THE PROMETHEAN

- THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL
  OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND

2006/2007 ISSUE

GENESIS

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THE PROMETHEAN

The Literary Arts Journal of Concordia University-Portland

The 2006/2007 Issue

GENESIS
one sacred fire, not meant to die
like candle’s flame through fiercer wind,
yet lives to soothe the darkened sky
to which, this web, its heart hath spinned.

o night, it burns with lovers’ spark,
yet singed that they shall never be.
for fire’s light escapes the dark,
erasing their sweet reverie.

-NIGHTFIRE
Rae Northcraft
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"INVITATION TO GENESIS"

NOTES ON THE 2006/2007 ISSUE

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. – Genesis 1:1,3

Passion is the genesis of genius. – Anthony Robbins

In this issue, we explore the nature of beginnings. Our theme, Genesis, has brought in a broad range of submissions, from poetry reflecting on our Biblical roots to memoirs detailing first experiences at college. We asked the Concordia community to submit poems, nonfiction, artwork, photography, and short fiction that embraced our theme, but did not limit our acceptance only to work that was inspired by beginnings. What we found, however, is that almost anything can qualify as a beginning. Even an ending is a precursor to something new, something inspiring.

The Promethean has grown significantly in the past two years. This is very exciting for us and we hope the trend will continue. Our expanding staff helps to add diversity and knowledge to the review process.

We are extremely pleased with this year’s issue and are proud to present it to you. We hope that The Promethean provides you with inspiration to continue on in struggle and in joy, knowing that others share the same human emotions, drives, and challenges. The Promethean is the voice of Concordia on an individual plane, and we will continue to welcome quality submissions that explore the broad range of humanity on personal, political, spiritual, and social levels.

Johanna Stephens
Student Managing Editor
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THE EVE OF SPRING

Tia Lawson

Her legs were smooth
as Satan slithered between them,
opening, exposing her.
Sensual desire wet her lips
like Adam had never done.
She knelt,
sucking dry the evil
that hung far below him.
Leaves fell silently,
wanting to cover his desire
and her pointed perfections.
The browns, tans and greens fused,
camouflaging their wrongs,
deceiving the wildness.

Colored in crimson,
she shied from his gaze.
"Why me?" she whispered.
After all, she had only been
His second thought.
Vengeance tasted thick, salty and warm
as he licked clean her first purities.
Rising above, hissing,
ejecting creation's living venom.
Gasping for infantile air her body
lay stricken upon the fertile floor.
"Hallelujah!" she sang,
praising the scales that tingled inside her.

The ferns cradled their tired bodies,
while their arms embraced
in malice and deceit.

From the Tree of Knowledge
they plucked two figs.
The first,
for their own sustenance.
Then, the other,
with which to form her missing rib.
Now, molded from the sweet nectar of raw fruit,
Eden's clay and Adam's bone.
She had the logic of man,
felt the frailty of the Earth,
and the sugar of desire deep within her.
Her body, no longer like man's,
stood looking to the tree instead of the sky.
Horror seethed in the eyes of her maker as
she finished the job He was unwilling to do.
A person should be whole. By whole I mean that they should have all the pieces that make up a good life — a mom, a dad, a house, perhaps a sibling, a pet maybe, a loving support system. I wouldn’t go so far as to say I never had that or I don’t have everything together because I did. I was whole. I had a mom, a dad, a house, a brother, a dog, a loving support system. What happened?

An elephant moved into our living room.

If I had to give it a description, I imagine it would be hot pink and sit on the sofa eating chips, drinking Diet Coke and watching Oprah all day because, well, it’s an elephant and it can do whatever it wants I suppose.

I might not have noticed the elephant had it not had such a firm grip on my father, who didn’t care much about the whole thing in the first place. He was far more concerned with the elephant, which was second only to his concern (or lack thereof) for himself.

A part of me is missing because the elephant took my father. I used to think if I had my father, I would be whole. Come to realize, things lost to elephants don’t come back so easy.

Dec. 26th, 1995 – ±11:45pm

I don’t remember what I was dreaming about, but I do remember being woken up. My mother touched me gently on my shoulder with a warm hand and shook me, telling me to get up.

Being woken up in the middle of the night usually merited one of two things — either the house was on fire or it wasn’t as late as I thought. I opened my eyes slowly and stared into the blurry image of the couch and blankets I wrapped around myself to keep warm. My mother’s voice from somewhere over my head was telling my brother to get up. When I asked why, she said that we had to go, to get our shoes and grab a coat. I sat up slowly and stretched and asked where we were going.

My mother repeated her request for us to put on shoes and a coat. It was only then that I remember registering something was wrong.

I sit on a big leather loveseat, my hands folded neatly in my lap, back straight. It is summer and hot outside, so logically I’m wearing shorts. The only problem with this is that my bare legs are sticking to the couch. I’m very uncomfortable. I decide that I hate leather.

The woman sitting across from me looks old enough to be my grandmother. She’s wearing some calico print dress, big old person glasses, and clunky old person shoes. Her graying hair is perched on the back of her head in a bun. It looks a lot like a little gray ball Velcroed to her head. She bites her lip, nods, scribbles something on her clipboard, and looks up at me smiling. It’s one of those smiles that suggests that she understands me and urges me to continue. I play with my flip flop and say nothing. I decide that I hate her.

“Miranda?”

She’s not sure if I’m paying attention to her or just playing with my shoe. I look up, but continue to play with the shoe.

“How does that make you feel?”

I’m pretty fucking sure I’ve spent the last fifteen minutes telling her how I feel, but I don’t say that. Instead I continue my thought from where I left off after she started smiling, nodding, and scribbling.

“I just don’t understand. I wish things were the same as before.”

Bites lip, nods, scribbles, smiles.

“The same as before?”

“Like, I want my family to be together again. But I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

More biting, nodding, scribbling, and smiling.

“How does that make you feel?”

Clearly, she doesn’t get it at all.

After the counseling appointment, we find our car parked outside under a shade tree at the curb. My mother is trying to give my brother a hug, but he just stands there and looks sad. In the car she tells us that this is going to help us. It
didn't help her and daddy, so how is it supposed to work for us? I decide that I hate therapy. A lot.

We stopped going to that therapist at the end of the summer. I think either she got too expensive, we ran out of money, or mom got to the point where she was okay. I think it was the former. Either way, I didn't have to see Velcro bun again, which made me happy.

Dec. 26th, 1995 – ±12am

Climbing carefully into mom's 1985 Toyota Corolla, she puts the car in neutral and turns the key. We sit in the backseat and say nothing. The car is like a tomb as mom pulls out of the driveway. Something is wrong, but we sit silently and let mommy drive. I think it was on our way there and not back or the next morning that she told us what was going on, what was wrong. Mommy had gotten a phone call from the police, saying we have to come pick up daddy. A nice lady had taken away his keys because he tried to drive home drunk. I remember realizing that perhaps this was why he was never around. He was drinking. I could hear my mother crying in the front seat. We told her it was okay and she said nothing. She wiped away her tears and kept driving.

Two years later I find myself in another counseling office. This time my counselor is Mr. Magoo. Not really, but he sure looks like it. He is a small man with wispy brown hair, balding, with a large mustache, large glasses, and large teeth. He is smiling at me like an idiot and I really wish he would stop. It's not an understanding smile, it's more of a cartoonish smile. It is freaking me out.

“So, how are you feeling today?”
“I feel kinda shitty.”
“I'm okay. How are you?”
“If I say anything other than okay, I have to explain myself, I learned quickly. I lie, and I'm okay with that.
“Just okay?”
“Crap. He caught me.
“Yeah, I'm kind of tired. I had lots of homework to do and soccer practice is long.”

He smiles his stupid cartoon smile at me and props his chin on his hand.

“Tell me about school.”

I did this two days ago. Not a whole lot has changed in two days. Everyone still thinks I'm psychotic and my teachers are trying too hard to understand why I'm so stubborn. Probably the only thing that has changed is that I am two days older than last time.

“The same. I go, I sit in class. During recess I do some homework. At the end of the day I go home.”

He sits up and scribbles something on his clipboard and stops smiling. Finally. He looks back up at me and strokes his mustache. After a moment he sets the clipboard on the table behind him and scoots in his wheelie chair over to a filing cabinet. I can hear him shuffling papers for a few minutes before he pulls out a piece of paper, turns around, scoots back over, and hands it to me. The paper has a picture of a sad bird in a cage with two bars through which it was peering. He folded his arms on his knees and looked at me looking at the picture.

“What do you think this means?”

I look intently at the picture for a few minutes, thinking, letting it tell me that I feel the same as the bird - illogically trapped.

“It means that there are many opportunities for freedom, but we don't see them. We only see the things that hold us back.”

He smiles at me kindly and nods.

“Do you think you're like that?”

“Yes,” I acknowledge slowly, “I am.”

He smiles his cartoon smile at me. I really wish he would stop.

Dec. 26th, 1995 – ±12:15am

We pull into a strip mall in front of a place where we often get pizza. I like this particular pizza place because it is cheap and the crust is the right thickness. Sometimes they serve this pizza for hot lunch at school. There are some cars here and there and there are people milling around probably wondering what's going on. Flashing lights are producing a bright glare in
the rearview mirror as mom gets out of the car. I look over at my brother. He is probably just about as scared as me. We can't see what is going on because of where mom parked. So all we can do is sit and wait in silence.

I would often sit in my room, staring up at the ceiling, music blaring, door closed, and feel like I was losing it. It was the only way for me to be at peace, knowing there were people out there who felt me, knew me, and spoke to me through flat, 5mm cylinders of plastic and years of technological development. This drove my mother crazy. She would come in to the room, often angry and without knocking, and tell me to either turn the music down or leave the door open. I didn't want her to know what I was listening to, so I turned it down and kept my door closed. I had developed a weird security from having my door closed. It blocked out things I didn't want to deal with, particularly everybody and everything. The only thing that felt right in my life was my alone time, which considering my fractured mental state, was somewhat dangerous. It was the only time I could put down my happy façade and feel truly torn up. One song stopped and another began.

I never thought I'd die alone
I laughed the loudest, who'd have known?
I had heard that there are signs, just like for every other malady out there, but true to form, I was in denial that something was wrong. Only I was allowed to know what I was thinking, about the thoughts going through my head. Only I was allowed to even feel this way about my life, about how fractured it was. I'm too depressed to go on
You'll be sorry when I'm gone
And all at once, I had the answer to my problem.

Dec. 26th, 1995 – ±12:30am

After a very long time (or what felt like a very long time), my parents came back to the car. My mother looked sad and angry; my father looked indifferent, like he didn't know why she was so mad. They were looks I became very familiar with over the next year, looks that I was already vaguely familiar with. Mom started the car and carefully pulled out of the parking lot. No one said anything on the ride home. I stared out the window and refused to look at my father. I remember beginning to feel very angry, the start of a tumor of hate that would grow and shrink and grow and shrink unconsciously as I grew older. How could he?! I thought, how dare he ruin this day. It was so perfect, and now everything was ruined. I didn't understand how something that started out wonderful could get so bad. I stared silently out the window as we passed cars and buildings in a kaleidoscope of neon and sulfur. I vaguely remember wanting to cry, but held back. What I do remember about the ride home that night was that it was then that I decided I hated Christmas. I was nine and my brother was five.

I feel very idiotic and selfish. Mom is staring at me with tear-stained eyes. My poor mother. First she had to put up with her mother, then my father, then her mother again, and now me. I'm such a horrible person. I can't deal with my own pain and fear properly and I hurt people as a result. I think I might have thought about being nice to her, but I was still too mad to think clearly. My mother continues to stare at me and cry. The only other time she was this mad...well, I don't know. Maybe she's never been this mad.

"How could you do this? Do you have any idea how selfish you are?!"
"I'm sorry!"
"People love you and care about you, why would you do that?"

At this point I might have suggested that it is because I didn't ask to be plucked up from my happy misery and transferred to my own personal hell. Wisely, I did not.

"I know you don't want to be here, but that isn't the answer."
"I'm sorry, mommy," I whisper.
"Your brother has come to me crying telling me 'I'm worried about Miranda.' Does that not mean anything to you?"

I say nothing for a moment as I recall one evening when my mom and brother had come to pick me up from Bible study. I had gotten into the car and turned around to say something to
my brother and saw that he was crying. I remember laughing and making a comment about not letting our grandparents get him down after asking him what was up and getting no response. Everything is dawning on me, but it feels somehow violent. Maybe it’s because mom is yelling at me.

“Yes, it does! I said I was sorry!”

“You’re not showing me that you’re sorry!”

“Yes, I am! Mom, I’m sorry! I’m so, so sorry!”

It was the first in a long series of fights that we would have regarding what it was I was thinking or not thinking about my apparent selfishness. Part of it was I was thirteen; part of it was I really was being selfish. Years later, she gets on my case for the opposite reason – now I’m too generous and I need a job.

“You’ve broken my trust. You’re grounded until you can earn it back!”

“Mom, I’m sorry! I’m really, really sorry!”

“Then you can show me by earning my trust back. No more sitting in your room. You have no privacy until I feel you can earn it back.”

She was true to her word. For the next three weeks, I was watched constantly. After a month, I was able to sleep in my own bed again. The next day, I was on permanent suspension from school. Six weeks later, my fate was to be decided.

Dec. 26th, 1995 – ±1am

I don’t remember coming home. I don’t remember getting out of the car and crawling into my bed. I don’t remember if my parents fought after they knew my brother and I were asleep. I don’t remember if I stayed awake staring at my ceiling before I fell asleep. I do vaguely remember waking up the next morning. The sun shone in through my window and made a grid on the floor where it came through the screen, a metaphorical cage that I had not realized was there. I might have stared at it for a while before rolling over and staring at the wall. The silence in the house was unnerving. Even today, I still dread silence in the house. Silence is more than an absence of noise; for me, it is an absence of life, of feeling, of emotion. It plays with your head, telling you that there are things, thoughts, and voices that are all around you and yet not there at all. Silence disturbs me. I decide I hate silence.

Waiting is hard. Waiting for someone else to decide your fate is even harder. Which is what I was doing – waiting for my fate to be decided. Waiting in a cushy office chair staring behind the main office desk out beyond the little teller windows in the wall into the silence of what I was hoping was a second chance. I shifted my gaze to my neatly folded hands on my lap, framed by my denim pants. I was grown up and helpless at the same time. A kindly lady walked past and smiled sweetly at me. I smiled back and returned to my hands. My hands, my hands, my hands. Who knew that so much pain could be inflicted with two such delicate hands as mine? Bored with my hands, I looked back down the hallway where my mother had disappeared. A door opened halfway down the hall and I returned quickly to my position staring out the little teller windows on the opposite wall. I turned as my mother appeared beside me.

“They’re going to let you in,” she said smiling. I smiled back, stood up, and hugged her.

“Promise me you won’t do that ever again.”

“Yes mommy. I promise.”

She hugged me again and kissed me goodbye. A tall, clean-shaven man had appeared and ushered me back down the hall to the counselor’s office. A tiny woman with a bob and large front teeth smiled kindly at me as I entered.

“We’re glad to have you with us, Miranda,” she said beginning to pull out papers with schedules. I paused for a moment. I didn’t want to be Miranda anymore. I wanted to start over, without Miranda, without thinking about all the things I’d done.

“Ana,” I said. “I’d like to be called Ana.”

She smiled and nodded. It was my first day of eighth grade.

April, 1997

I remember hating, or at the very least not liking elementary school. I had been in the same class since kindergarten and it seemed to me that most of the people in my class were
particularly wishy-washy, especially when it came to me. I was alone a lot because most of the friends I had didn't like me or I didn't like them. A lot of the boys saw me as a crybaby and so did the girls; the difference between the comments wasn't necessarily who was saying it, but what they were saying. One boy would call me a crybaby all the time no matter the occasion, causing me to cry and when the girls saw me crying they would make snide remarks about how 'big girls don't cry' and then walk away murmuring to themselves. Strangely enough, I admired these girls and wanted to do anything to be like them, to be pretty and popular, to be friends with all the 'right' people and stop being a crybaby. More than anything, I wanted to fit in. But, me being me, it was kind of unlikely. More often than not, I would come home from school completely miserable and not want to go back. Regardless, I still got up every morning and went to school convincing myself that today would be better, different, but knowing it was most likely going to be the same. I remember coming home from a particularly horrible day at school and my mother told me we were leaving. Leaving where and where were we going, I asked. Leaving here and going to live with your grandparents, she said. I don't remember if I yelled or just stood there. It will be better, she said soothingly. As miserable as I was, I was mad. I didn't want to go, and I let her know it.

