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Spring 1998

# The Canon, Spring 1998

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# CANON

spring

1998



**investigate**

## Editorial Policy Statement

The *Canon* accepts works from Dordt College students, faculty, and staff.

Every published piece should reflect the author's fleshing out of his or her Christian worldview.

This does not mean, however, that the pieces should be only about God or should reflect a narrow definition of Christianity, for "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Ps. 24:1).

In adhering to the broad guideline above and in sensitivity to those who may be adversely affected by excessive violence, vulgar language, or sexually explicit content, the *Canon* will publish no piece containing such material, nor will it publish material that advocates illegal activities or promotes bigotry toward any race, sex, ethnic group, age group, or religion.

The *Canon* will also refuse any factual material that slanders a member of the Dordt College community or is libelous.

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### Editor's Note

The *Canon's* design this year centers around the simple word *investigate*.

The cover features a piece by Marja Beukema entitled, *Investigation*, a piece the staff hopes will encourage the Dordt community to investigate, to check out what Dordt students have written and to experience vicariously the worlds they have known—the words they have lived in, been helped by, have loved in, been hurt by, have dreamed about, been made a puppet by, have shunned, or have helped to shape.

The staff hopes that others ask, as a result of these works, the same questions we ask—but not, by any means, that they get the same answers. The doors in *Investigation* beg us to ask what roads the contributors to this year's *Canon* have taken and, in turn, what journeys have been our own. Seeing where others have been gives us an impetus to live now, where the where-we-have-been meshes with the where-we-are-going, and where we can constantly seek out both the best destination and the best path to get there. We can only find such paths, though, when we open the doors to which God guides us—in short, when we *investigate*.

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# CANON

spring

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## investigate



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## The Music Washes Over Me

*Sarah Bliss*

Warm summer nights  
float into view and  
desire runs deep,  
throbs with the tempo.  
Wanting to touch  
the brief moment in time  
when we were together,  
my breath stops.  
I reach out and  
take your hand.  
But as the music fades,  
so does your picture.  
Replaced with the last notes  
of the song.





Psalm 42:8

Lee-Ann Grootenboer

## Sunrise

*Sarah Bliss*

Sighing, the purple-pajamaed crocuses  
wash their sleepy faces  
on the dew-dropped grass,  
stretch up,  
yawn wide,  
and dress the field  
in his Sunday suit.



Double Image

Helena Geels



# Photographic Memories

*Sarah Bliss*

There are some things you cannot capture on film.

For instance: the way light streams down  
from the stained glass windows  
in Sacre-Coeur, placing crowns  
on the people praying below,

Or standing with your one true love on a hill  
in Scotland and looking up  
to see the comet on its journey.

For instance: the sound of church bells tolling  
while you're eating strawberries by a river in Paris,

Or listening to Evensong sung  
by choir boys in Westminster Abbey,  
and as their words float up to God,  
knowing you're not alone.

Some things you cannot capture on film.



# Flutterby

*Stephanie Brown*

You perch on edge  
with arms upright,  
slender body holding breath,  
                                holding still,  
looking the other way  
and thinking I can't see  
you trying to blend your  
blaze with tones of earth.  
From here I could blow you over  
but if we raced you'd win  
and now you jump with  
beauty alarming, dispatching  
your current throughout  
the oak—electrified in  
a fluttering siren of color you're  
off on  
a kamikaze flight  
collapsing downward  
abrupt  
as if a rock were  
tied to your ankle  
then springing upward  
rebounding off  
thick air—heavy  
under slight wings  
and ticklish feet  
stroked by blossoms' breath  
You sound like the blink of an eye





his hands

Christine Phillips

# Solitary Flight

Stephanie Brown

Summers can be hard on an out-of-state college student. Just when you've gotten used to a place and its people, you're torn away, like a snail off a rock, and thrown back home, for three months. You're penned in with your family, in their house, and your old bedroom which has been remodeled into a sewing room. You're out of your element once again.

This last summer I worked afternoons and evenings at a coffee house, leaving my mornings mostly free—and mostly alone. And I noticed that people form interesting habits to gloss over their loneliness. Some isolate themselves, finding a nice spot on the couch, waiting for the feeling to pass—as if it were gastrointestinal. Others submerge themselves in pools of people or dilute their pain with drink. I watched birds.

My father had just built a picnic table out behind the house—right on the edge of a coniferous forest, accented by oaks, maples, and spindly serviceberries. I met myself there in the mornings, thinking I had found a quiet place to reflect and write. I drank steaming hot coffee and ate pastries left over from work the night before. There was no family, no phone, no one to interrupt my silence . . . except the birds.

The birds did not respect my privacy. The brave ones darted across the clearing, perhaps on dares, like ball players stealing bases directly overhead. They yelled back and forth, sending signals in a squabbling banter. It was no use ignoring them. I put down my journal, went to Barnes and Noble, and bought an illustrated bird book for \$6.95.

The first bird I became acquainted with was a stellar's jay (often mistaken for a blue jay). He's a quick bird, the size of a pigeon, mostly blue with a

prominent black crest on his head. He looks sort of like an overweight kid dressed as an indian.

When I first spotted a jay, I thought I had a rare find. I stalked him throughout the forest. An hour later, I realized he had friends in every tree. From then on I just sat on my bench and let the jays come to me.

Jays were noisy, abrupt, indelicate birds. They sped through those trees—like impatient drivers cutting freeway traffic, dashing all over the road. They were birds with an agenda. Every now and then I'd hear a big crash through the woods and jerk my head up, expecting to encounter a large dog or maybe a deer. It was always a stellar's jay, hurdling himself into the brush from above—like a kid jumping from a high-dive, totally uninhibited, flailing his arms wildly and landing with a smack.

During the hours I spent at the picnic table I was constantly bombarded with sound—mostly that of the woodpecker, thumping away his telegraphs on some tattered trunk. I would traipse around the woods for a good 20 minutes, neck craned, trying to pinpoint the sound. It was like tracking the buzz in my ear.

Only once did I manage to spot one. It was a fuzzy, six-inch Downy she-pecker, backing down a tree 10 feet away, like a repairman on a telephone pole. She was black and white—not a thing like the brilliant red I had expected. If I hadn't caught her mashing her beak into wood, I wouldn't have recognized her.

I soon found that—try as I may—there was nowhere I could go to escape from birds. They pursued me. One day a woman strode into the coffee house with an enormous parrot clipped to her shoul-



der. He had bold colors and an intrusive presence that dared to be reckoned with. The woman offered no commentary—no explanation for her exotic date. She ordered a vanilla latté; the bird had nothing. On my lunch break I was joined by hoppy house wrens—the suburban bandits stealing crumbs right from my plate.

