

Spring 2009

## Zephyr: The Tenth Issue

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Welcome, wild North-easter!  
Shame it is to see  
Odes to every Zephyr;  
Ne'er a verse to thee.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

# ZEPHYR

THE TENTH ISSUE / SPRING 2009

*the university of new england's journal of artistic expression*

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Angelena Pepe

Hello everyone! This is my first year as editor of the *Zephyr* and what an experience it has been! Publication got off to a rough start, but I am glad we finally got the ball rolling. I spent a lot of time perfecting the layout so I hope you all enjoy!

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all of the talented people who submitted to this year's publication. It is something we can all read and appreciate.

The *Zephyr* is a collection of creativity that we should all be proud of. So read and enjoy, and I hope all of you will be inspired to share your talents with us next year!

## The Youth Is Gone But The Spirit Remains

Michael F. Beaudoin

T. S. Eliot wrote that at the end of our exploring, we arrive where we started, and shall know the place for the first time. This passage went through my mind frequently in early October, during a three-day hike on the Appalachian Trail. My 36 mile walk from Caratunk to Stratton represented a 50th anniversary hike commemorating my first 100+ mile trip on the AT, from the Kennebec River to Rangeley, as a 15 year old kid in 1958.

Three years ago, I had this notion to repeat in 2008 at least a portion of my 1958 trek, this time accompanied by a younger brother, with whom I had shared several outings over the years. Despite busy schedules, with one of us on each coast, we managed to put a trip together.

I did indeed feel, while scrambling up the Bigelow range, that I was knowing this place for the first time. I discovered that a 36 mile walk in three days with a 25 pound pack carried by a sixty-something guy, however fit, is at least as challenging as a teenager doing a 100+ mile trip with a 40 pound pack.

We speculated about seeing anyone on the trail in early October. Yet, we met 14 through-hikers, all doing some hard travelin' to reach Katahdin by Columbus Day weekend. In our most woebegone moments, reminding ourselves that our challenges during a three-day hike were relatively minor compared to the demands of 5 months on the AT from Georgia to Maine, gave us impetus to push on.

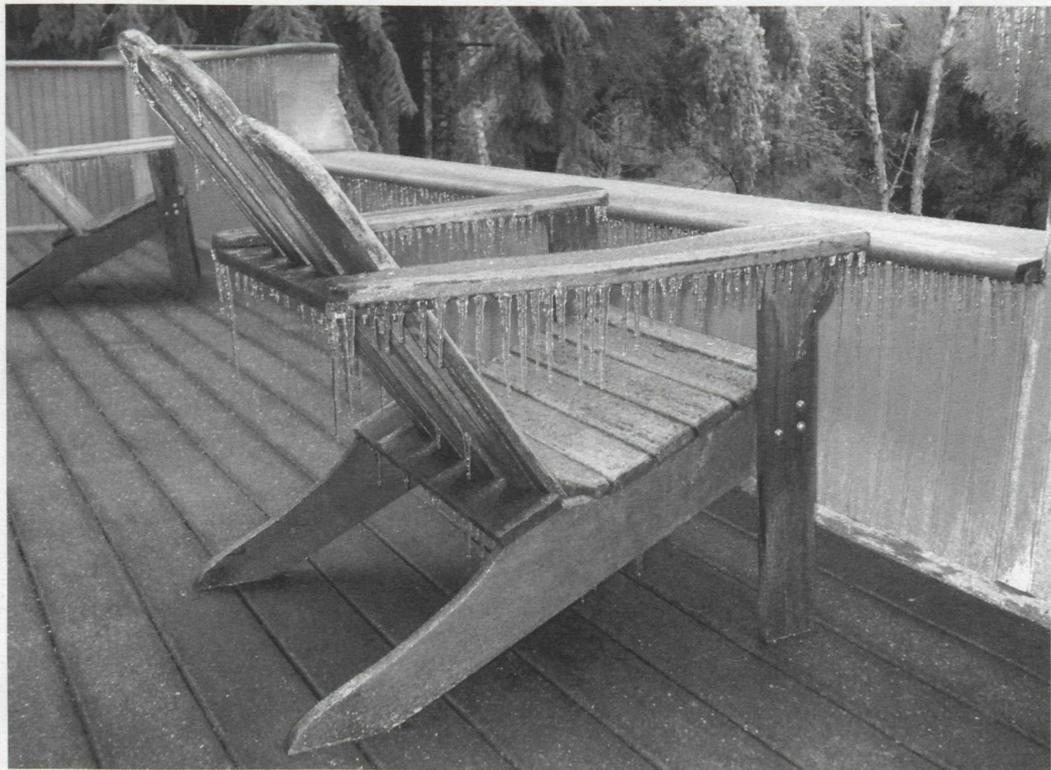
On top of Avery Peak, looking across the "100 Mile Wilderness" to the northern terminus of the AT, I reminisced about similar "peak" experiences over the last 50 years. I thought of climbs on many other high places that have provided a continuing connection to that initial exposure to the wild.

What is it that brings us to such settings, and keeps us returning, even over several decades? For me, it was family camping trips and climbs in the White Mountains that first provided the impetus, and subsequently, the desire for adventure travel within and beyond Maine. Visits to some 50 countries over the years further reinforced a lifelong curiosity for the unfamiliar. Interestingly, those voyages have always been characterized by frugal travel, likely instilled by that first challenge to pack 10 days' worth of food and gear and keep it all under 40 pounds for those tough traverses on Maine's 4,000+' peaks.

As I labored hand over hand up yet another a boulder field, I joked that I did not remember this particularly large rock from the last time I had passed through there. Of course, we usually remember the overall experience, the total mileage that makes up the sum of all those steps, rather than any specific section. And frankly, I suspect we often enjoy the remembering more than the doing. As I mumbled to my wife in a quick phone call after exiting the trail, "Well, I sure am glad to get that out of my system."

But on our ride back to asphalt and traffic lights, after this brief sojourn maneuvering rocks and roots, we were already talking about the next time, perhaps along the Pacific Crest Trail, or maybe a coast to coast walk across the British Isles. Because Eliot was correct; we do indeed know a place (and maybe ourselves) for the first time upon returning, and hopefully we are better for it.





## Blue Christmas

Marc Buchard

Jeffery Ralston had always been one of the biggest fans of Christmas since he was a young boy. For him, it was that one time of year when everyone had an excuse to be a bit merrier, when he was able to decorate his house with lights, blow up giant snow globes and mechanical reindeer and watch the cars drive slowly by, when he could dress up in his father's Santa outfit and invite everyone in his daughter's class over his house for hot chocolate and candy canes. Yet, Christmas this year pained him: this would be the first Christmas that he and his seven-year-old daughter, Alison, would be celebrating without his wife, Jean. Only one year ago Jean had been diagnosed with cancer, and only four months ago the chemotherapy that was supposed to have saved her, killed her.

The unexpected death of his wife was a devastating blow to Jeffery's daughter, but it was a crippling blow to a man who celebrated his tenth year anniversary with his wife in a hospital bed only one month before she passed away. It was, for him, so bad at one point that his sister had to visit regularly to make sure Alison was being taken care of properly. He had such a hard time concentrating. It was so difficult to get out of bed in the morning, it was so difficult to do all those simple things his wife used to do, so difficult to kiss Ali goodbye and tuck her in bed at night and tell her that her mother was alright and happy in heaven. Jeffery was distraught: he had lost his wife of ten years, and now he was forced to bring up his daughter by himself.

It was only three days before Christmas Eve. Jeffery had set up all the usual decorations with his daughter's help: lights, stockings, holiday paraphernalia and, of course, the Christmas tree. Although he did not feel that Christmas would ever be the same, he did not want to wear his grief for Alison's sake.

Jeffery's meatloaf was almost finished cooking. It was four o'clock and Southern Vermont was getting yet another light sprinkling of snow to add to the thirteen inches they had just received the previous week. Jeffery was busy mashing potatoes while listening to a collection of holiday cheer when the doorbell rang. The only other child within two miles lived across the street, so Alison naturally spent most of her time with him.

"Hello Mr. Ralston, is Ali home?" a little boy the same age as Alison asked. He was wearing so much winter clothing one would think it was twenty below zero outside. "Yes she is, Tommy. Come on in and I'll go get her for you," Jeffery said to the little boy.

Alison was ecstatic of course, and hurriedly put on her snow gear with her father's help, then ran downstairs to meet her best friend.

"Tommy!" Alison screamed as she ran down the stairs, "let's go sledding."

"Dinner will be ready in an hour. I'll turn the Christmas lights on then, so when you see them make sure you come home right away, okay?" Jeffery said to Alison while putting on her little pink hat with a single, fluffy pom-pom.

"Okay, daddy," Alison answered smiling. Her eyes were blue, just like her mother's.

"Okay sweetie, and where are you going to play?" Jeffery said to Tommy.

"Behind my house," the boy answered and then bounded away, Alison in pursuit.

"Alright, be careful crossing the street!" he shouted to them as they ran down the driveway.

"We will!" the two shouted back.

Jeffery closed the door with a sigh, then walked over to the oven to check on dinner. He had about fifty minutes before it would finish cooking, so he slowly walked into the living room and fell into a large recliner with yet another sigh. With his collection of Christmas tunes playing softly in the background, Jeffery closed his eyes and tried to relax. Thomas' mother had been kind enough to pick up and look after Alison after school until Jeffrey got home from work. This was nothing new, because she used to do so even before his wife had become sick, but now Alison was spending more and more time over their house. She had been going to visit the child psychologist at the school twice a week and she said that his daughter was handling the grief normally, and shouldn't suffer any permanent or lasting emotional scars. Jeffery, however, was not so well.

He loved Christmas time more than any other time in the year, and opening his eyes to the soft glow of the decorated Christmas tree, he once again remembered why. It was family, love, cheer, peace, and good will towards everyone. That was what Christmas stood for, what it meant to Jeffery. It was the one time of the year that people were always gleaming with holiday spirit, always willing to help out someone else - even if they were a stranger - and were always smiling, and some how the Christmas tree embodied all these things.

Gazing at the tree, Jeffery saw something partially hidden behind it on the wall out of the corner of his eye. It was a picture. A portrait of his wife she had given him as a present on Valentine's Day. She looked so healthy and beautiful, a stark and painful contrast to the Jean that would be forever burned into his mind as she writhed on the hospital bed in agony, the morphine drip long since useless at dulling the pain.

Slowly, Jeffery stood up and walked over to where the picture hung on the wall, taking the portrait in his hands. There she was: his wife. The woman with whom he had spent this time with last year, and intended to spend the rest of his life with, but that dream had long faded by now. His wife's passing had shattered his life into a thousand pieces, and he was still struggling to put them back together. Once again, realizing that he would never again spend another moment with the woman he had loved so dearly, he slowly sat back down on the couch sobbing- the portrait in one hand, his tears in the other, and the sound of "Blue Christmas" softly playing in the background.

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"Come on, Ali! My brother made a really cool snow fort in our back yard," Tommy said excitedly as the two children crossed the barren street.

"What kind of fort?" Alison asked him.

"One with tunnels!"

"Wow!" Alison said with wide eyes.

Thomas' older brother, Richard, had indeed constructed an impressive snow fortress at

the rear of his back yard. The snow bank was at least five feet high and ten feet wide, with a few tunnels dug through at the base. One particular tunnel in the center led to a small hollowed out room underneath the snow bank that was big enough for both of the children to fit in comfortably.

"Come on in and check it out!" Tommy urged Alison as he plunged into the central tunnel.

Alison followed him enthusiastically into a small dome shaped room in the center of the bank. "Do you think it's safe in here?" she asked, scooting up against the wall.

"Of course it is, Ricky made it," Tommy reassured her, patting the wall with his left hand.

"So . . . what do we do now?" Alison asked her host as she looked around the small chamber.

"Ummm . . . finish digging out that tunnel," Tommy said pointing to a third, partially completed tunnel leading out from opposite where they sat, "Ricky didn't finish digging that one out. Let's finish it for him, then there can be three ways in!"

"Alright!" Alison agreed.

"Hey, how about you start digging it out now, and I'll go ask my Mom to make us some hot chocolate!" he suggested.

