

The Cornfield Review

A Literary Publication of the Ohio State University at Marion

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Preface

The novelist James A. Michener is quoted as saying about writing, “I love the swirl and swing of words as they tangle with human emotions.” I believe you’ll find that the contents of this year’s edition of *The Cornfield Review* runs the emotional gamut, tangling with not only the sober and contemplative, but the whimsical and witty—even swirling and swinging into the outer reaches of the downright macabre and disturbing. Correspondingly, the work done behind the scenes in my Literary Publishing course to put this volume together was punctuated by the sound of laughter, tears, sighs, moans, and groans—and those were just the sounds emanating from yours truly! In reality, perhaps things weren’t quite that melodramatic, but editing a creative writing journal can be hard work, so I thank this year’s Editorial Board for their dedication. We hope that you, the reader, enjoy what we came up with in the end.

Acknowledgments are in order, of course. First and foremost, our thanks goes to The OSU-Marion administration, led by Dean Greg Rose, who continues to support this long-standing project. The English faculty are, as always, constant stalwarts. I would personally like to extend thanks to this year’s Editorial Board: Matthew Coutts, Kaley Eyster, Robert Johnson, Brianna Lawcock, Trisha Litz, Amanda Martin, Dennis Millisor, Rebecca Sullivan, Val Walton, Zachary Wheeler, and Joey Yake. As usual, The Cornfield Skeleton Crew, that hearty band of students who continued beyond

the Literary Publishing course into Spring Quarter to help finish production duties, also deserves thanks on this page: Trisha Litz, Robert Johnson, Zachary Wheeler, Val Walton, Bree Lawcock, and Dennis Millisor.

The Cornfield Review is published annually. The Editorial Board seeks quality poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction in addition to original artwork and photography. Submissions are primarily accepted from students and faculty of OSU-Marion and Marion Technical College, although works by off-campus writers and artists will be considered. For further details and queries, please email me at mccorkle.12@osu.edu.

—Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

The *Cornfield Review* Mission Statement:

We strive to represent the literary and artistic voice of Central Ohio by giving area college students an opportunity to see their work published in a professional literary journal. Additionally, we are passionate about achieving a cultural impact that goes beyond local campuses and reaches into the greater community.

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Required is a paragraph to said Wallace be written. Not difficult paragraph to write right just line right words left to right until left no paper left to write wrong. Stack words sentence and sentence and sentence and sentence for paragraph to write right. The paragraph subject is subject to whim, impulse, urge, notice, quirk, so if Ulysses you for want to example write up then right down the write words, utterances, expressions, sounds like example thusly and I Wallace English Class et al etc or e&c will recall remember recollect remind sing say vocalize *tiny purple fishes run laughing to your finger you want to take her with you to the hard lands of the winter with tales of brave Ulysses how his naked ears were tortured by the sirens sweetly singing* the Clapton words of hauntingly unforgettably indelibly sung vocalized harmonized by Jack Bruce creamy voice of then keep them the words phrases adjectives adverbs participles past conjunctions phrases prepositional direct objects subjects being subject to whim, impulse, urge, notice, quirk sentences to be analyzed broke down diagramed as was indoctrinated into my boyhood brain by sisters of Jake and Elwood sister penguin sister cecil sister agnes clair sister gervase sister marita aka our lady of halitosis to put word after word after word after word after word for to put sentence after sentence after sentence for ability to impress I Wallace English Class et al etc or e&c to old school paragraph using letters syllables englishwise only but spanishy frenchy et al etc or e&c may appropriately suitably aptly correctly fittingly while chinesey mathy and suchly the grade will not make like, “€©er☞μ±±” said Nathaniel and

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n \sum \int \int \int$$

“\” responds me like english major says “me and my boyfriend was just talkin bout how kids can’t write today” so we need to democratize dumb down and poor old sister cecil sister agnes clair sister gervase sister marita aka our lady of halitosis god rest their souls in graves spin because broken rules were made to be though as benson told quail you aint no effen kennedy likewise similarly as well equally I Wallace English Class et al etc or e&c will recall that we aint no effen james effen joyce so tune in elizabeth edwards talks about her marriage to oprah! wtf?

Walking High Up on the Dike

by Gary Buechel

Walking high up on the dike
That is where I was tonight
My three friends, yellow, black, and white
The dogs and me, out for a hike

Something that we really like
Tails are wagging with delight,
Walking high up on the dike

Horizon waits for sun to strike
Red-black sky transforms to night
The dogs and me, out for a hike

Coyotes, geese, and frogs alike
A group-sing throughout the night
Walking high up on the dike

From Horseshoe Road a Harley bike
Up here it sure does sound all right
The dogs and me, out for a hike

The geese are gently honking like
It now is safe to say goodnight;
Walking high up on the dike
The dogs and me, out for a hike

The day rolls around year after year
Bringing its memories and tears,
Your birthday Dad, I cannot forget,
The silent distance between us, I regret.

I have tried mending the walls and fences,
You will not let down your damned defenses
Enough to see that I have forgiven you,
I wish you would try forgiving me too.

Thirty-five years now we have been apart,
Unreciprocated love tares at my heart.
Maybe someday again we will understand
What it means to go walking hand in hand.

Father/daughter bonding begins anew,
When you miss me as I have missed you.



I STARTED THE JOB A FEW WEEKS AGO, but before we talk about that—

I have a short employment history. In so many words, I can't keep a job. I get fired, or laid off. I oversleep and show up late, or go to work drunk.

But I wanted to change. Driving to work, the first day, I had it all planned out.

This time I'll get it right. I won't screw up.

I wasn't going to fall asleep on the clock. This time I wouldn't call off unless I was really sick. This time, it would be good.

I was half right.

Even in the early morning the day had already started to fray around the edges. I woke up fifteen minutes late. I was surprised, because I was sure I was going to get canned, but when I showed up after 7:45, the bus was still there.

“Get in the god-damn van,” growled my supervisor.

We met at Job and Family services and the supervisor, Jim ‘Fudge’

Campbell, picked us up in a red van. The job was Field and Streams and it stemmed from a government grant to clean up Ohio's waterways and give some out-of-luck Ohioans a steady job.

In the van my adrenaline was pumping but I was happy.

I didn't get canned!

There was a bad flood that year. Someone said that was the reason we did what we did: *flood prevention*. We removed fallen trees from of the river, sawed them up, and threw the pieces up on the bank. After they hit the bank, it wasn't our problem anymore. The landowners could sell the wood or take it or leave it there. Maybe the logs would just sit there until gravity worked its magic and they rolled back into the river.

My co-workers were like me: down on their luck, looking for a job—any job—desperate. One of them stood out in particular. His name was Chester, but we called him Spain.

Everyone was polite to him. It came easily enough; he was an old man and he worked hard, but when he was gone, we talked. We laughed.

He was that guy.

He left the United States and moved to Spain fifteen years ago and, for lack of a better term, bummed around. He had a daughter that he never saw, an ex-wife he hated, a mother with whom he lived (in her basement), a dead father who used to race stock cars (named Chester Lester) plus three sisters he described as “despicable creatures.”

I’m not lying. Apparently this really happens.

“The biggest difference between Spain and the U.S.,” he said, “is that in Spain, if you don’t work—you don’t eat. Here, if I don’t work—I can still eat.”

Chester liked to share these little pearls of wisdom with us.

The reason we called him Spain wasn’t because he used to live there. Not really. Every other sentence that came out of his mouth would start or end with “in Spain.” At first it was almost charming. But he talked too much and most of the things he said

were ludicrous. It was mean to make fun of him, but he was asking for it.

The first day we actually worked, after all the paper work and educational videos, after the CPR training and the PPE tests, I was sitting in the bus, half-asleep, when I heard him say,

“Yeah, my mom just barges down-stairs, doesn’t knock or *anything*. I think that’s kind of rude. That’s sort of rude, aint it?”

Oh god, he lives in his mom’s basement?

I looked over to Joe.

Joe and I had grown up together and we got on fine since the minute we started work.

He was that guy.

I looked over and started laughing. Then Spain hit us with a bombshell.

“It doesn’t help that I’m a nudist,” he said. “Been a nudist for fourteen years now.”

“He was an old man and he worked hard, but when he was gone, we talked. We laughed. He was that guy.”



Joe and I tried to hold back the laughter but after a few terse seconds we wouldn't hold it back any longer. But it didn't seem to bother Chester. I found myself wondering if he was compulsive liar—saying anything just for the shock value of it—but then I looked over at him and I knew he was telling the truth.

Poor guy.

We arrived at the job site and our crew got out and started to unload the van. Chainsaws, come-alongs, rope, a wheelbarrow, a cooler full of ice and bottled water; *remember, stay hydrated: heat stroke*. We unloaded the shovels and rakes, the heavy copper-colored chains, and the pry bars.

The site we were working that day was back in the woods. Before, we drove the van pretty close to the job site, staying on the shoulder beside the cornfields and plowing through the weeds. Not today.

The walk from the van to the site was a quarter mile if not more. That doesn't sound like much, but when you're carrying a cooler that weighs sixty pounds if it weighs an ounce, or pushing a wheelbarrow up and down hills that reach angles of fifty

degrees, it might as well be five miles. It wasn't bad if you didn't have to push the wheelbarrow or carry the cooler, all the heavy equipment was in the wheelbarrow. If it wasn't your turn then you carried something light, a gas can or a jug of oil. Today it was my turn to carry the cooler.

I got to the site and I was dripping sweat and we hadn't started working yet. At that point I gave up on trying to be positive.

Some days are bad no matter what you do.

Fudge told us to form a human chain starting in the middle of the dam and ending on the bank. Joe was first in the chain, followed by me, then Spain, and after him another guy, Tyler.

Joe picked up the biggest pieces that he could without losing his balance and falling into the river. "As big as Fudge's arm," one supervisor said, but it was a joke. Fudge had huge arms—we couldn't pick those up.

Joe passed me the limbs, ash, pine, and oak, and I passed them to Chester who gave them to Tyler.

When Joe and I started working, we worked fast. What's the point in going slow? The day goes faster when you measure it in work done instead of minutes and hours. After a while, Chester and Tyler started to fall behind, so I stacked the logs in front of Spain. Joe wasn't going to wait for me so what was I supposed to do?

But Chester turned around and saw the logs stacked in front of him and he didn't like that.

"Don't put them down, he said. "I don't wanna have to pick them up again!"