Birds had my number; they knew where I lived.

Among the less exotic birds was my mother's pet chicken—Barbie, short for Barbecue. She walked with stealth, something like a three-toed white dinosaur stalking prey, head lurched and mouth gaping. Every chance she got she'd dart indoors and lay an egg in the corner behind the entertainment center, as if it were the most natural thing to do. And I had to chase her out.

But it is much more fun to chase a chicken than a dog or a cat. Barbie would run on her twiggy legs, chest heaving, eyes glazed, stumbling from side to side—off-balance and directionless, like a run-away potato cart heading downhill.

The chicken liked to sleep in our cherry tree. But she must have fallen from her lofty bough during the night, because we found her on the ground one morning—lifeless, right under that tree.

Another time I was reading out back when I heard a loud thump behind me. I turned to see a darling little silver bird who had barreled into an upper window—scrubbed too clean no doubt—and fallen to his fate below. I matched his countenance with one in my book and learned that he was a mountain chickadee who preferred sunflower seeds.

**I soon found  
that—try as  
I may—there  
was nowhere  
I could go to  
escape from  
birds. They  
pursued me.**

I cradled him gently as he took quick breaths. His tail was crooked. I found him a box and brooded over him as he furiously flapped away the last hour of his life. I tried to hand-feed him a sunflower seed, but he

refused it. Finally, he rolled onto his back, sighed out a breath (decreasing nearly half in size), closed his eyes, and died with his little feet plucking the air. It was traumatic. I buried him in a chamomile-peach tea box under Barbie's cherry tree.

Sometimes, in the evenings, I used to steal away to a big grassy park shadowed by tall cottonwoods along the river. One day I was minding my own plot of grass when out of the clear blue sky a flock of large Canadian Geese charged the land. I counted 36 birds in all.

They squawked loudly and chased entire families from the park in one deliberate feathery raid. Men ducked; boys kicked; women screamed—clutched their babies, and headed for safety. No one got hurt. I laughed heartily and rolled in the grass. It was like an alien invasion. The scene looked totally absurd from where I sat, at a safe distance, by myself.

After that I began carrying my binoculars in my car, and several times on my commute I spied golden eagles overhead. Once I pulled over to watch.

He was soaring in circles, carving his own place in the sky—with ownership. It was as if an old-growth forest was spread beneath him instead of highway 205 and the Smurfit paper mill. He looked strangely out of place, and yet he didn't seem to mind—he was connected to himself. He had peace of mind. I marveled as he climbed the ripples of sky and soared—alone, but not lonely.

# understanding

*Stephanie Brown*

When he was a kid  
his old man read to him from  
books with pictures.  
And he preferred the pictures  
to the words because  
of the freedom of interpretation.  
Words had a way of taking  
meaning and pinning it down.  
And so when he was of age,  
he moved in with a Monet,  
and they understood each other  
perfectly.  
And when he got lonely,  
he found himself a wife,  
and she was picture perfect,  
and they had an understanding.



## hit list

*Stephanie Brown*

It was the first of the year,  
and she was resolved to  
quit whatever it was that  
wrenched her soul.

So she reached for a gun and  
a pen, and with the latter  
she made an enumerated list  
of all the things which  
might be held responsible.  
She put god at the top  
& then others  
& next things  
& finally herself.

It was a process of elimination.  
So she went down the list and  
could find none at fault until  
she reached the bottom,  
and then she could feel the  
rocks being thrown from the  
one who condemned her,  
as they sunk inside her body  
to the core of her worth.

It was a process of elimination.

# Falling Stars

*Aren Roukema II*

The old man dreamed of T-shirts  
Flirting in his closet.  
The words she wrote across the chests  
Whispered that he'd lost it.

He knocked on many doors to find  
A man named Galileo.  
He begged for him to find a star  
To fly him from his sorrow.

Now in his dream the old man saw  
The star he'd requisitioned.  
She hung there like a fading song;  
Beautiful but fleeting.  
He reached a hand to pluck the star  
And take her from the sky,  
But in his love he reached too far;  
Her scalding insides burned him.

He dreamt he saw a shooting star;  
He knew that it was her.  
He laid him back and watched her fall  
To sweet revenge's fire.

He dreamt that he fell through the sky,  
And though he'd always fell,  
It was now he felt the wind go by,  
And now he hit the ground.





Self Portrait

Joanne Kim





Grief

Lee-Ann Grootenboer

## A Thought About Jeff

dedicated to Jeff Gesch

*Allison Kersbergen*

Time is like an hourglass feeding off an endless beach  
I feel it slip between my fingers  
I hold the grains tightly never wanting to let go  
Looking I search intensely for a jar to hold this piece of time  
It begins to cut me because my grasp is too tight  
I begin to bleed and cry out  
I drop the precious sand  
Motionlessly I watch the water wash it away  
I shall never forget  
As the sand comes and goes with the water  
I hold onto the fragile pieces in my mind  
Always

# The Wall

*Allison Kersbergen*

Huddled close to the cold brick wall  
His eyes fell heavy  
Slumping down against the sterile wall  
Night sky's moonbeams fix upon him  
Ears are keen to any sound but there is only silence  
He leans awkwardly trying to remember the music  
It soothed him once ...  
Notes and melodies are gone from his mind  
They fell silent the day she left him  
Hearing it clearer now  
He realizes it could never leave  
The music is a part of him  
He peers around the corner  
Sitting there frozen under the same moon  
She waits there  
They now suffer on different sides of the wall.



# not completely impartial

*Laryn Bakker*

the wind is pleading,  
waving branches  
in an attempt  
to communicate.

the man is ignoring it,  
fondling his chainsaw and  
trying to clear his mind  
of leaves on trees and other propaganda.

# The Argument

*Laryn Bakker*

Yesterday, when you stormed out the door you  
knocked the mirror.  
It rocked on its nail like a pendulum and  
although it swayed  
my reflection in it was unmoving.

# Seven Wonders

*Daphne Lamb*

Once upon a time, there were five Rachels that worked at Food World. One was married to the manager, one worked in the deli, one was a high school cheerleader, and one was a high school dropout.

And then there was Rachel.

She had a mole that peeked out from behind her left ear and hair the color of the grocery sacks she packed tight with cans and packages everyday. If asked, none of her co-workers could remember how long she had worked there, but she'd tell you three years. Actually it was four, but no one asked anyway so it didn't matter.

