



SIR

SNOW ISLAND REVIEW

ART & LITERARY JOURNAL

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SIR

The **Snow Island Review** is the literary and art journal at Francis Marion University. It is named for the headquarters of General Francis Marion, the “Swamp Fox,” who in the winter of 1780-1781 led incursions against and then eluded British troops by escaping to his wilderness retreat bounded by the Great Pee Dee River, Lynches River and Clark Creek. In 1974, Snow Island was named a National Historic Landmark.

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4.2 Seconds

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

“You didn’t go to my dad’s funeral,” she said taking a step towards him.

“That was two months ago and has nothing to do with what we’re talking about.”

He turned from the window of his home office to face her.

“We aren’t talking. And it has everything to do with it.”

“Okay. So what about it?” he asked.

“You didn’t go.”

“I had work.”

“I had class, but that didn’t stop me from attending the funeral.”

“Don’t -”

“Someone killed my dad, and you didn’t even bother to show up to his funeral. His future son-in-law didn’t even show up.”

“Ana -”

The lights from a car flickered through the blinds and caught their attention.

“Who could -”

“We have to go,” Jake reached for something at his side.

The shattering of glass and pounding feet on the floor sounded in their ears. Jake was pushing her past the bookshelves, out the door, towards the back door and down the steps, but it was all too fast. When she reached the first step, Ana looked over her shoulder just as two men fired their guns at Jake. She missed the step and tumbled down the steep brick stairs. She reached for Jake; she reached for help, for anything. But her body flipped over her head, and she plummeted down the stairs. The moment she hit the ground, her neck snapped.

Before she hit the ground and broke her neck, an overwhelming flood of memories poured in to her mind. It took exactly 4.2 seconds for her to fall down the stairs, not even a tenth of a minute. With every step that knocked her on the head, she recalled twice as many memories from the short 22 years she had lived.

Two months ago. Jake showing up at her house late the night her

dad died. She felt his arms around her and inhaled deeply. He smelled like cologne and something else she couldn't quite place. It was a peculiar smell. It was something small and hardly noticeable underneath the cologne. She asked what it was. He murmured something in her ear that she didn't catch. His breath was hot and humid against her skin.

Last weekend. She could feel the paintbrush in her hand as she painted Jake's sailboat onto a canvas. That was the day he took her sailing. She felt the cold wind of that day, the sting against her cheeks. She remembered the wind blowing his brown hair perfectly, as her long locks whipped around her face.

Three months ago. The night he proposed. She remembered the sparkling lights of the garden. The lights flickering around the greenery and flowers. She remembered him stuttering over his words until finally, he knelt down on one knee and pulled out a little blue box that held everything she ever dreamed of.

Two years ago. The day she brought him home to meet her parents. He was more nervous than she. She could see the color draining out of his face when he shook her father's hand. How dad remarked later that night, that Jake was a strange boy. She could feel the knots in her stomach after accusing her dad of being too critical.

Three and a half years ago. She felt butterflies the first time she saw him. He was beautiful as he ordered his drink. In turn, she had spilled his drink all over him when she tried to give him his coffee in Starbucks. She recalled how her manager, Bill, lectured her over carelessness. And how Jake had returned to the cafe everyday that week until he finally asked her out.

Two weeks ago. Sitting in her desk at school and raising her hand to answer the question. She remembered the test she didn't study for, and all the homework she did not do. She remembered her professor quoting something by Eliot and asking "do I dare?"

Five fights ago. She tried not to think of the first fight with him. Or remember the words they said. Remember the anger, the hurt and confusion. How she called him a liar and how he called her paranoid. She tried to forget.

Thirteen years ago. Ana tried not to think of the day she went into her dad's home office. The one room she was forbidden to go in. She

tried not to remember the shelves of books and finding one filled with passports, or what happened when her dad found her. She tried to forget.

Fifteen years ago. The night she spent with her family that Fourth of July. Her dad was setting off fireworks as she and her sister helped. She thought of the sparkling lights the fireworks threw into the sky. The sound was like gun shots. And that smell. After the fireworks were set off, that peculiar smell.

And then, with her last breath she remembered and recognized that scent. She knew what that peculiar smell was. She knew what it was, that something small and hardly noticeable underneath the cologne.

Airing Out Dirty Laundry

By Amelia J. Bryant

His white socks scattered the front yard,
draping over the pink azalea bushes,
flying through the air like caged doves
as he drove up
in his shiny pearl Cadillac.

“It’s laundry day,”
Grannie shouted,
tossing Grandpa’s leather suitcase
over the wooden porch rails,
as sweat beaded around her nose.

She went back in the house for more.
Slamming closet doors and
jerking on dresser drawers,
patches of gray hair frizzed
around her smooth cheeks
from the July heat,
as she scooped up all she could hold.

Shirts were next.
Plaid button-downs,
t-shirts, and work uniforms
flew over the rails
one by one,
too fast for Grandpa to catch,
even if he tried.

She let me throw some pieces, too.
I loved throwing games,
especially at age five.
But all Grandpa did was get in his car,

never returning to play.
To this day, I still
don't understand why.

Almondale (Part One)

By David Doughty

Almondale. It's my favorite season of every cycle. The time of peace. No cannon fire. No raids. No killing. Just peace.

My father was the Chief Elder of the Order of Priors; the lawmakers and peacekeepers of a settlement on the edge of a lost city that was once known as Riverside. We were the best among the few remaining colonies of survivors after the War of the Great Flashes. Father and his Order were the ones who instated Almondale as the annual time of concord before my younger brother Caden and I were even born. Back then, Almondale meant "no debates," rather than "no deaths."

It's amazing to think how well everyone in the city got along with each other in those days. The only thing that divided us was the belief, or lack thereof, in the spiritual ideals of a man had been written about and worshiped in the Before-time. A good bit of Riverside's residents, like my uncle, Jakyl, wished to reinstate this holy man as "The Savior," but many others, like my father, argued that this man was the cause of the War. Parties clashed, classes developed, and pretty soon not a day went by were there wasn't a block-wide dispute about the Christ. We were no longer the Settlement of Riverside. We were the settlement of believers and skeptics.

I don't personally remember much about my father. That may be because he was murdered before I could even walk. Killed on the last day of Almondale; the day of the Feast of Peace. Shot in the back by a headstrong believer by the name of Jessiah Combs. Combs wasn't too fond of the bias my father held against the believers, so the coward killed him and lead his band of mantra-shouting freaks to the far East. Caden and I watched our father die at the head of the feast table. The hallowed day of the Feast of Peace was forever tarnished with his blood.

Jakyl took control of the non-believers who remained at Riverside. He abolished the Order of Priors and set forth the Order of the Jackals. New laws were ordained prohibiting interaction or affiliation with Combs and his followers. New mandates were passed commanding every able-bodied civilian of Riverside to be enlisted in the Jackal Armada.

Jakyl had declared war on Combs and vowed vengeance on his clan of believers.

For a decade and a half, the Jackals infiltrated Combs' mountain hideouts with makeshift war-tanks and homemade explosives. My uncle would never let up until every single believer was dead and the man responsible for his brother's death was castrated and displayed for torture in the middle of the city for every non-believer to see.

Despite the differences between my father and Jakyl, both as brothers and as leaders of Riverside, Jakyl kept Almondale sacred. Every year, he and the Elders of the Order of the Jackal would trek to the top of Mt. Corpus to have a civil dinner with Combs and his head believers on the day of the Feast of Peace. Nothing was ever said between them. No eye contact was ever made. They arrived, they ate, and they left to prepare for another long season of battle.

It is rumored that Combs also adhered to strict obligations during the time of peace. For both sides, slaying during Almondale was forbidden under penalty of sacrificial execution. Makes sense, right?

My brother and I grew up knowing little of anything but the concepts of jilted war and faux peace. That and the prophecies. When father died, Jakyl took it upon himself to hold secret readings with me and Caden in the Archives. Civilian entry into the Archival Chamber was prohibited, even before Jakyl's control of the city. Nevertheless, my uncle saw fit to educate my brother and I, not just with the scripts of the Christ, but with what records remained of the history of our kind.

Caden enjoyed learning about the scripts but I found them to be tasteless and outdated. I much preferred sneaking off and reading solid, genuine volumes like the works of Epicurus. "Fear not your God," is my favorite ideal of his. It was foolish of me bring it up during scripture study, however. Jakyl had never beaten me that hard before. When it came to my brother and I, Jakyl was adamant about instilling the dogma of his own philosophies upon our impressionable minds.

Still, he never mixed those beliefs with the Order or with Jackal Law. He would often claim to the Order that he knew the Christ and that a time would come for its acknowledgement, but that now was a time for revenge against the traitors of Riverside. According to Jakyl, it was not about beliefs; it was about justice. According to me, it was about Jakyl

getting the “dirty work” done before inviting the Divine to his doorstep.

We were still boys when Jakyl first put us on the frontlines. Between my brother and I, we killed 146 believers and eradicated 3 barracks in the Eastern Cove under just a cycle’s time. The scouts would sometimes penetrate enemy territory weeks before our arrival and radio back with news of Jessiah’s whereabouts and movements. Unfortunately, every time they would get close, he would disappear. The whole operation was like taking a step forward but then taking three steps back.

With every miserable day that passed, my hatred for Jessiah and his people grew larger and larger. I began to see his face on the faces of the believers that I gunned down. I promised myself that I would take Combs’ last breath before Jakyl ever got the chance. As far as I was concerned, Jakyl was unworthy of killing Combs. He was nothing but a dirty believer who turned Riverside into a cesspool of warmongers. That’s not what my father wanted at all.

Father had seen this coming. He knew something about the past; about the Christ and the controversies. He knew that conflict might be unavoidable. It didn’t matter that Almondale was still recognized every cycle. When my father died, the true peace was gone forever. I resented Jakyl for what he did in my father’s name. It wasn’t long before I started imagining that I was shooting at my uncle’s face as well as Jessiah’s.

The battles were very hard on my brother. I could tell that something bothered him about killing Comb’s believers. I knew that Caden wanted the peace back just as much as I did, but I never thought he’d want it bad enough to pray for it. I was scarcely a man’s age when I walked into his bunker and found him repeating phrases in a quiet intonation.

It was one of Combs’ chants; a prayer he had designed himself to enquire the Christ for clemency and harmony. He was adulating the Christ and probably had been for some time. That is when I understood his suffering. I drew my rifle and pressed it against his temple. It was Jackal Law to kill any believer on sight, other than Jakyl himself, of course. It was my duty to immediately eradicate Caden. Yet, I hesitated.

“Brother, why do you pray?” I asked. I can remember thinking

'Why, brother? Why now? Why not during Almondale?' I can also remember my thoughts being interrupted by the cold voice of my uncle who stood in the threshold of the bunker.

"Kill him, son."

Son? This man was not my father. This man was not OUR father. Suddenly, my long-growing disdain for Jakyl had overpowered my conditioned inability to be disobedient. I turned and aimed at my uncle.

"No. Caden will not die on this day," I said. Jakyl had been drinking, I could tell.

"You forget yourself, boy. This is not a day of peace. You will kill your brother or I will kill you both. This is the ultimatum I give you and you will accept it."

"No," I said as I readied my rifle.

"I command you!"

"You will leave now or that command will be your last. That is the new ultimatum."

"He is a believer!"

"As are you."

"You defiant little shit!"

He lunged at me. I fired and missed. He pulled out his blade and kicked the rifle from my grip. That was his mistake; my hands were then free to use as I pleased. One blow to his chest. Another to his jaw. He managed to slice my face twice, blinding my left eye, before I could disable his arm. He dropped the knife and swung at me. I ducked and tackled him to the floor. As he reached for the knife on the floor nearby, I cupped my right fist in my left hand and swung both arms together down upon his head. He was momentarily incapacitated. I stood up, walked over to the knife, picked it up and knelt down beside my uncle who had started to come to.

