

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW



ART & LITERATURE

Dear Reader,

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW, a magazine of literature and the arts, is proud to showcase work produced by artists and authors from Crafton Hills College, the community, the nation, and, for the first time ever- the world. The contributing artists and authors range in age from teens to octogenarians, and vary in experience from novice to professional. Our goal has been to pursue truth through creativity and boldness. Ambitious expectations lead the way to our most exciting edition ever. Turn these pages to be challenged, entertained, and inspired.

Sincerely,

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW Team

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW is a literary and art magazine published each spring. The content is generated by students of Crafton Hills College, as well as other artists and authors who choose to contribute. The magazine is published by the Literary Magazine Production class with assistance from the Crafton Hills English Department. Opinions and ideas expressed in The Sand Canyon Review are those of the artists and authors. The Sand Canyon Review and its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the students of Crafton Hills College, its administration, or staff.

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POETRY

“Smear signature phrases of poetic gods.”

—Ashley Hayes, *The Man Who Marks Boards*

We are snakes with dislodged jaws
Eating oranges whole
Dancing in darkness
With glow sticks all around
Moving our nonexistent
Feet and hands
To the beat
A coil that keeps
Moving
Spitting gold fish across
Into another's open mouth
Late into the night
We turn back time
Water flies
And I
Can hardly breathe
Hysterics take over
With wet floors
We slip on
But don't care and fall and bruise our knees
Wrestling for the spout and hiding in
Locked bathrooms
Where we spray each other with perfume
And splash H2O out the cracks
With wide teeth we laugh
and eat
And then finally relax with our dislodged jaws
hanging open
Eating oranges
And watching into our vision the static pass.

My grandfather tastes like the bitter peel of a lime.
When I spit at the other kids, mother made me walk with him as punishment.
Away from everybody else.
He had me peel a bright green lime with my teeth.
Each bite filled my mouth with a cloud of numbing mist.
Each one more abrasive.

I would spit in anybody's face again,
if it only meant I could walk with you one last time.
Because underneath the bitter peel, the soft flesh of citrus.
Sweet as a Sunday's allowance.
Sweet as pan dulce con leche.
Sweet as the time you gave me my very own songbird,
and taught it how to sing.

But, when all that is left is the white string spine and a couple seeds,
I can't help but squeeze it in my hand tight as a handshake, close my eyes,
and hope that when I open them again, you're work-stained hands
will hold one last lime. And I already know what you'll say—what you would've said,
before the nightly rosaries in your name.

The phone sitting next to the crumpled
tissues and cough drops rings.
I look over—caller id: sister.
She never calls. Not anymore.
Not since she met him.
Not since the black eyes with their excuses,
the injured animals, manipulation, and torrent of lies.

The fortress he's built around her
to keep her isolated from those she used to love
now has holes in its walls—
holes he's made with his own angry fists.

The questions rushing through my head threaten
to overwhelm me as the phone rings but, now grateful
for the illness keeping me home from work,
I take a deep breath and answer the phone.

Hey, sis!
"I'm leaving him tomorrow."
Can I help?
"Yes, he leaves for work at 6am. I'm leaving then."

The next morning, the alarm rings at 4am.
I don't snooze, don't stay nestled
in the warmth of my comforting bed.
Immediately, my feet hit the cold wood floor.
My mind, normally hazy this early, is alert.
I've been waiting so long for an opportunity—
to be given the permission to act and help.

Anxiety, excitement, hope, and dread
fill my mind and my stomach.
I don't know what the coming hours will bring.
Only time will tell.
But this thing I do know—
today, we move.

mama kneels in her shawl and prays for my salvation
as la virgencita looks down and smiles at her prayers
but mama doesn't see her sin she doesn't know where i am
the cold wind bites no matter the layers
but i know where she is its time for five o'clock mass
the candles in the church flicker the heat turned up warm
wafers and wine on the altar more than i have eaten in days
all i have to do is renounce my way of love
and i will be the prodigal son welcomed home
instead of living in this rat hole
where there is no water and the toilet is down the hall
shivering in my boy shorts
la virgencita around my neck but she doesn't see me
ruega por me señora
because i don't know how much longer i can hold on
because the meds ran out and so did the health insurance
because i'm too sick to work
preexisting medical condition
mama tells her friends i'm away at school
people think she is amazing to have raised such a son
why wasn't she amazing when grandpa was in my room
why did she throw me out when i turned him in
ugly stench of breath as he whispered his love
his cold hands froze my baby brother my cousin me
my soul is frozen still i have always hated winter
freezing in this motel turning tricks to survive
frozen death of my life
perpetual numbness of long term pain
i look at the dusty cockroach in a spider web in the corner
will i soon be curled up on my back
frozen in rigor mortis like him
while the world goes on warm in its wealth

Choking on California

Dylan Freude

California, I am choking on you and it is a lovely feeling
Sweet home coiled in the ragged wings of manifest destiny—
Suspended by the flash of circumstance

California what is your secret?
What is your creation? Who will know your identity?
Our father was a strict Protestant and our mother a historically stubborn Spaniard
The East spreads its arms and the west its legs
I put forth before the court: which is better?
California, You are the feeling America has been drinking for
Forever washing the East out of our eyes

We are the countries productive ankle
You are the American Wet Dream
California is washed beneath my mattress

Fires, Floods, and Earthquakes- This place will never be utopia
Hollywood is bound to be monstrous, Hollywood is an iron maiden,
Hollywood is the glorious and holy mirror. Do you fear repetition?
The mountains are falling apart
Your art communities scare me
Blind Confucius on the streets of Los Angeles
Neon Halos above Mary's brow
Have we saved these or just yet to ruin it?

There is a pot of silver at the end of the spotlight

Rows of Spanish Valencias
Shift the valley form green to orange
Blanketing the city in dripping citrus

And soon
The gales return
Will draw ice from the moon

The Smudge pots
Will be summoned once more
Kerosene down their throats

Igniting a fire in the belly
Illuminating the nighttide
In a glow to guard the harvest

How I
Would welcome such a fire
If it would save my city

Etta prayed open
Heaven's doors from embroidered
Pillows in her room.

She made tea and asked
Jesus to be her unseen
Guest. He always came.

Etta left with her
Angels in autumn. Jesus
Has tea with me now.

for Ryan

The Man Who Marks Boards
Your hair directed the walls.
What worlds—your words!
Still seeming to speak just to me,
wandering between my ears
in your freshly miled shoes.

In the boldest fonts, you wrote,
“Profound chicken scratch,”
smeared signature phrases of poetic gods.
You asked me to bring the air to words,
waited heavily in front of my seat,
purring paint-my-numbers esteem.

I thought I could crack the wise,
I could taste my closeness,
but you never fully said yes.
Your smug smirk ripped the room,
and I sat knowing you were pleased,
but you sat fraying hairs into heads.

We fought about Hamlet for half hours.
You said he wasn’t a do-er.
I fumed that he killed everyone.
“No, he just sat around and thought.”
“Yes, making him the best do-er.”
You are my do-ing Hamlet.

Now, you talk to me as friends talk,
call me Kiddo with brightened eyes.
But you have changed me,
you have made me your shadow,
but I only know you in parts,
and you are above any pet name.

Hamlet, I am not like Ophelia
for when you turned toward the boards,
I traced the meat of your flesh.
And your untucked life,
I stole it, folded it, stuck it
within my deep pockets.

The colors caressing each other up high
Mixing and mating to create something new
The setting sun painting a cloudy sky
Presenting to us a spectacular view

An early bird star playing peek a boo.
The sun peeking back with half of an eye
The moon displaying it's particular hue
This dazzling dance of light in the sky

The carving of this canyon so grand in the ground
Has harvested every accolade
God working his magic not making a sound
This breathtaking beauty He made

The promise of creation is born with the sun
A gift that daily comes true
This cycle of life is given by One
And kept for me and for you

These are some of the reasons that I do believe
That there is a greater being than us
But no greater proof that I can conceive
Are the children entrusted to us

“California, You are the feeling
America has been drinking for..”

—Dylan Fruede,
Choking on California

a wonder

it's a wonder
a magical-way,
a secret
pockets full of eyes.

it's a wonder
to be to be.

like biscuits, butter, and honey,
and fine embroidered curtains
embracing the colors
of an early day.

a wonder will appear,
if eyes are not laced-closed
with rationality.

it will appear
like an ocean spray,
like a chestnut yearling,
learning its way.

dancing on the moment,
like the sun-rays
softly kissing the skins,
of all those laying-away.

it's a wonder
to be to be.

drunks at dawn
rolling-along,
down Bourbon Street
singing their songs.

to be to be
is a wonder to see.

drowning

floats like ugly deep waters
filled with images, fishes of unknown colors.

transparent and sharp as a knife.
boxed-up with blind eyes.

gods, friends, and tons of heart
cannot hear the calls.

desperate roads are endless
waters sick-singing and sucking.

drenched in the taste of others,
others , others, others.

buck-up,
Charlie Chaplin might say,
can't you see the light?

minds are pregnant with emotion,
ears are stuffed with selective hearing, and
eyes are swimming, sinking, and swimming.

Eclipse

Christopher Watson

Her life's an eclipse,
though vibrant stays lost to sight.
Too timid to shine.

[Untitled]

Brittany Miller

The chaotic storm
How ships beg for its mercy
Unheard by thunder

“All memories must go, carve
them out with a knife, can’t let
emotion stay...”

—Cat Siobhan, *Pretty*

Minnie, descending into Hell for a glance at the Moon, Struck in June-blue swoon
Claire de Lune tuning
The compass orbits against origin
A tinderbox Talisman
Ephemeral in Her ivory paw
Eventide rolls
Over Her toes
Astringent surf; buoyance becomes Her, step for step
How has She grown so tall?
Moon floats close enough to breathe in; Night-bloom perfume!
Her lids slip shut, delicious sin
The thrills of quill-spilled secrets...
She whirls to leave, to retrieve
Some safe place, Some liberty; Crowned and gossamer gowned, She found
Instead, it was all in Her head
Refugee set free, better places to be...
Hell drops it's guard, Black Heart pierced by fierce,
Lightning-flash passion, Erodes to reveal
A fable concealed
In towers of stone and steel
The sweet sigh of the Moon's kiss tastes the tumblers;
The lock pops
Minnie adopts this astronaut caught in hot flotsam!

mother's mouth fills with ravenous birds.

say something so he knows you're here, she says.
but what would he care?
my words are cavernous, impact of dust.

deism has gone out of fashion.
everyone wants a god who will love them.
ask the sea for a diamond or a dollar; not having or giving

you stand at the shore, longing. she covers with the sheet
his bare knee, an embarrassing gesture.
i am white on fire;
my eyes fly out the window.

machines beep, hum and scream. five years have gone by.
i have prayed for him to die,
the cry of a gull.

Sickle Moon and Two Stars

A. N. Teibe

Tonight's sky seems flat,
it could be an expanse with no shape at all.
Perception, they say, is everything.

I step outside in the dark,
see Venus and Jupiter, mistake them
as stars. Why not? What mass can I assign
to a paper-thin crescent glowing
phantasmal yellow-white,
or to its neighbors, bright, circular specks?

Heavenly bodies we call them,
as if knowing their figure: globe,
sphere, some kind of body-at-all.
Things change form and orientation to each other—
like landscape and weather with seasons.

So, too, the moon: harvest-time, slung heavy
and low to horizon, a large orangey circle aglow.
That very night it will alter itself,
float higher up, shrink,
become washed out and wan.
And what we call phases! A month's patience
can follow a crescent to full-bellied and back.

We apply theories—
fundamental motion and spin,
work instruments, measure angles,
plot points to chart out the math—
but what I see tonight,
a sickle moon and two stars—
look like phosphorous cutouts pasted to sky.

He hung from the tree
But not like a child should.
A vision long dead, or should be, with war.
His legs and arms drooped, a wilted iris.
Once firm and determined
Soon to be discarded.
They're out there.
She calls them demons.
They're sick, minds rotten.
Once firm and determined
Now soon to be discarded.
That vision. I hate them.
She hates them.
They hate him.
We're all the same.
I strung them up there,
And smiled at their horror.
He doesn't want any of it;
He has Jesus.

Laura stepped in the front door
Holding the mail in one hand and a blond toddler on her hip
The continuous ringing of the phone in their ears
She set the little one down
And moved over the obstacles of building blocks on the floor.

Mail slid on the oak dining table, she reached through
To the kitchen, "Hello" she says
"Laura, this is Dr. Rudek. "
The toddler is giggling as his brother's block tower topples.
"Your biopsy report came in...cancer... I made you an appointment
On Monday with a great surgeon."

Laura sits on the chair by the table
And a five year old girl dressed like a princess
Hits her brother with her scepter and runs
Screaming with laughter and delight
As her brother sets chase.

"Intermediate level... Malignant..." continuing
"May need to remove lymph nodes..."
The mail screams out, "Lowest Prices of the Season!
Southern California Gas Company
Toyota Motor Credit
Pizza- Buy one get, one free."

Rising to hang up the phone
Over the dirty dishes on the counter
Her finger traces the square pattern of the kitchen tile
Over, and over again,
interrupted by a pretty seven year old
"What's for dinner, Mommy?"

He is still now,
a brief respite from the relentless executioner within.
A moment's rest
and the battle continues
against the "messenger of Satan sent to buffet. . . ."
Innocuous words concealing intimate torment
and offering scarce promise;
he seeks momentary comfort.
Those who imagine Sisyphus happy
cannot see his blistered hands and feet,
nor feel the daggers of laborious torture in every sinew
as he cries out, "To what purpose?"
Not even Zeus could ignore the weeping of the innocent.
"How is justice served?" he cries.
"Do you hear?
Do you hear?"
But no answer comes. . . .

save these eagle's wings beneath us.

Does my expression give it away?
I guess my poker face recieved no play.
How does one cover up the look of disbelief?
Wanting to cry, but forced to show teeth.
Found truth at a young age, tried to escape but only make mininum wage.
Now I'm stuck in the system.
Corrupted Capitalism.
If this is the 'land of the free,' then please, enslave me!
Its time, I'm ready, the guilt is too heavy.
No longer can I sit in silence.
Destructive curiosity, the outcome, science.
Scientifically speaking, what happened to critical thinking?
Is the curiosity too strong?
Spreading disease to study what goes wrong.
Are our lives worthless to you?
Why does the world favor the chosen few?
If only everyone knew, what i do.

I miss liquor stores with hookahs on shelves that sit
Way high above the ground; the scent and the taste like
Curry and cumin and Oreos. A sweet yet
Sultry smell that gets up under-
Neath the crevices of pores and between
Little carbuncles in your skin. I miss, oh God

Do I miss the graffiti that looks like yabyum
And chardonnay binges on cool nights with wind
Whipping and streetcars blaring and bustling down along
Root sixty-six at three in the morning.

And the old men in rain coats
That popped a squat on cement lined curbs
with little shattering
Cracks, and tire skid marks for days.

I miss that place with heat like hell and boom boxes
That sat on top of newspaper stands just when school
was being
Let out. You could skip, or scamper, or scroll
To the beat, the thump, thump, ducka, ducka,
Thump! Man, we could all have gotten

Shot to the pounding of that beat. I sit, now,
watching snow flurries falling on the East
Coast, trying to forget
About the Golden One.

The St. Lawrence River

Amanda Haskins

Alone on an island that is one of thousands just like it
It would be a challenge to figure out where you are
Sit on the rocks, put your feet in the water
Breathe in the scent of peace as the breeze blows gently across the river
Listen to the orchestra of frogs and crickets while watching the fireflies dance
There are no cars, no people, no worries, time does not exist
There is only now and the beauty of this moment as the full moon rises

My sheets haven't seen me nude lately.
Some say my relationships are shaky.
Its not that I don't want a woman,
But I'm afraid of their commitment.
Do I fear them? Or myself?
All I want is to touch; I need help.
To be promiscuous would be nice,
But a slut I'm not, I'm cold like ice.
Don't get me wrong, I will prowl;
If the time is right I will drop trou'.
Now girls don't faze me,
As women have.
Women still craze me,
But I'm never sad.

I am a good Christian
By the bible I live my life
Condemned are those who stand to oppose me
By my hand they will meet strife
I am a faithful Christian
I live by a pure design
The laws I follow are of a higher power
All others are benign
I am a promised Christian
To a higher kingdom I set my sights
So long as I do my Father's bidding
And win my Holy fights
I am a solid Christian
My values set in stone
To vanquish blasphemous evil
So only the pure may roam
I am an honest Christian
For God I take men's breath
To the enemies of my Father
I bring merciful death
I am a good Christian
To commit sin for Him I am compelled
I am one of God's Christians
And for that I am going to hell.

dick burns, yes, old dickey burns, the darling of the ladies and foil of fellow gamblers
struts the street and crawls the alleys in his alligator boots and stetson silverbelly.

an ace up his sleeve and a gun at his back balanced between instinction and extinction.
a man who once met might go unrecognized but for the sullen, pinkish look in his eyes.

a man who, not by choice, sleeps all alone. wherever welcomed in he calls home.
a man caught in-between; however, the table with cards his favorite place to be seen.

dick burns, yes, old dickey burns, the darling of the ladies and foil of fellow gamblers
struts the street and crawls the alleys in his alligator boots and stetson silverbelly.

between the boom and the bust his lady friends find him a man of pleasurable trust,
but they know now why in the middle of a show he may get up quickly and have to go.

there's a spanking new sheriff in town; old dickey burns don't wanna be found.
he's gotten himself a pretty young lady; no longer at the doctor's office waiting.

dick burns, yes, old dickey burns, the darling of the ladies and foil of fellow gamblers
struts the street and crawls the alleys in his alligator boots and stetson silverbelly.

There is an edge where ocean slaps
at the land. When the water turns
black it is named a woman's name.
We have not seen for days, for this water, for

the ash and burning rock. The city
is at tilt, vertiginous
in the cinders and into the pumice.

For days we have heard nothing but the rain

but the rain ripping through bedrock.
There is an edge where rain starts
the tin rattling,

high above the deep mud suck. We hear
there will be more. Thirt stories down

the factory in the earth-packed air

the capital beneath the capital beginning.

dear mama
i just got some new ink
its simple and powerful
beautifully permanent
did you know people were marked
we were among the ones sent to the camps
i know you hate my tattoos
but think of it as a tribute
my people died in a gas chamber
people who thought like you sent
them there
you see back then we couldn't love
couldn't kiss in the streets
now people just call us names
then they used their fists
have you ever heard of stonewall mama
they locked us in a bar burned us
the stones on christopher street are still red
the pavement stained with blood
i finally got something pink
you know how i've always hated that color
even though i know its your favorite
although maybe that's really why
there is a little pink triangle on my spine
resting nestled right in the small of my back
to represent the people they call bent
yes mama i'm crazy
i'm crazy about her

In subfuscous, metallic
crawl, Mercury vacates
the bulbous womb
of repose, ascending
to the Trinity—
the warm message

conveyed in obeisance
of budding stem
and stout stock
alike—in progressive
display; the poles
have cast off

their spectral-white
habits (the saline
ablution made grander:
the cleansing begun),
affecting the tonsure
of infectious piety—

wherein the congregation
may, in transcendent
victory, rejoice loudly
all humanity's triumphs,
the laurels crowned
in exhaustive rings

around the bluish
dome—purely beheld;
the second coming
was closet drama
at Chernobyl's core
(the Savior is

fond of those
who share: even
His sign gained
arms, the mutated
appendages of faith),
not Three-Mile

Island—where belief
is printed, traded
like inflated currency—
and I await
Rapture, the promise
of nuclear winter.

Snowflakes drifting down
From storehouses of Heaven
Water earth below.

Blossoms sweet fragrance
Invite butterflies to perch
Oh the joy of spring!

Shouts of kids playing
Released from school's constant toil
The sun paints them brown.

Wingless flight of leaves
Falling past my window pane.
There return to dust.

“Flying home from a lost wedding”
- Rosmarie Waldrop

The hasp of the chest flew open when it landed, thud!, in the spring-awakened field two miles out of town near the willow-strewn creek we remember catching frogs in. The parachute bubbled down around it but too late, the animal spirits had escaped. The air around the chest, around the parachute’s silk, was in a dither, worried that the music, too, would leak out, which, of course, it did, slithering like some slinky water creature heading for the creek and, if it made it, the whole town and all its environs would become parade. The animal spirits would enter the bodies of men who would feel compelled to drink creek music. Soon the hare would be honking the cornet, the deer squeezing out accordion wheezes and the sax—well, you remember the dromedary has been waiting since that instrument’s birth to introduce into the world the Camel Rag.

time to put on the mask
and hide your real face
just nod when they ask
if you're doing okay
thanking God for the sleeves
that hide all your scars
just let them believe
you've done yourself no harm
right before you went out
you bandaged your wounds
left yourself no doubt
that more pain would ensue
they all laugh but your smiles
cloak torment inside
wall long as the Nile
behind which feelings hide
so sure no one can know
of your secret life
all memories must go
carve them out with a knife
can't let emotion stay
especially pain
tears wash it away
just like blood in the rain
drag yourself to your room
and sink to the floor
prisoner entombed
the bolt locked on your door
you know better than that
shouldn't have gone out
now must purge the fat
and cut your wrists, no doubt
the next time they see you
there will be no flaws
no one will make fun
they'll just stare in great awe
you will be beautiful
and you will be thin
death is merciful
makes you pretty again

Three a.m.
Telephone rings
I can almost smell the whisky on your breath over airwaves and state lines
Surprise surprise
Its no surprise
Guilt, regret linger on your tongue
And I fall for it once more

The horizon, a new day
I'm left a fool, mortified
Another joke on me

Well take that bottle
Drink it down, just as you always do
You'll drown those sorrows and come to find
She'll never amount to me
Hang up the phone
You've already pulled your last straw and tonight I've the longer

Delight, early morning sun rises,
Coloring sky its pinks and blues,
Sending promise to the day,
To face life's obstacles,
Hopeful, energized,
Renewed in grace,
Joyfully,
Offer
Praise.

The weeping willows weep
As silently their vigils keep
Why do the willows cry?
They watch the orange groves
Slowly die
Where trees once stood in viral loam
Now replaced by buildings and homes
Slowly the disease known as progress
Destroys tranquility and causes stress
The lure of orange blossoms
Filling the air
Brought tourists to Redlands
A city so fair
The tourist attractions
That made it so grand
Now replaced by an asphalt land
Gone are the reasons of which
To show pride
Are now cast by wolves
Along the wayside
Where greed has slowly been
Allowed to creep
And causes the willows to silently weep
Oh for the Redlands we knew
Of yore
If only the orange groves
We could restore
Maybe the willows no longer would cry
For the orange groves that continue to die

“Deism has gone out of fashion.
Everyone wants a god who will
love them.”
—Ann Detwiler, *mother mourning*

To be frank
You scared the scarecrows away
Where they once stood silent but brave
Where peacocks, crows and vultures pass
And never bother to move an inch or less
They copied the movements of the wind
And streamed the sting and sweat that seems to lend to rewinding
The screeching from tires to wires
The one day where the fields were gold and raven black
The skies cloud up the day as the scarecrows and strawberry patches
Could be sweetly decorated with your hair ribbons and conjugations
The one day where sweet tarts would fill your mouth
And nothing left to smother onward
The busy sidewalks has long been since gone
Only the targeted few would die with granny boots and gothic dress
Only times could spit on the trends
That figured to be admired, adorned and addressed
The lost key is focused on a city beyond us
Where simplicity isn't offering tall buildings
But only the hip and keen disease that leads to rebellion
You enjoy the flavor
Non- stop fun
Non-stop coolness
Gravity holds onto you
As you are set free

She came with all her health
that awfully organic woman.
Her twigs effortlessly piling
plastic bags vomiting leaves,
stems, florescent growths
of Mother's Earth in sad stacks
on my weighted conveyer belt.
She smiles politely, mocking
my inability to transform oranges
into numbers. I fumble, searching
for oranges in sheets
of sticky laminated code.
Where are the citrus fruits,
the smell of groves,
the mists of peels,
the sealed, juicy flesh?
Naval or blood?
3-2-6 or 3-2-7?
"Ma'am what kind of orange is this?"
"Blood. It's a blood orange."
3-2-7, .79 lbs at 2.00/lb
Long green shafts covered in wax.
Where are the bumpy shafts of green wax?
Will she notice if I smell it?
Those lean fingers bagged it,
her palate cannot bare my sniffing.
"Sarah, do you know the code?"
"Italian Cucumber is 2-18."
2-18, green waxy bumps, 2-18.
Rust colored potatoes shaped like tears.
Where are the rust potatoes?
Russet! Rust to Russet?
"Ma'am, is this a Russet potato?"
"No, it's a yam."
Yam. Yams are rust potatoes.
Yams 1-4-6. 1-4-6. 1-4-6.
"Are you new?"
"Yes, it's my third day."
No. No. I am not new.
I've seen and eaten food before.
The food you want is numbers.
Why do you eat numbers?
Apples. You take the codes.
Find your apple in this list of 12.
Gala or Fuji?
"Is this apple 3-1-1 or apple 3-1-7?"
Her eyebrows take a flexed stance.
Her lips tumble, "Pardon?"
"Is this a 3-1-1 apple or a 3-1-7 apple?"
"Those are Gala apples."
"Oh I see. You like to eat 3-1-1's."

In Remembrance of the Ten Year Anniversary of 9/11

When the sky is splashed with crimson red,
A battle had been placed and blood was shed.
Many lives were taken with evil greed,
Leaving many corps to lie and bleed.

Over the hills, some smoke had emerged,
A small, happy town had been submerged
With the cries of plea, and the thoughts of dread,
As the sky was splashed with crimson red.

The joyful city had been turned,
Into the lands that had been burned.

I haven't written a poem in five years, three days and a minute.
I know this because of the last time I did.

It was a cold March night not different than most
I'd just burned a batch of my finest French toast
The lights had gone dim, the power went out
And all that was left was my ink and my doubt
It would come back I should know, it always did
After some mom admonished their kid
Another fork in another socket.

So I pick up my pen and pull out this paper
Flick up my knees and do a small caper
Writing's not easy, at least in the dark
I can barely think of a starting remark.

Nevertheless I begin straight and true
I scribble down lines number one and two
They're really simple, no problem at all
It's the rest you're reading that make me feel small
Each passing line has a problem anew
None find their place in time or on cue.
It's frustrating now, a real pain in the back
Come on words, cut me some flack!

The lights come back on and my toast reappears,
Maybe they'll start up my cycle of gears.
I nibble on one, jot down a letter
Oh yes, we're getting better!
They increase in number, three and then four
Then five, six, a hundred more
I'm feeling it now, I know what to say
Even the rhymes know where they lay

Nothing is left to luck or to chance
Like a snap lyrical free-flowing dance
I leap, I sing, and so the poem too
Together we are one of the few;

The lights go black again. I lose my place.
Oh, well, I guess that's enough
Every five years isn't too bad, just fine—
Maybe I'll wait six more next time.

I've come to this place to renew and restore the empty spaces
of ash and stone. The river so clear I can see the fish below
who think they are safe in a veil of water. Reflections look

real enough for me to stand.

The ancient trees assure me. As the stone hits the water,
I can't tell what the river is trying to say. Stained glass
colors ablaze swirl behind black scribbles. A quiet
spirit appears of misty light distant from me

as the divine says goodbye.

you petitioned me once
“run and jump across”
across the chasm between us
for you would catch me
but never walk, never crawl
never skip through it all
build momentum, build resistance
and feel the free fall with the plunge
then, of course, you would save me
no matter the distance
but that chasm stares, mocks,
it enjoys my hesitation
the longer I wait, the deeper it teases
i feel so little, oh true trepidation!
yet you remain ready still
and beckon me to leave painted thrills
towards the city upon the hill
so lighted is the city upon the hill
oh, to clinch these eyes, bite these lips
hands wide, head up, feet tipped
so I may fall
....but not too far,
never too far, never too fast
for you to catch me.

Alabastro forgot to feign
his impending demise
a bit too long
the siesta had to be delayed
the fountains fell dry
and the gnostics
rued the dainty
universe created
thereafter.

Many turned the raw beets
and okra roots
into prayer wheels
since something definite
had to be demonstrated
in the open forum.

