

Eastern Illinois University

## The Keep

---

The Vehicle

Student Theses & Publications

---

Fall 1-1-2006

### The Vehicle, Fall 2006

Emily Davis

Stephen Jefferies

Bob Freyder

Willie Joseph Morris

Rebecca M. Griffith

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/vehicle>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Davis, Emily; Jefferies, Stephen; Freyder, Bob; Morris, Willie Joseph; Griffith, Rebecca M.; Dennis, Craig A.; Durbin, Lindsey; Foster, Jacob; Yeale, Amanda; Mapes, Diedre; Krahn, Suzanne; Hohes, Jordan; James, Mitch; Rolewski, Dee; Podeschi, Mario; and Masters, Andy, "The Vehicle, Fall 2006" (2006). *The Vehicle*. 85.

<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/vehicle/85>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Vehicle by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

---

**Authors**

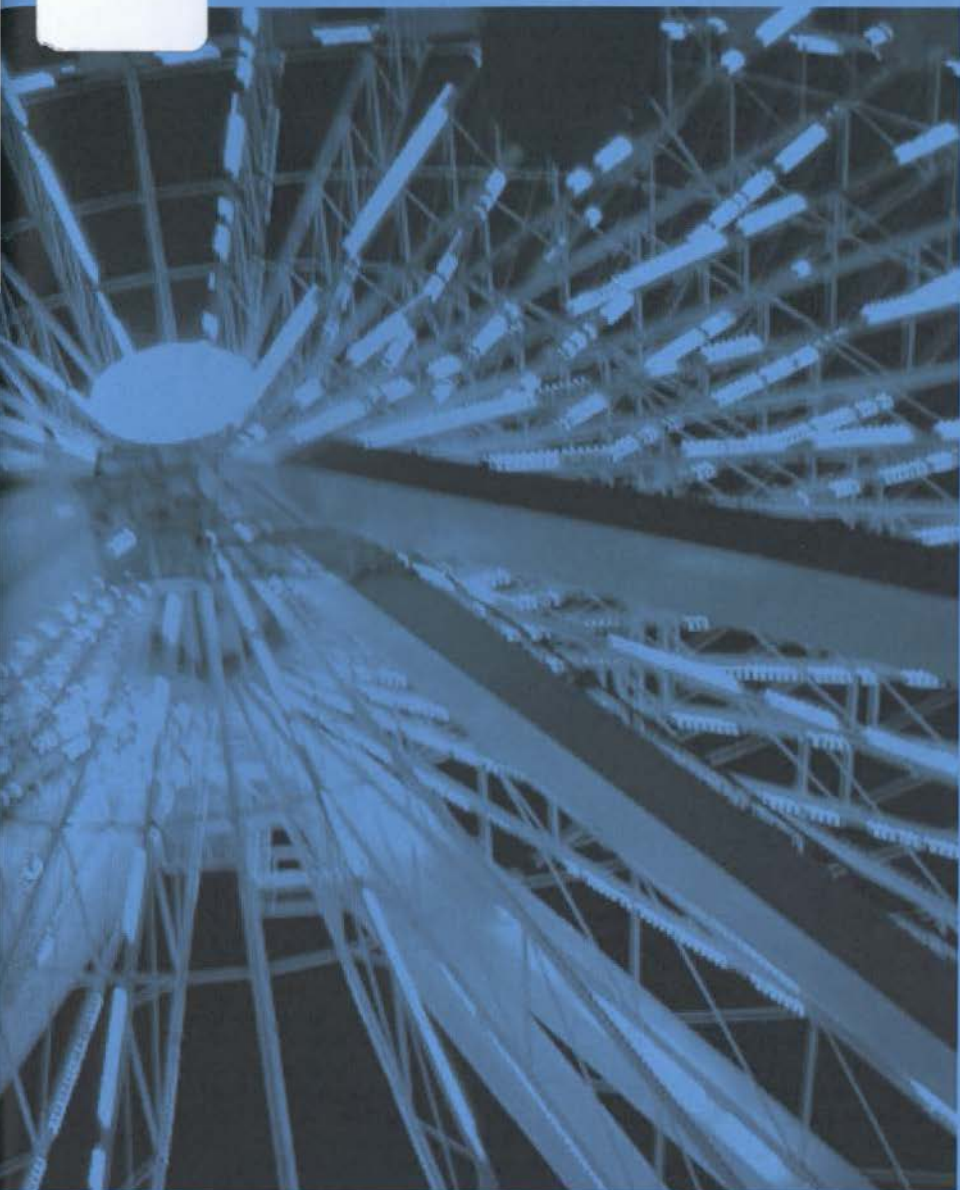
Emily Davis, Stephen Jefferies, Bob Freyder, Willie Joseph Morris, Rebecca M. Griffith, Craig A. Dennis, Lindsey Durbin, Jacob Foster, Amanda Yeale, Diedre Mapes, Suzanne Krahn, Jordan Hohes, Mitch James, Deej Rolewski, Mario Podeschi, and Andy Masters

Archives  
LH  
1  
.V4x  
2006  
Fall

**The**

# Vehicle

Fall 2006



# Credits

~~~~~  
Edited By Members of:



Editor.....Leslie Hancock  
Associate Editors.....Kristy Kash  
Joe Pilon  
Madeline Landes  
Lyndsey Herring  
Editorial Advisor.....Tim Engles  
Printing Advisor.....Bonita Rodebaugh  
Student Publications Advisor.....John Ryan

\* \* \*

Published by:

Student Publications Department  
at Eastern Illinois University

Printed by:

Copy Express

Special thanks to:

Jean Toothman  
Carol Stevens  
Letitia Moffitt  
Suzanne Krahn

## Table of Contents

~~~~~

Emily Davis, <i>Ferris Wheel</i>	Cover
Stephen Jefferies, <i>Her</i>	1
Bob Freyder, <i>Untitled</i>	2
Willie Joseph Morris, <i>Writing at O'Brien</i>	3
Rebecca M. Griffith, <i>Blanks and Habits</i>	4
Craig A. Dennis, <i>Soldier's Nightmare</i>	5
Lindsey Durbin, <i>Untitled</i>	6
Jacob Foster, <i>A Slow, Painless Death</i>	7
Amanda Yeale, <i>Thought</i>	8
Bob Freyder, <i>The Sociopath</i>	9
Rebecca M. Griffith, <i>Easy</i>	10
Diedre Mapes, <i>My Partner</i>	11
Suzanne Krahn, <i>Barriers</i>	12
Jordan Hohes, <i>The mind is a prison</i>	13
Mitch James, <i>We Were Shirtless When Thousands Died</i>	14

