

Fall 2013

SEEDS - 2013

Abraham Harb

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SEEDS

FALL 2013

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Dear Readers,

The way I planned for academic endeavors to go was completely shredded, after attending NEIU for one semester, I was hesitant and doubtful. Of course things never go the way we plan them, but this was a dream I could not let go. I decided to attend NEIU for the outstanding media organizations on campus among other reasons. How I would allocate time between them and academia would make or break me. And after one semester, I was already feeling helpless and broken. But that doubt soon disappeared. One afternoon, I picked up my phone to check my inbox and there it was, the email that would change the doubt. It was an email from the Editor-in-Chief at the time, sent to all the candidates being discussed for the new Editorial Board.

On August 7, 2013, I began this incredible journey, along with my amazing cohort Camille and our team to produce a journal and represent Seeds in the many mediums offered. I had decided to hold off becoming involved with anything besides the newspaper my first semester. I contemplated submitting to SEEDS my first semester or even being involved as a copy editor and work my way up, as it happens with any job. The then unassembled team spent the first half of the editorial board meeting informally getting to know each other/ brainstorming and each person revealed tidbits about their experience in publishing. By the end of that meeting, we had elected which applicant would fill each position. I left that day elated. I couldn't even believe what had happened. I felt like I had dreamt all of it—or in some way, I had misunderstood what had happened. Then it clicked. YES! Camille and I had been elected by the rest of our peers.

I soon began to feel joy again in regards to my academic life and everything else I was working on creatively. The dream I had was held high throughout all of this. Hold onto your dreams. Yes, that cliché, but it's the truth. Don't give up on your dreams, follow your intuition and keep fueled up by pursuing things that you are passionate about. When your dreams are shredded and burned—passion gets you through that rough patch. Chief Creative Officer at Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios John Lasseter once said, "Everyone has that little voice inside, that intuition. Follow that intuition, head towards the work that feels meaningful and satisfying—and it will lead you to where you're meant to be." This quote encapsulates my experience the first half of the academic year. Although I was fairly new to NEIU and wasn't acquainted with the daily and long term functions and goals of Seeds, I trusted my gut and leapt into this endeavor.

An artist never puts his pencil or paintbrush down. They simply hold it in their hand and often jot ideas down, trusting their gut. A writer never runs out of inspiration, just writer's block. Writers sit down, pull out a sheet of paper or open a computer and sift through all the emotions they have stored up. Organize those feelings and write a piece of poetry or prose. The visual artist snaps a photo, paints or draws much in the same way a writer does. This edition takes the reader on a ride through emotions of love, hate, joy, fear, passion, forgiveness, regret, hope and most importantly, trusting one's intuition. Without a theme, Seeds and the talented writers and artists published take the reader on a journey that doesn't encapsulate a single emotion, thing or idea. They trust their gut, while creating and these memories are shared by the storytellers, these authors and artists send out their work into the universe in the hopes that these reflections on life will touch the lives of other people and inspire them. With this journal that you are holding in your hands, I proudly present a literary and visual art offering, until next issue, enjoy!

With Respect,

Abraham "Abe" Harb
Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

I spent the final hours before sending the journal to the printer summing up my experience as Editor-in-Chief and layout editor for the Fall 2013 Issue of SEEDS. The InDesign program used for the layout is closed, each work is placed with hopes of bringing you, the reader, on a journey with us, the SEEDS team. Countless hours have been spent choosing and placing every story, poem and visual art submission bound within these pages. Precious time and brainpower has been spent designing this journal with the singular goal of making each page a stage for that artist to reach you, the reader. Now, that all of the work is done, I am left with this final step, my letter. Here I sit at my desk attempting to pen a correspondence that embodies all that I have experienced this semester and tie it up neatly into a couple of paragraphs.

How do I spend only a few sentences describing the relationship I've developed with Abraham, my partner in crime, the person I would never have been able to do this without? Those experiences could fill volumes. The description would go something like this: two strangers who became great friends and were lucky to find they work together like a well-oiled machine. Abe's ingenuity, artistic vision and exemplary attitude toward hard work have made this semester unforgettable for me. I look forward to working with him on the next issue knowing we shall only improve. There is Elliott, who was enlisted to help with the business aspect of SEEDS and has contributed in more ways than he could possibly imagine. We had a staff of editors, Jonathan, Emily and Chris, who read every submission eagerly. Their selections are the contents you hold in your hands. The team is rounded out with the copy editors, Alfredo, Jessica, Alisa, Eden, Michelle, Ian and Nathan, who worked diligently through their final exams editing every submission. Alisa gets an extra thanks for driving out to my place to sit with me and conduct final edits. We worked together for seven hours reading every piece, correcting every comma splice and every spelling error. Without the hard work and dedication of our team, this journal would not be in your hands. Then we have the faculty, Dr. Poll and Dr. Green for always being available to answer questions. But no letter would be complete without those who submitted, whether they are within our outside of the NEIU community. They are the backbone, without their bravery and creativity this journal would not exist.

Last but not least there is you, the reader. You are the reason we do this. We create stories, poems, and visual art pieces that capture moments in time that mean something to us. Each piece you hold in your hand has been crafted through blood and tears, heartache and overwhelming emotion—we humbly submit it for you to enjoy. May these pages move you, haunt you, or even make you uncomfortable. Because art is emotion and if something isn't stirred up in you then we didn't do our job as artists. And now I leave it for you to decide reader. You may love what you read, you may hate it; I am fine with either or. I just hope it invokes something because then I can be proud of a job well done.

Thank you,

Camille J Severino
Editor-in-Chief

The Editorial Board Wishes to Thank:

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The Independent Newspaper

WZRD

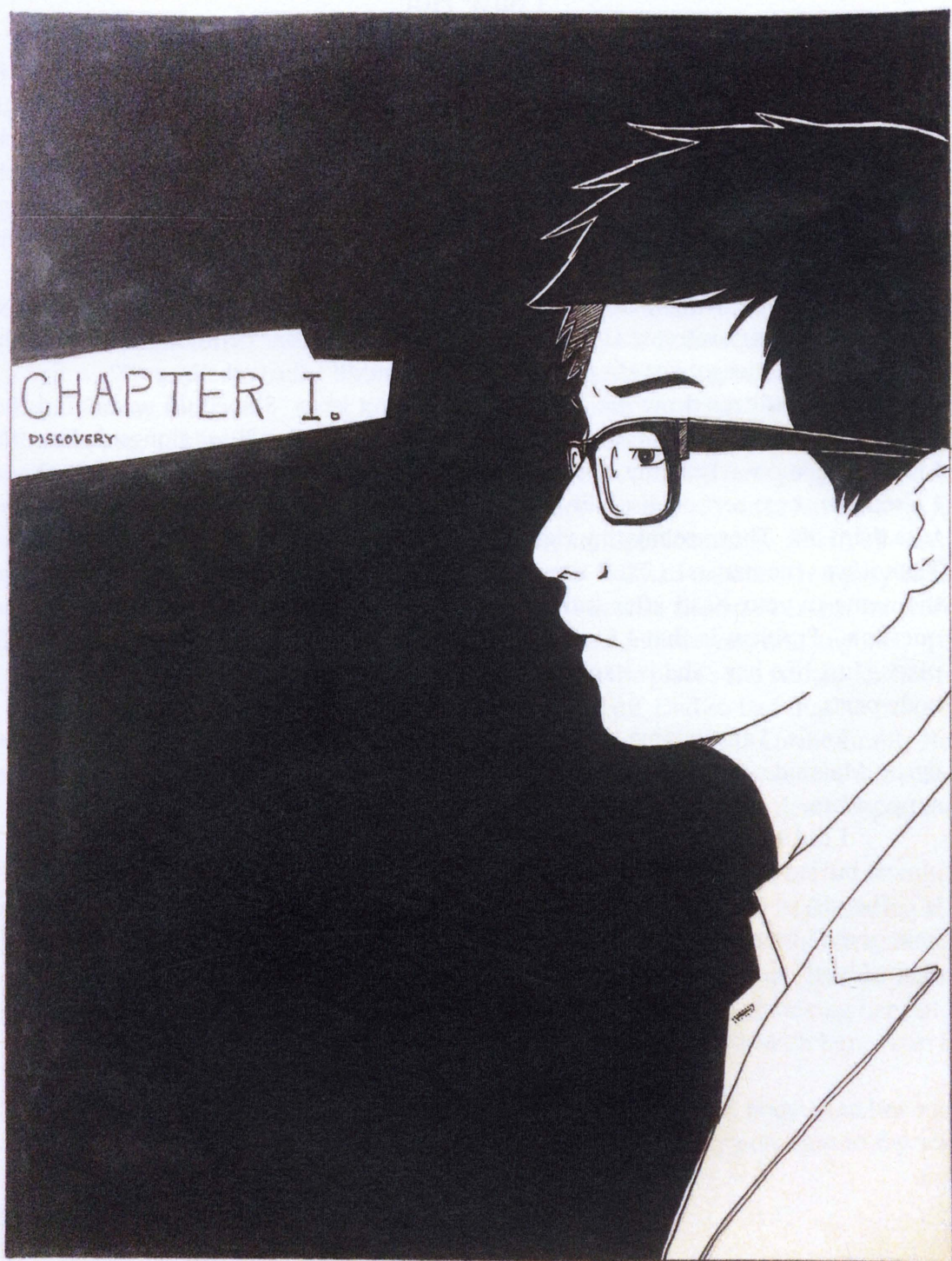
IT Department

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All those who submitted

and all the professors & faculty for the support



Chapter 1: Discovery - Samuel S. Han

I Saw Her

I saw her. My mother. She is dead. But I saw her. In the mirror. My legs had become hers, the shape, the curve up from the calf, past the knee, a few inches higher and there she was. In the flesh, so to speak. As the weight came off of me, Ma latched on. To my thighs. I saw her in a mirror in my dorm room at a retreat center in upstate New York. Here, snuggled into dense woods on the top of a hill, not high enough to give you a heart attack if you are out of shape, but enough to make it hard to talk and climb simultaneously, I was literally in Bumblefuck.

She is following me. One body part at a time. There she was, on a hill in New York, at a women's retreat. How did she find me? I left her behind, graveside, a short drive west of Chicago, just six years ago. Why couldn't she just stay put?

She infiltrated my life first with her damn keys. She could never find them. And she asked every 5 minutes where her damn purse was. It sat alongside her. Now, I too never know where my own keys are minutes after putting them down. Oh, and I also have some sort of disability with the ability to locate my sunglasses every time I take them off. They are missing right now. I have no flipping clue where I put them. Then it was the names. I can't remember people's names. Yeah, yeah, I know. Repeat the name in your head after introduction; say their name with each comment, each question. Problem is that I find myself not listening to these new people in the first place. Just like her. She is haunting me. She has infiltrated my psyche. And now the body parts.

Jowls. I am starting to look like a basset hound. Basset hounds run in my family, on Ma's side. Forget about the droopy boobs. In a few years my cheeks will need a support bra.

I did throw away the grey sweat pants with holes in the crotch. I think we almost buried Ma in hers. I forced myself to toss them. No. My husband forced me to. The vision of Ma in bed next to him, ratty sweat pants and drooling jowls, must have given him nightmares. I wonder how he feels about her thighs in bed rubbing up against his.

My ears are increasingly selective, just like Ma, hearing obscure words and phrases that are completely out of context, nonsense, but I hear them. I am reminded by my son of Ma's response to his comment, I am looking for the valet, when arriving at Sis's wedding: Why? Are we going to the ballet? I have now become Mrs. Malaprop. At a recent wedding, the priest asked us to open the hymnbook to 'The Servant Song.' My ears, of course, heard something different: The Circumcision Song. Not an unreasonable gaff. Religions have celebrated the circumcision, just not at weddings. Or the doctor telling me he will give the medicine to me in pill form. My response? Why do I need an appeal form? My family just shakes their heads in bewilderment.

My mother is back. First in my mind, and now latching onto my body. She will come for my soul soon. I just know it. There is no use running or hiding. She keeps finding me. If she found me in upstate New York, she can find me anywhere. I can't ditch her. We should have cremated her. Then she would still be trying to pull herself back together, particle by particle, instead of following me. I would have a long jump start on her if we had only scattered her ashes in multiple locations. Not in her favorite places, as she had none. Except possibly, the bank. She had accounts in many banking institutions. A few certificates of deposit in each because she was certain we were all after her cash, so she felt the need to hide it. "We" as in everyone and anyone.

No, her ashes should have been spread in all the places she ruined for her family, like Mikonos Greek Restaurant, where she pissed off Dad so bad that he proceeded to drink till he just about passed out and we had to carry him out. Or the Family House Restaurant, where she ruined my first date. Or Wisconsin Dells, where she allowed Sis to almost drown me. When I finally wriggled out from my near death experience, I tried to drown her in retaliation, all while Ma was sunning nearby.

We would have run out of ashes.

But no, we had to plant her next to Dad. He was against it, conjuring a torrent of ice and snow on her burial day, the week after Easter, in May. The sun came out immediately after the graveside service. He must have given up. He had no more fight. He would now have to spend eternity with her. I bet he tried kicking her out. He wanted peace for eternity after spending 50 years in hell on Earth with her. I can hear him now, six feet below, bellowing, 'You take her. I'm done.'

So she must have left. And now she's after me. Like a body snatcher movie. Taking over my body, my mind, one piece at a time. I'm hanging on tight to my soul.

Eden Novak DeGenova



Untitled ~ Ana Karen González Barajas

(emotions)

I peer into the mirror with an honest greeting...

Vanity appears on the other side,
With lustful eyes, she glances through instantly,

unimpressed by the image grinning back...

And with that, in a blink of an eye,
she's gone onto the next,

without even a goodbye...

Leaving the taste of disgust,
moving onto the next I must.

Can I do this? I contemplate...

With each subsequent stare,
a disheartened soul is provoked:

The once enigmatic grin...

turns into scorn,
replacing sincerity and hope

with dread, lackluster & sorrowful...

Ardent ambition gasps one last time,
dying without any sign of revival.

A.i. Herv

Ode to Clouds

swallowing the smallness of humanity
the only perfection is
clumps of formless white
suspended in blue sea
tricking toddlers with its
cotton ball counterfeit
pretending to be flavorless
cotton candy
the sky
drifts pregnant with moisture

Michelle Emery

Paint

Closed up within a can, you're nothing;
open—expectation and anticipation for brighter
walls, a change of pace from drab,
liquid sunny disposition. Your smooth surface

belies little of the depth beneath
or changes wrought when spread thin
and evenly across dingy surfaces.
You adapt well—better than most—
but you cannot do it alone. Alone, you

creep outward, undomiciled and directionless,
aimlessly conforming to habitual contours
until oxygen tricks you in your tracks.

It's marriage you crave: a hand to guide
you in your willingness to be together
and in that togetherness create something
new, beautiful and lasting. You hope.

