

Department: The Promethean, Transformations (2005-2006 Special Issue)

# THE PROMETHEAN

THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL  
OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND



2005/2006 SPECIAL ISSUE

## TRANSFORMATIONS

# THE PROMETHEAN

The Literary Arts Journal of  
Concordia University-Portland



The 2005/2006 Special Issue:

## TRANSFORMATIONS

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The way of the creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony: this is what furthers and what perseveres. —*Alexander Pope*

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good, and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12: 2

This year we honor our namesake, Prometheus, known in Greek mythology as the patron of human civilization. When presented with the task of filling the earth with inhabitants, Prometheus carefully created mankind in the form of the gods. When his creations were left uncovered, freezing in the cold, Prometheus, feeling sorry for them, stole fire from the gods and brought it to humanity in a stalk of fennel plant. In the 2005–2006 special issue, we metaphorically celebrate the gift of Prometheus by recognizing the transformative power of creativity. In this spirit, we have chosen poetry, short fiction, nonfiction, art and photography that broadly explore the power and possibility of change. The work in this issue is inspired or informed by the observation and experience of many kinds of transformations—personal and political, emotional and intellectual, secular and spiritual. It is with great pride that we present to you our “fire” in the 2005–2006 issue of *The Promethean*. We hope that these creative endeavors inspire you with the same passion they did us.

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## LA NOCHE

*Luis Garcia*

*Madre del Sol. Madre Mia.*

*Madre del Viento. Madre Mia.*

*Madre del Silencio. Madre Mia.*

She moves expertly in the darkness of the room.  
She's like the dawn. Voiceless.  
She knows its pulse, its creaks.  
My eyes are shut. I see her clearly.

The blushing, desert-dried  
Hand moves forward,  
Like a child's first steps,  
Afraid it's forgotten. Touch.

The chill of the night makes the hand tremble,  
Or is it afraid? Her eyes guide it,  
Her stare encourages it. Her hand refuses.  
It recoils. There is an unspoken battle.

The warmth of her stare  
Is the opposite of her hand.  
Smooth like Swan feathers,  
It knows what to do. A mother's stare.

I Scream. Wish. Demand. Within.  
Touch. Silence is my invitation.  
She doesn't hear. My voice is a whisper  
Lost in the explosions of the cannons of fear.

Her hand moves forward. An inch. Two back. She turns.  
She stops. She looks back. One thousand  
One. One thousand two. Nothing.  
Her stare lost the battle. It blends into the night.

My heart beats to the rhythm  
Of her fading steps. "I love you,"  
My heart speaks, but I am silent.

*Madre de la Luz. Madre Mia.*

## rites

*Greg Harris*

### I. Initiation

Half awake in darkness  
Camel sighs and Bedouin whispers  
At the base of Moses' mountain.

"Do we climb at night to avoid the heat?"

"No," our guide replies.  
"We travel in darkness  
Because if you could see  
How far you must go,  
You would not have the courage  
To begin."

A lamp glows amber from the window  
High in the monastery wall.  
A perfect crescent moon  
Cups a bright burning star.

Do you accept the path  
That has been made clear?

### II. Baptism

My Lord changed the water into wine.  
My Lord looks inside and sees what's fine.  
When I slipped into the Jordan's deep  
I came back up with my soul to keep.  
My Lord changed the water into wine.

My Lord healed the wounded and the sick.  
My Lord guides which path I pick.  
When the Jordan's waters closed over me,

I broke through the surface and could truly see.  
My Lord healed the wounded and the sick.

My Lord resisted temptation and sin.  
My Lord gives me strength to try again.  
The Jordan's waters cleansed my soul.  
I left her banks forever whole.  
My Lord resisted temptation and sin.

My Lord overcame the cruelest death.  
My Lord fills me with His breath.  
When I popped out of the Jordan's dark,  
I felt the heat of an eternal spark.  
My Lord overcame the cruelest death.

My Lord shines glory on creation.  
My Lord lights the fire of inspiration.  
I sank below the Jordan without a fight  
And came back up in eternal light.  
My Lord shines glory on creation.

### III. Communion

Down to the Galilee we trod  
a single line of white flesh.  
One too old, another too hoarse.  
He's dimwitted. He's judgmental.  
She's a peacock. He's hen-pecked.  
I'm too stupid, cruel, and lost.

The Galilee's a hard mirror to face,  
So deep and holy and awesome.  
I'll cling to its shore, hold back from its edge  
Where it's safer for us cripples.  
Sorrow's acid melts my heart.  
There's a hole where muscle once beat.  
What have I done? Look what I've become.  
I can't stand to see.

In the green marsh beyond our church,  
a stately egret watches.

Ah, you are here, and you'll be with me always.  
We have this body. We have this blood.  
Filled again, in time, with peace and love.

When I dream of consolation,  
I see the pristine Galilee  
And one great white bird lifting off the shore  
to soar in its own reflection.

#### IV. Ascent

Klickitat. Loo-wit. Wy' East. Sinai.  
Mountains all call the same question.  
Come, will you? Come.

Klickitat. Loo-wit. Wy' East. Sinai.  
Beacons born of fire  
Like lighthouses of a certain sea.  
Still us. Draw us.

Klickitat. Loo-wit. Wy' East. Sinai.  
Pull our souls right out our eyes.  
Grow our spirits large.  
Then wrap us in the blanket of our selves.

Klickitat. Loo-wit. Wy' East. Sinai.

## EXCESS BAGGAGE

*Tiffany Sharp*

I'm leaving for New York in five days.  
My life is divided into segments all over my room:  
Eleven pairs of pants lined up in the hall,  
Five piles: jackets—shirts—sweaters—pajamas—misc.,  
each on a corner of my bed  
one in the middle.  
There's portable entertainment (books, music, journals)  
under the window.  
I'm shutting my whole skeleton into one checked bag  
and two carry-ons.

I can see it now.

My shell will be standing, for the first time,  
in the white frosted grid that is Manhattan;  
Waiting for everything that fits inside of me  
to come around on baggage claim.  
It's only hours later I will discover  
that all my woolly winter wear will be enjoying  
two fun-filled days,  
basking in the heat of the Big Island,  
Hawaii.

At least in my backpack I'll have an extra change of clothes.  
Including three pairs of panties  
that will have been excavated  
by at least four pairs of hands  
by the time I wrench myself  
out of the security station at JFK.  
911? What *is* the emergency?  
God bless the out-of-towner.

Welcome to my commercial life.  
Some people think I am a walking advertisement  
for the so-called individual.

## VISITING ROOM

Courtney Smith

The punk kid  
who spent fifty dollars on her torn jeans.  
The hippie chick  
who bought her broomstick skirts on eBay.

This is why I hope American Airlines  
does send my bag to anywhere in the world  
except New York City.  
I can see then if it is still possible to exist.  
To still be alive without all the crap that other people  
have created,  
things that in turn  
have created me.

I'm leaving for New York in five days.  
I better start packing.

My hair is long—it would hang all the way down my back if it weren't in those ridiculous pigtails. Such hair hasn't graced my head since those days; we took the scissors to it at age nine. I'm wearing an outfit of a disgusting peach color that always looks darling on a six-year-old and horrid on anyone above that tender age. The shorts are short, the shirt has ruffles on the bottom seam and shirtsleeves, and a white flower design disrupts the solid wall of bright color. I am seated on his lap; my legs dangle over his, drawing my eyes down to white schoolgirl ruffled socks above black and white saddle shoes. My arms are straight, my hands press down onto his legs. This straight-armed pose gives my shoulders a slight shrug and adds a tinge of cute innocence to my broad smile.

He's there too of course. My shoulder blade leans against his chest. He's not a big man, but I'm so tiny, he seems large. His smile is big, similar to mine, except his right front tooth is chipped. White buttons line the front of a blue short-sleeve collared shirt, tucked into dark blue Levis. His face exudes delight, his eyes shine, and his smile makes his cheeks rise high and his reddish blonde mustache stretch out above his lip. His hands grip the front of my knees, holding me to him, and we sit, frozen in time long ago, enjoying a rare moment, as rare now as it was then.

My hand trembles as I hold the old Polaroid and look into the faces and the experiences of my past. I see us smiling, posing happily, and I nearly laugh at the truth the picture doesn't reveal; the nothing that is the everything of my very person. The photo lies to its viewer. We may look happy; in fact, we may actually *be* happy, but failing to reveal the whole truth makes it a sham. My mind is flooded with memories of everything I can't see beyond our smiling faces. I can't see the tables with two connected chairs on one side sitting in lines across the large open room. The tables are all the same, but some of the sets of chairs are beige, some salmon, and others burnt orange. I remember I never wanted a table with orange chairs, they were

so ugly. I can't see the strangers sitting at the other tables, but they're there, beyond the edges of the lying frame.

I can't see the tall wooden counter hiding, from the waist down, the bored but stern looking men watching over the room. These men were in charge, it was best to be nice to them, they checked out the playing cards and the backgammon boards. It is only because of the many decks of cards I borrowed from this counter that I am a master at "Big Casino, Little Casino," the most absurd card game in all of creation. I can't see the far right corner of the room where a television hangs from the ceiling and small children play with stuffed animals and Legos. I was the shy kid who watched the other kids play happily with one another even though they were complete strangers. Playing over there wasn't my top priority anyway; I was in that room for a specific reason, and playing with an overflowing toy box wasn't it.

We're in front of a whitewashed wall and we're the only subjects of the Polaroid. You can't see the room full of quietly conversing people, the too clean, too plain walls, the shiny linoleum tiled floor. You can't see the far left corner of the room where a doorway leads to a small room with two more doors, one "men," the other "women." A severe hailstorm brought a golf-ball-sized piece of ice through the skylight in this room one year. You can't see the wall of vending machines. Soda, juice, coffee, water. Chips, crackers, cookies, candy, gum. Sandwiches, burritos, cup o' noodles, fruit. The selection was rather large and never disappointing—the one plus side of the vast room. We were always there for hours at a time and quarters were the only thing they let us bring in.

I can't see the only two doors leading out of the room. The first, the one through which I entered and he could not pass through, and the second, the one through which he entered and I could not pass through. These doors were heavy, opened with a buzz, and had a small rectangular window in the upper side. They seemed loud and menacing to me as a young child; the finality of their closing always brought a wave of hopelessness, a deep sadness I had no control over. I can't see the windows. The picture was never taken in front of the windows. I can't say I blame the photographer (if he merits the name); the windows were the worst part of the room, the saddest.

A sort of desert stretches out beyond them; no matter the time of year all was brown, barren, and lonely. It seemed so open, yet it was closed to him, and to me while I sat with him. We were in a cage of layers; the room held us, tall metal held the room. The room was closed to outsiders, the outside closed to him. To be together was only a possibility in this one place with plain whitewashed walls and ugly orange chairs.

You can't see my grandmother, my only connection to him. Without her, there would be no Polaroid, no tumultuous memories, no father. She stands in front of us, watching as we smile broadly, smiling back, happy she can be a part of us. Her wrinkled face and curly brown hair appear in other photos; the photographer would have us all pose together once in awhile. In those photos, her smiles are never as big as ours though, and they don't reach to her eyes. Sadness still sits there and the happiness in the photo is shattered. The photos of him and me are rare, but in those few pictures, we are always delighted. It is as if we are completely happy; looks are deceiving. These may be more pleasant to look at, but the photos of the three of us show the truth. Hidden sadness brought to light.

My back hides the black numbers written across the white strip on the breast pocket of his blue collared shirt. The first set of numbers I ever memorized aside from my telephone number. It wasn't a requirement to store them in my mind, and they would have done me no good in an emergency, but still I knew them. How could I not? In that room, those numbers were his identity. My grandmother and I were always in the room before him, and one by one numbers were called on the other side of his door; hearing his number let us know he'd soon be walking through. One person at each of the tables had their own set of numbers, and I know without asking that every other person at that table knows those numbers, whether they desire to or not.

Our apparent comfort with one another belies the fact that physical contact was an annual, semi-annual in a good year, event. Phone calls kept us going in the in-between times, visits coming when my grandmother could make the time to travel from her home to take me to see him. This Polaroid is one of several. A sequence of photos, the same pose repeated at each meeting. Our smiling faces always present, his image seems to

be cut and pasted; only *my* clothes and my size change. We always look so happy, so content, but photos don't always capture reality. The photo is simple, but the memories are complex. I would be a completely different person if the circumstances behind the photo were nonexistent. Our true feelings are hidden behind our smiles, which were real at the time, but masked a pain that molded both our lives.

## I AM JONAH

*Kathryn D. Nilson*

I am Jonah.

The ship a rocking mouth—a man is talking in my ear—  
the God I do not fear is calling.

What reed or mountain be my guide—to bring myself up to  
the door to die—why pray? Why lie?

The darkness follows me from the outside—  
even darker than the inside.

The flesh upon the coat of sea—and fish—is me—I fall—  
and then I will be gone.

Oh whisper—whisper in the air—one day the people meet  
the King I will not follow and I jeer.

My heart in black pieces will be stomped—the worm—the  
wind—will peak this dying day—I

pray—to never be again.

Oh God I be—Why?

A final vine—a death to grow upon—myself—the shadow of  
myself—to be upon the ground,

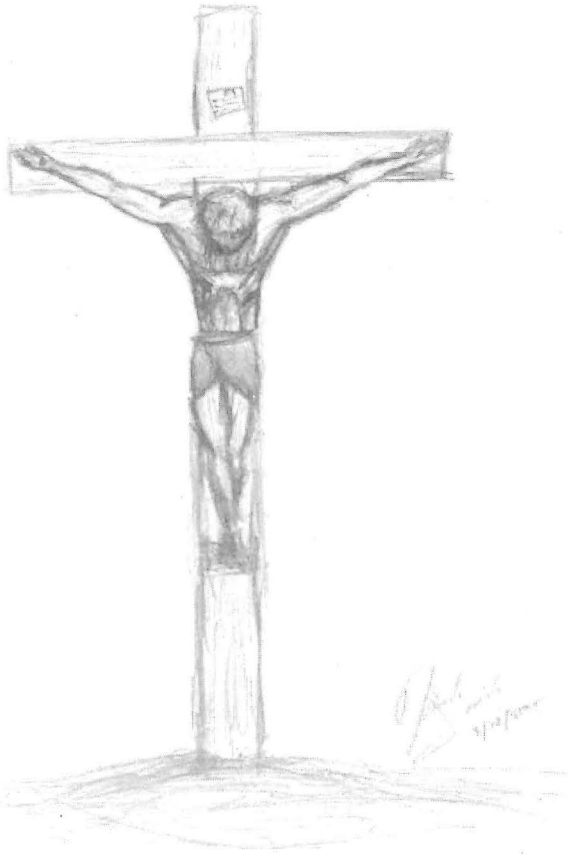
this broken ground that takes a beating—as my soul  
becomes—

to know what danger lies

inside—I hide and then I'm found.