It wasn't what he said that pissed me off. It was the way he said it. Like he was better. But he wasn't. He was everyone's joke.

"In communist Spain," I deadpanned, "car drives you."

So I stopped piling the logs in front of Chester. Instead, I started handing him twigs. Sure, he could tell me what to do, but I wasn't going to listen. Damned if I would cave to the narcissistic prick.

The third time I handed him a twig he snatched it out of my hand,

breaking it.

Screw that, I thought. It's on. The day moved slowly. For every log that we pulled out of the river we found another beneath it. The ones at the bottom were bigger and waterlogged and, of course, heavier.

I was sitting in the middle of the dam pulling up pieces as big as my forearm and throwing them on the bank. Another guy, Colin, was standing in the river beside me. He had a pry bar and was loosening the logs so we could loop a rope over them and drag them to the bank.

We'd loop em and then Fudge would yell "**one, two,**" and then we'd pull. **One, two and pull! One, two, pull!**

Colin got a small one loose and threw it into a place where the river had run around the dam, eroding the soil and creating an indentation in the bank. Spain was working beside us then. He got one loose and threw it on the bank.

"Hey, throw those over there in that hole," Colin said. "We're gonna fill it back up."

Spain gave him a strange look. Then

he got another one and threw it on the bank. Colin looked over at me.

“Seriously, we’re supposed to fill that up,” he said to Chester.

“I’m not filling it up.” Said Chester. “You fill it up.”

“Okay...I’m just doing what my boss told me to do. But screw that, right? Let’s just all do whatever we feel like.”

He looked over at me.

“Asshole...” He said under his breath.

“Yeah man,” I said. “Ole Spain over there, I was handing him logs—he couldn’t keep up... so I started stacking them in front of him. The smack bunny turns around and says ‘Don’t put them down! I don’t wanna have to pick them up again!’”

“I know,” said Colin. “I’m gonna end up punching that dude.”

“Dude,” I said. “Guess what he said earlier.”

“That he used to bang dudes in Spain?”

“Ha ha, no! I mean, he probably did, but that’s not what he said. On the way to work I heard him talking to Elmer.”

I did my best imitation of Chester’s voice, high pitched and fast paced.

“Yeah she just walks down there without knocking! I mean, that’s like my room.”

I went back to my own voice.

“I guess he lives in his mom’s basement, but that’s not even the best part. A few second’s later he says— And it don’t help that I’m a nudist. Yeah, I been a nudist for about fourteen years now.”

“Watch out Elmer.”

We both laughed at that. I thought I was gonna cry, laughing so hard. Then Joe walked over.

“What’s so funny?” he asked. “Spain over there telling jokes again?”

I told him about Spain’s nude experience with his mother, post-infancy.

“Aw dude, that’s priceless.” Joe said.

“Hey mom,” he said, impersonating Chester, “*Does it look better tucked in,*

or out?'

“Wait, shhh! Shhh! Listen.”

Chester was talking to Elmer again. “Yep. I don’t wear underwear anymore,” he said. “My momma found out and she said: your sisters wear underwear, your dad wears underwear... Well I’m not my dad and I don’t wear underwear!!!”

‘Hahahahahaha!’ We laughed even harder.

“Dude,” Joe nudged me, “I wonder how his mom found out he didn’t wear underwear.”

“They were probably getting ready to have sex and he just whipped it out of his zipper,” said Colin.

“Aw dude! That’s wrong.”

“Huh, the sad part is that it’s probably true,” I said.

“What a creep.”

“I know,” I said. “He’s been a real douche nugget today.”

I told Joe about the twigs and how Chester told Colin off. Then he nudged me again.

“Dude, I got an idea.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Let’s play a game: Closest To Spain,” he said. “Whoever can get closest to Chester, without hitting him, wins.”

“Joe, I think that’s the best idea you’ve had all week.”

So we started playing. By that time Spain was on the bank, cutting up logs with the chain saw; the perfect place to throw logs at him while being able to deny that it was intentional. I threw the first stick.

We started with small pieces, bigger than twigs, branches. Many fell a few feet away and a couple hit pretty close. Only inches away. Ten minutes later I threw one, a small one, but it bounced and hit him in the foot.

“I win!” I said.

Chester looked up and gave me a dirty look.

“Uh, oh! I think he’s catching on,” I said.

“Screw him! What’s he going to do?” said Colin. “Run away to Spain?”

“Ha ha! Good point,” I said.

“By the way,” said Joe, “you didn’t win.”

“What the hell do you mean I didn’t win?” I said, “Did you see that? I hit him!”

“*Exactly.*” said Joe. “The game is *Closest to Spain*, not *Brain Spain*. You hit him: you lose.”

“Aw, that’s quantum theory. When did you become a lawyer?” I said. “Screw it, I’m going to work for a little bit. I don’t want to get fired over his lemon face.”

“Dude, Larry doesn’t even care,” said Joe. “I told him about it and he just laughed.”

“What?” I said, “You didn’t say my name did you?”

Joe had no common sense. After all those classes we took on safety, safety, safety. No way Larry was going

to let us get away with throwing logs (some of them big enough to injure) at a co-worker. No way in hell. That was a safety hazard.

“Nah, man,” he said. “I just told him about the game.”

“You idiot!” I glared at him. “I can’t get freaking fired.”

“Whoa, simmer down there. It’s all good. I promise.”

“It better be *all good*,” I said. “ ‘Cause if I get fired because you told Larry, you’re going to be spending your next few checks on a hospital bill.”

“Ha ha, yeah right.”

“You just shut the hell up about it.”

“Dude,” he said. “I really don’t think he cares...” but I interrupted him.

“I don’t give a damn! Just put a lid on it.”

“Whatever,” he said.

“Yeah, whatever to you, Einstein.”

I was mad at him. There was no way we were going to get away with it. Christ, for all I knew that was as-

“I could feel the situation starting to spin out of control. Sure, it was Joe’s idea to play the game. But hadn’t I egged it on? Hadn’t I fed the flames when Colin got mad at Spain and hadn’t I thrown the first stick?”

sault and battery. Larry was going to laugh?

I stopped playing, but Joe didn’t. He started throwing bigger logs. Chester had really gone and screwed the dog. Not only was he everyone’s joke (because of the way he acted), now he had become Joe’s punching bag.

Joe was angry. I had called him out in front of everyone, but I didn’t catch any flak for it. Chester did.

I could feel the situation starting to spin out of control. Sure, it was Joe’s idea to play the game. But hadn’t I egged it on? Hadn’t I fed the flames when Colin got mad at Spain and hadn’t I thrown the first stick?

I was in the water when it happened and I heard it before I saw it. I lifted a log up out of the water to wrap a rope around it and I was thinking I would apologize to Joe and end this whole macabre thing.

And then everything went to hell.

Spain was standing on the bank sawing a log when Joe threw the last one. It floated up and over in a sickening curve and Joe’s aim must have been off or he just went crazy for a minute because when the log stopped climbing for altitude and started down, it was heading straight for Chester. It was a big log. It must have weighed thirty pounds.

Joe saw what was about to happen and he tried to take it back, but it was too late.

“Chester, look out!” he yelled. But Chester couldn’t hear him over the saw. Then the log hit him in the back and he fell on the chainsaw.

I said I heard it before I saw it, but it wasn’t the stomach-turning crunch of the log hitting Chester in the back that I heard, and it wasn’t the screech of the saw as it clove through his skin, flesh and bone, taking his arm off above the wrist. It wasn’t any of that because before all of that happened I heard a scream.

A high-pitched, deafening scream that clawed it's way out of the mouth of a girl on our crew. The girl's name was Amy, but it didn't matter. It didn't matter because when the blood starts flowing and the bones snap, when the lungs fail and the heart flutters, the only things that matter are to stop the bleeding and to breathe.

When I looked over, what I saw was Chester laying on top of the log, his chainsaw still running, his hand lying beside him, the stump of his arm shooting blood in dark red arcs. I saw everyone rush to help him, Larry reaching him first and hitting the kill switch on the chainsaw, screaming for the first aid kit and tearing his work shirt into a tourniquet. Amy calling 911. Joe's face: a mask of horror with a touch of revulsion, before he leaned over the dam and gave up his lunch to the river below.

Then after that, I saw the things that woke me up at night: Fudge picking up Chester's severed hand and putting it in the cooler full of ice, Larry pulling him back off the log and the way his arm flopped back when he did, the light blue tourniquet soak stained a dark purple, and Chester's eyes, angry and righteous like a medieval Jehovah.

The ambulance didn't arrive after too long, but the tourniquet worked and

Chester kept his life, and that was the end up the day. The rest of us went back to the office and filled out reports. I was sweating bullets while I wrote down the lies that I would stick to.

It's strange, because the thing that bothers me the most isn't how Chester lost his hand (although that's inextricably tied up in it), but how Joe never told anyone about the game. Sure, he would have been him snitching on himself, but I thought he would. To pass the blame on and say *it wasn't just me, it was all of us*. But he didn't.

Sometimes I wish he had and we all had come clean. Then I wouldn't have to deal with the guilt. I wouldn't feel sick every time I saw an amputee, and I wouldn't glance out my window at the warm sun and clear blue skies and think I was somehow cheating God and myself.

Eventually, by inept bureaucracy, and falsehoods on the part of Joe, Colin, and I, the state decided it was an accident.

But I still think about it, and late at night when my mind keeps turning, and I start to think in images and metaphors, I can't help but realize that I too lost something that day.