## Table of Contents

~~~~~

|                                                                            |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Amanda Yeale, <i>Complaint</i>                                             | 15 |
| Bob Freyder, <i>Untitled</i>                                               | 16 |
| Amanda Yeale, <i>Marked</i>                                                | 17 |
| Rebecca M. Griffith, <i>She Wears Red Lipstick, He,<br/>Heartsick Eyes</i> | 18 |
| Amanda Yeale, <i>Prayer</i>                                                | 19 |
| Deej Rolewski, <i>Home</i>                                                 | 20 |
| Diedre Mapes, <i>Your Dream</i>                                            | 21 |
| Suzanne Krahn, <i>Even Fingers Get Lonely</i>                              | 22 |
| Mitch James, <i>Aggressivity</i>                                           | 23 |
| * * *                                                                      |    |
| Mitch James, <i>Fallen</i>                                                 | 24 |
| Mario Podeschi, <i>Collapse</i>                                            | 36 |
| Andy Masters, <i>The Italian Crisis</i>                                    | 41 |
| About the Authors                                                          |    |

## Her

-Stephen Jefferies-

To be held deep inside your arms,  
To see your soul through bluest eyes,  
Safe from all my sorrow and harm,  
Is where I truly wish to lie.  
With hair so soft and voice so sweet,  
Your smile could melt a heart of stone.  
A wink, a nudge, all so discreet,  
That lets me know I'm not alone.  
The time, the place, it matters not.  
So long as I am there with you.  
All other things are soon forgot,  
And my whole day begins anew.  
It's strange how time becomes a blur  
Whenever I can be with her.

Blanks and Habits

-Felecia M. Gentile-

## Untitled

-Bob Freyder-

Plastic Politicians with painted smiles  
Robotic statisticians ramble on in monotonous voices  
as forgotten faces fade into walls  
They cling to scattered notebook sheets  
on which arithmetic equations blend  
as dilated pupils struggle to comprehend  
the blur of numeric jungles  
bordered in by scribbled sketches  
of a life beyond the textbook  
in which cut-up canvas creatures find home  
only to fade out  
like fallen soldiers  
with the scribble of a pen  
much like those forgotten faces  
Only this is something a war cannot mend



## Writing at O'Brien

-Willie Joesph Morris-

I came to the stadium to write at the highest point where my letter scribbled the image of the sky

I find myself in section B seat 34

So close to the fence imprinting a cross hatched dent on my skin

Writing under

Moth Attracting

Stadium lights

I come to think of better poems

I scratch my head and stare back at a moon peak a boeing threw the clouds trying to read over my shoulder

My fingers move across the its concert from counting every stone

How blank is my mind man?

## Blanks and Habits

-Rebecca M. Griffith-

She lowers those eyes,  
Those deadened eyes,  
Lit only with glitter from an old party,  
From smiles she used to show to him,  
From laughter she used to reach out and find in her hands  
When he filled the space next to her.  
Her empty fingers brush the obvious,  
the conclusion  
That she's been living in a shoe box world,  
Tattered papers,  
Stray pen marks,  
Old heartbreaks.  
Nothing that means anything to anyone else.

You cling, little girl,  
To a delicate world,  
To a devastating world,  
A world that will never change,  
No matter how many frozen frames you stare at,  
Trying to relive it.

A child still,  
Fingers hooked in torn bed lace,  
I cling.

## Soldier's Nightmare

-Craig A. Dennis-

Aching bodies sprawled out in front of me,  
Blood running,  
Moaning and groaning,  
Grown men screaming  
Waiting for Death,  
Wanting Death to come.  
The only warmth  
Comes from the blood  
Slowly escaping its home.  
Cold swirling about  
Accompanied by agonizing,  
Blood-curdling screams.  
Men begging for mercy  
From their gods.  
As I stand in the dark,  
Waiting to succumb to battle.  
Fighting each battle  
Little by little,  
Affected by each kill I make.  
My heart grows black and heavy,  
Nothing else matters anymore,  
Survival is the only thing.  
Surviving to only see her once again,  
Just to speak to her,  
IMPOSSIBLE!  
This is one battle that can't be won,  
Both sides lose no matter the outcome,  
The battle to survive.

## Untitled

-Lindsey Durbin-

A rich girl once  
lived in a penthouse  
on the tenth floor

Daddy's little girl  
has only known dollar bills  
and formal attire.

Receiving limousines  
instead of hugs,  
hasn't done anyone harm.

She owns credit cards  
and expensive shoes,  
with beautiful heels  
which came in handy

the day she jumped off the penthouse  
on the tenth floor.

## A Slow, Painless Death

-Jacob Foster-

There was time when care-worn callous  
Was hard yet lively, free of malice;  
When man's lifeblood was green and blue,  
A match with nature's cycling hue—  
Morphed into a grey and white placidity—  
Emblems of a species' swelling cupidity.

So callous of another, duller sort  
Was pseudo-born, free to support  
A massive, instant emigration  
To the coveting cold of the concrete nation  
Where feet and hands still move in time  
To the tick of the foreman's murdering chime.

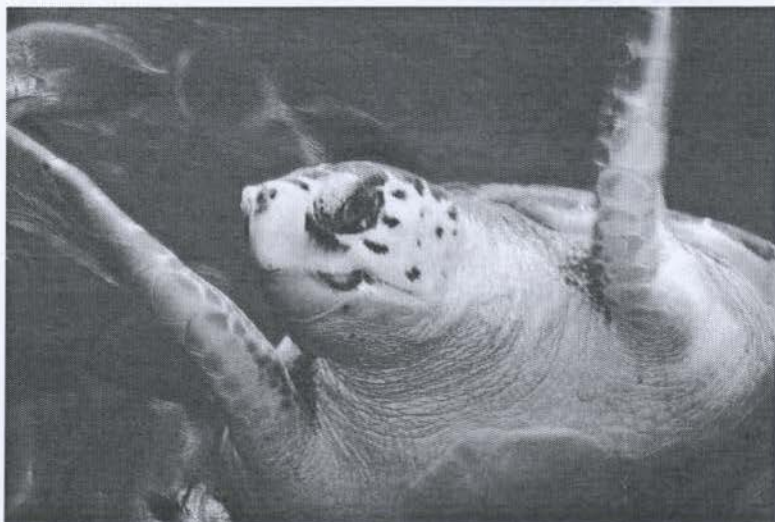
## Thought

-Amanda Yeale-

An apple core,  
a carnation,  
books once soaked with rain—  
all dry now  
save the bits of condensation  
that collect to call for life.  
How useless to know  
that things end this way—  
brown, damp, and forgotten.  
It is better to imagine  
that the lines of print  
will never run with careless drips,  
that water will forever flow  
in pursuit of loveliness  
up the stems of flowers,  
that the fruits of the world  
will forever be in bloom.

But this is only imagining,  
sanity,  
survival,  
This is not life.  
And what of it?

**Turtle Knows Your Name** by Emily Davis



## The Sociopath

-Bob Freyder-

Stolen pride feeds big dreams  
But I took the weight of the world  
as it came and went I fled the scene  
I felt the suicide of sympathy  
like a bullet wound in a bulletproof vest  
I push but don't look  
run but don't love  
exist without a feeling  
And I watched you fall  
as loud as silent films  
I felt you breathe  
as soft as screaming children  
Society as surreal as I please  
I feel no one

## Easy

-Rebecca M. Griffith-

Painted lips,  
Drawn mouth,  
Fake it, baby.  
Hollow promises  
Decorated ears,  
Willing,  
Preferring easy lies  
Beauty,  
Not pain,  
Difficulty,  
Truth.  
Head back,  
Imagined laughter,  
And it goes on—  
In the car,  
Up the sidewalk,  
In the bedroom.  
It never ends.  
Truth hides.  
She bends,  
She fears,  
She hardens  
She lies.



## My Partner

-Diedre Mapes-

She named me, Chip the Dip.  
I think I look more like a George.  
But I am her lover,  
A dancer who dips his partner.  
That's how I got the dip part,  
Gliding her around the room,  
Spinning her in circles,  
Supporting hands with mine—  
I even let her rest  
In my welcoming lap.  
I'm good to her,  
But she abuses me.

Knock, scrap, bang, ouch!  
Stop pushing me around baby.  
My body bares signs of her treatment,  
I could tell you her secrets,  
Her fears,  
Her dreams—  
But I get my revenge in other ways.  
Sometimes I tip back,  
Let her think she'll fall,  
But I catch her.  
I keep her safe,  
I hold her  
when she cries,  
when she laughs.  
I am her lover—  
the only chair in her life.

## Barriers

-Suzanne Krahn-

Why are we so good at building walls?  
Why can we build barriers?  
Walls and barriers mean protection.  
Protection from what?  
We say protection from enemies.  
When really we want protection from ourselves.  
Openness is the ultimate vulnerability.  
Break down our walls.  
Find out who we really are.  
Scared and weak and confused.  
But as quickly as the walls come down,  
They will be built again.  
Watch me build a wall to protect you from me.  
While openness is weakness,  
In weakness we find strength.  
Break down my wall.  
Find out who i really am.  
Scared and lonely and confused.  
But watch out.  
I will throw my bricks at you.  
And start all over again...

My Father  
-Jordan Hohe-

**The mind is a prison**

-Jordan Hohe-

voices clash Titans  
amidst a courtroom of bone

using no tongues

violently grasping control

how can black

be the Heart

that succumbs

to the serenity

of slavery

**We Were Shirtless When Thousands Died**  
-Mitch James-

My father sat,  
Shirtless,  
Drinking coffee.

The TV showed  
A wounded building  
Bleeding billowing  
Clouds of smoke.

I stood amazed,  
Toes curling  
On the cold wooden floor,  
Wondering  
What mistake was made.

Then, on the TV screen, hope crumpled  
Into a fine powder  
That blanketed  
Human beings  
And city streets  
Where that day's dawn had begun.

I heard something  
Of the Pentagon,  
And something of  
Hundreds dead,  
And thought war.

Bodies  
Falling through rising smoke—  
Would God  
Play catch?

I stood shirtless  
Watching,  
Wondering why.

## Complaint

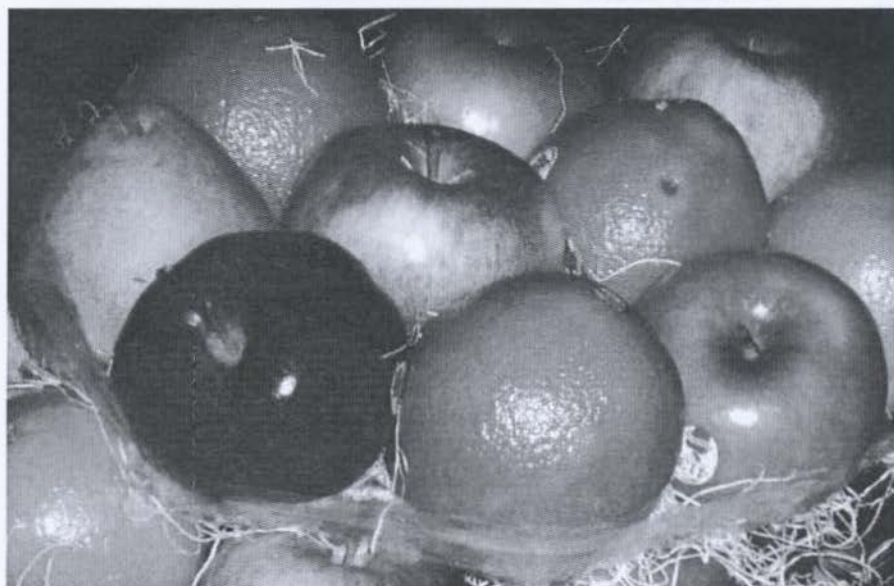
-Amanda Yeale-

I was given a plant  
and told that it was called Eve's Tree  
and told that it blooms  
only once a year,  
during the night.

I have watched it now  
each night  
for three years, dreamless,  
with only a bowl of almonds  
and a blanket  
on my porch step.

It has not bloomed.  
Perhaps it is dead.

Fall Arrivals by Emily Davis



## Untitled

-Bob Freyder-

So today was the day  
I looked my mother in the eye  
opened myself like a letter  
and shoveled my organs onto the floor  
She just turned away  
She drained her insides too  
in disgust  
My father just looked away  
I scraped the words from my tongue  
I could watch them hit the floor  
I hollowed out my body into a frame  
a cage of dead existence  
and as my mother cried  
My father looked away

## Marked

-Amanda Yeale-

His hands laid  
in laws  
n r  
c i  
that tumbled  