I joined the band for three reasons: first, I played an instrument; second, it gave me something to do with my time; third, I enjoyed it. Band was a peak in my life – from band I got a life and I got friends, both of which I embraced with open arms. Though we had our disagreements on occasion, everything always worked out for the best. I remember the trip we took to Disneyland in the spring for Magic Music Days. We went and spent the whole day in the park and then, later we went back to the buses, changed into our uniforms, and marched down Main Street playing a college fight song chosen by the director that we had memorized for the parade. After we were done playing, we changed out of our uniforms and got back on the buses to go home. I remember sitting on the charter bus, holding a Coke, sweating like crazy, and smiling as I stared out the window reflecting on the day. A girlfriend turned around in her seat in front of me and looked down at me.

“Well?” she asked, folding her arms on top of the seat. I looked up at her. “It's been a good day.” I smiled. And I remember thinking, for the first time in a long time, everything is wonderful now.
THE BODY FACTORY

Donnie Drobny

There is a factory of whitewashed stone
That life and death both call home
With broken windows and dark smoke stacks
Towering above rusted railroad tracks.
A sign outside, under dirt and grime,
Declares ‘Body Factory’ along with the time
Which forever stands at 12 O’clock.
Now walk through the door, grab a white smock
And lets take a tour and finally see
The place that made you, the place that made me.

Here look, inside each of these bins
See the arms and legs, wrists to shins.
Inside small wooden crates, lined up in rows
Are thousands of teensy tiny little toes
And here are the heads and there are the rears
Here is the blood and in here lay the tears
In each wooden box and every basket
Lay something belonging soon to the casket
From outsides like hair or your fingernails
To the parts we don’t see like slimy entrails
Yet in this warehouse of body parts
You will not find a carton of hearts

Hearts are installed much deeper inside
After the mind and with much more pride
But here we can see the belts and chutes
Where bodies are assembled with skintight suits
Robotic arms placing heads
Tying them on with tendon threads
Torsos twisting to fit in hips
And tiny pumps inflating lips
Finally filled with every part
Except the programmed brain and holy heart.

Next we have, with newly straightened spines
Dozens of finished bodies neatly in lines
And on each face, behind every eye
Not a single great thought or despondent sigh.
These bodies are perfect in every way
Without human consciousness to lead them astray
The next step is installing the mind
Some naturally crude still others refined
But each placed with precision and care
And covered with varying degrees of hair

In this room, white walled and sterile
They slowly remove all instincts feral
And add instead the proper response to
Ordinary questions like “how do you do?”
Each will respond in their own way
But each will have the same thing to say
“I’m well, and you?”
And each time it will be only partially true
For every mind is programmed alike
Not to truly say what they feel like

But here, finally, is the holy room
The room in which we can only assume
Holds the installation of the final part
Where inside the chest they place the heart
The first beat starts the whole machine
And each succeeding one pounds soft and clean
Declaring life, and the certainty of death
And forcing the body to take its primary breath
Without this final piece, which feels love and pain
A mere shell this body will remain.
DAILY EVENINGS

Samuel Irving

Fantasies of my life
With the freedom to steps
no longer crooked
As my blinded eyes
overshadow the standards of everyday,
drawn in a self reflection
relived in nightly spasms
and monthly flare ups
of needles scorching the tears
of a present past
Becoming the lines between
what I truly feel
as myself, in a condition that invades my body.

However I no longer
allow society to place badges
of special treatment on my chest
while placing kick
me signs on my back
Because I am a survivor
of daily struggle
and a child of promise.
For I seek not
to befriend mistaken ignorance
of “Can I help you with that?”
or
“Do you want me to read this for you?”

Because I am a descendant
of God’s destiny
and with every spasm
my lips can take,
every thing that
my eyes cease to see,
incorporated in my
dragging left sided years.
Just believe that my pain
exist beyond this page
and my soul rests
In God’s hands.
HOW TO BE ME

Jeremy Richards

overjoyed (in love)
happy (white Dove)
life (nice and slow)
me (Jeremiah Moe)

skin,
i am in.

thrift store (coats)
honey bunches (of oats)
ing (in nose)
moccasins (on toes)

me,
deep within.

best friend (red)
worst enemy (bed)
content (life)
seeking (wife)

skin,
i am in.

short (size)
insecurity (lies)
hair (on chin)
ever (fitting in)

me,
deep within.
eve(ill)

Jess Bouchard

you were the eve i couldn't resist,
as you taunted me with the apple that formed you.
half eaten and exposed, you

left poison on my lips (in the form of pity)

-- dripping.

only to ask me to stay
and be the better woman.

i covered your core
and made you ripe,
-- now,

i'm too bitter for taste,
a crumbling woman
with no seeds to plant.

---

THERE'S A YETI IN MY BATHROOM

Daniel Cole

There is a yeti in my bathroom
Yeknom monkey if you will
And I do not dare disturb it
For it might decide to kill

But I'll creep up e'er so gently
Stretching light through open door
Till its powder heavy body
Dilutes the light spoke of before

And I'll place a line of berries
As to draw the phenom out
Out into the open, where it's me and him no doubt

And we'll stand there waist to face
Exploring evolution's theme
Before conclusion makes us cronies
Cue the Brady family scene
"There’s a corpse on your floor," I said.
"Yes."
There was. Where Dio’s floor was usually occupied by a cheap, heavily-worn green rug, there was now a cheap, heavily-worn green rug with a corpse on top of it. The body was well-dressed in the classically-homeless sense, a man with what was once a nice haircut now grown haphazardly long, in what was once a sharp, gray suit, now ragged and torn. He was lying face down on the rug, in that super-still, non-breathing way that normally suggested that he’d leap up, screaming, “Surprise!” But also in that rigid, unmoving stillness that suggested there were no more surprises left. There was no blood that I could see, but the rug would make it pretty difficult to spot anyways. I was, instead, focused on Dio, who sat in his easy chair, looking anything but easy; ass perched on the edge of it, back leaned forward, elbows resting heavily against his knees, his fingers entwined together and supporting his chin, covering his mouth. “Why is he there?” I asked.

“That’s where it fell.”
“T’ll realize that, Dio. Did you kill him?”
Dio sighed, turning emerald eyes to meet mine. There was a disquiet in them, yeah, but he didn’t look quite as bothered as I imagine I would be in the same situation. “No,” he said. “Well, yes. This time, at least.”

A ragged sigh escaped my lungs, and I leaned against the doorframe behind me. I closed my eyes. I pinched the bridge of my nose. It was late, and Dio had called me over. Said it was important. Here I thought he’d gotten his hands on a Playstation 3. Those things are running a thousand dollars on E-Bay, you know. Instead, I come in to find a corpse on his rug. That rug cost a lot less than a Playstation 3. I felt deceived. Betrayed. Confused. Mostly confused; “What the hell do you mean, ‘This time?’” I asked.

“Well, I mean, it was dead before I killed it. I guess that doesn’t sound right. It was dead. Then it wasn’t. So I killed it. Again. Re-killed it.” Dio shrugged, returning his eyes to the body. Here he was, having ended a life, and he sat in his chair, barely disturbed. If it wasn’t such a big deal, did he really need to have woken me up?

“Like a zombie, then. Actually, exactly that. A zombie, then,” I said, looking at the body. It didn’t look particularly pale.

“Yes,” Dio replied.
“How’d you kill him?”
“I strangled it,” he said.
I let a silence drop over the room, but Dio didn’t seem to notice. I felt like my eyes should be burning through his temple, but I couldn’t smell burning hair. Mostly just whatever that spicy-wood scent Dio’s air-freshener gave off. “Dio. You can only kill zombies by destroying the brain. That guy’s head is completely intact. You don’t kill zombies by strangulation. That’s why they’re zombies. Haven’t you ever seen a single movie?”

“Well, I strangled it. Now it’s dead. And George Romero is a terrible director.”

I wasn’t getting into this discussion again. Dio knows that I love zombie movies, and he wouldn’t insult George Romero, legendary director of Night of the Living Dead, if he wasn’t trying to get at my temper. “Whatever, man,” I said. “Whatever. Look, is there something you really needed me for? I have finals tomorrow, and it is way – WAY – too early.”

“This isn’t big? I killed a zombie. You don’t see that every day.”

“That’s not a zombie, you dolt. That’s a person. I do see them every day.” I rolled my eyes. “I watched Die-Hard last night. You didn’t even shoot him, or throw him off the top story of a skyscraper, or blow him up. Weak.” I checked my cell for the time. Three-thirty. I had work in four and a half hours. I imagined this body had to be taken care of sometime before class tomorrow, or it’d never get done. Dio was like that. “So are we going to move him, or get rid of him, or what?”

Dio shrugged, looking back up at me, and smiling for the first time of the night. “I guess we can just roll it up, kinda jerry-rig it into something manageable. If we can just get
it out of the way for now, I can get it done properly tomorrow morning.”

It didn’t take that long. The body was pretty heavy for its size, but the two of us managed to roll it up into a bundle of tattered-green rug, and set it upright in the corner. I wiped my hands of imaginary dust; I always saw people on TV do that whenever they finished with some task. I dunno, it just felt right.

“How’d you know he was dead... before. Not dead. Undead. How did you know, anyways?”

“It was actually like the movies like that,” Dio said. “You know. ‘Braaaaaaains.’ Awkward shuffle. Uncoordinated grabs for my body, tried to bite my head. Can the human jaw even break a skull? I don’t think so. Seems like natural selection would kill off the zombies pretty quick that way. Hey, did we have Art homework?”

“I don’t think so,” I said. “Don’t worry about it. Just get to bed, and take care of it in the morning.”

Dio sighed, sinking back into his chair. “Like I don’t have enough to do in the morning,” he said. “I always feel like putting stuff off leaves the night with an unsatisfying end. Like it’s incomplete.”

“Me too,” I replied. “But what can you do? Some things just don’t wrap up nice and neat. Get some rest; I’m going back to my room.” I flicked off the light-switch by the door.

“Dude,” Dio said, before I slipped out completely. “Do zombies really need their brain destroyed to be killed?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Every film I’ve seen, they do.”


“Goodnight,” I said, and left.

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**MAKING LOVE TO GOD II**

**Greg Harris**

“How do we make love to God?”

St. Teresa of Avila

I would unpack the sorrows of my heart
Assigning each a colored glass shard.
A soldering iron would fuse the parts
Into a whole pane to take outside.

Stripping naked and holding the glass to light
I watch the colors play across my flesh
The yellow humiliations and purple slights
The blue disappointments and charcoal fears.

Feeling their warmth at the deep core
My heart swells and thrusts into love.
The heat creates a molten, golden dove
Who holds my life to her breast and soars.
I am Scarlet's eyes, glaring with a smiling vengeance. I watch as the boy paces in front of me, avoiding contact. The ears catch something in the way of an apology, but my diagnosis is different. He avoids me, constantly fidgets, and takes frequent glances at the door or his knockoff Rolex. He's nervous and in a hurry. Not sincere.

I am Scarlet's flaming ears. Insults are burning. Scalding even. I hear the boy's fast paced footsteps on the wooden floor. I hear a muttered apology. I almost missed it as a person ignores the wind. “It was years ago,” he finally says. “The pills were like an addiction. Like whiskey to an Irishman.” The mouth spouts something about that being a racial stereotype and that the boy needs to grow up. He's got bigger problems than stereotypes. His words attempt the form of apology, but his bland attitude, monosyllabic word choice, and monotonous expression don't fit the formula. Insincerity and excuses.

I am Scarlet's unbound lips. Scarlet's personal Pandora. I hurl insults like the fabled box hurled evil spirits into the boy's closed ears. I do not care if he doesn't hear. It's my job to speak. I tell him that his excuses are moot and that if he feels as bad about the “other” as he says, then perhaps he should go back to the pills. No remorse. My open box reveals no conscience.

I am Scarlet's broken heart. The bull's-eye. Scarlet's giant neon-red target. The boy's words hit like bullets through gun range practice paper. I am Scarlet's conscience? Surely I didn't mean the things emerging from my dark depths and bottom corners! But I am broken and the box is open. Words spilling out as if speaking were to go out of fashion tomorrow. I must have meant them. Perhaps I am not conscience after all. Maybe it broke along with the box fasteners.

I am Scarlet's clenching fists. Her seething rage. He walks away with no tears. He's devoid of all emotion. Like a robot, obsessed with Ikea furniture and a job that pays for more useless contraptions and cable that rots the brain faster than drugs. Did I really mean so little? Was I comparable to a little red pill? I thirst for blood and for hitting bone beneath a miniscule layer of flesh. He deserved it. But do human robots' bones turn to metal if they care too little about acting human?

I am Scarlet's weeping regret. I am the salty tears that leave a residue like hollow trails of sorrow through a forest of willow trees as I fall. Perhaps I am Scarlet's conscience.
BACK TO LIFE

Samuel Irving

Inhabited by the elements
Surrounding me and the
Trials of everyday
Where misery is my guide
As I stand as one third of the man I used to be
And one fourth of the man I could be
Marking a new existence
In the cracked concrete of
A past life once held

Walking through the clouds
Of smoke, my head escapes
With tunnel visions
Of a street dream being chased
In the sewer aromas, painting
Subliminal pictures of fallen
Soldiers, tumbling like dice games
Attempting to reach the point of
Stability in an unstable situation
Where abstraction leads to
Utter understanding, but
Unjust overstandments are
Restrained to the tenements
As testimonials

My reality is
Third world treatment in a
First world country, while brick
Covered walls cancel dreams
And shorten life spans, resistance
To change is so obscure and
Acceptance to the common
Is so often found.

In this chess game
Where the skies are the
Color of gun powder, the notion
Of departure is like surrender,
And the survival instincts are sharpened

I continually retrace
My beginnings in the
Dawn of a new era,
As the page bears witness.
I miss it. I miss the cold morning air. I miss friends. I miss laughing. I miss the adrenaline rush. I miss the nervous feeling. I miss community. I miss hiking. I miss building. I miss floating. I even miss the pain.

So many memories come to mind when I think about it. I remember how it wasn't a part of my life; it was my life. It was everything I did. When my friends and I weren't actually doing it, we were talking about it, we were watching it on TV, we were dreaming about it, we were anticipating it. We hated summer but without the summer we would have taken it for granted. We persevered through summer and somehow made it through fall. Then it happened: the first snow.

The first snow. It covered everything and made everything beautiful. Somehow it soothed us and tormented us at the same time. The first snow told us that it was so close, but it wasn't there yet. The first snow was to us what the first drink is to an alcoholic. We were no longer ourselves, we were obsessed. We watched the news more than our parents, just to see the weather report. Our longing grew as the snow accumulated. With each new snowfall we slept less and daydreamed more. Our grades declined; our nights were spent watching the videos and reading the magazines. We hurried home after school to pull out old rails and benches. This curbed our hunger for a little while but the satisfaction was only temporary, our appetites were insatiable. We kept waiting in agony. It seemed the day would never come until suddenly it was there in front of us, like a home-cooked meal set in front of a starving teenager.

We hardly slept the night before. We stayed up late getting everything ready. We packed the new gear that we had bought three months earlier, and set it by the door. We woke up early in the morning from dreams of gliding, floating, and weaving. We skipped school.

Wide smiles accompanied excited eyes as we began our ascent up the windy road. Our blood was already pumping, our adrenaline already rushing. We blasted our music and laughed about old times.

Then we were there. We turned right, through the large entrance, smiling mockingly at the open gates that had been closed all summer, holding us back. We unloaded and hurried up the stairs to the lodge. Our boots were on in a matter of minutes and then we were outside again. The chilly air bit at our noses while big puffy snowflakes danced around us. We buried our faces in our soft coats and strapped our front foot in. A few minutes of waiting in line, then we were on the lift. When we got to the top, we drifted off the chair and looked at the sight that surrounded us. Through the heavy snow we could see our playground. Trees, moguls, chutes and Cat trails called to us, begging us to come and play. We strapped our back foot in and took our first bite.