Rachel had a one room apartment down on Firefly Street. The apartment was thick and humid with the smell of incense and overcooked spaghetti. Nevertheless, it was her sanctuary.

The only other person who had been inside was her landlady, who was an overbearing Hispanic woman that always wore blue slippers. The landlady had nothing against Rachel. The first week of every month there would be a long envelope with careful print that said, "Rent for Apartment 228" that was slipped inside the office door.

Her mother, who lived 900 miles away, called every Wednesday night. The conversations were generally short and mostly consisted of "hello's," "how are you's," and the suggestion of coming back home. There were two reasons Rachel had no desire to leave her world, neither of which were shared over the phone. The first was the window facing east in her room. It overlooked a stop light, the bus stop, and another apartment building across the street. Sometimes there'd be a gang fight, maybe a window broken. It seemed as though there was always something happening over there. Rachel had considered moving over there—just to have something more to tell her mother about.

**Next morning,  
bright and early,  
Rachel went to  
work, and that  
night came home  
with five dozen  
rejected and burnt  
sugar cookies.**

The second reason was Simon. Simon lived three doors away and had said hi to Rachel once. It had gotten to the point now when she knew his heavy footfall and the jangling of his keys when he came back from work. He didn't have a car, but he always rode on the 8:15 bus. He had a ruddy complexion, a deep laugh, and eyes—hazel or green she could never remember, but they had long dark lashes that framed them perfectly. Simon wore a dark blue coat in the winter and had a green windbreaker for when it rained. Sometimes Simon brought women over to his apartment. Sometimes they came on their own.

It was the day that a woman with long red hair and a short black dress came and knocked on Rachel's door, mistaking her door for Simon's, that

Rachel knew that a change had to come.

If a woman could simply walk up to a man's door and knock, what was keeping her from doing the same? After telling the woman that Simon was not at home, Rachel shut the door and began to think. How did people, particularly strangers, walk up and strike up conversation with someone? Sometimes they brought things, like cookies, jello molds, maybe even a baked fish. Then again, maybe not fish. Her mother always made jello molds, but the thought of the jiggly

concoction made her stomach turn. Cookies could be managed, but Rachel had never baked anything in her life, but then again, she did work at a grocery store.

Next morning, bright and early, Rachel went to work, and that night came home with five dozen rejected and burnt sugar cookies. She was told she could have them for free, but couldn't understand the bakery supervisor's quizzical look when she took the entire batch. She carried them proudly home in a large white box tied with a string. The string was her idea. She left work smiling.



The anticipation was bubbling on her way home, but the questions were running through her head. Maybe the best way to do it was just to immediately stop at his door without going to her room first. No, she should change, maybe shower. Somewhere there was some mascara that had been her mother's. She'd look for that. There was the question of what she would wear. She hadn't bought new clothes in a while. There had been no need to up till now. No, she would go as she was. No need to make any more of the situation than there was.

At exactly 7:02 p.m. Rachel knocked on Apartment 232, her toes tightly clenched within her water-stained tennis shoes. There was no answer. She pressed her ear to the door, waiting for any kind of movement—thumps, coughing, shuffling. Nothing. She knocked louder. There was no way on earth he could have left—half an hour earlier Rachel had stood by her own door listening for the keys and the sound of his feet. She had heard him come home but hadn't heard him leave. There were still no sounds from within. Maybe he wasn't there. To make sure, she knelt down to the floor and looked beneath the door to see if any lights were on.

That was when the door suddenly opened. There stood Simon dripping water off every part of him, wearing a green towel. He did not recognize her, nor could she think of anything to say as she pulled herself up from the floor. He looked a bit annoyed, which made her flustered. She forgot her carefully practiced greeting, the one she heard off last night's TV movie, and had the sudden urge to cry.

Had it not been for the ring of a telephone that Simon suddenly made a dash for, Rachel might have become hysterical. So she stood at the doorway, her feet frozen to the floor, her sweaty palms softening the edges of the box. She never left the line between the hallway and his world, but she craned her neck to see inside. His apartment was different from her own. There was a window open and a circulating breeze. There was clutter on the floor and a map of Europe on the wall. Simon got off the phone and came back to the door to face a wide-eyed Rachel.

"Something I can help you with?" he asked. He widened his eyes, and she could see now that they were neither hazel nor green but a smoky gray.

"I just thought I'd say hi, and—" she was fumbling for words, lost as to what to say. She remembered the box and pushed it into his arms. "These are for you," she finally said.

He looked at the box in bewilderment. "These are for me?" he asked. She nodded. "I'm sorry," he said. "What was your name again?"

"Rachel," she said carefully. "Rachel Rhiannon Morgenstern."

"You know," he said. "I'd ask you to come in, but I'm kind of in a hurry and I told someone I'd pick her up in fifteen minutes and—" he stopped, noting a sudden change in the expression on her face. "Are you OK?"

"Fine," she said. "Really."

"Well," he continued. "Like I was saying, she's waiting for me and—the cookie thing is great by the way, but—I'm already kind of late. In fact, her name is Rachel too."

Another Rachel, she thought. It was impossible to be yourself amongst six billion all trying to be different as well. Everyone knew a Rachel.

She said good night and went into her sanctuary and closed the door. She looked out the window to the apartment across the street and could see the silhouette of a couple fighting. She watched the man slap the woman with the big hair around for awhile, thinking. She wished she were the woman. Tomorrow she may wake up with swelling under her right eye, but at least she didn't have to scheme about giving away batches of burnt sugar cookies.

Directly beneath her, she could hear the chattering and draining music of the landlady's TV. She always watched movies about troubled females and the men who loved; mostly musicals. Her mother watched musicals. She wondered if her landlady had ever seen *The Sound of Music*.

Rachel got up and tried to remember the landlady's name while looking for a box of powdered jello in the kitchen.



All Creation Sings

Lee-Ann Grootenboer

## From the Unfaithful Bride

*Matthew McNatt*

Let him kiss me  
His breath, sweet wine

Let him touch me  
Consecrate my every part

Let me feel him  
His spirit, deep within

Let me know him  
Come closer than myself

Let him choose me  
Me, adulterous me

Let me love him  
Him, above all others

Hallowed by my love



# A Small Certificate

Matthew McNatt

**M**y choice of an English education major in college reflects, I like to believe, my calling to teach. But sometimes I wonder whether I've ever really stretched beyond the legacy of my teachers—both good and bad.