"The age of the Jackal is now over," I said. Jakyl's knife found its way into his heart. He died laughing.

As I stood and took the weapon from his chest, I noticed that my dear brother had become silent. I turned to look at him with the one eye I could still see with. He stared at Jakyl and then looked to the floor in shame. I hated him so much. He had ruined everything. Jakyl's death was necessary but untimely. Combs' militia had grown larger

and stronger since the believers had first separated from Riverside and now there was nobody efficient enough to command the Jackals against them.

“Get out,” I said, softly. “Leave Riverside. If you return, you will die.”

Having killed Jakyl, doctrine stated that I was to take his place as Chief Elder of Riverside under the code of “Non-Premeditated Coop.” My first decree was that no one was to harm my brother as I and the rest of Riverside watched him walk away into the East; a banished soul, searching for those who prayed as he did. For what remains as an unknown reason, that was the day that the war between beliefs truly began. Many men and women would die in the decades to come. Some in the name of their Lord, and the rest in the name of me; the Savior of the West.

Although I had eliminated the Order of the Jackal, the Armada still called themselves “the Jackals.” I allowed them that, for Jakyl had made us fine warriors. I fit into the leadership position better than I had anticipated. I had even lead several successful raids during my first few months as Elder Deacon. I had established a monarchy or sorts; I wished not to have a diplomatic Order to oversee creeds and policy. My rule would be great and not faulty like that of my father’s or my uncle’s. I would be adored and admired. I would be a perfect soldier but also a friend of the Riverside public.

The Jackals and I spent several cycles roaming the Eastern Cove and hitting the enemy harder and faster. I donned my worn duster and eye-patch, smoked my cigars and brandished my trusty sawn-off at any believer we came across. We drank our bootleg bourbon and copulated with our finest women as we stormed land and hollered and cackled.

My name rang throughout the East, sprouting fear and uncertainty among Combs’ disciples. Even the toughest and roughest of those filthy Christ-lovers whimpered when they heard the name, “Deacon.” We were the Pirates of the West; living with few laws and refusing to form any new ones. In fact, the only one commandment that I made a point to preserve from Jakyl’s reign and before were the laws of Almondale.

Every cycle, the high ranking Jackals and I would journey to Mt. Corpus for the Feast of Peace to await the arrival of our counterparts.

However, we waited in vain. For, ever since my brother's banishment had sent news of my rule to Combs, he and his minions had never shown up for the Feast. Jessiah spat on my father's memory and the substantiation of my leadership by avoiding my ceremony of armistice cycle after cycle after cycle. To make up for all of the lost quality time, I swore that Combs' inevitable death at my hands would be nice and slow.

Many more cycles passed. Many more lives were wasted. Many more feasts were had with Combs' absence. I began to grow weary of the perpetual redundancies I faced as every season came and went. My face had grown old and rugged. My voice was tired but remained firm. I was no longer the young, disciplined soldier that my uncle had molded with his own hands.

I regularly wondered how I became what was; a monstrous czar of abysmal bandits. I was not the ruler I wished to be. I was crude and egotistical; ugly and un-mannered with my speech. I was nothing but a puddle of slime that used the public's dread of death to my own advantage. Even my own people feared me. As I sat and drank and bathed in my own pity, I would often look up past the sky at the world beyond this one. Father had once told me that "we are the children of the stars."

I would usually take another drink and ponder about what he might have meant by that. Probably something about "peace." Everything my father said had something to do with peace. It's all he ever dreamt of. Honestly, I thought my father was blinded by his naivety. I remember reading about the wars that our kind had fought before the Great Flashes. I didn't think we were meant to have peace. The Christ, the Lord, or whoever the believer's think made us, made us for war. It's the one thing we're damn good at; killing each other over nothing.

Every evening, while I would reflect upon better times, peace, and death, I would think about Jakyl. I would wonder how things would be different if I hadn't killed him and I would regret what I had done to him. Not that he didn't deserve it or anything. I just wished I hadn't had to do it. Then he would still be Elder Chief and I wouldn't have to drink away my hatred for myself every night.

And that's when I would think about my brother. It was his entire

fault. If I hadn't caught him praying that day, Jakyl wouldn't have threatened us and I wouldn't have had to assassinate him. I never lamented Caden's expulsion from Riverside, but sometimes I wished he was there with me. I felt that, with Caden by my side, I would not have become such a tyrant. I would continually recall a verse from the prophetic scripts that Jakyl had once taught to us, "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

While I am not a believer, I found wisdom woven within those words. Jakyl may have taken my eye, but I was responsible for fully blinding myself with loathing. Although I still begrudged Caden, my animosity towards him had all but disappeared. I missed my brother. I ached to know of the life he now lead and I would sometimes worry about whether or not he was still alive. What if he was killed by one of the Jackals already? What if I, myself, had shot him without noticing; only seeing the face of Jessiah Comb's? My coarse, intimidating prowl concealed my pain and sorrow well. Each night, before I returned to my chamber to sleep, I would look at the stars our father once spoke of, and I would wish Caden well.

One clear and bright Almondale evening, on the eve of the Feast of Peace, I sat on the edge of my terrace, drinking and remembering as per usual, when a Jackal guard burst into my chamber.

"Sir!" he exclaimed with vigor.

"Yeah?"

"Sir," he nervously hesitated. "Sir, I wish to apologize in advance for any potential insubordination..."

"Speak," I said, growing impatient.

"Sir...our scouts near Ravenswood have radioed us saying there's a lone believer traveling west."

"And?"

"And they've been tracking him. Sir, he's headed straight for Mt. Corpus. He'll be there by noon tomorrow."

I turned to look at the guard.

"Well, well," I said with a smile. "It looks like we're gonna have a little lunch guest!"

The guard still looked terrified.

“What the Hell’s wrong with you, kid?” I ask. He opens his mouth but it takes him several moments to actually say something.

“Sir...” he says, looking away from me. “Sir, it’s your brother.”

I hid my shock and looked back out over the view of Riverside.

“Leave,” I told the guard.

“Yes, sir.”

After the guard was gone, I took another drink and looked up at the sky. I thought of nothing and of nobody. I stared at the pale moon and hummed an old hymn that Jakyl had taught to us when we were still boys. It was Caden’s favorite hymn. It spoke of being saved from the darkness and being cleansed from sin. I thought of Caden while I sang the last lyric aloud.

“Was blind but now I see.” I was tired. “Got a big day tomorrow,” I said to no one. “I need my rest.” I finished my drink and stood. I took one last look at the sky. “Children of the stars,” I muttered to myself. “Huh. Goodnight, brother. See ya at noon.”

Ars Poetica

By Sommer Turner

I flip the little switch,
And grimy light drizzles -
Bulb filaments nearly fizzling -
Over my ransacked attic,
Where every inch of space is
Filled with dust and disarray.

In all the corners, cobwebs -
Fragile, yet enduring,
Matching the memories,
Beautiful or broken in their boxes,
Taped up and tightly tucked away
So the sentiment cannot escape.

Feeling odd and overwhelmed
By flashbacks and filth, I begin
To obsess over restoring order.
I mindfully move, gather and group
All these things, trash and treasure,
Like lines in a poem.

It's a task I've perpetually pushed aside.
Out of sight, almost out of mind...
Until it's time.

Beautiful Creature

By Deizmond Kelly

I'd never seen something so indescribably
Beautiful. At least until I saw her. I could
Have sworn I was dreaming because she looked
Like something out of a fairy tale. Something
Too beautiful for words to possess.

With her hips and curves that make me
Want to swerve into her veins and follow
The path of her blood stream to her heart.
Take the back roads of her mind so that I
Would be able to see her thoughts. Make
A straight shot down her spine and a sharp
Left toward her rib cage so I would finally
Be complete. Run off these roads and fall
To the pit of her stomach so my presence
Would forever be a present to the depths of
Her soul.

I lay in bed at night, wishing my sheets
Were her hands. Caressing my skin with
Their touch. That my pillows were her lips,
Decorating my cheeks with angelic kisses.
I imagine my cover is her skin, wrapping
Tightly into the contours of my body like
The pieces of a puzzle. I want her to solve me.

Find the solution to the mathematical equation
Known as my heart. Discover the square root
Of my soul and become the multiple of my existence.
I crave to know her, to confess my yearning attraction
To her. But these are only dreams. Surely something so
Wonderful already belongs to another.

So I bottle my emotions, mix them into a
Potion that I can one day slip into her cup.
So maybe, just maybe she will know what I'm
Feeling. Until then I'll keep the mental image
Of this beautiful creature locked up in my thoughts.

Bipolar Disorder Sonnet

By Amelia J. Bryant

It started Monday morning once she woke,
the words that stirred her husband out of sleep.
“I never thought you were the one,” she spoke.
He kneeled and pled, but failed. She never weeped.

That day, she dammed her friends and young brother;
They banned her presence from their households then.
At home, she ripped their photographs, rather
than try to make this family whole again.

That night, she called the minister, cursing,
rejecting God and calling faith a waste.
She showed no shame, no sign of unsettling
remorse, no care for ones she had disgraced.

She lays so still, her coffin closed and sealed.
They lower down her corpse, alone, unhealed.

The Bride

By Lorrie Burnett

Dressed all in white,
looking into the golden-framed mirror
as her mother happily adjusts the veil.
A smile is plastered
to her made-up face,
and her eyes are hidden
by a shadow of doubt.

The satin of her gown
hides the scars on her arms
left by a man with a
strong hand.
The more I gaze at her,
the sadder she appears.

Her emotions become
trapped in her reflection
as she spins to kiss her mother.
The smile she bares
grows wider,
the pain buried underneath,
and she walks begrudgingly down the
aisle to meet her fate.



Alone

-By Brittany Zedalis

Caged

By Carissa Fazio

All day she lies in bed, facing the wall.
Her cheeks layered with tears,
laced with ribbons of mascara.

A sparrow perched outside her window
stops singing. Ghost phones echo,
ringing through her gray world.

Her eyes trace the outline of the sparrow
against the foliage. Entombed in her mind,
she envisions only freedom from her cage.

The sparrow takes off, filling his wings with
air. She rolls over in bed, bracing herself
for another long night.

Catching Fireflies

By Dina Modlin

I stand at the edge of the woods
looking at the gigantic oaks,
whose leaves have changed
from vibrant green to golden yellow;
the crisp autumn air smells
of bonfires and s'mores.

My dirty-blonde hair is in plaited pigtails
flowing past my small shoulders;
my blue eyes with yellow specks
twinkle with delight,
I wear a huge grin
on my seven-year-old face.

watch the yellow-orange sun sink behind
the tall pine trees and oversized oaks,
as little stars begin to twinkle
with the crescent moon hanging
low in the midnight blue sky.

There is not a cloud in sight.
I wait impatiently
with my glass Mason jar,
holes punched
in the golden lid.

Slowly the forest comes to life
with bright yellow-green bursts of light.
I run towards them,
capturing the glowing beetles,
then quickly closing the lid
so they cannot escape.

I hold my prized possession
tightly in my small hands.

I run home, clutching the container to my chest
and set the live nightlight
on my bedside table
and drift off to sleep during story
time and dream of fairies.

Co'am Goes Ham

By Lucas Berry

Hi. My name is Co'am. I'm not like you. Presumably. See, I'm immortal, and we immortals tend to be a little bit different, what with the whole living until we get killed in incredibly violent fashions and all. It gives you a new kind of perspective. Which makes the following story incredibly annoying.