Chillayo washed
his feet
as usual
and the sun smiled
on him and him
totally alone.

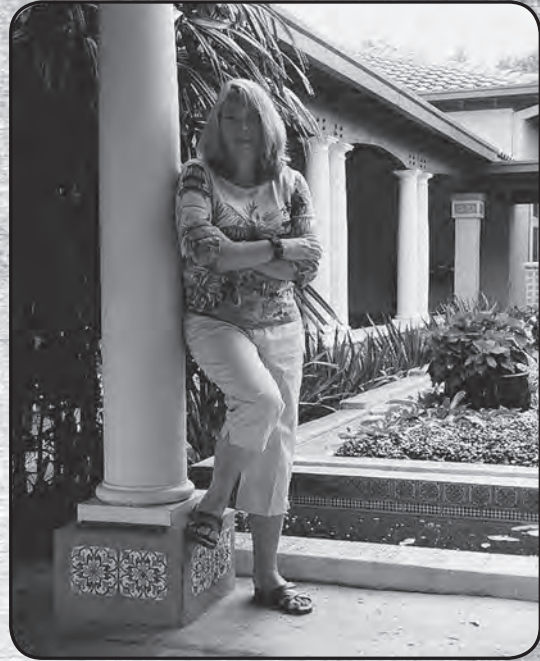
“Nothing is left to luck or chance.”
—Joel Juedes, *The Poem I Never Wrote*

BRET LEWIS

INTERVIEW BY ZARA BRETT

Going Places

Travelling without a map
Is fine for people
Who don't care where
They'll end up;
but
I want to know
The road ahead,
So I travel
With you.



Author Bret Lewis

Bret Lewis was born and raised in Orlando, Florida where she attended the same school from grades 1-9. She fell in love with Tennessee where she attended high school and college. She transplanted to Southern California in 1980 where she has now spent more than half her life. However, she still considers herself a southern belle. She has been an educator for the San Bernardino School District for the last 12 years. She has published both children's short stories and poetry, and has been published in the Sand Canyon Review two years in a row. She doesn't know if writing voluminous lesson plans each week counts as being published, but she has been asked for copies of the plans for several occasions. Besides writing, other interests include floral design, photography, and travel. She is most happy when she can include part of the three.

“What comes naturally is the emotion to express one's feelings in such a brief form.”

Q: When did you first start writing, and what made you decide to express your feelings through poetry?

A: I began writing creatively in the 7th grade when I got into some trouble at school. I was supposed to write an

essay, and instead, ended up writing a poem which was called “What Are Boys For.” Looking back on that, it is really bad writing, but it made me realize that it is a powerful thing to be able to express your thoughts by creating word-pictures.

Q: What type of poems do you find yourself writing the most? Is there every a reoccurring type?

A: They are relational. Either about how wonderful love is, or how bad love is. The high points and low points of relationships. They are usually snapshots of a moment or specific event.

Q: What kind of work are you most drawn to read yourself? Is any of that work similar or different to your work?

A: Although I like reading poetry, I don't spend that much time reading it for pleasure. I like to read historical fiction and autobiographical narratives. I am drawn to writing where authors have a keen use of figurative language such as John Steinbeck and Victor Villasenor. The type of writing where you feel like you are in the very same room with the characters. Writing that brings out strong emotion from me; either makes me laugh or cry. Makes me feel like "huh" I understand what the character is feeling at the moment. Both of the authors I mentioned are masters at revealing emotion through few words, which is similar to the type of poetry I write. My poetry tends to be short, focused on one image almost like a brief thought.

"Write poetry because you love writing poetry."

Q: It is said that to see the world with complete honesty, one should look to comedians, artists and poets. What do you think emerges naturally from your work?

A: What comes naturally is the emotion to express one's feelings in such a brief form.

Q: Poetry is very personal and

subjective. Do you write merely for pleasure, or is there a part of personal experience expressed through your poems?

"...it is a powerful thing to be able to express your thoughts by creating word-pictures."

A: Writing poetry was more therapeutic for me, and not many people have really read my work. It was more for myself, about people and my relationships with them. Even though a particular poem might be written about a tough situation, I feel it always has a positive outcome.

Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring poet?

A: Write poetry because you love writing poetry. If you end up becoming financially successful through your writing, and that is what you want, good for you. But I don't feel that should be an end in itself.

Q: To this day, what is your motivation for writing poetry?

A: I actually have dry-spells when it comes to writing. Usually a relationship or powerful event will motivate me to write. I laugh at myself sometimes when I think how many more poems I would write if I stopped to write every time an imaginative fragment floated through my mind. I guess that's why writers are advised to keep a notepad with them at all times.

Q: What are you trying to achieve through your poetry?

A: As I said before I see my poetry as being a snapshot of time, so I want to feel like when I go back and re-read one of my poems, in a way, I am able to keep that memory with me. I am able to keep it alive. Some people like to live in the moment, by creating a poem about the moment, I am able to keep that experience or relationship alive.

Q: Writing is a contribution to the understanding of life. How do you think your writing contributes to society?

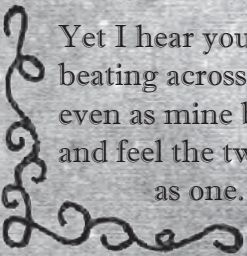
A: I write about common things that people can relate to so that when they read one of my poems, they can say, "I felt that way before" in a relationship. I feel my poetry has clarity and purpose, that a reader could say, "I get what she's saying." My poems are not very complicated. I think they are pretty straight forward. Even though I use some imagery, I don't think it is difficult to figure out what I am talking about. My poems consist of an every day situation; however, they have their own depth to the allegory of life.

Q: You have a credential in Multiple

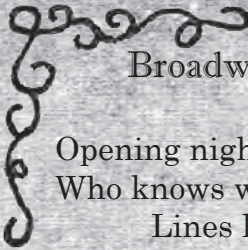


Bedtime Wish

Sleeping alone,
I dream of you
sleeping alone.



Yet I hear your heart
beating across the miles
even as mine beats—
and feel the two beating
as one.



Broadway Review

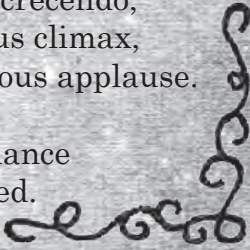
Opening night jitters—
Who knows why?

Lines learned,
Rehearsals attended,
Sleepless nights,
Endless rewrites.

Curtain rises—

Tentative beginning,
Gradual crescendo,
Rapturous climax,
Thunderous applause.

Encore performance
Demanded.



Subjects and academic background is in Journalism and Literature. Journalism and Literature are similar, but also quite different. What made you decide to change your major?

A: When my children were little, my creative outlet was writing programs and songs for their Bible class at church. I found this extremely gratifying and found working with children in general a lot of fun. At the time I was also working with adult students, and even though I enjoyed that, there wasn't something as creative with that job as working with children. While keeping my full-time job, I attended the University of Redlands Teacher Credential Program, and was fortunate to receive an internship in a local school district. I love being an educator. Everyday spent with my students brings both challenges and rewards. I try to instill in them a love for literature and how they can see themselves in the words they read that others have written.

“I laugh at myself
sometimes when I think
how many more poems I
would write if I stopped
to write every time an
imaginative fragment
floated through my mind...
Must be why writers are
advised to keep a notepad
with them at all times!”

ART &



INTERVIEWS

“I believe that if the work is honest
it will always speak to the audience
it needs. Even if that audience is
made up solely of one; i.e. the artist
alone.”

—Robert Standish

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
PROFESSOR

AARON RACE



— 1968 - 2011 —

FRIEND, TEACHER, MENTOR, HERO...

WITH LOVE, YOUR FRIENDS AT

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW

Italia Rutolo

The Hive



Oil on masonite, 24 x 30 cm, 2010

Autumn Bauman

So You Would Know I Was Here



Digital photography, 2010

Mandy Godard

Antediluvian



Digital photography, 2010

Robert Standish

Interview by Laura Oliver

Robert Standish's photorealistic oil paintings portray his subject's very private moments of introspection. Photographs that have been taken by Standish are recreated, brushstroke by brushstroke. His work delves beyond the shell of human form to the soul and personality. Standish's work adorns the permanent collection at the LACMA where these contributions provide a fascinating foray into his unique perspective of the human experience.

Laura: Who is your favorite contemporary artist? And is there a piece of art that you are particularly drawn to?

Robert: *Too many excellent artists out there to answer that one; especially with the amount and rate new artists and work can be discovered on the internet and social networks...*

Generally, I'm drawn to work that communicates that the artist is showing me something from their very personal and intimate world. It can be amusingly novel,

idiosyncratic or profoundly and courageously shared. I love work that seems unaffected as if the artist is doing their own thing. Just as often, I can have a great appreciation for work that comments succinctly on popular culture and the world of the affected person, society etc, I believe that If the work is honest it will always speak to the audience it needs, even if that audience is made up solely of one; i.e. the artist alone.

Laura: Do you work as you feel inspired, or do you schedule a daily disciplined time to work on your art? And can you tell us a little about your creative routine, if you have one? Do you listen to music, sip wine, snack or do anything else that helps you work?

Robert: *Mostly, I've found that a disciplined schedule gets me where I want to be with my work. Occasionally, I will take a period of time off to process which of a number of inspirations will be given priority. I like to work at night...music is almost always playing.*

Laura: As a runner and a writer, I have experienced "the wall" and "writer's block." Are there any frustrations you have to deal with in your craft?



Artist Robert Standish

Robert: An example is when the economy presents challenges to the available support systems for my work ie collectors stepping back from buying work in general. Times like these help create for me a firmer belief in the practice of an attitude of gratitude.

There are definitely times I have to remind myself to appreciate the creative process for its own sake. There are also times as the economy has demonstrated that a piece might have no chance of selling for quite some time. I find this can be an occasional artistic blessing of a time to reaffirm making work that one truly wants, needs and is ready to make.

Laura: What advice would you give to our readers who are aspiring artists?

Robert: Whenever you feel inspiration get to work as quickly as possible. Often it's important to just make art just for the sake of making it. Avoid creating a bad habit of waiting for inspiration. Don't judge your work as you begin. Wherever you start from that is your authentic beginning and you will arrive where your talents and heart take you. That process alone is important for your soul first and foremost. The rest is often practice and the additional blessing of how well the outside world chooses to embrace your work. Never to be confused with 'if it's great art or not' because that is determined by many factors that are often far removed from the truth of great art. Make sure once you create and have a body of work that you don't wait for the world to discover you. Share your work, market your work or find people to assist you. Periodically check in with yourself to make sure that the work you are making is the work that comes from your highest values. Some people might be happy receiving compliments or selling a painting and paying a bill or two or all. Others might find that this falls short after awhile and that the real value in making art for them is related to other core values. If you're making art or decide to become an artist don't expect it to make you happy, it can fulfill you in ways that not making it would not but your happiness is a choice that you can make based on something much simpler than being or making something. Choose to be happy and you will be. Make art to celebrate/ acknowledge your happiness, your despair, your knowledge, your point of view.

Laura: Your work has brilliantly explored cityscapes, Los Angeles nightlife, the introspection of bathers, and the psychological violations of advertising. In what direction is your work currently progressing?

Robert: I've really focused in on the subject of money which has been of great interest to me over the last



Robert Standish painting Halo

couple years. Particularly, How I perceive its impact on my thoughts, feelings and actions and the same for society. Some of it shows up in my paintings and some shows up in a collage series where I'm using real money to make a line drawing of a model. In the instance of my money collage series, most people viewing it would not think money was the medium used to create it but that is intentional and something that I think adds to the symbolism. I will be making my curatorial debut in May, 21st 2011 at Rivera and Rivera gallery in West Hollywood. The project titled, "Ward of the State; Tony ward artists' muse" came about as I was finishing up an oil painting of model Tony Ward. It occurred to me that a lot of my artist friends had also worked with him over the years and the thought of putting together an exhibit featuring only works of Tony as an artists' muse would be very compelling. Some of the artists (Estevan Oriol and RETNA) included in the "Ward of the State" show will also be in the upcoming MOCA street art exhibit. I hope your readers will come check out both shows.

Laura: As an artist, what do you find most rewarding?



Buy, Sell, Loan, "Mr. Ward", 2010

Robert: Exploring new work and connecting to it in a way that satisfies my personal aesthetic.

Laura: How did you learn to capture the moments when your subjects show a glimpse of what's really going on inside of them, instead of the image they are trying to project to the world? Did it come naturally to you, or did your studies in Psychology contribute?

Robert: Spending time with your subjects whether it be a focus on landscape or people has always been the most helpful for me. I've always been hyper aware of people's subtext and body language long before my studies in psychology, so I'd have to say it came naturally.

Laura: I love your painting, "Woman on Sunset Blvd" because the woman's face communicates so much. Can you tell us more about that piece and how you captured her incredible expression?

Robert: Thank you for the compliment. When I first started painting I had the instinct not to share much info about the model and situation that was a part of each painting. I'm still in that place.

Laura: What type of situations trigger inner conflict in your life?

Robert: You know those heavy duty clear plastic clam-shell type packages that contain your basic consumer item, and require heavy duty scissors to cut open, but the whole process takes like an hour because you first think you can do it by hand without scissors, but then, out of frustration, you quickly graduate to a knife because you know exactly where the kitchen knife is, but not always where the heavy duty scissors are. Of course, this is the moment where most people cut themselves... Yeah, that whole thing pretty much causes inner conflict for me (grave inner conflict). That and any time I have to teach someone how to Dougie. You'd be amazed how many people come to me for this.

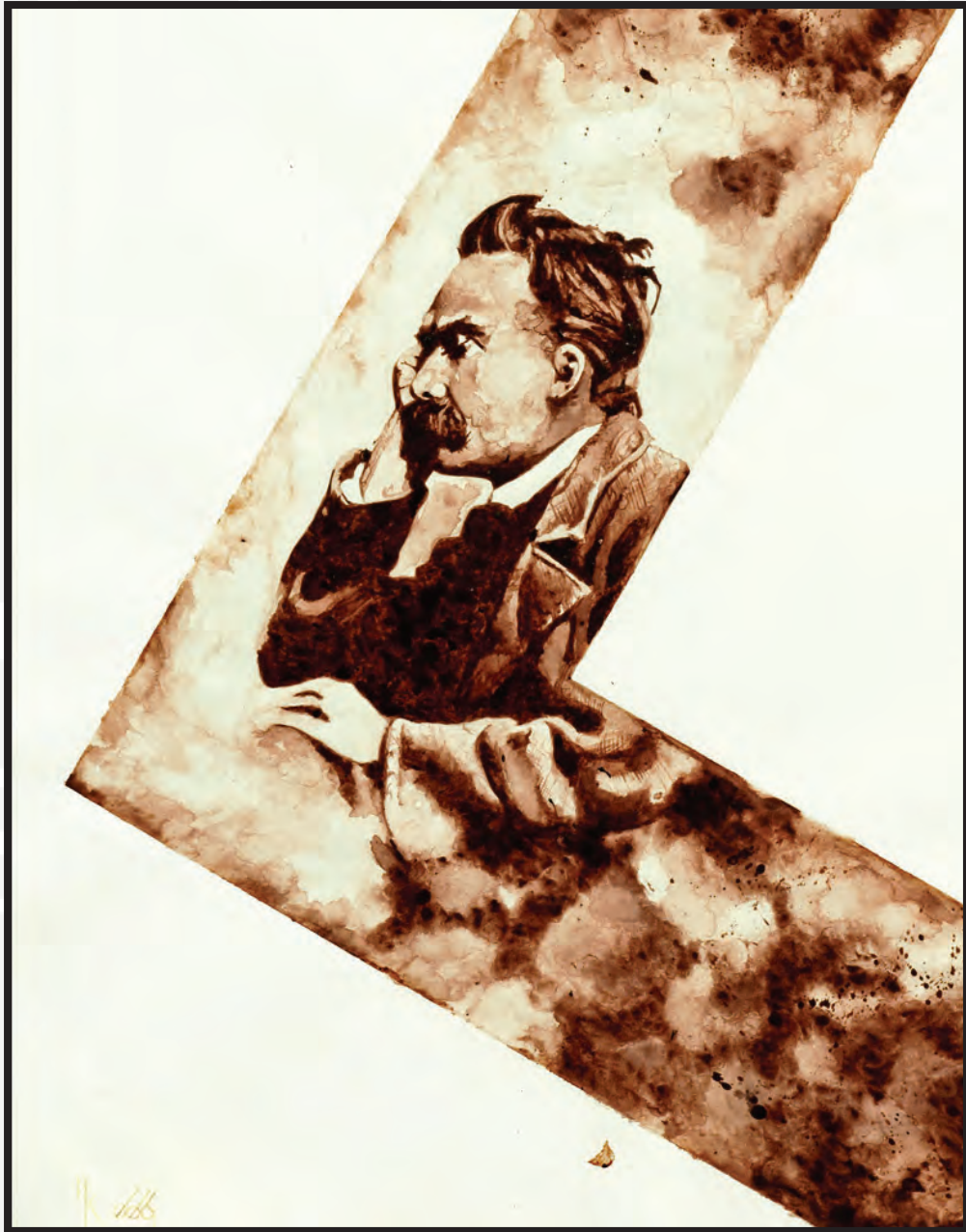
To see more of Robert Standish's work,
please visit www.robertstandish.com.

Below: Woman on Sunset Blvd, Oil on canvas,
14 x 20", 2000.



Nick Kushner

Der Antichrist



Blood painting, 19 x 24"

Alyssa Mees

Picking Up



Acrylic on canvas, 2010

Connie Major

Trapped Light



Mixed media, 2010

Mark Fore

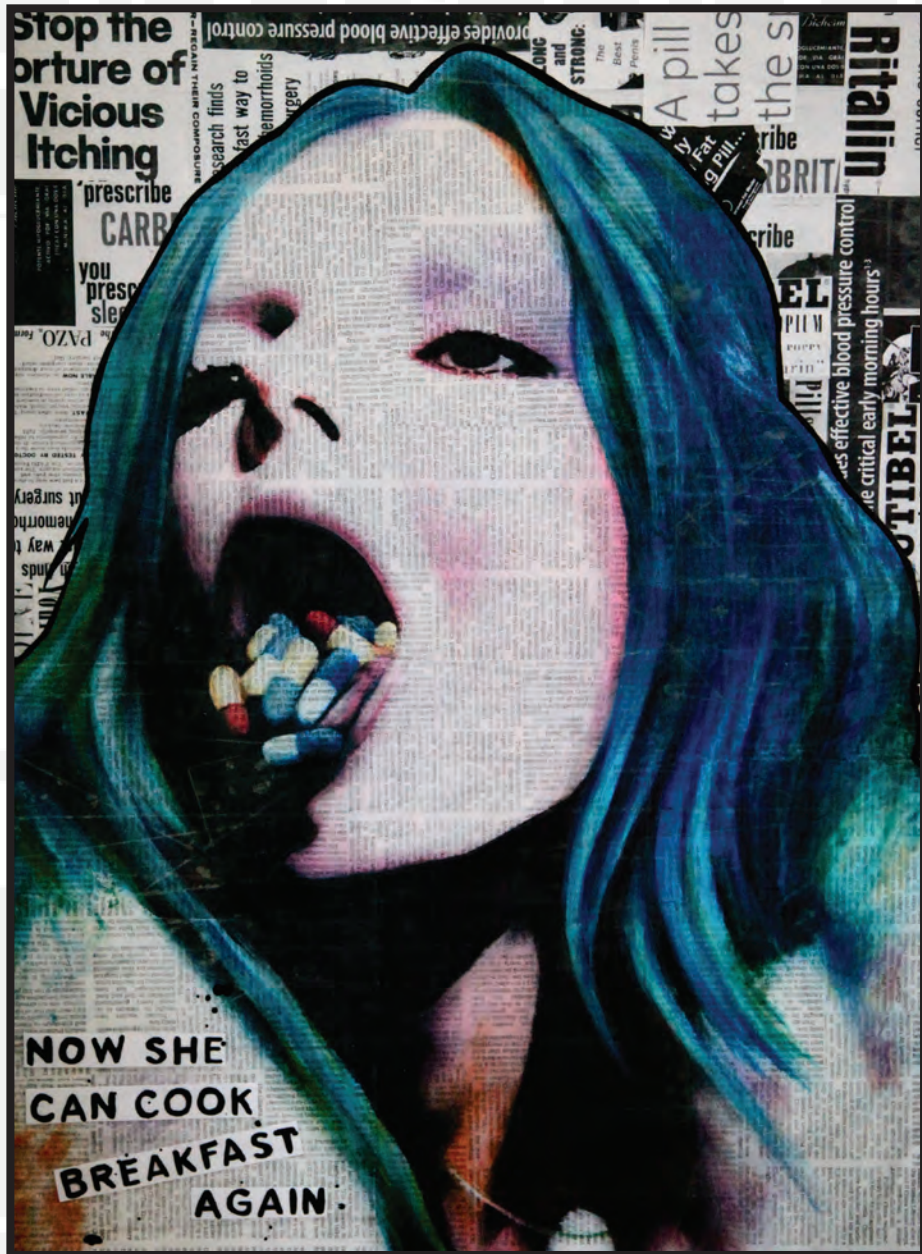
[Untitled]



Digital photography

Annie Terrazzo

Now She Can Cook Breakfast Again



Mixed media, 18 x 24", 2011

Autumn Bauman

Borderposts



Digital photography, 2010

Italia Rutolo

Temptation



Oil on masonite, 30 x 40 cm, 2009

Manny Lopez

An Angel with Red Bondage (AIDS Remembrance Series)



Digital photography, 2011

RYAN SHULTZ

COVER ARTIST

WRITTEN BY DAVID DASHOFF

Ryan Shultz has never been one to follow the rules. By ironically employing classical oil painting techniques to depict modern day youth culture, Shultz has created shockingly raw vantage points from which to observe our younger generation - and not without rustling some feathers in the art community.

Shultz has held an outspoken passion for the arts since his youth. Even during his years in high school, he was known for protesting to the administration his inability take extra art classes instead of eating lunch. Years later, after graduating with a BFA from the American Academy of Arts in Chicago and continuing his education at Northwestern University, Shultz was still no stranger to causing a stir – a fact which his arts professor attested to, “He was a difficult student,” Relyea, his professor said, “But Ryan was fiercely independent. I imagine he will be hugely successful... His concerns and interests are all extremely contemporary,



*Cameron and Cassie, 2009,
Oil on Canvas, 30"x46"*



(Left) Artist Ryan Shultz

yet he chose to use a painting technique that was nearly two hundred years old. We kept asking him why.”

Shultz has participated in more than sixty judged art expositions to this date, garnering an impressive number of awards, and has even been presented on the Bravo television series *Work of Art* (2010).

“Don’t ever be on reality TV shows,” Shultz mused jokingly. “It was really stressful, I’ve never been that stressed out my entire life.”

Billy Recling, 2007, Oil on Canvas, 36”x24”

Considering the fact that Shultz usually takes an average of five hundred hours to complete a single painting, it comes at no surprise that he felt the show’s eight-hour-per-piece work constraints highly stressing. He also was forced to step outside his comfort zone, oil painting being his forte, to create sculptures and installation pieces. Although he did not win the show’s art competition, his presence on the screen has still attracted him high-profile clients and public recognition.

Along with his continued work as a contemporary painter, Shultz has begun teaching private lessons to aspiring art students in



Sarah, 2009,
Oil on Canvas, 52"x28" (Right)

his spare time. Like any young artist, Ryan Shultz still has a long road ahead of him to become fully established amongst the art community. But with his unique style and passion, one can only hope he will continue to stir and stun us with his revealing paintings.



Jakub Smoking, 2008, Oil on Canvas, 48"x32"



For more about Ryan Shultz,
please visit him at Ryanshultz.com.

Christopher Carson

Love and Riverside



Digital photography, 2010

Bill Mutter

Clown and Cowboy



Pastel on paper

Maria Fulmer

Veins



Digital photography

Aubrey Stack

Death Draft



Digital photography, 2010

Brian Cooper

Finite Face



Oil on panel, 11 x 14", 2009

Isaac Bogarin

People of the Sun



Acrylic, 2010

Annie Terrazzo

Built To Spill



Mixed media on plaster, 9 x 11", 2010

Peregrine Honig

Curved Screamer

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW



Watercolor, 30 x 32

GEHARD DEMETZ

A LOOK INSIDE

Nearly everyone is familiar with the story of Pinocchio; timber taken into the skillful, caring hands of a wood-carver before being lovingly transformed into a child. In the case of Gehard Demetz, the current incarnation of such a metamorphosis is brought into startling relief when one is fortunate enough to experience a thoughtful perusal of his craft.

Demetz's sculptures prove to be simultaneously organically contemporary. His carvings of children seem imbued with life; their count-

WRITTEN BY NATE DUNN

enances bear the characteristic cark of children foundering in times of an uncertain future. The negative spaces in these sculptures are suggestive of compromised resolution or interrupted pixilation, which evokes certain unease with an almost casual overreliance on technology's role in recording the history of a people.

Demetz's creations are a marvel to behold. See why any of the displays by Gehard Demetz is subject to notoriety and international acclaim alike.



A Soft Distortion, 2008, 162 x 32
x 28 cm



For My Fathers, 2009, 260 x 51 x
90 cm



Your Monsters Are Just Like Mine, 2006, 169 x 38 x 35 cm

*Photographic credits by Martino Gerosa/Egon DeJori.
Credits: Galleria Rubin, Milano*

Morgan Sandler

Brooklyn



Digital photography, 2009

Italia Rutolo

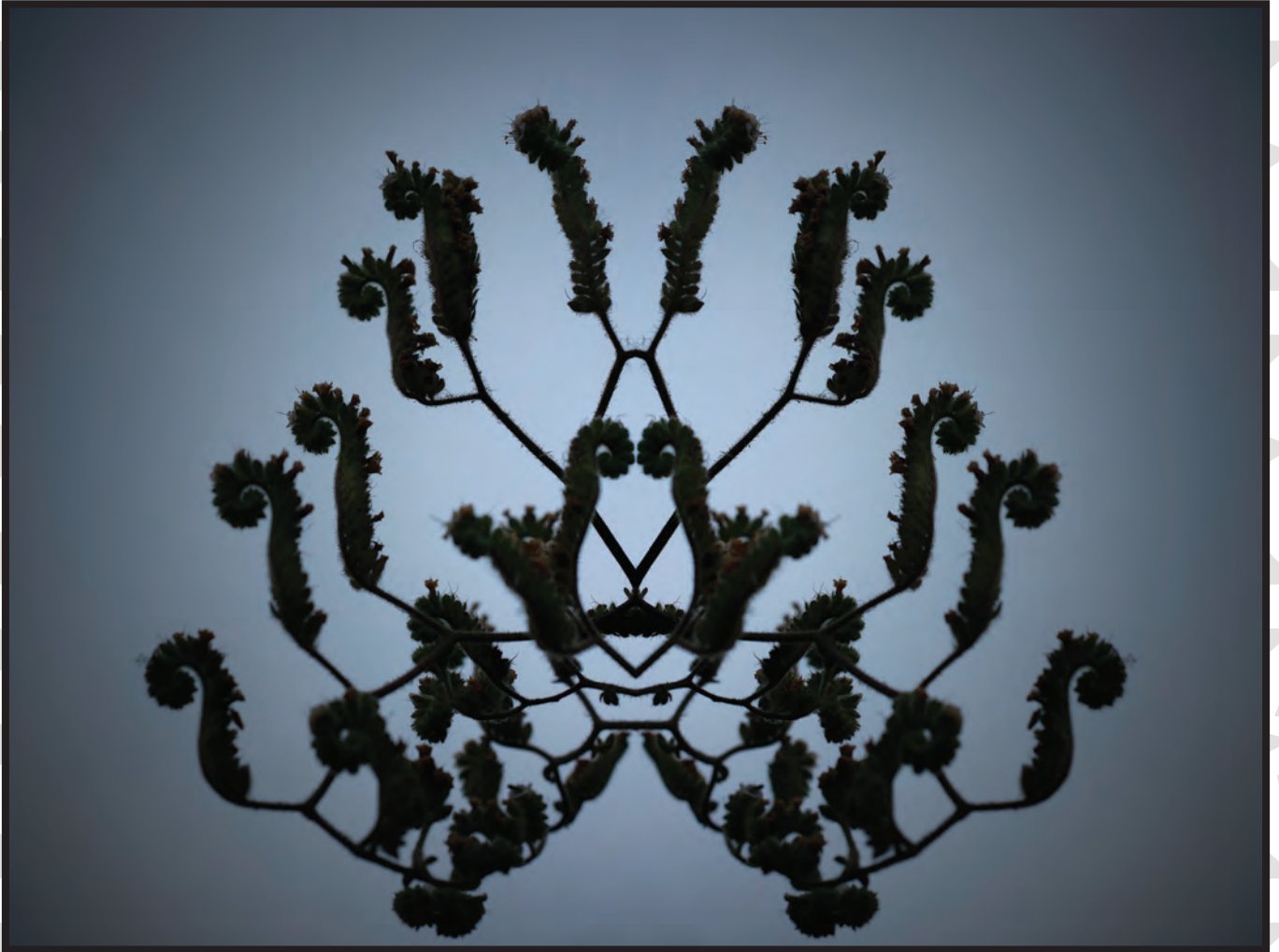
Not a Stupid Geisha Doll



Oil on masonite, 30 x 50 cm, 2010

Marcus Dashoff

Brain Stem



Digital photography

Peregrine Honig

Doily

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW



Watercolor, 49 x 35"

NICK GENTRY

A LOOK INSIDE

WRITTEN BY NATE DUNN



Artist Nick Gentry



Next Generation, 2010

Mixed paint and used computer disks on wood, 90cm x 110cm

Nick Gentry's technologically obsolete medium is refreshingly original while still allowing plenty of room for sentimentality. The texture of the floppy-disks being used as a canvas proves to be charismatically unique. This is an almost direct challenge to the fluidity of bio-rhythm. The portraiture captured here seems to be composed of equal parts sex appeal and disquiet. This might just be a guilty pleasure, only there's no guilt.