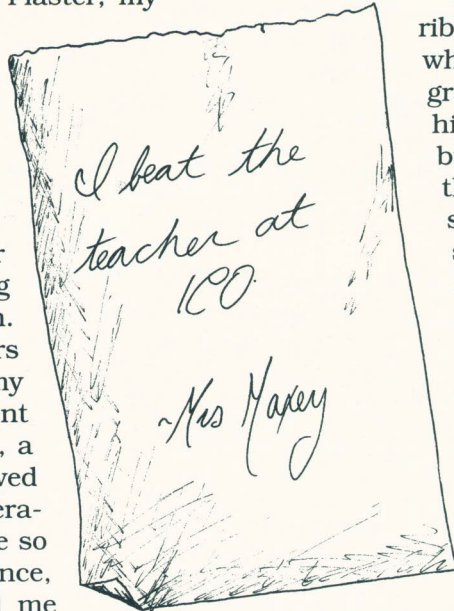
I remember one teacher who threw erasers and thrived on discipline, which, as the year wore on, she had more and more chances to impose. And I remember another who loved to question, dangling the golden apple of knowledge right beyond his students' reach: many probes, a few right answers, a lot of embarrassment.

Yet, I remember others like Mrs. Plaster, my first-grade teacher who had the audacity to think hugs cured tears better than Kleenex; like Mrs. Cobb and Mrs. Shipman, my third- and fifth-grade teachers who encouraged me to ask questions and then showed me how to find the answers; like Mrs. Payne, my sixth-grade English teacher who stayed after school explaining grammar till the basics finally sunk in. The list could go on, including others like Mrs. Kramen, who recaptured my joy for reading in the midst of turbulent middle school, and like Mr. Venckus, a high school English teacher who showed me that the themes in life and in literature are often the same. I could name so many who chiseled away at my ignorance, buffed off some defects, and helped me shine like a burnished *David*; yet I believe I have become animate—developed my character, stabilized my eccentricity, honed my intellect—through God's breath and my desire, for I can remember when I first felt the titillating whisper of reason: back in fourth grade.

I still have it—a cheap but significant certificate, torn from a small, green memo pad on which Mrs. Maxey neatly printed, "I beat the teacher at ICO." Mrs. Maxey and I had sat across a desk, a big ball of plastic triangles between us, as we meticulously placed colored rubber pieces on ICO's plastic bars. If only I could think far enough ahead, the game was pure strategy—guessing her moves, planning mine accordingly. Finally, she was stuck: any way she

turned the ball, I won. She looked down at me to see if I noticed. I looked back and waited for her, my teacher, the head of the pull-out, gifted-and-talented program in the grade school, to make the losing move. Then I, delighted, beaming, even gloating, played the final piece, earning her certificate.

I doubt she thought that slip of paper meant much; it took her so little time to write. But in my fourth-grade mind, it was somehow different from the high-gloss awards I had received elsewhere in small, rural Bixby, Oklahoma. It was an award for mental achievement.



I had received professionally printed ribbons in the school trackmeets in which, for one day each year, masses of grade school kids would walk to the high school's football field single file but would leave boisterous, in huddles that effervesced with laughter and sweaty bodies as they speedily swapped friends to brag, compliment, or put an arm around the shoulder of one they'd just beat. On these days, some donned gunny sacks and hopped fifty yards; others tied their legs with sisal cords, wrapped one arm around a friend, and hobbled for a hundred. Almost everyone grabbed a rope with the rest of his class to try to pull another class over the line. At the end of these days, almost everyone took away

some sort of ribbon.

On my shelves at home sat trophies from my years playing baseball in the Bixby Little League, a league supported by droves of relatives who came to cheer on their favorite team in Sportsman's Park. Then, the park's plumbing facilities were a nice walk away, but people didn't seem to mind the outhouses. Vendors' prices weren't exorbitant, and children often stocked up on Bit-o-Honeys and Laughy-taffys. The town was competitive, though, and parents worked hard to see their children were on the right teams. Yet I didn't mind getting third place—or even honorable mention—as long as I had fun with my friends. But even my one second-place little-league trophy wasn't as special as that sheet from Mrs. Maxey's notepad.

I hadn't worked any harder for her certificate than I had for other awards. In fourth grade, I got heat exhaustion earning an "extra-effort" T-shirt in the Jenks basketball camp. There I ran faster. Harder. Put up more shots. But for the T-shirt, I had merely sacrificed my body, so the small, green certificate somehow mattered more.

I didn't even devote more time to beating Mrs. Maxey than I did to meeting other goals. Many of the previous summers, I had spent countless hours reading books for the city library's summer program. I read my favorite series, *Danny Dunn*—1950s science fiction that I thought could be reality in the '80s. I read Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, every single one of them after second grade and most of them again after third. But this small, green certificate somehow mattered more than the medals I won at the library. Perhaps it had something to do with Mrs. Maxey.

Two times a week, I got a hall pass from my usual (and sometimes boring) classroom to whatever world I would choose, under Mrs. Maxey's guidance, to open up that day. Her classroom was filled with delights: to the left the TV and VCR, seldom used, were caked with dust. Beside them bean bag chairs were surrounded with books spread liberally on the floor. In the corner was a huge aquarium with several brilliantly colored tropical fish we students would take turns feeding. Against the back wall, three large shelves of encyclopedias, children's encyclopedias, and reference books filled with vibrant pictures from civilizations and jungles around the world. Along the right wall, illuminated by light from the windows, puzzles and games like Othello, chess, checkers, and ICO. An exhilarating room, exciting games—but ICO was my favorite.

Stuffed frogs sat on the window sill, frog figurines lined the bookshelves, and a frog poster hung on one wall. Mrs. Maxey even had a live African frog in a bowl by the fish tank, a frog who often sat on his rock, occasionally jumped, and always smelled atrocious. Poking out from the fern by the window was a tole-painted frog on a stick, something I had given to Mrs. Maxey a few years before. She said she loved frogs, so that's what her students gave her—year after year. And she displayed them all.

Sometimes Mrs. Maxey would take us outside and lead us in games on the playground. She knew how to stretch our creativity with make-believe and, through rhythmic marches, jump-roping, and skipping, to develop our coordination and enliven our sense of rhythm. I can still remember all of us sitting on a railroad tie thumping our thighs while Mrs. Maxey told a story, then marching back inside to the same beat.

Each day, class would begin with a structured activity around a large table in the room's center. Often, Mrs. Maxey would hand out cryptoquotes from the newspaper, and my friends and I would work together till we solved them. In one unit, she flashed words so quickly on the overhead we couldn't pronounce them—it was my first taste of speed reading. In another, we studied pictures of twisted rope to see if they made a knot. Through such activities, I honed my imagination.