Larry O. Dean

ten days

On the first day, 9 found you.

Her tail wagged with excitement, ice blue eyes lit up with excitement, and she leaped through the protective railing, barking with abandon. I smiled at you from behind the chainlink fence. You gave me a passing glance and didn't even react as 9 ran around, kicking up the soft dirt and grass.

On the second day, I dreamt of you.

Feelings of loathing stuck to my heart as I slipped through the nightmares, gripped with the overwhelming want and need to never wake up, to stumble through the kitchen, throw open the cabinets and pour every pill down my throat until I slept like you.

On the third day, I asked for your name.

I slipped my fingers around the fence, shivering from its cold touch but smiling the warmest I could muster. 9 was by your side again, tongue lolling out of her mouth, pointed ears at attention. You ignored me, facing the running waters of a dirty river that failed to wash away even dirtier feelings.

"Isabella," you told me, just as the horizon had nearly devoured the sun.

On the fourth day, someone came to visit you.

He stood by the fence as I had done before. I watched him from across the street as he awkwardly stood in front of the bouquet of flowers in front of the makeshift memorial. He clasped his hands together and bowed his head, whispering prayers and thoughts of you.

On the fifth day, I held my hand out.

"She'll take you," my bony hand slipped through the chain link fence, fingers outstretched towards your shadowed figure. 9 barked in agreement, panting heavily. You stared down at her, slumped your shoulders and shook your head, turning back towards the waters.

On the sixth day, I stayed home.

The thunderstorm kept me up all night.

On the seventh day, I told you my name.

You snorted, slapping a hand over your mouth in surprise. "Minerva? That's an old lady's name."

On the eighth day, I hopped the fence.

I felt the edge of a wire drag a gash into my leg, but I hid it until I left you. I sat down by the riverside and watched the water rush past with you. You reached a hand out to me, a shaky, tentative motion, holding back a sob as your cold flesh made contact with my warm cheek.

"It's always cold here." You buried your face in your arms. I nodded.

On the ninth day, you left.

You crouched down to 9 and buried your face into her fur before following her off into the woods. When 9 came back alone, I stayed and watched your grave for the rest of the morning.

On the tenth day, I did nothing.

Ichijo came by again to check up on me. He tripped over 9's food bowl on his way into the kitchen and scowled at it. "Are you getting a dog?"

"No," I smiled and shrugged. 9 barked in agreement.

Nergal Malham

Slanting Rainbows

Slanting rainbows
Shadowed storms
Windswept windows
Beautiful worms

Bars of sunlight
Breaking clouds
Silted lattice
Molding shrouds

Prism'd lightbeams
Rainy days
Tear soaked glass panes
Sinking graves

Light horizon
Darkened hour
Captured moment
Blooming flower

Time unfolding
Growing fear
Eye of windows
Rise, appear!

Give me solace
Give me pain
Make it clearer
Soak up rain

Dawning sunlight
Setting sun
In my eyelight
All is done

Rise before me
Flash with light
Light my window
Rise and fight

Slanting rainbows
Shadowed storms
Windswept windows
Beautiful worms

Nick Walsh

Rise Up

The world ripped apart

Humans acting like savages

Inhumane

Merciless

Unable to feel remorse

for loss of humanity

Where is the love?

Children, women, men

Stripped

Massacred

Where is humanity?

Silence is a crime

Speak

Protest

Let the world know

there is NO room for bloodshed

Sumaiya Maniya

Degrees of Red

I've always wanted to shed my Hispanic heritage, as if it was a piece of skin. Just peel away the un-Americaness of me and slip away clean. When asked where I was from my response was always: "I'm mixed", as if the mixture of different races made me a different person. As if the European descent in me made me a better person. But it wasn't so.

Some days I would wear a brand. The red color of lips would be imprinted on my forehead as a shameful mark I loved and hated. I loved the rush of love that was put forth. But I hated the moist soft touch of her lips upon the expanse of my skin.

The almost too-wet feeling of the closeness.

The invasion of my closely drawn space.

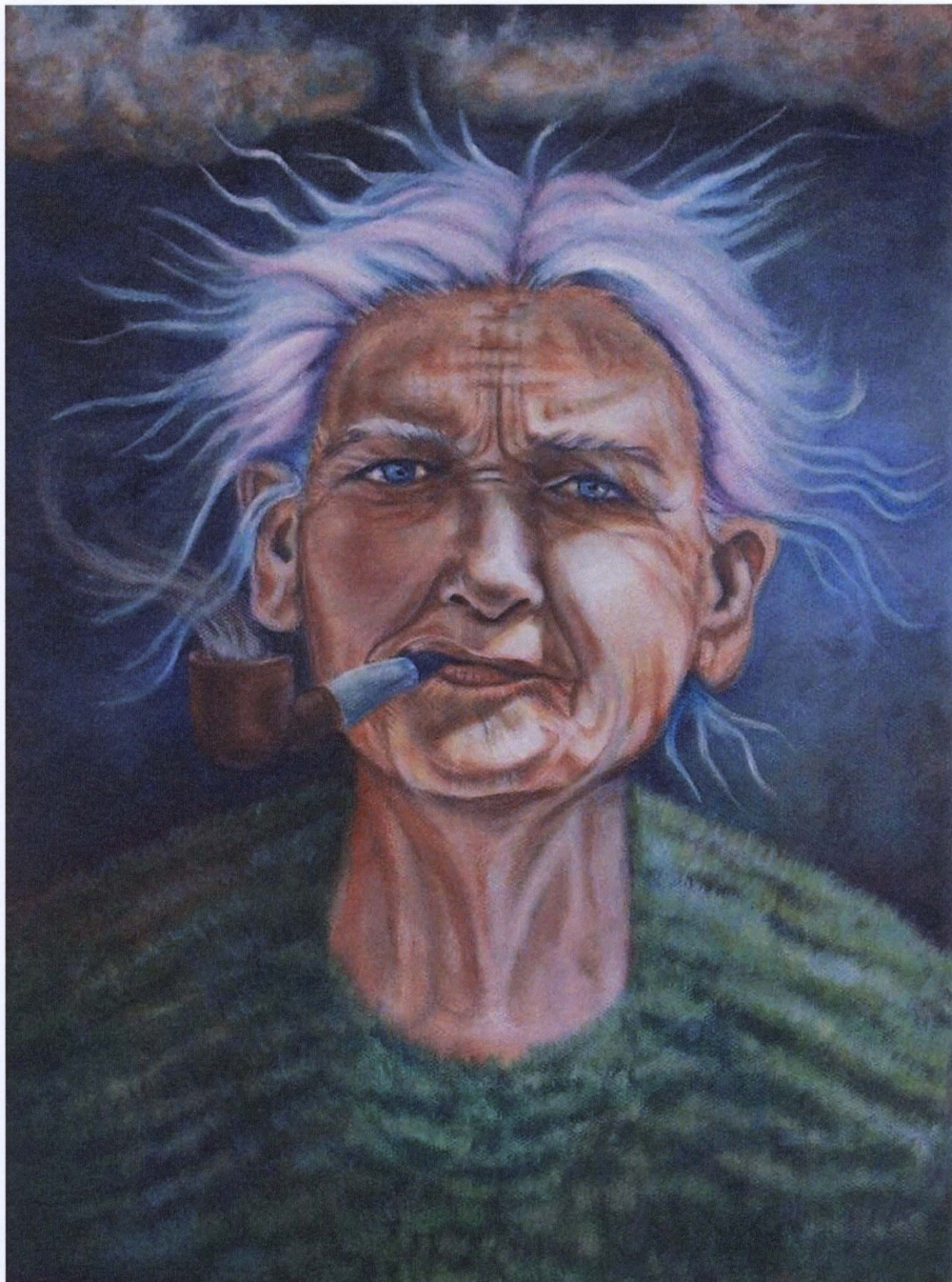
After the door closed behind me I would walk 10 feet, pass the back of my hand against it and scrub. Rub away at it continuously like a disease. I would double-check my hand to check for degrees of redness until I felt I was safe. Her mark would quickly single me out as the young girl with a Hispanic mother. The dark red color of seduction and fire—what American mother would wear red on a Monday? My Hispanicness was a disease. Americans were the best.

What I didn't realize then is that my mother's mark was no more than the large almond hazel eyes that I wear, the dark chocolate of my hair, the olive of my skin. I am a reflection of my mother. All of these are my brands. I am Hispanic. I am American. I am the best. I am degrees of red.

Stephanie Caceres



Work ~ Sharon Rutledge



Auntie Sal - Kristin Wilkens

Twisted Villanelle On The L

•

Sun cloaked clouds, the artic blanket just came,
and covered Old Town, Gold Coast and The Mile,
near gentrified projects along the L train,

barrios, bodegas, and China Town too,
Asia On Argyle a global world view,
for a nation of pilgrims the old and new.

Little Village, Bronzeville, an Uptown view,
Cabrini to Pullman tries to maintain,
near gentrified projects along the L train.

Hyde Park to Lake Shore evolve through the town,
Gresham and Chatham exist for a few,
in a nation of pilgrims the old and new.

Economic big shoulders for prime market land,
South LOOP and Near West Side have growing pains,
near gentrified projects along the L train,

Skyscrapers paint skies and rise through the clouds,
once Native culture now gives an art view,
of a nation of pilgrims the old and new.

Taste this Chicago, rich flavors excite,
while global tourists visit and help maintain,
those gentrified projects along the L train.

Elbert Tapon Briggs

Lane

12.15.04—11:30pm

I had my fill
hours ago,
and the last thought you left me with
was a lie.
You're my favorite liar.
Who made you cry, baby?
Will you let me be the caveman?
Yeah, I'm silly,
but only 'cause I can't think straight.

Mr. Cornet blasts
away. He knows
the Louisiana heat,
he remembers straight edge razors
held against momma's throat.
He's laughin' at me,
drinking and sitting and writing and thinking
'cause he knows.
It's always been so damn
simple.
All I ever wanted,
all I ever needed
walked out the door.
Train tracks and 40 mph
and it's gone.

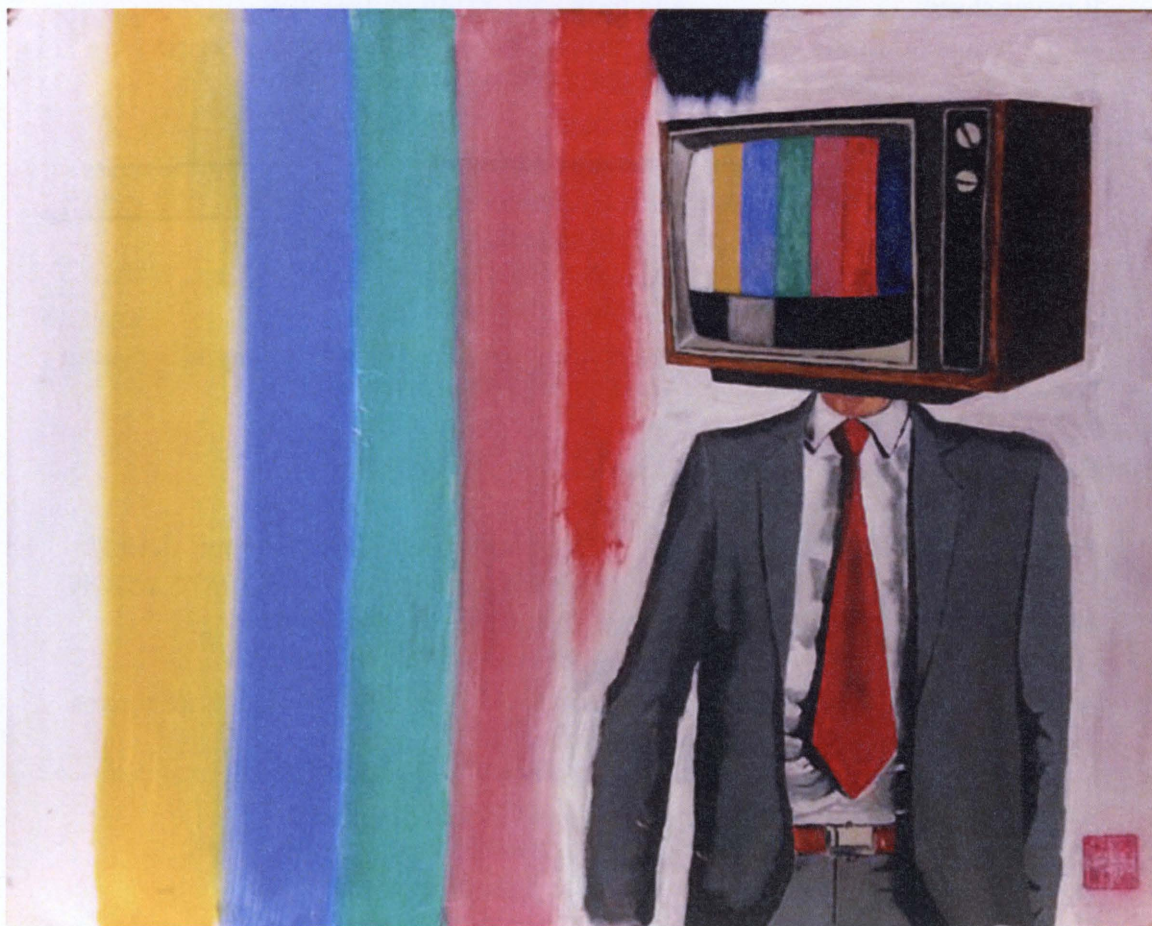
Indifferent night swallows this hope.
What else? Que pendejada.
Whiskey loves in its cruel way.
I find no crossroads buyin'
and hellhounds sleep
peacefully.
The sweet smile isn't mine tonight.
And I almost forget
(like a fool!)
that I care still.
Who made you cry, baby?
I dream imaginary dreams of kindness.
Sillyrabbit.

Emilio Maldonado

Nothing

Why do I feel so empty, jolted into nothingness, isolated and MAD?
It was nothing but my insecurities that mounted this idea into my head
This idea that I needed a man to make me feel ...
FEEL??!!!
Do you hear what I'm saying??!!
The mere mention of this statement sounds so unreal
A clouded day dream that fades like my alter ego jade
The same tired echo that never stops
It never stops...
As if I had to continue with this tedious task of validating my SELF worth
This deep seated need to feel accepted
Trying to avoid all forms of being rejected
Waiting to FEEL...?...An image seemingly dead
No longer can I pretend to mend this emptiness with hollow notions that reflect....
NOTHING but blood splattered bruised statements that hurt!!!
When did I become a captive prisoner?
Unable to escape...
Continuously avoiding all signs that pointed to the slow death of my self-esteem
Preferring to grind these negative thoughts in my mind
Obscene
Diverting attention from the real question
When did I stop loving myself?
When did I feel the need to hide on this one way congested ride to self doubt?
I refuse to be taken over by this idea...this sensation...this DARK TREPIDATION
Always wanting to PEEL this naked seal of humiliation off my skin
I just want to HEAL!!!
So let me take this moment to appreciate the quiet absence of what it all means
At first I hesitated to venture into this ordeal...
Only to discover that this journey revealed
A slow realization that my inner dissection is more complex...
So let me give birth to a new idea
The idea that I can escalate beyond
I'm just going to keep it real...
I don't need a man to make me FEEL!!

