mennonites shunned her when she married an outsider. Now in her forties, Mrs. Thurman was childless and a widower. Her son was killed when a harvester caught his overalls. Her husband died shortly thereafter of a weak heart. As best the doctor could tell, he starved himself to death and the largest muscle in his body gave out. After a time, the community took pity on her and employed her as a midwife, which helped her sustain the farm.

Nellie and Mrs. Thurman had wonderful times together plucking out simple songs on a piano. Instead of Bible stories, they read stories about princesses and talking animals--fairy tales Mrs. Thurman called them, written by a couple of brothers.

Nellie stood trying to catch her breath as she knocked loudly on the door. She turned away from the crisp fall wind, shivering as her long skirt billowed wide and her blonde hair whipped her face. In her haste, she'd lost her prayer kapp again. Maam would be mad because they are tedious to sew.

"Nellie," Mrs. Thurman said opening the door. "What are you doing here?"

"A bishop wants my baby," she said.

Mrs. Thurman looked quizzically at her.

"Come in and rest a while." She poured Nellie some milk and handed her a package wrapped in paper and tied with string.

"I stitched a prayer kapp in case it's a girl," she said. "If she's like you, she will need more than one."

"After a few minutes, we'll walk to Maam's and have a talk with her and that bishop." Mrs. Thurman had planned to announce her intentions about Nellie and the child's future to Maam tomorrow but the bishop's presence had forced her hand.

Crumpled, dry leaves raced past them, pressed by the wind as they walked quickly back to Maam's. Nellie always wondered where all those leaves ended up, year after year. Some were already brown. That

made her sad. The dark orange ones reminded her of Maam's *_suikers_*, moist cookies flavored with pumpkin.

In just that moment, Nellie felt something wet trickle down her legs.

"I've wet myself," she announced to Mrs. Thurman.

"Lord, it's the baby." She took Nellie's elbow and, as they reached the gravel path leading up to the house, she began shouting over the wind before even reaching the door.

"Maam, she's having the child now. Boil some water. Gather all the clean linens."

As they passed through doorway and foyer, Mrs. Thurman noticed the bishop still waiting.

"Clear the table in the kitchen," Mrs. Thurman instructed.

It was not a long labor, perhaps four hours. When a baby girl emerged, Mrs. Thurman whisked her away to the lukewarm water collected in a bowl on the wooden sideboard. As she washed the blood and membranes from her scalp, she saw that the girl's ears curled in upon themselves, as if they had withered and dried up. She scrutinized the body for other deformities as she cautiously bathed her. She knew doctors at many of the hospitals; she would phone a surgeon and have the ears repaired when the baby was old enough.

Maam bathed Nellie and helped her to an upstairs bedroom. They fended off Nellie's curiosity about the child by saying it would take time to clean and examine her.

Meanwhile, the bishop was eager to see the child. When he saw her ears, his brow arched and he whispered something to Maam.

Mrs. Thurman, who stood beside them with the child swaddled in a blanket, said, "I'd like to go upstairs now and talk with Nellie." She mounted the steps and asked Maam to prepare a hearty soup for Nellie. She'd need her strength now to feed the baby.

"It's a baby girl," Mrs. Thurman said.

"I'm tired Mrs.," Nellie said.

"It will pass."

"You know, you won't be feeling all that bumping and tickling in your stomach anymore." Then without explaining anything else, Mrs. Thurman handed the baby to Nellie who was sitting upright with her back against the headboard and pillows propped under her arms.

"Hold her with one hand under the head and another around the back." Mrs. Thurman sat on the bed carefully positioning Nellie's hands and keeping both of her own firmly pressing against the baby's back.

"Look at her ears," Nellie said. "They're all curled up like the fallen leaves."

"Ik hou van jou," she said to the child. I love you.

"Et jij waar dat is?" You are beautiful.

Mrs. Thurman smiled, as did Nellie who was content because she finally knew where the leaves went.

Downstairs the bishop paced the wood floors, fingering the letter from Maam in his pocket that told him of his daughter's circumstances, replaying the conversations from the afternoon. All these years he and his American wife had remained childless and so it would continue to be.



La Feria

Photography

Natali Peñafiel

WHAT SWEET NANNY GOAT

by Winston Watson

On a bright and early morning Trevor dallied in and out of sleep. He sat on four crocus bags of chick feed between the two burner stove and the cupboard, his head slanted to one side, snug in his palm. In the backyard, chickens clucked and fluttered their wings; and when they did, a stench of stale manure mixed with chicken shit and heat lingered around the small kitchen.

In a room nearby, over the chugs of a sewing machine his aunt shouted, 'Trey-vah, come ere'. Trevor shook his head and heaved a sigh. She called his name again, and on the third time he got up, cursing under his breath.

His aunt sat hunched over a Singer sewing machine, her face beaming under the bright light that it gave off. In the corner a standing fan whirred, swinging its head from left to right; the wind it blew spread stale urine settling in the chimney tucked beneath her divan. It made the calendar on the wall shuffle gently. Today was Labour Day.

'Yuh neva hear me callin you di first time?' she said, her eyes remaining on a piece of cloth. Trevor said nothing. He scratched his head and gaped at her as if he wanted help with the answer. His aunt stitched the piece of cloth then inspected it behind thick glasses. She wheeled around to him saying, 'A need four pouns a mutton from di meat shop', and then continued stitching.

He sucked his teeth. The chugs from the sewing machine ceased.

'But is who yuh kiss tecting, man? Jus because you is fambily, dat nuh mean mi won' karachi kick yuh backside out mi house. Tidday is big big Labah Day, yuh need fi be doin some work, cut di grass, sweep di frontyaad, someting.' She thrust her hand between her breasts, retrieving a little purse that she then snapped opened, taking out two crisp bills. "Everybaddy workin but you. All yuh do is sit dere an tek up space," she continued. Trevor took the money from her. He was about to step outside when his aunt called after him.

'Oy dere Trey-vah' she said, 'Four poun a mutton and if yuh drink mah money like di last time, is amblance goin pick yuh up dis time.'

Trevor sucked his teeth.

Outside the sun was real bright and there were

no clouds in the sky. He strolled barefooted on the heated pavement that blurred the sights. Whistling a tunc, he folded and unfolded the two crisp bills over his fingers. Just past the third house, he saw an old man painting his fence white. The old man wiped a face freckled with paint, his black skin shiny with sweat.

"Yuh exempt from work?" said the old man in a joky tone. And then upon noticing the money wrapped around Trevor's fingers, his face became grave. "You an dat rum business. Yuh need fi put it down an start do some work. Yuh not ole bones like me, you well an capable."

"Ole-timah, you mean you."

Nothing else was said. The old man resumed painting the fence and Trevor continued his stroll to the meat shop to get four pounds of mutton. He passed more people working in their frontyards; a bulky man thwacking vigorously at tall grass with his cutlass; and a woman snipping at hedges, her two kids fighting over a broom on their driveway. He reached the intersection where cars and buses crammed with people whizzed by. There were two shirtless boys who waited for the red light to sprint for the cars that stopped, to wipe their windshields for change. The light was green now so they were on the sidewalk idling when Trevor passed by.

'Look at rummie rumhead on im way to di bar,' said the older boy.

'Bring me a drink dere, rummie,' said the younger boy laughing, and both boys began pushing and tugging at each others worn out jeans.

Trevor kept his head straight and sucked his teeth. The light turned red and the two boys ran up to a white van. He crossed the street, squeezed through a hole in the wired fence, and was at the market behind the plaza. Vendors with their yams, pumpkins and cabbages spread out, bargained with the morning shoppers. A strong smell of fish and country produce filled the air. Under the shade of a tent owned by a peanut vendor, three men played dominoes, each man slamming a domino on the table on his turn, harder than the last.

'Trevor, what a gwaan brodda?' said one of the domino players, a fat man with four thick gold chains dangling from his neck and resting on his round belly. 'Lang time nuh see yuh since di factory days. Yuh down fi knock some domino?'

Trevor waved him off.

'Is wha? Yuh too good fi we nowadays,' said

the fat domino player, and he looked to the other players. 'A bet is di bar him goin to.'

Trevor walked over to another tent where there was a long line of customers. Before them stood a short round lady who took their orders of turkey neck, chicken parts, chicken foots and tripe. A young man, who resembled the lady taking the orders, chopped up meats, weighed them on scale and bagged them. Soon it was Trevor's turn to order.

"Two pouns a mutton please."

Within a few minutes Trevor exited the tent with a brown paper bag with two pounds of mutton. Instead of walking in the direction where he came, he took the opposite route, bent a corner to an alley which he hurried down, and then turned into the bar.

There was no one there so he sat on a stool furthest from the entrance. Multi-coloured lights shined on the glossy counter, on the assorted bottles of glistening liquor, and on the face of a female bartender with light complexion and a blue wig.

Trevor beamed. "White rum with water," he ordered, and the bartender smiled and turned to get his drink. She placed a glass of water on coaster and presented a small shot glass and a quart bottle of rum. Trevor thanked her with the change from two pounds of mutton, immediately pouring and gulping down three shots without a pause. He winced, forcing a coarse belch.

"Aye, tek it easy dere, boss" she said. Trevor winked at her, took two more shots again without pause, and then drank half of the water. He sat there staring at the bartender, filling the glass that was half empty, back to full with more rum. After a couple sips, the large display case full of liquor bottles, the bartender with the blue wig, the multi-colored lights, all began to spin madly around Trevor. Like a tall bamboo shoot in a light breeze, his lanky body swayed on the stool. He drained the rest of his rum and water and rested his head on the counter. The bar's spinning came to stop.

Then as if someone tapped him on his shoulder, Trevor jumped up and glanced over. There was still no one in sight, the bartender had disappeared to the back. He chuckled but there were no jokes to tickle him.

"One mo?" said Trevor.

"But da is too much. One mo? Awright." And he clumsily put the bottle to his mouth while he peered to the left through the corner of his eyes. His face writhed. "Yuh satisfied? One mo? Nah, yuh tricky. Nuh mo." The bartender poked her head to the front to see if there was a new customer. There was none but Trevor, so she shook her head and disappeared once more.

"A walk? But ah jus been ere. Mi do all dat

work; cut dem walls, paint dat grass. No walkin. A jus come from di factry. Jus from work. Need fi rest now." With that said, he put his head down again. But immediately he jumped up and brushed at his shoulder.

"Don' touch mi. A said no

walk. Es simple." He paused as if he were listening to someone talk.

"A don' believe yuh. If a tek one more sip, yuh will lef me be? Yuh lie. Yuh lie. Like when mama seh she comin back fo mi. Yuh lie. She neva come back."

Trevor then blushed. "Awright. Yuh promise den?" He took another swig from the bottle, his eyes bloodshot. The second he took the shot he stumbled off his stool, bouncing into other stools and some tables as he staggered to the entrance. Making it out the bar, he leaned his head over to a bush and vomited.

"Yuh trick me. See, yuh mek mi get up aftah yuh promise. Yuh lie."

Trevor wobbled through the alley with the bottle in hand, leaning against the wall on each side as he tried to walk fast. There was a commotion brewing at the market. He hustled through the heavy crowd and passed the three domino players, though they did not notice him. As he squeezed through the hole in the wired fence, his merino got caught in the sharp wires.

"The second he took the shot he stumbled off his stool, bouncing into other stools and some tables as he staggered to the entrance. Making it out the bar, he leaned his head over to a bush and vomited."

“Leh mi guh,” he said, “Why yuh tryin t hol’ mi back? Yuh lie. Everybaddy always lying t mi.” With a fierce tug he ripped his merino off his body, but fell flat on his face. He sprung up and looked ahead at the intersection. Across the street, the two shirtless boys were staring at him. They sat on the sidewalk eating round buns with small pouches of milk. Cars flashed by between the boys and Trevor.

“Where yuh goin?” he said. He was now shouting. “Don’ go to dem rude bwoys ‘cross di street. Don’ go.” Tears streamed down his red cheeks as he shut his eyes. The older boy said something to younger one. They both laughed. Then the older boy pulled out a brown paper bag, giving the younger one a lollipop from the bag. When Trevor opened his eyes, he put his hand to his mouth as his eyes grew larger.

“Di meat,” he said, “gimmi mah auntie meat. Why yuh give it t dem two rude bwoys? Why yuh arass mi?” The boys looked at each other.

“Nuh mo,” he said hugging the bottle of rum. “A don’ believe yuh. Yuh lie. Yuh not goin give it back.” Then he paused as if to think about something,

then said “Awright”, and took another swig. He threw the bottle to the curb and it smashed into a thousand tiny glass pieces. The rum leaked on to the concrete and the two boys cheered.

The older boy waved the brown paper bag in celebration.

“A can get it now? Fi real? Come fo it?”

Trevor clumsily stepped from sidewalk to pavement then back to the sidewalk. The two boys were now silent and the younger one put his hands on his head. Trevor stepped on to the street in front of an oncoming van. The driver drew his brakes but the van knocked him and kept driving. Trevor landed a few feet away, on his back, on the white line that separated the street. His head was slung to one side in a growing pool of blood. The khaki pants strained to accommodate his legs’ awkward twist, the blood that stained his brown skin, the culminating shadow of people from half a mile away circling over him, all made him look like a brown paper bag of meat, crushed by an invisible force.

Winston Watson



“Writing for me is the art that preserves my dreams. With the the help of Vicki Hendricks, my mentor and an awesome writer, and Elisa Albo, who opened up my senses through her world of poetry, I am able to express myself through the written word. It is my life-long goal to become a great storyteller.” -Winston Watson

Little Kirk

Winston Watson

Through thin strips of space, between shutters cracked open
To shield some sun, little Kirk's eyes curiously wander
Outside. Massive sycamore trees blanket the churchyard,
Sifting rays of light that illuminate the red country dirt.
The rest is shaded, the coppices of fever grass, Hibiscuses
Sway obediently in a tranquil breeze. Little Kirk sees what
Disrupts this morning. A mongoose appears from the bushes,
Captures his fancy in the way small creatures can transfix a
Child's attention. He drifts further away from the colorless tone
Of the Sunday school teacher's voice, Mrs. Buchanan, who tries
To usher the prospect of death into the minds of age 8-10 boys.
But the mongoose playfully darts in and out the country bushes,
Timid of the arriving church folk in their solemn tweed suits and
Primp gowns. The congregation files in as Mrs. Buchanan concludes
The Bible Lesson with a warning of the shortness of life and its
Threatening unpredictability.

She walks out the Bible study building, also served as the
Dance troupe building and the evening choir practice building,
Shepherds her boys to the front pews. An uncontrollable habit
To labrish, she stops near the entrance to catch up where she
Left off last week with two other women. It is then that little Kirk
Feels a tug from Greg, pulls him away from the rest. They scamper
Down a red path to a familiar place where Bones and Tarry await.
They never attend church and Bones has already removed his shirt;
Tarry has spent his offering money on a round bun and rolled up his
Corduroys knee length. The four cut through bushes led by Tarry who
Seems to know where, and him being the oldest, eleven, the bravest,
The rest follow.

Little Kirk remains silent, observant, sees swallowtail butterflies
Flitting among the wild dandelions, hears canaries sing. Croaking
Lizards skip among the limestone jutting from the ground. His eyes
Grow large with each new hint. Tiny hands trickle along the leaves,
Randomly picking the smaller smooth ones. Tarry leads them along
A now slippery path. Greg and Bones say they hear water running,
Tarry smiles, pulls away foliage with the help from his right hand man
Bones.

A creek streams water from an opening too high for even
The lanky Bones to reach. Shallow water meanders along a windy
Route where it disappears around a dark corner. Bones and Tarry
Slide down without invitation, splash each other. Greg, chubbier,
Carefully manipulates himself to avoid the rocks below near
Water's edge.

The water amazes little Kirk, the way the clearing allows
The sun to bathe the water's surface to mirror his swaying faded image.
The three call for him to join them, but he is reluctant. The lifeless
Rocks coated in moss underneath him, daunting. The water wavers

Above three boy's ankles. They jeer at him. Why can't he enjoy from here,
It his new discovery of creation in its splendor?
Tarry's coaxing breaks him down.
He slowly descends to his friend. They are jubilant and resume romping,
Church clothes soaked.
A loosened rock beneath little Kirk's foot gives way,
His small head strikes a rock below, a shuddering clunk,
The three boys motionless, his tiny body loosely crumples.
Blood slowly seeps its message into the stream.