"With marshmallows?" Alison asked.

"Yeah, with marshmallows!" Tommy agreed.

"Okay!" she said, now even more excited on account of the marshmallows.

"I'll be right back!" Tommy yelled as he crawled out of the fortress.

Who's gotta beard that's long and white?

Santa's gotta beard that's long and white.

Who comes around on a special night?

Santa comes around on a special night.

Special night, beard that's white...

Must be Santa, must be Santa,

Must be Santa, Santa Claus

Alison sang to herself as she started to dig out the tunnel.

Tommy closed the door behind him a few minutes later, carrying two large covered mugs of hot chocolate. He was carefully treading down his sloped back yard to avoid spilling any of the steaming cocoa in either mug when he noticed something: There was something wrong, he could tell, but not what it was exactly. Slowly, Tommy hastened his walk to a hustle, and soon arrived at the snow bank. A moment later hot chocolate was spreading across the fallen snow as Tommy frantically searched the large snow bank for what remained of a tunnel. He realized that the snow bank had collapsed, and that Alison was most likely buried beneath the snow.

"Ali! Ali!" he yelled down on his knees, digging frantically.

There was too much snow. She could have been anywhere beneath the massive bank, and Tommy realized he was not making any progress.

"I . . . I . . . I need to get help . . .," he said desperately, and then darted away.

\* \* \* \*

Jeffery had managed to situate himself across the couch after a short while. He left the portrait face down on the floor, not wanting to pick it up anytime soon. After what seemed to be twenty minutes, he got up and went into the kitchen to check on dinner.

The meatloaf was coming along great, only thirty minutes left. Jeffery started walking over to the cabinet to set the table, when there came an abrupt banging at the door. Jeffery went to answer the door, puzzled at who it could be. When he opened the door he found Tommy, his face red, his eyes wide, and breathing heavily.

"Where's Alison, Tommy?" Jeffery asked, looking around for his daughter.

"You . . . gotta come quick . . . she's . . . the fort fell . . . she's trapped!" the boy managed to get out between gasps.

"What!" Jeffery exclaimed as his heart started to race, feeling the adrenalin with an unsettling shiver that ran through his body. "Hurry!" Tommy yelled.

As fast as he could, Jeffery strapped his boots on, grabbed his jacket and sprinted across the way to Tommy's back yard.

"Alison! Alison!" Jeffery shouted as they stopped at the top of the hill in Tommy's back yard, "where is she!" he said turning to the boy.

"Underneath the snow bank, she's gotta be!" he said pointing towards the large mound of snow, where another figure was already digging.

Jeffery darted down the hill and was on top of the bank digging in a matter of seconds.

"Where is she? Where is she?" he shouted to the boy digging next to him.

"I'm not sure, but she should be right here!" Tommy's older brother, Richard, shouted back, digging just as frantically as Jeffery.

"Tommy, go and call 9-1-1," Jeffery ordered.

"Mom's already called," Richard said.

Jeffery, his heart pounding in his chest, tore through the tightly packed snow like a mad man. He was determined to save his little girl. He would dig forever if he had to. Nothing, nothing was going to take his daughter away from him. He dug with bare hands - hands he could not even feel any more. They had already dug two and a half feet down into the bank. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of something through the snow: a half buried small pink pom-pom. Jeffery hastily dug out around his daughter's hat, and pulled it out as soon as it was freed from the snow, revealing nothing. Nothing but snow lay beneath the pink hat.

\* \* \* \*

Two hours later, Jeffery sat motionless at Thomas' dining room table, warming his hand with a mug of hot chocolate. Tommy had been sent to bed, and Richard had helped the fire and police men completely move the entire bank of snow, without any sign of Alison. Everyone thought

Tommy much too hysterical to be playing a prank, and there was also the placement of Alison's hat. The police had no explanation; no one did.

"Mr. Ralston, if your daughter is somewhere out here, we'll find her. I promise you that. In the mean time I think it would be best if you went home and tried to relax. I've got cruisers on patrol around the neighborhood looking for her, and we're going to sweep the woods out back next. I know it's hard, but I have to consider your health as well," a police officer explained to an unresponsive Jeffery.

In the end, Jeffery agreed to go home and attempt to relax, and Tommy's mother had been asked to see him home safely.

"Are you going to be alright?" she asked sympathetically.

"No," Jeffery replied, not even bothering to look back as he closed the door behind him.

He was still in shock. He could not feel anything: grief, confusion or despair. He was an empty vessel whose pilot had ejected the moment he understood what was happening. His daughter was missing, and no one knew where she was. He had no idea, no idea what to say, no idea what to do, and no idea what to feel. He had hadn't eaten since lunch, and remembered the meatloaf he had left in the oven. It was done, and not burnt: the oven timer had shut it off when it was finished.

Jeffery, operating on autopilot, cut himself a piece of the meatloaf. He sat at the table, chewing and staring blankly into space. Thirty minutes later he stood up and went to the window looking out towards his driveway. It was dark now and he could see Tommy's house across the way with its Christmas decorations all lit up. Noticing that his own lights were still off, he flicked a light switch to his right, illuminating his front yard with hundreds of little lights. It was very beautiful, he thought to himself, very soft, very relaxing. It reminded him of childhood. Not knowing what else he should do, Jeffery walked across the kitchen and into his living room. He had left the Christmas tree on, and was about to make his way to sit down on the couch when he noticed something out of place. The living room was not the way he had left it.

To his right, sitting on the far arm of the couch, he could see his wife staring at him with her bright blue eyes, smiling from within the portrait he had left face down on the floor two and a half hours ago. Next to the portrait, illuminated by the soft glow of the Christmas tree, lay his daughter, Alison, sleeping peacefully in her entire snow outfit, save one fluffy pink hat.



## The Empty Passenger Seat

Stephanie Lynne Schmidt

My passenger seat is empty as I look out the window, hoping to see anything that looks familiar. Within the last two hours, I swear I've seen that gas station twice, and that pink house at least seven times. I mumble to myself that I wish you were here, but I know that isn't going to happen. Still, to make things easier on myself, I pretend to have company, and yours is as good as any.

I tell you how my life has been since I last saw you, one month to the day. Already my bones ache waiting just to hug you or punch you. I haven't decided. It's hard not seeing your best friend for so long and the separation has lingered and taken its toll on me. I wonder if the same is true for you or no.

I've never been in this area before. I know you grew up here, and all I want to do is see you once more, but there goes that gas station again, and I realize I went in another circle. If hell were a road map, I begin to think it would look something like your hometown.

Finally, I get into a stretch of land that doesn't contain that fucking gas station, and floor the gas pedal. The car seizes slightly at the sudden acceleration and I debate the speed I'm climbing to. Would you be going this fast? Would you be letting me go this fast if you were with me? In my mind I can see you shaking your head, fearing for your life, and it brings a tear to my eye. I need to see you soon.

I see a fence that should be more familiar than it is. Then again, I've only seen it once. At the same time, I wasn't sure if I would ever be able to come here again, but I knew that you were expecting me. In my mind I see a wrap around porch, and you sitting on it drinking lemonade with your mother. Then again, I don't know if you drink lemonade. Instead, the hallucination turns the liquid into soda, and I chuckle, replaying all the times you've stolen other people's drinks. It's too cold outside for you to be sitting on the deck, but the last time I saw you, it was sunny, so give me some leeway.

The driveway is bumpier than I remember. Then again, when I peeled out last time, there were tears in my eyes. I didn't know the next time I'd be able to see you again, and that killed me inside. This time, my head was clear, for the most part, except I couldn't remember exactly which place was yours. There were three different mini-roads to choose from and I chose the first. Last names were printed down the aisles, and I lost my temper slightly when I didn't see yours. It was the same story for the second choice. I chuckled a little bit at myself, being lost for the zillionth time today. I couldn't wait to see you to tell you the same story, but then again, you wouldn't expect anything different from me, would you?

I turned into the last driving area, and began reading; Colliard, Stickler, Assman (I swear to God, it said Assman, I made a mental note to tell you that you were next to someone with the last name Ass-man). Finally in the last stretch, I see what I'm looking for, Wheeler.

I hold my breath and turn off the ignition. The month before plays and replays in my ear nearly bringing me to tears, again. I step out of the car onto the snow, forgetting that the plows

never come near here. Your mother used to complain to me about it, but you never seemed to care. How could you?

The place is empty as I walk closer to you. I wonder if you can see me from where I'm at. Two more steps, and I can see your name clearly. If this were your house, I would be knocking on the door right now. Only instead, I'm kneeling, having the wind knocked out of me looking at you name carved in marble.

I trace my fingers along your name, and the two dates: born on, died on, and I fall apart reading the letters from just a month ago. No one expected you to get your headstone so quickly and even I was amazed at how beautifully it came out. If I didn't know better, I would assume that your mom paid more so that you wouldn't have an unmarked grave for too long.

My heart pours out to you, aching for a hug, a glance, anything that would bring me closer to you. But nothing will. I'm still adjusting to being without you. It's difficult to go from having a sister to talk to everyday, no matter the distance, to visiting a cemetery once a month and having a headstone replace a face.

As promised, I told you about Mr. Assman, and my lack of direction. It helps to imagine you laughing. I stay for longer than expected, and once the tears dry, I'm back in the car, wet pants clinging to me, headed back home. I roll down the window and call you "See you next month" just in time to watch the wind pick up outside the car. I think it's you telling me "I'll be here," and I laugh bitterly. Though it's freezing outside, I put my hand out the window and try to catch your words and hold onto them the entire way home, praying that this time, I don't get lost.

## Waiting

Elisabeth Ziemba

Sometimes, in those dreary hours before the sun broke the horizon, before the world awoke and forced her to smile, she wept for him. For the only man she knew she would ever love. She spent those hours, cold and dark as they were, on the breakwater, waiting. She did not sleep anymore, except small snatches during the day. Her nights were long, spent only watching the waves. Her family had told her she would forget him, if she would only let go and allow him to become no more than a memory. Her friends, had she any, would probably have said the same. She had tried, and had learned that she could not allow herself to sleep because he invaded her dreams. It was hard enough to see him every so often in photographs, and those she could not control. It was harder still to see his friends, whispering in groups. Whispering, she knew, about her.

He was her dream...and her nightmare. If she closed her eyes in a weak moment, he was there, his touch vibrant and real. She could feel his lips, warm and full against hers. She could feel his hands entwined with hers. She could weep, knowing it was only a dream, knowing he was gone. He was gone, and he was not going to come back. He had left her, alone. As alone as she had been when he had come into her life. She could still remember his first words to her...and his last.

"It's you." He whispered the words. She looked up from her book, flustered.

"I beg your pardon?" His blue eyes crinkled. He smiled, extending a hand.

"I'm sorry. It's just that you look exactly like this woman in my dreams." He laughed then. "Sounds like a bad pickup line, doesn't it? I'm Alex." They shook hands.

"Diana." He sat down then, and they began to talk.

And so it had begun. First a friendship, then he had asked her on a date. Before long they had been spending very little time apart. Within three months, they were saying "I love you". But it was those last words she could never forget.

"I wish I had never met you." The words rang out loud and sharp in the clearing. Her breath caught in her throat. "I wish I had never met you." He whispered a second time, turning and walking away from her.

She sighed, rising slowly from the breakwater as the sun flamed orange and red over the water.

"I miss you." She whispered the words to the ocean spray. She could only admit it here. Here, where they had kissed for the first time. Here, where he had stood laughing as the winds had blown back his ebony hair. Here, so close to, and yet so far from, the clearing where he had said his painful last words. "Forgive me." She turned as the sun finally burst from the horizon, its blazing sphere throwing a brilliant glow on the waves.



## An Eighth Grade Nightmare

Gretchen Lamontagne

As I was on my way down to his room, I felt the routine fluttering of the butterfly family that lived in my stomach. I knew he was going to say "hi," but what would I say back? "Hi" would just sound boring, like I couldn't come up with anything of my own. "Hey" was what I said to my friends. Maybe "Hello"? Yeah. That sounded mature. I approached the eighth grade math door and paused, hesitant to enter. Deep breath, I told myself. Mr. Belouin was dressed in his usual plaid button down shirt and khakis complete with yellow chalk hand-prints. His hair was short, blonde, and crewcut. His light blue eyes could pierce through metal. His smile could melt your heart. And I thought he was so handsome.