Esmerlda Guerrero



Smooth Moves - Samuel S. Han

Speedway Installation

The chair lands, remarkably, right-side-up and all in one piece, directly in front of me.

The handler doesn't seem to notice as he and the client pull away. If he had noticed, I'd surely have seen his curse-riddled jolt, his pathetic surrender to already-established velocity. No use in turning around now— at least that's the mentality when it's a mere cup of coffee that's fallen.

Some cups of coffee explode upon impact. Others leak slowly. Either way, I find myself drawn to the liquid in the midst of its virulent sprawl across the concrete. The black rolls outwards, filling petty craters and overrunning patches of sharp-scented dampness. And after all goes still, toxic miniature rainbows rise to the dark pond's surface, where the wind eases them into a dilatory swirl.

It's something to look at, I suppose. Like the chair, even though there are obvious differences. The chair, for example, doesn't leak or explode. In fact, it doesn't do much of anything except rock back and forth in the buzzing fluorescent light. It's stuck in one place now, like me.

I've been in this place for as long as I can remember, so you must understand that while I overhear a wealth of information in muffled snippets of talk radio, I've never been privy to a quality firsthand view of something so allegedly common as a chair.

I'm immediately struck by the elaborate grooves, the lines and shapes, the symmetry of it all. The top rail boasts an intricately carved festoon that graces the frame like a set of antlers. It contrasts with the two smooth, slender tusks at the base that are somehow charged with keeping everything in balance. Wedged solidly between these rockers and the rail by a collection of candlestick-like spindles, is the seat, easily the most worn part of the chair. I blame the friction of coming and going, and try to gauge the grit size of the handler's rear end.

Admittedly, I'm not exposed to much wood other than what's in the small patch of forest across the street, but the wood that makes up this chair is a sight to behold. The trees in the forest— at a distance, of course— look knobby, twisted, almost grotesque in comparison, not to mention that they change color. On a sunny afternoon the trunks and branches are a lifeless gray, but when a storm rolls in they darken to pitch, a prelude to the marathon of violent dancing that tends to ensue.

I much prefer the chair. It's graceful. It's predictable. It swings right, then left, then right, then left. It's a welcome addition to my world, a place where white lights narrow and flash into red ones, where squares of concrete rest side by side, where small rectangular patches of grass separate entrance from exit, and where neat rows of letters and decimals are always punctuated by a small "9" in the thousandth place.

There is order here, and where there's order, there's ritual.

Endless ritual.

It tends to unfold like a conjugation of reluctant souls, like some unprecedented porno flick where neither party is particularly interested until a hunger pang or ticking clock convinces them that they may as well do the damn thing. As if they had a choice.

You see, while it's ultimately an act between the client and yours truly, it's the client's handler who plays matchmaker and then takes care of the finances. With a rough tug, the handler positions my nozzle and inserts me into the client. Then we are left alone together. The whole thing lasts three or four minutes, short enough to spare me for the next in line but long enough to leave me feeling more drained after each cycle.

I am a 24-hour amusement ride. I am an insomniac supermarket bagger. I am a veteran deep fryer basket. I am Fred Astaire glued to the ceiling. I am the resident guillotine at Henry VIII's overpopulated polygamous resort (in some alternate universe). I am God's mail clerk.

I may be the one who is chained here (I'd rather think of myself as an installation), but it's those who come and go that are the real slaves. Without fail, they come back after going, again and again always clinging to the illusion of self-service.

My owner doesn't notice the chair, at least not right away. I see him out of the corner of my eye. He's behind the same desk in the same glass-faced building where he spends most of his days. Haggling, negotiating, bartering—I'm not sure. I haven't actually been in there. Only the handlers are allowed inside if they don't want to deal with me up front.

A few minutes pass. A handler and his son pull in and swerve to avoid hitting the chair as they pass my pump. I'm tired, as usual, so I don't mind losing business to one of the others.

As the handler walks back across my line of sight on his way to see my owner, he casts a bewildered sidelong glance at the chair, yet never slows. He reaches for his wallet as he nears the door, and with the ring of a bell he disappears inside. His young son, several paces behind, stops in front of the chair and eyes it with curiosity. He pulls himself up into the seat, and in the brief moment before his father reemerges from inside, spewing a cacophony of annoyance and worry, the boy feels what it's like to be in one place. I smile but no one sees me.

Carl Hauck

The voice of a child at night

When they run past our window
I see the red bandanas
and remember my brother
told me that it meant
those were soldiers that could kill.

He didn't make it back
before curfew tonight,
and I sit with my back
to the kitchen and try to ignore
my parents arguing about their son.
They fight because dad let
my brother go with his friends.

Everytime someone moves past
the window, I flinch
and try to see if he was wearing red.

The evening news

At night, someone I've never
met asks us if we're sure.
The riot police prowl the
streets and alleyways.
They're jackals, scavenging
predators, who lost their last
bits of humanity gnawing
on the bones of my
neighbor.

He asks us again if we're sure
because he can't go back to check,
and we're sure.
With a downcast glance
he adds another name to his list.

Name: Ven, Thila Sara
Address: Yuzana monastery, Myintkyina
Kachin State
Date: 26 September, 2007

Killed by riot police.

A survivor from Ngwe Kyar Yan

Life is the breath
of the transcendent
moments of time and space
tethered to a corporeal entity,
weakened by flesh and blood,
strengthened by
the immortality of experience
that exists in spontaneous
moments of lucidity.

Death is the fruition of suffering
made perfect in
the stillness of silence
before breathed again
into the dusty ashes
of a beautiful world.

Tonight we are the river
flowing downstream from
life to death,
carved by a straight line of
human flesh that does not waver
on the brink of annihilation,
where our souls travel in
fixed course,
set by fate,
humanized by our resolution to stand,
dehumanized by the soldiers and their bricks.

Nathan Steele



Untitled - Ana Karen González Barajas

Toblerone

A chocolate lab growing a beard in his later years is of no big concern—the graying around the muzzle can be a very distinguishing look, particularly to fellow dogs. Unlike the recent trend amongst people to hide their aging features, or to leave merely a “touch of gray,” canines find it to be like pillars in front of a house, a sort of façade on an inner extravagance. Thus, I was proud of Toby’s wise-looking whiskers in the twilight of his life.

Our evening walks became a sort of social event for us as not only passing dogs, but even passing owners of passing dogs would greet us with an air of importance and intrinsic respect. Tilda, a much younger pup who shares a fence with us, has even grown bashful in Toby’s presence. She now approaches with her head bowed respectfully, almost going so far as to whisper her greeting in proper, “Good evening, Mr. Toblerone.” He soon took over the role of leading our walks, distinctly gesturing his muzzle in a particular direction when we’d reach a cross street.

About a month after I initially noticed Toby’s first gray whiskers, his beard had grown in full. While I was still basking in the midst of the wonderful new perspective with which the world viewed my hound, Toby was already growing visibly weary. Having become accustomed to the attention, he now looked down his snout at admiring dogs, suddenly bored of their adoring sniffs. I could tell that something had to change, but I wasn’t sure what that meant.

On a Saturday morning, after our routine run, Toby was slow in retrieving the paper. He’s usually very timely but, considering his old age, I didn’t make a fuss. Instead, at about eight o’clock when I knew the paperboy had been by, I decided to fetch it myself. From the kitchen, I walked past the dining room and down the front hall. Peering through the window on the front door, I didn’t see the usual plastic blue bag that holds the daily. “A bit odd,” I mused aloud, and turned to the living room to see Toby, on the couch, apparently closing the paper and removing what appeared to be a monocle, all in one motion. I had barely touched my morning’s coffee and, after rubbing my eyes quite rigorously, dismissed my vision as ridiculous and kept it to myself.

The next week began as any week would. My ridiculous suspicions about the monocle

were allayed when I saw the abandon with which he chased a squirrel, nearly convincing it to never come back down from its tree. This spectacle of pure canine exhibition would, as the week wore on, dismiss other seemingly strange occurrences.

On Wednesday evening after arriving home from work, I took off my shoes and untied my tie before unexpectedly walking in on Toby—again in the living room—standing on two legs and looking longingly out the window. I caught just a glimpse of this as he promptly went down to all fours, having become aware that I had entered the room. Again taken aback I shouted, “Toby!” He responded as he normally would, slowly but happily coming to greet me, perhaps pleading ignorance.

Friday nights are clearly Toby’s most social of the week. It seems every dog from the surrounding six blocks takes to the sidewalks at about eight o’clock in the evening. And so, knowing this to be the case, I wore my black trench coat with the belt tied, along with my gray fedora that, while not entirely by coincidence, is nearly the exact shade of Toby’s beard.

Standing at the front door and holding a cautionary umbrella, I beckoned Toby. “Toby!” I called, hearing the echo of my voice travel up the stairs and into the second floor hallway. “Toby!” I repeated thoroughly, trying to mimic the initial excitement in my voice. “Toblerone!” I finally yelled, this time a little louder and with slightly less patience.

A furtive muzzle stuck out into view at the top of the stairs. Having collected himself, Toblerone marched confidently down, two legs at a time, right, left, right, left, right, left. Now, because I stopped using a leash with him ever since he started graying, I must say that, under normal circumstances, I probably would have missed this obvious accessory to Toblerone’s appearance: in place of his collar was a bowtie, black and tied perfectly. I gasped and did a sort of double take. Black on brown could be seen as a fashion faux pas! Eyeing the open door, Toby ignored my reaction as being that of an incomprehensible human being and walked outside.

We strolled along in silence with Toby about ten feet in front of me, leading the way. There was a slight chill in the air that complemented the crunching leaves under my shoes. Toby’s attention seemed to lay somewhere above the realm of sniffing trunks and greeting dogs and I began to wonder why he was wearing a bowtie at all, if not for social gain.

Upon arriving at home about an hour later, Toblerone nodded his nose goodnight and, before I could privately question him, walked right up the stairs and straight to bed. I hung my hat and coat in the hall closet then went upstairs to brush my teeth and wind down the evening.

By midnight, I sat up in bed unable to sleep, confused and doubting my own faculties. How could this be? I wondered. A dog assuming more class than me? Even after turning down the lights, my mind would not quiet. I connected, over and over again, the incidents leading up to this past walk around the neighborhood. The beard? That's only natural for a dog his age. The Monocle? I suppose a dog's vision must decline at some point. Standing on his haunches? Perhaps his front legs were tired. Such were my justifications. Until the bowtie. Ah ha! I could see if Toblerone wasn't pilfering my personal belongings! I leapt from bed and over to the closet. It didn't take long to realize that, most likely, unless I had indeed misplaced my own bowtie, Toblerone had taken it!

Realizing that this victory was quite transitory as it did little in the way of an explanation, I sat back down on my bed, defeated. There must be some reason for all of this, besides simply the needs of an aging dog!

Still restless after what seemed to be hours, I noticed the sky brightening through my blinds and decided to have a cigarette. I put on my slippers and a light jacket, walked down the stairs and through the kitchen, then out the back door. The air was surprisingly warm and humid for dawn in October, and felt like stepping off an airplane into the pleasant winter of, say, Florida.

The city was silent at this point and my mind had quickly achieved a sort of tranquility. That is, until I smelled smoke. Initially I thought it to be a sort of olfactory *déjà vu*, as if I had smelled the smoke before lighting the cigarette. The scent lingered in the heavy air. I lowered the burning Zippo from my still unlit cigarette and sniffed, apprehensively, before clicking the cover closed. It smelled sweeter than cigarette smoke, yet not as aromatic as a cigar.

Scanning the adjoining yards in curious confusion I spotted Tilda, sitting as a dog sits, facing a standing figure. Of course! There, in the neighbor's yard, wearing my bowtie and that monocle, was Toblerone, on hind legs. Surrounding his feet were a few spent matches and, in his hand, somehow overcoming the lack of opposable thumb, was a pipe!

I was now flustered. I couldn't take it! Could I no longer believe my own eyes? Was that really my dog? And how he looked back at me, as if I was some lesser being! Such audacity! Walking inside and slamming the door, I went straight for the liquor cabinet. Three fingers of Black Label in one gulp and straight to bed without another thought.

I awoke some hours later, my bewilderment present but dulled from a few hours of unconsciousness. I yawned my jaw long, like a lion, stretching the muscles in the back of my head, then came to a sitting position on my bed. I found and put on my slippers and bathrobe and headed downstairs, hoping the other occupant in the house had returned to his usual state and fetched the paper.

On the top step I noticed a note taped to the inside of the front door. I traversed the stairs in half the usual steps and quickly snatched the note and began to read. I remember the scrawl of the handwriting more than the actual words—which, in effect, said something like, “Thank you, sir, for your hospitality, but I must be moving on.” It was the most erratic handwriting I had ever seen, like that of the most seasoned doctor.

I noticed, out the window, a taxicab slowing down for a fare. There, for the last time, I saw Toblerone: one paw in the air and the other on his luggage, wearing my fedora and bowtie, and his monocle. As he opened the cab door and climbed into the backseat, I was out of ideas. Defeated. My best friend had outgrown me. I had been abandoned.

After my shock had dissipated enough to allow me to function, I made my way into the kitchen to brew some coffee. Having ground the beans and mixed them with boiling water in the large glass beaker, I sat down and opened the morning paper that was waiting for me on the kitchen table.

Scott Brehman



Lady on the Moon - Mimi Cross



Budding Flower - Abraham Harb

the inchworm glowed in the sun
its colors ran and run
wrinkling themselves up
and stretching themselves out
like an accordion

Nick Walsh

That Burn In Young Slaves

I've been taken from my home,
put in this place where the French
feel fortified. Kept captive.

Where we're from wasn't our home—
our families not from there.
Kept at work, our hands forever covered

with residue of sticky cane,
my back forever healing from their cane.
My body always heals— new skin covering new skin.

Their profits are enormous and demands
in Europe increase. They make money,
and think we are unaware of why they have fled.

Abandoned plantations are motionless across the Gulf, waiting to
be burned. They know I have power; I know I
have power. The André plantation has risen and I

will join, walking east through the parishes of
St. John, St. Charles, Jefferson, and finally,
to Orleans. We work our way East through

the German Coast burning down
plantations of exceptional cruelty,
recruiting newly freed men in an effort

to free more, running from those who fear
the oppressed. We are the history of revolt
continued by the inspiration of those who have succeeded.

The numbers I have killed are small,
just two under the brutality enforced by
the tools of my labor, the tools of my oppressor.

We are torn down and killed fifty-fold
in return. They have no empathy for their beasts
of burden— just another hide to feed and shine.