Gentry's paintings are trans-generational. They are a clarion call for the days when life was bigger; the floppy disks hearken to a time before personal computers could be folded up and slung in a tote. The style of Gentry's portraits are evocative of the sort of iconography that accompanied pop music from the same time period (e.g. U2, The Cars, The Eurythmics, The Pet Shop Boys, Dead or Alive, Tom Waits, etc.).



*The Immortal, 2011
Mixed paint and used computer disks on wood, 19cm x 18cm*

For more information about Nick Gentry, please visit nickgentry.co.uk

Betty Tompkins

Sex Grid #10



Pencil on paper, 17 x 14", 2009

Stephan Canthal

Sway Wood



Mixed media on wood, 10 x 13"

Steven Rodgers

Self-Portrait

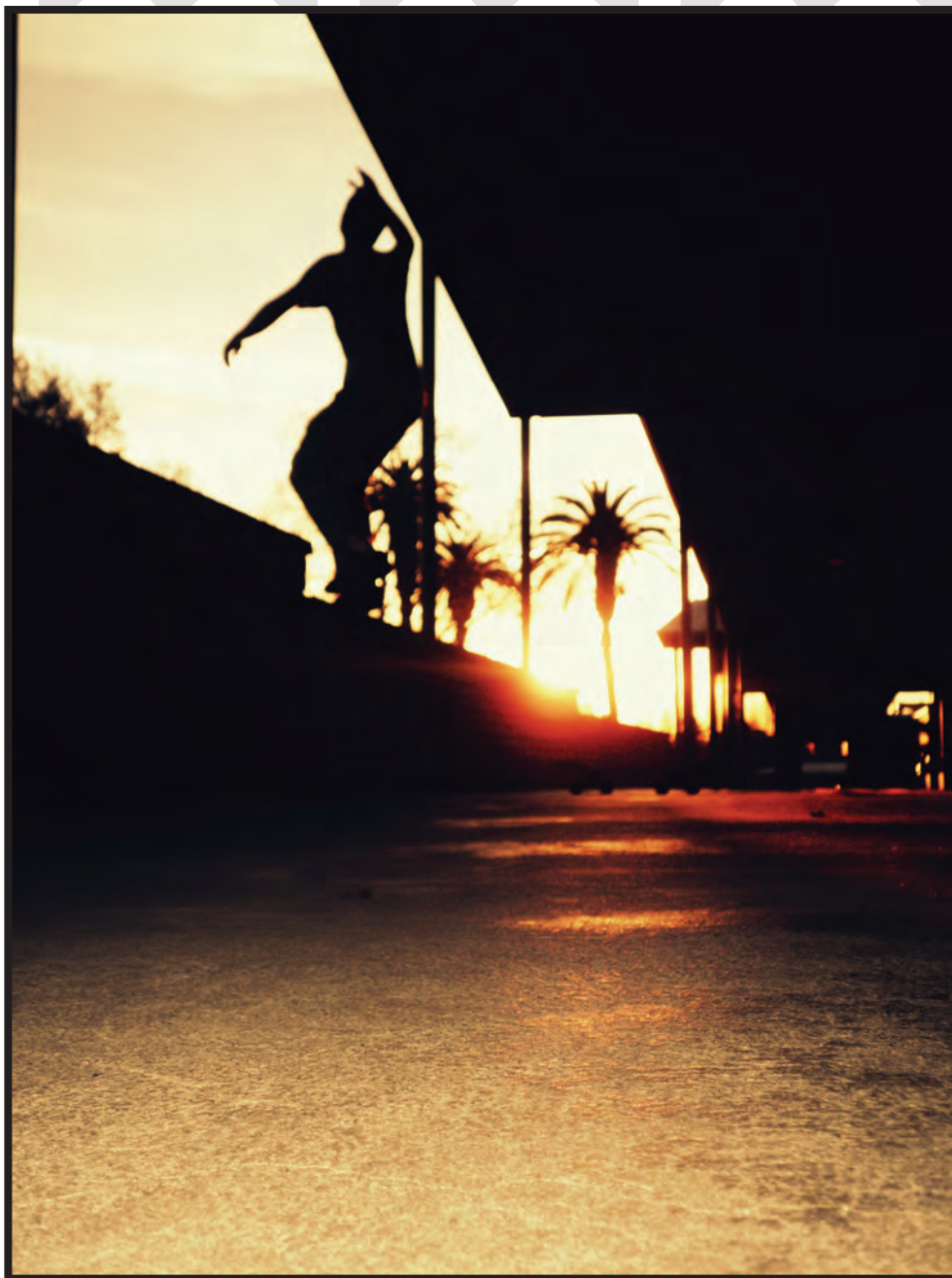


Pastel on paper, 16" x 20"

Zara Brett

[Untitled]

THE SAND CANYON REVIEW



Digital photography

Sylvia Lizarraga

Interview By Courtney Beamesderfer

Courtney: Hello, Sylvia Lizarraga! Thank you for doing this interview with us. Before we begin, could you please describe your personality by telling us which painting you would like to be? Why?

Sylvia: *My personality would be warm, very witty, funny, serious, and spiritual, with a very outgoing side. I tend to talk to everyone, but mostly to other artists. I can also be very reclusive when something in my life is bothering me. Out of all my paintings I would say I am most like my paintings "Foolish Games" and "Day Dreamer."*

Courtney: How would you describe yourself as an artist?

Sylvia: *Very emotional and technical with a surreal, symbolic, realism style. I usually paint or draw what I am feeling at the moment.*

Courtney: Seeing your work, we obtain an understanding of your style as a painter. Where did your visual influences come from? Is there a particular place, period, or event that impacts your style of work the most?

Sylvia: *My visual influence first came from friends and personal acquaintances Michael Hussar, Robert Standish, Kris Lewis, but this last year my influences mostly always stemmed from The Hive Gallery in Los Angeles where*



Artist Sylvia Lizarraga

I show my artwork. There are so many brilliant artists at the hive that it is hard not to be influenced by the best, and Nathan Cartwright, owner/curator. Nathan is the one who helps me expand my mind to my full potential.

Courtney: Early on in learning how to create your pieces, did you find you preferred a certain media to another?

Are there benefits to using one form of media for the work you're currently creating?

Sylvia: *I first started at a young age using acrylics but found it to be difficult to manipulate the paint before it dried. Acrylics, to me, seem too much like pigmented glue, so I switched to oils and have been in love with the media ever since. I also recently have been attached to using a plain, old, small point pen for sketches.*

Courtney: Knowing you have worked with contemporary masters, what have you learned about others' creative processes that you have found to be beneficial? What's the best advice you have ever been given as an artist that you use when creating your work? How do you go about the creative process?

Sylvia: *I am so appreciative of having the opportunity to work with master painters in my lifetime, and I would have to say the best advice I have been given was to paint on a natural base surface so my work lasts for centuries, how to blend flesh tones, and*

how to mix two specific colors to make a deep dark tone close to black but not as deep as black. I have learned so much about painting from the best, and also how to change my visual perspectives to see light and shadowing in a more realistic way so I can mimic it better when rendering a painting.

Courtney: I heard that you grew up in an artistic household; what type of artwork was done in your house? At what point in your life did you know that you wanted to be an artist? Do you think that by having early exposure to art in your household you gained a clear sense of what you wanted to do creatively?

Sylvia: *My father was a prolific artist and he mostly did very realistic illustrations. I*

watched him every chance I got, but would get scolded for snooping or taking his art supply. As a child this made me more determined to draw and create. I never really had a time in my life where I knew I wanted to be an artist; I just knew I was one at a very young age. But to really pinpoint a time: maybe in kindergarten, when my teacher praised me in disbelief for a finger painting I did of a president. I can't remember which president, though, since that was so many years ago.

Courtney: Throughout your work, you seem to focus on using female subjects. What attracts you to using female subjects in your work? Are you hoping in any way to comment about women in contemporary society? When creating, do you weave a message in that you wish to convey for the audience to spot?

Sylvia: *What attracts me the most about female subjects is beauty, and how we can be so powerful mentally. I feel I do have a feminist side, although I enjoy men.*

I just feel the female, for me, is more interesting as a subject matter, and I have always been intrigued with makeup, as I see it to be another form of art. I always try to convey small symbolic messages that have a deep meaning to me, whether or not it is noticed by the viewer, mostly through clown-like painted faces or facial expressions.





Foolish Games, 2009, Oil on wood

Courtney: What attracted me to your work the first time I saw it, wasn't just how realistic the whole piece looks, but how detailed the eyes are. You seem to capture the essence of a soul. Is this a goal of yours, and how do you go about it?

Sylvia: *I am so completely drawn to eyes. When I talk to someone it gets hard, at times, not to dissect every gleam, lash, and shape. Also, I feel the eyes are the first real connection to really understanding a person. At an early age my father always made me look into people's eyes when they talked to me, and that way I could see their intentions. The eyes are the windows to the soul ... so to speak.*

Courtney: You also seem to have a visual interest for creating the illusion of theatrical-like makeup on your subjects. Do makeup artists and their work have an influence on you? How do you use the illusion of makeup on your subjects to further enhance what you try to say within your pieces?

Sylvia: *My makeup influences have a lot to do with shows in Vegas and the circus. And yes, mostly always. Thank you for noticing.*

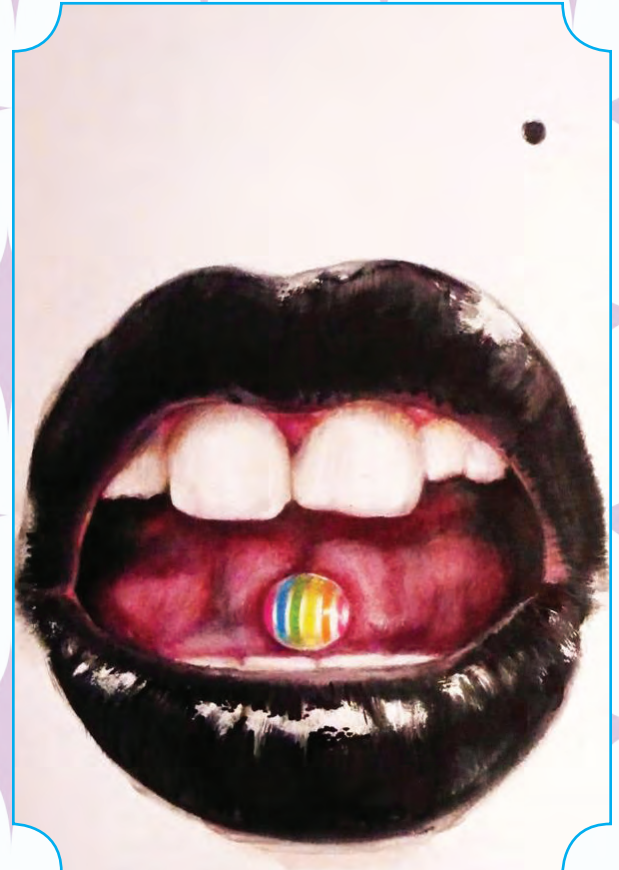
Courtney: You can often find that an artist will put a portion of themselves in their work, knowingly or not. Do you see yourself in the pieces you create? Or do you think that for you, there's a separation of artist and creation?

Sylvia: *I mostly always put all of myself in my work, an avatar of emotions and myself.*

Courtney: Seeing that your work has progressed into many collections, where do

you see your work going in the future?

Sylvia: *My work seems to be mostly recognized and appreciated in Italy. I plan to have a gallery showing sometime in the future in my grandparents' homelands of Rome and Florence. I hope to also someday have a gal*



Hidden Pride, Ink 2009, 8x10

lery of my own in a Vegas hotel shopping resort, and continue creating art as a form of meditation. I am currently getting enough artwork together to publish a book when the time is right and the funds are available.

*2010, Queen Bee and The Little Pricks, Oil on wood
Art on Page 101*

Stephan Canthal

Movement Dance 2



Inkjet on aluminum, 27 x 36 x 1

Lucas Simoes

Conversa [quase-cinema]



Sewn photographs on fabric and wood, 10 x 34, 2010

Ashley Broom

Music Lessons



Mixed media on wood panel

Lucas Simoes

Unportrait (6 minutos)



10 cut-out photographs, 16 x 12, 2010

Alyssa Mees

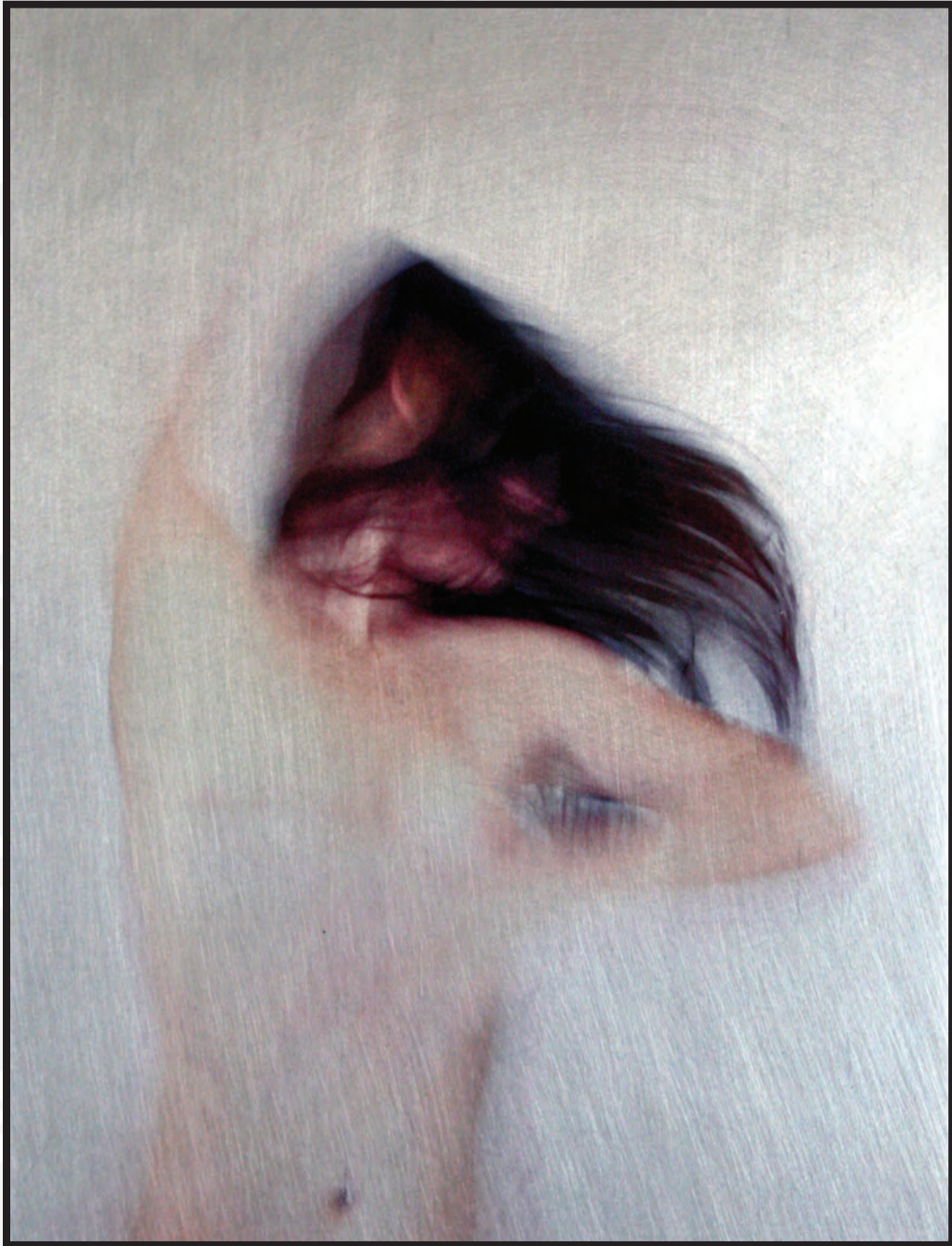
Glow



Acrylic on canvas, 2010

Stephan Canthal

Movement Change



Inkjet on aluminum, 12 x 16 x 1

SHORT



STORIES

I am beginning to feel a sense of relief and a subsiding in my anxiety. I cannot claim victory over the million little strings pulling at my marrow, but I can prove a sort of taming to myself.

— Dylan Freude, *Fortine*



“He began to wave it in the air as lightning flashed around him without a word, his back to me, as if waving a great flag to some higher power.”

—Dylan Freude, *Fortune*



Do you remember that time you laughed, and your beanie fell over your eye, just above the lid, but you didn't move it because you could still blink, and your hands were resting peacefully on your chest, because it was the first time we had ever sat and talked face to face so openly, just after we had walked under mistletoe in the middle of February and you smiled at me but then went off into your scientific ramble about how mistletoe is a weed, not because you were bitter but because you had just gotten back from directing a camp; you know, the one by my house that had the old radio that kept you from your nap the day we first met, back when we didn't know each other at all, before you spoke with sadness on your lips and

your lips and then pampered them with pomegranate lip balm, unashamed, before stashing it below the CD player of your black Focus, the sight of which still made me blink twice in hope that it would be you for five hundred and sixty-one days after, with the image of that laugh you gave that time, when, as a rarity, your eyes were not hidden behind your aviator glasses and they crinkled and you looked down; but I could still see them, the right closed more than the left, and your lips curled at the creases under your beard after you had quoted Emily, "I'll tell you how the sun rose..." and you said my name one. syll. a. ble. at. a. time? Neither do I...

“...with the image of that laugh you gave that time, when, as a rarity your eyes were not hidden behind your aviator glasses and they crinkled and you looked down...”

”

Glass and Soil

Larry Eby

In the heart of the burning market district of San Francisco, the 22nd Infantry Regiment sorts through clothes, jewelry, and furniture. They have given up on the fire and have moved on to raiding. The makeshift firefighters—ordinary trade men attempting to save their estates—attempt to create breaks in the fuel-like homes by use of dynamite but only add to the blaze. Some blow buildings just to blow buildings. Clouds of smoke churn an auburn shroud over the city, and the ashes of the American dream fall in sheets from the skies. It's visible to Mace only through a one-by-one studio window.

Above a tobacco shop, he paints signs. His studio is cramped and plastic sheets cover the walls, but not to protect them from paint. He is too clean for that. The plastic keeps out the dirt. Or at least he thinks. Under the window is a desk with scatter sketches of people. The city goes in undergarments and tourists and businessmen dressed in new sac coats. He watches them out the window. To the left of the desk he stacks his newest work. Nothing creative, just business signs. A sign for a tailor is his latest. It's simple, nothing but text, black and white and clean. He towers over a canvas, his massive hand delicately holds the brush at the ferrule and drags the toe across

the fabric as he works on his newest "piece." Mace was an artist once. He painted to paint. Acrylics, oils, water-colors. Portraits and nature. Nobody was interested in reality. They wanted an impression—to be shocked. He is of a different decade. He tries not to let it bother him. Some nights he prays for some museum to discover his work, but those nights have become rarer over the years. He has learned to feel fake joy in his sign-making. This one is bland. Blue lettering on a flesh colored background, no texture or life. It's for a harness maker. They met in the tobacco shop a month into Mace's residency there, a week before the quake. His name was Francis, and he had just fled Longmont, Colorado over a dispute with gambling.

Francis was overly charismatic and seemed to have a toothy grin even with his lips closed. And Mace felt uneasy. Not because of the charisma, he always felt uneasy around people. Francis almost felt welcoming and Mace tried to push aside his anxieties to get the deal made. Rent was almost due and work was scarce. They sat in black leather sofas that faced each other near the entrance of the tobacco shop. Francis smoked a meerschaum pipe carved in the shape of a tree stump. Mace wasn't a smoker. This is where he did most of his business. It made him feel important, like a true businessman,

since the people outside could see the deal through the window.

"I hear you make the best signs here in town or anywhere," said Francis rapidly. "I'm looking for something fancy, but not exquisite. Something modern and traditional. How much ya charge?" He slapped the arm of the sofa.

"Ten," said Mace.

Francis grabbed the crown of his straw boater. "Holy! You must be damn good for that price. But I'll tell ya what. I've heard good things. What about eight? Eight'll do, right?"

Mace didn't say anything. He was a terrible barterer. He set the price and never budged. Francis pulled out a white handkerchief and wiped his brow. A crowd of people began to gather outside the shop. They all faced toward the center of the street.

"What the hell is going on out there?" said Francis. He stood up out of his seat. Mace couldn't see passed the crowd. A new Winton pulled up on the street and uniformed men hopped out pushing the crowd out of the way. They seemed to have lifted something, carried it to the car, and drove away. The crowd dispersed.

"Ten, then. Deal," said Francis. They shook hands and parted ways.

Mace maps out each and every brush stroke before the hairs touch the canvas. He feels uncomfortable in his

cleanliness. But he finds it necessary. He's heard too many stories of disease. His white flannel seems to beg for a drip from his brush, or a fumble with the palette. Maybe the window will shatter and ash will engulf him. A glance out the window, the glow of the burning city. He takes a deep breath and paints another line. The tobacco smell below breathes through the floor. It's rich and nauseating. Unclean. So is each stroke. A silhouette of a harness. It's cartoonish, clean but fake. The fakeness feels unclean. He's disgusted with it.

“ Clouds of smoke
churn an auburn
shroud over the city,
and the ashes of the
American dream fall
in sheets from the
skies. ”

Mace takes a break from painting. Inside of a desk drawer is bottle of laudanum. He takes a gulp and waits for it to set in. It's bitter like copper and he shivers. He takes a heavy breath in hopes that the air will cover the taste. It doesn't. It smells like smoke. He takes a look out the window and watches the fire while the drug sets in. His limbs feel cold, but relaxed and

pleasant. His veins tingle like chimes. Another breath. The tobacco smell fills his lungs and now it's pleasant. The plastic wrapped walls expand out and he feels free to roam. He imagines new terrain and mountains on the plastic, a river in a gully filled with ducks. Heartbeats thump softly in his ears adding to the cadence of beautiful uproar in the burning city. The one-by-one visual of the metropolis looks refreshing and clean. Clean—in a just-dirty-enough kind of way. Clean like the sands.

Before the quake, Mace was in the park two blocks away from his studio. It was just after five in the morning and the city was still, calm, and empty. Mace was barefoot, dressed in a heavy coat and thick slacks. The grass was cold, wet, and refreshing. He felt like the world was emptied for him. He was the last human alive and whatever he did now was up to him. The leaves of the acacia rubbed together like the sound of rolling waves. Mace took a seat on a bench and looked out across the personless landscape. He rubbed his feet in grass, the blades between his toes. Soft and moist. The ground began to shake. Slowly at first, then progressively harder. It was booming. Mace stood up, covering his ears and ran to the center of the grass. He fell and curled up, waiting for the sound and shaking to stop. It diminished as

slow as it came. Mace stood up. The city was in motion. Cracked water lines shot water into the streets and people were digging through the rubble of their houses. Mace ran home. The tobacco shop was intact, but the front windows were shattered. Once he was inside his studio, he looked out his small unbroken window. Men and women dressed in undergarments were running through the streets yelling for loved ones. Mace began to sketch them.

Mace returns to the sign-making after hiding the bottle back in the desk drawer. He layers each line multiple times for harsh weather and takes pride in his work regardless of his enjoyment. He adds white highlights to accent the silhouette. A short lived grin hits his lips. There is almost life in the cartoonish harness. It wants a third dimension. It wants movement. Mace can see it. He can feel it. He wants to outline a stallion galloping through the open plains. Wheat fields, flowing softly to the breeze and shimmering in waves of bullion trim. Mace remembers the orders and represses the urges. He wonders if the white accents will even be noticed. Or liked. He feels guilty for breaking orders.

The harness maker's sign is nearly complete. Mace is bored with it. It is getting harder to breath. Smoke is billowing in through the cracks in the

walls. Its smells like a campfire. An alcove hidden at the border of a valley, hidden deep within the pines. The one-by-one window gives a theatrical view of the tragedy of the city. Buildings everywhere danced on by a burning devil. A few more brushstrokes and the bills are paid. Mace begins to rush each line. They start to get sloppy. Only a few more left to go.

“ It’s rich and nauseating. Unclean. So is each stroke. A silhouette of a harness. It’s cartoonish, clean but fake. The fakeness feels unclean. He’s disgusted with it. ”

The laudanum is starting to wear off and each muscle in Mace’s shoulder seems to be twisted. It writhes under his skin as he continues to paint. He tries to ignore it. He is almost done. The paint drips slightly from his palette onto his shirt. Mace stops to look. It flows slowly down his white flannel and onto the floor, splattering next to his boots. He is breathing heavily. The campfire smell is overwhelming the apartment. Mace needs to finish the sign. One last broad stroke on the bottom to finish the frame. Dark and bold. A cage for the imaginary stallion. The last bar in the cell to enclose it.

Mace is growing shaky and nauseous. Tobacco smoke fills the apartment and mixes with the billows of the city. The thunder of dynamite

is near and mimicking his heartbeat. Boom. Crack. The pressure from his hand breaks the brush. Mace drops his palette. The paint splatters across the plastic covered floor and seeps into a puddle. Mace bends down, dipping his finger in the paint. It’s cold and soft. He sits up and rubs the paint between his thumb and index. It reminds him of childhood. Across

the fabric, he drags his finger. Paint oozes down the canvas, tattering on the tarpaulin ground. His hands and shirt are covered in black acrylic. He steps back to take a look. It’s crooked and incomplete. He grins and drags his finger from the top to the bottom, over the lettering and through the harness and across the imaginary stallion. Reaching down, he covers his hand in the paint. He places a palm print on the canvas, and another. Another on his pants and wipes the rest on his shirt. He wants to taste it, but doesn’t give in. It smells bitter, like a fine wine. Mace is sweating. The building is burning and he realizes it. He licks his palm. The paint reminds him of laudanum. His feet are getting warmer. He can’t tell whether or not it’s the

floor or impending sobriety. The smoke is enough to annoy and push for his departure.

He picks up the sign, still wet, and makes his way downstairs. The shop is filled with burning tobacco. The countertop glass is broken, exposing only the cheap pipes and a red felt fabric that has caught alight. The door is broken down and burning with the sofas. Broken glass crunches under his shoes. He rushes through to the door. Fire singes his arm hair. He pats it out, his teeth pressed hard from the pain of the burn.

