

truth



Lloyd Hall Scholars Program Literary Magazine
2005-2006

LHSP Faculty & Staff

Faculty Director	Carol Tell
Associate Director	Charlotte Whitney
Arts Coordinator	Mark Tucker
Administrative Assistant	Tina Kokoris
Program Assistant	Ruth Marsh
Program Intern	Melissa Kuklin
Art Instructors	Mariannetta Porter
.....	Mark Tucker
Artist-In-Residence	Beili Liu
Writing Instructors	Dargie Anderson
.....	Paul Barron
.....	Jeremy Chamberlin
.....	Louis Ciciarelli
.....	Lizzie Hutton
.....	Matt Kelley
.....	Alex Ralph
.....	Naomi Silver
.....	Carol Tell
Journal Staff	
Editor-in-Chief	Ruth Neuman
Managing Arts Editor / Publisher	Noah Korn
Managing Literature Editor	Lauren Walbridge
Advisors	Carol Tell & Mark Tucker

“There is nothing so agonizing to the fine skin
of vanity as the application of a rough truth.”
-- Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

Thanks to...

The associate editors who read through all of the submitted works: Ben Megargel, Alexi Bolton, Brittany Allan, Jenny Howard, Andrea James, Amy Congalton, Sarah Smith, Liana Imam, and Danielle Smit. Those LHSP students who were brave enough to submit work. Carol Tell for all of her work editing, and guiding and supporting the staff. Tina Kokoris and Ruth Marsh for all of their help coordinating this publication. The LHSP instructors for creating an environment in which so many students create extraordinary work. Mark Tucker for providing photographs of students' art. And finally, thanks to the LHSP community for being such a warm environment for learning.

Cover Art:
“Truth” by Noah Korn
B&W Photograph

[Contents]

"Untitled" - Natalie Shields	8
"Downsized" - Ben Megargel	13
"Untitled" - Lauren Walbridge	18
"The Promised Land" - Liana Imam	19
"Dumped" - Jordan Teitelbaum	20
"THE RAVENous stomach" - Danielle Smit	26
"Breaking The Mold" - Jenny Howard	28
"Automatic" - Jordan Teitelbaum	33
Artistic Features	35
"Untitled" - Rachel Pryde	36
"Untitled" - Abby Klausner	37
"Nude Woman Sketch #45" - Adam Kosteva	38
"Nude Woman Sketch #29" - Adam Kosteva	39
LHSP Murals	40
Elizabeth Klein	41
Anna Harrison	42
Tara Boinpally	43
Gillian Goldberg & Lauren Sullivan	44
Lara Back	45
Lisa Glass	46
Stacey Rones	47
Erika Moses	48
Ariel Zipkin	49
Beth Duey	50
Meghan Corson	51
Suzanne Lipton	52
Sung Hei Yau	53
"The Longest Car Ride" - Sarah Smith	54
"Over the Wires" - Lauren Walbridge	58

[Contents]

"Why I Write" - Jordan Teitelbaum	62
"Kingdom of Tomorrow" - Curtis DeSantis	64
"Water & Wood" - Lauren Walbridge	71
"Entering the Foyer" - Sarah Smith	74
"Let Go" - Cristina Calvar	76
"Color in a World of Hate" - Catherine Smyka	79
"A Break from the Real World" - Landon Krantz	81
"The Truck Stop" - Larissa Stassek	87
"A Few Choice Words..." - Matt Lerner	92
"Liquid Sun" - Kristen Lo	96
"[under]/statement/standing" - Lauren Walbridge	98
"Barren Tree" - Andrea James	100
"Vanishing Act" - Cristina Calvar	101
"Land of the Beautiful" - Ben Megargel	102

The work of the following student photographers and artists appear throughout the magazine: Noah Korn, Larissa Stassek, Rachel Matz, Adam Kosteva, Lauren Walbridge, Layla Goddard, and Abby Klausner.



From the Editors

"You are not special. You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else." Perhaps it takes the vestige of a hallucinated identity to acknowledge the fact that we are not as beautiful and special as our parents once told us we are. It is Tyler Durden, the schizophrenic antagonist in *Fight Club*, who so aptly characterizes the attitudes of the writers and artists of the Lloyd Hall community this year. From class assignments and submissions to *Truth* to hallway debate, there was an underlying tone of vanity in the Lloyd class of 2006. This tone developed into more formal academic debates, as well as the ultimate theme of *Truth*.

Students were privileged to see rainbows of Lacoste Polo's and UGG boots around campus, with Bivouac and Urban Outfitters the premier outlets for spending extra cash. On Thursday evenings, lines of socialites, waiting to use the precious bathroom mirrors, crowded the narrow hallways. Mascara and lip-gloss were the fossil fuel of Alice Lloyd.

Yet the same students who participated in the Bronze Elegance fashion show also wielded 4.0 GPA's. For every night spent packed into a claustrophobic frat party, another was spent crammed into the library cubicles. It is this quest for balance that potentially explains the motif of our journal: vanity in *Truth*. For as much as we enjoy beautifying ourselves for a night out, we also revel in our academics. It seems only natural, then, for our

literary and arts journal to encompass two of our most cherished pastimes - a harmony between social and academic life at the University and LHSP community.

What *Truth* has become is an academic questioning of our extracurricular socializing. What is it to be beautiful? Are our bodies only a "means, a tool" for relationships, as Ben Megargel questions in "Downsized?" Or is beauty a realization about oneself, admitting that he or she is "the same... no better no worse" than everyone else, as Matt Lerner writes in "A Few Choice Words?" Or even, as a few authors ask, how do the physical similarities between twins, or siblings, affect their relationship and individual identities?

These questions examine not only our relationships with others, but also our relationship with ourselves. To many, *Truth* may serve as a literary revolution against the likes of *The OC*, *Laguna Beach*, and other shows glamorizing the glamorous and deifying superficiality. Yet to others, the stories, paintings, and photographs contained within these pages may only serve as entertaining quips, unsuitable for building blocks from which to grow. But hopefully, *Truth* will have some sliver of utility by examining a topic that is ever-so-present in our lives. And just maybe, the next time you go to look in the mirror, you will pause just for a moment, and reflect.

Noah Korn
Managing Editor/Publisher

Untitled

by Natalie Shields

In the winter of my youth, I was thirteen. I had only been alive for one hundred and fifty-nine months and already had cut twice and been on various antidepressants, none of which seemed to calm the self-hate within me. In a world of Rachels, I was Jacob's Leah—the unwanted, the good girl, the victim of the situation. I had felt this way ever since my parents had started to ignore me. When I told them that I wanted to hurt myself, to die, they took it as a joke and said not to do it on the carpet because it had just been steam cleaned. But I was not alone. They showed the same lack of concern for my other half, my brother.

My only sibling, Edan, my twin, and also my antithesis always seemed to be in search of something...something that I suspected to be either nonexistent or as eternally lost as the Arc of the Covenant. Some people said we came from different fathoms of the gene pool. Edan was a D student, lacking in no area except for the motivation department, but easily had the potential to get a 4.0 without ever breaking a sweat. He could have climbed both the social and scholastic ladders at the same time, therefore securing his position as an upstanding member of society before most people were old enough to have finished college. But instead of using his genius to “change the world,” he chose rather to put himself in constant company of notorious drug addicts, alcoholics, and other people who dealt death to children on a daily basis. He had the most remarkable mind, but drug usage and alcohol predetermined the tight limits put on him, as is so common with extraordinary people controlled by something stronger and bigger. The mind is its own worst enemy and its favorite victim. Thus began Edan's trek to inevitable perdition, and my struggle to get away from it.

His self-destructive habits included not simply killing, but sautéing his brain cells by way of either cocaine or whatever other cheap alternatives he could attain. The other, more hazardous pastime Edan favored when attempting to single-handedly defy death was overdosing on over-the-counter drugs. He disregarded the warning label on the bottle, saying that he would live by his own rules and his own warnings. After getting an “Evel Knievel” rush from his over-the-counter binge, he liked to assess how long it would take him to fall into

narcosis. Quickly after he neared this point, he would force vomiting. He made me watch him every time. We shared 50 percent of our DNA, so each time he killed a part of himself, a small part of me died, too.

Once he came partially to his senses; after I unhesitatingly revived him from a deep insentient daze, tears streaming from my eyes, he begged me to cover for him.

“Don't tell them! I'd hate you if you told! I know what I'm doing and it's none of your damn business. Don't ever question what I do, because I am brilliant and you are nothing!” —and I always did hide his weakness. Unknowingly, my title had transitioned from “sister” to “codependent” almost over night. The morning after he initially tried it, I noticed my first gray hair, mocking me in the mirror.

On nights that he asked if I would stay with him, I sat in the corner with my knees drawn up protectively, watching every second. He slept with his hands drawn over his face, stray strands of blonde escaping from between trembling fingers, slim body curled up into a ball. I monitored the movement of the covers, making certain he was still breathing and at the same time telling myself to breathe. I knew that Edan suffered through no fault of his own. He was flawed by nature, selected to suffer.

Since he was eleven, he had been having hypermanic spells in which he became delirious and barbaric, a violent imposter masquerading as the one who I had shared my mother's womb with for nine months a long, long time ago.

Every year, with the happiness of another candle on our birthday cake, came a worsening of the imbalance corrupting Edan's mind, which I'd come to expect but did not know how to prevent. As we both grew older, larger pieces of my brother's former self crumbled away and the bruises he inflicted upon me became more numerous.

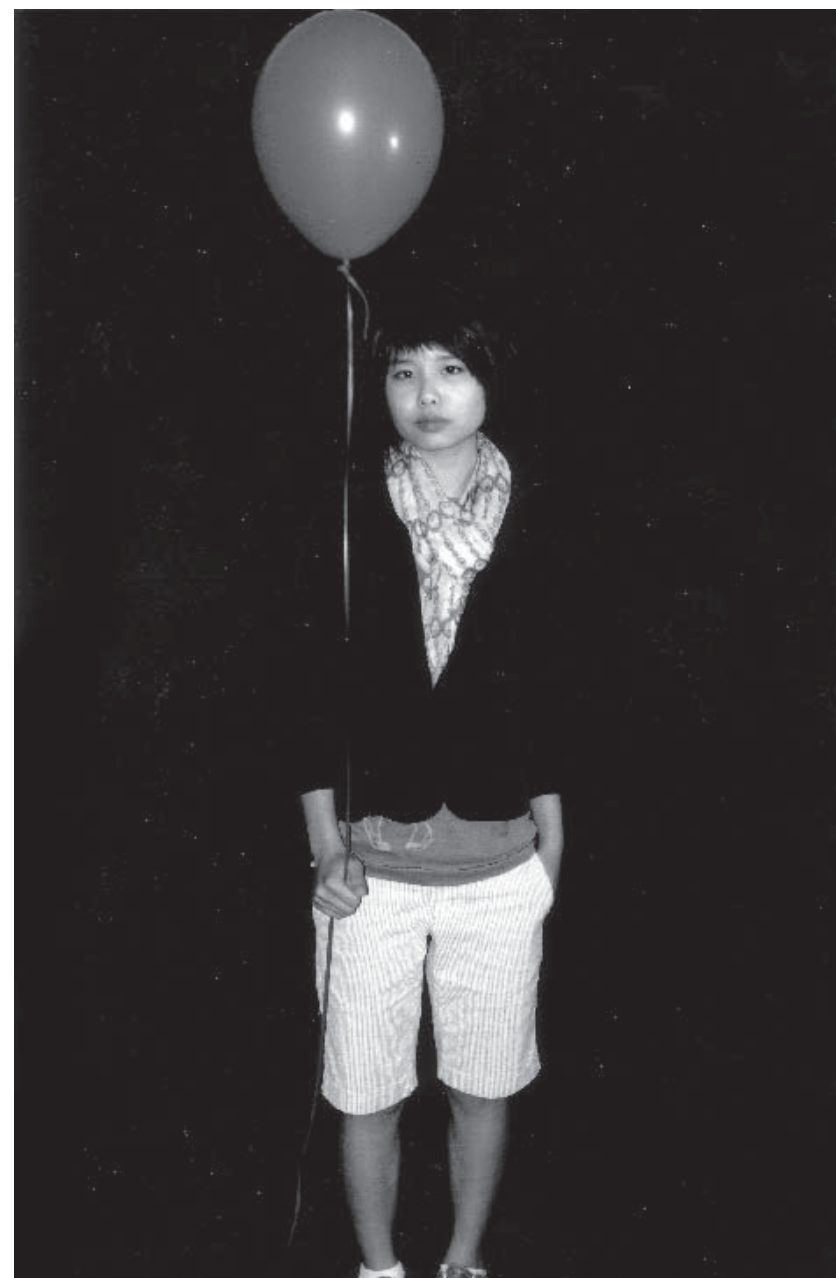
The ever heightening feral effects of these spells were hampered only when he drank massive quantities of hard liquor, so he began self-medicating with the help of Dr. Tequila, Dr. Vodka, and the specialist who seemed to be on duty full-time, Captain Morgan. Whenever he found emptiness in the bottom of a bottle, he found it in himself as well, and that's when he would morph into Mr. Hyde with a sharp vengeance, his face wild, with eyes that bit deeply into me and spread venomous fear throughout my body. I didn't understand him, and I still don't, but I knew the severity of these episodes and did not tempt his abusive tendencies purposely. Just being around him seemed

to set off a switch in his head: short circuit, bad wiring.

After his inaugural "spell" of hypermania, I forced myself down on my hands and knees in alarmed surrender. I feared his wrath constantly, keeping a latent fear in my heart twenty-four hours a day. Sure, I tried a time or two to fight back. The defense wounds littered my forearms, sometimes in round welts, swollen and ugly, others echelons of crimson scratched into me with his fingernails. But trying to fight him only magnified his rage, so my safest choice when confronted by him was submission. The first time he unleashed his anger on me, Edan forced me down the stairs backward, causing me to hit the stair post. I felt the wooden edge dig into my body. I fell further, the wind knocked from my lungs. He jumped down to the bottom of the stairs and began to pound what little energy I had out of me until I breathlessly pleaded for a quick moment of mercy. He stopped at length, the hate so powerful in his near-black eyes that I couldn't feel the physical pain until he looked away.

The next day, my parents didn't ask what had happened, too wrapped up in their own hectic lives to see my frailness. Hidden in a large crowd of people, I escaped teachers' notice. The students gawked. I was a freak-show to them, like a least favorite character on a TV show being killed off finally: my pain inconsequential and unreal to them. The deep fuchsia mark on my back caused by the razor-sharp edge of the post faded into permanent dead white as the amber and light greens covering my arms changed back to my light skin tone. I still cry at night sometimes when my body aches in places where the bruises and cuts once were.

I don't know how I'd ever managed to stay for so long. Dressed in black, my eyes as empty as my heart, I laid to rest the other half of myself. I watched the blood red roses being covered by the dirt, their vitality fading already, picked in the prime of their beauty. I knew then that I would always be only half a person, but still half, still something. I had vowed to myself that on the day of my eighteenth birthday, I would walk out the front door of my house and not look back. So a week after Edan's funeral, on the very day of my official inauguration into adulthood, I kept my promise. And unlike Lot's wife, I never did look back.



Noah Korn
"Black Balloon"
Black & White Photograph



Noah Korn
"Wings"
Black & White Photograph

Downsized

by Ben Megargel

The day it all began was about two years ago in a sweaty high school gymnasium. After a laborious hour-and-a-half class learning "life fitness" skills, I traversed the shiny basketball court to the men's locker room when I was suddenly intercepted. Her name was Megan McCurdy. Always deeply bronzed, even in depression-inducing Boston March, Megan was a feisty Irish Catholic with spunk for days. Despite being a complete loose cannon with a severe case of attention deficit disorder, she had always been surprisingly attractive to me.

"Hey Ben, what's due in math today?" she inquired.

"I think we had to finish that worksheet," I responded. While I specified which worksheet, it became highly apparent that Megan's attention had begun to waver. Her piercing blue eyes began to travel from my face, down my body, and then slowly back up. "Did you get that?" I asked, attempting to reel her attention back to the topic.