I will not be tried judiciously, no such treatment for the lowly.
They will shoot me, quarter me, hang me, anything
that will hinder the flames of inspiration

that burn in young slaves.

Ian Feigle

Unveiling

They look at me with pity
I look at myself with pride

They look at me as backwards
I look at myself as progressive

They look at me as oppressed
I look at myself as liberated

They look at me as a follower
I look at myself as a leader

They strip me from my agency
Describe me on their terms

They fight for my equality
When in fact I'm liberated

They continue to deconstruct me
Reduce me to stereotypes

As I hold the pen today
I inscribe my meaning

Sumaiya Maniya



Festival d'Avignon • The Woman - Janean L. Watkins



Rebirth at Dusk - Sharon Rutledge

Toothpaste

When I see that toothpaste tube
—deflated, flattened—
I'm a little sad
because I remember how it used to be—

firm and plump,
in the prime of its anti-cavity youth,
fluoridated, minty-
tasting, emerging
timidly from its glossy
wrapper, sheeny under bathroom
lights, like the silver

bumper
 of a new car
parked conspicuously
in the dealership's lot
tantalizing prospective buyers
browsing in the midday sun.
And I remember

before even that
how it slipped free
from its rectangular prison,
post liberation
from the oral care aisle
at the grocery,
where it sat shelved
between mountains of mouthwash
and forests of floss; I had to

squat down to seize it,
inauspicious packaging
designed to be attractive
but not too gaudy,
 like the teeth
it was destined to clean—

whitened, but not so white
when I opened my mouth
to smile or speak
people would squint
as if blinded by the light.

Larry O. Dean



[Poison]

It kills me,
like a sweet poison,
overtaking my bloodstream.

My toes tingle and turn cold...
It's slow. crawling up my legs,
It dwells inside my stomach,
gurgling and excited.

It goes up through my throat;
beginning to feel like vomit—

It suffocates me;
It strangles my tongue;
It's gone to my brain.

Where have I gone?

A.i. Herv



Cracked Canyon from LaSalle & Madison - A.i. Herv

Chaotic Sadness

There is an overcast of demise.
A death lingers in the small village.
The willow tree woefully sighs

In the deep forest where it lives.
It can be heard from the high cliff's ledge.
There is an overcast of demise.

Where the forest and village boarder lies,
There is a huge congregation spillage.
The willow tree woefully sighs.

Everyone gathers around her
As she says with sorrow a pledge.
There is an overcast of demise.

The big crowd goes demented and tries
To take everything in a pillage.
The willow tree woefully sighs

And with her last breath slowly dies,
But is stalled by a blooming sedge.
There is an overcast of demise.
The willow tree woefully sighs.

Chris Zavacki

the rappers
a sonnet

they sing hymns of battles plunders blood
a gangwar leashed unloaded over time
a black on black genocide slow killing a flood
of kills recelebrated resung redramatized with rhyme
there's so much pain the past is all they show
the glories all they know and now they strut
hector like achilles agamemnon across the streets of woe
new york beijing vegas emblazoned with their wages but
trailing tears and pain that mark it with a slaveholder's name
honor flashes in each eye concubines limousines and treasure
gild their roll across the desert it's such a measure
of how far we've come from days when kings would vie for fame
and peasants poor vile toothless found their single pleasure
in the meeting of their eyes with them is it the same?

Nick Walsh

The Second Bench from the Right

He waited
One second, Two minutes, Three hours.
He waited.

The second bench from the right, she said
so he made sure to arrive on time.
I'll meet you so don't be late, she said
so he came early but simply stood in mime.

The sun descended behind the buildings
as if being pulled down by Earth's eyes.
The moon made her appearance this night
on time and high in the sky.

He made sure to dress in his newest hat,
suited up with his favorite belt;
now checked that his bootlaces were tied,
an umbrella in hand he held.

And he waited.
One day, Two weeks, Three months, Four.
He waited.
The second bench from the right he couldn't leave anymore.
He waited.
 and waited some more.
 He waited...

Anupama Lukose

The Lost and Found

Hiding behind eyes of burning cigarettes
Capturing the essence of the already dead
These dimly lit rooms reek of molten lead
Stools prey Tantalus in exchange for empty beds

Dusty fans whirl above plastic ashtrays
As placated people
Clear plastic pathways

Welcome to the land of the lost and found

Regina Torres



Ethan Lipton - Mimi Cross

Flying V

Tommy played the guitar. Ever since he was a child and able to move them, Tommy's fingers were picking strings. Mostly because that's what his Daddy did and what his granddaddy did and his great granddaddy did before him.

Generations molded Tommy and by the age of fourteen the boy had far surpassed any other man in his family on the guitar. He could create licks that left people crying and sing blues songs so deep about heartache old ladies would come crashing to their knees. Fans remarked that when they closed their eyes and just listened to Tommy sing, what they heard didn't come from a fourteen year old boy. These sounds and songs were born of an old wise man who had lived and lost.

Just one year earlier, at thirteen, Tommy became a pretty big star on the circuit, playing clubs and venues his forefathers had only dreamt of. But, Sam, Tommy's dad, wasn't jealous in the slightest. He was proud of his son and grateful for the money. They started Tommy on the road at eight and it took many years of driving and bad gigs until they reached this point. Being a musician isn't always as glamorous as some think. It's hard to raise a family on musical wages. Tommy's mother and three sisters were back home working crappy jobs just so they could support Tommy's tours. But now Tommy was pulling in serious guarantees at these music halls. He had a feature in Rolling Stone coming out next month so it seemed that life was going to change for all of them permanently.

Tommy's father went with him to every show. He needed a chaperone, seeing that most of the places served alcohol, and Tommy was still only a child. Sam acted as tour manager, bass player and sound engineer. He had so many other roles sometimes fathering got lost in the shuffle. But Tommy was a good kid who didn't get into any trouble. The only thing he seemed to enjoy was playing his guitar of which he was diligent and possessive. It was a 1958 Gibson Flying V and

they found it at a pawnshop just outside Mississippi on Tommy's tenth birthday. After that day, there wasn't anywhere that boy would go without his Flying V. He ate with it and slept with it and carried it with him everywhere. Sam wanted to try it out the first time they saw it but something in this guitar changed his sweet and quiet son. The first time Sam picked it up Tommy began to scream and yell. "Put it down! Don't touch my guitar!" Normally Sam wouldn't put up with this type of behavior, but he knew his son was tired from life on the road and he figured he would get his hands on it eventually.

One night after Tommy blew the roof off the Riv in Chicago, Sam got them back to the hotel rather late. Tommy was out like a light as soon as he and the Flying V were in the back seat. His exhaustion did not come as a surprise to Sam. It made sense that his son would be so tired. They just finished their fifth show in three days and they still needed to get up early for an in-store performance at a Milwaukee record store at noon. Besides, they had been on the road for more than an hour after the gig because Sam didn't want to pay Chicago prices for a room.

Gus, the roadie Sam hired, pulled into the parking lot of an Xtended Stay. Sam instructed Gus to pick up Tommy and bring him into the lobby.

"I'll grab the guitar," Sam said.

Gus nodded because Gus didn't talk. He lost his voice box in a prison fight. Sam found Gus at a festival in Lafayette or was it Austin? None of them could remember. But wherever it was, some rabid fan bum rushed the stage and attacked Tommy. Out of nowhere, Gus came out on stage and had the guy pinned. Later Sam learned Gus was a random hire by the festival committee in whatever town they were in and Gus's job was over as soon as the stages were torn down. So Sam offered him steady work, a life on the road and all the crap that comes with it to protect his son.

At the time they found Gus, Sam and Tommy were touring with Billy who

played drums. But Billy wasn't that great of a drummer and didn't give a shit about Tommy. In fact, he seemed to be more than a touch of green when it came to fans paying attention to the boy.

In the beginning when the first found Gus, he just drove and unloaded gear. But it didn't take long before Gus was Tommy's closest companion. They were together all the time. This gave Sam time to hang out alone which was never an option when you're touring the country with your child-star. So it took only a few months before Sam started paying him more money than he was paying Billy who seemed to be showing up to the gigs drunker and drunker. One night in Colorado Billy's booze got the best of him and he passed out in the green room before the gig. They had a full crowd getting rather restless. Tommy was in back with Gus while Sam stood with the club owner who wasn't happy in the slightest. But he knew what would happen if they couldn't play so he was calling around town trying to find a replacement that could jump into their set with ease having never played the songs before. They weren't getting very far it being fourth of July weekend and all and Sam was about to give the club owner his money back until out of nowhere Gus walked onto the stage with Tommy and sat at the drum kit.

He picked up Billy's sticks and played a solo that transitioned the crowds hissing into cheers. Tommy and Sam got on stage quickly and not only did Gus know all the songs, he played them better than Billy ever could. Later after the set, Sam ran right up to Gus and grabbed his arm. Gus jerked it away because Gus didn't like to be touched.

"How come you never told me you played like that?" he asked Gus with a bit of irritation in his voice. Are you kidding? This amazing drummer had been sitting under their noses the whole time and he didn't even have a clue.

Gus shrugged his shoulders and said nothing to Sam because Gus couldn't talk.

Needless to say, as time went by it seemed to Sam that Gus and Tommy were much closer than he and his son had ever been. That didn't bother him too much because at thirteen the boy had to rebel in some way. But the only person who was able to carry the Flying V was Gus if it weren't Tommy himself and that Sam couldn't take.

Why didn't his son let him play the Flying V? Hell. He was the one who showed the boy his first chord at three. But no matter what, whenever Sam finagled his way to be the one holding the guitar, Tommy would insist that Gus carry it. Maybe Tommy thought he would drop it and Sam was known to be a butter fingers. That's why his playing had never amounted to be half as good as his sons. But after a while Sam got to thinking it may be the guitar. He had to admit it made all the difference in Tommy's playing.

The Flying V was gold and sleek and Tommy's fingers could move quicker down that neck than any other guitar Sam had seen him play. In the few years that this boy owned his guitar the crowds that came to see him had grown larger and larger. His voice had grown steadily deeper and he began to write his own tunes. Sam attributed the soulfulness of these new melodies to puberty and the lack of available girls his own age. But he, too, could not deny that it was rather amazing his son sang on a level deeper than a child should plummet. Tommy's leads were so dark, it was as if he had lived terrible heartache in his reality. But he hadn't. He was still a child who never did much more than play the guitar.

While Gus was putting Tommy to bed, Sam started eyeing the Flying V. Just as any cat snuggles up to Pandora's box, it is hard to stay away from anything that you are expected to avoid. In a matter of thirty minutes Sam had the Flying V in his lap and unplugged, so as to not wake Tommy. Normally Sam was as good a father as he could be and didn't even attempt to play the guitar, but this particular night was different.

Earlier that night Sam played bass while watching his son, who was budding

strongly into a man, make the women in the audience squeal with a delight Sam had never heard in response to his own playing. Sam had been noticing the subtle metamorphosis that enveloped the front of their stages over the years. The space that was usually held by envious and awe struck older men was slowly being taken over by a steady stream of hot women young and old. His son was getting all the things Sam ever wanted and he was still only fourteen years old.

Now back at the room Sam, with the Flying V in hand, struck his first chord, which was a D. When the pick hit the strings, Sam felt a wave over his body like it was completely made of water and the current was coming in.

“Did you see that?” he asked Gus who was sitting opposite of him relaxing with a porn rag and a beer.

Gus looked up and shook his head no.

“Watch me.” Sam instructed as he hit another D. This time the vibrations Sam felt were twice as strong and everything around him, including Gus became distorted. Once the guitar silenced, everything returned back to normal.

“That!” Sam exclaimed. “Did you see that?”

Gus shook his head no again but then he looked down at the Flying V with concern. Gus also knew Tommy would be very hurt knowing his father played his guitar when he didn’t want him too.

Sam washed Gus’s conscience away with a swig from the flask he kept in his pocket and dismissed the strange vibrations he felt when he had struck that D chord. He figured that had more to do with his excitement of finally getting to play this guitar and the visual distortions, well, had to be the whiskey.

Gus returned to his magazine while Sam played an A minor and quickly moved to the E minor. His son loved this combo, being the two saddest chords there are, and Sam wanted to have his son’s experiences.

That’s when he saw it. In front of him a wormhole had opened and Sam could see the other world inside. He stared at it in awe until it closed up when the guitar silenced.

It didn't take Sam long to figure out the more he played the more would happen. So Sam started with his son's tune This Ain't Livin and the wormhole once again opened up.

Sam felt himself stand and walk to the wormhole. Before he moved into this bright light, he looked behind him and could see himself sitting across from Gus, happily playing the Flying V.

Sam stepped out of the wormhole onto a playground. He wasn't a man anymore. He was a child. Sam could tell by looking at his hands and feet. A young boy ran up and knocked Sam out of his daze.

"Are you Tommy's friend?" he asked.

Sam nodded his head, speechless.

"I'm John. Tommy is my friend too."

And then John looked puzzled. "Where is Tommy? We play together every day."

"I dunno," were the only words Sam could muster and with the attention of a child John asked, "Do you want to be my friend?"

Again Sam nodded and before he could stop John pulled his sleeve and they were running around. They played baseball and shot some hoops and mostly just horsed around. Sam couldn't remember a time when he had more fun. But he didn't have time to think about his own childhood. He was too busy on the jungle gym and the teeter-totter and the slide and before Sam knew it, the sun in this world was setting and John said, "I'm gonna have to go home soon."

As soon as John uttered those words Sam did start to think. He thought about his own home and childhood and his father forcing him to practice the guitar instead of going outside to play with the other kids. Sam thought about how his father wanted him to be a star. Mostly because that was what his father wanted to be. Sam never really thought about what he wanted to be. He always just thought about pleasing his father because he loved him.

"John!" Sam could hear a woman calling in the distance.

"That's my mom. I gotta go," and like that John was disappearing over the horizon.

While Sam was standing in front of the wormhole ready to go through, he could hear John's voice call out. "I hope you can play tomorrow! Maybe you can bring Tommy with you?"

And then the wormhole suctioned him through and the playground was gone. Sam reentered his own body that was just finishing up his son's song.

Sam put the Flying V back in its case and put the guitar in bed with his son. He pulled two hundred dollars out of the money they earned that night and handed it to Gus.

"Please. Don't tell Tommy about this," Sam asked and Gus took the money. They both knew Gus would never tell Tommy because he wouldn't hurt that boy for anything. And besides, Gus couldn't speak.

On the way to Milwaukee the next morning Sam leaned over to Tommy, who was religiously working out licks on his Flying V.

"How about we blow off this in-store performance today and see what Milwaukee's all about?"

Tommy stopped playing and looked at his father excited. "Seriously? But that's unprofessional. What are we gonna say?"

"We'll call in sick," Sam said smiling and Gus smiled too.