**ACCUSATION**

*Beth Knapp*



Tonight I pay the price  
These sins she shan't forgive  
I've failed too many times  
I don't deserve to live

This is my trial, my excommunication  
She is the judge, ordering my damnation  
I cannot escape, there is no relief  
My judge, my accuser, lives inside of me

My God, redeem me  
Make me clean again  
Destroy the accuser  
Who longs for my ruin  
Lift the curse from me  
Let me live again

## IGLESIA DEL SENOR DEL PERDON

Luis Garcia

Gliding up and down in freedom my hand mimics the smooth and at times sudden movements of a kite. There is a feeling of timelessness that goes through my body with each and every breath of wind that slides through my open fingers. As I look out the window we pass an old man dressed in native phantom white pants and a long sleeve shirt on the side of the road. A bright red scarf-like garment wrapped around his waist serves as a belt. He takes small steps, his upper body bent forward, and pulls gently on the *rienda* dragging his loyal *burro* up the hill behind him. They both seem exhausted. Our car's engine roars louder as we drive up the incline and I wonder in silence if they will make it up the hill. The old man's eyes are fixed on the fading fog line painted on the road; it guides him to where he is going. The *burro* follows his master's *guaraches* ten feet ahead of him. The old man's straw hat is blown off by the wave of air we leave behind as we drive past them. Neither of them looks up.

As we're about to reach the top of the hill, I know we will reach *Cojumatlan* within minutes. Traditionally my father makes a scheduled stop at *El Camino al Cielo* viewpoint. He stops the car in the middle of the road and looks back at me, his eyes smiling. I was seven when I first saw his eyes smile. It was at this same spot I learned to read the secret. My father took me there like his father had done when he was my age. As I looked out the window I noticed not much had changed. The road's shoulder had slowly been conquered by wild grass. The fog line had almost disappeared completely. The *Guamuchil* trees, covered with *guamas* fruit, were as green as ever. It has been seven years since I last tasted the dry-sour taste. The simple thought of it makes my mouth water and I swallow the memories. The stone fences separating the road and the agricultural fields showed some of the damage different seasons had caused them over the years, but they still stood strong. All around me were memories, pictures that were engraved in the stones of my mind. The rest of the road leading to the top of the hill still

disappears into the burning sky. *El Camino al Cielo*.

Half way up the hill my father stops and shifts the gear to neutral. Nothing happens for a second. He looks back at me again. We know what is about to happen but still we wait for it as if it is something new for us, like unwrapping a Christmas present. The car stands still; it does not roll back. The car begins to slowly roll uphill towards the sky without the aid of the accelerator. My father's hands let go of the wheel and he brings his knees up to his chest to show us that he is not pressing the gas. The first time I ever experienced this it frightened me. I was old enough to know the basic functioning of a car and had a general knowledge of physics. I had ridden bikes up and down hills. I knew if I stopped pedaling I would roll back. The car did not roll back; it kept going up, slowly inching its way to the sky, defying logic and physics. *Un Milagro*, my mother whispers. I feel the pull within me.

I asked my father why they called it *El Camino al Cielo* and why the car rolls up hill instead of down. *Es un secreto, recuerdas*. I did remember. For many years, *Cojumatlenses* have thought of this spot as holy. At the top the secret unfolds in front of us. *Chapala*, the state's largest lake, is a piece of heaven. Its crystalline water expands as far as the eye can see. The larger-than-life Sierra Mountains on the other side of the lake appear miniscule, like small bumps at the vanishing point. The rays of light from the sun and the water blend into an unusual brightness. There is something dreamy about it, something heavenly. Its shores are covered with *Girasoles* and tied canoes. From the top of the hill, I can see the fishermen coming back from a day's work, holding tight to the paddles as they inch closer to shore. They too seem to have been away from home for a long time. Our family prefers to drive rather than fly here for *Las Fiestas de Mayo*, our town's largest religious festival to praise *El Senor Del Perdon*, for different reasons, and *El Camino al Cielo* and *Chapala* are two of them.

As the road coils and turns its way down the hill closer to the lake, the wind becomes cooler. I try to see how long I can keep my arm out the window but after a couple bugs fly into it I bring it in. I roll the window up and turn my attention to the lake and its crystalline reflection. I stare straight into it but the reflection is so bright it makes my eyes squint and I close them.



I try to search for the last image I had of *Cojumatlan*.

As my father continues driving, I keep my eyes closed. I know exactly what the way ahead of us is like. In darkness, I feel the car dancing with the road and I follow their rhythm with my body. I see the road making its way down to the bottom of the hill like a serpent winding itself through the *Guamuchil* trees and wild weeds. On the left side of the road the lake faithfully accompanies the road before divorcing it at the *Curva de Inzquintla*. Once we make that final turn on the road a straightaway leads us right into town. I can smell and taste the corn, onion, and garbanzo fields stretching all the way to the town limits on the right side of the road. They are smells that fill my *Abuela's* kitchen. On the left side, alfalfa, tomato, and potato fields are left behind as we drive by.

I can picture everything in my head clearly. I wonder if things had changed or stayed the same. When we were driving atop of the hill I noticed some changes. The lake had changed. It seemed smaller, emptier, not as close to *Cojumatlan* as it used to be. Its shore revealed land it never had shown before. Its identity was transformed. Small trees that were once submerged in the lake's flourishing years were now visible. I wonder if *Cojumatlan* had changed. I had.

We drive very slowly around the *Curva*. Aside for its bad reputation as the death curve, it has an enchanting disclosure for *Cojumatlenses* coming back home. This curve is very famous with our town's people because many of them have died there in car accidents. The roads in Mexico are very narrow and dangerous to drive on. Seldom are they taken care of and repaired. The curve is adorned with memorials displaying crosses and flowers left by family members for their loved ones who died here. The flowers seem to grow there naturally. There are a lot more than last time. As the road makes its way through the parade of flowers, the hill along the right side hides *Cojumatlan* from us like a stage curtain. This is the image that constantly pops up in front of me when I think of home. This is the image I think about along the five-thousand miles we must drive. This is what I wait for. This is the reason we choose to drive. At this point I no longer imagine. I open my eyes and seize it all.

As we exit the curve, I can see the agricultural fields to both sides of the straightaway. My eyes, however, are immediately drawn to the end of the straightaway. At the vanishing point our *Iglesia Del Senor Del Perdon* towers above all houses, trees and buildings. Everything else seems miniscule. The *Iglesia* is worthy of cathedral status. It is the center of our town, what holds it together. It stands proudly facing incoming visitors. *Cojumatlenses* brag about it and people from neighboring towns come to worship in it.

In a way the *Iglesia* seems foreign, out of place. Its architecture contradicts the homes and buildings surrounding it. Everything from its foundation to its backbone is made out of stone. The road that leads to our home passes by the church. Ever since we moved away and whenever we go back, the first thing we do is stop and visit the *Iglesia* and give thanks to *El Senor Del Perdon* for bringing us home safely. This time it was not going to be any different. As I walk into the *Iglesia's* courtyard, I see that it is surrounded by a new five-foot high stone fence with another seven feet of metal fence on top of it. This surprised me. The *Iglesia* is fenced in, separated from the town, but its doors always remain open. Inside the courtyard are gardens with statues of different *Santos*. In the center of the courtyard is a fountain with a statue of four different *Santos* holding *cantaros* in their hands and water flowing from them. They are the Saints of *Chapala* that keep the lake flourishing for the town's fishermen. I make my way past the fountain to the *Iglesia's* door, which sits open like a giant mouth. It is not going to eat you, I say to myself. As a child I was always afraid of the *Iglesia*. I stood in front of the giant's head and its mouth. I stood a couple of feet from the door and looked up. I had to bend a little backwards to see the top of the two towers and they still seemed as if they were falling down. I have since discovered it has something to do with the angle of vision and the way blood rushes up to your head when you lean back. As I stand there, I look up once again and still it appears to fall. I still tremble in front of it.

The exterior of the *Iglesia* is as beautiful as the inside. My great-grandfather died building its twin towers in the front of the church. Its dome tower, directly behind its older twins, was finished by his son, my grandfather. When we lived here, my

father was part of the crew who performed the annual maintenance. My ancestors' devotion to their faith was as strong as the stones of the *Iglesia*. The *Iglesia* is a physical act that illustrates their faith. It has been part of our lives for many generations. The same hands that helped build and repair it had also built and repaired our homes. I wonder what I will be remembered for.

Inside the twin towers are four different giant bells. When *misa* is announced it can be heard as far as the next town ten miles away. Its golden bells are a pleasure to see when the sun rises and sets. There is something heavenly about them; they have the reflection of *Chapala*. In the middle of the towers sits a giant clock visible to all nearby. Above the clock is a statue of touchdown Jesus, his arms up in the air open for everyone. Behind the statue of Jesus rests the dome tower. Its uniqueness is unrivaled. It is made of small tiles of marble. The last time I saw it, the tiles were yellow. This time the dome was the color of Jesus' blood.

As I walk inside the *Iglesia* I immediately breathe in the smell of incense. Benches extend as long as half a football field. The *Iglesia's* walls are high and are adorned by statues of different *santos* and *santas* about every ten steps. Silk of different colors, depending on the day, embellish its high arches. Catholic artistry hangs from its walls. In the front of the *Iglesia*, right under the dome tower, I look up and see the portraits of the apostles Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark painted in its ceiling. At the very end, above everything else, large pillars reaching to the top of the *Iglesia* hold a human-size crucifix of *El Senor Del Perdon*, its eyes half closed looking down at us. The large window in which it is encased seems to protect it from the sins we're about to confess. His body is different from bodies I have seen in pictures in America. His body is the color of my skin, a rich chocolate brown, and blood flows from cuts on his feet, hands, knees, and side. On top of his long curly brown hair is a crown not made of thorns or spines, but a golden crown befitting a king. I wonder if He knows I don't have many friends that speak my language. I wonder if He knows I don't go to church anymore. I wonder if He knows I don't work the fields but study at university. I wonder if he knows I have questioned Him. I wondered if He knows of the time my teacher asked if

any of us were Catholic and I did not raise my hand. I wonder if He knows I don't pray.

I kneel below Him. His stare is warm and nothing about the appearance of his body makes me feel horrified. He has not changed. I feel a sense of transformation, a feeling that can only be described by the tears that flow from my eyes. I do not say much. I kneel and pray the prayer for the absent sons, *Los Hijos Ausentes* again. *Padre Nuestro, que estas en el cielo, sanfificado sea tu nombre. Venga a nosotros tu reino. Hagase tu voluntad aqui en la tierra como en el sielo. Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada dia, perdona nuestras offenses como tambien nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden. No nos dejes caer en tentasion y libramos de todo mal. Amen.* I know this is the reason we come back. This is what keeps me full. This is what keeps me from rolling downhill. *Nuestra Casa*.

## ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF MY FATHER'S DEATH

*Lukas Sherman*

The first anniversary of my father's death, February 20th,  
is a Monday. Presidents' Day. And I have it off.  
I sleep in, take a long shower, say a quick prayer  
("console us who mourn"), dress.  
Outside it's cool, overcast, and still.  
A few birds chirp.  
The sun is pale in the gray skies.  
I think of the movie I watched last night,  
of snow and rage and death,  
and walk the few blocks to Division for breakfast.

Black coffee, a potato scramble, toast, the  
gentle music that reminds me of an ex-girlfriend,  
one my dad liked.  
It was a Sunday last year and I was at the Coast.  
It was sunny and warm and the phone call from  
my mom seemed unreal, even if expected.  
As did his dead body in the living room.  
Fifty-six was much too young. It always will be.

I want to somehow mark this day,  
somehow do something meaningful.  
I look at pictures from better times  
(how young he looks in 1999),  
listen to music he liked,  
wonder if the sand in my sweatshirt pockets  
is from that day.  
I don't know what my mom and siblings are doing today.  
I have ashes I will scatter later.

It doesn't feel much different, a year later.  
People never tire of telling you that life goes on.  
It doesn't mean it gets better though,  
it doesn't mean that the loss is not ever absent.  
It doesn't mean. . .



*Flawless Horizon* Erika Schmid © 2006

**EXACTLY ON 21ST STREET (10/28/03)**

*Lukas Sherman*

Suddenly, yet gracefully,  
as the smoke from the  
cigarette mingles with the  
steam from the tea,  
a calmness touches  
this cool October night.  
You sit outside a coffee shop  
on 21st and,  
though you miss the East,  
you don't mind  
that you're here alone,  
you don't begrudge the couples  
who stroll past, you don't need  
Canadian songwriters  
to block out the world.

**OH, SWEETHEART**

*Matt Nash*

Oh, sweetheart!  
It feels kinda funny to be ogled by eyes  
Of a girl I love  
With snide smiles back and forth, waiting  
To pucker to kiss

Her outstretched hand  
Waves me over as the ring finger  
Extends in hope,  
Vowing for gold or to be weighed down  
By the fattest,  
Most expensive cubic zirconium diamond  
Minimum wage can afford.

Oh, sweetheart!  
She might be this or she might be  
That. I know  
I am ready for commitment  
McDonald's or Arco?

It's weird to be loved when  
I don't even love myself  
Confidence is overwhelming, or is it thinking? I need a nap  
Or someone else

## TRUTHFUL FANTASY

*E. Jobanna Stephens*

My beloved stands in an angel's pose,  
With peaceful hands and his wings outstretchéd.  
I watch with eyes the color of a rose,  
And he knows that inwardly I'm wretched.