"Getting a little chunky there, eh Ben," she laughed, lightly tapping my stomach with the back of her hand. Ignoring the information I had just relayed, she turned around without a thought and picked up an entirely separate conversation with her friend. Suddenly, my fitted white undershirt felt entirely too small and my image of my body changed forever.

Although I am not normally so affected by off-hand critiques of myself, this singular incident was different. In reflection, I could attribute the reason to several variables. Perhaps it had something to do with my self-esteem at the time, unusually low due to the overwhelming pressures to perform well in school after an atypically low grading period, the impending SAT's, or my lack of female attention all winter. However, this sort of analysis isn't important. The exact science of why I was so deeply affected can't ever be fully determined. What matters now is not why I was so disturbed by this comment, but rather the fact that I was.

In the months that followed, this remark was buried deep within my psyche, momentarily exiting my cognizance. Realizing that it was necessary for my sanity to escape the confines of my town, I enrolled in a Columbia University study abroad program in Barcelona,

Spain. As the plane took off on July 1st, I felt the distinct sense that the measured, somber, and hermetic lifestyle I had suffered through most of my junior year was about to end in a drastic way.

My premonitions were well-founded. In the following days and weeks a frenzied period of heavy partying ensued, a blur of hazy smoke, dimly lit bars and thumping techno. By day I either sat comatose in pass/fail classes or dragged myself all over the city sightseeing. However, during the night I stayed up till all hours engaging in the most hedonistic activities thus far in my short existence. I barely stopped to look at myself until two weeks into the trip while getting ready for yet another night on the town. As I stood in a towel brushing my teeth I suddenly noticed my appearance as if for the first time. With shock I saw that my stomach had shrunk significantly and my chin had become far more defined. Muscles I never thought I had before suddenly were visible to the undiscerning eye and my body had a sense of form I was previously ignorant it could achieve. With my intake of nicotine at night to extend my buzz and excessive caffeine in the day to stay functional, my appetite had sharply declined. This decreased sustenance, combined with the multiple miles I walked every day, created the improved physique I stood staring at.

"Apparently my exclusive diet of cigarettes and alcohol is doing something right," I thought to myself, only partially joking.

The very next day I went with a few of my friends to the gym. After running for thirty minutes I decided to cut my workout short and head outside to the pool. The Spanish sun seethed against my body as I removed my shirt and briskly walked toward the pool. Wading my way through the crowd of Speedos and string bikinis, I suddenly heard a high pitched plea.

"Ben! Get over here!" screamed Mikhaela, a curvy red-head from my program. Preening on her lawn chair in a small purple bathing suit, she smiled ever so slightly. "Why don't you sit down next to me," she purred, tipping her sunglasses just enough to expose her investigating eyes. I willingly obliged her request, locating a seat in the curve between her hips and breasts. "Ooh, nice body," she said as she tapped my stomach with the palm of her hand. This tap was in stark contrast to the tap Megan had given me only five months earlier. Soft and lingering, this was a clear sign of interest, specifically with what I could offer physically. In that instant my body became a means, a tool, and a powerful asset to gain access to women. I had been involved

romantically with girls in the past, but I had never before used my body to attract their attention. In an irresponsive stupor, I stared at Mikhaela blank faced. Overwhelmed by my epiphany, I laughed idiotically and asked her whether she'd like to go swimming. Thankfully, she agreed.

I returned to the States a very different person. Other than the advances I had made in terms of experience, I was also physically changed enough to elicit positive responses from practically every person I ran into: "Did you lose weight? You look great." From my family to my friends, everyone fed my ego without prompt, and I loved it. With each comment I began to gain increasing self-confidence. When I returned to school for my senior year, I was given the time of day by girls who previously ignored me or thought of me as "just a friend." My physical self became associated with acceptance and validation.

However, as time elapsed, people began to get used to my trimmed down frame and the compliments faded. My "improved" look was forgotten, and the lack of attention irked me. I craved those daily ego boosts, the element of surprise that I could inspire. And consciously or not, I began to take measures to regain that approval.

To be clear, I was never an anorexic, a bulimic, or a compulsive exerciser. No Anna Nicole Smith certified diet pills, colon blows, or illicit drugs were ever used to achieve my weight loss. What I did do, however, was make much more subtle, mostly subconscious changes in lifestyle. Slowly but surely, french fries, pizza, and candy were almost entirely eliminated from my diet. Proteins, fruit, and vegetables became staples. Regular soda was replaced with diet. The elevator ceased to exist as an option.

All of these changes sound like healthy decisions, and they were. But I will admit that my lifestyle wasn't entirely positive. What types of food went into my mouth became a quasi-obsession for me at all times. When I did gorge on six pieces of mushroom and pepperoni pizza, I would feel a distinct sense of guilt, or at least the need to go run on the treadmill. Meals were skipped, hunger ignored. By the spring of my senior year, I was a full 15 pounds lighter than I was before the Barcelona trip. Those closest to me began to show concern for my health as my weight continued to drop to new lows. The "look" that I had once been complimented on had diminished to exposed bones and harsh jaw lines. "You are too skinny," my mother would exclaim, attempting to entice me with a variety of my favorite desserts.

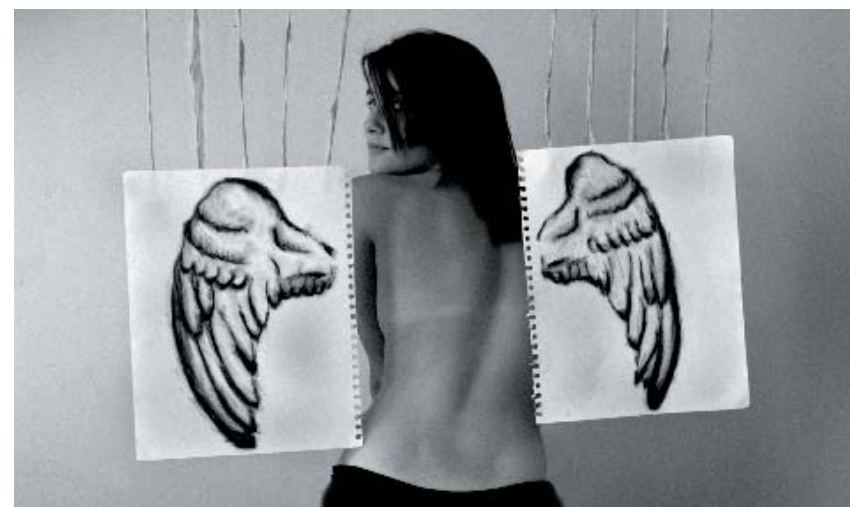
For some reason, however, I didn't heed their advice whatsoever. In fact, I secretly enjoyed being called "too skinny." It was better than being "too chunky," I thought.

Not everyone believed I was too thin, however. Megan McCurdy continued to ignore the changes I had made, and for some reason I was unable to stop without some sort of confirmation from her. Her acceptance would be not only the ultimate litmus test of my body's female attracting capabilities, but also a deeper validation of my newly improved self-confidence.

It finally came in June, a few weeks after graduation. After a series of PC grad parties filled with Sprite and Lays chips, Megan was having the final soirée, the last blowout. After the obligatory formal dinner in the backyard, Megan's formal party turned into a raging kegger in her basement. By 12 a.m. kids were moving about the property like a colony of tipsy ants. Megan was dancing wildly on a table, shaking her hips as she scanned the room. When her eyes met with mine her face illuminated and she screamed. Scrambling down the table, Megan ran towards me, arms outstretched. When she reached me she put her arms around my neck, kissing me on the cheek. After a couple inane minutes of standard party talk, Megan's eyes shifted down towards my body, slowly examining.

"Ben, you look so good," Megan exclaimed enthusiastically, pulling my body closer into hers. I don't know if this was the five Natural Light beers speaking or not, but at that time I didn't care either way. In a moment of courage I leaned in hesitantly and kissed her. To my surprise her lips responded, followed in quick succession by tongue. In this moment my self worth became independent of Megan's support or the approval of others. My self-confidence was no longer based on whether others liked my body; if I ever were to attempt to transform my body again, it would be for me and nobody else. After several heated minutes of making out in a shady corner of her beer drenched basement, she remembered something.

"Shit, I have a boyfriend," she laughed. "Whatever, different state, different rules!" she said referring to her boyfriend at Georgetown. "Anyways, you're so cute." Without consequence to my identity, I effortlessly whispered, "Thank you." Megan promptly kissed me once more before being swallowed by the roaring throngs behind her.



Noah Korn
Model: Lexi Bolton
Black & White Photographs



Untitled

by Lauren Walbridge

Society encourages editing –
multiple drafts and marks
and word choices, sentence
structure torn apart and thrown to the hardwood floor,

Make it again!
Pick it up and do it better!

By now I'm not so sure I
can. I'm sick of central parks
filled with persons holding
red pens,
marking
slashing each others' backs
and praising their faces
with stars.
Like sick and gleeful, necessary
kindergarden teachers

The Promised Land

by Liana Imam

it's a wasteland out there, darling, a snow-covered wasteland,
he tells me, pulling me closer, shielding me from it.
aren't you happier here, he says, where it's dry and warm?
but his hands are cold; i am thinking i'll take my chances
with the elements. he pulls the curtains, pulls my hair,
it's soft sheets and soft snow but we're all sharp corners.
we don't fit & don't flow but we keep forcing it,
keep pretending if we try we'll come easy like
the snow in michigan, beautiful and painless,
the way it is in normal years, anyway.
and i overanalyse my undercooked theories about this relationship:
success directly proportional to collective snowfall of the season.
aren't you glad you stayed, beautiful? he whispers,
his hands now warm but my body is shaking
cause he's got my heat along with my heart now, both
won by sneak attack in the tangle of grey sheets and tanned legs.
by night, the promises made against my back feel strong as ice.
but in the morning, everything has melted.



Larissa Stassek
"Snow!"
Digital Photograph

Dumped

A College Male's Guide to Getting Over Heartbreak

by Jordan Teitelbaum

She did it, didn't she? She finally realized that she doesn't need to deal with you or your issues so she dumped your sorry self in search of something better. Granted, maybe I'm being a little harsh on you. But then again, wasn't she? With seemingly nothing left to fight for, your goal becomes resolution. Now that she is gone, the only real objective is to forget about her as fast as possible and try to "move on" before she does.

Legendary singer and songwriter Billy Joel once said, "In every heart there is a room / a sanctuary safe and strong / to heal the wounds of lovers past / until a new one comes along." But after a turbulent and damaging relationship, we don't have time to wait for our "heart-room" to make us feel better again. Though it is one of those horribly sad truths of life, new and immature relationships – before, during, and after they exist – are all about a struggle for power. Before, it's a contest to see who calls first after numbers are exchanged. During, it's a battle to see who caves in first after a fight. But possibly the most significant struggle for power is in the period right after the break up. Here, both parties essentially compete to be the first to feel moved on. Anyone who is human enough to know heartbreak also knows that it feels like there's not enough tape in the world to put your heart back together after you've lost that special someone. Since I am no stranger to such heartbreak and am currently dealing with a pretty severe case, I think it utterly important to share my proven method of getting over your girl quickly.

The first few hours post-breakup are crucial to how the rest of the recovery process will run. At this time, it is imperative to cleanse yourself of your ex-girlfriend. Take down pictures, remove her from your Buddy List and speed dial, and dismantle anything else around your room that reminds you directly of her. In this critical time, at no point can you call her or try to see her. Even if you start feeling unsure about the whole breakup, you must understand that those feelings are completely normal and you are just second-guessing what is inherently best for the both of you. Spend the rest of that day watching some of

your favorite comedies and hanging out with a friend who can always make you laugh – you'll need it.

My post-breakup was just like the proverbial emotional rollercoaster. I first felt as if she had injected me with Novocaine. For the longest time I just sat there staring at the door she left through. My mind kept telling me to go through the first steps of recovery and whip out my cell phone to erase her number so I wouldn't be tempted to call, but my body was useless. There were no tears, however. I was far too focused on trying to reach out and wrap my fingers around the severity of what had just happened. After unlocking my eyes from the door frame, I quickly got control of my feelings and started going through the usual motions – I took down pictures, letters, and changed my computer background from a picture of us to a picture of Angelina Jolie half-naked. I hope all of you have better luck in this first vital stage.

When you wake up and realize that sleep could not cure this new situation, you will not feel like getting out of bed. Yet, the more you lie in bed, the more spare time you have to think about how much you miss her. Get up and get out; this day is the start of your busy streak. Whether you are in class or working on an extracurricular or even striking up a friendly game of Madden on PS2, immerse yourself in the activity and lose all superfluous thoughts. It is imperative to stay busy and stay active. Leave yourself no time for thought.

I recall that my second day was the only time I was disappointed in the inconsequential amount of work I had. After I finished, I started playing guitar and reading a new book. Once I was bored of these, I cleaned my room. Another great suggestion for the recently heartbroken is exercise. If you are out at the gym, you will be producing endorphins and tiring out your body so you don't have to lie restless in bed that night thinking hypothetically and overanalyzing. Thinking too much is a terrible sign when you need to achieve a quick recovery.

Distractions aside, the potency of your own will is the most important factor for the day after. I must have started to dial her number about twenty times on the second day, but I never pressed 'Send'. I drafted hundreds of texts, each one not quite breezy enough and yet lacking seriousness at the same time. Of course, I did miss her – but I wasn't allowed to tell her that. It's like a game, really. And as much as it hurts, you have to be the one who comes out victorious. You have to be the one to gain the power.

Even if you did take my advice to create a storm of activities and have a thorough workout, that second night will be the worst sleep you'll ever get. As if your eyes were sadistically held open like in *A Clockwork Orange*, no magical Sleeping Fairy will grace your eyelids and send you off to a place where you don't have to hurt so much. I can tell you how many tiles are on my ceiling. I can tell you how the whole royal family of Denmark meets a tragic fate. I can tell you these things because I stayed up counting and reading on that second night. I encourage all of you to try other methods, as these ones did not aid me at all until I finally fell asleep – after the sun came up – with my pillow tucked cozily between my arms.

The third day is a giant leap in terms of personal growth and getting over her like the snap of your fingers. This is the day that you start checking out other girls. If it is a weekend, then you are in luck because you can go out and meet some new ladies. In the worst case, there is a dirty trick you can pull off. Talk to one of your cuter girl friends about the breakup. Girls absolutely love this emotional stuff and cannot resist a hurt, damaged boy. I guess when we're heartbroken we can pull off that sad puppy dog face pretty expertly.

Admittedly, it is bizarre how when we are in a relationship, we sometimes think about other girls and wish we had the opportunity to get to know them or just have some fun. Yet once I finally had the chance to be with these other girls and flirt openly without repercussion, all I could think about was her. I was fixated, unable to get my mind off the issue. It was as if these other girls just fueled my inability to distract myself. Still, I must stress the importance of looking for other girls. Though, like me, you might just be confused at first, in the end you will realize that she is replaceable.

My third night was a drunken blur of tequila shots and the bar's dance floor. I danced with some pretty attractive girls (I think) and I considered the night a success until the next morning. I woke up feeling as empty as my stomach was after throwing up all that tequila. Still, I brushed off this emotion as weak and vulnerable, two characteristics that do nothing to help you get control. At this point, I still had not talked to her or seen her. And I can honestly say that I really started to miss her. I'm fairly sure it wasn't just the sex I missed or the comfort of having a girlfriend; I missed spending time with her. I think a lot of people overlook the fact that part of "girlfriend" is "friend."

However, through all this doubt and questioning, it is vital

to concentrate on the goal. The goal is to forget. Part of forgetting is accidentally remembering, but you just need to keep passing distracted and discard your doubts. It is natural by this day to reconsider the whole plan of getting over heartbreak and giving it up. I urge you to fight through the pain and think about the peace of mind you will soon have.