We cut through the untouched powder and shot off of small ledges. We weaved through the trees as snow flew in our faces, its freezing sting the most comforting sensation we had experienced in months. We were not rusty; it felt like just yesterday we were there, on the very same run. It was as if there had been no time between then and the closing day of the previous season. Our aching legs were the only reminder of summer.

Still, we were not satisfied; the meal was good but we were not yet full. We were still waiting for dessert, and just like all teenagers, we had saved a lot of room for dessert. But we had to wait. There was not enough snow yet but soon we would be indulging in the most delicious morsels of all.

The day finally came when a buffet of tabletops, rails, and quarter pipes greeted our anxious eyes. There was finally enough snow to build the snowboard park. The morning sun glintened off the shiny rails and cascaded over the mountainous tabletops. Aaaaah, the tabletops, this was my delicacy of choice. The others could have all the rails they wanted, but leave me the tabletops. The large jumps looked more like mountains than anything else. The steep run in shot up the jump and ended with an abrupt lip, then there was the flat middle space, followed by the gentle landing. From the side the jump looked similar to a table, which is where it got its name.
As I raced towards the gigantic hill in front of me I said a little prayer, just like I always did. It was my ritual; it calmed me down. I was nervous, as I should have been, but more than that, I was excited. How would it end? Would I land the trick? Would it look good or would it be sloppy? Would I crash? Would I hurt myself? I could hear the snow crunching under my board and feel the air rushing by my face. I started the ascent and the next thing I knew I was airborne, flying, no floating, through the air. I may have only been there for a few seconds but it seemed like an eternity. I grabbed “indie” (grabbed the middle of the board with my back hand) as I spun a 540 (one and a half rotations), soaring over the flat tabletop. I “stomped” my landing as I finished my last rotation and rode away smoothly. There is no way to describe that feeling. One cannot explain the sensation to someone who has never experienced it because there is nothing like it in all the world. All I can say is that I love dessert.

Those days are now gone and I miss them. I live in Portland, with Mount Hood only an hour away and Bachelor within a three-hour drive, but they are only teasing me. I look at them like a homeless child looks at a chocolate cake behind the bakery shop window. School, work, and a lack of money have pulled me away from the life I love so much. They have reduced me to a starving college student who dreams of the days when he used to be well fed.
Susan drew a handful of change from a dish on the counter. A little glass boat whose specific purpose she forgot and instead stored coins in. Maybe a boyfriend gave it to her. Or her mother. Or his mother, a boyfriend’s mother. Clinking. Nothing exact, just enough to get a load done.

Walking down the boulevard, her knuckles whitened wrapped around the drawstring of the duffel bag. The lumpy mountain range of dirty things she had worn throughout the week. To work. To bed. Out. If she went out. To a bar, a movie, then back home. It had been worn whether or not it came in contact with any germ of dirt. Whether or not her use of it could constitute real usage. Wouldn’t some amount of dust be drawn to it even if all it did were hang in the closet forever?

Perhaps grease molecules wafting in from the kitchen, or the sticky seam of a spider web in the corner of the bedroom would find its way onto the collar. Perched like an empty, one hundred percent cotton crucifixion.

Some people had plastic coverings. She hated what she had on. A beige parachute blouse, which made her look ten pounds heavier. She did her best to hide it but what could her best do to hide it? As if for the two blocks from her building to the Laundromat all eyes were on her.

Her cheeks reddened, embarrassed by her thoughts, embarrassed about why she’d bought the top in the first place. How obviously oversized it was. That she liked the design, but wanted a size smaller. Then again, why it remained, week in week out, the only clean article of clothing was because she liked the design, but it was too big. Winning the chance to be seen by default.

Inside the Laundromat she found a machine near the back.

If she gained ten pounds, would she have a whole, under-sized, laundry wardrobe?

Who had the money to buy a whole new regular wardrobe?

She worked on Wednesday. Thursday was her laundry day. If she switched shifts with Amanda, if Amanda took her tables on Wednesday, Wednesday could become her new laundry day. A day earlier. A day with one fresh option remaining. Was her arithmetic right?

If she kept the small wardrobe she most assuredly would get better tips from the male customers. But she would have to gain ten pounds to fit into her tight, skimpy, tip-conjuring clothes. Then what would the men see? A bulky midriff is what they would see, Susan said, as she undid the duffel bag.

A milk-eyed old man sat in the seat beside where she heaved her bag.

If her stomach grew fat, would her rear end join in, too? In ten pounds time.

In ten pounds Standard Time.

A pillar of magazines rose from the man’s lap. Currently he flipped the page of a food magazine. Something of a gourmet variety. Airbrushed spreads. Desserts on one side, sweetening the paper, recipes for the pictorial cakes on the opposite. The results, then the ingredients.

Opening her detergent, she noticed the man smile hungrily. At the layers of raspberry and whipped cream? At finding out that underneath the bronze rum soaked bun, under its skin, were pecans. Finding out there were pecans from the ingredients side. The written recipes, she wondered? He was salivating for a word: pecan?

Behind him a washer of whites spun. So apparitional.

Susan dropped the coins in the machine and sat. Her eyes wandered. She hadn’t drooled, but she had eaten breakfast. She’d been to the café on her day off. This morning. Thursday morning. She had been by; she left a book she was reading on break. She saw Amanda and could do it. Could do it with
Amanda. Switch.  
But Amanda, could Amanda switch? When did she do laundry? Or did she have dance lessons, or did she need to visit the grocery market? Did she need to spend her time in some way, that day, or all those days for an extensive time into the future?  
Did she owe her time to something? What wanted her so badly?  
She'd been reading a good book, she thought, as good as the last, and better than the one before that. It wasn't in her purse today. Someone had stolen her paperback. A customer, probably. Typical waitress phenomenon. Her eyes roamed, looking for a magazine to read.  
Amanda, did she kill time in the things she had to do, or not do? On Thursdays. Possibly.  
Filling it, or being filled?  
Susan's grandmother called her inquisitive as a child, in church, at the public pool, everywhere. She was the little devil in the details.  
Do you have to have a reason for everything? she was asked.  
There was usually a selection of magazines brought by people, then abandoned. Address tags were still on them. If time were cyclical, if things came round again, August 1997 could come again, and it could be delivered once more.  
Sheila Sharpe's subscription, alive and kicking, to Sheila Sharpe's surprise.  
Sheila Sharpe's subscription ten times fast.  
These articles would be fresh again.  
Today Marks Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of Marilyn Monroe's Death. It's been thirty-five years, our sweet honey-breathed Norma Jeane, but we still remember her rays of seduction cast across the silver screen in roles like *The Seven Year Itch* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*  
See photo of Monroe at twenty-one years old on Zuma beach in a pearly white two-piece bathing suit. A young goddess in the making. Remaking. Remembering.  
Summer Heat Hits Record Heights. We've checked the records, she thought.  
Page Twelve: Text Book Shortage on College Campuses, *La Partie Deux.*  
Go Back: Napoleon crossing the Rubicon, Rubicon, Rubicon.  
Encore, Encore, Encore! If it reciprocated in fluent French. Or Russian, could be in Russian.  
You could think second thoughts four times, Susan teased, teased herself.  
Machine lids and wire baskets were bare. No refugee magazines. The old man had caroused them all into a nest at the gates of his tuning knee caps. He worked at them with specious fingertips and attentive solitude.  
Susan thought, if she could have just one. I and the Roman numeral I at the same instant on the gray tether of her frontal lobe, fighting like gladiators.  
Instead, she stood and checked her machine, determined to wait the old-fashioned way. Quickly her thoughts jumped to her pockets. Thinking her thoughts jumping to her pockets, clinging to the hemmed ledge. Call for help from the keys inside. The lint. Save me! If there was anything there -- a rewrapped wad of gum or bill receipt -- she could mull over idly as if it were her whole world.  
No luck, though.  
No temporary whole world.  
The morning was golden which reminded her of her sister. Last week, her sister, a stenographer in Hollywood, invited her to stay with her and her husband in California. The letter named a slew of beaches perfect this time of year.  
Five years ago, she went swimming, not since then, now. At the Radisson hotel the urge had suddenly struck. She was with her sister and her friend, Tom. They were not guests. They were visiting a cemetery across the freeway. The hotel was new. It was Susan's grandfather, hers and her sister's. The grave. Tom drove. And they all swam, somehow. Unregistered.  
Nice. Succinctly cool and ordained, she told her sister. They built a hotel here, can you believe it? A pool. I am in a pool, six feet underwater. You could use histronics to whatever
nth degree your heart desired.

There are also orange groves. In the letter. Orange groves and movie stars and the family’s favorite restaurant on the shore, where the waves crashed on the windows while you ate. Sucking mussels. Like the young hipster boy eating a granola bar in front of his washing machine. He was thin, with no muscle muscles.

He should have muscles. He’s almost a young man.

The letter closed with gentle coaxing, “Keep your mind off of everything – your sister.”

Everything at the Center, where her father couldn’t remember he was there. Or boyfriends at separate Centers conversely trying to forget how they did what they did. Do it this way, they had counselors tell them. Works for me. I was you. I’ve been there. Susan hadn’t. She had sometimes gone to show support. But she wasn’t there in that there. It was a helpless there. She didn’t understand. She wasn’t sure how the psychology would affect them psychologically.

She saw people who had milestones and couldn’t get past those milestones.

Then there were those that disappeared like you’d think God would disappear. How social liberties might. They didn’t go to Centers and they didn’t have anything, yet, the boyfriends at least. Susan and them didn’t work out. There are rabbit holes for each one.

Her parents had their favorites and had suggestions, too.

Imbroglios of all colors.

How so? How so?

But.

The couple was fresh, vitriolic. Her sister and her husband Tom. A new Tom. Susan envied the healthy blood in their twin hearts.

She wasn’t going to visit Becca at all. The immediate rush of life’s many faculties is enough to cataclysmically close out all beauty and happiness with all beauty and happiness. Black it out. Too much on too much, you see, she thought.

You could be a pessimist and it plays out the same.

The thought was merely another thing on the list, she saw.

A young man coughed, he’d just come in five minutes ago and was coughing to get the old man’s attention. He wore an olive green corduroy jacket and faded jeans. It all seemed to fit him well enough. The old man, too, in his maroon vest and flannel undershirt.

Susan had seen the young man curse after pulling a pen from his breast pocket. He patted a second pocket and felt its flatness, then cursed. Was he an avid puzzle solver, from the newspaper puzzle solver section? At the back of the newspaper, the games people play. Sometimes they fold them for when they’re on the go, minus the news. The recipes without the lemon drizzled tarts. Oh, going in their pockets, Susan thought.

Gooing Marilyn Monroe’s controversial bow-out thirty-five years unresolved. The sugars have caramelized.

He didn’t have it in there. The man and his pen. Maybe it was work related work, general material expenditures or a client’s fax number on a scrap of yellow legal paper.

Wasn’t he in a Laundromat, though? Susan thought. Did he want to be reminded of work? Maybe he wanted to be reminded later, or, for later. His clothes were in the machine. He would make a direct line to the fax machine when he finished. Could he have wanted to be reminded of a game to play afterwards?

He was coughing at the old man, standing so close their boots nearly touched. Their feet looked like a dividing leather bridge.

The old man ignored him. His right leg reflexively lifted, guarding the tower of magazines he had acquired.

He was thumbing through a sculpture magazine. Modern Sculpture, read the cover. What kind of sculptures were people making today? Susan didn’t know today’s or yesterday’s. She knew a few from books or pictures. Sculptures were in-person things though, weren’t they? she asked herself. How would she know, she thought, she thought some art critic would judge her, she’s never stood before a real masterpiece. Only books and pictures.
California has world-renowned beaches. Rome is the place for in-person statues and mosques. Did the magazine detail any mosques? Cathedrals, she meant. All of Europe, really, she imagined. Travelers say that, people back from trips, at the restaurant.

You have to see it, sometime. Wednesdays are the best days, less busy. More radiant. Middle of the week. Susan can't Wednesday. Unless they talked with Amanda and formed a strong united front. Please. Don't tell me that, she wants to tell them, coquettishly with the usual traces of desperation. She likes to hear it. What else is there to hear?

The young man's fake coughing had turned into a full-fledged pardon.

Excuse me, he said. Would you excuse me?

The old man was awakened like melting snow. Excuse me? The old man said, still half-gloomily eyeing the magazine.

Yes, the young man said. His feet retreated and his hands clasped. Mind if I take one of these magazines. I'm about to go out of my mind with boredom, he said. His back was bent in anticipation, leaning for a copy. The top layer was a wedding magazine.

Mind if I shuffle them a bit, I'm not planning any weddings soon, the young man said.

No, sorry, the old man replied. He paused.

The young man's fingers wilted back.

Susan sat replying a hundred times more than either one did, inside her head. Her legs were crossed and toes were tapping. The young man's arms were crossed, squeezing sweat from his armpits.

Is he going to forget his work game amidst all of this? He'd be reminded with the solemn pen in his jacket, poking, scratching his nipple. Unless the pen wasn't necessary in the work game, if it was an outside tool. An object he could use without using up his work game. An away tool, away from performing and playing. Then would the pen have any significance? And if it was lost, or hung for a decade in a closet, hermetically sealed?

No, sorry, the old man said again. Time had returned to the same point. It was true, Susan thought, about time. It was a game in which she didn't need a pen.

I can't have one? The young man inquired. Then politely he said, there's no way you can read them all. There's no way you can either.

Did you bring them? The young man asked.

Were you loved twenty years ago, truly loved? Susan asked him. Did you wear down your will from decades of manual labor? How about a disappointing son? What did your son do that you can't forgive him? He's your son. She wanted to know what made him this specific old man in a Laundromat. She could supply all the answers she wanted without knowing a thing. Without even an essence. You could give life. Give it.

Asking him everything, every living question would only bring out an essence. Not knowledge. Would you tell me the truth? she asked.

Would I think it was the truth, she asked.

No, the man said. To the young man, no. He hadn't brought all the magazines. All the address tags were still on them. They belonged to people that weren't him, and who knows what else did, here. Belongings, belonging to other people. When August 1997 came around again they wouldn't be his. Don't ask him if he brought them all, she begged the young man. Too late, he asked. Next time it comes around she can beg beforehand. Still in her head. Time's vectors will let her in. Or he could ask sooner.

Let's split them. I just need one, the young man said.

No, the old man said. I can't.

Susan could understand that. She didn't know if she could do it, say, if it were a bowl of soup and she were starving. Or if it was old baby pictures of her and her sister playing with a dollhouse. She could understand the attachment and the need to have every morsel of it. Then, thought Susan, was the man starving for magazines? Did he birth them with a wife? Was he an editor? She didn't know if she could do it. Could we find a cure then give it up for hopefulness?

She also wanted to be a good human to other humans.

If it came around again then the story would
undoubtedly change. Or, the change would occur, but the result may not.

Susan pulled down the coin dish and carefully selected twelve quarters and five dimes. She could do that. Susan slapped the dish down and the glass shattered on the kitchen tile. On all fours, being cut by ghost bodies of glass, she swam in an ocean of shining coins.

But who knows if it came around again.

The old man was bunkered in. The vacuum sound of his clothes washing behind him muffled his words, made them incoherent. And if there were no clothes rolling around, soaping up, there would be words, but there would be no man, not here.

Would this happen on a pair of benches in the park? Is there a core place where this all happens, is all rehearsed? The Center where dad is, she thought. The place where her sister says you can forget about everything. Senseless death. Not immoral, Susan thought, but without empirical senses: death.

You don't feel it, you never felt, it's in you, you're in it, you don't know the depths, thank God and how terrible.

Come on, man, the young man said. He wasn't going to beat him, but I don't think, Susan thought, the old man is going to win either.

You can have it all when this wash is done, the old man said. Not long, the old man said. There was a moment of silence.