I'm the one with white wings of flesh and bone,  
Yet he—with scars and his terrible eyes,  
Has chosen to forgive, while my heart's stone.  
He speaks only truth, but I—only lies.

He loves me, it's true, but why is it so?  
Can he see beyond my imperfections?  
Does he know in his heart that I'm no foe,  
Or does he just wait for his rejection?

## RUNNER'S HEAVEN

*Howard Knytych*

Fog-shrouded path climbing through forest stillness  
Footfalls in cadence past arching vinemaple  
Brisk morning where the God-breath  
Puffs white from panting lungs  
Limitless life-force from Him as finally I know  
That He and I are one.

## OCTOBER

Beth Holian

It was almost winter. The trees outside, having turned to magnificent shades of orange and red, were now almost bare – leaving skeletal shadows in the pale light of the gray winter sun. The gently blowing breeze sent the last few leaves still clinging desperately to the trees spiraling gracefully to the ground, littering the sidewalk with various shades of browns. She pulled her coat collar up closer around her neck as the breeze brushed past her, sending its cool air down into her thick coat. The crunch of the leaves under her boots seemed to echo loudly off the houses in the empty street as she made her way toward the edge of town. She had been waiting for this visit all year, and yet, she dreaded going back. Glancing at her watch, she quickened her pace. She had never been late for this yearly meeting, and today would not be the first time. Pulling her glove back over the watch, she stuck her hand back under her arm and continued her solemn walk down the street. Though the trees were bare, they were also beautiful. The leaves created a symphony under her feet, the only music in the cold October air. It was both sad and magical; the first signs of an end.

“Come sit,” he said, gesturing towards the swing. He held the chain of the swing in his hand out to her.

“Are you sure?”

“Would I offer if I wasn’t sure?”

She carefully approached the swing and sat down in its seat. It hugged her wide hips and squeezed at her thighs. He got behind her and, placing his hands firmly on her back, he pushed her forward. She gently swung her legs back and forth with the rhythm of the swing as he pushed her. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. He pushed her higher and higher.

“It’s too high.”

“No, it’s fine, I have you.”

“I’m scared.”

“Don’t worry, I promise I won’t let anything happen to you.”

He continued to push her higher and higher into the air. Her hands gripped the chains nervously. She didn’t want to fall all that way to the ground.

“Close your eyes.”

“Why?”

“Just close them.”

She closed her eyes, still clutching desperately to the chains of the swing.

“It won’t work if you don’t relax.”

She let her shoulders fall. The sensation was like flying. It was a feeling of ultimate peace. After a few minutes, he gradually slowed her down and stopped her. She opened her eyes and slid off the swing in slight embarrassment. He laughed and smiled at her.

“See?”

She hit him on the shoulder and, despite herself, grinned back.

She looked longingly at the park as she passed it. Leaves of varying shades covered the grass of the field in a large, ornate rug. The faint squeak of the rusty chains of the swings could be heard as they swayed in the cool breeze that again stirred past her. It wound its way around her legs, past the trees and moved into the field of leaves. The breeze picked up the leaves as it passed, creating a kaleidoscope of colors, then died, and left the leaves to float once again onto the bed of grass. The sound of laughter could be heard as two small children ran towards the great plain and scattered the leaves gleefully, kicking up great piles as they ran through the field. They then stopped and picked up handfuls and threw them as high into space as they could, spinning with glee as colors rained on them on their way back down to earth. She stopped to watch them for a few moments before glancing at her watch again. She had to hurry and move on, or she would be late for their meeting.

“And after we rake them up, we have to jump in them.”



She paused and leaned on her rake, gazing at him skeptically.

“Why?”

“Because that’s what you do. You rake the leaves into a pile and then you jump in them.”

“Then you have to rake them up into a pile again.”

“Little Miss Logical.”

“Hey now! You like being out here raking up leaves when we could be inside drinking cocoa?”

“No, I don’t like being out here any more than you do, but if we are going to be out here, we might as well have some fun in the meantime.”

She took up her rake and kept raking the leaves into a large pile. They were both silent as they worked. The only sound that was distinguishable was the scratch of the rake on the grass as it swept up the leaves.

“Well, are you going to jump or not?” he asked after a few minutes.

She stopped her work and looked at him.

“It means we have to rake them all into a pile again.”

“But it’s fun. You know what that means?”

“Yes, I know what fun is.”

“Then try having some sometime.”

She looked from him to the small mountain a few feet away and back to him. She ran the few steps to the pile, leaped as high as she could, and turned to land on her back amid a cloud of swirling colors. He laughed and jumped face down next to her, sending more leaves scattering along the freshly raked lawn. They looked at each other and laughed.

“See, now wasn’t that fun?”

“Not as much fun as this!” she laughed throwing a handful of leaves in his face.

“So you want a war, eh?” he asked as he pelted her with leaves. They sat up laughing, grabbing leaves by the fistful and putting as much force behind them as possible. Staring at each other in exhaustion, he smiled at her.

“You can’t have cocoa until the first snow.”

The breeze blew fervently past the trees with a faint whistle in the bare branches. She pulled her coat tighter around her

and listened silently to the soft crunching beneath her boots as she climbed the hill. The smell of wet earth filled her nostrils as the breeze continued to blow past her, wrapping its cold arms around her and sending chills down her spine. Reaching the top of the hill, she turned and observed the path behind her. The hill was not very tall, but everything looked so small somehow – the park with its rusty swings and the children playing in the field, the neighborhood, the school, were barely visible. Her eyes clouded and she turned and moved on slowly down the other side of the hill. Passing through the enormous iron gates, she made her way up a grassy knoll, observing the large barren oak trees as she went. Some of the oaks still had bursts of color, but as she walked past, the leaves broke their connection and spun silently to the ground. She looked away from the trees and continued her trek across the lawn. She soon paused and stared at her feet. There was a small tombstone next to which she squatted. Brushing the dirt, grime and leaves away from the marble rock, she read as she had so many times before the name, followed by birth and death dates (the latter of which was some three years past) and the words that followed: Son, Brother, Friend. She stared contemplatively at the stone for a moment, tears falling from her eyes.

“I know you told me that crying would never bring you back, but there are some times when you need to get a good cry in. Wouldn’t you agree?”

She stared sadly at the tombstone and smiled through tears.

“This is for you, a smile through tears – the most beautiful of all. I thought you’d be glad to know I finally learned how to smile.”

She paused.

“I’m waiting for the first snow to have cocoa. Just like we used to do. The sad part is, they don’t think it will snow this year. Then I won’t get my cocoa I guess.”

Tears formed and ran like rivers down her already frozen cheeks.

“I promise to come back next year. Maybe then it will be snowing. I know how much you loved the snow.”

She turned and stood up, brushing the wet tears from her cheeks with her gloved hand and again pulled her collar up around her neck to keep it warm from the frigid fingers of the

cold October air. Sniffing, she walked back down the knoll and through the gates. Something cold fell down the back of her coat as she passed through and she shivered involuntarily. Looking up at the gray sky, snow began to fall silently around her. Catching the flakes in her eyelashes and letting them fall on her cheeks, she slowly spread her arms, palms up towards the heavens. Closing her eyes, she let herself wade in the wonder of the moment. There was nothing more beautiful, innocent, or pure than the first snow. She brought her head back down, opened her eyes, and faced forward. The landscape had very quickly become pristine and glittery, the brown and gray sidewalk transformed into a sea of white; the breeze that had accompanied her all the way to the cemetery had died. She pulled in her coat more tightly around her and made her way back up the hill. Once again at the top, she stopped and turned, looking back at the final resting place of the man who was both her brother and her friend. The cold once again embraced her as she stared into the distance, snow swirling silently around her. Turning, she made her way down the hill, and disappeared out of sight.

## ALL ABOARD

*Samuel Irving*

Dig this  
If I knew me  
If you knew me  
If we knew us  
Then we wouldn't be here

Standing on the edge  
Of space           we  
Exist in our own universe  
Submerged in an almost  
Sublime quandary

Searching for an embrace  
Of subtle comfort  
We turn the lights to  
A gentle dim and  
Slow the eve with a day's kiss

The mood slows to a snail's pace  
And I am frozen           in this surreal climax  
Where we  
Exist   to exist  
As more than  
Strangers in the night  
Against the backdrop of a  
Casablanca-like affair  
Escaping on mental trains  
To a land of dreams at work

Only to arrive at  
A place where we  
Escape from ourselves  
Within each other



## A NEW TEMPLE

*Daniel Hues*

The seas are becoming evermore like graves,  
The waters poisoned with martyrs' blood,  
The bodies you see are the corpses of slaves,  
Is this the commencement of a second flood?  
The tears of forlorn angels dawn,  
A new temple to the gods of Babylon.

Shall I kneel on all fours?  
Perhaps they'll discard their stones,  
Or are we just borrowed whores?  
Wearing sour flesh upon our broken bones.

Behold the mass valleys of charred soil,  
Where those who cultivate imminently falter,  
The vast oceans of blood continue to boil,  
For no virgin remains to adorn their altar.  
Who will frustrate the wisdom of the wise?  
Why do they hide salvation from our eyes?

Shall we go worship in their temple?  
Shall we crawl into their adulterous beds?  
Conjuring fear, they cause us to tremble,  
While in the secrecy of our thoughts,  
We long to sever their heads.

"Love your enemies," as it has been said.  
I'm sure my love will flourish when all my enemies are dead.

## ON TATTERED WINGS

*Donnie Drobny*

Death flew through on tattered wings  
the cold wind whipping through skeleton trees  
while the church bell sings.  
The full moon is made for nights like these.

The cold wind whipping through skeleton trees,  
tears of heaven swallowed by dust.  
The full moon is made for nights like these—  
a screaming world of broken trust.

Tears of heaven swallowed by dust  
and people with sandpaper throats.  
A screaming world of broken trust  
echoing in mournful notes.

And people with sandpaper throats  
their soundless goodbye  
echoing in mournful notes—  
A graveyard lullaby.

Their soundless goodbye  
while the church bell sings  
a graveyard lullaby.  
And Death flew through on tattered wings.

## INDIA'S REBECCA

*Andrea Bollie*

It is 6:00 p.m. and mass has just begun. The bells silence whistles and horns of the busy street and families stream into the sanctuary. As I walk up the steps the heaviness in my heart swells and infuses my mind. The days in India are filled with such intensity that by the end of the day I may only recall a few of the events with any clarity. I live here in this Catholic hostel and today I have decided to sit here on the steps and record the events of the day.

When I arrived at the hospital today my heart was overwhelmed and my mind torn. My family has been begging me to come home. Life here in India has been unbearable and my heart has felt hopeless. The weight of my feet has been more than I can bear. While riding in the auto rickshaw to the hospital today, I was searching for my resolve. My team members were piled in the small, three-wheeled vehicle with me, but I was vacant. It was apparent to me that as a team our will to hang on was somehow pushing each of us apart. We were walking the journey alone. Each one of us was afraid to speak out the fears and let the corners of our mouths fall. Today was the day I had to make up my mind. I had to find a way to thrive amidst death. In my heart I called out a prayer of life and hoped for nothing.

Each of us stumbled out of the rickshaw; Tiffany then paid the driver. We silently walked the same path to the maternity ward. Our voices began to emerge as we each recalled our checklist of observations and surgeries we would need to fulfill our hours. Our goals were managed by our tutors and course requirements. This was the sustenance we lived by. My obstetrics handbook became my knowledge, peace of mind, and, best of all, an accurate distraction. It was my truth.

Rebecca was born at 2:45 p.m. weighing about one and a half pounds. Her mother came into our hospital six months pregnant with her and was admitted due to hypertension. The

doctors decided to induce her labor to save the mother's life. Hypertension is the first stage of eclampsia, which ultimately will lead to death without treatment. Eclampsia rarely affects the developed world, but here in India they have a room just for their eclamptic patients. This was going to be the mother's fifth child, and she took little interest in what the outcome might be.

I had been posted at injections, NICU, and then observations. My tutor, Tiffany, had left me in the observations ward and was taking so long to come back that I had decided to go and see what she was doing. I walked into a room that was full of doctors and our staff overseeing the resuscitation of a baby just born. When I walked in, Rebecca has just been delivered. The mother labored alone in silence. My tutor Tiffany was there to lift the child from the pool of blood and cut the cord. The doctors instructed her to leave the baby as the family was very poor. Tiffany said, "I feel a heartbeat," and Doctor Lakshmi left the room. I walked over to Tiffany and she repeated, "There is a heartbeat—Get me a dry cloth." She held Rebecca on her lap and began to wipe out her mouth, clean her face, and count her heartbeats. Doctor Lakshmi came back in the room, but she and the others were concerned with another, larger child who was having difficulty breathing. She noticed Tiffany and I with the 1.5-lb baby, but continued on toward the healthier child who needed monitoring. I told Tiffany to start resuscitation, and she said quietly, "I don't think I can." Dr. Lakshmi looked at me; she was older, and I knew if I asked permission to resuscitate she would take pity in my lack of experience and say yes. So I did, and we began to bag and mask.

There were no breaths of her own and since the pediatrician, Dr. Nakul, was finished attending to the stronger, healthier child, he began to take interest in our little Rebecca. The nurse did as well and made space for this little one on the warm bed with the other babies. It was now after 3:00 p.m., and Dr. Nakul had cleared her airway. He took over bag and mask from Tiffany. Rebecca's heart remained strong and cyanosis was fading from her hands and legs. She began to improve, and her little body became pink. Then Dr. Nakul left, and Tiffany was called to respond to a woman who was hemorrhaging in

another room. She left me to continue bag and mask.

Around 4:15 p.m. another pediatrician, Dr. Raheem, came in and moved with great care and assurance over this little one who had just begun to take her own, though still irregular, breaths. Rebecca had been struggling for her life now for an hour and a half. Dr. Raheem instructed Dr. Nakul to get equipment. Dr. Nakul moved, but with hesitation, and had to be forced to get the appropriate things. The staff looked on with disgust at the will of Dr. Raheem and our team. The Dias, the traditional birth attendants, urged me to quit the resuscitation. I grabbed the hand of one of the Dias and put it on Rebecca's heart. She glanced into my eyes, acknowledging there was life. An endotracheal tube was placed into Rebecca, and Dr. Raheem took over bag and mask. After a few moments, he asked me to continue while he filled out her paperwork. He stated her condition on the form and ordered that she would be transferred to the NICU.