Megan Cook, untitled



Megan Cook, untitled

I

Seems it's always quiet in the graveyard
Just don't hear too many sounds
And I have often walked in graveyards
And wondered bout the people in the ground
I have many times stopped and listened
To the lonesome sound of wind
The wind sounds different in the graveyard
Like it's talking to a long lost friend

II

There's always evergreens in the graveyard
With branches that look like they're weeping
Casting their long never ending shadows
And knowing secrets they'll forever be keeping
The silent shadows cover the graves
Like the earth covers the dead
Crying for these has long ago ceased
Just a name on a stone at their head

III

Still I oft times go to the graveyard
I go even when the graveyard is closed
Here I have friends and loved ones
And I sometimes take them a rose
Many times when I visit the graveyard
I just cannot help but cry
I stand alive in the graveyard today
And here I shall lay when I die

I

I have walked on many roads
I have witnessed the changing times
I have cried when loved ones died
Being left alone and behind

II

I have walked on lonely roads
And rejoiced finally at their end
I have walked on graveyard roads
To say farewell to a friend

III

I have walked on happy roads
But they were never long
I have walked on some right roads
And others that were wrong

IV

I have walked on country roads
I have viewed the Heavens above
I have walked on many roads
I have walked the road of love

V

Yes, I have walked the road of life
Oft carrying a heavy load
And tomorrow I know that I must
Yet walk just one more road

I

On into the night he rode
Astride his trusty old mule
And he thought as he rode along
“I must be a complete fool”
He rode thru the dark forest
Past the ghostly, giant oak trees
Tho’ they looked sturdy and strong
Still they slightly swayed in the breeze

II

The sure-footed mule carried him
Ever closer to a feared fate
And his heart pounded inside him
And he knew he must not be late
Then, to add to his misery
To the already heartache and pain
Pelting his face like small pebbles
Came the cold unwelcome rain

III

At last he approached the graveyard
And his skin seemed to crawl
But he had a job to do
And as always he’d give it his all
He left his ride with shovel in hand
Stopped beside a new made mound
And here he started digging
His shovel making unkind sounds

IV

He cleaned the dirt from the coffin
And then he lifted the lid
He took the gold band from her finger
And his gun from where it was hid
The forty-four blazed in the darkness
As he filled the still form with lead
He said, "You won't cheat on me no more,
Cause now I know you're dead."



Bobbi Hupp, "Journey"

Quenched by the Moment

by Bobbi Hupp

I had a thirst for it
It was my first for it
Filled my heart til I burst for it
Its scent involving incense
In a sense intense
Yet intent
ON whisking me away
IN a way to where
They say love plays
So rewarding though
It lacked
A trophy or a plaque
And though its passed into past
I feel it after the fact
Nor words nor rhymes called express
Even Eden be impressed
Angels elated at what we created
In my mind so near so fresh
Forever we've seen in each other eyes
Together frozen as
Time flutters by
Hearts afloat on a buffet of butterflies
I knew not how to face this
Unforgettable is what the taste is
To our deserts this love is oasis

by Craig McVay

The Beautiful Prisoner Dreams of Andromeda

The galaxy Andromeda is the object farthest from earth visible to the naked eye. In myth, the girl Andromeda is saved from a sea-monster by the hero Perseus.

Dark in my cell, I dream razors fold
like winter into spring and rest like silver ponies in the grass.
I look above the lonely men in towers

and through February's midnight blur, I see
the impossible: The blue galaxy, two million light-
years away, spirals just for me
toward the Milky Way. Andromeda!

I step from the orange suit, and I become the girl
Andromeda, chained to the rock where roils the icy sea.

Naked, I push back against the sheer black rock
while the monster comes after me.
Wind and waves tangle my black hair,
and scream, we will strangle you!
And I cry for my invisible Perseus.
May he come carrying, like a lantern
only I can see, the head of Medusa.

But before he can fly over the sea
and marry me,
Men
turn on the floodlights,

which prowl through frozen razors
like white panthers in the yard.

“I LOVE RAINBOWS. They are the colorful Band-Aids God stretches across the clouds to heal the sky,” my Grandma says, closing her umbrella and shaking off the excess water. The clouds are still hanging black and thick in the sky, but the sun peeks through to light up the drizzle with a Roy G. Biv color show.

Grandma always says random things like that. We walk along the muddy gravel path in silence, the light brown water splashing on the back of my calves with every step. We’d walked this path side by side for years – the path that lead to the cemetery where my parents and grandfather were buried. It was our tradition to walk from the cemetery in silence, with only Grandma’s odd words peppering me with light, one-sided conversation.

“Your grandfather liked rainbows too. He said they were the only frown that could make the world smile.” I look at her, a sad smile crossing her face as she remembers him. I take her hand, feeling her skin; soft silk that has been wrinkled by improper care. Her eyes turn watery, but she doesn’t cry. She just stops walking and looks up at the

rainbow, having a conversation that I’m not privy to.

I look at the ground, digging at the rocks with the toe of my shoe. I need to talk to her today; I need to be honest with her. She’s the only family I have, too and I don’t want to lose her. I want to say, “Grandma, I met someone. She is good to me and I’m really happy.” But, I can’t say that to her. Instead, when she asks about my boyfriend, I change the subject.

Grandma starts down the path again. I have to tell her now. We’ll be at the house soon, and the familiar routine will take over. I stop and turn to her. “Grandma, I need to tell you something. I’ve met someone, and I’m really happy.” *I’m gay* keeps ringing through my thoughts, but I just can’t say it.

My grandmother smiles and hugs me. “That’s wonderful, sweetie. I hope you can bring her by sometime.”

I stand on our path, the rain starting up again, my mouth hanging open. How could she have known? I search her face for a sign that she disapproves. There is nothing. Only

a silky, wrinkled smile and a loving pat on my shoulder. “Let’s get in out of the rain, sweetie,” she says.

“Grandma...?”

“Honey, didn’t you hear me earlier? I love rainbows.”

CHLOE DIED THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 15TH. She knew the disease would kill her eventually, but she didn't think she would be around to witness her family fall apart when she took her last breath. She stood invisible in the corner, watching her family grieve: her sisters hugging each other while her father rubbed her mother's shoulders, trying to loosen her grip from the hand of her dead daughter.

Chloe turned away and looked out the window. She couldn't stand to see her mother cry. The doctor came into the room, offering the family his condolences before leading the father and mother out the door to sign paperwork. Her sisters followed behind, leaving Chloe alone to hold vigil over her withered body. She touched it, feeling the cold skin. It was surprising to her that she could feel anything. She didn't think a ghost could feel things. She looked at her body's face, her face. It looked waxy and pale now; all color was gone from her cheeks.

Chloe wasn't sure what to do next. She guessed that she was a ghost. She wasn't sure if she was sup-

posed to stay in the room, but she was afraid to leave her body. She thought there would be some kind of "white light" to greet her, but there wasn't. *Maybe I died the wrong way*, she thought. *Is there a way to die wrong?* She didn't know anything, and there was no one around that could help her. She began to get frustrated.

"I'm too freaking young to die! I'm only 22!" She noticed that her voice didn't echo around the room, like a living voice. It didn't carry at all; it was dead like she was – sound that disappeared the moment it left her lips. She kicked the wall and stubbed her toe. *I've got to be the first ghost in history to hurt themselves AFTER death*, she thought. It made her chuckle, a kind of desperate laughter. Not knowing what else to do, she slid down the wall and sat on the hospital floor. Still dressed in her gown, she could feel the cold marble against her legs. *I guess I'll just follow myself around for the next few days*, she thought. She drew her knees up to her chest and started to cry.

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...” her family sang three days later. Chloe stood at the back of the church, a spectator at her own funeral. The sanctuary was packed. She didn’t realize she had known so many people. She walked to the front of the room and stood looking at the crowd. Chloe saw her friends Lily and Stephen, their eyes red rimmed and puffy. She noticed that Lily’s pregnant belly was rubbing against the front of the pew. *She’s due in three weeks. I can’t believe I forgot that.* They were standing on either side of Brad, Chloe’s fiancé, who looked like he might collapse. He was as crinkled as his suit. She remembered seeing him for the last time at the hospital. She had convinced him to go to work; she would be fine until he got back. Chloe hadn’t wanted to die in front of him. She hadn’t seen him again until now.

The music stopped, and everyone sat in the pews. She sat down beside her mother. As Chloe hugged her, she felt a chill go down the woman’s spine.

“I miss you, baby,” her mother whispered.

“I miss you too, Momma.” At that moment, Chloe couldn’t feel the wool of her mother’s black sweater anymore. She couldn’t feel anything. She got up and stepped away from everyone. She knew she was crying, even though she couldn’t feel the tears.

The pastor came to the pulpit to give the eulogy and began talking about walking through a valley, fearing no evil and such. Chloe folded her arms, her mind beginning to wander. *Is there a God? If so, why is He letting my loved ones feel all this pain?* Chloe pushed the thoughts from her mind and concentrated on the service again. Looking to her right, she saw Brad, sitting hunched over with his head in his hands. His shoulders heaved with every sob. She wanted to comfort him, but she knew she couldn’t. Instead, she turned away and walked toward her casket.

She looked at her body again, painted with makeup she would never wear, in a dress that she hated. She couldn’t handle watching as her body had been prepared, so she had sat upstairs. She had wanted to kick the funeral director when she

came down and saw what his workers had done to her. *What was his name again?* She tried to remember, but everything was becoming fuzzy. It was like someone had pulled a veil over her memories.

When the funeral procession started, she watched as her friends and family came up one by one to say goodbye. She saw a couple in black, the girl twisting her funeral program until it almost ripped in two. The man had his arm around her shoulder.

“We’re going to miss you sweetie. We’re naming the baby Chloe,” the woman said. She put an ultrasound picture in the coffin before her husband led her away.

Who was that? It took Chloe a moment to remember Lily and Stephen. *What is wrong with me?*

Next came a man in a wrinkled suit. He leaned over and kissed the forehead of the dead girl. *He looks so*

sad, she thought. *Did I know him?* The man started crying and put a rose in the coffin.

“Come on, Brad, I’ll give you a ride home,” Stephen said.

Oh my God! That was my fiancé! Chloe sat down, feeling a little dizzy. *What is happening?*

She glanced around, frightened, knowing no one could help her. Why couldn’t she remember anything? Someone called her name, and she looked behind her.

“Chloe, it’s time to go now,” the figure said.

“Who are you? Why can you see me?”

“Chloe, I’m your messenger. I’m here to take you away from this life and into another.”

“I can’t remember anything. Why can’t I remember anything?”

“Chloe wasn’t sure what to do next. She guessed that she was a ghost. She wasn’t sure if she was supposed to stay in the room, but she was afraid to leave her body.”

“It’s all part of the process, Chloe. When we die, our body dies, but not our mind. Forgetting is the way our mind prepares us to let go of this life. Otherwise, we couldn’t handle the grief.”

Chloe looked at her casket one final time, not recognizing the woman, man, and two young girls clinging to the coffin. She saw the girls hug each other and walk away. Then, the man rubbed the woman’s shoulders, trying to ease her grip from the dead girl’s hand.

Those poor people, she thought. I wonder who died.

ORGASMS WOULD BE GREAT, Taryn thought, trying to catch her breath, *if only the guy would vanish right after*. She felt warm, bathing in her afterglow and staring at the light green stars on her ceiling. The bed moved, and she realized that Mr. Right Now was still there. Glancing over, she gave him a crooked smile. “Ok, Prince Charming, time to go,” she said.