and itched  
and became  
my tr  
in  
ity,  
my trust,  
all scratched gently  
in my skin,  
slipped beneath  
the sleep  
of childhood,  
and stretched now  
by growth  
to read  
I love you.

## She Wears Red Lipstick, He, Heartsick Eyes

-Rebecca M. Griffith-

One line in a novel that stops a reader's breath,  
Though the rest of the tale can be read without effect.

One leaf drifting dreamily toward the ground,  
Though all the rest are ripped violently from the branches.  
You are one striking simile in a Shakespearian sonnet,  
Though the dusty volume is old and cracked.

Your voice falls into a habit of gentle command,  
And I fell under its pulsing spell.

Your cracked hands molded,  
Your tone,

Proddings and pushings.

And I fell...

in love with pieces and parts,  
notes and words,

Not with a person,

Just the last two minutes of a film.



## Prayer

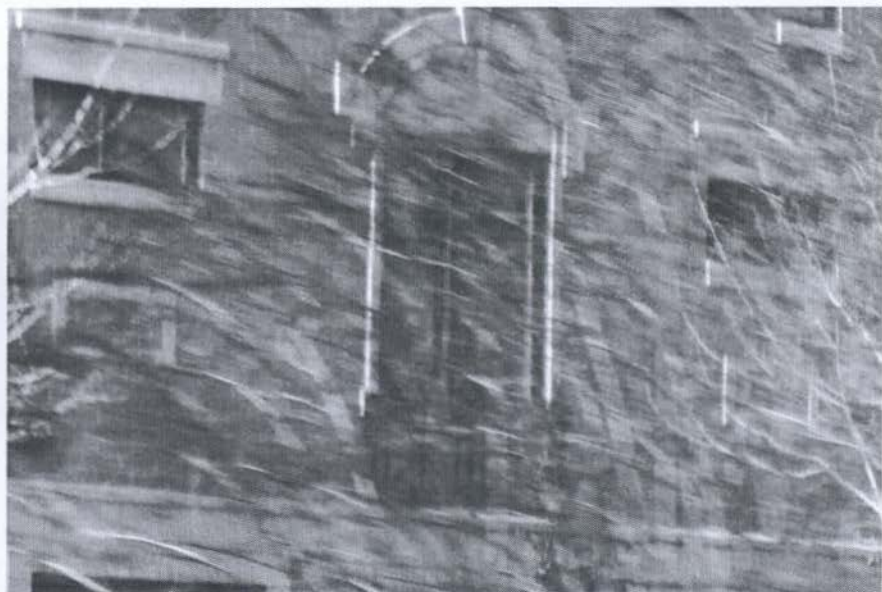
-Amanda Yeale-

Well over  
my human whisper  
roars the cry of  
my untamed  
god.

I do not  
believe  
that he is  
real,  
but he is  
my reality,  
and I cower  
at his passing.  
Will he not  
allow me peace?  
And if not peace,  
may I have myself?

No.

I am under the rule  
of a mountainous some-  
thing,  
native, unmoveable, and  
cruel



**Hidden in a Shadow** by Emily Davis

### **Home**

-Deej Rolewski-

Lights  
Pass me by  
Multiple towns  
I go  
Through  
Time flies through  
The sounds  
Of my  
Headphones  
Squealing of the breaks  
And  
Whistling of the horn

I anticipate my return  
Home

## **Your Dream**

-Diedre Mapes-

Who are you?  
Don't you know,  
I'm your dream.

Why are you here?  
Because you created me  
Into being.

How did you find me?  
You called me,  
I'm here at your request.

Where did you come from?  
Your mind, talent, heart-  
And passion.

What do you want?  
For you to believe  
In yourself and me!

Why are you here?  
To give you courage  
To follow your dream.

## Even Fingers Get Lonely

-Suzanne Krahn-

my fingers are missing their ivories tonight  
my head is missing its brain  
my eyes are missing a tear or two  
my mind is missing an explanation  
my bed is missing its body

the click clack of the ebony keys  
that form the words i see  
are no substitute for the ivory keys  
that form the notes of the songs i hear  
only in my head

my fingers are missing their ivories tonight...

## Agressivity

(A Poem of Reflection on Jaques Lacan and Loren Eisely)

-Mitch James-

A hateful species  
Meant to kill  
Brandishing barehanded  
Heavy knuckled  
Swings

As children  
Disemboweling dolls  
Eviscerating look-a-likes  
Into cold piles  
Of halo white

As adults  
Using evolutionary hands  
To smite down look-a-likes  
Knowing one's important  
When they make things explode

As a whole  
Rake down  
Rape Mother Nature  
In some meditation  
Of specie dominance

Where science  
Is discordant to her  
Meditation of  
A global parasite

For a blink  
We've fought  
With thumbs  
And clubs  
And bombs

And in a wink  
Gone...

**Fallen**  
-Mitch James-

Shadows melted down white walls with the falling sun as Annabel Anders lumbered from her living room to her kitchen. Hard wood moaned under her heavy feet. They beat down like cold slabs of steak. Her once white nightgown was now peppered with stains. An old flower design, that flourished in a sky-blue hue in its prime, was now faded to thin translucent blotches, revealing a diaphanous showing of pudgy white flesh. Her sizable un-kept body was draped only with the paper-thin pull over, and her breast, large, limp, and alone, sagged like an execration from God.

She passed through the doorway of her living room. Underfoot, she crushed paint chunks that had fallen from the old door-frame into chips. Her hair was ratty and balled up into a nest of knot with two pencils. Part of the balled mess was dry and dull; other portions glistened with bodily oil.

She walked into the kitchen and lifted the lid to the coffee pot. She flipped the old filter into the trashcan. It fell like a limp parachute and landed with a damp thud on a cereal box. The grounds lay scattered like nature's germens. She didn't even know why she made coffee anymore. She had never really cared for it in the first place, but Red always had to have his coffee in the morning, and in the evening on the nights he got off work early. Looking at the scattered grounds, she remembered one of those evenings with Red.

Red sat down at the table with the brown coffee cup he always drank from. Annabel poured herself some coffee and sat down with him.

"You said we needed to talk," said Red.

"Yes," Annabel replied.

"Well."

The room was silent except for the clicking of the ceiling fan above their heads. Red took a slow sip of the coffee and sat the cup on the table.

"Good coffee."

"Thanks."

Annabel looked down into her cup. It was a small black hole to her, some void, some nebulous. She wanted to fall head first into it and disappear in its vacuumed recesses. She didn't care if it would be embracing. It would be blinding. That's all that mattered.

Red lifted his cup to his mouth again and took another sip. He lowered it.

"You're pregnant."

Annabel stared down into the cup.

"What's wrong with that? Everybody gets pregnant, Bell. It's how the species survives." He took another sip of his coffee and peered at her over the rim of the cup. She hated when he called her Bell. Bells made beautiful music.

"We're so young," Annabel said.

"A lot of twenty year olds have kids. Always have."

"You're twenty. I'm seventeen, Godamnit." Annabel began to cry silently. A tear dropped into the cup without a sound. A small ripple sprouted from its landing. She watched the aftermath from the falling of that one small tear. The black surface shuddered. It quivered. It rolled up and slammed itself into the walls of the cup. Then, with placidity, it settled.

Red stood up from his chair and walked over behind her. He placed his hands on her shoulders and gave them three firm squeezes. He leaned down to her head and kissed her on the cheek.

"You're eighteen next month. We'll get married and make all this right. I'm gonna take a shower and get cleaned up. We'll go down to the diner for dinner."

She stood looking at the trash, and the scattered grounds, and the soiled filter. She finished making the pot of coffee and went back into the living room while it brewed. She sat down on a large, brown leather chair. She liked its touch. It was cool and smooth. It embraced her volume with ease, and with every sitting, it exhaled a breath of rich leather. Red had bought the chair when he first moved out of his parents' house. It was a beautiful chair, and was the first and only piece of furniture he had for the first year he lived away from home. He had the chair before he had a bed to sleep in, so he said. It was his "smart" chair. Somehow its touch, its embrace, coaxed the muse from him. Red loved to read, and he wanted to take up writing before going into the military. He thought that the war would give him material to write about, and it did, Annabel was sure. He could never write about any of it now, though.

Red believed atmosphere was germane to creativity, and the chair was germane to atmosphere, and that was Red's equation. He wrote to Annabel about all the things that he would sit in that chair and write about, and about how much money he would make them, and how, when he got back from war, he would only have to work at the warehouse until he published his first novel. "Then it would be green and spring," he said.

The sound of the coffee's brewing became inconsistent, telling Annabel that the coffee was about done. She stood from the chair and made her way back into the kitchen. She opened the cabinet door and looked at the collection of cups lined up in a strict line. At the head of the line was Red's brown cup. She looked at it. She had thought about

drinking from it nearly every time she made coffee. It must be getting lonely these days. It was near a year since it had been drunk from. She reached her arm to it slowly, but faltered, and brought her hand to a larger blue cup she often used. She put cream and sugar in the cup and filled it up with coffee.

It was time to start thinking of dinner, she thought. Now, without Red monitoring her cooking habits with his work shifts, she often forgot about eating. Now, where once she was up at six a.m., she was up at noon. She seldom left the house. Dinner, she thought. What's for dinner?

She walked to a two-door cupboard that stretched the length of the floor to the ceiling. She opened the cupboard and scanned the inventory. It was empty except for some boxed dinners. Red hated boxed dinners, but now it made more sense for Annabel to cook them. She continued to scan, and on the top shelf she noticed, among a number of spices long abused with disuse, a bottle of cayenne pepper. Red's favorite dish called for those aggressive little shavings that aggravate the tongue. It was a spice she had forgotten, but right then she remembered all too well.

Annabel cooked over a pot of boiling rigatoni noodles. Red quietly walked into the apartment from work and crept to the doorframe of the kitchen. He peeked through the door looking at Annabel at the stove. She was like a witch performing incantations over a cauldron. Steam poured in billowing soft clouds about her head. He grinned at her beauty. She was in a pair of jeans that fit the thin form of her body like art, and she was already wearing maternity clothes. Her hair was bunched into a cute ponytail with a rubber band. He snuck into the kitchen, furtively, despite heavy work boots. He crept behind her, looming over her, looking down as she worked. She had no idea he was there. She didn't notice his ominous, ecliptic shadow. He put his hands on her hips and lowered his head to her shoulder. She jumped in surprise and dropped the spoon she was using into the boiling water. She tried to turn around to face him, but he held her with a puissant grip. He kissed her neck and worked his way up to her ear.

"Smells like my favorite," he whispered.

