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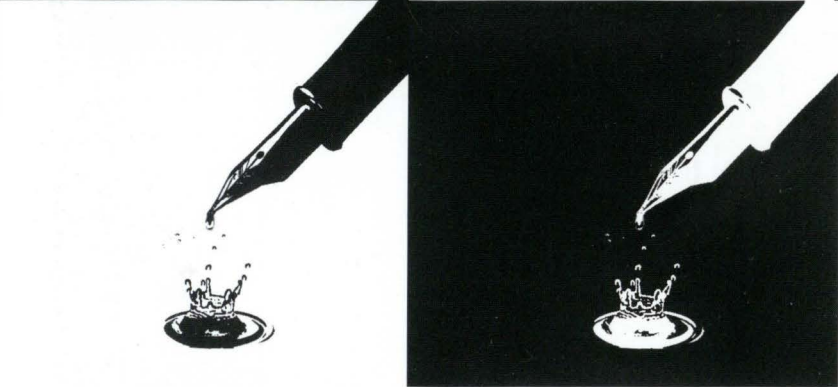
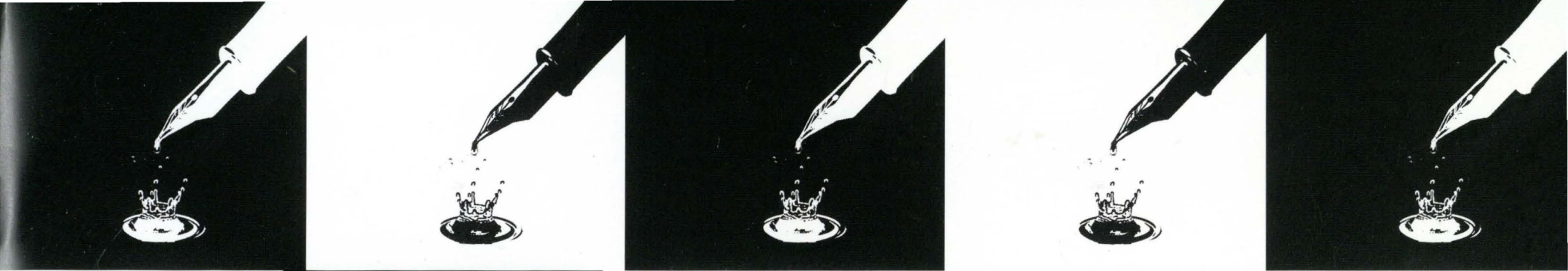
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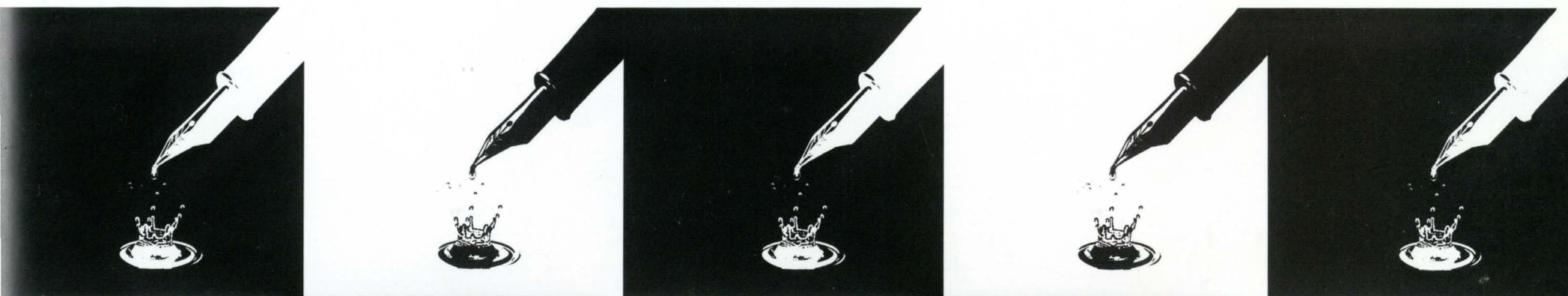
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University of Richmond

THE MESSENGER

Spring 2012



The Messenger

2012

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All submissions should be e-mailed as attachments to richmond.messenger@gmail.com. Submissions will be reviewed and selected anonymously by committee.