"Hi Gretchen, how are you today?" I froze. "Come on, come on, spit it out" I thought rapidly as I bumped into the chair in front of me.

"Hello." I scurried to my desk, almost dropping my folder on the way. "You didn't even answer his question! What is wrong with you! That sounded so stupid! Brush it off. You'll make up for it when you hand in your homework." I liked math a lot and always did well on the homework assignments. So aside from my clumsy nature, I at least had that going for me.

We began the day's lesson. As I correctly answered his question about the algebraic equation he had written so perfectly on the board, I felt Ryann nudge my arm and we giggled. He was so dreamy. I felt my heart skip a beat. I was almost positive no one knew of my infatuation with our teacher. No one but Ryann anyway.

The end of the year was coming. Regretfully, I would be moving on to high school. Although I would be in the same building, and it was likely that I would run into him when passing through his class to Technology, he would never be my teacher again. There was another thing that the end of eighth grade math meant, judgment day. My fate was completely in his hands. Would I be skipping ahead to tenth grade math next year, or would I be stuck behind with the rest of the "average" kids? Lord knows that would be horrible. I knew he could only select a few of his best students to do this, so I have to admit I was a little nervous. I was good at math. Heck, I loved math, but did he realize how smart I was? I mean, just because we were in love didn't guarantee me a buy.

I finished my yellow and pink note to Ryann and folded it into a little triangle. She was sitting right next to me so there was no way he would see me pass it to her. His back was turned. Now was my chance. I stretched out my arm towards her desk and

"Gretchen, could you pass that forward please?"

"Damn! Caught!" My thirteen year old face turned red. "This can't be happening" I thought, almost pleading with myself for it to be a dream. It was real. I stood and walked toward him, head down, eyes on my feet. He grazed my fingertip as he took the note from my sweaty hand. As I desperately found my way back to my seat I prayed that he would just throw it away and not read it. He put it in his pocket. "WHAT! He put it in his pocket?" I couldn't believe it, though I had just seen it with my own eyes. How in the world was I going to make it to lunch?

The rest of the period dragged on. Despite the fact that I could feel my classmates burning holes in my clothes with their stares, I tried not to make eye contact with anyone. I was so embarrassed. "How could this happen to me?" The bell rang. I practically ran out of the room and down the hall. Ryann caught up to me as I was grabbing my lunch out of my locker, ready to climb into it.

"What did it say?" she asked, nearly out of breathe from running. I didn't even want to tell her because then she would know how embarrassed I should be, and I didn't even want to know how embarrassed I should be.

"Oh, nothing really. Let's go to lunch!" I played it cool. I mean, no one needed to know what was written on that little piece of horror. I'd just pretend it was no big deal and the whole thing would blow over. We found a seat at our usual table. Mom had packed me a tuna sandwich, carrot sticks and a piece of her homemade zucchini bread. I couldn't wait to just eat my lunch and move on with the rest of my life. The everyday gossip mingled with the smell of Shepherd's Pie, filling the lunchroom air. For a moment, I thought I could forget about how embarrassed I had just felt, but oh was I wrong. Sitting at the teacher's table, set above the rest of the lunch room, was Mr. Belouin. I had refused to allow my eyes to even venture in that general direction, but I couldn't help but notice that he had a little piece of paper in his hand, and was doing something that looked very similar to reading it. "He couldn't be! And in front of all of the other teachers too?!" I could vaguely distinguish yellow and pink squiggles. It was my note. I shifted my eyes to Ryann, who had evidently noticed the same thing.

"I think he's reading it," she whispered to me.

"Good thing I only wrote about every cute boy in school besides him!" We laughed so hard, it startled everyone else at the table.

"What's so funny?" Jared asked.

"Oh, nothing. Just an inside joke" I managed to say between laughs. From that moment on I decided that the only person who had made a big deal out of Mr. Belouin taking my note was me. As embarrassing as it was, I had survived my first, and definitely my last, note-intercepting-by-a-teacher experience, and the only bad thing to come of it was that my math teacher now knew every boy in the school that I had a crush on...well, everyone except him!

**Safe**

Travis Redman

Time represents possibilities in life  
Take away those possibilities and hope is gone  
Through the open bike trail with Atlantic ocean on right,  
College campus on left,  
And plants and trees that come in between.  
Hurry, but don't the sky will grab us if it's ready.  
A car could rid us of today's troubles  
With 5 million pieces of sun shattered in front of us.

Safe. You can be safe.  
Yes you can. Yes I can.  
But from death? Who can be?

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The sun hangs low in the autumn sky  
Natures vibrant colors painted on earthy  
canvas treats the eye  
Light cast across a crystal smear  
And a ghostly mist does appear

Beyond the mist and in the shadows  
Light reflects where it goes  
Reflections in the shadows now come to light  
Are ghostly images brought forth to light



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What you may see and what you cannot  
How open you are in thought  
Steadfast remains in black and white  
Step forward from the shadows and feel the warmth  
from the light

## Almost

Rachael Mott

In your weaker moments, when you're too exhausted to stop yourself, you let yourself imagine. Sometimes you even catch yourself in those in-between moments, when there is no such excuse to be found—you were so involved in your book, how did that thought creep in? His fingers in your hair, his smile aimed at you and only you, his hand linked with yours, or perhaps even an arm thrown casually around your waist.

And every time you see such things in your mind's eye, you wish you hadn't. It always ends with an effort to fight back tears, once you come back to your senses.

You catch yourself, once again, and a grim, bitter excuse for a smile crosses your lips when you think that it would be so wonderful to not have to catch yourself, not have to drag yourself back to the painful reality of no one. It would be so incredibly blissful to be remembering instead of dreaming.

Sometimes, only at your very lowest, you just let yourself go, though, because even that daydream, the one where he has a hand on your back and another tangled in your hair, pulling you to him to kiss you, because he wants to kiss you—it's just so indescribably fantastic that even though you feel physical pain when you wake yourself up, that brief glimmer of happiness is almost worth it.

Almost.

Once, he caught you. You'd been at the library for hours, trying to forget (even more than you were trying to remember) and you'd vaguely wondered what it would be like to have his gentle fingers mapping your face. He'd sat down next to you before you'd realized that he was even in the same room and—much to your mortification—had asked what you were thinking. Your subsequent blush and incoherent response had resulted in what he surely must have thought of as "harmless" teasing, but was in fact far too accurate in all its fun for your comfort. He'd been bewildered when you refused to look at him for days afterward. If only he knew.

You never let yourself imagine anything beyond that kiss—it's hard enough pulling back to reality after that vision, and you theorize that trying to escape the idea of his bare skin against yours would surely destroy you, and besides, you barely know how to imagine such things.

So you pretend to not care or notice as you watch him kiss your best friend, and you tell yourself that it's impossible to miss something you never had anyway.



## Porcelain

Stephanie Lynne Schmidt

I stood helplessly as I watched her turn to glass in front of me. It started at her eyes, frosting over to crystalline perfection, and spread throughout her body, shaking so violently I was afraid to place my hands around her. My biggest fear was watching her hit the floor and shatter. I wrapped my arms around her, trying to keep the cracks from breaking her beautiful figure, and worrying the entire time that the pressure I placed upon her would be what pushed her over the edge.

She whispered into my neck words that ceased to end, and all I could do was remain a shoulder for her. She was falling, I could feel it, and she stopped reaching for my hand long before I was ready to stop trying to catch her.

I've seen her broken like this once before, and I'd love to say that I was part of the reason she was put together. But just as this time, I am destroying her, last time I couldn't break her fall.

Love is a silly thing. You would get sucked into a rip tide, go out into a blizzard dressed in white, lay in the middle of a street with a semi truck barreling forward, you would do anything in the world as long as it made that person happy. You forget for awhile that you even exist, and all you see is her.

If the person you love is weaker than you are, you go through endless measures to stay strong for them. You create barriers between them and the rest of the world so nothing can get through without your consent. You are the bouncer to the nightclub known as life, and you gladly take your position.

Even still, no matter how closely you guard those doors, something can still happen, and here you are, watching the love of your life crashing. If life were an operating table, you would be the surgeon praying to God that your scalpel doesn't slip. If life were a dream, you'd be beside her waking her before she started screaming out in pain.

Rather than being something fixable, however, life tears her apart. She's broken, breaking, something you would more than readily take from her, but it is hers to bear. All you can do, all I can do at this moment is be stable, be that person that she craves more than anyone else to fall apart in front of.

I take her face in my hands feeling her hot tears soak through the creases in my fingers and it burns like acid straight through my veins to my heart. She tells me she just can't do this anymore and I try to keep from breaking for her. I've never known a hard life, yet she has already been through so much. The burning in my heart quickly escalates to anger at everyone and everything that has ever wronged her.

If her eyes weren't already upon me, every wall in the room would be broken beneath my fists, but I know my anger scares her so I keep myself in line. I wonder if she knows her sadness kills me. If looks could actually kill as everyone says they could, the sadness in her eyes would have

stopped my heart the first time I met her.

She has had everyone in her life leave her. Some made the decision themselves to leave, others had God make the decision for them. I swore to her that I would never disappear from her side, and I am still trying to reassure her this very moment. She refuses to hear me as I expected. She assumes that she will always be let down. Yet here I am, waiting for the day she'll let me prove that I am not going anywhere.

When her sobbing ebbs faintly, I release my hands from her face and wait for her reaction. If she starts falling again, I will catch her. Instead, she sits for a moment, probably contemplating running out the door as she usually does once this passes, but instead, she takes me, wraps my arms around her and embraces me.

"Thank you." Her words are like air to me and I breathe off of them. Just as I am attempting to keep her afloat, she sends me a life raft.

Some day she will know that I will be the one to save her, until then, every time I watch her turn into something so breakable, I will be by her side. As long as she keeps running to me, I will not leave her.

Once more I draw her into me, pretending that I am so much stronger than I actually am. And I just hold her, until I feel the glass peel away from her, leaving only scarred skin. Some day, I will be the one to save her. Today, I am just the one to bring her back from battle.

## Shattered Like Glass

Katie Edwards

How did we lose all the good that was given to us?  
 Shattered like glass: the pieces will never fit again  
 Fissures in what was once whole  
 A deep scar that we can never mend  
 Who lit this flame in us and then smothered it so fast?  
 What's keeping us from reaching out and coming together again?

If only I knew, if only I knew  
 Of internal wars seething since childhood  
 An entrenched and untold reliance that shackled you to your prison  
 And a surreptitious phobia of never living  
 How long had you been drowning?  
 How long had you been waiting for a generous hand  
 To raise you from intoxicating fluids inhibiting your existence?  
 You staggered onward until the earth ended  
 And gravity severed the chains that bound you  
 Pain ended as life contacted rock  
 And blood froze when waves embraced body, broken  
 The sea swallowed your very last breath  
 Ocean water filling and consuming even your soul  
 And you died alone, so very alone  
 Those frozen waters welcomed you home

And in that moment I knew the world would never be right  
 Fissures in what was once whole  
 A deep scar that we can never mend  
 Shattered like glass: the pieces will never fit again  
 In that moment I grabbed for your hand  
 And caught nothing but the air,  
 Only vacant and indifferent air  
 And all I wanted was your touch  
 But I felt nothing but the wind,  
 The bitter and desolate wind  
 Piercing my attire, stroking my bare skin  
 Biting, stabbing, penetrating  
 Telling me all the things I knew were true  
 In that moment I knew I was much too late

I reached out to help much too late

As salted water doused your flame  
I shuddered at the sudden chill  
Of memories grappling in my mind  
Shouting words I should have said  
When the arms of self-doubt and tenacity  
Held me down and I didn't fight to break away  
What could I have said? What could I have done?  
Who is at fault and who can I blame?  
But all the answers are in my head  
I was much too late; I was much too late

How did we lose all the good that was given to us  
When it seemed that we could never go wrong?  
Who lit this flame in us and then smothered it so fast  
Leaving us incapable of lighting it ourselves?  
I can collect the shards of our memories  
I can try to build the fire that kept us young  
But I can't break the wall built between us  
When your feet stepped off the earth  
Fissures in what was once whole  
A deep scar that will never mend  
Shattered like glass, the pieces scattered  
They will never fit again  
But I will keep reaching out for you  
Grabbing at the vacant air  
And standing strong against the bitter wind  
Taking every blow that comes my way





## Another Day

Linda Labbe

Just another day or so they say  
the sun is shining no clouds in the way  
just another day oh can't you see  
how very lucky you are just to be

just another day or so they say  
the leaves are falling time is fading away  
don't wait to do the things you promised to do  
remember all the people waiting for you

the winter is coming all too soon  
so go out fall in love under the autumn moon  
watch the leaves change and children play  
can't you see time will soon fade away

just another day don't let it be  
go out and enjoy all that you see  
be with all of the people that love you  
show thanks to the heavens above

your children though they have grown  
and find it hard to make the time to call their own  
their hearts are with you each and every day  
come out and see us don't let time fade away





## **Beyond Time**

Travis Redman

Although life slowly becomes  
A series of endless walks and rides,  
There are people who see beyond time.  
They are ones who equate longing  
With departure from Eternal Minds.