Outside, the crisp air blends with the heat of the burning city. He looks at the building and watches it burn for a short while. He sees the glow of fire in the upstairs window. The smell of burning plastic stings his lungs. He covers a cough in his sleeve and heads down the street towards Francis's harness shop. The rent is due, and Mace needs to collect.

The streets are littered with burning documents, scattered clothes and loot that wasn't valuable enough to carry. Mace kicks aside a melted boot and avoids the garments. He thinks about the disease they could be carrying. Behind him a woman's voice is shouting.

"Son! My son!"

Mace looks towards her, uneasy

about the stranger. She is an elderly woman, petite. Mace takes a few steps back. She repeats her shouting.

"Stop," yells Mace. He feels dizzy.

"Son, Daniel, we are leaving!" She grabs his flannel. He pulls away, almost dropping the sign, and shrieks at her. The cracks in her hands are black with ash.

"The boat is at the docks. Come on now, sweetie. We need to leave."

Mace takes off running and finds haven in an alley. He is wheezing. Dumpsters are staggered throughout the alleyway. It's a shortcut he can take and avoid another encounter with the woman. He debates the dirtiness and agrees to continue. The alleyway is covered in used toiletries, torn fabrics, and smells of decomposing animals. He covers his face with his sleeve, and wishes he could do the same to his eyes and ears. The booming heartbeat is still echoing in the distance.

At the end of the alley, he can see across the street to Francis's shop. He picks up the pace to a jog and imagines himself living in the wild. Running through jungle vines, monkeys screaming above in trees. Rich dark soil spreads under his soles. It's cold and moist between his toes. He trips over a crack in the cement, falls to the ground and drops the sign. Broken shards of glass cut into his right palm. He yells

and turns around to sit, grasping his hands. His blood loosens up the dried paint on his palms and stings the wound. He yells for help. The barren streets only answer in crackling fire.

Mace stumbles to his feet and grabs the sign. He is shaky and keeps his right hand close to his chest. Blood drips down the canvas. At the end of the alleyway, Mace rests against a brick wall. He takes a deep breath of smoke and starts to cross the street.

“ The ground
began to shake.
Slowly at first,
then progressively
harder. It was
booming. ”

Mace is wheezing. Francis isn't there. Mace knocks again. No answer. His hand is numb and he takes a seat, his back against the door. He tries to slow down his breathing. He begins to feel calm. The city is warm, like a womb he just crawled inside of. He picks up and examines the sign. It's a masterpiece of black and red stripes with handprints scattered throughout. The harness isn't visible. He smiles and sets it aside. The hard wood of the door feels oddly comfortable against his back. His flannel is itchy and he shifts and rubs his back against the door. He

continues to shuffle his body, growing with intensity. He can't stop.

Out in the street, a uniformed man walks alone, kicking through trash and debris. Mace stops moving and watches him. He hopes he hasn't been seen. The man seems lost. He sits and fiddles with a dresser drawer on the ground, the brass handle broken. Mace's back is itching again and he imagines what it's like to be in uniform. He trudges through snow dressed heavily, but bootless. His feet sting to the cold. He cracks bare branches with his rifle pointed forward into the wood. It smells cold, like sugar. The military coat is abrasive, rubbing his skin and leaving it dry. Mace begins to rub his back against the door again, more vigorously than before. He looks up, a building urgency of empathy. He can feel the uniformed man's back. It itches, just like his. Mace shouts to him, "You need to try this. Really, it helps!"

Aftermath

Robert F. Padilla

It had been the fight of my life even though I was only in fifth grade. Battered, bruised, and bloodied, I ran across the street to the empty field, dodging teachers on the way. I realized they stopped chasing me after I side-stepped Mr. Landon, causing him to slip and fall to the ground. He was overweight so I wanted to laugh, but I was too upset. Instead, I watched as he rolled on the ground, cussing frantically as he raced to get up and regain his composure. A faint smile crossed my face as I ran through the gate and off campus.

Eventually, my parents were called. I had seen my father's blue 1965 classic Ford pickup truck pass by once, but I wasn't about to flag him down. He would most likely be angry with me, but at the moment, I was too angry to care; angry at the world. Time passed, and I guess he finally spotted me at the edge of the field. I was leaning against a boulder. He was not a man for talking much, especially when he was angry. He always had a rough exterior, but at the same time he was an understanding man. It was seldom that we had heart-to-heart talks about anything, but when we did, I could always count on him to say what needed to be said, even if he was awkward in his presentation.

The blue Ford motored up to the parking lot of the gas station at the edge of the field. He honked the horn and got

out quickly. It was evident to me by the way he moved that I was in trouble; his motions were quick and sudden, just as they always were whenever he was angry. I could see it now; he would begin shouting and yelling about my leaving school because of a fight. The belt would probably be whipped out and he'd start wailing on me right there in the middle of Fremont Street. How sad I must have looked. It was probably a combination of fear and anger, but looking as beat up as I did, maybe he didn't see that. Maybe he just saw his son, looking more worn out than he had ever seen before. As he stepped from the truck, I momentarily saw his face; I began to dread the moment he would reach me. I turned, not wanting him to see my face as I silently cried tears of sadness and anger.

“ ... I thought for a moment I might be in trouble again. My father was contemplating something. ”

The sadness was a combination of how I felt at the moment, about myself, about life, and about people in general. I was sad that my father was probably on his way to hit me for ditching and forcing a phone call from school. That had never happened to me before and I

did not feel up to finding out the result of such actions. Most likely, he had left my mother to run the motel we owned as he searched for me.

More importantly, I was saddened that up to this point in my life, I had been unable to find anyone I could call a friend. Most peers, at this point, did not or would not accept me, for reasons even they probably could not say, and I could not understand why.

The anger came from knowing that my nemesis in the fight that just occurred would, more than likely, get away clean. In fact, she struck me as the type of person who would tell her parents about it and be congratulated because she had fought and been aggressive, and that angered me!

It seemed to take my father forever to reach me. Maybe he was walking slowly on purpose, forcing me to think about what I had done and the consequences that were in store. I grew tenser by the moment, waiting for the hammer to fall, so to speak. I suddenly needed to have something to do with my hands as I waited nervously. I picked up rocks, sticks, and pebbles quickly. He finally reached me as I leaned against a huge brown boulder sticking out of the ground. He leaned against the boulder as well. I stared as his belt glistened in the sunlight from around his waist. I expected the screaming next, then the belt. I was waiting for it. Tossing the

stick back and fourth in my hands while clumsily holding the rocks, I waited for the inevitable.

“So what happened?” he said softly.

“I donno.” I said, holding back tears, forcing myself not to look at him. I broke the stick, flinging half of it as far as I could. Why wasn’t he screaming at me?

“Had a big fight, huh?”

“Yeah.” I sniffled, wiping my nose against my sleeve. “I’m in trouble?”

He did not answer quickly. It was as though he were looking for the right words. “What if I were to just up and leave the motel one day? What if I left for a day or two and didn’t tell anyone? What would happen?”

“Heh, mom would freak!” I smiled a little. “We’d go looking for you, I guess.”

“How would you feel?”

“I’d be scared. I’d wonder why you left for no reason.”

“Well, so why did you leave school like that? Don’t you think I felt the same way when I heard from the principal that you just ran off? Why didn’t you go to the office and explain what happened? We’d have come down and talked things out.”

I tossed a small rock, not as far as the stick, still awkwardly holding the broken piece and pebbles. I began to

feel ashamed. "They didn't believe me. They only wanted me in the office, not the other person!" My voice rose. "You wouldn't have believed me. Jimmy was the only one there on my side. He knows what really happened," I squeaked.

"Has there been a time when I didn't listen to your side?"

"Guess not," I whimpered.

"You guess not?" he asked.

I fidgeted with the items in my hand. Sighing heavily, I spoke. "Okay,

maybe we can talk to Jimmy tomorrow." My eyes grew large and I looked up at him, growing fearful again. "We have to go see the principal; you know that."

"I guess," I sighed, looking away and tossing another pebble.

"You wanna go home and get cleaned up? Tomorrow we can go back to school, call Jimmy in and clear this mess up."

"Yeah! You know, he was—" He cut me off.

“... I wasn't about to flag him down. He would most likely be angry with me, but at the moment, I was too angry to care ...”

you win. You always listen." He smiled faintly. I didn't want to admit that, but I knew I had to or he would have just kept presenting the same question over and over until I answered, and I was in no mood for that.

"You know, it's no good to hit girls."

"But even if—"

He touched my shoulder. "I know son, I know, calm down." A pebble slipped from my nervous fingers, fingers that were not as nervous as we talked quietly and calmly. This was something I had not expected. I sniffled again. "It was pretty bad, huh? Are you banged up much?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Guess I'll live," I said, half sarcastic.

"Atta boy." He smiled. "Well,

"I know son. But you can't fight with girls! You know this," my father stressed, looking me in the eye. Immediately I looked away. One thing I have rarely been able to do is look people in the eye. I don't know if I have an aversion to staring or what. "That understood?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Yeah!"

"Alright?!" he said, giving me a fake punch to the gut, letting me know everything was okay. I jumped and laughed as usual. He could always fake me out, especially at a time like this.

"Yeah," I half laughed.

Everything seemed alright.

"You were defending yourself, right?"

"I swear I was dad, honest!" I said, tossing the last small rock, still

holding the broken stick and a pebble. He spoke awkwardly, “Mmm-kay, just making sure.” There was an odd silence and I thought for a moment I might be in trouble again. My father was contemplating something. Then he spoke softly, almost secretively, “You, uh, you want a coke before we go home?” he asked as we walked to the truck.

“Yea, but, aren’t I in trouble?” I asked, thinking this might be some sort of trap.

“Well, you were defending yourself. There’s no crime in that. Besides, I heard you missed lunch.”

“Yeah.” I smiled. We laughed as the final pebble flew from my hands.

His voice was back to normal. “Well c’mon, let’s go inside.” We walked into the office of the gas station and stepped up to the drink machine. It was similar to the one at our motel, save for one difference, which was the choice of drink. We dropped 50 cents into the machine. I pulled open the glass and metal door and got my dad a coke. Quickly I stuck the nickel that dropped as change into my pocket. He smiled. Dropping two more quarters in and keeping that change as well, I opted for Delaware Punch. I loved Delaware Punch. We did not have this drink in our machine, and for some reason, could not get it. It was a purple-colored, carbonated grape drink, the likes of which I had never tasted before or

since, and I miss it to this day! I used the bottle opener on the side of the machine. I loved the fizz sound bottles made when they were opened by these machines. I also liked to let the bubbles hit my face when the bottle was first opened because they tickled my nose.

“Umm, just one thing.” He leaned down to me as if spilling a state secret. “We gotta drink it before we get home. Mom’s cooking pot roast.”

“Oh!” I sighed. That meant dinner was almost ready. If mom had caught us drinking a soda so close to dinner time, we’d have been dinner! Having a soda with my father at that moment, was probably the best thing he could have done. We had talked out our problem and everything turned out alright.

Although Jimmy backed me up the next day, I was still suspended two days for fighting. But that was as far as my troubles went that day.

My nervousness was gone as we walked to the truck and I tossed the broken, clammy stick as I sat, laughed, and had a soda with my father, grimy hands and all. We talked more about the fight, then about swimming later, while he drank a coke and I drank a soda, as we sat in his classic 1965 Ford pickup. It was just before dinner and mom never found out.

One Rainy Day

Scott Goss

Rory watches a beige gutter overflow the porch's corner edge in a sheet as he considers the ghostly vapor dancing in vanishing wisps atop the surface of his coffee. On this morning he sits outside to see the horizon develop beyond clouds that cast a dark blanket over the mountains as the recent storm quells. There's shattered glass that lies in a puddle bulging off the curbside. Hard rain never runs off enough where the curb slopes. A slight gust stirs the puddle, causing busted fragments of patio furniture to drift about. Across the street a liquor store stands open. East 17th Street is a run down business district stretching up the hill until it t-bones with a triple tiered gaming joint called Jackpot Crest, a casino that's partly the reason Rory's business still exists. Gamblers going back and forth pass a fireplace shop that manages to stay open in a valley choked by drought. Sometimes those who have noticed his place after they've won money call him the next morning, still under the influence of being momentary winners; something he can't relate to, not like drugs, but some other thing. Rory will ask and they'll tell him they saw his storefront after hitting the jackpot, and usually afterwards their own story unfolds in their own words. Mostly he likes these customers because they'll small talk with him, but he'll still

charge them up front before ordering their materials since most of these jobs he'll never complete.

He lives in a studio apartment below the showroom. A window faces the street and a stairwell leads to a front stoop. He's grown accustomed to the flow of gamblers walking down from the casino and senses that their unkempt clothes betray the folly of relying on luck. Rory has worn wrinkled clothing too, and once slept wherever sheer exhaustion dropped him. He'd found solace in disease, staying high his coping mechanism.

He opens at 8 a.m. six days a week unless he has a job installing fireplaces. This craft resembles creating puzzles with shattered stones. Sometimes he puts pieces into crude mosaic patterns from the hearth to the mantle. Weeks ago he had considered taking this day off, not booking a job since it fell on the seventh anniversary of his brother's death. Rory waits for the wound of memory to heal, but it hasn't. For now he fights to keep memories of before the open-heart surgery complications when Troy was alive.

But the client for today would not compromise, so Rory booked it. He knew then it could prove a struggle. This morning's rain furthered that notion. He pulls his laces tight through

the eyeholes and knots his highly polished boots, then leans to arch a sore back and lifts both hands to wedge his fingers beneath his glasses. He sighs deeply and pulls his open hands down his face. With an effort he stands up.

Rain falls as he organizes his chisels and mallets in the toolbox in the bed of the truck that once belonged to Troy. When Rory paroled he found the truck was his, but the gasoline in the fuel tank had turned gummy and it took six months to save enough money to fix it. He sees that last night's rain washed his vehicle well.

His client for today lives in the hills. The job is to restore a dual fireplace for a manor on a cul-de-sac called "The Summit." Turning up the dead-end winding slope he notices that his materials haven't been delivered. Up here the hillsides are supersaturated with too much rain and water stands in places. He knocks on the door and rings the bell. The owner opens the double doors and Rory stands facing a medium height man with squinty eyes and sallow cheeks wearing a loud oversized unbuttoned Hawaiian flower-print shirt. There's an unwrapped, robust cigar in his breast pocket and, when he smiles at Rory, his teeth are straight and show no imperfections. His freshly shaven jaw is firm. It's about 8:40 a.m. "Good morning," Rory says.

"Morning. Step inside," he says, glancing down at Rory's outstretched hand. "You won't mind if I don't, but I've just washed mine." Rory lowers his hand and slips it into his pocket. "Follow me." He's shown into a den full of pristine furniture. The client pulls the cigar from his pocket and runs it beneath his nose, inhaling its pleasant aroma deeply. He bites the end and spits it out. It lands next to Rory's boot. He sits down on a crimson ottoman and uses a zippo for fire and puffs the cigar. He pulls the flame into the tightly rolled leaves, but pulls too hard and inhales wrong and coughs and gags. Rory reaches down and picks up the cigar end and flings it into the fireplace. Then he begins taking measurements in order to set up his scaffold.

He turns facing the owner, "So it's two fireplaces you want?"

With a red face and watery eyes he catches his breath, "One for me." He gestures an arc, "One for the ladies."

"Got it," Rory says.

Through the morning the client sits in the living room and flips through various business magazines. He watches Rory from the corner of his eye. Some clients force polite conversation, but very few sound authentic. Some sit in the same room and monitor his every move. He can sometimes hear them

breathe. He's used to it, but today it's getting on his nerves. A hand cramp causes him to slip and with his inch wide chisel he cuts neatly across two of his knuckles. He inhales fiercely between his teeth and with his opposite hand he sweeps up into his palm a small mound of stone-dust and quickly mixes it into the wound. The staunch blood turns to paste. He fishes from his workbag a bottle of superglue and, with his front teeth, unscrews the cap and applies three strips before any blood is spilled. He's left with the promise of new scars.

He sets aside a portfolio and strokes his face, "Mmmmm, well, if you say so." Rory knits his brow and steadily exhales, then continues to work.

Headed home he stops at the market since he needs groceries and toilet paper. He hurries through the downpour and sees that the digital clock above the entrance blinks 88:88. He grabs the only shopping basket. Its plastic wicker is busted in spots. He goes down the bread aisle and he overhears someone say, "Yeah, another twenty?" Rory puts into the basket a prepackaged sliced loaf of wheat, but

“ ... a blank silence wedges in between his thoughts and he tries to blink away the watering of his eyes. His body has already begun to anticipate the blast. ”

He continues to piece together fractured stones and crafts one chimney column. Carved bull-nose angles set against beveled edges seem to meet but never do. Each piece he pastes with mortar, but as it nears noon, his makeshift scaffold starts to wobble. He tries to keep balance, but it still teeters. He stops mortaring and climbs down and, using a level, he checks the planks of the scaffold. All surfaces read stable.

"Having trouble?" the client asks from his armchair.

Rory rubs the back of his neck with his palm, "Everything seems fine."

switches it for a plump button loaf of speckled tomato bread. He hears, "Where?" There's a pause, "Okay, in a half hour."

Rory turns the corner and sees the speaker. Not anyone he recognizes but he knows those buggish eyeballs and jutting cheekbones, knows the creased baggy pants, the brand new spotless athletic sneakers offset by a bleach-white ribbed undershirt. The speaker slips his cellular phone into an oversized pocket and darts a glance at Rory, then breaks eye contact as he moves off, but the little girl with him

stands there smiling. Rory grins at her as he lowers his head even with his shoulders in order to wave rapidly. Her wide smile reveals that she's missing her two upper front teeth. But the man grips her by the shoulder and jerks her. "C'mon," he says and the light of her face goes out.

Rory goes over to the butcher-display case and bends to make a selection, but graphics on a case of beer lure his attention. He stands upright in order to consider the long, refrigerated showcase. His eyes are drawn to a red and white packaged 12-pack, an old favorite of his. He takes a deep breath and turns back to select the choicest piece of side meat. He chooses one having an equal amount of gristle and flesh, and then he heads to the only checkout lane to fall in behind the dealer and the child. She's ogling the wall of candy located just at her eye level and asks, "Can I have some chockit, Tom?"

"I already said NO!" he says and she flinches back, stepping into Rory. The man snatches her wrist and yanks her toward him. The clerk says, "\$12.97," then he casts a dull glance at Rory.

The guy reaches into his pocket, pulls out a wallet, and out drops a sealed baggie filled with a crystallized substance. It lands with a faint plop

a few feet in front of Rory. The little girl's eyes have wandered back to the dynamic rainbow wall of sweets.

"Could I buy her some candy or gum, Mister?" Rory asks as he advances one measured step and covers the baggie with his soiled boot. He plucks an item from off the top of the checkout lane's shelf. His heart begins to race and his nerves turn electric. The little girl's eyes again brighten with hope.

"Naw, Spooks. Don't worry. I take care of her all good."

"Of course," Rory leans forward off balance, "there's little doubt."

The man gathers his goods yet disregards his receipt and, as he drags the girl away, she looks back at the item in Rory's hand. They exit the store. The clerk asks, "You gonna still buy that?" Rory bends down and picks up the baggie. He stands up straight as he pockets the score. He knits his brow and squints, saying "What?"

The checker slides his items over the barcode reader, "The horoscope in your hand, man. Still wanna buy that for the little girl? Maybe teach her how to read the stars?" He snorts as he tosses the basket down beneath the counter.

Rory is holding a rolled-up Libra horoscope scroll embossed with a set of scales. Rory shakes his head, "No,

I guess I won't now," he says running his knuckles back and forth against the stubble on his face.

The clerk eyes him vacantly, "Then put it back on the rack."

Once home he sets the groceries on his workbench, then unloads his tools in the rain. He descends into the basement and puts water on the stove before he pulls from the fridge a partially thawed chicken breast. He wets a blackened rag at the mud sink, goes over to the stairwell, and sits down in order to remove his boots. He begins wiping away the layers of muck that coat them. Then he reaches down below the second step, pulls out a polishing kit, and starts to polish them. Once he finishes that, he tucks the kit back underneath the stairs next to the large air tight storage container labeled "Troy." He goes over to the stove and turns on a burner. He crosses the basement once again, but this time he heads to the corner that serves as his bedroom. Positioned square in that corner is a chest high, glass-covered armoire; he pulls out the bag of crystal, sets it on top, and just looks at it. Something he's done without for five years. Yet he doesn't want it. But he needs it. Here he is facing it alone. Being tempted never ends.

Rory dumps the shit all out and looks at it. The water that's boiling

across the room whistles shrilly, but he ignores it. The crystals are beautiful. Next to the armoire is a makeshift shelf and on it, there is an unfinished scale model of a living room cut-away that he's built to use as a sales model. He's worked on this miniature a long time. It has in its setting a small red wagon to suggest a child-friendly fireplace. He grabs the little wagon, which is actually a hide-a-key that's been painted red. He had chosen it since he knew he'd have lost it otherwise. But despite the magnet, he had made sure the wheels would spin. He uses it to crush the crystals. They smush under the pressure and stick to the side of the wagon's boxy frame. This shit's fresh, damp; must have been cooked sometime yesterday. He uses his knife to scrape the smudgy paste from the edge of the wagon. Flakes of red paint drop into the pile of white. He sets the wagon back into the living room model. With his blade, he pulls out one long fat rail, half the length of the armoire.

He walks to the kitchenette and pours a steaming cup of water then adds loose leaf Dragon Well tea. Going over to the window, he rises up on the balls of his feet and watches the steady traffic heading up to the casino. On his path to prison he had lost everything, family and all were gone when he got released, and all he had was his vehicle outside

and the box with Troy's belongings right there hidden in plain sight underneath the stairs. And that shit's just waiting, has been waiting, and won't ever tire of waiting. It waits to consume his person again. He removes the hollow rod that supports the checkered drapes of the model's window. He trims the rod to a stub and notches the end to finish making his snooter.

He concentrates on the sound of cars outside driving by on their way up the hill to the casino. They embody vague hopes and mild dreams mixed with pockets of change. He runs his fingers over the mixture of coagulated blood, stone-dust and glue that spans his knuckles. He walks back and stands in front of the armoire. He picks up the snooter and inhales deeply gulping down mucus in order to clear his nasal passage. Then he pauses and a blank silence wedges in between his thoughts and he tries to blink away the watering of his eyes.

“Rory waits for the wound of memory to heal, but it hasn't. For now he fights to keep memories of ... when Troy was alive.”

His body has already begun to anticipate the blast. He fits the snooter into his nostril, pinching the other side, bends forward, and closes his eyes.

“No,” he lowers his fist, “not yet.” He drops the snooter and it rolls to

the edge of the armoire. He reaches over and pushes the living room model off the shelf. It lands with a crash. He goes and sits down on the stairs and clutches his temples, but his open palms turn to fists and glide back along the crest of his skull until stopping at his nape. Pinched elbows cover his face as he grabs at his brow with both hands and, grinding his palms into his sockets, he holds his chin high and slowly uses his open hands to pull down the skin of his cheeks. He returns to the armoire and stands before the untouched line.

He needs something else, anything else. He goes back to the stairs, kneels down to move the polishing kit out of the way, and pulls out the container filled with his brother's unpacked belongings. Rory has yet to check its contents. He opens the tightly sealed box and, as he does, a curious odor seeps out. Stale sweat wafts in his

nose and he remembers the room where his brother spent countless hours reading on his bed. Sifting further he finds his personalized shirt from the high-school debate team, “Sir Troy” written across the back. That was the

nickname he'd chosen to negate his unseen physical handicap, which was congenital heart disease. Troy was older and Rory had looked up to him, even though he was a knight in broken armor, compensated with a brass mind and mercury tongue.

He comes across the journal his brother had written, but pushes it aside. Rory once read it and remembers coming away offended since there were over a hundred pages of entries, yet his brother never once mentioned Rory. He remembers how his own life had often marginalized his handicapped brother once he started excelling in the sports Troy could never physically participate in. And then he comes across his brother's fountain pen. He had completely forgotten that signature quirk of his. Troy always wrote with a fountain pen. And as he pulls out more he finds that one of the ink cartridges had exploded near the bottom of the container. The spilled ink had left a big splotch on the outer margin of his journal.

Troy staked his life, but lost after walking into the hospital on a gamble for a better life by putting his damaged heart in the hands of a surgeon, but never exited alive. Rory remembers leaving the hospital's waiting room that night to get high and the call he got to rush back, only in time to have a nurse

lead him into the room as an orderly was unzipping the cloudy morgue bag so he could view the collapsed chest and the face with an iodine-colored, sticky residue left by the tape that had secured the tube that ran down Troy's throat. He can't get rid of the vision of his brother trying to pull that tube out of his mouth so he would be able to say something, anything, whatever it might have been. But hospital staff held his arms; he never got to speak. Rory had looked into his eyes deeply, deeply, then he left and got high, and stayed that way for years.

Tears drip from his chin. Among the collection of possessions Rory finds a piece of paper with what he needs. He carefully folds the page and pockets it then puts the rest of Troy's things back into the container and shoves it beneath the stairs. He walks to the bathroom, opens a roll of toilet paper, folds some up, dampens the fold then wipes under his eyes. Then, with this dampened wad, he walks to the armoire, smears the shit off the glass, picks up the bag, goes over to the toilet, and flushes it all down together, and then flushes one more time.

He gets a razor from beneath the sink, takes off his faded coveralls and looks at the bushy hair on his chest. He shaves the area of his left pectoral muscle. Once he finishes, he wipes the

excess hair down onto the linoleum, then puts on a clean shirt. He drinks the last of his cold tea. He moves over to the stairs, pulls on his boots, and tucks the laces into his socks.

He gets into his truck and turns left onto East 17th.. A quarter of a mile down, he pulls into a brightly lit parking area. He heads towards the neon light. He walks inside the building and approaches the Formica countertop inlaid with a geometric pattern.

The person at the counter asks, “Can I help you?”

“Could I buy her
some candy or gum,
Mister?” Rory asks
as he advances one
measured step and
covers the baggie
with his soiled boot.”

Rory pushes an ink splotted page across the counter. “Can I get this signature across my heart? My chest, I mean, across my chest, right here?” he points to the spot.

Troy had used a fountain pen to sign the final page of his journal.

The tattoo artist nods, “Get in the chair.”

Breathing

David Dashoff

Breathing. Billy did this constantly. Hell - ever since he could remember he'd been doing it. Flapping his lungs about—whiffing at this and that. If you could count on Billy doing any one thing, it was breathing.

To put it bluntly, Billy thought he would continue to breathe for the rest of his natural born life (it was so very dear to him).

That filthy liar.

On the seventh of December 1941, Billy died. Reports didn't specify whether he had drowned during the sinking or suffocated from the fumes, but in either case, one thing was for certain. Billy had abandoned a childhood occupation only moments before his death. Billy was a fake.

There were others like him, of course. People who had once openly professed their wanting to breathe only to later give it up—cold turkey. Many were from the Navy. It was a disturbing trend.

“How dare they?” the breath-lovers would cry, flapping their air bags this way and that. “And to think, seconds before death?”

Frauds, they called them, fakers—because, as everybody knew, near-death experiences always showed a man's true colors. And oh, did they show.

Stuart didn't understand it either...

Stuart was a staunch breath lover. He sniffed and he bellowed and he panted like the best of them, respiring just for the sake of it. He flaunted his huff and he flaunted his puff and he didn't give a damn about who knew, because nobody did it better. Deep gusts flowed from his guts—like porridge.

He found himself at a Navy recruiting station ten miles south of Pewter and seemed to rather like the idea. The walls were choked with posters of thick, square jaws.

“I'm Joe,” one spoke to him, “and I'm smiling.”

The smiling man gazed triumphantly at the ceiling.

Overhead supertitles suggested that, besides breathing, he yearned for war bonds and blowing up Japanese people - but Stuart wasn't convinced. He seemed too happy. Stuart smiled. Stuart was happy, too, but serious. He curled his brow prudently. It was time to do what the smiling man had to do.

Buy war bonds and win the war the American way. By winning.

Soon a recruiting officer waltzed to Stuart's feet (he was a habitual breather, too, Stuart could tell).