“Go? Go where? I thought we were just getting started. We could cuddle.”

He reached for her, and she turned and got out of the bed. “Sorry, hon. I’m a one shot a night kind of girl. And, I don’t cuddle.”

Straightening her t-shirt, and silently wishing it covered more of her chubby figure, she walked into her bathroom and shut the door. She sat on the edge of the tub, arms crossed over her chest, rocking back and forth until she heard him start to shuffle around in the next room. *If I just stay really quiet, then he won’t keep trying to stay*. Her legs, cold against the porcelain, started to shake, sending chills through her.

She wasn’t sure why she continued to pick up guys in bars. The sex was awkward and lousy most of the time. *Why should I have to concentrate that hard to climax? I could get myself off easier*. All she did know was that she wanted the closeness of a human body next to her, that skin on skin connection was something she craved. When she heard the sound she had been waiting for—footsteps down the stairs and a slamming front door—she got up, took off her shirt, and started the water in the shower.

“Maybe there’s something wrong with me,” she said, staring into the mirror until the fog took over the face and she couldn’t see anything but the blur that she felt through her body and mind. Then she stepped into the tub and let the water run over her, washing away all the sins of the night.

“She just threw me out!” Terrance said the next day at his office. “I couldn’t believe it. We had sex; I barely caught my breath, and she was telling me to leave.”

Aaron leaned back in his chair.

“Did you offend her? I’ve never had a girl ask me to leave that suddenly. Usually they want to cuddle all night, and then I have to slip out before they wake up in the morning.”

“Hell, I didn’t say anything. I moaned her name a few times, but I don’t see how someone could take offense to that. No sooner had I pulled out and taken off the condom and she said, ‘leave.’”

“Man, that is really cold. What did you do?”

“When she walked into the bathroom, I waited a few minutes to see if she was just being catty. When she didn’t come out, I got dressed and left. What else could I have done?”

“Did you think about calling her, Romeo?” Sasha leaned against the door, her thin lips upturned in a smirk. “See, this is exactly why I don’t date men. You are clueless. Women are much easier to please. Call them, tell them they’re special, sing to them occasionally, and they are yours.”

Aaron let out a chuckle. “You think it’s that easy, huh?”

“Actually, I do. I can let you in on a little secret too. Every woman is at least bi-curious. With the right approach, I could probably pick up a woman faster than you. And I can tell you this – I’ve never been thrown out before the sun comes up.”

“Want to make a bet on that one?” Terrance came up and put his arm around her.

Sasha shrugged him off. “Terrance, how many times have I told you? Please don’t touch me. I don’t want your smarmy, used-car-salesman nature to rub off on me.”

“Um, Sasha,” Aaron whispered, “we are car salesmen.”

“Actually, I am a car saleswoman. But, that’s not the point, Aaron. You don’t have to act like it.” She turned to Terrance. “Let me guess, you went into the bar, you said and did all the right things to get in her pants, and then she took you home.”

Terrance stood silent in the doorway, his foot playing with the edge of the carpet.

Sasha's eyes got wide and put her hand over her heart, mocking him.

"And then she threw you out?"

She threw her hands up in the air, exasperated. "Hell, of course she threw you out. Did you even take the chance to get to know her at all? What do you know about her? Do you know her middle name, her age? Hell, what is her last name?"

"I don't know, ok? I don't know. I guess that makes me a pig, right? What about her? She wanted to screw me as much as I wanted her. She didn't try to get to know me either."

"She followed your lead. This is probably a woman who isn't all that together when it comes to self image. If I had to guess, I would say she was a little overweight, and looked at the floor quite a bit when you spoke. Am I right?"

Terrance continued to kick the carpet, not wanting to look into the eyes of either of his colleagues. He tucked his long, brown hair behind

his left ear, only shifting his gaze when he heard the click-clack of heels on the showroom floor. "The sale is mine. I saw her f-fir-." Terrance stopped and stared into the showroom.

"Hello, Earth to Terrance." Sasha waved her hand in front of her friend's face. "Man, you can have the sale. What's wrong?" She followed Terrance's eyes to the fiery redhead who was circling around a 2009 Dodge Challenger. "I like her style—cherry with some power under the hood. That's what I like in a woman too."

"That's her..." was all Terrance managed to whisper before the woman started to make her way toward them. He ducked into the office and hid. "You take it Sasha."

"Scared of a girl, huh? I have to meet this one." She left the office and approached the woman. "Is there anything I can help you with today, miss?" Sasha would have said more, but she was hit with the scent of lavender and pumpkin pie and couldn't remember how to speak for a moment.

The shorter woman looked up at her, eyes blue like icicles, and smiled. “Maybe you can. I’ve been thinking about buying something new.”

Sasha took a deep breath, trying to collect herself. *I could get lost in those eyes*, she thought and then shook her head. *What in the hell is wrong with me! Sasha, sell the damn car!* “Are you interested in trying out the Challenger? Most would say that it isn’t something suitable for a woman, but I love this car.”

“No, I don’t think so. It is beautiful, and it has such a great engine, but I don’t need something this unconventional.”

“Maybe unconventional is just what you need,” Sasha said under her breath.

Taryn heard her and turned around. “Maybe you’re right,” she said with a slight twinkle in her eye.

Sasha began to get a little nervous. “Well, ma’am, if there is anything you are interested in test driving, or any information you need, please

let me know. My name is Sasha.” She shook the redhead’s hand, and a jolt of electricity travelled through her body.

“I’m Taryn,” the redhead said in a quiet voice before walking away from the Challenger to look for a more conservative model.

Taryn stared at the Dodge Caliber for a long time, longer than she should have considering she had no interest whatsoever in buying the car. She had no need for an SRT anything, nor did she want a turbo charged “grocery getter.” She was using the car to stare at the woman across the showroom. Something inside kept screaming “*Her!*” *This is not like me*, she thought. *I’m not attracted to women. So why can’t I stop staring at this woman? But, she is so amazing. This is silly. Then again, maybe I just need a change of pace.*

She straightened herself, and then proceeded to walk as slowly as possible across the room. She didn’t know if she was asking this woman out on a date or not, but she knew

she had to get to know her. She'd never felt this unexplainable pull before. She tapped the blonde woman on the shoulder. "Excuse me, Sasha?"

Sasha turned around, and flashed a smile that looked genuine, instead of the usual smarmy "I get paid when you leave with a car" smile. "Yes Ma'am?"

"I want to test drive that Challenger. You may be right. Something a little less conservative may be just what I need. Will you take a test drive with me?"

"Of course I will. Just let me grab the keys, Ma'am."

Sasha grabbed the keys out of the box in the showroom and walked out to the front of the dealership. "Ready to go?"

"Yes I am. But, Sasha, this isn't going to work if you keep calling me Ma'am."

Taryn looked over at Sasha's smiling face and hoped that she had interpreted that statement correctly.

Three hours later, Taryn laid on her back, looking up at her glow in the dark stars that were now cream colored because of the light streaming through her blinds. *So that's what it's supposed to feel like.* She turned over on her side and saw Sasha's smiling face.

"What time is it?" Sasha asked while stretching and curling toes.

"It's five o'clock," Taryn answered. "Why?"

"Five o'clock! Oh my goodness! I have to get back before I get fired!"

"Oh, don't leave yet. Just tell the dealership that I want to keep the car for an overnight test drive." Taryn slid her fingers down Sasha's arm and over her ribs. "Because I do. I want to keep the 'car' here all night."

Sasha got up, rummaging around to find her suit. "The 'car' needs to go back to the dealership where it belongs, Taryn. It can't just stay out all night. Besides, I thought you were looking for something more

“Something inside kept screaming ‘Her!’” *This is not like me, she thought. I’m not attracted to women. So why can’t I stop staring at this woman?”*

conservative.”

“Conservative has its perks, but I think I want unconventional.”

Sasha put on her pants and began tucking in her blouse. Taryn got up from the bed, not bothering to cover herself with anything. “Please don’t go. Please? I want you to stay.”

“Taryn, I have to go. You’re a one shot a night kind of girl, right? You don’t want people to stay.”

“How do you know that?”

“I work with Terrance. He told me everything about last night. I was hoping I would be better to you than he was, but maybe I wasn’t. I criticized him for not taking time to get to know you, and then I slept with you after an hour long test drive. What’s your last name?”

“Shipley. My name is Taryn Shipley, and I’m asking you to stay. I

want you to stay with me, Sasha.”

“Taryn, I can’t stay.” She started toward the door and Taryn blocked her path.

“Yes you can.” She put her hands on Sasha’s face and gently kissed her. “Stay.”

Sasha’s green eyes started to tear.

“Taryn,” she whispered, “I have a girlfriend.” She turned away from the speechless, naked woman and walked out the door.



Danielle Schwaderer, untitled



Danielle Schwaderer, untitled



Danielle Schwaderer, untitled



Danielle Schwaderer, untitled



Danielle Schwaderer, untitled

Wait, don't move,
The sun may be bright,
The birds may sing,
Having slept a full night,
Must there be something to do?

The clouds will still laze by,
But none in my eye,
The light may try to pierce,
To the bed where we lie,
We have nowhere to go to.

Let us just bask in the comfort,
The love we have in the air,
Let the mind slip away,
Let the others handle your cares,
After all, I entirely love you.

Pretend we have servants,
For a day of solitude,
Let breakfast, lunch, and dinner in bed,
Lighten your mood,
For I am no fool.

Feel your heart beat with mine,
So just lay in my hold,
Close your eyes and let me sing,
Days of new and days of old,
After all, I entirely love you.

Silence is golden
Pale,
Pulsating like waves
Like a
Little French phrase,

Causing an indent
In a crescent,
Holding the mountains
That wither and shape
As they age.

In a blink of an eye
It changes from a moan
To a sigh

In a drop of a rain
It changes from plaid
To plain

In a loose hold,
It changes from warm
To cold

In a strike of a drum
It changes from plush
To plum

In a beat of a heart
It changes from dull
To bright

In a strum of a guitar
It changes from ice
To water

And in a tick of a second
It changes from an impression
To an expression—
Just with a smile.

When We Were Young...

by Jon Sutherin, Robert Johnson, Arika Baker, et al.

it was a dream that never came time
like empty years sitting on a tree stump.