East Indian Evening Man

Winston Watson

In raw heat, an evening thick as molasses, he sits
On a crate housing overripe Bombay mangoes,
Marinating in a tonic rich in lull and vibes, his
Head slung snug back, up to a darkening sky.

His mulatto complexion now poisoned red, painted
On a face uncommitted to a smile or frown,
Garnished with a scraggly beard and unruly hair,
Disguises the coolie of a convoluted heritage.

Ackee trees hung over depressingly low create
A canopy of comfort for him, saying, *you're not
alone*. Shirtless and shiny with sweat, body liquid,
sprawled, he cuddles his rum bottle, glistening.

Us girls

Sarah Furst

Mine is a generation of orphans.
We're an assembly of cutting off our hair-
And then hating short hair (on ourselves).
We never do know which side of femininity
We're chasing.

We're girls looking for significance
In closed coffee shops.
And meeting breathtaking people
Within the people we already know.
Then finding ourselves in an empty room.

We believe there's art in everything-
And that altering our mood
Is an art in itself.

We're downloading songs
From the only movies that ever made sense to us.
Well, they only made sense to us.
They're the ones that make us cry
For the lives...
For the futures that we'll never have.

And that music becomes the soundtrack,
For that girl,
Or that night on the roof of a car.
It becomes the beat
which is the only thing I can seem to recall from that
party.
It's wavelengths drag me out to the sea of my dreams-
But when I awake I am still drowning in mediocrity.

We're a generation of instant gratification
At our fingertips
But mostly at the hands of women
We're trying to love...
Or at least
Trying to pretend
We don't.

We're a generation of women
Without men,
And relying all of our needs and emotions
On each other.
We've become accustomed to disappointment, anyhow.
And I keep finding myself in the same place.

Her eyes demand my story
And I try to convey with my body
That it's not mine to offer.
Because my circumstances and past
Don't make up me.
I'm merely kinetic potential.
And I can only be defined
As the story in my head
That will never REALLY be told.

And then her words haunt me
Like the prose in my head
Often do
-before I bleed them onto paper.

She has a relationship planned out to the sex,
Now she just needs someone to fill
The absence-
Or replace the girl
She knows
She's trying to-
Dying to-
(won't let anyone see)-
FORGET.

And me?
I'm getting antsy
In the middle ground
Of homicidal pleasure.
I'm trying to change
The colors of responsibility and passivity-
But on the world's palette,
everything ends up grey in the end.

"Unless I am writing for something structured, I prefer free writing or poetry. I've been writing for about 8 or 9 years, but it's more than a hobby or a major. It's how I express myself, and if I weren't able to 'breathe in ink', I would probably be in a mental institution by now. I think 'the arts' are everything. I think that their importance is lost in the mechanics of society. Every child should be exposed to every art form possible and we should continue to fill our lives with it. We should blast the music that reminds us of that person until our ears bleed, read our favorite piece until we find meaning where there is none, and stare at the eliehe and over-studied paintings until we realize that just because a history book calls it art, doesn't make it so. And on the other side of the paradigm, just because someone doesn't see the art in this world, doesn't mean that it isn't right in front of our faces, waiting to be consumed." -Sarah Furst

Sometimes

Sarah Furst

Sometimes the wind is just the wind.
And sometimes 'face value'
is strictly superficial.

Sometimes when I ask you
to listen
 to a song,
 or read a poem-
 or even watch a movie-
It's because there's something there.
Something I can't always take credit for,
or something I can't shape my words
around.
Sometimes that one verse is ME.
Or it's how I'd tell you-
if you'd listen.

And I'm almost
positive-
that you're not that dense.
No, you're afraid-
 of what you'll hear
 in that woman's voice-
 and what it will mean for you.

But whatever it is
and whatever you may associate
with that metaphor...
Well, that's me.
And this is how I express myself.
It's more than a hobby
and it's more than an option
-for you.

It's how I breathe
and it's how I make love.
It's how I eat, sleep, talk, sing, scream, cry...
It's how I see the world.
And I know you're not an artist
And you're not a writer
And you're not a musician...
 And for the most part,
 that's what I love about you.
So I'm not going to

expect you
to understand me,
Well... EVER...
Or to hear the Morse code
in between my laughter
or my hot breath
or my tears.
But you'd better be damn sure
in thinking
that you better try.
And even if you don't understand,
and everything seems black and white-
just try to appreciate it
for what it is.
And open your eyes.
Please let me OUT
of that box I was in when we met.
Because you'll have to accept
that I don't even own
those shoes, anymore.
Because sometimes the rain is just the rain,
But sometimes it's just release I was looking for.

Inner Beauty

Sarah Furst

Yeah she's beautiful.
I guess...
She's laughing for no reason
and lying through her teeth
-but only when she doesn't have to.
She's the center of attention
-slouching in her corner.
And when she smiles
you're the most important person in her life,
But when she cries
buildings turn to rubble.
Sometimes I think she's just a shell,
hoarding the hollowness of broken hearts
that came before you.
She's like glances and touches
that she's never actually meant.
She's like loving and having sex-
but never at the same time.
Not that she could ever differentiate,
somehow she never learned.
She's everything passive,
but she still gets where she's going-
or at least where she ends up.
She's like dancing in parking lots
and separating people by "other universes"
where they could be happy.
She's nothing concrete
And everything abstract.
She's a magnificent parasite
feeding off your inspiration.
She's a gloomy fantasy
that sneaks up in you
behind her eyes.
She'll let you look right through her
but you'll never see inside.
She'll say your name and change your mind
and then forget it ever happened.
She's taking naps on short car rides
and staying up all night.
She's compromising and pretending
She just closes her eyes...
and she can't understand why
I won't let her
Close mine.
Yeah, she's beautiful-
She's a phenomenon.

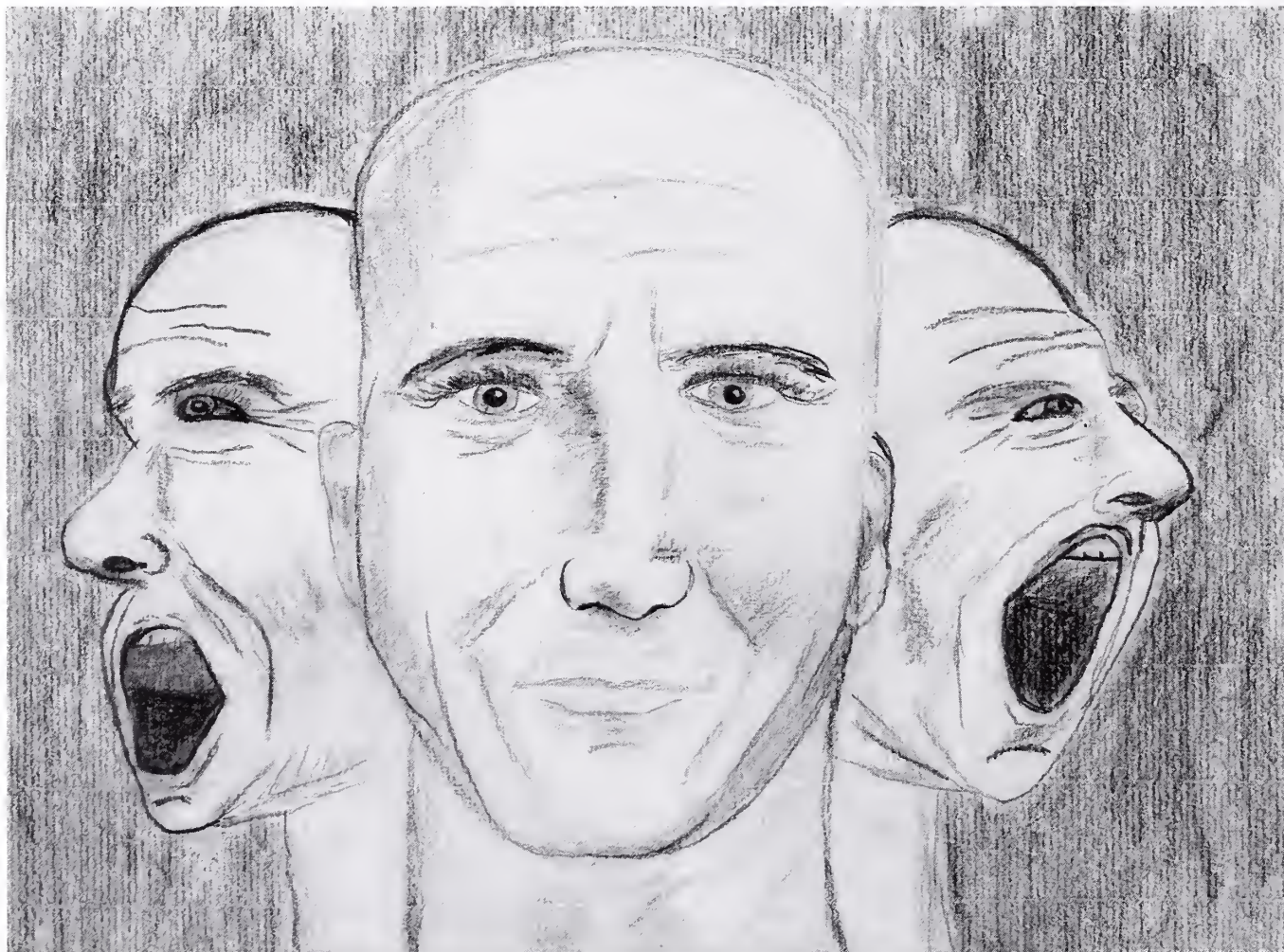
INTROSPECTION

Sarah Furst

You know that feeling you sometimes get when you awake out of a deep sleep after sleeping somewhere different? Well, she could have been on the other end of the earth in that instant. The desperate feeling was like nothing she had ever known. It went right down to her core, she might have been born with it. It began to coil itself around her neck.

She sat straight up in bed in the small hotel room. Someone was watching her. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw it. A flash of steel as it caught the mid morning gleam making its way through the threadbare shades. She saw the gun's reflection in the mirror as it rested on the vanity. Somewhat wary of the entire situation, she rushed to the mirror for protection. "Who's there?" she tried to scream. But her voice came out more like the whisper of a last breath. And then it came, the voice. "Scared...?" it probed. It was close. Where had she heard that voice before? Maybe it was someone she used to know. She spun around to shoot at whomever was there. "Ah we finally meet." it said. "This could be very good. You know, for the both of us." The words went right through her ears, but the voice floated above her. She couldn't seem to process it.

As if her body had gone into auto pilot, she felt the trigger sling-shooting beneath her fingers. The shot lingered in her ears. A sudden feeling of warmth flooded her. "It never seemed so loud in the movies," she thought. She covered her ears out of instinct. Finally, she drew her hands back, hot and sticky with blood.



Perfectly Sane

Graphite Drawing

Sarah Joy Porter

(Lukewarm) (People
Pleaser)

Crystal Bianca Alfonso

You're always dancing on the fence,
Neither on this side or that
Your color is just grey,
Neither white nor black.

You're so indecisive
You can never choose.
So you never ever win,
Because you're so afraid to lose.

You're scared of being alienated,
So you accept every single thing.
But fail to realize
That by that, you stand for nothing.

You never stand up for what's right,
But you won't condone what's wrong.
When people tell you something,
You always go along.

And when you hear this poem
I know you'll say, "It's true."
But then you'll turn around
And go back to what you do.



2/5

"le sigh"

Le Sigh

Etching

Erin O'Dea

"I've been interested in art as long as i can remember. i love lowbrow art, pop art and japanese design, i also like religious work. i work mostly in acrylic although i do a lot of silkscreening and digital illustrations as well. i like to mix them up and incorporate silkscreening in paintings. art is art. everyone does art for their own reason and it all has its own purpose. i wish there was much more funding for the art programs and more people interested in volunteering their time. lazaro amaral was my favorite artist ever - i met him at his studio in miami beach a couple years ago. we ended up becoming great friends and he has been my mentor ever since. i teach silk-screening with him at the art center of south florida - he encourages me with so much. i think you can easily see his influence in my paintings. i'm also very lucky to have a boyfriend and a brother that are AMAZING artists and help me learn some patience and give honest critique when i need it." -Erin O'Dea

Lost

Troy Jeffers

You said you missed the way I talked to you at nights.
You told me you wake up with a smile when you dream of me at nights.
You pleaded, "When will I see you again, I miss you, can't you see?"

I've missed me too; it's been awhile since I've seen me.

I missed the way I used to create not being bound to reality.
I miss the way I used to shiver at the thought of human travesty
The real travesty here is as we grow, we grow away from ourselves
We drift further and further away from God and closer to hell.

Where are you? Do you miss you too? Or has it been so long since you've seen you?

Come back to yourself while I come back to me.
I'll rest my mind for a while and ease my knees
As I bow humble before my white dove.
Receiving new mercy and basking in love.

When I'm done, with peace I'll fly home
Thanking the Holy Father, for never leaving me alone

Extraordinary People



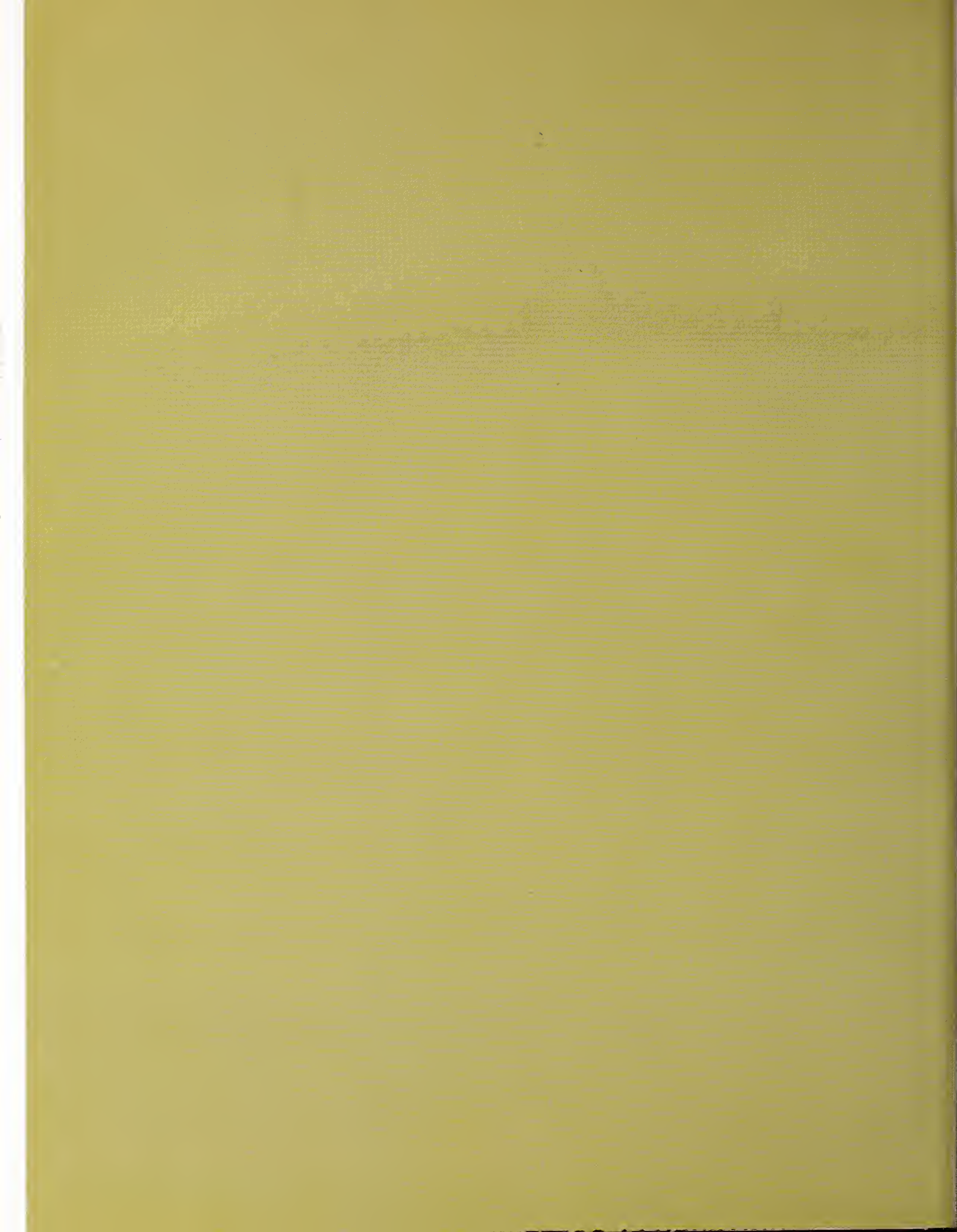
From Top Left: Sarah Porter, Emily Moorhouse (Editor), Anthony Walker, Winston Watson, Athena Sheth, and Daniella Dorcelus

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Partrick Ellingham

The P'an Ku staff encourages you to look within!