## Homeless in Vegas

Dan Rothermel

He approached  
As Hannah and I walked the Vegas Strip,  
On this pre-rush hour Monday morning.  
Slender, scruffy beard, searching eyes  
    I'm so hungry. I can't stand up.  
    I could use five dollars for a meal.

Funny  
I'd been thinking about giving to the homeless  
After last night  
When five or six different men approached us  
Here in Sin City.  
As usual, I never made eye contact.  
I just did the Dionne Warwick thing,  
    walk on by, just walk on by.

I mean, everyone knows  
    You shouldn't give money to them.  
    If you do, you're just an enabler.  
    Don't you know it's all going for alcohol anyway.  
    Give it to a local shelter, maybe a food pantry.  
    Hasn't your mother taught you anything?

Still I wonder about my motivations  
This moment caught me off guard.  
My head understands why not to give, but  
My heart wonders if...  
    I'm just being cold and selfish?

I'm clearly a have in a world of have-nots.  
I've got the money to give. I could do it, you know.

Our eyes don't meet.  
It's a transaction.  
I close the deal for two dollars.  
He's off immediately.  
He's got work to do.

We part and I'm not satisfied.  
I wouldn't do it again.  
And I bet you wonder  
Will I actually take the time to give to a shelter  
Or a food pantry,  
Or am I just all talk?

## **The Red Badge of Courage Poem A Tribute to Stephen Crane**

Konrad Kross

Young Henry Fleming, a boy from the farm,  
Dreamed of going to battle, among men and arms.

But once away, from farmland and cattle,  
Henry began to think, would he run from battle?

Henry's regiment was number three hundred and four.  
After months of drilling, they finally marched out to war.

A loud soldier, Tom Wilson, thought he would be shot dead.  
He gave Henry some letters, "They're for my family," he said.

As the rebels advanced, Henry turned tail and ran,  
His officers shouted, "Come back! Fight like man!"

The rebels advanced! The regiment would soon fall!  
But to Henry's dismay, they won after all.

Henry ran to the woods, too ashamed to go back.  
He threw a pinecone at a squirrel and it dodged the attack.

That made Henry feel better, it was natural to run,  
The officers were fools, he was the smart one.

A dead corpse in the forest struck Henry with fright,  
Filled with horror, Henry ran from its sight.

Night was approaching and daylight grew dim.  
Joining a band of wounded soldiers, Henry found his friend Jim.

A friendly tattered soldier spoke with Henry a bit,  
But made him feel guilty by asking where he was hit.

Soon Jim started to run, Henry didn't know why.  
But the poor man was looking for a safe place to die.

Henry was devastated, he didn't know what to do.  
He ran from the tattered soldier leaving him to die, too.

Off in the distance cannons still boomed like thunder,  
"What's happening out there?" Henry started to wonder.

He then tried to question a soldier who fled,  
But the terrified man clubbed him upon the head.

Henry was dazed and he stumbled about.  
A cheerful soldier decided to help Henry out.

The man brought him to his regiment, he knew the right place.  
As he left, Henry realized he never saw the man's face.

His men were glad to see Henry, they thought he was dead.  
Henry told them his wound was a shot in the head.

Tom Wilson made sure that Henry got better,  
Later the next morning, Henry returned Tom his letters.

Soon the regiment was assigned to the battlefield again.  
This time Henry was determined to fight on to the end.

So he fought like a wildcat, firing relentlessly,  
And he continued to fire when there was no enemy.

After the battle, he and Tom looked for a creek,  
Nearby they overheard two high officers speak.

"The 304th regiment fought like mule drivers out there,  
But they are the only men that I can spare."

"Then send them in to lead the attack,  
But I do not think too many will come back."

So the men led the charge with fire in their eyes,  
But fear overtook many, the troops were paralyzed.

Henry threw down his gun to protect the United States colors,  
He raised the flag high to inspire the others.

Just as the men were falling down in despair,  
They opened fire once more, their shots filled the air!

When the smoke cleared, the battle was done.  
The 304th regiment had actually won!

The men were all tired, their spirits diminished,  
Then the general criticized that the attack wasn't finished.

And though most of the troops were still weary and sore,  
They proved their courage in battle once more.

The fighting was brutal, the rebels' position was strong.  
The men had to do something or they wouldn't last long.

They couldn't stand ground and they couldn't go back.  
The only option for them was to attack.

Though Henry knew that the dangers were large,  
He raised his flag high and led the men in a charge.

To his surprise, the rebels retreated.  
All of their enemies were finally defeated.

And so ends this story of the soldier who ran,  
And his courageous struggle in becoming a man.



## The Hunted

Jenna Crovo

The seals are porpoising,  
breaking the murky water like glass.  
Heading heedlessly into danger  
which they know is lurking, camouflaged  
just below them.

She is a master of her trade, skilled in ambush,  
occasionally lifting her eyes to the surface.  
Her darkly shaded back renders her virtually invisible  
and blends in perfectly with the rocky bottom.  
She spies a straggler: it is time.

Like a torpedo she races to her chosen target,  
charcoal eyes rolling back,  
massive jaws agape, extend into a voracious grin.

More accurate than a sniper,  
her pearly daggers sink into the blubber rich prize,  
as she explodes from the water in a nightmarish spectacle.  
The swells turn crimson, remaining troops push on.

The sky was gray that brusque sunrise.  
A dented cage was lowered into the water,  
covered in a mingling slick of blood and fish oil.

The diver was next, camera in hand,  
visibility was poor, he waited, barely seeing  
the bleeding tuna lure five meters away.  
Nearby, a school of jacks suddenly dispersed.

A silhouette loomed in the distance, turned,  
coerced by evolution and the scent blood,  
the shadow cautiously approached.

From the cerulean depths emerged the selachian queen.  
Her lithe body oscillated smoothly through the water.  
She attacked the bait with relish, shredding the tuna's flesh.

Camera was rolling, capturing her every move  
tuna scales flashed through the water like fireflies,  
each time hungry jaws came back for more.

The bait gone, her movements became jerky,  
agitated. She was not satisfied, she charged,  
in a titanic clash of teeth and metal.

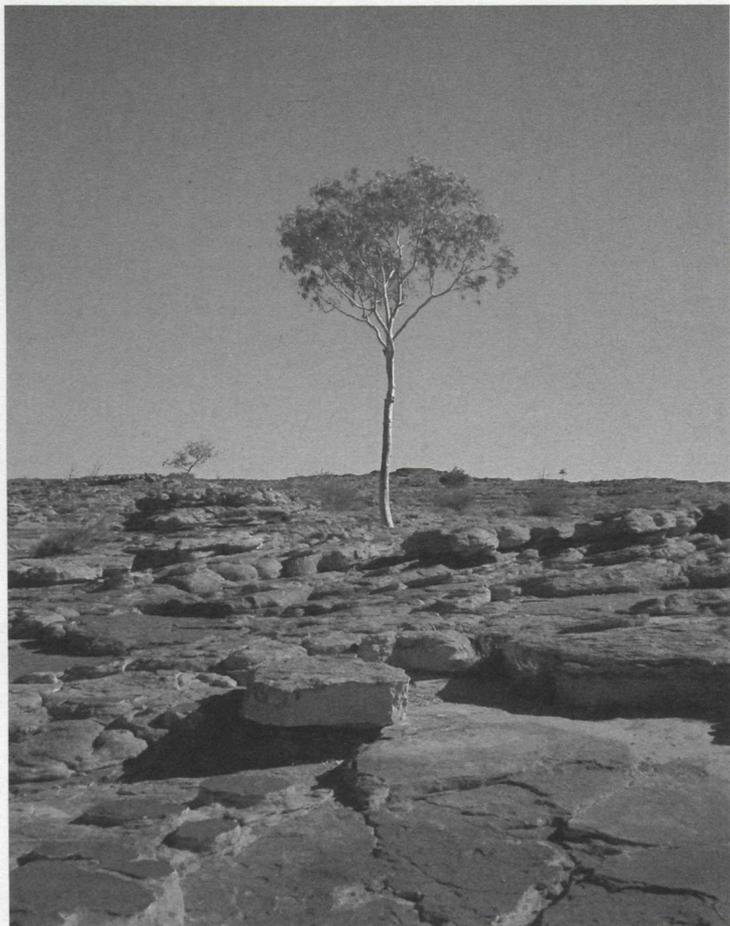
Raw, voracious force nearly ripped the cage apart.  
Serrated steak knives grated against the bars,  
spine tingling as fingernails down a chalkboard.

But, for whatever the reason, she left,  
perhaps she felt ennui,  
or disliked the taste of aluminum.

The ocean was quiet once more, and the jacks  
had returned to feed on the few remaining tuna flakes.  
The cage had a few more dents, but it survived,  
as did the diver.

Day breaks off the coast of South Africa.  
Cape fur seals are playing in the surf,  
bearing a course to the launch pad.





## Chief White Cloud & Drill Sergeant Neville

John D. Daugherty

As the jealous Queen/witch in Snow White would probably say, although, in her particular case, it might be mistaken, "A little reflection never hurt anybody." But, for most of us, it's a good thing indeed. We all have some regrets; I know, for example, I really should've let that little old lady out of the parking lot that time. And we all have some shining moments of which we ought to feel proud. But you know what? When we pause to think about all the good and the bad things we have done (The Animals), we just may find (The Rolling Stones) they share one outstanding quality in common: they were things we did without thinking.

When we think about what we're going to do and then do it, the only thing about the whole process in which we can take pride is our ability to reason, or the lack of it, in the case of regrets (see also, "bad planning"). On the other hand, when we act on impulse, we may take pride in or be ashamed of what we may think our actions tell us about our "true" or "inner" natures. It's odd, isn't it, that contrary to the official or otherwise pronouncements concerning stick-to-it-iveness, ambition, and hard work, it's actually the "inborn" or genetic traits that ultimately mean the most, and that most of us would rather be the average big guy than the exceptional little one. Here we are in a supposedly democratic society absolutely agog over the doings of royalty. Oh well. So it goes. One other thing about reflection: even when we look back on something as positive as saving a life, there may very well be overtones of regret. Why does it all have to be so complicated?

During the VietNam Era, we had Selective Service, or "The Draft." I'm still not convinced it wasn't a better system than relying on mostly the poorer classes of society to volunteer to protect us all in exchange for some portion of the education and health care we all ought to get anyhow. At any rate, back then, there were all kinds of "deferments." Naturally, anyone who was "deferred" just sort of hoped the conflict would be over before the deferment was. But it just kept on keeping on, and, finally, the deferment for guys in grad school came to an end, and I was drafted. I did get to finish the current semester.

I was a grad student in English with a concentration in Creative Writing at West Virginia University, in Morgantown, where I had achieved a bachelor's degree in history (Russian and Oriental) the previous year, so I reported to the Induction Center, in Fairmont, just down the road a piece from Morgantown, on June 17, 1970, and was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for Basic Training. It turned out that the Army was doing some kind of research on the soldiering aptitude of "normal" inductees vs. that of college guy inductees, so I was assigned to a company almost completely filled with college guys. Except for Chief White Cloud.

