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The Vehicle, Spring 2009

Justine Fitton

Josh Boykin

Stephen Garcia

Dan Davis

Justin Sudkamp

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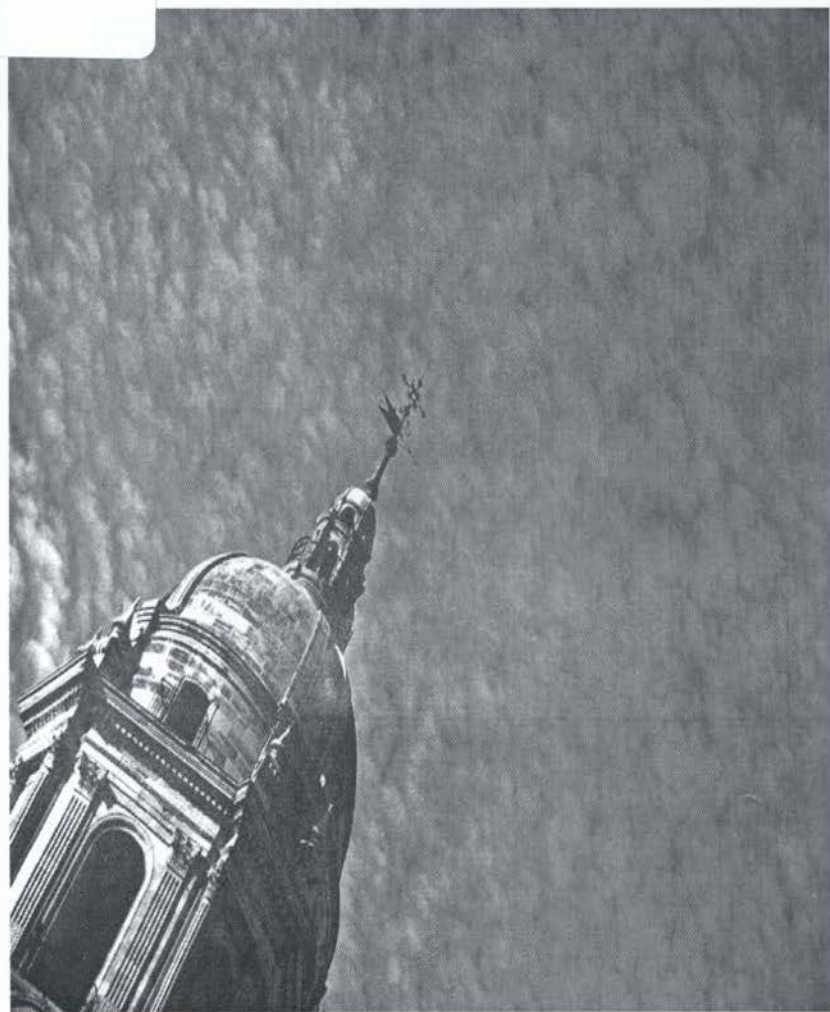
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Archives
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Spring

The Vehicle

Spring 2009



Celebrating 50 Years

Credits

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The Many Definitions

ve·hi·cle

[vee-i-kuhl or, sometimes, vee-hi-]

—noun

1. any means in or by which someone travels or something is carried or conveyed; a means of conveyance or transport: a motor vehicle; space vehicles.
2. a conveyance moving on wheels, runners, tracks, or the like, as a cart, sled, automobile, or tractor.
3. a means of transmission or passage: Air is the vehicle of sound.
4. a carrier, as of infection.
5. a medium of communication, expression, or display: The novel is a fitting vehicle for his talents. Language is the vehicle of thought.
6. Theater, Movies . a play, screenplay, or the like, having a role suited to the talents of and often written for a specific performer.
7. a means of accomplishing a purpose: College is a vehicle for success.
8. Rhetoric . the thing or idea to which the subject of a metaphor is compared, as "rose" in "she is a rose."
9. Pharmacology . a substance, usually fluid, possessing little or no medicinal action, used as a medium for active remedies.
10. Painting . a liquid, as oil, in which a pigment is mixed before being applied to a surface.

Origin:

1605–15; < L vehiculum, equiv. to veh (ere) to convey.

Source: Dictionary.com

Note From the Editor:

This issue of *The Vehicle* marks the publication's fiftieth anniversary. Since 1959, many, many people have been involved with Eastern Illinois University's literary journal, and I am proud to be counted among them, along with the wonderful reading and editorial staff I've worked with this year.

There is an excitement about working with *The Vehicle* that transcends resume-building. Those who have worked with the journal know that we have a unique opportunity to highlight the voice of this campus, to archive, in a way, the attitudes and thoughts of its students. In preparation for this issue, I was reading through some of the archived journals, especially a commemorative edition published in the Spring of 1993, in celebration of thirty-five years of *The Vehicle's* presence on campus. That issue featured artwork, poetry, and prose from each decade *The Vehicle* has been in print, showcasing the change and growth experienced by the University community throughout the years. This drove home to me the beauty of what *The Vehicle* can be and the unique place it holds among other noteworthy campus publications. Unlike *The DEN*, which informs students on a daily basis, or *The Warbler*, which encapsulates each year in photos, a literary journal can preserve the creative work of students, the fruits of their thoughts and musings, for years to come. Fifty years of student expression is certainly something to be celebrated.

The meaning of the word "vehicle" goes beyond trucks and cars. A vehicle is also the means by which something is conveyed, or a medium of communication, or expression. Eastern Illinois University's *Vehicle* has conveyed the thoughts, talents, and creativity of Eastern students for fifty exciting years. I invite you to celebrate with me and the rest of *The Vehicle's* staff as we mark the close of these fifty years and start work on the beginning of the next fifty.

I hope to see you all at this semester's reading event during Celebration weekend, where we will have some special guests entertaining us with readings from the archived issues of *The Vehicle* that will be on display.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of EIU's one and only student literary journal.

—Rebecca Griffith, Editor-in-Chief 2008-2009

Fall 2008-Spring 2009 Vehicle Awards

Best Overall (Winnie Davis Neely Award):

Amanda Veale, "Dining at the Mortuary" (Fall 2008)

Poetry:

1st Place: Jake Dawson, "Hop Scotch Bebop" (Fall 2008)

2nd Place: Anthony Travis Shoot, "Spring" (Spring 2009)

3rd Place: Sarah Fairchild, "Trumpet" (Fall 2008)

Prose:

1st Place: Mary Lieske, "Motivation" (Fall 2008)

2nd Place: Daniel W. Davis, "Coyote Moon" (Spring 2009)

3rd Place: Daniel W. Davis, "Guitar Man" (Spring 2009)

**The Habits of Husbands
For Betsy**

Kim Hunter-Perkins

Mine uses my lotion excessively, until there isn't any left for my elbows.

And forgets to return the movie, so the video clerk leaves rushed whispers on the machine.

And wipes his hands on whatever. Including my shirts.

Once, a friend stopped by unexpectedly and later asked if he had been doing *that*. I said no, but I lied. Of course he was.

And sometimes I think I'm doing things all wrong, or he wouldn't.
Not when I'm home.
Not when I'm not.
Not because I said no, not tonight. Again.

But then, I do it too. Sometimes. Only. It's not the same.

Young American

Maria Rhodes

Brush the velvety black wig,
While listening to Bowie.

Peel off street clothes,
Plain t-shirt and shorts.

Take a bra and spandex out,
Stuff and Tuck.

Slip on sparkling purple ball gown,
Feels great against my skin.

Put on platforms,
Now at least 6' 5"

Get out make-up from hidden place,
Arched eyebrows, drawn on lips.

A new person,
All night.

Kevin Doesn't Live Here Anymore

Justine Fitton

Memory:

Front yard behind Mom's lilac bush
2nd grade Kevin digging hole
(wants to get to China/see dragons)
Over and under the windowpane
nicked blonde wood
Kevin hacking away with a butter knife
pretending to be a lumberjack

On the mantle, Kevin's senior picture
Just this August
white T-shirt, camouflage hat.
(not the oxford and tie Mom picked out)
Mom in Grandma's good black dress
sitting by the door
but
her eyes are in Kevin's room
Dad takes the long way into town
1700 East presses down on our lungs anyway

St. Elizabeth's cemetery:

Alison Carter crying hysterically
surrounded by sniveling sym(pathetic) posse
Funny. Kevin hated Alison.

Memory:

Alison running for FFA president.
Kevin says,
"She thinks the only kinds of milk are white and chocolate"

I laugh. (guilt).
No matter.

No one notices.
Walking to the burial plot
Brown/Red/Orange (Soil/Blood/Morning sun)
leaves crackling under my feet
smothering dry skin skeletons

into the ground
with my equally temporary foot.
No one trips me.

Memory:

My four years to Kevin's seven
Climbing that mulberry tree
Grandpa's funeral
Kev shouts,
"Look Kelly! I'm closer to heaven than you!"

October 27, 2006, 2:19 AM
Kevin through the windshield
Lying in Merle Franzen's field
for hours
Just off 1700
While I'm cuddled in my cocoon
Warm/dreaming/breathing.

I don't know where,
seeping into American soil
or rising even closer,
But Kevin doesn't live here anymore.

Summer Vacation
Mary Lieske

I remember a warm breeze on a hot day,
and a cool splash of wild water over tanned skin.
I remember sinking into a pool of laughter,
and watching the sun set over the pier.
I remember being alone when the tide came in,
rinsing my feet with the salty tears of whales;
and being alone when the air turned chill,
the heat of the day giving way to the dark of night;
and being alone though you were right there beside me,
breathing in the fresh ocean air.
I remember watching children play in the sand,
and wishing I were still one of them,
able to build sandcastles with seashells and tiny flags.
I remember we were friends then – family, even –
and we smiled and laughed and watched T.V.
while we waited for dinner to cook.
You were my mother, my father,
my sister and brother;
puzzle pieces of a family forced
into one single being.
You were the sibling I could count on,
and the friend I could always trust.
And if you don't think of those days
when the beach was a guardian against terrible time –
against places to go and things to do –
before the shore became an endless stretch of empty sand
that continued on past the sunset without waiting –

Even if you don't carry these memories with you
and see them the way I do,
I will always remember.

Perfect
Christie Cheattle

Neat in a row
It's perfectly so
A jack-in-the-box laughs them goodbye
A little doll waves without a sigh
No one notices a broken porcelain cup
Or the toy rubber duck missing his quack
As they leave it appears just so
But everyone knows that they don't want to go
They put on smiles and leave tears in their eyes
And leave behind sorrow, worries, and lies
Of course they know that no one will frown
Because no one knows what they leave in this town
Nobody knows of the borrowed time
Or of the broken home

Hate for one

Miranda White

Tears cascade from a lonely face.
Hands grasp wrists in leftover disgrace.
A scarred reflection causes monotonous pain.
Life slowly relents with nothing left to gain.
Continuing thoughts play over in her head.
Sometimes believing she was better off dead.
What could cause a heart so cold
To forget her morals and do something untold?
A promise filled statement lays at her feet
Sliver of metal pronounced it discreet.
They can laugh and point and stare
But who is she to show such despair?
A lifeless, desolate soul sits alone
Not forced upon her but chosen for her own.
No one to listen to and no one to blame
Already she knows she brought her own shame.
Selfish whispers tear her from the inside out.
A betraying throat has something left to shout.
Memories return a look of disgust.
Scenes full of hate and inhuman mistrust.
Maybe she was wrong as she began to realize
"But who were they to tell me otherwise?"
Emotions become void and start to dissipate,
It was herself that she had learned to hate.

Twig

Daniel Paquin

The gravel underneath the tires gives way to a layer of dried pine needles. Small rays of sunlight filter through the tops of trees. Through the open window I can see birds flitting from branch to branch, and I imagine them chirping to each other, calling out to potential mates.

The light breeze coupled with the deepening shade begins to dry the fine layer of sweat that condensed on my brow. Willow's hair blows into her face, and out of the corner of my eye I see her smooth it behind her ear.

"It's really beautiful out here." My voice is dry and raspy from disuse.

Willow doesn't turn in my direction. Her only response is a simple "Hmm."

We've been on the road for around six hours, moving from the crowded lanes of the city and interstate to the deserted dead ends of the country. She's said nothing since we left the house and her only words to me then had been a "Yes" and a nod when I'd asked her if she was ready to go.

Our four year anniversary is tomorrow. Normally, we'd go out to a fancy restaurant and then come home to a private bottle of champagne and a box of condoms. I still have both of them packed in the back of the Jeep with the camping equipment. I doubt I'll be unpacking either.

Instead of tradition, I'd decided that we should go camping, return to the spot where I'd first met her. Hopefully, to what we had before, the love between us when we got married.

Around six years ago, Willow and I had been camping together. That time, we went with a whole group of people, fresh out of college, a bunch of friends getting together for one last bash before we all went our separate ways. Before we all started lives of our own. Back then, Willow had been the shy tag along; she'd spent the majority of the camping trip with me, the loner of the group.

I found out from one of my friends later at my wedding that the real reason Willow had been invited camping was to hook me up with her. I had gone through college single, focusing more on my education than the dating scene. It had been decided that I needed a girlfriend, so my friends set about convincing Willow that camping for a week in the middle of nowhere with a group of total strangers

would be a good idea. Willow had been reluctant then, and I'm beginning to wonder now if she regrets deciding to go.

I pull up to a small clearing surrounded by a ring of trees, just big enough to comfortably accommodate a few tents and a campfire. Willow remains in the Jeep as I unpack our things and begin setting up the tent. Halfway through setting up she finally opens her door and steps out, her boots crunching the parched needles underneath her feet.

"You wanna give me a hand?" I wipe sweat from my face with the back of my wrist.

Seeing my complete incompetence at tent raising, Willow breaks into an unfamiliar smile. "Sure," she says, shutting the door and heading my way.

After another half hour or so, the tent's finally up, thanks more to Willow than me. I've never really been any good at any of this macho male stuff. I've tried reading books about surviving in the wild, but without actual experience, those books proved useless.

I move to restack the rocks around the fire pit, and Willow begins to wander off into the forest.

"Hey, where are you going?" I shade my eyes from the sun with my hand.

"To get firewood," she calls over her shoulder.

I watch as she weaves in and out of the trees until she is out of sight. Restacking the rocks, forming a complete circle with them, I can't help but think that bringing Willow back around to me full circle is going to be much more difficult than I anticipated.

After the college camping trip, we'd kept in touch, growing closer together. I talked with her more than I did any of my college buddies. When she'd told me that she'd be in town for a few weeks, we decided to meet up again. Just for old time's sake, I'd told myself.

By the time she left a few weeks later, I was packing my things to move in with her. Being an author afforded me the mobility that her job as a florist didn't provide her.

Her flat had more than enough room to accommodate us both and it didn't take me long to settle in with her. Willow had a large collection of various potted plants that she watered and pruned every day. It wasn't long before I could tell the difference between *Atropa belladonna* and *Conium maculatum*.

The sound of Willow's boots crunching through the underbrush is a welcome break from the natural ambiance of the forest.