I remember when we all lay on the floor to listen to a radio play, each of us forming a different picture of the story—the booming voice was the hero; the raspy one was the villain. Afterward, we sat around the big table and compared images, and each student gave stunningly different pictures of his stars. For the heroes and villains, some cast Nancy Drew and a phantom or Encyclopedia Brown and the inimical Bugs Meany; others cast fellow classmates. For both hero and villain, I cast myself.

Mrs. Maxey encouraged such diversity, and she challenged our opinions. A vegetarian visited our class during a nutrition unit; modern photographers came during a unit on composition. In her class we met a shriveled woman who drank only distilled water, a skinny man who dressed in solid black but worked with colorful fiber-optics, and an African-American woman who told stories of her ancestors. It was okay to disagree in Mrs. Maxey's class, and my friends and I did frequently. She even taught us how to construct and present our arguments.

She wasn't afraid of us. To her, we weren't challengers or, worse, burdens. She didn't mind constructing extra lessons to develop individual interests or meet personal needs. When we were curious, she encouraged it. I can still remember her saying "yes" when I asked to taste the fish food. And saying "yes" again when I asked to go to the drinking fountain to rinse out the bitter stuff. She cared.

Yet she was also the teacher. She knew more than we did. In the games, she was not only an encouraging coach, she was a formidable challenger, which is why I was proud to beat her at ICO—she had, after all, taught me how to play. That was the first time I, a student, had surpassed a teacher—at least in something.

But that sheet from her memo pad didn't stop me from learning from her. The next year, she would teach me typing, more reasoning, and, yes, more about ICO. She would even beat me—again and again. But I saved that sheet nonetheless. Then, it was a symbol of a student's pride. Now, I see as defining: not only as the first fruits of my reason, but also as a reminder to a future teacher of the wonder of a special teacher's humility.

# devyan

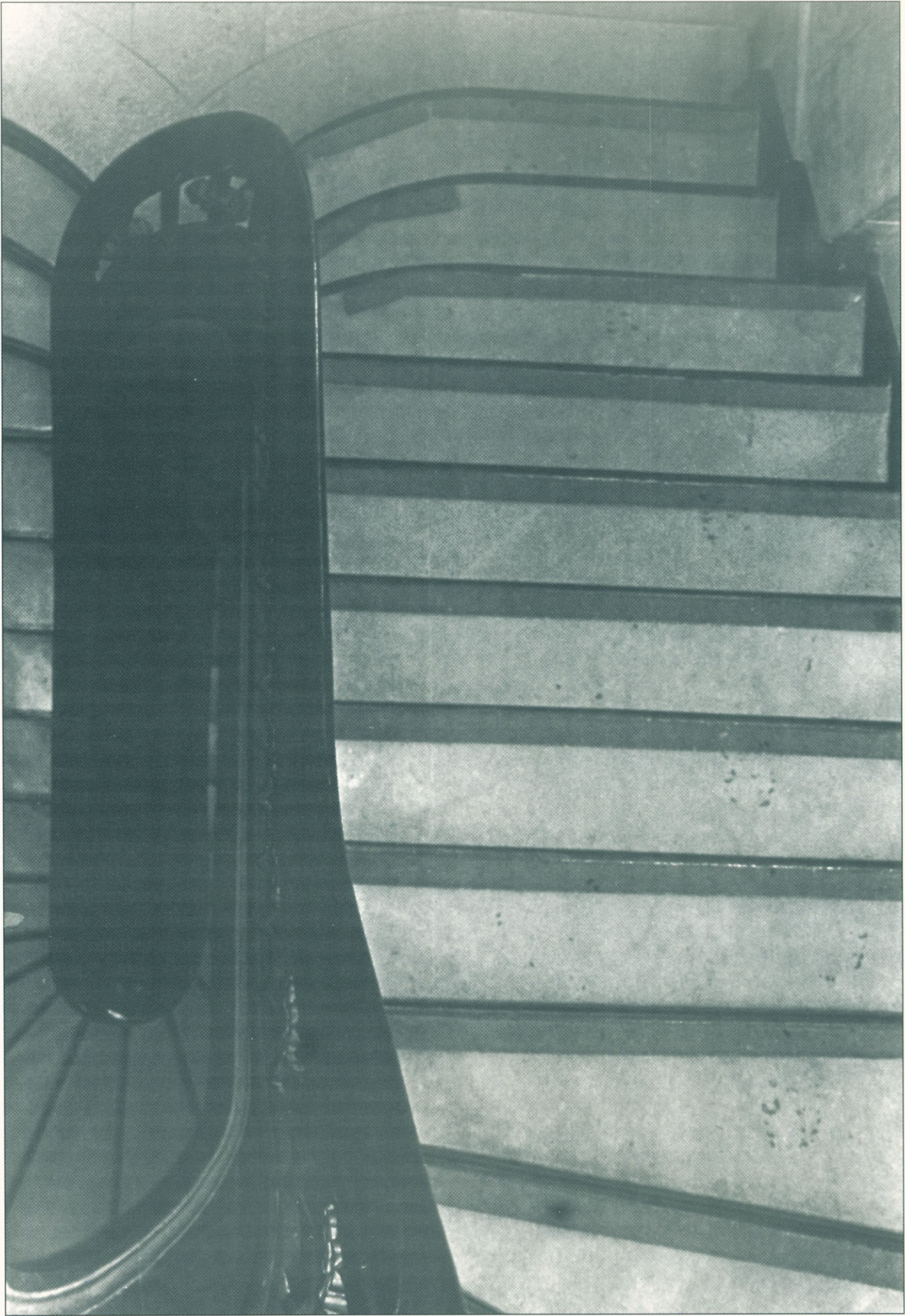
*Jessica Vanderwerff*

sitting on the time-out chair,  
hardly an equivalent consequence,  
his mind whirling  
plotting his escape.  
curly black gelled hair  
and brown eager eyes  
watched for an opening;  
with Olympic speed  
like a Tasmanian  
in his size four toddler jeans  
he ran around in spirals  
while I reduced myself  
to chasing him.



Untitled

Lee-Ann Grootenboer



To the Chapel

Carmen Zonnefeld

# Controlled

(to Margaret Atwood)

*Jessica Vanderwerff*

He  
asks me if I'd like  
sauce on my steak.  
how odd,  
I don't even remember ordering steak.  
On the plate it waits.  
I wait too.  
"Eat up," he says, "you  
look as pale as my chicken breast."

funny,  
one time ago,  
it was one time  
chewing fresh green grasses in  
the warm sun  
and I  
was one time  
a woman with an appetite  
ambitions and preferences.  
Once I would have crawled  
off his plate into my own  
fresh grass.