I was on my way to see an ex-girlfriend about some very important business. Literally world-ending stuff here. She's the queen of the vampires, and also the biggest dealer, ever. And by dealer, I'm talking about everything. Drugs, sex, guns, you name it. And, she always seems to have a new boy-toy. And not all of them are very bright. Her current one seems particularly dense. Byron, that's what his name is, couldn't think of it for a second there. He's the kind who takes the whole vampire superiority thing very seriously. All caught up in the craze sweeping the nation. Nothing a human can do could ever compare to a vampire as far as he's concerned. So when I walked through the front doors of one of her worse clubs, and saw him waiting for me and obviously pretty pissed off, I could hardly keep myself from rolling my eyes. "What are you doing here human?" he snarled. "Your kind isn't welcome here."

"I don't want any trouble, just need to talk to Allesa real quick. It's pretty important, so if you could step aside, I know my way around."

"I warned you human." he screamed, melodramatical as can be, as he leapt at me. Or at least he tried to. But here's the thing that most of these young supernaturals don't know about me. I'm pretty good with my brain. As in, I can use mine, to manipulate yours. So as he was just about to tear out my throat, I sent a little psychic lash at him, stopping him dead. Looking around I saw a questionable black leather couch, and a slightly dented metal chair next to it. Motioning, I led him over and had him sit on the couch. I took the chair. The dazed look on his face almost made me bust out laughing. But just dazing him and giving him a headache for half an hour wouldn't have gotten my point across. I may not be looking for trouble, but I can sure as hell handle

it. So I took it to the next level. See, vampires can do that whole dazed thing to their own prey; it's just one of their abilities. But there aren't many beings out there who can force repeating hallucinations onto someone, trap them in their own heads so to speak. I can. And so I did. Alessa was pretty pissed at me. I suppose trapping her boyfriend inside his own mind, making him repeat a conversation with me about how I'd trapped him, while he drooled onto a flea ridden couch probably wasn't the politest way to say hello. But hey, such is life. I blame her really, she should've warned him not to mess with me when I'm busy, she knows better.

Consuming

By Lucas Berry

The magic swirled through the air in a most terrifying manner, or at least it would seem so to an outsider, it was more magic than most magi, let alone normal men, ever saw in a life-time, all in one small place, swirling and twisting in such chaos, that weaker minds would have broken at the mere sight, it would have turned them into jibbering lunatics; the torn shreds that were all that remained of the spirit, fluttered through the air as though tossed by a hurricane, and the remnants of sentience they retained, even in their sundered state, allowed them to scream, and scream they did, with a sound to shatter sanity; but, despite it all, this massive hurricane of magic, this twisting typhoon of power, was all constrained to a small circle, no bigger than a dinner plate, by drawings upon the ground, intricate designs meant to bind a spirit to its summoner's will, with a new layer, of recent invention, meant to direct the spirit's power upon itself, to make of the spirit's power a blade, driven by the command of the summoner, in order to tear the spirit asunder, and the newest addition, a small sigil, meant to act as a funnel between the circle in which the spirit and subsequent magical tornado were contained, and the larger circle where a child stood; the child, who should have been terrified, but was not, who should have been shivering in fear, or insanity, or who should have long since fainted from the stress and fatigue of the summoning, but who, instead, smiled a wicked smile, triggered his cruel invention, opened his mouth, and drank, in large and greedy gulps, the vast, swirling expanse of magic that began to funnel into the circle he had traced upon the ground.

Companions

- By Brittany Zedalis



Conversation

By Tiara Felder

“Hey, how are you?”

Well honestly, looking at you makes me
want to scream so loudly that I burst my eardrums
and bleed out my hatred on your new white shoes.

If I could, I would pull your soul away from your
body to make you as empty as you've made me
and I can't help wondering if you knew the torment
you would cause when you knocked on his door

that night, your slutty teen hormones demanding
their first time and picking a conquest at random
since you had no man of your own. I feel
guilty for a second as I hope that it hurt and that

you wanted to stop, but he didn't, and that he
wasn't as gentle with you as he always was with me.
The smell of him, like Christmas, coffee, and fresh ink
is my favorite memory. His warm hands on my constantly

cold skin, then later on my rounding belly. The way
he loved us, or said he did. How he'd bring up his finger
and wipe away the tears beneath my cheek when I laughed
too hard and later, toss AJ up so high even I believed he

could touch the stars. Because of that, I can't even say
I'm sorry I met him, just that he met you and that you
were too inexperienced to make him wrap it up.
“Fine, thanks. You?”

Crosswords

By Amanda Taylor

Every morning at five he'd rise to retrieve
The morning paper and make a pot of coffee

"I drink for the taste, not the energy"
He'd say, as he filled in the crossword in pen.

Placemat and paper perfectly parallel,
He'd position his coffee cup particularly

As he'd brood over the black and white boxes,
Sometimes he'd talk his clues out,

"Five letter word for 'Blood of the gods'?"
Eyes concentrated, he wrote "ICHOR"

My feet would dangle as I'd watch,
"Do you ever finish your puzzles?"

Thoughtfully, his sure face changed.
"I always try," he answered carefully.

Today the newspaper sat untouched,
And his spot at the table was cluttered.

Turning to the crossword, I grabbed a
Pen and took a seat at the foot of the table.

"_____ in Venice?"
"Fighting force at the Battle of Midway"?

As I read the down and across words, I realized:
It's hard to complete a crossword in pen.

Daddy's Little Girl

By Deizmond Kelly

This morning I woke up a princess,
Still able to call myself daddy's little girl.
But as lay me down to sleep, I pray the lord
My secrets keep, for if these secrets ever part
It's sure to break my father's heart.

I promised daddy I wouldn't tell. He
Told me if I was a good girl and kept
His... our secret, he would buy me a
New teddy bear. Maybe even a new dolly
If I keep it for a really long time. So I do.
Mommy puts me in the bathtub and finds
a boo-boo on my thigh. She always told me
not to lie, but I promised Daddy so I tell her
me and Kissy from next door were climbing trees.

I promised daddy I wouldn't tell.
Wouldn't tell mommy that it hurts when
I walk. Wouldn't tell her that the spots in
my panties weren't what she thought.
Promised him that his... our secret would
always be safe with me. And it was. I
never told mommy how scared I was to stay
home alone with you. Or how I wanted a lock
on my door not only to things that go bump
In the night away, but to keep you from
bumping your skin against mine. To hide
underneath my blanky and cradle my fears
in my broken self.

I don't tell my first love that our first
time was something that I was already

used to. I don't tell him that the all too familiar feeling makes me sick to my stomach. I don't say that I want to cry. That I want to scream until my lungs collapse. Instead I lay there like a good girl. Like daddy's little girl.

Now I had a secret of my own. I promised myself you would never know. I was wrong... The look on your face said you could feel the difference. The fire in your eyes told me I was in trouble.

The next morning I woke up, feeling like a train had run through me. My limbs were numb. Though not as numb as my heart. My sheets soaked with traces of my hurt and humiliation. The burning desire to break takes over.

I told mommy our secret today. Watched as her heart sank to her feet. Her tears made puddles in my shoulder blades. Her breath hot in my ears as she helplessly tries to catch it. You walk through the door and silence falls. The horror in your eyes told me all I needed to know.

I'm sorry I couldn't keep our secret a secret anymore. I'm sorry that my hate for you over powered the love I buried away. I'm sorry mommy left and took me with her. I'm sorry you're alone now, with nothing but barred windows and doors to keep you company. I'm sorry I broke your heart Daddy. I hope I can still be your little girl.

Damn Liberal

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

Damn liberal.

He doesn't want children,
he believes in abortion,
and he likes to drink Guinness on Saturday nights.

She hates him for it.

But he's on his knees
playing guitar,
strumming her heartstrings,
singing a song.

His eyes meet hers,
and she knows

he understands her in ways no one else can.

Damn liberal.

He speaks poetry to her,
lyrical lines they both memorized,
and explain their lives
which have intertwined.

She hates him for it.

But he's standing beside her,
lingering in the doorway,
wishing he could stay.

He sees right through her,
she knows it's true,

he understands her in ways no one else can.

But it's complicated.

Their hands are tied.

Their hearts are already occupied.

He won't if she can't.

So, separated they stand.

But

he understands her in ways no one else can.

Brave

- By Brittany Zedalis



Desire

By LeAira Frierson

It starts as just a tiny spark,
travelling slowly,
gaining momentum and
heat as it spreads.
Snaking its way in and out
gently consuming all in its path,
until it's raging, strong and fierce.
The fire burrows deep, making a cavern;
a pit of glowing embers set ablaze.

Later awakened once again,
by the whispers of wispy winds,
the flames rise, stretching.
Adorned in radiant hues of red, yellow and orange;
it becomes a fury, surging with white heat.

Almost impossible to bear, but so
enrapturing that it excites the senses
Not willing to rest, until there's
nothing else to burn.
The smoke finally curls into the air
leaving a rich hickory scent
that lingers.

The Doll Maker

By Amelia J. Bryant

He buys her clothes
from lavish boutiques,
only gowns of silk and fine lace.
He dresses her carefully,
never wrinkling the fabric.
Shaking his head,
he reaches for more tools.

Sitting her down,
with her mouth open,
he coats peroxide
over her teeth.
Bleaching away
all set-in stains,
his eye catches another flaw.

She just sits there
while he brushes ammonia
into her hair.
Salicylic acid polishes
her porcelain skin,
as cellulite cream burns her delicate limbs.

With gloved hands,
he rips open her breasts,
stuffs them with silicon
sculpting their size
to his satisfaction.

Later, he pours sulfuric acid
down her waist, corroding
her love handles, devouring flesh

down to her bones

When she asks
“How about now?”
he shoves the last of the bottle
over her voice box,
the swirling acid taking away
her silly questions.
He places her in her chair.

Eileen

By Michael Britt

I have a love that sings, 6 strings on-key.
I stroke her locks, caress her neck of pine.
Her curves are smooth, yet roll like storms to sea.
Her voice emotes, dispatching sounds divine.

I lean, she rocks, as hearts suspend on strings
The sky is black; our tones are filled with blue.
We pluck at chords. We pick pedals of spring
and stroll in time along the paths I choose.

Eileen, she sways as notes pass through the night
Converging arcs of sound begin to rise.
The song we strum is ours for wrong or right
as joyous notes are bitten by her cries.

Eileen, my love who sings so soft and sweet
I lean against your songs of hearts on-beat.

Farm House

By Michael Britt

Flames flicker in the distance
slashing through smoky skies.
Charcoaled memories smear my cheeks.

Eager embers pugnaciously perched,
hiss at the disfigured foundation.

We're just doing our jobs
as a wrecking crew of flames
rip rafters down.

Smoke stacks send signals,
choking black skies.
Ashes of photographs fall at my feet.

It won't be long now!
As the thick smoke sweeps up
removing all remnants of the past.

Is this the farm house?
It is the farm house!

Now— an inferno
I watch the flames grow higher,
as auburn locks tickle night's nose,

I wonder how something engulfed by flames,
could be so cold.

Fire and Gasoline

By Elizabeth Graham

He says we are like
fire and gasoline.
Through alcohol, dust,
charcoal and caffeine
I've burned without you.
So I am the fire.
If you only knew
the fuel I desire.
My insides still singe
when I hear sirens.
The heat in your eyes,
that ink on your skin.
inflamed high-heels and
fire engine red lips.
of all people you
know the partnership.
When gas finds flame
destruction arises.
Erased by embers;
new beginnings comprised
of ashes, and smoke.
Fresh growth can emerge
From the ruin. The
combination will purge.
You'll never know
until you douse the flame
how the landscape will
never be the same.
Smoldering until
the gasoline runs.
Out, fuel will flash
before warmth has begun.

A firefighter; who
smokes. You should know what
fire can do with
gasoline in its gut.