She emerges from the trees, her arms full of branches, all roughly

the same size and length. By this point, I've already built a small flame using nothing but dried leaves and a sparse amount of twigs collected from the clearing.

Willow sets the pile next to me as I stoke the fire, thankful to now have the resources to keep it alive. She blows hair off her face, an unseen twinkle of excitement in her eyes.

"Thanks, babe." I stand, moving closer to kiss her. She moves away.

"I'm all sweaty and gross." She fans herself with her hand.

I hide my disappointment. "I don't care."

"Well, I do." She disappears behind the tent flap. She re-emerges a few minutes later carrying her backpack. "I'm going to bathe in the creek. I'll be back in a little while."

I watch again as she weaves through the trees, saying nothing about the blackness of night that now begins to envelop the woods. I turn my attention once again to the fire, building it up out of a few small flickers.

After our honeymoon, we'd settled back into the flat and picked up our daily routines. Nothing seemed to have changed. We still had sex often enough to make condoms a permanent fixture on our weekly shopping list, and we still cuddled afterward before falling asleep in each others' arms.

I'm already in my sleeping bag, sitting on a log by the now roaring fire, when Willow once again returns from the trees. Saying nothing to me, she enters the tent. I wait until she exits, sleeping bag in hand, before I speak.

"Our anniversary's in a few hours." I try to correct an edge of pleading in my voice before continuing. "How do you want to celebrate?"

She moves towards the log opposite mine, stepping into her sleeping bag and pulling it up to her chin before sitting. Her eyes dance with flame as she stares at the fire. I catch a small sparkle in the corner of her eye before she blinks it away.

"I'd just like to sit and stare at the stars tonight." The cracks and pops of the burning wood obscure her voice, giving it a monotone sound.

"We can do that," I shift on the log to get a better view of her around the fire. "But what about later tonight, before bed?"

"What d'you mean?" She glances up, and quickly back down again when her eyes meet mine.

"Well, seeing as how it's our anniversary, I did get some champagne and-

She cuts me off. "I'm really not in the mood right now, Zakk."

She rises and drops her sleeping bag around her feet. "In fact, I think I'm going to go to bed. I'm tired from the trip."

I remain by the campfire and consider waking Willow up to try to talk to her. I decide against it. The last time I tried to talk with her about what's happening between us she kicked me out of the bed. I now sleep on the couch.

After a few hours, I retire to the tent also. Inside, Willow's asleep, curled in a corner and surrounded by her things; a makeshift barrier against me.

A few months back, I stopped by Willow's flower shop just to see how she was doing. She was heading out the door to make a delivery as I arrived and I told her that I'd wait for her to return.

In the meantime, I would talk to Nikki, Willow's best friend and co-owner of the shop.

"How's the floral business treating you these days?"

"It's good, I guess. It's a little slow most of the time"

I looked in the cooler behind her and I could only see one other order waiting for delivery.

"That's odd. Willow's always staying at work afterhours. She says that you guys are busy the whole week through."

"We're barely making enough money to keep the shop open right now." The look on Nikki's face mirrors my own.

Lying awake in the tent, I can't help but feel I've done something wrong. Ever since I told Willow about my conversation with Nikki, she's been growing more distant. And every time I ask her about it, she avoids me, sometimes for days on end.

I've settled myself into my place on the couch, but I don't even consider sex an option anymore. My hand's gotten more use in the past few months than it has since finals week my senior year in college.

I roll over to face Willow from across the tent. This camping trip was supposed to bring us closer together, but so far it's only served to pull us farther apart. My watch beeps 12:01 AM and I whisper, "Happy anniversary" to Willow before falling asleep.

I awake in the cold several hours later. The fire has all but died outside the tent, but the few remaining embers and the moon provide enough light for me to realize that Willow is no longer in the tent.

I bolt upright, nearly tripping out of the tent and step bare-foot into the still hot coals. Silently cursing my dumb luck, I try to still myself enough to listen to the silence around me. I read somewhere that shouting in the forest at night attracts predators, otherwise I'd be shouting for Willow right now.

A light breeze tugs at my t-shirt, carrying a noise to my ear. I listen for its direction, and all I can think about is what to do if you get attacked by a bear.

I sprint through the forest, stopping every few trees to get a beat on the sound. It continues to grow louder and I see flashes of people being mauled by bears on "World's Worst Animal Attacks" or one of those other stupid TV shows.

Not wanting to run into whatever it is that I imagine is attacking Willow, I slow my pace as I draw near the sound's source. By the dim moonlight filtering through the trees, I can see shadowy figures that move up ahead.

A low moan echoing through the forest forces me to hold my breath. Another causes me to break into a rabid sweat. A third moan finally drives me to action, a full out run in its direction. I think about screaming at the top of my lungs in an attempt to scare off whatever it is that is attacking my wife, but I'm too out of breath to do so.

I'm right on top of the sound when I trip on a tree root, hitting the ground and a bush. I struggle to right myself, and through a small hole in the bush I see a dark shape braced against a nearby tree.

Instead of a bear, leaning naked against the bark is Willow, one arm clutching a tree branch over her head, the other cradling a good size twig between her legs. Her eyes are closed, and she bites her lower lip before letting out another moan. I've been with Willow for four years, and never have I been able to make her moan like that.

I watch in shock as she pumps the stick in and out of herself. A few drops of wetness sink into the wood, twinkling in the moonlight. All I can think about is crying as a child when I pulled a splinter out of my fingertip.

I wait until Willow climaxes before deciding what to do. Once finished, she drops the stick, gathers up her clothes and gets dressed. I remain in the bush until I can no longer hear her footsteps carrying her back to camp. Free of the grip of the bush, I scoop up the freshly used twig and trudge through the forest in the direction of the camp site, Willow, and a new understanding of my wife.

Along the way, I become aware of splinters and thorns in

the bottoms of my feet, something the rush of adrenaline had allowed me to overlook.

Once back in the clearing, I reenter the tent and place the stick next to Willow's sleeping form. I lie down on my side and fall fast into sleep, all of my worries washed away.

The next morning, I awake to find Willow's spot vacant once again. I slip on my jacket against the crisp morning air and exit the tent. Willow sits wrapped in a blanket next to the fire. The twig lies at her feet.

I move to the log opposite hers and sit, careful to avoid eye contact. Willow stands and makes her way around the fire to sit beside me. She rests her head on my shoulder.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I just didn't think you'd understand."

I wrap my arm around her, pull her close. "Of course I don't understand. I mean, I saw you jilling off with a tree branch last night. This whole time I thought you were cheating on me."

Willow pulls away from me, tears streaming down her cheeks.

I continue, "But I'm willing to try to understand. I love you too much not to."

She embraces me, her touch sending warmth speeding through my body. Willow stands, taking my hand, and leads me to the tent. Once inside, we lay together like we used to. I finally unpack the champagne and condoms.

A few weeks after our anniversary camping trip, I roll off of Willow, untangling a piece of bark from her hair.

"Redwood?" I ask, eyeing the bark.

"Oak."

I kiss Willow, tossing the bark on the floor next to the bed. It lands next to a small pile of twigs, some used and some unused.

The Witch's Grave

Dan Davis

A small country cemetery.

It is daytime.

It is safe time.

There are no mausoleums here.

These are graves.

These are holes with coffins in them.

The grass is unkempt.

It has yellowed in spots

Where the weeds have not yet taken over.

We pass the gravestones,

Scarred by sun and weather.

We can read some of their names,

These hapless victims of fate.

Their names mean nothing to anyone now.

We are heading for that corner over there,

Where the cemetery meets the forest,

And the trees overhang the dying grass,

And shadows thrive even here

In the daytime.

It is cold, in this shadowy corner.

We are forgotten. We do not exist.

The grave awaits us.

Dulled by time and shadow,

Marred by decent hands

Doing evil things,

The grave waits for us patiently.

It rests on the ground, the gravestone.

It looks up at us, curious, but unsurprised.

It knows us.

The trees, above, are not quite barren.
A leaf, small and daring, detaches.

It drifts lightly downward,
Spiraling downward,
Ignorant and oblivious and full of freedom.

No! we shout. No! we scream.
But the leaf does not heed,
And lands on the gravestone.

Before our eyes it withers, the leaf.
It turns brown and decays,
And is spread like ash by the wind.

We stare at the gravestone.
Stare at it.
The name is worn, faded,
A ghost.

We must know her name.
Someone has to know her name.
We cannot leave until we know her name.

We cannot know her name until we lie with her,
Restless, fearful, alone.
Only then will she whisper to us,
Through decayed lips,
Her voice a memory of every scream
And every angry word ever spoken.

She whispers. But not her name.
She whispers a word that beckons.
She whispers a prayer that chills our hearts,
A curse that drowns out our plea.

What is her name?
What is her name?
What is her name?

Behind us, the sun.
 Before us, the shadows.
 Beneath us, the grave.

She knows us.
 She welcomes us.
 She embraces us.

Medicine Woman

Lindsey Durbin

I remember the medicine woman
how her wooden rice maracas shook me to sleep
years ago when she danced alongside the August evening heat
her burning sage lullabies into the quiet streets

I was young and naïve when I heard her song
I slept warm in a trance beneath the golden sun
as the medicine woman swayed on the night sky floor
leaving drunken Dakini shadows flowing on my wall

She strung bitter root tea sacks around her neck
and shaped energy between her fluid palms
she moaned to the houses to join her serenity song
music wrapped in mint cream for a small fee

On the eight o'clock nights I would hear her
howling her sworn mantras of healing power
her bare feet stained slapping against
the black bubbled tar in the street.

She would sing
swinging her rag skirt selling her remedies
for the good of the common folk she laughed
and for the good of the soul she screamed

I believed her sacred words
my feet tapped along to her dirty chants
as I drifted into dreams of her visiting
selling me wild grass bushels and powdered pollen cups

The sweet mystic melody of the medicine woman
incense smelling superstitious queen and gypsy
her oil selling song cut short
the year she tripped in her trance and slept in the street

Ylang-ylang oil soaked her brown skin and sparked fire
she did not stand but melted there
dry hair and maraca rice cracked continuing her enchanting beats
She was my mother then.

Epistle to a Bombshell
Kim Hunter-Perkins

"You are the unexploded bomb."—Vita Sackville-West

Like an exquisite fire.
Or cocaine.

Dazzling and irresistible.
And dangerous.

I circle you without caution of consequence.

Aware.

Of the imminent.

Guarded

Aaron Dillard

Criss cross cuts
in cross sections
on a ribbon of flesh
on her guarded thigh
hidden deep beneath flimsy cotton.
We act as if reading countenance
is somehow better
than touching anguish
left as a braille trail.

On the night of clock nights I would hear her
howling her swarm mantras of fading power
her hair feet stained slapping against
the black bus ticket car in the street.

She would sing
swaying her body skin rolling her melodies
for the good of the common folk she laughed
and for the good of the soul she screamed.

I believed her pocket words
had been taught along to her dirty chants
as I filled into dreams of her walking
singing her wild grave bushes and powdered pollen cups.

The power of all melody of the medicine woman
singing smelling supernatural queen and gypsy
was in spring song and street
because she stopped in her trance and slept in the street.

When I sang it soaked her brown skin and sparked fire
she did not mind but melted there
My hair and the sun like sparkled continuing her and fainting beats
She was my mother then.

Lean and Hungry in Yesteryear

Tim Ernst

Wide eyes for when times stops, when brakes lock—to evade the
crimes we commit
Harboring cadence, we can run down the halls that once witnessed our
past
I'll fake the grin if you break the clock—along with every light lit
Spread arms like wings; we'll make angels on walls laced with dust
Watch me impersonate kings; listen closely as the water pipe sings
Shed your angel wings; improvise against time as the pendulum swings
Let us watch our teeth collide: we'll coincide and act like we know how
to feel
We build skyscrapers and monuments with things we thief and steal

Dance in retreat, with feet off-beat, detached from yesterday's prayer
We can retire in ash with broken backs from writhing through every
damn hymn
We'll burn all the prose that chose to impose on the impulse to simply
not care

You can rip up each song that took me too long to compose through
notes made of sin

We'll drink till we're numb and slowly succumb to the fires we never set
free

Naked in haste, we'll break at the waist, with every last groan out of key
Let us watch our teeth collide: we'll coincide and act like we know how
to feel

We build skyscrapers and monuments with things we thief and steal

We won't break stride, even with the archers' bows bent to break
The window down the hall hosts the sight of a northern star
Never inspired, we claw and perspire, afraid that we'll soon be awake
With fate, we relate so we toast and we gloat of the glory of getting this
far

Eyeing the end, we'll laugh and contend with every mistake we have
made

We can go out back and play Brutus and Strato but only if you hold the
blade

Let us watch our teeth collide; we'll coincide and act like we know how
to feel

We build skyscrapers and monuments with things we thief and steal

Coyote Moon

Dan Davis

The man followed the sounds of violence across the barren field. He limped slightly, favoring his right leg; the rifle slung across his shoulder helped, in its own way, to counterbalance. He also carried with him a flashlight, but left it off; the full moon shining above the dead winter trees provided more than enough light by which to see.

The field was pale, ghostly, as though a blue filter had been placed over the land. Where shadows lurked, they were blacker than the starlit sky above. The faint remains of snow appeared as dust, the ethereal remnants from the previous week's snowfall. At least there was no mud, nothing to bog him down or cake his boots. He had a busy day planned tomorrow, he reckoned, busy enough without having to clean his boots also.

There was no breeze; the winter night was still and silent, except for the distant noises and the man's ragged breathing. His breath plumed out before him, vanishing as he passed through it. He walked quickly, steadily; he knew these fields, knew them well, and he knew his own body. The flannel jacket that hung loosely around him trapped any heat that tried to escape; the man was sweating. He unzipped the jacket; wouldn't do to sweat, then have it evaporate and leave him freezing.

He was a light sleeper, had been ever since the war. It had kept him alive; a little trick they'd all been taught. You learned what sounds to ignore, what sounds to become alert to; a distant explosion wouldn't be noticed, but a closer gunshot brought on full consciousness. His wife had often cursed his sleeping habits; but she'd been dead five years now, so he figured she could finally get the rest she hadn't been able to in life.

He had started out of bed at the first growl. He knew it was the first, because the sounds continued on so long—growling, snarling, menacing noises that belonged in nightmares. He had his jeans, shirt, and jacket on in less than three minutes; by that time, the growling had turned to barking, growing steadily distant.

He grabbed the rifle and flashlight on his way out the front door of the farmhouse; he turned the porch light on, then flicked it off

again when he realized it created more shadows than it dispelled. He stood at the bottom steps of the porch, listening to the barking, pinpointing it in the night. The sounds now came from midway across the west field, moving steadily distant.

He let his vision adjust as he walked across the yard. He noticed the shed and the tree that stood beside it; the decorative windmill his wife had installed and he'd never gotten around to dismantling; the skeletal garden his wife and daughter had taken so much pleasure in tending, before the latter moved away to college and the former lost interest.

He passed the mutilated corpse of one of the feral cats that lived in the dilapidated barn behind the house.

Coyote.