Next they were both in chairs—Stuart facing the smiling man, now animated. The door was closed.

Words were spoken, documents were revealed.

He signed. Quickly.

And before he could even feel any manlier, the papers were whisked away to a pile of smudged signatures and other manhoods and he was sent on his way to boot camp with a misty smile and a handshake to replace some individual - some unlucky son-of-a-gunslinger cowboy, some tired, queasy old timer casualty named Billy.

“ Overhead supertitles suggested that, besides breathing, he yearned for war bonds and blowing up Japanese people—but Stuart wasn’t convinced. ”

I think that was his name. Billy.

He was in the paper.

—Oh well, Stuart was smarter than Billy. At least Stuart knew not to stop breathing.

And so Stuart the breather was sent on his way. And he smiled. And the smiling, breathing men smiled back.

All Fight and Nowhere to Go

Larry Eby

Jacko was cold. Poor guy always looked like he was a recent genocide survivor, but without the cowering and the odd colored skin. But Jacko held himself like he had a purpose. He wasn't the type of guy that you'd find hanging out around A&W, like the rest of us, making petty drug deals and trying to find some lay. On another day, it'd be hard to find the guy at all. It probably had to do with him and his parents squatting in various abandoned houses around the city, or maybe, as some "locals" believed, the guy was out and about attempting to actually make it. Jacko was a character. Always wearing that damn leather jacket with that patch on the shoulder that said, Following the Leader. No one wears leather jackets, and no one around here has a saying. And there was a reason why he was here, just none of us knew it yet.

We all were huddled in a circle out back of the A&W, passing around a small glass pipe with some blue swirls melted into it. The skunk smell was abroad and a few of the girls, dressed in mismatched ragged clothing, opposite the group, couldn't stop their giggling. It was cold, hence the huddling, and Jacko sat at the concrete table near the entrance of the building. He just kind of sat there and watched. It didn't seem like anyone even noticed he was there.

But I noticed. I took a short hit, held it in, and then passed it to the guy in the gray hoodie to my left. I let out the smoke into the cold air and wondered what part was smoke and what part was breath. Jacko was still at the table, just staring at us, like he was some vulture or something.

"What's he doing here?" I said. I nudged my buddy, Ricky. Ricky was tall, large, and afraid of anything with more than two legs. He was in a heavy jacket that smelled like cat shit, and it gave him a more oval shape than the normal cone shape he usually had.

"Huh?"

"Jacko, man. The guy's just staring." I tried to whisper it, but failed. The pipe was back around and I took another hit, passed to the guy to my left, and let out the breath.

Ricky was high and didn't understand a damn thing, and those girls couldn't stop laughing. A car pulled up, ordered, and passed by the group to the window. Everyone gave a quick shout in annoyance and this young kid, Barker, threw one of his shoes at the car after the guy got his order. He missed.

"Eat that, assholes!"

The manager, the clean shaven type with a red A&W hat on, yelled at us and told us he called the cops. It was a common threat and no one took it seriously. Not even Jacko, with that

serious looking leather jacket. He was just sitting there looking at us.

“Seriously, you fucks. What the hell is going on with him? He’s just staring.”

“Paranoia! Paranoia!” said Barker.

I gave him a push. “Fuck off, little shit.”

Jacko wasn’t at the table anymore.

The group dispersed around the parking lot, since the asphalt was finally interesting again. The gigglers were calmer now and sat on the handicapped parking blocks. It looked like they were discussing the color blue. Ricky took a seat at the table where Jacko used to be and put his head down. I decided I was going to find Jacko.

The only logical choice was downhill toward the track-homes, since the upper city was purely commercial and it was hard to find anything other than A&W open this late. I stopped, pulled a pack of Camels out of my back pocket, packed them, lit one up, and kept walking. The streets were quiet and dark, minus the passing Civic that rattled from bumping Mexican music with its high beams on. The air was cold and moist. After the car turned down a street and the sound faded to a soft hum, I could hear the wind passing through the palms above.

I reached a lit-up street corner and took a right up toward the houses. I took a drag, blew it out and dropped the cigarette on the ground. Up ahead I could see what looked like a really skinny kid in a leather-looking jacket underneath the yellow glow of a streetlamp. I yelled for him. He noticed; he had to, but he kept walking. He turned another corner and I picked up the pace.

“ I had my hand on the doorhandle when Jacko hit me in the ear. I felt burning, and a throbbing filled my head. ”

Around the corner there were six homes in the round cul-de-sac that were seemingly vacant and vandalized. Most of the windows were broken and a few of the doors were missing or busted down. The far middle house had unlit Christmas lights still stapled onto the eaves and the neighborhood smelled like septic. From the far middle house I heard a door close and figured Jacko made it into his temp-house.

I didn’t know what I’d do if I followed him in, but I wanted to know what he wanted and I already got this far. When I reached the driveway, I could see the door. I could tell that,

at one time, the thing was probably nice. The wood was stained, but it was chipping, and the small window in the center was broken and the metal design frame that used to hold the small pieces of glass was bent. The door was ajar, so I pushed it open. Glass under my feet cracked as I stepped inside.

The entrance led to what was probably the living room. It was empty and smelled like dust, and the hideous flowered wallpaper was beginning to peel off the walls to reveal yellowish drywall. It was barely lit with light from the kitchen. I could hear some movement coming from the second story, just a small creek from what sounded like footsteps.

“Jacko, you here?”

Jacko answered from the kitchen to my left. “What the hell. What are you doing in here?” He was still wearing the jacket, and even through the dimly lit living room I could see that patch, Following the Leader.

“That some band or something?”

“What the hell are you doing?”

Jacko was hesitant to get closer. He was nervous and his hands were shaking. The wind picked up outside and I could hear it blowing hard against the house, whistling and booming.

“Whoa, relax. I came to see what you wanted at A&W. I’ll leave, relax.” I had my hand on the doorhandle when Jacko hit me in the ear. I felt burning,

and a throbbing filled my head. I caught my balance and threw a swing his way, connecting to his eye socket. Jacko stumbled back and tripped, landing on his ass on the bare concrete floor in the empty living room. He held his eye with both hands. A small creak from the upstairs.

“ Jacko was still at the table, just staring at us, like he was some vulture or something. ”

“Shit, man,” I said. I walked over and held my hand out to help him up. He didn’t reach back. My hand retreated to my side. “I said I was leaving. I didn’t want to hit you.” My ear was still burning.

Jacko was quiet and rubbed his eye slowly, legs sprawled flat against the concrete. Upstairs, the same creaking of footsteps. Beads of sweat dripped down my side from my armpit and felt cold against my ribs. I swallowed, nervous-like, and heavy.

“You ok?” I asked.

Jacko took his hands off his face and dropped them in his lap. His eyes were watering and he fought off sobbing. He couldn’t fight off the shivering, his teeth chattering. He took a few deep breaths, each exhale letting

out a weak cloud in the cold.

He was looking down toward his shoes. They were old leather army boots, worn from use that was probably not his. "Everyone's so happy there."

His voice cracked mid-sentence and we both sat quietly for a moment.

"No one is happy there," I said.

He lifted his head up and looked at me, shivering.

"Just look at Ricky," I said. "Guy gets beaten by his pops every other day."

Jacko shifted, his jeans rubbing against the floor. The concrete looked cold and unwelcoming.

"Why are you there?" he said.

I couldn't think of a real reason. I had never really thought about it. "I just showed up one day and kept coming. Can't find anything else to do, so I'm there."

His eye was starting to swell a little. I took a seat, my back against the wall. The concrete was definitely cold and unwelcoming. I wondered how long it would take for a spider to crawl down from the dilapidated ceiling and nest in my hair. It was quiet again; just the creaking, the breathing, and the booming wind. I broke the silence.

"You don't have to sit out of the group, ya know. No one has a problem with you being there. It's just damn awkward when you're sitting and watching us like some stalker serial

killer or something."

I decided to leave. I had caused enough problems for the night. I stood up and looked towards the door. The inside was sprayed painted red with an unreadable gang-tag. There were scattered shards of the window on the floor next to some crumbled drywall piled like the bottom half of a shattered hourglass.

"You smoke?"

He nodded and I reached out a hand. He grabbed hold and we gripped around the thumbs. I pulled him up.

Outside I packed the Camels and offered one. He pushed the lid open with his thumb and index finger and pulled out a cigarette, pressed it between his lips and accepted the light. I mirrored, then looked out across the shattered world of broken glass, cracked driveways, and chipping paint. Cold wind flowed through the streets and danced with the fallen leaves that licked at the wind. Smoke filled my lungs in a deep breath, and again, I wondered how much of the smoke was smoke, and how much was breath. Jacko was no longer shivering, but standing tall among the still sounds of the night. A warmth ran through me, like a fever in the darkness, and I felt at home among the strange.



“Positioned square in that corner is a chest high, glass-covered armoire; he pulls out the bag of crystal, sets it on top, and just looks at it.”

—Scott Goss, *One Rainy Day*





“Demands for revenge and
payback, piercing screams,
spontaneously closing doors all
came to mind as Ami stirred the
channa.”

Avni Shah, *Haunted*



Everyone Has A First Love

Priscilla Santos

Everyone has a first love, first romance, and a first kiss. My first love appeared when I was only ten years old. His name was Tuxedo Mask, and he threw roses in an anime show called "Sailor Moon."

Before I was even aware animes existed, the only cartoons I ever saw were Looney Toons and Disney movies. I must say, I liked Prince Charming from Cinderella. Unfortunately, his nose bugged me and he didn't make my heart do that whole skip-bounce-kaboom thing (later dubbed the Grenade Effect).

I remember my best friend at the time, Andrew, invited me over to his house and subtly introduced me to his cable television.

"What? You have how many channels... You have your own TV! What in the -!"

While there he introduced me to animes such as "Dragon Ball Z" and this fossil of a show called "Robotech," but they only interested me to a certain degree. They were all about war, war, war, kill everyone, eat rice, fix the robot, and war. I got bored. Then one day, thirty minutes before Dragon Ball Z came on, I saw a flash of pink; I became intrigued.

"Hey Andes..." I said.

"It's Andrew," he muttered.

"What's that show?" I asked. I remember the grimace on his face.

"Oh, that's just Sailor Moon. It's really girly and stupid; you won't like it. Come on, we'll play Legos until DBZ. Maybe Goku will turn into a Super Saiyan and..."

His voice faded as I thought about the possibilities of what I would see; as I said, I was intrigued.

"Well, I wanna try it."

He stared at me. I was a tomboy and this was the last thing he expected from the girl who could beat him up.

"What? No, let's play—"

"I'm watching Sailor Moon," I snapped.

"Alright fine," he said quickly and muttered profanity under his breath.

So we sat down, him reluctant, and me comfortably curious in a chair four feet away from the television screen. I waited, and suddenly the show came on. It had to do with a very klutzy blonde saving the world in a small sailor number. I thought it was the coolest thing in the world; girls fighting crime while looking good with great hair. I became excited, and thought the show could not get any better, when it happened.

Sailor Moon was in trouble! The monster's attack was coming right at her and she could not move to the side. She screamed. I screamed. My hand swung back and accidently hooked Andrew's nose. I did not notice; the

moment was too intense. I looked at the screen and suddenly there was a red flash. I froze, and a beautiful red rose stopped the attack of the monster. A Spanish guitar played in the background. Castanets. And there he was, a masked man in a tuxedo and top hat. I stared at the screen. Stared. Waited. Clutched my chair...

“Be careful, Sailor Moon,” he said in a silky voice.

“I thought it was the coolest thing in the world; girls fighting crime while looking good with great hair.”

Skip. Bounce. Kaboom. Grenade.

It was my first crush. After that day, I made sure I made it to Andrew’s house everyday, on time, just so I could watch Sailor Moon; so I could watch her save the world, pig out, and trip. So I could watch her fall in love with the dashing Tuxedo Mask. He was smooth, romantic, and cheesy. I liked it. The princes in the Disney movies did not throw life saving flowers, or have castanets in the background. How lame.

I turned to Andrew, who was nursing a hurt nose.

“I want to be Sailor Moon,” I said

proudly.

He gave me a look of death, but I was too caught up in myself to notice.

“And,” I said. “You can be Tuxedo Mask.”

“WHAT?”

I don’t think he ever forgave me for that.

Fortine

Dylan Freude

Nearly every morning, during my late teens, my father would be out beyond the back porch as the white rays of the sun had begun to fade to an acceptable blue. There he would do his stretches and lifts, each one chosen in seemingly random order. While twisting and straining against his own steel and the gravity of the porch, a listener—usually only myself drinking my morning tea out of sight—would hear the quick, forced harmonies that he blurted out. These are the moments that I have lately been engrossed by, that of my father's obscure singing while exercising.

As he moved during his exercises he heard songs in his head, which, as I believe, were heard as skipping ribbons of vinyl that merged seamlessly from one song into another. In his lyrical blending he created wholly original works of rhythm. He never sang a song through with verse nor time signature. Instead they were musical speakings, that of a voice fluctuating in tones that were variations of genres. Growing up I assumed that different genres would play on the skipping recorder in his mind and were dependent on his exercise routine.

While lifting weights he sang a type of blues and country, though not quite bluegrass, that rolled off his breath in puffs like clouds escaping in

bursts. When pulling a great black band around a post, he would half hum and whisper a jazz melody, mixed with the tappings of Duke Ellington with his tongue. The most difficult to describe are the melodies he emitted when stretching. They were, to my greatest recollection, a folk-like enterprise, heavily relying on Californian beach rhythms.

These, among his internal music box, woke my two sisters, brother, and my mother in the late morning. They became so natural to us that they blended into the sounds of the house unsettling with the heat that accompanies the slow progression of awakening. It was as if every morning contained a sunrise in a diminished seventh.

Hearing our father from her room, my eldest sister, Ida, would use his utterances to bang out songs on our upright piano in the family room. These songs eventually won her several secondary school talent shows and later aided her in earning a regional scholarship. My father is still, to this day, unaware of his role in her success. In her last letter I received, she wrote that she returns home often for inspiration by sitting on that porch out of sight, listening to our father. Ida tells me that our father misses me.

On those mornings, as I reached

the bottom of my mug on that corner of that porch, as bits of tea leaves glided unto my tongue and between my teeth, my father would stand looking out over our wide property past the orchids and as we called them, “bubblegum trees,” and place the tips of his two forefingers on his wrist, as if taking the pulse of the land and his own. He would hum, measure by measure, classical music. It was the only piece of music that he sang in its entirety and of which I never became accustomed to. My father, as far as I know, was not a lover or frequent listener of classical music, nor has he ever picked up an instrument. With the closest relation that humming and whispering and the clicking of one’s tongue could shadow actual music, he imitated Tchaikovsky, Shubert, and, to my excitement, Chopin.

For all of his exercises my father neither bragged nor gloated about his strength, except for one night in a drunken stupor when he mistook a remark I made for aggression and said: “You mess with the buck, you get the horns!” It is still a punch line among my siblings. His body was not exceptionally muscular but stocky. The muscle clung low to the bone, creating the lean set tone that is the build of older men.

I remember hating my father several mornings as I lay in bed or on the family couch, sweating with a

hangover. I would hear my father and feel alienated from those sounds as I lay on my back. I could make out from the couch the arch of my father’s muscular back and could see steam rising from it. My mother once told me, in the few instances she was awake at that hour with me, that he may catch fire at any moment. His self-immolation those mornings were a sort of spiritual exercise that I still wonder and meditate on.

“ I do love
him. He is
the bard of
the sea otters
and I of safety
information. ”

My father is the modern Neal Cassady. I wonder now of my envy and admiration for him. He was the in-between of an immovable object, an unstoppable force, and I have resigned myself to Sisyphus, eternally struggling with the ephemeral idea that is him.

As I write this I am on vacation with my wife, traveling from California, our home, to Montana. In the airport I reread an article in a dog-eared magazine I have had in my satchel about a man who plans to jump from 20,000 feet in the atmosphere and fall back to Earth in a specially-made suit.

The face of the man haunts me and has been the catalyst for this chronicle of my father. This man, like my father, pushes the boundary of the possible and my father, the probable, and the two unite and glow like some copper wire that burns in my mind. In holding this wire tight with my thoughts I can unravel the narrative that is my father and me. This is my goal.

“ This man, like my father, pushes the boundary of the possible and my father, the probable, and the two unite and glow like some copper wire that burns in my mind. ”

I board the plane remembering how I hate flying and puddle jumping across the northwest. Seattle is usually shrouded in a thick, vengeful, western mist and when the plane shutters through clouds toward Kalispell, I cling to the seat and wait for the bottom to drop out. I tell myself that, should the plane go down, I ought to at least go out laughing, but instead I form the sign of the cross in the air with my index finger and wrestle with my breath. I am terrified. I cannot be brave before my wife in these moments. She sits there mumbling with irritation, accustomed to my spells of terror.

The Montana air is nothing like Southern California's. It is crisp, clear, and heavy. Stepping off the plane I feel it resting in my diaphragm like a

woolen animal.

My wife and I rent a car and travel two hours north of Kalispell bringing us to Fortine, a small town in the Tobacco Valley off Interstate 93, in the northwestern region of the state. Small white crosses atop red poles dot the interstates' peripherals as we pass. They are brief testaments to the deceased. Fortine itself is located off a

small exit, indistinguishable from the surrounding forest, save the railroad tracks that emerge between the trees. In town, the Fortine Elementary School is the largest building, constructed out of a converted barn and what resembles a church. It, among the other half dozen buildings, including the United States Post Office and the Fortine Mercantile grocery and bar near the interstate comprise the town. Residents of Fortine have their homes submerged in the thick of forest, branching off the main winding road into itself as if hiding from the immediate presence of what the interstate births. Yet in their hiding exists a kinship of the sheltered that is both hesitant and welcoming.

In this town my wife and I take our third vacation together and third

visit to the unfinished cabin. The cabin has been the passion project of a close friend of ours who, until recently, did nothing to finish the completion of it. Its wooden porch stretches the length of the northern half of the cabin facing the thick of surrounding forests. The cabin has two stories and an extension of a skeleton garage, which is covered with a green slated roof. With each visit the cabin progresses slowly, but a plethora of wood chips and shavings, as well as the smoker's teeth white spackle on the shower doors and windows, remain constant. On this visit, the many wooden support beams across the ceiling and porch have been scraped of their bark, creating the harmony between the lighter under wood and the shallow brown surface skin of the tree.

There, too, is no furniture save four barstools, a table, a couch, and coffee table in one enclosed room. We disperse these throughout the cabin as needed. On the cabin's second floor, two double doors open into the air where a balcony will be constructed. My wife and I sleep on a stored air mattress in a curtain-less blank room. It is here, in the comfort of a bare cabin, that I think of my father. I do not know why I think of my father, so I interrupt my narration to discuss its reasons here.

Since reading of the falling man and arriving here I have been disturbed

by something that alludes me, like an ache in a joint that cannot be assuaged. It feels as if tiny strings have been attached to my elbows and knees and are pulled consistently and lightly. It is the feeling of needing to run quite far and fast, but even the thought of doing so, or even hiking, leads me to believe that no distance or speed will satisfy.

Something is amiss and I fear that it exists beyond or past the white warm waves of my memories ending only at my father. I have no means of calling him in the woods and I truly do not know if I could say anything of substance to him or articulate why I have become so obsessed with him. Yet recalling him on those mornings on the porch makes my joints twitch and upsets the purgatory in my limbs and mind. So, reader, I ask that you bear with me, as this physical act gives me a slight jolt, like thankful shock therapy.

Thinking back, it was as if my father saw the corners on everything, and the common narrow perceptions of daily struggles alluded him because he was peering before us, as so many of us are caught in the past and present. But he was nothing but human. It was his being wholly human and fully accepting universal limitation of the human condition that completed him.

I knew he was a saint and I

worshipped him from afar, yet our close intersections were marred with breaks. I would speak of my work in college, and later in copyediting, and he would look longingly into me, past me, to my full potential behind me. It was not as though I disagreed with him. We functioned on alternating tracks, departed from one another, crisscrossing paths and acknowledging the momentary shared familial identities. I would watch his silhouette drinking coffee before he left me in the Los Angeles airport so many times. I now know that he was loved by all, not because of his persona, but because his energy simply prevailed over others or his adrenaline held out longer than theirs.

When I was younger I placed myself in conscious resignation of him and me. There certainly was love between us, but it was the love of two small-talkers in secret. I do love him. He is the bard of the sea otters and I of safety information.

It is not as though some obvious pinnacle moment arose since I have been here in Montana, or a pertinent catalyst that soothes my unease, but rather subtleties that point toward the ephemeral notion of my father, increasing a slowly entering comfort, such as sliced strawberries floating in my wife's wine glass in the kitchen or

feeding domesticated elk through wire fences, or shooting a third generation .22 Luger with the neighbors down the road.

Domesticated elk, for the sake of detail, are beautiful, skittish animals that graze in a fenced-in farm area. The owner of the farm, which sits atop a hill in Fortine, is a Hungarian man. The neighbors recommended we visit the farm and ask to feed the elk. The owner spoke honestly with his accent and shuffled to the wire gate behind his home. He shook a coffee can full of grain and below emerging between trees, four bulls approached. I have never been particularly powerful in describing nature (my profession does not require that I am; copyediting is quite far removed from it, really). I am no Thoreau or Muir. Only that seeing these powerful, full animals with antlers static with velvet, completely conscious of the power of those excess bones, one feels as if the great creatures of California, both feared and accustomed, were wholly inadequate. Their antlers protrude like cupped hands with extended fingers toward heaven, stalwart like my father. My father, too, is like the elk: a muse to nature.

Currently, I am huddled in a tent some distance from the cabin. While at the Fortine Mercantile earlier, I saw distant rainclouds gathering and

ventured out with a waterproof tent into the woods from the cabin with the air mattress in hand. My wife joins me with two sleeping bags zipped together as one to attempt a small adventure.

We sleep and wake in the tent with the rain and thunder as if trying to sleep in a jarring car. The edges of the sleeping bag have become moist from draping unto the rain soaked ground. The passing lightning is like a camera documenting my sleep.

“ He gazed over the canyon, like Moses in silence. Slowly he reached down on the floor and picked up the long boat pole light, studied it, and raised it above his head. ”

I listen to the muffled grazing of footsteps passing us, whether real or not, and lay in terror. I wonder if I can be baptized by fear. The storm is passing and I lay on the air mattress with my magazine, trying to read by an electric lantern. I am beginning to feel a sense of relief and a subsiding in my anxiety. I cannot claim victory over the million little strings pulling at my marrow, but I can prove a sort of taming to myself. My thoughts drift now to the meeting of ships and storms.

When I was twenty, my father purchased a boat for our family. Each summer we took it out to a lake in the Mojave desert between the borders of California, Nevada, and Arizona. At the end of each summer, my father and I would take the boat out of the water. For several years I was the only sibling old enough to aid my father. At the end of one particular summer, a storm approached the lake. It was one of those wicked desert storms that gathers from procrastination and loneliness. We took the boat out of the water in the evening to avoid the harsh sun of the day. I stood at the rear of the boat as my father drove it on to the trailer. Overhead, the stars were being slowly blocked by jealous clouds.

On the rear of the boat was a 54” pole light used to identify a boat in the night, not unlike a personal lighthouse. I remember laying it on the floor of the boat as the water ran away from its sides and as the storm met us in full force. Had we waited a minute more our boat would have slid off the trailer and run into the ground or the dock. The road out of the lake was a winding steep hill that echoed as the thunder wandered through its canyon walls. As we neared the top of the hill, the boat’s canopy came loose. It flapped wildly in the air, more brilliantly than any fish.

My father and I pulled the car to the side of the road. I scrambled up the side of the boat as my father used the car to climb on. The epicenter of the storm reached above our heads, screaming with wind and light. We had to grab the canopy and retie it to the boat before it tore and blew away. Without it our family would evaporate in the summer heat the following year.

A long metal frame went across the boat in a squared stretched out 'U' shape upon which the canopy was attached. This improvised metal frame was about two inches thick, but the canopy that was still tied around it added a diameter of one foot.

“ I knew he was a saint and I worshipped him from afar, yet our close intersections were marred with breaks. ”

I jumped up on top of the canopy, which was waist high and wrapped my arms around it flapping in the wind. With my limbs around the frame and canopy, the storm became louder and I felt the hair on my arms and neck stand on end with the electricity in the air. I clung to the frame, eyes closed. I became terrified. Lighting in the desert was echoing off the canyon walls and reverberating through my body.

I remember never wanting to let go of that frame. So petrified was I that I was unaware that my father retied the

canopy to the frame next to me. I clung still as my father moved to the rear of the boat, wordlessly taking in the storm, ignoring me and becoming engrossed. I opened my eyes and saw my father through a sideways glance. I was fearful for him standing on the rear of the boat that was raised because of the slight slant of the road.

He gazed over the canyon, like Moses in silence. Slowly he reached down on the floor and picked up the long boat pole light, studied it, and raised it above his head. He began to wave it in the air as lightning flashed around him without a word, his back to me, as if waving a great flag to some

higher power. It moved slowly in his extended arm. I yelled to him, but my voice was either lost in the thunder or had quivered so greatly that I could not be understood. Tears and thunder rolled over my face and the boat. I closed my eyes and clung on tighter. Time stilled itself and my heart pounded. Then my father lightly touched my shoulder amid the storm, as if blessing me, and helped me back to the car. Once in the car I cried until I calmed and slept. Neither my father nor I spoke a word of this until years later, and even then it was

only a remembrance.

Thinking of it now, as the present storm migrates overhead, I wonder of my father's facial expression when he lifted me from the canopy. I cannot recall if he had been smiling or solemn. In my mind's eye, I envision his face like that of ancient statues of gods and angels. It may have been blank and solid with certainty. I am unsure.

Now I read my magazine as the tent perspires from the passing storm. My wife sleeps. I realize now that I cannot be an ether of energy and light like my father. Yet my attempt toward him is like the shadowed flower, defined by the aching for the sun, struggling only against itself and the perceived inaccessibility of the star. Before the storm, I had begun to again reread the article of the man who planned to jump from 120,000 feet in the atmosphere. In the void of space, where one is unsure of the sensation of falling to or from Earth, I wonder what melody that adventure will mutter in bits and who will hear it, falling free and beyond comprehension toward home.

Prometheus

Isaac Escalera

The boys from the neighborhood stood outside the corner liquor store, loitering somewhere between the dusk of youth and the dawning of adolescence. In each parking space, an oil stain, and against the wire fence that separates the structure from an empty lot, trash gathered against itself. With the other three watching from outside, the one in a grey hoodie walked through the automatic doors, looking for something to steal.

He didn't know what he was supposed to steal yet so the plan was simple. Don't get caught. He thought about stuffing candy bars into a Big Gulp and filling it up with soda. It was a trick he heard his cousin talk about once. The clerk would never know he'd be walking out with the candy. Still, he would have to pay for the soda and that would only be considered kinda stealing, and kinda stealing wasn't about to earn him any

“He didn't know what he was supposed to steal yet so the plan was simple. Don't get caught.”

respect from the neighborhood boys. He needed to grab some cigarettes, an adult magazine. Things like that.

Behind the counter, the clerk was busy yelling insults and answers at the TV while ringing up customers.

“This famous thief stole fire from the Gods.”

“Who is Apollo?”

Boop Boop Boop. “Time's up. The correct answer is ‘Who is Prometheus?’”

“Baghh! Who knows this stuff?”

The customer ignored the clerk and asked for a pack of Camels and \$10.00 on 2.

Then, the one in the grey hoodie saw it—a silver Zippo lighter with a picture of an eagle, claws open and descending—begging to be taken. While the clerk checked the customer's ID the kid picked up a deck of playing cards with one hand and stealthily slipped the lighter into his hoodie's pocket with the other.

“That ain't for kids,” a voice boomed from behind him. He turned around to see another customer in a Trucker's cap and a snaggletooth grin starring down at him.

“Whatcha got there is a poker deck. A man's game.” He gave a smug smile at the kid. “You a man?”

The kid stared back, rolling his tongue inside his mouth, searching for the words. Trucker cap let out a laugh and patted the boy on the shoulder. He smiled back, put the cards down and walked out, feeling the cold metal of the silver Zippo inside his pocket.