Her head lolled to her left shoulder as his lips and breath melted the muscles in her neck. He pulled her into him, sealing the gap between his hips and her ass. She went with it, rotating her hips in small seductive circles. She reached up and put both hands around Red's knotted neck, making his kisses more forceful, more passionate. He crept from her cheek back to her ear.

"You're beautiful," he said.

She spun with a celerity that broke the firm fingered grip of Red's hands. He reached behind her with his right hand and grabbed her ass.



He filled his fist with her taut young flesh. He squeezed, and Annabel moaned. He scooped her up with one hand. She wrapped around him with her legs and arms. They kissed with passionate lips and tongues. Red spun around and began to carry her to the living room.

"Wait," Annabel said, breaking their lips.

Red stopped. "What's wrong?"

Annabel reached over and shut the stove off.

"Ok," she said, barely getting it out before her tongue was back in Red's mouth.

He carried her into the living room, and laid her gently on the couch. Annabel was turned on by the sporadic moment. Red came in and seduced her and took her to the living room couch and not the bedroom. It was so passionate, so fresh. The bedroom was further away than the living room couch. Could he not wait the few extra steps? Was there no time for a walk?

Fresh flame, consuming, voracious, spurred Annabel forward. She pulled on Red's shoulders, pulling his head to her chest where he cupped her breasts through her shirt and squeezed them together on his face. He could feel the hard nipples through her bra and shirt. He bit one softly. Annabel moaned. She could feel Red's coarse facial hair breaking through the shirt's fabric and nipping her soft vulnerable skin.

"Harder," she said.

He bit harder, and Annabel reached down his back and pulled his shirt off. It was still damp from his shift at the warehouse. Annabel threw it to the floor. She reached out and undid his belt and unbuttoned his pants. Gravity pushed them with precipitate force to the floor. She could see his girth, growing, wanting to burst the cotton veil. This made her vagina throb with every pump of her beating heart.

She undid her own belt and pulled off her pants and underwear that clung to her with a damp grip. She kicked them from her ankle. Red reached out and grabbed her hands. He pulled her up to a sitting position and took off her shirt. As Red reached over her back, Annabel leaned forward and put as much of Red's cock into her mouth as she could. He grabbed the back of the couch as he nearly collapsed from the feeling and the surprise. He stepped back from her.

"Baby, I just got done at the warehouse."

"I don't care," Annabel said, grabbing both of his hips with a nail-gouging grip, and pulling his cock into her mouth again.

He stood and enjoyed the long absent sensation of oral sex. He got the feeling, as she worked, fueled by passion, by desire and lust, that at that moment she wanted nothing more; that she was hungry for nothing more.

Red pulled the straps of her bra down over her shoulders so that it fell around her waist. She lay down on her back and grabbed his cock and

pulled it to her. He climbed into her, slowly, and with familiar ease. She moaned through a closed mouth and squeezed pressed lips. Her eyes rolled back as he went all the way in. He went down to his elbows, and kissed her chest and neck while he made love to her. She ran her nails up and down his back in varying tensions depending on the depth of each slow unfeigned thrust.

He was close to her. He smelled of sweat and hard labor. He smelled like cardboard, and concrete, and metal. She grabbed his hair and pulled his mouth from her neck to her lips. As her tongue entered his mouth, his thrusts began to quicken and reach deeper into her. She opened her mouth, breaking their kiss, and moaned on his lips. She kissed him again and moaned into his mouth. His hips began moving, not in slow circular movements, but rather, in strong, straight shot, punching thrusts. Annabel broke their kiss again and turned her head to her left shoulder. She screamed. Red grabbed both her hands and crossed them above her head. He held them down with his veined gorilla grip. She looked at his hands holding hers down. She saw their wedding bands touching together. They were separated, but each thrust brought them together, tapping, touching. Would they spark? So this is marriage, she thought.

She stood looking at the cayenne pepper and realized that she had been holding her breath for so long that her lungs throbbed. She exhaled the stale air that had been sitting in her. She inhaled fresh through breaking breaths. She grabbed a boxed dinner and shut the cupboard door. She sat the box down on the counter top and reached inside a cabinet and got out a skillet. The linoleum floor was cold to her feet. What else should I have with dinner, she thought, trying to keep her mind in the present, trying to keep it firm and not letting it slip to a time that didn't exist anymore. She placed her hands on the edge of the counter top and dropped her head. It had grown so heavy. She squeezed the counter trying to keep emotions hidden in dark fissures where they belonged. She looked down at her gown--at her chest. On her left side, the gown was pushed from her chest by her large breast, but on the right side the gown draped like a dirty sheet.

Annabel lay on the couch with her back to Red. She was pressed tight against him, still sweaty from the sporadic lovemaking. Red had his arms wrapped around her. He slid his hands up and cupped her breasts. He rubbed and squeezed them gently. Red pulled her closer to him by her chest and clenched breasts. Annabel closed her eyes and placed her hands on his. They felt rough like the chiseled hands of a statue. Red was rubbing and squeezing rhythmically. Then he stopped. His hands stopped rubbing as a whole, and their movement was replaced by the moving of his thumb only. As his thumb pressed and rubbed, Annabel realized that he was thumbing an unknown lump in

her breast. His thumb stopped.

"What's that, Bell?"

She pulled his hand away from her breast and felt the lump herself.

"I don't know," she said.

Annabel's face bunched in confusion. She looked as if she was focusing very hard on something with her eyes, but it was her mind that was focusing, figuring, calculating, guessing. She held her breath as she rubbed. She was afraid.

She looked up from the flaccid, dead portion of nightgown. It looked empty and lonely. With a deep breath, she walked to the silverware drawer and pulled out a measuring cup. She then reached above her head, conscious of the weight from her one heavy breast, and pulled a medium sized baking dish from the cabinet. She opened the boxed dinner, threw it all into the pan like the box instructed, and placed the pan into the oven. Annabel opened the refrigerator and pulled out a jar of sweet sun tea. When Red drank tea, before he went to war, he would only drink it if it were sun tea. Therefore, there was only tea in the refrigerator from the end of May till the beginning of September. It had been an unusually warm summer this year, an Indian summer some had said, so she was drinking sweet sun tea at the beginning of October.

She poured the amber liquid into a glass. No ice. She never saw the sense of using ice if the drink was cold. The drink was never around long enough to get too warm, so why water it down with ice, she thought. She put the tea back in the refrigerator and turned to leave the kitchen. She stopped, remembering that she had forgotten to turn the stove on. She went over and twisted the knob to 375 and exited the kitchen. She plopped in the brown chair and took a swig of the sweet tea. She felt it crawling, cold, down her throat and into her belly. She took another drink, a big one this time, so that she could feel the cold run down and form a puddle in her stomach, quenching caustic stomach acid. She could feel the spherical shape of her stomach as the tea came to a halt in her belly and cooled its walls. She closed her eyes.

A week and a half ago Annabel had gone to the doctor for testing. The surgeon, Dr. Badge, had decided to remove the lump from her breast and perform a biopsy. Nancy, a nurse at Dr. Badge's office, had called on Monday and set up an immediate appointment for Tuesday to go over the results of the tests.

"So, what do they think is wrong?" asked Red.

"Well, Mr. Anders, all that will be explained by the doctor upon your arrival," answered Nancy.

"You can't tell me anything? Not one thing? Should I be worried? Should Annabel be worried? She's pregnant, ya know."

"Listen, Mr. Anders. I only know so much about the doctor's patients. I'm not at justice to discuss their conditions, or-" "It's a condition! A condition? What kind of condition? She is going to have our child. She can't have a condition."

"Listen, Mr.-"

"No. Unacceptable."

Annabel shuffled into the room. Her hair was straight and draped slightly over her face. She had heard it all. She had felt that something was wrong. An animalistic notification throbbed inside her. Something inside her; some kind of chemical unbalancing within her brain that was meant to incite an emotion that directed her consciousness to the likely hood of something not being right inside, was spilling, trickling, dripping inside her. With one small pointer finger Annabel reached out and hung up the phone.

The next day she was wearing exactly what she wore the day before. She had not bathed. Her hair was draped, clung in hugging strands, over her face and eyes. Like small sinuous ropes they dangled and danced as she walked into the doctor's office. She and Red sat down in the waiting room. They were on time. Prior to the doctor visit, Annabel couldn't remember the last time they were on time for anything. Like abnormal clockwork, just as they sat, the door opened.