By the time you wake up on day four of your crusade, provided that you aren't feeling as hung-over as I was, you should start to see the brighter side of being single. For one, you don't have responsibility always weighing you down. Furthermore, you don't have to deal with those insidious mini-fights about blown plans or miscommunications that drove both of you crazy for no reason. You feel independent, finally realizing that there is life after her. You get so lost in the power of love that sometimes you forget the power we harness within.

If you'll notice by now, you have been without her for four days. You are still alive. Time keeps on ticking, regardless of whether or not you are ready to move on. By this pivotal day, you should be busy enough in your schoolwork and activities that you don't even have time to realize that this is the longest you've gone without talking to her or seeing her since you met her. You start to understand that this is the way your life is now – that she no longer plays such a principal role.

My own fourth day was almost perfect. I had successfully skipped through all the songs on my iPod that reminded me of her and I spent hours in the weight room. I knew I should have figured that with my luck I would see her. Breathing heavily, I saw her outline turning a corner and coming towards me. There is no way to prepare for something like this. Believe me, if I could have, I would have ducked out of the way into a bush or utilized some other evasive tactic. Instead of hiding, I was struck immobile. I had almost forgotten how amazing she looked. We made eye contact and the swirling teal in her pigments pierced me immediately. All bundled up, she looked like something a small child would want to hold. Even though she had such baggy clothing, I still tingled at the swagger of her body when she walked. Suddenly, she wasn't just an ex; she was this beacon of love and beauty. It took an immeasurable amount of strength to let go of her embrace. All I wanted was to keep my arms around her, but I gave her a quick, awkwardly abrupt hug before we idly chatted and both went on our separate ways.

As I saw her strolling in the opposite direction, I was panged

by the vicious metaphor of her walking away from me. Luckily, I had a Spanish paper to write and I was actually looking forward to losing my thoughts in subjunctive clauses so I wouldn't have to think about how unexpectedly real my situation just got. After completing my essay, I sternly admonished myself for thinking about her. The catch about thinking is that once you start, it spirals onwards into hours of deep thought and eventually one giant headache. Immediately, I remembered my training and called up a girl I had met at the bar the previous night. We talked for a while, but I was aloof and not very responsive.

I think I now understand how people feel when Ed McMahon comes up to their door with an oversized check for millions of dollars at some random point in the day. It was exactly how I felt when I saw her number on my Caller ID. I didn't dare pick up the phone, though. The two armies – love and logic –battled in my head. However, I knew that only one could come out a clear winner.

Instantly, I felt the power I had built up start to drain. I would have given up all the confidence and girls I met at the bar just for another awkward hug. As Henry Miller once wrote, "Confusion is a word we have invented for an order which is not yet understood." I switched off between feeling carefree and feeling careless. How much change can a person take? After hours of circular thinking, I told myself that I had to stick to my original goal and get over the heartbreak. And that self-righteousness to keep going for that single goal is admirable on its own.

In the midst of tearing down pictures and flirting with other girls, I found myself unable to escape her. And after deflecting these flashbulb thoughts of how she looked all dressed-up and how her smile could always make me smile, I finally admitted that I was lying to myself. I was blatantly ignoring all my feelings in an effort to get over her. These lies can often sound persuasive and appealing enough to actually trick us for a little. Still, I felt like all this lying to myself was to avoid the question I didn't know the answer to. While relationships do make organic chemistry look like multiplication tables, I couldn't help but wonder if I ever would know: Did she miss me back?

If you are strong enough, please take this getting over heartbreak method and put it into good use. But if you see less in black and white, go against the rules and make your own. This doesn't just go for heartbreak, either, as you will find that any disappointment

or failure that you try to hide from will haunt you until you face it candidly. The choice that is going to determine your tomorrow is all yours to make. Although I'd like to issue a caveat about the permanent consequences of that choice, I think I have a phone call to make.



Rachel Matz
"Untitled"
Black & White Photograph

THE RAVENous stomach

by Danielle Smit

Once upon a midnight dreary, my stomach became weak and weary
It was starved over a quaint supper, for I was poor
While I nodded, eyes falling, suddenly my stomach began growling
as if someone cruel was inside howling, howling in my inside gore
"Tis some hunger," I muttered, "growling in my inner gore."

Only this and nothing more

I entered to take a drive in my car and food was not very far
I had to settle for something less, for I was poor
I was in the mood for starches so I pulled up to the golden arches.
Arches that had satisfied before
"This is a hunger," I thought, "like one I've had before."

I wanted fries, and nothing more
Deep into the dark drive-thru peering I drove to the black box,
hunger searing
"How can I help you? The voice did implore.
"I would like some fries of an extra large size."
And that order I did devise without drink or something to pour,
no ketchup or honey sauce to pour.

Just fries, and nothing more

There was no room for guessing for each of my syllables was
expressing
answering the question it did implore.
But then the voice answered back, with very little tact,
"Would you like that to go in a sack, your order number four?"
I had not asked for number four

I wanted fries, nothing more.

"I'm sorry, you must be mistaken, for this is not the order taken.
I did not ask for a Coke that you pour.
Some French fries will do just fine for it is late to completely dine.
A stomach like mine just needs the order from before."
And I repeated this as clearly as before.

But Quoth the employee, "Number four."

"Idiot!" said I, "thing of evil! You are as dense as a weevil!"

I do not want order number four!"
"Would you like fries with that? They're new reduced fat."
In anger and frustration I sat and said what I had before,
Quoth the black box, "So just number four?"
"This is our word of parting fiend!" I shouted, upstarting.
It was not worth it to stop the rumble in my gore.
The rude service I had received was more stressful than I could
conceive.
That night they tried to deceive me by selling some drinks to pour.
They should have kept those drinks they pour
For I will return, nevermore.



Adam Kosteva
"Crawfish"
Digital Photograph

Breaking the Mold

by Jenny Howard

The trip from Livonia to Mount Pleasant is a bearable two hours, a straight shot down some highway, I couldn't tell you which, but the distance is just enough to be too far for frequent visits home or elsewhere. I know this in the back of my mind as I glance over to Lindsay, whose nerves exude from her being—or maybe they are clear only to me. I study the profile that I have looked at nearly every day of our mutual eighteen years: ridiculously thick curly dark hair, wide smile, small features—hazel eyes with the long lashes that I have always been jealous of, tiny ears, her “mush nose,” as I like to call it for its lack of cartilage. Our startling difference in appearance seems to go along well with the journey that we were about to embark on—independent lives at different universities in different cities, different majors and different ambitions. My feelings, however, are not so independent. Driving Lindsay to Central is the last time we will be together for a long time—and to me, this holds entirely different connotations. Though I still have a week to go before my own big day (moving to college—perhaps one of the only things that I didn't do first), my nerves are out of control.



Lauren Walbridge
“M-43”
Digital Photograph

Lindsay glances over, noticing me staring next to her in the back seat. She crosses her eyes and sticks her tongue out at me, standard Howard fare. I cross my eyes back and tune out as my dad mentions to Lindsay something incomprehensible about banking (like highways, I don't have much patience for such nonsensical things). Our seating arrangement in the car has not changed in eighteen years: Lindsay always behind my dad, me behind my mom. Smiling to myself, this reminds me of the shirts we used to have way back when in the Twins Club of Livonia, mine identical to my mom's, and Lindsay's to my dad's.

The Big Picture of the upbringing of my sister and I has been emphasized by my parents in two points: On the one hand, Lindsay and I were urged to be our own people, completely independent of each other. On the other, we were supposed to have a perfect, cohesive “twin” relationship. To this day, I'm not exactly sure what constitutes this great relationship that I have missed out on. I'm fairly certain that my mom's idealized view of twins comes from her membership to the Twins Club. As is often common in towns such as mine (known doubly as the Whitest City in America, and one of the Best Places to Raise a Family...I prefer the latter), there is a club or community group for all sorts of things. The Twins Club was a group of mothers of twins who got together and had clothing sales (two sets of everything gets expensive), attended monthly parenting meetings, held joint garage sales, did community service, the whole shebang. Their club t-shirt and crest will remain ingrained in my memory forever. Their specialty, however, was play-dates. Lindsay and I would often find each other at the mercy of play-dates with fellow twins. These twins were “perfect twins.” They looked and dressed alike, got along, had their own language, banded together, blah blah blah.

Lindsay and I were bewildered by our differences from these twins. Even at our young age, we knew that we were cut from a different mold. This concept was difficult for my mother to grasp. She often expressed her frustration at the fact that we did not have that relationship. Being around the Twins Club moms and other twins maybe added some unneeded pressure onto Lindsay and me. What we had was different from any other pair of siblings that I knew, twin or not.

On the highway, a sign overhead advertises Central Michigan University. (“Fire up, you Chip you!” My dad, ever the jokester...) We

are getting close, and I can see it in my sister's eyes, her thoughts have gone from masking the issue at hand, with banking and the number of hangers she has, to the root: this is it. In my mind I immediately jump on the defensive. Her roommates had better be nice to her, her professors fair...I hope she doesn't have to walk too far to her classes, I hope she makes some really good friends...what if she doesn't like her classes? What if she gets lost? What if she needs help with something? Who will be there? I start to feel a little panicky, try as hard as I might to hide it. Lindsay, of course, notices right away and rolls her eyes with a nervous smile. "Stop looking so freaked out...you're more worried than I am!"

I am Type A to Lindsay's Type B—my family jokingly enjoys blaming this on our order of birth, which I think has merit—I had a two-and-a-half-hour head start into the world, and have been running ever since, considering my role in our relationship as Mother and Resident Worrier. I have this vivid memory of the two of us in the doctor's office, ready for a tetanus shot—something that Lindsay is scared to death of, magnified by the fact that we were five years old... trauma is everywhere when you're five. Outside of the examination room, brave and bandaged, I heard a piercing scream, and the shock of feeling that went through me is indescribable. What was wrong didn't even occur to me, I just knew that I had to get inside that room and make sure Lindsay was okay, all that mattered was that I was in there in that room to be there for her. The motherly feeling hasn't left me since.

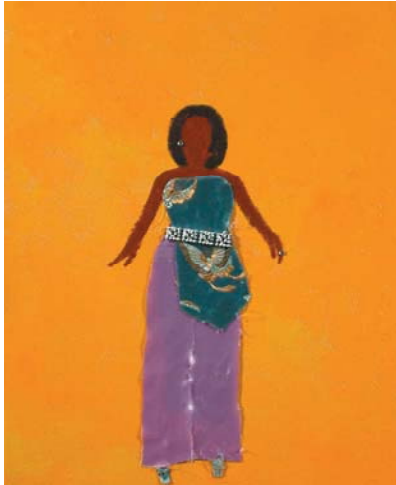
Though the trip is slated for two hours, it feels like much less when we pull into the parking lot around Lindsay's dorm. "I can't believe we're here already..." Lindsay's tone is a mix of nerves and dread. My parents immediately bustle around—my dad charging into the building to take on the front desk, my mom sizing up the contents of the car, perfecting her unpacking strategy. Lindsay and I sit in the car, alone together for a few minutes. This is where our sisterly bond kicks in, where we exhibit "twin-like" behavior that we never had in any other aspect of life, because I do feel emotionally connected, where we can sit together without saying a word, and I know exactly how she's feeling, and all it takes is reaching out and squeezing her hand to let her know what we don't need to say to each other.

My sister and I regard driving to my high school as both a blessing and a curse. Living twenty minutes away means serious

planning when it comes to making it to school, and I am a stickler when it comes to being on time. My sister, unfortunately, lives up to her birthright in this sense. I came to dread mornings, because not only did I have to drag my butt out of bed, I also had to practically jump on Lindsay to get her moving. And she is not a morning person. Needless to say, tension mounts when Type A and Type B disagree, and mornings were the worst of our squabbling. We would leave the house, fuming—Lindsay angry with me for rushing her out the door, and me angry with Lindsay for making me late. But, somehow, the second we got into our car—lovingly dubbed "Clark" after one of our favorite songs and of course Mr. Gable—all hostility disappeared and the straight line we drove down Newburgh Road at 40 miles per hour (Lindsay says she "quite enjoys such a leisurely pace," it of course annoys me to no end) became some of the best twenty minute spurts of our relationship. Clark became our vehicle (literally) to get out everything that we needed to get out—frustrations, secrets, funny moments. One particular day in the spring of our sophomore year, we reached the end of our trip and turned onto my street. We passed Southampton, the street before my block, when I was struck with a profound sense of sadness—but why? At that moment, I realized that I actually enjoy spending time with my sister, and that it upset me that our twenty minutes of alone time were coming to an end. I finally figured it out, that the definition of our relationship is not meant to fit "twin" or "sister," that all that is really important are times like the twenty minutes in our car together and the relationship we have developed in our seventeen years together. And I never said anything to Lindsay, but we both knew in a way, because from that moment on, things were a little different between us. Imperceptible to those around us, but somehow, inside, we knew.

And now, I miss Lindsay, more than I can express, or explain. I don't really know what the deal with it is. We still bicker, and I still yell at her for mumbling to the point of imperceptibility on the phone, or for whining at me, or for being too lazy to type me e-mails. Sometimes, I realize, I just miss her presence in the room, or that the walk to my classes is a lot lonelier than our morning drive to high school, or that she hasn't been around to experience the mundane moments of my life. This, I think, expresses perfectly our hard-to-define relationship. It's hard for me to live without her, yet a part of me still needs to be on my own.

It has taken my parents a while to warm up to the contradictions and fuzzy lines of my relationship with Lindsay. Now that we have matured and grown up or grown out of the bickering stages (kind of), it's easier for them to see that we are completely different people; being a "typical" set of twins is a complete impossibility. Knowing us and knowing how we are, this is okay with them now. My sister, I think, will always see me as the older sibling—a stable force, anal and protective to the point of annoyance, but always there and always around for support. I embrace the fact that I have been able to go through childhood and adolescence with a life companion, but I also sincerely appreciate our independence and differences—to me this is the best of both worlds. And I know that our relationship is not perfect by "general" standards, or the usual stereotypes, and that it never will be. And, to me, this is a contenting conclusion to come to, because I realize that I have just learned one of the Big Lessons of Life, and after all, isn't that what it's all about?



Layla Goddard
"Untitled"
Mixed Media



Automatic

by Jordan Teitelbaum

The heart beats on like the core of the Earth.
The lungs breathe air in deep, letting it out to sustain.
The hand pulls away from the stove too quickly to see.

And yet,
When I'm with you,

My heart pauses, waiting for you to smile
My lungs cease, staring into your dazzling eyes
My hand shakes, longing to reach out and touch you

Forget the autonomic nervous system,
My love is
Involuntary.

