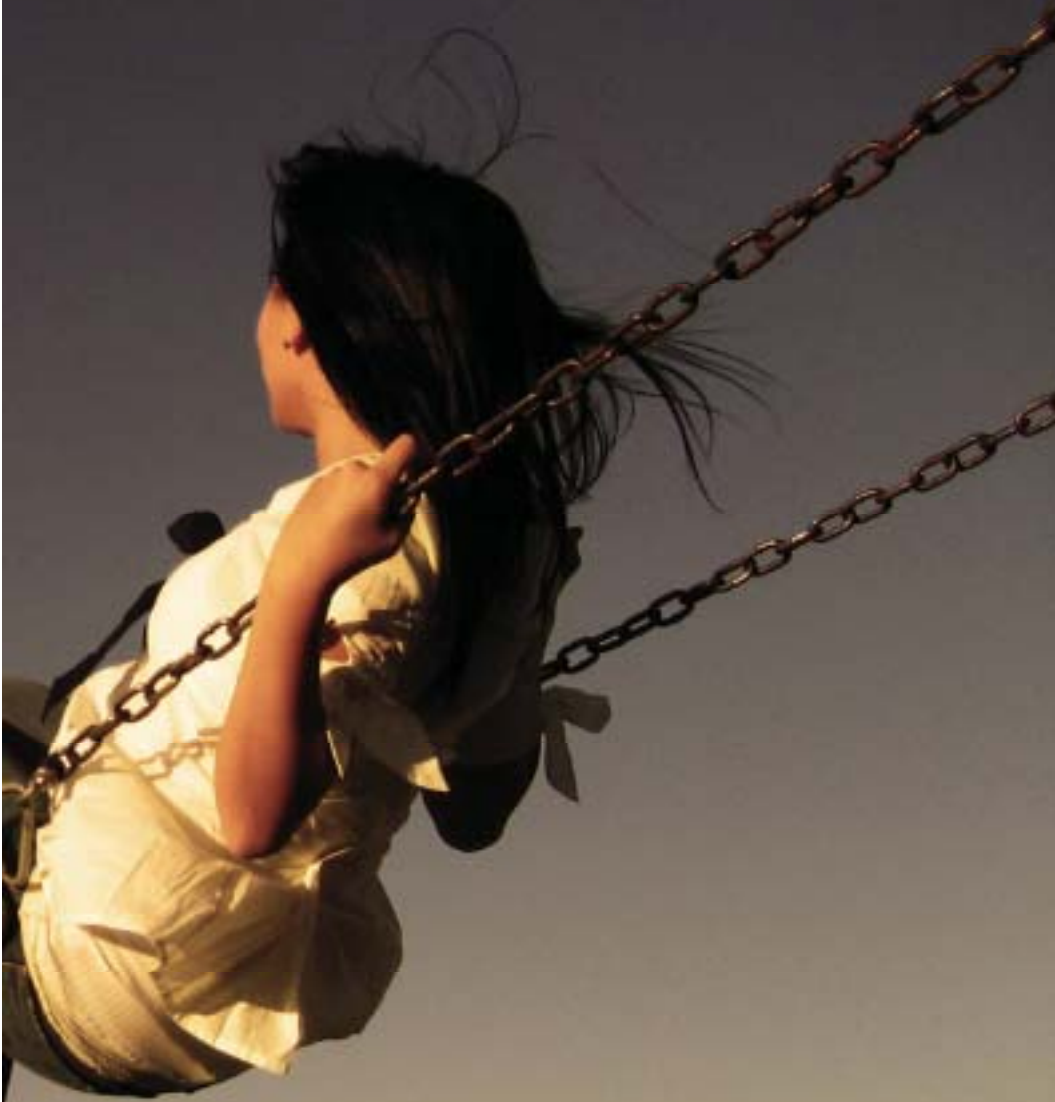


this is *not* a dream



**View From the Hill**  
LHSP Arts & Literary Journal  
2007-2008

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# A Block

by Rachel Applebaum

How many times have I looked back?

Through cardboard boxes,  
tattered notebooks.

Old words.

Forgotten phrases.

I've laughed at my former self

for my silly turns of my pen.

But I've also been envious

of my ease

once upon a time.

How readily inspiration came

before the list:

Before an old man I loved but barely knew disappeared.

Before a man and a woman showed their true colors

(some wonderful, some horrible, some heartbreaking).

Before I became someone I barely recognized.

Or before I realized how little I know about myself.

Perhaps inspiration for honest words

could come from this

list

if not for me and the knowledge that I lack.

I must right now write from a block.

Until time,

swiftly flowing, cleansing time,

erodes it away.

# Goldeneye

by Benjamin Levine

- *Bonding: the formation of a close relationship (as between a mother and child or between a person and an animal) especially through frequent or constant association*
- *Male bonding: bonding between males through shared activities excluding females*  
-merriam-webster.com

“Hey Benjamin, are you up for some bonding?” my hall mate asked me Monday night of last week. I had just opened the doors to my fourth floor home after I had been studying my ass off for five hours for a big Calculus exam worth 35% of my grade. The best thing I could’ve been asked at that moment was if I wanted to bond. “Oh my god, I would love to bond,” I answered with a look of relief draped over my face. Josh knew I had been studying all day, and there is nothing better than a good “bond sesh” after hard-core studying. I gathered up two more kids wandering the hall to bond with us because to achieve that real special bonding moment, having four players is essential. I powered up the high definition Sony, set the input to Input 2, jammed the game into the cartridge slot, and switched on the antique Nintendo 64. The screen remained black. After several attempts of blowing on the inside and outside of every piece connected to the game and system, the screen came to life. The famous James Bond music followed by a gunshot and blood pouring down the screen was appreciated by us four players as much as the crying of a healthy newborn baby. Smiles grew on our faces, and I was tingling with the excitement of pre-bonding. It must have been my lucky night because I was fortunate enough to possess the first player controller. Being first player meant that I was able to choose everything from level to scenario. However, “With great power comes great responsibility,” as the great Uncle Ben has told us, and if I happened to accidentally click the start button prematurely, the entire round would be screwed up. First player

is the only player with that responsibility, but everyone wanted that power and control even with the harsh penalties and scrutiny that comes along with the first player package.

I first set the level to Temple and weapons to Power Weapons. The Temple-Power Weapons combo is the standard first round level and weapon selection because it provides a neutral fighting ground with generic firepower. Then we go to character selection. Rules about character selection are as follows: you can't be Odd Job or Moonraker Elite, and if you're James Bond some players might argue that he is "better" than everyone else. Personally, I think that James Bond has the same shooting and aiming abilities as Natalia, Jaws, Orumov, etc., but I stay away from being Bond to avoid any confrontation. Odd Job and Moonraker Elite are significantly shorter than the other --characters; in order to shoot at a shorter character, you have to lower your aim, which is not easy to do, and it is unfair. In the video game world, it is referred to as cheap. "You're Odd Job. You can't be Odd Job. That is so cheap!" "Look who's talking James Bond!" This would be a typical conversation involving character rule violations. "Everyone good?" I asked as I could already feel my fingers becoming sweaty from the intensity. I clicked start, and the game had begun. Twelve minutes later, I was cursing at myself for letting my arch nemesis, Josh, beat me in a final showdown to end the round. First to ten kills wins, and we both had nine. He had BA and an RCP-90. I had a DD44 Dostovei. I had no real chance. But even though I did not win, I still had the chance to earn more impressive awards. After playing the game for more than ten years, the awards given to the players are the most satisfying or depressing factor of the game. The awards are based on how you played during the round. My awards were Most Professional and Marksmanship Award; Josh's were Most Dishonorable and Most Frantic. I considered myself victorious. An hour and half later of intense bonding, we called it a night, and we would be waiting till the next time we bonded to enjoy the experience of GoldenEye 007.

The year is 2007; it is the week of Thanksgiving. My nineteenth birthday is less than three weeks away, and I am still



attached to this one game. August 25, 1997 was when the highly anticipated first person shooter was released onto the Nintendo 64. I can remember playing GoldenEye with my neighborhood buddies Eric, Matt, and Brian everyday after school in the third grade, but Brian wasn't actually allowed to play because of the violent content of the game. In all honesty, I don't know if I would let my ten year old play a game where the objective is to be the most efficient killer possible. We would tell his parents that we were playing Mario Kart, and boy, were we deceiving little shits or what? Instead of playing a game where you drive on a rainbow with a cute little character, we were playing a game where you get rewarded for having the most accurate aim at the other person's head. It was worth it though. We all loved that game more than anything. At the ripe age of eighteen, I still have that same love. From 1997 to 2007, there have been more technological advances to video games than could be thought possible. Ever since the Nintendo 64 was released on September 29, 1996, the new gaming systems that have been put on the market have been: Dreamcast, Playstation 2, Gamecube, Xbox, Xbox 360, Playstation 3, and Wii. I have lived and am currently living through those systems and the games that come along with those systems, and even though there have been spectacular games such as the Maddens and Grand Theft Autos of the world, nothing gives me that feeling that GoldenEye does. Why? How is it possible that a game made ten years ago is better than ones being made today? Why would I rather be playing a sloppy three-dimensional game than a game that can be played in 1080i and people will walk into the room and think they are watching a real football game? Tomorrow Never Dies, The World is Not Enough, Agent Under Fire, Nightfire, Everything or Nothing, GoldenEye: Rogue Agent, and From Russia with Love are all James Bond based games created after GoldenEye 007. Not one of those titles means anything to the average gamer. Mention GoldenEye 007, and the average gamer will not only know the game but they will have loved the game. Better graphics, more involved game play, authentic weapons are all features of these newer games, but this 1997 outdated dinosaur of a game has captured my attention more so

than any other I have ever played or dreamed of.

My Uncle Marc had the same old Ford station wagon for more than fifteen years. Uncle Marc could afford a new automobile or at least a car that wouldn't smoke when the radio was turned on, but he chose not to upgrade from his ancient means of transportation because he obviously had a special connection to his Ford. Grandma Helen has had the same pair of glasses since I was born. She lives thirty minutes outside of New York City, and she loves shopping and staying fashionable. However, even though she may buy a pair of shoes that will only be used for one spring brunch, she still wears the same rusty, thick brown-rimmed glasses. "I like these ones the best," is her straightforward response to the continuous nagging she receives from her lack of glasses modernity. The family has bought her numerous pairs of glasses, but she refuses to keep them. She will try them on, complain about the balance across her nose, the texture, or the way they look. Sometimes old is better, but people love new. The word new is interchangeable with the word better. When someone says something is new, it is being implied that that something is better. iTunes is always asking me if I want to update to a newer version. I click yes assuming that this newer version is improved. I assume that technology is always becoming more advanced, and when my computer asks for something to be updated, I don't hesitate to accept the updates. My brother owns NBA 2K7 for Xbox 360. When NBA 2K7 was released, it was considered the most realistic basketball simulation game available. A year later, my brother purchased, without ever seeing or reading anything about the game, the newer model of the game, NBA 2K8. He assumes the newer game will be better. Better meaning more realistic basketball being played on the 360, which indicates the game will be more fun, and fun is why we gamers play the games. After opening the game and playing it for several hours, a disappointed brother was pouting in his room. The game was not as good as the older version.

Sometimes, old *is* better. GoldenEye for 64 is old, but it is better.

- *The music in GoldenEye is absolutely perfect, and adds a lot of ambience to the game. For instance, one of the later levels starts in an elevator, complete with laid-back elevator music. When you exit the elevator, the level's real soundtrack kicks in. A minor point, sure, but it demonstrates the detail of the game. The only thing that could make GoldenEye's sound better is the inclusion of speech.*

-gamespot.com

What is the key element to making a high intensity scene in a movie? The music. Every high intensity scene, from a movie to a Broadway show, has music that causes the scene to really come alive and be felt by the audience. There are scenes in movies where nothing is happening, but because the music is creepy or eerie, the audience becomes scared. It is the music that causes the fifteen-year-old girl's hand to squeeze her boyfriend's arm so tightly he loses feeling in his fingers. It is the music whether it is there or not. Scenes where only the deep breathing of a trapped woman can be heard are scary because you wonder why there is not any music. All the great classic movies, not only horror films, have famous music in them: *The Godfather*, *Star Wars*, *Braveheart*, *Jurassic Park* and especially *Jaws*. People that have never seen *Jaws* know its theme song. That is how powerful music can be in media forms. Another set of films famous for their original music are the *James Bond* movies. *My dad can play two songs on the piano; one of which is the James Bond theme song.* I can't tell you what *The World Is Not Enough* is about, but I can sure as hell hum you the music. GoldenEye masterfully incorporates the signature James Bond music into the game making you feel like you are part of a James Bond film. The score is nine kills to eight, and you are playing to ten. You just picked up the best gun available, the Cougar Magnum, and body armor; your enemy is racing towards higher elevation to have a better vantage point. A bead of sweat is dripping down your sideburn. All you can hear along with your heart beat is the music the game provides you with,

and the game doesn't disappoint by any means. The music actually enhances the intensity of the game significantly. Not many things in life are perfect. There were the 17-0 Miami Dolphins of 1972, and there is Jessica Alba. Besides from those two, not many perfect things come to mind, but the music in GoldenEye, more officially referred to as the sound of the game, is pretty damn close.

The one problem with GoldenEye is that it is too good. Ever since Rare released GoldenEye for the N64, companies have been trying to create a game that reaches the GoldenEye level. The standard for a multiplayer first person shooter was set remarkably high, and there have only been a few games to even come close to this GoldenEye standard. Most notably is the Halo series for Xbox and Xbox 360. Some people will claim that the Halos are better, but those people are just infatuated by the fancy looking guns, flashy colors, and the name Master Chief. I enjoy Halo. I love flying around in Ghosts too, but if you say you just Haloed for an hour, it doesn't have the same smooth sounding ring as does the term bonding. Every time a new multiplayer shooting game is released the first question asked is it as good as GoldenEye. The question is not is it better than GoldenEye, but is it equal to GoldenEye. GoldenEye, a 1997 game for the Nintendo 64, is the standard for excellence. If you feel lost in this world of video gaming, here's an anecdote for your comprehension. An 85 year-old man is matched up against a 25 year-old man. The two men compete in a number of competitions; they race against each other, they play basketball against each other, and they box against each other. The 85 year-old wins each competition because he is faster, more athletic, and stronger. How is that possible? An 85 year-old man who has a maximum of fifteen years left of life is matched up against a 25 year-old who is in his prime physical condition. This, my fellow reader, is what GoldenEye is to every other game. The other game should be better; it should be more fun. But this freak of nature, 85 year-old man named GoldenEye 007, is a one of a kind and will never be made again.-

- *After seriously playing the game for weeks, N64.com can sincerely say that Goldeneye 007 is a intelligently conceived and brilliantly executed diamond of a game*
- *The game is brilliant in both the single-player mode, opening up new weapons each time a difficulty level is cleared (the cougar magnum in the easy difficulty level), and in multiplayer mode, making it the best multiplayer game on the system (edging Mario Kart 64 by a hair). In fact, we can say with a clear conscience that Goldeneye 007 is the best single-player first-person game on any system.*

-ign.com

The only way for gamers to discover how great or awful a game is before purchasing it or spending nearly ten dollars to rent it for four days is by trusting the game's reviews. The most concise way of finding out if the game is worthy of hard earned babysitting money or weeks of allowance savings is by the reviewers' rating given to the game. The site I respect and trust the most is ign.com. Its rating scale is as follows: 10-flawless and perfect (aka impossible to be), 9-a fantastic achievement with minor imperfections, 8-excellent gaming experience but misses in some areas, and anything below a 7 is not worth your time. Ign.com gave GoldenEye 007 a 9.7 and labeled it incredible. Gamespot.com another highly respectable video game site gave GoldenEye a 9.8, which according to its rating scale is between perfection and superb. I have been fortunate enough to have the luxury of enjoying the video game experience since the fresh age of five on the Super Nintendo. I have played many games on many systems, platforms, and consoles. . I sit in my dorm room with a Playstation 3 that has capabilities that the game creators can't even utilize yet, and I bond while the Playstation 3 becomes dustier and dustier as I hunt down James Bond in the bottom right of the screen. "Whoever is player three is a cheap bastard! I hope you get Most Cowardly."