"Annabel Anders." A nurse looked out over the empty doctor's office, likely out of habit. She then centered her view on Annabel and Red. She offered them in with a smile and a "Right this way," as if they wouldn't have known where to go without the invite. The nurse led them through a hallway lined with makeshift cubicles. From within the cubicles came the ambience of clicking keys, telephone rings, and the swish of small desk fans. Quaint, fake, voices emanated from behind the walls. It was a somber serenade of resonating technology. The nurse led them to a patient room. It was a mauve color, and it was cold.

"The doctor will be right with you," she said with a smile. It was the same smile that she would give to a high school kid there for a physical. It was empty. It didn't matter much. Red sat down in a chair by the door, and Annabel sat down on the paper-covered bed. They both sat in silence. Annabel looked like death. She stared, not at the wall, but into the wall, into a realm or place not attainable by anyone else at that time. Her eyes beamed through chunky strands of hair like hate. Red took slow, steady, breaths. His right leg shook in nervous anxiety. The clock ticked, loud, deafening, in Red's ears.

The door opened, and in walked Dr. Badge. He walked over to a counter top adjacent the patient bed and sat down with a glib and casual air about him.

"How long do I have."

"Bell!" Red's head shot up.

"Now slow down just a step, Annabel," said Dr. Badge. "I'll get right to the point since it seems that's your method. You have breast cancer."

Red's head flagged with neck snapping, extemporaneous, weight.

"But wait," the doctor said, raising his hand up as if to halt Red's crashing head, "it's not malignant. In fact, your chances of success through this are very good. Eighty-twenty odds. You discovered it very, very, early, in it's nascent stages. Through some chemo, and maybe a little radiation, you can be good as new, if that's even necessary."

"What about the baby," asked Red with his head still sagging towards the floor.

"Well," replied Dr. Badge in an optimistic tone, "that's just it. We will have to do a little more testing to make sure that the cancer hasn't spread beyond the mammary glands, and then, if it hasn't, you'll have to, or rather, Annabel will have to, make a decision whether to keep her breast or the child. If it has spread past the breast, which is very unlikely being that the cancer is in such an early stage, then, Annabel, you will have to choose yourself or the child. You can keep your breast, do chemo, and abort the baby. Or, if the cancer hasn't spread beyond your breast, then you can have it removed and keep your child. The child cannot be born after chemo and or radiation. That's the definite thing."

Red stood up from his chair and walked over to Annabel. He wrapped his thick arms around her, but she sat stolid. Dr. Badge talked of procedures and medications, of past patients and psychiatrists. For an hour or more he talked to the Anders, and they nodded when his break in speech indicated they should. They were not hearing what he was saying, however. His voice was dampened by the morose thoughts and feelings that now steeped their brains to near bursting.

"Are there any questions," asked Dr. Badge "I'm sorry."

Annabel and Red were silent.

"Ok, then. You know how to get a hold of me if you have any questions or issues. On your way out, make sure you talk to Nancy. She is going to give you some packets that can help you, some informative literature and things. She also has your appointment date for your next set of testing. All right. I will see the two of you in a few days then."

Dr. Badge turned and exited the room. Red felt Annabel suddenly grow heavy. She was limp and oozing from his arms and onto the floor.

"Doc!" Red tightened his grip. "Doc!"

Annabel stood from the chair and carried the empty glass to the

kitchen. She placed the glass in the sink and went over to the stove to check on the dinner. The clock on the stove told her she had fifteen minutes left. It was right. She closed the oven door and walked back to the kitchen counter. with a hesitant left hand she reached over to a drawer she had not opened in a long while. Why was she doing this to herself, she wondered. Today it was bad, this spell. Her hand sat in limbo hovering above the wooden knob of the drawer. She knew what was inside. She had seen it enough times that she could close her eyes and see it perfectly. She could see its black and white contrasting shapes and lines and blobs of black and strips of white. She could see its little block numbers revealing a date long dead yet still inimical. She reached down and wrapped the knob up with two fingers. with a slight pull the drawer slid open.

For nine and a half hours she lay there and screamed, cursed, clawed sheets, pulled hair. Red stood beside her and helped her through the process the best he could. The best support he gave was his right arm, which bled through many small incisions. Bringing a child into life sounded like death, like hate, like a spewing fourth of discordant sounds from the bowels of hell. It was a melancholy ambience of grunts, heavy breathing, tearing sheets, clanking stirrups, screaming, cursing, all in a noxious cloud of bodily fluid, sweat, and blood. All of this, just for the doctor to lean over and whisper to the nurse; something that made her react in haste to the doctors side; all of this, so that the doctor could struggle to pullout a pale, flaccid, quiescent lump from Annabel's vagina.

A problem. That's what Red heard the doctor whisper to the nurse. A problem? What problem? Then he saw the pale un-moving child. It made no sound. It had no life. The doctor lifted it, still attached to its mother, and snipped the chord. He threw a blanket around it and was out the door all in a matter of seconds. Annabel lifted a heavy head of matted, sweaty hair. Her head shook uncontrollably, and her eyes were defeated, wet, coursing. "No," she forced out in one lenient breath, and then fainted.

"What's wrong with my child," asked Red in a monotone whisper.

"I don't know, Mr. Anders, I-"

The nurse stopped talking as Red, looking up from the floor, literally took her breath away. As he lifted his head, he grew as big as God. His hands didn't move, but they were so charged, he was so angry, she could feel them emanating with the desire to smash things. His arms turned from evolutionary limbs, to giant lumbering clubs meant to still pulses. He stood straight now, barrel chested, broad shouldered. His skin was peppered in splotchy reds and pinks. He was seething. She had never been more terrified of anything in her life.

Through instinct, she slowly walked backwards and out of the room.

Later that night, he and Annabel were finally mollified enough to talk. The room was pitch black except for the faint green light of a machine monitor. Annabel looked over at the door where the child was carried out, and Red looked down at the floor with his elbows on his knees and his hands locked together.

"What do we do now?" asked Annabel.

"I'm going to see an army recruiter in the morning."

The pain that knotted in Annabel's heart tightened. "Why?"

"Because, Bell, I'm scared."

"Why?"

"I'm scared of what I'm going to do."

"What do you mean?"

"I wanna kill, Bell. I've never felt like this before. I wanna kill something with my hands. I wanna put my hate onto people. I want them to feel it. Feel how fucking heavy it is. So Godamn heavy. So thick. I want them to hate me. I want us to come together and see who hates more. Nobody can hate more than me."

"That'll change." She continued looking over at the door. "Your feelings will change. Give it time."

Red still looked down at the floor, "I'm talking to the recruiter tomorrow."

Annabel wretched under the blanket and rubbed her flat chest where her second breast used to be. She retched to cry. There were no tears left to run.

Annabel shut the drawer and walked out of the kitchen and into the bathroom. She lifted her gown and sat on the toilet. The bathroom smelled like Irish Spring bar soap. It was Red's favorite. The bathroom had a garden tub. Attached to the tub was a shower spout. A rust colored plastic liner acted as a shower curtain and ran the diameter of the tub on a track that circled the top of it. Annabel reached into where the curtain split and opened it, looking at the tub. She had loved the tub at one time, but now it made her ill to bath in it. She would force herself to do it on occasion, but she would do it without alacrity. She would do it with a lucid remembrance of what took place there.

Red was gone. He had been gone for four months, and then he was deployed. He came home for a week before his deployment, but he wasn't himself. He was in a different world, a different place. Red was of a different mind. He drank his coffee and ate; staring at some other plane that seemed to steal the moment Annabel broke the monotonous silence. He was like a shell shuffling around with feeble limbs, pressed by heavy gravity. Then, one morning, with a kiss and a plastic face, Red walked out the door. It was the last time he would walk out that door.

How was Annabel to know? She smiled and said something to him about love, and future days, and marriage, and smiles. He walked away into the grass.

It had been eight months and Red was deployed and destroyed. When she got the call about him she answered with a heavy exhale. The floor trickled in numb bits away from her. It became impossible to stand. With numb clubs for legs she shuffled, with the assistance of clutching hands, to the bathroom. She began heaving. Her lungs pounded for air. The air was too thick, too heavy, to do her lungs any good. She looked into the mirror through a fluid filled view. She stood and glared. In that instant, she hated. She clutched the collar of her shirt with her hands and ripped the shirt in two clean halves. It fell heavy to the floor. She stared at herself, full of Magdalene sentimentality, one breast speaking of her sex, the absence of the second, speaking of injustice. She saw the stretch marks that tarnished her belly. They crawled down her side. They were caused by a once moving, kicking, breathing, child that came out mum, static-austere. The mirror rained down in glittering shards into the sink and onto the floor. Her hand trickled with blood. She saw herself in its reflection no more.