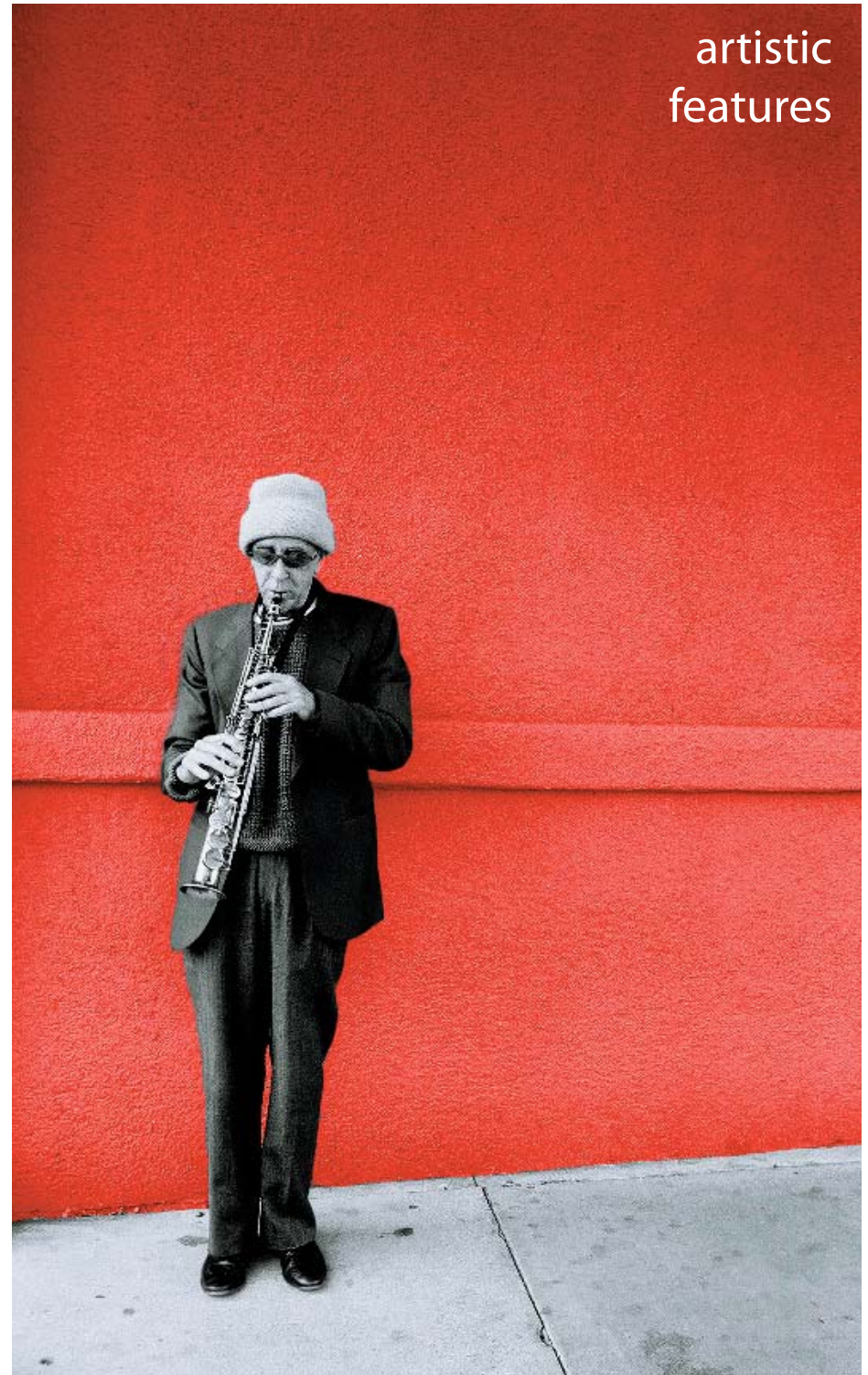
Once I tried to fight it.
Wrestling around in a pit of darkness,
Love scratched and scraped at me.
Throwing punches aimlessly,
Love hit me square in the jaw.
Grappling and clawing under the surface of a river,
Love tried to dethrone my logic and stay afloat.

Love won.

And though I'm not much for defeat,
I can't deny that maybe I didn't hit
As hard as I could.

“If the world could remain within a frame like a painting on the wall, I think we’d see the beauty then and stand staring in awe.
-- Connor Oberst

artistic
features



Untitled



Rachel Pryde
"Untitled"
Collage

Untitled



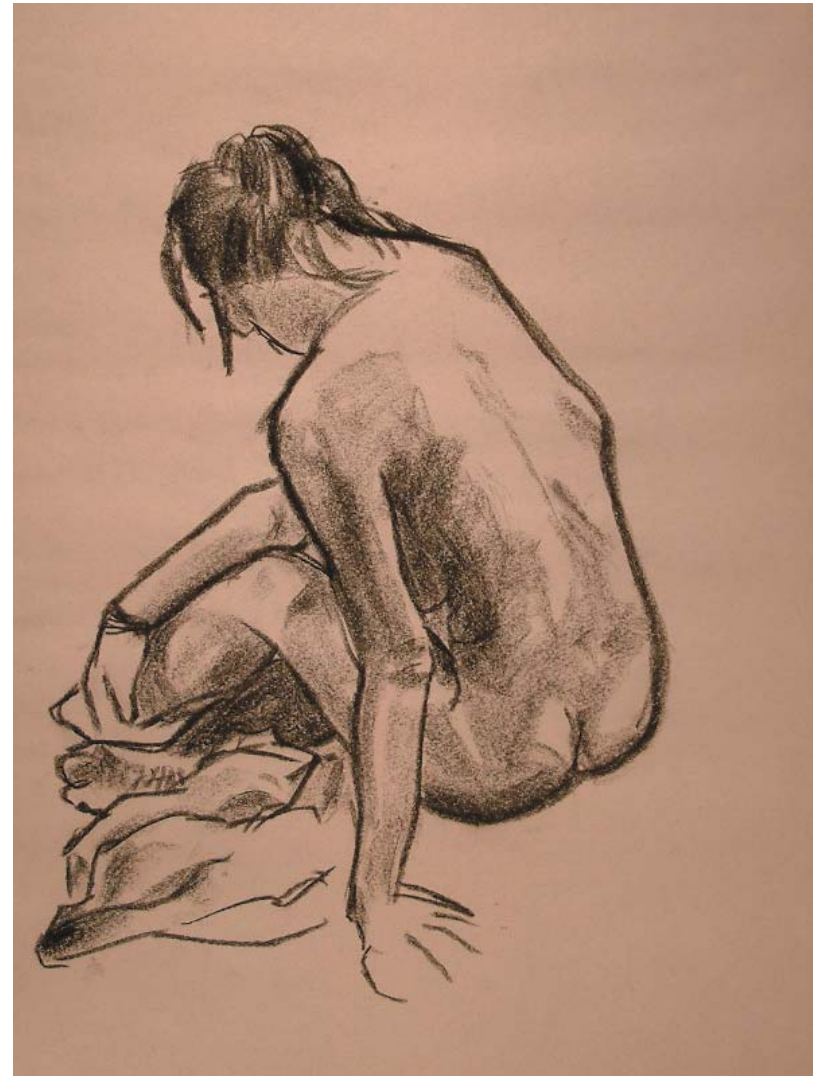
Abby Klausner
"Untitled"
Black & White Photograph

Nude Woman Sketch #45



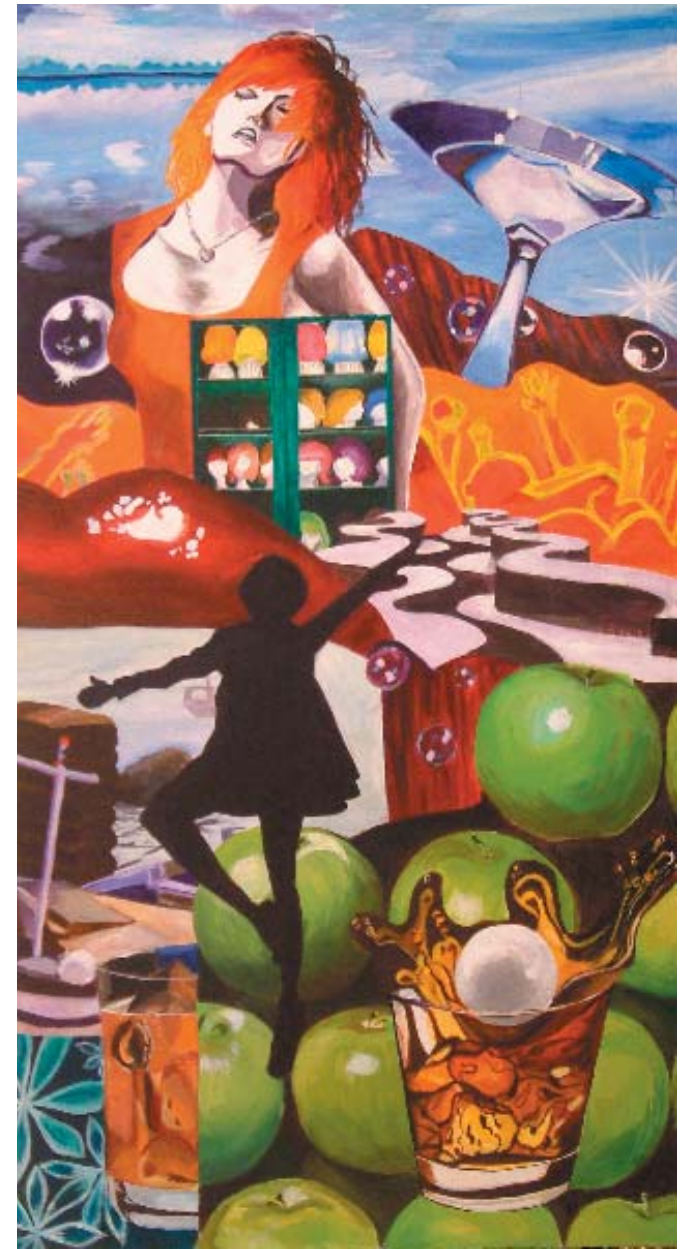
Adam Kosteva
"Nude Woman Sketch #45"
Charcoal Sketch

Nude Woman Sketch # 29



Adam Kosteva
"Nude Woman Sketch #29"
Charcoal Sketch

LHSP students produced individual works of art to be displayed together as a large mural. We applaud their creativity and collaboration.



Elizabeth Klein



Anna Harrison



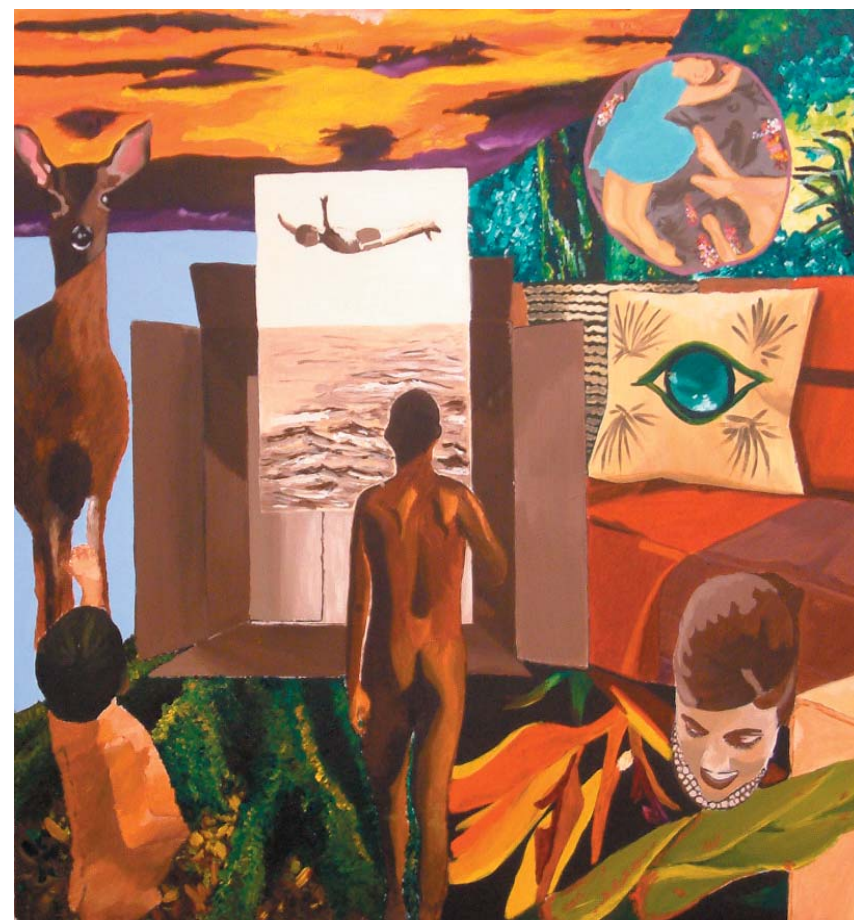
Tara Boinpally



Gillian Goldberg



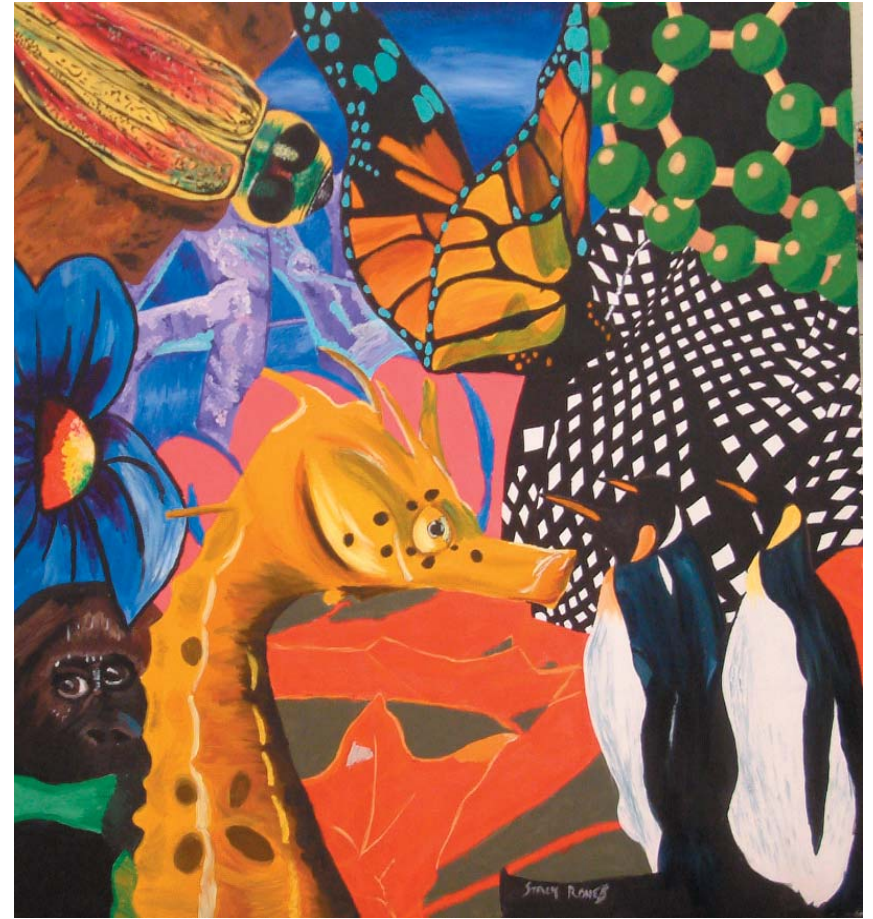
Lauren Sullivan



Lara Back



Lisa Glass



Stacy Rones



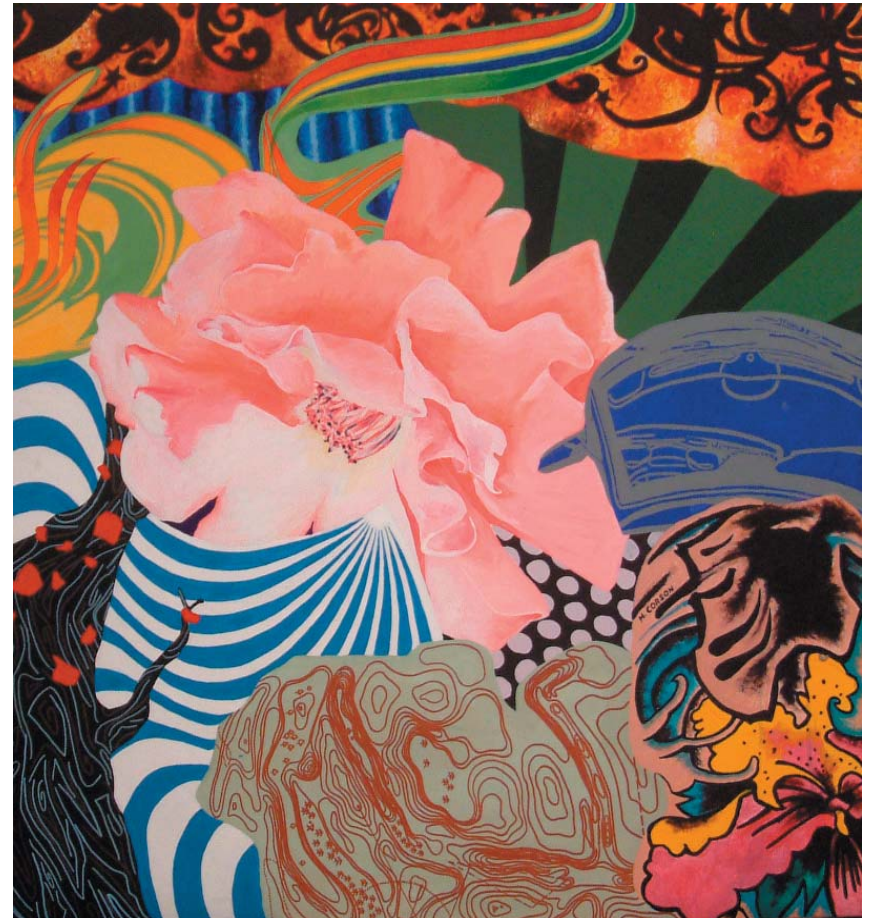
Erika Moses



Ariel Zipkin



Beth Duey



Meghan Corson



Suzanne Lipton



Sung Hei Yau

The Longest Car Ride

by Sarah Smith

10 Minutes. “K Mom, we love you too,” Megan and I shout as we fly out the door, scramble for shoes, speed walk to the car. We are running late—Megan’s golden straw hair swishes past me, her short, determined stride ready to squash anything in its path. Note to self: wash the car. Streaks of mud are smeared generously across the metallic black paint, creating mountains and valleys of dirt and grime. Wasting a few precious seconds to avoid getting smeared ourselves, we hurriedly swing open the doors, toss in the backpacks, books, instruments, and off we go.