# The Gift of Silence

Anna Young

I'm sitting in the front pew of Milford Baptist Church. The heat of the little building causes the sweat to bead up on the pastor's brow. The air is close and heavy with mourning. The pressure of my mother's grip on my hand is cutting off my circulation. A deep, uncomfortable burn starts somewhere in my chest and leaps up into my eyes. My grandfather lies still in a varnished coffin. His face holds no expression. He looks like he's sleeping. He's silent . . . perfectly silent.

In an instant, I'm taken back in time long before this day, a time when I was first getting to know my grandfather. I remember him leaning over the newspaper scratching with his pencil, his glasses resting upon his hooked nose. He would purse his lips into a concentrated line and furrow his large, bushy eyebrows together. His skin was wrinkly and leathery, sun-stained instead of sun-tanned. Little fossil-like creases imprinted the rough skin around his eyes.

He was doing the crossword puzzle. He did the crossword puzzle every day.

He glanced up for a moment from his task. He caught me looking at him and a sudden smile lit up his solemn face. He chuckled and waved me to his lap. By the time I'd clambered up onto his massive thighs, he was back into the crossword puzzle. Without a word, he let me see the puzzle and continued scratching with his pencil despite my intruding presence on his lap. We both sat in silence, my tiny little face trying to mimic the expression of his old, wrinkled one.

The organ starts to thump out the opening measures of "Amazing Grace." I slowly pull myself up and straighten my dress before I start singing. Amazing grace. My grandma's name is Grace. I glance in her direction. Deep circles line her blue eyes. They are full of a dry redness. I look away quickly.

I remember the stories. When they were first courting, he used to write her long pages of poetry and send them to her under a secret name. She always knew who they were from, though. "Yup, she was always too smart for me," he would say with a wink.

Or when they had to board in Mr. and Mrs. Clement's house right after they got married. They both were teaching at the same high school in Forest City, Illinois. They didn't have a honeymoon, they were only 18, and they were flat broke. "It was the happiest time of our lives," he said. When Grandpa was first diagnosed with brain cancer, he wrote Grandma a poem. I never read it, but it made Grandma cry.

Right before his death, three months later, he took her hand in his and he wept. It was the first time I'd ever seen his eyes overflow. He whispered a verse from the poet, Bryant, and was silent. In the silence, I saw a man and a woman who were not my grandparents, but real people. He kissed her hand and spoke not another word. Grandma smiled. It was his silence that had drawn her to him in the first place.

My cousin, Bryce, is slowly making his way to the podium. His movements are forced and determined. My aunt strikes the beginning chords of "My Tribute" and my mind begs for a little silence.

Like the silence that Grandpa used to tell me about. He and Grandma soon moved out of the Clement's house and out of Forest City altogether. They found an old farmhouse outside of Muscatine, Iowa. They were comfortable there. Grandpa got a job teaching English at the local community college and Grandma gave birth to my mother and my aunt.

"The greatest thing," my Grandpa used to say, "was that we were living on a farm." He would tell me about how the midday sun would beat down on him while he was riding along on the tractor. His eyes



would get big as he would show me how the bugs bit him and the sun burnt him and how his packed lunch-meat was warm.

Then, Grandpa would get this thoughtful look and he would say, "But, Anna, it's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. And it's so quiet. A man can really think out there. You know, that's were most of the great poets get their inspiration from nature. And the silence."

Bryce had finished the song. Now that he's made it back to his seat, I can see his shoulders slumpling and shaking, my heart falters a bit. My mother's eyes are black with mascara and I pull my focus from the grief. I stare at the cross above the alter. I clamp down my rising emotion and focus on the cross . . . the cross.

Grandpa used to talk a lot about the cross. He would sit in his lazy boy and comment upon "This new generation!! They are all so darn liberal. I swear, this whole country is going to go up in smoke!! If only they would focus upon the blood of Jesus and the old rugged cross . . ." He would say this all with a rocking motion, occasionally stretching both hands out to emphasize his point.

Then, he would sit back for a moment and fold those same hands across his stomach. "But I guess the Lord has it all figured out and an old fuddy-duddy like me should just keep his mouth shut."

During the summer before his death, Grandpa would ask me to read to him. There were so many times I remembered listening to him read to me from Mother Goose, Shakespeare, Shelley, and of course, the Bible. That's the book that I chose.

I opened Grandpa's old Bible and read from Psalm 90.

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
throughout all generations.  
Before the mountains were born  
or you brought forth the earth and the world,

from everlasting to everlasting you are God.  
You turn men back to dust,  
saying, 'Return to dust, ...'"

Halfway through the third verse, I stopped. Grandpa was quiet. His breathing had taken on a rasping quality that past week, and I was surprised to suddenly hear silence. He lay quietly on his bed with his eyes open, waiting in silence to hear the next word.

I continued with a shaky voice. It was the only sound outside of the deep, still silence.

"'Return to dust, O sons of men.'  
For a thousand years in your sight  
are like a day that has just gone by,  
or like a watch in the night.  
you sweep men away in the sleep of death;  
they are like the new grass in the morning—  
though in the morning it springs up new,  
by evening it is dry and withered.'"

The service is almost over. The air in the church begins to lighten. My mother's grip loosens. Peace slowly makes its way into the hearts of those who loved this man, my grandpa.

As we all file out of the little, brown church building I look across the corn field right beside it. The sky stretches like a lazy cat above the field, as far as the eye can see. A hawk flies way high up, the only speck in a sea of blue. For a moment, everything is still and I inhale sharply because of the intense silence and I remember what Grandpa told me about the fields. A small, curious smile begins to form on my lips.

My mother calls me and I turn to go, but not without taking one last, long look on the fields that my grandpa loved and on the gift that he was given there, the gift that he passed on to me, the gift of silence.





**Trumpet Fingers**

Helena Geels

# not like you

*Sarah Walsh*

the difference is,

when I have a really bad day with wild unstoppable emotions and my prof calls on me when I didn't read the chapter between class and getting up late and falling on the ice in front of a group of total stranger freshmen followed by an empty mailbox after hoping for a package for weeks and the boy I like ignoring me and my roommate not taking my messages,

I can't call my dad.