For Fairytales

By Stephanie Smith

I coolly contemplate the sharp edges of
his clip board, a swift trip or a stabbing
thrust would work. He asks about the three
bears. They all do. "Why?" he asks.
The word echoes in my head

like a dripping faucet. I recall the dark thrill
of entering the den after the incomprehensible
and morbid disappointment that no stranger
stirred to meet me. "Why not?", I heard myself mutter,
"I had no other purpose for my time".

My luscious locks of gold mark me useless,
too delicate for drudgery and too dainty to date.
My diabolical decimation of the three bears'
den felt purposeful, fateful, but to what end,

I still wonder? Their porridge filled me with reckless
excitement, their chair let me rest in power
and rupture control, and their bed leapt to meet me
with tingling anticipation. Then, the chase that never was,
but the thought of their heavy paws pounding
the loam lent lightning and thunder to my pulse.

"But do you think it was right?" Right?
Nothing over knoll or dale ever felt so satisfying,
yet leaves shake and shudder underfoot knowing
I run towards stagnate air and dreams misplaced
by dimness. "Right is for fairytales."

From “Tate Rowan Blankenship (Life and Contacts)”

By Justin M. McGee

I.

J. F. K.

To be initialized in a world repulsed
by the thought of remembering
the first letter
of your first name
must be incredible.

This world called me to it,
to the River.

“Sing us one of those,”

The people called on us,
you and I.

Tears became the River.

With our song
we captivate those who
took us and our songs
captive.

Pretentious.

I am a writer, and I speak as a writer.

I see and perceive my world as a writer,
but when the final hour comes, I’ll be a writer
no more.

I’ll put away my pens, paper, ideas
and
drink.

In a world of vampires, werewolves and bad novels,
that day may come sooner than later.

Just as Christ did

(at his most human, dying on the cross),

I ask you:

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

Jen

My inner-goddess squirms.
I'm trying to hold my head above water,
but I can't tread water forever.
His body is heavy on me.
I love to make him useless.
I can fix him.
I'm going to fix him.
I will fix him.

"The Winged Ship"

Wave goodbye to the land,
land of the dry living and dead.
You've pinned me,
you've impaled me,
(and the others)
and spread my wings,
and forced me to accept
the unrelenting winds.

It's not your wind
to put in my sails.

There's no destination
I can see, but there's
some comfort in the
billowing clouds. They
show the right direction.
Wait.
They are caught in the
same unrelenting winds.

My quick movements
could cause your hurricanes.

X

Behind a screen,
under some ridiculous name,
living with her parents,
eating frozen pizza and Funyons for substance,
dozing off on her closed French book,
forgetting her unshaven legs,
she types.
She creates.
She destroys.
She recreates.
She writes.
Unnoticed,
she writes.

XI

“Figurehead of the Basilica”
bows his head and passes along
the possibility and reality of responsibility.
It is a lifelong term.

“The POTUS”
raises his head, knits his brow
and stresses over unfulfilled promises.
It is a four year term.

Frustration

By Nikki Clark

If I were of a mind to merely write,
I think I would not find this task so hard
as it appears to be to me tonight,
for I am no Elizabethan Bard.
But write I must for this is due today.
And, though I have no question of the heart
nor mistress to compare to summer's day
or wisdom to a youth and love impart,
I still must will myself to do this task
instead of watching Oscar nominees.
And now myself this question I must ask:
What subject can I write with speed and ease?
 So I set point of pen to empty page
 To trap frustration in iambic cage.



Captured

-By Brittany Zedalis

Garden

By Nikki Clark

There grows a garden on my skin;
But I'm not one to grow it.
Another gard'ner plants the seeds
and I do merely show it.

Though many hours spend I here
and contemplate its soil,
I do not work this garden hard
and yet, it gives me toil.

This garden harbors secret pain;
with hatred it was sown.
I hide the hurt I hold within
though all my scars are shown.

Alone, except for that old witch,
the crone who tends to me,
the one who made my garden skin
that no one else will see.

She prunes away all that I love,
she weeds out all I am;
whispering that I'm insane,
she brings me up by hand.

For every disobedience,
for each my acts of sin,
a flower violet, blue, or black
blooms across my skin.

I hate this garden she creates,
this map of all I'm not:

blooming battle-scars of all
the fights with her I've fought.

I loathe the flowers that she grows:
the blooms that feed my fears.
But, violets spread across my skin,
watered by my tears.

Come one day I will be free
and all my pain will end
all the violet blooms will fade
I'll shed my garden skin

Great Minds

By Anna Register

(This poem is my view on why some of the famous writers (ex. Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, ect.) committed suicide.)

I am trapped-
Trapped inside my mind
Swirling thoughts chasing me to the edge of sanity
Pulling, tugging, dragging me down
I can't get free
I am a slave to these thoughts
These supposedly higher thoughts of higher thinkers

They will not let go-
They will not let me let them go
I Cannot write them
I Cannot say them
Because If I say them aloud or write them down
They become real
And it is reality I cannot deal with

But try as I might little by little they escape
Escaping through my lips and through my pen
Just tiny things, almost insignificant
Yet they glare at me, poking holes in my carefully developed façade
And with those little holes I feel my sanity slipping away

Falling,
Spiraling downward,
Coming ever closer
To that dark abyss

Some may call me great-
Great writer

Great thinker
Greatly disturbed

And thinker I may be,
But it's slowly killing me
In the end I'm just me
Losing all semblance of sanity

Guitar

By Nikki Clark

He pulls her onto his lap and
slides his hands down her body
caresses her smooth curves.
One arm anchored around her
waist, fitted snugly in that crook.
His other hand cradles her neck.

He runs his fingers along her
length, eliciting those hums he aims
to hear, those sounds that thrill him

within his every nerve and sinew,
quickenning the blood-rush through
his veins, spurring him ever on.
He picks up the pace,
Fingering her tautness,
tempo increasing,
building, rhythms erratic,
Then, -- she sings --
hits a high note and he leans
over her sated and spent.

When the last reverberations of her voice
sink beneath the silence surrounding them,
he sets her aside until the need arises again.

Harmony

By Anna Register

I sat on the soft grass, legs crossed, with my notebook in my lap. I sat a few feet in front of the woods beside my house, just watching, studying the delicacies of nature. The tree in front of me gained and held my attention. It was a larger tree, but not overly so, straight and regal. What really captured me was the mass of various plants wrapped around the tree's sturdy trunk. The different shades of green twined together had my rapt attention. They looked like something out of a portrait, something too stunning to be real. It was real-realization hit me- if this was tangible and precious how many of those awe inspiring portraits were inspired by actual scenes and how many more wonders have yet to be discovered?

Swirling, tangling, intricately connected,

A tangled mess of vines and thorns.

The honeysuckle lying next to the poison oak,

All striving toward that unreachable height.

The way the vines crossed gracefully reminded me of a spider's web-delicate yet incredibly strong. I was awed by the overwhelming sense of harmony emitted by the vegetation. The vines and thorns, things so opposite, working in tandem toward a common goal, the sunlight, that which sustains life. The honeysuckle and the poison oak brought forth childhood memories of Sunday school-"the lion and the lamb." At the time I thought the idea utterly ridiculous. Why would a lion and a lamb lie together? Would the lion not eat the poor lamb? But now, looking at these enemies working together, the idea of a lion and a lamb seemed much less impossible.

Stretching, straining, trying desperately

To twine themselves around the trunk of the great oak tree

And reach the light of the pale blue sky.

Up they go, slowly, making their way to the top of that old oak tree.

*Their vibrant greens clashing beautifully against the blue expanse of
open sky.*

Aren't we all trying desperately to reach that goal? To get that which we believe will sustain our life, fulfill it. The flora go about it so much more beautifully, giving pleasure to us insignificant humans while reaching their goal-Not destructive, not harmful, just peaceful soothing. Why can't we do that?

They weave their web across the Earth,

A magnificent mess since time began.

Living in harmony, the lion and the lamb,

Beautiful yet disastrous, all which nature can be

The eye of the storm, the wind in the trees,

The song of the birds, the sound of tiny heartbeats.

*Continuing, everlasting-Nature, the world, the cycle, will be here
long after I am gone.*

I Give You More

By Megan M. Roberts

For all You've done,
For loving me- for all I'm not.
For requiring greatness - knowing it's not asking too much.
For the answer- without its prior.
For the comprehension- in the midst of a clouded state of mind
For knocking me down- to show the purpose of my limbs
For letting me go- when I wanted to hold on
-But always standing next to me

I continue to give you more
until my MORE is my MOST and my most is my ALL and my all is with
YOU.
Contrary to 'fact' Y-O-U spells the BEST, rather the Highest, according
to the rest.
Because I'll stop at nothing less to see that "S" on your chest.
Without a costume or a title, a cape- you're an idol-
Never Idle but I'd doll you. Like I was 3 years young & I sought you,
fought 'til I got you
- My newest appendage.
But MORE is like nothing to you, a year's not even a month to you.
So why do I even strive for you???

An invisible structure, a figment ideology... wow check that irony.
But I'm living a physical life, for so called after life, but after life still
sounds like life to me.
But what's life after life? 'Cus I just started living though I've been alive &
breathing...

Well you gave me that too, and I've given it back to you- so there more
Here's a little bit more of the more you've blessed me with.
My moves are more too right? Because I'm definitely not me in those
moments.
SURELY not less it's like Superhuman, not Kent-like but Spirit-like.
Like CO2 pressurized- You expand the King in me & the music pops the

top.

And that's included as more right? Because the more I GIVE to you the more I AM like you...

... Or so I'm told.

But I rather live purposely in your absence,

Than purposelessly in your existence.

& THIS is included in more right?

I mean I'm not at my MOST, so I haven't hit ALL

But it's pretty fun trying 'cus I love a challenge and I'm asked to reach the intangible

Touch the invisible, See the inconceivable & Imagine beyond my intellect??

No problem.

Because obstacles are psychological barriers producing physiological disruptions.

But those cognizant are conscious of this & can make out a better walk for this.

So I'll take the easy road they paved, because they've given their MORE and even their ALL.

And it's a beauty to be pinned & promoted and to read the book straight from those who wrote it.

For lowering my head- so I'd be able to hold it high.

For the attacks & misfires - that struck the wall to build my ministry.

For the stones & Arrows aimed at me- So I'd know the power of grace.

For a design by purpose- on purpose.

For did, doing & done- Because only you can.

For a reason to trust- because sometimes I need one.

For reminding me I'm the one in charge- if I want demolition.

For the effect of miracles- after I've been affected by doubt.

For the afflictions- sparing the infection.

For the shortage of words in the world- I give my all.

For the then I can't change- & the now I embrace...

-I give you my all

And when I feel I've reached my MOST

I look back at this page and remember:
I've never reached my most in my all.
So I've reached my Most and done my all in this, so what's next on the
'Honey-Do' List??
I give Him more of me until the next thing starts to click.

-Ambassador [2Chor 5:7]

I Love You, Shiloh Andrews

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

He's holding the poem I wrote in his hands, "Kyra, wow! This is just amazing."

You're such a Casanova. Oh...god. You kill me.

I blush, "you really think so?"

"Think? Oh, I know it! You will definitely get this published, I just know it," he smiles again.

Oh Shiloh, I wish you knew. I wish you knew. I want you to feel what I feel. Do you not know what else I have written for you?

I can feel the letter in my back pocket burning a hole through my jeans.

"Thanks," I take the poem out of his hands.

Every bit of me is screaming not to let him go. Maybe there is still a chance. He loves me. He has to. Even though he's with -

"I brought you something else to read."

Oh god, don't do it, Kyra.

Shiloh smiles, "what is it?"

"Something you need to read. But don't open until you get home.

Okay?"

I pull the letter out of my pocket and hand it to him. It's too late. It's too late now.

"Okay," he laughs.