9 Minutes. Homework, books, cell phone, project, money...I scroll through a mental checklist while waiting to pull out of the driveway. I have to lean forward to peer through the blanket of dew that still envelops the windows. My impatience is growing—why hasn’t some genius invented a way to get rid of morning rush hour traffic?—and as Meg reaches for the black case, I can feel the inevitable coming. “What do you want to listen to?” she asks nonchalantly, as if we don’t go through the same tedious dilemma daily. “How about Dashboard?” I suggest, playing along anyways. “Nah,” she replies. “I’m not in the mood.” Yellowcard, Greenday, Rascal Flatts, Weezer, JT... this is so routine that it’s like rehearsing a scene from a play. But today I’m getting a headache; my irritation is building, the warning lights are flashing, until I can’t hold it in any longer: “Ya know what, Meg—I don’t care what we listen to. Just put something in!!”

8 Minutes. Silence; it hangs thick in the air. This is not written in the script. Meg and I sit there, both shocked at my outburst, both annoyed at each other’s indecisiveness, both realizing this is a stupid subject to fight over, both unwilling to admit this is childish. We don’t care; we’re sisters— isn’t that what we’re supposed to do?

7 Minutes. Yellow turns to red. Out come the purses as my sister and I reach for our lip gloss. Our arms move in symmetry, like two synchronized swimmers: “And reach, two, three, twist, two, three, glide, two, three, pucker, two three.” The timing is perfect— our graceful act ends just as the light turns green. But the silence is starting to make me feel claustrophobic.

6 Minutes. I focus on the scenery to avoid the awkward

silence. This is my favorite part of town: the tall trees, bursting with the fresh green of spring, create an arch over the road, and spurts of sunlight squeeze through the leaves, making everything—the old, quaint houses, the chipmunk in the tree, the elderly man walking his dog, the cars ahead of me—look infinite. It is a perfect scene frozen in time, and for a moment, I forget everything else. This is the utopia of my drive. Completely at peace, I glance at my sister, and see the same serene look upon her face. The silence has changed from an awkward silence to one of understanding.

5 Minutes. We’re talking—words are now flying back and forth as we make up for lost time. I don’t remember when the spell broke; I don’t remember how it started; I don’t remember who said the first word. But that isn’t the point, is it? We’re talking!

4 Minutes. I can’t breathe—my ribs are aching, my body’s shaking, and tears are sliding down my cheeks. I feel another attack coming on; my lungs are like volcanoes, ready to erupt at any minute. I check Meg, and she’s in the same state as I am. Just as soon as I think I’ve gotten myself under control, Meg does it again—her face contorts into shock and horror as she imitates the look on my face when her dress split at prom, and I lose it all over again. I am laughing so hard that I almost hit the car in front of me.

3 Minutes. While laughing I catch a glance at my sister, and once again I realize how much she reminds me of a porcelain doll. There is not a single hair out of place. Big, round, chocolate brown eyes hidden beneath long, curly eyelashes, a small, charming nose, and pink, pouting lips are perfectly set in her smooth, flawless skin. Though she appears fragile, experience has taught me that my sister is a bull: tough, fierce-tempered, and not afraid to charge.

2 Minutes. Megan is leafing through the CDs again. A few moments of silence pass until she triumphantly emerges from her digging. The solution to our problem lies in a simple silver disc that gleams in the sunlight. Two words are scribbled on it in red writing: Dirty Dancing. In the deepest, manliest voices we can summon, Megan and I begin to sing: “Now I’ve had, the time of my life...”

1 Minute. We’re approaching the school and something happens. As I turn into the school, the black driveway turns into rubber, stretching and stretching and stretching until it seems as though it will continue on forever. Then it hits me—I want it to go on forever. With each twist in the road my throat tightens a little bit more, my breathing

is a little bit faster, my shoulders become a little bit tenser, and the invisible hand clenching my heart grips a little bit tighter. I can't do this—I have to do this. I start rambling on about my graduation speech, the end of exams, open houses, the ugly caps and gowns. But then I look at my little sister, who is now silent...biting her lip...staring straight ahead...blinking very hard...I can't do this...this can't really be the last time...the last drive...I try to open my mouth. To tell her that I know. To tell her that I understand. To tell her that things are going to change. To tell her that nothing will change. To tell her that I am scared too. To tell her about 10 minutes—10 minutes of each day for the past two years. I need to tell her what those 10 minutes mean, but my mouth seems paralyzed. But then I find my hand reaching for the dial—up goes the volume—I know what to do—the car stops—we've parked. I smile at my sister...she smiles back...and we belt out: "And I've never felt this way before. I swear, it's the truth, and I owe it all to yooooouuu..." Time's up.



Adam Kosteva
"Untitled"
Digital Photograph



Abby Klausner
"Untitled"
Black & White Photograph

Over the Wires

by Lauren Walbridge

“One of these days, I’ll learn from my mistakes and not rush to opinions before I have given works in any medium the time and full attention they deserve.”

- Gerald Locklin

It’s foolish to say that a handshake or a hug has less impact than typed words. We all know it’s true – our contact (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) is what makes us human and keeps us sane long enough to remember it. That said, it’s just as foolish to say that typed words carry no real meaning. That they’re empty and emotionless. That technology is stealing our human contact. NEVER.

How many books feel like letters, like strange conversations you may or may not have had with a friend, but either way it doesn’t matter because you want to have had them? Decades and countless essays have proved to us that books (typed words, letters, pages, and chapters) make us want to live better lives. We want to be something, ANYTHING that would make us half as fulfilled as the people we read about.

Modern culture has decided that electronic forms of communication are unacceptable. Yes, they are not substitutes for their “originators,” (also known as) handwritten letters, but the fact that letters have evolved to their current state has been integral. Advantageous. Essential.

When you love something, it’s never about proximity. It’s purely about the contact, whatever you can muster. Medium, context, and time fall behind. It’s either real or it’s not, there are no grey areas and no in-betweens. I speak of email here, this electronic devil that plagues our minds long after we (should) have gone to bed. And despite all belief, it’s not merely a question of “is there any there?” but “who is it from?”

I received my first Alex email three months ago. I knew nothing of California, the surf, or even the ASS-tro Sham. All I knew was that my best friend Erin had come home from San Diego rejuvenated. In meeting Alex, Erin had found new inspiration and I was curious...

intrigued. She and I have the telepathy of twins without the common genes, and there was no way I was going to let her do this alone. I’m a pro at long-distance friendships.

Alex wrote me, rambling for what would undoubtedly be pages were it ever printed out. He talked about everything – California, his friends, attending San Diego State, amazing music, who he was, who he wanted to be, and Erin. He said she talked so much about me that he needed to at least attempt conversation as well. I remember that day like it was yesterday. I heard his voice in every navy blue, Arial 14 word that I read. The fact that it was about three months ago is irrelevant: it was a Thursday afternoon, and an unexpected excitement filled me up so quickly that I had to write back.

I threw myself over the wires.

We are a culture of movement, of transportation. From changing jobs to changing spouses, people of the 21st century can make themselves comfortable in unknown places for a variety of reasons. We are constantly transposing ourselves from one location to another, picking up our emotions and memories, relationships and fleeting glances to pack them with our dishes and extra bed sheets. We want desperately to take either everything with us or nothing at all.

Growing up, we find that nothing holds more value than friendship. And when those friends leave, and go to New Jersey/London/Chicago/Texas/Detroit/Toronto/insert-far-away-place-here, a small part of your heart goes with them. Now consider the situation where you meet someone when you’re far away from home, and you leave them after only a brief vocal tryst – a piece of you stays there.

Alex and Erin are two of the most stubborn people I have ever met. They will fight tooth and nail to hold up their tough exteriors in a situation where really, they are as vulnerable as children. And somehow, the two of them became absolutely convinced that they weren’t attached to each other. Joe and I knew better. Joe and Alex had been like brothers since they were born, and hardly ever left each other’s sides. Almost as naturally as Alex and Erin had connected, Joe and I became fast friends. We were constantly baffled by the two of them, the way they dug their heels in and refused to email each other for days just because the other one had said something slightly childish. They were both terrified to admit that they were the least bit

dependant on one another, for fear they'd get their hearts hurt.

So the brave exteriors stayed up, and one night it was the worst it had been. Erin had been quiet and refused to talk about it, and I refused to believe it was solely the fight they'd had over whether "hardcore music was overrated or truly genius." As I finished that sentence, she looked at me with eyes wide with worry. "Something's wrong," she said. "I can feel it."

I highly doubt that there has ever been a time where two people have not striven to maintain contact over long distances. I watch movies and read books where people wait anxiously for letters or badly connected phone calls. Some might argue that it makes the reward sweeter, having to work so hard for it. But in this age of instant gratification (as much as I despise it), digital letters do not falter.

You can feel someone from a million (a slight exaggeration, perhaps) miles away – admit it. Is it God, or your grandmother who passed when you were two? Your mom when you're at sleep-away camp, or your little brother in the hospital? Combine that ability with the near lightening speed provided by the Internet – and you have something. Your mind works harder, reading every damn letter and phrase over and over again until you've sucked every possible sense of tone and meaning and rhythm out of them. It becomes a movie that the real world has decided is too expensive for it to make, thus the production is left to you.

Very early in the morning of Sunday, July 24th (the next day), I was talking online to Joe. Having recently invested in a high-tech wireless system, they were able to stay in contact while driving through New Mexico on tour. For the past week we had joked about the "stupid wires" and the strange way they tied us all together; what they gave and yet didn't at the same time. We all decided we'd take what they had to offer. At 4:10 am I received this message: "Shit, Lauren, I'm going to have to let you go. Al fell asleep at the wheel, and we all like fell to one side of the van, and... it's ridiculous. And now he's outside the van puking, I gotta help him. I'm sorry. I'll write tomorrow."

Monday morning I read an email detailing Alex's diagnosis of advanced gastric cancer, and the tentative plans to get him back to San Diego for the six surgeries and liver transplant he would need very soon. The words were cold, calculated, and I could feel Joe choking on

every word.

Imagine a world where every beautiful thing was seen for what it was: beautiful. Our society bombards us with images and themes that suggest a time that once existed, and that right now we are so far in the dark ages we might never get out. The mechanics of such a society's theoretical existence doesn't matter; what are the emotions behind it. Why might they have appreciated such things? And why are we personally complacent enough to let things slide by us, loudly and publicly grappling with the lack of honest joy?

Why on earth would we fail to value words, the things that essentially make us human? No matter their context, medium, or motivation – it does not diminish what they are.

While we no longer require the wires, I can still feel Alex. Those emails are the physical traces he has left, and I will take images on a screen any day.

Lauren Walbridge
"pavement/paper/plastic"
Digital Photograph



Why I Write

(A Spoken Word Piece)

by Jordan Teitelbaum

I missed dinner and my friend asked me why
He didn't think I seemed like an anorexic guy
Instead I tried to get ideas out of my head
So I sat up in my bed and wrote till my fingertips bled

When he asked me why I wrote, I took note,
Then I asked him why he ate
If he felt the same need to satiate?
If his uncontrollable desire he could explicate?
If he got as much as I did from what was piled on his plate?
But he couldn't relate, I declined the debate
This disease is innate, a genetic trait
Have to succumb to my ultimate fate

I urge to express
Feed my need to impress
Because I know I couldn't suppress
All the emotions throbbing in my chest
That I tend to repress
Quickly they begin to depress
And only on this paper can I truly address

What drives me loco
And what makes me smile
The joys of hot cocoa
And what's truly worthwhile

The blinking cursor is an invitation
The smothering white is a plantation
Where I can drop my seed to feed the need
The words coming in spurts of creation
The fingers flapping faster than a firefighting Dalmatian
I start to feel better as my confusions are freed

Though I have friends
My thought flow never ends
And neither does my mouth
My cell phone minutes are limited
My perceptions still seem primitive
So I turn to this new friend to holler and shout

Yet when I write my story
I don't think of fame or glory
I just hold on to the one thing
Left in Pandora's Box
I'm rocking the optimism
With a pure hope that shocks

After getting a cell phone
Right after I lost my dad
After seeing my mother alone
Right after she almost went mad

It really is terrific
How every experience is so specific
Each protagonist so prolific

But to explain life is my ambition,
My purpose and my mission

I grip the pen although the pen grips me
Denying me the right to make a choice
When suddenly I'm shot off on a spree
Writing furiously and spreading my voice
A cozy hiding place for my escape
The flimsy paper holds me in its arms
Yet still I fold it up into a cape
And fly on winds unscathed, untouched by harm
Jump in this pool if you can stand to swim
But caution to the wise: this water's deep
What starts a head with ideas to the brim
Soon ends in endless hours of restless sleep
Forget cathartic sports or lullabies
Just strive to write your life, open your eyes

Kingdom of Tomorrow

by Curtis DeSantis

A palace
 in the woods lies dead
 Where gloom and darkness dwell.
 A cold and ghastly night of tales
 The silence pleads to tell.

A child
 and yet one more come forth,
 Two burglars in the night.
 They creep with care up ancient steps
 On which Moon casts her light.

Dire mysteries
 and secrets hide
 Beyond the looming door.
 The child named Dvendil reaches up
 To carry out his chore.

So dusk to dawn
 and foot to floor
 The young ones steal within.
 Their boots don't sound, their hearts hang still.
 A risky little sin.

A tick beats
 out around them,
 Perking ears and widening eyes.
 The door creaks shut with aching
 As a night owl swoops outside.

The candlelight
 and shadows fight,
 A war 'mid light and dark.
 The air within the hallways stands,
 No love nor cheer, but stark.

The friend
 of Dvendil, Rieger,
 Hears a grumbling far away.
 The castle's beast in slumber,
 But will it from sleeping stray?

A creature taut
 and fearsome,
 Lying soft as floating sheep,
 Who's reigned from age of Yester
 When he claimed the castle keep.

The homeless
 home since mounted high
 With no one to behold,
 But now two faces make their way
 Through foreign halls of old.

They trample
 hither, forth, and through,
 Up stairs of grand delight.
 Down railings, 'long the halls of grim
 To seek their secret plight.

To where
 they go they keep an ear
 On beastly snoring's pulse.
 They must not be discovered
 Till the hoard is swapped with false.

From door to door
 by colored panes,
 Once beautiful and pure.
 They search past every column,
 'Cross each shadowed rug of fur.

One child
 peaks through the crevice

Of a door with open crack.
The other stands as sentry,
Peering out through eerie black.

Dven,
 could this be the holding room?
The boy at doorside asks.
Brave Dvendil turns, his eyes alight.
Lets spoil what darkness masks!

Two titter through
 the ancient way,
One fierce, one soft, both wronged.
They grovel to the threshold near,
Which to their line belonged.