That wasn't his real name. I don't even know how he got stuck with that moniker, but it rapidly became what nearly everyone called him. I don't know who came up with the name or why,

or even why it stuck—I mean, he wasn't an Indian or anything. He was an odd looking and even odder acting little guy from, I think, some small town in New York. He was, and pretty obviously at that, a bit slow—what would have been called in those days, "retarded." He had what I've since come to realize were all the symptoms, in a mild form, of Down's Syndrome. Unlike the rest of us, White Cloud was not a draftee—he had enlisted. He should never have been allowed to do so; to some unscrupulous recruiter, he had been just one more number. But the recruiter's not the only one at fault—since he was only 17 and hadn't finished high school, his parents must have signed some sort of waiver so he could enlist. The recruiter probably convinced them that the Army would do him a world of good and make a real man out of him or something. It did, actually, make something out of him that he had not been when he came in, but I don't know what to call it.

White Cloud could never get anything right. He was what was technically termed, in official Army jargon, if I remember the term correctly, a "fuck-up." The Army's idea of discipline in Basic Training, at least back when I had some experience with it, was to administer it in such a way that any oppositional group solidarity was utterly destroyed and replaced with another kind of group solidarity—one in which it was to the benefit of all to get things done The Army Way. What this means in practice is that whenever someone does something in an other than The Army Way which is, thus, deemed "wrong" (the jargon for this is "fucking up" or, occasionally and more euphemistically, "screwing up"), it is not just the transgressor (the "fuck-up") who is punished, but everyone—it could be everyone in the transgressor's detail, everyone in the transgressor's squad, everyone in the transgressor's platoon, or everyone in the transgressor's whole damn company.

To be sure, White Cloud was not the only transgressor—but, other than he, few were ever repeat offenders, and none were so consistently, so obviously, and so often caught screwing up. If it wasn't a drill sergeant yelling at him, it was practically everyone else around him. He soon became a pariah. He was not well treated. Far from it. But it was not as bad as it could have been, nor nearly as bad as it would soon become, for Drill Sergeant Neville had yet to make an appearance.

Drill Sergeant Neville was a kind of semi-mythical figure. Other drill sergeants would speak of him in reverent, hushed tones, admonishing us that we had better not be caught doing whatever it was we were doing once Drill Sergeant Neville got back from leave. In my case, it was wearing wire rim glasses like John Lennon or somebody and reading Rolling Stone, or, worse yet, avant garde literature. Neville, we were told, was "strac" a word I never did learn how to spell since I have never (to this day) seen it in print and heard it only in some North Carolina twang of a dialect, evidently universally spoken by drill sergeants and which, just as evidently, meant super strict and totally Army. He was described as like John Wayne, only bigger and more rugged, as V-shaped with shoulders that had to be turned sideways to get through a door. He was invoked in his absence like some military boogie man.

He was, as it turned out, all that and more. If White Cloud had thought his life was a living hell before Drill Sergeant Neville arrived, there are probably no words in the English language that can accurately describe what his life was like once Neville at last appeared on the scene. Somehow, although Basic Training was a little more than half done by the time Neville returned from his

extended leave, White Cloud had managed to survive. There were actually some few in his platoon who helped him along, and even some of the more kindly (to stretch the definition of the term to quite near its breaking point) among the drill sergeant cadre who would cut him (and thus the rest of us, too) a bit of slack. That all came to a sudden and screeching halt with the arrival of Drill Sergeant Neville.

First, let me tell you about Fort Dix in the summer. It was around 95 degrees every day with close to 100% humidity. How about a ten-mile hike, at double-time, to the rifle ranges with 90 pounds of gear strapped to your body in fine, white sand up to your knees with your thick, long-sleeved deep forest green shirt buttoned all the way to the top? I forgot to mention that you're wearing a gas mask. And don't forget that an undershirt is required.

We had all our buttons buttoned because White Cloud had his that way. This grievous error had been spotted instantly by Drill Sergeant Neville, on hand at last for our first trek out to the rifle ranges. Some companies went in trucks. Not us. The obvious solution to this vexing button problem was not to inform White Cloud that it was too warm for that. No, the obvious solution was to make everyone button the top button too. Then we all dropped down for 25 push-ups, then we put on the gas masks, and then we started the Rifle Range Death Run.

Whenever anyone stopped, fell down, or passed out, we all halted, and that guy's whole platoon did 25 more push-ups. It was a sort of break unless some guy in your own platoon fell out—which, more often than not, was the case no matter which platoon was yours. Trucks following along behind took the heat prostration victims back to the hospital. Lest we see this as an easy out, Neville assured us that these wimps would be punished for their shortcomings by pulling extra KP duty—a fate we all saw as even worse than heat stroke. Neville also made sure, again and again, to emphasize that this was all entirely White Cloud's fault. Of course, only stupid people could believe that, but the Army was betting college guys were just as stupid in that respect as anybody else and, of course, won the bet.

When at last, near ten that evening, we returned to our barracks and stowed all our gear and were ready to collapse, Neville visited each platoon's area and regaled us with tales of what he called "blanket parties." A blanket party is what happens to fuck-ups, we were told, "If you get my drift," he added with what was no doubt intended as a good natured wink. The fuck-up is surrounded as he sleeps, is suddenly jerked from his bunk wrapped in his blanket, and is soundly beaten. He cannot see his attackers. This is, evidently, somehow supposed to make the fuck-up more competent. We heard in the morning that White Cloud had been the guest of honor at just such a gala event. And so it went for about a week. White Cloud, ever more morose and even more withdrawn with each passing day, was increasingly covered with bruises. One morning, with the company "in formation," an officer, pointing toward White Cloud, asked Drill Sergeant Neville why "that man" was so banged up. Neville informed him that this trainee fell down a lot, asking White Cloud, "Isn't that right, private?" White Cloud nodded in mute assent.

Finally, the day came for "record fire." This is when a trainee can earn a badge, Marksman,

Sharpshooter, or Expert, depending on his record fire score. I eventually earned an Expert badge and a weekend pass. As a matter of fact, we “soft” and despised college guys won the Battalion Flag in physical fitness, test scores, and marksmanship.

Until record fire, we had never been issued more than three cartridges at a time for our M-16A1's. There were two varieties of the M-16A1, one produced by the GM Hydramatic Division, one produced by Colt. The difference between the two was that the GM version ejected the hot brass out the weapon's right side and to the rear while the Colt version ejected straight out. For this reason, Colts were issued to left-handed shooters. I'm right-handed, but asked for a Colt when weapons were issued, because, since I cannot close my left eye all by itself, I shoot left-handed. When Drill Sergeant Neville noticed that (1) I was indisputably in possession of a Colt rifle and that (2) I was equally indisputably right-handed, he sent me back to the weapons room to have my rifle replaced with a proper right-handed GM M-16A1.

This meant, since I continued to shoot—and very well, I might add—left-handed, that the hot brass was ejected right down my collar. When I started to button my top button at the range for record fire, Neville magically appeared next to me and informed me that since White Cloud had his top button unbuttoned for this occasion, we would all have our top buttons unbuttoned. Contrary to his probable expectations, this actually did nothing to increase any ill-feeling on my part for White Cloud, but it did serve to confirm my already low opinion of Neville.

This time, for record fire, we got full 15-round magazines. There are two parts, the second being night fire, which is done on full automatic, ideally in three-round bursts, using tracers. My new GM was equipped with “select fire,” meaning it had a three position switch: one position for semi-automatic fire, one position for full automatic fire, and, the new one, one position for three-round bursts. The first part of record fire is on a range that's like a giant arcade shooting gallery. Man-sized-and-shaped targets can pop up anywhere on the range at any distance from the shooter, ranging from about 25 feet to 300 yards or more. Firing is done from standing, kneeling, and prone positions. A full clip is expended in each position. Points are scored for each hit; points are deducted for each miss as well as for any target that pops up but is not fired upon. Each soldier has his own range, and they are widely spaced with a line of tall, slender evergreens separating each range from the next. There are no fewer than 50 yards separating one shooter from the next, perhaps a bit more, so the line of ranges to accommodate a whole company of trainees at a time is very long indeed; thus, a company's drill sergeant cadre is spread pretty thinly along the firing line, which, in our company's case, was more than ten thousand yards long.

As luck would have it, Drill Sergeant Neville was prowling up and down the line in my general area, whacking the side of his own right leg resoundingly with a swagger stick—which, even then, was supposed to be illegal—in precise military time to his steps, and, as luck would have it, White Cloud was the next man over to my right. In other words, I was the last man in the line of my platoon; White Cloud was the first in the line of his. I could see Neville off in that direction coming my way when I was issued my clip and the order came over the loudspeaker to lock and load.

The "snick" of all those magazines clicking into place seemed loud in the sun-drenched silence. Sweat trickled from under my helmet down my forehead. My glasses were steamed. Time seemed to stand still. I could hear the whack of Neville's swagger stick approaching as we awaited the signal for record fire to begin. I sensed an out-of place movement from the corner of my right eye and turned. White Cloud was moving to get to his feet. Suddenly, I knew beyond certainty without the thought ever forming consciously that White Cloud was going to kill Neville.

I don't know how I covered the ground so quickly. White Cloud, entirely focused on Neville, wasn't looking my way. I tackled him waist high, knocking him flat on his back. He was sobbing as I wrestled the rifle from him. The safety was off. Neville's face was as white as a piece of paper. He knew. I knew.

MP's came and took White Cloud away. We never heard a word about what happened to him. Neville had despised me as a "pretty little college boy," as a "goddamn peacenik hippie bookworm." I hadn't been nearly the target White Cloud had been, but he'd made no secret of the fact that I wasn't exactly one of his favorites. Now he owed me his life. No words passed between us for the remaining weeks of Basic, but he bothered me—and my two best buddies—Marty, from Albany, and Rick, from Baltimore—no more.

Did I do the right thing? I sure hope so.



Malpeque Harbour, Malpeque, PEI

















## Perfectly Plastic

Stephanie Lynne Schmidt

I'm plastic pacing facing any way  
But out.

These wounds wound too light,  
These deaths not air tight.

I'm craving captain of a failing ship,  
And finding shore is on the  
Bottom of this floor.

I'm perfect plastic smiles,  
Open mouthed, you can see for miles.  
Miles of words that betrayed,  
Belittled, abandoned.

I'm deceit dying off wishing these  
Wounds would dig deeper into me  
Than into her.

I'm flawlessly failing at extracting  
The perfect pains.  
She is not a doll, she is not/

I'm resilient and reason,  
I took this sharpened spear  
And jabbed like it wouldn't  
Smear her blood all of my hands.

And I can't make her stand. Again.

I'm pacing practically running  
Away from all these problems.  
They aren't big enough,  
They don't merit an intervention.

I'm flawlessly failing  
At being perfectly plastic,  
And finding resilience and reason,  
Anywhere but fantastic.