I feel it building in me. I don't want to leave. I want this to work. I want him to chase after me, after he reads that letter, and tell me that he loves me. But I know that'll never happen. Because he's Shiloh Andrews. He was never anything more. He was just someone I knew. Someone I gave my heart to and couldn't take back once I had.

"I have to go."

I swallow the hard lump that had formed in the back of my throat. My knees start to shake. I feel short of breath.

"So soon?"

"Sorry."

I'm so sorry Shiloh.

He sighs, "time's never enough."

“No, it’s not.”

I look away and remember that night on the beach. That night we talked for hours. That night I knew without a doubt that I loved him. I had known him then. I knew him. Maybe that man is still somewhere in him, even now. He can still be the same man that he was back then...but he can’t. He never was that man. I loved an idea of who I thought he was. Oh...god!

“Bye Kyra.”

He stands up and wraps his arms around me for the last time.

No. *I don’t want this to be the last time you hold me.* No. *I don’t want it to end this way.*

Not my Shiloh, no, no, no!

“Good. Bye. Shiloh.”

He whispers in my ear, “see you next week.”

No. *I’m sorry Shiloh...*

“I don’t think so,” I inhale, for the last time, the scent of ground coffee and old notebooks.

His shirt is soft in my hands, and I press my forehead against his chest for one last time. He’s my best friend. How can I do this? How can I do this to him?

“Okay, well soon,” he replies as he lets go of me.

I look up at him and his blue eyes. This is the last time. My last chance. *I love you, Shiloh Andrews.*

“Goodbye,” I force out.

He walks me to my car. He opens my door, like the gentleman that he is. I get in and he shuts the door to the rest of my life with him. I’m watching him through my rear view mirror. He goes back to the table we were sitting at just moments before. I knew he wouldn’t wait til he got home. He fiddles around with the envelope, opening the seal of our fate. Looking away, I put my seatbelt on to keep me from stopping him. My eyes drift back up to find him in the mirror. He starts to tear the envelope open. Oh my god, this is really happening.

I turn on my radio. He pulls the folded letter out, along with the rest of my heart.

The top of my car is down. It’s all out in the open now. Now he will know. He starts to unfold the letter. I look away. I put the car in reverse, turn

around and zoom out the parking lot. I want to look back and see his face for one last time but I can't. I can't even imagine the face when he reads my letter.

But I can imagine the lines he's reading right now,

"Dear Shiloh,

I love you. I love you more than you can possibly imagine, but I can't be your friend anymore. Friendship just isn't enough. I thought it was, but now I know it's not. I'm in love with you, Shiloh, and I can't watch you be with someone else. I can't watch you be with her. I can't do this anymore..."

I step on the gas and floor it. I'm heading down the street; my eyes are set on the road in front of me. I can't go back now. I'm already gone.

Images

By Tiara Felder

A single black stitch in the hem of a white dress
whispering the truth, but keeping her secret secret.

Quiet lines on the otherwise perfect flesh of a pink inner thigh
because she didn't want to wear her struggles on her sleeve.

A naked man in a hotel bed with a naked woman who looks and
sounds so much like his wife. She is not his wife.

The butterfly they caught and released two weeks ago.

A yellow gold wedding band set with brilliant...diamonds? laying
on a marble countertop drowning in an untouched glass of cheap wine.

Two signatures beside each other on an official document to make it
real.

Two signatures beside each other on an official document to unmake it.

Grumpy

-By Brittany Zedalis



I Must be Dreaming

By Shaquana Adams

When I close my eyes
You are there
Just like I remember you.
You never say a word but
You smile at me and every
Once in a while you take my hand and
Kiss me
You kiss me.
When I dream you are with me forever.

You'd smile that big smile
And I'd be deep in dream.
You'd smile and I'd think that
I'll never see you smile for me again.
So when I close my eyes
I treasure every moment.
When I dream you are with me forever.

I'd wake up, heart racing.
Clutch the sheets and return to life.
And remember that there is a difference
Between my dream and this world.
But when I dream you are with me forever.
When I dream you are with me forever.
When I dream
You are with me...
Forever.

Insomnia Induced**

By Stephanie Smith

**The poem is composed entirely of lines from Proven Guilty by Jim Butcher, The Bank Robbery by Steven Schutzman, YOUCAT translated by Michael J. Miller, and Principles of Economics by N. Gregory Mankiw.

A kind of psychic litter box,
the film of my insomnia is
misunderstood and misused.

Risk aversion provides
tendons to alter tensions
as my streets go on.

My subjective perspectives
shrink more substantially
if one look, froze over,

withered and died.
The greater little bits
detach me from myself

and curve intersecting
the vertical long-run.
Infinitely far away and

all but inconsequential,
the gold that wants to spend
my life leans transparent

towards the truth.
This down the ladder can be
due to pedagogy and a prophecy.

Hot enough for you?

The Land of Oz

By Amanda Taylor

Legalize the candy-shaped marijuana
As simple sour gummy candy.
A new low that gets the kids high.
Promoting drugs look cool in the first place
And alcohol-addicted youth
Take a shot of humility.
A flying monkey drops his pants.
“We’re not in Kansas anymore”
But idealism soars over the rainbow.
Go-go booted indie babes sing along
to mom-rock heart-throb,
An elegiac noise.
Playing “Gold Digger” as the national anthem
Glamorous swooners slam-dance while
Dressed in creepy black angel wings
That reflect the glow of the sunset
And torn fishnets with disco balls
That reflect the festering problems.
Just breakdown barriers and
C3PO reborn as a birthday cake
Is not Battlestar Galactica.

La Sombra

By Michael Britt

The last memory I have is enjoying sierras vistas from the window seat of El Autobús número doce on its way to ancient ruins in the city of Tepoztlán located in the Mexican state of Morelos. The rain pounds the windshield of the old bus with a heavy thwunk ...then oscuridad .

I feel the arid breeze tickle the minute hairs on the back of my neck. The heat is dry and unforgiving. There is no sign of life, just the sound of my shallow breaths. El sol thrashes violently against my battered skin, as a leather worker tenderizes his hides before he starts the curing process. Out the corner of my eye, I spot the skull of some animal that I can't identify; it resembles something out of a Georgia O'Keefe painting. What fate is this? Where am I? Which way did I come in and is there a way out?

All I see is a sea of sand and endless waves of dunes in the distance. On the horizon, the sun is precariously perched above; the way una pantera steadies upon a tree branch waiting to pounce on his unsuspecting prey. Little heat mirages snaked up from the baking earth adding to the oddly fluid nature of this desolate plane. If this heat doesn't kill me, I will surely die from dehydration or starvation. Dying in solitude has always been one of my worst fears. This is contrary to the way I lived my life prior to this experience.

From out of nowhere I see the outline of a figure. Is he part of the search party? Did I have a search party? Is he real? These endless thoughts paced through my head like a runner in a marathon. Is my mind playing some sort of cruel joke? If so, the humor was lost on my body. The faster I walked the more elusive this wisp became, until finally, without any warning, the landscape changed drastically and the mercurial stranger disappeared.

Are you crazy if you realize you're crazy? The lush landscape surrounding me wails at my insanity. The palm trees and bubbling springs wave and whisper sweet nothings to my mind as it passes on its way. This cannot be real. In the distance I hear the roar of the sea. What is going on? Where did the figure go and who was he? I nourish

my aching stomach, wet my parched lips, and ponder over my current predicament. Without any warning there is a tormenta destructiva . The vicious wind rips at my clothes and once again, I feel helpless. I see a furious bolt of lightning collide with the ground beside me. Lightning never strikes the same place twice, I think to myself, grasping at anything to relieve my stress-ridden mind. Suddenly, I feel my body collapse under the pressure of thirty million volts of electrical current.

I awake amidst agony and misery. A paramedic is above me with paddles. Amongst a wreckage of mangled metal and molten steel the fire fighters' hoses emit an intense barrage of water that is strangely beautiful as it cascades into the flames of the wreckage. I become aware of the fiery sensation emanating from my torso as I lay frying on the scalding Mexican pavement. A cool breeze suddenly surrounds me as the workers furiously pass and re-pass attempting to save my fellow pasajeros . The scorching palms sway in the breeze before me unaware of the tragedy that has presented itself on this bright day. I begin to see the irony of my fear of dying en soledad . I notice a figure out of the corner of my eye. Though morphine is now coursing through me I recognize this sombra and a chill runs up my broken spine. As his cold piercing eyes penetrate my soul a leering smile spreads across his face.

The Lone Connoisseur

By Justin M. McGee

When all the children's shoes are paired,
and dishes have been cleaned and stacked,
and the lights have all been turned out,
he'll come staggering in,
like he sometimes does,
and wake the entire house.
The nights where he doesn't show are
the only still ones they know.
He is the lone connoisseur of their
broken dreams and the corporeal nightmare.

"How about another one?"

Blurred vision mixes
neonsignspooltablesstobaccosmoke
bartendersloosewomenfightingmenmorebartenders
brokenglassbrokenhomesbrokenbonesand
thetags
ger
i
n
g
.

He is the lone connoisseur of their
broken dreams and the corporeal nightmare.

Looking Back

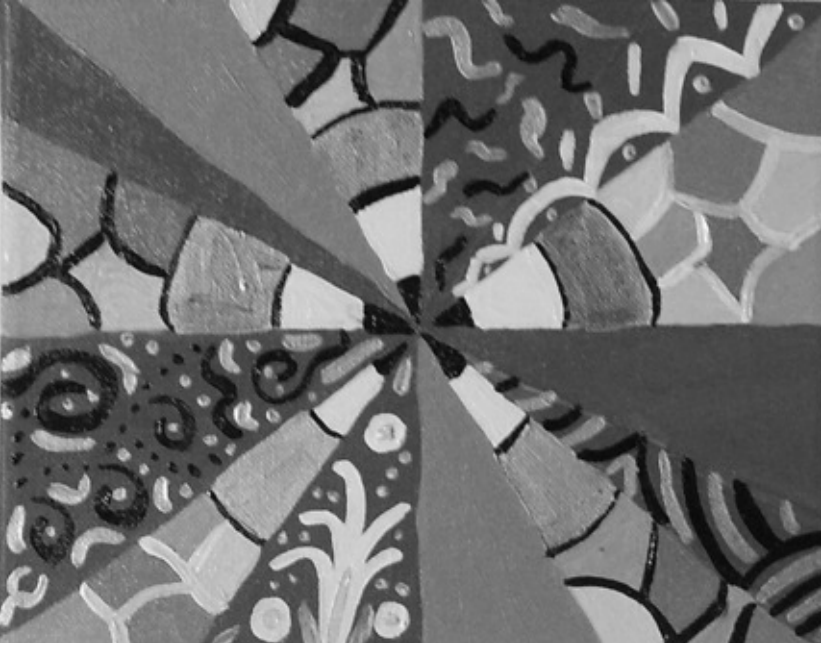
By Ashley Elvington

My black Chevelle
Flies down the road
Goodbye to this town
I'm leaving behind my heart
With you in Chicago

How the rain falls
Heavily upon my windshield
When it stops and all is clear
I'll look in the rearview mirror
And think of you

Insight

-By Caitlyne McNeill



Love Letters

By Brittney Rosser

Love, romance, and passion were often a familiar thing in my home as I was growing up. I can recall the use of rose petals, lipstick messages, and chocolate treats being exchanged between my parents regularly. I was too small in age to fully grasp what and why these events would happen. I was an inquisitive individual. Therefore, I always took it upon myself to question them about why and what was going on here. Each time I received the same annoying answer, “You’ll understand when you’re older”. Those words ignited me like flames. They were my quest and motivation to pursue an understanding. Often I would walk into the bathroom and see letters draped over mirrors with bright red lipstick. Countless days my little body would stare up at these mysterious shapes and patterns yearning for their understanding. I made the connection that some of the shapes resembled the ones engraved on my alphabet game. I began sitting in my room redrawing and reciting the letters and phrases I spotted on the mirror weekly. With a little coaching from my game and my older brother, I gained the skill of being able to create small words. As time progressed, I was able to read and comprehend the majority of the words that I was writing. For the first time in God knows when, I was finally able to read the lipstick message written by my parents on the bathroom mirror. It read, “Have a good day at work honey. I can’t wait to get you all alone in that room tonight”. The message greatly disturbed me. At that very moment, I cursed the day I could understand written words and vowed to never read again.