# Fallout

by Jackie Kauza

It was dark, both because of the clouds that obscured the full moon and because her eyes were shut tight. She rolled over.

She visited herself, ventured back through the mists of time to watch life again through a four-year-old's eyes. Her father had taken her older brother Kanoe to play out in the surf and she was sitting with her stubby fingers buried in the warm sand, watching them darkly through the slanting sun. She should be out there in the ocean, too.

"What's wrong, Mali?"

Her mother had come to sit beside her. The woman's hair had danced around her face, cavorting with the sea breeze. Her smile vied against Mali's scowl.

"I wanna go swim."

Her mother's smile hadn't wavered. "The waves are too strong, Mali."

"Kanoe gets to swim!"

"Kanoe's older than you."

The old argument, unfairest of rationales! Mali glared at her mother fiercely. "That doesn't make him better!"

"He's taller than you."

Mali fell silent. No matter how she looked at it, she couldn't refute that. Kanoe towered over her. But was it her fault that she had only seen four summers while he had seen eight?

That might make a good counterpoint.

Her mother had been two steps ahead of her, however. She always was.

Before Mali could open her mouth, her mother dug her little hand out of the sand and led her along, not toward the roll-

ing waves, but toward the small, twinkling pools left behind as the tide avalanched back out to sea.

“I’ll show you something special, Mali. Just look at this.”

Her mother knelt and Mali flopped petulantly to the ground beside her, determined not to be won over.

“Here. I bet you’ve never seen one of these before.”

And Mali gaped, because it was true. She had never seen one before, never bothered to notice something so pretty. Her mother had reached into the warm tide pool, her arm immersed to the elbow, and had drawn out a five-petaled flower. Dark blue rimmed with sunset indigo pooled from a golden peach-fuzz center. Wide-eyed and wordless, Mali stretched out her pudgy hand, and the flower felt just like it looked—warm velvet.

“I like it, Mama,” Mali whispered reverently, all thoughts of swimming and Kanoe banished from her mind.

“It’s a little flower that only grows in tide pools,” her mother explained, plucking the flower from Mali’s palm and braiding it into her daughter’s hair, just above the ear. “It can’t grow out where the current is strong. But it makes up for that by being beautiful.” Examining her work, she smiled again, her warm velvet smile.

“It’s called a *malio*,” she continued. “It’s named for you.”

She rolled over.

Kanoe had laughed about it and taken to teasing her, calling her *Malio*. Every day, he’d taunt her, for after that day Mali was rarely without a *malio* braided in her hair. She liked the lovely little flower and liked the way it so selflessly shared its beauty with her.

She’d stamp her foot and stick her tongue out and chase Kanoe around and around—futile, of course, because her legs were stumps and his stretched on for miles. She did what an angry little sister was required to do.

But truthfully, Kanoe’s teasing didn’t bother her. She liked being called *Malio*. She liked hearing him say it. It brought her

back to bright tide pools and her mother's smile, and it made her feel like Kanoe was calling her beautiful. Maybe he was. But she acted mad at him because the game was fun and she was supposed to.

She rolled over.

She'd known something was wrong the instant she woke. Instead of the walls being kissed by pearly moonlight, they danced and trembled with a strange primordial red. Footsteps drummed weathered floorboards, both in her little house and in the house next door.

Somewhere in the distance, someone started screaming.

"Mama?"

She rolled over, eyelids flickering.

She'd known something was wrong the instant she woke. Instead of the walls being kissed by pearly moonlight, they danced and trembled with a strange primordial red. Footsteps drummed weathered floorboards, both in her little house and in the house next door.

Somewhere in the distance, someone started screaming.

"Mama?"

She rolled over, eyelids flickering.

Her mother had rushed into her room and there was something wrong there, too. She moved like she was lopsided, one arm wrapped around the bulge of her stomach, the other hanging limp like beached seaweed at her side.

Mali couldn't tell if the red on it came from the flickering light. Her heart began to race fast as the thundering beat of a nene's wings.



"Mama?"

"Get up, Mali, hurry!"

Mali had never heard her mother speak like that and she threw herself out of bed, following the stumbling woman down the hall to where Kanoe waited beside Grandmam.

His eyes were like two miniature moons in his face as he stepped toward their mother. "I can stay, Mama!"

"No, Kanoe!"

"I can fight, too! I'm a man!"

Mali watched her mother seize Kanoe and shake him like a doll. "You are thirteen! You cannot stay, I won't allow it!"

Mali ran to her grandmother and felt Grandmam's arm encircle her. The fear she'd felt a moment ago was nothing to this. Her mother's voice was like a hurricane's screech and she'd never heard anything so terrible.

"You go with your grandmother and your sister, and you go!"

Her mother threw Kanoe away from her and before he could argue, Grandmam seized his arm and dragged him toward the door, her other hand a vice gripped around Mali's fingers.

"Where are we going, Grandmam? What's going on?" Mali wanted to cry, but no tears seemed brave enough to leave her eyes.

"We're going to your aunt and uncle across the river," said Grandmam and, as with her mother's, Mali could hear something foreign in the old woman's voice. "They have a boat. We're going to get away."

She rolled over, whimpering.

There were footsteps behind them and Mali felt sweat seeping from Grandmam's paper skin.

Kanoe wrenched himself free, turned, planted his feet.

"You go! You go!" he called over his shoulder.

"Kanoe, no!" Mali screamed, trying to stop as well. Grandmam pulled her along, but the old woman was looking over her

shoulder, too, eyes trained on Kanoe.

“I’ll catch up to you!” Mali heard her brother’s voice.  
“I’ll—”

But she couldn’t hear him anymore, couldn’t hear him because she was screaming his name.

She rolled over, one hand scratching against rough floorboards as she tried to reach for Kanoe.

Fire had licked its way over the covered bridge, growing from the shingles like grass from a burial mound. But the river beneath flowed swift as ever, fast enough to sweep an old woman and a little girl to their deaths.

Grandmam was panting heavily, coughing from all the smoke in the air, but pushing Mali ahead of her. “Go on, Mali, go on, go!” she rasped, her worn hands banging against the small of Mali’s back.

Mali ran, but kept looking back, making sure her grandmother was still coming—and looking through the red-stained palm trees for Kanoe.

“Get across the bridge, Mali!”

Mali hesitated as she neared the river. The flames on the roof of the bridge were dancing higher, like excited demons, and heat rolled from the wood in waves.

“I’m right behind you! Go!”

Mali felt her feet carry her forward, heard the heat roaring all around her, felt its blistering teeth nipping at her ankles and toes as she tore across the bridge.

The ferns on the other side were wet and she crashed into them with relief, feeling welcoming licks from their soft, damp leaves.

Then she turned to look back.

She rolled over and cried out softly in her sleep.

The heat bellowed as Mali turned, the fire snarled with triumph, and she saw the roof of the bridge crash to a blistering reunion with the waiting beams of the floor.

She screamed, ran back toward it, but the heat was alive now. It took physical presence, a powerful fist that beat her back, singed and crying.

The fire grew too much for the bridge and, with a final crack, it plunged into the cool relief of the water.

Grandmam was nowhere.

And Kanoe could never catch up.

Mali staggered back, the tears of the ferns mingling with her own. Then she ran.

She rolled over, but her limbs stayed firmly where they were.

Wait... she wasn't rolling. She was holding completely still.

It was the world that was rolling beneath her.

Mali jerked awake. Darkness assailed her from every direction, but there was a faint gray light in the eastern sky. The world rocked around her and she stared at the floorboards beneath her body. Like ghost whispers, low voices reached her, and she craned her neck around to see her aunt wrapped in a blanket, talking quietly to her uncle, who was trying to coax more wind into the patched sails.

She hunkered down again, closing her eyes, though sleep had been no escape, not from what she had lived through.

After a few minutes or hours or days, she gave up and crawled to the side of the boat to peer back the way they had come.

As she worked herself up onto her knees, the wind caught her hair and sucked it across her face like a black mask. Something rustled beside her ear, complaining weakly at the breeze, and she reached a slim hand to the side of her head.

When she brought it away again, it held the *malio* flower.

It was crumpled now, charred at the edges, no longer velvet, but scarred paper. Wind, which before had only caressed it,

now tore little chunks of it away. It had curled in upon itself, five little mummy fingers trapped between her own smooth, living ones.

Mali's eyes lifted from the *malio* and found the horizon, a bright gray light against the dark and swaying sea. Like a lone palm tree silhouetted on a sand bar, a pillar of black smoke belched into the air, roiling unnaturally from the blistered rock that had once been an island.

Mali's eyes found the *malio* again, then watched it drop as she released it. It touched the gray waves and stayed for a moment before it sank, deeper and deeper, out of sight and gone.

# Today I Became a Man

by Alex Rodriguez

*First day at the University of Michigan*

No sleep all night. Nerves build up inside.  
Sweat drips. My hands tremble as I attempt to brush my teeth.  
Bags are packed and are stacked helpless in the car.  
Thirty minutes.  
I don't remember breathing the whole way. I don't even remember blinking once.  
Ten minutes.  
I've been to Ann Arbor once in my life for 3 hours. All I saw was the Mexican restaurant and the mall.  
So many new things. It looks so urban with influence of rural but it's collegiate.  
Zero minutes.  
There is a lot of commotion in front of Lloyd.  
Big blue buckets being wielded in and out of the building, in them an orgy of fridges, microwaves, and televisions.  
The people all look like me, nervous, confused, and just waiting for it to be all over.  
I go in, give them my name and I feel like a jail prisoner.  
They give me a shirt, they throw me a key and I am left to fend for myself.  
My dad is outside and I know he feels like crying. Oldest kid going away for the first time, two other, younger kids at home and a wife with Multiple Sclerosis.  
All my bags are in my room in two trips.  
4035 Klein.  
My future home.  
I'm still nervous, my roommate inside unpacking, his brother and mom there with him.  
I walk my dad to the car, he breaks my spine with a hug and takes my breath away when he says "make me and your mom

proud.”

I go upstairs, call the ex, she is already crying because I am gone, even though I will see her in a week.

I am still nervous. I have been waiting to be on my own since I was ten. But here I am debating if I have made a mistake.

I don't think that I am ready. I don't think that I will survive.

The kid across the hall calls me over with five other guys in there and offers me a shot.

I look at the tiny glass, barely big enough to cover three fingers and say

“Sure, why the hell not.”

# The Frog Prince

by Beth Wittenstein

You've heard the story. The princess kisses the frog, he turns into a handsome prince, and they live happily ever after. Or... is it—the princess gets mad, throws the frog at a wall, he falls down, turns into a prince, and then they live happily ever after? I can never be sure which ending to follow. It doesn't really matter. This story isn't about the Frog Prince anyway. It's about Peggy Lynn, a little girl who loves the story of the Frog Prince.

Peggy Lynn lived with her parents in a quaint but small house in a respectable neighborhood. They lived only a short drive from the main highway and a very short walk from a small pond behind their house. Peggy Lynn's father went to work everyday and her mother, a very traditional woman, stayed home cleaning the house because she didn't believe in hiring maids. The house was spotless. Peggy Lynn's mother never left a wrinkle in a bed she'd made or a speck of dirt on a floor she'd scrubbed. She worked hard ensuring that her house was always in pristine condition.

Peggy Lynn didn't do much at all aside from attending school five days a week. On weekends and afternoons, she played with a small golden ball her father once gave her and wandered outside. Peggy Lynn was a pretty girl, but she wasn't exceptionally beautiful. She had mousy brown hair, soft blue eyes, and several little freckles that dotted her nose. She tied back her curls with a green ribbon that matched the green dress she wore everyday. On her feet she wore plain black Mary Jane shoes and white socks with ruffles at the top. She was ordinary, from top to bottom.

One day, Peggy Lynn was walking around by the pond, tossing her golden ball in the air and then catching it again. After several minutes, she failed to catch the ball as it fell down from the air, and it rolled all the way down the hill and into the lake. Peggy Lynn immediately fell to the ground and started to weep.

She cried for several minutes before she noticed a small green frog sitting on a lily pad at the edge of the lake. She was overjoyed and stopped crying. She knew this story well—she would kiss this frog and he would become her prince.

“Frog,” she called, “Will you not fetch my ball from the lake? I will of course kiss you if you grant me the favor of retrieving my play thing.” She waited anxiously, but the frog just stared at her, blinking slowly. Peggy Lynn thought maybe the frog hadn’t heard her so she walked right to the very edge of the lake.

“Frog, please swim down to the bottom of the lake and bring up my ball. I will be most grateful and shall give you a kiss,” she said. The frog continued to gaze at her silently. “Please, Frog,” she pleaded, “If I kiss you first and return you to your true form will you swim down and fetch my ball?”

This time the frog replied with a hearty, “Ribbit!” Peggy Lynn accepted his reply as an answer and scooped up the frog in her hands. She lifted him to her face and kissed the top of his head. Nothing happened.

“Oh, just my luck. He isn’t a prince after all. Just an ugly little frog!” she cried. With that, she tossed the frog back into the lake and began to cry again.

“You’re crying because you just kissed an ugly frog aren’t you?” came a voice from the bushes, “Why would you do such a thing anyway?”  
attached to this one game.

A little boy walked out from behind the bushes and approached Peggy Lynn. He had wispy ginger hair, bright green eyes, and more freckles on his nose than even Peggy Lynn. His khaki pants were very dirty and he had rolled up the sleeves of his dark green button-down shirt exposing even dirtier forearms and hands. Peggy Lynn stopped crying once he walked over and looked at him with wonder.

The boy said, “Hello, my name is Henry Joe. What’s yours?” Peggy Lynn introduced herself and she and the boy began talking. She told Henry Joe about her ball falling to the bottom of the lake. He asked why she didn’t just swim down herself and retrieve it.



“I suppose I hadn’t thought of that. But, I’m not the best swimmer and my mother would kill me if I returned home all covered in dirt,” she answered.

“Well I’m already dirty,” Henry Joe replied, “and my mother never cleans so she won’t mind. I also love swimming. I’d swim all the time if I didn’t have to go to school. I’ll fetch your ball for you.”

He dove into the pond as Peggy Lynn waited anxiously on the side. Several seconds later, he swam up with her golden ball. “Oh!” Peggy Lynn squealed with delight as she ran over and hugged Henry Joe tightly, forgetting how dirty he was. Several more seconds later, she pulled away embarrassed, thanked him once more, took her ball, and ran home.

The next day, Peggy Lynn returned to the pond and was very excited to see Henry Joe playing with his own wooden yo-yo. They sat together and played for hours, starting a tradition that would last for years to come. One day, when they were older, they realized that their childhood friendship had flourished into a deep love for one another.

They soon got married and moved into a lovely home of their own. When Peggy Lynn became pregnant, the couple was overjoyed and Henry Joe spent several months furnishing and painting a nursery room that Peggy Lynn decorated with dark green curtains and bright white lilies to compliment the soft green walls and deep blue carpet. When the baby was born, his parents noted that his curious eyes were bright green and bug-eyed, he had no hair, and his face was already spotted with the freckles of his parents. They named him Freddy Paul, but always called him FP for short — Frog Prince.

So you see, what happens during the story doesn’t really matter. The “happily ever after” ending is always the same anyway. Kissing the frog didn’t bring Peggy Lynn happiness or love, and yet people always say that in life “you have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince.” Such a foolish hyperbole is very misleading. Peggy Lynn only kissed one frog after all. Her “prince” still came, and she and Henry Joe—as you can imagine—lived happily ever after. THE END.

# On the Plane from Frisco

by David Roston

Sitting on a plane  
With the sun on my lap  
and a pen in my hand  
I write on that sun  
and it bleeds ink  
Red ink  
Black pen  
Punctures a wound  
that bleeds the sun  
Fire and ice  
WATER!  
in my paper cup.  
Drink it up!  
honey pie  
sunny pie  
Ball of life  
Energy!  
and heat  
fills my body  
leaks from my eyes  
pours down my face  
and onto my shirt  
into my chest  
and out of my mouth.