There was more blood than the feline's body allowed; something else had been injured. More than one thing, it looked; in the moonlight, the dead grass was blackened with spilt blood. He didn't waste time wondering what it could have come from. Whatever had shed this blood, and whatever it had been shed from, was still alive; otherwise, there would've been a second corpse littering his yard.

As he headed into the field, the barking changed to a sudden, harsh yelp. The man froze, listening. Seconds passed without sound. He waited, eyes closed—the better to concentrate, the better to pray. Then snarls. Growls. Barks. He smiled.

Still alive.

He quickened his pace. The sounds of struggle diminished; two creatures, then one. The final growl turned into a mewling; the mewling to an inconstant yelp, a cry for help, a beacon for rescuers.

He knew what he would find; he had traversed this land enough to know what spilt blood meant, what a cry of distress implied. It wasn't hard to imagine the scene awaiting him, but still he kept his mind from it. There was a job to be done, tonight, then another tomorrow; but they would each come in their own time, far too soon, and it was no use to encourage such thoughts. They only inhibited his judgment, held him back from doing what would have to be done.

The mewling was coming from within the grove of trees—the beginning of a forest, the edge of his property, which he seldom visited anymore. He had once hunted in these woods, but had given that up along with his youthful bloodlust. These days the trees only served as a subject for his paintings or midnight musings; he never walked among them, fearing traps he'd set long ago and the bloody memories they would bring.

He entered the trees slowly; the limbs, leafless, did little to filter the moon's penetrating glow. There were more shadows here than in the field, but they hugged the trees, leaving open spaces of light that dotted the forest floor. He watched the shadows, unslinging his rifle and bringing it up to his shoulder. He didn't check to make sure a round was chambered; he cleaned and loaded the gun every day. One round in the breech, two more in his jacket pocket. If by three rounds he still needed more, then he might as well be unarmed.

The yelping came from further on. He must've been upwind; the sound changed pitch, becoming more welcoming. He kept the rifle to his shoulder, but lowered his aim; if there had been any danger, he would've been alerted to it by a growl.

He found him in the middle of a pool of moonlight, anxious eyes grinning mischievously. The dog's tail twitched, slowly but whole-heartedly; it was all he could muster, given the circumstances. His right hind foot was caught in a snare; the wire had pulled taught, crushing bone, twisting the hip out of its socket as the dog's momentum had carried him forward.

The mewling subsided. A slow whimper emerged, then silence. The man knelt, looking around. No sign of a corpse; blood dotted the ground, but the dog was the only living creature besides himself.

He set the flashlight on the ground, then reached out and slowly petted the dog's head. Fourteen years old, caught in a trap, and the dog had still managed to fend off the coyote.

"Good boy."

The dog's tail thumped, the snow and forest debris muting the sound. His eyes closed as the hand stroked his head. The man slowly, cautiously, turned the dog's head to the side, examining the neck, then the torso. It was hard to tell which parts of the animal were injured, and which were just covered in blood.

"Gave him hell, didn't you boy?"

The dog grinned; his teeth, like the ground, were darkened by blood. Yes. The coyote had gotten more than it had bargained for; it had crashed off into the forest, maimed, perhaps dying. In the morning, the man would come back and track the creature down and kill it. An eye for an eye, his old Bible had said. The man hadn't read those words in five years; they meant little to him now. What had to be done simply had to be done.

Moving away from the dog's head, he looked at the captured foot. He wished he'd brought a knife, something to cut the wire with; all he could do now was follow the wire to its source and haul the whole damned thing out of there. He didn't remember exactly where he'd put it; the setting of the traps, too, had been years ago. Didn't matter where this one was buried, anyways; finding it was something to do later, afterwards.

He set the rifle on the ground, trusting the dog to alert him to any danger. The coyotes in this country were solitary, but he had on occasion seen them in packs. Even if the animal was alone, in its injured state it might thirst for revenge.

The man didn't dare touch the dog's leg; instead, he stared at the trap, working out the damage in his head. He had caught enough coyotes with these traps to know how they worked. The snare, when it clenched, cut through flesh and bone; he had often stumbled upon traps to find only the animal's foot remaining, not bitten off but *cut* off. This particular trap was illegal, outlawed for the level of cruelty it inflicted on the ensnared creature; the man used them because they worked every time. He'd never had a trapped animal escape; at least, not one that had gotten more than a few yards away.

The dog's leg hung unnaturally; the dog himself did not move, for surely even the slightest movement of the lower torso would cause him intense agony. The man's jaw clenched as he surveyed the damage; his breathing slowed as he concentrated. The leg could not be reset; there was no doubt of that. The dog would always have a limp, one debilitating enough to limit normal movement. The wound around the foot would become infected; there was no way the man could clean it efficiently within the next couple hours. Too much would have to be done; he couldn't cart the necessary supplies out here, he would have to cut the dog loose and carry it back to the farmhouse. And that would take time.

Then there were the wounds inflicted by the coyote. He couldn't see them, even in the moonlight, for they were hidden beneath the dog's fur; but he could tell, by the amount of blood spilt, that they were deep. They would become infected, too. And the dog was still bleeding; there was a small puddle of blood below his neck, the wound there leaking faster than the frozen ground could absorb. The man stared at that slowly spreading puddle; the dog watched him, no longer grinning, but contemplating his own mortality, as intelligent creatures are wont to do.

The man nodded; mostly to himself, but also for the dog's

sake, to answer the unspoken question in those eyes.

"It ain't too good, boy. Won't lie to you—it ain't too good."

The dog lifted his head slightly; a tongue emerged, licking some blood from his lips, then disappeared back into that cavernous mouth. The head fell back against the ground, the muscles strained with the tension of holding it aloft. He issued a soft whimper, nothing more.

The man stood. Picking up the flashlight, he shone it around. He had set the traps against the base of the trees, he remembered, using the roots as natural anchors; it was in these very spots where the shadows, in this ghostly moonlit world, congealed. The flashlight revealed no traps beneath the nearest trees, except the one now in use. The man turned the light off and set it back on the ground. He picked up the rifle and looked down at the prone dog.

"I ain't goin' far."

He walked around back of the dog, pacing the perimeter of light in which they were encased. When the dog's back was turned to him he stopped, cradling the rifle in his hands, staring out into the forest.

He was cold; he zipped the flannel jacket up again. He bit his lip, his fingers clenching against the barrel and stock of the gun. He reached up with one hand and wiped his face, the bridge of his nose. His good foot ground into the dirt; his lame leg ached.

He ran a hand—bloodied, now—through his thinning hair. He coughed. Breath exploded from his lungs, filling the night air with a plume of vapor. He watched it disperse, slowly fading from reality until it was as though it had never existed.

Sighing, he let his head fall down onto his chest. He pictured a dog, trotting towards him down a country road, muddied golden fur rippling in the summer wind. The dog came in silently, tongue out, tail wagging. The man stared, waiting. The dog bore no collar, no identity, no ownership. The man told him to leave; he stayed. And stayed. He stayed until he belonged. From then on, neither was alone.

Standing before the darkened forest, the man shivered, perhaps more so than he should have. For a second, the gun rattled in his hands. Then the shaking subsided, as quickly as it had come, and his grip tightened.

He raised his head, turned around, and walked back over. He knelt down again; the dog opened his eyes and watched. The tail didn't thump this time, so much as it swooshed slightly across

the dirtied ground. The man smiled; the dog did not. After a moment, even the man gave up such pretenses.

"Good boy."

The dog looked at him.

The man's eyes wandered back to the dog's leg. "Life ain't fair, is it?"

The dog huffed in agreement.

"I'm awful sorry 'bout this."

He stood. His grip on the rifle at first refused to loosen; after a deep intake of breath, he was able to bring the rifle back up to his shoulder. He held the end of the barrel a few inches from the dog's head.

"It ain't right. It ain't right and I'm damned sorry."

The dog closed his eyes.

The man did not move again until the echo of the gunshot had faded from everywhere but his memory. He stepped back, re-loading the rifle and then slinging it over his shoulder. He followed the wire until he came to its source, then kicked the trap it from its fixed position and walked back to the dog. He'd have to go back to the farmhouse, grab a knife, a tarp. Couldn't bury him out here; wouldn't do. Ground too hard anyways. The man figured he'd be several hours digging a hole tomorrow; but it was worth it, damned if it wasn't.

He paused before returning. He glanced back into the forest, his eyes following the coyote's blood trail until it disappeared in the shadows. There were more traps out there; they would have to be disabled as well. That would take time. Everything would take time. But, he figured, he had some to spare.

Dirty Tears

Brittany Morgan

The cold does seep through four tattered blankets
if you touch the frost inside the bedroom door
it's real
shivers are nothing compared to shakes, she says.

In winter the leaky doorways lead to frozen floors
crunching under unlevelled steps where
the floor is rotten still
step lightly, she says.

When the wind blows the trailer shakes
the water's almost always a dirty brown
if you want supper before eight your out of luck
if it's burnt you eat it anyway, she says.

The sidewalks made of planks of cheap leftover wood
the weeds grown up between
the rust from the swing set comes off in your hands
she wipes them on her pants and goes on.

The giant mud hole in the front yard
shows her reflection
but she doesn't see
dirty crusted fingernails
longs legs too skinny-
black and blue
the cut on her left hand
from crushing cans

She doesn't know she cries
Dirty tears

Dirty tears

Dirty tears.

Idyllic Has an End
Justine Fitton

miss Daddy's hands the way they used to be
capable, tan, veins popping out, strong
shuffling the deck, playing Euchre
lifting me out of the cab
where I curled up in the blue beanbag chair
lulled to dreams: talk radio, cigar smoke, combine vibrations
the head rolling over the beans
like a tumbleweed in his favorite westerns
slipping between rows of golden brown corn
like fingers lacing through lovers' fingers

miss Oma
the way she made fried chicken
and giggled when Opa was mad
and said, "Ich liebe dich"

miss 1800 East
three potholes in front of the rock driveway
first bike ride, first car accident, first kiss
stuck in the snow with first love
Daddy dug us out, so much for sneaking out

miss snow boy, kiss boy, love boy
the way he stuck his tongue out when he smiled
and how he never turned back
got the all or took the nothing
loved intensely
hated intensely

Daddy's hands shake these days
I guess they needed money and soil
Now they toil in Tennessee

Oma stares with an empty gaze
like a gutted pumpkin

I haven't driven down 1800 in 3 years

And the boy is gone

lost the all and chose the nothing

The heart still beats
just a little slower, more somber
Than at 6, or at 16

The Remedy

Josh Boykin

I don't like you, bottom of my glass.
I can see through you, and the world shows up
in disproportion
all muddled and such

So I'll give you rumandcoke refills,
vodkatonic chasers,
and proportion the world to my liking.

True Nature

Stephen Garcia

I have a break in between classes, it's just an hour but I always find ways to fill the time

Listening to music, trying to do homework, or watching TV... Animal Planet

I see those cheetahs running, bugs working every so diligently, and monkeys climbing

I am being sucked in without a fight, completely immersed in this primal world

I enjoy watching Animal Planet it's not my favorite channel but the TV is overrun with Maury, fake judges, and lifetime movies (I am *not* an unappreciated wife)

I love that within an hour I will say the word "cute" and not feel any less manly

Baby animals (except any bugs of course) are ALL undoubtedly "cute"

I can't let my roommates catch me watching Animal Planet

So like a smart animal, I keep ESPN and Spike TV on the recall button

I'll watch anything but Animal Police though; I just can't bring myself to do it

I've seen too many starved, neglected, and broken animals in my day

Ants are really creepy, a million legs, feelers, tiny stingers and mandibles chomping

In Africa a species of ant called "Siafu" is rumored to have eaten human baby

The hour is ending and I have to leave for my British Lit class soon

I need to pull my mind out of the jungle and sea, back into my human hive

Athletes running, businessmen working ever so diligently, children on monkey bars

And I yet again being sucked right back in

We Are All Eaters of Souls

Dan Davis

We are all eaters of souls
Here in this dismal well
Where the dampness rots our flesh
And the pestilence feasts on our tongues.

There is a way out,
But we cannot reach it.
There is a light,
But it only blinds us.

We have naught to do but feast
Upon the bitter remnants
Of dreams that were cut short
By the cruel sisters of some interminable fate.

A voice is heard,
Distant and echoing.
But it is only the voice
That enslaves us.

We are numerous down here,
Caught in a web woven before time,
Trapped in a dungeon that once held gods
But now detains those who could not fly.

To live here is to die
A death a thousand times.
To remain here is to suffer
The defeat within the victory.

We are all eaters of souls
When left unto ourselves,
Untended by our fragile humanities
And encouraged by our wrathful hunger.

Blood
Gretchen Schaible

I am your blood. I flow through your entire body, constantly carrying oxygen to your organs. Without me you would die, and I would die without you. We need each other. I love the thrill when epinephrine flows with me and we race throughout your body. Your heart speeds up, the airways in your lungs open more and the blood vessels in your skin and intestines narrow, letting me flow to more important places. I am like fire in your veins keeping you alive. I am your blood.

I notice today that you've been drinking more water than usual. My veins are softer, easier to penetrate. I enjoy the thrill as adrenaline mixes with me. I stay on this high for almost thirty minutes, but the ride is smoother than before, exciting yet calm. Even more epinephrine is joining me now; I'm so excited! I carry oxygen to your stomach and can feel the butterflies bumping against each other. Oh, the sensation! Though I am racing at unstoppable speeds I can feel a buildup of pressure in your arm. Your heart beats wildly and you try to keep your breathing steady but I can feel your excitement. I feel the tightened capillaries beneath your skin tear and I seep out, leaving a tender purple mark. Then for the first time I feel it. The vein in my arm is pierced. I try to flow around a cold silver pipe, but my efforts are useless. I begin to flow through this silver tube which becomes a cold clear plastic pipe. I trickle into an empty plastic bag, cooling and gradually collecting at the bottom.

I've never been so motionless in your whole life, it makes me tired. The entire bag fills and I stop flowing out of your arm. I can feel your bone marrow working to produce new blood and the white blood cells clotting the punctured vein. I feel so lifeless as I am picked up and sloshed around. They take me away from you and place me in a plastic box. I am cushioned by other bags of blood. Time passes and I can hear you leaving. Wait, don't leave me! I am your blood! Your voice fades away and I feel so alone. The box closes and darkness surrounds us. We are lifted and driven to a hospital where we are tested and refrigerated at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. I am so cold. Time drags on slowly and I begin to forget the thrill of carrying oxygen. You don't come back for me and I feel hurt.

Thirty days have passed now and many bags of blood

around me labeled *A Positive* have been taken away. A nurse wraps her warm hand around me and gently carries me out of the fridge. I can feel the blood pumping through her fingertips. I should feel excited but without any adrenaline the sensation doesn't come. The lights above are so bright compared to the dark cooler. The woman lays me down on a silver tray and walks away. Is this the end? I lay exposed for a few minutes until she returns. I welcome her warmth completely and she carries me through the hallway and into a dimly lit room. She begins to fidget with the clear plastic tube and I can feel a gentle suction through the hose. I hang suspended by a metal hook.