The doctor instructed me to continue to give fifteen breaths per 60 seconds and not let the tube in her trachea be moved. I continued with diligence and tried to protect her from the harsh movements of the other workers around us. I was pleased when a Dia came to finish tying and cutting her cord. In my heart, I uttered, *Mark two—Rebecca is here!* Her breaths continued and she became increasingly pink all over. Dr. Naheem came over to me and looked at me for a moment; he made a small statement about her outcome. I said that I knew, but that she was alive. At that point, we determined that it wasn't up to us to decide. We would fight for her life with all we could.

Finally, at 5:00 pm I was told to carry little Rebecca to the NICU. Just prior to leaving I had the idea of taking a photo of her. For a moment I thought that it was a bit strange to take a picture of someone receiving resuscitation, but I ignored the thought and asked someone to take her picture like we would have for any other child. Another worker attempted to take her, but she had no idea how delicately to hold her or how to maintain the airway with the bag and the attached endotracheal tube. So I took Rebecca from her, and Tiffany helped me to carry her, holding her still, continuing to give her breaths. As we stepped out the door, a nurse came to get Rebecca's footprints. In my heart I said, *Check three—she is alive and*

*acknowledged.*

We arrived to NICU and were met by a nurse who was incredibly disgusted at the sight of this little one in my arms. While she refused Rebecca, we handed her the notes from Dr. Raheem, and she yanked the child from me. At that moment, the endotracheal was moved. She quickly turned to carry her to a bed. I caught the bag just as Rebecca left my arms, just before the bag and tube completely fell limp. I leaped alongside the nurse in order to hold the bag properly and yelled to her to stop and hold the tube. She disregarded my words and Tiffany, who was a half step ahead of me, managed to get the bag again. Rebecca was laid on the table. Her pinkness had faded. I took the bag, held the endotracheal and began to resuscitate again. Dr. Raheem came in quickly and instructed us to move her to another bed that was warmed. The nurse moved with hesitation until he repeated the command. Rebecca was moved. I told him she had been breathing all the way until she had been taken by the nurse. He took out the endotracheal tube and began to bag and mask. In one fluid moment, my heart was pinched. He stopped. Rebecca died. The nurse looked at the clock and washed her hands. Tears streamed down my cheeks and Dr. Raheem began CPR for a short while. With gentleness he consoled me. Then he said, "I told you not to let the tube be moved." I explained to him again that it had occurred in the exchange. We all looked at each other with no move toward rebuke or blame. He and the nurse left Tiffany and me alone to mourn over little Rebecca.

While Tiffany and I grieved over her death I began to feel consoled in my heart. During her short life this little one was named, her footprints were marked, and she was loved.

Tiffany and I walked back through the same crowd that had witnessed us rushing off this little one, and they now saw our sorrow. After a few moments I got my things together to leave. I always said goodbye to my patients at the end of the day, but on that day I was not attending any women in the labor ward, but felt I needed to go back in there anyway. The mother of Rebecca was still there. I had not approached her yet, but I knew she had seen me working on her little girl the entire time.

I also knew that she had said that she did not care if this child lived or died. I came to her and rubbed her arm. She turned to me and smiled and pointed to the area where I had been working with her little girl. Her face was pleased. I explained that Rebecca had lived for two hours and had now passed. She shrugged her shoulders and began to resume her sleep. I started to sob, and she began to wipe my face and console me, telling me that it was okay because she already had four children. I knew she would be thirsty, and at that moment I reached in my bag, took out my water bottle, and poured water into her mouth. She drank large gulps without hesitation, with her eyes meeting mine. We held hands for a moment, and then I left.

## MONSOON

*Jennifer Stanford*

Stillness in a purple haze  
Cicadian buzz a masquerade  
All is silent here  
A celebration in the streets

A place in time  
Witness of death and life  
The spring of each new river  
—Celebration in the streets

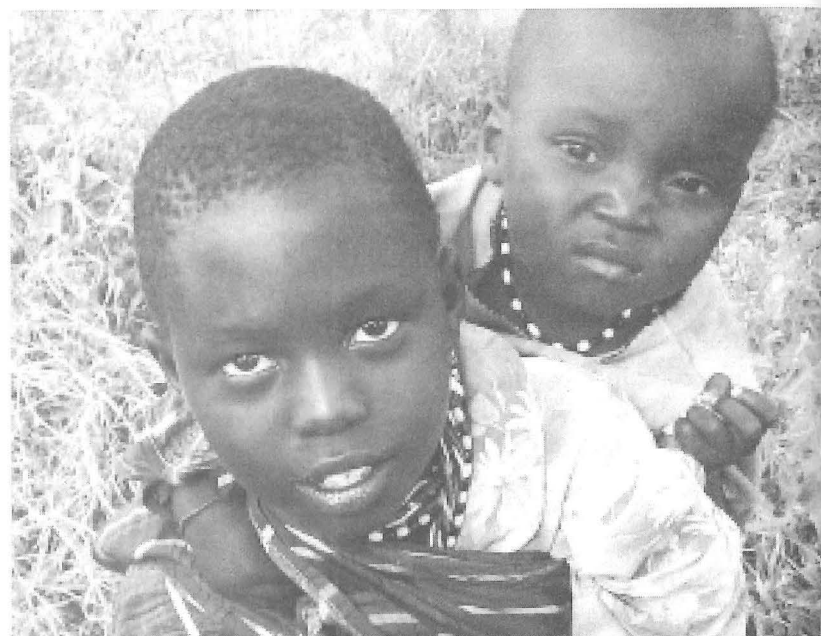
Dust-filled air suffocating breath  
And palm trees bending in obeisance  
Against flashes of dry electric light  
A celebration in the streets

Photos capture place and time  
Like the bars of a bird's cage  
Encase the wings but not the song  
—Celebration in the streets

Dry river beds without a source  
Disjointed rivulets in a desert plane  
Where dark gray skies reflect the eyes  
A celebration in the streets

Ruddy hand with pale and brown is joined  
Together in freedom, deaf and blind  
Where palm fronds strew the ground  
—Celebration in the streets

Then liquid flows from heaven's skies  
Drenching parched earth  
The street a river—river, floods  
A celebration in the streets



*Kenya I, II, and III* © Erika Schmid 2005

## I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED

*Luis Garcia*

I've always wondered  
If Pa' ever loved us.

In our one-room home,  
All seven shared a bed  
But I don't think Pa' loved us,  
He would always sleep  
On the ground.

On winter nights,  
Back-to-back we'd cram, fighting  
For an inch of warmth, an inch of skin.  
I don't think Pa' liked that  
He'd lie alone, shivering,  
Blanketed by the silence of the night.

Papa didn't like home.  
He'd leave before the sun was up  
And come back when the sun was down.  
Pa' liked the fields  
More than us.

Papa didn't like the food  
At home either.  
We'd all get enough soup,  
But Pa' always took the smallest bowl  
And no milk or bread.

Pa' only smiles when we aren't looking,  
And cries when he thinks we're sleeping.

I wonder no more.

## ENAS, AN IRAQI, SPEAKS

*Tia Lawson*

"Baghdad," I hear on the news,  
an insurgency and rebels coming to mind.  
"My Baghdad," she said,  
a home with neighbors she cries for.  
The love flowed from her lips,  
her scarf-clad head looked out to us.  
A doctor with a mission.  
A privileged few see the photos.

Omar's blue eyes searched my own.  
He looks like my own family, people I love.  
His body holds out for hope and medicine,  
as his Baghdad loses books and schools.  
He may live, but will Omar ever read?  
"It is your money," she said, "your votes."  
My finger has not pulled a trigger  
but my hands have detonated bombs.

"My Baghdad" echoes as I sleep, as I study.  
A woman who loves her home, her country.  
I wonder, if united, can they also stand?  
Children need toys, not tanks, in order to play.  
Ignorance, shame, devastation—  
a bomb is dropped on my heart,  
just like on the hospital in Al-Quiem.  
"Their Baghdad," I whisper.



## SARCASM AND SUNRISE

Holly Goodrich

“Must...stay...awake...” It’s 2:00 a.m., and I am sitting on my bed reading *The Quest of the Holy Grail*. The only thing that keeps my eyes open is the horrific specter of a failed British lit quiz which will be the inevitable result of sleep. Unfortunately, my eyelids have been transmuted into lead and keep shutting. As a result, the words of the *Quest* are not making much sense. Am I reading about a monk lecturing Lancelot on his many sins, or something about the Devil appearing in the form of a beautiful maiden to tempt Percival? My eyes shut again...

*Dong*

“What the...” my half-awake mind strains to make sense of the unusual sound.

*Dong*

“Stupid alarm...go away...I want to sleep.”

*Dong*

“Um,...my alarm is supposed to turn on the radio...”

*Dong*

Yeah, that noise would be a church bell...crap. I force my eyes open. Looking around, I notice thick stone walls dripping with moisture and brightly-colored stained glass windows. I stand up and, using my well-honed detective skills that clearly rival those of Sherlock Holmes, I deduce that I am in a medieval chapel. Following this brilliant realization, I attempt to unravel the deeper mystery of how I got here. The last thing I remember is desperately fighting the particular form of drowsiness that results from the lethal combination of medieval literature and early morning hours. Obviously, I have lost the battle. I am now dreaming of my homework when I should be doing it, which incidentally hardly seems fair.

I look up towards the ceiling of the soaring chapel and sigh. This is certainly not historically accurate—if I’m going to be stuck in this stupid dream, I wish my mind would come up with something a little less cliché.

I hear a sudden gasp. Turning around I see a short guy in brown robes who looks suspiciously like a monk. Oh great,

another cliché—my wish is not to be granted it seems. The monk’s brown eyes appear as if they were about to part company with his pale face.

“She-devil, be gone from this holy place in the name of God!” he shrieks while making the sign of the cross with shaking fingers.

“I’m not a she-devil,” I halfheartedly attempt to explain, knowing full well that this will not work; monks in dreams never believe sleep-deprived time travelers.

“You must take me for a fool,” he predictably snarls. “Of course you are a she-devil or worse, a woman who has abandoned all decency. One has only to look at your apparel to see that.”

I glance down and note that I am wearing a navy blue, V-neck t-shirt and boot-cut jeans. I also note that I have on my silver hoop earrings, the ones I have been told small birds could perch in. I make a mental note of my imagination’s horrible and distorted sense of appropriate fashions for medieval times.

“No woman of noble character would dress in such a way!” The monk announces with all the confidence and excitement of someone who has been transported to heaven and received direct revelation from God. “Those rings in your ears bespeak a woman completely given over to vanity and the transitory luxuries of this fleeting world! Surely they are the sign of one completely devoid of spiritual feeling. For—”

I feel the irritation building deep inside me; this sounds far too like the four years of lectures I endured in my religious high school. I can still see myself sitting in the back row as the principal went on and on about how girls must dress modestly. In his world, no guy could handle the sight of the skin below a girl’s collarbone or her bare midriff without being driven mad with lust. As a result, we were suppose to wear baggy shirts that would cover all of these areas, as well as shield our stomachs from view if we performed the normal everyday tasks of stretching our arms out as far above our heads as possible or of bending completely over with our knees straight, which, of course, we all did for long periods of time every day. Only this would keep us from leading ourselves astray.

“—that however is not all that condemns you...”

The monk hasn’t even noticed I’m not listening, and his

ongoing sermon is dredging up more memories of my education, key features of which were important moral lessons. For example, we were taught that it was evil to dye your hair, wear jeans to chapel, enjoy secular music, or consider dating. Uttering a swear word would be as well received as confessing that you enjoy slaughtering small children in your spare time.

Furthermore, we were taught that questions and doubts were things stupid people entertained despite the fact that my school's own curriculum issued compelling invitations to such attitudes. It contained such gems as "NASA proved that the story of the sun standing still in the Bible was true," a statement only exceeded in absurdity by the world geography book's assessments of life in South Africa. Supposedly, it had been a country "founded on Christian principles where all the races lived in harmony." The actual facts of physics and apartheid were apparently unimportant as all this was justified by the infallible, completely-free-of-contradictions Word of God, which contained all you would ever need to know. Clearly, doubting was a great sin.

"...Furthermore, that shirt looks very soft and not the least bit bristly."

"Well it is cotton," I say, trying in vain to relieve the bubbling tension simmering inside of me with a sarcastic comment.

"It matters not what the fabric is called in your heathen tongue, for it is soft and thus not conducive to holiness. I entreat you to follow my example, confess your manifold sins, and clothe yourself in a hair shirt. Perhaps then even one such as you may be saved from the fires of hell."

"So you're trying to tell me that wearing an itchy shirt makes a person holy? If only I'd known it was so simple I never would have gotten rid of all those baggy, scratchy sweaters!"

"You dare to mock the holy mysteries of God." His voice took on a somber note; he sounded as if he were preaching to a congregation of thousands. "Such is the evil of this time," he intoned with righteous indignation. "None seek for good and truth; all are lazy, disobedient and unwilling to turn from the path which leads to destruction."

I just can't take it anymore; the small sarcastic comments

can't extinguish the anger flaming inside me fuelled by one final cluster of memories. When I got to college and discovered that they had lied to me, my world shattered. I felt lost, like I was sailing in the middle of the Pacific, with all sight of land obscured by waves crashing around and over me, my voice lost in the howling winds. This gave me a strong intolerance for lectures on rules and how no one looks for truth, especially from a monk in a dream.

"Shut up!" I shout, using my gift of eloquence. "I've heard this before," I continue, determined to make this guy suffer through *my* lecture. "Don't swear, don't watch R-rated movies, don't listen to non-Christian music, or read any kind of fantasy literature, blah, blah, blah. Follow all the rules and above all be sure you're always perfect, so you can tell everyone else how much they're sinning. After all, what is true should be obvious, especially to those fortunate enough to see your life!"