Crazy old bastard, the young man said. Jerk. He did not say it viciously. He said it and seemingly felt empty. He went back to his machine and slouched in his chair, swiping his jacket, like a cape, across his torso.

Susan watched the old man set down the wedding magazine. His eyes were moist and weary. There was a woodworker's forum next, but then his buzzer went off. He collected his clothes and didn't glance at the stack of magazines he'd obsessively hoarded.

Susan thought she saw a tear roll down his cheek as he left. He went out the door and onto the sunny street. The blinding street. Amanda, she asked herself, could you cover every shift of mine, for every month on the calendar, and every niche on the rotunda of repeating time?

Waiting for her clothes to ding, the machine to ding. Her weight might come eventually. Ten easy pounds. She wouldn't be light anymore. Her sister's husband called her a lightweight when they drank beer.

Waiting for her clothes. The old man's tear would be there over and over. The one true river of the soul, was that a line of poetry, she wondered? The same sad thing. No, definitely not, she thought, not to explain it correctly.

Then she'd be out on the bright street. And if she had been crying she would've known why.
CHARLES MANN BUSBY (1934-2006)

Christina Busby

all and everything
we are

(is he said)
is energy
sifting and shifting
from one
form to the next

(is he said):
I will never (ever)
leave you here
I will (forever)
be near

(is he said)
and 9 months passed
his breath
sighed deep and
his eyes
rolled tight and
he quietly exited life
sifting and shifting
from today
to forever

gasping:
I will (always)
be near you,
my dear.

CHOIR

Rae Northcraft

dthis stark white room
has become much
too familiar.
kurt snaps time
and waves his hands.
every second
or so
the silver pen tucked cozily in his
plaid pocket
is concealed.
his movements are gracefully jerky.
they start.
and stop.
like puppets, we follow.
knocking the outrageously mediocre
gold-rimmed spectacles
down his old-aged nose.
pages are turning.
mine are perfectly aligned
at eye-level
with his diet mountain of dew.
he thinks that it is cleverly hidden.
that we can't see it.
his "diet" weakness.
i laugh,
because i can.
it is so cold.
so plain.
the only windows
rest on the north wall like vertical eye slits,
a mere six inches of width.
even so, the world is blocked
by ivy vines.
bastards.
the only color
offends from scarlet exit letters
above the door.
disguised as a warning,
or hope.
i swear that it must be warmer outside
than in this room.
it's funny.
i know the opposite.
i have no choice
but to soak up the fluorescent rays.
and write helplessly.
we are all writing.
some on homework pages.
others on cell phone screens.
whiteboard reads:
SECTIONAL TONIGHT.
perhaps,
i will be absent.
yes.
the black phone on the wall
never rings.
i consider
the hope it must bring—
always expecting a call.
a shrill of squeaky sopranos
bring me to wally,
the accompanist,
who plays their parts.
i don't believe i have ever
heard him speak.
possibly he is mute.
speaking through his piano.
what a gargantuous display of vocal chords.
i envy his eight octaves.
tenors are behind me.
they remind me of this constantly.
the altos are also present,

presently oppressed by their
nazi leader.
flat.
that girl is in front of me.
the one who cheerfully exclaims,
"hi rachel!"
but she never means me.
so many
are unused.
forgotten.
in this room.
the organ in the balcony.
and the file cabinets.
the balcony.
the overhead.
sharp.
i, like others, twist my hair
and my nothing thoughts
around my finger.
natural.
i write that the glass is both half-empty
and half-full.
i may fail choir today,
but i ace poetry.
INCOMING TIDE

Holly Goodrich

My mind was drowning, engulfed by a terrible image of the ocean seizing and smothering me; I could feel the pressure of the water’s lethal embrace of my ribs and the burn in my nostrils as I struggled to breathe saltwater. It all started innocently enough. We were wading in the cold Pacific; my brother and I each grasping one of my dad’s hands. We just stood there as the tide came in and slowly buried us from ankle to knee. My brother and I shrieked with delight as each wave hit us and as the beach moved farther away. Then I panicked as my overactive imagination quickly moved from an observation of the distance we had “traveled” from the shore to a vision of impending death. But my daydream of doom was vanquished by my dad’s promise that we would head back after the next wave hit. As I grew older, I again found myself surrounded by waves. They engulfed me like the sea but this time my dad could no longer lead me back to shore; we were being torn apart by the incoming tide.

I realize now what I was blind to then: my parents were never really happy together. Like fuel oil and seawater, they could not coexist; each was an irresolvable and frustrating enigma to the other. My mother’s religious devotion and my dad’s equally firm skepticism had always been an issue. He was far more interested in perfecting his golf swing than pondering the cataclysmic end of the world which my mother considered imminent; my mother hated golf. To anyone who knew my parents the news that they were divorcing would hardly have come as a surprise.

But, I was stunned by this unexpected reef. My sole experience of divorce in my eight years of life had been in a game I played with the kids next door. The two older girls wanted to pretend that their brother, Nathan, and I were married and were getting a divorce. The oldest girl, Rachel, played the role of the judge, assuring me that all would be well as Nathan would later play another guy who I would marry. Nathan, who was deeply embarrassed by the game, decided to balance a book on his head. I can still remember Rachel asking in a deep voice why Nathan wanted a divorce and then declaring “young man you have a book on your head” when he refused to answer. The whole thing was incredibly amusing and did little to prepare me for the announcement that my dad would no longer live with us. I was devastated as the ship of my world splintered around me and sank. It was difficult for me to construct another or even make repairs; I was never very good at building things.

Yet on nearly every trip to the beach I tried to construct sand castles. On one particular visit, when I was twelve, I dug a series of interconnecting trenches using nothing but clam shells. It began simply enough; I dug a circle in the sand. The top layers of sand were hard and made disturbing crunching sounds as I scooped through them, causing me to shudder. Grit packed under my fingernails until they felt swollen. Luckily, being so close to the sea, I soon hit water sparing me from this cacophony of unpleasantness and sweeping away the building tension under my nails. Once I got to the water, I used my hands instead of shells as these were better tools for spire making. I loved the feeling of the liquid sand running between my fingers and dripping down to form a castle in the center of my circle, though the result looked nothing like its medieval counterpart. Still, despite its craggy mountain-like appearance, I thought of it as a human constructed fortress, not the wild peak it mimicked.

One such fortress was hardly enough, so I began on another which also needed a moat and matching sea wall. Soon I had an entire kingdom of ten or so gray sand islands topped with darker mountain castles and surrounded by a canal system of moats. Many were adorned with simple gray and white seagull feathers, which served as pendants, as well as clam shell fragments, remnants of the many broken in their building.

This construction effort was part of a game I played pitting my pretend castles against the sea. The moats and sand walls were not truly my creations but were the attempts of the inhabitants to stave off the invading tide. These were daring souls who risked the wrath of the swiftly advancing ocean to protect their home. Of course, they always lost in the end and collecting their tattered sea gull feather flags and shell treasures,
they moved father back to build another palace which inevitably met the same fate. They were unfortunately ruled by a stupid and self absorbed royalty who preferred this arrangement, finding that it facilitated the building of private pools which they used for parties. As a result, these miserable serfs were forever condemned to lives of fruitless effort, always striving to build what would inevitably be destroyed.

However, on this particular day, the oppressed slaves managed to build an entire kingdom which was rescued from destruction by the simple fact that this time the tide was going out, not coming in. It was amazing what all those workers could accomplish when their efforts were not smashed. Several people stopped and asked me about the castles. I merely nodded when they asked if I did all that. I did not tell them about the brave denizens who were the unfortunate subjects of a capricious royal family forced to wage a never-ending battle against the sea. Likewise, I also did not explain the game to my mom and step-dad who returned from wandering the beach hours later. Somehow, I did not think they would appreciate the struggle the way I did.

Yet all sand castles eventually collapse. The spring break of my senior year of high school my mom, brothers and I spent the week at the beach. For me, this was a time in which I found a strength whose power seemed to both shield and destroy me; I feared it would turn me to stone. Yet I longed for such a transformation because stone has no memory. The ocean beats against it and grinds it down to sand yet the rocks go on never caring, never crying. I envied such hardness.

That week I spent hours on the beach, even on days when the gray clouds unloaded their rainy burdens. I walked along the path on top of the cliffs, looking down on the dark ocean with its white tipped waves as the wind whispered a soothing lullaby through the tall sea grass. I went down a long stairway made of gray driftwood to the beach and searched the rockier patches of sand for agates which I stuffed in an empty bread bag. I loved to spend hours like that doing nothing but hunting for those stones which ranged in color from an almost opaque white to a deep amber. I loved the way you could see the light through all of them. Lost in the hunt, I did not have to think about all that had fallen apart.

Most importantly, as I strolled along the shore, I did not have to think about the trial. About the months before it in which I had desperately prayed for a plea bargain which would keep my shameful secret from the world. I did not have to think about the humiliation of the day the principal told me in a voice tinted with accusation and fear that a detective from Child Services had come to interview me. I felt the shock in his voice hearing in it his thinly disguised outrage that the outside world was intruding on his perfect Christian school kingdom. As ruler of the castle, he had seen to it that all the sections on sex crimes in a reference book for the law class had been ripped out; after all, such things did not happen to good Christian girls.

I did not have to think about standing in the front of a court room with twelve pairs of strange eyes on me as the defense lawyer cross-examined me. His friendly surface concealed the tiger I sensed lurking behind his eyes, just waiting to pounce on the slightest conflict in my story. I did not have to think about my former step-dad on the stand giving a twenty-first century update of the medieval “it’s the woman’s fault” argument. According to him, it was my short night shirts and naïveté which had led him to touch me. He was only trying to teach me of the dangers of immodesty; all those salacious comments were meant to be educational. A photograph of me in one of those oversized, men’s t-shirts became exhibit A. In it, my face is bright red; I am obviously begging him not to take the picture. The lawyer used the adjective “disturbing” as he called the jury’s attention to it. Clearly, I was a seductive temptress. I did not have to think of those twelve pairs of eyes scrutinizing my every reaction as everything within me shouted, “He’s lying!” My nails dug into my palms as I squeezed my fingers into a fist to keep from uttering screams of primal rage. I did not have to remember the undertow of fear that tugged at my stomach for the entire day, the question “Will they believe him or me?” Nor did I have to reflect on the conclusion, a conviction for Sexual Harassment and Sex Abuse III, crimes on the lower end of the punishment spectrum. He was sentenced to 30 nights in jail and counseling, in the day he was free; I had served 7 years. But in that moment none of this mattered; I had only to keep looking
for another agate and that search was enough.

When I got bored rock hunting I would walk watching the waves and listening to the music of them sneaking up the beach and breaking over the rocks, a symphony of crashing and roaring. The wind would sing in my ears and now and then a seagull would join the concert. I could taste salt with each breath and wander completely free from expectations, memories, and questions, not having to be anything but Holly listening to the ocean. It was as if all the wild strength of the ocean could embrace me and end my silent bleeding.

I made the mistake of believing that this insensibility could last. I left home and went to college trying to pretend that none of my memories existed as if to transmute myself to stone through sheer willpower. I soon realized this was impossible and began the tedious process of facing the past. One night of this continuous process stands out. I had been attending a college worship group called Higher Ground throughout the school year. Here I learned about a God who was not like the Overseer of the private school fortress I had known before. He didn’t fake acceptance while keeping His distance. He wasn’t offended by all your shameful secrets or your family’s less than glittering past. He terrified me. I didn’t know what to do with such unconditional love; my previous experience had been ill preparation.

On this particular night, the struggle was overwhelming and fierce. I had gone up to take Communion and found I didn’t have enough strength to return to my seat. I collapsed on my knees in a corner, my head pressed against a pillar; I wept. Years of tears gushed out of me. An unknown person put a hand on my shoulder and I felt a wave of warmth spread through me. It was an embrace of acceptance and love and the same wild strength I felt while wandering along the beach. I let it fill me and returned to the ocean.

The summer after my first year of college, I journeyed there again for the day. I waded out in the ocean up to my knees and thought of the events of the past year. I wandered where beach and sea embrace, wading ankle deep in the ocean and feeling as if everything wrong inside me could just wash away and be lost forever in the nothingness of that blue-green. I knew simply that I was happy and that I could choose not to let my memories smother me. So there in the embrace of ocean and wind and all I could not define I said a prayer of release and gave myself up to the Presence which surrounded me. For me it was a baptism, and when I returned to shore I knew I had left behind another small piece of my pain to be forever lost, swallowed up like a shipwreck.

My story does not end; it is one I will write for my entire life. After all, shipwrecks have a nasty habit of resurfacing. When the tide gets low enough you can still see them, history’s mementos, moldering, rusty ribs. Yet they are not the past itself, not the life-suffocating oil slick or the panic of a drowning crew; they are simply reminders. On my journey, I stumble on these decaying wrecks. They are memories triggered by the most trivial of events, the title of a book, the headline of a newspaper or a nightmare; they are deep fears churning inside my stomach when I converse with unfamiliar faces. And above all, they are the waves of silent questions and doubts which often tug at my feet. Some days these pull me under in a lung-crushing squeeze, but most days I look forward towards the horizon and take another step along my coastline where the calls of the sea gulls and the music of the sea drown all lesser voices.
FOR ENUMA

Melissa Meszaros

And the world had fallen, or came to
The empire at once, that once
What it has transpired from

Felt it crash and crush my heart
Wanting nothing but to see through

And the faults that befall,
Let it be fall
Let the dying weather succumb, too

Winter of, the splinter in my heart
Wanting nothing but to feel new

And with the new, anew, I knew
A great beginning for you
What it has transpired from

NAKED

Jen Murphy

We were born naked and as we grew
our secrets grew too.
We began to put clothes on to cover our shame.
A sock
to hide the bad places we've been.
A t-shirt
to cover our sensitive, broken hearts.
Some gloves
to restrain our manipulative hands,
and underwear
to get back our virginity, our faith and our innocence.
A DIFFERENT FEEL OF BEAUTIFUL

Kristina Galicinac

Oregon is not home. Home is where the uplifting warmth of the sun is often there to soak up. An array of tropical flowers that speak of all the colors of the rainbow—hibiscuses, orchids, the bird of paradise, plumeria—make the verdant greenery twenty times as vibrant. The smell of the flowers reminds you of the taste of sweet pineapple, leaving you wanting to just lay back and sunbathe as you cool down with a piña colada.

It’s where the light, turquoise blue water stretches out until forever, perhaps beyond. Like a mother singing its baby a lullaby to soothe it to sleep, so is the water that trickles into my ears. Each wave rolls in and out, in and out. It is as if the tide would take me with it. Home is where my parents and best friends are, my constant and genuine source of love.

Oregon is not home.

I keep telling people, “I’m still adjusting; I just need a little more time to get used to this whole college thing.” Three weeks of massive amounts of reading and daily homework have now gone by and almost every day remains a tiring chore to get through. The weight of missing home and close friends always burdens me, making my feet heavy to carry as I walk from class to class.

But that’s not to say that I don’t have my good days here. Fortunately, I’ve made a good amount of friends to hang out with. Though it has only been a short amount of time, some have gained enough of my trust to make me feel comfortable to confide in them. They make the load a little more bearable, but of course, never nonexistent.

Unwilling to tend to strenuous homework one Sunday afternoon, Maria, Jessica and I decide to embark on a much less life threatening adventure: sightseeing. As we ride up a winding road, my mind is put at ease by the abundance of lush, green trees that border it. I close my eyes and try to envision a Hawaiian sunset. In my mind’s eye I see the vibrant golden sun that blends into intense tangerine orange and ripe strawberry red, bleeding all over the sky’s canvas and reflecting on the water. But the smell of the pine needles and bark seeps up my nose again and I remember where I am. Moments later, we reach the top and I find myself actually comforted by the view. Stretching for miles and miles are the tree covered cliffs of the Columbia River Gorge. Off in the distance, Mount Hood sits serenely, covered in a marshmallow topping of snow.

The river water is calm and is a blend of light blue with a subtle hint of gray, like that of steel. Above it, there is a thin blanket of mist that makes the whole scenery look like a painting. I breathe in deeply the cool air and exhale, trying to absorb everything. I could get used to this, I think to myself.