I slowly seep out through another metal tube into someone else's vein. Immediately I notice that the rhythm of the heart is different. The pulse is slow and steady and I readily accept oxygen from the lungs. I feel content being put to work again, feeling the warmth of a body and the constant movement. I swirl through the heart and course through the body, though I am still your blood. After four hours I am free of the bag and the body I am working in is growing stronger. I travel everywhere, learning the routes of the veins and where they lead. The person finally wakes up and doctors and nurses are constantly entering the room, asking questions of this person who I now inhabit. It is a young man and the other blood cells tell me they were in a motorcycle accident. I understand why there are so many white blood cells working now and I try to race faster to help in any way possible. Days pass and the man grows increasingly better. I have become a part of him; a crucial element he needs, but I am still your blood.

Years later, I have fused and am now part of this man. I have felt the highest of adrenaline rushes and moved at speeds faster than I ever experienced with you. My life is a constant thrill. As I flow through the body, listening to the rhythm of the heart, I feel an exotic sensation. A second heart beat is pounding and I feel pulled to it. The pull increases as the man walks down the street and I feel so confused by the different rhythms. As you walk in the opposite direction, you brush arms against the man. I feel tugged by a magnetic force towards the contact point and as you walk away the tug lessens. As you pass I realize the truth.

I am yours, and yet I am his. I share a special bond with you that cannot be broken over time. I will never be a part of you again. I realize that I was a part of you given away to help save others and in knowing this I feel I have purpose. I may flow through

your veins or race through the heart of another but I am, forever,
your blood.

Scarlet on the Wind

Justin Sudkamp

She spins

dipping smoothly

dancing flawlessly

The song is near completion

Her performance is closing

Forever in her dreams posing.

Rest on the ground,
Daughter of the wind,
The audience is silent
With your siblings blend.

Illuminated

Rashelle McNair

Band of sunlight
casts a red glow
across closed lids.
Bare-skinned,
we lay against each other
in a twin bed
never too small
for us.
Your breath moist
against my neck,
a whispered
good morning.
I know
I belong here.

Lightning Rod

Kim Hunter-Perkins

Not flying—
suspended.

Straddling this beam
a hundred yards up.

With no strings.

This is arrogance,
insanity
a thousand ways to
die broken, in heaps.

Or is it merely grace?

This swing of hammer.
This body confident.

This fearless moment.

To defy.

Stage *Sarah Fairchild*

bill goring
guitar/vocals



Tree

Alycia Rockey

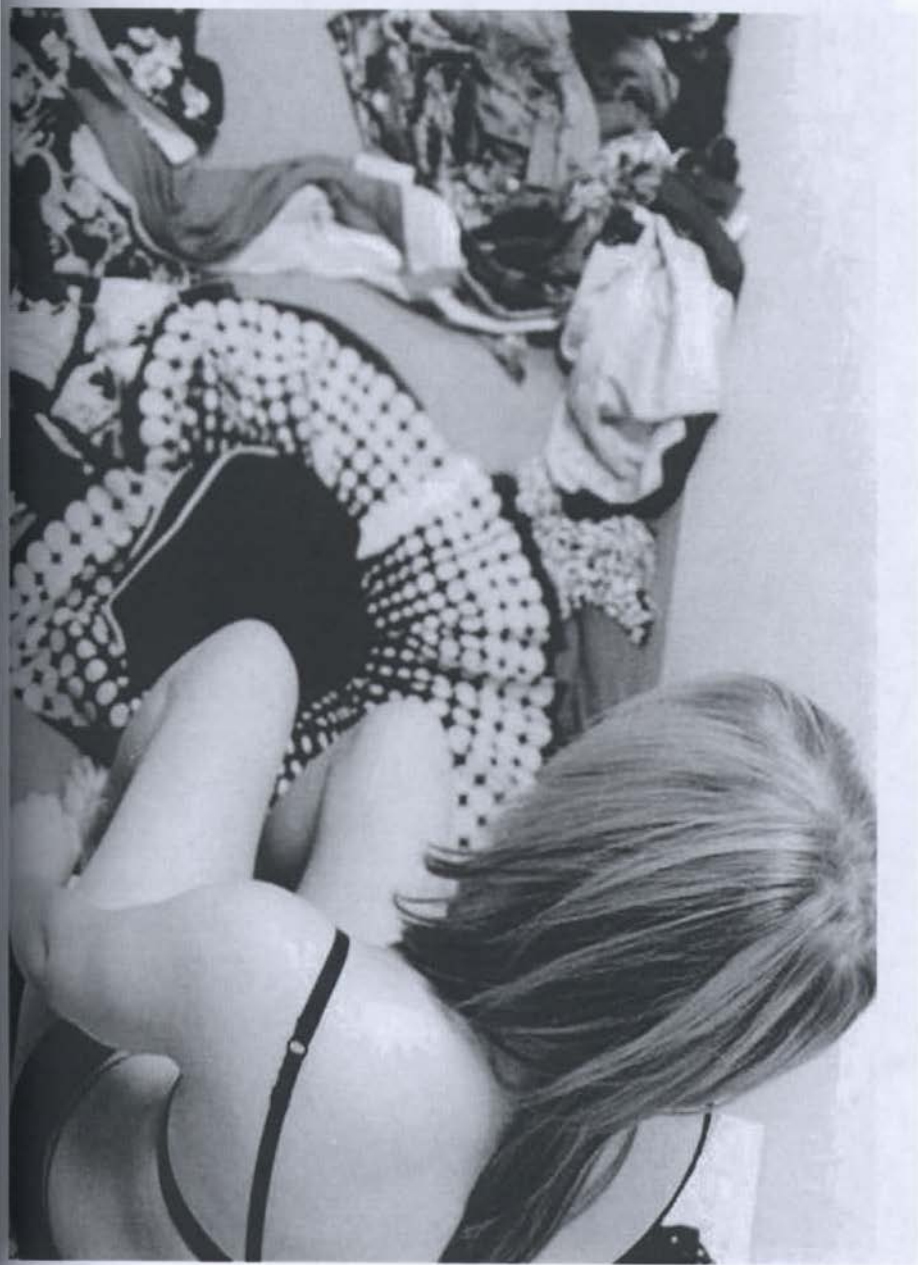
Tire

Sarah Fairchild



What To Wear
Kristy Pearson

Right?
Sweet Water



Greenhouse *the Post*
Alycia Rockey

Home
Alycia Rockey

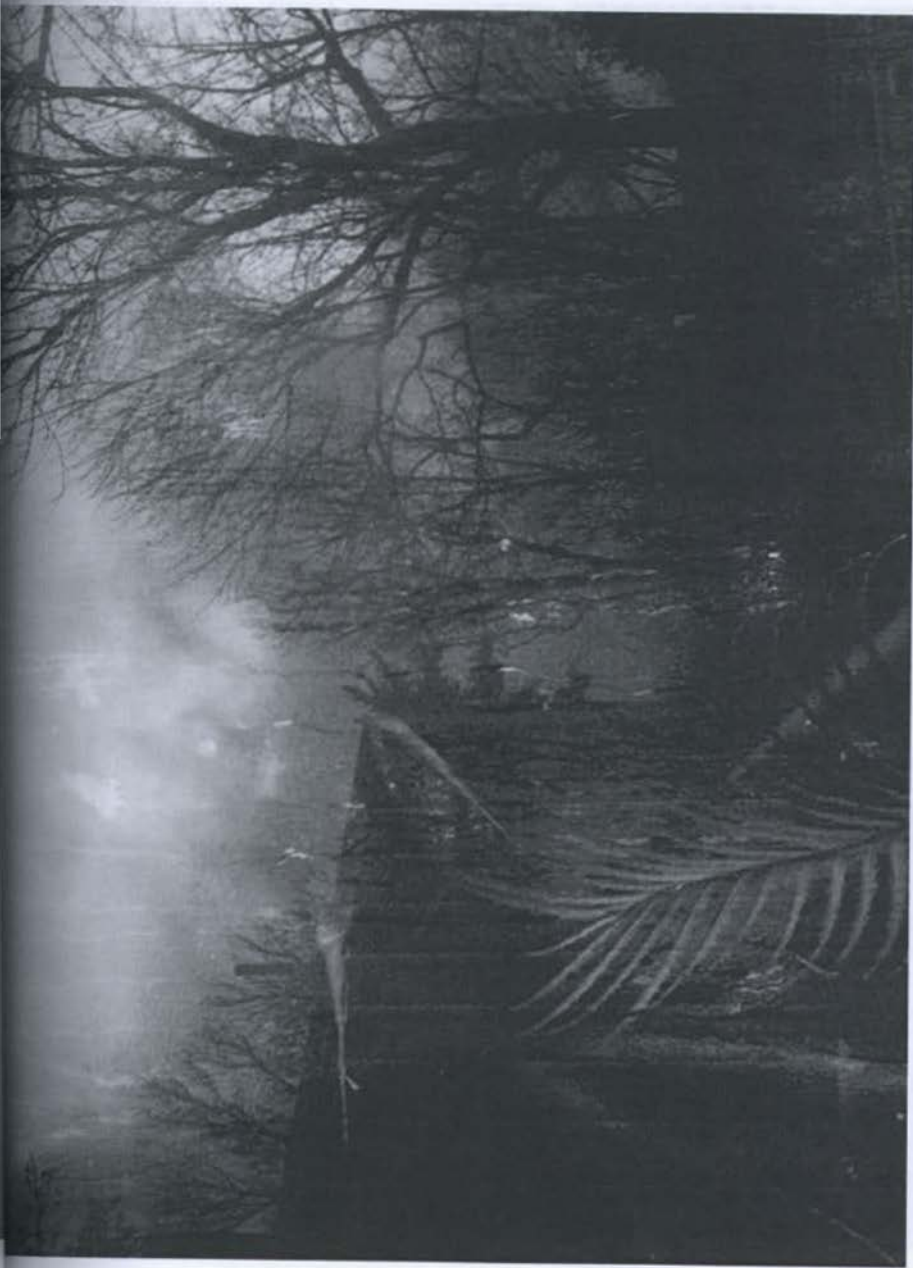
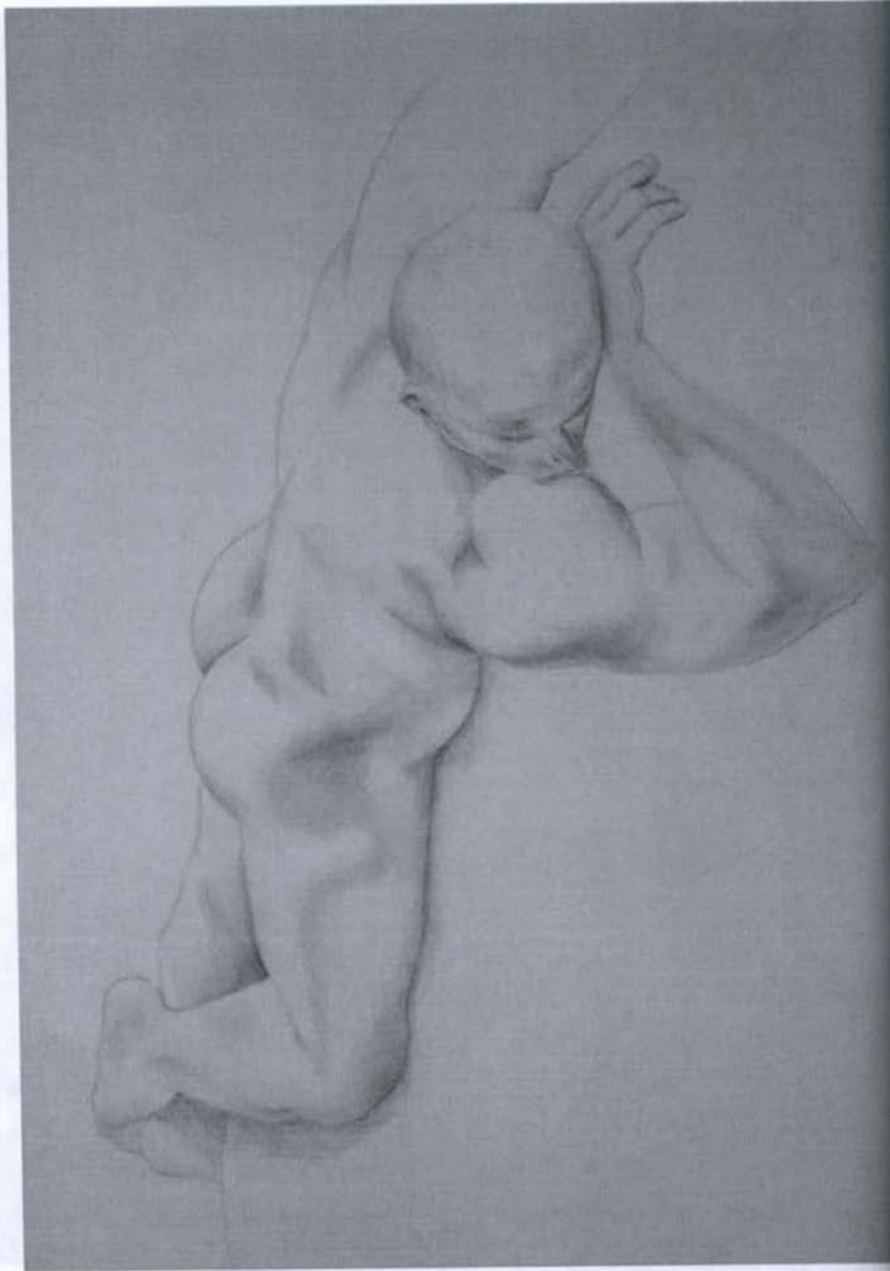
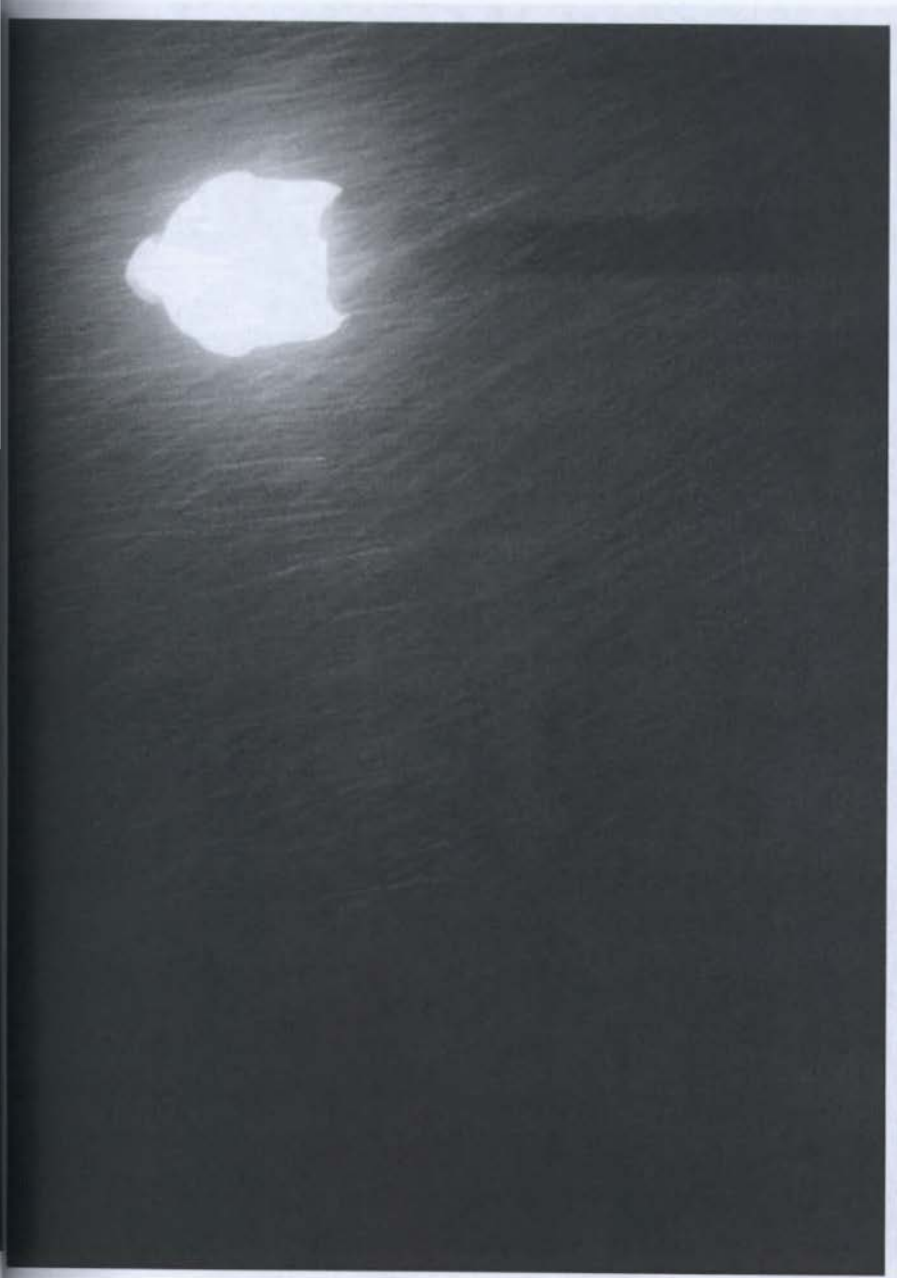