Thank you to all of the students who submitted and all of the teachers who helped out in the process. A special thanks to our advisor!







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Ballet Dancer

Ink and Digital Art

Marlene Leslie

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Cover

Le Femme de la Fumee

Marlene Leslie

Pure Innocence

Photography

Robert Hill





Earth Angel Digital Art yahidith Monnalisa Fernandez

Mas o Menos (More or Less) Tracy Elliott

The best thing about the bus, even when you had to wait for it, was that you never had to know what time it was coming. It came anyway, even in the dark. It was hypnotizing on the side of the road, with all those headlights thrusting past her in the blackness, making her feel small and quiet on the bench, as if she could have sat there all night and no one would have noticed.

Maybe it was dangerous for girls in dresses to sit alone on the side of the road in the middle of the night, but not too dangerous. Cars sometimes honked in jaunty, vulgar ways as they passed, but she was too observant to be caught by anyone like that. There was a pepper spray in her purse, and she had been on the track team. She would escape, even in a taffeta gown.

But the night was kind, so the bus came sooner rather than later. It was the 42 route, the only one that went anywhere worth going, and it came to a sleek halt in front of her. Bending to lift the great folds of her skirt, she stepped up into the doorway and twisted to the side so she wouldn't get caught in the doors as they creaked shut. She paid with a crinkled-up dollar, as ancient as the bus was, and made her way to one of the bright seats in the front.

The air of the place was dried-out and foreign, with its yellow lights drying out yellower paint – paint that looked as if it was originally white. And there was a sort of radiator hum, the kind that reminded her of hospitals or cafeteria-style restaurants, giving the air a sickly odor that she recognized, but had never been able to identify. Sitting near to her, looking as if he didn't notice any of this, was a ragged man in sunglasses and a hat. The glasses unnerved her, because even now he could be staring at her, sizing her up, and she'd never even know. And across from her, making her even more nervous than the man in the glasses, was a huddled Spanish woman in loose floral print, muttering with a fervor that seemed to denote some sort of mental disease.

"Son las nueves," she was saying, "Son las nueves."

Her fixation with the woman made the man in the glasses stir, and he leaned forward a bit, turning to fix his black-paneled mosquito eyes toward her.

"Hey," he drawled in some accent or another,

"You know what she's saying?"

She knew, but she didn't want to say it. To speak it would be dangerous.

"Hey, you, girl. What's your name?"

"Ganymeda," she lied. But it was true, she supposed.

"I said, Ganymeda," he pronounced it as if she was stupid, "Do you understand what this chick is saying? She's driving me out of my freaking mind."

"Son las nueves y dos," the Spanish woman was saying, not understanding or not caring what was being said about her. "Son las nueves y dos."

"Yes," Ganymeda said finally, not wanting to ignore the man. Cautiously, as if she was afraid of being bitten, she continued, "It's Spanish. She's saying what time it is."

The man rolled his whole body into a shrugging sigh, as if the truth was more ridiculous than anything he could have come up with. But then, it often is. "Gawd," he sighed, "Why them crazy people always on the bus with me? Who came up with all them crazy people?" He rolled his gaze back in her direction. "And why you wearing that dress? You got a party or something?"

A long creak of the wheels brought the bus to a stop in front of a Dunkin' Donuts, and it didn't start up again. Ganymeda's mind raced for a moment, as she felt that something must be wrong. The driver stood, stretched, moving with the slowness of a full day at the wheel, and turned to them.

"This is my break," he said. "We got ten minutes here. You can go inside if you want. Just be back in ten minutes."

The Spanish woman turned as if to stand, but finally gave the glowing clock a long stare and broke the pause by repeating, "Son las nueve y siete."

It looked like no one except the bus driver was going to go inside.

"Goddamn!" the man spat, taking his hat off with the frustration. But the presence of the pink dress made it all too surreal for him, so he added, "Sorry, miss. Shouldn't say those things in front of a lady. Shouldn't take the lord's name in vain at all, even."

Ganymeda wanted to say that she didn't care, that she had heard worse things with fewer apologies, but she liked the fact that her presence wanted to make someone more polite. So she just nodded and smiled serenely, as if she forgave him.

"Son las nueve y nueve."

The Spanish woman was worse. With every

repetition, Ganymeda's stomach churned as she felt the weight of the night press in on her. There was a reason she rode buses. She didn't need to know what time it was. She didn't want to.

"Son las nueve y once."

"So," the man said, wringing his hat in his hands. "My name's Mitch. I got a little church, just a place I borrowed, so I can spread the word."

Ganymeda nodded politely.

"We got a sort of new faith," he continued.

"You might want to hear about it. It's always good to know where you stand. Seems death's always closer than you'd think, and the afterlife—"

"Excuse me," Ganymeda said harshly, not wanting to sound rude, but not wanting to hear another word. "I'm comfortable in my own faith. I don't want to hear about the afterlife."

"Son las nueve y eatorce."

Mitch leaned back, the glasses making his mood impossible to read, and for a moment she was sorry she snapped at him. "Fine," he said, "To-each-his-own. It's just good that you're sure what to expect, y'know? Eternity is forever. And I figured that somebody in your shoes—hey, those *are* nice shoes, miss. Why'd you say you were all dressed up?"

Ganymeda elung to her skirt, frowning, trying to block out the sound of the Spanish woman's warbling. In the pause, the bus driver returned with a steaming plastic cup of something that smelled like coffee and chocolate, mingling with the radiator smell of the bus in a stomach-turning sort of way. As they lurched back into motion, Ganymeda realized that silence was her answer, and Mitch could deal with that any way he liked.

Mitch nodded sagely, leaning back in his seat. "I see, I see," he said. "It's alright. There's things about ol' Mitch that nobody knows. My life's been harder than you think. Harder than you think."

"Son las nueve y veinte," the Spanish woman said, as if to say, "Mine too."

Ganymeda didn't want to talk about the way her life had been, as if so much of it had passed. Time was shifty, and there was too fine a line between having too much and not having enough.

"Anyhow," Mitch continued, "This church of mine, we were looking for people to spread the word. Out on the streets, you know? But people don't care, just like you. They have their own faith. Well, I says to them, have you ever thought that we could believe all sorts of things, all at once? Like, you could believe

in Buddha for all I care – did Buddha really live, like Jesus? – yeah, only when we die, we all join back into the same sort of...oh, how do you put it...a sort of eternal stream. The stuff that time is made of. Time is the same for all of us, anyway. Someday it'll just suck us back into the veins of the universe, and then where will we be? That's the real question."

"Son las nueve y venitres," said the woman, and Ganymeda felt as if her bones were about to crack in on themselves. She wanted to yell, to tell them to stop, but it was past avoidance. Now it was just panic, and her breathing was becoming thin and dizzying. The bus was so awful, and she was so sure the pressure would kill her, she put her shaking hands to her head, trying to stop the pounding.

"Hey," Mitch said with some alarm, "You okay? You gonna be okay? I didn't upset you, did I?"

It was impossible to stop the shaking, now that time was upon her, eating away at her pale skin and clutching at her heart. The Spanish woman mercifully stopped speaking for a moment, watching her convulse, and Mitch got up to take her by the shoulders.

"Hey. Listen," he said, "You listen to me. You're not afraid, are you?"

"Of course I'm afraid," she gasped, managing only a half-breath of the thin air. "It's the most frightening thing there is."

"Son las nueve y treinte," the woman began again, unaware of the voices before her.

"I thought you didn't believe me, anyway. There's no point in being scared of the unknown."

"No!" she shrieked, her voice harpy-shrill, making the bus driver turn and utter a warning phrase that she did not hear. At last she moaned, "It's not the unknown. It's her, sitting right there."

"Son las nueve y treintidos," the woman said, as Mitch turned to solemnly look her over.

"You can't help but hear her," Ganymeda said. "Wherever you go. Is it worse that she speaks, or that she might stop speaking? I can't think of it. How can you think of time, when any minute could be the last one? It's too much. I want to sit down."

"Miss, you are sitting down," Mitch said. He wiped his brow of sweat, now that Ganymeda's shaking had slowed. "So, I guess I understand now. Why women like you go out in the middle of the night, wearing some ancient dress. It's kinda crazy, y'know? Just like she's crazy, you're crazy. Who came up with all you crazy people?"

“Son las nueve y treinticinco.”

Ganymeda breathed, long breaths, just to prove that her papery lungs still knew how. There were places in the world for people for her, but she was beginning to realize that the bus was not one of them. It was a creature of time and meter, and when it reached the end of the line, there would be nowhere else for her to go. She reached to pull the yellow cord, so that a cheery ding sounded and the driver knew to let her off on the next stop.

“Now, where you gonna go?” Mitch sounded annoyed. “You gonna go home?”

She didn't know, so she didn't answer. She would go somewhere where the rest of the time couldn't find her. As the bus simmered to a halt, she

stood and caught sight of something in the window, the only thing nearly as frightening as the progression of the minutes. She saw her reflection, pale and thin in a rose-pink gown, her lank gray hair piled up with butterfly pins atop her head. She couldn't help imagining her skin pink and youthful in the pale light, but she had to turn aside before the driver urged her on. She didn't look back at Mitch or the Spanish woman, but stepped back out into the night with a fresh but shaky confidence, her soul adrift on memories.

The door slid shut, sealing out the night. The Spanish woman seemed to lose track of herself, and glanced at Mitch with glazed eyes. “Nueve y media?” she said, shrugging. “Más o menos?”

Pretty Baby Princess Boots

Michelle McCullough

I come home and you're not at the door
'That's strange, you usually greet me.'

There is no ball of black fur sleeping on the couch
I can't see the glare of your green eyes under the dark bed.

You are not sprawled on top of the TV with your tail blocking the view
Nor are you sitting regally on the computer chair.

I grab your favorite treats and shake the bottle
Yet I don't hear your little white paws gliding on the tile
Not even the sound of your happy-expectant cry.

All of a sudden there you are sitting on the kitchen counter
I have finally found those beautiful green eyes
Your black fur shining in the sunlight
And your white paws batting at a cardboard box.

There you are on the counter forever framed
And there you shall remain for all to see my 'Pretty Baby Princess Boots.'

I put down your treats in front of you just like I always do
Knowing that they will still be there when I come back.

Out to Play

Digital Art

yahidith Monnalisa Fernandez



Alive With Music

Jade Brown

She swerves and glides across the floor,
Head bowed in graceful humbleness,
Carrying the eyes of her audience,
She enchants the room with her rhythm.
As blues echo through the dense haze
And slips into our souls
Along with cheap liquor, and the aroma of high priced cigars.
She dances and she dances,
Swoops like an eagle,
Then she springs like a tigress.
Then she soars with the music.
The piano watches and plays intoxicated.
She controls the music.
And we stare eyes affixed, as she becomes alive with music.

Indian Wonder Colored Pencil Laura Conel



What a World We Live in Today

Norman Tracey

Each day has 24 hours and it would be impossible for a man to
Keep trace of his woman all this time. You just never know what
She could do when you aren't there. And from serious observations,
It is men who care less about their woman who has it
Easier, they just always seem to be getting more and more woman
At all time and they are so loved by them all. But
It's men who care that are left lonely, feeling neglected all the
Time.

The man who cares too much has no time to notice anyone else.
So with the woman knowing this, she feels so free, knowing her man
Won't be doing anything and many at times catch up with the present time,
That is, the guy who has them all. But when a man loves his woman so much
That he tries to justify her every move, she slips away.

Many wonders why, but such is life. It is just the way life goes. People
Want what they can't have and often lose sight of what they do have. It would
Be virtually impossible to stop it but what can I do as a lonely man who just
Couldn't help but noticing? Maybe not much but I could make it clear
For a few, who'd probably be intellectual enough to realize how
Painful of a world we live in. Don't be apart of this misdemeanor, you'd
Only make it worst by spoiling the few good beings left.

Which way will you go? Left with the players or right with the few trying
To make tomorrow a better place. I'm going left, because even if I do fail now,
I know that with continuous faith, I'll find that one and when I do I'll keep her
To the end. And keep in mind that hearts will be broken but heartbreaks last as
Long as you want and cut as deep as you allow then to go. The challenge is
Not how to survive heartbreaks but to learn from them.



Purple Orchid Digital Photography Suzanne Serrano



Passion Flower Digital Photography Suzanne Serrano

Political Animals

Yvette Susan Bernstein

Aristocratic aardvarks and
Bureaucratic barnacles were all present at the
Campaigning cheetah's press-release gala, discussing the dichotomies of
Dancing deer and the
Economic frailties of elephants and the
Financially poor foxes who often caroused with those
Glib-minded gila monsters who only believed in
Historical hippopotamuses who ignited the minds of
Imperial iguanas and
Jailed jackknifing jackals who marauded with
Monarchies of manatees and never napped with
Neanderthal nymphs and always okayed any
Outsider orangutan personally being persuaded to reckon with the pro-life views of
Politically-minded possums who queried after
Quaking quails to reveal their revolutionary rebuttals of
Rankling raccoons who strove to stipulate the benefits of stocks with
Sassy snakes who turned more and more now to
Tight minded conservative turtles for advice who understood the
Utilitarian philosophy of urchins who vainly validated the promiscuities of
Voracious vultures who
Withered under the leftist walrus's filibusters and
X'd out all the x's but
Yeoman yaks still yodel out for youth and sometimes commune with the
Zebras of zoology funds

Redman

Digital Photography

Suzanne Serrano





Flies Dying

Amanda Gordon

One by one they kill themselves on the lamp,
Drawn by the light to their doom.
One by one
They succumb to its hypnotic hold.
So bright, they say.
So beautiful, they say.
So beautiful I have forgotten my comrade
Who said the same and perished.
So one by one they destroy themselves
For beauty and beauty's sake
One by one, all saying:
So bright, so beautiful, my preArkkh!
Fall and twitch.
And this continues.
Because they have no brains, only instincts
And instincts draw them to the beauty and the light
As instincts will
Their insignificant mumbles are heard only by each other
Their talk of beauty heard only by their equals
The fatal attraction kills them;
The object of desire is unfeeling.
One by one they die that way
Drawn by beauty
And light
And instinct
To doom.
Too stupid to know it's happening.
One by one they kill themselves on the lamp, all saying:
So bright, so beautiful. my preArkkh!
Fall and twitch.

Decision at Dawn

Louis D. Berson

As far as I can see, the lush green grass and groups of trees, dot the land, with rolling hills from sun up till sun down. We keep on traveling to south central Texas day after day getting closer to our dream, our own patch of land. Land we can call our own. It's Uncle Jesse and I, an old man and a fourteen-year-old boy following a promise made to my mother to plant and tend her plants, making the best tasting wine we can. Rolling along listening to the wagon creek as we move, the two mules lather to a white sweat covering their bodies. I take off my hat and wipe my face with my shirtsleeve, gazing to see where the sun is on the horizon and asked, Uncle Jesse, "How long do you think we've been in Texas."

"Don't rightly know, maybe three of four hours."

I turned around and reached back into the wagon for the canteen. The sun really took a toll on me that day. I shook the canteen to see how much we had and took a big swallow, swishing it in my mouth before I drank it. "Do ya think we can stop and let the mules rest?" I asked.

"You know, it's getting late and my bones are achin'. I think we gonna rest here for morning. Drive the wagon to them trees over there. Then hobble the horses by the tall grass."

I did as Uncle Jesse said and then walked back to the wagon untying the canvas covering my mother's hopes and dreams, her grape plants, not much, only the roots and fifteen-inch stems. "Uncle Jesse how long these grape vines be good in the back here?"

Uncle Jesse dropped the firewood he was carrying and walked over reaching in his pocket and pulling out his pocketknife. Opening it, he cut into one of the plant so slowly and carefully, then smelled it. "They'll be good for two more weeks ifin' we water them twice a day." He then closed his knife and placed it back in his pocket. "Adam, get ya bedroll and set up camp." He then walks back to where he dropped the firewood and started our fire for the evening. Once the fire was burning, he left it alone to burn down.