She turned to the bathtub and turned the water on. It poured from the spout in a cloud of steam. The water was white and hazy with heat. Her hand found the largest shard of mirror in the sink. With her pants still on, she stepped into the scalding water. It burnt her, but not the way it burns one in their right mind. She didn't care if the water scalded her and made her skin blotchy with red and pink. People care about pain because they know that they could feel something better instead. She didn't feel anything right then. No pain. No pleasure. Just numbness. Feeling was for the living. She shattered the mirror into a hundred dead little pieces. It felt nothing. She was the mirror.

She held her wrist in view, and with a meticulous, vertical incision, she splayed one of her veins. It spewed. She moved the point of the shard up half an inch to the next vein, and began to open up that one as well. It opened as easy as the first. How simple it was. How Godamn simple it was to take a life, she thought. It didn't take clout. It didn't take power, faith, or worshipers. It took just the opposite. It took emptiness. That was all.

The reflection of the bleeding vein, of the pulsing red fluid, danced in her quaking hand. Sliding down, a jagged sliver of the shard snagged and latched into her skin like an anchor. It pulled her skin taut. She jerked, and the glass opened up a hole in her wrist. This was not a clean cut, but rather, a crooked winding aberration. It looked like a surgical mishap. Nothing. She felt nothing.

She moved to her other wrist and splayed those veins as well. She laid her wrists into the hot water. The red mixed with the haze. She closed



her eyes waiting to feel the loss of blood. She began pumping her hands in and out of fists to increase the flow. The water was approaching the top of the tub. She noticed her one breast still breaking the surface of the bloody water. She placed the tip of the mirror at the top of her breast and pushed it in until it could go no further. She began to cut up and down with biting, gnawing strokes. She didn't need it anymore. She had no child, no husband, no family-she was woman no more. As she sliced, she began to get light headed. All she knew faded to black.

Her glance went from the tub down to the floor. There was a giant red stain from where the tub had over flowed onto the carpet. She didn't remember the neighbor from below bursting in to see why crimson water dripped from his ceiling. She didn't know what he thought. She didn't remember the ride to the hospital. She didn't know how close she was to death. She only cared then that she wasn't close enough.

The oven timer went off. The sound pierced her ears. With a deflated breath, she walked from the bathroom and into the kitchen. She shut off the timer, and with a hot pad, grabbed the food from the oven. She made a plate of the slop, grabbed a dirty glass from the sink, filled it with water, grabbed a fork from a drawer, and exited the kitchen.

She approached the wooden door with full hands. She hadn't been in there since the morning. She always left the door cracked just enough so that she could open it with her foot. She ate dinner in his room every evening. The first few times she had to put her dinner down to open the door-but not anymore. She had developed a system. She raised her foot up to push open the door. She could hear the beeping. The beeping always pierced her ears like little spiteful pins. There he lay like mechanic death. He lay there with tubes of liquid stretching like pulsing roots from his cadaver-esque form. He looked tangled in a web of shiny, jutting poles. He lay there, heaving in small, steady, breaths-looking like a graveyard reject wrapped in junk scrap metal. The plastic tubing, jutting from his body to small golden bags, and to God, made him look like tangible death; an evisceration of some darker place-some bowel from an unknown deep.

She entered the room and sat the dinner down on Red's desk. She rolled his desk chair out and sat in it. She picked up the plate and sat it on her lap. with a sagging head, she placed the first bit into her mouth and began to chew while Red lay there like some loathed aberration of all she once knew.



Dirt and blood everywhere. A man yells far away. Shoulders hurt, also bleeding. Blood and dirt everywhere. I decide I need a doctor.

My boss runs around the corner of the ruined building. Even now he is stoic. Blood is on his hands, but I know it is not mine. Another man must be hurt. He asks if I am okay. I cannot remember if his name is Bruce or Ritchie. I tell him I think I need a doctor.

He has a man with him, bald. Months later I will still wonder who he is, where he is from. I will hope that he recognizes me in some restaurant somewhere and tells me who he is. I will not remember his face, only his non-hair. I will want to buy him a beer. Two beers. A house.

They sit me down on a bed of salvaged insulation. We peeled it from the building's roof yesterday, back when it was still standing. I see my co-worker, who's name is probably Bobby. He has a blood-soaked handkerchief tied around his arm. He looks like he is in pain. I do not look like I am in pain-I know it exists, but my face does not react to the information.

Empty mind.

Time passes as I black out again. Now two paramedics are squeezing my wrists and gently touching my neck. They are the classic team-one fat, one gangly. The fat one's name is Shawn. I will always remember remembering his name.

Yes, I was inside. Yes, I was unconscious. Yes, I moved afterwards.

They make notes. They tell me I have pissed myself. They say it's normal with a concussion.

My name is Mario Podeschi. I was born in September. Today is ... today is ...

They say it's okay. Lots of people miss that question.

I see Ritchie and know his name is not Bruce. His face is still like stone. I do not see my mother, but I know she is there. I hear her praying, or possibly cursing: "ohGodohGodohGod."

They clean my arm and poke me with needles. The big man tells me his name is Shawn and I laugh at him for being so obvious. He looks at me strangely for laughing. The thin one stares at my arm; it looks worse and hurts most. A blood bubble, a "hematoma" I will learn, has formed where I tried to catch a furnace and a few hundred two-by-fours. It looks like a pimple under a microscope. I flex to see if it will explode. It does not. But the pain is a tiny hell.

I realize that I will write this all down someday. This requires remembering that I like to write. I wonder if it will be with my left hand or my right. I try to measure my "hematoma." It is perfectly round and unnervingly huge. One third of a grapefruit, I decide. A big, red, bloody, dirty grapefruit.

They ask me the same questions again. I do better this time. I remember it is Tuesday.

Inside the hospital, they poke me with more needles. I think of hospital dramas and wonder if I am an interesting case. They send me to another floor to get x-rays. Moving hurts less than I expect, but everything is out of focus. My mind and my eyes cannot settle on just one thing. Even paying attention to the pain is difficult. I am grateful.

I notice the x-ray and stare hard, trying to get it to hold still. It has cross-hairs on it that they use to target my "hematoma". They are slippery, though. They spin like a ceiling fan. I cannot keep them still.

In the elevator I realize I have forgotten to think again. I ask myself if I have been getting x-rays for minutes or hours. I wonder if there have been other tests, if perhaps my heart stopped and I was revived only after my brain had suffocated and stopped working and that was why my mind was not working. The smell of my urine reaches me as a nurse pushes me down the hallway, and I vaguely remember being confused this much earlier as well.

My room is now filled with family members. My mother and father are in the same room for the first time since high school graduation. Dad's moustache sags, lining up with the wrinkles in his cheeks, and his eyes squint with grim concern. Mom's eyes are puffy, and her face is smeared like a disobedient palette.

I lie to myself and Ritchie that I will be back to work on Monday. I have not yet accepted that my life has changed forever. I am not yet aware that my spine has collapsed on itself, that I will spend the rest of the year in constant pain, or that back surgery is inevitable.

The doctor prescribes pain killers and sends me home.

That night, I cannot sleep. The muscles in my neck lock in place, and I wake up every hour more exhausted than when I lied down. I do not dream but am lost in reverie-I keep seeing the flower.

Four a.m. I try to read and realize the letters don't hold still.

Five a.m. I turn on the television, but it's movement makes me sick.

Six a.m. Wake up in the wrong bed. Cannot remember how I got there.

Seven a.m. Sun rises. I vomit.

Eight a.m. Give up on sleeping. Try to vomit but can't.

Nine a.m. Nausea. Dizziness. Standing is excruciating.

Ten a.m. Asleep again at last.

Eleven a.m. Wake up and spend five minutes trying to remember why I hurt so badly.

Noon.

A knock on the door tricks me into remembering the collapse. My eyes slam open, hurting my skull. The room sways but I stand anyway. Mom looks at me worriedly from the kitchen. She would look more worried if she knew that I did not remember when or how long ago she got home. She answers the door as I sit back down.

Two friends have visited me. They are the first to hear the story. The telling exhausts me and I lie down again. They have ideas for me, conversations, but their voices blister my bruised brain. The very act of thinking becomes painful. My eyes close but I do not sleep. My head finds the pillow, then buries itself underneath it. My legs writhe as I try to escape the pain.

I have yet to learn that you cannot escape back pain.

I learn then that you cannot escape head pain.

Empty mind.