After a few minutes, we resume our journey and ride along the historic highway. The road seems never ending and there are so many turns, it feels almost as if we are on a rollercoaster. I find sweet solace from the wealth of trees.

Finally, we arrive. I rub my eyes a little in an effort to fully wake myself after falling into a trance of sleep during the drive. Above me, an eagle flies past and for a moment, I attempt to imagine myself in its place. How wonderful it must be to simply spread your wings and soar high over all of God’s creation, everyday, not bound to the ground by gravity’s pull.

The sound of the water falling brings me back to reality. It coaxes me from my day dreams. And I walk on.

Weaving through the crowd of people, I make my way to the railing and stop to stand in awe. Hundreds and hundreds of feet of water continuously crash to the base, creating a roar like a lion’s. I freeze the picture in my mind. The water looks like white taffy in the process of being stretched or massive amounts of sugar being poured into a bowl. Below the waterfall, the logs float carelessly. They seem to have no other responsibilities than to just be. I breathe in deeply and feel the warmth of the sun upon my skin.

Here, in this moment, I feel completely humbled by the works of God’s hands. Somehow, I could have sworn that He was smiling down and telling me, Yes, my precious child, you’re in the right place. You’re right where you’re supposed to be, I promise.
Oregon is not home. It's not palm trees or light brown sand, it's not tropical sunshine and warm breezes, and it's not surfboards and beach towels or the salty air in your face. But Oregon is equally beautiful in its own way. There are tons of tall, green trees that are so full of life. There are parks to take long walks in and scenic drives that speak of history. Oregon is meditation.

It's where I should be, and that's just as beautiful.
LEAVING

Rae Northcraft

thank you for the room to breathe
let this endless anguish seethe
o'er your frail hands seeking mine
like a glass of priceless wine
welcome to forever's end
where your dreams do not transcend
and I, your god, do not exist
forsake your memories un kissed

AGONY

Johanna Stephens

She lies awake nights, rocking back and forth and
straining to stop the constant low whine emanating from her
throat.

Sleep tortures her with promising dreams of flight,
transformation, truth, only to wake up covered in fingernail
marks – huge swollen purple welts with crescent shaped pools at
the centers. Self-mutilation is hers – a glorious routine to forget
all but the white-hot passion of agony.

In pressing her nails deep, deep, and pulling off
the chocolate scabs, she is blissfully unaware of her acid
disenchantment in reality.

She wants to believe, she wants to believe in anything,
but the obsidian void kills her. Doubts become black adders
that crawl under her skin and slither through her veins. They
burst free only through blood let out in fluid violence.

Trying to believe slaughters her, makes her whimper to
an unseen god that has yet to answer. She only really believes
in nights – bright ruby with her blood and white-hot with the
absence of memory.
TRAPPED

Rebecca Andersen

This is every day,
It has become routine for me.
They ask, I give,
(But I want more.)

The crowd of people don’t phase me.
A man approaches me,
The usual, but who is this man?
(I am in my own world, alone.)

My feet are aching,
I would rather be somewhere else,
But I am a woman,
(I have to stand here.)

I am decoratively dressed,
But this isn’t by choice.
I am supposed to blend in,
(But I can’t.)

It would be nice to be one of them.
No worries.
What if they stood where I was?
(Would they understand? I don’t think so.)

I want to get out,
But the hour has not come.
The people in front of me do not know the time,
(Yet I count the seconds.)

They live the life,
That is my dream.
The glamour of the night,
(I watch behind this cage.)

This life I cannot live,
Is shadowed by this mask.
Why can’t I just escape,
(This is my life forsaken.)
ADVICE

Rae Northcroft

Call me selfish--
I am.

I want the world,
And the skies,
And the lies.
I want you--

To use,
To take notes,
And then write my name
Atop the page--
Clean white,
Hidden stains.

I want your beauty
And your pains.

If you're giving,
Then I'm taking--
I have no shame.
I do not cower as I kiss
your purple heart
And bleed your knowledge
into my veins.
ARRANGEMENTS

Daniel Cameron

A good rule of thumb: it takes five years to recover from the death of a loved one. Not only that, but spring moves North approximately thirteen miles per day. It's August now and you didn't know him whatsoever.

Occasionally in life someone will ask, have you ever been to Europe? If you tell them, no, they'll say, you should go. You can nod and express desire then continue thinking about why it's been ten months since you've driven your car.

Sometimes you will be replacing a bulb in a table lamp and recall that a human body at rest releases the same heat as a 150-watt screw-in. Then you can think does it give off the same amount of light?

Then you can think about all those replacing-light-bulb jokes. And why you burn candles instead.

Eating out, your server will lean over the table and with a sense of familiarity ask, how is everything? Or, can I get you anything else? This will be uttered whether the table is singular or not.

Despite saying, good, nothing, I'm fine, thank you, you leave an oversized tip you can't afford.

As you watch television before bed someone on screen will make a comment about how watching television ruins the brain.

By the time the evening news airs you'll prepare yourself to fully fathom what happened today. Halfway through the broadcast someone will read a missing person's report at which point it's okay to remind yourself that one trained dog equals sixty search and rescue workers.

Rarely, though it does occur, an anchorman will inform the people at home that a SAR dog is trapped in a frozen crevasse. The camera never stays long enough to count the sixty rescue workers huddled at the scene. Rest assured the Nielsen ratings have their own estimations.

Traditionally human-interest stories are comprised of schadenfreude and animals.

Volunteering is very rewarding and often manages goodwill without the shallowness of cameras. Cedars-Sinai offers positions in the nursery year round. Spend a weekend walking the halls with VISITOR pucked to your shirt. Learn in the training seminars about anti-contraction medications, atosiban, nifedipine, and fenoterol. Be aware of the inherent risks: cerebral palsy, gastrointestinal problems, and mental retardation to name a few. Mark on your calendar the limit of viability at twenty-four weeks. No sooner.

Remember this all factors into the abortion debate.

After handling preemies, when you're physically shaken, leave the NICU, avoid peering into the steamy isolettes, and drive home. Nauseated with despair, you can follow up with thousands of exhaustive articles online until morning sickly shines.

Work is necessary. Sometimes you'll need to motivate yourself when ultimately there is no meaning to life. Of course finding good work is difficult. Persistence is key. Practice in a mirror. Some people that lock themselves in the bathroom anxiously memorizing dialogue, include comedians, advertising agents, and White House press secretaries. Occasionally teenage boys practice sexual thrusting.

Never answer an interviewer's question for longer than sixty seconds. This formula allows for sixty complete one-minute responses per hour, so consolidate. You can watch the clock tick as the HR lady asks, why do you want the job? Searching the classifieds, you can think, she must've thought I was eager to leave.

Funny, you've noticed a similar effect while microwaving your frozen express dinners. The neon clock counts backwards and your hunger dances embarrassingly. Grilled Turkey Medallions because it's Thanksgiving. Mesquite Grilled Chicken in the summertime. Rapping your fingers on the sink basin you feel determined to master the art of cooking this week. Immediately, as the chicken still lazes in infrared splendor, you're a prize-
winning chef of Le Cordon Bleu. Skip the gradual process; all four burners on the stove are blazing.

In the blink of an eye it's all happened.

You taste test everything.

Showering in the morning, pull back your stomach fat and suddenly your body is carved in mahogany. The marathon gun waits for your toe to creep near the starting line.

In the Laundromat, you're a happy mother.

In the movies, you're in the movies.

Lifeguards and receptionists do it on slow days. They daydream. Those are the two professions listed by title in the Intro to Psychology textbook you skimmed in the corner chain store. Generally, the author touts, it occurs out of boredom. But you know this type of eagerness, with the imaginary eugenics involved, perennially sits like a third eye in the middle of your forehead, crying.

In order to address boredom outside of work, create plans to shop to exercise to clean to call your mother long distance. Generally only a third of the items written on To-Do lists are completed. Thankfully you'll be able to tell an ex-lover you had dinner plans with so-and-so, but they fell through at the last minute because so-and-so had to do such-and-such.

If you are drastically bored, a sex change will age you five years. Non-surgical transvestism fluctuates your age relative to your clothing choices.

If life seems like all work, television, and household repairs: add people. It's not uncommon for real people to throw actual cocktail parties. You can think about how often you hear cocktail party from literature or film versus how often you attend them. Also, it's not entirely rude to consider the get-together elitist then immediately admit to jealousy and promise yourself to try and have a good time if it kills you.

Afterwards you'll learn to save your skepticism for things without rules of thumb, because cocktail parties are famous for them. One, for example, asks you to let a bottle of red wine breathe two minutes for every year between the vintage date on the label and the present.

Another will become apparent to you at the party. And another.

Flying standby after a long trip to your Sister's, you know it is safe to assume that beyond the terminal windows the pilots coming in would never think of landing if they hadn't touched down in the first quarter of the runway.

You are supposed to make another pass.

Returning home at nights when the silence of your life is deafening, television doesn't matter. Lights on or off, doesn't matter. Drinking wine alone under your bedsheets, the bottle's Lamaze, doesn't matter.

Sometimes it's beautiful that the ceiling plaster takes shapes when you cross your eyes. Other times it's beautiful when you stare at the ceiling and nothing forms. Both, however, are the same barrier that, after a week, is no longer thick enough to quell the raging stench of a neighbor dropped dead above.

Police all sound the same over the phone. You learned this from your own experience. Sgts. to cadets, there is a warble of woodland creature in each throat. Officer Roddick is a tranquilized animal trying to get a statement. You would commend him for performing his dangerous job well, but you'd sound like a grandmother thanking a boyscout in the crosswalk.

During renegade cop flicks an angry commissioner who's on his second angioplasty will threaten the renegade cop(s) with stale desk jobs. Fortified paper-pushing. The main character, a loose cannon, hates the idea, yet weekend moviegoers who return to their offices on Monday are never insulted. They know it's not real.

A real police officer will not ask you to "free associate" unless he or she is a part time psychiatrist as well. Instead, when you say the word "thicket" after Officer Roddick explains the cause of death, he will bid you goodnight and finish the report himself.

Calling directory assistance from your dead neighbor's number is weird. Technology twitters; you wonder, if one day
they’re able to teach robots what you’ve learned, does that make you a robot? Does that make machines human?

The service hasn’t been disconnected. The automated operator transfers you and it rings, and rings, and rings.

You let it.

Insomnia is a common side-effect of mood medications. Buddhists with sleep disorders are encouraged to meditate on metta, or loving-kindness.

You’re not Buddhist, but you try so hard to distract yourself with what’s good.

Masturbation fails quickly.

You don’t laugh at the late night talk shows anymore, but they’re on, glowing like a toxic lagoon. Lying on your side, the same question pulsates from your temples, who constructed this thing, sadness, to be so comforting?

Confused, you pray.

You thank God for taking your beefy neighbor. Heaven or hell, he’s removed from the equation. No longer a congenital concern. His wise empathy is there for you all the more.

You want this pity to last forever.

So when you’re awake all night and finally do call one of those infomercials, or those hotlines, or those charitable organizations that flash on TV, you could be up for hours in the company of someone whose job it is to let the customer hang up first.

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**ILL**

*Rae Northcraft*

Frozen in this grave, am I--
Iced over by a deadly chill
In my bones.
Like weather-enduring gargoyle stones.
Breathing under covers,
I catch the thrill of empty breath.
And I sigh--
by and by
to the feverish, ever wondering why.
I stand cemented to this sanctuary.
Am I comfortable here? or comforted?
Perhaps,
I simply indulge in a place to rest my head.
There are cracks in my brain,
where thoughts leak out through my lips.
And through the ink in my fingertips.
You bandaged me to keep them in.
But now,
They’re leaking through my skin.
NEVERLAND

Kimberly Lindow

Their house was a brilliant deep red with long, cream colored stairs leading up to the front door, and a wrap-around porch up high, looking over the entire neighborhood. The inside was warm, cozy and tidy, until the bedrooms were reached. I always liked going to their house. It felt lived in and friendly. The best part about their house was the backyard. It did not look like all of the other yards in the neighborhood, where not a single blade of grass was out of place. Their backyard was secluded, with huge fir trees guarding it like some sacred shrine. Because of the trees, there was no grass in their backyard, just a soft bed of pine needles littering the ground. In one huge fir tree was a makeshift tree house, hand-built of course. The creaky boards were moss covered and old. Even though it was weathered, the tree house beckoned with every trip. Next to the tree house sat a trampoline. Since I did not have one, every visit to the Lewis' was an opportunity to work on my acrobatic skills.

Years ago I had the best neighbors a girl could ask for. They were not the picture perfect family that had two kids and a dog; they had nine kids and maybe a hamster at one point in time. Meredith and I spent every waking moment together and were very close in age and would take turns going to each other's houses. I always liked their house the best. When I was little I felt I had two homes: one with my parents and brother and one with the Lewis'. Both places were special. They were vastly different, but in some ways the same.

One steamy summer day, when the shade of the trees was calling our names, Meredith and I went to her house to play. "What do you want to do?" I asked listlessly.

"I don't know. How about we go play outside?" Meredith said.

When we stepped outside onto the back porch we were transported to a place where time stood still. We could be out there all day and it would only seem like five minutes had passed.

Everything was magical; the way the sun shone through the limbs of the fir trees and bathed the back yard in an indescent light, and the way the big evergreen trees looked the same no matter what time of day or year it was. We quickly rushed down the stairs and ran to our favorite spot, the tree house. "Let's play house," I said. "We can be sisters living together."

"Ok," Meredith said.

'House' was our favorite game. We made up this elaborate game by watching our own mothers. We wanted to be just like them, so, naturally, we would do everything that they did. We cleaned, swept the floor, and just like in real life, it never seemed to get clean. We made our own food, weeds from the back yard mostly (we did not actually eat them - we were not that crazy!) and we made sure everything was in working order. There were two levels to the tree house and we had to make sure that every room in the house was sparkling clean. The first level was a piece of cake- it was getting to the second floor that created hazards. Moms are not real keen on tree sap on new play clothes.

Sometimes in our games we would have our own rooms and we would have to be responsible for them, just like real life. One person would stay upstairs, the other down and we would continue on with our game. We would talk to each other just like our mothers talked to us. We would say, "I am going to get some food for dinner," and then go pick the weeds a short distance away from the tree house. We had salad for dinner a lot. It was the most abundant. My all-time favorite was the chef's special salad, featuring a bunch of dandelions all mashed together mixed with clover. Yum!

Most days the two of us would have 'house-guests' in the form of our siblings. They seemed to always ruin our game, never understanding what it was like to play house. I was responsible and felt like I had a sense of purpose in the world. I was still a carefree kid playing with my best friend, but at the same time I was a responsible adult, taking on the world. Our siblings would enter our house without knocking and mess our rooms up. Their favorite thing to do was to jump on to the trampoline from the second level. That was what always brought us crashing back to the reality of being a kid. It looked
like so much fun that we just had to try it. If our siblings' goal was to distract us from our game, they succeeded every time. The game usually ended after they arrived. They would get us so distracted, we forgot about cleaning the tree house and playing our game. We would give in and just jump on the trampoline. The house could always wait for another day.

The best part about this game was it had no rules. All we had to do was act like grownups. It was easy. There were no winners and no losers, just work to be done. Looking back, the funny part is how both Meredith and I hated cleaning our rooms in real life, but when it came time to play 'house,' that was basically all we did. Through our games we would talk about what needed to be done and then do it. In real life we did anything to get out of cleaning. It might have taken all day to clean my room when I was little but when we played 'house' it only took a couple hours.

Those long summer days of playing house in that tree house bring back fond memories. I can still remember its grayish green boards all ramshackle, somehow surviving all those years. Meredith and her family moved away later in my childhood. We could no longer run down the street and play 'house' together. Our neighborhood water fights ceased and our sleepovers slowly dwindled to nothing. We had to be driven to get to each other's house and real life slowly took over our pretend households. We didn't realize then that those innocent days spent pretending to be adults would swiftly become distant memories. Now, I can't seem to get away from adult responsibilities. I no longer can just pretend, they are reality; no more can I pretend to play house, I live in one. The days of smashed dandelions for dinner are over; I actually have to make something edible to eat. The sweeping and the cleaning are perhaps the only thing that has truly stayed the same. Those tasks never end, even though I want them to. The reality of it is that pretending is just practice for real life. As a kid, that was all I ever did. I did so much pretending that when real life came, it still felt like I was pretending. Now, I cannot escape real life. The world of pretend has left me. Unlike Peter Pan, I have to grow up; Neverland only exists in my dreams when I long for childhood and childhood friends. This is where my pretend world lives on.