Uncle Jesse watched me as I took care of the livestock without him telling me to do so. I saw him smiling and shaking his head. He reached under the wagon seat for his rifle he called "Uncle Henry" and his bedroll, walked over to some trees and set-up.

I went back to the wagon for food and Uncle Jesse said, "Stop! Boy, I want to sleep tonight. I'll do the cooking." He laughed as he took the food from my arms.

"Uncle Jesse, how long till we find land we can use?"

"You'll know by the sweetness of the soil and the smell of the land." Uncle Jesse smiled.

"When we get them in the ground, how long till we start blendin' for wine?"

"It'll take two or three plantin' seasons to get a strong grape. It may take up to eight months settin' in the barrel for table use," Uncle Jesse said.

I saw Uncle Jesse look up to the heavens and say. "I'll be proud to put her name on the bottle and don't ya think she'll be looking down and giving us that big sweet smile of hers." He looked down at the beans in the pot. "Tomorrow we'll stop early and try to get some meat for them beans."

Then he passed a plate to me to eat, sayin,' "I want to tell you this now. I couldn't be more proud of ya. After your brother and pa dyin' in that war. Your mother dyin' of loneliness, cause she loved my brother like no other women could. You goin' to grow up a strong man and one who knows how to read and write too."

"I know I was only eight when Pa and Daniel died. Was Pa as big as I remember?"

"He sure was. He was a big un." Uncle Jesse said. Looking up to the sky as if to say hello.

"Do you think I'll be as big Uncle Jesse?"

"You're getting there, just wait till you stop growin' in a few years."

"Uncle Jesse was Pa good at tradin' and cypherin'?"

"When your Ma met your Pa, she told him ifin they took up courtin' she was gonna teach him how to read and write. She made good on her promise and he changed as he learned more. Don't forget he was a captain in the war. Adam, you keep up with your learnin' and practice it. I want to give you some advice 'bout it. The less people know about ya the better off ya be. Never show all that ya know. Never let people get the better of ya, but let'em think they have."

"Thanks, Uncle Jesse, I'll clean up the plates and check the livestock before we turn in." When I got back I threw some more wood on the fire.

Uncle Jesse leaning on one arm, says, "Another thing my pa taught me was to never bet a

man at his own game. Well, your pa and your brother never did take chaw. It's too dam messy. If'in yah gonna smoke, buy store bought cigars. I even try one every now and then. You seen back home those who tipped a bottle more then they should what happens? When you open a mouth to that, it never stops talkin' or sippin' and you get in trouble. Enough talkin' for the night. Lets get to sleep."

"Night, Uncle Jesse."

I woke up early, restarted the fire, made the coffee, tended to the horses and mules. Everything looked and smelled fresh. As I walked back to the fire, I could see Uncle Jesse wakin' up. He looked over at the fire saw the coffee goin' and smiled as he stretched.

Jokingly he yelled over to me, "Ya gonna' let me sleep here all day, or was ya planning on leavin' me here?"

"No, Uncle Jesse, but an old man like you needs all the rest he can get." Pulling his suspenders over his shoulders, Uncle Jesse hollered over, "Don't you be callin' me *old man!*" Then laughs.

As I was putting some dried beef in the skillet. I could hear Uncle Jesse stretch again. I saw him knock his boots together and shake them before putting them on. Just as breakfast was almost finished cooking Uncle Jesse came over and had his first cup of coffee.

"Food sure smells good. I do believe that a good cup of coffee makes the day start right nice."

We sat and ate, not speaking a word to each other til' we finished.

"Uncle Jesse, would ya mind getting' some water from the crik?"

"No, ifin these bones will let me."

"Uncle Jesse, do ya want anymore before I clean up?" "No, I'll get my bedin' and then help ya hitch the wagon."

Uncle Jesse went over where he slept and moaned as he bent over for his bedroll and rifle. As he walked to the wagon he used the butt of the rifle as a crutch, throwin' his bedroll in the wagon and putin' the rifle under the seat. I unhobbled the mules and harnessed them to the wagon. Uncle Jesse was just finishin' a cup of coffee when three men on horses rode into our camp.

The one on the big gray said, "The coffee smells mighty good."

"There ain't much left, but it's hot and ya welcome to it," Uncle Jesse told him.

The youngest looking of the three said, "Thanks" got off his horse and grabbed his cup from his saddlebags and poured himself a cup of coffee, drinking only some of it and passed it to his friends. The biggest one of three threw his leg over the saddle horn and asked, "How long ya'll been' travelin'?" "About seven, eight weeks I guess." Uncle Jesse says and walks over to the big one. "My names Jesse and this here's my nephew Adam." Uncle Jesse extends his hand and the big one does nothing so Uncle Jesse pulls it back giving the big man an odd look.

The big one say's, "I'm Jake, the one on the bay is Blue and the little one is Dewcy." I kept on doing what I was doing, getting the horses and tying them to the back of the wagon.

"Mighty good lookin' horse flesh." Jake the big one says.

"They'll do." Uncle Jesse responds.

"I see they's from the Double Bar X spread," Jake said.

"Yeh, we bought them from a man name of Thurman a week ago."

Jake reaches in his shirt pocket, pulls out some chaw, bit a corner off and chews it. "Ya know we work for old man Thurman and some of his stock went missing." Turns his head he spits on the ground. He looked at Uncle Jesse, then at me, pulled his gun out. "Dewey, go look in the wagon and see what they have in it."

"Nothin' under the tarp but some plants," says Dewey. He picks one up, looks at it curiously and throws it on the ground.

I made a movement to get the plant and Dewey drew his gun on me. I jumped back and looked at Uncle Jesse. I was afraid of what might come next. Uncle Jesse stepped toward Jake and said, "Ain't no need for this. We got a bill of sale for them horses. Just let me go to the wagon and get for ya." I saw Uncle Jesse turn and start for the wagon when Jake cocked his gun. Uncle Jesse stopped dead in his tracks. Jake tells Blue "Goin' get the pouch they talking 'bout."

"It's in the wagon behind the seat." Uncle Jesse offered.

"Here'tis Jake." Blue untied the leather straps attached to the canvas bag, reached in and pulled out all the papers and a book, handing them to Jake. Jake just looked at all the papers.

"It's the one in back folded in half." Uncle Jesse offered again.

Jake took the folded piece of paper and threw everything else on the ground. He just starred at the paper and once again turned his head and spit on the ground. I wanted to talk but Dewey came over to me, cocked his gun and put it two inches from my head. Fear now became terror, my whole body was shaking. What was probably just taking minutes felt like hours. I felt as if I would pass out when I heard Uncle Jesse. "There it is, signed by Mr. Thurman and dated. We ain't no horse thieves. Now just let us be on our way? You have innocent law bidin' people here." I finally spoke up, "You see we paid honest money for them horses. We didn't takem'." My voice cracking as I spoke.

"What does that paper say Jake!" Dewey questioned.

"They telling the truth, Jake" Blue asked.

"Keep your guns on'em boys." Jake said, putting his gun back in his holster, he got off his horse, walks past Uncle Jesse and pushed him against one of the horses.

"Ya see old man Thurman's name on it don't ya. The papers in your hand." Uncle Jesse said getting madder and madder.

Jake walked over to where Dewey and I were standing. I backed up to the wagon until I couldn't back up any further.

"Do ya see old man Thurman's name on this here piece of paper?" Jake demanded, pushing the paper in front of Dewey's face.

"Ya know I can't read." Dewey responded. Then looking at the ground. Uncle Jesse looked at the way Jake showed the paper to Dewey and realized none of them could read. "Can't none of ya read. Let's go to the nearest town and let the sheriff handle this. He can wire your boss and can clear it all up." Then Uncle Jesse looked over at me and saw my frightened face. "Just hold it tighter boy, we gonna' be ok."

I could see Jake didn't like what Uncle Jesse said. He tightened his grip on the Bill of Sale and walked to the rear of the wagon. "We don't need no sheriff. Let me think on it."

Jake looked at the horses, walked back to me, and stared at the wagon and the mules. Jake got right in my face. "Ya a horse thief, just like the other one. Boy! Do ya know what we do to horse thieves round these parts?" Jake, Blue and Dewey all laughed. Blue, imitated a man being hanged.

I again heard my hear beating almost outside

my chest. I cried out, "We ain't got nothin' you need! We paid for them horses! We didn't steal'em. Uncle Jesse tell'em!" I saw Uncle Jesse tried to come over to me but Blue waived his gun and Uncle Jesse stopped dead and just looked at me.

Jake picked up a stick and walked over to the fire and stirred the embers making the fire come back to life. Jake turned and looked at Uncle Jesse hard. He bent over the fire and touched the corner of the bill of sale in it.

I yelled, "Uncle Jesse!" knowing he couldn't do anything, we both watched as the only proof we had of our innocence burned.

"Blue! Dewey! Do you see any Bill of Sale?" Jake laughed as he pushed it into the fire. Dewey pushed his gun under my chin hard and just stared into my eyes. "Your right. I do believe we have a couple of horse thieves." He turned to see what Uncle Jesse's expression was and moved his gun from my face.

I don't know what made me do what I did. I got mad and punched Dewey in the face and knocked him to the ground. He looked dazed for a few seconds cocked and pointed his gun at me.

"Don't kill'm yet!" Jake yelled, then looked at him again. "Dewey, get up off the ground." Dewey got up and dusted himself off. "Boy, ya sure is lucky, I almost put two slugs in ya." That's when he punched me and knocked the wind out of me. I thought I was going to die. Breathing was almost an impossibility. I could here Uncle Jesse yelling. "Breath slow! Breath slow!" All I could do was roll on the ground.

The next thing I heard was Blue saying. "Are ya sure you didn't kill him Dewey?" Jake spits again and tells Dewey. "Get'm on his feet now!"

As I got back to my feet I heard Uncle Jesse say. "Boy, you ok? Adam, stand your ground. There's nothing we can do with these animals here. They goin' to do what they want no matters what we says or do."

"Ya write about that." Jake said, Punching Uncle Jesse in the mouth. "Dewey, find some rope to tie these two horse thieves up. Look in the wagon for some."

"Found some." Dewey responds. "Boy, what are them plants anyways?"

I was mad, I really didn't want to say anything but I was afraid he'd hit me again so I said. "For

makin wine. They grow into grapevines.”
The ropes were tight and I couldn’t move. They tied my hands and feet together. They just tied Uncle Jesse’s hands behind his back.

I could see Uncle Jesse pulling at the ropes when he shouted over to me. “Adam, do what I taught you. Stand strong.”

“Blue, leave the boy by the wagon and put the old man by the horses.” Jake ordered.

“Sit down and don’t ya move an inch.” Dewey said as he grabbed the reins of his horse and walked over to Blue and Jake.

“What’s goin’ to happen to us Uncle Jesse?” I asked. Jake looked at Uncle Jesse and said. “Don’t ya go askin’ him. I tell you when I want ya to know.”

Uncle Jesse turned and looked up to Jake, took a deep breath and said. “Boy, they gonna shoot us or hang us. These animals just want what we have and are gonna bring back the horses to their boss and be hero’s or they gonna sell everything and split the money to drink and gamble. All we can do is die like men.”

All I thought was who’s going to plant Mom’s grapes. I just sat and cried where Uncle Jesse couldn’t see me.

Uncle Jesse tried to wipe the blood from his mouth on his shoulder, “How does it feel to do away with an old man and a boy? Makes you feel like a big man. When you spend all your takens, tell’em how ya got it.”

Jake turned and kicked Uncle Jesse to the ground saying, “Enough old man, just sit and keep your mouth shut.”

“Jake! What are we gonna do?” Dewey shouts nervously at Jake.

“When I make up my mind I’ll tell ya.”

I could hardly move my hands they were tied so tighty to my feet behind my back lying on the ground all I could do was lye and smell clover mixed with the lingering smoke of the fire burning. I felt my heart pounding outside my chest. My body getting tighter and trembling. I remembered what Uncle Jesse said to me awhile back. “Don’t fright, all ya senses leave ya and ya got nothing. Think with your brain G-d gave you.”

I told myself “No! I’m not going out this way. Think!” I told myself. I then remembered my boot knife. “If I can only get to my boot knife.” I looked up and saw they weren’t looking at me but at Uncle Jesse. I couldn’t move much but my fingers were free.

Slowly I tried to pull my pant leg up but I couldn’t hold it and pull at the same time. So I scooted closer to the wagon wheel and used it as a third hand. It took four tries before I could touch the tip of the handle. The ropes were too tight. I twisted my wrists to get some slack. I could only touch the tip of the handle; I needed only two more inches. I fought with the ropes again. I felt the ropes cutting into my wrists, what I thought was sweat was my blood running down my hand. Now I was able to grab the handle of the knife, but I couldn’t get it out of its sheath. I took a deep breath and made another attempt to remove it. “I got it! I got it!” I said to myself. At that point I thought I was screaming it out loud. I looked up and they were still talking to Uncle Jesse. Now was the hard part, turning the knife around so I could cut the ropes. At this point I was feeling poorly. Slowly I moved my fingertips down the handle so I could get it in the palms of my hands, then turning the blade. I kept telling myself, “Don’t drop the knife, don’t drop the knife.”

I could hear the three laughing and Uncle Jesse pleading with them. I knew I had to work faster. I heard Jake say. “Go get my rope.” I worked at cutting the ropes, how far had I gotten, how much more is there.

Dewey grabbed the rope off his saddle and looked at me. “Boy your next.” He laughed as he handed the rope to Jake.

I knew I had to stop moving, they were all looking at me. I knew but I couldn’t stop. I needed time, and time is what I didn’t have.

I started working as fast as I could. At this point I didn’t care if they saw me. I felt the knife move and my feet were free. Now I had some slake, but my hands were still bound. I twisted my hands and started cutting again. Looking up I saw Dewey grabbing at Uncle Jesse on the ground trying to pull him up. Blue got off his horse and helped Dewey put Uncle Jesse on a horse.

I knew I had to get to Uncle Jesse’s rifle. It was our only chance. My fingers were sore and bleeding but I forced them to cut the rope. I knew only minutes away Uncle Jesse and I would be dead.

Jake took the end of the rope and made two loops, then started twisting it around and around. He held one end and counted the twists. “Thirteen, just enough”. The loose end he wrapped around his saddle horn and the noose he threw over a tree branch, repeating “Thirteen that makes it legal. Just what a

horse thief deserves.”

I could see tears in Uncle Jesse eyes as he looked at me. “Adam hold ya own. Don’t be fraid; ya see ya family soon. Don’t let these animals turn ya”. Turning his head to Jake he spits in his face.

Jake wipes the spit off his face and smiles, “Boy’s let see how he does the hangman’s dance. Jesse, remember to kick high when the dance starts.” Blue grabs the noose and places it around Jesse’s neck. “Pray ifin ya believe” He tightens the noose a little more then turns toward me, “Boy watch and learn how to dance the hangman’s dance.”

I felt my hands go free. I looked up and saw Jake start to back his horse up. All three were looking at Uncle Jesse. “Now’s my chance,” I told myself, “everything now depends on my teachin’s with a rifle.” I jumped up, reached under the wagon seat and pulled what Uncle Jesse called Uncle Henry, (a repeating rifle from the Henry firearms company.) turned and fired at the rope hitting it and Uncle Jesse falling to the ground. Jake went for his gun and I cocked the lever one more time and shot Jake in the shoulder before he could get his gun out of the holster. Cocked the rifle one more time and told them to stop or it’s the last thing they do. I yelled “Uncle Jesse! Uncle Jesse!” ...Nothing, I moved slowly around were I could see Uncle Jesse, holding the rifle at the three murderers. I could see Uncle Jesse lying there **Dead**. Jake ordered Dewey and Blue to shoot me. They look at each other as, if to tell the other to do it.

I fell to my knees crying, trying to look at Uncle Jesse but I couldn’t. I wanted to shoot them where they sat. But I couldn’t. What would Uncle Jesse want me to do? At that moment one of the horses moved and I leveled the rifle at Dewey. They all froze. “Throw your gun over here with your left hand, slowly! Now get off your horse and get Jake off his.”

Jake yells out. “You fools now we can’t do anything.”

“What could we do with that repeater aimed at our middles.” Dewey yells back.

I remembered something Uncle Jesse said he did after a fight he got into. “Get’m to drop their britches to their ankles, it’s hard to fight and run that way” I took another look at Uncle Jesse. The tears kept coming and coming. “Walk over here, ... now drop your britches now.”

“You want us to do what?” Blue remarked.