Messages

By Justin M. McGee

I love you son

Love you too, pops.

What are you doing?

Just got home.

I'm scared to death son

About what?

Everything

Why?

About me...

What about you?

I love you

I love you, too.

I'm still afraid

Not sure of what...

Just calm down. There's nothing to

be worried about.

I'm not excited

About the baby?

Well yeah

What are you not excited about?

Life I guess, for the 1st time I'm ready I think

I'm sorry, this isn't about you. I love you son

It's okay.

Missed Opportunity

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

If I

If you

If we just

Maybe if we

If only.

Moments

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

Your laugh,
Your smile,
Your voice,
Were moments,
Of sunshine.
Your life,
Your love,
Your legacy,
Sweet moments
In my memory.
And in
Those moments,
I saw,
I knew,
And I
Loved you.

Mud Rats

By Shanta Mungin

Soft breeze, salty air
With a mild eggy odor.
The tide decides to turn around
So that we can enter the banks.
A clean black canvas awaits us,
Ready to bog us and steal our shoes.

We wade almost waist deep,
Bucket in hand, dip nets in the other.
Bait, string, and sticks
Slink through the muck's
Gooey surface to cleverly steal
What lies beneath the turning tide.

We think of those blue-finned
Crabs, as we pull in our lines
Scooping them up leisurely.
We let our dip nets seize
The creek's blue ribbon prize.
We pocket her goods,
Stealing her underwater jewels.

Deciding we have pilfered enough
For today, she covers herself back up.
As the tide rises, we wade back.
Waist deep, buckets overflowing with
Blue crabs, shrimp, and oysters,
Lifted from her liquid essence.

Horseman

-By Alex Bohm



The Muse

By Amanda M. Graham

The Muse comes in like
a rat.
creeping, silently.
sulking and weaving stories
No, sounds
and syllables
minute pieces of
trash and treasure
to be plucked
at ripeness and
fed to the
hungry elephants.

My Problem

By Sommer Turner

I pour my poison down my throat,
Smooth and cool, chilled liquid silk.

So begins my routine, a craving crying,
Raging to flee the boredom of reality.

Repeat, repeat until I carelessly lose count,
Blending right in with this spent scene.

Liquor lulls my moonstruck mind into believing
That, if I really wanted, I could stop here, now.

Right. The warmth wells, jolting through my
joints, making me move. I try to ride the rhythm.

Spinning free, I swear I'll never get enough,
Although I already know I've had too much.

Warmth turns to fire, filling my frame,
Causing this carousel to crash, and fast.

Step outside, take a breath, settle yourself.
But I'm past the point of digesting any advice.

With my pulse pounding, stomach
Sour, my body hunches and heaves,

And I wonder why I do this same
Damned dizzy dance, night after night.

Ode to Penny

By Amanda Taylor

Your perfectly round,
Copper body glimmers
And reflects light from the pavement
And you catch my eye.

You are so reliable that way,
Always showing up
When I need you most.

One of the best things
About you is your size.
You are small enough
To fit in my pocket
So I can keep you close to me.

You may be odd, but
There is power in numbers
Which makes you even
Better.

Sometimes you just make sense.
But if things don't work out
And you find yourself lost
I find comfort knowing
You are good for luck
When found on heads up.

Then maybe you will make
Someone else's day when
They are in need of perspective
and are short on change.

Perception

By Laquaan Malachi

I am not my accomplishments
I am my skin
Line me up with other Americans
Wetback, Chink, Nigger, Jew
If you're not the majority
This is how they see you

Affirmative Action, food stamps, WIC
Paid for in Labor, Blood, Whips
Climb on my back, Get to the Top
Then kick over the ladder
Tighten the top

Then there's the devil
Ronald Reagan
War on Drugs on behalf of a grateful nation
But what they don't know
And refuse to see
Is crack cocaine as his responsibility
Dear Mr. President, Congratulations
For the purchase you made
Of which we're still paying

Trayvon Martin, Rodney King, Jena 6
Is life in America when you look like this
They don't see my accomplishments
They just see my skin
This is the struggle
Of an American Black Man.

The Perfect Pear

By Alyssa Hardy

is firm, but
not too firm.

It won't bust
when it falls

from the tree.
It will be sweet

without making
you sick, or those

around you.
In your own way,

you should enjoy
the pear in Portland.

(Oregon, like
Pomona, knows pears)

Enjoy the pear.
Until you're tired

of pears,
keep it around.

Pears (particularly
perfect pears) only

last for a piece—
a season.

Perfect Posers

By Carissa Fazio

Holy ground coated in red
loophole carpet, combed over
with a fresh vacuum twice
weekly. Rubbed the wrong way
as feet shuffle in. Humans.
Bodies. Coming in twos
like a nightmare of Noah.
Empty shells. Silk flowers
sit stagnant. Red
pews for resting. Soaking
in the power of the Lord
or the sweat from restless
corpses. Sanctuary
speckled with few members
present. Candy wrappers
crinkle. Smiles dripping with
caramel--overly sweet
and slow. Warm.
Handshakes with less
grip than a slug.
The thud
of rolled dollars and spare
change in the velvet-lined
dish. The pages of dusty
bibles turning.
The sniff and cough of
someone moved in the Spirit.
"Amen," they say.

Radius

By Amanda M. Graham

Two points of a compass are we
Forever connected
Only one point remains grounded
in the center
fixed.
While the other trails the edges
Skirts the boundaries
tempting temptations
slipping.
Even when brought together
Side-by-side
The two points never converge.

Rainbows

By Lorrie Burnett

I hear the muted sounds of waves crashing
against the dark rocks that jut out from the ocean,
As if the volume of the world had been
turned down until it was almost inaudible.

My ears beneath the surface,
fill to the drum with the salty water,
The sound of my breathing magnified,
making each breath a shout in my ears.

I taste the ocean as it filters into my mouth
around the snorkel at my lips.
The water leaves a bitter taste,
It causes my nose to wrinkle.

I feel the wind on my back as I float,
causing the hairs on my skin to stand,
and little bumps erupt over
every inch of exposed flesh.

Through the dirty lenses of my swimming goggles,
I see flashes of rainbows glimmering in the water.
Suddenly, the fish were everywhere, surrounding me,
clouding my vision with hues of yellow and blue.

I want to see more colors.
But the rainbows leave,
swimming farther out in the ocean
I need to swim after them.

Ignoring the warnings from my parents,
I swim further,

I am a strong swimmer, but the current
in the deep water grows stronger.

Swept up by the current,
My heart begins racing.
It pounds against the wall of my chest.
My breaths turn to violent screams.

I again hear the muted sounds of waves
crashing against the black rocks
as they mix with the shouts of my mother and father,
calling to God to save their baby.

I fight against the current,
Swim and push,
trying to move forward,
but the current pulls me backwards.

It pushes me down until
the surface of the water is above my head.
All around me, I see them.
They shimmer and sparkle in the deep blue.

My lungs scream and burn,
I open my mouth for breath,
the snorkel falls out,
and the ocean fills my lungs.

Revolver

By Teri Kourtis

Bought and sold,
at the corner pawn shop.
I didn't even have a chance
to collect any dust.
A pair of pernicious paws
grabs me aggressively, excitedly.
His fingers feeling my frame,
eyes glittering like it's Christmas.

If I had eyes, they would be wet with tears.
I don't want to do it again.

The power I had
to pierce that woman's womb,
is a curse.
Forever it will consume me.

Without a second thought,
the man with the hungry eyes,
and big black beard
paid for me with some cash,
and we were on our way.

If I had legs, they would be running.
I don't want to do it again.

Tucked under his old black belt
I'm hidden,
like I want it to be.
His pace quickens,
his heart races.
His hand hovers over me.

If I had a heart, It would beat out of my breast.
I don't want to do it again.

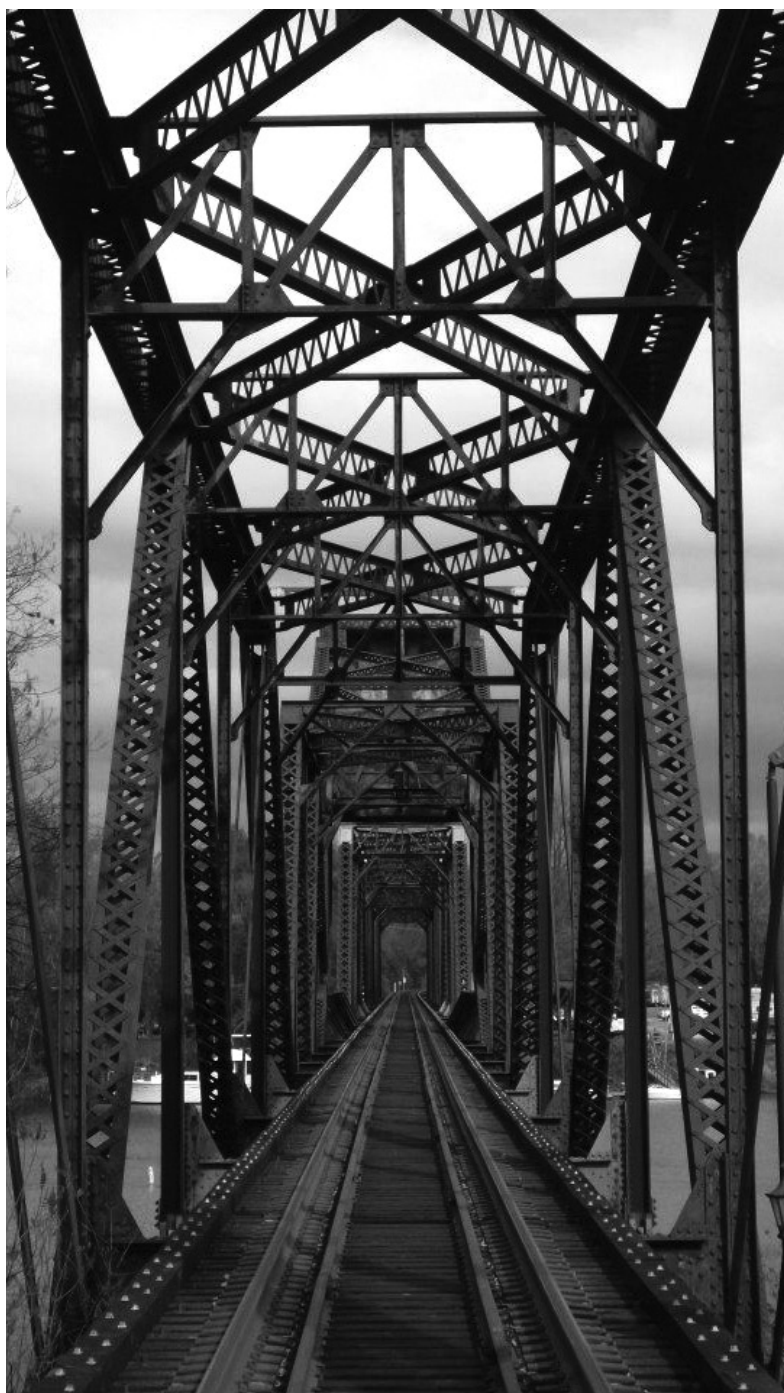
The worst part,
is seeing the eyes of the one
I'm about to hurt.
I can see things through them
that no one ever has.