## Truth is Not Manifested Through Shopping at Urban Outfitters

by Robbie Dembo

My body was whored for the gossip of the North Shore  
And cake-faced skeletons fixed their kids with anxiety medicine I  
sacrificed happiness for fashionable despair, they chemically per-  
fected their bread and their hair  
Gadgets and gizmos and fladgets and flizmos and stock markets  
and it's a buyers' market  
And enough is enough only when enough means more and more  
and more!  
And less only refers to weight, DUI's and credit score  
And—angst is so chic, and chic is so passé  
And—money can buy almost everything, but it can't fix yester-  
day  
My judgment was never 20-20, but my hindsight sure as hell  
was  
I blotted my blood soaked community with one detractor's  
ephemeral gauze  
Do you remember when 6 was 9, and when pigs could fly?  
I could switch on the truncated light of the divine  
But we would still memorialize the afterthoughts of teen suicide  
Mothers would lose sleep over what they could have done  
Fathers would look for ways to make mistakes more fun  
Teachers and pastors and peers alike  
Would start to forget that perfection was a price hike  
But who the fuck cares if half of this town is clinically depressed?  
As long as you smile when they watch you, you've won the con-  
test  
Women, go on and watch your idiot box Men, loosen your ties,  
start talking stocks  
I cruise through submission down a highway of attrition  
My synergy's been crushed by cataclysmic physicians  
It's hard to say we've been morphed but never moved

When we constantly demand to be approved  
Lucky for me, I never was an expense  
I've had enough time to nourish my own discontent  
It wasn't me, or you, or him, or her,  
But something somewhere made reality a blur  
A bird once chirped that we fear the unknown  
I replied with a bark that words hit harder than stones  
But, it was the elephant in the room  
The one who reeked of decadence and doom  
That so silently demolished my home

# Cavendish

by Samuel Shingledecker

Everyone's dying, but at their own rate.  
It may not be early, it may be too late.

This is rarely the case.  
We die far too soon.  
We die a little for everything we do.

We choose our pipe,  
find some Cavendish,  
and die a little there.

We light the match  
only to dim our light.

We first try it.  
We see if we like it,  
but it is just a false light.

We try and try to kindle the fire  
as so many try to finish a life.  
Soon we get the knack and gain a skill.

Smoke drifts from us  
mingled with the slowly departing  
soul.

We try it again.  
We try it with friends.  
We don't feel that well when the night ends.

Yet don't be consoled.  
It's not over yet.

We still die a little even if we quit.

We lose that pleasure  
and that friendly fun,  
even though it crystallizes our lungs.

And you too can't get off scot free,  
despite no scented misery.

Even without such chemical forays,  
you die with me each night, each day.

When you could run you sit where you lay.  
With high fructose corn syrup for death you too pay.  
We hurt each other with the words we don't say.  
We rarely choose right when filling our tray.  
Hell, many of you non-smokers'll gladly blaze a jay.

But

We're all dying each and every day.  
Some faster than others; each in our own way.  
It would at least make sense if we weren't so eager  
to stay.

The true work of  
art is but a shadow  
of the divine perfection.  
--Michelangelo



Olivia Su  
*So Close, Yet So Far*





Sam Goodman  
*Ganges Sunrise*



Daniel Kim  
*squirrel*



Eric Harman  
*Self-Portrait*



David Roston  
*Looking inSide David*



David Roston  
*Medusa*





Alisa Modylevsky  
*P-ROK*



Sam Goodman  
*Taj Mahal*



Robbie Dembo  
*Max*



Katelin Krieg  
*Eden*





Brian Surguine  
*school 5*



David Roston  
*13 (bench)*





Talyah Sands  
*tilly*



Robbie Dembo  
*Devi*



Sam Goodman  
*Spanish Mosque*



Alexander Stuessy  
*Stone Pumpkins*



Brian Surguine  
*Girl at Jax Beach*



Robbie Dembo  
*Jeff guitar*





Daniel Kim  
*ambience*



Olivia Su  
*Orange Study*



Talyah Sands  
*olives*



Daniel Kim  
*bridge*



David Roston  
*17 (forest)*





David Roston  
*Louis XIV*



Daniel Kim  
*vestige*



Robbie Dembo  
*bell white*



Talyah Sands  
*sink or swim*



Daniel Kim  
*wrong way*



Sam Goodman  
*droplets*





Beth Wittenstein  
*black & white*



Talyah Sands  
*intertwined*



Daniel Kim  
*eyes*



Daniel Kim  
*golden rust*

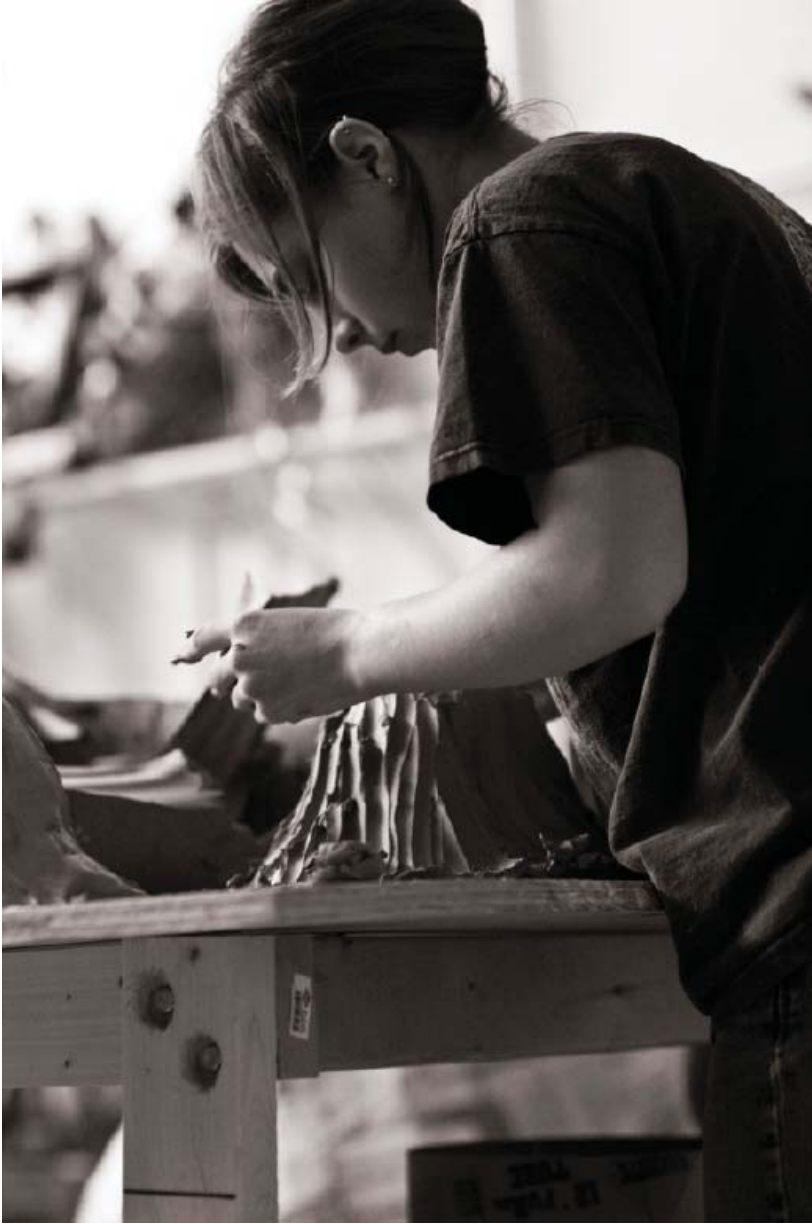




Festifools photos taken by Myra Klarman.













FEATURED ART.

# A View of the Hill

by Alisa Modylevsky

Ink-blotter dot people surround  
sharp grass blades freshly covered  
in quietly lain white blankets,  
like the splatters of Pollack's paintings,  
a collage of serenity and insanity  
poured into one bowl;

The scattered students shout  
in vain,  
like the wistfully gnarled  
charcoal branches of the trees,  
outstretched and begging  
for the leaves of spring to clothe them;

Yet is there anyone to hear the childlike cries of terror  
disguised in the form of frustrated juvenile rebellion?  
Or shall the confused silence of the bright-eyed youths  
Forever remain buried  
Like the shrouded solemn hills?

This all and more  
I see from the cold glass confines  
That press against my nose



# Black-Pawed Warrior, Yellow-Eyed King

by Noveed Safipour

Once, my family had a cat. His name was Ramon. When I envision him now, I see a black-furred creature with long, muscled legs and a broad body stretched out against the carpet in the living room of our California home. Here, he relaxes for eternity in a patch of sunshine on the floor, a golden, sacred throne of light. I will always prefer to remember him like this; when I recall much else, the memories turn profane: a scratch on my nose, suffocating fur in my face, the merciless hiss. These memories are better forgotten, but perhaps they are best when recreated into a new being of the past...

Somehow, Mother convinced us that Ramon should be put to sleep. I don't remember what technique she used when speaking to Roxana, my elder sister of two years, and me about her decision, though I vaguely recall the soothing words "He's in a lot of pain, and it's time to let him rest." As an innocent fourth grader, I don't think I fully understood what was going on. Euthanasia just felt like a responsibility—no different from finishing my homework, doing my chores, and making sure I went to bed by 9:00 p.m. every night. She said it had to be done, and I agreed.

When his final day came, though, everything felt more real. Ramon spent the morning unsuspectingly, as he had most mornings since he'd turned 17 years old, the equivalent of 76 in human years: moping around the house as an old, weak, feeble feline, and curling up in dark corners, neglecting the affection of the sun and his people. His luxurious coat of fur had gained many gray hairs, and his yellow eyes maintained a naïve, blank stare. When he was more youthful, Mother had sometimes spent hours chasing him around the house with a cardboard cat box, and her, my sister and I would form a three-person team, all attempting to catch this fierce warrior fighting for his freedom. On that day, though, Mother only had to scoop him up and disregard the panicked claws digging into her

skin for long enough to gently dump him into his confinement.

She then proceeded out to the car, but just before she left I interjected: "Mom, I don't want Ramon to die."

Her lips puffed outward a little and her eyes narrowed at the ends, as if she wanted to cry, but couldn't. She spoke sympathetically, sorrowfully, and said we didn't have a choice; she then quickly left with Ramon before anyone else could intervene.

I stumbled over to the family room, my eyes unsure of where I was going, my feet questioning the ground they crossed. Why should Ramon die? Sure, his age made him hard to take care of, but couldn't we keep him alive a bit longer? Just long enough so I could see him tomorrow morning, resting in his sun patch by the window, and know he was happy with everything in life?—that he was happy with me?

I soon found myself bundled in a ball on our blue, folded-up sofa-bed, my eyes starting to water. I had finally realized that I would never again see Ramon moving, meowing, or breathing. Roxana then entered the room, still in her night clothes and her hair uncombed, disheveled, and stopped five feet away from me. "It's okay," she said. "I don't want him to die, too."

And then my vision was blurred by tears, and the two of us stayed there for a while, stuttering and crying and thinking about the loss of the fifth member of our family.

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Less than a year later, my great aunt Delia Paullada died of old age. She had lived in a nursing home in Los Angeles, where she had an apartment with furniture, a television she used to watch soaps all day, and a cross with Jesus bleeding on it. Whenever we visited her, she spoke of nothing but death and how her end was coming, and we would feel sorry for her—but when Aunt Delia finally died, I didn't shed a tear.

In sixth grade, our close family friend Lynn Ellner finally passed away from cancer. I remember one night, about six months before she breathed her last breath in a hospital bed, Mother came home bawling, saying that she didn't think Lynn was going to make it. Father came and hugged her, and as the

two embraced, I stood there watching, looking somewhat emotionless. I felt sympathetic and terrible and sad, but I didn't cry.

So far in life, I have encountered death many times in many different forms—my Father's dad, who only knew Farsi and therefore communicated with me through laughs and smiles; my friend's grandmother, who had taught me how to do crossword puzzles; the sweet secretary from the kindergarten through eighth grade school I'd attended, who often had a pleasant grin and whenever I felt ill gave me Advil. Sometimes I've cried, and other times I've mourned internally. But for some reason, none of them make me feel such strange pain and such baffling regret as with Ramon—the cat who strode through our home's hallways like an anonymous soldier parading off to a war he knew he'd lose.

Whenever I first reflect on him, my initial question is why—why should a cat, a pet often known to ignore his owner and do as he pleases, arouse more misery in me than people who talked to me, cared for me, or even loved me. Ramon had never shown much concern for me. But then I realize that's precisely the point: between him and me, an epic sort of tension always overshadowed any connection that we had.

I remember when I was five, Mother decided to teach my sister and me how to hold him properly. She gently picked him off the floor, his padded black paws dangling below, and then securely placed one arm around his body and the other below his bottom. Roxana held him first, and Mom applauded her, told her "very good." Ramon purred an official declaration of satisfaction, but otherwise gave no reaction.

Upon my turn, however, as Mother placed him in my arms, Ramon made a hiss, threw his paw in the air, whacked my nose with his sharp claws of iron, and after a vicious wriggle leapt out of my arms. I began to cry, and Mother fawned over my nose apologetically. Ramon lurked off to the side and glared at me, as if I had somehow invaded his territory and provoked his wrath.

I don't think I held Ramon very much after that. Actually, I can't remember if I ever tried to hold him again at all, for his black paws had permanently instilled a painful memory in my brain. Yet

for each painful memory like his black paws there also exists a more positive counterpart, like his yellow eyes: two beautiful, brooding objects that revealed the noble soul of this aggressive fighter.

With these eyes, he played games with us. His spirit jumped to life whenever our family tempted Ramon with anything from a simple strand of string to a grey, toy mouse. As he lay on my parents' bed, I remember many times dragging the mouse across the comforter, right below his nose. His pupils would follow this critter, until suddenly he would attack wildly, leaping towards it and then tackling it with his claws.

This was not, however, the Ramon I encountered as an infant. At a young age, I began to have terrible ear aches and fevers, horrific allergic reactions that caused my parents to stay up late at night, worrying. When they finally took me to the doctor, he reported that these were signs of allergic reactions; my Eustachian tubes—which were abnormally small—were swelling, creating much pain for me. A visit to an allergist revealed the source of the problem: I was reacting to cat dander.

For a while, Mother and Father debated over whether or not to keep Ramon. Father felt getting rid of him would save money and effort; he always looked at things practically. But Mother decided she couldn't let him go so easily, for she had kept him for so long, raising him since he was a kitten. Soon, the bathroom cabinets were overflowing with allergy medications—Claritin, Sudafed, Allegra. The trouble Ramon caused seemed an unworthy burden, a cobweb covering Mother's heart.

Over time, though, I became aware of why we kept him. One night when I was around 10 years old, I remember reading on the couch in our living room. Raindrops repeatedly smashed against the roof, as the tall pine tree and the even taller plain tree in our backyard swayed in the wind, when suddenly the lights flicked off—the power had gone out. Father went about the house setting up flashlights and candles, while

I huddled in the dark, alone. But once I had a flashlight in hand and waved it about the room, I noticed the two beaming, golden eyes lurking in the dark against the opposite wall, those of a king guarding over his domain. I then felt like there was someone to protect me.

And so I began to see two different sides to Ramon: the pain and the pleasure, two perspectives battling it out in my brain. When I tried to feed him, he often refused to eat, and I felt unappreciated—but then I would see him bathing in his sunlight throne, his two pointy fangs slipping outside of his mouth in a delightful grin, and I knew he appreciated life. I remember Mother often telling me throughout my youth how once, when I was a baby, he sat on me, and she had to peel him off me to let me breathe—but on most nights, just as my parents closed the door to my room, I usually asked if Ramon could come in and sleep with me at night. To me, he was a paradox, both a kind-hearted pet and a wild animal at the same time. He was a burden to me, but over time I learned to love him and tried my best to treat him with care, even though it wasn't reciprocated.

In the final years before his death, Ramon began to meow loudly, with a sense of hopeless confusion that now reminds me of the third act in *King Lear*, when he wails miserably in a storm on the British coast and laments over the fool he has become, the power and royalty he has lost. Slowly, Ramon's pounce when playing with string grew weaker and weaker, until eventually he ignored all play and didn't move at all. We sensed that his body—once the strong build of a Roman gladiator—was wearing out.