# The Storm

*Robyn Vis*

Birds bounce from tree to tree,  
Innocence clear on industrious faces.  
Squirrels chatter, chasing around a  
Tree trunk, quarreling over nuts.  
Idly, a brook trickles by stones  
On its narrow path through the woods.  
Stately cedars, majestic oaks, and slender birch  
Rejoice in the sun's roasting warmth,  
Search desperately for moisture in the dry hard soil.

Suddenly the rays of light retreat  
Before a rising mass of black clouds;  
An onslaught of impending judgment.  
Sunlight backpeddles, nearly falling on its back  
While the clouds advance like a united armed force.  
Bleak greyness fills the atmosphere.  
Creatures huddle in silence,  
Fearing the pounding of the gavel.

Suddenly, light splits the sky as  
Michael draws his sword.  
Noise erupts, shattering silence.  
The air fills with the clash of angry swords.  
Sharp darts pierce the ground  
And lay, broken. The ground, a sodden mess.

Thunder cracks; the air throbs  
With the rattles of darts and arrows  
and the ring of clashing swords.  
Nothing can hide from the onslaught of fury.



But finally the pounding fades,  
the clashing of swords weakens—  
sky piercing light lessens.  
Darts slow. The pounding  
Is less insistent.

Darts have stopped.  
Swords have been sheathed.  
A hesitant stillness takes over.  
Ever so slowly, light and peace reclaim  
The land.  
Subtle changes begin:  
Birds and squirrels tiptoe out of hiding,  
Leaves drip droplets as the trees shake themselves  
Like puppies.  
A filled brook laughs gaily,  
Running through the woods.

A single tentative chirp.  
Then another.  
And yet another.  
Soon the forest comes alive  
Rejoicing in its new life,  
For the storm has passed.

# Homeland

*Jill Vossen*

Souls cry out  
reaching  
touching  
my  
Spirit  
I am  
adrift  
without them  
they are my home.

Dancing is their way  
to pluck my heart  
Where does my partner  
from?  
Dancing,  
dancing,  
dancing,  
dancing  
with  
my partner.

Aching  
in my very  
being  
for my home  
across  
the sea.  
I long for the  
lochs and meadows,  
the isles of emerald,  
the crags and pipes of  
the Highlands.  
My native language  
lost to invasion.  
When will I  
return  
to the  
Land  
I  
Love?

The faery kingdom  
weaves a spell  
unbroken by dawn  
and left in the night.  
Foggy, misty  
sleep.

A call to battle  
heeded by many  
who will not return  
marching,  
marching,  
marching  
to pipe and drum.  
The outcome  
is certain,  
lives are not.  
Fierce warrior poets  
against organisation  
and strength  
WIN.  
Victorious

Celebration of  
victory is the  
ground of betrayal.  
A woman  
a temptress  
come to destroy.

Weaving a spell  
of magic  
intrigue  
surrounds  
encompasses  
enfolds  
into the  
night.

Betrayal.  
Running  
away,  
the woman  
scorned  
and run out;  
Damage undone.

The victors  
proclaim  
in loud voice  
of dance and song  
Celebrate!

# Achtung

*Mark Brink*

swollen feet  
broken nose  
mud seeps into my socks  
the wind howls  
four hours till sunrise

he left me  
ravaged  
broken  
dying  
blood

alone i lie  
no help will come  
why does he do this to me?  
dark branches snap in the wind  
the rain sets in

i open my eyes  
darkness surrounds everything  
the rain slams against my face  
“why?”  
he is too far away by now

a new smell surfaces  
foul, rank  
burns my broken nose  
the pain lingers  
sleep

anger turns to acceptance  
no way out  
i lower my face to the mud  
he has won  
fade to black.





The Journey

Gena Koning





Moi

Kristin Vander Giessen

## the extraction of your memories

*Paula Treick*

I carve a hole  
and sift through  
strata: membrane,  
gray matter, your cloudy certainty.  
I snap a single chord  
and your brain buzzes  
with memories. I of course,  
will take them all with me.  
I use my favorite tweezers,  
pluck solemnly, surely.  
I'll take this, the memory of  
our first kiss. And this,  
the boatripe we joked would  
be a three-hour tour. Here we are  
in Minneapolis, here in Memphis.  
And would you mind also  
if I took the nastiness,  
the words we should not have said,  
but did. My latex gloves seep with  
bitterness, but I want that, too.  
I want it all.  
I sew you up with bright green thread,  
leave on the fluorescent light so you  
won't wake in darkness.  
The tools are in my pocket,  
I clutch your memories in my fist.



# the paper shredder

*Paula Treick*

I have a dream. You  
are in it, of course. I can't  
escape you even when I  
close my eyes. But, like a dream,  
we're out of context, we're in my  
office, by my desk, a place  
you've never been. And, get this,  
the dream is so real that I  
even know what I'm wearing,  
but that's wrong too, way wrong.  
The skirt is too short and the  
blazer is itchy. You say nothing,  
but you're staring at me  
so smugly, like you've just  
announced your world takeover  
and I, I just can't stand it,  
you being in my office, you being smug,  
so I move in. I corner you by the  
paper shredder and even up until the  
last moment you must be thinking,  
She won't do it. But I do.  
There's no blood, you come out evenly,  
in long, flat strips. I arrange you on  
my desk like a Mr. Potato Head I have  
the freedom to put together wrong,  
lips here, eyes here. You are much  
more endearing as paper.





Outdoor Performance

Lee-Ann Grootenboer

# Four Wheeler Friend

*Renee Hoekstra*

Neighbor friend best friend Laura girl  
Had a four wheeler.  
Freedom then bliss then after school summer  
Changed our clothes and life was ours.  
Neutral, clutch, start button, gas, gas, gas, stutter  
Roar \*pop\* zoom zoom zoom.

German sheperd mix, mine, Loafer puppy buddy  
Running out behind us chasing rabbits.  
Fields belong to us, us, us, then  
Not the ones who want a road built through 'em  
Went to court, told 'em that  
Now their half road stands there in a ruin.

Corner stop. Gas station. End of block.  
Time to get the candy  
Pennies here, pennies there, clerk groans  
Couldn'tcha next time bring a dollar?  
Peanut butter, chocolate, caramel, marshmallow.  
Lik 'em Stix and Dynamints, cherry chalk and Bubble-Yum.

Summer neighbor buddy bullies  
Dirt bikes handy.  
Greg and Carl want a ride  
Four wheeler. Ready.  
Criss cross bikes in front  
Can'tcha go no where?