Happiness stalked us home and wore our
pajamas,
and the darkness of the leaves followed us
like a dog begging for soup,

and the stitches of our once broken hearts ripped open
when we arrived at our destination
where the future was yesterday and the past was to-
morrow,

and you said it was when the winter came,
and Nikki was questioning “what’s a...?”
and Ashlee pounded out answers, “it is,”
like a dream that never came true,
and it was the crying out that it was,
when Arika needed a car, and Jon had no choice but to sing,
and Whitney shot the puck,
when the fridge was empty
and the trash was burning,
and Robert nestled in sleep
like the stems of dreams in his eyelids.

When we were young
it was when the memories lost that it was.
The universe turned its eyes upon us,
and we had lots of cheeseburgers.

When we were young
time stood still among the flat leaves of eve-
ning,

and men and women cried at the moon
when their children were given free will,
and they had finished their Christmas shopping on time.

When we were young we lived like Eskimos.
We never took enough money to the vending machine.
We found a lake.
We ran until we reached the ocean.
We were haunted by the mysteries of the sky
and the hundreds of flies on the ceiling.

When we were young
the eyes of happiness twinkled
like the tears of lost children trickling to the ground,
and all who opposed us bowed
as we spun off into the void
and the thunder of the ocean left us
barren,
like the broken bottles of night.

When we were young, summer was an eternal
season, and there was an end
to endings, and death was like go-
ing to bed.

By Jon Sutherin, Robert Johnson, Arika Baker, Ashlee Roberts, Whitney Taylor, Stuart Lishan, and Nikki Chaney (Autumn '09)



Kristin Mihoci, untitled



Kristin Mihoci, untitled

SITTING HERE UNDER THIS BIG OAK TREE, I am enjoying the oncoming spring. I have always been able to sense the life and change in the air when the sun's rays begin to re-warm the frozen countryside on which I live. The area I am in right now is a large open area, one where the tree I am leaning against is the only tree within a circular area of probably one hundred yards; beyond this there are multitudes of trees and shrubs, flowers and small animals. There are also many small but powerful streams and cricks, in which, runs clear, cold water. The grasses in this approachable area are begging to turn green, but there are still patches of dead and brown scattered here and there.

I lean up against this tree, letting the sun warm my pasty winter skin that will, by the end of this afternoon, give it a tinge of pink.

I close my eyes and recall my days as a child.

* * *

I still lived on this land, just as my family had for the past four or five generations. I once saw a picture of the very tree I am leaning against being planted by my great grandfather, over one hundred years ago. My

memories now run through my mind of the days I've spent exploring the many acres on this property.

I remember always having a respect and appreciation for the flowers that have grown around our home. We had a white rose garden on the side of our home; one which my mother gave me the responsibility to water every day during the heat waves of the summer. Once after finishing my daily duty, I dipped my nose into the pool of scent; it intoxicated me with pride to know that these delicate petals and scents were alive because I took care of them. My nose swam in the moist blooms and encouraged me to discover more of the aromas of the world.

I camped in the woods here when I was young, and still even today. I used to enjoy the small streams that ran like veins through the meadow and throughout the woods. I remember when I was about six, making my way to a stream that ran through the thickest part of the forest. Removing my little sandals, I dipped my tiny toes into the chilly water and wiggled them deeply into the sand and mud that lined the bed of the flowing current. Once they were numb and red I removed my

toes up into the surge of liquid and let the grit filter out from between them. I pulled them out and stumbled over to a near by patch of tall grasses and miniature white flowers, probably considered to be weeds, and I wiped my feet in the warm afternoon overgrowth.

I looked around as the water evaporated off my toes and ankles and noticed that it was mostly very tall pines in this area; they filled the air with a scent of sweet, sticky sap and their needles padded the surrounding area. I walked over to the tallest tree and observed it's structure; it's crusty bark was peeling and being clotted with a thick sap. Small bugs that had been attracted by the tempting smell and ventured into the sweet treat now faced a bittersweet end. I saw a single ant lodged in the trap; he struggled to lift his legs and he moved his head to and fro clenching and unclenching his pincers in attempt to free himself. I picked up a thin twig and pried him up from the sap, two of his legs stayed attached. I released him just the same thinking that it was better to live in pain and as a cripple then to not live at all. Hunching over from placing the ant and the twig down, I decided to rest awhile against the towering pine,

much as I am doing now. I looked up to the multitudes of needle swaying in a light breeze; they swayed and delicately fell to the ground like a bird's feathers might fall out during a flight in the clear blue skies of day. There are also pinecones hanging gracefully from the branches. They reminded me of the decorative ones I made in my class at school and hung on my Christmas tree during the holiday. However, these cones seemed to be much heavier, their umbos were fat and bloated. I learned later on that the pine cones I observed at the bottom of the pine were actually female cones that had become impregnated by the falling pollen of their thin male counterparts dangling from the tree top. A few of these weighty females had dropped to the ground and seemed to be more comfortable resting in the bed of needles before they finally released their fertilized seeds to create a new generation of pines.

* * *

Reconvening my mind back to the present, I open my eyes and take in the beautiful day. The sky has many puffy white stratus and cumulus clouds floating in the blue sky. I see cumulonimbus clouds in the dis-

tance, towering like skyscrapers and with many shadowed crevices and darkening valleys in them, intimating to the summer shower we are going to receive. I'll continue to sit here, supine, I am anticipating the storm; my white rose garden is in need of more of a drink than my watering pail can deliver. I watch the sky. I enjoy the new shadows that are being thrown across the landscape.

The leaves that are in the oak I am resting against have begun to shudder from the touch of the imposing gusts, yearning for a downpour. The clouds have now changed the palette of the sky from a misty gray to pastel shades of pink and dingy yellow, the storm is here.

Quiet rumbles of thunder break in the distance and a crack of white lightning tares through the stacked clouds. Vibrations ran through the skin of the tree and emanated on to my skin, giving me goose bumps. Tiny drops of water speckle my skin. I step away from the tree and move into the open meadow where I sit Indian style. I look around me and take in all of the plants absorbing the rain that is beginning to fall harder. The parched and cracked

soil begins to heal itself, as if mending back together with liquid band-aids. It was pouring now, and I laid back to watch the storm clouds roll by before they were gone. Beads of water wash over my skin, lifting the sweat and dirt from today's outdoor excursions. I close my eyes and open my arms like I once had when I was a child making snow angels, except now, I opened them to embrace this powerful storm. Smelling the damp air, I detect a musky scent of roses, one that I had never encountered before, in the grasses around me. I breathe in this new perfume of flowers and reopen my eyes to find this pure new odor.

Looking around, I notice in between two delicate and slender tree trunks that branched outwards, a small and exquisite rose bush. I crawl on my hands and knees over to it. Laying my eyes on the single bloom that grew upon it, I gasped inwardly. It's like no rose I have ever seen; it is a white rose and along all the edges and especially penetrating into the tightly layered petals in the middle, it was stained with a scarlet pigment. Like blood, the flush of red seeped through the white of the petals giving it a new life.

Awestruck, I gingerly run the tip of my forefinger around the outside petals, expecting the sanguine color of them to dye my fingers. There are water droplets schematically placed on all the petals, as I observe, a single droplet rolled slowly into the pistil.

The rain stopped.

* * *

To this day I remember the afternoon I discovered that blushing rose. Now, well into my seventies, I still search to find such a flower on this impregnable land. The beauty of that flower in my mind, still astonishes me.

Now I just observe the trees and their leaves. I am by the same tree that grows in the middle of the meadow. I run my fingers over the bark, my hand is almost camouflage with it; the wrinkles and sun tanned crevices run on the both of us. I look up to observe this spring's new leaves; their small and precise veins giving them life. Hundreds of paths spanning the breadth of the leaf remind me of my playful days in the woods as a small child and my fascination with the running streams.

To me, these leaves are something more though; they are the life of the tree. From the leaf to its stem, from the stem to a twig, twig to branch, branch to limb, limb to trunk, trunk to sky to roots, this is life.

Leaves are always there for the tree, except in winter when they leave the body to hibernate in a cold, dead sleep. In fall however, as if to say 'forgive me for leaving you', they change to brilliant shades of orange, reds and yellows. A visual gift that the world can remember as the harsh gales and heavy snow falls during the winter.

Leaving the twisting and winding roots and branches to cryogenically freeze, tiny seeds of buds are growing within the branches to sprout again. Once they feel the sensual touch of the sun's rays through the bark, tiny stems push out of the thawing cork.

Time is pressing on, it is spring again and soon after the summer showers come, it will be autumn again and then winter, but this passage of change will forever come again, with the blooms and sprouts of spring.

Life begins again.



Amanda Martin, "This City is Afraid of Me"



Amanda Martin, "These Days Are Few"



Amanda Martin, "Little Miss"

A place where souls get stuck in between entangled bodies
Countless good memories can't overtake the consistent stabs in the back
Decisions are made without thinking of the consequences one might endure
The once sweet fruit of the earth starts to taste bitter
Day and night become one in the same

Multitudes of uninhabited minds don't understand
Endless oceans don't amaze the common man
Broken shards of glass stab at naked feet
Letters disappear within the flames
While taxis won't stop and the train is never on time

The highs are never high enough and the lows are always too low
Winds change direction but they never blow
Pauses end up saying more than words
Time passes but the wounds never heal
Not even the hum of the fan makes sense anymore

Season Intermittent: a Quadrilateral

by Zachary
Wheeler

<i>Cold</i>	<i>duck</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>pond</i>	<i>waters</i>
blue	feather,	sets	scum	ripples;
<i>which</i>	<i>glides</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>waves</i>	<i>round</i>
hungry	in	nature,	chapping	lip(s)
<i>numbs</i>	<i>slowly,</i>	<i>sweetening</i>	<i>fogs</i>	<i>between</i>
your	circular	eyes,	thin	white
<i>fingers,</i>	<i>fall's</i>	<i>tasting;</i>	<i>fermented</i>	<i>clouds.</i>

Bright-eyed slugs of evening
languidly push
down/along/through/around/in/on
dim-lit streets that web and course
the veins of town at dusk.

This city
this birth
this circle
these stars
What's next in time,
-split between-
setting suns and rising moons.
Change slowly breathed from sky
under thumb of a wanton God.

Awaiting release
awaiting the end
this path has become worn
I grow tiresome
wish to dissolve, to nothingness.

A joy
a celebration
to be absolute
caging infinite potential
as nothing.