Figure 1
Sean Walker



Me at the Lamp Post
Elizabeth Surbeck

Little Miss Liz
Kathy Anderson



Rome

Alycia Rocky



Little Miss Liz
Kristy Pearson

of the Lamp Post
Elizabeth Burck



Doudna

Alycia Rockey



Flag

Alycia Rockey



Flag Protest

Alycia Rockey



Trial
Dan Davis

By the marrow of my bones some God seized me
and pulled me down to His level.

I fell with all the grace that He had endowed me,
tumbling and fluttering and twisting on His unholy hook.

I saw stars and comets and planets and creations
that had been forgotten before me, abandoned to the reaches of
memory.

I saw a mirror, and in that mirror I saw myself,
lonely and absent, fragile and forlorn, nothing but a fractured reflec-
tion.

Then I saw a God, your God, the God,
and His features reminded me of caverns and canyons and turbulent
seas.

He was magnificent as only a God has a right to be,
glowing and glowering in all the majestic glory He had permitted
Himself.

He turned me over in His illustrious hand,
examining every flaw and crevice and ailment in His humble crea-
tion.

He studied me for a lifetime, forever, for an endless heartbeat,
and did not ask me my name or my desires or my thoughts or my
intentions.

I felt His eyes, I felt His breath, I felt His indignation
at what I had not achieved, at what I had not dreamed.

I imagined Him punishing me for all my faults,
but I could only think that I was as He had created me.

He thought of me, in doing so judging me,
and sentenced me without a verdict, without an appeal.

Then He flung me, with an absent flick of His wrist,
back into the void from which I had been removed.

Dear God

Kristi Kohlenberg

Who do I pray to,
if I don't believe that You can help me,
if I don't believe that Saint Peter is waiting for me,
to chastise me for forfeiting a life with you?
Who do I pray to,
if I don't believe there's a burning abyss beneath my feet
waiting to swallow my soul
when my body is eaten by maggots?
Who do I pray to,
if I don't believe that You created this world,
the darkness and the light,
man in Your image,
and woman as a secondary rib?

If only the pagans could see us now,
worshipping a God evolved from Zeus, Thor, and Mixcoatl.
A God that incorporates El, Elohim, and El Shaddai,
while the goddesses were kept distinct
to diffuse the power of woman.
I cannot condone
the greatest book on Earth,
when men of antiquity decided
the best creation myth makes Eve take the first bite.

How can I pray to a God,
who told my ancestral mothers they talked too much,
who told me to be subservient to a better sex,
who said I cannot enjoy the carnal desires You gave me?
How can I pray to a God,
that I resent
for not respecting me?
Who can help me
when You are created in the image of man?

A Cheap Metaphor Is What We Have for Death

Keith Stewart

For an entire week now
Both sleep and food have escaped me
At least in full ration.

When your departure caught my ear,
I enlisted in the army
And strapped my shield across my chest
Hopeful that my heart
Would be safe.

But instead I have bore the brunt
Of an emotional attack:
Shrapnel has penetrated my outer layer
And torn through the ventricles of my engine.
Dirt and dust has befallen my head,
Resulting in a blubbery hell for memory.
And although the summer solstice is upon us,
This frigid time has sent my hands shaking.

Your brethren too have been taken
By the aftermath of what is cheaply titled a war;
A battle of unknown proportions and unmistakable lack of wisdom
For which we try to go on with our lives using.

Just know...

No memorial, no stone or granite
Could ever replace the void left behind.
No grassy pasture, or summer-laden sunset
Could ever substitute the awe of your entirety.
And no belief, language, or poetic diction
Will ever satisfy the melancholic riddle known as your-not-being-here.

Sad Moon

Jennifer O'Neil

Under the light of the moon
You eyes shine in the darkness.

The moon guides me to you,
Shows me the way home.

Like a beacon, she pulsates,
Radiates a silver shimmer.

She reflects the glowing embers
She feels in my quickening heartbeat.

A halo surrounds the moon
As she becomes our personal angel,
Looking down at us between
Awestruck glances at the lover
That makes her shine.

As I steal a glance at her
She beams a sad smile back
And I realize what troubles her.

She and her lover, the sun,
Can never be together
And I smile sadly too
Because I understand.

In that single fleeting moment
I realize that you were never there.
Only a mirage, created by the moonlight.

Introduction

Sam Sottosanto

"Penny."

I hated the annoying voice, but I stopped what I was doing and went over to help her anyway. "What?" I asked. "Is it trigonometry again? Listen, Kate—I don't know if you heard me or not, but I can't help you with any sort of math. Your guess is as good as mine."

She growled, her fierce eyes burning a hole into my face. "No. It's *not* trig this time. It's my English homework. We're supposed to write a letter to a pen pal, and I don't know what to say."

My cousin was only a year younger than me, but sometimes I imagined her much younger. She was very spoiled (courtesy of my Aunt Louise), and was used to having everything her own way. We did not get along well, but I was forced to deal with her.

Every July since I was two, my mother used to drag us to our Aunt Louise's house for the entire month. The two sisters had been close growing up, and now they lived states apart.

These past few years especially I had begged my parents if I could stay home with my grandma, but I never had any luck.

Kate was not well behaved in school and hardly ever got passing marks. This year, she was taking trigonometry, English 10, and only semester one of chemistry in summer school. Believe it or not, it was quite an accomplishment compared to the four classes she had to retake last year.

"Why are you writing to a pen pal?" I asked. "That's kind of a weird English assignment."

"Tell me about it," Kate whined. "But Ms. Green says it'll help us develop our own writing style—whatever that means."

I rolled my eyes. Kate never liked to work.

"So, are you going to help me or what?" she groaned.

I took a minute to consider the challenge. "Fine," I said. "Do you know who you're writing to?"

"Some guy named Michael," she explained. "All I know is that he likes to fish and swim. Sounds like a retard to me."

"What? Did he write to you first? Let me see what he wrote."

"No, Penny!" Kate complained, her anger showing through every inch of her body. I think she was getting sick of me—as always. But that didn't change the fact that she wanted me to go away. No, she wanted me to stay and help her with her English homework.

Kate infuriatingly took in another breath. "We picked out of a hat who we got, and it said on a note card who the person was and what they liked." She handed me Michael's note card. "Now tell me what to write and I'll write it."

Sometimes I just wanted to smack my cousin straight across the face. "You know what, if you're going to be like that, I'm not going to help you."

The look on her face was priceless. "Go to hell."

I knew better. I didn't say anything, and walked right back into the kitchen to finish making my lunch.

Not two hours later, Mom had me go to the local grocery store to pick up some sugar so she and Aunt Louise could bake cupcakes with my younger sister, Nina, and my cousin, Lily.

The grocery store was not far off, so she made me walk instead of use the car. I was a little upset, seeing as I *loved* my mom's new camaro, but I'd live.

I walked into the grocery store.

From the corner of my eye, I noticed a group of teenage boys, maybe around my age, give or take a few years, hanging around, acting cool. I didn't pay much notice—until I heard it.

"Wait! There she is!"

I turned around. Nothing happened. The guys didn't say anything else—maybe they weren't talking about me. Why would they be talking about me, anyway? I didn't even know them. So, I turned back around, and went my own way, down the baking aisle.

"What? Man, you're just going to let her go?"

I turned around again, but this time the three boys were gone. I shrugged it away. It wasn't until I had finally spotted the sugar and was about to grab it, that I heard the ruckus again.

"No—allow me," one of the boys said, taking the sugar off the shelf for me. "You wanted granulated sugar, right? Not brown sugar?"

"What are you talking about? I was just about to pick this one up until you took it from me..."

"Oh... I'm sorry, Penny." And he handed it to me. So weird. Wait.

"How do you know my name?"

"Oh... sorry. You don't know me. My name's Sky Wilson," he said, holding out his hand, as if he wanted me to shake it. I thought that was a bit weird too, because only adults shook hands—not teenagers. I took his hand anyway, shaking it.

"These are my friends, Nick Colosso and Jake Hughback," Sky said, pointing to the guys a few feet behind him.

The blonde—presumably Jake—mustered up a sweet "Hi," and the brunette—probably Nick—waved.

"Umm... it's very nice, meeting you. But I have to go home now."

"No, wait! You can't go!" Sky yelled. "Listen. I'm a friend of Kate's," he let out. "We're in the same English class."

Oh, so you're a loser who failed out, too?

He began to stutter. "We're doing a pen pal project, and—"

"Yeah, I heard," I interrupted. "But I've *really really* got to go now."

"No, this is important. You have to tell Kate to write to Michael. If she doesn't, he could wind up like me."

"Like you?"

His eyes began to freak me out—actually scratch that, his whole *appearance* began to freak me out—so I walked a few inches away, as if to avoid him. I thought I heard footsteps behind me, like he was following, but when I turned around, I saw nothing. The three boys were nowhere in sight.

In fact, they were anywhere to be seen in the whole store.

I quickly bought the sugar and went home.

"Did you finish all your homework, Kate?" Aunt Louise asked her daughter in the middle of dinner. We were having steak, corn, mashed potatoes and gravy. I picked at my meal, while Kate devoured hers.

As instantly as Aunt Louise had mentioned her homework, the incident at the grocery store flew back into my mind. For some odd reason, the look in Sky's face seemed very serious, almost as if it were a matter of life and death.

"I can see right through you, young lady," Aunt Louise continued. "How's trig going?"

"I finished it, Mom," she said, digging her spoon into a pile of mashed potatoes.

"And your English?"

"I finished it."

I looked over at Kate, unsure if she was telling the truth.

This is important. You have to tell Kate to write to Michael. If she doesn't, he could wind up like me.

What did he mean anyway, 'like him'?

"Kate," I began, mumbling. "You finished writing your pen pal letter?"

She started to choke on her mashed potatoes, evil eyes staring straight at me. "Of course," she growled—I swear, like an animal—and she went right on back to eating.

After dinner, I went to her backpack to check and see. I told myself that this was stupid, that the incident at the grocery store was just a freak of nature. But it scared me.

And sure enough, when I looked in her English folder, there was a blank piece of paper. And all it said was, "Dear Michael, Hello. My name is Kate."

For a second, I couldn't believe my cousin. How could she be so rude to a person she didn't even know? I could imagine the scene: all the other kids in this poor boy's class opening up letters full of words and interesting tidbits of information. And the only thing he would get out of my cousin's letter was her name.

Then, I remembered: this was Kate. She was a spoiled brat, who, when it came to other people—she didn't care.

I felt bad for the kid, I guess you could say. And that's sort of why I did what I did.

Dear Michael,

Hello. My name is Penny.

So, you like to fish? That's cool. My dad and I used to go fishing all the time when I was little. We don't so much anymore—I guess it's because there never is enough time in the day.

I can remember this one time though, when we went. I was about seven or eight. Dad woke me up real early in the morning; it was a surprise. We went to the prettiest lake I can remember, and as we fished, I got to see the sun rise and the reflection in the lake. I'll never forget that.

But fishing's not the only thing that I like. My most favorite thing to do is read. I almost spend every day reading. Anything from horror to romance to sci-fi—you name it. I'll be interested.

You seem like a pretty cool guy. What else do you like to do besides fish and swim? Do you like to go on hikes? Every now and then I do.

Anyway, I've got to fly. It's late, and I'm going to be busy in the morning.

Your Pen Pal,

Penny

I knew Kate well enough that when she saw this letter, she wouldn't do anything to it. She'd just keep it and turn it in, as if she had done it herself. I had no doubt that Michael would receive my letter.

It was two days before we were heading home when Kate looked at me like I'd never seen her look at me before. "You know, I never thanked you, Penny, for what you did."

The pen pal assignment instantly flashed through my head, and a grin popped on my face. "Kate? Really?" I asked. "You're *thanking* me? Wow. This is a first."

"Don't get used to it," she sneered back. "My teacher gave me a hundred percent on it. The only thing she said was that she thought it was weird that I called myself 'Penny', but it was totally okay, because I made up this awesome lie. I told her that I don't feel comfortable telling strangers my real name—and she believed it!"

I cocked my eyebrow. Was I really related to this girl?

"Anyway," she went on. "Ms. Green said we didn't have to continue writing to our pen pals for the class as an assignment, but if we wanted, we could do it on our own time." Now, she took out an envelope from her English folder and handed it over to me, a smile a mile long on her face. "Here's Michael's letter; he's your pen pal now. I didn't read it—the guy is too much of a retard to me. He's all yours."

And then, before I could think of anything else to say, she walked out of the room. I stared down at the envelope, at Michael's curvy handwriting. Before I knew it, I was opening it up.

Dear Penny,

That was so nice of you. I can't believe somebody actually wrote to me. My last pen pal never wrote anything.

You know, you seem like a pretty cool girl, too. Don't think I'm crazy, but I think we should meet up somewhere and talk. I don't have very many friends, and I'd like to be yours. Why don't we meet up at the grocery store on the last day of July? How about over in the frozen food section?