Alas,
 aloft the stairs of war
They feel its warmth and fire.
Its shape so smooth and finished,
Weld in burnished gold attire.

O,
 balanced on its handle,
Standing upright 'yond the stairs,
The Blade of Fathers stolen
By the beast of palace heirs.

It shines
 in dungeon's dimness,
Wakened forth by worthy blood.
Was once their kinhood's rapier,
Till the beast slaught cream to mud.

As Dvendil
 draws yet closer,
And his hand is pulled outstretched,
The sword grows ever brighter

With excitement to be fetched.

He grips
 the burning steel,
Which molds divinely in his palm.
But something's eyes are opened
As it feels the breaking calm.

A wailing
 cry of fury,
Crumbling walls, and crackling glass.
The beast awoken, wrath and rage,
An angered, roaring mass.

Abrupt
 and swift as field mice,
Rieger scurries, Dvendil too,
From hidden room of treasure
To the hall with weapon true.

Sharp right,
 then left, and onward fast,
They flee from vicious hate.
The monster ever gaining
On their heels to spoil their fate.

They veer
 another corner
With the front door gravely near.
But halted in their path ahead,
The gruesome Domineer.

His eyes
 crazed green, his heart a-thump,
His masses pounding threat.
Scorned figure swathed in hellfire,
Razing candles out in fret.
No op'ning
 left to steal through.

No short path to cut escape.
Just everything one fears at night
When darkness bids to rape.

The monster
 wretch of beast begins
To stalk toward young ones pale.
They tremble, quake, and stagger back,
Their limbs and chests so frail.

They cannot
 win or conquer now.
Their legs have yet to grow.
But if not them then who will come,
Their fathers' worth to show?

Poor Dvendil
 loses balance
As reality descends.
His body wavers tither 'bout,
His strength of spirit bends.

And who
 to lie him slowly down
To fainted dreams so kind?
The boy of timid weakness,
Lacking any nerve of mind.

So
 with a lurching chest
And with two eyes as white as fleece,
Shy Rieger lifts the blade
And faces forth as boy to beast.

The moment
 now for fear to wane
And dark to pass away.
A start anew to come and shine
Where ends in peace will lay.

O Rieger,
 raise the blade in pride!
Send Beast into the past!
Pierce through burnt flesh to lighter days,
For honor 'gain to last!

The Blade
 calls out from ages past,
A war cry ever whole.
And Rieger feels its power
In the rumbling of his soul.

He strikes
 the beast through angry heart.
It screeches twists of bile.
Its flailing claws scratch all around
In dying fits of rife.

It falls and falls
 to depths of vice,
And Earth inhales its wrongs.
The broken stone trails endlessly
Behind its wretched throngs.

So once
 and for the rest of time
The beast has fell to gloom.
The boy reclaims the Blade of Fathers,
Evil now in tomb.

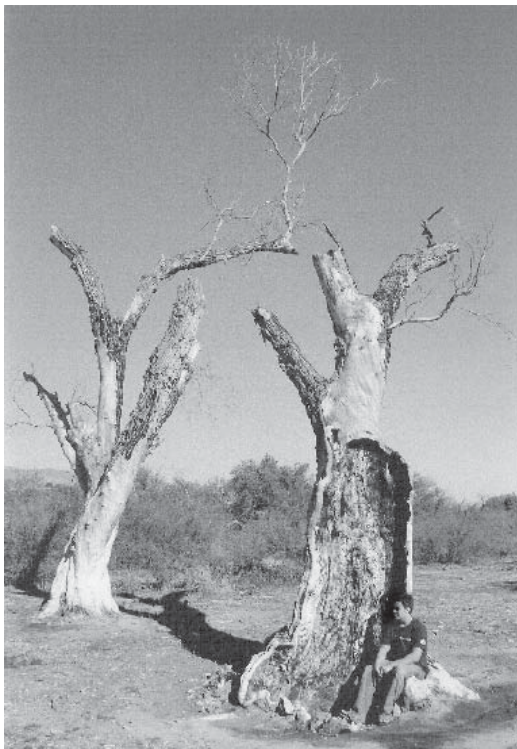
A boy no more,
 not prince, but king,
He granted hood of man,
To wander fields as wheat not chaff,
To sway as golden bran.

Hail Rieger
 and his wakened friend,
 Good Dvendil they will name,
 Who sprint through palace doors to dawn,
 The horns and cries untame.

Victorious
 and gleeful,
 Rieger grips Dven by the wrist.
 In silence, yet in laudful yells
 They exit into mist.

The palace now
 reclaimed for good,
 The kingdom freed anew.
 And all thanks lives in one true boy,
 Who did what few could
 do.

Noah Korn
 "The Trees"
 Black & White Photograph



Water & Wood

by Lauren Walbridge

The roads known as Hill and Beckett come together at the head of a lake near Ochen. A sort of rift valley filled in by hundreds of years of rain, Hyde Lake is framed by rising hills, tress thickly dotting the slopes. The houses hidden beneath them are always built at least halfway up to avoid the spring melts and water rising.

And it's at the bottom of Hyde Lake that one of the residents of such a halfway-up house is lying.

....

In the early 1920s, a large group of Irish immigrants made their precarious way from the New York docks and down the coast, across the Appalachians and through the Midwestern flatlands to Oregon. Hyde Lake offered the seaside demeanor and its desirable comforts of home (without the hardships) and settling directly on its edges, their houses were filled with glows given by the same stuff that kept the rains off their heads. Having chosen dry heads over stable land without knowing it, their tipping hillside community soon began to slide with the clay-filled mud down towards the water's edge. On April 3rd, Seamus Leary woke on his island of a bed to see his valise and socks floating by.

Shouts, slamming doors, and broken windows later, a little more than half the residents stood on the hillsides and watched their modest village recede underwater. Bubbles pushed up a stray chair or two and other small buoyant objects; as for the missing residents, the bubbles were not enough. The heavy sleepers and the drunks sank to the bottom with the elderly and the sick and despite rescue attempts, the only thing fished out of the water was little Colleen Darky's sketchbook, filled with pages upon pages of ink, water-induced to look like a book of what had just happened. The blurry sketches of their modest houses gave way to ripples and tides, slowly sinking to the bottom of the lake. The village at the bottom of a very small sea.

....

Ginny Wight, full of being seven and the sunlight, was running as fast as her tiny legs would carry her. Patchy sunlight made her look like a small, dark deer who had suddenly risen to two feet. Instead of

her dead mother's red and unmistakably Irish curls, Ginny's hair was more a mass of shadow that seemed to settle on her head, drifting down in front of her green eyes and clear, level brows. Close and tall, skinny pines were paired with forest carpet, that strange arrangement of needles and leaves and broken down sticks.

For about another thirty yards Ginny ran full tilt; she stopped only just short of a pile of enormous rocks. The impressiveness came not just from size, but the strategic placing and cohesiveness of the project. Each rock supported and was supported by another, and so on and so on. Chest heaving and legs tingling from her run, she swallowed and took in the scene: to the left of the rocks was a small, circular grouping of ordinary white mushrooms. Her logical father's voice said, They're just mushrooms. Nana Jean's said, That's a fairy ring, child. Daddy countered, It's a pile of rocks. And Nana Jean admonished, Yes girl, it's a cairn. Turning on her left toe, she spun and raced back in the direction she'd come from, tearing like the banshee she was sure would follow her.



Adam Kosteva
"Lake View"
Digital Photograph



Noah Korn
"A Window to the Soul"
Digital Photograph

Entering the Foyer

by Sarah Smith



They stand before her
 Everything she's not—
 Regal, Beautiful, Riveting
 And most of all
 Magnificent
 "Magnificent"—they told her mother
 "The most promising of our pupils...
 Just give us a few years and...
 'Magnificent'—that's what they'll say
 In all of the reviews!"

"But how do I get from here to there?"
 She wondered now, as she stood on those steps of the foyer...
 How do you stand so confident and tall?
 She asked those two regal guards—her eyes piercing the picture for
 answers...
 To the center your thoughts fuse
 Under the shield of your will
 Pure and original
 Though all eyes are on you
 And a storm brews beneath your feet
 Out of all the bubbles of thought that surround you...
 How do you do it?
 How do you pick that one brilliant thought?

But the guards simply stood silent
 Those Keepers of the Secret—
 They chose to ignore her plea
 And gleam perfection instead.
 And because she started to feel
 Nauseous from all sparkle
 And the weight of the precious gems pressing upon her shoulders...
 She closed her eyes—just for a moment
 And listened to the soft "whoosh"
 Of the air as she exhaled.

Finally feeling brave, she opened her eyes
 Ready to take one last glance and move on
 But instead of seeing superiority, she found tranquility
 For there in the center of the piece, there was peace
 And in that moment she understood what the guards were trying to
 tell her
 So she looked...
 Past the beauty and grandeur...
 And glimpsed into the keyhole of the future.
 "Welcome"

Let Go

by Cristina Calvar

Release. Exhale. Liberate.
Unleash that potent vulnerability,
Set it free
Watch it dwindle into the world's pandemonium.

Unsure of where to mark its next victim.
It seductively lures any takers, passing by.
The strong become weak, while the weak become weaker
Defenseless, defeated, despondent.

A siren in disguise,
Only the omnipotent will rise.



Noah Korn
"The Game-Night Lights"
Black & White Photograph



Lauren Walbridge
 "As The Summer Sets In"
 Digital Photograph

Color in a World of Hate

by Catherine Smyka

I wake up to a world of black. My ears pound with the yelling from downstairs before I even open my eyes. I roll over and stare at the faces on the wall, envious of their perfection, position, and satisfaction. A flutter of dark angels' wings persuade me to "get up, get up." What for? To suffocate in the pollution, the greed, the unhappiness? I'd rather stay in bed. "Get up, get up!" That is the mortal voice of the father I fear more than anything. I get up.

I dress in hand-me-down clothing screaming to rid itself of the hate, the unfaithfulness, the disgust it has seen in its lifetime. I walk through the frame where the broken screen door used to hang on its hinges. No one says goodbye.

I pass bearded men in thin winter coats picking through trash cans and teenagers blowing clouds of black into the dirty air. Smoky-gray snow stings my face.

The billboard overhead sadistically screams, "Try this! It will cure the disease you call life!" Try living with my father. On my left is the sign split in two. I wait anxiously for the bus. Sirens blare down the street as a car flies by, hitting a trash can and a striped cat. I step back away from the curb. A putrid, graying monster speeds towards me, spewing pollution and empty dreams. No school for me today. I'll end up like my father anyway. I climb aboard. I know where I'm going.

The woman sitting next to me tries to avoid touching my poisonous skin. Her delicate fingers stroke her leather briefcase while she squawks on the phone. "The Lexus got in an accident so I have to ride the bus today...I know, isn't it just awful..." I lose myself in the black world outside the window, screaming for help. Buy me a car. Bring me some food. Take me with you. Please don't leave me here. A man slaps a woman across the cheek and she falls to the ground, whimpering and apologetic. I don't cry. Let me off here. I can walk.

I kick a stray soda can and start down the path my feet have walked a hundred times before. The pavement, slick with grime and greed, wears thin, becoming tiny pebbles, then sand. The angry voices disappear behind my retreating back. I enter the only color I know.

A light mist sprays my tired face. Clean. It is clean. I embrace the gray waves, run my calloused fingers through the gentle, angelic

foam. A bright gull dives for the water, cleansing itself of the grime of the city. I join him.

The crystal water flows over my dirty body like a tranquil waterfall. I emerge from the quiet sea, my hate dripping from the tips of my fingers. I shiver with energy, baptized by my waters of peace. I stare across the calm waves, a tiny figure in a canyon of power, my back turned on a life of tears, blood, and depression.

It is my only blue in a world of black.

Adam Kosteva
"Boardwalk"
Digital Photograph



A Break from the Real World

by Landon Krantz

This is going to be something amazing. The boy's never seen something like it before, something so real and so blunt. Between cartoons, stereotypes, and movies, he thinks he already knows what's coming. He tells his father he wants a poster afterwards, a glowing, vibrantly colored poster depicting this magnificent event.

The sun is beginning to go to sleep and the shaded half of the stadium is crowded. The heat is unbearable, and the boy even considers asking his father to buy him a cerveza from the vendor. Despite his newly acquired status as a college student, he doesn't push his father's generosity. He's gotta pick his fights and stick with buying the poster. It's creatively colored with a bull jumping in mid-air at a matadore. There's an empty spot on his dorm wall worth filling.

He pulls out a bottle of water from his pocket. It's still cool and surprisingly refreshing. Finishing it quickly and unable to spot a garbage can anywhere, he holds the bottle in his hand. He'll wait till the end of the show to throw it away; he's too anxious now to move.

Fellow Americans order a dozen cervezas from the native vendor and fill up their already bulging stomachs. The fat Americans put the bucket of iced cerveza next to them, preparing for the next couple hours of entertainment. The boy wonders if their stomachs can physically get any larger. Maybe they think it's a good look. The stomachs go nicely with their solid gray shirts, jean shorts, and filthy baseball hats.

Everything's white. Besides the dirt in the center and the blood-red boards, the stadium is white, pure, and innocent. The crowd itself is filled with white. The deep red boards form a ring around the dirt, and another ring of space behind it separates the crowd from the actual arena. The sun is almost set now and the crowd dissolves into the other seats as the temperature begins to drop.

An uproar of music comes from the darker half as the band boisterously signals the entrance of the warriors. Two tubas, four trumpets, some flutes, and a young man on the drums make up the band. The only young member in the band sits alone on the side, apart from the rest of the players, perhaps a newly inducted member. As the music picks up, men with elaborate wardrobes and black hats march

into the stadium, followed by two blinded horses with obese riders, a horse carrying a plow on its back, and a man in a suit. The horses confuse the boy, but he immediately identifies the elegant, brightly colored costumes as belonging to the warriors. By their dress and by the reaction of the crowd, it's clear that the warriors (in costume) are envied, feared, and admired at the same time. They remove their satchels and creep behind protruding blocks of wood coming from the blood-red wall.

Two gates from the outer ring open as the animal charges into the dirt circle. An enormous cheer comes from the crowd, and the boy and the father join the applause. The animal is fierce, athletic, and young. It's full of energy as it rampages around the circle, throwing itself at the warriors who are still hiding behind the blocks. It's black, sleek, and fast, and the mere sight of the animal is shocking; it proves to the boy that this is not a game or a fictional story where one team may win. This bull is going to die; all he wonders now is how. The first warrior reveals himself to the bull with a colorful sheet in his hand. The sheet is beautiful and elegant just like the warrior's costume, amplifying his glorious and revered presence in the arena.

The warrior's attire is fantastically disguising. The other three warriors leave to the outer ring. Then the boy remembers that there are four fights tonight, realizing that the real competition tonight is between the warriors and their performances.

After toying with the bull for a few minutes to the pleasure of the foreign crowd, the first warrior once again sneaks behind his block as the blind horses and the obese riders enter the ring. The horses are now covered with armor and completely blindfolded. The obese riders carry large spears as they slowly move towards the confused bull.

The boy and the bull are both clueless as to why these horses are blinded and what they are waiting for. The two soon become outraged as the horse moves next to the bull and the spear jabs the bull in the back. Once, twice, three times, four times. Blood bubbles out and brightly streams down the black fur of the bull. A grunt comes from the bull as he drives his horns into the horse. But the weight of the rider, the armor on the horse, and the lack of vision of the horse cause nothing to change as the rider continues to weaken the bull. The boy thinks, "Good job, fatass. Your job is to eat burritos so the bull doesn't knock you over." The gates open again and the blinded horses exit with their fat riders.

The crowd's a bit quieter now, and the warrior thinks to himself that it's time to give them a real show. On the outer ring, a man hands him two bracketed daggers, decoratively disguised with pink and green flowers on the handles. This is a ritual, it's his culture, and it's time for him to show the Americans the courage in his work. Walking around the blocks, he is alone with the bull, and the daggers in the arena. Staring into the bull's eyes, the warrior waits patiently for the music to pick up. He hears the trumpet roar and dashes sideways to excite the bull. He's flying high above the ground and comes down with two quick jabs. Adrenaline shoots up his chest and into his neck. The rush of strength. He's in his own world now. The crowd is fading. He's so athletic, so courageous. He goes back for two more bracketed daggers and as the bull immediately charges he soars sideways. Pound, pound. Four flowered daggers now are swaying on top of the bull's back. It's time to have a little more entertainment before the final battle.