Confirmation of this came when Mother decided to rearrange the furniture in our living room, just for variety purposes. An hour later, she was stunned to hear Ramon wailing much louder than usual, as if in a great panic. She soon found him shivering in the middle of the living room, alone and afraid. As he stumbled about, he clumsily bumped into the chairs and tables and sofas in the room, frantically jolting back every time he felt an unexpected object. It was at that point we realized Ramon was only getting around the house by his sense of memory, and nothing else. Along with his sight, his health too began to deteriorate. After many trips to his doctor, we learned his liver was failing, and

soon he would have to be force fed with a turkey baster. I later was told that the veterinarian suggested we put him to sleep, but Mother objected for a while: she couldn't stand the thought of killing her cat. A raging internal debate plagued her for weeks, all as Ramon grew older and more ill, until a moment came while she was taking a nap. Using all of his energy, Ramon tugged on the comforter of my parents' queen-sized bed, gradually pulling himself up, until at last he reached over the top, wandered over towards Mother and collapsed beside her. Mother says she felt he was letting her know, "I'm ready," and her decision was finally made.

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I talked to Mom on the phone recently and brought up Ramon. She expressed fond memories of him and said she wished I had known him better—seen him when he was at his full youth. I asked if he really had sat on me as a baby, and she instantly shot down the claim. She said Ramon had been a sweet cat, and besides, they had bought a special cradle cover to make sure he couldn't get in.

"I'm sure I had told you cats are known to sit on babies because they are attracted to breast milk," she said. "Perhaps me telling you that mixed up your memory."

And that's the truth of the matter: my memories of Ramon are mixed-up, fluttering about inside my disorganized head. To me, he's a myth that dominated my childhood, like the gods and monsters of ancient Greece. If I'm Odysseus, he's both Athena and the Cyclops. For Mother, Ramon played one role: a loving, irreplaceable pet. For me, he played two: an emperor and a villain, a knight and a beast, but always detached; forever an abstract entity I'll never understand—that will never love me back.

When Mother returned home with his lifeless body, though, he did seem like a cat. He was lying on a towel in his cat box, powerless and seemingly asleep. Roxana asked if she could pet him, and though it seemed creepy, I did too. I let his dander infect my hands one last time. To me, it didn't matter



matter anymore if I reacted badly. I wanted to pet him and know he was content.

We buried him in our backyard, Father digging for an afternoon to get the hole the right depth. Mother bought a square slab of marble to mark the spot, one surely fit for royalty. We had a brief ceremony that I don't quite remember—I think Mother might have read one of T.S. Elliot's poems on cats—but I do remember that afterwards, I realized I had forgotten something: I hadn't held him before he went underneath the earth. I never let him know for sure, in one final embrace close to my chest, that I never had wanted to harm him; that despite the problems he caused, he wasn't a burden; that all the tension between him and I meant nothing; and that I had just wanted to love him, all of him, from his yellow eyes down to black paws, deep into his soul, and beyond—and even though it will never be mutual, love him I still do.

# M.B.

by Patricia White

I am a surgeon,  
Scrubbing in and scrubbing out  
I am cold and I am hard  
I am stronger than ceramics that surround me  
I take this procedure seriously, not lightly, not playfully  
This is my job, this is my life  
I am a surgeon,  
So dependent to my task  
As free to it as captive,  
Driven to seize time and space for feeling  
My mandatory repetition clinging to my days and nights  
But – this is my job, this is my life.  
I am a surgeon  
With one hand down, one up  
I am serious and harsh,  
So what if I defy this unpolluted place?  
So with the sting upon my hands, I scrub in and I scrub out  
Because – this is my job, this is my life.  
I am a surgeon  
Hunched and bunched and torn apart  
I am invisible and viewed  
The task is done; obsession satisfied  
And I'll just keep on drinking water, I'll recover  
I know because – this is my job, this is my life,  
I am a surgeon.

# Sea Heart

by Katelin Krieg

My eyes dart back and forth—  
She is nowhere to be found;  
Lost in the sea of blank, expressionless faces,  
Shuffling feet, humming voices.  
But wait!  
She surfaces  
From the heads bobbing on waves.  
Those without sea legs.  
I fight the tide of bodies,  
Swimming against the great human undertow,  
Only to reach her.  
Knocked about, I lose my bearings.  
My port is my starboard,  
My stern is my bow.  
Lost again, my love has vanished from my eyes.

I stop in a lonely alleyway;  
Send a searching glance down the long corridor.  
Land ho!  
She is found.  
I rush to her, my wobbly sea legs a-quiver, and  
Stop  
Short.

She meets,  
Greets with affection,  
Another.  
I watch from the dark corner,  
Nonexistent in her mind,  
A forgotten conch,  
No longer the far off voice of the sea  
Whispering in her ear.

She departs from the other,  
(her lover, perhaps?)  
and my rage seeps into my marrow,  
like the raindrops into my overcoat.

In the glow of the streetlight,  
Under a large umbrella,  
She pauses.  
Contemplation overtakes her dainty features.  
I approach, silent as a jungle cat,  
Her tiny frame effortlessly my prey,  
If only my fingers could grip around

That delicate, exquisite neck.  
She gasps, feeling my presence.  
Our eyes lock,  
And my decision to keep her to myself—  
Permanently—  
Has been overturned,  
Like the verdict of a fickle judge.

A smile creeps across my cracked lips,  
And I cannot help but think of her narrow escape.  
“Good evening, ma’am,” I sneer.  
A look of confusion is quickly replaced by a hesitant smile,  
As she nods to me and scampers off.  
I retreat back into the night,  
An unknown, forsaken lover.

# Good Mama Part 1

by Ardella Williams

I remember so clearly the force of malice as your teeth clutched down on skin so much lighter than mine, hoping to awaken you from sticky tangled cobwebs that constantly hospitalized you as leg muscles locked into tight spasms, no longer sending electrical vibrations through nerves to your cerebellum. Bronzed skin wrinkled and sagging on a bathroom stool in a chipped white tub only to enforce that your personal hygiene remained clean.

You were never there.

Locked within yourself as brown eyes grew black hoping to regain memories that were so impaired by the exclusion of diagnosis that kept you away. You wanted so much to regain the image of his handsome light face, a man you spent the majority of your life with. The nights you brought your baby girls home, the sound of water running over pots and pans with traditional herbal remedies.

They miss you.

Tears dropping within ponds of soapy water praying to regain opinions so strong, only hoping to forget that late phone call. Eager to overlook how time seemed to be in a complete jumble as you drove down streets, finally pulling over asking two teenage girls how to get you home.

They brought you back.

Yet tears would not be held back from barriers of principles you built. Though you were forgiven for leaving them all alone crying hoarse screams of panic and fear.

Still we never blame you.

It was not your fault that you became a victim as chemicals froze on I-94, stuck in traffic jams heading back home to memories of happy tiny green bowls filled with chitlins and olives.

They miss you.

Yet you love on through their constant stories. You became a heroic character, a storm full of mystery and absolute greatness

conceived from the strongest of African blood and the fierce toughness of a black panther gracing the Earth with you elegance, sultriness, and sly savvies.

You will always be our Good Mama.



# The Eye

by Annie Traurig

At the core, there is me.  
Molded from the pressure of my parent's hands-  
Gentle and forceful motions  
Until out of unformed shape,  
I came to be.

They crafted me in certain ways-  
Under weight of palm they rolled out  
Thighs, my lips, arms, a pair of hands  
Taking bare to attach clay fingers of compassion,  
Knuckles of reflection.

(I imagine the forming of my skull to be a joint effort between  
right palm of hers and left palm of his- they moved in alternating,  
circulating movements until the form was round)  
and rendered:

Head.  
Brown tendrils atop, neighboring ears  
And, especially-  
They chose a piece to be my eyes  
Which they connected by cable  
Right to the hollow of my chest  
Wherein, with rush of wind,  
Blew soul.

With dazed eyes I distinguish sculptors and sister  
With soul I recognize kin-  
The forms of their bodies learned,  
The maps of their face lines memorized:  
My First World.

Soon new beings peer in and  
My baby eye widens to perceive:  
Grandparent, aunt, uncle,  
Family giving rise to more family:  
A second ring of ties to comprehend.

Quickly- school.  
And able eye sees friends, teacher, enemies,  
Mind races to file away each face of  
Third World Country  
In memory.

Life rushes on and mindful eye  
Attends summer camps, high school,  
Travels to workplaces, university, lands far away.  
Each venture brings exposure to beings  
Whose existence was once unknown.

(With each step taken I feel a new world form, like concentric  
circles which swell outward from a central vertex)  
As I move through the rings,  
The thought occurs to me that  
I must know everyone.  
To date- the number of faces catalogued in my mind  
Must number in the millions.

Hungry and boastful in my desire to add to this amount,  
I dash away from center point where I am  
Confronted by faces unknown, forms unlearned.  
I understand then that I know so few,  
That I have so many yet to perceive,  
That there are those I will never travel far enough outward to  
reach.

Overwhelmed in the quest,  
I retreat,  
Abandoning the abyss.  
I pass through each ring  
Until my eye recognizes the scenery.  
Until warm breath of soul,  
Ushered in by parents,  
Whispers, surreptitiously:  
*At the core, there is me.*

# El Horno

by Danielle Taubman

The mother mashes corn to make tortillas

Breathing in the kitchen's fumes

The girl plays with her father's machete

Unthinking

The boy watches us

The Americans

Unabashed

What do they think of me?

Am I Gringo?

Intruding

Or am I here to understand?

The farmer cries in his field

The hammock snaps

Held up by threads

The midwife looks at her husband living next door with another  
woman

The fifteen-year-old grasps his newborn child for the first time

Scared

Through the thin mattress I can feel the rough ground

Sleepless

Restless

The government shuts the light off

Prevents the town from showering

No one is clean anyway

The world is dirty always

## I Served Dinner at Half Past Nine

by Trevor Maat

I served dinner at half past nine  
To my guests who questioned "Where is your wife?"  
And rather than give an untimely reply,  
I simply inquired, "Shall we dine?"

Around the table sat four guests and I  
The conversation was good, so too the red wine  
Until at ten they heard the ticking clock chime  
And one guest demanded, "Well, where is your wife?"

With a start I replied "Let's play a game-  
That is of course, if you want to play."  
"Let us finish eating," they complained,  
"How can we let all this fine food go to waste?"

So I sat at the table, watching the sight  
As they disgustingly ate every last bite.  
Until finally they thought that the time was right  
To try their luck at a game that night.

"We'll play a guessing game," I said,  
"So let's all hope you're clear in the head."  
With that they all smiled not knowing the red  
Stains on the carpet were from another bright head.

"The first question is easy, and simple you see:  
Can you figure out where my late wife could be?"  
They then all together sighed in relief,  
Finding comfort in knowing she was safe with me.

"Well, she can't be here," said the uptight Mrs. Greer.  
I replied with a sneer, "You're wrong there my dear."

My guests then sat still, not knowing how clear  
I was actually being, and they still don't I fear.

"Maybe she's in bed," said another fine guest.  
"Or just getting dressed," said old Mr. Largess.  
"Or She finally left you!" said a friend in good jest.  
"No," I assured, "perhaps you'll hear her while you digest."

Soon an hour went by, but try as they might  
They couldn't find my wife in the house that night.  
At half past eleven, they begged to rise  
And to leave me and bid me a very good night.

They said "The dinner was good, it tasted fine,"  
And "Send her our compliments when you locate your wife."  
From my porch I stood waving in the dark twilight  
To the weight in their stomachs, my dear late wife.



## The Fifth Wheel

by Keesha Hargrow

It was a chilly autumn night, the streets filled with sexy cops, provocative cab drivers, monsters and superheroes, and I was sitting in my bed staring out the window, glad that I wasn't at home where little annoyingly cute kids would knock on the door and ask for candy, which is something that is more annoying when you're too old to do it yourself. Everyone in the dorm was going to some type of Halloween party except me; I was in no partying mood, although the thought of putting on a mask and pretending that I was someone else for a night tickled my curiosity.

It would be nice to just disappear into the shadows and not have to worry about anything.

Even though I wasn't going to a Halloween party, I wasn't going to just sit in my dorm and look stupid for another weekend. My cousin Ashley planned to make sure of that. We were going out on a triple date--Ashley and her boyfriend, Junior; Ashley's girlfriend Alyssa and her boyfriend; and me and whoever Alyssa could cook up for me. But the idea seemed like a bad one from the start because I wasn't trying to get setup. My mind was elsewhere, and I was very depressed about it.

We were all in my room and everyone was waiting on me. Junior was in the corner messing with my roommate's things while Alyssa stared at some Lifetime movie on TV. Ashley wanted me to go and get dressed while she cleaned up my side of the dorm room, which was very junky. I was usually a very tidy person but lately it was like I didn't care. I took off dirty clothes and left them on my bed along with a lot of other random stuff, and my bed wasn't made. I wasn't surprised when Ashley said that she was going to clean. I already knew that it was a mess.

"It's eleven o'clock now, so hurry up and get ready so we can go," Ashley said. She started to clean off my bed.

I sighed heavily, knowing that if I told her that I didn't want to go it would ruin the night for everyone because we were

using my mom's car to go out.

"Alright," I told her and gathered my stuff.

"Where's the bathroom at?" Junior asked. He was sitting on the other side of the room with a cigarette in his hand, anxious to light it but I made sure to tell him that he couldn't. I really wasn't sure what Ashley saw in him. He was a scrawny boy who looked lost in his baggy jeans and over-sized coat. He annoyed the hell out of me.

"It's down the hall," I told him. I was about to leave just when I almost forgot my key.

"Damn, you need a key to get in the bathroom? This place is like a prison!" Junior just went on and on, and no one was really listening. I didn't respond to the prison comment. I had come to that conclusion before. I didn't need to be reminded because sleeping in the tiny room and taking uncomfortable showers in a community bathroom were enough evidence that it was most definitely like a prison, except the bars keeping students in were the high expectations of parents and friends and the desire to be the best. I couldn't stay there every weekend; I had to escape.

I took my sweet time going down to the bathroom because I had a feeling that I was going to be disappointed when I got there, as I always am every time I buy a brand new outfit to wear. It had been a while since I went shopping for new clothes and I should have been excited but I was only depressed. When the outfit is in the store it looks cute and I think that I will look so good in it, but then when I get it home it's like I was picturing the outfit on someone other than myself because a second look tells me that it is definitely not my size or there is something else wrong with it, like it's defected or something. Or maybe I was defected.

Shopping had always discouraged me because I wasn't the average sized girl, and it was hard to find clothes that would fit me, especially at the last minute. And if I'm shopping with my older sister or someone it is much worse because it is not only frustrating for me but for them too and patience begins to run thin.

My senior prom was a perfect example. It was supposed

to be the best time of the year, only a few weeks left of school and one last night to get together with all my high school buddies and party. It was a time to go all out and buy ridiculously expensive stuff and get your hair done in the shop and get your nails done and your toes done and rent a limo because you put in four years in that hell hole and it was time to get your just desserts. I normally didn't go to proms and dances, but senior year was the year that I told myself that I would stop acting so anti-social and participate in things. I told myself that I would give in to conformity and be materialistic for one night because I definitely deserved it. I was going to splurge on myself for once and have fun, and I was going to ask a good friend of mine to come with me.

However, as I have learned over time, things never go the way that you plan them. I didn't consider the fact that my friend didn't like girls anymore--but that wasn't the reason why he wasn't going to take me. It was because he was broke and he couldn't dance. I could relate to that, but I was going to prom anyway, and I decided to go stag and take my cousin Ashley along with me. Who needed a date?

I didn't begin shopping for my dress until the week of prom, and of course I didn't have any money. At the time I wasn't working and it was hard to save money when you didn't have any. So my sister told me that she would buy me a dress and shoes and gave me a \$100 limit. I wasn't sure what type of dress I would find for under \$100 and then some cheap shoes, but it was better than nothing.

I hated shopping. It was kind of like buying a bunch of new stuff for an old car and trying to fix it up, but in the end it just doesn't work out.