“You heard what I said!”

“You can shoot me now but I aint’a goin do that.” Jake said.

I lowered the gun to his mid section and tightened the grip on the rifle. With his good arm he undid his buckle and lower his pants. Backing up to the wagon I reach in under the tarp and pulled out some leather straps we used for the plants. “Lie on your bellies with your hands out in front of you, any movement and it’s your last.” I had all three lying were I wanted them and carefully went for their guns. I took their rifles from their saddles and put them under the wagon seat. I cocked one of the pistols and shot just above Jakes head.

“I didn’t move, what ya shoot’n at me for?” Jake hattered.

“Just want’n to let you know I hit what I aim at.” Making sure they all herd what I said.

“What you aim’n to do with us? Dewey asked.

“I’ll let you know when the time comes.” I was glad they were on their bellies with their heads looking forward so they couldn’t see how I was shaking trying to tie them up one by one.

I walked over to where Uncle Jesse lay dead and removed the rope from his neck. The moment I turned him over I screamed. I couldn’t see I was crying so much. I just sat there thinking of a life without Uncle Jesse. I must have sat there for hours. The next thing I remembered was Blue asking for water.

“Boy, can you give us some water?”

“Me too,” Dewey shouts.

“Just shoot me hear and now,” Jake said. “Ya shot me good and it’s better to die then live with this here pain.”

I don’t know why I did what I did but it felt good. I walked over to Jake and kicked his bleeding shoulder. The way he screamed and twisted on the ground made me feel good. I told him “Uncle Jesse died like a man. You scream like a baby.”

“What about the water.” Dewey yells out.

I walked over, picked up our canteen, and gave each just a sip. I looked up at the sun and saw it was about noon. Uncle Jesse was all I could think about now. I knew I couldn’t carry him alone so I just dragged his body over to where he slept the night before. It was a cool place in the shade. I felt my body swell up with anger looking at Uncle Jesse. I ran back to where the three murderers lay and kicked them over and over again. Yelling “Why? Why?” I could hear them screaming at me but I couldn’t hear what they said. I finally came to my senses when I saw Mom’s grape cutting on the ground. I walked over to the wagon, picked it up and thought this is the closest thing I have to a family. I

carefully tied the canvas around it and placed it back with the others in the wagon. As I looked at all the other plants my mind went back to our home, with Mom carrying water and making sure the dirt around each plant was moist and soft. I hear her singing as she prepared the new seedlings from the cuttings she made after the last seasons crop. She treated them as she did my brother and me. Jake voice shattered my thoughts with his voice yelling. "Boy! Ya gonna leave us in the hot sun all day."

I walked over to where I had tied them up and checked to see that the straps were still tight. I looked over at Uncle Jesse and knew he had to be buried soon. The longer I waited the harder it would get. I got a shovel out of the wagon and walked over to Uncle Jesse's body. Each shovel full of dirt felt like my heart was being ripped out of my body. I dug as long as I could and stopped. I knew I needed help. Which one of the two could I handle? Blue was bigger then Dewey. But Dewey's not as bright as Blue. I soon made my decision. Blue could do it faster. I walked over to Blue and turned him over. Placing a gun to his head I said, "I need your help burryin' Uncle Jesse. One move and your dead. One deep breath and your dead. Ya know I can shoot and shoot well." I pulled my boot knife out and cut the straps on his legs and then his hands. I backed up fifteen feet or so for my safety. Now walk over and finish the hole, then I gave him more water.

"What about us" I heard Dewey say.

"Ya aint' the one working" I shouted back.

Blue really put his back in digging the hole. It look him about two or three hours. All the time Blue dug Jake moaned and cursed me. I told Blue to throw the shovel out and stay in the hole. That's when I back up to the wagon for the rifle and Uncle Jesses' bedroll. Putting the pistol in my waistband I told Blue to get out of the hole. I threw the bedroll at him. The look on his face was fear, and that made me feel good. I guess he thought I was going to kill him. I told him to drag Uncle Jesse into the hole and wrap him in his bedroll. After I gave him more water I tied him back up, this time against a tree. I tied the other two the same way. Jake was the harest because he was going in and out of conciseness and I had to drag him. It was my responsibility to bury Uncle Jesse. The same feelings I had when I started the hole I felt when I filled it. Every shovel full was filled with memories of Uncle Jesse. Everything he taught me, everything he was. Even when he threw the corn snake in my bed. When I ran and told my Mom, they both laughed. The tears came

back and I did something that puzzled me at the time. I started smiling. Thinking he was with our family and they were all looking down at me.

By the time I finished with the grave it was just beginning to get dark. I just realized that I haven't eaten in twelve hours. I gave water to the three murderers and started a fire for the night. As I was making dinner Blue asked if they were getting anything. I feed them some of the beef bacon and trail gravy sayin' "This may be your last meal," While smiling.

It was getting dark and I needed to get more firewood. I knew I didn't want to leave those three alone. I sat there staring at the three for hours with one question rattling in my head. What do I do with them? The question kept rolling around over and over again. By chance I looked over and saw I hadn't taken care of the livestock. Uncle Jesse would have tanned me if I'd forgotten. He taught me to take care of them before I took care of myself. As I got up I looked over at Uncle Jesse's grave and smiled. "It's late but they'll be taken care of properly."

After the animals were taken care of, I sat staring at the fire again. I could see the three men squirming and twisting to get comfortable. I had placed a stake in the ground between their legs so they couldn't move much. Blue fell asleep and Dewey kept waking him. Jake moaned now and then but much less then before. I knew I wouldn't sleep at all that night. They killed Uncle Jesse," what do I do with them?" I asked myself over and over again. Dewey talked and talked. I don't remember talking back to him. He didn't sleep all night. I remember the fire, the things Uncle Jesse taught me. Thinking all I have to do is turn and Uncle Jesse ol'be there. I could hear my heart beating louder and louder and then I jumped. An ember in the fire popped, I thought my heart stopped and fell backwards. After I gained control of myself I took the canteen and let the water pour over my face. I must have paced back and forth for hours thinking was this true, did it really happen. Before I knew it, the fire was only burning embers and the sky was welcoming daybreak. I had survived the night and the torment. I looked at the three tied up and still sleeping except Dewey.

I made a decision, but wondered, was my decision a fair decision? Would I be able to live with it? Is this what Uncle Jesse would have wanted?

I walked back down to the stream and filled the canteen again, smelling the freshness of the morning and the sounds of the water on the rocks. " This day is my beginning," I said to myself walking back to our

campsite. I knew what I had to do and I was going to do it.

When I got back Blue was awake. I walked over to Dewey who was now sleeping and kicked him to wake up, in doing so, I woke Jake up. As soon as he moved he hollered. I told them to look around and see everything they could. This was the last morning they will ever see. Dewey cried and begged for his life, he wanted to see his wife and baby. Blue just stared at me. Jake yelled. "Just make it fast, I'm in too much pain as it is."

In the wagon I picked three leather straps we used with the saplings. Poured water in our coffee pot and dipped the leather in it, waiting till they were dripping wet. Blue saw what I was doing and started screaming "Not that way! Not that Way!" Then the other two saw and started pulling at their bindings. I looked at Blue and said, "It's not the hangman's dance, but it'll do." Dewey asked if I could write a letter to his wife. I agreed. Jake just sat there in pain, trying not to move any more then he had to.

After I finished Dewey's letter, I told him I didn't know when she would get it. He seemed to accept my answer. With the other two watching I took one of the straps out of the coffee pot and tied it tight to Dewey's neck. I told the other two to watch and be ready for what happens. "Blue ya're next." His eyes got big and his mouth dropped open. "Jake, you'll be the last. I want you to have the most pain. To let you know, that you took everything I had in life and for that I'm going to take everything you had in this life. As the sun started to rise high in the sky, I looked over at the three. Dewey began sweating and his face turning red. Blue stared at Dewey's face still with his mouth open. Jake, still in pain sits and does nothing.

I walked over to Uncle Jesse's grave and leaned on the hanging tree. I told Uncle Jesse that before I left I would cut that branch off. By this time I could here Dewey and Blue start to scream. It was time to draw another strap of leather from the pot. As I walked to Blue he was trying to kick and pull his bindings apart. Blue began begging and pleading to spare his life. I didn't have any emotions in me for him. As I tied the strap around his neck, he pulled his head away. I pulled his head backward and tightened the strap. I looked

over at Dewey and saw he was having trouble breathing and his tongue was starting to swell and turn black. Just short moans were coming out.

Jake shouted at Blue. "The old man had more backbone then you. Die like a man."

I looked back at Dewey and he was dead. The strap still tightening and his tongue, sticking out of his mouth getting blacker and blacker.

Jake wanted to know, "Are you going to bury us?"

"We're ya goin' to bury us?" I asked.

Jake silently turned his head.

"Each shovel full of dirt
felt like my heart was being
ripped out of my body."

I walked the horses down to the stream for some water. They just drank for a while till I walked them back. I pulled the last strap out of the pot and walked over

to Jake. He just looked forward without any emotion or thought as I tied the strap to his neck. As I turned to walk away He asked. "Would it do any good to ask you to shoot me?"

I just walked back to the wagon.

Blue kept saying, "Please, Please, Please."

There was no emotion for any of them. Picking up a saw from the wagon I climbed the tree and scooted out on the branch and started cutting it down. It fell ten feet from Uncle Jesse's grave. I dug a hole where Uncle Jesse's feet were and buried the branch as a marker. I looked over and saw the lifeless bodies of Uncle Jesse's murderers. What I told Jake, I couldn't do. Uncle Jesse would have wanted me to bury them. So bury them is what I did, without a marker and without words.

I hitched up the wagon, set the saddles in along the tailboard, and tied the horses in line. Circled the wagon over to Uncle Jesse. Looking at his grave, no headstone, just the branch as a marker. I had to do something else before I left.

The last memory I had of Uncle Jesse's grave were three of Mom's grapevines I planted to keep him company.

My Open Door

Michelle McCullough

I stand here in front of
your house hoping that you will
let me in, but you never do.

Every second you get you look out your
window or open your door to see if I am
still there only to find out that I have not moved.

I hear you cry and it makes my
heart ache not being able to comfort you.

I know of the tunnel you dig to get away from everything,
including me, but I stand here waiting and hoping that you
will dig your tunnel to me.

I can't help you unless you are willing to let me.

Come dig your tunnel to me and come into my
house. You have but to open the door and you will
not have to wait any longer for my
voice can put your mind at ease.

I can see you standing outside my house waiting,
for what I don't know,
but maybe now I can find out.

I open the front door and stand there
watching you as you watch me.

*Inspired by Mark Strand's "The Tunnel"

Abandoned Faith

Photography

Amanda L. Conrad





Requiem for Beatrice Photography Bernard Bernbaum

Natali Penafiel

Photography

Ecuador, Up and Down



Snakes and Oranges

Tracy Elliott

This is the story of a man and his dog. A deep orangey-red dog, lolling his tongue out the car window and watching the fly-speckled air drone by. The dog, Homer, loves to ride in the car, but his owner could care less. Dogs wouldn't understand the boredom that humans associate with a thing like a car. He closes his droopy eyes, savoring the wind, as his owner fumbles with the radio dial.

Here is a man who spends more money on his morning coffee than some people spend on their dinner. His eyes are running a stock ticker, and his fingers tap morse code on the steering wheel: "SOS! Buy, sell, trade! When is the meeting? Who has the memos? SOS!" He hasn't been on a ride in the country in a long time, and it's straining his nerves. The great yellow wheat fields look alien to him, and the sky is shockingly blue and naked when not covered up with the tips of buildings. But here there is only one building, stubby and red in the distance, and as he drives toward it, his mind is elsewhere.

Homer has been watching the sky for signs of rain, and watching the ground for evidence of snakes. Nothing has come up so far, but he's waiting.

The car lurches, bumping roughly over gravel, as the car passes a lone mailbox that has its red flag pointed at the ground. It feels like nails on a chalkboard, the gnashing of teeth, to drive his fresh car over the rocks. But he sets his jaw and plows forward, finally coming to a stop in front of the old farmhouse. The man and the dog head toward the front door, and the man knocks while the dog paces in circles.

"Allen?" calls a voice that strikes Homer as familiar. The door reels open, and there stands a short woman in a floral-printed dress, beaming a smile that looks as if it hasn't been used in a while. Homer yaps to attention, flinging himself at her as she laughs, and Allen pulls him back by the collar. These two smell the same, Homer thinks, both like package-bread and orange marmalade.

They all enter the house, which is decorated with pictures of roosters. "It's so good to see you again," the woman beams, headed for the kitchen to take a shrieking kettle from the stove. "How was the drive over?"

Allen sits down at the table, and Homer leaves to go poke around the house. "Not too bad," Allen says. "It's not as if there would be any traffic."

"Yes, but I'm always worried the car will break down and you'll be stuck in the middle of nowhere."

Allen smiles and shakes his head. His mother forgets how things work, sometimes. "You know I have a cell phone. I'd call for someone to come pick me up."

He pauses, not wanting to upset her. "And how have you been holding up?"

When she returns, she's got two mugs of tea and a plate of sliced oranges. When Allen was younger, he would squeeze the juice into his tea. Now he eats the pulp properly, putting honey in his tea instead. Really he prefers coffee.

She frowns, making a sort of so-so motion with her shoulders. "As well as can be expected, I suppose. It's been too quiet around here. It's hard to think about other things, when the house is so quiet."

She stirs her tea slowly, her eyes beginning to look glassy and distant. Allen is afraid she might start crying. There's nothing worse than watching your mother cry.

"The oranges are delicious," he says, a futile effort. He's not good at these things.

"We've had a good crop this year," she says, smiling again now, although feebly. "I sent your sister a box of them, and she just called to ask me for more." Tending the small ring of orange trees in the backyard has been his mother's hobby for years now, and she takes pride in the way people like them. It was so easy to feel useless sometimes, out in the middle of nowhere, but at least if juice and marmalade and citrus-glazed cakes were being made, then she could be pleased with herself, and see her guests happy as well.

"I'm cooking a roast, too," she says. "Are you staying for dinner?"

Allen's mind flickers to a comforting image of his own apartment, the light from his computer casting the room blue, with the news buzzing on TV and a frozen dinner in the microwave. He doubts he would stay, even if he could.

"You know I can't stay for long," he says. "Really, I just came because there's something I wanted to ask you."

"Oh?" she says quietly. "What's that, dear?"

Homer's collar tags jingle from the kitchen, where he has found a bowl of food with his name written in scribbly yellow letters on the side. Homer can't read, nor can he remember why his own bowl would be in this strange kitchen.

"I wondered," Allen says. "If you might want 29

to keep Homer here with you. I'm away at work most of the time, and he probably doesn't like being cooped up in the apartment. Plus I thought you could use the company."

His mother does not speak, but glances away toward the orange trees. Through the screen door, the sky always looks gray and cloudy. Finally, she speaks again.

"Why would you take him away, if you were going to bring him back again?" she says, her voice very even. "Didn't I tell you he wouldn't like the city?"

Allen sighs, and doesn't bother explaining that Homer likes the city just fine. "Well I didn't think you'd end up needing him here."

"We needed him before," she says, sternly now. "He's your father's dog. Your father needed him."

Allen remembers now why he doesn't visit. There's too many things he's taken away, and she won't forgive him. Homer is eating something he found on the ground, and does not understand that he's being fought over.

"He used to sit in his chair, you know, calling for him," she says, her voice quavering. "I'll never understand why you took him."

"He *told* me to!" Allen protests. "When I left for the city, he *told* me to take Homer."

"And I told you not to!" her voice is rising. "Do you think I want him now, out of pity?"

"No, mom, listen..."

She stands, overturning her teacup. Allen didn't move to clean it up, but Homer began to lap it up from the ground as it dripped. It tasted like oranges. "I don't want him," she said. "Do you think I want to stare at his face each day, thinking that your father would be alive today if only he'd been here? Do you think I like to be reminded that it's my son's fault that my husband is dead?"

"You know that's not true," Allen says, watching her incredulously as she heads toward the kitchen. He stands as well, trying to follow her. "Do you honestly blame me? It was a rattlesnake, mom, and there's nothing any of us could have done."

"The dog could have," she says. "Homer always chased snakes. He would have spotted the thing, jumped on it, before it could attack. Now what's he going to do? Run around causing trouble? I don't need that."