The monk tries to continue, obviously unsettled by my anger yet still attempting to convert me. "You speak the words of one who has never traveled the path of righteousness. You are lazy, weak and care nothing for good. You—"

"How dare you tell me what I am!" The explosion that has been coming for years finally bursts out of me and the words come spilling out in a furious torrent. "I'll tell you what I have done. I've discovered the real world in which you can rise early and pray, or wear an itchy sweater, or search for truth everywhere but it wouldn't get you closer to God or holiness or anything else! Guess what? I'm tired. Tired of trying to look for truth when I'll never be able to find it. Never! I'm sick of rules and lies. I give up. Do you hear me? DO YOU HEAR ME? I GIVE UP!" The scream I have held in for so long finally comes out.

The monk is shocked beyond words; his face is completely blank. The fact that I just screamed at a monk in a medieval church reminds me that I'm dreaming and brings me back to reality—well, as close to reality as you can get in a dream.

I look at the monk and know that it's not really him I'm yelling at. I am screaming at everyone who ever lied to me and at myself for falling for all of it, for believing. The bell tolls again and I feel its hollow ring inside me. Clearly it is time for me to leave.



As I turn away, the monk says nothing; he is relieved to see me go, no doubt. I sigh inwardly as I push through the heavy wooden doors and let them slam behind me.

So, where do I go now? I look up and see a bleak horizon dominated by the black skeletons of mountains. Should I go there? Where do you go when you're lost in a dream and you yell at a monk? I sigh and sink down on the steps completely confused and wishing I could just wake up. I hear a creak and turn around to face the last thing I expected to see. It's the monk again.

I bristle. His face is a puzzle. It's almost as if he is embarrassed and confused, but that can't be. He must need sermon material. I can hear it now: "And then despite the abuse hurled on me, I followed the lost soul out of the church and convinced her to follow the path of righteousness..." Yeah, that's how he'll tell the story.

Having no wish to become an illustration of the importance of persistence, I spring to my feet and prepare to run.

"Please wait."

The softness of the request shocks me. I turn with surprise.

"How may I help you?" I say, still keeping up the sarcasm.

His eyes do not meet mine as he walks over and stares at the mountains, which moments before filled my vision, as if he were searching them for answers. "Well, I realized that perhaps I, I was overzealous during our discussion and I wanted to—"

"What? Come marching out here and pretend to understand my frustration, thus fulfilling your spiritual duty?"

"No, you misunderstand."

"Then what is it you want to say?"

"Look, it's not easy being a monk," he blurts out, then stares at the ground and takes a deep breath. "People expect me to be spiritual. They expect me to lecture them and tell them how wrong they are. If I didn't they would get angry with me; they would tell me I'm not teaching them the Biblical way and never listen to me at all. They might even burn me at the stake. So I have to say all those things. But deep down I know just as well as you that I can't ever live up to all the expectations. I know I seem like an arrogant hypocrite and it's not without justification. I am, but I am also forced to be that way. What else can a medieval monk in a dream be but a complete

stereotype? I just hope that every once in a while I break free of the cliché and actually say something true."

"That's really heartbreaking. Maybe you should see a therapist and—" I stop my sarcastic rant mid-sentence. True, I don't like what he's saying but what could I expect him to be really? Perhaps his intentions were once as good as mine. Perhaps he really tried to follow all those rules and by the time he realized he couldn't it was too late to change. He was trapped inside a role he could never live up to. I almost felt sorry for him.

"Look it wasn't really you I was yelling at, it was—"

"God," He finishes my statement to my surprise.

"Yes."

"You are not alone."

I stare at him in amazement.

"But you're a—"

"Do you really think that makes a difference? Believe me, I've tried harder than you to find the truth. I've studied, prayed, even fasted but still have gotten no closer. People come to me expecting me to have all the answers when I have none. So I tell them what I know, which isn't much, and I try to help them. That usually doesn't work, so sometimes I pretend; I go along and do what they expect of me and tell them what they want the rules to be, while I secretly scream inside."

"Why haven't you given up? Surely it can't be worth all that just to keep a job in a drafty monastery. I mean, the food sucks, you have to wear a hair shirt and then there's the whole celibacy thing. I mean, what's the point of all this?"

He sighs. "I don't know really. But something will not let me go. No matter how much I scream inside, no matter how hard I try to leave it all behind, I find I cannot. So I stay. Half the time I'm a lecturing hypocrite and half the time I'm a hardened skeptic shaking my fist at the clouds, but still I stay."

He pauses for a moment and then says almost to himself, "Perhaps I stay because underneath all the rules and the hypocrisy and the lies there is something beautiful worth fighting for. His love, you see—Christ's, I mean. It transcended all else. Every time I'm ready to quit, I catch a glimpse of it. My rules, my lectures, my words are nothing compared to Him. It is He who will not let me go though I hide from Him behind my mask of pretensions or run from Him in rebellion. He is why I

stay. I know that sounds strange, even contradictory on some level, but that is my reason. It's all I have."

I am stunned into silence by this confession. Not knowing what else to do I look up at the barren mountains. The rising sun bathes them in a golden and rose embrace. Then the sun peers above the horizon in a flash of diamond bright light that pierces me. It kindles a fire inside my eyes it seems, for I can see nothing but a golden white sea. Though I close my eyes, the fire does not die. It is still there burning in the core of my soul in a place beyond thoughts, where mere knowledge suddenly seems pale and insipid compared to this penetrating warmth. Is this what the monk was talking about?

In a daze, I turn and ask, "Is this a vision?"

He laughs for the first time.

"No, this is the dream which begins the Quest."

I awake with a start to a room bathed in sunshine.

## GROWING THE FAMILY LEGACY

*Chris Engebo*

Erik had tagged along with me many times to the same secret spot. He was getting older now, and this season he got his very own steelhead fly rod, instead of the flimsy little Snoopy rod he used to have. He had unusual patience for a ten-year-old—in a dozen steelheading trips, he had not even gotten a bite, but he kept coming. He'd grow a bit impatient from time to time, but he was sticking with it. I'd hooked a few over those trips and always offered the rod to him, but he wanted to do it himself.

On a late summer morning, Erik was getting his casts all wrong. His line spent more time tangled in the bushes and tree branches behind him than it did floating on the water. He'd done a great job of tying his own flies, but they needed to be in the water to attract a big shiny brute with an appetite.

It was getting to him. He stood there fuming—I could almost see the frustration building up inside of him. He must have thought for a moment about throwing that fly rod as far as he could, but his frustration waned and culminated only in a groan.

I always tried to encourage him, but it's hard to convince a kid having so much trouble that it's going to be okay. I gave it a shot, anyway: "It takes a long time and a lot of patience, Erik. It's okay if you get frustrated, but hang in there."

He thought about it awhile before asking, "How long was it 'til you caught your first one on your own, Dad?"

"Seems to me it was a couple seasons, although Grandpa might say it was longer."

I gave him a couple of reminder lessons, and pointed out a riffle for him to target. He swung his rod a couple of times and let the line fly. Not bad—he was regaining a little confidence. Then he got a tough snag, right behind a large rock. He jerked and tugged, and finally the line released, but he lost his fly.

"Why don't you tie on one of those bright ones you did last night?" He took my advice and pulled one out of his fly box. I was really just curious about the pattern—it was one

Erik had come up with on his own. It was bright purple and pink, and in a minute, he had it ready.

Erik cast, and just as I reminded him to mend the line, he got snagged again. Then I saw a bright flash in the water and looked at him—I could tell by the arch of his eyebrows above his sunglasses and his gaping mouth that he was the stunned recipient of a strong steelhead strike.

The line flew off his reel as the fish shot downstream.

“Don’t let her get to those rapids if you can help it!” I shouted my reminder. As I watched, I remembered the rush of adrenaline I’d felt when I hooked my first steelhead on the fly, and I knew that Erik was in his own world now, unlikely to hear anything I said.

The fish cut back just before reaching the tail of the pool where the rapids began, and Erik began reeling like a pro. I was glad he had that 8-weight rod—a beginner with a smaller rod probably couldn’t have handled this beauty. He fought the fish for what seemed like hours, but was probably ten minutes. Finally, she began to tire, and he got her close to the bank. She was a chrome-bright wild hen, and I gently held her while slipping the hook out with my pliers. She waited and rested for just a moment, then swam swiftly back downstream.

I looked at Erik. I don’t know which one of us had the bigger smile. “That was awesome, Dad!”

“Yeah, I’d say it was. Good job, Erik. That was a beautiful fish! You don’t see ‘em like that too often.”

“Dad, does this make me a real fly fisherman now?”

“Well, I thought you were a real fly fisherman before. But I’d say that now you’re definitely a real fly fisherman in anybody’s book.”

All these years later, I’ll never forget that smile. I get a nice reminder of it whenever I fish with Erik and he hooks one. There was one smile that was even better: his nine-year-old daughter Jenny’s when she aced us both and got her first steelhead last summer.

## A SOLEMN REQUIEM FOR NATHANIEL BRADBURY

*Kaithyn Montague*

The young girl sat alone in the dark room of the abandoned house. Windows allowed a cool breeze to pass through their broken shards still clinging to a lost purpose. The deep red curtains fluttered against what little pieces of the window still remained as the wind passed through. The girl took no notice of the drop in temperature. She sat cross-legged on the bare wooden floor staring downward, focusing intently on her small hands.

“Darby, you have been a very dear friend,” she whispered, “but this betrayal is the last straw.”

“Darling, I have done you no treason. I remain faithful still.”

“You are lying, Darby Rosengard. I detest liars! You know this,” she spat.

“Darling, I have done you no treason. I remain faithful still.”

“You, Mr. Rosengard are a despicable cad. You have told that woman the same sweet words that you promised were dedicated to me alone. What kind of man do you consider yourself?”

“Darling, I have done you no treason. I remain faithful still.”

The young girl began playing with the hem of her light-yellow dress. She raised her hands, releasing the once brightly-colored fabric. Her hands glistened red. “You disgraceful excuse of a man. You have forced me to act in an unwomanly manner against you. That woman you loved has ruined everything we worked for.”

“Darling, I have done you no treason. I remain faithful still.”

“No!” she screamed, “You lie like the devil himself!”

“Darling, I have done you no treason. I remain faithful still.”

“Do not tempt me, Mr. Rosengard, you cad!”

“Darling...”

The little girl curled up on the bare wooden floor, whimpering. She rocked back and forth, sustaining a quiet, pitiful whine. The red from her dress soaked through and stained the polished wood as she rolled in each direction. Tears fell from her eyes, causing them to sting and turn to match her hands in color.

“Mr. Rosengard, look what you have done to me! To this family!”

No answer.

“You miserable excuse for human life! Answer me!”

No answer.

“You have been a plague upon my existence, lately, Mr. Rosengard. You continue to try my patience. Did you once ever think of anyone other than yourself? Your daughter, perhaps?” she cried, almost bellowing.

No answer.

“Get your lazy ass off of the floor and stop bleeding on my carpet!”

Silence. Utter silence.

The little girl’s eyes widened, tears still draining her energy. She stared at the nothingness on the wooden wall across from her, silently lamenting. “Oh God!” she said. “Oh God, what have I done? Mommy?”

“Tabitha, darling, go to your room.”

A pause. “Mommy, what happened to Daddy?”

“Tabitha, your room!”

The little girl shrieked while feverishly rocking in the fetal position on the floor. She stopped after a few minutes, suddenly sitting up as if she’d been pulled up straight by an invisible, unknown force. She’d stopped crying and was once again staring at the floor, then intently at her hands still stained red.

“Nathaniel Bradbury,” she said, “won’t you grace me with your presence this fine morning?”

No answer.

“Is this a gift for me?” the little girl asked, closing her hands into fists, clutching at nothing but air.

No answer.

“Why thank you, Nathaniel. I shall put in a good word for you with my family.”

“I picked them just for you. To show my faithfulness.”

The little girl squinted at her hands, closing her fists tighter until her short fingernails drew blood from her already blood-caked palms. “Nathaniel, you have been a very dear friend, but this betrayal is the last straw.”

“Tabitha, no, you must be mistaken!”

“You are lying, Nathaniel Bradbury, and for that you must be punished.”

“Tabitha, what are you talking about?”

“I detest liars, Nathaniel Bradbury.”

“I have done you no wrong, Tabitha, you are my dearest and closest friend!”

“You, Mr. Bradbury, are a despicable cad. You have told that woman—”

“What woman, Tabitha? There is only you.”

“No! You lie like only the devil himself does! Do not tempt me, Mr. Bradbury!”

“Tabitha!”

The little girl stood up, glaring at her hands as if they were the true root of evil. She walked to the wall and began to pound against it with surprising strength. Anger coursed through her veins, the room was all one brilliant shade of red. After a moment, she stopped hitting the wall. “Look at what you have done to me, Mr. Bradbury!”

Silence.

“You miserable excuse for a man! Try to answer me now, will you?”

Silence.

She smiled to herself as she walked back to her original spot in the room, seating herself cross-legged once again.

“Good. That is the last time you ruin a tea party with your detestable mouth-soundings. Get off the floor and stop bleeding on my carpet.”

**TO NARCISSA***Tabitha Jensen*

Towering hills, a series of miniature mountains rising up above the lush green valley below. The two siblings, star and shadow, cut sharply by a cool sparkling river. The only noise louder than the glacier-spawned water is the deafening hum of summer crickets, cicadas, and bees ruling in their untouched home. In clouds they zoom from brush to bloom. The trees watch from the hills, weary in the summer swelter. A frenzied, adrenaline-laced fear tinge their dry and parched frames, the possibility always present that at any moment a spark, a bolt, could end their centuries of existence.

In one patch of the valley, robbed from the crickets, cicadas, and bees and oblivious to the forest's plight above, cars and minivans are parked along the seldom-traveled road. Men stripped to white t-shirts and jeans grimace as the ambivalent sun blanches their skin and moistens their receding hairlines. They spend all morning driving silver poles into the earth and stretching weathered canvas across them. Within their freshly birthed and fleeting walls, women in starched blouses with hair swept tightly above their dewy necks in bleached blonde buns flutter around round tables, spreading crisp linens, setting plates, and perfecting sprays of blood-red roses.