We must have gone to 4 different stores to find a dress for me. They were all either too much or too small. All of the traditional dresses with the glitter and ruffles were at least a \$100, but it didn't matter because there weren't any that would fit me. I did find a peach colored gown with a plunging neckline that tied up in the back that fit me quite snugly, but if I got it I would go to the prom without shoes. My sister wasn't really any help be-

cause she was trying on dresses herself, and looking quite good in them even for a four month pregnant woman. And it wasn't difficult for Ashley to find a dress because she was a slim girl who had to wear at least a size five or close to it. I felt left out because I couldn't find anything. In the end I did find a simple red dress which revealed my cleavage quite nicely but revealed more of my body than I would have liked. Ashley found herself a green ruffled glittery dress that completely outshined my dress. The envy in my eyes shined and glittered just as her dress did.

I stood there in the bathroom looking at myself in jeans that were too small and I wanted to cry and curse whatever person or force was responsible for the misfortune of people. I sighed deeply and sauntered back to the room with a drooping face. Part of me knew that it was going to happen.

Ashley could read the disappointment on my face when I got back in the room.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"They don't fit," I said flatly.

"Come here, let me see." Together we attempted to make my jeans fit but it was fruitless effort. There was no way that they would fit. So Ashley began to rummage through my sparse drawers to find me something else to wear, and by this time I was really certain that someone or something was out to get me. I wasn't one to believe in luck and all of that, but when so many things could go wrong in one night there was no other explanation. I really didn't want to go anymore when Ashley pulled out a wrinkled pair of jeans and told me to see how the outfit would look. I had on a stretchy red, black, and white blouse with a low cut and red "ballerina shoes" with my wrinkled pair of jeans. I wasn't feeling anything that I had on.

"You don't like it? I think it's cute," Ashley said, but I knew she was just saying it to make me feel better.

"I would rather be wrinkled up than too small," Junior chimed in from the corner.

I sighed deeply again. I looked at Ashley, who was dressed in more tomboyish attire--blue jeans, a tight-fitting cotton sweater jacket, and blue and white Jordan's. She looked comfortable

and cute in her clothes. Then I glanced at Alyssa, who was celebrating her 20th birthday that night and was looking really hot in her knee-high boots and tight jeans. I felt ugly and out of place. As I looked in the mirror I could see that the shirt was way too tight and the belt that I had tried to wear around it didn't help much.

"You don't want to go, do you?"

I shrugged.

"We're gonna have fun, Keesh. Didn't I promise you that we were gonna have fun? You said you wanted to celebrate doing so good on your midterms."

I looked down at my feet. "I don't like the way that it looks."

"It looks fine, okay? Now, you need to finish getting ready. I'm 'bout to go smoke a cigarette with Junior in the car."

She and Junior left while Alyssa helped me with my hair.

"I'm so not feeling this outfit..." I muttered.

"Why not? I think you look sexy," Alyssa told me. It sounded sincere, but I didn't buy it.

The original plan for the night was a trip to the city--Detroit--to meet up with some old friends of Ashley's and Alyssa's and for me to meet this guy that I had been talking to on the phone. His name was Gene, and he was friends with the guys that Ashley and Alyssa used to talk to a while back. It wasn't like some random blind date where you got some completely different description about the stranger that you were meeting. No, this was much more different. I actually knew Gene through Ashley. We had met last summer when Ashley's ex-boyfriend Lamar came over to see her. At the time Alyssa was talking to the other guy who was with them (his name was Tay). Our meeting was actually kind of interesting because I was completely oblivious to the fact that Gene had any interest in me whatsoever.

Ashley was outgoing and always meeting new people, while I kept to myself. When her new friends would come around I would pretend to have interest in something else and not be part of the conversation. And usually her friends try and make

conversation but I block them out. Gene, however, was different. He was quite forward and wanted to “lay down with me,” whatever that meant. I didn’t know what to say, so I guess he took it as a no. As usual, I was cold and distant to someone, but the surprising thing was that Gene asked Ashley about me when I wasn’t around. It felt good to know that someone was interested in me because I was so clueless when it came to guys that I never seemed to have a meaningful or long-lasting relationship that didn’t end in heart-break.

It wasn’t until recently, however, that I called Gene up and tried to arrange plans for our meeting. For the past three weeks I had painstakingly attempted to arrange the perfect meeting but something always seemed to come up—either I had to work or he had to take care of his daughter. This particular weekend was supposed to be the one when everything was supposed to fall into place. I went to so much trouble to get everything together, even while I was supposed to be working. I honestly couldn’t believe it when he said that we should get together. My instant response was, “really?” I couldn’t believe that things were looking up for me, and it set my expectations so high for the night.

And then, it happened. My hopes were popped like a balloon when I received a message from Gene that said, “I’m sorry I’m not feeling good. Don’t think that I don’t like you because I do.”

I wanted to cry. I wanted to say, “Forget men.”

Before our little Plan-B date was to take place Alyssa had to call her friend up and make the set up happen, so we decided to go to Burger King to eat. I was kind of hungry, so my discouragement went away while I ate my double cheese burger and fries and slurped my purple berry Icy. Food was like a relief to me at times. When I was feeling down or upset I could fill myself up and feel good again, and usually eating would make me drift into a peaceful slumber. I liked to eat like everyone else, but I had weird tastes. Ever since I had started staying in my dorm at college I hadn’t been eating any normal foods, only fast foods



and Subway. I hadn't had a home-cooked meal in the longest. When I was at home everything was okay--I'd occasionally scarf down the meal that my mom made and eat some snacks once in a while, but college life was a survival, and when you're on a Wendy's and Subway budget you are broke fast. It was a sweet temptation that I couldn't resist, and it was a swift and sure ride to the "Freshman Fifteen," which is more like the Freshman Thirty.

After we ate we drove around while Alyssa called. And called. And called. No answer. Yet another screwed up plan.

"Now he don't wanna answer his phone," she fumed.

"So what are we gonna do now?" Ashley asked her.

"Hmm...I'ma try and call Smoke and see what's poppin'."

Smoke was another one of her friends, and he was also Junior's cousin.

I had given up hope by this time.

Smoke lived in Belleville and was at his boy's house chilling. So that became our next destination. I looked out the window as we soared down I-94 in deep thought. I assumed that what would happen would be that I was going to get Smoke's friend while Ashley had Junior and Alyssa had Smoke. I would be with a total stranger. The more that I thought about it, the less I wanted to go. My mind was on Gene, and even though I was having angry thoughts about him, they were thoughts nonetheless. He was the one person that I WANTED to be with that night.

We had driven around Belleville for at least an hour because Alyssa's friend Smoke wasn't answering his phone. Just as we were going to call it a night she had reached him at the last minute and we were on our way to the house he was at. It was located in a very suburban-type neighborhood with big houses and big lawns that looked like empty football fields. The white Focus crept through the silent streets like a ghost searching for the house. There was a row of cars parked in front of a large house that looked like a mansion. We could see people in the window and hear music. It was a party.

I was starting to feel a little better because I honestly

didn't want to be with someone that I didn't know by myself. So I put on my lip-gloss and fixed my hair and made sure that my clothes looked okay before we walked up to the door. There was something less terrifying about being with a lot of people at a party.

Junior went in before us. I was glad. I was beginning to feel a little bit more comfortable with myself as we approached the enormous front door. It reminded me something of a mansion, especially once we got inside. There was a grand staircase and a chandelier hanging from the wall, and there was a large pit couch in the living room. The walls were cream-colored to match the couch, and the carpet was burgundy. I didn't go past the living room to see the rest of the house, but I could only wonder what type of "prince" lived in a house like that.

Smoke greeted us as we walked into a small room by the front door where a bunch of men were shooting dice. He gave Alyssa an affectionate hug to wipe the mean mug off of her face. Junior was among the men in the room. Smoke was a short, dark, chubby guy who didn't seem very attractive to me. I feigned a smile and shook his hand when Ashley introduced us. A tall, skinny man brushed past and Smoke told us that he was his boy Wes, the owner of the house. He specifically turned to me and asked me how I was doing. I smiled to myself and said fine. I wasn't going to take it out of context, however. He looked alright, but he was worlds taller than I was. I couldn't imagine myself with someone that tall.

About an hour had passed before I was officially bored and ready to go home. The men were still gambling and the CD player was beginning to skip. I sat on the stairs and stared at the TV. There was some Discovery Channel thing on. Ashley and Alyssa were watching their men gamble. Wes had been busy all night and buzzing from room to room like a good host. He came over to the stairs because he had to get by, and he asked me, Ashley, and Alyssa who was going to go up stairs with him and they both pointed to me so fast. I shook my head vigorously. I don't need to go there again...

When Wes came back downstairs he went and got Hei-

neken Beers and offered them to us. I really wanted to enjoy myself so I asked for one. The smell of it made my stomach turn worse than sour milk did. I just knew that it would be horrible. It wasn't my first time trying alcohol, so I tried to suck it up and throw it down my throat, as Ashley told me, but it wasn't working.

I wanted to go home, especially when Smoke went up and gave Alyssa another hug, and then Junior gave Ashley a hug, and they were all playing around while I was alone looking stupid as the fifth wheel, as usual.

I could be doing better things right now, I told myself. I got that writing assignment that's due Tuesday that I haven't started on. And I got that reading to catch up on, there's no telling when there'll be a pop quiz...

I decided to put off these assignments and have fun this weekend to celebrate doing so well on my midterms, which really meant just getting them over with and passing. I had really slipped far since high school. Back then I was trying to get my homework done before I got home. Since I had been in college it was like, "I'll get to it eventually," and I would end up stressing myself out at the last minute.

Part of me even questions why I'm in college. In high school there was structure. I didn't really need it but it was there, like a safety net hanging under me to catch me if I fell and I could pick myself up and carry on. In college there is no safety net, and if you fall it's a long way to the bottom, and there was no one that would help to pick you up except yourself. Yeah, I had better, more important things to do, but I just wanted to escape that weekend. Escape all of the stress of school work, of money issues, and of men, and go to my own little world where none of that existed and I didn't have to think about it. That way, my expectations wouldn't get dashed and nothing could go wrong that wasn't supposed to go wrong.

So, I decided to enjoy myself by any means necessary. My work will be there tomorrow, I thought to myself as I guzzled down that Heineken.

# Oblivion

by Noveed Safipour

Every night, I feel its silky fingertips  
gently brush across my face  
with silent, grey palms,  
erasing my thoughts  
and transporting me  
to the lucid land  
that I encounter before  
so-called heavenly dreams  
but after closing my eyes.

Here, in the darkness  
of this timeless purgatory,  
I imagine a rest stop  
along the tedious, dirt-paved  
highway of consciousness,  
offering travelers respite,  
a chance to breathe.

A shoddy 50's diner stands there  
by a cliff, a 3,000 foot drop,  
with a waitress named Dolores,  
and the best damned burgers  
on the Eastern face  
of the Anonymous Range.

Behind the marble counter,  
Dolores lights up a Marlboro.  
The empty red stools  
between me and her  
prolong her everlasting  
cigarette break.

When she glances at me,  
I know she's wondering  
how long until I hop back  
into my rusted pickup truck,  
and move on through the pass  
leading to the nightly fantasies  
all humans desire.

She assumes I'm eager to do so,  
and while twirling her brown locks  
she says, "No folks come here to stay,  
they all want to keep moving."  
She shrugs before inhaling again,  
and blowing out a whiff  
of thin, airy smoke.  
"I dun' know why."

I could stimulate my senses  
with a cheeseburger, a cup of coffee  
and help my mind inspire a dream  
that I'd save for my destination,

but I prefer in this moment  
to make the bells jingle  
as I push open the door  
and taste a blast of cool mountain air  
graced by the scent of pine needles.

I look up at the peaks,  
stretching into the clouds,  
and that's when I realize  
I don't want to greet the visions  
awaiting me on the other side,

for within these evergreens,  
the dusty unpaved road,  
the eternal sunshine,  
I can already feel God.

# Stabby McStabstab

by Samuel Shingledecker

As soon as he could reach, a thrash, slash, crash  
'Ach, ugg' I says as I freak, flail, fold, fall  
I saw him soon enough, but he got me  
There was no running, I could not flee  
I should've attacked him before he attacked me

I saw a shadow long heading for me  
It was dark but I felt safe on the street  
Now I lay with my liver near my spleen  
Why must we be so brutal, so mean?  
I should've fought back when he attacked me

I carry a knife because my friends tell me to  
I suppose tonight should've given it use  
Instead, I get to steep in my own juices  
I'm not some delectate rotisserie goose!  
Why didn't I know to just let loose?

Did he see me in the dark and fear assault?  
To him, are his actions my fault?  
Security breeds members of paranoia's cult  
Though I use slant rhyme, I'm no Walt  
Will I die for bred actions without thought?





I watched as he watched  
the wind brush the leaves  
I watched as he waited  
For his bird to sing  
I watched as he closed  
his eyes to feel  
the broken light  
his life ideal

## Purple

by Sierra Cain

Scratch the skin and it turns red. Anything harder makes it purple. When he's around my skin is always purple. It hurts so much. Daddy, please stop. Daddy says what goes on in the house stays in the house. So when my teacher asks me why my arm is purple, I tell her I don't know. Daddy tells me I don't know anything anyway. Mommy just sits there. Why does Mommy always sit there? So quiet. Like the ants on the ground. But they move more. Mommy doesn't. She just sits, really quiet. I learned how to spell quiet yesterday. I drew a picture of Mommy and wrote Q-U-I-E-T all over it. I didn't draw one for Daddy though. I never draw pictures for Daddy. He never likes them. He never likes anything I do. Daddy, don't you love me? 'Course you don't, because I don't know anything. I never do anything right. That's why I'm always purple. When I scratch my skin, I turn red though. Red is my favorite color. I hate purple. It reminds me of Daddy.

The men in the blue outfits came yesterday to talk to me. Someone always wants to talk to me about him. I just hang my head. I don't have anything to say. There's never anything to say. Don't they know that? Now I just don't talk anymore. It only turns me purple. Mommy is the same color as me now. Why isn't there someone here to make Daddy purple? After the men in blue outfits came I got in trouble. I promised Daddy that what went on in the house stayed in the house. I cried the rest of the night. Daddy began to stop when it got warm outside. I thought maybe he started to love me again. Maybe Daddy loves the warm weather and it makes him love me. He only makes me cry when it's cold outside. I always wear sweaters on those days. Mommy dresses me up in pretty sweaters. I like all the colors. I make sure I beg her not to buy me purple ones. I have sweaters that each have a color from the rainbow. Except for purple. I even have a rainbow color sweater. Mommy bought it for me for my birthday.

A lot of birthdays have passed now Daddy and you're gone. I didn't cry when they put you in the ground. You took away all of my tears a long time ago. I don't even cry when he makes my eye or arm or leg or stomach purple. I just stay quiet. There's nothing to say. I've been to the hospital a lot. They know me by name now. I still never tell them anything, but I think they know. I think they know Daddy, but I swear I never told. I don't tell on him either. Mommy has been long gone. You said she left. Mommy didn't leave. I miss her though. He doesn't buy me sweaters like Mommy used to. I buy my own sweaters now. But I don't like the colors. All my sweaters are pale now. He doesn't like red. It reminds him of his Mommy and Daddy. So I hide it under my bed.

My best friend called the police. They came to the door, in their blue suits, just like when I was little. I didn't have anything to say. My best friend cried and asked me why. I looked at her and walked away. There was nothing to say. To her or the police. I think I love her but I don't know. I don't love him though. He reminds me of you and I get scared. I don't cry though. I just wait for someone to come take him away. I used to read stories about Prince Charming and Fairy Godmothers. I burned them all when Mommy went away. No one was coming for me.

No one. No one ever comes for me. I go into the kitchen and play in the drawers at night. My skin is red for different reasons now. Maybe I can make him my favorite color. When he's asleep I'll try. I stay quiet like Mommy used to. Like you told me to. The only thing you ever taught me. He never notices. The sheets stain red and I leave. I go to the police and I show them my stomach and back and start to cry.

# Poem #123

by Alexis Delaney

A balloon, a battery, a biscuit.

A cartridge,                    a cart

a partridge...