C.J. Althaus



Extinction - Chris Sykora

Harmony

Scarlet Red

Emerald Green

Sunshine Yellow

Burnt Orange

f

a

l

l

i

n

g

The pavement,
a canvas of colors
splattered together
Multiethnic pigments

Blending

A mosaic—

ILLUMINATED

Sumaiya Maniya

Letter to the Editor

Dear editor, I have seen
a lot of things in my long
time on this earth
but this one
takes the cake
I was on the bus to work
sitting in my usual seat
when along comes a man with a duck
on a leash
I mean walking the duck
like it was a pet or
something!
I have nothing against seeing eye dogs
and I know
it is legal
to have them on a city bus
but I have never seen
a seeing eye duck
(if that is what it
was) and to add
insult to injury
the man sat in one seat
and sat his duck
in the seat next
to him and as I watched
this drama unfold
an old lady
and a pregnant girl
stood the whole ride
while the man
and his darling duck
sat like lumps
and ate roasted sunflower
seeds and to top
it all off when they got up
they left a pile of shells
behind
in both seats
which I know is not
hygienic and a mess
besides.

As a tax
paying citizen of our
beautiful city
I was plenty mad
and should of
spoke up

like it is my right to
but they moved so fast
down the aisle
and off the bus (the
duck even flew
for a second over
the head of a man
sleeping in the front)
that by the time
my brain caught
up with my mouth
they were gone
and the hydraulic
door had hissed
shut and we were
on our way
to the next stop.

I am writing
about this shocking
incident as a warning
to that man and his
devious duck
if they ever bother
to read the paper
not to be so selfish
and sloppy
because I know
we can all get along
if we remain civil-
ized and I hope
the duck in particular
reads this because
I know it wasn't his
fault being that
he was a duck
and on a leash
and would likely
just as well
have been paddling
on a pond or something
with other ducks
and not riding
a city bus
with his inconsiderate
master I wish
I could tell him this
myself but I
don't speak duck.

Larry O. Dean

Couplets On The Corner

A corner hustle is a dangerous thing,
Just never know the profit weight will bring.

The crack can get you high enough to fly.
Sometimes the rock says you will never die.

She told you man to put the gym hat on,
more than a game dude, now your ass is gone.

So what the love we had was not to be,
but if he treats you bad come back to me.

So you're the one, the streets are calling king,
your concrete servants, to the law they sing.

What is that song that Flora used to sing?
Open your heart and fly, just has that ring.

Say Curtis Mayfield used to have that flow,
the future hell that Blacks and Whites will go.

Aretha Franklin made one giver respect,
to you girl, love and serve and then protect.

The song said send a dozen roses when,
you have that feeling that two hearts can win.

So flashing gats and glocks makes one a man?
Now what's your next move, do you have a plan?

Elbert Tavon Briggs

And My Three Lotus Siddhartha's



And if each one, three lotus flowers, untaught by the pond
will breed; and next, mount up from above each column's wet in
want. *Oh, Prince, live each their need. Be their resting silence.*
And after that, to gamble-over and break the surface, and be no longer
submerged, but un-dipped, yet still. *Be it so, oh Prince, no violence!*
And if each one, ever with rewards to grant, offering a gift, strikes as
they drift, may it be thus...*oh, Prince, oh Buddha, their resting gift.*



And still more their chorded physiques. May they all be
our arpeggios! All the more, their floated-flat form. Bulging sprouts.
Three holy blossoms! Triad buds. Holy, rising mounts.
And as silhouettes, so natural to this world...*Oh, Lotus, oh Buddha!*
May you overcome all *the muddy, the ache, the lingering, the reek,*
the maggots, the grave; and each her smothering weed.



And so be it evermore for these three soliciting souls, all
seeking vigor as sunlit seasons, and reverse again. For all
to seethe, to aim, to hear, to meet, to swim. To breathe.
And then, so too may we drift, each one as royals like you, ever with
offerings, perceptions, compassions made whole, clashing away
from our wrongs, setting ever right our world, ever to defy.
And thus my Siddhartha's ever shall remain, floating tall, each one.
Teaching, holding, laughing, serving yet relaxing. Hallowed blooms.
And each one, ever fresh. Ever dry

John Ross, Jr.

El Amor

Óiganme Hermanos!
Busquen para esa planta.
Esa planta que no aparece,
Hasta que este listo para buscarla.
Esa planta que muere,
El segundo que lo dejas.
Esa planta que pica,
Y aun da alimento a la alma.
Tal planta es,
Esa flor eterna.

[Translation]

El Amor
Hear me Brothers!
Look for that plant.
That plant that won't appear,
Until you are ready to search for it.
That plant that dies,
The second you leave it.
That plant that stings,
And yet gives nourishment to the soul.
Such a plant is,
That eternal flower.

Fernando Domingo Reyes

Across The Muddied Terrain of Some Untimely Idealism

No, we can't go on flying
when we should just be walking
through mountains like time
that can be seen from the foothills
or up in silver peaks.

Speak your tongues,
print your characters.
I'll read this language
in pin-wheeling trees
and time-defined clouds—
crisp edges,
fine curves.

Those slivered peeks
through window blinds lead
to narrow perspectives,
rash judgments,
enforced contraceptives.

Say I can't grasp
some familiar fellow's hand.
Say my interest won't reach
the piqued mind
of that dying elephant's
outstretched foot.

Well, just watch me.

Scott Brehman

3 Seconds

In three seconds, her children's lives passed across her eyes, through her shuddering body, down to her now paralyzed feet, unable to navigate the stairway down to the front door.

Who rings the doorbell at midnight? Not the mailman, nor the UPS delivery or Orkin man, not the neighbor looking for a cup of sugar. The only guests knocking at midnight are those in blue uniforms with steady, reluctant voices and a desire to be anywhere but here.

In three seconds, she ran to the landing and froze, unable to will one foot in front of the other to maneuver the stairs that have now multiplied in number, making that trip down an endless, agonizing descent into hell, or worse, the dismal abyss of unbearable loss. She can't go down those infinite steps to a door that keeps moving further away, intensifying the three seconds into an eternity that it will take for what's beyond the door to tell her that her life is over, that everything that went before has reached its untimely end, that she will never hear laughter again, except in those precious photos and grainy videos of piano recitals and pumpkin patches, graduations, locks of hair and never letting her beloved out of her reach.

In three seconds the past is erased, the present is frozen, the future is uninhabitable. She was hobbled in that moment. She prayed to everyone and to no one for those seconds back, for her breath to return, her heart to reboot. She asked the universe to forgive every unworthy deed she had committed in her now useless life, making deals, selling her soul in return for those lost in three seconds.

As she steeled herself for what lay beyond the door, she heard her husband below.

"Doorbell's working hon!"

Eden Novak



Broken - Samuel S. Han

Aliyah's Poem

Wintery End

A child should play in the snow.
Eyes should watch the children grow.
Yards are not a combat zone.
Snow men should feel right at home.

Gun sights in the afternoon.
Six years old and gone too soon.
Front porch marked a danger zone.
Tragic kind of children's poem.

Spring Begins

That is where she once would play,
smile and dance on holidays.
In Little Village south and west,
candles mark eternal rest.

Snow has gone but winter holds,
will the winds let kites unfold?
Shoot to kill the orders told!
Wonder what the news will show?

Coldest Winter Ever

UN sanctions should be here!
War on drugs or children dear?
After school no child should fear,
they run, drop, and roll to keep life near.

Tech 9' instead of bat and ball,
metal detectors in school house now.
Teachers must master the "pat them down."
Flak jackets replace the caps and gowns.

Silence of Spring

We won't see her smile again.
Did they notify her next of kin?
Her mother is in the house, right there!

Teddy bears and candles grow and grow.
Culture of silence makes justice slow.
Where ice melts, flowers bud, and violence blooms.

Elbert Tavon Briggs

The clouds are so inviting,
my brain is so opposed.
The practice grows excruciating
as I bring my brain to blows
(concerting my brows,
which float like storm clouds
over the blowing arid furrow
of my yellow fallow forehead,
flat and fallow, aching fellow).
Drought and mellow blight,
a plain and hollow light my eyes!
The guise of unincitement in my brain.

But the clouds are so inviting,
writing, floating in the heavens
(words ascending like St. Stephen
with his blowing broken bones).
The clouds are bones that should be broken
for the words which they'd have spoken
are the stones which seed the brows
and blow the coming of the rain,
the soaking flow of longed for sowing
of the seeds of soaking knowing
in the sluice gates and the fallows,
in the broken yellowed hallows,
in the furrows and the shallows of the brain.

Nick Walsh

Sun Sweat

Slivers of slick salt
Sweat glides down
Sunburnt spine + thighs
Summer leaves its trace
In moist air
Content to dine on
Savory human skin
Sucking from its source
The nutrients left behind
An easy exchange
For our relentless
Industrial footprint

Michelle Emery

In Dreams

8.8.13 1012am

In Dreams

Last night for the first time in ages
I didn't punish myself for being alive.

I think it had to do with your shoes.

It's May in August.
There's a cool breeze that could blow for years and I wouldn't mind.

This cool breeze blows thoughts around like the flotsam and jetsam of the city's
regrets and hopes.

Even mine, fragrant as they might be with a laurel of lavender placed on it, just
linger on Division St. unable to make it to you.

Maybe it's the sexiness of the breeze that saps my will,
or the memory of your collar bone
or perhaps it's your shoes
that keep me from being able to fight the breeze, hit the surf.

I didn't quite almost cry today.
Last night, I moved your shoes.
Your shoes belonged here.
I avoided a necessary trip to the Green Mill at 1am,
skipped out on feeling cool cuz it wasn't necessary.

I came home and your shoes were gone. A cinematic editor far more talented
than me, I've got a 10 second reel of silent flashback, I'm remembering your
voice.

I'll quit smoking the reefer to preserve what I've got left to...

Now I'm back on the breeze. It is delicious and intoxicating and the safest temptation I'll know all year.

You and I are taking a nap on my couch. When I awaken I look onto your hair on my chest, into your face.

I don't need to feel cool anymore.

I breathe easy.

A smile begins waiting for you to awaken.

The breeze is getting Acapulco on the maples and elms on Division St.

As I take your clothes off I laugh silently,

you told me once not to worry when you took off your shirt the first time, that you were wearing something underneath.

I Lee Marvin you silently; I never worry when a woman takes off her clothes.

The breeze takes a break, maybe you can hear me baby?

Sweat, stink, cries, slaps, scratches, mysounds/yoursounds/oursounds.

I keep just enough control so I don't bite too hard.

I encourage you to let it go. I can take it.

The wait was still not worth it.

I'm a greedy, unreasonable bastard. I want more yesterday.

I want more last week.

The breeze is back.

I see my own fantasies dance outside my window, mingling with the lecho somebody is preparing.

Zakopane is open, a memorial to the desperate lives that used to own Division St.

Maybe I'll get an Old Style and a shot, check out the swollen tits on the bartender and have some pretzels.

Her shoes were gone when I got home.

Emilio Maldonado

Spare Me My Heart

Spare me my heart, my love
For you play with it like a toy
Does it bring you joy
to fool me by acting so coy?

Spare me my pride, my love
for you trample it under your feet
Can't you be a little discreet
rather than leaving me in the street?

Spare me my mind, my love
for you belittle any thought
Won't you agree not to scoff
rather than causing distraught?

Spare me my life, my love
for you decide everything for me
Must I always meet your every need
until the day that I crumple and bleed?

Spare me, my love; please spare me
My heart is torn and my pride bleeds
My mind is warped and my life needs
I cannot desire and I must heed
to everything you deem as your creed

What kind of scheme has been made
in order to keep me this tame?
Why must I suffer and must I refrain
from ever informing you of any pain?

I cannot be your Superman
I do not have a master plan
I do not have a killer tan
In fact I am quite bland

If you only knew how to love me
for what I was and not what I'll be
I'm hoping that one day you will see
The essence and epitome of me

One day you will see
One day you will need
I won't be there for I'll be
the one that made like a tree

Samuel S. Han



White on Green - Abraham Harb

the sky
felt for resistance
pushed down by heaving
rhythmic gray
churning and moist
waiting for nature's monumental clash
in rising reverence
the temperature expelled
like sweet dew
desperately feeding
all beneath

Michelle Emery



Without a Song - Sharon Rutledge

The Last Olympian

"I'm done." These were the words spoken by a man who appeared to be in his late forties. He rested his head gently against the stone wall behind him. "I'm done," the man repeated.

There was something liberating, he supposed, about finally putting into words what he had been thinking for so long. He had been hanging on for so long, straining to stay, and he hadn't even known why. In the end, it had come down to the fact that he didn't have a reason to stay. He had stayed, looking for a reason to stay.

And he was through with that.

The man stood up, balancing on the stone railing of the clock tower upon which he had been resting. Sixteen stories below him cars drove by, people walked on, and the city lights shined on as though the choice he had made simply did not matter. Perhaps it didn't.

He was just so tired.

"So long, old timer," the man said as he gently patted the side of the clock tower. Then he calmly walked out and stepped over the edge. For an instant he fell. Then wings sprouted from the heels of his shoes and he flew through the air. "I've still got miles to go before I rest," so spoke Hermes, last of the Olympian gods.

Though he didn't fly so high as to reach the clouds, not one person in the city below noticed him. Still, such a thing wasn't so strange. He was still a god, and mortals cannot see a god if he does not wish to be seen. As he flew on, he thought of how it was that he came to be the last of his family.

Hestia had gone first. Even at their prime, she was never terribly popular amongst the mortals. Soon, her very position as one of the twelve ruling gods of Olympus had been lost to her. Dionysus had taken it when he ascended. He still wasn't sure exactly when she had vanished. Some time not long after the Romans began to worship them. It was a somber day when they learned that she was never to return. Realizing that despite all their power, it was only the

prayers of mortals that had sustained them and had been humbling.

The Romans weren't all that bad as far as worshipers went. Granted, he much preferred being Hermes to being Mercury. That had been a good time for them. Then their worship had started to flag. Eventually, it became less honest prayer and more lip service. By that time, the old ones were all gone. Grandfather Kronos, Oceanus, Hyperion; they were all gone.

Then Constantine converted. Looking back, he realized that this was when it had really begun, the end of his family. Gradually, they lost their powers along with their worshipers. They stuck firmly together at first, but eventually they broke apart and drifted away. His father had stayed in Italy and tried to fight the inevitable along with Apollo. Athena returned to her old haunts in Africa and tried to regain her power there. He and some of the others had gone traveling, trying to find new worshipers. However, it hadn't been enough. Despite all of their efforts, they had faded away, one by one, until only he was left. And he would have gone, too, if not for the whim of fate that made his symbol into the symbol of medicine.

Hermes shook himself out of his thoughts. How he got to where he was no longer mattered. And it's not as if ruminating on the past would change anything. Besides, hadn't he just decided he was done with it all?

Gently, the god touched down onto the earth. The wings on his shoes beat softly for a moment before curling up and merging into his shoes. Hermes looked around briefly at where he was, a small playground in an unknown town on the island of Sardinia. A small group of children ran about the playground, their laughter high in the air. Though he had made his decision, there was still a matter he had to check up on.