The bull sees the warrior creep again behind the wall and thinks of the hot pains searing into his back. His muscles are tightening up. He can barely see in front of him. But that wretched teal, pink, and green flowered wardrobe is coming back. The warrior draws a sword and the bull backpedals in confusion and in fear. He looks to the gates where he entered but they're closed and there's no exit. All that is left is him and this decoratively dressed man. His only option is to fight back as he digs his heels into the dirt and charges. The warrior shuffles to the side and taps the bull on the head with the sword. It's only wooden. What is happening? It's only wood? He charges again. The heat down his back is worse. Every time he charges forward a bolt of lightning drives through his lungs. Eventually he gives in and lays down to rest.

The boy notices the wooden sword exchanged for a real one. He whispers to his father, "Here it comes." The warrior sees the bull has already fallen and slowly approaches it. As he does, the bull hears his footsteps and jumps up with a large grunt. The pain is fading now; everything is just cold and his back has gone numb. The boy notices drops of blood in the dirt where the bull was lying. One last charge by the bull culminates with another warrior sidestep and a metal sword directly through the back of the head of the bull.

Black. The bull can only see black now. He hears the men muttering something as all the warriors congregate by the fallen beast. The warrior pulls out his sword and holds it up to the crowd. The band begins to play more upbeat music. The young drummer is

drumming with his head down. The rest are indifferently waiting for the final blow. Then, with all the warriors crowded around the bull, the first one stabs the fallen bull one more time in the head as it lets out an even louder grunt than before. The grunt is so real. The bull no longer sees anything, but he can feel the dirt under him sliding away. Everything's sliding away. And all that can be heard or seen is black. Absolute blackness.

The boy sees the horse with the plow come out and drag the nearly dead bull out of the arena and towards the grill for a later feast. The boy's eyes scan the crowd. No one is cheering. The band is playing as the crowd sits with their hands holding up their falling chins. Hands cup faces, people slouch back into the bleachers, and solemn faces fill the crowd. The crowd is full of anger, sadness, confusion, and guilt. The boy hates guilt more than anything. He has always thought, "Guilt and pride are the two most dangerous emotions."

The proud warrior comes up and takes his bow. The crowd softly applauds his battle as the warrior smiles off the arena and joins his fellow competitors in the outer ring. Men come out to blend the blood into the dirt and a new fight is upon the crowd. The second warrior steps out behind one of the blocks with his sheet in hand.

The father notices a man yelling in the aisle as he begins to leave the stadium. He's shouting in Spanish and the father understands his protesting cries. The boy only speaks English, so the father quickly sees an opportunity to enlighten his son. "He's a protester," he says, "he's saying this is 'inhumane' and 'unjust.'" The father hasn't spoke Spanish in a long time and never learned how to say 'inhumane' or 'unjust' but he can see his son was interested in the protester and in what his father had told him. The father looks again at his son, whose eyes are fixed on the arena, and wonders if he's enjoying the experience. He also has never been to a bullfight before, and has found it to be a little graphic but quite entertaining.

The second warrior has toyed with the bull enough as he signals the entrance of the obese riders. The bull turns around and sees the horses come in. He's stronger than the previous bull, but is having trouble turning because of the wound from the tunnel. While caged in the gate, a man in a suit had stabbed him with a spear, one that looks similar to the ones these men are holding. It still feels as though the sharp metal is piercing into his spine. Seeing this same spear, he knows what's coming, and charges into the horse, lifting it onto the blood-red

boards.

The crowd boos the entrance of the riders but begins to scream and shout in satisfaction as the obese rider nearly tips over the boards. The fat Americans have finished their beers. Their hate for these riders amplifies as the riders once again spear the bull in the back. What pussies, sitting on blind horses with armor. Dirty asshole taco-eating douche bags. "Hey fatso, fuck you." No one laughs. His fatter friend throws in one of his own. "When you're done, come over here and I'll give you some of these tacos. Why don't you find a real sport like football, pudgy?" The crowd embarrassingly chuckles with the men.

The second bull puts up a longer fight as it eventually succumbs to its killing. The plow horse pulls it away, and the boy feels he has seen enough. He drops his water bottle under the bleachers, careless to look for a garbage can.

The father notices the bottle bounce off the bleachers and into the pile of litter underneath their seats. Sensing his son's satisfaction and frustration, the father replies "We should get back for dinner soon." At the exit, the boy notices the vendor selling the posters. Looking closely, he sees flowered daggers are sticking out of the jumping bull, which he never noticed before as weapons. Pretty good disguises.

The vendor jumps forward as if a pot of gold was offering itself to his posters. Immediately he begins showing the boy several posters, but the boy kindly says, "No thank you," turns his head towards the exit, and walks away. In his mind he said, "No I don't want your damn savage poster, leave me alone." Regardless, this is their culture, it is their life, and he would never be that honest.

Back at the hotel, the father goes up to the room to meet the boy's mother as the boy enters the shop for today's paper, something to get his mind off the fight. An innocent animal's blood bubble from a cowardly rider on a blind horse, a disguised warrior toy with the bull, stab it with flowered daggers, toy with it again, then stab its head twice with a large sword, have it carried away by a plow, and all to the background of a large, raucous band. The boy needs something to change the subject in his mind.

Thank God: the San Francisco Chronicle. Not to be ethnocentric, but he's glad to read something American. Sitting on the comfortable couch in the lobby, the boy opens the front page. "Terrorist bombing in Israel kills 5, 32 injured," "Oil prices skyrocket as war escalates," "Baseball player charged with assault and battery outside a downtown

club," "Ethical protest against new research turns violent," "Homeless man murders teenager." The boy grins and thinks to himself, "It's nice to be back to the real world."

The Truck Stop

by Larissa Stassek

I'm twenty-seven now. Thinking back, I really don't know where all that time went to. I've been sober for nearly eight months. I'm remembering things I haven't thought of in years. Like how I got started in that old life of drugs and drifting from place to place. I remember I was sixteen. It was just after I left home, before I realized that I would never be a rich man, that a life of money and comfort wasn't for people like me.

You see, before walking out of that trailer, crushed like a wad of paper between the other dilapidated trailers in that dusty little park, I had told my step dad—and I truly believed this—that I was going to make it on my own, become rich and famous, you know, that whole thing. If I would've known then where I'd be today, I probably would've stayed and finished high school. But at the time I felt invincible, so I left. I found a place to stay, above this little old lady's garage two towns over. She was nice to me and didn't charge too much. The room smelled like cat piss, and it was always too hot, but I liked it there. It was a place of my own. I took a job at the first place that would take me—a run down little burger stand in the middle of nowhere. I lied and told them I was 18. They started me at the grill. At first it wasn't so bad. I liked the crackling squealing sound the meat made when I smashed it into the grungy grill. Kind of like the whimper a frightened child makes under the strong hand of his drunk mother. Sometimes when I listen hard enough I can still hear that meat sizzle and pop, I honestly can.

That was when I met Keri. She worked at the stand too—she was one of those girls that carried people's food right to their cars, gliding along on roller skates. I loved to watch her skate. She glided so smooth and wonderful, like an angel floating from cloud to cloud or something, and sometimes I thought she couldn't be real. Just my imagination playing a trick on me, the goddess of one of my many day-dreams as I stood over the grungy grill.

She must've been real though, because I can remember that first conversation I had with her. She came up to me while I was grilling to hand me an order, and our eyes met. I looked down immedi-

ately, but I could tell she was smiling.

"My name's Keri," she said, shifting her weight and balancing her full tray on her right hip—not too curvy, or too flat, just perfect. Her hair was blonde, and she had it pulled back and held up with a pencil. I could see the bite marks, like little potholes, on that old yellow pencil from where I stood. I liked that she chewed her pencil. Even though she was smiling, Keri had a sort of unpleasant look on her face, as if she'd just stepped in dog shit or something. I liked her face — it wasn't artificially kind or boring like most other girls'. Too many girls walk around with naive grins on their faces, and I've always wondered what they have to smile about.

We hit it off right away. Every night after work we'd get into my old car and I'd drive. We didn't really ever go anywhere, but that wasn't important. We were young and in love. At least, I thought we were in love. As I drove I'd look over at Keri and see this look she'd get on her face—it was a content, lost look. Like it didn't matter what happened the next day, or the next week—just that we were alive and living today, right then.

One night on one of those drives we actually ended up somewhere. It was a little past two o'clock, I think, and we were almost out of gas, so I pulled off the road into this dark little truck stop. Keri had fallen asleep awhile before. She looked so peaceful and pretty, sitting there in a beam of moonlight. I decided I was going ask her to marry me when she woke up. Feeling really good about this resolution, I pumped the gas and went into the store to pay. The man behind the counter in the station looked up at me over the top of his magazine as I walked through the door. He had a long, crooked nose and a bad comb-over. He didn't even try to fake a smile. The light over his counter flickered and hummed with a thousand stories.

I paid for the gas and the man gave me my change without saying more than two words to me. I turned and walked down an aisle of motor oil toward the restroom in the back. I wish more than anything now that I hadn't used that restroom—that I would have just gone back out to the car, to Keri. Exactly what happened next I've turned over in my head a million times since that night, but I can never get it quite straight. Here's the story anyway, as best as I can figure:

I got outside, and was all set to get in my car and drive my future wife away to start our promising lives together, but instead I found an empty vehicle. I looked around the dark parking lot, searching. And

there she was, standing in the center of a circle of sinister-looking men dressed in black. At first I thought Keri was being attacked, but then I saw she was laughing. She popped something into her mouth and took a swig of a beer, and then passed the bottle to a man with greasy black hair that matched his leather jacket. He also popped something into his mouth, took a drink, and passed the beer to the next man. I had never taken drugs before, but I knew what they were doing. I hurried over to the circle to get Keri.

"Let's go," I said when I reached them, careful not to make eye contact with any of the men now surrounding me.

"Why?" Keri asked innocently. Like she didn't know why.

"Because it's not safe," I whispered. The men laughed, and I glanced around nervously. It wasn't necessarily the speed I was worried about, but those men with their leering glares. I could only think of one reason why these men would lure a beautiful sleeping girl out of a car with speed and beer, and I wasn't exactly thrilled about it.

"Hey, if the lady wants to have a little fun, let her," the man with the greasy hair growled.

"Yeah, who the hell are you to ruin our fun?" an even bigger man added. I could tell I was getting myself into trouble, but I couldn't just leave Keri with them.

I tried to pull her away, and back to our safe lives at the burger stand. That's when things got blurred. I remember the men closing around me, their faces glowing eerily in the beam of orange neon light coming from the "open" sign of the station. Someone pulled Keri out of my grasp, and someone else began to hit me. I kicked, screamed, and scratched, but there were too many of them. I must have passed out at some point, because the next thing I remember at all clearly is being inside the station again, leaning against the wall behind the counter. The man I had paid for gas was sitting on a little stool in front of me, looking worried.

"Man, are you alright?" he asked. I had a headache, and I tasted blood, but I assured him I was fine.

"Damn, that was about the craziest thing I've ever seen," he declared with a relieved laugh. "There must've been like eight of those guys tearing into—"

"Where's Keri?" I interrupted. All I could think about was getting to her.

"That blonde?" The man hesitated and looked away. "She left,"

he said quietly, "with those guys."

I couldn't believe it. Less than an hour ago, Keri, the woman I had planned to spend the rest of my life with, had been sleeping peacefully in my car as we cruised down the road, young and carefree. I thought she loved me. Now she was gone. Who knows where they took her. My head ached and my lip stung. I leaned back and tried to lose myself, to sink back into a time before I had pulled into this damned truck stop.

The man took pity on me, and he offered me some marijuana, promising it would make me feel better. I didn't think anything would help, but I figured what the hell, after all I'd been through. As we sat there behind that counter, sharing a joint and a couple of beers, I tried not to think about anything that had happened that night. But I couldn't help it. The brain gets in the way of life. Over-thinking can ruin everything. I decided I would never let my judgment and thinking control me again. If I had just joined Keri and that group of men, instead of trying to escape, I wouldn't have this headache and split lip. I wouldn't have lost her.

That's how it all started. I stopped going into work. Every day became a quest to find more drugs, and another place to sleep—I drifted like that, from high to high and town to town, for so many years. It killed me. You think I'm alive now, but I'm not. I'm just an empty shell, walking around, trying to remember what it feels like to live.



Noah Korn
"Trespassing"
Black & White Photographs



A Few Choice Words Regarding Arrogance

by Matt Lerner

People often ask me to describe myself. In a single word, arrogant would suffice. My cockiness has always been a defining characteristic. A negative characteristic, some might say, but a defining one nonetheless. It is this self-important mentality, though, that also breeds both my lighthearted humor and cynically sarcastic monologues.

And this is the way it has always been. I have always felt I could back up my talk. No reason to change. Although I am conceited when it comes to any domain, athletics inspires an entirely new force of elitism deep within me. All of my friends can testify that I am the loudest, most mocking and disparaging person to watch a sports game with. Basketball, baseball, football. It doesn't matter. I am the type who will sit on the couch, hand plunged into a bag of chips, t-shirt dotted with spilled salsa, who has the audacity to scream at the screen when a wide receiver drops an uncontested pass. Go figure.

But it's not just the athletes who receive the brunt of my intolerable verbal brutality; it's the fans as well. While most sports fans are of a fun loving mindset, and are a likeable breed, not all can be classified this way. If there is one type of person that can instigate my most conceited and haughty speeches, it is the unathletic sports fans. I am unable to explain how many times I have seen them shooting a foul shot at half time for a brand new Mercedes. Not a three pointer or a launch from mid court. Simply a foul shot. And how many times I have seen them fail to hit the shot. And fail to hit rim. And fail to hit backboard.

"Give me one chance to do that," I'll say.

Seriously, just one.

But if there is any particular type of unathletic sports fan that I cannot stand, it is the "foul line baseball droppers". They are the ones who are blessed with front row tickets to baseball games and ironically are the owners of the most dysfunctional motor skills I have ever been able to witness. Every televised baseball game you can see at least one of them make an attempt to scoop up a foul ball, and to say the least,

the results are very disappointing. The ball will slip past them, ricochet off their glove or, my personal favorite, hop through the dirt irregularly, causing the fan to spill out of his seat and onto the field in pursuit of the elusive souvenir. While loyal ten-year-olds sit in the bleachers, fat, middle-aged men buy out entire sections of the box seats and only attend about a quarter of the games. The least they could do is give a proper effort for the ball that rolls right by them. The ball that every real sports fan covets. They are the most lazy, selfish, inconsiderate people on the face of the earth and are an embodiment of all that I hate in the world.

"Give me one chance to grab a foul ball," I'll say.

Seriously, just one.

So when I finally got my chance, that one chance, I couldn't contain my excitement. My dad got front row tickets to the Yankees game and I knew, for a fact, that I would be leaving with a foul ball. There was no doubt in my mind. Not even an iota. It was a physical impossibility for me to not leave with a ball.

As I entered the stadium, I was briefly reminded of all the things that make the game great. Not a souvenir baseball; the real things. The smell of popcorn and roasted peanuts, the familiar syrupy stickiness to the pavement, the bustle of thousands of people trying to attack the seams in the crowd and get to their seats, the sight of crisp, brand new baseball caps lined up in an even row at the gift shops, the taste of joyfully biting into the sinful and nauseating item we call hot dogs, and of course entering the stadium and seeing the electric green field explode into view.