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Section One

Short Stories *and* *Essays*



Agate 5 - Elizabeth Ygartua

All the memories generically associated with one's sixth grade year do not in the least compare to the one experience that I had that year that will forever be ingrained in my memory.

Birthing a baby.

Let me immediately clarify that I myself was not giving birth to a child. My eleven-year-old self wanted nothing to do with boys or reproduction after the vivid sex education classes I had been forced to attend the year before.

The baby in question was my youngest brother.

My parents had always encouraged me and my four siblings to pursue whatever interested us, no matter how insane or irrational it was. I had a dream of being a baby doctor. Not just any doctor, but one who helped birth babies. I did not realize that those doctors had a more specialized title – obstetricians. My parents were completely thrilled by this new dream of mine. Why wouldn't they be? For two years I had been determined the only occupation worthy of my presence was that of a professional soccer player, so when my sudden decision to become a baby doctor was a relief.

I was under the impression that the process of birth was magical, quick and easy. When the doctors came into the hospital room, it would suddenly be time for a baby to arrive. The doctors might even have pleasant conversations with the parents as they helped to deliver the baby.

It's not that I was naïve. I knew how babies were born. My fifth grade teacher had gone into a lot of detail about the process, and in my sixth grade head I thought that I had the entire birthing process worked out.

It seemed a perfect job. Baby doctors got to be in the hospital room and help parents see their children for the first time. What more could I want to do with my life? I loved babies and helping out,

so this seemed the perfect job for me.

I remember the day my mom approached me with the radical idea. My older sister by sixteen months, Alex, and I had been sitting in the kitchen when she walked into the room. I don't recall where our dad was during this conversation, but I do remember that he was conveniently absent.

"Ryann," our mom said. "I know that you really want to be an obstetrician."

"No mom," I responded with a quick shake of my head. "I want to be a baby doctor; you know the kind that help to birth babies."

I could hear my sister stifling a laugh, but I focused my attention on our mom who was rubbing her massive pregnant stomach, which looked at that moment as if it was about to explode.

"Right, a baby doctor," our mom said with a smile. "Anyway, how would you like to be in the delivery room on the day that Mick is born?"

"Yes," I stammered back in my excitement.

I was so flabbergasted by what I had just been invited to witness that I did not truly think about what I had just committed myself to. The details were a blur, so I merely focused on the fact that I could brag about the fact that I had actually done what the doctors in hospitals do.

"Of course you're welcome to come too, Alex," our mom said, as I wiggled around on the kitchen chair.

I was so preoccupied that I almost missed my sister's response and her facial expression. Alex gave a weak smile and nodded before turning her attention away from me. Years later our mom described to us that she had known before even making the offer what Alex's response would be. At twelve and in seventh grade, Alex knew a little more than I did, which was maybe why she was not jumping for joy at the thought of witnessing a birth. But on the other hand, she was not going to let her little

sister show her up in anything, so she grudgingly accepted the invitation.

Once I calmed down enough, our mom explained the details of what we were going to do. Being as this was her sixth labor, she was well aware of what was going to happen and therefore extremely calm. She explained to Alex and me that no matter what day of the week this happened, she would make sure we were at the hospital.

That was when the waiting period began. I was excited that I was going to have a baby brother, but this new opportunity made the entire event seem much more intriguing. I could not wait to be in the hospital room and experience the real deal. I waited and waited, and then the day finally came.

I remember being told to get ready to go to the hospital on October 5th 2002. My stomach sank. I was actually going into the hospital to help birth my brother, and I knew nothing about how to birth a baby!

Now that I thought about it, what teachers had said about birth would in no way ensure a successful delivery. I suddenly understood that I was a six grader and nowhere near a certified baby doctor.

As all of those thoughts crashed in on me, I panicked. Backing out of the commitment and just visiting the newborn as usual a couple hours after it was born was the best option for everyone. The words "I can't" had even formed on my lips before I caught a glimpse of Alex. She was busily getting herself ready to go, and she had a determined look on her face.

I knew I could not back out. I had been the one who wanted to do this in the first place. I was the one who had been so insistent about wanting to be a baby doctor, and I knew that if I chickened out at the last minute, I would never be able to live it down.

I was going to be the doctor, not her, and there was

no way I was going to let her outshine me in my dream job even if we were only going to be watching the birth. I had made a commitment and I was going through with it.