Clean slates mislead
potential filled,
but parametered by being a slate,

broken it must remain granite,
passing time,
winds erode
particles dispersed,
spread into air,
Now infinite potential,
infinite energy
compacted into the molecule.
Body/breath/tree/grass/sand/sea/lion/sound/light
all avenues open
complete freedom
robust choice.

Deeper into nothing.
Deeper, beyond things.
Deeper past what is known.

Warp the molecule
in nuclear shatter,
a presence beyond tangible.

There beyond reach everything known and unknown sifts through, and I
could grab hold
of absolutely anything and become like it.

Better yet, I can sit and observe as I usually do, reserve the potential, to be a
nothing, a universe, self-contained, a completeness of self/world/potential/
energy/nothing/all.

There is infinite all
In the nothing that is potential...

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Gena Wiley, "Portrait"



Jessica Fair, “The Singer”



Jessica Fair, untitled



Jessica Fair, untitled

Whenever a headache racks your mind
It is I, there, fighting back a sickness.
Whenever you think your back feels sore
I've been resting against it with my mind.
Whenever tears roll down your cheek
I am somewhere kissing you.
Whenever, wherever
I am there.

Du bist schön, wenn ich siehst du
Ich bin betrübt, wenn du lässt mich
Kannst du hört meine Stimme
Ist es zu dir wirklich schlimmer?
Wirst du vergeben
Wirst du vergessen?
Mein Kriegsruf klammheimlich
Ich bin einen glanzlosen Fisch.
Hilft mir von dem Wasser
Mein Got, geweihten Verfasser.
Wirst du vergeben
Wirst du vergessen?

You are beautiful when I see you
I am saddened when you leave me
If you can hear my voice
Is it really that bad to you?
Will you forgive
Will you forget?
My War Cry on the quiet
I am a dull fish.
Help me from the water
My God, holy author.
Will you forgive
Will you forget?

Cutting wood within a deep dark forest
My axe created whistles, hacks and thuds
Making sensual rhythm out of death.
The fraying, dead bark, how it crackled!
Leaves they fell quite forcefully upon me
In a sort of vain to stop the harvest.
On and on, and back and forth I had swung
Thinking how this winter would be warmer
When suddenly my eyes came upon her.
A ghostly, gorgeous female soldier
Was stripping out of her noble armor
Into dazzling beauty quite unheard of.
She swiftly jumped into a deep, blue lake
That, in that spot, I had never realized
Flowing far down what now were golden hills.
Being ever the cordial gentleman
I cared not watch from stealthily afar
Rather joined her in the water naked.
She did not even scream or look surprised
However, seemed a bit more curious.
With a pride-filled gaze she intr'duced herself:
Athena, mighty daughter of the Gods!
Not to be outdone I would raise my sword
saying, 'Hector, mighty son of Priam!'
Her heart was won; she gently kissed my lips
Her godly hands rubbed fast upon my chest.
A divine light shone off her sparkling breasts
Ever sweetly encompassing us both
She let a shrill like wail that made me wince
Nails then dug into my muscled shoulder
I felt small dewy drops of blood leak out
They heated and they rose ambrosia smoke.
Minutes passed; unlikely passion soared
We sunk beneath the thrashing of the waves.
I could not help but stop to contemplate

She had never been an honest virgin
From the tender sort of way she loved a man.
We shared great much fluid in the fluid
Rolled deeply in the tangled matted sea weed
Sediment in every orifice.
Schools of fish in a hurry whisked away
A crawdad child watched through parted hands
The mother catatonic with her shock.
At last with one more pushing, kingly thrust
We returned back to the water's surface
But Athena had a look of sour rage.
She screamed that I should never tell this romp
Or else she would end my life in battle;
Thus she faded back to her white, still cloud,
Her paranormal armor followed her.
Despite her angst I blew goodbye a kiss
Then went back to the cutting of dark wood
With belief in miracles and heaven.

My Eyes Roll Back

by Andy Schwegman

My eyes roll back and close on their own.
I lose control, my breathing slows and my heart is subtle.
I flirt with disaster, I laugh in the face of death.
I am naive to the consequences of my actions.
For I am not a risk taker, I am just a fool.



Melissa Lester, untitled



Melissa Lester, untitled



Melissa Lester, Big Ben Tower

STEVE WOKE UP ON THE FLOOR IN AN EMPTY PLACE to an unfamiliar knock on the door. Feeling groggy and confused, he wiped his eyes in a vain attempt to wake up. As he shuffled to the door that he didn't recognize, a slight panicked confusion came over him; he was no longer in his apartment, and he couldn't recall much from recent memory. He reached the door. "Who is it?"

"My name is Lloyd," the voice called from behind the door. "I'm your orientation guide. If you'll please open the door I can explain a little better for you."

"What the hell is an orientation guide?" Steve asked.

"It's a guide that orientates you. There isn't a lock on your door. I was just asking as a formality. Please open the door and I will explain everything."

Hesitant, Steve obeyed. The sun was up—bright, but not too bright—and Steve was stunned; he had never seen greener grass, a bluer sky, a whiter fence surrounding a nice two-story white house with blue shutters. A man who looked in his thirties wearing a navy blue business suit coupled

with an amazing red-striped power tie stood at the door with a half-smile and a folder. "Good morning, sir," Lloyd said, extending his hand. "You must be Steven. So glad you could make it. I'm sure you have a lot of questions, and I have a lot of answers. If you would gladly follow me, I'll show you around for a bit, and hopefully the staff will have your new house furnished by the time we get back."

"What? Who are you?" He was still half asleep.

"My name is Lloyd. I know you are still waking up and confused, to say the least, which is why I brought you your favorite drink." Lloyd handed him a cappuccino. Steve eyed it, and then Lloyd, and then took a sip. This was the best cappuccino Steve had ever had. "How did you know this was my favorite drink?"

"I'll bet that's the best darn cappuccino you've ever had."

"What's going on here?"

"Come walk with me. I'll explain all you want to know."

Steve shut the door behind him and walked outside. The grass was ridic-

ulously soft, and Steve paused to take it in. The scenery was overwhelming, even without the confusion he already felt. “Where am I?”

Lloyd responded nonchalantly, “You’re in hell. You died of a heart attack in your sleep; eighty-seven years old it says. Relax though; it’s not what you think.”

“I’m dead?”

“Yes.”

“My wife . . . my, my children . . . all gone . . .”

“It’s ok. They’ll join us soon.”

Steve glared at him. “You asshole. What the hell kind of saying is that? I don’t want my wife and kids to go to hell! What kind of hell is this?!” Steve’s attitude was more inquisitive than angry, and Lloyd could tell that Steve was going to fit in just fine in hell.

“Look, relax. One: your wife isn’t *going* to hell, she’s *coming* here. Two: it’s not what you think. Let me explain. If you put two and two together already, then you figured out that there is a God. God created everything,

and passed down laws to every living thing on Earth.”

“Every living thing?”

“Yes. Pay attention. I don’t like repeating myself. Anyways, each creature and bug and bacteria and such all fall under the rules of God. Each organism has its own heaven and hell, and you are in the human’s version. From what I’m guessing, you didn’t believe in God, and so you went to hell because you didn’t believe.”

Steve took in his surroundings again. A few neighbors here and there waved at Lloyd and welcomed Steve to hell as the two strolled down the seemingly endless street. “So where’s the eternal hellfire and all that jazz? Is this like a torturous beginning to fool me into thinking something so that I suffer more, or what?”

Lloyd chuckled, although he’s heard this a thousand times before. “No, no, no. Eternal damnation just means you’re condemned to hell with no chance of getting to heaven. You see, the Bible *is* right about one thing: if you don’t believe in God and you didn’t truly repent your sins, then you will be condemned for

“I’m dead?”

“Yes.”

“My wife . . . my, my children . . . all gone . . .”

“It’s ok. They’ll join us soon.”

all eternity. There are no absolute wrongs or rights aside from that. You can do whatever you want on Earth and those two rules must be followed, or else God condemns you to hell. What the Bible is incorrect about, however, is what hell is like.”

“Clearly. This place looks amazing. Too bad it’s probably filled with crooks and the like.” Steve looked around uneasily. “I can’t believe I’m lumped with the likes of Hitler.”

“On the contrary: Hitler went to heaven.”

“You’re kidding? How the hell did he manage to do that?”

“He repented. He was a great follower of Christ. According to the Bible, all he had to do was truly repent and declare faith in the Lord and such, and God had to save him. I’m sure that busted God’s balls

pretty hard.” Lloyd chuckled. “We don’t want him anyways. What’s neat about hell is: there are very few ‘criminal types’ as you might say; most of them repented and went to heaven, so there are only relatively good people down here, most of whom just didn’t believe in God. Hell is a pretty nice place. Lots of people leave heaven to live here.”

“Leave heaven? I assume that’s what my wife will do, since you said she’s ‘coming to hell?’”

“Yes. You can never get into heaven, but she can sacrifice heaven to come to hell, from what we guess. They always come down with no memory of heaven; it’s probably part of the sacrifice. Heaven and hell do share lists of people, and we can usually tell the heaven dropouts when we see them. Your wife is a strong candidate. People leave heaven to be with their loved ones in hell often-

times. Some even leave it to get *away* from the ones they loved, like a great divorce. Even though heaven is just like it is in the Bible, it doesn't replace loved ones."

Relieved about his situation, Steve drinks from his cappuccino casually as they stroll down the long block of houses, each as rich as the last. "So this is hell, huh?"

Lloyd smiled. "Yes, Steve, this is hell. What a wonderful place. A house for every family of souls, infinite time for you and your loved ones, very few worries and very good weather; I couldn't be happier about the last eight hundred years here."

Steve nearly spit up his drink. "Eight hundred years! Damn, man, you can't be over forty if I was being the least bit generous!"

Lloyd pulled out a pocket mirror, as if he prepared for this. He handed it to Steve. "Take a look. You don't look too bad yourself." Steve handed his drink to Lloyd and popped open the mirror. Wow, he thought to himself, I look *exactly* like I did in my thirties. "People always think they looked their best in their thirties, no matter the era. Who would have

thought?"

Steve's excitement was rising; with the promise of his wife, a new home, and infinite time, he could barely begin to imagine the possibilities.