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VOYEUR

Donnie Drobny

Looking through your window
Watching your sweet, subtle moves
A tear almost falls from my eyes.

You look at me, but I can't move
And I can see inside your eyes.
I see through your body's window,

Your heart and soul, shining from cerulean eyes.
And you don't see me, outside your window,
Still, you don't move and I don't move.

My dreams drift to inside the window
To a time, a place, where nothing moves
But the lights that dance in our eyes

To a time found in dreaming eyes
Where I don't have to sit by your window
Waiting for that one single move

When you call me inside the window
Like Peter Pan through a child's eyes
And together we both move,

And dance, and dance, and move
And watch the lights in each other's eyes
And someone else watches us from the window

With eyes that wait at window panes, afraid to move.
I am 5 years old laying on my miniature bed with both of my hands resting on my naked stomach. I am trying to imagine what it feels like to have a growing baby inside.

My first thoughts of sex are rather abstract and I wish I still thought giving birth was more artistic than it is. My mother gave me the first ideas when she was trying to explain the process of sperms uniting with the egg. She must have dwelt on her terminology for a long time because she described them as “worms” and “eggs.” I first envisioned chicken eggs inside of my body being attacked by killer earthworms because those were the only eggs and worms I had ever encountered. She should have used the correct words because I couldn’t get that image out of my head. It was the strangest thing I had ever heard, but I liked it for that.

Soon enough this idea escalated into a new theory. She was trying to redeem herself by teaching me a different method of sex and giving birth or, as she would say, “making babies.” I was under the impression that these eggs inside would eventually travel out of my body into my hands, so I could hatch them. The only creatures I knew to hatch eggs didn’t excite me, not until I thought it possible to hatch a dinosaur. Even though I had never seen one in real life didn’t mean it wasn’t impossible for them to still exist. Maybe I wasn’t looking hard enough to find them rummaging the earth.

I went to kindergarten telling my classmates of the news. It eventually reached my teacher and she found me sitting at my desk with my hands wrapped tightly around my waist. She asked me if anything was wrong and I told her I was just waiting to hatch my egg. She didn’t know how to respond to me and told me she needed to talk to me later; we never spoke. She called my mom instead and expressed her concern. I clunked she thought it humorous that I had this idea of hatching dinosaurs, when my mother was the school nurse, also a midwife. I am almost certain my mother delivered her daughter, Joy.

My mother had to sit me down again and try to see what went wrong with our previous discussion. I’m not entirely sure what she was saying because it didn’t matter; I was ready to hatch my eggs and she wasn’t stopping me.

For the next several weeks, I made space in my room for the arrival of my baby dinosaur. I was thankful it was almost summer because that meant I could sit on my egg all the time. I told my mother I wasn’t going to gymnastics camp or vacation Bible school because I had bigger plans; I was going to have a dinosaur and preparation was key.

She didn’t challenge me because I think she realized there was no way to help me understand. My older siblings knew very well where babies came from and how it happened. I just didn’t want to understand; I wasn’t nearly ready to see the reality of the matter. She even helped me build a hatching spot comfortably located in the corner of my room with plenty of pillows and blankets. I almost think she enjoyed helping me make the hatching nest. It was easier for her to give in to me, even if my idea was silly.

But time went on and my body wasn’t producing an egg. I wasn’t entirely sure how long this process would take but I was patient and waited. I eventually asked my mother why my body didn’t do what she told me it would do. She explained to me that there was no room for a growing dinosaur anyways, so maybe I should reconsider. I hadn’t thought about where I’d put it when it got big, maybe she was right. I wasn’t ready to have a dinosaur and my room was too small. I was too concerned about receiving my egg that I didn’t take into account all the other important things, like space.

But how could I stop my body from making eggs? Sure, I wasn’t ready to have a dinosaur but maybe my body was?

Again, I turned to my mother for the right answers. She told me my ONLY option was to eat the grotesque vitamins in the cabinet that I always made a witty protest against, and that would make the eggs stop. So, as my only option, I ate the vitamins daily with disgust and prayed that I could stop taking them.

It wasn’t until I was 15 and had a boyfriend, that I entirely
understood sex, thanks to my new public school education. I am sure the boys I dated dumped me on account of my ignorance. My first boyfriend was 3 years older than I and already had sex, so he thought we would do the deed, too. He hung around though, and I still hadn’t kissed him by our third month anniversary. It became very apparent to him that sex hadn’t surfaced in my mind yet, because he asked me if we would “do it” eventually. I told him I would have to ask my mother; I laughed to myself.

**MY MIND IS GAY**

*Daniel Cole*

Illuminating blue corn dog
Don’t inquire as to why
I have my pineapple monkey
And sweaty old dog life

Ragged black brick slushie
Take your old lady perfume
It’s left me mellow-crazy
Like a shamuburger-dogcow

And now you clear potato
Shove off into the sea
With your Portland air-fumes
Your dinosaur dreams

And please do not tell me
My name is or once was
It isn’t
wasn’t
And it’s not up above

So be confused, perplexed in my fantasy game
Hairy-white chicken-duck
You know my name
RHYTHMIC END

Johanna Stephens

The soloist's violin string snaps, and with it comes an explosive silence - an absence of sound that presses on the eardrums and pushes needles into the inner ear.

It's ruined - everything is ruined in a burst of color. It's so bright and it sends beads of light shimmering down from the ceiling, catching in the audience's hair and being inhaled into its collective lungs. The concert has ended, and it can't be played over. This beautiful failure, devoid of sound but overwhelmingly abundant in vision and emotion, brings back an old thought, a potent idea -

The end of one thing is the beginning of another. The end of sound is the beginning of color. The end of color is the beginning of the feeling that comes from hearing the most beautiful piece of music. It fills you, lifts you, sends you soaring through each gently rising crescendo and bold fortissimo. At the same time, your heart is cracking into tiny shards of glass that stick in the palms, shoot through the veins and emerge where the heart used to be, continuing the cycle of taking and giving back.

The audience pulses towards the exits. The silence is still pressing and the light is still shimmering. Their souls are still soaring and their hearts are still shredding. This concert's end is the start of tonight - the soloist lost her audience, but gave them the gift of a blank slate, a way to erase wrongs and create rights. They won't remember the exact moment they received it, but they will remember the burst of color that came when the string first snapped.

PEGS

Donnie Dobny

I'd rather have a frozen heart
Or one that's made of stone
Than live another day with this emptiness
Calling my chest its home
I've tried to fill it so many times
With so many different pegs
But if this hole inside of me is round
The pegs are always square
Or triangular

Octagonal

Pentagonal
Bottle shaped pegs, empty and brown
Belt shaped pegs leaving welts on my back
Knife shaped pegs with red coated blades
I try to fill the hole with pegs made of light
With cross shaped pegs
Or pentagrams
Or tiny graven images

Yet each peg the hole devours
A mouth with a thousand peg teeth
Each peg becomes a part of me
Of the darkness
The emptiness
The hollowness

Dwelling inside me
And soon the pegs will all run out
And I'll be hollow still
An empty shell—once a man
Now no more than a corpse
A holey ghost
Vacant eyes
And broken pegs
EL DORADO

Lynne Danley

Nine years old. Only one more year before ten, that magic place in the double-digits where the big kids got to go. A year ago, I peered down the dark tunnel of my future years and couldn’t envision ten at all. Today, if I squinted hard enough, it shone like a distant star, illuminating the way out of little-kid-hood.

That’s when it all began -- on my ninth birthday. Not that I realized it at the time, of course. All I could think about on that sunny morning was cupcakes. Today Mom would bring cupcakes for everyone in class and, because it was my birthday, the other kids would sing to me and maybe they wouldn’t chase me at recess and call me a nerd and run away from my cooties. Everybody liked you on your birthday.

“Ichabod! Get up! It’s late! You’ll miss the bus!”

The father-daughter morning ritual. I always got up. It was always late. I never missed the bus.

I could smell them even before I got to the top of the stairs. There they sat on cooling racks on the table, the Betty Crocker instant box-mix chocolate cupcakes, waiting to be coifed with pink, sticky frosting and those little sugar balls. The oven was still warm as I brushed past it, balanced a bowl in one hand and, with the practiced dexterity of a concert pianist, poured cereal, milk and sugar into it with the other, procured a spoon and ate while I re-climbed the stairs and looked for something suitably birthday to put on. Nothing in my closet seemed right. The mirror failed me. There he was, Ichabod Crane, the bespectacled schoolteacher with the skinny legs and knobby knees -- scabby, in my case, from falling off my bicycle -- the dishwater-blond hair hanging like a wet string mop around the pale face, the crossed eyes and crooked teeth. Hopeless. Nothing I draped on that frame would help. I squirmed into a blue and red plaid dress, snatched up the dog-eared notebook in which I wrote my diary, and scrambled down the stairs.

Mom, of course, was yelling in her usual Mom way, "Elizabeth! The bus!"

“Yes, Mom,” I said, kissing her chubby cheek as I ran. “See you later.”

Mom didn’t say, “Happy Birthday, Beth,” but she beamed at me as I boarded the bus.

“Good morning, Mr. Blumberg,” I said to the driver. “Today is my birthday.”

“So? And you are getting to be quite a little lady, Beth,” said Mr. Blumberg through his gray mustache. He rubbed his bald crown. “Soon you’ll be fighting off all the boys who want to kiss you.”

“Yuck!” I said, giggling as Mr. Blumberg patted my head.

I was always very careful to call him “Mr. Blumberg” now. Since kindergarten I had called him “Mr. Kike” like all the other kids. Then one day in late October a new boy came to Miss Miles’ third grade class.

“This is David,” said Miss Miles. “Mr. Blumberg is David’s grandfather.”

My best friend Molly knit her brows quizically. “Who is Mr. Blumberg?” she asked.

When Miss Miles didn’t get it, her own brows stood up on end on her forehead like brown caterpillars crawling up a birch tree.

“Why, your bus driver, of course,” she said.

“You mean Mr. Kike?” squeaked Tommy Pratt.

Miss Miles got something then. Wearing her thoughtful look, she put an arm around David and led him to a seat in the front row. Then she said very quietly, “Children, ‘kike’ is not a nice word at all. You must call your bus driver Mr. Blumberg.”

We kids looked at each other, totally confused. You weren’t supposed to call someone a “nigger” or a “wop,” but “kike”? What was that? It sounded like a fish. And why didn’t the bus driver ever tell us he had his name wrong? But I’ll never forget the size of his smile when I got on the bus the next day and said, “Good morning, Mr. Blumberg,” and for the first time ever, he said, “Good morning, Beth.” We always said something to each other after that.

I stared dreamily out the window as the bus rolled...
past Lincoln High School. Girls with their pony tails swishing, carrying their folders with pictures of Elvis or Ricky Nelson or the Everly Brothers, stopped to chat with pompadoured boys, their hair slimy with oil, posturing on the steps in their immaculate Levis. I sighed. Being a teenager had to be even better than being ten.

The luckiest teenagers had cars. Kids with cars were always popular. When I was seven, I decided that was my way in, to have a car. I hoarded my weekly allowance and any other money I got so I’d have enough to buy one by the time I got to high school. If I found a new book or record or movie magazine I couldn’t live without, I saved up my lunch money and starved. My car would be a convertible with fins like Mickey O’Hara’s brand new 1959 pink Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz. Mom said when I was ten I could start babysitting if I acted responsible, and then I would put babysitting money in with my allowance. I figured I acted pretty responsible most of the time.

Nobody, not even Mom and Dad, knew about my car money. I hid it in the bottom of my jewelry box, the one with the little plastic ballerina that popped up when you opened it and twirled in a circle to the tune of *Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!* I had to find another place soon, though. The money was beginning to bulge out the bottom of the box. I figured I had over fifty dollars in there by now. I never counted it. I preferred not to know exactly how much I had. That way I wouldn’t be tempted to spend any or get discouraged if I didn’t have as much as I thought. My biggest fear was that my stupid little sister Pam would find it and then I’d have to give her some to keep her from telling. It wasn’t good to let anyone know you had a treasure.

I found Molly when I got to school and we bounced her rubber ball against the wall until the bell rang. Molly said nothing about my birthday. I tried to act like I didn’t care as I walked to my desk, as if it were just another day. It wasn’t time for birthdays yet, not till Mom came with the cupcakes. I squirmed through arithmetic -- the yuckiest part of the day -- and English and social studies. No one mentioned my birthday in spite of all the hints I’d been dropping all week. By lunch my stomach felt sick, and I fed my bologna and mustard sandwich to the pigeons on the playground. After art class Mom would come.

The best thing about art class was the smell. Crayons, paste, tempera paints and oilcloth filled me with the same thrill I saw in Mom’s face whenever she went out to cut roses. Unlike some of my classmates, especially the boys, I took no culinary pleasure in consuming either paste or crayons. But I loved opening my art box, taking out my oilcloth and breathing in the fumes. I even got a tiny little high from it today, in spite of everything.

That’s when it began.

I was engrossed in a futile attempt to make my Thanksgiving turkey look less like a porcupine. To my right, Tommy’s Pilgrims came to life on the page. Impressive, but not as good as his Halloween monster had been. Takes one to know one, I thought. On my left, David Blumberg was struggling with what I meant to be birds flying over the Mayflower. They looked more like black pickles with propellers. Little wads of paper kept hitting me on the neck. I tried not to pay any attention.

If I turned around, it would be me and not the pitcher who would feel the wrath of Miss Miles.

“Excuse me,” said a woman’s voice from the classroom doorway. The voice had an almost-familiar accent I couldn’t quite place. It wasn’t like Rosa the cafeteria cook’s or Mr. Donatelli the owner of the milk store’s, but I’d heard one like it somewhere.

As I turned with the rest of the class to face the door, a spit wad smacked me in the eye.

“Yes? May I help you?” asked Miss Miles.

The woman who strode into the classroom was handsome, energetic. She wore a coat much too heavy for the unseasonably sunny fall day and had the thickest, most beautiful black hair I had ever seen. In her hand she carried a report card, which she waved as she spoke. We all got report cards last week. After subjecting me to one of his tedious lectures on my lack of computational brilliance, my father had signed mine and I had thankfully returned it.

“So,” said the woman, handing Miss Miles the card,
“you don't like my boy?”
Miss Miles glanced at the name scrolled in her elaborate handwriting at the top of the card.

"Why, of course I do," she said. "I like David just fine. Are you David's mother?"

The whole class turned to stare at David, who betrayed nothing. And then I realized that the accent was Mr. Blumberg's, but not quite. This voice sang, accompanied by its own percussion of thickly enunciated consonants.

"Ah, I am sorry. Yes, David is my boy."

She paused for a moment. "Then he doesn't do his work?"

"Yes, he does," said Miss Miles. The caterpillars began to move.

"So maybe he doesn't return his homework on time?"

She addressed her son without looking at him. "David, do you bring in your work every day?"

"Yes, Mama," said David.

Back to Miss Miles. "But you don't like his pictures?"

"Pictures?" asked Miss Miles.

"So what is this? What is this 'C' for art? It says here that C is 'average.' My son is 'average.' He does his work. He does it on time. So you don't like his pictures?"

Everyone gaped at David, whose face was only a few inches from mine. I saw his lips curl upward into the slightest, almost imperceptible hint of a smile.

"His pictures are just fine, Mrs. Blumberg," said Miss Miles.

"I like his pictures," said Mrs. Blumberg. "And who are you? Picasso? Do you make pictures like Picasso?"

I could not recall anyone ever rendering Miss Miles speechless, but there she stood, mouth ajar, the report card dangling from her limp hand as the caterpillars crawled up her forehead.