I quickly got ready with my sister and rushed to the car.

I knew I was going to be able to keep it together. How could I be so nervous? I was not the one who had a baby inside of me that wanted to come out. What could go wrong when all I was going to do was sit quietly in a hospital room? In would be like school.

My sister and I were given sanitary paper robes to wear over our clothing to keep everything as clean as possible. Then the fun began.

The action had finally started after two long hours of waiting as our mom's contractions got closer and closer together. I was not a big fan of just sitting around while all of this happened, but I assured myself that when I became a real baby doctor I would not be forced to sit and wait this long. I would be going from one hospital room to another, helping the mothers to birth their babies.

Yet finally all the waiting paid off. A gorgeous young female doctor, as my mom described her, entered the room. When my mom had filled her in about the plan to let Alex and me watch the birth, Dr. Meshcat was very supportive. She even wanted to take it to the next level, and told Alex and me to scrub up.

Here I was, gloved up and standing next to the real baby doctor, telling myself that I was ready to go. I knew I could handle this, even if it was more than I had initially agreed to. I had eyed the baby doctor up and down and instantly made the assessment that I would look much better as a doctor than she did, which helped placate me.

My mom was lying down on her back with a white sheet covering her when the baby doctor said it was time to get the baby out.

Let me just say that when the doctor pulled

back the white sheet and made my mom spread her legs, I was not prepared.

I remember the initial repulsion at what I saw. I should not be allowed to see this. This person lying down on the hospital bed was my mother – but that did not stop the baby doctor.

I wanted to throw up. In no way was this experience what I had signed up for. I heard the doctor talk to my mom as I watched her begin pushing the baby out.

Blood stained the white sheets and I wondered why on earth the hospital would use such light colored sheets if they knew something like this was going to happen. It seemed like such a waste. Sweat dripped down my mom's neck as she gripped the hospital bed and pushed with all her might.

Alex and I were standing directly next to the doctor at the foot of the bed. To say that we got a full view of what was going on would be a gross understatement. I watched as a little slimy white thing that the doctor described as my brother slowly emerged from all of the blood, head first.

I was thoroughly repulsed. In no way shape or form did this come close to the magical vision I had associated with what baby doctors did. This was just plain gross.

Why didn't they teach this in sex education classes? I'm sure that if the schools made the entire sixth grade come to the hospital to witness a birth, then all of the boys and girls would stay very far away from one another for a very long time.

I did not want to be in the small hospital room for one more instant, let alone make this my career. All I wanted was to get out of the room. I did not want to be a baby doctor anymore. In fact, anything would be better than this job.

The same instant when I made up my mind that I wanted to do anything with my life other than what I was participating in right now was the moment the doctor decided was the perfect time to engage my sister and me in what she was doing.

"All right girls," she said with her hands in the pants of my mom that I was trying to avoid looking at. "Why don't you two help me get this baby out?"

The doctor gave my sister and me a quick encouraging look. She did not seem to realize that I no longer wanted to help get the baby out. The baby could stay in my mom for all I cared.

But just then, a small noise emanated from Alex's mouth sealed both of our fates.

"Okay," she said weakly as she slowly moved her hands down to the forbidden area.

I stared at her in shock. I could still run out of the room and attempt to forget this entire experience, but I knew that even fleeing the room would not erase what I was seeing now. I could stand back and allow Alex to be the sole helper but I knew if I did, I would never be able to live this moment down. And besides, it had been my stupid dream of being a baby doctor that had gotten us here in the first place.

I told myself that the faster I got down and helped to get this baby out, the faster I would be able to leave this horrid memory behind me forever.

In the end, even though both my sister and I were completely mortified at what we were doing, we stuck to our commitment. Both our sets of little gloved up hands were right down in the action with the doctor. We helped grab our baby brother and were consequently the first ones to see him, even before our mom and dad.

Though thoroughly shaken about the whole experience, I managed miraculously to keep my face poised well enough the entire time to fool the doctor into thinking that I was enjoying myself. The doctor even rewarded my bravery by letting me cut the umbilical cord that attached my brother to my mom.

"Lucky girl," was how she described what I got to do.

If only she could hear the sixth grade foul language I was yelling to myself as I tried to keep myself from throwing up all over my new brother.