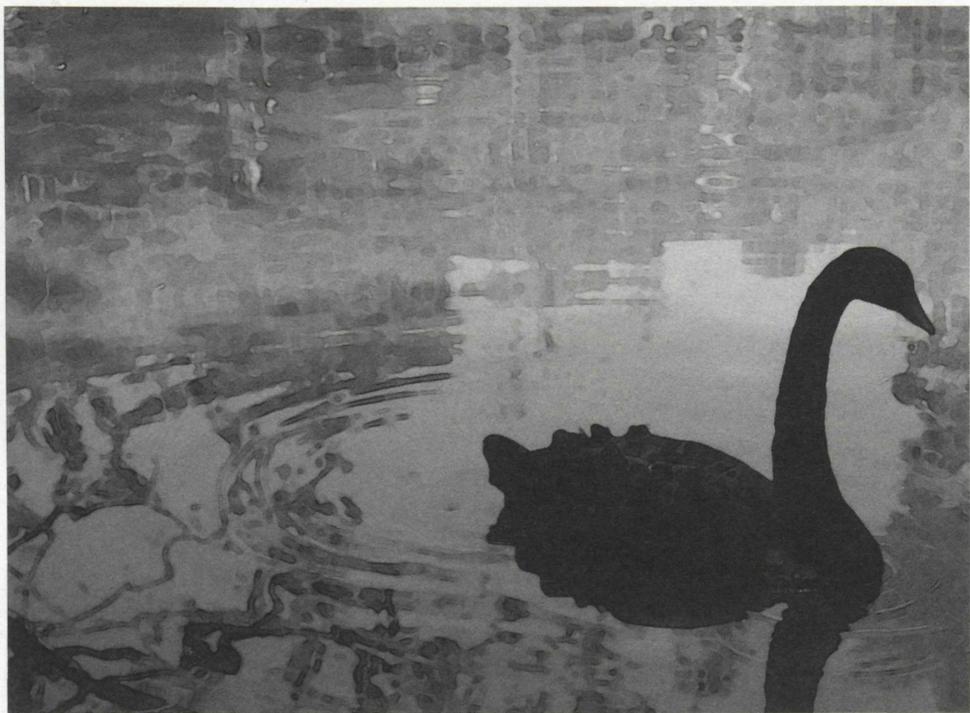
**Bare**

Leslie Ricker

I was not for love,  
but scarred heart  
    was two times attracted -  
one walked,  
one worked,  
both were the boast of beauty

two passions arrived together,  
two great hearts  
    to test my worth;  
must one be subtracted,  
    along with some sunshine,  
from this once warm and fertile earth?

now, there, bare  
    is love-  
inert,  
gone beyond hurt  
    to the death  
    of a caterpillar hopeful of  
    butterfly rebirth



## LaUra'S Poem

Stephanie Lynne Schmidt

She asked me to swim,  
To pretend like there's no water,  
No weight pushing me under.  
And there isn't.  
Rather, she can't see it.

She asked me to swim,  
Like a fish capable of living in this,  
I promised to adapt,  
I promised to try,  
But I can never tell her,  
That I'll lie.

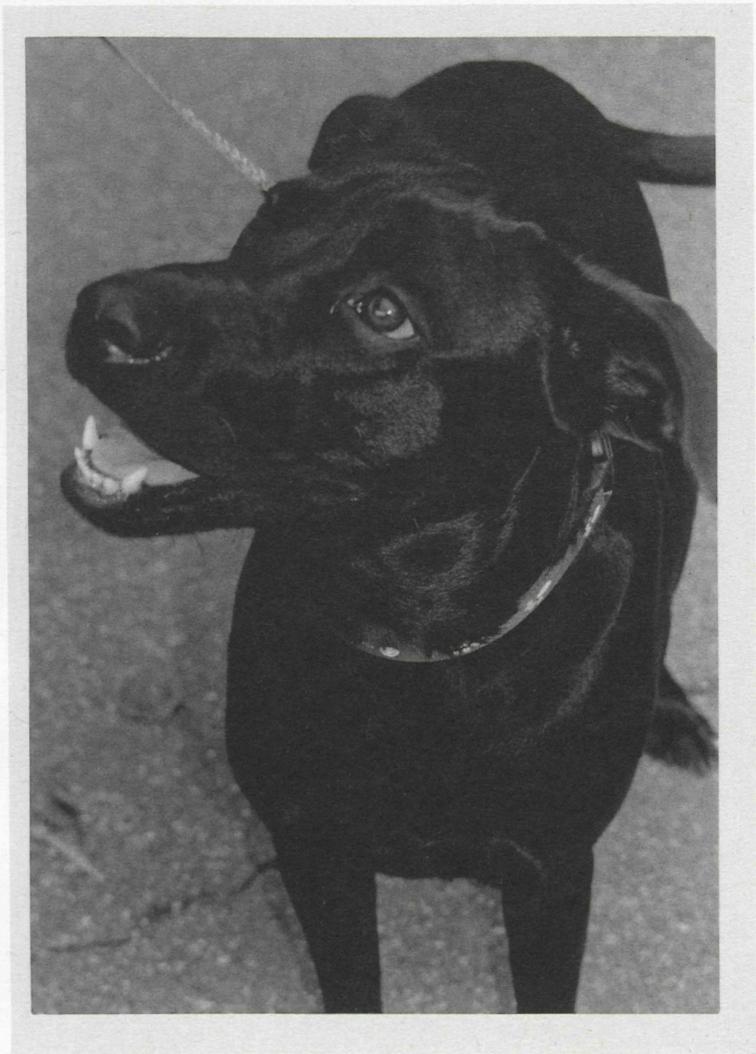
She begged me to swim,  
To keep my head up,  
Keep gasping for air,  
Keep scratching at the surface as though a lifesaver is there.  
But there's not.

She was screaming for me to swim,  
To not let this beat me,  
To hold her hand and make it through,  
But I'm not that strong.  
Sister, I'm not you.

## 17<sup>th</sup> Birthday Poem

Tari Pisano

Today, my friends,  
I have grown a year older.  
I guess you can say I have grown  
a day, minute, or second closer  
to the moment my soul leaves my body.  
But for now I am young  
and have surely counted my blessings.  
It is a mystery to me  
how quickly time happens.  
Once I was holding wild flowers in my hands  
and now I am looking at them  
from my window.  
We are but shadows in this vast existence,  
and grabbed by the collar by God  
to stop and witness every long moment  
as it passes...  
And so, this is what I am doing.  
I stopped, and thought, and captured  
this moment, while I could.  
Ending on this note- I thank God  
for all my wanderings and  
my own vast and brilliant existence.







North Rustico Harbour, North Rustico PEI

## **My Plea**

Hilary Spencer

Festering sores  
Stitched together by lies  
Infected  
Oozing their dark secrets  
The sickening patter of blood  
Dripping on a cold stone floor  
The choking call of death  
So close now  
Futile attempts at freedom

Let me out, I beg  
Let me live  
Let the chains be removed  
From my tortured heart  
Let me love again  
Remove the burden of memory  
That haunts my dreams at night  
Let me be free  
Let me be me.

## Ever Unsatisfied

Tari Pisano

Ever wanting

Ever waiting

Ever thinking

Never getting

What I am praying for.

Ever asking

Ever writing

Down a word or two

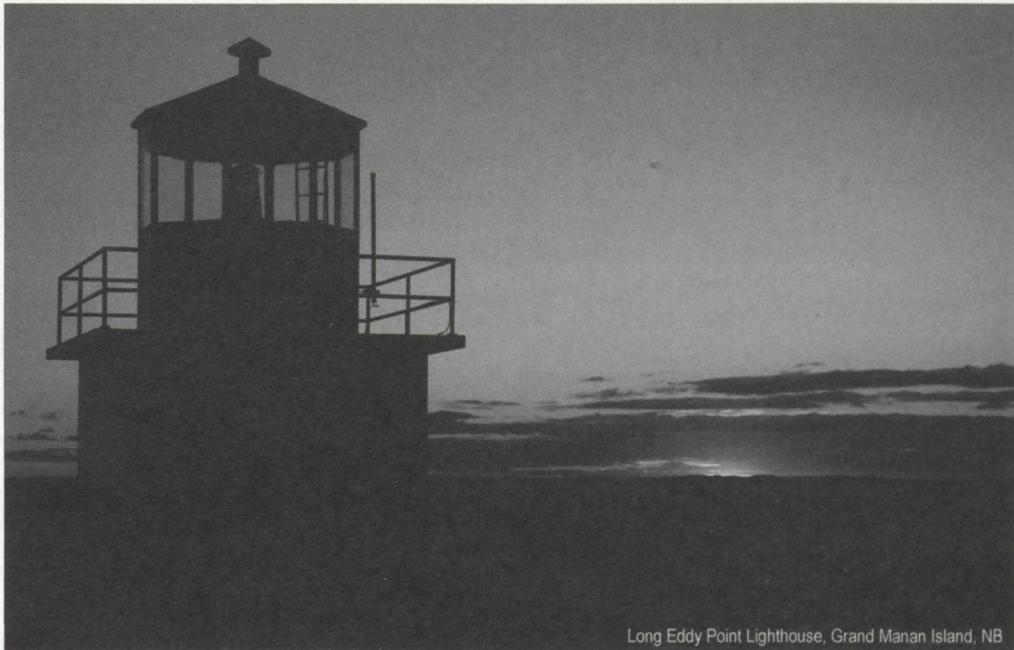
To ease my troubled mind.

Lost in thought

As I am ever unsatisfied.



Eastport Harbour, Eastport, Maine



Long Eddy Point Lighthouse, Grand Manan Island, NB

## **In my life**

Tari Pisano

In my life

I have grown like a plant.

My roots were deep

Below the surface.

My soul was already present before my birth.

I came into the world like the tiniest of sparks

Yet bright enough to start a fire.

Reaching out to the golden rays of my makers,

My mother, the earth, and God.

Now I am expanding, with my arms

Branching out to Life, for better or for worse.

And my mouth and mind create delightful things

That find their way to every crevice of every

Organism, in the deepest of seas

And highest of mountains.

I know that I am one with the wind that brushes over your face

And shakes my branches.





## December 29

MaryAnn Caret

Fragile flower  
So weak and frail  
Where did you go?

Matriarch, Mother, caretaker of everyone-  
Now, it is your turn to be taken care of.  
I hold you, feeling your bones through your aged skin.  
Where did you go?

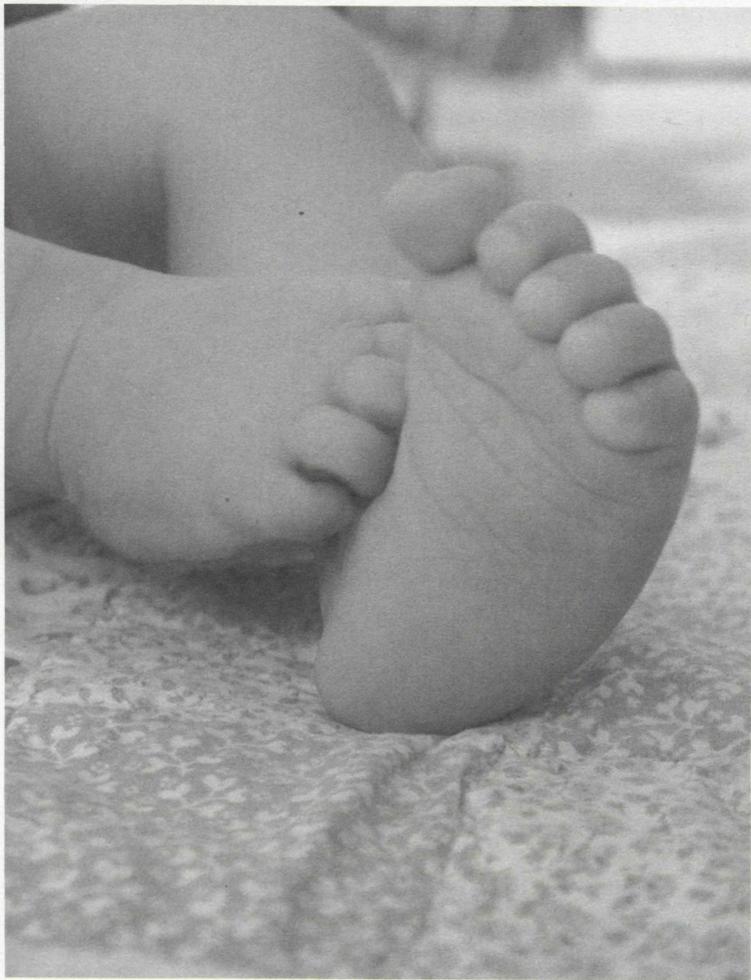
Finally, my prayers are heard:  
No more suffering for her, please, no more!  
Tell her it's OK for her to go - no! But...  
It's OK for you to go...  
And your breath is gone.

The loving heart has stopped beating.  
I take your hand, as soft as silk,  
And whisper "good-bye"  
Not wanting you to go.