I hope to see you there.

Your Pen Pal,

Michael

P.S. I love hikes.

As soon as I looked up from the letter, before I could even register any thoughts from that recent—well, *shock*—a strange mist began to fill the air.

My heart started to beat out of worry, but, in an instant the worry vanished. In fact, I felt pretty calm all of a sudden. Almost too calm.

Oh, but the feeling was so nice! How could I suspect anything bad of it? It was so smooth, kind, and it overfilled my entire body—I felt as if I could never be scared of anything.

It was a nice feeling.

"You probably don't know who I really am," Sky said.

I gasped. "Who said that?"

The strange mist began to form into the shape of a person. *Oh my God. What did Kate put in those drinks earlier?* I began to shiver.

"Don't worry, you're fine. It's just me, Sky." He chuckled. "And you're not on drugs. Don't worry."

"What are you doing here?" I asked, trying to fight away the peaceful feeling. Because I wasn't scared—that was sort of making me scared.

"Don't worry, it's okay," Sky repeated. "Listen. I know you're probably a little creeped out about Michael's letter. And maybe about me, too."

I looked down at Michael's curvy handwriting and laughed. "How'd you guess? He came on a little too strong, don't you think?"

"I know you're going to think I'm crazy, but you have to go and meet him, Penny. He's a very depressive kid. And he's going through a tough time in his life right now."

"What? This is insane!" I couldn't think of anything else to say!

"No, listen. You don't understand. Don't take this as a shock, all right?" he asked, putting his cold fingers on my shoulder. "I died of a suicide two years ago. I took my dad's old gun from his toolbox and shot myself in the head." He took a moment, as if he was gathering his thoughts. He was a bit nervous, maybe even more so than I was at this moment.

"But all these kids kept on making fun of me at school," he continued. "I was the kid nobody ever wanted to be partnered up with. So, I felt there was only one way out—death. And Michael's going to end up the same way as me if you don't go and do something about it."

"No," I muttered. "I can't. I'm leaving soon, and—"

"Penny," he said, slowly. "You have to go and meet him. You *have* to."

"But I don't understand!" I yelled. "I'm going to be leaving in two days, and how is me meeting him going to make him any less suicidal? I'm going to be gone. I live far away."

"Trust me," Sky said. "Just go and meet him. Tell him the truth. This guy has self-esteem issues. When he sees that you show

up there, it'll brighten his mood, and eventually things will get better from there."

I finally decided to say what was on my mind. "But I don't want to."

"You have to."

"Can you come with me?"

"No," he let out. "This is something you have to do on your own."

"What?" I asked, annoyed. "That's not fair! You dragged me into this, Before I could say anything else, he was gone. The last thing I heard

was a whisper. "Go see Michael... promise me you will..."

I'm such a sucker.

"I promise."

~

I waited in the frozen food section for what seemed like ages. I was right next to all the flavors of ice cream, and I was getting kind of hungry. Of all places, I wondered, why the frozen food section? And why even a grocery store, at that?

That's when I saw him. He was this tall, nerdy looking kid with glasses and long messy, brown hair. He kind of just came and stood over by me. I thought he was ignoring me for a second, but I saw how nervous he was by his goose bumps and the way he was shaking. It looked like I was going to be the one to break the ice.

"Hi. Are you Michael, by any chance?"

This kid looked so happy, I can't even tell you. Maybe Sky was right—maybe he didn't get out too much. "Yeah! You're Penny, right? Wow! I can't believe it!"

"What?" I asked.

"Oh, it's just an honor to meet you," Michael continued, not even answering my question. He took my hand in his and began to shake it. Weird. What was with the hand shaking thing?

Before he could say anything else, I spit out the number one thing on my mind. "Listen, I need to tell you the truth."

"What do you mean?" he innocently asked.

"Well... you see, I wasn't supposed to write you that letter."

"What do you mean?" he repeated. He began to look a little pale, all of a sudden.

"Listen, Michael," I began. "I'm not in Ms. Green's English class. My cousin is. You see, she wasn't going to write it. The letter, I mean. She wasn't going to write you a letter. I just thought that that was such a mean thing to do, and you were an innocent kid, and I felt bad. So I decided to write to you instead."

He was silent for a minute before he said anything else. "Really?" he asked. "That was a nice thing to do. Your letter really brightened my day. You're brightening my day right now."

Michael and I talked for about fifteen minutes until I told him that I had to go. He seemed like a nice kid. I wondered why he had such low self-esteem.

Michael and I still kept contact through letters for three years, until I moved away to another address. The last I heard of him, he was studying at a

university with a major in business. He had a girlfriend, too, and a bunch of friends.

Every now and again, I still wonder about him. And I think about Sky.

I'll always remember that summer; and the two very interesting people I met.

The Transported Man

Stephen Garcia

You present the readers
With what looks to be
An average poem
They look at it
From top to bottom
Sifting through
Lines and words
Searching for mystery
A secret, your secret
Are you watching closely?

Beginning to believe
Sensing a release
Within their soul
This average poem
Has taken new form
They swear they understand it
But secretly they don't want to

Their eyes near the final stanza
Anticipation peaked
Waiting to stumble
Across the final revelation
If they want it enough
They will find it
You take your poem back
That marvel and wonderment
Still illuminates their eyes

Have you attained your prestige?

Divine Insanity
Grace Lawrence

My eyes are closed,
my Brain gone.
She's out singing the eggshell Blues
with the polished black birds
in the Tree
that resides in my backyard.

The Tree that sprouted in front my eyes
from the giant cracks in the earth.
He is saturated with the
greenest green
I have ever seen.

Each leaf is drenched in dye
I could wring out and
watch Splatter on the ground.

This Tree is dripping moss.
Soft moss that I swear is
snow white rabbit fur and cotton balls.
I want to it touch so bad
it hurts.

As I get closer,
To my great surprise
A Branch stretches its
spiny wooden fingers out to
shake my hand.
(What a lovely gesture!)

I reach out to grab it,
but it is untouchable.
Floating and drifting
round my fingertips

Like trying to catch
a Breeze.
The one that gently streams along

above my head
in the sky
where pixilated clouds tango.

You present the chapters
With what to do to be
An average poem
They look at it
From top to toe
Sifting through
Lines and words
Searching for mystery
A secret, your moral
Are you watching closely?

Receptive to nothing
Serving a command
With a sign and
This average poem
Has been the best
They want the one
But surely they don't want to

Their eyes near the final stanza
Anticipation peaked
Waiting to stumble
Across the final revelation
If they want it enough
They will find it
You take your poem back
That moment and wonderment
Subliminally their eyes

Have you attained your purpose?

Divine intensity
Dazzling words

My eyes are closed
my Brain gone
Sits cross sitting the western blues
with the polished black birds
in the trees
and hidden in my backyard.
The fire that crowned in front my eyes
now the light circles in the air
He is saturated with the
growth green
I love your work

Each foot is reached in eye
I could write out and
wait hidden on the ground

The fire is burning more
Ball more that I know is
now what is not in and cotton balls
I want to touch so bad
I hurt

As I get closer,
To my great surprise
A branch extends to
my wooden fingers out to
shake my hand
(What a lovely gesture)

I reach out to grab it
but it is ungraspable
floating and billowing
around my fingertips

Like trying to catch
a breeze
The one that gently streams along

Moonglow Memories

Justin Sudkamp

I would dance with you,
But I am old my sister.
So old the Cottonwood, I planted at ten,
Has lost its mighty decrepit limbs
To the wind.

I remember our dances
When my legs were short
And you were the waxing light
Of cricket-sung summer nights.
Oh my sister, I am old.

Do you remember the salad days?
When I'd run the pack's song
And we'd whirl in the fullness
Of your silver smile.

The greens of those days
Returned to black earth;
They are out of seasons.
Ah, my pale sister
I grow cold.

The sun which once bronzed
The skin of my children and me
No longer melts the frost in my bones.

My children?
I taught them, don't worry.
They know the songs of
 the whippoorwill
 the cricket
 the bullfrog.
They know the steps and the seasons.
They know the cycles
And disregard the reasons.

Ai my silver sister

The memories crack the heart.
I showed them their light
Even as mine began to ebb.

I am old my sister.
So old my feet barely clear
The suddenly mountainous molehill.
So it is just, then, that I come
In your waning hours
To slide down your beams
One last time.

Connected

Brittany Morgan

She faces away
The pen etching lines
Only she knows
Only she feels
Filling in empty pages
Her body turned
A little stiff
Toward the wall
Her hair falls
Hiding her face
As her hand races
Across the page
Notebook flat
In her lap
Almost connected
As if they were one.

Spring

Anthony Travis Shoot

driving drunk
in the middle of nowhere
with the windows down
I feel the world
flame and swell
inside me—
it smells like night and grass.

right now,
the wind could rip the ribs
from my chest,
and I'd keep singing.

Bodhisattva

Sarah Fairchild

Maria Magdalena Hernandez
meditates on the AC unit
throne, where She sits like
The Buddha of Conger and
7th street, poems of John Berryman
spilled open on the Pulpit of Her lap.

She speaks from The Dream Songs
with an accent of Urban Enlightenment.
Paints the great truths on the abandoned
buildings of a spiritless city.

The moon is
so angry with me
I cannot understand it to its brother.
But yes, the moon is high and red.

The night... I see the moon.

I hear the night
I hear the sky

The moon is
loose in the through-gritted teeth.

The hatted man is my witness.

But I cannot think.

I cannot cry.

I hear this moon,
I hear this moon.

What about Love?

Justin Sudkamp

There is love
 but how many find it?
Who are they that
 reach into the slop of ages
And pull out a
 chip of diamond?
Romeo and Juliet
 they found love amongst
Blood feud. They died.

God sent down his sonself
 for he so loved the world.
His life, too, was forfeit
 so man may thrive.
The flow of blood
 may have ceased from
His wounds, but
 did the tears dry from
His eyes?

Love exists
 it has to,
But does one have
 to walk hell
And half of Georgia
 barefoot
To find it?

Angry Moon

Jennifer O'Neil

The moon...
Is dangerous tonight.

See the blood on its skin?

The anger in its eyes?

The tear on its cheek?

I fear this moon.
I fear this moon.

The moon...
Is angry with me.

I once preferred it to its brother.

But now, the moon frightens me.

The night...frightens me.

I fear this night.
I fear this sky.

The moon...
Leers at me through gritted teeth.

His hatred makes me wince.

But I cannot move.

I cannot cry.

I fear this moon.
I fear this moon.

Haunted
Kellen Fasnacht

When I'm alone
and it's cold
raining, dark

I see you
where you were,
the guest room

smiling quietly
draped in blue
patient, calm

not quite you
only what my
thoughts render

in the wake
of two sober
winters.

Desperate, I
reach to touch
your pale hands

unwavering,
frozen at
your hips

your name,
a whisper
from my lips

leaves me
shaking, broken
with truth

years after loss
holding out
for hope

that in time
or death
or love
you'll long

to reach back
to touch

my gaunt frame
sunken cheeks
tired eyes

understanding
how it feels
to still be

alive.

Haiku #1

Justin Sudkamp

Love is like a rose
It has both beauty and thorn,
Dying with the frost.

Cherry-blossoms,
I reach to touch
your pale hands

uncovering
frozen at
your hips

your name,
a whisper
from my lips

leaves the
shaking, broken
with truth

Immobile

Rashelle McNair

He sits
on the scarred
wood of
the kitchen chair

large frame
once robust
sags in a faded
t-shirt

box wine fills
the crystal globe
in his shaking hand

cigar dangles from wrinkled lips
perfect smoke rings float
up
burst on the yellow ceiling

his eyes like lonely moons
pale in the sunset
look past smudged
sliding-door-glass
towards mountains he'll
never explore

a man of action
he despises the cancer
that his sawed-off shotgun
can't destroy.

The Churning

Josh Boykin

there comes a point in sleep-deprivation'
when your heart wants to vomit, projectile;
play its contents on the wall
with strokes
using colors bold, industrious
captivating as wheat field sunsets
from last summer
tractors silhouetted in the fiery sinking orb

and sometimes we forget to sleep
so we don't get to

and perhaps we fear ourselves
so we don't want to

but just because we've been so long isolated

doesn't mean that we don't need

our Dreams.

The Guitar Man

Dan Davis

They called him the Guitar Man. "Git-Tar," he often drawled to himself, late at night. They never called him by his Christian name; most didn't even know it. *The Guitar Man's comin' to town. Did you hear the Guitar Man last night? Boy, I wish I could play like the Guitar Man!* He'd gotten used to it; given enough time, a man could get used to anything. He'd learned that lesson in a broken down shack in a forgotten corner of town; learned it again behind cold gray walls and barred windows; and again in an empty bed, staring night after night at a ceiling fan. He didn't gain his knowledge from no books; didn't ever read no books, didn't ever have need for 'em. Not even music books. The music was in his heart—always had been, always would be. Couldn't put love on a piece of paper; you could only capture it in a melody, one note at a time.

He knew it would be his last performance; felt it that morning as he arose from his bed, joints aching, head pounding. Took a shot of whiskey to silence the noise; it burned on its way down. Never burned before; that's how he knew. When a man can't take his liquor, he needs to stop drinking. And there was only one reason the Guitar Man would stop drinking—if he was to be meeting his Savior fore right too long.

He sat on the edge of his bed a moment, pondering. Heaven was a dancehall; he'd discovered that years ago. There would be good-lookin' women on the dance floor, lost in the music, shimmying in the glare of the subdued lights, swaying back and forth, back and forth, left to right and right to left. Their hands would move gracefully; their hips elegant and tasteful, devilish yet chaste, a combination that would drive men to their knees. The music would flow through them; they would feel it in their souls, and their souls would respond in kind, just as they were meant to. Music was a language; it was the universal language of the angels. There were a lucky few who understood how to mold the words, who could imitate the rise and fall of the syllables and stresses.

The Guitar Man was one of the Chosen. He had long ago thanked the Good Lord for the gift.

Heaven was a dancehall where the liquor flowed. The amber currents went down smooth; they caressed, they consoled, they

nourished. A man drank to the rhythm of the jukebox; a beer for a quarter note, a shot for an eighth, a double shot and a prayer for a sixteenth. Pool cues cracked against polished eight balls; clinking glasses timed the minutes. And, if you were lucky, the Astros were on the television.

There would be no spotlight, though. That's what always bugged him when he played—how he was the only one lit. Music was a conversation—the singer sang, the audience responded, and the singer sang some more. It was only the man on the stage who got the credit; but there was no way in Heaven or Hell the man could be on the stage unless there was a man off the stage listening. Music was a conversation; and if you're talkin' to yourself, then you're just plain crazy.

He slowly lifted his balding head, feeling the gentle rush from the ceiling fan above. There was a mirror on the wall; like every morning before, he forced himself to look into it. For the first time in years, he met his own gaze staring back. He wasn't sure if he liked what he saw. Maybe. Just maybe, there was something in there this time, something behind the half-hidden tears that told him he was going to be okay.

It had been a long time.