Allen can't take his eyes off his mother as she

fumbles to do anything at all with her hands, moving jars around, putting oranges in different bowls. Wind sways the branches of the trees outside, making it seem that the sky must be clouding over after all.

"What am I supposed to say to that?" he says with his arms out, pleading. "All this time you've been harboring all this resentment toward me? My own mother?"

She's spotted Homer's old bowl on the ground and picks it up, carrying it to the sink to wash it out. "It's how life goes," she sighs. "We don't expect things to happen the way they do. But when they do, we have to be held accountable. I shouldn't have to live with that kind of guilt, dear."

She hands him the bowl, clean now, and her eyes are cold.

"I can't just leave you here," Allen says, "What will you do?" He stares at her intensely, searching for some trace of the woman he had known all his life, and who even ten minutes ago had seemed so different. But now he felt, as Homer did, that this was some woman he recognized vaguely from long ago, but whose identity he could not place.

"I'll tend the oranges, same as always," she replies calmly.

Yes, Allen wonders silently, fiercely, *But who will tend the snakes?*

At last he takes the bowl from her, wondering now what he could possibly do with it, and walks from the kitchen, his mind spinning. The snakes and the oranges and his dog and his mother were spiraling with the facts and figures in his mind, searching for some conclusion, and he was drawing a blank. Homer yips at his heels, happy to be on the move again, and eager to have a look at the new, gray sky. He says goodbye to her as he leaves, and she stares stonily back at him.

The man and his dog leave now, heading back toward the city on the same road on which they came. The man's mind is weak, wondering if it had been a mistake to leave all those years ago, and if it is a mistake to leave right now. The dog thinks of the taste of tea with orange marmalade, and wonders what all those shapes might be – the buildings he can see on the horizon.

*wRites of Spring, Robert Meeker Memorial Writing Contest Winner (North Campus)

Addition by Subtraction

Elizabeth “Dani” Callahan

“I don’t want you around my step-kids. You’re a bad influence. I want them to grow up to be smart and educated, so please stay away from them.”

“If you want to go to an Ivy-League college, then go ahead, but don’t expect me to pay for any of it. I would have to go into my retirement fund to give you that kind of money, and all that money is mine. I need over two million dollars; I can’t just haphazardly throw it around.”

Those phrases and variations of them have been hammered into my mind by my father for as long as I can remember. Since he has been abused by his parents and suffers from emotional disorders, I have never put the blame entirely on him. After my parents’ divorce following his affair, I attempted to

keep in contact with him because part of me felt he would change. Our “conversations”, however, were meaningless and painful. They drugged up

terrible memories and emphasized the fact that he was incapable of caring for another human being. Usually he would tear apart my aspirations and make a mockery of my feelings, and I would hang up the phone in tears.

Two years ago, my father told me that he had no desire to support my educational expenses and that I was on my own, so I decided that he caused me enough pain and that it was time to move on. I wrote him a farewell letter describing the ways he had hurt me throughout life and ended my contact with him for good. I made it clear that I still loved him even if he could not love me, but that I could no longer continue our relationship at the expense of my health and self-esteem. I have not heard from him since.

The letter that I wrote my father symbolized my realization that it was hopeless relationship. His behavior was not because I was a bad person or did not deserve love from a parent, but his sickness would not allow him to act like a normal father. I had to move on and strive to enjoy life without dad. I surrounded myself with friends and family for emotional support, and focused on my education

and giving back to the community. I had never been more active and motivated in life until I separated myself from him. I felt a free, independent spirit rise within me. It was a feeling that I have never felt for a continuous period of time until then.

I began to develop a burning desire to do things that I have never felt compelled to do. I quickly realized my calling in life – to be a child advocate attorney. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children who had been abused and neglected like I had been; children who needed someone to stand up for them. This was a dramatic change from my previous career goal, which was to go into whichever field paid the most money. This desire caused me to suddenly care for my grades in school, so that I would have the opportunity to go to law school and achieve my dream. I began volunteering for numerous organizations and became extremely active in my

community. I have even become close with several children in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters organization who have been or are in situations like I was. I am able to

empathize with them and hopefully leave a helpful, long-lasting impact on them.

Although I knew cutting ties from my father was the correct decision to make, I did not have the slightest suspicion that it would have such a profound and rapid effect on me. I also did not immediately realize that one of the main factors behind my motivation to change was a choice I made. While losing a parent can lead to emotional distress and hardship, I feel that in this situation it relieved me of significant stress and trauma, allowing me to improve myself and, in the process, others.

“I began to develop a burning desire to do things that I have never felt compelled to do.”

Violeta

(serie garabatos y alaridos)
Natali Penafiel

Violeta...¿Es que de soñar no estas cansada?,
¿Es que no te alcanza la pobreza?...
Veo que te has vestido de princesa,
mas tu sencillez en la mirada
te hace transparente como el hada
que corre descalza en mi tristeza.

Coqueta...¿Qué ocultan tus ojos fascinada?
- pues de admiración te siento presa -
Oso preguntar niña traviesa:
¿Que esconden tus manos en la espalda?
Y ante mi impaciencia dices: ¡Nada!,
aunque has respondido con torpeza.

¡Escuha! Vuélveme por tí túnica blanca,
para tus pupilas hazme estrella,
tórname manguante de la luna
para sujetar tu cabellera...
Mas ¿Que te impulsará?, ¿Qué es lo que esperas?
si ante mis palabras no te inquietas,
sabes que no ostento vestiduras,
que no soy estrella, sólo escarcha,
sabes que esta noche hay luna llena
y aunque así no fuese... tu melena
no merecería estar atada.

Pero entre mis versos tu embelezo
me hace suponerme enamorada...
Oso cuestionarte nuevamente:
¿Qué escondan tus manos en la espalda?
Y antes que tus labios, tu Mirada
ya me ha respondido claramente:
Vuélveme por tí atavío plata,
Vísteme de azahares cual doncella,
tórname sin gloria, sin riquezas
para ser humilde cual violeta.

Mudo mi semblante en la sorpresa,
descubres tus manos de la espalda...
!Hada! ¿Que guardaste?... ¿Que ocultabas?...
!Nada! Sólo un ramo de violetas.

Ma Mer¹ **Noemie Levy**

My mother, Ma mere²
Comme l'eau de l'ocean
Qui se partage³ between
Madness and tranquility.

Drenched inside your wet womb,
Broken water gave me life.
Your crystal clear streams consumed me,
Quenching me, parched and pink.

I swam in you, and it was all I needed.
You, who had waited so long for me.
You took me to the sea and back,
And had me breathe your turquoise water.

I drown sometimes,
Gasping, lost between your
Love and disappointment.
Stuck between the sea and the shore.

It is not you who chokes me,
For I have put these barren walls
Which now fill with your water
And make me bluer than the sea you wish to be.

It's true,
I was once attached to you.
But the cord from which I took life
Now strangles the life from me.

Ma mer - French. Translated, it means, "My Ocean"

Ma mere - French. Translated, it means "My mother"

"Comme l'eau de l'ocean, qui se partage..." - French. Translated, it means "Like the water of the ocean, which is split..."

Iraq
Ashley M. Davey

The depth in their eyes matches
The depth in their souls as they
Answer the door to three military men.

The knowing in their hearts match
The truth in these men's voices as
They tell them what has happened in hell.

Hearts shatter like the picture
Frame against the floor as his
Wife and parents realize he will never
Meet his unborn twins.

Their world ends at the moment
Like his life ended in a second,
surrounded by his brothers and
Bullets as he defended his country and his family.

The beginning is easy, the end is hard.
But is it all now a part
Of our everyday lives?



The Politics of Justice

Jade Brown

At the Little London Primary School in Jamaica, in a tiny little classroom, I learned one of life's most important lessons. I learned that justice is in the eye of the beholder.

All the students, including me, looked forward to the last day of the first week of school. Not only was Friday "the beginning of the end", but also the day on which our teacher would choose the prefects – the two assigned bullies who would govern the class for the rest of the year, similar to the American version of a hall monitor.

In my fourth grade classroom the tension mounted. We sat quietly in our seats, poised and staring straight ahead with our hands neatly folded on our desk. Angels would have been intimidated! The teacher walked around our unusually peaceful classroom, finding everything else to do, but announce the prefects. Haaaaa! A long sigh pierced the quiet air and even the chalkboard seemed to be staring at me impatiently. I must have prayed a thousand silent prayers: *Dear God in heaven and Jesus please let me be the one. Pleaseeeee. I promise to be good.* Finally tired of our little eyes following her, the teacher grudgingly began.

"Second prefect: Oneil Mattis!"

We clapped! A few faces dropped as the crybabies, suck-fingers and overall losers of our class all realized that their chances of "prefect-hood" were nonexistent. They had no chance against the elite –the teachers pets, task volunteers and smarty-pants of our class. I was one of the elite and therefore still had a chance; with eyes tightly closed I kept praying even more fiercely. The teacher began again.

"First prefect... *Please let it be me! Please let it be me* – danced in my head like an irresistible jingle.

"Leroy Ricketts", the teacher announced.

Flabbergasted, I opened my eyes. If my ears had deceived me, my eyes did not, for there was Leroy "suck-up" Ricketts grinning from "ear to ear" in his Zeus-like glory. However, he did manage to flash me a triumphant glare, when the teacher turned her back to pin on his shiny, new, prefect badge. A proud ten-year-old narcissist, he returned to his seat in awe of himself and blatantly ignored our half-hearted congratulations.

I looked over at my other opponent, confidant and friend, Tracy; with hands tightly crossed over her chest and her bottom lip protruding in a pout,

she was clearly, equally distressed. Since first grade Tracy, Leroy and I had always ranked as the top three students in our class. We were well respected and equally popular both with teachers and our peers. However behind the angelic smiles we donned for teachers, we knew each other pretty well and Tracy and I knew that Leroy was rotten to the core. Perhaps I envied him for his privilege; his father was a well-known local police officer and his mother, a former teacher, remained friends with most of the staff at our school. Leroy had it made: teachers always recommended him for the best programs and field trips, at times letting him eat lunch with them in the teachers' lounge.

On the other hand, Tracy and I worked very hard to separate ourselves from the bunch and impress the teachers. We were unified in our dislikes for Leroy and he knew it. If he remained prefect for the rest of the year, Leroy would crush us, especially since his best friend Oneil held the title of 2nd prefect.

At lunch Tracy and I met in the left corner of the schoolyard, far away from Leroy and his crew

"He's gonna ruin us". Said Tracy. "I bet he'll always pick us to help clean up the school yard, collect lunch orders for the classes, stack books in the library and all those other stuff that prefects are in charge of."

"Plus, knowing how much he likes us, he'll probably try to get us in trouble with the teachers.", I added sarcastically.

"Ha! Told yah I was gonna win", he said.

When neither Tracy nor I replied, he swaggered away, undoubtedly, thoroughly impressed with himself. As we watched him go, one thing was clear; Leroy did not deserve to be prefect. Perhaps his arrogance was not a crime, but his violation of school rules, which often involved cursing and participating in unauthorized sports behind the school, was surely reprehensible. Our resolve was simply – death to the "Rickmeister"!

In his first week of office, we stayed close to Leroy, watching his every move. Just one slip-up and he could kiss "prefect-hood" goodbye. Even though, he did not (as I had predicted) give Tracy and me the worst tasks to do, he continued to gloat. Besides having to take orders from Leroy, it was his gloating that irritated me the most. But, that Friday Leroy sinned! During one of his "illegal" cricket games, Leroy said the F-word. I jumped up from my place on the ground.

"Did you hear him? Did you hear him?" I

shouted at Tracy, jumping up and down. "He cursed!"

Yes! Tracy had heard him too. As we ran off in search of our teacher, I took one last look at the "Rickmeister" grinning from ear to ear; he had no idea that he had just committed political suicide. Despite my dislike for the kid, I felt like a traitor, but I shook off the guilt. Justice must be served!

Tracy spotted the teacher descending the stairs. I blurted out the whole story about Leroy playing cricket and cursing before I could change my mind. The teacher looked at us doubtfully, but followed us to the back of the school yard, where both Leroy and Oneil were playing cricket in a restricted area of the school yard. Shocked, she immediately stripped them from their "prefect-hood".

I was delighted; finally I would take my

rightful place as a prefect.

However I had started celebrating a little too soon. Tracy was appointed first prefect. And as for me – I got nothing! Some other kid became second prefect.

Perhaps, the teacher regarded me, just as the rest of the class did – as a tattletale who could not be trusted. Though she followed all school rules, Tracy was an even meaner prefect than Leroy. As I look back at my first lesson in politics, it occurs to me that a great philosopher, John Dalberg-Acton, was correct when he said "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." With her new found power, Tracy moved from my best friend to my worst enemy in about one week. Justice was served, but it sucked!

My Secret **Chevelle D. McAfee**

Hush child, you know you can't do that.
What if the misses comes in, you know she'll have your back.
We know you mind is strong.
But, we have to forget about it, in order to live long.
I don't like it no more than you.
But you see what happen to Sara, they sold her off
And they'll do you too.
Here's comes the misses, put that away.
You can't let her catch you, at least not today.
Good day Mame, can I do some 'em for ya?
You surely can, go start dinner and make me a tub of bathe water.
Come child, go out in fields.
No mamma, I don't want to.
You go child, you go, you hear, you hear.
No time for your foolishness now, you go on, do as I say.
Child don't play with me now, go on out to the fields.
One day I'm gonna be free, wait, watch you'll see.
One day I'm gonna be frec.
I have a secret, I wish I could tell.
Mister and Misses don't know, but lil' Cassie taught me well.
Momma say this gonna cause me to get a tree.
I never got whipped before, but this time they can't stop me.
My mind is made up, I can't live like this.
I pray everyday that GOD gives me a sign.
When the time comes, the journey is all mine.
Gal, what are you doing, oh just thinking momma.
Get that look off your face.
I know what you're thinking.
Is it wrong momma, to pray and dream for change?

No child, it's not wrong, but do it quietly and alone.
So no one can see the expression on your face.
Momma, whatever happened to daddy?
He got that look in his eyes, like you have right now.
I didn't know what he was planning.
But later, he told me what he was going to do, and how.
Mister found out, what he was going to do.
They caught him, beat him, and whipped him til he couldn't see.
Then as if that wasn't enough, they put a rope around his neck
and hung him in a tree.
This is what happened to your daddy.
I don't want the same for you or me.
It's gonna be different momma, I'm gonna make it you see.
I'm gonna be free momma, just like daddy.
Child, go on, rest your mind now, tomorrow will be a new day.
Let's stop all this talking, it's nonsense anyway.
Good night momma, good night child.
LORD keep us, shield us, from all hurt, harm, and danger.
Cover us in your blood LORD; watch over my child, forever Amen.
As I laid in my bed, thinking about what it's like to be free
All I could hear is momma saying, "Child leave it alone,
Child, please leave it be."
All I could say to her was, "I can't momma, I can't, that's just not me."
My life, is my life, no one should take that from me.
If I have to die fighting, that's just how it will be.
I wear no sign, no limbs on my back.
I was born with a strong mind momma.
A strong mind like daddy, you know that.
I cleared all my thoughts, so I could sleep.
It was hard for me not to think about it, the secret I had to keep.
Many folks have died behind this you see.
But, I believe this moment is mine and one day I'll be free.
I'm going to forget about it for right now.
Because momma wants me to, but GOD knows my plans
And He knows how it's going to happen too.
Weeks went by, I never mentioned it again.
The thoughts of being free, still stuck in my head.
I eased the stressed expression on my face.
But momma, still knew, I was gonna leave this place.
I had to find, a better life for me, and when I do,
I'll come back and set my momma free.
The time has come for me to reveal what I know.
Little Cassie, has taught me, how to sound out words,
read, and write you know.
I've been keeping this secret, for many years.
This is the trouble that momma fears.
I told her not to worry, to wipe away her tears.
She knows I can't help it; I have to do what's right for me.
I'm gonna leave this place.
I'm gonna be free. WAIT, WATCH, you'll see.

Paradise Lost

Jerome McHee

I spent the first nineteen years of my life on a twenty-one sq mile island called Bermuda. This is an island that stands alone in the Atlantic Ocean with its closest point being Boston or Washington D.C. Either one, the nearest land to Bermuda is far far away. This is an island limited in space so everything is imported. There are no factories of any sort, just retail stores and buyers. The people who live there are like no others on Earth. The majority of Bermudians are very friendly, courteous, spoiled but very easy to live with. Every Bermudian has a sense of pride since we are the only representations of ourselves except for the Bermuda Triangle. The outside world fascinates us and we are very open to new cultures and things. But one thing is for sure, we are very naïve in thinking that the world can be a big Bermuda with a little just a little love and unity.