## Song From a Wooden Recorder

Hilary Spencer

Simple things trigger memories;  
A song from a wooden recorder  
Played by a visitor  
Brings back a memory,  
A song, from a summer's day past.  
A tear brushed away  
As sweet memories rush by.  
Every now and then  
A smell in the air, like now.  
A smell from so long ago...  
No name left to give it,  
A shadow of a memory  
Hidden, overcrowded  
By wave upon everlasting wave  
Of new knowledge, crashing  
Haphazardly against the imaginary walls.  
Foam, like bits of memories, flying through the air  
Landing, joining, to drown again  
Until something, a smell, a touch, a sound  
Rescues it from its watery grave,  
Pulling it up from the dark depths  
Of useless facts, of names and faces,  
Leftovers from discarded poems and thoughts.  
A sadness, a deep, sudden sadness  
As the memories intertwine  
One bleeding into another  
Creating a bigger picture, a window,  
The view of a childhood long gone  
One thing leads to another  
Like a song from a wooden recorder.



## **When the Night Arises**

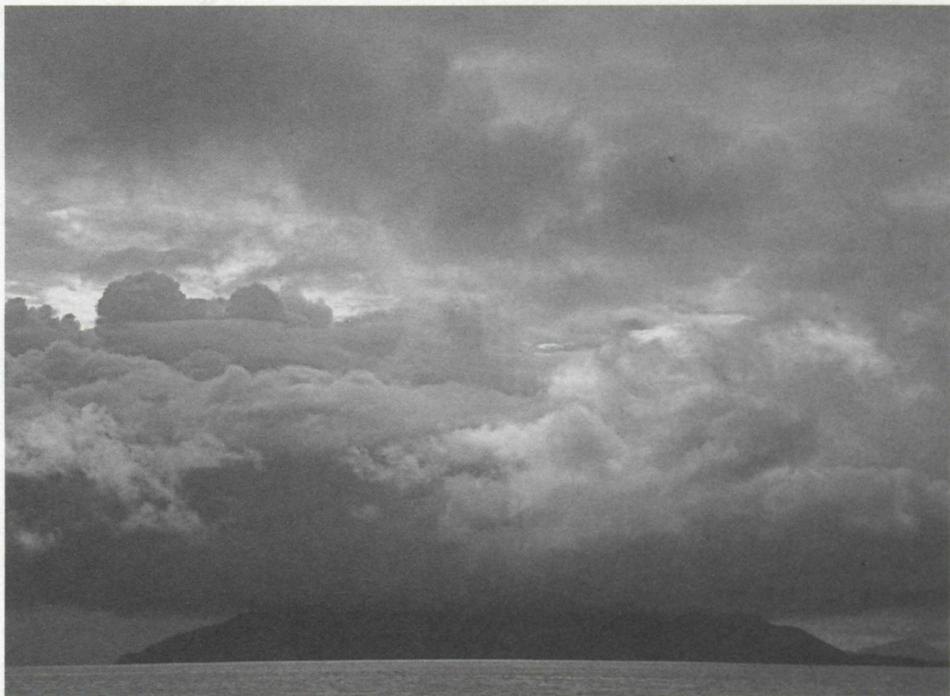
Hilary Spencer

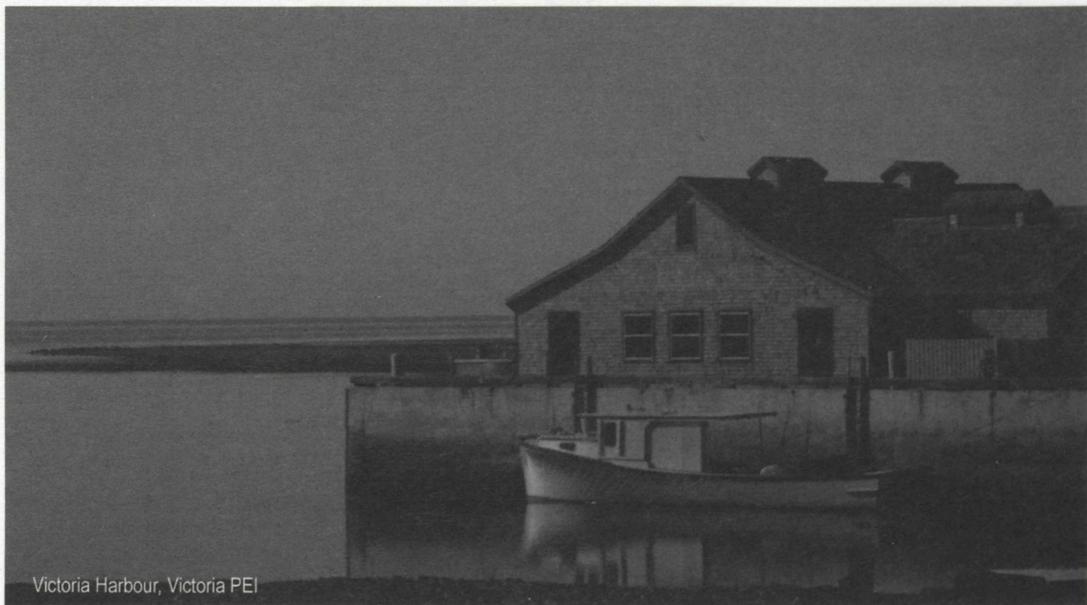
The sweet sound of nothing  
Ringing in my ears  
Not a distracting sound anywhere  
For anyone to hear

The comforting darkness  
Closing in around me  
The thick fog arriving  
To protect and surround me

A comforting twinkle  
From the stars in the sky  
Their knowledge of the universe  
Watching me from up high

The night holds so many mysteries  
And so many surprises  
I always feel so happy  
When the night arises





Victoria Harbour, Victoria PEI

## Nothing Sudden

Leslie Ricker

"I wish I had something  
to say about brilliance  
or depth of commitment,  
something fundamental or profound."

nothing sudden  
just desires and doubts abating,  
gently dissipating,  
like sweet raindrops  
into the ground

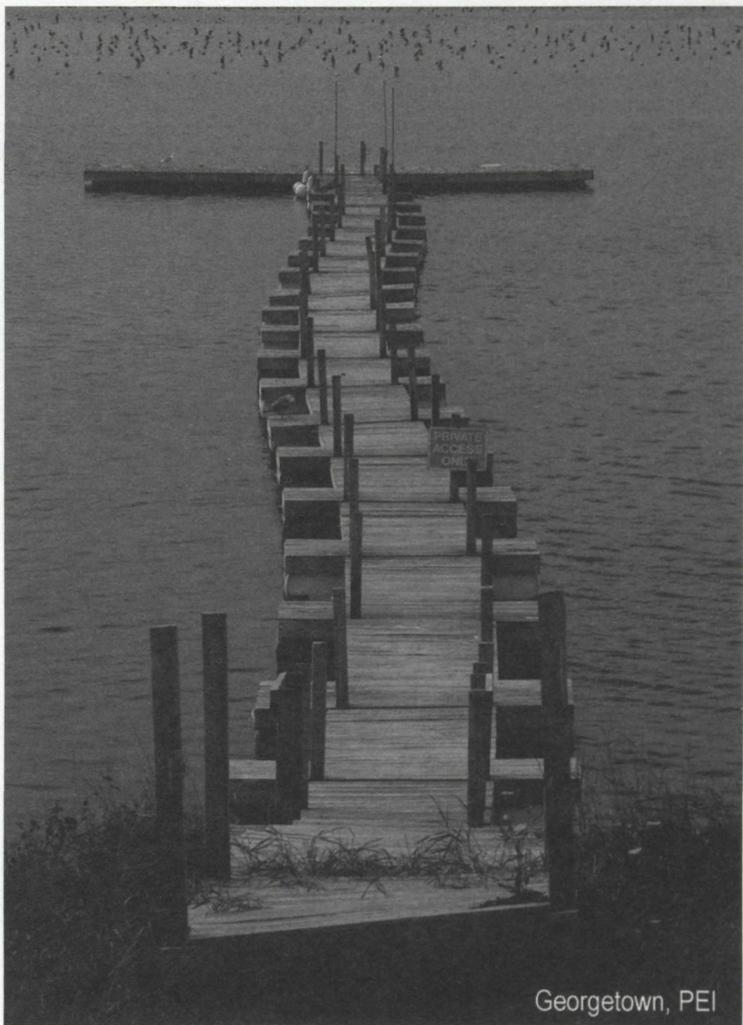
"I wish I could see  
through my own reflection  
into the very heart of glass  
where heat turns to sand to liquid  
that through my veins might pass"

nothing sudden  
just a quiet flood  
of crystal through the blood  
to illuminate "me"  
that I might know myself  
at last

## Loneliness

Caryn Howard

The sense of loneliness  
Has taken hold  
I cannot make it disappear;  
Surrounded by people,  
I still feel alone,  
Like no one really understands  
All of me.  
Loving, welcoming friends  
Cannot bring back  
My sense of belonging.  
Do I truly belong any one place?  
Or do parts of me  
Fit in different places?  
When I'm here,  
I feel something missing;  
When I'm there,  
I feel the same.  
Will I ever find the balance,  
The place, with that one person,  
Where all of me belongs?  
And if I do,  
Will I finally feel whole?  
Will I finally lose this lonely feeling  
That follows like a shadow,  
Never quite fully gone?



Georgetown, PEI

## A Drink by Moonlight

Katie Edwards

I listened to song after song. Each one made me cry. It would only take one word to send me back to another time; to run an old, regrettable conversation through my head; to imagine my actions and words in a different way, the way it should have been.

The most frequent conversation was the last I would ever have with my best friend.

"You know the stuff you do, it isn't right. You don't need to drink, you don't need those drugs, you don't need to take these risks. You don't need to prove yourself to anyone. I love you. Everyone back here still loves you. It doesn't matter how far away you are, we all still love you."

"You don't understand. I have a new life, new friends and a new family. I'm not the same person I was back then. No offense, I don't want to sound like a bitch, but that's who I am. You don't know me anymore."

"Maybe you're right. I don't know who you are anymore. I don't even care anymore. It's your life, do whatever you want. I'm not your mother so I don't care. Drink, get completely wasted. It doesn't make any difference to me as long as you're happy."

"Bye."

It wasn't really an argument, just a disagreement; a minor clashing of opinions. I didn't mean some of the things I said, but I'd wait to apologize. I didn't want to seem too weak or I wouldn't get my point across. There would be time.

So the months went by and I thought about her everyday. I thought about the things I said, the things I shouldn't have said, all the things I wanted to take back, the apologies I wanted to say. It would have only taken a few minutes, you know. I would have felt so much better, but I had too much pride for that so I let the months slip by until finally I received a call.

"Hey Sadie. This is Leslie. Do you remember Amber McDougal?"

"Yeah, of course I do. She was one of my best friends."

My voice shook. I already knew what was coming. People don't just call you up and ask you about past friends at random. Things just don't work like that.

"There was a car accident. She's dead. She's gone."

So I called that number. The number I'd thought about calling for so long. I called over and over and over again just praying she'd answer if I kept calling. I called and left voicemail after voicemail quelling the voice inside my head telling me it was pointless, telling me she was gone and she was never going to answer.

After my ear had started hurting from pressing the phone against it, I began to reach out to her friends, asking for more information, still praying it was just a mistake.

I expected my efforts to be in vain. I'd only met a small group of her friends, perhaps once or twice. I didn't expect them to remember me or even respond. In a jealous rage that Amber's father had taken her away and that she wasn't begging to come home, but instead making new friends that led her to drugs and alcohol, I'd made it very clear I had no intention of making friends with her

friends. I suppose that was unfair since I'd judged them and never gave them a chance. I was jealous. I was blind. I was stupid.

One responded only to clarify that she really was dead. It was very curt, but I didn't blame him. I'd never shown him kindness, why expect it when he's mourning the loss of someone he loved and I, removed from the situation, cut in to ask if it's true? The next to respond was more kind. He told me everything: how the driver was drunk and high; how they piled into the car with him in much the same condition; how he hit a mailbox; how they pleaded for him to pull over; how they tried to escape; how he took off while she was halfway out the door; how the car spun out of control; how she hit the light pole and was crushed between it and the car; how they called the police; how they watched them lay the white sheet over her body. He apologized to me. He said he'd keep me updated about the funeral arrangements.

More of her friends responded. I received message after message telling me how much she loved me; how much she talked about me; how much she had missed me; how much she had wanted to go "home". But the last thing I said was I didn't care and no amount of messages would ever remove that guilt.