Hermes let his eyes wander over the children at play for a moment before picking out the one he was looking for. As always, he was easy to find, the young boy who ran ahead of the rest of the pack and always seemed to be laughing the loudest. Although he was only six, it was already obvious that he was going to break a lot of hearts when he was older.

Hermes leaned against a nearby tree and folded his arms, carefully

watching the boy. Nearby, a few mothers watched the children as well and chatted amongst themselves. Neither the mothers, nor the children noticed him, for he still did not wish to be seen.

He watched the boy play and lead the other children around in whatever game they had come up with for a few moments before smiling gently. Though the boy wouldn't be quite the force of nature the others were, it was still obvious who his father was.

"So long, little brother," Hermes said before taking to the air once more.

It had surprised no one that his father had chosen to spend the last years of his life chasing skirts. What had been surprising was that one of the women had not only managed to track him down afterward but browbeat him into marriage. He hadn't known why his father had went along with it, but he had. Three years ago, the last of his father's power had drained away. Then he was the last.

Hermes flew through the air once more and soon reached his destination. When mortals travel, they increase the speed at which they move. When gods travel, they decrease the time it takes to get to where they wish to go. It is for that reason that though Hermes had made his choice less than an hour ago, he was able to travel from London to Greece in that time, while making a stop in Italy.

It was a small city that Hermes came upon now. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly with a smile. It was a city in his homeland, and he could think of nowhere more fitting to rest than here.

Hermes walked slowly towards a small bar. The bar was one that had existed in some form or another in this place since before he could easily recall. Dionysus had always loved it, which spoke well of the bar. Both he and his brother had frequented it often in their long lives.

The old and tired god looked around the bar as he entered. It was almost completely empty, which wasn't terribly surprising. It was still fairly early. The only person there was a young woman at the bar, the owner's daughter if he wasn't mistaken. If they didn't do something impressive, mortals all blended

together in his mind.

"Hey, Hadrian, 'been awhile," the woman said with a welcoming smile on her face.

"Mhm. That it has been," Hermes replied as he walked over to the bar and took a seat. "My usual, please."

"Bit early to be drinking," the woman said, raising an eyebrow.

"It's something of a special occasion," Hermes said with a wry smirk.

The woman shrugged and pulled out a couple bottles of alcohol and started to mix his drink.

"So what's the occasion?" the woman asked as she passed him his drink.

Hermes took a small sip of his drink and let out a sigh of appreciation. "I've come to decision over something that I've been mulling over for a while now."

"And that would be?" the woman said, favoring him with a look that was not amused.

"That I'm done."

The woman took a deep breath in through her nose and let it out slowly. She put both of her hands on the bar and leaned forward slowly with a fierce grin.

"Done. With. What?" she said slowly.

"With everything," Hermes replied. "I realized that I've been living without a purpose for a long time now. And now I've decided that I'm done with that."

The woman blinked in surprise before her brow furrowed and she said quietly and forcefully, "Hadrian, I may not know what goes on in your life, but whatever it is, you can work through it. You've still got a long time ahead of you and there's no reason to—"

"Kid, you're saying nothing I haven't said to myself for years," Hermes interrupted calmly. "Believe me, I've been thinking about this for a long time. There's nothing left to say."

"Bullshit," the young woman said sharply. "What about your family or your

friends, huh? You think they want you to end it all?"

"I haven't had anyone I could call a friend for a very long time," Hermes said quietly, taking another sip of his drink. "And I've outlived my entire family: my grandparents, my parents, my aunts and uncles, my siblings, and even my own children. So there's really no one to complain about whether or not I end my life."

"Yeah? Well, now I'm your friend," the woman said, causing Hermes to look up from his glass. "And I say don't go doing anything stupid."

Hermes stared at the woman and for the first time, truly noticed her. At 5'7", she was a bit shorter than he was. Her brown hair was cut into a simple bob and her eyes were a sharp green that glared fiercely at him.

He stared for a few more seconds, before he burst out laughing. The young woman watched him in confusion, unsure whether to take that as a good sign.

"I haven't laughed like that in years," Hermes said cheerfully, raising his glass. "As thanks, let me give you a blessing," he said, before clearing his throat. "May you live a long and happy life," he said with a smile on his face. The woman froze in place. The feeling that something more than mere words were being spoken filled the room.

"It's not quite what I would have given you in the old days," Hermes said conversationally. "And it isn't as strong as it would have been back then. Still, coming from me, it should mean something. And thanks for the drink," he said before draining what was left in his glass. He set the glass on the bar and as the sound of glass clinking on wood echoed through the bar, he vanished without a trace.

Such was the end of the great god Hermes.

Eugene Guzzardi



Saint Sebastian, the Buffalo - Chris Sykora



Irish Lad - Kristin Wilkens

Alone and Awake

Sleepless, so get stoned, fall in love with your children all over again, panic, gasp for a breath and wonder if anxiety is becoming the norm. Look where you've gone, been to, going to, long for, escape from, retreat to the imaginings of an ever youthful heart that thinks life began an hour ago. Long for dirt trails and hoofed animals, barns and pooches, a walk in your beloved birches, the only tree you know, but why not, you only need one kind to love...me, sons, a life better than on the planet of loons where you find yourself working today and wondering how you got there in the first place. Lessons waiting for mastering if you could only figure out whom the teacher is and what the fuck she is mumbling under her breath. A course you completed years ago. And I miss you. Alone, awake, stoned.

Eden Novak DeGenova



Untitled - Ana Karen González Barajas

This is about Sestina

This is a Sestina
About a lovely woman
Who is my love.
She is slender and tall.
She likes to dash
Around with me.

Her and me
Likes to write a sestina
With a dash
Mark when a pretty woman
Is said to be tall.
This poem is about love.

We share all the love
That female and me.
We both are very tall
And love a good sestina.
That luscious lipped woman
Was painted in a dash.

The painting is on my dash
Board next to my love,
Who is a woman.
I, myself, and me
Is writing this sestina
Which is slender and tall.
Did I already mention she is tall
And likes to dash?
Also, she liking a sestina
And that she is in love
With a man who's me?
I love that woman.

She is a woman—
Who is very tall—
And who likes me
Faster than a dash.
I am her love.
Her name is Sestina.

To sum this in a dash
This is about my love
Who is called Sestina.

Chris Zavacki

Letting Go

The problem with learning to fly is that we're not yet, most of us at least, ready to let go of the ground.

'Let go of the ground?' you say. What is this nonsense? Wait. Wait. Hear me out. Think about it. What do you think of the ground? The ground is the thing that gravity pushes you down into, or the thing that holds you up against the pull of gravity. The ground is always there. And thus you walk around on it, go about your day-to-day activities on it, even roll around on it from time to time. Point is, you've come to take it for granted. Most of the time you don't bother to look down when walking, do you? You're confident that the ground will be there to receive your next footstep.

And how does this apply to flight? Well, it seems that after such thorough training, years of self imposed brainwashing, it takes a suspension of disbelief beyond the capabilities of most people to free themselves from these chains: co-conspiring shackles of gravity. We've rooted ourselves to the ground.

But knowing this consciously doesn't allow me to disregard it and instantly become a member of the airborne. No, my training is too thorough. I too have chained myself to the ground. For what is it that you do whenever you jump? Immediately upon leaving the ground, probably even in the very process of leaving the ground, whether you're an Olympic jumper or a child playing jump rope, you prepare to land. You tense up or relax your muscles, even space out your legs accordingly. You automatically adjust for how high you've propelled yourself, anticipating how hard the landing will be, preparing your knees to absorb the shock of impact. You tense up, expecting the landing to be inevitable -- the landing is thus inevitable because we think it so. It's a cycle you see. A self-fulfilling prophecy we make every time we attempt it. We wouldn't -- we shouldn't fall back down to earth if our minds are truly focused on the air. We are, in effect, the cause of our own failure.

So how are we to fly if we're so focused on landing? That's what I meant by letting go of the ground. Realize that gravity isn't holding you - realize that you're the one holding to the ground so tightly. Don't tense up, relax . . . relax . . . relax and let go.

"Jump" as an operative word is actually bad choice because when I say that you will automatically add the implication of the fall back. Just as up implies down, left implies right. You can't really "jump" into the sky, can you? You have to kinda just . . . float off the ground. When next you "jump" you must release the hold your legs have on the ground and simply let it fall behind you. Yeah, that's it. Let the earth just fall back behind you as you go up, out into the sky. Don't prepare for the landing, indeed, forget that there is a landing, there need not be a landing, believe truly that there is no landing.

That's what I'll do next time. Or the time after that - it may take some work, readjusting my mindset. But I'll get it. I'll learn to fly. I'll reach for the sky and then simply go up, go out to meet it. I'll become a part of it. And I won't prepare to land, cause I'll not be coming back down. Not until I'm good and ready.

I will learn to let go.

Georges Augustin

Sweet. Revenge.

A brush in one hand,
a red ribbon in the other,
She rolls the brush through her dark blonde hair
and pulls on her vest of leather.

The thoughts jumble through her mind,
entangled with her vines of joy.
She reaches for her head with hand
and pulls her hair without noise.

She drops to her knees
hands to her face.
She gasps
for her breath.

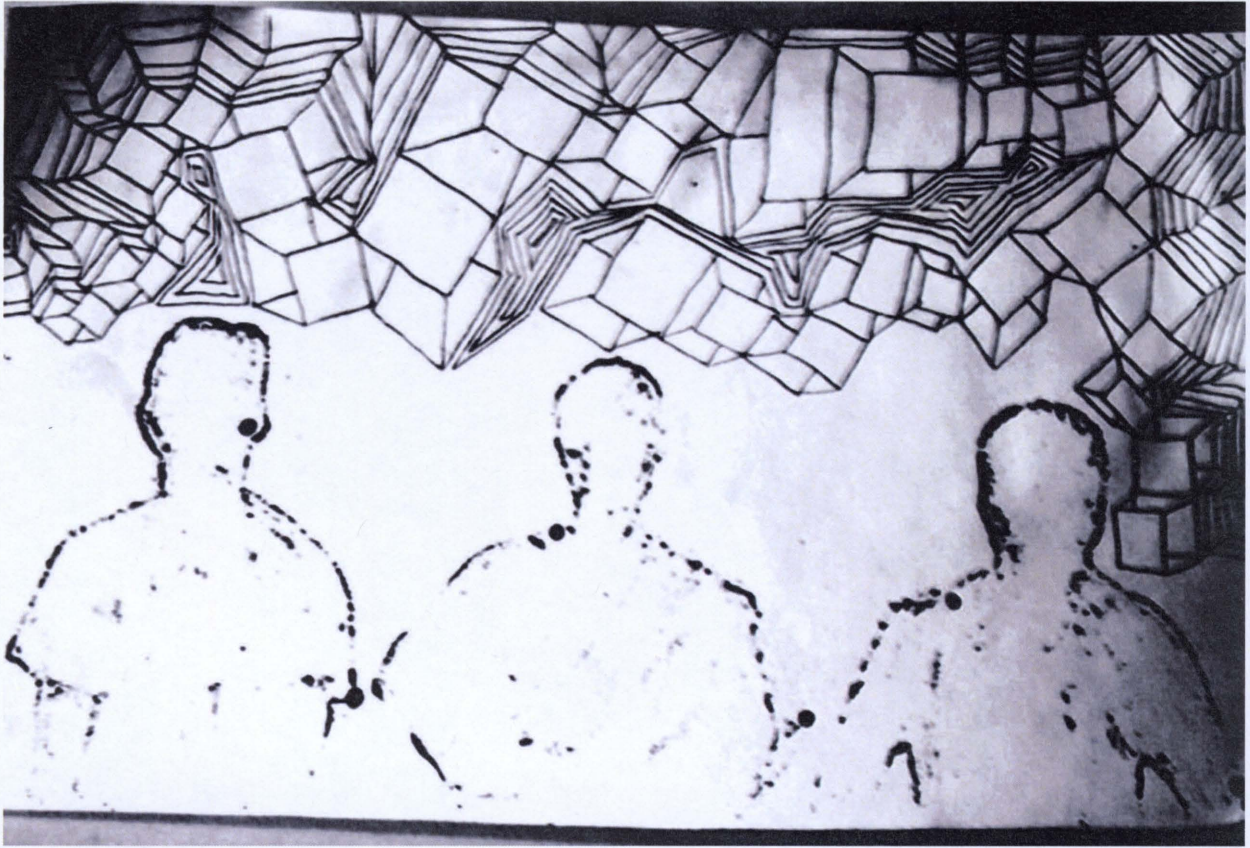
Her blonde waves cover her eyes
Her tears dry with a stoic expression.
She rolls the brush through her dark blonde hair
And ties it with a ribbon.

She looks at the reflection in the mirror
and is happy to hide her chagrin,
paints on her new red lipstick
And looks at herself with a grin.

Anupama Lukose



Walking After Midnight - Mimi Cross



Blurry - Ian Feigle

Restless Soul

Body cold like a winter night
Skin as clammy as a snake
Eyes open but cannot see
Touching but cannot feel
Laid to rest but soul so restless
On the outside looking in

With hair like hay
Skin pure white as sand
Mouth speaks but is not heard
Asleep but does not wake
Laid to rest, but soul so restless
On the outside looking in

A crowd gathers around
Words exchanged, embraces shared
Everyone so helpless
No understanding of the present
Laid to rest, but soul so restless
On the outside looking in

Moving closer to the center
Flowers lay across the ground
Body crashes into hardness
Gazing into empty eyes
Laid to rest, but soul so restless
On the outside looking in

Death has come
No longer here nor belonging
Blessing unseen when given the chance
Too young to be laid to rest, my soul forever restless
I'll always be on the outside looking in

Julia Talley

Memoirs of My Favorite Shirt

The Beginning: Part I (One O'clock)

While in my favorite shirt, I awake from a vivid dream at one in the morning. It reminds me of the horrors of midnight when the day has started anew but the darkness of the past still remains. Midnight feels so close, even though time has passed and my thoughts do move the fastest. But it doesn't compare to the value of success of my peers and my actions. As I lay on my bed because I have no will to rise at this time of the night, I turn my head to the clock. It measures the moment of my collapse to the buildup of my glory. I gaze at every second that passes. 1."Why me?" 2."Is it my fault?" 3."Didn't he love me?" And 57 more just like it. But when I pay close attention, the silence between each tick increases in length and I become desperate for the light of day in my room. I want to go to sleep and awake when the sun beams through my windows and I squint because it is too much to handle. But I'm afraid. Afraid that when I close my eyes, images of yesterday appear, the same images that made me cry myself to sleep at midnight.