If I had a soul, it would surely be doomed.
I don't want to do it again.

As soon as I was tucked away,
I was pulled out.
His hand on my trigger
BAM!
I do it again.

Journey

-By Cordelia Johnson



The Runaway

By Deizmond Kelly

I ran away today
not because I was afraid
but because I knew there had to be
some other way to find the light.

The air in here is clean today...
or at least I thought it was. I
start to feel the fog from the from the valley
choking me again. I feel what mommy gives me,
what she calls medicine, over and over again. If
I could count, I don't think my deformed finger and
toes would be enough.

I've been checked into my little motel here
for about six months now. With its warm walls
like jello in a school lunch. I tried to climb one time,
but slipped. I was afraid but calmed myself remembering
I'm connected to my bungee cord.

I tried counting the days until mommy
realizes what my kicks and turns mean. I
think she's too busy getting lost in the fog.
I want to scream at the top of my fragile
underdeveloped lungs "Mommy, I'm kicking
to get your attention, turning and twisting trying to break
free of your addiction, so why do you insist on confining me here?"

Leaving me stuck in the vacant Grand Canyon
you call a womb. I'm fighting to stay with you,
but I think my body has had enough. I'm tired
of your empty words of love and twisted lies
of how much you care. I'm numb with you

introducing me to my father of the day.

I've found the voice of someone real. I hear
the sound of him calling to me. He's my father.
maybe not biologically, still I know in his arms I will
be home.

Some place where the smoke from your pipe
and the liquid from your needle will no longer
invade my sanctuary. Where my cries will be heard
and my soul can find its meaning. Where I, me and
my nameless self can be free.

I push and climb until the walls of jello around me break.
you scream it's too soon only too late
as you watch the waters of your dam
break at your feet. You fight to hold me
in but I climb until you have no choice
to release me.

I ran away today
not because I was afraid
but because I knew there had to be
some other way to find the light.

Shady Corner

By Jasmyn Holliday

She stares in a daze, leaning
in the shady corner,
counting the squares of plaid
in her gritty brown skirt,
anything to distract her mind from
this never ending shade of gray.

She elevates her left arm
for support as if she holding up the wall.
Staring out the shattered window
into the somber darkness skies.
One star, dim and lonely as her,
Fading in the night; unseen.

The corner caressing her back,
with her eyes blue and grieving
desperate for answers.
Stuck lips, broken heart, and
dried white down her cheek.
Desperate for understanding.

Bare walls like her mind, but
deep dark thoughts stalk between
every inch of chipped paint.
Haunting,
If walls could talk
Oh, if walls could talk.

Speed Dating

By Tiara Felder

Pretty and pristine, this young girl
sits with her hands laced across her
lap that's clothed in a pattern of
big, bright flowers that I swear
would blow if the wind did, too.

My eyes glance at hers, then quickly
back down to her tiny manicured fingers
as I busy myself fixing a napkin holder that
isn't even broken and wondering if she knows.

Her mouth opens, then changes its mind.
I cough to clear my voice, but it still cracks
when I speak as if I were in puberty and
I tell her that I've never believed in love, just sex.

She laughs and says, "Me, too."

Squeezing the Phone

By Franklin Delano Bennett, Jr.

I was deployed two weeks ago and now we're ready to fight
I'm just starting my day but my baby it's almost goodnight
I needed to hear her voice, so I ask if I could
Sarge said, "even though it's bad timing", I believe it would be good
"Hello daddy" came after just one ring.
Amazing how such a little voice is such a big thing
She said, "I'm happy that you miss me and I'm sorry you're alone
Until I'm back in your arms again daddy, I'll be squeezing the phone.
"Grandma prays with me each night that God would bring you home
Since mamas in heaven and we're on our own.
I'll keep my lamp on through the night while I wait for your ring
And I'll stand proud of you daddy when it's "America" I sing."
"Hello daddy" came after just one ring.
Amazing how such a little voice is such a big thing
She said, "I'm happy that you miss me and I'm sorry you're alone
Until I'm back in your arms again daddy, I'll be squeezing the phone.
I will die for my country to get a pat on my shoulder from that little hand
Hear her call daddy, and to see that sweet smile again.

Life

-By Cordelia Johnson



Still as Stone

By Anna Register

I sit patiently,
just watching
I watch the forest change
From green to yellow to brown
From small saplings to tall trees
From giant beasts to humans and birds
From a raging fire to a frozen land

And now I watch the humans come and go
Build their little tepees
Live, grow, and die
Build their little wooden huts
Then cut down all the trees
To live and grow and die
Still more come and go
I watch them bring new things
And do new things

Yet still occasionally seeking shelter,
In my strong embrace -then leave
Then live more and grow more and die
A cycle just like the forest
But soon they will be gone
Just like the animals and the trees
Then I will watch over nothing
Because time means nothing to me.

Straight Kinky

By Cordelia Johnson

The flowing tresses fall past my shoulders,
i see the hues of a reddish brown glow.
I wondered what next to make it bolder?
Maybe color, a cut to let it show.

My red is bright, catches the light like glass
the shine is divine, a fire ignites.
The snip of scissors really chaps my ass,
no one expected this big a change right?

I caress corkscrews and spirals, not locs.
The mirror shows me a sassy red head
I love my look being outside the box.
My hairs personality is widespread,

Alone no more, for we are many now,
Yet “the few, the proud, the” Natural crowd.

A Stroll at Night

By Nikki Clark

Walking in the still of night
beside a quiet sea
beyond the reach of city lights
the stars more clear to see

The gentle rhythm of the waves
is soothing to my soul
their pattern never constant stays
yet stead'ly in they roll

I feel upon my face a breeze
the slightest breath of air
a light comforting touch to me
like fingers in my hair

As I am swaying in the wind
a sound catches my ear
faint and faraway quite dim
I strain for more to hear

The song is coming from the east
beyond the sea and sand
riding waves it comes to me
as if from foreign land

It seems to be a lullaby
of unknown melody
floating on a sea-breeze sigh
meant only for me

Tipping the Scale

By Ashley Elvington

How much can I take
Before I start to break?
The pressure's caving in
How long until it ends?
How much can I take
Before I start to break?

How low can you get
Before I can't forget?
My shoulders are heavy
Will this burden break the levee?
How low can you get
Before I can't forget?

How long will it be
Before you set me free?
There's nothing left to shatter
Did I ever truly matter?
How long will it be
Before you set me free?

There and Back Again: A Gollum Tale

By Lucas Berry

I sits in a class just trying to be.
Not that much wrong, 'til I starts listening to Me.
Taking notes I says.
Don't care Me says.
And so it begins, this thing You can't win,
like a battle of five armies waiting to begin.
And in truth I realizes
it never ended,
Me was just harboring,
letting it sit and stew,
and adding to the pot, Me never stops.
And so it begins, this thing You can't win.
Because it tells its own story,
and in the story lives,
and this story it is: It never ends.
The waiting is worst.
That's as false as true,
but more false,
and also more true.
Because it's never over
and there's never any waiting,
even as You sits
and wait for it all to begin again.
It just begins
and begins
and begins again
without ever really ending.
That's how it is, this war with Yourself.
It is deeper than deep and as shallow as can be.
It is by its nature as dramatic as a tale of the sea.
And You can't speak of a tale of the sea,
unless You tell a tale of the sea,

because then they will call You a fisherman.
And that is something that You never want to be.
And the story that it tells, this story where it lives and is,
is the pathway to itself,
a place I has always and never been.
And this place is Panic,
and the path is War, except when the War is called Panic
and the Panic is called War.
And I walks the path of War,
and there he meets me,
in the place that is Panic,
to start off a war that never ended when it began.
And there I meets the dragon.
The Dragon.
It feeds itself on the fear
it creates just by existing.
It brings itself into being on the fear that exists in its forethought,
in the whispered mention of a nameless thing in the dark of your mind,
where nothing lives but the You that is afraid.
And the You that is afraid,
it hates the fear,
and loves the fear,
like a ring used by a bug-eyed thing in the dark under the deep of the
mountains.
It loves the fear because it is a sweet, safe refuge of torture.
It hates the fear because
it is a terrible thing
of teeth
and grinding
and claws
and darkness
and blood
there in the dark parts of Your mind,
where nothing lives but the You that is afraid.
And the You that is afraid is called Me, even by I.
And I lives in Panic with the Dragon, and walks War with Me,

until he finds a different path.

A new path,

a scary path,

a path that cannot be.

But the path is.

And I jumps.

I falls.

I falls into a page.

There, I bleeds.

And the blood is words.

And the words are.

And I finds that he loves this beautiful place of bleeding words into a page, for in it...

he makes peace with me. Fragile peace. A peace like staring off the edge of a cliff. Like staring right into the abyss. But this time, I doesn't have to jump. And me doesn't have to jump. They can stand in this beautiful place of bleeding words and have their peace, and stare into the abyss for a time, for a long time perhaps, before they must go back down War, that is sometimes Panic, to the land of Panic, that is sometimes War.

Separate Ways

-By Myshel Watford



To Have, to Hold... to Break

By Brooke Elisabeth Rogers

She waits for time. She waits for moments.
Moments to have. Moments to hold. Moments to break.
So she smiles, and she laughs, and she loves
Because she knows that nothing can last.
Each moment has passed.
Nothing lasts.
All the words she never said. The chance they never had.
Love to have. Love to hold. Love to break.
But she smiles, and she laughs, and she loves
Because she knows that nothing can last.
Each moment has passed.
Nothing lasts.
The desire she has. What he doesn't know.
A promise to have. A promise to hold. A promise to break.
But she smiles, and she cries, and she loves
Because she knows that nothing can last.
Their moment has passed.
Nothing lasts.
Nothing lasts.

Turns to Gold

By Franklin Delano Bennett, Jr.

The sun was shining in yesterday, in every window of our home
Now it's raining on the pane and it seems like the last of hope is gone
When we all come home, it's only together to sleep
Lord, I've lost everything in this world I prayed to keep
When we said our vows, I meant every word I said
Now our home has gone cold, like separate rooms in the same bed
How can I teach my little girl the value of a promise we made
Is greater than the gold we will lose in a simple trade
When I gave you this ring, I thought God blessed me with you to hold
But that old "till death, do us part", just left our marriage cold
Oh, there's a pawn shop down the street where things are bought and sold
Ain't it a shame, when a wedding band turns to gold?
A symbolic circle that turns completely around
Just by a pawn shop from the other side of town

These Fragments

By Justin M. McGee

I.

The July sun rained down
on their perfectly planned morning.
He had one hand on the steering wheel
and one on the stick.
She kicked off her shoes,
stretched,
catlike,
batted her eyes at him,
and put her bare feet on the console of his Jeep.
It drove him crazy.
“Got your seatbelt on?” He asked
this time, like he did every time.
“And, did you ever get registered to vote?” He asked
this time, like he did every time.
“Yes, I do. No, I don’t,” she answered
this time, like she did every time.

II.

Your face was made of pixels.
So was his face, but not to him.
He’s almost 4,000 miles away.
He’s almost 6,400 kilometers away.
He’s almost 3,500 nautical miles away.
But, he’s five full hours ahead of you.
The sun shines on your face,
and the rain falls on his.

III.

“How long is forever?” Jon asked.
“Well, if you go by her watch,
the second hand stops tickin’ when she changes the locks,” he answered

himself.

Jon looked round the bar and realized he was talking to himself.

“How long is forever,
if you go by my watch?” Jon asked.

“I’m just waitin’ and watchin’
and waitin’ and watchin’
for the damned thing to stop,” he answered himself.

IV.