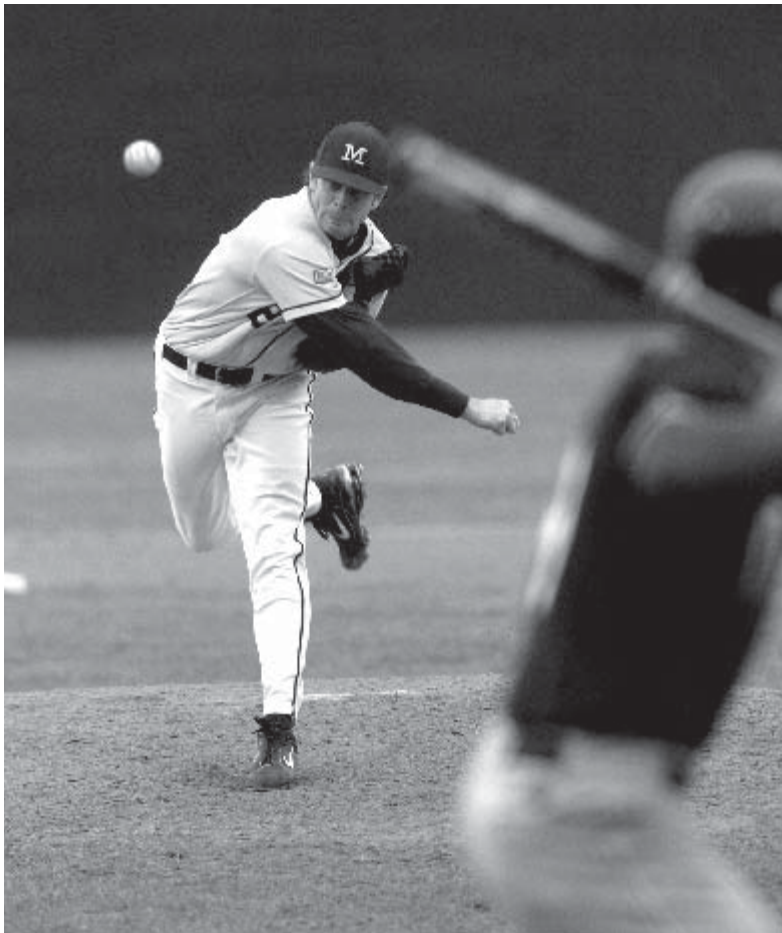
So, I sat down in my seat and waited. There was no chance I would be an embarrassment like all those who came before me. I envisioned myself triumphantly reaching over the wall. I envisioned myself triumphantly sweeping my glove through the grass. I envisioned myself triumphantly holding up the ball to the cheers of thousands. And I envisioned all of this because I was better than everybody who had tried previously. I was more athletic. I was more coordinated. And yes, it can be argued that I was more arrogant.

The innings passed by without any chances for me to show off my impeccable foul line baseball snagging skills. Then in the 7th inning it happened. The Yankees' All-Star first baseman stepped into the batters box and glared at the pitcher. As I watched the series of events unfold before my eyes, everything occurred at half speed. The

pitch. The flash of white. The swing of the bat. The clap of leather on wood. I reacted.

I followed my prize as it danced through the turf and graciously draped my glove over the wall, lifting my entire body from the waist down clear into the air. With legs flailing in the air, I snagged my gift. My little white present with red trimming fit snugly in the pocket of my mitt and all I could think was, "What was so hard about that? I'm the man!" Famous last words.

Maybe I became distracted by the flickering images of the



Noah Korn
"At Bat" and "Oops"
Black & White Photographs

many people who had failed before me, maybe the humidity of the August night formed slippery water droplets in my glove, maybe it was karma. But as I sat in my seat and reached into my glove to claim my reward, I felt sick. My glove was empty. I peered over the wall, and there in the grass sat my ball. As I had pulled myself back over the wall, I used my gloved hand to steady my body from falling onto the field. I guess I should have used my free hand.

I couldn't bare to watch the rest of the game. I didn't buy the peanuts or the cracker jacks. I didn't root for the home team. To this day I don't even know who won the game. I felt empty. Guttled even. I had been truly convinced I was better than everybody else, and I couldn't have been more wrong. I was the same. No better, no worse, no different. My dad saw me sitting there sullenly at the game and leaned his head towards me to say,

"Don't worry about it, Matt. It's just a ball."

But he didn't understand the true tragedy of what had happened. Nobody did. He thought I lost a nifty memento but that's not what the ball was. The ball, in my custody, was my permission to continue being able to make fun of the uncoordinated slobs I watched on TV. It was my permission to continue being arrogant. It was my permission to continue doing what I've always done. Without that ball I couldn't do it anymore. I've watched plenty of baseball games since that day and I've seen a countless number of people unsuccessfully try to grab a ball from the field. The only difference is that now I watch quietly.



Liquid Sun

by Kristen Lo

i remember summer.
hot air, choking on my own breath
feels warm liquid sun down the throat
warms body like rapid motion,
an explosion,
maybe.
i remember sitting in friends' cars
windows down
wind blows long hair, short hair around faces
shaped by dreams.
dreams.
words spoken
never traveled past the sun
circled around and landed on the windshield.
i remember stretching and
touching the clouds of animal shapes and
figures of people we once knew
and maybe didn't care for much.
i remember walking down same paths
laughing pointing joking waiting
for something to stir up real emotions.
i remember carefree empty minds open to
possibilities and being needed
but never being found from getting lost
among ourselves.
i remember summer.



Lauren Walbridge
"Fishbowl Life"
Black & White Photograph

[under]statement/standing

by Lauren Walbridge

This'll be the first way that this comes out. Published (not) accepted (maybe). The deadline beat of some jazzy incarnation of Hollywood & Vine. It's me not coming through. It's me being locked in and running in all directions at the same time.

William S. Burroughs speaks with the same voice that my Catholic guilt admonishes with. He even quotes from the same book. He's maddening about it – makes me mad.

"You go numb from innerparalytic thoughts and bad chairs." Grief is majesty. Finality.

I'm not impatient I'm just insecure about time. And when someone is asking me things like,

"Hey, what kind of medication can I take to make my heart stop hurting?"

what am I supposed to say? I am not the type, the kind of person in a moment so intense and emotionally demanding in its stature that I am (like those people) suddenly full of convictions and thus spill out with perfect sentences at all the appropriate moments... Right? No, not right –

We do not burst from the wings and eloquently defend ourselves and state our cases. We stumble and fall. Terribly. Us second types.

In the middle, this is me being stuck in (the) fuck(ing) middle – I'm not rich enough to sport 7evens every day of the week, nor near edgy or skinny enough to buy my vintage 3 sizes too big and look miniscule yet important in it. I don't have angles or a concave stomach and the colors both wear work best against straight blonde or dark hair – if not straight, then artfully curled by heritage or ceramic curling irons.

Mine (that likes to pull red from dyes) used to be blonde it's never been dark now it's in the middle. Just like me. My hair and my body and my family, and actually I'm not skinny enough for both, for either, but especially to be indie.

Ginsberg said, "America is this true?"

My door is open but my window shades are not. I'm letting in the fluorescent people from the hallways but not the shadows and cold bursts from beyond the glass beyond the shabby thin curtain material. It's not a vacation but a momentary abortion of where we are.

What we're in, what're we in, really?

It can be a train wreck either way you look at it. With you/me/us/them and someone else, there will never be a situation where it works out fine and with no hurt feelings, a time without blackened egos or bruised tongues. The only way that can ever happen is if you're both already in love with someone else.

"Ginsberg," America said, "is this true?"

Why is this happening? Why is this all coming to a head now? Why, why when the sun is in my eyes and I can't see a thing and it's icy and why, why is this all coming to a head now?

Barren Tree

by Andrea James

Each time it grew, I grew
From frozen ground it sprouted from beneath
They named me Death, and called me deceased

Each time it grew, I grew
Its roots were big black and strong
Wait, stop, don't. Raped when I did wrong

Each time it grew, I grew
The barren skies which rejected each limb
The hatred in my eyes when I stared at him

Each time it grew, I grew
The bloody sun, that never gave it leaves
My father's grave that forever haunted me

Each time it grew, I grew
Two large branches that pierced the sky
One black gun that watched him die

Each time it grew, I grew
A black tree, surrounded by earth
A child, terrified, hated since birth



Noah Korn
"The Fork In The Sky"
Black & White Photograph

Vanishing Act

by Cristina Calvar

Is it black?
No.

Look.
Look close.
Look closer.

Is it white?
No.

Look.
Look deep.
Look deeper.

Mind. Body. Soul.
Are they sound?
Feel. Hear. Taste. Smell.
The four ultimate survival senses.
My eye constantly deceives me,
It reveals to me all but the truth.
We each wear a false façade.
A mask, not to cover the face,
But to hide our identity, intent and purpose.
For nothing is ever what it seems,
But a culmination of trivial, well-intentioned untruths.
It's not black. Not white. But gray.
The natural blending of what is pure and real,
With what is contaminated and false.
Reality relies on instinct,
Our ability to unveil the faulty layer.
Acknowledge and distinguish from what is black and white.
Find truth.
Look. Stare. Analyze.
Don't glance.
For what it appears to be, is never what it ought to be.

Land of the Beautiful

by Ben Megargel

At the age of eighteen, I finally got my first “real” job. I had just completed my senior year of high school, and after several summers of resume-building hell, I was ready to do something easy, something mindless. I wanted to meet friendly people my age whom I could relate to, who would make my virgin working experience a pleasant one. After considering employment at Bertucci’s, Legal Seafood, and a day camp, I settled on a place I thought I knew, a place I’d been visiting for years: the revered, detested, idealized, scorned land of the beautiful, Abercrombie and Fitch.

The Atrium Mall, where the store is located, is a high-end shopping center, situated about thirty minutes from my house. On my first day, I was assigned to arrive at the ungodly hour of seven in the morning. The hour was so early that my father, who usually made the coffee, wasn’t even up yet. As a result, an Abercrombie-clad, uncaffeinated zombie dangerously drove to the mall. All mall-employees were supposed to park on the bottom level of the underground garage, so after circling down into the depths, I nervously ascended the escalators to the top floor, classical ambiance music filling the air. Finally, I reached the store, bending under the half open gate to enter a ghost world of equally exhausted youth. Without the typical techno-pop blasting from every corner, the store felt like a deserted wasteland, the antler light fixtures hanging gloomily in the still air. I stood around awkwardly, expecting someone to greet me warmly. Instead, I was met with blank stares and a barrage of snobby attitudes.

Meekly, I enquired, “What should I do?”

“Why don’t you just, like, go talk to the manager?” responded a very attractive, rude blonde.

“Ok, where’s the manager?”

“In her office” she answered, only after several seconds of silent exasperation.

The manager turned out to be friendlier than the unidentified blonde, but not much. Kristin was a curvy, strawberry blonde with highly arched eyebrows belying her sharp tongue and judgmental character. She tersely welcomed me to the store and then quickly showed me how to punch in on the computer. A small receipt printed

out, signaling that my shift had officially begun at 7:03 am. Promptly after this, she doled out several instructions. My first task was to re-fold several tall stacks of shirts so that all the edges lined up perfectly, yet still had the “rustic-nonchalant” look that Abercrombie was known for. I wasn’t even aware a stack of shirts could embody these qualities simultaneously. After completing the first pile, I proudly put them aside to start a new pile. Suddenly, an unassuming brunette snidely remarked that I had done the pile wrong and should probably start over again. She proceeded to show me, with an acute sense of superiority, how to properly fold each shirt and stack them so that the same stripe faced forward. I did as told, placing the final product neatly on the shelf. Several minutes later, Kristin, who was slowly revealing her anal nature, pulled me aside to inform me of my folding faults.

“Hey Ben,” she said in a faux-sweet chirp, “these shirts just aren’t exactly what we are looking for.” She proceeded to manipulate the pile in multiple ways, producing a result practically identical to my original. “It should look more like this, you know?”

Honestly, I just couldn’t win in this place. My fellow employees stoically continued to fold in a mechanical, emotionless fashion, mostly ignoring my presence unless I made some mistake, which was often. Frighteningly enough, the constant critiques spurred me to covertly compete with my coworkers over the quality and efficiency of our T-shirt folding. As a result, I transformed from a responsive, normal human being into an emotionless cog in the Abercrombie system. I aggressively folded, trying with each shirt to outdo the stunning ghost of a girl working next to me. Suddenly, just as the store opened, a sped up version of Mariah Carey’s hit “We Belong Together” came blasting from all corners of the store. The music began to fuel both my competitive spirit and drive to work. Time stood still inside the store, the changes in the sun obstructed by the fashionably dressed mannequins and tall denim walls. More machine than human, I began to work at an even more accelerated pace than before, the bleeps and pounding base of the music serving as audible Ritalin. I became so intertwined with my work that my manager had to tell me to go home at 1:30, a half hour after I was scheduled to leave. Driving in circles up from the parking garage, I felt as if I was reemerging into normal society, returning from a psychedelic dream of fast paced tunes, models-in-training, and snobby attitudes. I was purely exhausted.

Despite a lackluster first day, I was still quite confident that

Abercrombie would prove to be an upbeat, social, and laid back workplace. How hard could it really be anyways? Granted the first day was less than spectacular but I knew that once I got to know my coworkers my experience would be enriched. Besides, I had only done stocking my first day. Soon I would be able to interact with customers.

For the first several weeks Kristin mostly confined me away from the customers, making me go through the obligatory training period. As time passed, I soon learned the many rules and regulations of being an Abercrombie employee: jeans and flip-flops were a must, facial hair a big no-no, individuality optional. Unconsciously, I began to personify these qualities: I became more cognizant of my appearance, less outwardly expressive, in a sense, more "Abercrombie." I had become comfortable at work, at ease with my anonymity and superficiality. My encounters with my coworkers and customers were distant, effortless, and perfunctory, similar to my first day experience.

However, one day in the heat of July I was violently jolted out of my hazy comfort zone. Apparently, Abercrombie Inc. had seen promising increases in jean sales and wanted to further promote this trend with the release of new styles. In addition, they had seen positive results in stores where the former policy of disengaged, neutral employee attitude was shifted to a more aggressive, friendly demeanor. Upon receiving the decree to implement these policies, Kristin immediately took action on a quiet Tuesday morning.

"Ben, just so you know, there's been a change. From now on you like, have to go up to every single person that walks into this store and use our tagline," she commanded. "The tagline is 'Have you heard about how great our jeans fit?' Basically, you are, like, the model of the jeans so try to show off, you know? Also if they say they haven't heard how great the jeans are, tell boys 'It makes you look great from the front' and girls 'from the back.' If I catch you not using the taglines I'll write you up. You'll do it, right? Great, thanks!" She walked away, neglecting to wait for an answer.

Several middle-aged women came and went, but I was unable to approach them for fear of a disgusted reaction. Finally, a wealthy looking, middle-aged woman entered the store and immediately was drawn to the jeans. I built up my courage, unassumingly inching towards her, moving at an ever so careful pace as not to unsettle her. Hunting was easier than this, I thought to myself.

"Hey, have you heard about how great our jeans fit?" I stuttered.

"Actually, I need some help. I'm looking for the Porter 5 pocket, light wash, Emma Jeans in a size six short. I want them to be a little destroyed too. Do you have it?" she asked commandingly.

I went and searched for her, and after extensive rummaging, was able to come up with destroyed, light wash Emma jeans in size six short. I displayed them to the woman, who was becoming visibly impatient and rushed.

"These aren't Porter 5 pocket," she groaned. I began to explain to her that I actually didn't know what Porter 5 pocket was and that my fellow coworkers didn't either. She proceeded to stand still in literal disbelief for several moments. I could see weeks of repressed anger and frustration flood out of her emotional lockbox, and the word vomit was directed straight at me.

"This is ridiculous. How can you even work here? Honestly, you are pathetic. I can't believe this." She tossed the jeans down and left. I returned the jeans to their home, dumfounded by my experience.

At the end of the summer I left the job, slightly embittered and completely finished. Whether I truly learned anything I do not know, although it would be a stretch to glean a positive moral from the wreckage of vanity, homogeneity, and bitchiness. But at least I got a free pair of some really great fitting jeans.

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us
are looking at the stars."
-- Oscar Wilde

M



LLOYD HALL SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Publication & Art 2006