"I like David's pictures," Mrs. Blumberg repeated. And with that, she whirled and strode gracefully to the door, where she turned back and said before whisking out, "And my son David, he is not 'average.'"

You could slice the silence in the room. Kids squirmed. Every eye was on David's face. For the first time, I really looked at it, framed by thick, curly hair, with its full, large features. Not a wildly handsome face but a nice face. I decided I liked it.

David stared at the black pickles on the paper in front of him. I envisioned my father delivering Mrs. Blumberg's speech to Miss Miles and cringed. David must be dying with embarrassment. Before I thought about what I was doing, I reached out my hand and touched his, the hand that was resting across the Mayflower in his drawing. David looked up at me then and my eyes met his -- clear, strong, beautiful eyes, almost liquid like a doe's, golden and intelligent. I caught my breath. I thought I'd choke on the lump in my throat.

As I recall it now, something like a tiny flame, an explosion of delicate sparks, went off in my brain and something happened that I couldn't articulate but I knew was very, very important. David was not embarrassed. He was proud, and I understood. Just for a second he covered my hand with his and smiled at me. I smiled back and squeezed his hand, then snatched mine away and buried my face in my arms. I couldn't look at him again.

Mom arrived, flushed and panting but only a few minutes late and with all of the cupcakes intact and sparkling in their box. Relief. Everybody sang "Happy Birthday," snatched a cupcake and began chattering through crumbly mouths to their friends, ignoring me.

David asked, "What will you do for your birthday?"

"Oh, I get to eat whatever I want for dinner and have cake and ice cream and open my presents. And I get to stay up late if I want," I said, still not looking at him. "I'm going to eat fried chicken and potato salad."

David said, "Cool." I watched him out of the corner of my eye. He wolfed down his cupcake and went back to his drawing. I broke mine into little pieces and ate them very slowly so I would look busy. Mom came over and kissed me on the cheek before she left. She looked startled when I kissed her back.

The afternoon raced by in a blur until the bell rang. In the hall, as I was struggling into my coat, David said into my ear as he passed me on his way out the door, "Happy birthday, Beth."

Department: The Promethean, Genesis (2006-2007)
“Thanks, David,” I said. Deciding not to take the bus, I ran all the way home.

Everyone called Mr. Donatelli’s corner market “the milk store.” Pam and I got to go there because we could cut through the vacant lot behind it and we didn’t have to cross the highway. Every Friday I took the dollar Mom gave us, folded it up in my hand so no one would see it, and walked to the milk store, where I got a quart of milk out of the cooler and Pam got a loaf of squishy bread off the shelf. Then we waited while Mr. Donatelli sliced a half-pound of bologna for us and wrapped it up in white waxy paper.

Mr. Donatelli had a cash register but he didn’t push the buttons to find out how much people owed. He wrote the prices down in blue ink right on the paper bag he put the groceries in and added the figures up. Then he added them up again just to make sure they were right. Then he took the dollar, pulled on the handle that opened the cash register and put the money inside the drawer. We got back ten cents, which he always took out in two nickels so he could give one to Pam and one to me. I usually bought a 3-Musketeers bar with mine, but sometimes I got M&M’s. That’s when I brought a dime of my lunch money to buy a Coke so I could pour the M&M’s into the bottle and let them soak in the Coke. Later on, when I was in high school, I bought Teaberry gum so I could make a chain out of the gum wrappers. My seventy-five-foot chain was the longest in my class. But by then gum and candy cost a whole dime.

One afternoon right after the Christmas holidays, I found David waiting for me outside the big school doors. “Hey, Beth,” he said. “Wanna go to the milk store and get some ice cream?”

This struck me as a strange proposition as I slid across ground covered with January ice and felt the sting on my cheeks from the probably-below-zero air.

“Sure!” I said ecstatically. “But I don’t have any money.”

“I’ve got some,” said David. “We can share.”

What we shared was a chocolate dipped ice cream cone with nuts on it. Mr. Donatelli presented it to us with a solemn flourish. “It’s better in the winter,” said David. “You don’t have to worry about it melting and having the chocolate fall off in pieces all over you.” I nodded in admiration as I took a nice, firm bite.

We finished the ice cream cone and cut through the lot with David chattering about a book he’d just read called Man’s Search for Meaning. He said it was kind of a hard book to understand but his father answered his questions about it. It was about the war and people who were put into terrible places with barbed wire around them because other people didn’t like them. They were starved and beaten and left to freeze without any clothes. Some of them were led into ovens and got burned up. But the man who wrote the book tried not to think about how bad it was and made himself think about how he was going to help people when he got out. That kept him from giving up. He told other people they had to think about what they had to do when they got out so that they wouldn’t give up, either. He was some kind of a doctor, I think. David said he must have been very brave. I said I would have been really scared.

Since he hadn’t finished telling me about the book when we got to my house, we walked around the block. “My dad was in the war,” I said. “He was on a battleship and shot big guns at other ships. But he never told me about those people. He doesn’t like talking about the war.”

“That’s okay. Maybe he didn’t know about the camps,” said David.

“Was your dad in the war?”

David got quiet for a minute. “He was in the camps,” he said. “But he thought about taking Mama and me and my brothers and coming to America. See, his papa was here. And he got out.”

“Wow,” I said. “I’d sure like to read that book.”

David promised to loan it to me.

We had ended up back at my front door. “Wanna come in?” I asked David.

He retreated a step. “Better not,” he said.

I took his hand and dragged him up the icy steps.

“Come on!” I said. “I want to show you something.”

I raced up the stairs to my room, discarding gloves and hat along the way, with David at my heels. He stopped at the
“Come in and close the door,” I said. “No, wait. I’ve gotta make sure Pam’s not around.”

As usual, Pam wasn’t. She lived at Francie’s house, which eternally endeared me to Francie. I pulled David into my room, closed the door and, with his help, dragged my reading chair in front of it.

“Now, David,” I said, “you’ve got to swear you won’t tell anybody about this. If you don’t swear you won’t show you.”

“I swear,” said David.

“Cross your heart and hope to die?”

David solemnly crossed his heart.

I opened my jewelry box, removed the bottom and reverently lifted out my life savings.

“Wow,” said David.

“You’re the only person in the universe who knows about this,” I said. “Not even Molly knows.” I thought a minute.

“Guess that makes you my best friend.”

David beamed. That made me beam, too.

“How much is there?” asked David.

“I don’t know,” I said. “I’ve never counted it.”

That seemed to impress David. “I’ll bet there’s a hundred dollars there! What’s it for?”

“It’s for my car,” I said. “For when I get to high school. A convertible.”

“Wow,” David said again.

I heard footsteps on the stairs. I tried stuffing the money back into the box but this time the bottom arched over it.

“Beth! You’re late! Is that Pam up there?”

“Sorry, Mom. No, Mom. It’s my friend David. From school.”

“David? I don’t think I know David. You’d better come out.”

I slammed down the lid of the box, threw my paltry jewelry collection on top of it, and motioned to David to help me move the chair away from the door so Mom couldn’t hear. We lifted it and got it across the room all right, but then I tripped on the throw rug and my end crashed to the floor. David covered his eyes.

“Elizabeth, what are you doing in there?”

I opened the door and sauntered out, followed by David. Mom looked him over with her critical Mom look. This was followed by an all-out frown.

“Hello, Mrs. Copeland,” said David.

“Boy, dinner sure smells good,” I said. “Can David stay?”

“Good heavens, no!” said Mom. This was a Mom tone you didn’t argue with. She mostly used it when what she said didn’t make any sense. “I mean,” said Mom, tugging at her skirt, “his mother will worry. Does she know you’re here, David?”

“Yes, ma’am,” said David. “I mean, she knows I went to get ice cream at the milk store. But I should be getting home.”

“Ice cream?” she said as David raced past her down the stairs and barreled to the front door, calling behind him, “Bye, Beth! See you in school. Nice to meet you, Mrs. Copeland.” He flung open the door and threw himself headlong into my father, whose hand still pointed the door key at the lock.

“Sorry, sir,” gasped David breathlessly.

Dad held David at arm’s length and surveyed him.

“And who,” said Dad, “are you?”

“Blumberg? Blumberg?” asked Dad. He glared at me. “Blumberg? You must be a long way from home.”

“I’ll take the bus,” said David.

Dad released him and he skidded down the stairs into the darkness. Mom was frowning as she went into the kitchen. “Blumberg,” said Dad. “What was he doing? Selling something?”

“No, dear,” said Mom. “He ran into Beth at the milk store. He’s in her class.”

I wondered how Dad knew that.

“Yes, sir. I’ll take the bus,” said David.

Dad released him and he skidded down the stairs into the darkness. Mom was frowning as she went into the kitchen. “Blumberg,” said Dad. “What was he doing? Selling something?”

“No, dear,” said Mom. “He ran into Beth at the milk store. He’s in her class.”

“Well, I don’t want him in this house again. And I don’t want you,” roared Dad, shaking a finger at me, “hanging around with him.”

I nodded. No point in arguing with Dad. He didn’t use a special tone when he didn’t make any sense. He seldom made
The next day at school, I opened my desk top to find a well-worn copy of *Man's Search for Meaning* inside a beautiful blue and gold tin box. The box had a very clever false bottom and was twice as big as my jewelry box.

David and I ate lunch together every day for the rest of the winter and into spring. We always divided whatever we had and shared it between us. We are fast so we could go out on the playground and talk. David liked to talk about so many things. We talked about *Man's Search for Meaning* a lot. I didn't understand anything about anything in that book, but David explained it all. And he talked about poetry and animals and space ships and history. He told funny jokes, too. I talked about my stories and living in old houses and drawing and growing flowers. We both talked about music. We made up names and formed a book club. We each took a book out of the library and read it and then we exchanged books and read them. Then we talked about them.

At first, Molly didn't like it that David became my best friend, but then she started hanging around with Beverly Johnson and got okay about it. We still bounced her ball against the wall every morning before school started, but it was getting hard to talk to Molly. We didn't have anything to talk about.

One particularly beautiful spring day, David got sick. During recess, I went to the nurse's office, where David sat forlornly in a chair with a thermometer sticking out of his mouth. He looked terrible and didn't feel like talking, so I just sat down in the chair next to him and tried to look cheerful. It didn't work.

Then David's mother came to walk him home. She still had the most beautiful hair and striking face I ever saw even though her dark skin looked paler than I remembered. And she still sang when she spoke. Mr. James the music teacher wouldn't have liked it -- he would have told her not to sing through her nose -- but I loved listening to her. She sang like that with the nurse for a few minutes and came back with the bad news. It looked like measles, she said, and David was going to have to stay home for several days until he got well. David and I groaned in unison.

David had taught me a new word. He called it "hootspa." He said that's what somebody has when they have a lot of nerve. I never had much hootspa, but that's when I got some from wherever hootspa comes from.

"Mrs. Blumberg," I said, "may I come with you and stay with David so he won't get lonesome?"

Mrs. Blumberg said nothing for a minute, then she stroked my cheek. "You," she said, "must be Beth."

"Oh, Mama, can she?" said David.

Mrs. Blumberg smiled and the smile stretched all the way across her face. "But what about school? And what will you tell your mother?"

I deflated. Mrs. Blumberg looked thoughtful. "Come," she said. She strode down the hall toward Miss Miles's classroom, with David and I waddling behind like ducklings. Suddenly, she turned around and cocked her head, looking at me. "Have you had this measles, Beth?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," I said. "Pam and I -- that's my sister -- we had them last year." Mrs. Blumberg just nodded, opened the door to the classroom and sailed in.

"Good morning, Miss Miles!" said Mrs. Blumberg, cheerfully. Miss Miles stood upright and braced herself. Mrs. B. went on, "I see David is now 'B' in his picture drawing. This is good, yes?" She didn't wait for Miss Miles to make a reply. "Now David has this measles thing. We will need to take home some work for him to do. And Beth is going to help us carry it. I will see Beth gets home in safety."

David tried to look as weak and fragile as possible and I stood sentinel. To her credit, Miss Miles decided not to engage Mrs. B. Together, they retrieved David's schoolbooks, workbooks and pencil box from his desk and deposited them into my outstretched hands. Miss Miles explained to David's mother what he had to do and Mrs. B. jotted down a few notes. Then we all paraded out and walked the few blocks to David's house without saying a word.

David lived in a tiny apartment in a part of town I'd never been in before. The living room was bursting with so much heavy wooden furniture that I had to sidle sideways to get...
to the hall that led to the bedrooms. A wonderful pendulum clock, its base carved into birds, vines and flowers, dominated the mantle over the fireplace on the far wall. Something that smelled heavenly simmered away on a two-burner stove in the miniature kitchen, and two loaves of fresh, homemade bread cooled on the counter near the sink. Everything in David's house looked worn, even shabby, but it sparkled immaculately. I felt like Alice in Wonderland, shrunken down and wandering through a doll house.

David had to share a room with one younger brother in the upper bunk above his bed and a baby brother in a crib wedged into the corner of the room, and all of them shared one dresser. From the scuff marks on the lid, the two older boys obviously used the wooden toy box under the window for climbing up and looking out.

David, who really was sick, crawled right into bed. His mother tucked him in, kissed him and left quietly. I took his hand and he smiled weakly at me, then closed his eyes. I sat very still on the edge of his bed, holding his hand until I was sure he had fallen asleep. Then I climbed onto the toy chest and pulled back the blue curtains that covered the window.

I drew in my breath. A tree stretched its pink-blossomed arms across the middle of the little yard, and all along the fence the most incredible tulips and daffodils nodded their heads in the breeze. Some little white flowers covered the ground in front of them like snow, trimming the edges of the velvety green lawn. Flowers in cobalt blue pots and terra cotta planters peeked out from among the beds and a stone bench under the tree beckoned the reader. Birds fluttered happily around the cottage-shaped feeders. The doll house sat on the edge of a fairyland. I wanted awfully to climb out the window and sit in that magic place, but instead I closed the curtains and wandered into the kitchen to find Mrs. Blumberg.

She really was singing now, in a strange language, while she stirred the aromatic concoction on the stove. I hid in a corner and watched her for awhile, fascinated.

"Hello, Beth," she said without looking up. "Is David sleeping?"

"Yes," I said, coming sheepishly out of the corner. In the afternoon sunlight streaming through the kitchen window, Mrs. Blumberg looked very tired. "Can I help?"

She smiled that broad smile. "Why, yes," she said. "I would like to sit a minute." Instantly, she did. I set the table under her direction and then sat down in the chair opposite her.

She leaned her head on her hand and closed her eyes. "Tell me about the school. Do you like it?" She said "shool" for school.

I began chattering away like a monkey, answering Mrs. B.'s questions the best I could. Then she asked me if I thought David liked school.

"I think so," I said. "But David is so smart I think he gets bored sometimes."

Mrs. B. smiled again. "I think you are very smart, too," she said. "Do you get sometimes bored?"

"Sometimes. In English maybe, and social studies. We read baby books."

"And arithmetic?"

I thought a minute. "No, not bored. I just hate it."

Mrs. B. laughed out loud. Her laugh sang, too. "I think I do not understand these schools," she said. "I think in these public schools it is important that people like you and you can say what is in the books, but you do not learn how to think. They do not teach what you can do with what you learn. They do not care if you work hard. I think this is a very different kind of school."

"Kids don't like you if you're smart," I said.

Mrs. B. reached out and stroked my cheek. "You don't worry about that, Beth. You just be smart and do not be afraid of what they think. It is most important that you love to learn. I am happy you are David's friend."

"I'm happy, too," I said.

"I think you must go home now," said Mrs. B. "I will walk with you to the bus stop. Have you got money for the bus?"

"No," I said.

Mrs. B. rummaged in a jar near the refrigerator and fished out a dime. We looked in on David before we left. He
was thrashing in his sleep and looked awful. I ran over to the bed and kissed him on the forehead, which was like kissing a hot oven.

“Poor David,” I said.

When I looked out the back window of the bus, Mrs. B. was waving at me, wearing her big, wide smile.