# The Clearing

by Katelin Krieg

The snow fell softly on the silent, monochrome landscape; the sky was a soft gray blanket covering the world. Gravel crunched under my feet as I wandered down the deserted, winding road. Leafless, barren trees surrounding me danced and swayed like a troupe of ballerinas, back and forth to a slow, haunting tune, unheard in the winter breeze. The small pond stood as still as a soldier outside of Buckingham Palace, its surface stony-faced and expressionless, reflecting only the gray sky above. Flurries began to stick to the blades of grass, forgotten confetti after a grand celebration. I stopped and listened to the silence that surrounded me, like an impenetrable fortress, warding off the outside world. As I turned and walked back to whence I had come, the wind picked up and began to howl at my back, for it did not want to be abandoned in that forsaken place.

## Pizza, Snowplows, and Ski Cronies

by Danielle Taubman

If you are a skier who has children, you have probably been wondering when to teach them to ski. But this does not require enrolling any of your children in ski school for a day of madness. No ski instructor by the name of Doug whose voice has a Mickey Mouse twang will be necessary. You are the only ski instructor your child needs. Of course you are worried he will fall once and avoid the sport forever. Luckily, the majority of children are fearless.

Your first mission is to “hype up” the skiing experience while you’re on your way to the ski resort. Tell your pupil, who we’ll call Scottie, how much you enjoyed skiing when you were his age. Especially focus on how cool it will sound when he tells his friends he can ski. Once Scottie is convinced, make sure that he remains in an enthused, gung ho state.

As soon as you arrive at the mountain, ask Scottie if he is excited. If he says yes, you know your first mission is complete. If his response seems lifeless, don’t panic. He will probably start as a timid skier, but if you master the other steps in this risk-free process, Scottie will be confident before you know it.

Since you are likely renting skis for your first-timer, make sure the ski resort worker is in on the effort. If he turns out to be Doug in disguise, discreetly ask for someone else’s help. After all, the goal is not to expose Scottie to high-pitched babblers; the goal is to make Scottie feel like a big boy who can handle anything. Now that Jason has replaced Doug, you are in business. Jason knows what he has to do to persuade Scottie skiing is the next best thing to Sponge Bob Square Pants.

With Jason’s help, you should get Scottie shorter skis than you would for a skilled skier. The shorter the skis are the easier skiing will be for him. He will have better control (if he has any at all), which will be a miracle in and of itself. Make sure you don’t get poles for your child. As an experienced skier, you know the only

purpose of poles is to assist you in pushing from one run to another and from lift to lift. Therefore, you should regard yourself as Scottie's poles. You should however, as a cautionary effort, get Scottie a helmet. If he thinks he is too cool for protection, point out all of the big kids wearing them and I can guarantee he will change his mind. Finally, have Jason put on Scottie's boots for him and, once both of you are ready, walk him outside. Click him into his skis and class is in session.

Now, you probably think this is already too much to remember and we haven't even hit the slopes. But from here on out it gets easier. Scottie is already metamorphosing before your eyes; he is practically an Olympic skier.

The next step is the chairlift. Ahh, the chairlift. Do you remember your first attempt at the lift? You probably don't because you were a) knocked out after falling several feet or b) have worked countless hours with a therapist trying to forget the trauma that took place. But it does not have to be scary for Scottie. You are with him and you will do everything you can to protect him. Tell him the chairlift is similar to a Ferris wheel, which means he will have a delightful time. Have him skate up to the red line when your turn comes. If he is slow, the chairlift men will notice and will slow it down after a chuckle to themselves. Tell Scottie to turn back and reach his hand out to the chair. Once the chair swings up to him, he should squat and be ready to be carried into the air. If your child has acrophobia, do not panic. Just make sure he does not look down. Point out the advertisements on the structure of the lift, or talk to him, anything to keep his eyes from wandering in the wrong direction.

When the end of the lift is in view, show Scottie how to keep his ski tips pointed up to the sky. By this time, the lift should be ending and your chair should be arriving above the angled hill of packed snow. Once you are both successfully over the mound, tell Scottie to stand up. Grab his hand, and gently pull him down the small hill with you. If he managed not to fall, you have a natural in your hand.

Now proceed to a larger, gently sloped hill to show him the "pizza." That's right. Maybe the person who taught you how



to ski called it the “snowplow.” But they are one in the same. Whether called a pizza or a snowplow, the technique is a natural for teaching a young child. Show Scottie how to make the pizza by turning his legs in toward one another until his skis create a triangle. Tell him the shape he has made is a pizza and he’ll get a kick out of it.

You are now ready to take him down a run. Make certain the run is a green. This should be common sense, but you’d be surprised what over-eager parents try to do. Once you are sure you are not taking little Scottie down Demon’s Pleasure complete with moguls and a forest, tell him you’re going to begin.

If Scottie falls right away, ski down backwards forming an upside-down pizza with your skis, him in between your legs. This will create the illusion of him skiing and will reassure him about the sport. Show him how to make wide, even turns and have him follow your path. Teach him to lean down the hill and when to put pressure on each foot. But do not tell him to do maneuvers like moving his skis perpendicular to the hill when he wants to slow down. Remember, although he is your little genius, he is young and cannot handle this the first day of skiing. No technical stuff on the first day. That is key.

If you follow these steps, your child will be an expert skier in no time. If you are having second thoughts about teaching him to ski this young, just remember that the younger the child, the more receptive he is to instruction. My final suggestion to you is to just chuckle at the parents enrolling their kids in ski school. They obviously haven’t yet read this guide.

# Little Girl Lost

by Keesha Hargrow

Alone, like a Samurai in the forest, with no stable home  
So young she must fend for her own  
Must make Audacity her roof and dine with her eyes  
No one to take care of her, no real support in her life

Too young to see what the world is like  
So she listens to the wind in the night  
Can't understand what she hears  
So she thinks about nature and ignores her fears

Random, raging thoughts, so she waits

Care and Order, her parents, run her life  
A wilderness to dark to navigate  
Blocked by the mountains and trees of her emotional plight  
Be strong like the Samurai

No friend to make the quiet, lonely nights lively  
So the girl embraces soundlessness in the cold wilderness  
No enemy to hate so she looks  
In the mirror at the frown staring back and forms a rivalry

She finds no spiritual guidance, no faith or hope  
For the future, she embraces death as an escape from this loneliness  
She is me, at the end of my rope  
Why do I feel so alone and tired and ready to end this?

Be strong like the Samurai, I am alone  
No one to love me and no place to call home.

## The Downside to Ice Cream

by Katelin Krieg

I looked at the clock. 8:45. It seemed like the hands were frozen in place. I chewed the cap of the pen I was holding and prayed that somehow nine o'clock would instantly be there.

"Catch!" said my coworker, Curtis, as he tossed me a Twix bar. The five-aisle grocery store was empty, and the sun was setting outside the big front window as a layer of humid air hung over the earth like a blanket.

Curtis hopped over the counter top, and began to stare at the scratch-off lottery tickets, all brightly colored, shiny, and beckoning with phrases like "WIN \$1,000,000,000!" and "ONE OUT OF THREE TICKETS WIN!"

The clock now read 8:46. "We should just shut off the lights, lock the doors, and get out of here," I suggested. Curtis nodded, "Everything's done. The meat room is all cleaned, and I just filled the milk case." I opened the cash register with a loud ding that echoed through the vacant store. Mid-80's soft rock played quietly over the speakers as I counted out the twenties and recorded it on the drop sheet, along with all the checks and credit card slips. I shuffled over to the safe and pushed the two stacks through the thin opening.

8:49. I was sure by now that God had a personal vendetta against me and was slowing down time just for kicks. I spun a penny on the countertop as I ate my Twix bar. "What are you doing tonight?" I asked Curtis.

"I don't know. Probably getting drunk with the guys. Craig's parents are out of town this weekend. What about you?"

I shrugged, "I'm exhausted and I have to be here at eight tomorrow morning to open." Curtis made a disgusted face. "At least I get bacon and eggs out of the deal," I mentioned.

"That is true. Greg does like you best." He went back to staring the lotto tickets. "Boss's favorite," he coughed a minute

later. I grinned, "You know it."

I tried to fight the urge to look at the clock again, but I couldn't help myself. 8:52. Only eight more minutes.

I hopped the counter and walked down aisle one. "Hey, did you know we have bottles of pine nuts?"

"They probably expired two years ago," laughed Curtis.

This place had been going down the tubes since before I started working here a year ago. The neighborhood hardly shopped here anymore; Meijer and Wal-Mart were just so much more convenient... and cheaper. My boss would often rant about how disloyal the neighborhood was, pointing out that he supported local little league teams and donated to the Knight of Columbus all the time. "And what does Meijer do? They don't even pay taxes to the town! They're out in the township. Their money doesn't go to the schools or the roads or anything within city limits."

By now I was back at the counter. I lifted myself up and sat on it. My apron was dirty with the residue of watermelon and pineapple that I had cut up hours ago, and my hands smelled like potent lemon cleaning product.

8:56. So close. I watched kids on bikes and couples walking dogs pass by outside the window. Suddenly a car pulled into the parking lot—a new model of a Ford Mustang, black with the sun gleaming off its newly polished exterior. I groaned. "We have customers," I mumbled and hopped down off the counter.

"If they want ice cream, I'm going to kill someone," said Curtis. The door opened and the bell rang. A middle-aged couple walked in. The man was slightly overweight and his hair was salt and pepper colored. He wore a heavily patterned polo and nicely pressed khaki pants. His loafers looked freshly polished. His wife was very trim, dressed in jogging shorts and a tank top, which showed off her extremely tan shoulders and chest just a little too much for a woman in her mid 40's. Her sneakers were pearly white, much like her smile as they walked in the door, probably highlighted by her huge, dark sunglasses.

"Hi," I greeted them with a pleasant smile as they came in. The man answered, "Hello!" His eyes lit up as he spotted our ice

cream freezer. "I see you've still got hand dipped cones!" he said with excitement.

My insides twisted. "Sure do," I said, doing my best to sound cheery. I peeked at the clock. 8:59. I hated it when people did this. And it happened all the time.

"Is there something I can get for you two tonight?" I asked as the two of them studied the twelve tubs of ice cream waiting to be emptied.

The woman's face scrunched up and the smile disappeared. "Do you have any fat free frozen yogurt?" she asked, staring at me through the dark sunglasses.

I couldn't help but think to myself, "Lady, you could use some ice cream. With calories. And fat. You could stand to gain a couple pounds." But I responded politely, "Nope, just ice cream. The flavors are all listed on this board here," and I motioned to a dry erase board hanging on the wall that listed the twelve flavors in fancy handwriting and a rainbow of colors.

"Well, I'll have a waffle cone of moose tracks, hun," the man told me.

"Good choice," I said, and grabbed the scoop, a napkin, and a waffle cone. Dipping ice cream is a little more complicated than it looks. And today was especially nasty. Someone had turned down the temperature, and the ice cream was rock hard. I struggled to dip his cone, and stack it without breaking it, but I somehow did it. "Here you go," I said as I handed him the cone.

"Thanks, sweetie. What are you gonna get, honey?" he asked his wife, who looked at the case with dismay. "I guess I'll just have a little cone of vanilla, since you don't have any frozen yogurt...."

If there's one thing I hate more than people who ask me stupid things like "Do you have frozen yogurt?" or who come in and get ice cream at one minute to closing time, it's people who get tiny cones of vanilla. I can't even explain why. I think it has something to do with being boring and unwilling to enjoy something so pure as an ice cream cone. Or something equally pseudo-philosophical.

I dipped her cone and handed it to her, as I walked over

to the register. "That will be \$5.25, please." The man struggled with his wallet in one hand and his ice cream cone in the other, but finally he dragged a twenty out. Of course. After I had already counted all the twenties, he'd pay me with a twenty. I quickly snatched a ten, four ones, and three quarters out of the register. "\$14.75 is your change, you guys have a great night."

As soon as they were out the door, I tore off my apron. "Curtis!" I called down the deserted aisles, "Let's get out of here!"

The lights flicked off overhead. He was one step ahead of me. I tossed my apron into the cardboard box for the laundry service, and Curtis was punching us out. The clock read 9:12.

"You just had to say something about ice cream, didn't you?" I pretended to be irritated with Curtis, and he broke into a grin. "At least I didn't have to scoop it."

"Ha, ha, real funny, jerk," I said sarcastically.

We stepped outside into the humid evening air; it was like walking into a sauna. Droplets of sweat instantly collected on my hairline.

Curtis locked the door, and tossed me the keys, "Since you get to be here again in less than 12 hours."

"Don't remind me," I joked. We walked quickly to our cars. "See you later, Curtis." I waved goodbye.

"Bye Kate!" he yelled and jumped into his truck. It started loudly, and he drove off; the hula girl on his dashboard looked as though she was having a seizure.

I sighed and got into my car. The one light on the Kinney's sign shone eerily into the dusk; its harsh fluorescence cut through the dark, and the black specks of bugs flew around it in a frenzy. I drove off, my radio blaring, into the quiet Essexville night.

This was my summer. And, strangely, I loved every minute of it.

# Aphrodite and Eros\*

by Alexander Stuessy

I said he was selfish  
He said I was wrong—  
He sold fish  
In his past-tense pretense  
On the streets of  
Our cities—  
He sold fish  
At good prices  
To good people.

But what about her, I said—  
She was good, of course.  
Good and righteous and  
Conscious, of course,  
But he had no fish for her.

How—she could not pay—  
Her purse was full of napkins  
And none could equal  
Even the scales of Pisces

Then I will take her,  
    For I have no business here,  
To storms of frothy blue  
And jagged rocks of  
Tanzanite  
    The home of the sea  
        To see them breathing  
        And free  
And she will not be hungry  
In the depths



She looks hungry,  
Feed her to the trash, he said.  
But do not worry about her—  
She is good  
And good people may  
Waste away  
But are not   wasted.

# Human Nature

by Rachel Applebaum

I should go on a pilgrimage  
to a distant holy land.

But what am I looking for?

Perhaps it is all too easy now:  
with planes, cars, boats, trains.  
And out of that ease comes difficulty.

Everyone wants to love and be loved.  
True, genuine.

Sometimes I forget  
about my troubles, her troubles, his troubles.  
And then feel guilty for the lapse in punishing memory.  
It's all misery anyway.  
Should we carry our burdens out front and center?  
Never forget lest we stumble again.  
And add one more to the weight.

If we believe that humans are born to suffer,  
then happiness really is a stolen moment.  
A rebellion.  
Can that really be so?

Our eyes and ears are trained to search for beauty in the world.  
We couldn't find it if we didn't deserve it.  
The sun rises as often as it sets.  
And we look to the east as the shimmering orb makes its way to  
the west.  
We wait for it to come again.  
We wait for the warmth on our faces and the light on the road  
to begin our pilgrimage.

# The Last Time\*

by Patricia White

The last time you saw me  
I washed your fingers and cleaned your hands  
Not to belittle you, but because you couldn't.  
I helped you from one room to the other,  
From the chair to the bed, from the bed to the chair,  
I knelt below you to find the right book, the right page,  
And I put that black boot you hated on the broken foot you  
couldn't reach.  
I looked away occasionally so that you  
(that is you and she)  
Would not see the terror I felt.  
You tugged at me, she tugged at me,  
I didn't really mind, because I know you're both sick,  
I did my duty, but not of duty, of love.  
The last time you saw me  
You told me to never give in or up,  
You told me you admired me,  
And you thanked God for me,  
With tears.

The last time I really saw you  
I held your hand, but your fingers had already been washed,  
Not by her, not by me, but by staff,  
Not because they needed it, but for protocol.  
I helped her from the car and to your room,  
From the door to the bed, from the bed to a chair,  
You were wearing the bracelet I'd gotten for you,  
And clasping a rosebud rosary,  
But I took my time to talk to you,  
I made them all leave, though they didn't like it,  
I sang "Amazing Grace" and I prayed you could hear me,  
I wished aloud that you'd like it, to hear me sing,

And when I did you squeezed my hand harder.  
So I knew you could hear me,  
I hoped you could understand it all,  
I squeezed back harder,  
And I thanked God for that,  
With tears.