The day of the viewing was the hardest. Going to school with the evening's events looming over your head, the hour and a half drive in silence, always thinking about the way things were and the way things could have been. Just seeing the pictures brought tears to my eyes. I left messages to her on posters and tiny pieces of paper, left a message in a book, and all the while I knew that they were messages long overdue and messages she would never receive.

On one poster I read a message from her ex-fiancé. I'd met him one summer, actually knew him pretty well. He visited me a few times even after they'd broken up, but I showed him contempt because I blamed him for the new Amber. His message said "I still love you." I broke down and started sobbing.

My friends ushered me to a seat as the service began. I can barely remember everything that was said; I was crying too hard to listen. I wanted to talk to her father, but I didn't know what to say. I wanted to see her one last time, to say good-bye, but I couldn't look, I didn't want to admit, to accept, that my best friend was long gone.

In fifth grade I had no friends. As a rule no one spoke to me. But Amber always broke the rules. She was the first person who ever walked up to me and spoke to me by choice. It was the first time I'd been invited to join another group. She was the first real friend I ever had. So where was I when she needed me?

I went up to the people who wrote to me and introduced myself. The kid who sent me the first message to tell me Amber was dead apologized for his rudeness. Each one hugged me and told me how much of an honor it was to meet me. I was still hurt. I knew I'd made a very grave mistake and I would live with my guilt for the rest of my life.

I gathered my courage and approached Geoff, Amber's ex-fiancé. He recognized me right away and hugged me and everything I had wanted to tell him disintegrated into tears. My friends were waiting for me so we could make our way home, but if there was one person I needed to talk to, it was Geoff.

As my friends dragged me away he told me to meet him at a parking lot about an hour from my

home that Friday. He didn't give me any other details, but I knew what I was getting myself into.

I listened to song after song, doubting my decision to come. I trusted Geoff; he'd never given me a reason not to. He had no intention of hurting me; he was only trying to help.

The bonfire lit up the entire parking lot. I recognized a lot of the people from the viewing; some I'd never seen before. I made my way closer to the group and a few guys, including Geoff, broke away to greet me. I could smell the liquor on them when they were still a few feet away. They hugged me and brought me closer to the fire.

Everyone was either laughing or crying. It was a celebration and a memorial. They drank in her memory, to her life, and they kept their parties going as if she'd never left, just the way she would have if anyone else had died.

"Did you ever drink before? I'm pretty sure Amber said you haven't but everyone up here drinks so that seems kind of weird to me."

I shook my head. Everyone back home drank too except for a few other people. I didn't even have a clue as to how alcohol tasted. I was going to try, to give them all the benefit of the doubt and, after the way I treated them, it was the least I could do.

"It's great. It takes a little getting use to, but after a few drinks it's amazing. It's like medicine. It makes all the pain go away. I can't even tell you how you've made it this far without it."

He opened a beer bottle and handed it to me. We all stood in a circle. They chatted casually, anxiously waiting for me to take my first sip. I leaned back against the fence. I wasn't sure if I wanted to. At this point numbness sounded great. Hell, I was halfway there. I'd just driven an hour to be there and I'd told my parents I was staying at a friend's house. There was no going home without giving a lengthy explanation as to why I smelled of liquor and fire.

I didn't want to. There was no medicine for loss. Numbness sounded great, but what would happen when it went away? Amber would still be dead. I would still feel regret and guilt. Would I have to spend the rest of my life drinking just so I would never have to feel the pain?

Was I going to run away like that? I already had. Instead of standing my ground and telling Amber how I really felt, I'd let my cowardice get the best of me and I told her that what she did didn't matter to me. I took the easy way out to avoid fighting with her and this is how it ended.

Prior to the viewing, one of my friends told me it was my fault. "You were the only one left. You were the only one she still talked to. You were the only one she actually listened to. You could have kept her from this, but you didn't love her enough to tell her the truth. This is your fault." To some extent she was right.

I didn't want the numbness. I wanted to feel. I wanted to cry; I wanted to scream; I wanted to be honest. I could drink, but in the morning Amber would still be dead. What was it worth, those hours of numbness? Alcohol was the reason I was there in the first place.

I swung the bottle into the fence post. The glass shattered and droplets of beer rained to the ground. I was left with the neck of the bottle, jagged edges as sharp as a knife, perhaps sharper.

I was mildly aware that everyone was watching me. I brought the edges of the bottle across my left shoulder with a scream. Geoff grabbed my wrist to prevent me from harming myself further, but I struggled. My arm jerked towards my face, slicing my cheek, just missing my eye. The bottle fell to the ground with the blood from my arm and face.

Geoff released me and I turned to leave. I could hear the other guys holding him back and telling him to let me go. I knew he didn't mean any harm, it just wasn't for me. I had cut myself deep enough to leave a lifetime mark, stained my clothing with blood diluted only with tears, all a reminder of what alcohol had done.

I turned back and waved goodbye. Everyone was still staring at me. I got into my car and drove off. I didn't need to prove myself to anyone. I only needed what I believed in. They understood, they would forgive me, but I would never forgive myself and I would never forgive alcohol.



## I Will Do Without

Travis Redman

I will just do without  
 Although desire will attempt to move my hand.  
 As my body travels on a ferry across Casco Bay.  
 Solitude becomes my companion.  
 I trust redemption is working my inner toils  
 While one mistake leads to another:

One pulled over for speeding  
 Another operating after suspension  
 From failure to pay a fine,

which I reckon I had paid,  
 but never got notice in the mail.

Carry me wind

over roads and formidable troubles

which have injured my youth and perceptions,

But finally have constructed the man I am now,

Who finds pleasure in eating vegetables more than meat

and is spontaneous with random bouts of joy.

My fat runs into yours reading these words

And I endure with broad strength instead of by escaping,

The overpass holds more mountains:

will autumn bring a plateau?

Or will I just pay more time riding my bike around the base

Until winter's solemn snow forces me to abandon it.

This summer has been quiet, but at least I can move,

Riding beside a mute companion: a mere mirror of what life could have been.

**FIERCE**

Geneva N. Guinee

That which is extremely intense, wild savage  
But if indeed without, we would perish.

It is a brand new day in the eyes of the world,  
To some it's apocalyptic, but to others, but to I, I which  
Is that referring to me and myself. Who  
Has in turn been told what to do, while courageously  
Thinking that what could be done was willing,  
What could have been done was objectionable.  
But today it is I that will achieve and climb the ladder.

The life in which was lead, in which is lead  
Is now set in new standards, shaped by knowledge,  
Hope, and no more fear... well no more than what  
Was had, but then forgotten.

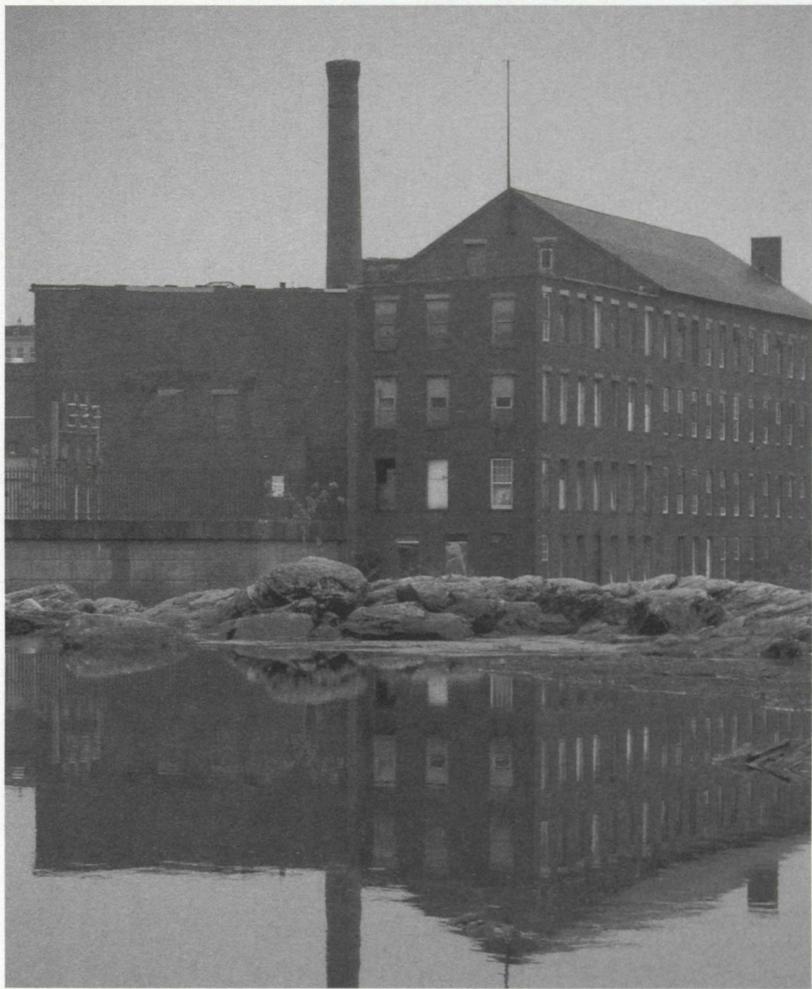
Living the life I have, for which I am thankful for, I  
Have to work for. Since not one thing comes easy, but  
Asking the questions  
If fighting is right what is needed and for what is  
wanted?, would it be worth it? Will it be worth it?  
The answer, cannot be foretold, it can only be assumed  
And the assumption is that change will come for those who  
Work for it. It will be worth it.

So today, FIERCE, how ever "savage" it may be  
Is shown. Especially in this I, of which is spoken of.  
The light from within is starting to shine, the feeling of my self  
Is starting to some around once more, and as it does it encourages others to  
Fight, to be them, to be FIERCE.

The old is dead and gone.  
So today instead of I, I worry about the we, about the us,  
Where do we start?  
Where do you start?



St. Andrews Point Lighthouse, St. Andrews, PEI



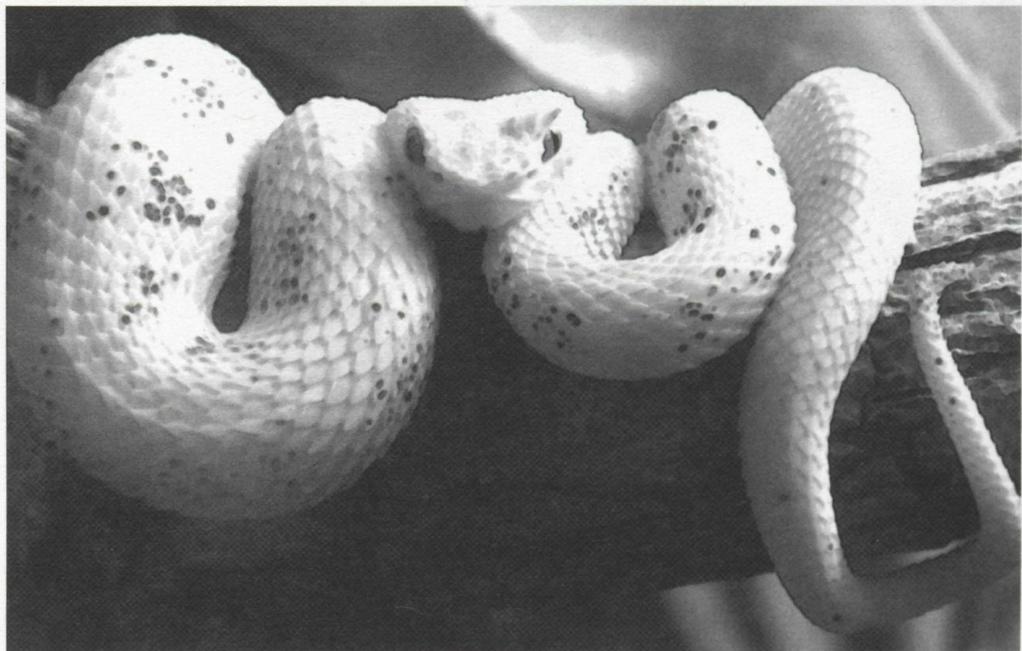




## Nighttime Wandering

Hilary Spencer

Beyond the borders of man-made walks  
The crickets whisper, the ocean talks  
Liquid luminous from the lights above  
And I instantly fall in love



# THANKS TO OUR PATRONS

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