“Drivin’ into Darlington County
Me and Wayne on the Fourth of July.
Drivin’ into Darlington County
Lookin’ for some work on the county line.
We drove down from New York City
Where the girls are pretty, but they just want to know your name.”
There’s nothing like a loud 1984 Springsteen howl
with the windows down on a sunny day.
“I started out on Burgundy
but soon hit the harder stuff.
Everybody said they’d stand behind me
When the game got rough.
But the joke was on me.
There was nobody even there to bluff.
I’m going back to New York City.
I do believe I’ve had enough.”
There’s nothing like a low 1965 Dylan croon
with the windows up on a rainy night.

V.

In the deserted parking lot
at midnight
in the drizzling rain:
“Why do you always do this?!”
She screamed.
Maybe I should have worn my rain jacket.
I thought.

“You’re so fucking detached from reality!”

She screamed.

That back passenger side tire of mine could use some air,

I thought.

“God, sometimes I hate you!”

She screamed.

I still can’t believe that store went out of business,

I thought.

“Are you even fucking listening to me, jackass?!”

She screamed.

“Yeah. Hey listen, remember that time we were up in Tennessee?”

I asked

in the deserted parking lot

at midnight

in the drizzling rain.

VI.

“Find you a beer you like in a can,” he told me.

I couldn’t imagine what kind of beer

this man would drink out of a can.

“Put a straw in it and hop in the shower.

It’ll be the best shower you’ve ever had,” he promised.

I’ve been trying to use that advice for almost a year now,

but I can’t make myself do it.

Maybe tonight’s the night.

You would laugh at me.

Not with me, but at me.

“Look at you! Drinking that beer in the shower!” You would say.

So, I’ll just sit here and drink my beer straw-less.

Torn Between the Two

By Lorrie Burnett

My best friend grabs me
by the right hand,
my lover grabs me
by the left.

As they pull from each side,
I scream in agony.
The rip starts in my chest,
blood spurting and oozing.

The lover shoves a hand in between
my ribs, cracking them open,
and pulls out my lungs,
trying to get to what is really important.

The tear moves down my body,
slowly opening my abdomen,
as the loved ones pull harder.
My head falls off, and is kicked to the side.

My intestines spill and
land on the floor with a sickening thud.
The pink of my insides smothered with blood
stain the no longer white tile.

My broken, beating heart on display,
splits in two, and the friend pushes
the lover out of the way, diving to claim
what once powered my body.

They scramble through the blood,
slipping and sliding,

grabbing and tearing at my flesh.
Each take hold of a chamber.

Stuffing parts of my body into their pockets,
they reach for other organs.
My discarded head watches as
they squish my stomach.

Dividing the organs is difficult, but
they won't stop until I am won over.
Each fights for full control over
what was mine, and now I am nothing.

Silhouette

-By Cordelia Johnson



Unbroken

By Lucas Berry

Lightning and fire pounded down upon the man like a monsoon. But he did not break. The earth shook beneath his enemy's fury. But he would not be beaten. The first strike had caught him off guard, sent him to one knee. The wind howled around him, hungry, malevolent, a beast on the hunt. But nothing would move him. Finally, his fury spent, his victory assured, the ground before him turned to a wasteland of ash, the enemy stopped. He stood tall and arrogant as the smoke and dust cleared, a cruel smile upon his lips. The man looked up. The ground all around him scorched, blackened. Broken. But not he. He stood, slowly, stretching to the fullness of his height, drawing himself up. He smiled, lazy, amused. Satisfied. Looking into his enemy's eyes from under dark brows, his teeth flashed. "My turn." Then everything went black.

Unwarranted Boastings

By Lucas Berry

Lick and suck,
We're gonna fuck.
Kiss and bite,
We'll go all night.
No whips or chains,
But we'll play games.
Lick the clit,
Kiss a tit.
Suck a dick,
Oh...shit...that was quick...

View From Inside the Mailbox, or Ars Poetica

By Elizabeth Graham

Hinges always squeak twice a day, except on Sundays.
once around 2 p.m., again two hours later.
mail comes in
mail goes out
cards, coupons, bills, magazines,
birthday wishes, balances due, & what to wear for fall.
Printed uniform characters mostly, recyclable ideas.
Stacks that deliver nothing.
Handwriting speaks volumes
inside the mailbox,
An idea worth responding to.
Immediately you write,
and then re-write to perfect
or to savor your own response.
Make minute changes,
scratch-out
then re-word with impeccable penmanship.
Address and stamp the envelope
withhold it for days
or weeks
then finally lick
seal, send.
and trust.
The hinges will squeak twice a day.

Walker

By Ashley Elvington

Note: Walker (noun): A popular term for zombie due to the recent television show “The Walking Dead”.

Once upon a time, long long ago
I thought he was Prince Charming
But little did I know
He was as hollow as a hole inside
Living? Not so
But dead and rather pungent
Yet my feelings never ceased to grow
Cornered as I take my last breath
I never thought he would be the face of death

He’s a different kind of walker
The heart type of stalker
Draining out the best of me
He took my heart and left my brain
The former’s more nutritious to drain
As he sucks the life out of me

Left with logic, robbed of feeling
I am becoming as hollow as he
He ripped away each piece by peeling
As he drained the life out of me
Tugging on my heartstrings
One by one
Unraveling, unraveling
Until they’re all undone
He’s draining the love out of me

He’s a different kind of walker
The heart type of stalker
Draining out the best of me

He took my heart and left my brain
The former's more nutritious to drain
As he sucks the life out of me



Stare

-By Brittany Zedalis

Whirling Memories (non-fiction)

By Anna Register

I sat on the living room couch with my legs tucked under me, my dog beside me, and the eleven o'clock news playing on the television. The infamous red bar flashed across the bottom of the screen. "Tornado watch for the following counties..."

The memories assaulted me as they do almost every time I see or hear the word tornado.

-My very first memory; I must have been three or four.

I sat in the hallway with my back pressed against the wall, and my stuffed dog clutched tightly to my chest. I was terrified; my biggest fear at this time, and for years after, was thunderstorms, and one raged outside. I reached over to grab my younger sister's hand. I envied her; she did not fear thunderstorms. We sat in the hallway for half an hour, since the radio announced the warning, before my terror gave way to hunger. Just as I decided to travel to the kitchen in search of food, my grandmother returned to the hallway.

"Nana, I'm hungry. Can I get something to eat?" I whined; I felt like I would starve.

"No. You need to stay in the hallway. I'll go get you something. Okay?" I nodded. Her commanding tone left no room for argument. She returned a few minutes later with a cup of goldfish in her hand. She handed me the goldfish; I munched happily on my snack. When only a few goldfish remained, I took two out and made them swim in the air in front of me, trying to distract myself from the storm outside.

-Another memory comes from a time only a few weeks later.

"If there is ever a tornado you need to get in the bathtub and cover up with the futon," my mom instructed as she pointed first to the bathtub

and then to the green futon resting on the floor in front of it.

“Why do I need to get in the bathtub? What if it flies away with me in it?” I questioned, curious and a little scared.

“Don’t worry it won’t fly away, and you will be safer in it,” my mom assuaged my fears.

I nodded, “okay.”

~A week later.

“Mommy, Daddy, why are you going outside? It’s scary out there,” I asked, afraid for them; there was another thunderstorm. I could hear the wind howling outside and see the sheets of rain obscuring anything more than a few yards away.

“We have to move the cars away from the tree,” my mother informed me. She was referring to the only tree in our front yard-- it was bigger around than I was tall, about four feet. That tree could fall. Now I was really scared. I went to my room, got my favorite stuffed animal, and then headed toward the bathroom.

At this point, I smiled at the irony. A year later, we moved from that house in Tornado Alley, Alabama to South Carolina. Only a few months after the move, we received a call informing us that a tornado hit our old house, nearly destroying it. We were one lucky family.

~The next wave of memories hit me.

We drove up our long driveway as we returned from our vacation in Florida. Tree branches littered the drive. We stopped repeatedly to move the tree limbs out of the way. I asked why there were so many.

“While we were gone a tornado hit close to our house,” my father explained.

When the van came to a stop, my sister and I got out of the car, and noticed our bright green truck just behind the house. We ran toward it.

“Oh my goodness! It’s flipped over!” I exclaimed, awed by a force powerful enough to flip such a large object. Mallory just nodded. We ran back after our parents called us. As we reached the front of the house, my Dad beckoned us forward.

“Look, the tornado moved this column two inches!” He said excitedly, pointing toward the bottom of the nine foot column. I reached over and pushed at the column; it didn’t move an inch and felt like solid rock. Again I was awed by the tornado’s power.

“We’re really lucky we weren’t here, aren’t we?”

~The last memory in my reel arrived. Unlike my previous memories, this time I was at school.

We sat in the hallway, backs pressed against the concrete wall, holding our books over our heads.

“Why do we have to have to hold the books over our head? What’s it going to do?” A fellow student muttered.

“Would you rather have your arm broken or your head broken?” snapped one of the older children. The teachers hushed us. We talked in whispers, trying desperately to distract ourselves from the situation and palpable tension that surrounded us. An hour later a teacher walked into the hallway, and announced that the tornado threat was over. Relief filled the air.

I sighed and flicked off the TV before walking around the house to turn off the lights and lock the doors. I crawled into bed, pulled the covers over my head, and whispered goodnight to my dog. Dreams of flying bathtubs and goldfish whirled through my head.



Through a Looking Glass Darkly

-By Alex Bohm

Woman

By Cordelia Johnson

The things we go through.....

Friends

Crushes

Puberty

Fights with Mom

Fights with Dad

First Dates

First Loves

Wedding Planning

Giving Birth

Bad Hair Days

Killer Heels

What Should I Wear

Where are the Kids

Mom was Right

The things we go through as a Woman.

Words Attempt

By Shaquana Adams

Words regurgitated on a page that is already drenched with warm salt water.

Words splashed haphazardly on a steady white sheet.

Words purged through a body, but can never fully escape.

Words squeezed out as the maker scrunches their face in an emotion too violent to name.

Words drawn as if drawing a face. Delicately. Catching every wrinkle, every spot.

Words typed on a screen that can only read back at a broken soul.

Words stamped on random pages. They wince from too tight and hard a hand.

Words snatched from a vital organ. The red ink taints the page.

Words stuttered through trembling lips. They try to explain.

They are all my words.

Words? No...

Words attempt at emotions.

Yellow Stapler in an Office

By Tiara Felder

They're jealous, I know. I feel the looks they give, hear their whispered conversations as they lie behind me, patiently waiting to be held again. They think I like my life. They think I like being picked up, touched constantly. New hands gripping me every day, seeing my insides on the outside and getting passed around like the office whore.

I am not a whore, but I was made this way.

They think I think I'm better than them, but they don't feel the envy I have. How great it would be to live as them- unused thanks to progress and things like e-readers and copy/paste functions. I pray for progress to speed up and find a replacement for me...or at least paint me sensibly.

Your Face

By Amanda M. Graham

I miss your mouth
The entirety of it.
The way you smile.
How it curls upward
In the left corner
To form a smirk.

The way your lips move
When you are about
To say something
But change your mind
At the last moment
And put them back together

How your beautiful, slender nose
Meets your upper lip.
Those cool, soft, thin lips.
Lips that speak directly
To the core of me.
I see them in my sleep.

The contrast of your chin
Magnifying the smooth beneath
Just enough contradiction
To drive my senses wild.
Slightly prominent, exquisitely displayed
Representing a man of honor.

I love your jaw line
So strong and tender
Clenched in frustration
Thoughts swirling
Much to be said

You try and refrain

Such masculinity
To your face
Every smoothed line
Every sharpened curve
So much depth
Emotions registered

A single eyebrow raised
In intrigue and anticipation
Eyes that pierce my soul
Looking up at me
From lowered lids
Gleaming with desire

See in me something
I myself do not
A me that shall remain
Carefully locked away
To be released only
At a glimpse of you.

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