I'm at the window in the lodge, the one man-contrived structure that obstructs the God-sculpted landscape within miles and miles. As if aware of their transgression against nature, its architects had taken great pains to stay loyal to the crickets, cicadas, bees, and trees they intruded upon. The entire interior and exterior was constructed of exposed logs, giving it an inconspicuous cabin look. We were the first ones here to orchestrate and oversee our creation. Dad, still the varsity football player whose letterman's jacket is fraying in the closet, is helping with the canopy. Matt's outside with him, bonding with the father we'll soon both claim by the end of the afternoon. Mom is looming over the caterers, being a tyrannical, devoted mother of the bride. Here I am, alone, the only one who can see outside the well-planned camp amidst the buzz.

I've only been here twice before, but it has been a hundred, if you only excuse reality. The rich, fragrant valleys of the Willamette and the treacherous, beautiful Columbia. It was the gold at the end of the rainbow for thousands who set out for this place, a failed dream for thousands more who set out and failed.

My fascination with the odyssey for Oregon began in the farthest stretches of my memory, as a kindergartner in Western Washington. Wednesday was Computer Day, when Mrs. Armstrong took our class into the Apple Computer lab, where old, comically archaic beasts by today's standards ate floppy disks the size of a Dr. Seuss book and spat out blocky text and stick figure-esque graphics in green and black. My consistently favorite game, contrary to my computer buddy's objections, was *The Oregon Trail*. Given a virtual family of emigrants, it was my divine duty to guide their tiny little wagon from Missouri to the Oregon Territory. As elementary school went on, the popular game evolved with advances in technology. Screens got 256 luminescent colors, floppy discs morphed into CDs, and soon you could visit replications of Chimney Rock and Fort Hall. The pioneers themselves even changed. They got voices. I hated recess with a passion, so when classes broke I'd hunker down in the library to buy pixilated bags of flour, judge whether the conditions were advantageous for fording the river, and recommend the best course of action against a nasty outbreak of cholera.

In the daily shade of books, whose influence permeated my veins, I was driven to take on my own independent study of this phenomenon. Reading the real stories and legends of these represented people I'd bonded with, I became more and more fascinated with their place in history. What dangers they'd faced! What trials they endured! By their own accord, they tore their entire lives up by the roots and gambled their very existence for a promised land. What was this place? What was it all for?

On road trips, I begged my parents to stop at historical sites I'd studied. The Whitman Mission. The Barlow Toll Road.



Every time I could bring myself closer to these people, to this dream, I jumped rabidly at it.

After I graduated into middle school, Leonardo DiCaprio and Cover Girl took over my dorky history love. The adventures of the Oregon Trail and the promise of the Willamette Valley didn't even cross my mind until half a decade or so later, in high school, when my parents packed up their new Ford Expedition for the Great Cross-Country Family Road Trip from Seattle to Arizona to Vegas. We drove south down to Portland, then headed east at the river's edge. Somewhere around Pendleton and The Dalles, the trip barely begun, my little brother had to go to the bathroom. Dad pulled over at a little roadside state park, which featured nothing more than covered restrooms and a couple of picnic tables.

But the park didn't need to boast anything for the beauty its boundaries claimed. A lush green valley on one side, flanked by a sparkling blue river that separated from stretching timber-dense hills that filled up an unclouded horizon. Blue flowered underbrush gave the nameless mountain a glistening, ethereal quality, like an ocean wave frozen on the crest.

Alone, next to the picnic table, I looked at all that stretched out before me, and I suddenly understood what all those theoretical little people I marched across the simulated prairie were toiling for. I could skip Arizona and Vegas. I could stay here forever.

Five years later, I'd all but forgotten about the fleeting rest stop visit, despite a move from the Mt. Rainier plateau to northern Portland and, later, the southern suburban outskirts of Hillsboro. On a few occasions I reflected serendipitously on my childhood fascination with the Oregon Trail, which had, strangely enough, led me to my eventual adult home, but my mind never wandered back to those sparkling blue hills rising above the crisp, shimmering river.

Until two winters back, when my parents were in town for my father's birthday. Mom had made a reservation at the Columbia Gorge Hotel way past Tualatin, famous for a world-class farmer's breakfast and touted as America's Most Romantic Hotel in all the *Portland Bride* magazines in which I'd secretly been indulging. I was cooking lunch at home when she called me from the road.

"Hey Mom, where are you guys?"

"Well, we're just now passing Centralia, and I wanted to stop at the Pfaltzgraff store, and Dad and I want to grab something to eat at Arby's"

"Good times."

"Are you working tonight?"

"No, not Thursdays," I said, thankful for my small and all-too-temporary reprieve from peddling lingerie and boudoir accessories at Lloyd Center.

"Do you and Matt want to have dinner with us?"

"Uh,..." If there was one thing Matt wasn't ever too keen on, it was venturing anywhere outside the apartment on a weeknight. He brags about his old party-all-night ways, but I find them rather hard to believe when he's asleep every night by nine. "I'll mention it to him."

"We'd really like it if you could—" she drew out in that mother sort of way.

Spending the day with the cat, rolling pair upon pair of washed socks as the heavy winter rain caught the wind and threw itself mercilessly against the window, I decided quite firmly that I wanted to see America's Most Romantic Hotel. I wanted to eat from the kitchen which birthed the World Famous Farmer's Breakfast. So I didn't ask Matt about it. I told him we were going, and he was driving.

"The Gorge? Do you know how 84 is this time of night? It'll take us two hours just to get off the Banfield."

As it turned out, the Banfield was the least of the trouble. Any inclement weather in the greater Portland area is amplified by about ten thousand along the Columbia River, and the wind howled against the poor old minivan with a furious vendetta. While Matt struggled to keep the car on the road, I gazed blankly out the window, feeling incredibly guilty for insisting that we set out into the untamed wilderness, where we could probably die and never be found. Without the benefit of streetlights or city neon, we moved along carefully, guided only by the illumination of the landscape, which emanated from the half-moon and vividly clear stars. My eyes adjusted to the natural darkness, and I could see hills rising out from the crystal river below. Fresh virgin snow flocked the trees at the summit, trickling down to a scant dusting by the base. My heart began to beat

wildly, and I pressed my hands against the window like a child on Christmas. "Matt! Look!"

"Sweetheart, I'm driving."

"I've been here before," I murmured, pushing against the glass, trying to break free. This was the heaven of so many dreams I'd felt, the paradise I'd barely stopped at, the most stunning spot in my universe. "It's so beautiful," I breathed.

The top-heavy van swerved to the right, knocking my entire head straight against the window my nose had been pressed against. "Honey, are you all right?" He asked tenderly, freeing his hand from the wheel just long enough to brush my shoulder.

"Yeah." I sit back in my seat, sitting still and rubbing my reddening forehead as we trekked on.

In the frigid snow we pulled into the hotel, met by my well-bundled parents. We exchanged hugs and exclamations over the weather, completely unaware of the magnificence towering above us, veiled in moonlight. It had slipped out of my mind, anyhow, replaced by the anticipation of dinner and presents and good wine.

A heavy door opens and four excited pairs of feet shuffle in. Laughter echoes amidst the vaulted ceiling, and the world melts back into the moment. Brianna has the dress, Christine has the shoes, Leslie has the Victoria's Secret bag, Chelsea is chatting with the hairdresser. All to shove me off, an all-too-willing participant, into this new world. I turn away from the river and hills. Today, once more, I will be distracted by parading guests, and cake, and tears, and a veil that I will try to keep on straight. The mountains, rivers, and valleys will become wallpaper in an endlessly photographed gala, far behind who gets captured drinking champagne straight from the bottle and who cries uncontrollably. I won't see them. They will only rise and flow and appear after they've been forgotten.

## ESCAPE

*Donnie Drobny*

Deep in my soul locked up so tight  
Lost in the darkness of a moonless night  
No way out, not for my crime  
Sentenced to eternity; forever doing time

You have given me the key  
The only thing that can set me free  
And yet here I sit rotting away  
Afraid to see the light of day  
Slitting my wrists with these rusted chains  
Scars resulting from self-inflicted pains  
The blood of a Lamb adorns these walls  
to remind me that, sooner or later, everyone falls

As the key is inserted into the lock  
the chains fall to the floor made of rock  
Trembling, I slowly crawl to the door  
and fear seizes my body to the depths of its core  
The door finally opens, and Oh! what a sight  
my body—my soul draped in glorious light

## RELENTLESS EROSION

Amy Gebrke

They say a trickle of water  
Carved the Grand Canyon  
Out of a flat plain  
Eroding until the earth was  
Worn away and hollowed

Such a vast emptiness  
Such a thing of beauty

My emptiness is not beautiful  
Though *she* used to be beautiful

I still recall our first dance at the grange  
My heart guiding my hand  
Guiding her in time to the music  
I lost myself in that moment  
That terrible moment of bodies  
Swaying and gazes holding still

Her sweetness is gone now  
It evaporated and was replaced by her  
Complaints her coldness  
Her not nows and maybe later  
Her right aways and don't forgets  
Her constant disdain and indifference

I became her flat place  
She became that stream  
That drip of endless relentless water

Wearing me away  
Hollowing me out  
Every merciless day

The Grand Canyon's emptiness  
Began with a stream

Mine began with a dance



## SLEEP

*Angela Rasmussen*

Kaleidoscope of emotions  
 Surging within me  
 No words can describe  
 Tears cannot heal the anguish of the soul  
 Sleep, the only escape  
 Sleep is all I can do  
 Dreamless sleep awaits  
 Exhaustion takes over  
 When I awake, the kaleidoscope remains  
 Haunting me  
 Tormenting me  
 A black cloud of sorrow blankets my soul  
 Leaving me alone  
 Wandering in this darkness  
 Hurt and confused  
 Wishing I could stop the tears  
 Strength is no longer  
 Just weakness  
 And sleep

## JUST SOME HARMLESS KILLING

*Daniel Hues*

Now it's time to go and make a bunch of poor choices,  
 And when it's all over I'll just blame it on the voices.  
 Is that irresponsible?

I speak of blood and death  
 Because it's all that suffices the voices in my head,  
 Screaming with a blackened breath  
 For me to reach out my hand and embrace the dead,  
 Decaying in the skin of regret,  
 Has no one perished in their stead?  
 "Do not stop until the fire is fed,"  
 My voices said,  
 Fear being their only threat,  
 But I am not among them yet!

I speak of pain and sorrow  
 Because it's all that the voices allow me to say  
 For those impatient for tomorrow.  
 They threaten that there is no new day—  
 "Burn the bodies until only ashes remain,"  
 The shrill whispers in my ears relay.  
 I feel so alone, for they don't allow me to pray,  
 They just stay.  
 The stab wounds in my back  
 Aren't the source of my pain.

I speak of lies and slander  
 Because the voices compel my lips to spew  
 Resin from false candor,  
 A smile to defile what you thought to be true,  
 A thorn among the hearts of the lost.  
 The same flame cannot resurrect anew  
 A freshly-branded blade to cut you through.  
 I'm killing you.

The wrath of these voices is like a winter frost,  
Blood adorning the snow from those double-crossed.  
The vengeance of these voices is unforgiving,  
I could silence them, but I desire to remain among the living.

## JUST ME

*Samuel Irving*

If I could write a poem

I would write a poem so deep, that it's simple.

A poem that details the world with

A revolutionary harmony

If I could only write a poem

I would speak the words of Etheridge, Gordon, and Gil

On a train ride back to Billie Holiday Street

I would write until words became more than words,

Educating the viewpoint of a mental vocabulary while

Reciting Nouns with an obtuse twist, so I could track

The trail of where the great poem was written

If I could only sit and write a poem,

I would write a poem to express the anguish

Of the mothers left alone in the slums, the children

Crying in foreign lands, and the bruised ego of

A political structure vying for power.

If I could write a poem, I would write on the good times,

Soul train lines

And hustle contests, where everybody got down

If I could write a poem I would write on

The separation of one color

Into legal surnames

I would write on where we went wrong and what

It would take to get us back

If I could only write a poem,

I would cross the borders of understanding

Until I found sanity within abstraction

If I could write a poem, I would spill

Over the cup bearing the pain of the disabled, disadvantaged,

And disgusted, wiping the floor with adjectives

Until my verbs get jealous

If I could write a poem, I would make it very deep  
So deep that it drowns in pools of simplicity

But I need to stop and think  
If I was to write a poem,  
One of those great poems.  
I would only need to use my metaphors  
To unlock my similes' prison  
And let my thoughts take flight on the page.

## CORDED EMOTIONS

*Samuel Irving*

Memories of a  
first encountered stance  
ring through the lines  
of conversation

As you whisper *bello* in the voice  
Of a meadowlark

A tone, calming like  
Rubbing ice cubes on  
Your lips during a heat storm

So refreshing as new doors  
Open, with the simplest  
Words and tranquil melodies

Sweet on my mind  
Like cotton candy  
At urban street festivals

Where discussion made plans  
Of gentle days and romantic evenings  
to set the mood

Realizing the butterflies  
Inside, you adopted my  
Orphan tears

Into a heart-shaped house  
Where love lives

We sipped Moroccan tea  
Beneath the night's sun  
Reciting the *suress*  
*Why nots*  
And *remember whens*

We touched upon uncharted  
Territories, where the  
Common lived not and  
We seemingly existed forever

Until we retire to thoughts,  
only to play the same phone game  
Again the next night,  
As the moon ushers in another bonsoir.