A Gray World (Two O'clock)

It's two in the morning in my room, where I can see figures align the walls with posters and pictures that represent who I am or who I was. I'm not sure anymore. After not sleeping for an hour my eyes have adjusted to the darkness. So maybe this is the new way to look at this room. I've grown accustomed to seeing things halfway in my room, So why focus on a time when the door and window would be open and bring in a fresh gust of life? Or why focus on a time when I couldn't see my own hand and only felt the heat of Death Valley? After an hour or so, this gray world seems tolerable as long as I don't stare at the clock. I let my mind wander to any distraction.

Questions (Three O'clock)

Time continues to pass me, but nothing seems clearer. I still see the same hazy figures I saw earlier in the night because I'm reluctant to look at a better time and reluctant to look at the reason I'm still awake. I look at the clock and realize an hour has passed. The thoughts haven't stopped ticking and the world continues to rotate faster than my progress. My eyes freeze on the clock and I start listening to my thoughts again: 4."Was I good enough?" 5."Weren't we supposed to last forever?" 6."How could he cheat on me and leave me for him?" And my eyes begin to melt. Like an icicle my eyes drop one tear at a time. But by looking at the formation of the ice, it's inevitable that these tears could drop before my cold heart pumped arrogance into my veins and froze the potential of vulnerability. These thoughts move fast and it's so easy to ignore them, but if I pay close attention they will slow down and I will be able to find answers.

Reason: Part I (Four O'clock)

For six months we danced together in a world where electronic music was this relationship's heartbeat. Where our hands made flashing lights a piece of art that we both could share and admire and blinded us from the truth, and where XTC was our ecstasy. For six months we thought our puppy love barked like a guard dog, making its presence known inside these fences. But it was more of a growl towards the owners who kept it enslaved. Enslaved because we were scared of knowing a life without its protection. Those six months of lies stretched into two years. For two years I would look at the clock and see seconds turn into hours turn into two years of wasted time. For two years all I could think of was his beauty and humor, but neglected the obvious flaws hoping that he could one day change. For two years I saw friends pass by me every hour and I would envy how fast their lives moved, even though I couldn't see their progress. For two years and four hours, I didn't seize the strength to slow down the clock and let this icicle melt so I could embrace spring." "This shirt is feeling uncomfortable." 7."Was that a bird chirp?"

Answers (Five O'clock)

1."Because if you want to grow stronger you have to push more weight." 2."Yes, because you lacked the courage of being alone, but it's equally his, too." 3."Yes, but like a favorite shirt, the color will fade if not properly taken care of and this was a damaged shirt which you were willing to hold on to for too long while he found a new one." 4."Yes, but the shirt was too big on him." 5."No, because the shirt was too small on you." 6."But you cheated on him first and would have left too if you had found a better replacement." 7."I just heard it again." I wipe my tears, but they keep pouring down because the truth has to overflow so I can slip on a puddle that awakes me from my fantasy. I wasn't ready for the truth, but that's my own fault for not paying attention to the 'caution' sign. But as I lay here soaking in my own truth, there's nothing left to do but to get up and clean this spillage that has tainted my favorite shirt and room. "Should I try to clean the shirt?" "No. It's time to throw it away." I get out of my bed and walk to the trashcan by the wall, the walls that look different, and stare at the shirt one last time. This shirt holds all our stains of the truth. It has drug streaks that stimulated our love, alcohol stains that fueled our hatred for each other, a kiss smear on the collar from Daniel, sweat marks from our pores, blood spots from my lip and his eye and drops of our tears. As I prepare to let go of all these truths, I fold the shirt, bend down and put it under my bed. As I rise back up, I realize that I can see my room's natural wall color again. Something I haven't seen in hours.

The Beginning: Part II (Six O'clock)

I haven't slept all night, but I feel energized with a sense of happiness because a victory is in my reach. I look at the time and realize the progress I've made and in only half the time I suspected. I have beat my fears that kept me awake in a trance, staring at the clock with no action instead of leaving each moment be on its own. I open the curtain and let light sprinkle into my room, the room that keeps drastically changing in appearance. It feels like I have entered into a new world where new opportunities, experiences and people await me. I have gotten a chance to have a new beginning where miracles and magic exist, where I can evolve as a person that has his mindset figured out because the honeymoon of triumph is still active. Yet this spillage is still in the middle of the room so I might as well start my day by cleaning it up. With a mop in my hand, I start soaking up this mess but realize halfway through that chunks of our precious moments lie between all the sticky truths. Those moments that made me smile because we were cuter than our pictures. Those moments that made me laugh because he understood my stupid humor better than my movie collection." "Those moments that made me cry, because, for the first time, I felt something warm and tight like an inexperienced boy - my favorite shirt. Like the second hand that starts at top on twelve, it will soon come back down to six. Every tick lets me know that the fun is almost over because my memories return to the frontier of my mind. I start staring at the clock again, but this time with some light in the room.

Reason: Part II (Seven O'clock)

That time in his room, when we were still fresh, and Mel came over, we talked and drank. I slept over for the first time, before, when we could still drink together. That time we went to Underground Sound and we bought \$200 worth of drugs each and had the most amazing trip ever, before I realized that drugs brought us together. Those times when he would sleep over at my house and we'd order pizza and watch TV all day until we fell asleep in each other's arms, before every night ended in an argument. Those times when we would do so many drugs that we stayed up all night and day talking about our lives while laughing and crying, before the day you chose drugs before me. Those times we made love, before sex became a substitute. That time I took him to the 95th floor at the Hancock for our first anniversary to save what I knew was fading, but I cared more about missing Rose drop 44 on Atlanta. That night we went to the movies drunk and laughed the whole walk to my house, before we got into a fist fight and my dad and sister had to break it up. And that other fight when Alicia had to break it up. The times he would answer, Hey baby on the phone and I knew he was trying to impress his friends, whom he was with since we stopped pet names awhile back. The times I realized he was cheating on me, but I didn't care enough to do anything. Or too scared. Damn, I thought there were happier, sober times. I need to get out this room because, if not, I'll keep staring at this clock. Shopping can be a good

distraction.

Shopping (Eight O'clock)

The day has progressed and it seems about the right time to go out and try new things. I go down the strip where my favorite stores are located. I window shop and stare at the mannequins that look so perfect. They have these beautiful shirts on to call their own that fit them so flawlessly, and here I am with a shirt I yanked out of my closet only to cover my bare skin from the world. These mannequins, they hold the power of perfection and beauty. They stand in the window so everyone can admire them for they can boast about their favorite shirt. And I realize I'm tired of not being able to have my own favorite shirt. I want my own favorite shirt! I want to feel that warmth again, which I can cuddle into and wipe these current tears on. I want a new favorite shirt because I'm not happy with this raggedy shirt I owned before my favorite shirt. But mostly, I'm not happy being without one. I enter a store to look around at what's available. I haven't shopped in two years. I've been window shopping for one and a half, but now I'm in a situation where I can afford a new shirt. But shopping seems strange. I pick up a shirt and take it to the dressing room. But it doesn't feel right so I put it back. I try on another shirt, but this could never compare to my current favorite shirt. I pick up a shirt that I would usually never pick up, just to try something new, and I put it back down immediately. I find a shirt I really like, but there's none in my size. I touch another shirt just to feel the material and walk away with a smile, but still a void in my heart. Confused and depressed, I look at my watch and begin to reflect on my favorite shirt. It wasn't perfect, but it still felt right to me because I had never had a favorite shirt before. I need to take a shot to get through the day.

A Mannequin (Nine O'clock)

As I continue my search for a replacement, I bump into the man that gave me my favorite shirt, Jorge. I'm happy to see his beauty and I'm proud of myself for not breaking down at first glance, but deep down it hurts to see him in his new favorite shirt. He's a mannequin. Time has passed and we both have matured into new people, but our chemistry is still the same. I'm not surprised that we are both tipsy. I'm not surprised that I can hold my composure in front of him, but I am surprised at how he acts around me. While in the store, we talk about the past, future and present. And, of course, we keep drinking. Since we are together, I completely stop shopping and we walk around outside the strip catching up, laughing like old times even though he keeps bragging about his new favorite shirt. But then he asks if he can come home with me. I say yes. "I just want the closure that I didn't get at midnight, but this is a bad idea." We arrive into my room, which is brighter than when I left, and then he attempts to kiss me. I say, No, but then he reveals his secret when he takes off his favorite shirt: his old favorite shirt is under it with all the same stains as mine, but with David's, Jose's and Dani's kiss smears instead of Daniel's. I see it and then we

kiss. We kiss and an energy of the past creeps into me, I feel happy. I feel loved. Time doesn't matter because I'm drunk and in love. Half way through these puzzled yet familiar actions, I realize I'm committing the same act that he violated that separated us so many times before. I become ashamed, but part of me feels satisfied that my kiss smear will now be on his new favorite shirt - the shirt that has three other kiss smears on it already. We finish breaking moral acts and then he looks at me and says, You know I'm not a cheater, right? and that is when I realize my disgust for this child who doesn't know how to keep his shirts clean. He walks out my room knowing he left his old favorite shirt and walks out with the arrogance of a mannequin as he struts his current, dirty, favorite shirt that he claims is spotless, just like he claimed about the old one. He's a mannequin. He's in denial that my kiss smear is on his favorite shirt. He will deny we ever saw each other. He will deny me his love, again.

Final Tears (Ten O'clock)

I cry. I cry because I've gotten the closure that I did not think would hurt so much. I cry because I'm ashamed of the act I have committed. But I mostly cry because I had him again, I felt the warmth of my favorite shirt and it was torn away, again. I cry. And I cry. But this time I know that these are my final tears for a boy that was never there to catch them, and again, isn't here. My tears have been falling for two years and ten hours because of a boy that deserved nothing from me but my farewell six months into that relationship we started. I will not drop another tear or take another second for him. He's a mannequin, an image of perfection, but a false image of reality. He's a mannequin, an exterior that shows everything I want for myself, but an interior that is vacant. He's a mannequin, fake. I wipe my face, I stand up and walk to get my favorite shirt that is under my bed and...

The End (Eleven O'clock)

I throw it away.

The Beginning: Part III (Twelve O'clock)

I look around in my room that appears familiar, but completely different. It's the brightest it's ever been and it still has the same posters, but with a new glow that explains new things about me. And there are lots of new pictures that have filled blank spots on the wall. I look at the clock and I'm astonished at how much time has passed and progress was made. I think about everything that has happened in this past day and I'm proud of myself for never giving up and continuing to push through heartbreak, an emotion I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy because death would be more sympathetic. So here I stand in the middle of my room, shirtless, feeling a bit of a chill, but I will not put on anything that will cover the scars from this day. I look into

the mirror and see my bare skin, something I haven't seen in years, if not ever, and I love what I see. I see a man whose eyes are puffy, but shoulders are back. I see a man that has bigger muscles because the weight of heartbreak makes anyone stronger. I see a man whose hopes and dreams have changed because new challenges were met and made. I see a man that is still developing into his own and will continue to praise the universe for every problem that occurs because he knows that resilience will make him who he will be. I see a man that is persistent about life because he won't go down easy. I see all these things that I never saw before because a shirt had covered it up. But now I see a man with a better understanding of why karma and life can be a bitch. I see a man who still wants love, but will not go down a road of disgrace and pity and regret and disgust just to find it because he knows where that road leads. I see a man that will not let someone take advantage of his heart because he has more self-respect which makes him confront mannequins. I see a man that realizes love does not only come from a partner, but from family, friends and, most importantly, himself. I see a man who is not scared of being alone because for the past twelve hours he was by himself and he survived. I made it out of my hole of misery because I made it to the peak of virtue that would never again let me try on a shirt while having one on already. Worthiness lets me know I deserve a new beautiful shirt that gives comfort, support and a pocket on the upper left side to hold all my secrets because that's what I offer. Love: the sensation of complete acceptance that powers through the mind, heart, and soul, which brings a light to the present world through your energy. I have yet to feel true love that isn't marinated in drugs or alcohol, but I have felt the love of my sister who held me like a fragile baby when I cried in a gray world. I felt the love of friends that helped me forget about the past and to live in the moment. I felt the love of my homophobic cousin who told me there are other fish in the sea. I felt the love of the universe that gave me every single one of those past challenges for I could rise to a better place in life. But most importantly, I feel the love for myself. My closet is full of shirts, even if I don't have a favorite. I remain shirtless for the world can see my bare self and sometimes I get cold, but I know how to change the temperature in my room. My dreams are getting bigger, which will ascend me into higher points in my young life. And with action and patience, I will have even more shirts in my closet, including my future new, favorite shirt.

Raul Cañas

Write

I never spoke out in life,
my courage came through writing.
Strings of words phrases
sentences that tied up my life
on small pieces of napkins journals loose leaf papers.
I always wanted to be a writer,
but I'm afraid I was not born one.

My topics were always on the same subject:

my mother's lack of language.

She lacked the words to express her intense volume of feelings
Shame, Hurt, Love, Greed.
She felt too much.
At times her brute sentences would burst out like confetti in her
Portuguese-Spanish slang that offended those who did not love her.

It was easy to dislike her.

Long nights spent home alone as the dark halls enclosed around me and
the dust bunnies that would creak underneath taunted me.
She slaved at work:
bending, lifting, sweating, serving, smiling.

Until she came home with sweet things.

Chocolates, fruits, candies, flowers that just
a few hours before had been meant to be served to Jews Whites Richs.
I never saw the varicose veins on her thick legs -- the blisters
I saw the sleepless nights she spent cleaning humming singing:
"I believe in angels..."

My mother lacked language, but

When she sang she sang with the passion of mangos
Like the juice that spills over the sides of your mouth as
you bite into the fleshy stringy fruit.

Her passion made up for her absence.
Writing makes up for my silence.

Stephanie Caceres

Great Service

"Great Service Matters!"

That's what my boss says to me
When I clean the room.

Great Service matters.

Goes into how I work
With the customers.

I tell them how my product is good for them.

Standing. Outside my room.
Waiting. For a person to come in.

Great service matters,

When luring them in.
I make it comfortable for them.

I lay on my bed.

Sexually sprawled out.
With almost nothing on.

The customers come in.

I display the product.
Some take it and some leave.