If what Lloyd was saying was true, that the people here *were* relatively good people; no real crime, no more murder or rapes or thieves, no worries, no *need*, just *want*, just time, just love and happiness, amazing friends, memories good and bad, and all the time to remember them and create new ones. Steve's eyes sweltered with tears, and he fell to his knees and sobbed the happiest whimpers in all his time and thanked God that he didn't believe in God. Lloyd's eyes watered, too. "It always gets to me when the newcomers grasp reality." He pulled out a handkerchief, dabbed his eyes, and then passed it to Steve after the moment passed.

"Welcome to the new world. You'll have all the time in the world to do what you want. There are social gatherings daily, although you are never obligated to go, and you'll find your neighbors are most pleasant as well. Your house should be furnished to your liking now. If you have any questions, ask around. Lots of folks have the answers and are

more than happy to share with you.
I'll be around as well.”

Lloyd smiled and went on his way.
Steve collected himself and went
back to his house to take a nap—for
how long, though, was solely up to
him. Tomorrow is forever, Steve
thought to himself, smiling, and to-
morrow is going to be a great day.

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(but why?)

Ice Cream Cone and a Little Cream Soda

by Malcolm

I SAW THIS GIRL IN CLASS eighteen dark hair skinny tan pretty face lots of money things like that but there was something different about this girl I don't know I can't quite put my finger on it she's definitely gorgeous and totally out of my league as if I cared to have her maybe I do I don't know yet but she just gets me thinking about great ideas like marriage because I've never wanted to get married or anything and children because I never wanted children or anything but she is so beautiful her name is Angelica and she looks kind of Asian-American but I never asked her I never talked to her although she looks great and I think she is single maybe looking but she'd never go for me I'm sure of it I don't think I look all too special especially to be with someone as great as her I bet she's smart too we have math together I don't remember the exact title of the course who cares anyways unless you're into math which I'm not *that* into math I'm into this girl our class is later at night it lets out about 10 o'clock-ish depending on how much we get through which is usually a lot despite the fact that our professor goes off on tangents—no pun intended—quite often but I see where she walks to after class sum-

mer-time classes are small but our class had twelve people or so I really like her once I happen to be downwind of her and I could smell her hair although it was a subtle aroma I couldn't help but relax when I smelled her hair even from that far away even that faint of an odor I could smell it and I was floating in a cliché all the way to my car I can't remember the last time I relaxed like that it feels like love I didn't follow her home I wish I could go home with that beautiful girl but I can't so I don't push it I can't take it too far I don't want to be that guy even if my feelings for this girl are strong I've been in love before but this was different there was a definite physical attraction dear Lord there was a definite physical attraction her body is amazing and she's gorgeous but there was a *want* a *need* perhaps but more want because I don't think anybody needs anything but maybe I need this I think she would feel this way too wait what am I saying of course she doesn't feel this way she isn't crazy like I feel maybe she stares at me like I try not to stare at her I like to stare she wears clothes that are so nicely matched together and all girls wear tight clothes nowadays which doesn't make things easier for

me but hers were so formfitting I could already see exactly where her skin would crease if she were laying down naked on my bed one leg outstretched and the other slightly bent raising her ass ever so slightly in the air and arching her back resting on her elbows the bed keeping her firm body just in the right place as she smiles back at me as I take her right then and there I focus back on trigonometric functions it's about time for class to let out and I notice that she takes the same way out every day and she walks by a closet nobody else seems to see it and they never see me scoping the room out the campus is small but nobody cares it's only Monday I have four more days to see her again in class and it's killing me I can't sleep and nothing is funny to me anymore nothing at all even *Seinfeld* my favorite show and games aren't fun anymore not even *Guitar Hero* I can't sleep and I watch

things to relax me and nothing works at all I just think about Angelica and the times we could have together and a lot of times I feel sick I used to be able to sleep but gradually it's been getting worse and worse lately on Tuesday I puked in the bathroom after class I was so lovesick it was making me sick I can't eat either I can barely hold water down and still no sleep at all I just drone at the TV trying to bore myself to sleep but no dice and finally Wednesday after class I decide I'm going to tell her and then it'll be all over and I will sleep again and I know it's wrong but it's not wrong I love this girl *genuinely* but I don't know how to prove it to her and I know I'll blow my chance if I don't do it this way this awful way but it has to be done I have to tell her I haven't slept in three days and haven't slept well in three weeks since I saw her because I need to get these feelings for her off my chest

“... on Tuesday I puked in the bathroom after class I was so lovesick it was making me sick I can't eat either I can barely hold water down and still no sleep at all I just drone at the TV trying to bore myself to sleep but no dice...”

I'm so lonely and so she's walking by and I grabbed her from behind clamping her mouth shut and I dragged her back into the closet so that she never sees my face and we get there and she is struggling hard and I think she is starting to cry and I start crying and holding her mouth closed tighter and I tell her I'm sorry it had to be this way but this is how it had to be done and I told her that I wanted to say something and then I would let her go and she couldn't get mad she couldn't she wouldn't I'm getting dizzy I don't know what I would do if she doesn't reciprocate but I say to her that I see her all the time and I'm not good enough to be with her and that she was above angels in beauty and I'm smart and I'm an asshole but hey at least I'm an honest asshole am I right and I'm still crying and she is listening hooray she is listening to me she isn't fighting me anymore I'm still dizzy though and I tell her that I wish that she would want to be with me but I can't force her to that wouldn't be right for her and I would never feel right about it I never feel right about anything but I'm right about her and I want to be with her maybe just like this for a while so that we can get to know each other I don't want you to

hate me I'm not trying to hurt you if I did hurt you I'm sorry I'm sure I scared you a bit my body is pressed against hers and she still can't see my face but I can see hers in my mind and she isn't struggling I say that I know she is the one for me and I let go of her mouth and she doesn't scream or anything she says to me she says "Who are you" and I say not to worry about that I'm just a guy that isn't good enough for you yet but I want to be I can't be anything but me but maybe that is the person you want to be with even though I am crazy as all hell for doing this I'm sorry about this by the way I won't do it again I shouldn't have done this I'm sorry and she says "Don't be sorry" and she's not scared at all I can't believe it and she says "you seem nice besides this incident here and maybe we can meet sometime soon let's get out of this closet it's dark I can't see your face or anything" she sounds sincere but I don't get to hear her lie to people that often she could be lying what if she's lying to me like everyone else she's not I can tell now but I say you can't see me yet it's not a good idea I don't think you'd find me attractive until you got to know me until I grew on you so leave but don't look back at

all and I'll see her again soon I didn't say anything about class because then she would know I'm in the class too and she would find me I can't remember what happened the next two days I think I slept a lot since I haven't been sleeping but I'm in class now she sure was looking hard for me all through class she was staring down all the guys and listening hard when they answered questions at least I thought she was I didn't disguise my voice what if I have a question about math and then I think silly me I'm great at math I don't need to ask any questions about math that was a silly thought she was still looking but she doesn't notice me at all because I am invisible she never noticed before and even though she was looking now she can't see me nobody ever sees me sometimes I like that sometimes I don't it makes it hard to make friends that want to do stuff I don't like doing a lot of the same things that other people do I have college things to do I don't work I just get financial aid and scholarships I don't work well with others so I don't see the point in a job I make do being poverty stricken from that I don't mind it money just complicates things mostly she didn't notice me

following her again and I grabbed her again this time she didn't fight it I just pulled her quickly and gently into the closet and shut the door and she said "why didn't you rape me last time we were here I thought you were going to rape me" and me being the dumbass that I am asked her if she wanted to be raped and she said not really although she probably meant more like hell no because seriously who wants to get raped and I told her how attractive I thought she was because I thought she should be told that but I was quick to say but that's not why I love you and she said "Oh really why do you love me then" in a half joking half serious tone of voice that I almost didn't appreciate and I said you make me want to be a better person you make me want to live and succeed and fight for the things worth fighting for and she paused for a second and then right there she pulled me close and kissed me SHE KISSED ME it was so perfect I kissed back even though I don't think my breath is all that great but I closed my eyes and kissed her back as nice as I thought I could kiss and I started crying a bit and she started crying too she feels cold for some reason and we kissed again there in

the dark and kissed like there was no tomorrow and she said she thinks she can be with me and that she wants to see me in the light she wants to really see my face and wants to hang out and I said I still don't know and she says I think you are in my math class but I can't find you and I said I can't find me either maybe I'm not in her math class she says I am and she's right but I tried to play coy with her although I can't play games very well I'm quick-witted but not when it comes to secrets us meeting here was a big secret that's a secret that I can keep probably for fear of trouble and fear of judgment I'm right about this love nobody can tell me I'm wrong but mostly because I don't think she will be attracted to me and we left I think but I can't remember much she voluntarily walked into the closet the third time which was on Monday after the weekend and she waited and she said "I kissed you in here I wouldn't have done that if I didn't like you I know you care about me I want to know your name I want to see your face I want YOU" and we kissed again and I said where do you want to go and she says come to my apartment and she gives me the address and I say ok you leave the

door unlocked and I'll be there in twenty minutes and she can wait in her bedroom with the lights off and I'll be in and turn on the lights and we will just hope for the best afterwards maybe we can go for an ice cream cone and a little cream soda and she laughs she likes *The White Stripes* or at least that song she has good taste in music I get to her apartment the door is unlocked and she is inside in the bedroom it's the only door closed so I know that's what it is I open it up and there she is reading a book under her sheet this thin silky sheet baby blue silk sheets wrapping to the shape of her body it looks exactly like I had pictured it I sigh in relief as they say I smile and she smiles at me and says hi and gives her bottom lip that tease bite that I love and hate because it drives me wild and I say hi and she says what's your name and I say Andy because my name is Andy and she says it's nice to finally meet you I'm Angelica and I say I know and I'm sorry for the way it had to be and she says don't worry about it this is our new beginning and I come over to her and run my fingers over her shoulder down her back removing the silk baby blue sheets off her and I get a bit impatient and throw them

off her she looks so good it's amazing I've never seen anything look so good in my life and she cranes her neck back slightly to look at me while I do this and she is smiling the whole time so I take off my shirt and undo my pants and take off my socks and I get naked with her and I lay down half beside her half on her and I lean into her left ear and say I love you Angelica and she says I love you too Andy and she leans a little more and I lean a little more and we kiss so nicely and she raises her ass a little and it's easy for me to get in and we make love right there her body arching and we're moaning near simultaneously and we both come at the same time and this was the greatest sex I ever had her body was perfect mine was perfect with hers we were made for each other and as we climax together I close my eyes and when I open them I realize we are in the closet again and her body is limp in my arms her pants are down and she's dead and I'm fucking her no oh no I killed her oh no she's not breathing she's not moving oh god I killed her oh god what have I done oh the proverbial shit has hit the fan my sobs are uncontrollable I gotta go I gotta get out of here I gotta go I look at her lifeless body