PANGAEA *By Erick Bruecker*

They (geologists, and the like) say that the earth wasn't always arranged the way it is now. They say that at one point, continents weren't separated by large bodies of water, but that land started as one big chunk of not-water somewhere in the middle of the water. Saudi Arabia was a part of Africa, which in turn was a part of the Americas, and so on.

Ms. Stern (who, in spite of her name, had the friendly, if passionless, overconfidence that comes with having just finished a third-rate degree in better economic times and would go on, if I'm recalling correctly, to contract either Lyme disease or pregnancy) called this chunk Pangaea. Progressing through my 7-year old brain and being interpreted by my speech-impaired mouth, it came out as something slightly different: panthea. It broke apart because of natural underground tuttunnic plateth that have been consistently shifting since the earth was formed. Modern science (which I had just discovered) was, and remains, fairly certain of something like this. It explained earthquakes.

It was getting dark when my mom (who, in spite of any opinions that may be formed based on her actions here, is arguably a saint) came home and saw me, in the dining room with the lights off, gluing cut-out continent shapes onto blue construction paper in the positions in which they must have been before a few giant earthquakes (or thousands of very small earthquakes) settled them into their now familiar places. Being of the school of thought that parents must take an active interest in their children - especially what their children are doing in darkened rooms - she asked me what I was doing. I explained, as well as I could, about panthea and tuttunic plateth and that I was making a map of what the world used to look like. It took her a minute to realize that I was talking about homework, and she pointed out that Africa doesn't touch North America.

"See, they're separated by an ocean," she said.

They fit together, I explained. Before they were separated by oceans, they fit together and there used to be just one chunk of land. She told me I had to take my schoolwork more seriously, tried to point out where the continents actually belonged, but was dismayed to find that I had already glued all of the pieces onto the construction paper.

“Well, you can do this one for fun, and I’ll print off more of these and get you some more construction paper, and you can do it right for your teacher.”

“Thith ith wight,” I said. “Thith ith how it wath.”

That was when she began to suspect that I may have been stupid. She called Amy W___’s mother, Mrs. W___, who confirmed that, yes, continents were often separated by oceans. Mrs. W___ wasn’t sure what to do about me. She suggested that children go through phases where they make up random things which they insist must be true. It certainly, Mrs. W___ assured my mom, wasn’t because [my dad had left].

Mom tried to reason with me one more time: “Amy isn’t doing it this way, so why are you?”

By this point, I was watching The Simpsons (at which she glared with forced disapproval) and could only be bothered to say, “Amy’th wong.”

She told me that I had to take school seriously. This wasn’t a joke. She wanted to know if something was wrong with me -- I had never acted like this before. Nothing was wrong with me. I was right, and if anyone disagreed with me then they were wrong. Of course, I couldn’t explain that then. Hell, I didn’t even know what it meant. In frustration, I went to bed.

When I got home from school the next day, Mom apologized. She had met with my teacher, apologized for my ignorance about the location of the continents, and promised that, if given another chance, she would make sure I did it right. I wasn’t a bad kid, I just had some problems because [my dad had left]. She would take me to a psychiatrist, make sure I flew straight. My mom assured Ms. Stern that I didn’t need to be put in any special classes. Ms. Stern pulled out the stack of continents glued to blue construction paper and handed them to my mom.

“Take a look at these,” she said. Every one of them had the continents separated. “Erick is the only one who did it right.” She explained to my mom that not only had I done nothing wrong but I was excelling. Her only fear was that I would get bored.

After her apology, in the long-term, my mom insisted that I either finish high school or get a job, and that I seriously consider college. Aside from these two major caveats, she settled into a largely ceremonial advisory role in my academic career. When I was struggling with math in middle school, she didn’t even ask what I was studying before suggesting that I get a tutor.

As for Pangaea, my mom accepted the idea without ever really warming to it. In the end we agreed that, personal opinions aside, it did exist once, and now it was gone.

BARE FEET

By Ryann Dannelly

Every step I take is carefully planned for this is not the first time I've maneuvered my way around my house without making a single noise. I know one small slip up on an unforgiving floor board will give my position away to the one person I'm very good at avoiding. Instinctively I slow my steps when I reach the middle of the hallway. This section is known to tattle, it groans loudly under the weight of walking feet.