The last time I saw you  
I held your hand, but you could not squeeze back,  
I think you would have, but you couldn't,  
I didn't mind it, even though I sort of did,  
I hated that you were so cold,  
And I hated how warm you looked, how real,  
As if, somehow, movement was eminent,  
I whispered to you that I would miss you,  
That I would miss your smile,  
That I would miss hailing Mary for being so full of grace,  
I said I would miss the pressure,  
And that I would miss you.  
I sang "Amazing Grace" too softly for anyone else to hear,  
And I prayed that you liked it this time,  
I hoped you could feel the love I felt,  
He put a hand on my shoulder,  
And handed me his handkerchief and left,  
He understood you and me,  
I wished I could have too,  
But I didn't mind, even though I sort of did,  
And I thanked God for 90 years,  
With tears.

# Choose Any Angle You Like\*

by Katelin Krieg

“Choose any angle you like,’ she said,  
The world is split in two.”\*  
I on one side,  
And you on the other.  
The eye of God between us,  
Simultaneously separating and uniting us  
Over words of wisdom—  
Long distorted by a man—  
And raining down upon me,  
A lone, confused believer.  
From your seven pillar castle  
Atop a royal plateau,  
Placed amidst the stars,  
The crescent moon caressing your face as you sleep.  
Two thousand miles from your door  
I can simply hope that a star  
Signifies a future with something more.  
How strange these two paths should intersect  
At the eye of God, himself.

\*From Linda Gregerson’s poem...

# The Everlasting Gaze

by ???????

I woke up with a start. My skin was clammy, in a cold sweat. My cell phone on the bedside table was ringing and buzzing, so I flipped it open and mumbled a groggy, "Hello?"

"Charlie, we've got a 419 on Washington and 38th. It's pretty ugly. Chief wants you down here ASAP." I mumbled something to the effect of "I'll be there soon," and rolled out from under the blankets. I threw on yesterday's wrinkled pants and shirt. At four-thirty in the morning, I didn't think I needed a tie. Somehow I found my way to the car, started it, and rubbed the sleep out of my eyes.

Washington was a sea of red and blue flashing lights; people were milling around everywhere. I walked up to my partner. "So? What have we got?"

"Female, mid-20s, D.O.A. She's a mess. Whoever did that to her needs the needle in his arm." I walked into the abandoned warehouse where he told me she was—I'd never seen anything so horrific in my 20 years on the force. This poor dame was in dire shape. I walked out of the warehouse to pay another visit to my dinner.

A week later, I was sitting in my office going over the file. We were no closer now than the night we found her—Jacqueline Carter—to capturing the monster who killed her... Until that exact moment, when the phone rang. "McCarthy," I answered. "Good. Get him down here immediately," I replied after a long pause. They had found a witness.

Our witness was meeting with a sketch artist when we arrived. In a pre-interview session, he told our people that he had seen our victim walking with a tall, thin man into the warehouse. Later, he saw the man leave in a black sedan—alone.

As he gave his description to the artist, we discussed the possibility of his involvement in Jacqueline's murder. I let Tom interview the guy on his own; I was beginning to feel sick. I met the sketch artist in the hallway, and she handed me a picture of a

face, mostly covered in shadow, but with eyes clear as day. I got the feeling I'd seen them before, but I did my best to concentrate on the evidence at hand, and push the feeling to the back of my mind. Gut feelings don't solve murders.

Our investigation proceeded to lose steam, and I proceeded to lose more and more sleep. The chief told me to take a few days off, so I spent time holed up in my dingy apartment, going over details of the case. The place was a mess of notes and crime scene photographs, but the evidence was minimal—a shoe print, some tire tracks, and an unreliable witness were all we had to go on—that and a sketch of eyes. I still couldn't shake the feeling I'd seen them before. I leaned back in my chair with my hands folded over my head. I was exhausted. I shut off the light and blinked. My eyes felt like sandpaper, and I couldn't remember the last time I'd slept.

I lay in bed for a few hours before giving up. I walked around the apartment building instead, and found myself on the roof as the sun rose. I recognized a pile in the corner and went to see what it was. The steps seemed vaguely rehearsed; déjà vu was lurking in my mind. The pile was a dark towel, much like the kind I had in my own apartment. Underneath, I discovered a shirt, a pair of pants, and a pair of shoes, all covered in dried blood. I stumbled back in surprise. My stomach sank and my head began to pound, I somehow found my way back down the stairs despite a burning pain in my skull. My shirt. My pants. My shoes. Covered in blood. I fell into my apartment and rushed to the bathroom. I gripped the cold linoleum of the counter and squeezed my eyes shut. Mine? What? How? I splashed water on my face and ran my hands through my hair as I looked into the mirror. The glow from the morning sun cast an unusual shadow on my face... only my eyes were visible. My mouth gaped in shock. My eyes. They were his eyes. Our eyes... They stared at me, an everlasting gaze of hate and guilt. The events came back to me in waves. I remembered the dinner, the way the black dress hung on her curves, the trip to the warehouse. She had something to show me, she'd said, and when I tried to kiss her, she slapped me. That's when everything hit the fan.

I wailed and buried my face in my hands. I suddenly stood



up and flung open the medicine cabinet, grabbing at every bottle I saw, and emptying the pills into my palm. What a lovely, colorful feast. I swallowed them all.

“Officer?” the man in the white lab coat approached a stocky policeman, who looked up and asked, “How is he?”

The doctor looked somber. “Physically, he’s fine. Mentally...” He trailed off.

“What do you mean?” questioned the officer, ringing his hands.

“Well, Charlie has something we call dissociative identity disorder. It’s most often caused by childhood trauma, after which the personality splits to deal with the situation. Unfortunately, Charlie’s other personality was violent, and he killed Ms. Carter. But you already knew that from searching his apartment, didn’t you?” The officer nodded solemnly. He looked up with glassy eyes. “Any chance of him...” he paused. “...recovering?”

It was the doctor’s turn to shake his head. “It’s rare. When the main personality discovers the others—or in the case, the actions of the other—it’s very hard to deal with. We have him on sedatives and anti-psychotics for now. With intensive therapy... well, we’ll see.”

The two shook hands and the officer thanked the doctor. As he was leaving, he passed a sitting room. Inside, his partner, his thin frame draped in a hospital gown as he rocked slowly back and forth, staring into space and mumbling incoherently. A tear slipped down the officer’s cheek as he left the ward.

# This Is Not A Dream\*

by Noveed Safipour

Yesterday, while roaming around a town at twilight  
I discovered a replica of Magritte's The Lovers  
in an art gallery's window.  
It was a poor copy, for too much light  
shone down on the couple:  
the man in a suit, the woman a red dress,  
embracing one another and kissing  
as a sheet covered each of their faces.

I knew it lacked darkness,  
for my parents had loved  
the original's ominous tone.  
(*They can't feel each other* Mom said,  
when she showed me it once,  
and I nodded blankly,  
pretending to understand.)

I still didn't understand the painting, but  
as I examined the copy, a homeless man  
approached me, bundled in sweatshirts  
but with a clean shaved face and black  
slicked back hair, dripping with icicles.

Then I realized that the man  
was René Magritte, for somebody had slapped  
a red and white sticker onto his garments  
that read *Hello, My Name Is René Magritte*,  
with his signature scribbled on it, barely legible.  
He grinned at me and proclaimed,  
"This is not a dream."

I rushed away from him,

hurried down an avenue,  
where I passed a slender man  
with a 12 inch nose.  
He wore a black trench coat  
and carried a metal briefcase  
while blabbing on his cell phone,  
*Yeah, baby, of course I love you,  
I just won't get home 'til ten tonight...*

# Shades

by Jackie Kauza

Fresh spring light

tr

ic

kl

es

through newly minted leaves.

Crisp. Clean.

Woven blankets of grass

s p r e a d

across the old, tired earth,

transforming the weary winter's hues.

A vibrant suffusion

Of a new season's glory.

Flower buds

l t e

i t r

the fields and groves.

They haven't bloomed yet.

There's no color spectrum,

Only a range

Of little monochromatic capsules.

A thousand shapes and sizes.

But even monochrome

Isn't so monochrome.

The tiny maple leaves are

Different

from the baby oak leaves,

still cloaked in brown.

And the stately, enduring pine  
does not share  
its customary hue  
with the apricot.  
Or the apple.

Fragile ferns  
peek  
out  
from the darker moss.  
And the stems of  
Dandelions and thistle

Refuse  
To confine their color  
To the accepted shades  
Of rose stems  
And lily stems  
And lilac stems.

All those trite hues of those conventional beauties.

And the clover.  
The clover.  
All three leaves.  
Everywhere.

But only  
the one  
with four

is lucky.

# you

by Kelsey Vanoverloop

I don't understand you.  
You say you're hurting,  
Yet you smile.  
You say you're lonely,  
Yet you are never alone.

Why do you hide?  
Why do you lie?  
Why are you so afraid?  
Why won't you care?  
Why won't you let me care?

It seems like a waste  
To keep it all inside  
When I'm right here.  
When you're right there  
But, you keep me so far away.

Break down your wall.  
Just let me in.  
Maybe I can't help,  
But how do you know?  
How'll you ever know unless you try?

So, until you decide,  
I'll still be here, right here.  
For those moments  
When I almost see the real you  
When you almost let me understand.

# Art School Symphony

by Alisa Modylevsky

Night's bleary smokiness does not exist  
down the clay-smudged dimly lit corridors  
where the caffeine-crammed zombies  
shuffle wordlessly into the warbling  
woodshop,  
Praying that the soft murmur  
of the cigarette stained drill press  
does not lull them to sleep

A lone girl lies on the chocolate colored couch,  
Her consciousness tucked  
away  
Into folds of paisley blankets  
past cylinder structured ringlets  
of vermilion hair.  
Hands firmly clutched,  
The canvas engulfed by her warm  
protective body,  
And dirty paintbrushes  
buried in memory encrusted,  
earth-scented rainboots.

Yes, what a  
colorful

hurried place

Where star-gazing souls

Transform into blurry shadows of  
anciently mastered images



# Distinction\*

by Jackie Kauza

Fronds crisscross in the sultry air,  
But just a houseplant hunching there.  
Roots knuckle out of the living loam like  
vertebrae,  
The backbone of the earth,  
Or just desultory little toes curled in a pot?

Curlicues of green lounge down  
From the leaves,  
Sweat sliding from them in the tropical heat.  
And claws clack across the hardwood floor,  
Or is it the humidity-soaked foundation  
Of an ancient temple  
Tucked away from the prying eyes  
Of those who do not know to see it.

She walks with feline fluidity,  
Living liquid,  
There in her own domain.  
All padded paws and sharpened claws  
And rich, stripe-painted skin.

And the longer you watch, the less you see  
Of her.  
You try to focus, try to train the eye  
On her,  
But still the stripes melt into sylvan shadows  
And then she becomes  
One with the trees and still you pray  
Don't look at me,  
Though part of you wants her to.

But when she does, you freeze in the jungle, snared in the mol-  
ten, cold gold.  
She waits and watches, eyes and studies,  
Until you come into focus  
And she knows exactly what you are  
And who you are  
And why you're there.

And with a catty, toothy grin  
She blinks her eyes and invites you in,  
Crystalline marbles in a furry face,  
Or is it the mask of a different place?

Of a world where houseplants  
Drip jungle tears  
And the old dusty floor  
Is a temple of seers,  
Housing a knowing tigress  
That steals the form  
Of a tabby cat.

And which world are you really in?  
And how much can you really watch?  
And what is genuinely real?  
But I won't answer that, you see,  
Because I'd have to define reality  
And I've found in situations  
Such as these  
It's best for the distinction  
To be a  
little  
bit  
blurred

# The Night

by Alex Rodriguez

I was always a heavy sleeper, put me in a bed in the middle of a storm and I would only wake to use the bathroom, but for some reason, by some chance, I woke on this night. As the little bird came out of his hibernation in his wood box, he chirped three times to help signify the hour. I woke up, dazed and confused, as I rubbed my hands so hard against my face; it was like my forehead was a dirty dish and I was trying to rid it of the mess. I tossed and turned and could feel the sleep leave my body and then I perked up and heard voices. My room was down the stairs from my parents and this made the sounds coming from their room even clearer to me.

My dad was never a late sleeper; he would always be up before the sun and welcomed the day with a cup of coffee and the paper. At the same time he was a firefighter and would have to get up early to get ready for work. I thought that this was one of those mornings. The voices continued and I heard my dad saying, "Come on babe" and "get up" and this let me know that he was talking to my mom. He had called her Babe since I could ever remember. In fact it always made me laugh because when I heard Babe, I thought of the pig.

My mom was far from a little piglet. She was strong, fierce, and if I ever got out of line, trust me I was afraid of her first. But, on this night my mom did not answer him with an "I am sleeping", in fact she did not even answer him at all. It was just silent on her end, like the silence that comes when you see an ambulance drive past. I listened to my dad and his pleas for a minute or two until I lost the battle with my ability to stay awake.

I awoke four chirps of the bird later to the voices of strangers in my house. I came to the conclusion that the voices belonged to my dad's friends from work. Before I even moved out of bed, the door opened and there stood my dad looking like Halloween on Easter morning. His eyes looked like lake beds dried to the earth and I could tell that he had been crying. I had never seen

my dad cry in my life. I thought that he was a superhero who had the ability to hide all emotions. He sat on my bed, and squeezed me like he had never squeezed me before. The pressure of his arms were so strong that I felt if he did not let go of me soon, then I might have to accompany my mom on her journey. He let go and I looked at him and said the only thing that a son could say to his father in this situation.

“What’s wrong?” “They’re going to have to take your mom to the hospital”

As soon as he said this, I turned to my right and saw two paramedics carrying my mom down the stairs in a stretcher and I sat and stared. I was too young to know what was going on but just the right age to scream: I was ten. And that is what I did. I screamed. I screamed so loud that the paramedics almost dropped the stretcher. I was in pain. My body felt like the time I put my arm on the iron as a kid, but this time it was about twenty times worse. I was in such a state of shock that I did not even realize my dad telling me that she would be fine and that he was leaving.

I heard the sirens drive away and I heard them get further and further away from me like a rocket from earth. My insides were torn to shreds, my heart beating like an addict on cocaine. I was afraid to walk up those stairs. I was afraid to confront the place where whatever had happened took place. But I began, step by step like a man who was sent to heaven too soon and was reluctant to continue.

When I got to their room, the door was closed as if trying to keep a secret from me and then I pushed it open. I was greeted with a slap in the face by a horrible stench. The sheets were tossed, the television was on the floor, and then there it was; the vomit was right there in the middle of the room and on the curtains, and on the door. It was everywhere. My mom was sick, but how sick was the question. For the next 48 hours, I think that I fell into a coma because I do not remember much about them, only that I missed my mom. Then my dad came and said if I wanted to go see her and I reluctantly said yes.

The car moved gracefully across the freeway, almost like it was feeling the same way that I felt. The car did not feel the

road and I did not feel a thing. In reality, I felt dead inside. I was nervous and I felt like crying, but yet I was calm, like the ocean before a tsunami. Everything was silent, nothing moved, and yet I was a wreck on the inside. The ride to the hospital was hell on wheels and I was the angel in the passenger seat. I remember everything about that ride. There were four cars with flat tires, three different speed limits, one accident, and eight exits before we got off at the ninth one. It was the 23rd of December. Houses were massacred with Christmas lights and there was a volcanic eruption of snow flurries falling down. I saw the hospital down the street and it stuck out like a weed in a garden. We pulled in, paid the fare and parked. Now at this moment, my dad looked me straight in the eye, just like he had done on the bed and he said "Do not be afraid, she may not look like your mom, but she is, do not worry". My stomach was in knots and it felt like the heaviest of strongmen had played bloody knuckles with my insides. I imagined the monsters of my dreams and believed that my mom might look like them, but it did not affect me. The adrenaline did not kick in. I knew she was my mom and I would hug her regardless of what nightmare I had to fight.

I entered the room and saw what seemed to be every torture weapon created by a doctor sitting next to my mom in a cold, metal tray. The beeping of the machines played games with my mind and agitated me as soon as I heard them. I was a visitor in jail and then I saw the prisoner lying on the bed. Same face, same hair, same mother. There were bruises around her arms from the constant bombardment of the needles and I saw what my dad told me about. On her head, she was missing a lock of hair and in its' place was the mark. The stapled scar, that was the point where they went in, juggled, cut, and extracted the piece of my mothers' mind that made her who she was. Although she looked the same, that piece that was taken let me know that she would not be the same.