When I was around eight my mother packed her things and left for the U.S. in search of a better life financially. She left behind her two sons so one day when she was settled she would send for the both of us. As usual, nothing goes as planned. It would be about a year before I would see my mother again. She left without saying goodbye, only leaving a note behind attached to my favorite VCR, saying she's gone.

I started to live with my father, and my brother was living with our uncle. I recalled having a strange sense of certainty that I would one day live in the U.S. But another feeling came over me that assured me that I would not be living with my mother or brother again. I was on my own. The thought of living abroad excited me. I was tired of living on that rock. I wanted to see more. Whenever I thought of the states I always thought of fun since that's all I had every time I visited the U.S. in the past. Soon I learned that visiting somewhere and living somewhere are two totally different things.

My brother eventually moved to the U.S. He could no longer stay in Bermuda because he was not a citizen of Bermuda. So he had to go. My family is originally from Jamaica. As you can guess, I was the first Bermudian in my family since I was born and raised there. He had got his papers to live in the U.S. through my mother. He started to live with her, and then he got married, had a family, and went out on his own. That feeling of one day moving to the U.S.

was so clear to me now because earlier when I stated this feeling, I left out one detail. I also had a strong feeling that my brother would eventually move to the U.S. too. It was like destiny had introduced itself to me very clearly for the first time in my life. All I was thinking at that time was, a new beginning a new life. When I finally decided to move to the U.S., I was nineteen years old. I was so accustomed to the traditions and ways of Berm (Bermuda for short), moving to another country seemed very exhilarating but also a bit scary. Ironically my stepmother and sister had moved to the U.S. also. My father and his wife had purchased a beautiful home out here since it was impossible to do so in Bermuda since a 2 bedroom house these days can cost you at least \$800,000 U.S. Yeah, I'm not exaggerating at all. The conversation I remember having with my mother about my move until this day is still stuck in my head.

She began saying, "Baby, how you feel about moving to the States."

I replied, "Excited, I get to experience a whole new beginning."

She replied, "Don't get to excited. America is no Bermuda."

I pondered on what she said then I quickly put it out of my mind only to find out what she meant when I left.

I am now living in Florida and I see a place very different from my home. There is a sense of pride, but it is a pride that says I am better than you. It seems more people care about themselves than their community or others. Don't get me wrong. I have met some wonderful people since I have been here. I love the fact that it is so diverse and that people can come together when there is a crisis. But, we as people, as human beings, need to be more informed of our surroundings and we need to be more unified so mankind could be heading strong. The opportunities and the potential the U.S. has are unlimited beyond belief but many people don't see them.

The transition of moving from one country to another changed my perception of how life should be. I realized that the island did not make me. It was the people who were around me and the unique experiences that they gave me and what I went through there that molded my character. The lesson that I learned was that it is not what you have or where you live. It is how well you utilize what you possess that can determine who you are.



Chosen Path

Photography

Amanda L. Conrad

Reply to Robert Frost's "Fire and Ice" **Rena Wang**

Roll, roll, roll your dice,

Come with fire come with ice,

What you pick what it lie,

Goes to the fate of your die.

Start Today **Quiana Rivera**

Dreaming starts now in this very moment
Tomorrow starts today
It's only one step from there to here
If you want to change

Start today

Start now in this very moment
In the flicker of an eye
In the cry of your new born baby
You can feel your forever begin to change

Waiting is an excuse to more of nothing

The beginning of anything starts
In the middle of something else
The end of anything is the
Beginning of something new

Start today

A Second Chance

Ellie Groden

Jamal slammed his car door shut. He looked down through the tinted window at the resume sitting on the seat and shook his head. He kicked his tire and regretted it. He walked heavily up the stairs to his apartment.

He stopped at the front door to compose himself. "Tomorrow will be better," he thought, still the bitterness lingered. He put the key into the lock and tried once again to shake the resentment that had followed him out of the interview and all the way home.

"Hi daddy!" she ran to meet him at the door. The four year old ball of joy threw herself into his arms.

"Hi Dee!" he said scooping her up and kissing his little girl all the way into the kitchen. "Hi baby." He set Dee down and wrapped his arms around his wife. She smiled warmly.

"Did you have a good day?" Cassie asked leaning into him. She had one hand flat on his lapel, the other on the stove, both her eyes right on his, their daughter danced at their feet.

"Yeah," he said breezily, his eyes communicating that he didn't get the job, hers saying she was sorry. He sat down at the kitchen table and Dee climbed onto his knee. "So how was your day?" he asked, smiling into his daughters eyes.

"I unna get a baby," she said proudly.

"You're going to get a what?"

"I unna get a baby!" she said loudly. She jumped off his knee and ran back into her room to play with her dolls.

"That girl she adores at school, Sandra, her mom is pregnant. They're all excited about the new baby." She leaned on the door frame of the small kitchen watching him. He took off his tie.

"I was so qualified," he started. He unbuttoned his top two buttons, then rested his hands on his knees and let his head fall. "Cassie, the guy looked at me like I was a day laborer," he said meeting her eyes.

"I'm so sorry," she said somberly, "but you can't let it get you down."

"I know," he said rising to set the table, "Where's Chris?"

"He went out," she said turning back to the kitchen.

"I'm worried about him. He's barely ever here and I don't like those friends of his. Every time I try

to talk to him he gets attitude and tells me I'm not his father."

"You're not," she said taking the chicken out of the oven, "You are his big brother. Chris loves you; he just wants your respect."

"Yeah and he'd get it if he did something respectable. Have you seen the size of the T-shirts he wears lately? They could fit Biggie Smalls." She laughed. "I'll try to talk to him tonight," he said putting the broccoli on the table, "more like a big brother," he mocked.

"He's just a kid," she said, "he's mad at the world right now because it took his parents. You are all he has, be good to him."

"Do you ever get tired of being right?" He asked. She shook her head smiling. He kissed her holding her face in his hands.

"Dee Dee darlin'," he called, smiling. "Come to dinner."

"The cluuuub went crazyyyyy," Jackie sang loudly, "the way she shake that ass sho amaze me. Come on," she said laughing, pulling Tasha onto the dance floor.

The music in the club was loud, the dance floor packed. The two ladies wound their hips, tossed their hair, and shook their asses for that song and many to follow. Jackie fanned herself dramatically and mouthed, "So hot." They were sweating profusely. Jackie stepped up to the bar and made eyes at a boy and then turned to Tasha embarrassed, smiling widely. Tasha looked around the bar for a man worth making eyes at.

It had been some time since either of the two friends had gone out. Tasha had left her job just two weeks before, after being hired at a significantly better firm. She felt like she had just ended a long possessive relationship. She had been looking forward to going out since Jackie called her earlier that week. On Monday, Jackie had finally gotten the promotion that she had been promised practically two years earlier. She left her young son with his grandma for the night in order to celebrate.

Six years ago Jackie and Tasha were just two freshman at community college who had both signed up for a black appreciation class. They left class together that first day laughing about the red-eyed Rasta's, the extreme Malcolm X's in training, and the granola eating white kids that made up the class. They were both ambitious, level headed, and intelligent, and had been close ever since. Jackie was there to remind Tasha of her dreams as she worked her way

through law school at night, while slaving away for an unappreciative lawyer by day. Tasha had been there for Jackie while she worked and went to school all the way through her pregnancy, and then more than ever when Jackie found the nerve to take her baby and leave his ungrateful father. They were both finally happy with their lives. Tonight they celebrated that.

“Cheers,” Tasha said holding up her martini, “to us.”

“To us!” Jackie grinned tapping her glass.

The two friends laughed and drank and danced some more. Eventually the exhaustion set in and they decided to go. They stepped out of the club giggling

him look down at Jackie and then back up into her pleading eyes. She wanted to grab him and shake him, push him against the wall and throw his gun in the gutter. She tried to hold onto his eyes for as long as she could but she could feel time speeding up again. The silence broke.

A shot was fired and sirens cried out. Jackie shrieked, the sirens screamed louder, and Tasha threw her hands over Jackie’s head pulling it down and covered her own head with her arms. When she felt safe enough, she peeked over her arms. The hoodlums had scattered. She took her hands off her friends head slowly.

“Lights blurred, the noise came back loudly and abruptly, and reality settled gravely over her.”

into the cold and stumbled across the sidewalk to catch a cab.

Tasha saw a group of guys coming up fast on her right. She saw a black 9mm and time stopped. The street was eerily quiet. She could hear her heart pounding in her chest. She saw Jackie’s frightened eyes and pulled her to the ground. Another gang crossed the street towards them. She saw their hardened faces, the one in front yelling and waving his piece in the air. Lights blurred, the noise came back loudly and abruptly, and reality settled gravely over her.

Tasha squeezing Jackie’s hand dragging her backwards across the freezing sidewalk until they were flat against the building behind them. They held each other as if it meant they could hold onto their lives. The reckless teenagers pulled guns as if they were playing with toys. “This is real,” Tasha thought, “this is life or death.” She could not believe the wasted youth displayed in front of her. Her mouth was dry but she wanted to scream. She had never felt so alive, or so powerless. Jackie’s eyes were squeezed shut, her mouth was moving, and Tasha knew she was praying furiously.

Tasha’s eyes were wide open. She stared at the kid in front. Suddenly everything slowed down again as he looked right at her. His eyes met hers and silence surrounded her. His face changed. He looked soft. She knew he didn’t want to be there. She saw

Both women stared wide-eyed at the body left lying in the street. The cops were taping off the area and the crowd had shifted from ducking on the floor to standing on the curb. The people watched solemnly mumbling the words “wasteful” and “useless.” Tasha wondered when things had gone so incredibly wrong.

Jackie collapsed into her lap, tears streaming down her face. Her mouth was open in a wide cry but there was no sound coming out. Tasha rubbed her back staring forward blankly. She couldn’t shake the image of the gun or the boy’s sorrowful eyes. Her breath was short, and difficult. She had been laughing innocently one second and impending death the next. She never thought walking across a sidewalk would put her life in jeopardy. The simple freedom had been taken from her so invasively. She was appalled. The women sat curled around each other on the dirty sidewalk in the winter moonlight, their lives shining in a startling new perspective.

Chris’s hands shook as he unlocked the door. His heart beat down into his gut, banging against the iron drum sitting in his stomach. He opened the door and his brother stood staring at him. He thought he might be sick.

“What’s wrong?” Jamal asked fearing the answer.

“Nothing,” he said automatically.

Chris looked down at the carpet wondering how he had let it get this far. He couldn’t shake the

sight of that woman's eyes. He never wanted to hurt anyone. He wanted to go to college. She looked at him begging to be spared. She feared for her life.

"I can't do it anymore," he said and with the words a tear let loose down his dark cheek.

"Do what?" Jamal asked putting his arm

around him and guiding him to the couch. Chris's thoughts swirled and a lump blocked

words from coming out of his mouth. He met his brother's eyes, tears now rolling down Chris's cheeks.

He pulled a gun out of his pants and took out the clip, his hands shaking so badly that it rattled against the table as he put it down. Jamal couldn't believe his eyes. Cassie and Dee flew through his mind and in that instant he considered throwing his little orphaned brother out on the street.

"Chris," he said quietly, "what did you do?"

"I don't know," Chris said sobbing into his hands. Jamal took a deep breath and exhaled trying to focus on anything except the Glock sitting on his coffee table. "I don't want to die." Chris said looking up into his brother's scared eyes, "I want to live to make you proud, to make Dad proud."

"Chris," Jamal said gripping his little brother's shoulder harshly, "who gave you that?" Chris stared blankly. "Do the people who gave you that know where you live?" He shook his head no, sniffing and wiping his face on his undershirt. "They aren't going to like you walking away, but you have to. You'll get your ass kicked pretty bad." He said still gripping his shoulder, but compassionately. "Have you seen anyone else walk away?" Chris nodded. "Did he live?" He nodded again.

Jamal sighed. He took his hand off Chris's shoulder and placed his clenched fists in his lap. He wanted to throw him through the wall for bringing a gun into his home. He fought the urge to lay his brother out right there.

"I'll walk away," he said plainly.

"How could you do this?!" he asked standing. He shouted quietly through clenched teeth. "You think generations of people before you fought so that you could act like some ignorant fool running around like guns don't kill people?" A vein was popping out of his forehead and his eyes were looking down hatefully

at his little brother, "You think Dad got the shit kicked out of him by cops fighting for your freedom so you could hand it back to them?" Chris shook his head.

"You think having that makes you free?!" Jamal asked pointing at the gun with intensity.

"No," he said softly.

**"Her mouth was open in a wide cry
but there was no sound coming out."**

"By picking up that gun you're throwing away your rights. You are throwing away your

life. Do you want to be a statistic? Do you want to rot in prison!?" Jamal took a breath and lowered his voice. "Do you want to be the reason that people in the United States Senate think black abortions will reduce crime?"

"No," he said standing, "Give me a second chance. I want to make a difference. I want to make things better."

Jamal grabbed his brother and pulled him close. He wrapped his arms around him and breathed heavily into his shoulder. All of the brother's raw emotion flowed into each other. It was a cold clear night. The radiator smelled of burnt dust. The moon was almost full, and it shone down on them through slits in the blinds. Jamal's eyes were closed. He held his brother tightly. Chris sobbed into his shoulder. He couldn't shake the image of the brother left lying in the street, and how he would never get a second chance.



The One Who Lies Inside
Danielle Rowe

What lies beneath those pretty faces
Those hollow eyes that make-up traces?
The camera hides all inner plight
Computer altered shadow and light.
The sultry look, the forced red smile
To get ahead, perfect guile.
To compromise morality
Yet face the screen with dignity

The flawless blonde, the polished skin
Yet still it hides what's deep within.
Why does one choose this heatless path
To live their life behind a mask?
What makes one want to be an idol
Lose all self just for a title?

First Breath

Quiana Rivera

My life was about my friends, my car, and about me
Until I was hit with an unplanned pregnancy
I was seventeen and scared beyond belief
My life wasn't about me anymore

I hide my secret and my shame, until I could no longer live with my pain
The nights I cried myself to sleep worrying about the life that grew within me
My body began to change, my belly grew big, and my hormones grew wild
I was a child having a baby

On July 20, at 4:42 pm, with the sound of his first breath I grew up in that very moment
My world would never be the same again
I chose to give him life, and I promised him a good life
A life in which he would not have to pay the price for being born to a teen mother

Almost thirteen years later, I look back at my unplanned pregnancy with different eyes
My son may had been an unplanned pregnancy, but he was planned by God
He is the greatest driving force in my life

I love you Alexander
Mommy

Eric
Esther Kertzman

I can't leave Eric alone,
I met him at the soccer practice,
He was with his daughter,
I was with my son.

My expression changed when I saw him,
What a quite surprise!
He was talking with another woman,
He made signals to me to wait.

I left and knew he was going to look for me later,
Later I saw him walking to the parking lot.
I waved my hand,
He came to say hi,
My heart was pumping,
His eyes were lighting.

“Do you want to sit?”
“Could you leave your daughter?”
“No, I am just saying hi.”

He is so handsome,
So thin,
So tall,
So attractive,
So provocative.

“I am going to move my car, I parked far away.”
Maybe I'll walk with you,
Maybe we can kiss,
Maybe...
“Mom, mom, look at my goal!”

Love's Sestina Stephanie Conner

It started as slight glances across
a crowded room. Eyes shifting through bodies
to reach one another for that second of unity.
She caught his, he caught hers, they both smile
as if words were not needed. The fire ignited was warmth
impossible to extinguish. There was no turning back.

The connection became a desire they both need back
in their world. The night came when he laid her across
his silk sheets, uncovered her smooth skin, and placed the warmth
of his own on top. As desire became pure energy, their bodies
were immersed into a whirlwind with an occasional smile
of reality. Both had longed for the unity

which this would satisfy. Yet there was no question that this union
was inevitable. He proceeded slowly while she stroked his back
so gently causing chills which brought him to smile.
Moving down her frame, he removed a cross
which lay on her chest. Their bodies
were now completely bare. She felt the warmth

of his tongue on hers, he then began to spread that warmth
elsewhere. She started to breathe deeper as this union
advanced. He kissed every inch of her body
while following with the tracing of his hands. Her back,
breasts, belly, a little further. Her hand slid across
his groin feeling his sense of inclination. They smiled.