## HATEFUL THINGS (AFTER SEI SHONAGON)

*Donnie Drobný*

I hate it when you walk away and never say goodbye  
I hate it when you break my heart and never even try  
I hate it when you smile and your heart isn't there  
I hate it when you laugh and don't seem to care  
I hate it when I can't cry for you  
I hate it when I finally do  
I hate it when you say he's like me  
I hate it when I have to agree  
I hate it when your eyes wander away  
I hate it when you have nothing to say  
I hate it when you haunt my dreams  
I hate it when I silence my screams  
I hate it when you kill my thoughts  
I hate it when my feelings rot  
I hate it when I'm all alone  
I hate it when I should have known  
I hate it when you're always right  
I hate it when I'm cold at night  
I hate it when you're in my mind  
I hate it when I know I'm blind  
I hate it when I see your beauty manifested  
I hate it when my heart is harshly tested  
I hate it when our eyes meet  
I hate it when you watch your feet  
I hate it when I walk away and you let me go  
I hate it when I know I love you so

**CLOUDS OF GRAY***Nick Derrick*

I stay awake to watch the sun rise again today  
 But its beauty is hidden behind clouds of gray  
 So I imagined the brilliance of colors  
 Dancing in the morning sky  
 As I sat alone and closed my sleepless eyes  
 A brand new beginning, a brand new day  
 Only to be hidden behind clouds of gray

**WRITING POETRY***Matt Nash*

I read the poem in cacophonous flow  
 The stanzas blur, my eyes dilate  
 Expletives explode from my mouth  
 Popping veins indicate my frustration  
 I remember to breathe in...then out...  
 Anger management was not in vain  
 Rereading is key to understanding  
 So is repetition, so is

Alliteration, appreciation,  
 Contemplation, take a break...  
 Rhyme, end rhyme, how about  
 A diet Coke with Lime

The verses  
 Are one giant Rorschach test  
 The methods don't focus my intent  
 Up and down, backwards and forwards  
 On my head, dangling from the chandelier  
 One finger in my nostril

I have come to conclude that  
 I will never write a poem.

*Aaron Snyder*

It had been thirty years since we had landed on Mars. Thirty years since we had set foot on the fertile, rich planet that we all had thought would only be good for mining iron and high grade titanium. When the first ship landed everyone expected the swelling of pride that came with the lunar landing. Parades, footprints on the moon, Cadillacs, Mankind, and jerky footage.

The thin atmosphere clawed at the hull of the Abassi. Stabilizer rockets fired and fired again trying to balance the ungainly ship on the head of a vaporous pin. The crew clenched their teeth, weathering the vibration and uncomfortable creaking noises that came from the frame of the ship, the stress searching for chinks in the fragile armor.

The twenty-six month journey had been a harrowing exercise in relentless boredom but entry into Mars's orbit had relieved the tension of being trapped with five other high-strung individuals. Pre-entry flight checks were done, contraband was stashed, and gear was tied down for the final approach lest an errant coffee cup brain some crew member like a ceramic pinball. Once everything was secure the crew strapped in and with an unconscious prayer tipped the ship down.

The crew was fixed on the altimeter and hull temperature gauges. They all knew that the craft had been designed to withstand 60 to 65 percent more stress than was needed to endure entry into Mars proper but screaming towards the red Martian surface at three hundred kilometers per hour was disconcerting to even the most rational mind. No sooner had Murray loosened his grip on the arm of his cradle, shaking his numb hand, than they heard a loud crack from the port side. The ship lurched to starboard. "Keep her steady." Murray tried to hold a course but the ship listed hard and rolled. The captain rapidly checked all of his tank pressures looking for drops that would indicate ruptures in fuel lines or vessels and habitually crossed himself, "There's a pressure drop in tank six but everything looks fine; I said keep her steady Murray, pay attention!" Murray cut the engine and waited until the ship began

to right itself. "Sit tight." He tripped the pilot light and they were under power again. The rear dropped a little and brought the chin of the ship to bear. The ship groaned as it settled onto the air. Murray grinned. Gill shook his head, "That was stupid, Murray." "It worked."

The whistling of the atmosphere grew louder and louder as the air became thicker. The captain checked the altimeter again and blew the charges that held in their security blankets. The drogue and main chutes deployed and filled with the thin, cold carbon dioxide, blooming open like a perfect white flower.

The creaking ship slowed, the rush of sound deadened and the crew was silent. They fired the last landing blasts and touched down one two three points, its steel and alloy feet pressing deep into the dusty surface. The hulk of the ship stood, its surface stained by oxidation, its shell creaking under contraction. Bloody and scared mankind had made it to Mars.

Shortly after landing and stretching their legs the people on board began their duties. They were a crack team of scientific prodigies, all hand picked for their particular talents, many peerless. Captain Gill Stride led them; his military background, two doctorates and a laundry list of special projects made him the man for the job. Victor Comm was only arguably less qualified. The remainder of the crew was comprised of Murray the engineer, chemists Leah Strutt and Jake Fidge, and a man named Hans Verner in charge of communications. The group had been isolated from each other by their respective training before the launch but the voyage to Mars had made up for any holes in their acquaintance.

The ship was built in three parts: propulsion in the rear, cabin in the front, and what equated to a huge toolbox separating the two. After landing the crew began unloading the huge crate. The tractor came first. It was an engineering marvel. Four-wheel drive, massive lifting and towing capacity, structurally stressed integrated polymer batteries, solar recharging array, life support backups and a wicked hydraulic lift arm, all at a scant 350 kilos. It was the paramount object of engineering lust. After the tractor came the shelters. There were three domes of increasing size: Number 1, the largest, was the lab and airlock

system; 2 and 3 were, respectively, for the control room and mess hall and crew quarters. Additional construction included all the instruments, tools, and accoutrements that filled the labs and enabled them, finally, to transmit the long awaited "All clear" back to earth.

They all sent short messages home to loved ones. Leah sent her mother and father a message. "It all went just as planned," she stammered. "We dropped in and stuck the landing, just stuck it. We're all fine really, we're all fine." She repeated various combinations of these sentences in different tones and at different volumes until she thought she sounded convincing.

Hans sent a message to his wife in Pittsburgh: "I had to mess with the alignment of the antenna but I built in enough adjustment that it all worked out..." he trailed off for a moment shuttering his eyes with his hands. "And its so beautiful here, I'll bring you something special. Probably a rock from the look of things," he said, smiling. "I love you." He tried not to tell her any more of the technical details of how he had to set up the equipment. He said "I love you" two more times and was finished.

Victor sent his commercial mainly to his parents and his girlfriend but didn't leave out anyone else that may have been listening. "I have my schedule all set out for the next week, we have a lot of work to do but, that's what we're here for, right?" He hugged the microphone close and said, "This place is going to be great, we just need to get cracking."

Gill managed to rattle off all the requisite flight and landing data. "We had a little mishap on the way in, piece of debris caught the port nacelle and tore up some parts but other than that it went pretty smooth." Like Leah, he reassured everyone at home that they were safe and sound. "The crew did a great job, real troopers." He shot a half snide glance at Murray. "Real troopers."

"Dropped in and stuck the landing. It was perfect. We're all set up now and it looks like we'll be fine for quite a while, we've got food and water for months and a clean place to live. Had a run-in with some debris but the ship doesn't seem to be worse for the wear. This is going to be sweet, as long as I remember my helmet." Murray tapped the red button and made an inviting motion towards Hans, "Fire it up Hans. Let's see if

we can get the money." Hans encoded the message, checking all his figures and switches three times. Finally he charged the beacon, and hit the button. The main power dimmed momentarily as the coded burst swelled through the main relays and bolted through the leads to the amplifier and then to the antenna fifty meters off site. From the top of the tallest antenna you could see the tiny perfect silver domes next to a pile of packing rubble that caught the first light of the Martian dawn, its flawless aluminum skin a burning white on the red gravel of the surface, a wondrous blight.

They had been sent following a set of Martian landers dispatched at the turn of the century. The first few landers did little more than look around and take a few pictures, then promptly ran out of batteries, or froze, or broke, or didn't work at all. Over fifty years the robot landers improved but never seemed to do the planet justice. The government administration was driven to succeed by the need to leave a legacy, to follow up the lunar bases started twenty years earlier.

In 2065 the Abassi mission was sent out. Earth-orbit assembly of the vessel, rocket and ion propulsion, experimental burst communications technology. The scope and scale of the technologies involved culling all but the best engineers and technicians. To offset the massive cost of the mission the government sold off portions of the cost to private entities. Massive advertising campaigns promised that the great wealth and prospects on Mars were unimaginable. Cheaper, higher strength materials and a snazzy logo sold thousands of companies on the idea of investing in Mars. The company was looking for, in addition to minerals which the landers had found, any strata of soil or rock that offered promising evidence of water or at least held out a rumor of water. Water on Mars would mean a much higher, but still slim, chance of extraterrestrial life as well as a more diverse set of chemical compounds and processes. The company had provided a great deal of the funding and was interested because water, life or not, meant easier installation of vital industrial infrastructure that could increase the value of further exploration on the planet.

Gill and his team were to survey, above ground and below,



the area surrounding the landing zone. Running through drills practiced a thousand times, Gill and Victor mapped every ridge, gully and rock within a square kilometer. After the surface had been scoured for significant data and was found wanting, they began the laborious mapping of the various strata underground. Done in the old days with a pipe and elbow grease, mapping was now done with ground-penetrating radar that was able, with the help of a stiff impact, to read the density and composition of a volume of about a dozen cubic meters by listening for the echoes.

While pounding their way across the base they were getting static or interference from something. Victor checked and double checked all the monitors and relays, then finally in desperation called Gill. He ran all the same diagnostics that Victor had, much to his frustration, and found the same result: the GPR was fine, everything was running like a finely tuned watch. "Hey Murray. Get over here," the captain barked. "What is it? I'm really busy repairing the capacitor array. It got banged up on entry," Murray paused. "We felt that little crack against the port nacelle. It tore up the insulating wrap and we cooked some caps." The captain returned a look of disgust and exasperation. "What do you make of this Murray?" said the captain, thumbing over his shoulder at the round radar display. There were what appeared to be lines weaving across the screen, interconnecting, intertwining like a ghostly green net. "It looks like the GPR is messed up, maybe the hit damaged this too—it was a pretty good hit." "No Murray, they're tubes, underground tubes; we've checked six ways from Sunday and they're tubes under the surface," Murray scratched his head at the possibilities. Water, gas, radioactivity, lava, air, life, god only knew what could be running through those tunnels or where they came from. Murray smiled, his hands itching, and asked the question the others wanted to hear: "So when do we start digging?"

There was one tractor they had brought and converting it into a drilling rig really made the geologists and Murray unpopular at mess that evening. The little six-million-dollar tractor was tipped on its side, propped up against a shipping crate and outfitted with a jackshaft and a cobbled drilling rig. It was far from ideal, one drive axle used to drive a tube with a bit on the end: spin, shovel, spin, shovel.

Jake was on shovel duty, grunting, cussing and clearing the hole of debris. He stopped and asked Murray, hard at work on keeping the rig working, "You think there's critters underground? Little green men?" "Not a chance man. Whatever it is we'll be lucky if it isn't corrosive and won't eat through our suits." He chuckled and kicked the tractor, his initial enthusiasm for the project having waned in the week it had taken to carve out the few meters they had managed in their spare time. "Where's Gill?" asked Jake curtly. "Damn captain. Doesn't like sweating in his suit. He thinks smelling better will give him a better chance with Leah." Murray grinned. The intercom crackled as Hans piped up from Pod 1, "Enough shit talking guys, it's quitting time. Shut it down and come in for dinner." Murray hit the switch and when Jake tossed his shovel in the air, it flew up out of the divot in the Martian surface in a long smooth arc. It landed lightly in the low gravity, leaving another small print in the surface. Jake followed the shovel in a slightly less graceful arc and landed on his back. Murray gave him a kick as he stepped over him on the way to the airlock. It would be good to rinse off and get a hot meal.

At dinner the hall was noisy. Despite the side project of digging, everyone was still busy running their own projects. Gill and Victor were arguing about the best way get to the top of a nearby mountain for "surveying." The rest of the crew knew that Gill was an avid mountaineer and the peak to the south of the camp had been calling to him since they landed. He decided early on, being the captain and all, that the satellite map was not accurate enough and that he could set up a laser mapping system on the peak to get a perfect digital model of the larger surrounding area. Gill claimed it would ease his work load as well as provide invaluable insight into the formation of the geological forms in the area.

"There's no reason to climb that mountain and you know it," blurted Victor. "We have plenty of work to do in the lab, and with one of us always taken up in Murray's harebrained shoveling we don't have enough time as it is." He took one more bite of his less-than-appetizing meal and with mouth full pointed his fork at Gill. "It's a waste of resources and time. We

have work to do and theories to disprove; the board will have our hide if they find out that we came all the way to Mars to dig holes and climb rock piles. They are going to want some sort of return on their investment or we'll be in serious shit." Victor's fork rattled in his glass as he stood. "I'm getting back to work for a few hours." The rest of the table looked at him and then at Gill, waiting for a response. A spat between the two was not uncommon; Gill was always right and in command and Victor was always right and subject to somebody else's orders. The hatch closed behind Victor and the rest of the crew glanced at Gill and then at their plates. "Either way, Victor and I will be heading out first thing tomorrow to climb up there and take a look around. Jake, round up the gear we'll need for the surveying. Leah, are there any samples that you need from the top of the hill?" Gill asked politely. "No, I'm fine. I just need to keep up on the soil samples I already have," Leah replied, intently lancing an overcooked carrot like a small boar. "I've been behind since day one."

Murray picked at his reconstituted meal and his stomach suddenly turned. He set his fork down and stood up collecting his napkin and plate. "I'm going to turn in, long day tomorrow." He got a nod or two from the group all looking at their food with the same contempt. He knew that each meal was carefully balanced in calories and nutrients to provide exactly what he needed to work. He felt ill when he saw the meals and wished that he could get a real vegetable. A single stalk of celery, crisp, green and wet, or maybe a tiny radish, anything alive. That was the part that got to Murray that he wasn't prepared for. He was a fish out of water, enclosed in a silver bubble he could live in successfully for months in space. But he was dead sure that, while progress and technology could keep him breathing and fed, it would have a hard time keeping him sane. He scraped his perfect meal into the disposal, shut off the light, and tried to think of something other than the hum of the ventilator or the near vacuum outside waiting to empty his lungs.

The next morning Gill and Victor ventured out. It was a good two miles to the foot of the mountain and another good mile hike to the top of the rocky crag. They took their time and made it to the foot in less than two hours. While both men wore over sixty pounds of gear the lower gravity compensated by

lightening their load. "It's not so heavy, its just kind of awkward," Victor said. "This was easier in the pool back home," Gill laughed. "Well, there's no quitting now, unless you plan on walking off the job and off into the sunset?" "I figure we'll both be back in a few hours." The going was easy, the sand and loose rock giving way to larger crouching features of red and ochre. Stepping here and there on larger rocks the two men clambered up at a steady pace. "I still think this is a bad idea, Gill," huffed Victor breathing hard into his microphone. "Waste of time and money if you ask me." "Good thing I'm the Captain," Gill chided. They were halfway to the summit and both men had settled into a rhythm with the slope dropping away behind them. "Just think, we're the first men on Mars. Not many people get to be at the outer edge; it's a privilege to see progress first hand. So quit bitching." Smiling, Gill turned, missed a step and toppled. Distracted by his reaming of Victor he had by chance selected a rock that sheared off under his weight. The bulky boot rode over the smooth fault in the rock and Gill palmed at the thin air trying to regain his balance. Victor watched in disbelief as the captain of the Abassi fell slowly down a steep bit of slope peeking over the edge of progress.