“I broke the stick, flinging half of
it as far as I could. Why wasn’t he
screaming at me?”

Robert F. Padilla, *Aftermath*



Haunted

Avni Shah

The sun had fallen, disappearing behind the horizon and leaving the kitchen sleepy and dim. Ami had been sitting there awhile, grading a stack of Lord of the Flies essays analyzing instinct versus order—a mind-numbing topic when put in the hands of 100 tenth graders. It was nearly seven and the darkness reminded her that she'd promised dinner tonight, a task that usually fell within Tim's domain, but he was working late, which usually meant mandatory happy hour with the partners. Lawyers had different ways of earning promotions, traditional work hard/get promoted rules be damned.

moment driving her to eat more frequently and in larger portions. But over the last few days, the repetitive flavors she was most adept at producing—bland creaminess and subdued heat—had become unappealing. Suddenly, today, she desired the flavors she'd abandoned for spoonfuls of mac and cheese or ten-minute burritos that tasted more like canned beans than any other ingredient. What she most craved was the mixture of spices her mother used in all dishes, the kick that helped clear her sinuses and was so specifically Indian. The smell of oil and turmeric and paprika

“ It was too much to explain: her desire to make Indian in the first place, the foul taste, the ghosts haunting and lingering, taunting her that only they knew the right away, that she'd disappoint them. ”

For the last month following her mother's death, she'd had no appetite and dinner was often a bowl of cereal, or a handful of almonds and a banana, simple things easily put together. She never craved one thing or the other, just went through the motions to help stop the fidgeting and restlessness that consumed her in place of the energy-zapping depression that she expected.

Hunger had recently awakened again, the need to fill herself up every

mixed with coriander and curry powder had always reminded her not of the special occasions—like Diwali or her engagement—but of weeknights spent doing her homework while her mom spent an hour in the kitchen preparing vegetables such as okra or cauliflower for dinner. When they needed a quick fix of something more intense, her mother would make chickpeas and serve them alongside fluffy puris, which she would fry once the rest of the family came to the table so that everyone

(except for her) could enjoy them while they were hot.

Earlier in the day, Ami had located the index card on which she'd written the channa masala recipe and she reviewed it now, gathering the list of ingredients from the cupboards and fridge. The comfort of having everything in one place—canned garbanzos, plump hothouse tomatoes, an onion and even the rarely-used Tupperware full of tiny spice jars her mother had filled and labeled and often referenced in her cooking tangents over the phone—reassured her.

She turned the knob and ignited the gas flame. Placing a saucepan above it, she embraced the challenge of making her first from-scratch Indian meal. For years, she had no interest in this task, and then, when she finally took interest after college, she feared if she tried, she would discover a deficiency in her own ability. But today, she felt like she had to prove to herself that she could recreate the beloved dish. A combination of emotions fueled her fervor as she poured the oil: guilt, shame, self-doubt, and a growing sense of judgment that had been implanted by her mother and now lived in her conscience.

As the oil heated, she chopped. First the onions, then a small tomato. She added these to the pan and when

the onions appeared golden, she began to measure out the spices: channa masala, garam masala, coriander powder, turmeric, salt, chili powder, garlic. The quantities were specific, but knowing how hard she'd had to push her mother to commit to a tablespoon or teaspoon, she doubted any would be accurate. It had been two years since she'd recorded the recipe and she had yet to prepare it. It was meant to be for Tim's birthday, a dish her mother had insisted he'd like, and so Ami had taken it down and stored it away, knowing that the recipe he'd prefer was the fettuccini alfredo they'd enjoyed on their first date. Today, her mother's recipe was relevant again, unearthed from where it'd been buried.

For several minutes, she watched the pot too closely and stirred the mixture too often. She tasted it over and over. She forgot to adjust the salt and garlic and then overly relied on the channa masala to fill in some flavor. She regretted not having observed her mother's technique; a firsthand demonstration would've helped her hone her instinct before attempting these meals on her own. Without any direction or point of reference other than the tasty final product she'd enjoyed many times as a child, she cooked aimlessly, pushing away the

claustrophobic angst that threatened to consume her, the void of being lost.

“ How would she explain this attempt? It was mishmash Indian. Turns out none of it blended well together, that experimentation had led her too far astray. ”

Pops and gasps from the boiling curry were the only sounds filling the eerie silence of the kitchen. Scattered among the dark crevices were patches of moonlight, their dim yellow glow reminiscent of scary movies and ominous scenes riddled with malicious ghosts. Demands for revenge and payback, piercing screams, spontaneously closing doors all came to mind as Ami stirred the channa. Though she wasn't one for getting easily spooked, in that moment, she imagined her own horror scenario, the unfinished business that lay in her past. First her grandmother, a woman whom even Ami's parents had regarded as cruel, who viewed soap opera villains as heroes, who viewed manipulation as her right, who wore so much oil in her hair she'd stain the couch cushions she'd lean against during the day as well as her own pillows in bed at night. Ami had never been kind or decent to her, unable to pretend that she was

deserving of such respect. Following her death ten years ago, Ami would occasionally think about her, a spirit lingering in the atmosphere, waiting to take revenge. Even though Ami's parents taught her that Jains don't believe in ghosts, that karma is a much different thing than heaven or hell and there is no limbo, she now wondered if her mother might also be hiding in the darkness, waiting for the opportune moment to demand retribution for every argument they'd ever had, for every decision that she believed Ami had made to spite her.

As the water and spices began to boil together, her body began to ache from its intense and ineffectual stillness. All this effort, all the chopping, sautéing, spicing, and tasting, brought her no closer, and the instinct that she had spent years rebelling against was not in her after all.

She shifted from one leg to the other and stirred the pot once more. Her mother always had a few dishes cooking simultaneously and Ami knew that her singular focus was pathetic, another issue thwarting her success. Finally brave enough, Ami brought the stained wooden spoon to her mouth and tasted the channa again. At first, the effect was almost non-existent; she could only identify the chickpea's slight saltiness, not the overpowering blend of chili powder, ginger and cumin she had

expected. A moment later, her palate was overwhelmed by a tongue-burning spiciness.

Infused with petulant rage, she tossed the spoon onto the counter, marking the clean white tiles with drops of orange-brown. The channa had always looked so beautiful when her mother made it. But Ami's looked like something gone bad, corroded. Rust.

Rust that would befuddle her husband, perhaps even frustrate him if he was as ravenous as he usually was after a long day and a couple cocktails. He always encouraged her, but she had to question what he really thought of her cooking ability, of how pathetic it was that she knew so little of a culture to which she ostensibly belonged. How would she explain this attempt? It was mishmash Indian. Turns out none of it blended well together, that experimentation had led her too far astray.

“ A combination of emotions fueled her fervor as she poured the oil: guilt, shame, self-doubt, and a growing sense of judgment that had been implanted by her mother and now lived in her conscience. ”

Tim would be home any minute and this disaster—the channa, perhaps, and also her restless insides—would be shared. It was too much to explain: her desire to make Indian in the first place, the foul taste, the ghosts haunting and lingering, taunting her that only

they knew the right way, that she'd disappointed them. Tim had seen her clash with her mother and even her father, who mostly stayed out of it, but he'd never quite been able to understand the tension implicit in growing up a world away from the one her parents were raised in. And he wouldn't understand why this was so important to her now—identifying the incongruous flavor and correcting for it so the dish tasted similar to her mother's, reigniting a plethora of memories, a grab bag of happy, sad and angry, a difficult past but one that was always laced with flavor.

The keys jingled in the door. She took a deep breath and tried to exhale everything that she suddenly, in this dark, offending kitchen, abhorred. More than exhaustion, she felt pressure to undo what was already done, the past

that she could never change no matter how much she wanted to.

Tim pushed the door open, clean-cut in all camel, except for his light blue button down, which peeked out from the frame of his blazer. This used to turn her on—his confidence regarding what

looked good and how he wore it so well. Instead, as he set his briefcase down, she wondered how she had ended up with someone so formal, when for years she had rejected what was traditional and conformist. Maybe he'd seemed risky to her then, a white boyfriend instead of a nice Gujarati boy.

"I'm exhausted," he said, leaning in to kiss her. "Happy hours used to be fun. Now they're just an extension of work."

"Sorry to hear that." She felt for him, but chose not to probe further. They'd discussed this before and it was his own fault for putting himself through this. She could care less whether Tim made partner or not.

"So you're really cooking?" He smiled and leaned in, picking the spoon out of the mixture for a taste.

Ami swatted him away. "It's not ready."

"Looks ready to me."

She stole the spoon back and returned it to the pot, stirring with the same compulsion with which she bit into the dry skin on her lip, over and over until it began to bleed. "I told you, I'm not done yet."

He apologized, skulked off like a puppy that'd been scolded and led back to his cage, spirit and dignity deflated. A moment of remorse washed over her and then she let it go. There was much more besides Tim's feelings to feel sorry

for and she couldn't bear to think of it all at once.

Alone again in the ringing quiet of her kitchen, the tension mounted. Her insides felt tight, like they'd been grated over and shredded. She knew she was overreacting, that her performance anxiety grew from nowhere. Tim didn't care if the dish was perfect, but she needed it to be.

The spoon in her hand felt like a weapon. The wood was long and thick, sturdy, and her fingers remained tensed around it, ready to wield it in attack if provoked. Her furious motions began to break the already overdone chickpeas and she switched to a back and forth sautéing motion to avoid further damage. The color had improved—it was deeper, less coppery—and thicker too. She scooped up a spoonful and blew on it before sampling. A strange chalky sensation covered her tongue, like she had just eaten sawdust, and soon an unbearable spiciness overwhelmed her palate, throbbing strangely on her gums and in her cheeks like an ulcer. The chili powder she had hoped to tame by adding milder spices had been emphasized as the gravy simmered far too long. She spit the chickpeas into a napkin and took a long drink of water. The burning persisted and it was so uncomfortable she spooned sugar onto her tongue.

It was a last resort, but without anyone else to call on, she dialed the same number she'd dialed since she was five years old. Her father greeted her brightly, but she could tell he was masking something heavier. She imagined him alone all day, bogged down with memories in acknowledgement of the month that had passed and the forty-one years before that.

“The channa had always looked so beautiful when her mother made it. But Ami's looked like something gone bad, corroded. Rust.”

She knew no other way to broach the subject, so she just went straight into it. “I'm stuck, Dad. I need your help.”

The reaction she'd expected when she shared that it was channa masala she was making was absent. Instead he was steady and firm with his recommendations, perhaps even happy to put his head into a concrete task.

“Did you put in the masala?” he asked. “Enough garlic?”

“Yes,” she confirmed, “I did everything that Mom said.”

“But something's missing,” he said. “It shouldn't be so harsh on your

tongue.”

“I know, but no matter what I add or how long I cook it, it still burns.”

By the time Tim returned to the kitchen, she had determined her cooking experiment a failure. She turned the stove off, removed the saucepan and poured its contents down the sink into the garbage disposal.

“What about dinner?”

She shook her head, tears brimming. But she refused to give in to the childish handling of defeat. No use in crying about something that she'd caused herself, something that was 100 percent her fault.

They ended up with a large mushroom thin crust from Patsy's. Though pizza was their go-to Friday night meal and one she normally enjoyed, she took no comfort in the lukewarm slice, the crust no more enjoyable to chew than a glob of stale gum.

“Not bad, huh?”

She nodded. She might've enjoyed the hot mozzarella and juicy mushrooms, the sweet tomatoes baked into the sauce on another night. But on this evening, every bite she took felt like a piece of her was floating away, like her mother, who'd haunted her in life, had finally left her alone. And it was the last thing she wanted.

A Day in the Life of a Working Man

David Dysart

4th Street

He didn't have long today. Kal needed to be back by five to watch his daughter when his girlfriend left for work. If she was late again, she would catch nothing but crap from that supervisor. Guess who would hear it after that? Damn right.

It shouldn't take too long. Even though he didn't have a ride home, he could huff it. He just wished it wasn't so hot. Man, it must've been in the trips today. He'd be home in a bit, though. One more job today and he'd clock out.

of it had been coming from legit work. But damn, day labor at houses and construction sites wasn't exactly big money.

2nd Street

Kal was almost there now, and he knew this job would last them at least a little while. Maybe he could even get a tie and a jacket with the money from it. Finding a respectable job would be easier then. If he looked presentable, that is.

Even though he had never worked the Quick 'N' Go before, he

“ The slide of his gun framed the man's startled eyes as he looked up from the paper. ”

3rd Street

This was another thing he caught crap for. Jackie laid it out last night. He HAD to find a new job starting tomorrow. The thing was, though, he had been trying to find a new one for over a month. Every minute he had went to it. Even when he told her that he was down at King's Park playing ball, he was passing out apps. Problem was, nobody wanted a fool with a record working for them.

Most of what money he did get went to buying a gun. The rest he brought home and told Jackie he had gotten from dice with the boys, which was sometimes true, but more and more

knew it would be a good job. He had friends that had worked it before. As long as you knew what you were doing, it was easy money, and despite Kal's recent job search, there was no doubt that he knew what he was doing.

1st Street

Jogging across the street, Kal waved at a Cadillac that had stopped for him. It looked like his friend's, DeSean's, but the baby blue paintjob wasn't exactly rare around these parts.

He crossed the deserted parking lot. That was good. He wouldn't have to wait for anyone to leave before he started. It meant for a quick job, and that was always good. Plus, it allowed

him to finish getting ready as he made his way for the store.

Quick 'N' Go

The door swung out with a worn beebop chime. The man at the counter didn't look up from the unreadable lines and dashes on the newsprint in his hands. That old fool was always reading that Korean stuff.

"You best put that shit down and pop open the register!" Kal's voice screamed from behind the ski mask. The slide of his gun framed the man's startled eyes as he looked up from the paper.

Their yells began blending together, but Kal knew that when "motherfucker," "cash," and "now!" popped up, they came from his side of the conversation.

That same damn door chime cut through the shouted multilingual blur of words, and a gasp later, he looked over to the ad-strewn glass of the door to find a woman and a couple of kids, one even in her arms. He whipped his hand down and behind his back.

Kal opened his mouth for a word, but the store roared with a flash... and a cruel punch to the chest. As the breath escaped his throat, leaving the sound behind, his chest exploded again with another searing flare.

With a stumble, he fell backwards and crashed into the metal and bread of

some display. His gun gave a clank as it bounced off the tile.

The room swirled with darkness as wetness began flooding his body. A weird pain burned in his chest, but even that started to fade.

Now he wouldn't be getting home in time.

He wouldn't get to hear the sirens of the damn five, the da...

damn fi-oh...

He wouldn't be home by five.

Jackie would be late and get yelled...

Gathering Darkness

Pam Donahue

Even after paying admission and making his way through the herb garden, David arrived 46 minutes early. He went through the large, wooden doors into the old mission church, now only a tourist attraction. Taking off his jacket and loosening his tie, he quickly surveyed the sanctuary and found that it was empty. He took several minutes to scout around, touching nothing, taking in all the old paintings, carved figures, and stained glass windows, looking for the perfect place to sit and rest for a moment. He finally found it, a darkened space behind the pulpit to the right, where the families of the deceased sat during funeral services. He looked up and noticed that the ceiling light over this area was burned out.

The church doors were shut, even though it was a cool and clear winter morning outside. While he was in the garden he heard the excited chirping of the English sparrows, the males fluffed up and dancing around puffy rosemary bushes, courting the females. He smiled as he watched them. It seemed to be a good omen, at least, better than last time. As much as he was unacquainted with feeling hopeful, he felt a small flicker here, today. The crepe myrtles were bursting out their tiny, deep pink flowers and the herbal, almost medicinal, scent of eucalyptus was strong in the air. Inside the church,

it was cool, still, and held none of the freshness of the outside. It smelled of oiled wood, incense, and musty books.

David sat in the dim wooden pew and took a small bottle of antibacterial hand sanitizer out of his jacket pocket. Squirting a generous amount onto his hands, he rubbed it in while he waited. About 20 minutes later, he saw the front of the sanctuary light up from the morning sun as the door opened, and a thin draft of cool air came in. A woman entered and nervously looked around the room, hesitating and holding the door open. *Diane*, he thought. *Her name suits her*. She was as stunning as the pictures he'd seen of her, with shoulder length, brown hair and deep blue eyes. Her long legs and small, curvy waist were accentuated by her denim mini-skirt. She matched the skirt with a long-sleeved, blue and white striped sweater, tan shearling boots, and a small, pale blue leather purse. His eyes trailed to the untidy scuff on the outside of her left boot, and then back up to her hair. It looked like it had been blown by too much wind and needed to be brushed.

He edged forward in his seat to stand, but the way she held her body so stiff and still made him nervous. She slowly turned to leave, then stopped. She stood there, looking at the floor, and held the door open for another moment. With a heavy sigh she turned

again and entered the room as the door closed behind her, causing the light to dim again. She looked all around the old chapel but didn't see him sitting in his dimly lit place. He edged farther out of her sight by sliding behind a gaudy banner that hung from the ceiling. It was reddish-orange and was emblazoned with a huge, shimmering gold lion with bared claws.

“Cautiously, he moved to a position where he could see the floor. There on the ground. The wadded up tissues were still there.”

A lively jingle filled the room as her cell phone rang. She quickly walked back to the fifth row and sat down before she answered in a hushed voice. “Hi,” she said as she crossed her arms, and then her legs. “Yeah, I’m here. No, no, everything’s fine. I’m at the museum this morning.” She listened, and then quickly glanced around the room. “Of course I’m by myself.”

Tiny pricks of perspiration started to form on his forehead.

“Yeah, I’m still planning on staying till Tuesday.” She blinked hard and looked down. “Tell them I really miss them, too, and that I’ll be home soon. Especially Kristen. I know how she worries.” Combing her hair with her

fingers, she said, “Just give me some time to clear my head, ok? Yeah. Talk to you later.” Closing the phone, she put it down on the seat beside her, and pulled her arms tight around her. Small tears painted wet lines on her cheeks. She pulled a wad of tissue out of her purse, and he saw some of it drop to the floor. She didn’t pick it up. He took a short breath and felt his stomach muscles go rigid. *Pick it up!* he thought.

She wiped her eyes quickly, then stood and paced back and forth in the aisle next to her pew. After a moment she stopped, looked toward the door, and then up, staring upward for a moment. “Where are you?” she asked.

He wanted to get up and say hello, to introduce himself in person. He wanted to say something wonderful to her, but he couldn’t move. His muscles were still tight and he felt nauseous. He stayed where he was and watched.

She sat down again and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. She didn’t move for a long time. After awhile, she clasped her hands together in her lap and closed her eyes. He thought she looked comfortable there in that praying position, something he did not understand.

Raised in the church himself, he’d decided that he didn’t want to go anymore when he was thirteen. It

turned out to be one of the hardest decisions he ever made. His mother used to scream at him all morning before she finally left for church without him, usually ending with, “Would it kill you to come with me one morning out of the whole damn week?” He couldn’t stand going, but sometimes it was almost as hard to stay home.

He worked hard while she was gone. He cleaned the house, making sure to have everything dusted and in place, and the beds made. He made a special effort to vacuum the floor spotless. They had dark green carpet that showed every speck. His mother would seethe over those specks, and then explode if they weren’t picked up. Eventually, the clock would tick to 12:17, the time his mother came home every week. When he heard her come through the door, his heart would race. He would listen as she walked from room to room in the short, clunky heels she wore to church. He usually had marks on his body in the shape of those heels, in places where no one would see them. After surveying his work, she would come in to his room. If he was very lucky, she would look at him sitting on his bed with his arms crossed, clutching his ribs, and only say, “Hmph.”

On those days, when his mother was happy with his work, she wouldn’t scream at him anymore and lock him

in the basement for the rest of the day, where he sat on the stairs in the dark, waiting for her to come. He began to grow accustomed to the dark place. When his hunger overwhelmed him, he would open the jars of raspberry jelly his mother had canned. He knew she would beat him later for eating it, though. He learned to make the jars last a long time, hiding them in between imprisonments, and then sneak them out to throw them away in the neighbor’s trash before she could find them.

“ He edged forward in his seat to stand, but the way she held her body so stiff and still made him nervous. She slowly turned to leave, then stopped. ”

He never knew, from Sunday to Sunday, what she would do to him. He knew that she liked a clean house, so he perfected his house cleaning skills. On the days when she came home from church and was satisfied, they would make their way into the kitchen and she would make lunch for both of them, gossiping about people at church. “You should see the way Marjorie Dawson drools over Harlan Van Derhoof. It’s disgusting. I hate that woman. She’s been itching to replace that no-good husband of hers ever since he died,

God only knows why. Too bad Harlan's already married!" She had something bad to say about almost everyone in the church. David wondered why she went at all, but if he contradicted her, or said something nice about the other churchgoers, she would take his chin in her hand and look in his eyes in a way that terrified him.

The Sunday lunches they used to share were simple—bologna sandwiches and a Coke—but he always volunteered to wash the dishes afterward anyway. Sometimes his mother dropped something on the floor, a napkin or a knife. He was always quick to pick it up, throw the napkin in the trash and get a new one, or put the knife in the sink and get another one. It made his mother happy when he did that. He could tell by the way she watched his every move, smiling when he got it right.

Diane crossed her legs. David's attention was quickly drawn back to her. She sat quietly in the pew with her eyes closed for several long moments. Then she sighed, opened her eyes, and reached for her cell phone. Her tears started again as she opened it. He heard faint beeps and knew she had started to text a message. Her hands trembled. Watching her, he felt a pain in his chest, as if the space around his heart had just narrowed itself, squeezing the struggling, tight muscle. He knew her well, and was already

guessing at what she was doing. The air around him seemed to grow solid; he was having trouble breathing it in. She finished her text, viciously punched the "Send" key, and held the open phone up in the air.

"There!" she said as she snapped the phone shut, looking upward. "Happy now, God?" She choked as a sob lurched out. It was an awful, guttural sound. David sat back, crossed his arms, and closed his eyes.

The cell phone on his belt silently flashed with a message, just as he knew it would. The indistinct brightness of it was visible even though his eyes were shut. He knew it was the text she had just typed, and he knew what it said without opening it: "If you're still on your way, don't come." It repeated in his head, *Don't come, don't come, don't come.*

When he finally opened his eyes, he looked down and saw that his crisp, ironed shirt had wet drops on it. He pulled a perfectly folded handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his eyes, and tried to blot the tears from his shirt. He then refolded it neatly, carefully replaced it in his pocket, and glanced around the edge of the banner toward where she was sitting. Although he could still hear her weeping, she had disappeared. He realized that she was either lying on the pew or the floor, out of sight, lost to him.

breath. There were dark specks gathering in front of his eyes. He picked up the bouquet of miniature pink rosebuds from the seat beside him. They were adorned with a small, romantically floreal card that said, “For my lady, my beautiful Diane” dangling from the white satin bow tied around them. She

“ He slipped out of the church and stood still, breathing heavily, listening as Diane screamed insults. Two more books thudded against the door. ”

had never specifically mentioned it in any of their long online chats over the past eight months, but he knew from her profile page that these were her favorite flowers. He wondered if her neglectful husband knew that. David knew she would have to pass by the front pew if she left the same way she came in, so he slipped quietly from his seat and placed his gift there.

He stopped for a moment. His stomach muscles spasmed. He didn’t want to, but he had to see ...

He slowly approached the pew where Diane was still lying. Cautiously, he moved to a position where he could see the floor. There, on the ground. The wadded up tissues were still there.

He clenched his jaws and fists,

but forced himself to turn and head toward the door. When his hand was on the large brass rail to open it, he realized something. It was quiet. Diane wasn’t crying anymore. He turned back to see what had happened.

Diane was sitting straight up in the pew, looking at him, her eyes large and confused. She grabbed some more of the tissue and wiped her face. “David,” she said. “I didn’t know you were here. When did you get here?”

David looked down at the floor at his feet, breathing hard. “Pick it up,” he said quietly.

“What?” she asked.

“Pick it up!”

“What? Pick what up? What are you talking about?”

“The tissue! Get it off the floor! I saw all of it fall, and you just left it there, in a mess. You never picked it up!”

When he looked back at Diane, her eyes cut him like a razor. “You were here—?” Her face was tight and flushed. “You were here the whole time!” She stopped for a moment, her eyes wide and searching, as realization came rushing in. She stood up. “I risk everything, my marriage, my kids, everything, to come and meet you, and you spy on me, and now you’re upset about some tissue?” She reached for a book, probably a hymnal or a Bible from the back of the pew in front of her, and

threw it at him. He dodged it easily, the pages fluttering in the air as the book fell. He looked at the book on the floor.

“Get out!” She threw another book. It hit the door behind him. “Get out, I said!” She looked around for another book to throw.

He slipped out of the church and stood still, breathing heavily, listening as Diane screamed insults. Two more books thudded against the door. He heard them fall on the floor, along with the other books. He closed his eyes, closing out the crowding blackness, fighting back nausea, swallowing hard.

David opened his eyes and looked through the dark specks in his vision, all around the grounds surrounding the church. No one was around. No one else could hear what was going on. He stole quietly back into the church.

About fifteen minutes later, David opened the church door again and slowly pushed his face through the opening. He looked around and saw that the grounds were still empty. It was quiet all around him now. As he came through the door he cinched his tie back into place and jerked his jacket collar smartly over his shirt collar. He felt a line of sweat run down his back despite the cool morning air.

He had retrieved the bouquet of rosebuds and tucked them under his arm as he reached for his handkerchief. He wiped his face and hands as he

walked to his car, and then refolded the handkerchief and put it back in his pocket. Then he treated his hands to more antibacterial gel. They felt disgusting.

As he hurried to his car, he thought of the scene he left behind. A tourist or a docent would probably find Diane’s still, quiet body in the church. All the hymnals and Bibles had been replaced in their slots behind the pews, which had been wiped clean along with all the doors and handles. The floor was now spotless.

The police would recognize it immediately when they found her mouth stuffed full of tissue. They had found other women in other parts of the country with their mouths jammed full of something, although it was his first time with tissue. He had left her leaning against the giant cross in the back of the church, peaceful and decent, the way she should be. Her hair was brushed. Her purse was hung in the crook of her elbow. Her hands were folded together on her lap. She was so beautiful that way.

He smiled. She reminded him so much of his mother, the last time he saw her.

The Mirror

Chris Koch

- I -

That night, he thought that he dreamt. They were sitting across from each other at an elaborately set dining table of burlled maple with matching chairs. The table was in a grassy clearing in the middle of an otherwise densely wooded forest.

"I don't have a weapon," she said. "I don't use weapons because I don't believe I should have to. Not with reasonable people such as yourself, at least. No, all I have is this mirror."

"Yes," he replied. "I have seen the mirror, and although I know that I have to confront it, I..." He turned his head to make eye-contact with the small object impossible. "I know that I have to confront it but I have been afraid." He paused to consider the words just spoken and added, "Or maybe just unwilling." This addendum was designed to minimize the possibility of her viewing him as a coward. "It is difficult to explain. I *know* that I have to look. I *know* that living under a delusion is not an option for me." He recognized an opportunity for a little puffery and seized it. "Others may choose to live in a dream world, but such a false life is repulsive to me ... beneath me."

"So what exactly are you afraid of, then? What is the source of your reluctance?" she probed. "Do you know?"

"Of *course* I *know*," he replied,

with what he hoped was not too much arrogance. "It is the fear of probability. The cold, unerring, ruthless objectivity of numbers assures me that the likelihood of my receiving another such opportunity for personal transcendence is practically ..." He could not finish his thought.

She took a moment to dramatically shift her position forward on her chair and to adjust her expression to show earnest determination without rendering it entirely devoid of compassion. "Is the rarity of true beauty something that you are so unwilling to face that you must cover it with deception? Having battled your way to the surface after so long in the vast sea of delusion, having taken a deep lungful of the nutritious air of reality at long last, will you now willingly return to your drowning?"

Beneath the table, he pinched his thigh sharply in an attempt at distraction. A rebuttal would only appear childish and her frankness was, after all, entirely appropriate. She was *always* appropriate, in her choice of words and inflections, in her disclosures and concealments, in her advancements and retreats.

"No! I will not be the dog returning to the vomit, but... I think there is more to it. It is... complicated."