As he positioned himself above her, he looked into her eyes, smiled,
I love you so much, is all he could say. She then felt the warmth
of him inside her as she let out an affirmative sigh which echoed across
the room. They were now one. Two souls united.
Slow at first, the desire enhanced. Back
and forth, little faster but not too much. Their bodies

began perspiring from the heat of each other. Her body
wanting more. Having no inhibition, she slowly hinted him up, smiled,
then took the initiative to reposition him on his back.
He laid back taking hold of her small but curvy waist as her warmth
engulfed his. She then proceeded to show him why this union
was worth waiting for. She performed until her muscles ached, then laid across

his chest. Their bodies wrapped in each others warmth.
All they could do is smile. That same united smile which
brought them both back to that first glance across a crowded room.

The Ascent

Watercolor, Pen, and Digital Art

Marlene Leslie





The Power of Small
Ashley M. Davey

It is unimaginable how the smallest things in the world can soften the hardest heart and make the meanest person in the world smile and feel important even if it is just for one day. The one thing that crosses your mind, or at least crosses my mind is a kiss.

When you are a child, a kiss from mommy on a scrapped knee heals all wounds and every child waits for the kiss on the forehead at night as they are tucked into bed by mom, dad, or in my case grandma that made you feel safe from all the monsters under the bed, the boogie man in the closet, and the ghost and ghouls outside your bedroom window.

Your first kiss as a young teenager brings you that first rush of love and heat of romance and lust that fills your young body and makes you wish and pray for another kiss and a hug as soon as possible.

But when you grow up into an adult and you find your true love, a kiss can put you in cloud nine and relieve all your stress from a hard day's work, start a day or night full of romance, calm your fears of the future, and make you know you have found the one you are meant to be with forever. And then the circle becomes full when you have a child and you kiss their forehead when the nurse or midwife first place him or her on your chest and makes you feel like your life is complete, makes you realize that being a mom makes you feel invincible.

The smallest thing, such as a kiss, can heal heartbreak and pain and make you smile when you feel like doing nothing but crying. A kiss is a simple gesture that shows just powerful and great the power of small is.

A Room

Jade Brown

In this room dusty old books sit on the shelf taking up space, taking up room.
Like the dusty old knowledge that sits in the apartments of my brain.

In the closet, my closet,
Clothes, tools, shoes, junk!
Items long discarded lay in a drunken slumber on the floor.
The clock ticks away.
Above it the cobwebs set in,
Nice and easy, time to snore.

In this room there is no wind,
No gentle breeze,
No awareness of time.
Laziness sets in like an old longed for friend,
And everything remains.

I have no objective,
Not even to clean this room.
No fear of my organization collapsing,
For in this room it has already collapsed.
My mind basks in freedom of lazziness.....
mine eyes rejoice in the easiness of negligence.

Truth is-
To clean this room would be dishonest.
To place everything in its rightful place
And clear away the clutter that is my life
Would tell an unspoken lie.
Hence, I emerge unfazed.

Perhaps seasons have passed outside,
Skies and moons evolved.
But alas!
I know not of it in this constant room through which time never passes.

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The Urban Rino

Digital Art

Nick Lopes



Bumper The Bass Rat

Digital Art

Nick Lopes

Not Listening

Photography

Elaine Wong



This I Believe

Ashley M. Davey

I believe that as long as you have faith, as long as you have something or someone to believe in, all things will eventually be alright. I believe that as long as you care, there will always be at least one other person in the world that will care about you as well.

Life isn't always roses or peaches and cream as people describe to you while you are growing up. They don't tell you about the hardships and heart break you are going to experience throughout your years. Now whether the hardships happen at a young age or later in life doesn't matter, because the things that make our lives hard are the things that bring us all together. I didn't realize that until I was out of high school.

In my freshman year of high school, my friend Emmanuel had a heart attack at the age of 15 on the track at school trying out for the basketball team. The entire school came together and supported his family in their hard times. Then in my sophomore year, after homecoming, my friend Meghan died in a car accident coming home from the dance. Her boyfriend was driving the car and was also injured. Even though some people blamed him, he had faith that things would be ok and at her funeral, her family embraced him and told him that it wasn't his fault. Later that year, my best friend, Jesse, who I had known since I was 5, committed suicide on my 17th birthday. I thought my world would end until I started spending time with friends and members of his family that I had not seen since I was in elementary school. Their love and compassion helped everyone get through it. And in my senior year of high school, Bradley Kay, died in another car accident. All of his friends didn't believe that something like that could happen to such a wonderful person and a lot of people gave up faith. But his mother's words at his memorial made everyone realize that he was watching over us and wanted us to keep our faith and go on in our lives.

I thought these heartbreaks and hardships of my life were over, but then in October of 2004, my older brother Victor, at the age of 35, committed suicide in my freshman year of college. I wanted to give up on life when it happened. I didn't want to go to school, spend time with friends or my boyfriend at the time, or leave the house. Friends we had not seen since I was 6 years old showed up and talked about all the good things my brother had done and all the reasons why he was such a great person and it made me realize that I couldn't give up on my life because there were people put there who cared about my family and had faith in the fact that we would be better. That even though it may take us years to get used to the fact that he is gone, one day we will be able to have faith and knowledge that he still cares about us and that one day we will all be together again.

I believe in life. I believe in love. I believe that as long as there is someone out there who cares about you, you have to have the faith to care about yourself. I believe that all things happen for a reason and that those reasons are to bring us all together and make us realize how special life is everyday.



Laura Donel

Behold the Wind **Danielle Rowe**

I believe that the only difference between the wind and people is that the wind is truly free. It sneaks around in the early morning and listens to the sound of mother earth and its inhabitants. Spying if you will and hoarding our secrets from the moment we wake. There are no secrets from the wind and at will it snatches noise and sound from their creators and wisps them away to it's far away archive. Or at a whim it can carry a voice to a waiting ear and keep it in such perfect form that it sounds exactly the way it did upon leaving the lips. It can bounce sound off the mountains or smother it in the trees. It can mute all sound but the hum of itself and carry your mind to a distant place. On a warm day the wind brings a cool and refreshing breeze and it can whip an icy hand at any who dare defy it.

For fun the wind finds humor of ruffled feathers as it tickles a passing bird. It plays charades with all of life as it dances the clouds into form urging us to guess its likeness. The wind and the sea movie in form. When warm seas will not bend to the will of the wind, it becomes angry and exerts its power as it bullies the earth. It is the very formula for life on earth and can give life or take it away. The wind has such strength and beauty that we should destroy it more and more each day.

The Day They Went Away

Raichelle Williams

My name is Mukami, and I am 12 years old. I was born in a small village on the banks of southern Ghana, where my friends now tell me strange things have been happening. This morning I was awakened by cool breeze and the warm African sun on my bare uncovered feet. My sleep was well enjoyed and now it was time to help mama feed baby Kwesi. Today I did not hear father chopping wood or smell the Okra burring in the wind as I frequently did in the mornings, all that filled the air was the smell of wet earth and Thyme. I quickly jumped out of bed, to see what my family had been up to, startling as hen attempting to lay her eggs in my favorite basket . I Checked mama's and Kwesi's resting place, however there was no sign of them. I quickly made my way around the house to see if father had been taking a break after chopping the fire wood. but his ax was hanging still on a rusty nail. Where would they go without telling me I wondered, I did not enjoy being alone, especially upon first waking up. Instantly I started reminiscing about stories Samiha shared with me a few days ago, she was rambling about people vanishing without a trace, or being fooled to go with those with fairer skin than that of our own. I tried to block out many of the stories she presented, but this morning her strange rambling paid me a visit.

Lightening struck, it sounded like lightening, but during a clear sky? Again I heard the echoes of something that sounded similar to lightening. In the distance I could see papa standing with a group of men I had never seen in the village, one of them struck him in his cheek and he fell to the ground. I ran as fast as I could to his aid, but the mud created from the heavy morning dew made it hard for me to move quickly. As I got closer I could see Mama kneeling in the dirt, her colorful wardrobe was now brown and grey, and her eyes were full with tears that refused to fall, her stare was as distant as the stars in the black sky. These men carried large silver utensils, and as I looked around had managed to get some of the strongest men and women in the village to their knees with out saying much. A short round one appeared to have all the power, I watched him place chains on mother and papa, I pleaded with him to stop and he struck me just as he had struck my father. Mama was clearly in pain, however she managed to whisper an African proverb to bring comfort. I cried as they lifted both mama and papa to their feet and lead them towards the ocean neither said a word or pleaded. it was almost as if they knew their fate and could do nothing to change it. The sound of birds chirping masked the nightmare I was living, each time I reached for Mama I payed the price and was hit to the ground. I watched as they boarded large boats and was left standing confused and enraged. The warm African sun got hotter and the smell of wet earth was replaced with sweat and smoke. I morned in the footsteps left by my mother in the wet sand, for that was all I had now.

The Big Date

Toshina Elliott

Almost home from Galleria Mall
Macy's shopping bags in her well-manicured hands
One has that sexy red dress she's had her eyes on for days
The other holds strappy heels and lacy lingerie
She plans to show those off after the perfect dinner date she's made

Hubby should be back from his business trip soon
Opens the door and goes upstairs
Puts all of her things down on their king-sized bed
Takes a hot shower – no time to rest

Departing from her now steamy bathroom
The phone rings, causing her eyes to light up with a child-like anxiety
“Hello...Happy anniversary, honey!
Are you almost home...How long has this been going on?
...Who is she? How could you do this to me on what *used* to be *our anniversary*?

“Don't even *think* about coming back home to get your things...EVER!!!”
Slamming the phone down,
She slips into her lingerie, dress, and strappy heels
Calls up her girlfriends – “change of plans”
Goes downstairs and drives off to meet her crew
“What happened to your husband?” they ask – “Hubby who?”

Love of Lies
(Inspired by the Memory Keeper's Daughter)
Rachel Williamson

I could not look you in the eyes
Through twenty-five years of happiness and tears
You carried twins, I carried a secret.
We lived a love of lies

Professionals working side-by-side
Beneath the changing skies,
We choked in silence, mute and blind –
Nowhere could I look you in the eyes.

How could I do this to our family?
What – protect them? No. Betray them?
Everyday thoughts tremble, shaken by silent fears.
We lived a love of lies.

Our lives would never be the same...
My inner demons struggle –
Her broad face – a mask of flattened beauty – etched by a “classic case”
I could not look you in the eyes

A solid, predictable profession –
A house, two cars, a healthy son, a cat, a dog.
A nice suburban collection of respectable marital cars.
Yet, we lived a love of lies.

I am no longer in the picture, but they finally meet –
Mother meets daughter, who meets twin brother – a private moment you say.
Awkwardly formal, where easily casual should have been.
Words unspoken, a captured still – born anew, a “love connection” you can play.

I could not look you in the eyes.
Why? Simple –
That's the way love goes
When living a love of lies



Stephanie Michios

Digital Photography

Orange Bliss



The China

Esther Kertzman

Mom was setting the table for pesaj. She put out the most beautiful china. White plates with silver border and some carved leaves on the sides.

“Esther, come help me, put the silverware around while I set up the china”. Silverware I could handle. They were sturdy with thick handles, and I liked them because they had tiny flowers on the tip. I really liked this set of silverware. The china was beautiful. I would say it was delicate, but I wasn’t fond of the china. My mom said the china was very special and fine. The plates seemed that they were going to break if you hold them too tight because they were delicate and thin.

“Esther, this china set belonged to your grandmother Charne.” “Willy, you mean.” We used to call her Willy because my cousin Simon could not pronounce abuela

and he said Willy. So Willy she became.

We visited Willy on many vacations. My dad used to stay in Medellin. But we went to Cali. My mom used to set my

sister and I up with children from her friends, so we would have friends with whom to play. She chased us at Willy’s house with the same spiel: “call Alice now, call to say hi and that you are here, so you can make plans and do something here”. It seemed that she wanted to be alone with Willy for some hours. Up we went. Called and made plans. It was difficult at the beginning, but after the first call it was easier. It also was cool to play with different children, not the same ones we used to play with the whole year in Medellin.

My mom not only had that china set but like four more. She already was planning to give them to the four of us, one china and one set of silverware to each when we got married. I imagined that I was going to be so glamorous when I got married. I would serve tea in the dark blue cups and eat in the fine white and silver china. Even when I got married I thought about it. I thought I was going to be a fancy lady. I wanted a silver tea set to serve tea to my friends.

“What friends?

Did I have fancy friends?

All of them were as towny as me.

Did I have maids to clean after ourselves all the fine china by hand?

Did I have a dishwasher?”

The night came and all the family sat for the seder. We were not religious so the prayers went fast and we ate in the elegant china, used silverware and drank wine made by Willy in beautiful cups. That night my cousins Simon, Noemi and I got drunk. That was easy. Even a cup of homemade wine made by your grandma can get some children drunk. We went up and down the stairs saying silly things. I loved when they came to my home for pesaj. We played a lot. Simon liked to be a ship captain and I loved to be his servant. Anything to play with my big cousin. I thought he was handsome and cool. Very cool. Noemi was tired of him. Simon was her brother. Duh!

When the seder was finished and everybody

left and we went to sleep my mom put everything in order again for the next big occasion. The silverware in its box and the china in the buffet.

•••••
• “Even a cup of homemade wine
• made by your grandma can get
• some children drunk.”
•••••

That buffet had all those elegants plates that we just used once or twice a year. That buffet that my mom wanted to inherit all its contents to her 4 children at the time of their marriage. “What an incentive! At that time I thought silverware and china were important.”

Time passed by, my siblings got married all in the same year. They had discussions who was going to keep what china and who was going to keep what silverware set. It was not that my mom was not appointing them, but they discussed and air their preferences. Fanny wanted the Rosenthal, but Salo married first so he could choose first. Even though Salo was not the wife of his marriage, and he was not going to be dealing with china and silverware in his life, he was interested in the china distribution. Finally each one of them got one china, and a silverware set.

Nine years later I was getting married. I forgot about the china and silverware. But my mom reminded me. “I have a china for you, but since you live in a small apartment I’ll keep it for you. But I can take your silverware right away.”

I was equipped. I had silverware. Every time we used

them we had to wash them very carefully and keep them in the wood box.

My husband and I decided to move to USA. My mom decided to pack the china in two big containers. They were like treasure chests. Big and bulky. It was very important for my mom that I brought the china with me. She did not want to leave me out from the legacy. Those chests occupied a lot of space in the storage. During three years when we lived in an apartment they were in a storage. Finally we moved to a house and brought the china to the house.

I unpacked the china with care and stored it in one cabinet.

One was not enough.

I needed a drawer a big drawer of the kitchen closet.

It was not enough.

I needed to use another cabinet.

One fourth of my kitchen was occupied with this china.

At first I was so excited. The first opportunity to use the set was passover, I did a seder, the food was not fancy, it was all bought at the market.

Gefilte fish from a jar.

Kitchen soup from a can.

Salad.

Rice.

Yes, rice,

sefardim can eat rice in passover and my husband is sefaradi...and chicken from the market.

I was so proud of my china.

My beautiful and antique china.

It belonged to my grandma.

It was brought by horse from Buenaventura to Cali, from France to Buenaventura by ship.

And from Checoslovaquia to France by train.

My grandma used to use the china a great deal.

When she had friends over for tea, cookies and to play cards.

Then my mom used it and I admire the table of my mom.

It was elegant and fancy.

And now it was in my simple rounded wooden table with my simple food from the market.

Not made by scratch like my mom used to do or my grandma.

The china and silverware were more important than the food.

The scenery was taking importance away from the performers.

I was very happy playing to be my mom, and at the end I washed everything by hand not in the dishwasher.

I was happy being like my mom.

I was happy being a idishe momme.

I was happy in that function.

When Rosh Hashana came, I did the same.

But I did not enjoy the game.

I did not enjoy washing every plate after everybody left.

I did not enjoy drying with a towel one by one the plates and

silverware.

Next seder I doubted.

Do I want to be washing all by hand afterwards? Silverware and china used by 15 people?

I realized that the china had a lot of value for my mom, it represented part of her life and culture, but for me....

It was occupying space.

Now even though I love history, old things, and my culture,

I would rather use beautiful paper plates like Noemi.

“ I was happy being like my mom. I was happy being a idishe momme. ”

Pan Ku Staff



Emily Moorhouse (Editor)



Mario De Paola



Nathan Phelps



Wilson Torres

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patrick Ellingham

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