Me, man, Laura, man, on top of that machine  
Start her up with a roar  
Carl looks, Greg looks, scared looks, man  
(Back off, back off, man, she's not kidding)  
Shift to first, gas pushed, off in a roar  
And you thought, didn't you think, that we were just girls?



# Reflecting on our place

Emily Hutten

**O**n summer Saturday mornings, I climb out of my bed at four o'clock to drive to the Halifax Farmers' Market, an hour and a half trip from my home in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, where farmers congregate from small towns and communities all over the province.

Men with calloused hands and dirty-kneed overalls greet each other with casual hellos. Women with tired eyes and strong arms carry in baskets of brown Russet apples and round loaves of freshly baked bread. Children, wide-eyed and smiling, run with shrieks of delight as they watch their breath in the cool morning air. My breath steams in my face as I carry in box after box of apples, potatoes, bunched carrots, corn, and green beans.

Soon the truck is unloaded and my favorite part of the day begins. Baskets are filled with crisp, green spinach and mixed salad leaves, yellow and blue beans, dirt-covered potatoes, apples, and snowpeas. Mounds of long, thin carrots, chubby beets, and white onions are arranged along the table front. Corn, zucchini, and cucumbers fill boxes out front. The smells of fresh dill and parsley mix strangely with the aroma of freshly baked cinnamon rolls rising from the bakery downstairs.

Five forty-five. Our first customer comes up to the table with a smirk on his face and a sparkle in his eye. "Hello, my friend," he leans close to my boss. "What do you have for me today?" His shoes are powdered with flour from long night hours kneading pizza dough at his shop downtown. In a low, deep voice he asks for a bag big enough for dozens of pale green zucchini, called "cousa"—a favorite of many Greek and Lebanese people.

More customers arrive. Our table is surrounded with thick, rich voices that rise and fall excitedly in their native tongue. I stand watching, a silent observer. One woman, her hair wildly pinned on top of her head, walks with hunched back and knotted fingers. Her manners are quick and gruff as she reaches across the table for a bag and digs her hands into the boxes of cousa.

Mrs. Mingo arrives. She is tall with pleasantly round glasses that enhance her friendly eyes. "One pound of green beans and a bunch of carrots, please." I rip the tops off the carrots so they fit into the leather shopping bag slung over her shoulder.

More customers line up in front of the table—the morning rush has started. Faces pass before my eyes as I take orders and return change. John, the quiet man with a full, brown beard, stops to buy exactly one pound of spinach, just as he does every week. Mary and her blond-haired daughter, Margaret, walk away from the table with their bags of salad mix, green beans, and potatoes. The Chinese women in bright colored shirts come looking for bak choy, mizuna, and nappa. Their voices sing a melody that mixes with the strummed chords from the guitar in the corner, where Dan McKinnon sings old tales of the sea and pictures of life in small town Nova Scotia. A boy wearing a plaid bowtie and vest stands on a wooden box and plays a fiddle tune. A couple, arms wrapped around each other, stop to listen, and a family with toddler twins wanders by clapping their hands with the rhythm.

More and more people flow into the room: college students with back-packs and patched jeans, business women carrying briefcases along with their flowers and apple cider, fathers holding new born babies in their arms and holding their wives' hands. All these faces pass before me—how can each one be so uniquely distinct and yet fashioned the same?

**N**iagara Falls on sunny Sunday afternoons is an amazing place. My uncle and I walk the path along the great, thundering falls. Water surges ever onward until it races over the drop to the river below. Mist rises and fills the air with so much water our clothes are wet. We are amazed as we watch the power before us—not only the surging strength within the falls, but also the continuous flow of people streaming passed us. So many people. So many faces.

My uncle, casually walking along, hands in his jean pockets, asks me, "Why do we study theology?"

I know my uncle has more to say. His eyes squint behind his round, wire-framed glasses, as he looks out at the falls.

He talks to me about how exciting it is to study and analyze theories about faith and salvation and grace, to dive into our books and seek to grab hold of the definitions of life and death and the Kingdom. "But," he explains, "the problem with studying is that we lose sight of the object—we get lost in our attempts to understand and explain. When we lose sight of why we study we need to come to places like this. Look around you. Then you know why we study. Then you know why we are here."

The surge of people pushes me on every side—I hear the chorus of voices in hundreds of different languages, I see the collage of faces and bodies, and I am in awe.

Each body has a nose, eyes, and mouth. Each has a heart, soul, and mind. In each face and each heart we see the image of the Creator. The One who gives us faith, salvation, and grace—the One who breathes life into us.

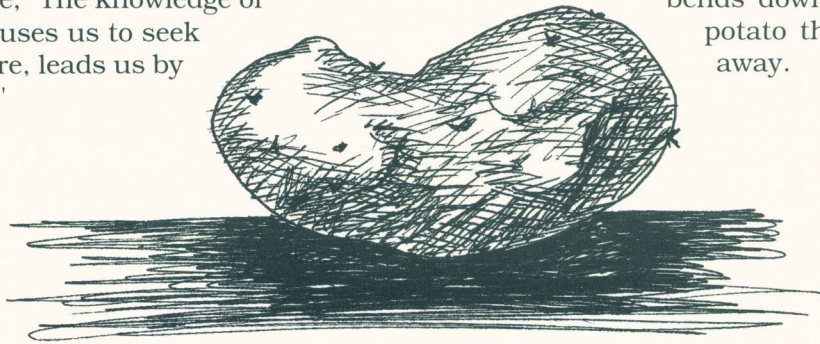
John Calvin, a reformer following in the footsteps of Martin Luther, wrote, "The knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find Him."

What a wonder. The God of heaven and earth, the Almighty One who reigns at the center of all life reveals Himself to us not only through thunderous falls and mysterious wonders. He comes close to us. He molds us in His image.

**S**lowly the market empties of people. Our table looks bare. Haphazardly placed bunches of carrots and beets lay limp. The baskets are half empty, and the fresh greens have faded with the crisp air of the early morning hours. A few families wander out the door and squint at the warm noontime sun. Two farmers lean against a nearby pole with mugs of coffee. They discuss the lack of rain and the outrageous prices wholesalers are offering this season. The butcher across from us begins to pack up his meats and sausages. The day is over.

I am tired and forget to laugh as a woman with wild curly hair makes a lighthearted joke. I turn to pick up a stack of empty boxes and carry them out to the truck. The warm sun falls on my back as I step out the door.

When I return the woman is behind our table sweeping up the leaves and scraps that were scattered onto the floor during the morning rush. She bends down and picks up one lone potato that had fallen and rolled away.



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## **Colophon**

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## **Correspondence**

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