"What have you not told me?" she

asked. “What are you not telling me?”

He took his head in his hands and rubbed his face, collecting thoughts, collecting composure, collecting nerve.

“I swam to the surface, as you say, and filled my lungs with reality. I was no longer living under a delusion but I was still an animal—an animal called “human,” but an animal just the same – and I was content to live more as an animal than a human because of my disdain for the ways of men. I could tolerate no more cruelty and stupidity!” A hot, violent, hatred flashed momentarily across his face and faded just as quickly. “But under your influence I saw a virtuous side of humanity. I saw a nobility and beauty that I had utterly forsaken the possibility of ever knowing. With a profound depth of feeling that resulted from this change in perspective, I knew that this was how I was *supposed* to feel, that I was *meant* to be *this* way.

“Of course I realized that you were on your own journey and that you would be looking for a means to influence the furthering of your own transcendence. The laws of thermodynamics suggest that it would be impossible for me to act as such an influencing agent on your behalf because the expenditure of a quantity of energy never results in a greater quantity of energy. Likewise, from

the discipline of physics, one entity cannot provide leverage to a second entity and, at the same time, use the second entity as leverage for its own movement. So how could I hope to mean as much to you as you mean to me?”

Her face revealed neither acknowledgment nor confusion.

“ He turned his head to make eye-contact with the small object impossible.

“But perhaps, or so I thought, I could maintain orbit around you ... neither detracting from nor hindering your own progress, but merely absorbing your influence like the Earth absorbs the Sun’s energy. In time, it seemed possible to me, your energy would bring forth Life and it would evolve and eventually become intelligent and beautiful and noble and creative. Having become strengthened and enlightened by you, I could provide you with strength and vision and inspiration in return! Then I would be more of a partner than a protégé; a symbiotic, contributing part of the same system rather than a by-product thereof.” Emboldened by his flowery analogies and by his own honesty, he continued, “I decided that you could

arm's length for an indefinite period of time and determined myself to remain content there ... requiring nothing, asking for nothing, taking nothing. The mere possibility that one day you would be pleased with the Life brought forth by your energy would be enough," and with an almost innocent enthusiasm, he concluded, "*I swear it!*"

"So, precisely put then," she coaxed, "your fear is ..."

“He laughed inwardly at “hon.” It was one of those words that she frequently used to make her appear human. ”

She had cornered him again! Such mastery! His best intellectual efforts to conceal and preserve his emotional contraband were completely transparent to her! He slumped back into his chair. "... That looking into your mirror might reveal something to me that would erase this hope ... this dream of *equality*."

A thick fog of silence descended upon them as she lit a cigarette. He moved to speak but she held up her hand with effective authority. He felt as if he were a child waiting to be reproved for impudence and wished for the power to retract his words or for the ability to compose a brilliant statement that would inspire her toward leniency, but no such power would be given him then, he knew ... so he sat waiting for what

would surely be an artful disassembling of his cherished, intricately woven, self-fabricated notion.

She doused her cigarette in a champagne flute.

"What do you want me to say?" she began, but then shook her head decisively. "No! Never mind! It doesn't matter what you *want* me to say because I already *know* what needs to be said. You have to stop this! You

have to look in the mirror. I will not allow this foolishness to continue, do you hear me? But you know that I cannot force you to look. You have to do it yourself, freely; and frankly, you either have to do it now or continue in your folly until you become a pathetic shell of a man. You have to look now because, while I may be *able* to wait around for you to come to your senses, I am becoming less and less *willing* to do so. My respect for you is in jeopardy here, do you understand?" She took out another cigarette but then put it quickly back in the pack, which she returned to her cache. "Understand that my words are not fueled by cruelty. They are inspired by empathy and compassion and concern for your well-being. If you intend to reach your potential you must

discard this dead weight of *what if* and accept *what is*.”

His eyes filled and he tasted the saltiness that usually precedes vomiting, but he resisted. Anyway, there was nothing in his stomach but a gnawing pain. His throat was constricted with emotion.

“Will you look?” she asked. He said nothing. “Will you look?” she asked again, more sharply.

Feeling almost paralyzed with fear, he nodded his head, but it was nearly imperceptible. She put her question forth once more with sternness that left no doubt; it was his last chance.

“I ask you, *will you look?*”

His frustration erupted. The dam that held his tears broke; mucus streamed from his nose; saliva, plentiful and viscous, stuck to his lips as he spoke. His chair fell over as he rose abruptly.

“*Shut up!*” he yelled. His voice was strange and distorted; thick, throaty, and broken. He had never heard himself sound like that before. “Shut up, will you please, and just show me the fucking mirror!”

She raised it slowly and, once at the proper height, flicked her wrist to give it proper alignment for his viewing. With some difficulty he forced himself to turn, keep his eyes open, and peer intently through his tears, searching

for whatever it was she wanted him to see. Suddenly, his face took on the expression of profound astonishment.

It lasted only briefly, however, for he became aware of the fact that he was falling, physically falling. This profound truth eclipsed all other thoughts and concerns, replacing them with the instinctual, urgent need to preserve self. But he was unable to stop; unable to find balance, to brace himself, to re-position himself or to do anything that might lessen the impact. His body was a mere object, a lifeless mass in the planet’s unyielding gravitational grip, and his panic slowed time dramatically. It felt as if each moment of descent gave him several to consider the truth of what was happening:

I am falling.

I am still falling.

I am pulled closer now.

Still closer.

The sky seems very blue.

I wonder if there will be pain.

I think I am nearing impact now.

There ... I see her knees in my periphery.

I must be nearing the forest floor.

What beautiful knees they are!

Here it comes.

The impact was painless. It was more of a sound that he detected or, rather, a collection of sounds with each

body-part having its own timbre as it met the earth. His elbows made a light, high sound while his back was more of a baritone. His head was the loudest ... a kettledrum, perhaps. Last came a long push of air like an amplified audio signal, slowed down and processed through a digital reverb for exaggerated effect. Then silence.

He eventually became aware of her face above his. It was not agitated or surprised in any way; not frightened or frantic. What he thought he saw on her face was the look of heartfelt pride that a mother might bestow upon a child who has made it through a painful but necessary ordeal. There was a small tear running down her cheek.

“... you either have to do it now or continue in your folly until you become a pathetic shell of a man. You have to look now ...”

“You are a good and brave soul,” she said with detectable emotion in her voice and a beautiful, reassuring smile on her lips. She bent down and kissed his forehead.

He realized that he would be able to manage only a very few words. He forced them out, broken, in barely audible gasps: “*Thank ... you ... my ... An ... gel.*”

- II -

“And how do you interpret this dream?” the analyst asked knowingly. He was a near perfect stereotype of an analyst—the beard, the wire-rimmed glasses, the tweed coat with leather elbows—only a German accent was missing.

“Well, first of all, I never said, unequivocally, that it *was a dream*,” he replied.

The answer to this was a restrained sigh, but the patient had the sense that the doctor actually wanted to emit a more obvious and dramatic sigh, perhaps accompanied by a temple massage. “Let’s start here then,” the doctor suggested. “Who is your mentor

in the *dream*?” He applied tactfully subtle force in using the word “dream.” “Who is the woman who is guiding you to face reality? Do you know?”

“Yes. I know her. She is my Angel!” The patient smiled broadly at first, but his smile was replaced by a quizzical expression as he considered how he might adequately qualify his statement. “She doesn’t know that I know that she is really an Angel. She has manifested herself in the flesh as part of her ‘covert’ mission to liberate

me from bondage, but it is not really covert as far as I'm concerned ... it is perfectly transparent. Still, I mustn't let her know. I think that she thinks that I will be afraid of her if she appears plainly as an angel, or maybe that I won't be able to handle the knowledge that there are angels to begin with. For my part, I don't want her to know that I know that she is an angel because she may become distraught when she learns that I am one of the rare humans who can tell when they are in the presence of an angel incognito. So she is happier believing that I don't know that she is an Angel and I am happier to let her believe that I am oblivious to this fact so that she will continue to appear before me. Do you see?"

"Mmm," was all the analyst could manage.

"So, yes, she is my *mentor*, in your words, though I prefer liberator. Who better than an angel to lead a liberation front? Was it not an angel who loosed St. Peter's chains and allowed him to escape from prison? She has given me her hand and is trying to guide me forth toward a life that knows no bounds. I only hope that I will be strong enough when the time comes. It will, I am sure, be very frightening to take a prolonged flight without the use of engines or man-made wings. I will have to be extremely courageous, more so than I have ever

been."

The analyst wrote in his notebook and closed his eyes as if in contemplation. On the couch, the patient witnessed all of this and enjoyed a moment of personal pride in thinking that he presented the doctor with the most satisfying challenge of his professional career.

"What convinces you that this woman is an angel? What qualities make her divine, in your estimation?"

The patient smiled and rolled his eyes, joyously overwhelmed by the question. "Woof!" he barked. "Well! Where to begin? *How to begin?* There are many things I could mention. She is, well... she is *wonderful*, for one thing! Absolutely not anything like earthly women. Certainly not like these small-minded American girls. Not like any human for that matter! She is unconcerned with trite, petty nonsense for instance. She walks completely unencumbered by the usual constraints. Right through walls, I imagine, if she wanted to! Her hands are softer than *any* human hands could ever possibly be, but ..."

He stopped, shook his head, struck the heel of his hand against his forehead and laughed at himself, a good, genuine, hearty laugh. "Well! Isn't this just perfectly foolish of me!" He laughed again. "Really, it is quite impossible,

isn't it? When I say 'Her hands are softer than any human hands,' it fails to properly communicate anything meaningful to you since, at best, the softest hands you have ever felt are nowhere near as soft as hers! She has re-defined the word "soft" for me so that it holds no communal meaning for those who have not experienced such softness! Of course not! I am attempting to put the sublime into words! A *complete* waste of time! Well, at least I can say this: she exudes a spirit, energy, and freedom that I find both exhilarating and, well ... *terrifying!*"

The doctor looked up from his notebook. "*Terrifying you say?* Interesting. In what way do you mean?" he asked.

“Still, I mustn't let her know. I think that she thinks that I will be afraid of her if she appears plainly as an angel ... ”

"Well, the sense is that I am, for some inexplicable reason, receiving an unprecedented opportunity, a rare, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will only be squandered if I screw it up by my own hand. And what if I fail! AACH! That would be SO terrible! Destined to

live the rest of my pathetic, stifled life knowing that I could be flying had I only mastered my fears and insecurities! And this is precisely what she is trying to teach me to do ... Blessed Angel be praised!"

"Yes," the doctor acknowledged. "Fear can certainly cripple us; cripple our minds and prevent us from reaching our potential. Is this what you mean by *flying*? Is *flying* here a metaphor for what we psychologists call self-actualization?"

So much Psychoanalese, the patient thought; *the imperfect language of PhDs*. In a breach of expected protocol, he spun around on the couch to sit up and face the doctor, who was clearly startled at the abrupt movement. "Doctor!" he exclaimed. "Jesus! You think I'm off my rocker, don't you! You think I'm making this shit up! You think I am suffering from delusions! What next? A sedative and a straight-jacket?"

"Now, now, my dear boy," the doctor said in his well-practiced, soothing doctor-voice that cracked just slightly. "Calm down! I am merely trying to understand the nuances of your language. People use the word "flying" in all kinds of ways: *flying down the highway ... my hands were flying across the keyboard ... his mind was flying through his memories*, and none of these are

intended to suggest actual flight through or out of the Earth's atmosphere. Take a deep breath. Relax. Lie back down."

Why, the patient wondered, was it so important that he be lying down? Perhaps the couch was suspended above a trap door that the doctor operated by pressing a button on his pen. Unless the patient was completely upon the couch he might be able to grasp the edge of the floor and avoid falling down the chute that led to the padded room below where attendants in white suits were waiting to subdue and sedate him. Nevertheless, he resumed the classic posture reserved for doctor-patient interactions and they resumed their session.

"Are you fully expecting to achieve flight then, without the aid of engines or man-made wings? This is very exciting indeed," he said, trying hard not to sound incredulous or condescending. "Can you speak to this?"

The patient emitted a sigh. He regretted having brought it up in the first place and took a moment for a little self-reproach. He should have known better than to introduce such ideas to the hopelessly earthbound.

"Listen. I know what you're thinking," he confessed in a calmed tone. "You think that I am speaking about matters that are outside the

realm of possibility. Well," he threw up his hands, "I really don't know what to tell you or how to convince you, and I am not even sure if there is any reason to try! Believe it or not, I have already flown with her, a short, introductory flight. She knew that I would not be able to endure a sustained one, but it was a flight just the same, and she intends to grant me future opportunities to experience this phenomenon. Had you experienced it, Doctor, you yourself would agree that anyone would be foolish not to seek such opportunities, even sacrifice dearly for them."

"Flight," the doctor said, as if wanting to make sure that they shared a mutual definition of the term. "You are saying that you have traveled, hovered, or soared relatively far above the surface of the earth for a relatively long period of time with no mechanical assistance, without any strings or other ... conditions?"

"No mechanical assistance whatsoever," he assured. "Definitely no strings. I cannot say that there were no conditions, however, because there was at least one. I did have to be within her." He said this with no hesitancy or reserve.

"Within her?" came the obvious inquiry.

“Yes. Coitus. She made it clear that flight would only be possible for me during intercourse and that orgasm would render me a victim of gravity once again. I would crash to the earth and burn instantly.”

“I see,” said the doctor. He scratched at his beard. “I wonder if you have heard of a condition known as—”

“And so this is the impetus that drives me, currently,” the patient interrupted with great exuberance, “to master self, to endure, to maintain flight! If I can remain within her, in control, I may achieve enduring freedom ... lengthy, soaring flights! Who knows where we might venture! Other worlds, in other solar systems? Why not!”

“You think I am suffering from delusions! What next?
A sedative and straight-jacket?”

“Al ... alright. Can we ... how about ... well ...” The doctor was flustered and opted to once again divert the flow of their conversation. “What about the mirror? Have you given it any thought? Can you imagine what it represents and what you might have seen in it? Can you imagine what she showed you that brought about such a dramatic, physical reaction? I am speaking now about the temporary paralysis leading to your fall.”

The patient assumed an

incredulous smirk. “Wow! Really? Really, Doctor? I’m surprised to hear you ask! I think it is fairly obvious, don’t you? I thought you would have figured that out right away! She is showing me that I am a mortal and she wants me to see for myself how unlikely a pairing we would be. A mortal and an angel? Can you imagine! She wants me to remember my place, to know that ours is only a temporary affiliation, and to accept that I cannot return with her to the heavens because I am needed here on earth.”

“Yes,” said the doctor, as if he had just listened to a child explain how Santa manages to deliver toys to children around the world in a single

evening. “Yes, it does seem impossible, I admit. Perhaps she is mercifully giving you an opportunity to face the fact that you are better suited for the company of other humans, no?”

“Wow! It is true! Yes, doctor ... I see that now. She may have been trying to protect me from a possibly devastating disappointment, to help me accept my current lot.”

If this statement was intended to give the doctor the false sense of having made an advancement, he foiled it by

circling back to defend himself with renewed vigor. “On the other hand—and this is what you are failing to realize, dear Doctor—I have been *chosen* to be the recipient of her beneficence. *I*. Not anyone else. For some reason that I may never fully comprehend, *I* am the one that she has been sent to rescue.”

He thought for a moment. “I would venture to say that the Israelites did not fully understand why God decided to free them from the hands of the Pharaoh. I think they just said, ‘Oh! God wants to get us out of here, put an end to our slave labor and take us to a land flowing with milk and honey? We’ll take it!’ And even though they fell short time and time again, what with their idolatry and manifold sins and all, Yahweh just kept at it and kept at it! They were *chosen*! Nothing to be done about it! End of story! In the same way, I have been chosen to receive My Angel’s gracious assistance, to be succored and comforted by her in my time of tribulation and captivity. For what exact purpose? Who am I to say! I am a mere mortal! But I trust her implicitly and if it is her will to liberate me only to abandon me shortly thereafter, so be it! Until then, however, I am as important to her as she is to me. With no recipient, there is no need for a benefactor!”

“I would say that ... *Whoop!* Look

at the time! Damn!” The doctor was artful at conversational deception. “Well, why don’t we conclude here? In fact, I think I’ll *have* to. Other patients, you know! Anyway, you’ve certainly given me plenty to think about. Plenty!”

“Are you sure?” the patient replied. “I can literally talk about this all day, so if you need any more information or if I can answer any further questions, just let me know.” He was completely earnest.

“No! No! I’m quite content with the amount of information you have already so generously supplied, believe me! I intend to pour over this in my spare time tonight and in the days leading up to our next visit.”

The patient smiled.

- III -

Her voice, even when distorted by the phone, was like butterfly kisses upon his ears.

“So, how was your meeting today, hon?” she asked.

He laughed inwardly at “hon.” It was one of those words that she frequently used to make her appear human.

“I think it went very well, my dear one! He really is such a nice fellow and I believe that he is truly on my side. Much cause for optimism! Much cause

for optimism, indeed!”

“Was there any talk of—”

“No,” he answered quickly to avoid hearing the question in its entirety. “Not yet, my Queen, but we have to be patient! Patience is a virtue! ‘Love is patient!’” He thought he was particularly clever to quote scripture, as if an angel would not have heard it a billion times. His pretending to offer her spiritual admonishment would give the impression that he thought himself superior to her in the traditional fashion of a man/woman, which would reinforce her belief that he was in the dark about her divinity. “He is dreadfully entrenched in the “system,” and it will take some time for him to see.”

“Oh, poo!” she pouted.

“Sometimes being patient just *sucks!*” Her modified speech patterns were so adorable to him!

“I know, I know! It will be soon, though. We *will* be together soon. Whoa! Someone is coming!” he whispered, urgently. “I’d better go, before I am discovered. Good night, my beloved Angel!”

“Good night, you crazy fool!

He made a kissing sound into the secret shoe-phone and placed it on the floor next to its mate. All was well in the world. His bunk mate’s snoring would not prevent him from sleeping peacefully and dreaming of flight.



“Coming to terms with his condition and his surroundings, Mark wanted to take a look at the fellow who was so interested in him.”

Matt Bosack, *Forgotten Time*



Forgotten Time

Matt Bosack

Mark just kept driving. It didn't matter where. It didn't matter for how long. He just needed to get away.

He finally made it out of the city. His eyes were swollen and burning after the sorrow that poured through them. But even though his stomach was still tied in knots, his chest didn't feel like somebody had just hit it with a sledgehammer anymore. It was the first time he felt he could breathe. Despite the respite, Mark's body still continued to ache. However, no matter how much he tried to ignore the pain, he knew there was no ignoring reality. Then again, he knew that there was no running from reality, either, but he had already committed to that.

The exhausted SUV rumbled onward into the night. Every now and then, Mark could detect the calculating stares of reclusive yellow eyes, only to watch them disappear into darkness as his headlights lit the next scene. How he wished he could vanish so easily.

Another 45 seconds passed as Mark methodically watched for the blur of the next lonely mile-marker. He envied each marker he passed; they stood alone with nothing around but life passing by. No harsh truths, no difficult emotion, just life moving along with passive glances.

The moon shone particularly bright that night. Mark didn't notice.

He was a man on a mission, only the mission wasn't clear to him at that point. Thinking about what he was doing would force him to think about why he was doing it, and he couldn't bear the thought. He just kept ... doing.

The next feeling Mark had was that of his head suddenly jerking upwards. The anguish, frustration, hatred, and most of all, fatigue had finally permeated down to his core and he lost all control of the vehicle. His body jerked to the right as the car tilted and began to roll. The roof crunched on the pavement; Mark's body was thrust downward. The other side of the car collided with the pavement, and his body went crashing against the door. In that moment, fear of the unknown made him wish he had never left that day. But only for a moment.

The force of the first tumble, alone, couldn't slow the momentum, and the car took another revolution, followed by a third. Mark lost count, and consciousness, just after feeling a pinch in his leg.

"Hey, you okay?" a voice called out to Mark. Mark struggled to open his eyes. He couldn't feel much at first, but he tried hard to understand his surroundings. He was lying down, and his head and shoulders were angled up. Instantly, he recognized it was

no ordinary bed. To Mark, the only beds that angle up are the kind you find in hospitals or the kind owned by people who watch too many late night infomercials. Logic told him his bed probably fell into the former category.

“Hey, you. It’s about time you woke up.” The voice called out to him again. Mark was surprisingly lucid, but he felt almost disconnected from his body. He attempted to reestablish that connection, closing his hands into a fist, and then stretching out his fingers. Under one hand, his fingertips sensed the rough, crisp linen of his hospital bed sheets. Under the other he felt his chest, covered weakly by what seemed to be, in all likelihood, a hospital gown. He then tried to move his arms, but his left wing was bound in a sling.

“The force of the first tumble, alone, couldn’t slow the momentum, and the car took another revolution, followed by a third.”

Realizing he hadn’t responded to the stranger, Mark mustered up the strength and courage to speak. “I’m awake.”

The stranger laughed. Mark wanted to peer over, but he was still

getting his bearings. The stranger spoke again. “And surprisingly talkative.”

Mark tried to pick himself up, but he felt his chest would cave in if he took anything but a shallow breath. He took his obedient hand and started feeling around for a good load-bearing spot on the mattress. Once he found it, he tried to prop himself up further. His roommate began to show concern. “Whoa, take it easy. I bet you don’t even realize how bad it was. But from what I hear, it’s not nearly as bad as it could have been.”

Mark began to realize at this point that he was only peering out of one eye; the other was shut and refused to open. Finally realizing how bad he must have been injured, he felt it was time for him to assess damage. He wiggled his left arm; given that it was in a sling and there was no cast, perhaps it was a separated shoulder. He moved his right arm, and it agreed just fine. He wiggled both sets of toes. At least I’m not paralyzed, he thought to himself.

Mark then tried to move both legs. The left leg felt like a mess. He could almost feel each and every sinew of muscle that was torn. However, it moved relatively fine given the circumstances, so that was good enough. His right leg, though, wouldn’t budge. He took his working hand and reached

down—a soft cast. His skin felt itchy, and there was numbness and burning in the middle of his upper thigh. If it was what he thought it could be, then it certainly wasn't good. He knew a broken femur would not be easy to recover from. It was time for the last bit of check-up—it was time to test his chest and lungs. He attempted a deep breath. A sharp pain was sent to every inch of his body, but he felt it most in his right shoulder of all places. His lungs, filled with accumulated mucus, caused him to cough, leading to even more pain. This vicious cycle continued to perpetuate itself as he winced, groaned, and wheezed.

“Feeling it in your shoulder? Yeah, the docs call it “transpired pain.” Probably from a ruptured spleen or a collapsed lung. The nerves in your organs are connected to other parts of your body, and when the organ senses pain, it gets transferred to the other ends of the nerves. Just calm down, though. It'll be fine if you just calm down.” The man knew a surprising amount about being injured.

Mark took a smaller breath, followed by another, each one minimizing the pain, minimizing the coughing. “Thanks for the advice.”

Coming to terms with his condition and his surroundings, Mark wanted to take a look at the fellow who

was so interested in him. He leaned his head to the right to take a look at the stranger. The man had a familiar face with an equally familiar smile. There was something calming about his presence. He was a handsome fellow, with a few days of stubble having accumulated on his chiseled jaw. He had the look of the guy Mark wanted to be: fit and comely. However, Mark could've considered himself these things, too, if he wasn't too discriminating in his self-assessments.

Mark was surprised to see his new friend in a hospital bed, because he looked like he had no ailments whatsoever. Noticing Mark finally coming to, the man spoke again. “So what's your name? I've just been calling you “Lucky.” I supposed it fit after listening to what you've been through.”

“Ha. I don't feel lucky. And my name? It's...” Mark was confused. This wasn't a hard question, or at least wasn't supposed to be. The man smiled, and attempted to assuage Mark's confusion.

“I guess “Lucky” will have to do.”

“No, I know my name. God damnit, what's my name?” Wracking his brain wasn't working. Nothing was. Mark tried thinking about his childhood, hoping it would jog his memory so he could gather his name. He thought if he remembered his

mother calling, his name would come to him. That didn't work. He couldn't see her face. He couldn't see anything. In fact, the furthest back he could remember was waking up a few minutes ago.

The stranger sensed Mark's bewilderment. "Look, brother, you'll get it back. Don't worry about that. Just give it a little time."

"What the hell happened to me?"

“ He thought if he remembered his mother calling, his name would come to him. That didn't work. He couldn't see her face. He couldn't see anything. ”

Mark was really asking himself, but his new friend answered anyway. "All I know, Lucky—I suppose it's okay for me to call you that since you've misplaced your actual name—is that you got wheeled in here after surgery. I heard something about a horrific car accident. Then something about your spleen, your lungs, and breaking some ribs, a leg, and maybe your arm."

"Yeah, that much I gathered. But I don't think I broke my arm."

"Well, some good news! Look, the way I see it; I'm not going anywhere anytime soon, and neither are you. So we better get to know each other. I'm Richard. You can call me that, Rick, Richie, or do like most people and call me Rich. If you call me Dick, though,

we can't be friends anymore." Rich reached his hand across towards Mark's bed. Mark took his right arm and tried to extend it out. Their hands barely reached. Rich, taking his fingertips and thumb, grabbed the tips of Mark's fingers and shook them awkwardly. Despite the limited contact, Mark could still feel how abnormally cold Rich's fingers were—like he had been holding an

ice cube just before reaching over. "I guess that'll have to do. Well, it's nice to meet you, Lucky."

"Nice to meet you, too, Rich." As Mark pulled his hand back to the bed, a heavy-set woman walked into the room, her skin and shape matching that of the chocolate pudding in her hand. Nurse Pudding was wearing a floral print scrub top with pink bottoms and white sneakers. Upon seeing Mark with his eye open, talking, she dropped her hands and stood there, surprised.

"Oh my, you're awake. I'll go get the doctor."

“Three more weeks in here. Three months of physical therapy. So, total—eight to ten months before full

recovery, huh? Maybe I should start calling you “Unlucky.””

Mark began to lower his bed position to a spot that wouldn’t force his weight on his damaged torso. After a whole day of being awake, he didn’t feel any better, but he felt solace in knowing that the doctor believed he would make a full recovery. “Very funny, Rich. Now that you’ve eavesdropped on the entire conversation I had with my doctor, you can at least stop calling me Lucky. According to the vehicle registration, my name is Mark Foster.”

Despite hearing his name, Mark couldn’t gain context about who that name represented. It was, at that point, still just a name.

“Okay, Mark. I still like “Lucky,” so if you don’t mind.”

“Whatever, man—if you like it so much. Well, you just learned more about me, but I don’t know anything about you. Why are you in here, anyway?” Mark tilted his head over to get a better look at Rich as the response came out.

“Ah, well, I suppose I got here around the same time you did. It’s funny, because I’m pretty fuzzy on how I got here, too. But as far as I know, I’m not going anywhere for a while. Anyway, how are you feeling?”

What a question to ask. Like a day made a difference. Mark was starting to wonder if his chipper new

friend was always going to ask dumb questions. “Like shit.”

Mark did have another problem, though. For the first time since waking up, he had to relieve himself. Bound to his bed, he didn’t know how to approach his dilemma. He wondered if his friend knew. “By the way, I have to take a leak. The doc removed the catheter, so what the hell happens now? Do I get a bed pan or something?”

“... Mark could still feel how abnormally cold Rich’s fingers were—like he had been holding an ice cube just before reaching over.”

“Bed pans are for the other type of business. In this case, though, you have two options. One: you pick yourself up and walk to the bathroom over on the other side of the room. Or two: you take that weird looking bottle on your table, you put it between your legs, and you, well, I’m sure you get the rest.”

Mark appeared horrified at the notion of urinating while lying in bed, and with an onlooker no less. Still, he had to relieve himself, and therefore, had no choice. He reached up with his good arm and grabbed the bottle.

He slid it under his sheets and under his gown. It's not rocket science, he thought, and as he positioned the bottle just right, he looked to make sure Rich wasn't leering. Rich, as genuinely thoughtful as he seemed, turned his attention toward the television. Mark began to let his functions go.

A moment later, Mark finished and felt much better. He reached back down to take the bottle out, shocked as he witnessed the result. "Holy shit. That's not good."