As he sat down in front of the microphone, he waited for the Thrill to come. It took its sweet time, now. In older days, younger days, he would feel it even before he took the stage; he would feel it just thinking about the song, the guitar strings, the women, the booze. He would drink, first; maybe a little, maybe a lot. Maybe he would fuck. Something to take the edge off—the Thrill had been that strong, then. It had been so powerful it could overwhelm him, if he'd let it.

But these latter days, the Thrill wasn't so easy to find. It still came, alright; it always did, never fail. But instead of lightning, it was a train; a slow, steady train that built up speed as it progressed. He could be halfway through a performance before the Thrill kicked into overdrive; and, always, it left him as soon as he exited the stage. Didn't use to—no, he'd spent a lot of hazy nights fightin' off the Thrill, using every weapon the devil threw into his hands. Lost a marriage that way. Wound up in jail that way.

He ran through his first riff—a simple number he had derived years ago from the Pentatonic scale, nothing outstanding, but it was still a crowd pleaser—almost without thought; his eyes were closed, his lips drawn tight, the outside world kept at bay. He was in the song. That first note, that brief F#, opened the door to a world he had discovered at the age of eight, sitting on his grandfather's back steps. A beaten up hand-me-down, the strings dirty and frayed almost beyond recognition. A subdued sunburst finish; dust caked the pick guard, scratches marred the body. His grandfather had handed it to him gently, as though afraid it would shatter.

"Here you go, son. Now play it for me."

And he had; just one note—an open E; the instrument had looked so frail, he hadn't wanted to risk breaking a string—but it was enough. His grandfather had smiled and cackled in that intimidating way of his, as if saying: *Son, you play this here guitar, and you play it well, or you'll get a whoopin'*. He had obeyed; all the rest of that day, through dinner, on the back porch, he played. He came away with more mosquito bites than a boy could count, and raw fingers that couldn't even hold a cup of milk the next day, but he had his music. He had his song.

His fingers hadn't danced, back then, so much as they'd stumbled. Tonight, though...tonight they blazed across the neck, bending and stretching, forming a G chord without hesitation, following with a C that came on instinct. His right fingers plucked as his left waltzed. His feet kept the time; he alternated between them—his feet didn't concern him, he wasn't even aware of them. His voice wasn't what it used to be, but that didn't matter. This was the blues, mister; this wasn't music for choirboys.

*They told me long ago
Ain't no way to get back home*

His throat felt constricted; nothing new, always did. He had never felt comfortable singing; it wasn't what he was meant to do. But it had to be done; he was the Guitar Man, but a guitar alone couldn't hold an audience like this. You needed lyrics to match the notes; you needed words along with the melody. Otherwise, the song, the blues, was only half complete.

They told me long ago

All a man can do is roam

His lyrics came to him in dreams, usually. The melody was a conscious thing, a waking thing; Picasso never painted no picture in his sleep.

*Well I'm goin' home this evenin'
And no more shall I be alone*

She'd left him for his friend; isn't that the way it always went down? Stabbed in the back twice—by his lover and his buddy. That was what the blues was about—betrayal. Betrayal of the heart, betrayal of the soul. Whiskey helped. Cigarette smoke, hanging thick in the air, helped. Many a sleepless night was due to the blues, to the music that arose from distrust and misuse. He knew it; he had lived it, he had made a living from it. Not much of a living; a tip jar, a smile, a word of praise. But a living nonetheless, and one he was grateful for.

*Now I wonder through this darkness
Not a light can I see
Alone here in the darkness
Without a light for which to see
Oh I can feel the devil's fire
Oh brother do you hear my plea*

He didn't remember the exact moment he'd found the Lord again; it had come in some dimly lit bathroom, huddled beneath a sink, with vomit on his shirt and a bottle in his hand. Of that, he was certain. He'd been drunk, that was a safe assumption, he'd spent that period of his life inside a whiskey bottle. Still did, you could say; once you moved in, you didn't move out, not entirely. He'd never gone to an AA meeting; he'd never gone to a church service. But somewhere along the way he'd put the bottle down—at least, more often—and started reading his Bible again. The pages were tattered and torn, tarnished through years of neglect. There were stains on the words of Moses; Revelations was a patch-work tale of damnation and redemption. A good portion of Genesis was missing entirely.

Blues was religion; the guitar was his altar. It was high-brow thinking, something he hadn't dared to contemplate in his youth; but age afforded him some slack, granted him permission to think outside the golden box he had tried to craft for himself. Blues was religion; it was his way of preaching, of singing praise. Even if he sang of murder and despair, he was speaking the Lord's tongue, and God was listening.

He lay down in his bed that night, the guitar cradled in his arms. He stared up at the ceiling fan again, counting the blades as they *whooshed* pass: one, two, three, four, five, six...four blades, only four blades, but they flowed together, melted into a blur of images that, if you viewed it just right, became one solid spinning blade, one single current of motion and wind and everything that music was supposed to be.

One note at a time. That's how you played the song. But sometimes, yes sometimes, if you were lucky, you would get a chord.

He strummed. C chord. Slow, thoughtful.

"And now..."

D chord. A little quicker than he should have, but everyone was too caught up in the song to notice.

"I'm a goin'..."

A pause. Then, the slowest yet, a G chord.

"Home..."

He smiled. It didn't matter how many teeth he'd lost in bar-room fights; it didn't matter how wrinkled his face had become; it didn't matter how his eyes weren't quite as penetrating as they had once been. No. He was the Guitar Man; all that mattered now was how he played, and boy, could he play. Yes, son, and you would do well to remember it 'til the day you meet the Lord: the Guitar Man knew how to play.

The Old Boat Dock

Josh Boykin

And he sits on the chair wondering if
by the time she moves on and finds a new
catch he will finally cry. The old boat
dock rocks his senses into submission,
eventually allowing him to drift,
float into the crystalline sunset now
gilded by the golden glow of lovedreams.
Harbor's night swallows him, but memories
in his mind spark like stars, dotting the mute,
jet-black sky around him. One small, simple
kiss caused his Big Bang; light leapt from her soft
lips to bring fire to his cold world. But now
midnight makes short work of silenced spirit;
now he flounders in a dark void as wide
open as the door she didn't bother
pushing closed when she left. —The wind blows in
quietly from the bay and he wakes, feels
ready to toast the night. Slowly he draws,
sips on the old flask. Moonlight shimmers on
the tender dock where his once flourishing
universe was formed; moonlight shimmers on
vapors forming from his last breaths. Death's draught
works quickly; he's marked his ethereal
"X" on Hell's contract-line before he sees,
yearning for her, his final mistake: tears
zero, he fades. The old boat dock rocks on.

Saltwater Raindrops

Tim Ernst

"The skies are getting darker now;
It must be getting ready to rain" she said.

"No, God's just depressed;
That's all," I responded

"Why would he be depressed?"

"Well, because the sun was shining,
Of course"

"Oh" said

She.

So we laid

In silence

And admired the depression

Slow Motion
Grace Lawrence

I watch my faucet drip
tiny droplets of water.
I should turn the cracked
plastic spout, make it stop.
But I just stare.
So long that
each individual drop
slows down
into tears
that collect
in the bottom
of the porcelain basin.

Solid Advice

For *Cor* Anthony Travis Shoot

Colleen McLaughlin

Spray-painted on a brick wall—
Kiss her,
it may be your last chance.

Along in the yard,
the wind is dry, bare of
change. The grass has
gone over in a golden
state to their long, flat
over-riding gave
resting solely on their
this, speaking of
They're drained of hope
I found, seated, as if
I could.

She waits from the upper
window through I watch
tossing about I watch
crying, I could. She
beyond my no second
I pick up and up kick
start to dig, it is
and of look over the

I left the letter on
Gwen's desk
For a moment, "I don't love you
I leave the car door cracked
and go down towards the river—
I guess and people and complain
as I walk away.

Though I've been told
that isn't my medium,
I like to think I can pretend
to feel as if that thing I have
under this December snow.

Then my feet start hurting.
And I've just come here
for my summer specials
and you'll look that look—
in the middle of the stream.

While the moon has
I struggle to keep thinking of
those friendly, sunlit hours,
still reflected in the water,
the slowly freezing moment.

Every smile takes longer
as the wind whips the leaves—
the faces slip away as I'm called
by the price of those smiles,
every little corner this
Flying faster, the current breaks
to sweep from all away,
of that expensive summer,
I keep looking, reaching over,
but the ice encroaches.

Reveling those painted combs
surrounded by the glistening trees,
with the old tin wings,
I'm flooded with the colors—
but, oh, the price of the summer—
how much I said for Christmas that year.

I Left the Radio On
Serena Heath

For a moment,
I leave the car door cracked
and go down towards the river –
it groans and beeps and complains
as I walk away.

Though I've been told
this isn't my medium,
I like to think I can pretend
to feel as that dying flower
under this December sunset.

Then my feet start hurting,
And I've just come here
for my summer sandals
sitting still upon that rock –
in the middle of the stream.

While the moon rises,
I struggle to keep thinking on
those friendly, sun-lit faces,
still reflected in the waters,
the slowly freezing memories.

Every smile fades quicker
as the wind whirls the leaves –
the faces slip away as I'm chilled
by the price of those smiles,
every roller coaster ride.
Flowing faster, the current threatens
to sweep them all away,
of that expensive summer,
I keep looking, reaching over,
but the ice encroaches.

Revisiting those browned cornfields,
surrounded by the graying trees,
with the old tire swings,
I'm flooded with the colors –
but, oh! the price of the summer –
how much I paid for gasoline that year.

Untitled
For Courtney

Kellen Fasnacht

"I want to hide in a hole where no one can find me."

8-23-08

Alone in the yard,
the wind is dry; bare of
change. The grass lies
bent over, in a golden
salute to their king, his
overpowering glare
resting solely on their
thin, speckled shoulders.
They're drained of hope;
soulless frames, bending;
lifeless.

She wails from the upstairs
window. I thought about
crying. I couldn't. Sweat
condenses on my forehead.
I pick up the shovel and
start to dig. It is all
she ever asked of me.

Ermine Drive
Stephen Garcia

A broad stretch of black, exposed with each rotation
Scouting ahead through a narrow gaze
Waves of green and brick surround, but do not threaten me
Unseen rays blanket and pacify
Gently gliding, a draft so fresh slides through my hair
A constant clicking lingers...waiting for my approval
Worn handles dictate the next turn|
A new lane nears as gravel crunches beneath
Peering ahead to another stretch of black

When my foot starts hurting,
And I've just come here
for my summer sandals
sitting still upon that rock --
in the middle of the stream.

While the moon rises,
I struggle to keep thinking on
those friendly, tan-lit faces,
still reflected in the waters
the slowly fading memories.

Every smile fades quicker
as the wind whips the leaves --
the faces slip away as I'm chilled
by the price of those smiles,
every roller coaster ride.

Flowing faster, the current threatens
to sweep them all away,
of that expensive summer,
I keep looking, reaching over,
but the ice encroaches.

Reminding those browned combats,
surrounded by the graying trees,
with the old tire swings,
I'm flooded with the colors --
but, oh the price of the summer --
how much I paid for paradise that year.

James K. Johnson Creative Writing Award Winners

This Spring, two winners were chosen for the James K. Johnson Creative Writing Award, named in honor of the retiring dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. Anthony Travis Shoot and Daniel Paquin were both honored with a cash prize and the opportunity to read their works in a reading at the Doudna Fine Arts Center on April 22, 2009.

You will find their winning entries featured on the following pages, preceded by a statement from each author about his writing.

"As far as my writing goes, I tend to write things that I would read myself. If I'm not interested in my own words, then I can't expect others to give them much attention, either. I've not done much nonfiction, but with "Patricide" I was just writing to get it all off my chest. It was one of those subjects where I've held it in so long that it was getting to the point where I needed to let it go and move on or implode. It was really hard to write "Patricide." I remember that the first two or three times I sat down to write it, I only succeeded in wadding up a piece of paper stained with tears at the end of the night. Eventually, I got it all out, and while it's still a really touchy subject, I feel better about the whole experience."

—Daniel Paquin

Patricide

Daniel Paquin

"Our fathers were our models for God." – Tyler Durden

If Tyler's words ring true, then it's no wonder that I don't believe in God. I don't believe in my father, or the possibility of having a father, for that matter. I've never had a "real" father and at this point in my life I'm not sure that I ever will. Or ever want to.

My eighteenth birthday was the week before my senior year of high school began. Lucky me. You would think that being that age and having access to porn and cigarettes during your last year of high school would make it easier, but it didn't. I don't smoke and I've never really been attracted to porn that much. Besides the fact that it's distasteful, in my opinion, there's something grotesque about the human anatomy. And having it all laid out like that for you doesn't help much.

Towards the beginning of my senior year, my mother decided, now that I was an adult, it was time for me to decide whether or not I wanted to have open communications with my father. She gave me his e-mail address and wished me the best of luck. My mom wasn't even sure that his e-mail address was still active, something about him changing stuff like that every few years, and her not really knowing for sure. Luckily, or unluckily now that I look at it, he hadn't changed his e-mail in a while and he actually received my

communication.

I don't really know anything about my father, just a few sordid stories from my mother, a number of Christmas cards that can be counted on one hand, and a single picture from before I could remember. In the picture, Jeff (that's his name after all) is holding me in his arms, what appears to be a Christmas tree in the background. He seems to be holding me more away from him than anything else.

His hair is long and red, and to this day I am thankful that I inherited my mother's dirty blond hair instead. In the middle of his goatee sits a smile, forced it seems, on whose behalf I'm not sure.

In the picture, my baby face isn't smiling at all, one of the few instances this happened from all of the baby pictures I've seen of myself.

The handful of Christmas cards all have basically the same message scrawled on the inside and if it weren't for the snowmen or Santa Claus on the front and the words "Merry Christmas" already printed inside, I doubt that I'd ever have been able to figure out that the cards were actually meant for that occasion. The message contained within each cheap, box of 25 for \$2.99 card is scrawled in such a way as to be nearly unreadable. Like it was written in haste or an upwelling of emotion, most likely anger. Even now, I still can't read most of what's been written inside those cards. They, from what I can gather, read as follows.

Dear Danny,

I hope this message reaches you...

...

Your mother is trying to keep you from me. [or "me from you" depending on how he was feeling that day, I guess]

...

If this does reach you, write me back and tell me what you want for Christmas. Anything you want, I'll get for you.

...

Call me if you can. I'd love to hear from you.

...

I wish your mother wasn't making it so hard for me to reach you.

...

It's selfish of her to try to keep you from me.

...

I wish she'd come to her senses and let me see you more.

...

Hopefully, I'll talk to you later, Little Man.

Love,

Your Father

Jeff never signed the cards with his name and he never called my mom by hers. They always referred to each other as "Your father" or "Your mother," as if it was my fault that they hated each other and they wanted to keep reminding me of it.

I'm still waiting on those Christmas gifts that I asked for all those years ago.