The doctor came in about another hour after my eyes broke the faucet and the leaking began. He pulled my dad aside and behind a plate glass window, in front of the needles and tools, my dad became human: I saw him cry for the first time. My

mother was a victim of Multiple Sclerosis. Her body had become a tomb, her mind had become a vassal and I had become the first mate. My mother became my responsibility. She became my homework, my habits, and my life and I became me.

# House

by David Roston

Circles and curves  
Lines and leaves  
Intertwine as I look deeper

The house grabs my eye  
And the eye that I follow  
Leads me into a new life unseen

For the only sense of shelter  
From these forces so strong  
Is the house  
That I now  
Call home

# We Are All Similar

by Morgan Peterson

*from the painting of the poem "Viaticum"*

We are all similar.

The same sun sets,  
And the same moon rises.  
The same day is shared,  
And the night is full of surprises.  
Same.

We are all similar.

Our houses may not resemble.  
But do we all not call them home?  
Our beliefs may very well differ,  
But do we all not serve one God?  
Same.

We are all similar.

The curved arrow poits to you my friend.  
And he and she and I,  
To say that all have fault inside,  
Yet all have innocent eyes.  
Same.

We are all similar.

A period, my friend,  
Marks the very end.  
Death.  
A final rest.



We are all similar.

With the spear, we have all had a date.  
In life we have learned the word hate.  
All have had pain; all have lost loved ones,  
Yet all desire the red blood, of another's son.  
Sad.  
Same.

We are all similar.

But hope lies in all of us.  
For where the line,  
Divides divine,  
And earthly state.

We all shall meet one day.  
And suffer similar fates.  
Same.

We are all similar.

Some will have the glory of soaring through trees.  
Presenting themselves to God, and bowing on their knees.  
Some will forever be the rulers of the ground.  
Falling deeper and deeper as the world goes round.

Same. Difference.  
Same difference.

Yes, we are all similar.

# After A While

by Alex Rodriguez

*Love of My Life, Regret of My Actions, Realization of Letting Go*

After a while you learn  
The subtle difference between  
Holding a hand and chaining a soul  
And you learn that love doesn't mean learning  
And company doesn't always mean security  
And you begin to learn  
That kisses aren't contracts  
And presents aren't promises  
And you begin to accept your defeats  
With your head up and your eyes ahead  
With the grace of a woman and not the grief of a child  
And you learn  
To build all your roads on today  
Because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans  
And futures have a way of falling down mid-flight  
After a while you learn that sunshine burns  
If you get too much  
So you plant your own garden  
And decorate your own soul  
Instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers  
And you learn that you can really endure  
That you are really strong  
And you really do have worth  
And you learn  
And you learn  
With every good-bye you learn.

LHSP POETRY.

*(insert Carol's letter)*

## Caldwell Winners

*(I'm not sure which winners were spoken original, spoken interpretation, or written so can you fill that in? And where is the best place to note that the poems that have asterisks spread throughout the journal are Caldwell winners? Also, are we still putting honorable mentions in the journal, because I didn't receive any?)*

# Oasis

by Danielle Taubman

Splashing in pools of dreams  
Wading in waters of the unknown  
Non-waterproof boots soaking through  
To uncomfortable toes  
Dancing in the rain  
Moving to the beat  
Of each  
Pitter, patter  
Mouth open  
Catching delectable  
Dots of water  
Tonguing notes in a rain dance  
A silent Oasis

# Leeja

by Alisa Modylevskky

I once had an imaginary friend with a Russian name.  
She was a sterling shield superhero  
in contrast to my weak non-radioactive self.  
She could cross-country ski in the middle of the dry Midwestern  
summer  
and run outside barenaked during the dead of winter.  
Together, we would overtake the elementary school playground  
me dancing on the swings, her flipping around on the monkey bars  
She would remind me to color inside the lines,  
I would tell her not to miss me too much when I left to go shower.  
We were a rowdy team,  
how we'd hide in the clothes racks at the store to spook my mother  
jumping and running like crazy because we didn't know any better  
only to enter the house with bruised, sun-kissed knees.  
Until one day,  
like any child who is becoming an adult,  
I eventually tired of her unpredictably wild mannerisms  
Though she is forever embossed in my mind.  
I wonder where she is now?  
I like to believe that she is now playing with another young girl,  
Somersaulting down grassy hills and smudging crayons on the walls  
the way we used to.  
Back in the golden summer days of my  
childhood.

# Tamar

by Johnisha Taylor

She's undercover and underage  
Combines fear and rage  
She bares tear lines under page  
Unattached to her soul  
She folds underneath herself  
And it's cold  
But no one rescues her  
And she never runs  
She Stays  
Finds different ways to get paid  
And births a baby under cage  
But no one notices because cries fade in the rain  
She bleeding 6 types of semen  
Needing to hide  
She's pleading to God  
She don't want to live  
How could He ever forgive  
Her sins—choke her  
And she can no longer say no  
So she's raped and silent  
Struggles between sex and violent  
Love and kindness  
She wants to rewind this—Life  
Live twice have a family and be a wife  
But she thinks it's too late  
The streets be her fate  
She gives and takes nothing  
But disease  
She's always on her knees  
But never folds her hands to pray  
She thinks faith is a tease  
To be hopeful for the impossible

She's been knocked down by too many obstacles  
She forgets her Pentecostal faith  
And trades it for philosophy  
Phil is love  
And she so lost in he  
What can she becomes from this  
She's uses excuses  
And confuses the truth  
To why she chooses her bruises  
Any touch from a man is affection  
Can't take control of her situation  
She trades sex and conversation  
And there's no hesitation  
She's always prepared to share kisses with strangers  
And doesn't know she's in danger  
Away in the manger she rest-ed  
Nested many birds  
And together lost her soul, her mind, and God's word  
None of which seemed to be important in the first  
They didn't feed her in her hunger or her thirst  
Save her from her curse  
Or put money in her purse  
So hey, she figures it couldn't be worse  
Somebody get this girl a doctor  
Better yet...  
Get her a nurse



*(I'm assuming there will be an introduction?)*

# a rabbit and a poor farmer

by Sophia Cho

“Whooo~! sighed the rabbit, then he put down his carrot in front of his legs. “Mmm, very good.” he ate one bite. He liked being beside the farm. So he moved from the forest to the field beside the farm. He could steal vegetables everyday.

At that moment, the farmer sat down on the ground and put his head in his hands. “Oh, god! What a stupid rabbit!” he said, “My carrots! They always steal my carrots and lettuce!!!” The farm was very important to the farmer. He was kind. But right now, he was very upset.

The rabbit burped, “Burp! That was so good.” said the rabbit. Then he imagined that the farmer looked very angry. And he giggled. He went out to look at the farmer’s face.

The rabbit quietly ran to farmer’s farm and hid between in the grass. Only his eyes could be seen above the top. He saw the farmer put his head in his hands and say something to himself. He looked very sad.

When the rabbit saw that, his smiling face changed to sad face just like the farmer. The rabbit thought farmer was very poor. And that was all his fault. The rabbit felt sorry for the farmer. He ran home with a heavy heart.

At home, the rabbit thought about how he can reward the farmer. And he thought he should. At that moment, an idea hit the rabbit’s head. “Aah! Got it! Got it!” He shouted to himself.

“Collect seeds and give them to him!!!”

He needs seeds to grow more vegetables.

Then he went outside to find seeds. But he stopped walking. “How can I get seeds?” He thought.

And he looked around. Some cherries and apples had fallen under the trees. The rabbit jumped under the tree and picked up the cherries with his front paws and teeth. Then his teeth turned red. He grabbed three seeds.

Yay!” shouted the rabbit. “Now for some apples!” So he tried to pick up the apples. But he couldn’t because it was harder. So he

gave up. He thought and thought. And he grabbed the apple and started to eat them.

"Mmm~, it's very tasty!" He said. He had another bite.

At that moment, he felt something is in his mouth. What was it? Then he spat it out. It was an apple seed. He ate more and more apples. So he got more and more seeds. "The farmer will be very happy!" He thought. He smiled his biggest smile ever. He ran faster than a cheetah to the farmer's farm.

The farmer was taking out vegetables and fruits to eat.

He saw the rabbit and ran toward rabbit with a net.

The rabbit shouted, "Ruuu-n!" He quickly put down the seeds and started to run. But when the farmer saw the seeds, he stopped chasing. He looked back and forth between the rabbit and the seeds. Then the rabbit stopped trying escape. The farmer grabbed seeds and opened his mouth. "Di-did you bring these for me? But, how did you-?" The farmer said. The rabbit nodded, yes.

"Ahhhhh!" The farmer yelled. "Did you understand me? And did you give these seeds me? He asked with his mouth still open. The rabbit nodded again.

The farmer gave his hand to the rabbit to see if the rabbit really understood him. The rabbit didn't bite or scratch him. The farmer grabbed the seeds and stood up and started walking away. The rabbit followed him. But this time, the farmer didn't scare the rabbit. The farmer went to his farm and planted the seeds.

He picked up the rabbit and spoke softly to him. "Thank you for the seeds. Could you live with me? I'm very lonely" The farmer said softly.

The rabbit nodded, smiling.

The farmer hugged him tightly.

"You are a very smart and good rabbit!" he said very proudly.

One year later, cherry trees and apple trees grew up tall and healthy. The farmer got many delicious cherries and apples

# Reality- impossible truths

by Madeleine Bradford

The shadow of the wind  
sounds like the dawn and dusk in harmony  
while the sound of the sea  
is the echo of  
eternity  
as it dances ripples  
across the mirrored water  
like a dream  
reflecting silence  
in the dark.

Calm is the essence of shadows,  
and relief, as it hums the  
whimsical little thoughts of  
the brushes and bumbling  
stream, casts tiny motes of  
dust  
from the broken mirror of  
time,  
whose footsteps echo rainbows,  
and whose souls wistfully sigh,  
so like broken wisps of captured  
moonlight.

Pools of darkness  
embrace and envelope  
galaxies of galaxies,  
saturating sleep  
into every fold  
of memory.

Tears drip,  
    dreamlike,  
from young eyes  
who reach into the darkness  
    and surface holding  
a handful of heartaches,  
an armful of joy,  
a little hum of peace,  
a broken clock with angry eyes,  
a heart full of tragedies,  
a small, determined, candle,  
    burning hope  
    into sorrow,  
and a soul full of forgotten mountains  
and broken dreams.

Why is it,  
    that those eyes  
    see only task to task,  
    and never see  
    the buds of freedom?  
but only the thorns of envy  
    and thorns of hatred  
    and thorns of cruelest  
        mocking fortune-  
indeed, time doth ply a wretched  
hammer,  
    to our bent and rusted lives.

And, if we do not stop to listen,  
when would anything  
hear the sunset singing  
or even notice what riches  
lay on cups of golden  
honey  
and melted dew,  
fragrant treasures  
you have unknowingly found  
overnight-  
a blessed gift you have been given!

Gasp of softest clouds  
alight the feather dust  
from the stars  
you love-  
ones that grow  
in generous bounty,  
flowing over the sable night.  
and climbing the  
trellises of clouds,  
like the song of a rose-bud  
unfolding,  
singing, sung-  
notes flowed out  
and petals fell  
and treasures unlocked themselves  
and spilled upon your feet  
while you were watching  
the tide  
tap it's foot  
in time  
with eternity.

# A Day As a Bird

by Katheryne Johnston

Ahhhhhhhh, what a beautiful morning. I wake up to the sound of birds chirping. They sound awfully close and not to mention loud though. I look out the window but all I see is a massive blue sky in front of me. "Oh well," I said to myself, "it must be a clear day." I get up out of bed and stretch my arms. My legs feel really thin and wobbly and my arms feel soft and connected to the side of my body with extra skin. It feels really strange and I hope I'm not sick but I manage to get to the bathroom to check the mirror. When I peek at the mirror I don't see myself, I see a medium sized bird covered in bright blue fuzzy feathers. I open my mouth to scream but all that comes out is a happy chirp. It's just a dream I tell myself but it's not. I have really been transformed into a bird. "Oh no!" I tell myself, "I'm lost in a bird world."

It turns out I was trapped in a bird world and my bedroom and bathroom had been transported to a tree branch right next to a blue bird nest. That is why the chirping of the birds seemed so loud and the sky seemed so blue and massive when I looked out my window which was really now just open sky. I started to panic. I didn't want to be a bird or be living by some either. It wasn't my idea of a perfect neighbor. I slowly stepped out of my bedroom but I didn't know the bird's sign for peace. The birds just seemed to welcome me as their own little baby though and they even offered me a worm. I took it not planning to eat it but they watched me until I swallowed the last little bit. Not bad, I thought or maybe it was just my bird taste buds. They offered me another one and I gulped that one down too. I ate 3 more worms before I was full. After breakfast the 2 little babies in the nest were going to have a flying lesson so I joined in. Yes, I have always wanted to fly. First, hold out your wings really wide and keep your head high and your back tall. Make sure your legs are straight and not too far apart. Never ever bend your knees because it will really effect your take-off. Then after listening carefully to all the instructions it was finally time to go. The first time that I tried I spread out my

wings really wide and started to run. Unfortunately, I tripped on a loose branch and fell. I wasn't discouraged though and tried again. This time the wind wasn't blowing so I didn't get a good take-off. The third time though everything was perfect. The wind was blowing just right, my wings were held out high, and I didn't bend my knees. I couldn't believe that I was actually flying for a few minutes it was so peaceful and the view was great. Then just when I thought I had it the wind changed direction and I started to fall. Oh no, I cried thinking how I was going to get back up to my nest. I reached the ground and landed though it wasn't very smooth. "Ouch! that hurt," I said to myself then I got up and started trying to locate my nest. I found it and noted that it was only about four trees away so I walked over to it. Then I had a great idea to call to my parents for help. I started to chirp and peep or make any noise I could until finally my mother looked down out of the nest and saw me. The next thing I knew she was flying down towards me and help was on the way.

Back in the nest I was so relieved to be safe. The comforting touch of my family was so relaxing after that long frightening flying lesson. At least my landing turned out okay I could have been really hurt. My mother and father then gave me some worms for lunch to help me regain my strength. I gobbled them down quickly and then watched my brother and sister eat. They were also really hungry and were done shortly. After lunch we had another flying lesson with both our mother and our father. This time everyone had a beautiful take-off together and we were all flying as one family. Our parents showed us all the wonderful views from the sky and how everything looked from a bird's eye view. My favorite part was when we could see all the people looking at us longing to fly though they would probably never get a chance without an airplane. Later after our family flight we were so tired we decided to take a short nap. We all snuggled down into the nest and soon we were all dreaming and sleeping peacefully.

Awhile later I woke to the sound of nearby flapping wings. I opened my eyes and saw my dad just coming into the nest with a whole beak full of worms for dinner. At the sight of them I got up immediately and ran to get my share of them. I managed to get 2 of them and gobble them down before my brother and sis-



ter could snatch them away. I was still hungry from all that flying and so was everyone else so my dad set out once more to gather worms. Meanwhile my brother, sister, and I decided to play a game. It was called air tag and it was played just like regular tag but in the air. It was so much fun we were laughing and playing right up to the point where our dad brought another beak full of plump, juicy worms. After he landed we all had some more worms and I got 3. After dinner we were all so tired and full and it was getting dark so we decided to end the day on a good note and go to bed early. We all got into our nest and once again soon we were all snoozing away.

When I woke up something didn't feel right. The nest seemed almost soft and not made out of twigs and straw. My legs felt normal and my body wasn't soft and feathery with wings. I slowly got up and I saw my own bedroom with my own human toys in it. I didn't hear any birds chirping and the sky didn't look so big when I looked out my window. I slowly walked to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. I was happy with what I saw because it was me. The only thing that was left that had any proof that a day as a bird had happened to me was a small, blue, fuzzy feather stuck in my hair. I laughed relieved to be back home and returned to my regular self. Even though a day as a bird had been fun it certainly was tiring and that's the truth!