Rich looked over from the TV, concerned. He saw the same thing Mark was looking at. The bottle, held in the air for inspection, was filled with bright red contents. "Oh, don't worry about that. That's normal for your kind of injury. The doctors said you'd be pissing blood."

"How is this normal?"

Distress and concern consumed Mark, even if for a second, as this was nothing he had ever seen. The thought of his body acting this wrong was horrifying, and in that instant, Mark wasn't so sure he'd be making a full recovery. Rich was confident, otherwise. "You had, and probably still are having, internal bleeding. It'll pass with time."

Mark was still holding the bottle in the air. Was the doctor lying? Was he really going to ever recover? Was he going to be bound to the bed forever?

Would he walk right again? Questions fluttered about his mind, causing him more anxiety.

"Hey, Lucky. It's going to be fine. It's really nothing to worry about. I promise." Rich looked over with a warm sincerity Mark could not ignore. Maybe Mark just wanted to believe Rich. It was much easier to do that than worry about a lifetime of being crippled.

"Okay, if you say so. But what do I do with this?" The bottle still remained held high.

"Well, you were supposed to close the thing back up, but now that you left it open, I suppose you could hold it like that until everything evaporates. Or, a better idea would be to call a nurse in here to get it."

Mark couldn't help but laugh after realizing his faux pas. "I just realized that there aren't many times in your life when you ask someone what to do with your bloody piss."

Another day went by, and Mark still didn't know who he was or how he ended up in the hospital. He tried and tried as hard as he could, but no memories surfaced. He thought about all the different ways he could try to remember who he was. If it was a car accident, then where did it happen and where was he coming from? He asked

about his wallet, but Nurse Pudding said it wasn't on him or in the car. "Yo, Rich, this may sound like a stupid question, but has this ever happened to you? Have you ever gotten amnesia?"

"Can't say that I have. But it's gotta be one helluva thing not remembering who you are. I suppose you can't remember what happened to your wallet?"

"No, I can't. I always have it on me. In my front left pocket. Always."

"I'm the same way—well, I was. My watch always had to be on my wrist. From the moment I woke up to the moment I went to sleep. The only times I didn't have it on was when I was in a rush, or something got me flustered." Rich pointed to his wrist. "See? No watch. Obviously whatever led me to end up here got me worked up enough to forget even my most basic routine."

Deep down, he knew that the words he spoke at that moment would be the last he would ever say to his brother.

Just then, Mark's unswollen eye opened up, then welled immediately with tears. Rich noticed as Mark began to whimper. "Lucky?"

Tears were streaming down Mark's face. Rich was now showing deep concern.

"Lucky? Come on, bro. Talk to me. Everything's going to be fine. Just talk to me."

The pain was intense as Mark's chest was heaving from the sorrow, but the sorrow itself hurt more. "I was leaving the city because ..." Rich listened more intently. "I was leaving the city because of my brother."

"What happened to your brother?"

"I watched as he was buried." Mark's insides were on fire, and his tears stung the scabs on his face. "My brother was killed by a drunk driver. He was walking on the sidewalk when some car ran him down. My brother, Cameron. He's dead now. Cam's dead." Mark continued to sob, until he realized something new. His memory was coming back to him in tsunami-like waves, but the next part stood at the acme of the rush. Mark looked immediately to his left on the nightstand beside him. A note, slightly

tattered and dotted with two shades of dried blood rested there, folded, but slightly open. Mark reached over and grabbed the note. He pulled it open and read the message:

Mark, I'm supposed to be going to surgery in a couple of minutes and I don't have a will. I figured this could be it just in case I don't make it, so

hopefully somebody got this note to you. I don't have a bunch of stuff back home, so you just figure out what to do with it. Just make sure you get my watch. For some reason, I left it home tonight. Sorry I don't have more to leave you guys. You know what, though, I wasn't wealthy, but I was rich in other ways. You and the rest of the family have been the best thing in my life, so in case things don't go well, don't let my death be the worst thing in yours. I always considered myself lucky, but I guess my luck's just run out. Be lucky for both of us from now on, brother. —Cam

Mark lowered the note as he finished it and closed his eyes for a moment. Suddenly, another realization consumed him; his stomach dropped, but his heart lifted. He spun his head towards his roommate. “Cam?!”

“Hey, brother.” The man with the all-too familiar face was now sitting up, no longer dressed in a hospital gown, but in a t-shirt and jeans. His feet were still bare. He looked upon Mark with a slight, but warm, smile.

“But—how? How are you here?” Mark was overwhelmed with puzzlement, joy, and hope. Deep in the back of his mind, he knew that it could not possibly be real, but he ignored these concerns.

“That’s a good question. I don’t

know the answer.”

Mark felt the answer irrelevant, though. Real or not, there his brother was, sitting right in front of him. He then felt disappointed for not realizing Rich was his brother sooner. “Why didn’t you say anything before?” He tried to sit up. He wanted desperately to reach out and touch him.

Cam responded quickly, “Mark, don’t. Just sit back and don’t hurt yourself.” Mark settled down. Cam continued, “I didn’t say anything before because you weren’t ready to come to terms with what happened.”

Raising up just a little in his hospital bed, Mark continued to listen intently.

“I’m here, though, to make sure you eventually did. I’m here because after what happened, you needed help to get on with your life.”

The tears came back to Mark’s eyes. “But Cam, I just don’t understand. Why did that even have to happen to you?”

“Who knows why the hell anything happens? Mom used to say, ‘Everything happens for a reason,’ but you know I never believed in that. That’s not the point, though, Mark. The point is: you almost let my death be the cause of yours. Some things happen in this world that we can’t explain, that eat us up inside.”

“I know that.” Mark spoke the words, but he didn’t truly accept that fact prior to this moment. All the uncertainty and uneasiness he tried to escape prior to the accident was becoming just a fading memory as he spoke to Cam. His big brother was back, and playing the role when he needed it most.

“I know you do. So Mark, you can’t run from it. You almost died trying. Think about mom. Think about dad. They need you. Our family was always the best thing we had going for us. Just because I’m gone now doesn’t mean all that should fall apart. It doesn’t mean that you should fall apart. You’ve always been my kid brother, and you always will be. And know that I am so proud of you for what you’ve done in life up to this point. But I want you—I need you—to keep going and keep making me proud. So get out of this damn hospital as soon as you can, and live your life free of whatever hurt you may be feeling over what happened to me.”

Cam stood up from the bed and walked over to Mark’s bed. He put his hand on Mark’s shoulder. The icy touch he once felt now filled Mark with a warmth that transpired throughout his body. “Do great things, brother. And know that I love you.”

Tears continued to stream down

Mark’s face, and he ignored the sting as they crossed over his unhealed cuts and scrapes. He tried to speak, but couldn’t. Deep down, he knew that the words he spoke at that moment would be the last he would ever say to his brother. He fought the sadness and mustered all his strength, but all he could get out was a whisper.

“ I always considered myself lucky, but I guess my luck’s just run out. Be lucky for both of us from now on, brother. ”

“I love you, too.”

Cam flashed one last smile, then turned to leave. Looking back, he pointed to his own wrist. “And Mark, don’t forget about my watch.” Still smiling, he walked through the hospital door and out of Mark’s life forever. Mark wiped the tears from his eyes. That fleeting hope—wishing Cam to remain by his side forever—turned into hope for the future.

Nurse Pudding walked by the door and noticed Mark was looking at the doorway. She did a double-take and, confused, walked into the room. “Excuse me, Mr. Foster. Are things all right?”

Mark smiled, looking at the note once more before looking back at her. “Everything’s okay.”



“A glance out the window, the glow
of the burning city. He takes a deep
breath and paints another line.”

Larry Eby, *Glass and Soil*



Interview with Q Pearce

by Pam Donahue

It was my distinct pleasure to interview Q.L. Pearce, a well-established and prolific author who writes primarily for the YA (Young Adult) market. Although she has published at least 200 books, her most famous works to date were her contributions to "Scary Stories for Sleepovers," published in the 1990's, a series of spooky and mysterious stories for slumber parties, campouts, and sleepovers.

Q: How long have you been writing?

A: I've been writing for about twenty-five years. I began my career as an editorial assistant at Lowell House/Roxbury Press in Los Angeles. I enjoyed working on every aspect of publishing but writing was my dream. I wrote short stories at lunch and took creative writing classes in the evenings at UCLA. My first opportunity to publish came in the form of a work for hire assignment. It was an activity book about dinosaurs and I loved doing the research! That began my career as a nonfiction writer.

Q: Was there anyone (or anything) in particular who inspired you?

A: My family was my earliest inspiration. They moved from England to Canada shortly before I was born. My mom left a lot of things behind, but she made room for a couple of boxes of her favorite children's books such as *Wind in the Willows* and anything by Enid Blyton. Some of my earliest memories are of her reading to me. My father wrote short stories. He was always working on a new mystery or a western, but he never submitted

anything. My older sister wrote poetry and published a couple of things. As a child I thought that creative writing was something that everyone did. I was a huge Nancy Drew fan. Later, I became hooked on short stories, mainly sci-fi and anything spooky. Ray Bradbury was my favorite. I would be remiss if I didn't mention *Twilight Zone*. Rod Serling is still one of my heroes.

Q: What is "work for hire"?

A: In a work for hire agreement the author is contracted to write a book, usually nonfiction, for a flat fee. Book packagers and school/library publishers may offer work for hire contracts. The details can vary, but the publisher generally retains all rights and does not pay royalties. For that reason some writers don't like WFH but it can be a way for a new writer to publish and for an established writer to supplement his or her income.





Q: How many of your books have been published?

A: This may seem odd, but I don't know exactly how many of my books have been published. I think it is now somewhere in the neighborhood of 200. I'm currently aver-

aging three or four new titles each year and I always feel a thrill when my author copies arrive and I can hold a brand new book in my hands.

Q: Who is your target audience? What age group? Why?

A: I write nonfiction for young readers from kindergarten through high school. I enjoy doing research and translating what I learn for a particular age range. I rely on a lot of input from educators and experts in the field so each book is truly a group effort and I must say that I keep the needs of teachers and librarians in mind when I am writing. I have also been fortunate to work with some amazing editors. When it comes to fiction I write mainly for middle grade and I love that age range! The kids are curious with active imaginations and they are so much fun!

Q: What was your most difficult book to write? Why?

A: This is an interesting question because I think most books have difficult patches and books may be difficult for a variety of reasons. One that was tough for me was a nonfiction biography of Given Kachepa. It is part of the KidHaven Press Young Heroes series, which features children who have made a positive difference in the world. Given is an heroic young man who, at age 11, was the victim of human trafficking. Since his rescue he has become a voice for other victims. What was difficult was finding the right balance. Given endured a great deal of pain as a child. In spite of that, he is now a loving, caring, optimistic young man. I wanted to capture not only his story but give the reader a glimpse of the strength of spirit that made Given a survivor.

Another example is a book that I just finished for Lucent about artificial intelligence. It was difficult because of the subject matter. In order to simplify a complex topic for young readers the writer must have a solid grasp of the material. What you choose to leave out can be every bit as important as what you include. I spent hours researching the smallest details to be certain that I understood them correctly. I'm proud of the result and I now have a notebook full of sci-fi ideas.



Q: Which one did you like the most? Why?

A: If I have to pick, once again two come to mind. Right now I'm thrilled to be co-authoring a nonfiction picture book for Carolrhoda with author/illustrator Gina Capaldi. It is the story of Native American writer/musician/activist Zitkala Sa. Gina and I have completed the manuscript and she is working on the art. She has been wonderful about letting me see the sketches and asking for comments. I am totally in awe of her work. I think this book will always be one of my favorites because I learned so much from my talented co-author and I have such deep respect for Zitkala Sa.

Another book that I loved doing was, *Ghost Hunters*, for KidHaven Press. I tagged along with author/paranormal researcher, Tamara Thorne, on a number of investigations and we stayed overnight in several "haunted" hotel rooms. I have loved ghost stories since I was a child, so this was a dream project.



Q: Tell me about *Scary Stories For Sleepovers* and how you got involved with that.

A: *Scary Stories for Sleepovers* was the perfect marriage of my fascination with spooky tales and my preference for short stories. It was a series for Price/Stern/Sloan. The publisher owned the series and over the years they contracted several different writers for individual books. I did five and there were eleven or twelve stories in each. I found plots everywhere. One of my favorite creative exercises was to go to flea markets or second hand stores, find unusual objects, and come up with a frightening history for them. The only problem was that sometimes I would scare myself.

Q: What would you like to do in the future?

A: I would love to co-author a YA novel with my husband, William, a medical researcher and a fan of sci-fi and mystery. We are celebrating our thirtieth anniversary this year and I still think he is the most interesting person I know! I would guide the writing but what could be better than having a scientist reading every word and making sure that the technical aspects of the plot work? I actually love collaborating on manuscripts and I've had the good fortune to work with such talented authors and illustrators as Gina Capaldi, Francesca Rusackas, Mary Ann Fraser and Tamara Thorne.

“One of my favorite creative exercises was to go to flea markets or second hand stores, find unusual objects, and come up with a frightening history for them.”

Author's and Artist's Biographies

Chris Bahner grew up on the inspirational front yard of Hermosa Beach, “the most wonderful playground that could be imagined.” Loving ideas, he has studied music, psychology, philosophy, and psychiatric nursing. He now strives to use his imagination to create and touch the “heart of hearts” of others.

Michael Todd Barrett is a former Crafton Hills student who writes from his home in Northern California. His debut novel, *The Curse*, is “powerful storytelling at its finest...Best Debut Suspense of 2009!” Deena Peterson. *The Curse* is available at Amazon and Kindle as well as most online outlets.

Matt Bosack grew up an Army brat, developing a passion for writing and film as he traveled the world experiencing diverse cultures. Currently creating training tools for the Military, he will be pursuing his Master's in Writing for Screen and Television at the USC School of Cinematic Arts this fall.

Daniel Brandenberger is a Crafton Hills student egalitarian. His majors are English and History, and he aspires to improve our nation's democratic condition. Daniel encourages ephemeral living, and dreams of an ambitious self-represented society. His writing enlightens the crude psychological state society has entered, and the buck point of life's absurdities.

Ashley Broom was born on June 15th, 1989 in Denver, Colorado and graduated from UNC with a studio art degree. Now she is a full-time traveler, and her preferred methods are travel by foot and freight train. The road, the people she meets, and the situations she experiences become the inspiration for her work.

According to Isaac Bogarin a 22 year old artist from the Harbor area in LA, “staying inspired, creative, and motivated, are all essential needs to creating work that one can be proud of. With all of these components in place, a black surface will inevitably become something beautiful.”

David Camberos is an English major (with an emphasis on creative writing) at CSUSB. He is also the proud owner of his very own wall-mounted pencil sharpener.

Christopher Carson is currently working hard toward becoming a full time photographer. He is a California native that will travel anywhere for a photo. He will have more photos for view and sale at fineartamerica.com. He is a member at Redlands Art Association and at RAM in Riverside.

R. A. Casby is a long suffering poet from the desert southwest who has been a monk and a pauper but has found his voice in poetry.

Amy Christensen feels awkward having to write about herself in the third person. She feels less awkward running by the beach, practicing yoga, going to her church, or spending time with family and friends. She's a social worker in LA after attending UCLA for undergrad and USC for grad school.

Michael Cluff has been a full-time associate professor of Creative Writing and English at Norco College since 1996. He has recently published in *Indigo Rising*, *San Gabriel Valley Poetry Quarterly*, *The Toucan Magazine*, *Medusa's Kitchen*, *Eskimo pi girl*, *Queen Vic's Knives* and *Dissident Editions*.

Emily Conner currently lives in Seattle, working towards a degree in Spanish and Linguistic studies. She has studied in Spain, and plans to study in Costa Rica this autumn. She finds her inspiration through traveling and the cultures and people she meets along the way: beauty in everyday life.

Jonathan Cook is a M.A. student at San Jose State University. He devotes his free time to literature, writing, and the exploration of poetic verse.

Brian Cooper, of Los Angeles, earned his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1995 and MFA from USC in 2002. His work has been exhibited at several galleries in LA and NY. His work is also included in "Incognito" at the Santa Monica Museum of Art. Briancooper.com

David Dashoff ~ Why do most people feel the need to reiterate their names immediately after it was stated in the title? It's blatant, unprofessional name spamming. David Dashoff this and David Dashoff that. It should follow: "David Dashoff lives here, likes that, and does the other."

Gwendolyn Di Ponio teaches English at Crafton Hills College. Her creative work aims to advocate for the dead, especially in areas of social justice. With so many lives encumbered by cruelty, hypocrisy, and ignorance, a posthumous voice offers hope for new generations. She is a wife and mother of two.

Pam Donahue was the Editor of Short Stories for this year's edition of *The Sand Canyon Review*. Delighted to be asked to work at something that was such fun, she thinks it would be even better if she can figure out a way to get paid for it next year...

Ann Dunlap lives in Indiana with her husband and daughter. She enjoys writing Christian poetry and short stories, and has also written Sunday school material for a large curriculum publisher. She enjoys singing, playing guitar and piano, and doing needlework. She home schools her daughter and works as an Ophthalmic Technician.

Nate Dunn is an English major who has returned to school after 15 years of working in psychiatric care. He enjoys married life, fatherhood, cultivating chili peppers, aromatherapy, reading, and other out of body experiences. This is the first semester that Nathan has contributed to *The Sand Canyon Review*.

Deborah Dybowski is a retired kindergarten-first grade teacher. She enjoys the creative process of writing. In her spare time, she writes poems and short stories. She also has begun writing articles for the *City News Group* which serves Loma Linda, Colton and Grand Terrace.

David Dysart, an unnoted writer attending Crafton Hills College and CSUSB, is currently on the road towards an advanced degree in psychology. The fourth edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is David's second time getting his work published, the first time being in the Arioch Morningstar/Scott Sigler podcast, *Tuesday Terror*.

Larry Eby is a recent graduate of CSUSB where he attained his BA in Creative Writing. He has poetry currently accepted in *Badlands* and *Welter* and is awaiting their publication. This is his debut for fiction.

Isaac R. Escalera is an undergraduate student at CSUSB where he is working toward his B.A in English Creative Writing for Fiction. He currently resides in the neighboring city of Rialto. If you are like him, you're probably reading the author's Bio without reading any of the author's work, to which he would say, "Shame on you. Read these fine peoples work now."

Veronica Felipe is from San Jacinto, California. She studies music, photography and writing at the same time. She wishes to study at a Los Angeles Film School and hopes to continue with writing poems. She will graduate soon from college.

Joel Ferdon is a chain smoking, coffee slinging, poetry fiend. His poetry has been published in such places as *Charlotte Viewpoint*, *Three Line Poetry*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *Indigo Rising Magazine*, *WeirdYear*, *Unheard Magazine* and soon *Rusty Truck*. Joel is also the recipient of the 2011 Indigo Rising Surreal Minimalism Contest. He lives and writes in Charlotte.

Dylan Freude is currently a student at the University of Redlands studying English, Women and Gender Studies, and Liberal Studies and earning his teaching credential. He has been previously published several times in *The Redlands Review*. Dylan finds inspiration for his fiction and poetry in extracting significance from often overlooked common experiences of life.

Maria Fulmer's photography creates surreal, delicate portraits of the natural world. Her artwork has been nationally exhibited, and she is currently preparing for her first solo exhibition. She is expected to receive her BFA from CSU East Bay in June 2011. More of her work can be seen at mariafulmer.com

Mandy Goddard attends Crafton Hills College. Small moments and serendipitous events are lenses through which she views the world in her photography. Being vertically challenged affords her a perspective often missed by others. Her work reflects her own unique affinities expressed in simple terms.

Scott Goss lives and works in Southern California. His day job is just a day job. He writes to try and make sense of the surrounding world but this sometimes doesn't happen. He believes that a story is often lived first and crafted afterwards. Only then can it be abandoned.

Grace Marie Grafton's most recent book, *Other Clues*, prose poems, was published in 2010 by Latitude Press, an imprint of RAW ArT Press. Dancing Girl Press published her chapbook, *Chrysanthemum Oratorio*, also in 2010. Recent work appears at www.thegoldenlantern.com and www.indigorisingmagazine.com. She lives in Oakland, CA.

Amanda Haskins has loved words since she was a little girl. When most kids brought a toy to show-and-tell, Amanda would bring in whatever book was her favorite at the time. As she grew older, her love of reading led to her love of writing; today that is all she does: read and write!

Ashley N. Hayes is currently completing her bachelor's degree in English at CSUSB. Hayes was the Managing Editor for the 2010 edition of the *Sand Canyon Review* and has recently been accepted to CSUSB's 2011 MFA program. She survives due to the support of her husband, her grandparents, and her amazing daughters, Harley and Veyda.

Peregrine Honig made a name for herself when a set of her prints were purchased by the Whitney Museum of American Art, making her the youngest living artist to be included in the permanent collection. Honig's sculptures, imagery, and texts explore themes of sexual vulnerability, trends in disease, and social hierarchies.

Holly Jackson is from Eugene, Oregon. She graduated from Wesleyan University in English and Spanish Literature and as one of Wesleyan's 2007-2008 Student Poets. Her writing has appeared in *Off the Coast*, *Ostranerie*, *The Hangman's Lime*, and *Dreamboat*. She reads William Stafford, bikes, and works with immigrants in Portland.

Joel Juedes studied law at Harvard for six years before moving to Highland at age nineteen. In his spare time he can be found hang-gliding off Mount Everest and catching orbit. His hobbies range from rocket-launching pets to urban camping. Someday he hopes to become president and fix gas prices.

Chris Koch is primarily a singer-songwriter, most comfortable with the concise brevity of poems and lyrics, but who occasionally wrestles with formats requiring lengthier periods of concentration. The lofty quest for Global Sanity is a favorite topic (followed by trite, hackneyed Desire when under the befuddling power of a muse.)

Nick Kushner, a NYC based artist, has garnered attention from the alternative press in America and abroad for using a most personal pigment: his own blood. Kushner likens his work to “Art as modern-day alchemy” by the literal and complete immersion within it, unleashing the schism of transformation through its creation. Visit him at thethirdangelsounded.com & nachtkabarett.com

Brett Lewis (a pseudonym) has been an educator in the Inland Empire for over 20 years. Her interests besides writing include British and American history, geography, travel, floral design, and photography. She is a published author of poetry and children’s stories, having written her first poem in seventh grade.

Manny Lopez is a Southern California based artist, whose sometimes-controversial work ranges from photography to mixed media. His main work is in the visual arts as well as written works published in academic journals. His artwork has also been showcased to raise funds for AIDS related charities.

Connie Major’s signature postscript is, “Clay is clean dirt and I love to play in it.” Her childhood included jumping in the mud, walking roof rafters, and watching every detail of home construction. She uses these experiences along with a degree in metal smiting to engineer clay into ceramic art.

At 21 years old, Reanna Marchman is an Undergraduate at CSUSB and working towards a degree in English – Creative Writing. She has a passion for working with youth and serving the oppressed. Her love for God and people drives her passion for serving and inspires her to write poetry.

Meredith Matthews, a Redlands native, enjoys the finer things in life such as Angels baseball, artichokes, air drumming, burritos, lawn gnomes and iced green tea. Meredith doesn’t know how to swim and is afraid of fish, so please don’t push her in to any pools or lakes.

Bill Mutter has been creating life size ceramic sculptures of childhood memories for over 25 years. His current series of children in Halloween costumes includes large pastel drawings. His work has been exhibited in galleries and museums throughout America; notably PS1 and The Whitney Museum at Philip Morris.

Laura Oliver loves to jog in the hills with her dogs and observe God's presence in the surrounding nature as her feet pound the dirt. She finds her four grown children and her husband of 28 years incredibly fun and interesting. Her dream job is to be part of the writing team for *Mad Men*.

Robert F. Padilla graduated from SBVC and CSUSB. His poetry appears in *The Pacific Review* (Vol. 24) and *Phineas* (Vol. 34). Robert's short stories and poetry appear in *The Writer's Gallery Magazine* found on Amazon.com. He is currently working on poetry and novels.

Jessica Provencio graduated from CSULA in 2009 with her B.A. in Mexican American Studies. She works at a coffee shop and substitute teaches while continuing to take classes in creative writing. She is a cat person and prefers lined journals and nib pens. She does not like punctuation or capital letters.

Kate A. Reynolds attends both CHC and CSUSB. She wants to earn a Doctorate in Physical Therapy from Loma Linda University. She found a passion for writing after writing "When Fire Burns" when she was a freshman in high school. Her poetry commonly depicts emotions through imagery of nature.

Cindy Rinne grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. She has lived in San Bernardino over 25 years. Cindy is a fiber artist who enjoys stitching together stories. She has exhibited her artwork internationally. Cindy is also a poet. She coordinates mixed-media poetry events, is featured in solo poetry events and teaches visual poetry workshops. www.fiberverse.com.

Steven Rodgers is currently an art major at Crafton Hills College. He plans on attending an art school up North. His inspirations come from simple interactions with others to the blissful indulgence of being alone in nature.

Born in Naples-Italy, Italia Ruotolo graduated with a degree in Fine Art. She then worked as a goldsmith and designer. While her background has greatly influenced the development of her style, allowing her to always search for the "precious" in her work, references to everything from art-to-art nouveau to pop art can be seen.

Morgan Sandler is a Los Angeles based cinematographer and photographer. In addition to working on productions, he also teaches full time at The Los Angeles Film School. He took this photograph while living in Brooklyn, New York. Although he currently lives in Redlands, CA, he still considers Brooklyn to be his second home.

Priscilla Santos is a student at Crafton, planning to transfer into the Loma Linda Nursing Program though her specialties lie in the arts. Mostly, she finds her inspiration from her religion, music, and her fascinating family. She is honored to be featured in the Sand Canyon yet again.

Felix P. Sepulveda, 61, was born in Redlands, California. He attended Lugonia Elementary, Redlands Junior High, and graduated from Redlands High School in 1968. Late in life, he attended Crafton Hills College before transferring to UCR. He served as a Probation Officer before deciding to pursue his real passion.

As a first-generation American, Avni Shah explores cultural conflict between Indian parents and their children in her experiences and through her writing. She recently finished her first novel *Arranging Love*, an excerpt of which was published in Ekakshara.

Lucas C. Simões graduated with a study in Architecture at PUC-Campinas and from Politecnico di Milano in Italy. Since his first solo exhibition in São Paulo in 2001, he has shown work at various exhibitions. In 2010 he received the Grand Prize of the Salão de Pequenos formatos da Amazonia (UNAMA).

Cat Siobhan was born on Independence Day and works as a nanny for 5 kids. She finds inspiration through life experiences; poetry is a great outlet for her. Her poetry was published in the *REVHS Literary Journal, Iliad*, 2005 and 2006 editions.

A.N. Teibe's work has appeared in *Fifth Wednesday, Ekphrasis, Badlands*, and *Chaffey Review*. She recently co-edited *Blankets & Other Poems: An Anthology for the People of Japan*. A native of Northern Utah, she now makes Inland Southern California her home. A.N. loves to hike and prefers mountains to flatlands, sunshine to rain.

Annie Terrazzo has been creating trash portraiture for 7 years. Her first project, "Art Is Trash" was born when one of the screws in Annie's brain became loose and fell onto a canvas. "Detritus," Annie's recent endeavor, is made completely out of newspapers from around the world. She is inspired by Ralph Steadman, strippers that don't speak English, box tape and expensive champagne.

Betty Tompkins's work has recently been in the elles@centrepompidou exhibit, Paris and the Lust and Vice exhibit at Kunstmuseum and Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern. Her second exhibit with Galerie Andrea Caratsch, Zurich will be from May through July. The Algus Greenspon Gallery represents her in New York City.

Christopher Watson is a pseudonym for a student of Crafton Hills College. She is currently an education major, however, because of the economy she is reconsidering. She resides in sunny Southern California where she loves to spend time at the beach. She loves to read, bake, and sing.

CJ Wilson is a freshman at Crafton and a pretty cool guy. He loves playing music and eating good Chinese food. He began to show interest in writing at the ripe young age of 11, and by 14 he began writing poetry. He's pretty stoked about this.

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