I know I have not slept, but something has been forgotten. Their voices are concerned now. I want to comfort my friends and mother, but cannot articulate the words. My thoughts are perforated. Coherence is impossible. I will never remember what I told them, but they finally leave.

I take two pills instead of one this time. I hunger for sleep. My mind is still aware of the pain, but it no longer frets over it. On one level, I am keenly aware of it.

There is no doubting that my body is mangled. On another level, two pills allow me to ignore it.

Six precious hours of sleep later, it is dark again. I wake up exhausted-the pills have worn off and my spine competes with my concussion for attention. My mother is asleep. I wander to the living room. Turn the television back on. Turn it back off. I sit on the couch for an hour, trying, trying to think through the blur.

I think of Algernon. No, that is not his name. Algernon is the rat. The main character's name was. The main character's name was. The main character's name is irrelevant. I tell myself! can fill that detail in later.

Charlie Gordon is given a treatment that takes him from mental retardation to genius, but it does not last. The treatment is temporary. His intelligence piques, then declines. By the end, he is back to himself

and blissfully unaware. The rising action, climax, and falling action follow his LQ. On his way back down to his original state, he clings desperately but to his mind. The efforts are both futile and heartbreaking.

I remember being sad when I read the story.

Suddenly I am terrified.

People will ask me later what the worst part of the accident was. My physical therapist will ask three times a week for me to rate the pain in my neck and back. But no pain, not in my wrist or my spine or my muscle or my skull, can compete with the terror of trying to remember Charlie Gordon.

## The Italian Crisis

-Andy Masters-

Dr. Theodore Winslow glared at the paper in front of him. It was an urgent report on a censorship crisis in the *Persons Dimension*. Summarily, it explained how a new government in Italy had taken control of the country. Usually books stay out of human affairs but this time, it was different. The new government had begun to burn and rewrite books by the thousands!

Where Dr. Theodore Winslow, nicknamed simply "The Dr.", lived in the *Books Dimension* where there was everything from journals to magazines to normal books living and working. The DL was The Head of Intra-dimensional Affairs at the Embassy of the Book in the capital of the *Books Dimension*, Book Bork.

Most books lived and had homes in the *Books Dimension* and traveled to the *Persons Dimension* to work. Whenever a book is read by a person, that book must cross over to the *Persons Dimension* and give life to the otherwise inanimate object there. This crossing-over is why books seem to come to life when we read them. An books vary in their work, depending on how well liked they are in the persons dimensions. For example, some books are born and never really find much work; some books are born and have a lot of work in their early years but slow down as they become old. The luckiest ones, but not necessarily the best, become school curriculum and never have trouble finding work.

All employees in the Embassy of the Book were in the *Books Dimension* permanently and could not cross over. The Embassy dealt with issues ranging from intradimensional crises to angry librarians and overdue fines. The bulk of the staff at the Embassy was actually textbooks, they simply did not cross over while being read. This should not come as a surprise due to the lack of life in any chemistry or algebra textbook you might find. Any non-textbook employees were either highly unpopular or written in a dead language. In some rare cases, the Dr. and other high-ranking officials at the Embassy used highly-confidential contacts from the *Persons Dimension* to hide special books away, making sure they weren't opened.

The Dr. sat in silence, thinking. He was a large book, his covering a deep auburn. Along his spine were lines of golden embroidery, of which he was extremely proud. His office was fairly large with an oak brown desk in the middle and papers mashed across it. Near one of the walls was a globe, but in the shape of a dictionary. Near the other was a dictionary; but in the shape of a globe. He had no phone, just a fax machine; this was because books cannot actually make any noise unless someone slams them shut.

To speak with each other, they either write on paper or think words on to the back few blank pages that all books have. The words would always disappear after a few moments; this was the preferred way of communication.

Suddenly, a chemistry textbook rushed in to the Dr.'s office, slamming the door behind him and causing the Dr. to cringe.

"Sir, books in the Italian quarter of Book Bork have begun to deteriorate! We have over 15 reports of missing and tom out pages!" the textbook wrote furiously. The Dr. remained still for a few moments, he slowly pondered his options. After a few short seconds, he knew he had only one choice.

"Get me Hamilton Striker as fast as your binding can take you." he wrote grimly. The small test tubes on the front of the chemistry textbook seemed to pale as he heard the name of the dreaded general of the Lancers. The Lancers were an elite group of infamous books trained in the art of acute paper cuts, called in by The Embassy of the Book only in the most extreme instances. Throughout bookdom, many rumors circulated about the Lancers. Some said they sharpened and stiffened their pages to allow them to cut easier, some said they wondered if they *have* any writing in them at all. Some even wondered if they had ever even been read before. What was known was that they were indiscriminate in who they cut to finish the job. Whenever the Lancers went out on a mission, civilians were harmed, and if band-aids were in short-supply, they were doomed.

This case was even more dangerous because it dealt with taking down an entire government. The textbook sped out of the office. As the minutes ticked by the Dr. wondered if he had made the right decision.

An hour later a sleek black book with no markings or distinctive cover art stepped in to the Dr.'s office.

"You requested my services?"

"Hamilton, I can't say I enjoy seeing your pages, but I'm stuck between a paper shredder and a prairie fire here, and *I have no other options.*"

"I know you don't like me Doc, so let's get this over with fast. What do you want me to do?" The black book wrote roughly, taking a seat in a small bookshelf set out for visitors in front of the Dr.'s desk.

"The Italy situation has gotten out of hand, we need you and the Lancers to cross over and straighten things out."

Hamilton nodded.

"These are your orders; cut at will with extreme prejudice and leave no prisoners." Hamilton radiated at hearing the orders.

"Consider it done." wrote Hamilton in calm, slow letters.



He walked out and the Dr. sighed heavily, looking back down at the papers in front of him. I hate to do this, thought the Dr. *He's a natural born killer and sending him out there is like flinging napalm in to an old library! But.. I know what needs to be done, and he's the only one who can do it.*

\* \* \*

The next day, word had spread throughout The Embassy of the Book of the Dr.'s decision and everyone was on edge. Around midday, all the employees were called to the main conference room for an informational meeting. A rustling of pages could be heard as everyone took their places in the rows of bookshelves set up but all the noise stopped as Dr. Theodore Winslow stepped in to the room. All pages were on him as he began to speak.

"I know you've probably all heard of my orders by now to Hamilton Striker and his Lancers yesterday. I have just gotten off the fax machine with the Italian Dictionary. As you all know, the leader of all Italian books and words is stationed permanently in the people's dimension, conducting affairs there. We did not write to each other for long but he made one thing clear, it was not pretty--"

"Sir, Are you trying to tell us that

People died,

Women cried,

And eggs fried?" interrupted a small book of poetry, long since forgotten in the Person's Dimension due to its bad rhymes and too frequent use of the zeugma.

"I'm afraid so, the Italian Dictionary told me that the streets ran red with blood and black with ink. None were spared paper cuts, not even women or children. \Ve were successful in replacing the tyrannical government--" wrote the Dr.

Suddenly, in a brilliant flash of light Hamlet appeared in the middle of the conference room! This was a very rare occurrence because someone somewhere was always reading Hamlet. Some books instantly flipped open their books and wrote, "GASP!" or "Ohmigosh!" One chemistry text book spilled the beakers of solution on his front cover all over the floor. An algebra book became so alarmed he crossed over to his book in the *Persons Dimension*--

\* \* \*

Richard Staffman, freshman at Villager Community High School, had been stuck on the same algebra problem for 27 minutes. All of a sudden he jumped out of his seat, pencil flying through the air.

"I get it! 1 get it! I really finally get all of it ... it's beautiful!"

As soon as he had retrieved his pencil and sat back down, he promptly lost it.

\* \* \*

---and returned, flustered, as soon as he could

"Sometimes ..." Hamlet wrote slowly, silence returned and all pages were trained on him. He began to sweep to and fro in an overdramatic fashion that is common of Shakespearian actors.

"Sometimes, we must be cruel to be kind." With that, he vanished in another flash of light followed by more unheard gasps.

As everyone returned to work that day, the Dr. watched them, deep in thought again. He had done what he had to; no book could blame him for that. Well, he thought, better get back to another exciting day at The Embassy of the Book. If he had a mouth, he would have been grinning as we walking out of the conference room that day.

## About the Authors