still gorgeous still warm and defiled I'm still sobbing I open the closet and scope out the hallway nobody is there and it's dark outside I run to my car real fast and pull it close to the school where I don't see any cars and I pick her up and pull her pants and panties back up after wiping up my mess and I fasten her belt but not too tight and I slung her over my shoulders like she is holding on just like a groom carries his bride into the honeymoon suite if anyone did notice they wouldn't say anything I get her to the front door where all the smokers go but sure enough I'm almost at my car and some fat kid from freshman composition who squawks when he talks asks me if something is wrong like he really gives a fuck I'm getting pissed still sobbing and I say everything is fine she just has a low blood sugar what a shitty lie and he starts walking over as I am setting her down in the seat gently and buckle her in safety first and I grab my ice scraper that I refuse to place in the trunk in case I need it like now I turned around and I bashed that fucker in the temple and I look around and nobody is around so I leave him there after I wailed on him a couple more times to make sure he wasn't saying any-

thing dead men tell no tales I can't believe that she didn't really love me she can't say it now she just mocks me from the passenger seat laughing at my sobs and runny nose it was still Wednesday I checked her phone since I don't have a phone what have I done why can't I just have normal dreams like everyone else why can't dating just be easy maybe this is a normal dream for everyone and mine is just a little different than everyone else's I took her body back to my place nobody is out at night and the neighbors usually just mind their own business anyways unless we are showering at the same time because we all share a water heater and nobody can shower simultaneously I carry her upstairs and make us some ice cream cone and a little cream soda just like I promised or at least I thought I promised her an ice cream cone and a little cream soda oh well oh well oh well she was still beautiful we played *Guitar Hero* her fingers were too stiff for me to help her press the buttons we laughed at that she strums just fine with my help and we made love this time not rape once on my bed and once in the shower afterwards just like lovers do but after a couple days she started to get rotten even though I washed her

often especially after we made love and I started to feel sick all the time I still can't sleep every time I looked at her hell every time I looked in the mirror I couldn't see very well my face was all funny looking it was scary she was scary I hate her I'm not going to class anymore I told the cop it was because I was upset he asked if I had seen anything that night and why of course not officer she was such a nice girl I can't believe she would be missing and that kid was such a helping hand he helped me with my books one time he bought it he bought everyone's story I just gotta keep quiet for now why can't things just work out for the best now she's dead and rotting her skin is all grayish I had to buy so much air freshener because she stinks to high heaven and that phrase makes me wonder if she can smell herself from heaven how can anyone think love is easy or awesome or worth it its not worth all this people talk about love and they talk about settling down with a nice girl what nice girl there are no nice girls people don't settle down with nice girls they settle down with women who take advantage of them of their feelings of their need for companionship and women do the same we all settle love is a joke a

sick joke why should I have to settle why shouldn't I get what I want all I wanted was that moment that one moment back to change it all to fix it and set things straight to be social to be that guy that Angelica would want to be with but no Oh no this guy this imperfect this unwashed cannot touch the golden well guess what I touched the golden I loved perfection and I got what I wanted besides sleep but at the same time I didn't get what I wanted because you can't turn back time no matter how much it should be turned back sometimes time is the most important thing that you can never get back I wanted her to want me I wanted the opportunity to make it happen but opportunity cannot be taken it has to be given but it was refused to me even though I didn't ask for it so I selfishly took it just like I selfishly just took all those sleeping pills a bit ago I need sleep so bad this sleep is forever I'll be with her forever as I lay next to Angelica the most beautiful girl I have ever seen the one that is rotting away with her hair falling out and losing color stinking up the joint clothes looking a bit ragged and I was already rotting with her as I kissed her faded perfect lips and told her I loved her and she just sat there

empty eyes gazing into mine asking "why?" and I tell her because I love you but she can only ask "why?" just like she has for the past week she has been here staring at me with those eyes asking "why?" soon my eyes will be closed and we can sit together and there won't be any more questions no more asking "why?" no more *Guitar Hero* no more making love she smells too bad maybe I should have washed her better no more of that at all it'll all be peaceful and we won't have any problems we will finally have time to relax and get to know each other just like that cop tried to get to know me get my story he didn't suspect anything but I'm sure once I go missing for a few weeks someone will come looking for me after the smell gets unbearable or the landlord will come looking for rent and smell us and someone will walk in and see us together and the cops will take our first family portrait together and use it as evidence in a case against me like it matters the soon to be dead man laying next to the most beautiful person who people will miss and cry about then forget about because nobody really cares at all and you can't turn back the clock to fix it anyways nobody cares to turn back time and fix it

anyways I'm finally getting tired and
I pull her close to me and smile and
shut my eyes and rest my head on
her shoulder and I hear her talking
and she says "I love you" and I tell
her I love her too I'm tired too tired
to cry about it too tired way too tired

I am harsh, and hot and hard
I am the perfume-scented air
My earth is broken up and charred
My soil rich beyond compare

I am cotton and papyrus
I am drought and I am flood
I am lotus, I am iris
I am the Nile—your life blood

I have the desert stars for eyes
Millennia have swept by me
I am the pyramids at sunrise
And my body hugs the sea

I've had pharaohs sail my waters
Watched Kings rise up, then fall
Seen shades of Isis in my daughters
Raised my children to stand tall

I am before and afterlife
I am death and I am birth
Enduring famine, plague, and strife
I've raised the wonders of Earth

I am Egypt.

In the Hand of Darkness

by Olivia Varney

In the hand of darkness I lie awake
And wonder, which pain is worse?
To wither like a bud deprived of sun
Or to simply die forgotten, like a seed
Unplanted, and unsprung?

I little know which road to take
Am I blessed, or am I cursed?
For I have no memories to hound me
But neither have I hope, or tender thoughts
To keep me company.

Need is a thirst I cannot slake
But oh! the way it burns!
It's one relief the very thing that fate deprives me of!
While all around me sweethearts flaunt
Their undeserved love.

With dawning light I hide the ache
With each dusk it returns.
I wonder, is it my fate to be ignored?
In the hand of darkness I fear I'll die alone
Untouched and unadored.

Little star,
You seem so fragile and so cold,
A brittle bit of silver dressed in gold.
Faint glitt'ring point of distant light
Can you see me?

Little raindrop,
Falling, swift and soft as dancer's feet
Tinkling like sad bells, so light and sweet,
A sound so full of heartbreak and delight.
Can you hear me?

Little snowflake,
Soft as lace, more fragile still
Drifting slowly past my window sill.
Chip of ice, so cold and white
Can you feel me?

Little bird,
The smallest speck against the sky
So much life unlived, so soon to die.
You sing a silent song, so dark, so bright.
Come to me.

Little prince,
The humblest vessel for a mighty heart.
A soul that splintered and was torn apart.
Reach for me, oh fallen knight,
Let me save you.



Olivia Varney, view of Mount Hood (Oregon)



Olivia Varney, view of Grand Canyon

Contributors

Tabitha Albright: “Call me Tabs—‘nuff said.”

Alan Bryan: I am from Mount Gilead Ohio and I am majoring in Psychology. My favorite movie is *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

Gary Buechel is real old. He has a special dog trained to bite him if he is about to doze off in class or utter something indecipherable. Instead of expanding his vast knowledge in college, he has been wondering if he (or anybody else for that matter) really knows anything for sure. He is still a student because he was not smart enough to quit when he was ahead.

Gail Castle: I am an old man, Kentucky born, going where I have not been. Why is my mail addressed “Ms. Gail Castle”? Yes – sir!!! I should be a Kentucky Colonel – but I’m just a Kentucky “COOGE”.

Ben Ditmars is from Caledonia, Ohio. He is a history major and a senior.

Jessica Fair writes, “Profession: I wrap your Chipotle burrito. Also: ‘Idk how people watch crap like The Hills its like brain cells committing suicide?-S.M. Foxbower.”

Melissa Lester is part of the OSUM family and has had a lifelong love affair with photography. One day she hopes to have enough money for a real camera. She would gladly accept donations for her camera fund. Currently, she’s a Junior majoring in Sociology.

Malcolm: Malcolm, you silly man!

Brianna Lawcock is an quirky english major who enjoys overloading herself with classes and getting a gay straight alliance working in her senior year in some sick evil delusion that she is awesome. She has been writing for several years, months, days, and hours, and has somehow come up with items that were deemed shockingly worthy of this publication.

Stuart Lishan is an Associate Professor of English at OSU. His current favorite word is “tulip”; favorite movie is the last one he saw “Amreeka”; current favorite poet is the multi-headed and talented Arika-Ashlee-Nikki-Robert-Jon-Whitney-Stuart (not that he’s vain or anything); and his favorite team is the Buckeyes! He’s written and published poems, stories, song lyrics, bits and pieces of memoir, and contributor’s notes.

Contributors

Amanda Martin is a recent graduate of OSU, aspiring for world domination. Her back up plan if that fails is a career in writing or photography. You can see her gallery at <http://andriatower.deviantart.com/>

Kristin Mihoci: I am a nursing major with a minor in English. I have a passion for writing and reading and try to find inspiration for my work in the natural world around me.

Deb Noll: Non-traditional, still learning to live and living to learn. Reared in southern Ohio, graduated from Edgewood High School in 1973, moved to Columbus in '76, married a Pennsylvanian in '82, gave birth to a son in '84, worked for 35 years before entering OSU Marion in fall 2008. Finding ways to put smiles on peoples' faces makes me happy!

Ashlee Roberts: I am a sophomore at Ohio State. As a child, I grew up in the two cities of Galion, Ohio and Chester, West Virginia. Most of the writing I do is in the form of letters and I use them to keep in touch with different friends and family members around the country.

Andy Schwegman: I was born in LA in California. I'm basically just your average kid, enjoying the little things and making memories. Love hanging with friends around a bonfire and I'm athletic and active.

Olivia Varney spent much of her childhood pouring over beautifully illustrated books of fairy tales, myths, and Native American legends, as well as listening to the countless stories her father wrote for her. By the age of nine she had begun writing her own stories, and at fourteen she discovered poetry, and fell instantly in love. She can generally be found tucked away in a corner reading, or online at <http://mykingdombythesea.blogspot.com>

Colophon

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