I went to the Blumbergs the next three days after school. I told Mom I was going to Molly’s. It felt bad to lie, but I had to see David. I saved some of my lunch money for the bus and dropped Mrs. B’s dime back into the jar when she wasn’t looking. I didn’t think the Blumbergs had very much money. I helped Mrs. B. set the table the first two nights, and we talked a lot about how important it is to learn and to be yourself and not care about what other kids think. Mrs. B. told me not to worry if what you did didn’t turn out perfect. What mattered was that you tried and did your best and that you kept trying till it got better. The thing she told me the most, though, was that you have to have faith. I didn’t know why she said that but she said it about five times. You must have faith, Beth. God knows everything you need.

I thought she worked too hard. She seemed so tired. I told her I would come over after school and help her, but she just hugged and kissed me.

The last day I didn’t see Mrs. B., but David’s little brother Eli let me in. David was pretty cheerful for someone who looked like a spotted corpse. I told him about all the nerdy things that were going on in school and we talked about the books we’d finished reading. I brought him Kidnapped from the library. That looked like a boy’s book.

I couldn’t get away on the weekend. Monday took months to arrive, and arithmetic class lasted a week. But the last bell finally rang and I ran all the way to David’s.

Something felt wrong before I ever rang the doorbell. It gave me butterflies in my stomach. When nobody came to answer, I stretched up on my toes and looked in the front window, which was open a little. I couldn’t see anybody, but I could hear voices through the crack.

“What can I do?” said a man’s voice. “She will not go.”

“She must go!” said the voice of an old woman. “She could die!”

“Esther,” said the man, “we have no money for Dr. Baumann. How can we pay the hospital? He has been good. He comes for nothing. But she cannot go to the hospital for nothing. How can I get one hundred dollars? The rent has taken everything.”

I dashed along the side of the building, praying the gate into Fairyland was unlocked. It wasn’t. I shoved against it but it wouldn’t yield. I crawled on my hands and knees along the fence, looking for a way in. A hole at the bottom of one section, big enough for a rabbit to get through, led into the flower beds. I stretched the wire as hard as I could, parting it just enough to wriggle through, but not before I had torn my shirt, skinned my knees again and made a dreadful mess of the tulips. I ran to the back door, which I knew was kept unlocked, and quietly let myself into the kitchen.

In front of the sofa, a man with dark, thick, curly hair stood with his back to me. Seated in front of him was a beautiful old woman wearing a gray fringed shawl. I crept along the stairwell, chose a moment when both of them decided to talk at once, and bolted up the stairs. First I peeked into David’s room.

David slept soundly. He looked much better and the spots were almost gone. His deep skin tone had returned. That gave me a brief second of joy. Then I tiptoed across the hall and looked into Mrs. B.’s room.

David slept soundly. He looked much better and the spots were almost gone. His deep skin tone had returned. That gave me a brief second of joy. Then I tiptoed across the hall and looked into Mrs. B.’s room.

I had to cover my mouth to keep from crying out. At first I thought she was dead, a statue with her ankles and arms crossed, her white face surrounded by a halo of black hair. I crept to the side of the bed. Even when I put my ear near her mouth I could not hear her breathing until I listened for a minute. I didn’t even need to touch her to feel the heat radiating from her forehead.

I snuck back into David’s room, climbed up on the toy box and squirmed out the window. It was just a short drop to the bottom, where I fell -- not too hard -- on my own bottom. I don’t think I ever ran as fast as I did to that bus stop. I thought
the bus would never get me home.

"Please, God," I prayed. "I know You don't always answer the way we want but I know You always answer." Mrs. B. taught me that. "Please don't let Mrs. B. die. And please tell me what to do!"

I hated to cry, but tears blinded me as I burst through the door of my bedroom, wiping snot on the cuff of my sleeve. Opening the bottom drawer of my dresser, I withdrew the beautiful blue and gold box with the false bottom. Tucking it under my arm, I fled down the back steps, out the back gate into the middle of the street. Which way to go? I decided to trust my feet, which led me to the milk store and the old wooden phone booth in the corner.

I did not know how to spell "Baumann," and when I looked under "Doctors" I couldn't find anybody listed, not even my own doctor, Dr. Cross. Then I remembered about calling the operator. She said she would connect me to Dr. Baumann. When he came on the line and said hello, he sounded just like Mr. Blumberg the bus driver. I told him that Mrs. Blumberg was very sick and she had to go to the hospital and that they didn't have a car and would he find somebody to take her there? I said all of this in one word without taking a breath. Then I said not to ask them about the money because it was already at the hospital. And then I hung up.

I sat in that phone booth until I got my breath back, never taking my eyes off the lid of the box. Then I walked to the hospital. It wasn't far and I didn't have to run. In the lobby, I took a card and the stubby, chewed-up pencil attached by a string to its holder and wrote "For Mrs. Bloomburg" on the back of the card and put it inside the box. I had to stretch my arms as far over my head as I could to push the box onto the counter where the nurse was. And then I ran. I ran all the way home, climbed into bed with my clothes on and pulled the covers over my head.

I had the skin prickles from being scared. I thought about it and decided I wasn't scared because I might get in trouble with my dad. It wasn't because I'd never get my convertible and be popular, because it doesn't matter what other people think about you if you are kind and true to yourself. I didn't really know what being true to yourself meant, but I believed it because Mrs. B. said it. Mrs. B. wasn't going to die if they let her in the hospital. People didn't die in hospitals. And then I knew why I was scared.

I was scared because I didn't know how much money was in the box. And I didn't know if it was enough.

I shivered. It was so cold. I imagined the tears running into my ears and the snot running down my nose turning into icicles. I thought maybe I was going to barf, but when I tried to get out of bed to go to the bathroom I couldn't move. Maybe Mom and Dad would just find me there, frozen in the bed, curled up into a little snowball.

And then something wonderful happened. From somewhere above me, I heard Mrs. Blumberg singing. She sang in her funny language, but I understood the words. "You must have faith, Beth." That's what she sang. "God knows everything you need." And God must have sent me some faith from the same place where hootspa comes from, because I went right to sleep.

David came back to school a week later. He didn't say anything to me at all. He just opened his desk and started putting his stuff back inside. But when I opened mine, I saw another tin box on top of my arithmetic book. This one was red and silver. I slid it onto my lap and pulled off the lid.

There, in a ball of tissue paper, nestled a little metal model of a 1959 pink Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz with the top down.
POETRY SOUP

Jess Bouchard

my esophagus
is a slide for poetry
like vegetable soup
that pours down me
with
celerydiction,
artichokealliteration,
beansyntax

poetry tends to fill me
as it finds my mouth
each bite at a time
then devour my undivided attention

so I consider eating it all up
and digesting these words
to produce
tastefulmetaphors

CLOUDS

Rebecca Andersen

White clouds,
Grey clouds.
Cotton candy,
Sugar dandy.

Shapes of cats,
Shapes of hats.
Puffy like cotton,
Childhoods not forgotten.

Swirls and curls,
White as pearls.
Lets swing on them,
Run on them.

Sun beams burst,
Can I be first?
To fly,
So high?
THE CREATURE

Jeremy Richards

Something clawing at my insides
Through my empty veins it rides
I am not alone, I cannot sleep
Deep within my black heart it creeps
Numbing all of me that feels
Reducing my skin to an empty peel
This monster haunts my vision
Yet cannot be removed by incision
So still it crawls, black as night
Feasting in the hollows, void of light
In my memory it takes its reign
Thriving on every picture-perfect stain
The demon soars on the wings of hell
Thoughts drowned in its deceitful swell
I fear it will never die
I feel its ever vigilant, midnight eye
Watching every action taken
Leaving not a nerve unshaken
Will it be with me all my life?
A self-inflicting constant strife?
This is the burden I must bear
A weight I will not ever share
Who will win the battle, the beast or me?
Will I triumph and be set free?
Or within me will it always hide?
My ever-present thorn-in-side.

HOW TO

Daniel Cole

I take a scalpel to my chest
And split apart my naked breasts
I see beneath the cage of life
My thump beats once, then beats twice

And with my hands I dig in deeper
Feeling warmth, then cold take over
Fibrous strings of skin entangle
Till I tear through and let blood drizzle

My fingers move against the bone
Over ripples, revealing home
As callous
Yet, a fragile zone

Buzzing sound of near conclusion
Begins the grind upon my sternum
Wailing cries for hope's delusion
To open my Pandora's box

And with my marrow seeking fusion
I deny, complete the job

Struggling bones separating
Ends invading O2 tanks
Nerve synapses off and firing
Spinal twitching, matter pangs
Diaphragm is concaving
Final moments, thoughts dissipating
Now I'm nearly done I am
Now I'm nearly done I am
Now, I'm dearly none I am
Now...I'm nearly done
Now...I'm dearly none
WORDS

Tabitha Jensen

Sometimes we don’t have a savior. Sometimes no one looks to see our flailing arms and kicks against a background of monotony. Sometimes the effort put forth by all our heart and soul and fire retrieves nothing from this Earth but an electronically regurgitated form letter of appreciation.

Sometimes, even a scream at a capacity you didn’t know your vocal chords could ever possibly allow is heard by no one. Sometimes, the only thing we have is the silent written word.

Written in the dark, in the light. Typed, scrawled, scratched, printed. Lead, ink, blood. These words are the echoes of spirit, the enigma of being that no one can deny. No one can say the essence of who you are is wrong.

Unless they do.

Words are ugly. Words hurt. Words can make you lose your lunch all over the neatly typed page. Words can stir people into revolution, or turn them inside to despair. Words can seduce you, make your day. Make you laugh. Let you know that you’re not alone.

Words take guts, and bravery, and guile to produce. Multiply that by ten thousand, four hundred and twenty eight, and you have about what it takes to keep them.

Hold on to your words. Print them, spread them, pepper your entire universe with what you see and hear and feel. Don’t be ashamed of your words, because only then are they incorrect.

I have my words. They’re just not here.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Andersen is a junior English major. She writes, “Clouds must be read from a child’s perspective--simple and beautiful. Too often do I overanalyze my writing, but this poem proves the beauty of simplicity. My second poem, Trapped, is an emotionally dense poem that was inspired by the painting The Bar at the Folies-Bergere. The woman’s face, although emotionless, evoked a longing to escape the counter she stood behind. But more than that, the wall that stands between a woman and the world. As a woman, I often times feel trapped, so I write.”

Jess Bouchard is a hobbyist photographer and married to poetry. She writes, “I thoroughly enjoy sending letters and collecting everything old. I highly dislike raisins. My intellectual (poet) homies include: Sylvia Plath, Robert Creeley, Walt Whitman, and Charles Bukowski. The poems I’ve submitted are experiments of different types of writing styles and themes that are rather comical, to say the least.”

Christina Busby is a young and thoughtful English major at Concordia University. This poem was written in remembrance of her grandfather who passed away from cancer in the fall of 2006. It attempts to capture an important lesson her grandfather taught her shortly before his death.

Daniel Cameron, a junior English major, is originally from Thousand Oaks, California. He now lives and writes in Portland.

Daniel Cole is a 22-year-old anarchist of creativity and imagination. He grew up everywhere, but calls Monterey, CA home. He’s been influenced by the brains of Dr. Seuss, Tim Burton, Shigeru Miyamoto, and the free roaming Japanese imagination, while his childhood was infected by Legos, comics, lots of sun, and daydreaming.

Lynne Danley is the Program Coordinator at the CU School of Management. She lives in Gresham with her wonderful husband Terry and Jack, their rat terrier (but don’t tell him he’s not their child). Lynne loves writing, reading (especially good mysteries),
music, movies, cooking, gardening, walking, playing with computer applications, and learning about most everything. She also enjoys visiting with her daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren. In "El Dorado," two children make some discoveries about what is truly precious. It was inspired by some of Lynne's recollections of the humor, pathos, drama, fear and wonder of childhood.

John (Rocky) Esposito is a freshman Theology major.

Donnie Drobny writes, “Have you ever felt that all the words in the world couldn't describe a feeling or moment in time? I know that I have and yet, I still try to encapsulate those moments with my words. Some say it's an obsession. For me, it's a calling; that's what these poems are about. Answering a call.”

Kristina Galicinao writes, “'A Different Feel of Beautiful' was written mainly as a declaration of acceptance. On the day of my departure, while walking toward the airport security checkpoint, I broke down and through my tears, told my mom repeatedly that I didn’t want to go. After traveling about 2600 miles from the comforts of home to go to a school that I had never seen in person yet, I realized fully how scary and even risky my decision was. I was always aware of the fact that going away for college would be difficult and had thought that I was okay with that. But it's not always possible to accept something you're not even familiar with in the first place. Naturally, God always provides what is needed. So in the midst of my fears and doubts, I was given a sense of peace that has helped me to willingly, confidently, and even joyfully face each day here in Oregon.”

Holly Goodrich is a senior English major. She loves writing and finds it very therapeutic. She would like to thank Prof. Anna Dzirkalis for her encouragement and support. Without her assistance, Incoming Tide could not have been written.

Greg Harris is the Marketing Director at Concordia University. His poem, Making Love to God II, attempts to add a masculine voice to the tradition of erotic spirituality in Christian literature. It is one of his few poems that is not based on personal experience.

Beth Holian is a sophomore pursuing an English degree. She enjoys reading, film noir, art, and drinking massive amounts of coffee and then sleeping it off. In her spare times she works on adding to her many writing projects and planning her next cow tipping adventure.

Samuel Irving is a junior majoring in Interdisciplinary studies (Psychology/ Sociology). He plans on pursuing a Masters in counseling and to open up a wellness center for minorities after Graduation. His writings are a reflection of God working through the situations in his life. His mantra is, “Nothing can hold us back but ourselves.”

Tabitha Jensen is a senior English major at Concordia University, graduating this spring. Her post-graduation plans include attempting to publish her thesis project, Confessions of a Lutheran Schoolgirl, and find some career to finance her devastating designer stiletto habit. She's also a huge fan of artisan sea salts, farmstead cheese and Trader Joe's exquisite line of exotic simmer sauces.

Tia Michelle Lawson writes, “I worked on The Eve of Spring over my last year at CU. I think that the essence of this poem - the fusion of ancient theology, feminism and my own interpretation of religion and spirituality - truly defines my own unique experience at Concordia and the integration of formal academic knowledge with my own views on the world. I have written this piece not to be controversial or abrupt but simply as an expression of my own beliefs and as part of a dialogue which wishes to place alongside history the 'alternative' voices of those who think and feel differently. Vaya en paz.”

Kimberly Lindow writes, "I have thought about writing about my childhood for many years but I never actually followed through. This year, I decided to finally write about my favorite neighbors and the time I spent with them. It was only when I was writing that the title came up and the ending came out the way it did, which are my two favorite parts.”
Melissa Meszaros is a junior in the Interdisciplinary Studies program with emphases in English and Communications. She writes, “From Pittsburgh to Portland, I have been so blessed to have such an exciting and beautiful life. At the age of 24, I know that there is no other place I’d rather be than Concordia University. Concordia is the reason I have a second chance, my Genesis, and for that I am thankful.”

Kaitlyn Montague is a sophomore double-majoring in English and Humanities. She’s a huge nerd who spends time contemplating who would win in a fight between Ziggy Stardust David Bowie and Labyrinth David Bowie, and the deeper symbolism in any part of Dracula and its 5000 interpretations. She enjoys comic books, Finnish Goth rock, epic war movies, and let’s not forget the gothic, fantasy, and minimalist fiction. Her writing is sporadically inspired by melodramatic movies, music, and sometimes literature if it hits the right chord.

Jen Murphy is a freshman Social Work major.

Rachael (Rae) Northcraft is a freshman in the Secondary Education program with an endorsement in Language Arts. Her poems are dedicated to all of the crazy (yet, lovely) people who befriended her and to the strangers who were always faithful to offer a smile or an awkward hello.

Jeremy Richards is a freshman English major from New Meadows, ID.

Jyndia Schaible is a senior Biology major with minors in History and Psychology.

Johanna (Josie) Stephens is a junior English major with an art minor. Rhythmic End and Agony were both written after random lines came to her in the middle of various nights. She finds her best inspiration when writing implements are not available, and is lucky if she remembers anything by the time she finds one.

Alex Woolner is a senior at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, in North Adams, MA. She enjoys photography, tea, galoshes, and French culture. She is a comrade of Jess Bouchard.
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