## ROOMS

Louise McKenzie

The room seemed to swallow me. The spotted, dingy gray carpet was sucking the life out of me. The puzzles and frazzled quilts on the wall were making me dizzy. The woman sitting at the small wooden desk seemed to be ignoring me.

“You don’t understand! I would die for that little boy. I would give everything I own to stop the suffering he goes through every day because his family is being ripped apart,” I screamed, fanatically pointing at the door on the right. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath as I ran my hands over my face. I looked at the woman sitting at the small wooden desk littered with craft supplies.

“But I can’t, I can’t do a damn thing to stop the pain he deals with. Mom, are you even listening?”

“Yes,” she said, tying off the stitch on the end of a quilt. A black quilt, a quilt of self. One that none of us ever expected her to make.

“Mom, James loves you. But you meet Jim, Jim says ‘drop it and come with me’ and you just leave us, and now you want to cut any ties we have with you?”

“Just because I want Sue to adopt James doesn’t mean I don’t love him,” she said as she calmly hung the finished quilt on the wall with the others.

“Yeah right it doesn’t, why don’t you tell that to him? Are you ever gonna write when you’re traveling? Do you think you’ll find time to visit any of your four children? Mom! Will you please pay attention?” I said, yanking my hair as I glowered at the ceiling.

“Dear, I don’t know why you’re getting all worked up. It’s really nothing to worry over,” she said, keeping her cold blue eyes from making contact with me.

“Right...nothing,” I said. I walked to the door on the left, and with one last look I slammed the door and entered a cold, dark room.

I peered around the dimly lit garage-like room. No walls; just a blackness and a cement floor with pieces of an old van scattered about. A man with pepper-colored hair and glass blue eyes was smeared with grease. He cursed idly while he wiped more grease on his once white muscle shirt. Silence pounded on us for moments. I couldn’t stand the pounding any longer, so I spoke.

“Why did you never talk to me about the things that happened, when I was younger?” I was hit with silence and the slight intrusion of clinking tools as he worked under the dusty blue van.

“Why were you so angry? Why did you never talk about when you were a kid or about your parents?” *Tink, tink, tap* of tools.

“Why did you lie under oath? Why make ME out as the liar? Why?” I wrapped my arms around myself as it seemed colder. The silence like deathly snow covering, as it cloaked the bridge between us. “I don’t have the answers, the ones I need.” He stopped for a moment, not to look at me but to point at a small manhole in the corner. I looked at him with furrowed brows but he just went back to *tink, tinkling*.

The lid was impossible to lift. I used all my weight and it still didn’t give. “I can’t do this by myself. Dad help me...please.” I looked into the reflective glass as he stood beside me. And I waited. Silence pounded.

“...I’m... proud of you—for trying to get to the problem, trying to solve it.” He smiled a busy smile at me and shook his head. “You don’t need to open this, for you it’s empty. Just move on. Keep making progress.”

I walked out the garage door and into the sunlight and I blinked, trying to shield my eyes from the glare. I heard people cheering as I stood on bleachers near the black track. I saw the finishing ribbon broken by a tall, gangly boy, who was not old enough to grow facial hair but was trying hard anyhow.

He had sky blue eyes with a dingy yellow cap of hair. I tore my gaze from them and looked around; the view had changed. There was garbage lying around everywhere and the people were gone, not like they had left but like they

had become the refuse itself. The grass seemed to die before my eyes—the green washed away, replaced by a dead yellow brown. The sun grew hotter but dimmer, its yellow warmth swapped for a pale grayish suffocating heat. The boy looked around and started walking back the way he had come.

“Wait!” I yelled and ran after him. “Don’t you want to know what’s up ahead? Don’t you want to see what you worked so hard for?” I almost pleaded with him.

“Why bother, I’ve already been this way. I know this route, it’ll be easier,” he said with a bland voice.

“But there could be something better up ahead, better than what’s back there,” I said as he just kept walking. He became blacker and blacker with each step until he eventually disappeared into the track.

I turned around to find my way back and found that everything had disappeared but the track. A heavy falling started, something like snow, but not cold or wet. It avoided me and struck the ground, and soon the track was just a huge white circle. I walked around a bit; the white non-snow creaked dryly like a packed powder reminding me of flour.

I was so enamored with the dust that I almost tripped over a young boy just a few years younger than the last. Just as tall and stringy but with a small scar on his cheek. He had the same dingy cap and his eyes were blue. Not sky blue—more like river blue, the color of being swept away, swept down stream with no way to steer. He was sifting around in the white not noticing me at all.

“What are you looking for?” I asked

“My way. A way to get back. Revenge. Someone...” he answered in a faraway voice. *Sniff.*

“You won’t find any of that under there.”

“That’s okay.” *Sniff, buff, puff.*

“Why is that okay?” I wanted to know. This seemed to catch him off guard as he looked at me and blinked. His eyes were red and watery. I felt I was drowning.

I woke up in the dark as I do every night. As I have done every night since James was born. There are no nights that sleep comes all the way through. I walk to his room; it always makes me feel better when I see him sleep, so peaceful. But his light is on and I hear little whispers under the door. I push the door open and get the deer caught in the headlights look. “Baby, what are you doin’ up?” I ask, crouching down to look at him with my cloudy blue eyes.

“Couldn’t sleep. Bad dreams,” he says, using his bent up little car to push the dingy yellow mop hair from his eyes. Not all blue eyes—blue-green eyes. Warring eyes, where the green is struggling to overtake the blue.

“Come ’ere James.” I sit in the corner of the little white room with him on my lap, surrounded by toy soldiers and stuffed dogs. I play with his long hair and he sighs and I wonder if the green will win or if he’ll be like us. I know there’s so much fear behind that blue, so much anger, and pain. Maybe what they say is wrong. Maybe the green will take over, maybe he has hope.

## THE EFFECTS OF RAIN

*Matthew Owens*

Listen to the rain outside  
Listen to the roaring tide  
Rivers running through the street  
Keeping to a steady beat  
Overflowing the land of love  
Bitter water from far above  
Soaking the dull green grass  
Killing every race, gender, class  
What has really happened today?  
The world has turned gray.

Listen to the rain outside  
Listen to the gentle ride  
Tiny drops freefall from above  
Descending like an innocent dove  
Cleansing the world of hate  
Acting out a beautiful fate  
Saving every man from death  
Revived by the heavenly breath  
Rejoice for the heavenly might  
The world has turned bright

**ANDREA BOLLIE** drew upon her experience as a midwife working in government maternity hospitals in India as inspiration for “India’s Rebecca,” an essay that explores the challenges facing doctors and caregivers who provide primary health care in India’s slums.

**NICK DERRICK** is an artist who works in a variety of media. He loves painting, drawing, writing, and playing bass guitar.

**DONNIE DROBNY** is a junior English major who plans on influencing and molding young minds as a high school teacher. Donnie idolizes T.S. Eliot, Ted Dekker, and Robin, Boy Wonder.

**CHRIS ENGEBO** is in the MAT program at Concordia and will graduate in May 2007 with endorsements in math and language arts. He hopes to eventually teach in the Longview, Washington area. His story was inspired by the Kalama River.

**LUIS GARCIA** is an English major who plans to either attend law school or pursue a professional soccer career. He has played soccer for Concordia for the last four years and currently is serving as president of the English Honor Society (Sigma Tau Delta). He enjoys writing stories and poems and finds inspiration in the work of Shakespeare, Robert Frost, and Octavio Paz. His work in this issue explores his efforts to reconnect to his culture after experiencing years of disconnect in America. In the spirit of honoring his cultural traditions and heritage, he dedicates his poems “La Noche” and “I’ve Always Wondered” to his parents.

**AMY GEHRKE** graduated from Concordia in 1996 with a degree in Elementary Education. She has traveled in Southeast Asia with Youth Encounter, taught in California, and has been working in Admissions for the last five years. Her stories and poems are “reactive snippets” to experiences or conversations in her life. “Relentless Erosion” was written after spending a weekend on a Midwest farm owned by a couple who have been married for over seventy years.

**HOLLY GOODRICH** is a junior majoring in English. In



addition to writing, she enjoys music, anime, and, of course, good books. Her story was inspired by her personal experiences in high school and by her study of early British literature, which she finds fascinating.

**GREG HARRIS** is Concordia University's Marketing Director. A pilgrimage to Israel in 1998 inspired his poem "Rites." Greg offers the following clarification of the fourth section, "Ascent"—the chant invokes the name of four mountains, three of which use the Native American names for the peaks around Portland: Klickitat is Mt. Adams; Loo-wit is Mt. St. Helens; and Wy' East is Mt. Hood.

**BETH HOLIAN** is a freshman studying to be an English major. She enjoys reading, anime, writing, coffee and cow-tipping. "October" is based on a song of the same name that she played in band during her senior year of high school.

**DANIEL HUES**, a Pastoral Studies major and English minor, is currently at work on his senior thesis, which explores the connections between the works of St. Augustine and the poet John Donne.

**SAMUEL IRVING** is a sophomore nontraditional student majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies with a major concentration in Psychology and a minor concentration in Social Work. He plans to use his education at Concordia to help others through poetry therapy. Samuel is a lover of music, art, and literature.

**TABITHA JENSEN** is an English major in her third year at Concordia. She currently resides in Hillsboro, Oregon with Matt and the cat. Writing is one of her favorite things in the world, sandwiched somewhere between wine tasting, cooking, *Family Guy*, and incessantly checking MySpace, and she's thrilled to be a part of this very special *Promethean*. She would like to remind you all that when playing The Oregon Trail, it's important not to over-hunt. Killing one buffalo will provide more meat than you can carry back to your wagon.

**BETH KNAPP** is a freshman and is currently working on a Psychology degree. She enjoys writing, reading, and drawing, and is currently working on her first novel. Her poem "Accusation" is a personal reflection on self-criticism and guilt, and the hope that comes from having a relationship with Christ.

**HOWARD KNYTYCH** earned his undergraduate degree in 1966 from the University of Oregon and an MSW from Portland State University in 1975. Retired now from a former

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career in information technology, he devotes his time and energy to various avocations, including singing, FAA-certified flight instruction, and astronomy. The latter interest led him to an adjunct staff position at Concordia, teaching Astronomy 101. "Runner's Heaven" was inspired by a foggy run one fall morning from Menucha Conference Center near Corbett to Crown Point during a religious retreat some years ago.

**TIA LAWSON** is a junior Humanities major from Medford, Oregon. Her goal is to live for 102 years and hopefully still be full of passion, striving for knowledge and living with health as her greatest source of wealth.

**LOUISE MCKENZIE** is a junior in the BS-Social Work program living in Oregon City.

**KAITLYN MONTAGUE** is an English major hailing from Idaho Falls. She spends her spare time writing her first novel about werewolves and contemplating the dark mysteries of the unknown. (For example, who would win: Wolverine or Colossus?)

**MATT NASH** is an English major who will be graduating in December of 2006. His poems in this issue are attempts at the satire of love and poetry in general. He knows that not all people enjoy poetry, so he tries to lighten the mood through his writings.

**KATHRYN D. NILSON** enjoys many things, including bicycling, creating art, and writing. A few of her majors along the way have included psychology, history, pastoral studies, communications, theology, and music. Her goal is to be a teacher and advocate for at-risk youth; she is currently studying social work and gaining hands-on knowledge through her work at a youth shelter. "I Am Jonah" is Katie's self-reflective journey through the Old Testament book. In this piece, she hopes to communicate her understanding of what it means to fear, what it means to run, and what it means to fight God, but most importantly, she hopes to reveal the silence and humility that come when great and magnificent love falls on undeserving flesh.

**MATTHEW OWENS** is a freshman business major. His poem was inspired by the first big rain of January.

**ANGELA RASMUSSEN** is a junior majoring in Psychology. Her poem "Sleep" describes a time when she wanted to go to sleep and never wake up; in writing the poem, she



wanted to connect with those who also have felt this way, and show that Jesus, through his offerings of peace and love, is the greatest Comfort of all.

**ERIKA SCHMID**, a freshman, plays basketball and runs track for Concordia. Her photographs in this issue capture scenes from her time spent in Kenya, where this past summer she taught health education and helped fight the war on AIDS and poverty. She is currently pursuing a pre-med major and plans to do medical mission work in the future.

**TIFFANY SHARP** is a senior working toward her B.A. in Christian Education. Nonfiction, poetry, and short stories have always been her creative outlets of choice. The poem "Excess Baggage" was daringly penned during a rather turbulent plane ride to New York City in January of 2003.

**LUKAS SHERMAN** is currently finishing his M.A.T. at Concordia and student teaching at his old high school. He has a B.A. in English from Wheaton College and an M.A. in English from Boston University. He lives in southeast Portland.

**COURTNEY SMITH** is a junior majoring in English. She hopes to pursue a career in editing or publishing. Reading is her ever-present pastime, and creative nonfiction is beginning to stand out as an area of interest in her own writing.

**AARON SNYDER** is a senior English major. The excerpt from "The Slaying of Spring: A Long Short Story" in this issue is part of his creative writing senior thesis. In this work, he explores the intersections of various genres, including science fiction and nature writing.

**JENNIFER STANFORD** is a senior English major graduating Spring 2006. "Monsoon" was written from memories of childhood years spent in Arizona.

**E. JOHANNA (JOSIE) STEPHENS** is an English major and writing tutor finishing up her sophomore year at Concordia. She writes, "I wrote 'Truthful Fantasy' three years ago, and have been working to improve it ever since. While the subject of the poem no longer holds me, the relevance of the work itself does. The underlying themes still reflect and shape meaning in my life, despite the differences between who I was then and who I am now."



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