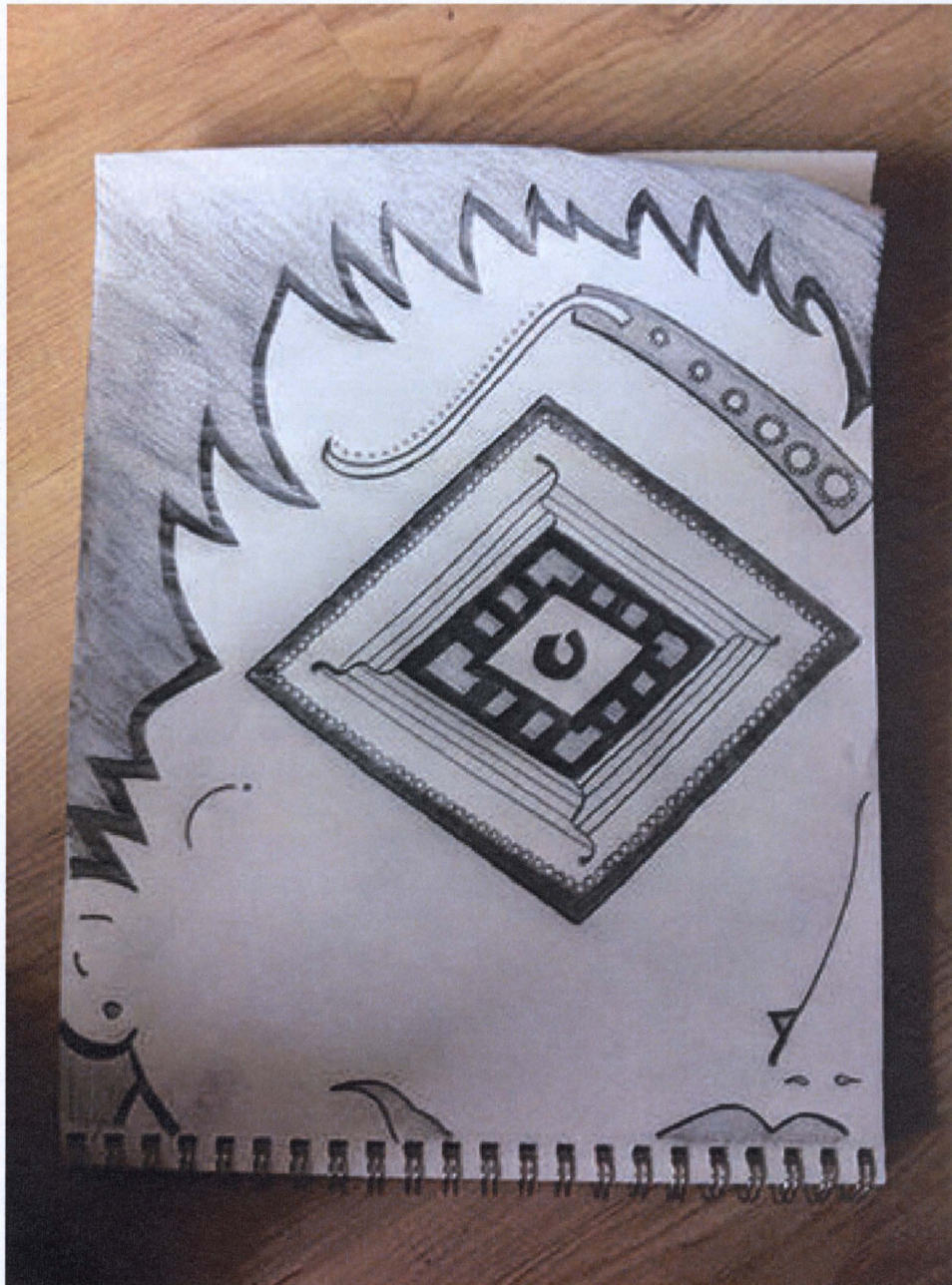
It matters how great my service is because,
great service matters

Chris Zavacki

Barren

A gift I was given
To care for children
All my life I paid my dues
Now what shall I receive in return
News of brokenness
My heart can only weep
Crying out on the inside
But never inside out
How could this be possible
A blessing I shall never receive
Never the gift I have longed for
The dearest I reach out to
Why would I be blessed with a gift
But not blessed with a way to use it
Have I sinned in some way
Turned against my maker
Barren at twenty one
Longing for something I'll never have
I'd give my life for another
Risk it all to hold my child
For even a second
Once I was broken
The blessing I saw in disguise
But taken away it was
The only change I ever had
A miscarriage they said
Now I'll never know
How a mother feels
That title I will never hold
My heart breaks
Heavy and weary
My soul longs for more
A miracle is what I beg for

Julia Talley



Doodle ~ Camille J. Severino

I must decree

I m u s t d e c r e e
m y b r a i n i t ' s d e c a y i n g
I l a y , c r y i n g
w i t h n u m b n e s s
M y b r a i n
I t i t c h e s
— W h y m u s t i t i t c h ?
I s h o u t
I y e l l
I t s d e a d —
m y b r a i n
f i n a l l y ,
t h e n u m b n e s s s u b s i d e s
a n d n o l o n g e r m u s t I r e f r a i n
f r o m r e t a i n i n g a n y t h i n g ,
b e y o n d t h i s i t c h i n g ,
i n m y b r a i n .

A.i. Herv

Author Biographies

C.J. Althaus has been writing fiction for thirty years. Althaus enjoys creating drama within stories and moving readers emotions. Althaus has been published several times and is grateful to SEEDS for providing artists a platform to showcase their talents.

Georges Augustin is a Master's student in Linguistics. He is also a dancer and musician, a linguist of the rhythmic and kinesthetic language as well as the oral. In his head is playing a constant stream of music, and he somehow manages to live his life between the beats.

Scott Brehman graduated from Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in 2002. Recently, he—along with every other participant—received a medal for participating in a race during which he averaged a mediocre amount of minutes per mile. Brehman is currently unemployed and uninspired, and is terrified that one day a college diploma will be foisted upon him, setting him off on a downward trajectory that will lead him to embark on a life of poverty and relative beauty.

Elbert Tavon Briggs studies at Northeastern Illinois University and currently resides in Chicago, Illinois. A graduate student in a period of transition enrolled in the NEIU English Writing & Composition Program. Briggs is currently creating with the Randolph Street Poets at the Chicago Cultural Center. His poetry reflects a lifelong commitment to incorporate poetry, music, art, dance, and drama, to give voice to the voiceless.

Stephanie Caceres was born in Caracas, Venezuela and grew up under the sunny palm trees of Miami Beach, Florida. After years of dreaming of Chicago she has finally moved to the city and is anxiously awaiting the winter for her first snowman. Daughter to a Portuguese mother and Chilean father she always questioned her past and more importantly her heritage. "Degrees of Red" is inspired by the feeling of inadequacy and shame of her Hispanic heritage and coming to terms to accept herself.

Mimi Cross is in her senior year of pursuing and English/Secondary Education degree at NEIU. She lives in Chicago and has been paper-cutting for 10 years. Cross' art has been exhibited at the NEIU Ronald Williams Library, the Echo Gallery, Japan America Society of Chicago, the Women's Club of Evanston, and at Art in the Barn in Barrington, IL. Her English literature studies very much inspire and inform her work.

Larry O. Dean was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. His numerous books include Brief Nudity (2013), Basic Cable Couplets (2012), abbrev (2011), About the Author (2011), and I Am Spam (2004). Dean teaches in the English Department at NEIU and is also an acclaimed songwriter whose most recent release is Fun with a Purpose (2009) with The Injured Parties.

Eden DeGenova is a Chicago-area musician, singer, actress, and monologist—all for much longer than she cares to admit. DeGenova's work has appeared as performance pieces, online and on her own blog.

Michelle Emery loves examining her relationship with nature through weather and environmental ethics, which she tends to reinvent through the senses that can transform into the sensual. Emery is currently working on various multi-genre writing and hopes to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing.

Ian Feigle was born in Phoenix, AZ and now lives in Chicago, IL. He draws inspiration from geography, avant-garde culture, notions of pre-civilization and even water. Feigle's most pleasant memories are recalled in smelling desert flora after a rainfall. He is 1/3 of the musical group, House Sounds, and can be found playing though out the Chicagoland area with his favorite bands.

Ana Karen González Barajas is a photographer, filmmaker, painter, writer and singer born in Mexico City. Barajas studied Graphic Design at the University of Guanajuato and is a visiting international student at Northeastern Illinois University. Her previous works have been shown in Mexico and France. In January 2014 Barajas will be taking part in a photography exhibition at Casa de la Presa in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Esmeralda Guerrero was born in Morelia Michoacán and is a mother of two amazing children, Alexandra and Victoria. She enjoys expressing herself through spoken word and painting. Guerrero wrote the piece published to cleanse her mind of how she felt and to invigorate her soul.

Eugene Guzzardi is a 21 year old student at Triton College, he prefers to go by Geno. This is his first time being published, but said "I realize that this is supposed to be witty, but I'm currently blanking on all sarcasm."

Samuel S. Han doesn't consider himself an artist. Han believes the romantic notion of being an artist is a tricky one and proclaims he is just a human being that learned how to maneuver random sharp sticks, dip them in ink, and make lines on thin sheets of processed timber. He was educated in school that taught him one is not a successful artist if you can't make money off of it.

Abraham Harb is a photographer, creative writer and journalist who became interested in the visual arts at an early age. Putting ink on paper started out as a hobby and he has turned it into a career. In 2005, Harb took a photography seminar on a trip to the Owasippe Scout Reservation. This was his first time holding a camera and where his passion for creative writing/ visual arts began to form.

Carl Hauck is an English teacher at Grayslake Central High School and a graduate student in NEIU's literature program. He is also a solo musician (carlhauck.com) and a member of the Chicago-based indie-rock band Sunjacket. Hauck's first short story, "Leave as Found", was published by Prick of the Spindle.

A.i. Herv has been writing since early 2010, both with a creative and journalistic incline after being urged by an acquaintance to submit to a literary magazine. Herv was awarded The Harold Wilcox Award for Literary Excellence for his achievements on The Wright Side Literary Magazine and his play "Timing," was featured in a play festival series. His prose and poetry are always tinged with optimism and is often inspired by Emily Dickinson.

Anupama Lukose is currently attending the University of the Sciences as a pre-physical therapy student. She is enrolled in her second year of college and is an active participant in campus as well as student body affairs. She has been a member of the USciences Indian fusion dance team, Dhadkan, for two years and is currently leading the team as its captain. Her passion for dance began at the age of five and since then, Anupama has acquired training as a classical dancer. Her passion for the arts goes beyond dance as she has started to explore writing poetry and prose.

Emilio Maldonado has been performing at poetry venues around the city for years. He was a Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic finalist in 2005 and often collaborates with other artists including other NEIU students. Maldonado is inspired by life and the connections he make with others. He is influenced by all of the arts and the wonder and beauty that abounds.

Nergal Malham is a tiny senior at NEIU. She spends her time frowning at things, sleeping, and looking at pugs. Nergal dreams of becoming a pug one day. She is currently in the never ending process of editing her first novel manuscript.

Sumaiya Maniya was born and raised in Chicago and is currently pursuing English at NEIU. While growing up as a devout Muslim in a post 9/11 world, Maniya faced many challenges. In her writings, she draws inspiration from her experiences as a Muslim woman living in the U.S. She hopes her writings will allow people to understand her faith better and thus help bridge the gap between her religion and its opponents.

Domingo Reyes is a 21-year-old Mexican-American from Summit, IL who currently is a tutor at Bogan High School. He loves different forms of Literature, which inspire him to write some prose and poetry from time to time. Reyes feels like he can capture more emotion when writing in Spanish.

John Ross, Jr. teaches in the Department of Communication, Media and Theater (CMT) at NEIU. He has written six volumes of poetry, his most popular entitled: *Goat Troubles and Other Chicago Poems* (2010) and *Ode to Boston Neighborhoods* (2012). Ross is interested in the relationship between the worlds great religions and their appearance and effect upon theater, film and poetry. He holds a graduate degree in Dramatic Arts from Harvard, as well as advanced degrees in theology from Loyola University Chicago and Boston University. His latest poetry collection *Prince Siddhartha: A Buddha's Life in Quatrains* is due for release in January 2014.

Sheila FitzGerald Russell earned an art degree from Dominican University. Her mediums includes oil painting, metal sculpture, ceramics, food, and photography. Russell draws from nature and fertility to create strong fanciful and abstract feminine figures and imaginary 'she-creatures' that pay homage to the beauty of moths and the power of the microscopic

Sharon Rutledge is a Chicago Artist originally from Peoria, Illinois. Always willing to explore the potential of any creative mode or motive, Rutledge likes working in many different mediums while combining both organic and digital techniques. Often times, her work analyzes subconscious themes and the possible consequences of a life in perpetual motion.

Camille J. Severino is a current English Major at NEIU. She is a constant doodler and enjoys putting a thin Sharpie to a blank page and letting it lead her without any plans or preconceived ideas. Severino holds a degree in Visual Communication and currently the Berkeley, Illinois Public Library uses one of her original drawings as a logo.

Nathan Steele is a graduate student at NEIU. Before that, he attended LSU in Baton Rouge. Steele's poem stemmed from a series of peaceful government protests in Burma in 2007 and a subsequent harsh military response.

Chris Sykora is an educator who believes it is the mission of him and his fellow educators to show students how to question the world around them, ask what the character of knowledge is, search for the nature of learning, attach meaning to experience and foster personal enlightenment. Sykora understands that the very purpose of education is to help individuals step outside of their own worldviews, appreciate the problems that others face, see multiple perspectives and develop solutions after weighing many factors.

Julia Talley is an English/Education Major who recently self-published her first book, *Exposed: a memoir of lost days*, on Amazon and Lulu. Talley enjoys creative writing, learning to play guitar, and creating crazy concoctions in the kitchen. Talley has been writing since she could hold a pencil and won't stop till she can't anymore.

Regina Torres has been pushing a pen around since I was in pigtails and has been published in various mediums. Her main writing interests concern people she interacts with in real situations and scenarios—Torres then aims to provide a visual snapshot in written form of how people from various beliefs, lifestyles, and cultures view/treat those who are different from themselves.

Nick Walsh writes poetry, fiction, and fantastic anecdotes. Presently Walsh is studying W.B. Yeats and Federico Garcia Lorca and striving to fuse the spirits of great past folk tellers, spinners of great poems from the fabric of national folklores, into his brain for a new American verse. Meanwhile, highly doubtful that that will succeed, he is presently wondering, what can be done? where are we going? is there a chance? or should he be pursuing a more practical career to put bread on the table, wine in the jugs, and wood on the hearth to keep the home fires burning?

Janean L. Watkins found her niche in writing and photography as a student at NEIU. During her time there, she created *Seeds*, an award winning literary & visual arts journal. In May of 2010, an essay entitled, "We Are Still a Family: Same Gendered Family", was Watkins' first international publication in *Ebony Magazine*. In 2013, her photo of the artist KOKUMO was featured in *Huffington Post*. In collaboration with her partner Lakeesha J. Harris, she is tackling the issue of disproportionate surgical procedures among women of color with a literature and photography anthology entitled, *CUT*.

Kristin L. Wilkens received a B.A. in Studio Painting in 2008 and loves to paint portraits. The sources for her work come from everyday life. Wilken has a strong curiosity and deep interest in the human experience strives to meld the physical and spiritual characteristics of each person by painting the most telling portrait possible.

Chris Zavacki is a new transfer student at NEIU. This will be the first publication of his poetry. Zavacki is inspired by the dark side of subjects and brings light to them through his subliminal messages. Zavacki enjoys playing with word choice and structure within his pieces.