~~~~~

**Emily Davis**, English major. She plans on pursuing a career in ESL. She also loves to travel. The inspiration for her pictures came from recent travels to Chicago, Atlanta, and Charleston.

**Craig A. Dennis**, Sophomore Computer Science and Math major. He graduated from Oakland High School in Oakland, IL. *"I have been writing poetry off and on for the past three years, and started in creative writing my senior year of high school."*

**Jacob Foster**, Junior English major with a Creative Writing minor.

**Rebecca M. Griffith**, Sophomore English major with Creative Writing, Professional Writing, and Women's Studies minors. She is an Honors student and plans on attending graduate school. In the future she would like to become an author or editor.

**Mitch James**, English major with a Creative Writing minor.

**Stephen Jefferies**, English major. He hopes to attain an MFA degree and teach creative writing classes. He enjoys *"reading and writing, along with many other activities such as paintball, guitar playing, and video games."*

**Suzanne Krahn**, Sophomore Geology major with a Chemistry minor. She is from Kewanee, IL. *"I'm a recreational writer."*

**Diedre Mapes**, English major with a Creative Writing minor. *"I love to write, to read, and England."* This is also her *"first time submitting something to The Vehicle."*

**Andy Masters**, no major provided. He was born in Towanda, PA. He is a Christian and hopes the future will be all right!

**Mario Podeschi**, an English Graduate student. He works in the Writing Center and earned his B.A. in English at EIU. He hopes to pursue his doctorate in grammar or literary theory.

**Amanda Yeale**, Sophomore Psychology major. She is from Macomb, IL. *"I hope to spend my life helping survivors of sexual abuse, writing poetry, and finding happiness."*

EASTERN ILL. UNIV. LIBRARY



3 2211 131597818

“Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has a contempt for poetry, cannot have much respect for himself, or for anything else.”

-William Hazlitt