That first e-mail I sent to Jeff was one of the hardest things I've ever done. It took so much effort to try to form complete sentences that I ended up giving up on that altogether, as well as forsaking punctuation. The end result ended up something like this:

Hey
betcha dont know who this is do ya
its your son, Danny
yeah thats right
im 18 so its time for us to meet for the first time
in..... well as far back as I can remember
I thought we could start slow and work up to actually
meeting in person
cause that wont be until next summer at the earliest
because I have college to attend
so e-mail me back and we'll go from there
umm..... I guess that's it
Danny

My mother used to tell me stories about my father when they were together and I was a baby. All of them, in a roundabout way, never directly mind you, accuse Jeff of being a poor father. Like I need reminding. They make for some interesting stories to tell friends, but I'm not too sure how much I can trust my mother in this

subject.

I think I want to believe her more than I actually do.

Her favorites, if they can be called that, are the stories in which my father was doing something obviously illegal. Besides painting him in a very negative light, these stories also serve to tell me how much better off I am without the man. My personal favorite involves one of Jeff's rare visits to see me. I was living in North Carolina at the time, and Jeff was under court orders not to leave the state with me. The police in Arizona found me 5 days later and I was taken back to North Carolina in police custody. My mom tells me that Jeff had planned to use me as a tax write-off.

Another one I've heard numerous times is about how I was almost killed in a gunfight. Apparently, Jeff, my mother, and I were driving in the family vehicle when we were forced off of the road by some Mexicans on choppers. They were disgruntled about a bad drug deal my father had been involved in and to show their annoyance, they opened fire on Jeff and his family, my baby self included.

There is one story that I do believe is completely true and I always tell it as if there were no way it could be false. When I was 5 days old, Jeff convinced my mother, fresh out of the hospital after my birth, to go see the movie *Aliens* in theatres. I doubt I'll ever know for sure if this story is true or not, but considering the fact that *Aliens* is my favorite movie of all time and I, apparently, slept through the whole thing in the theatre, I'll believe it until I hear otherwise.

I had all of these stories in the back of my mind as I checked my inbox several times a day waiting for my father's reply. Finally, it arrived. It went something as follows:

Hey kid. I knew that eventually this day would come and I was looking forward to it. I can't say that I liked the way things went in your upbringing but we can discuss that soon. As I told you before feel free to ask any questions that you have and I'll answer any of them. What I want to know is are you living with your mom? Because I don't know that you will get this e-mail if you are. It is 3:30 in the morning here and I am off to work so drop me another message today. to let me know we are reaching each other. Thanks Danny for making the effort to talk to me again. God only knows what your mother has told you about me but I would like to straighten it all out.

Love Dad

His reply wasn't what I had expected, or hoped for.

From then on, we exchanged e-mails about once a week, but I was quickly finding out that he really didn't seem to care about me much. He never really asked me, his first son from his first marriage, any questions, instead talking, gloating rather, about himself and his latest projects. Jeff always seemed to be rebuilding his car or remodeling his house, and I still can't figure out how he paid for it all since he always told me that he worked in a grocery store.

I don't have many memories with my father due to the fact that I haven't seen him since before I reached double digits of age, but the ones I do have all leave something to be desired. I used to be heavily into the Power Rangers and my father, as well as everyone else I encountered, knew about it because it was all I talked about. I lived for Power Rangers and I never missed an episode. My favorite was Kimberly, the Pink Ranger, and I still harbor a crush on her to this day.

In one rare phone call with my father he told me that he had a surprise for me and someone else got on the other line. A female voice that sounded vaguely familiar said, "Hi, Danny."

"Umm, hi...", I replied uncertainly.

My father must have heard the hesitation in my voice because he spoke next, "Danny, you know the Yellow Ranger from Power Rangers?"

"Yeah!" My heart leapt at the mention of my favorite show.

"This is her. I know her personally."

I think my heart skipped a beat at that moment. I had talked to the Yellow Ranger! Even though she wasn't the hottest, I still gloated to my friends the next day at school, and got an ego boost from their jealousy at my fortune. Now, all I can think when I look back on this is why he couldn't have gotten the Pink Ranger instead of the Yellow. If he had been lying, would it have made that much of a difference in the long run?

In another memory, I actually went to visit my father, flying to Arizona by myself. I must have been a cute kid, because I got loads of attention from all the stewardesses, and all the airplane peanuts and ginger ale my little body could handle. I remember switching flights and being personally escorted to a child holding/waiting area of some kind, fully furnished with all the latest video game systems and pizza. The man escorting me carried my single

suitcase while I carried my backpack (like I'd have let him carry it anyway) and made sure that I made it onto my connecting flight safe and sound.

I remember the flight there more than I remember what happened in Arizona or the flight home. I'm not sure if it was this trip or another one, if there was another one, but I have this vague memory involving a remote control monster truck. I barely got to play with it before I did something wrong and it was taken from me, never to be returned. I still miss that monster truck.

I don't think I've seen my father since then, and every time he mentioned me visiting him in our e-mail correspondences, he never once said that he'd pay for my return ticket, only that he'd pay my way out there.

I've never visited him because I don't want to be trapped in Arizona.

Jeff and my mother divorced when I was very little and I have their divorce papers to prove it, one of few mementos that show my father's existence. My mother wasn't the type of person to let one bad marriage ruin her life and she soon remarried. My first step-father, Doug, also ended up being my third stepfather. My mom divorced him after having two kids with him and remarried again, this time to another Jeff, this one the same amount of asshole that my father was. She divorced Jeff-2 a few years later and remarried Doug, whom I've never been too keen on.

I'll admit that Doug has been more of a father to me than Jeff ever was, but there are just some father-son things that he never did with me. We never played catch, he never took me camping, we never had the birds and the bees talk. I learned to shave on my own, eventually getting tips from my mother, rather than Doug, when I kept cutting my face. I'm still a really poor shaver and I cut myself at least once every time I shave.

I've always been closer to my mother, for obvious reasons, and so, I consider myself more feminine than those males raised with a male role model in their lives. Doug's not doing father-son activities with me also played some part in my eventual turnout as well, I would think. Either way, I've always been forced to call Doug "Dad" and it always seems like I'm betraying myself when I do so. I've never mentioned it to him, but I did mention it to my mom once and she suggested that I talk to him about it.

I never did.

Through all of this there was always the constant push of Christianity down my throat, mostly, it seemed, by my step-fathers,

with some lackluster support from my mother. Jeff-2 and Doug always seemed to need to go to church, and my mother always just seemed like she was tagging along for the ride. Don't get me wrong, she's a religious woman, but she seems to have a more personal connection with God that doesn't require going to any organized group worship ceremonies. She seems perfectly content to worship on her own. My step-dads were always the ones who saw regular church-going as a necessary family activity. I can remember Jeff-2 getting up early, much earlier than what he normally would for work through the week, to put on his toupee before church. As if the people he saw at church didn't know he was bald, or cared more about it than the inmates at the prison where he worked.

Doug was always, and still is, the center of attention at whatever church we attended. This never fails to anger my mother, since she is always shunned

and swept to the side when people come to talk to Doug. It's funny how many times we've switched churches for exactly this reason, only to have it happen again at the new church. By this point, I would have thought that my mom would have figured out that it's a part of Christianity, not the church itself. I have.

Maybe that's why I don't believe in God. Having religion forced upon you by someone who is pretending, rather horribly might I add, to be your father doesn't make you too keen to believe in the Holy Word or God the *Father* (emphasis mine). Tyler Durden really was right when he said that our fathers were our models for God. I believe the rest of his wisdom also:

"If our fathers bailed, what does that tell you about God?"

Pressing Matters

Every two weeks
I keep saving the voice-mail—
my baby boy
crying like that

She sent it
when he was days old,
and I was busy

The phone reminds me
to erase it,
but I won't—
It's been three months
and I won't

No way to keep
him like that
forever

I just keep saving him
and saving him like that

Empty Things

when I spoke
then screamed,
my words missed

some slid,
some splattered,
some
tumbled
down
the wall

and collected like garbage
around the kitchen trash can
neither of us cleaned

we couldn't clean
so you left
with me
still spitting trash
like that

but, without you
there are still crumbs
and more crumbs

and empty things
and wasted things
and used up things

you left us all here
and I'm making more of this
than I should,
this human debris
that clutters and crowds
and fails
as these words fail

but I keep missing you
and missing you
and missing

Divorce *Masters*

Every two weeks

At recess I'd hear the voice call—

I used to lay

on the grass and

watch cars zoom by

on the two-lane highway.

When north and south bound cars

would meet,

I'd close my eyes

to make them crash.

Sometimes I'd open my eyes

just in time to close them again—

more cars, another crash.

I'd picture

my mom's hatchback

meeting my dad's El Camino—

their bodies lurching

through the windshields,

blood and glass and

arms stretched out across the hoods

as if to touch.

I played this

over and over

without understanding.

Most times, I'd watch

the corn swaying

in far off fields.

On the Street Where I Live

I saw a little boy
wearing a tank top in January.
His dog wore a space age flea helmet and
pulled him down the middle of the road as
the boy glided effortlessly
on roller skates,
while cars honked—
his mother,
nowhere to be found.

Contributors

Josh Boykin—"Help for the sake of helping; love for the sake of loving; live for the sake of living."

Christie Cheatele—Freshman English major who loves to write and hopes to one day be an author and possibly an editor. She was on her high school's newspaper staff for two years and served as the publication's Editor-in-Chief.

Dan Davis—Senior English Major with minors in Professional Writing and Creative Writing who plans on attending graduate school at Eastern beginning in the Fall of 2009.

Aaron Dillon—Senior English major whose future goal is to pursue a Ph.D. in either antebellum literary studies or southern literary studies.

Lindsey Durbin—Senior English major with Professional and Creative Writing minors.

Sarah Fairchild—Freshman English major with a Creative Writing minor.

Kellen Fasnacht—Senior English major scheduled to graduate next Spring. "I'm from Charleston, IL., and I've been sober since October 10th, 2007. My life has changed dramatically since then and I hold no regrets for what I've done to myself, my family or friends. They've forgiven me, and I've forgiven myself. Without doing so, I wouldn't be as genuinely happy, as I am today. We suffer for a reason. It allows us to discover the strength we hold within ourselves. I'd also like to thank Dr. Abella

Without her, these would just be images on a piece of paper with no meaning or heart. Peace and Love.”

Justin Fitton—“I’m not my perspective or the lies I’ll tell you every time”-Rilo Kiley

Justine is an English major who enjoys ranch dressing, buying

with enough peer pressure. She spends her free time driving around in the country listening to George Strait when gas is under \$2.00/gallon. Otherwise, she can be found in Barnes and Noble reading entire books in the big comfy chairs to avoid buying them. She thinks that this is preferable to racking up library fees, because if she keeps a book for two weeks she probably isn’t going to give it back.

Stephen Garcia—Junior English major with a minor in Creative Writing.

Tim Ernst—English major with a Pre-Law minor.

Serena Heath—First year graduate student in English. She graduated in May 2008 with her B.A. in English and Creative Writing. Her favorite genres are poetry and creative nonfiction. “Either way, I love telling stories.”

Kim Hunter-Perkins—English graduate student who used to hope to get a job. Now that she has one, she hopes to get rid of it quickly, and run off to join the poet-circus, where she will tame the wild onomatopoeia and fly through the air on a metaphor. Or perhaps she’ll just refer to herself in third person and sell popcorn at the entryway.

Kristi Kohlenberg—First year graduate student in Literary Studies with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She primarily writes fiction, and has academic interests in Linguistics, Composition Pedagogy, and Gender Studies.

Grace Lawrence—Junior English major who enjoys reading and laughing.

Mary Lieske—Graduate assistant in English. Her B.A. is from Kent State University, where she majored in English and minored in AMRS.

Rashelle McNair—Junior English major with minors in Creative Writing and Medieval Studies. “I love reading and writing, and spend more time with these passions than watching TV. And I really like TV.”

Brittany Morgan—Senior journalism major with a Creative Writing minor. “I started experimenting with writing at a very young age. I’ve grown to have a deep love for words...and my Siamese cat, Kiki.”

Jennifer O’Neil—First year graduate student trying to keep her head above water while at the same time forcing herself to make time to write.

Daniel Paquin—Senior English major with a Creative Writing minor. He hopes to pursue his Master’s degree here at EIU in Literary Studies with Creative Writing Emphasis. He spends his free time writing short stories, watching *Aliens*, listening to industrial music, d20

Submission Guidelines

Modern larping, and hustling senior citizens at shuffleboard. Daniel's favorite past time involves hiding in the bushes at water parks, near the fake rock-speakers, and unscrewing the joints of waterslides. He has also started work on his first full-length novel as well as his first screenplay. His favorite Pokemon is Typhlosion.

Kristy Pearson—Freshman English major with a Creative Writing minor. The eldest of five children, Kristy attended Lake Park High School in Roselle and began taking pictures sophomore year. She loves to read and spend time with her friends.

Maria Rhodes—Junior Communication Studies major with an emphasis in TV Production. She has two minors, Film Studies and Creative Writing. Alycia Rockey—Junior Journalism major with a concentration in Photojournalism.

Gretchen Schaible—Freshman from Brownstown, Illinois currently majoring in Music. "As a junior in high school, I studied abroad in Spain and lived there for one year. In my spare time, I like to read and write."

Travis Shoot—First year graduate student focusing on Literature Studies with a Creative Writing emphasis. "I am primarily interested in working-class fiction and poetry by authors like Larry Brown, Raymond Carver, and Charles Bukowski, but I also have a strong interest in science fiction and rhetorical genre theory. I plan to write my creative thesis based on working-class poetics, focusing on domestic relationships, rural life, class issues, and Mid-Western life in general."

Sam Sottosanto—Sophomore Journalism major who loves to write and hopes to be a novelist someday. She is involved in Writer's Ink, and WEIU-FM, and also works as an online reporter for Dennews.com.

Keith Stewart—Junior Electronic Media Production major with an English minor. "I want to get into film by becoming a producer, director and script writer. I really enjoy writing and the prospects of becoming better at it. The poem, 'A Cheap Metaphor is What We Have for Death' is in response to one of my best friends, Matthew Foltz, being killed last June 13th in an automobile accident. I wrote the poem exactly a week following the incident. To this day, I am still not sure how I came up with some of the words."

Justin Sudkamp—English major with a Creative Writing minor. "I have been going to EIU for too many years to mention. Also, I have been a member of Writer's Ink for a year."

Elizabeth Surbeck—Freshman who likes the snow and finding a good picture. Sean Walker—Senior Art major with a concentration in Painting and Jewelry. An online portfolio can be found at <http://www.eiu.edu/~arteport/?server=pen&id=skwalker2>.

Miranda White—Freshman currently enrolled in the Biological Sciences Program.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are accepted before midterm each semester. As specific dates vary, please watch for flyers, posted throughout Coleman Hall.

Please e-mail TheVehicle@gmail.com with any inquiries.

Reading Event

All readers of *The Vehicle* are invited to attend a reading event highlighting this semester's talented writers. This Spring, the reading is scheduled for Saturday May 2 at 3pm in the Black Box Theatre in the Doudna Fine Arts Center.

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“How can one not dream while writing? It is the pen which dreams. The blank page gives the right to dream.”

—Gaston Bachelard