I count each step; one, two, three steps perched on the tips of my toes. A side step on a dead spot on the floor, and my slow dance continues. One, two, three, four more delicate steps and I reach my destination. I pause to listen for a pursuer, but I hear no one. I'm safe. I face the closed white double doors in front of me, my bare feet digging into the plush white carpet. The only reason I'm standing in front of her door is because I know she's not in the room behind it. She's sitting in a metal chair with a purple cushion on it, in the kitchen on her laptop. I know not to put my guard down even though she's sitting an entire floor below me. She has ears like a hawk, no, better than a hawk.

I raise my right hand to the round brass doorknob and begin to turn it to the right. The inside of the doorknob is clicking, but I don't stop turning it. The quiet clicking noise is muffled by the humming air-conditioning unit in the wall next to me. I keep turning the doorknob until I hear the final definitive click. The sudden high pitched ringing of the doorbell breaks my concentration.

"For Christ sake," my mother screams. I jump and try to scope out where the boisterous voice is coming from. My mind races as I try to remember why I wanted to get into my parents' bedroom in the first place as I frantically search for the woman with the boisterous voice. I expect to see her standing somewhere on the third floor landing, but she is nowhere to be seen. I can hear the skidding sound of the metal chair scrapping along the wooden floor as she stands up in the kitchen. Even from my position at the end of the third floor landing, I'm able to hear clearly the sound of her one-inch high heels clapping on the floor as she leaves the kitchen and heads toward the basement door.

"Do you know what time it is, Megan?" she shrieks down the basement stairs. Her voice sounds anything but dulcet as it reverberates around the entire house. I breathe in a sigh of relief. I'm still safe. This attack is not meant for me. "Your ride's here," she screams again. I can hear the light footsteps of my eight-year-old sister as she prances up the wooden

basement stairs to our waiting mother. "You need to grow up and remember your own schedule for once," my mother yells as the feet of my sister dart around her. "Get outside now," she yells as Megan races toward the front door. The sound of Megan grabbing her ballet bag in the hallway and sprinting out the front door is accompanied by my mother's voice muttering a few choice words. I hope Megan made it out of the house before the stream of obscenities was loud enough to distinguish actual words.

The house is quiet once more. I can hear the digging of my mother's heels as she walks back to her chair in the kitchen and sits back down. Turning back to face the door, I go through the entire process of silently turning the doorknob, which could really use a proper oiling, once more. I tiptoe into the bedroom and close the old wooden door behind me, silently and just as carefully. Realistically I know that a feeble old stained door will not keep my mother from finding me if she really wants to, but I still feel safer with a barrier between her and me.

The appearance of the empty master bedroom momentarily calms me. The afternoon light coming through the two open windows is bouncing off golden walls and onto old wooden furniture. As I shift my positions at the entrance, a bright reflective light catches my eyes. I look around for the source and finally discover the light is coming from the dresser. Slowly I walk over to the dresser on the right side of the room and pick up the golden picture frame. I can feel a smile spreading across my face when I look at the picture. The photograph was taken my grandmother seven years ago at the Pacific Beach in California. Five bodies with smiling faces are piled onto an inflatable pink tube bobbing in shallow ocean water. My entire family and I had just ridden a wave all the way to shore. No one had fallen off and we hadn't flipped the tube. This four inch by six inch picture managed to capture a smile on everyone's face as we all squinted at the camera.

As I stare at the photo, I realize I remember what happened seconds after the camera clicked. Our celebration continued and I laughed with my mother over our accomplishment. My little brother Ben, days away from turning six, was bouncing on his section of the tube in pure glee. His feet were splashing about in his excitement as he extended his skinny arm and gave our dad a high five. I watched as Ben bent over the tube and down into the water. In a flash, he had thrown what he thought was pure ocean water into the air in an act of celebration. What he didn't know was that his small fist had grabbed sand as well. When he threw the water into the air, water

and sand splashed down into our little sister eyes.

Megan was sitting contently on our mother's protective pregnant lap when the sand and salt water hit her in the face and matted her dark brown curly hair. She immediately started crying, which was quickly followed by my mother cleaning out her eyes and tickling her round belly to make her laugh again. Our mother turned to look at Ben who was staring at Megan with the panicked expression of someone who knew he had just done something wrong. She gently told him to be more careful around the baby before smiling to let him know everything was all right.

When I hear the sound of her chair grinding once more along on the wooden floor, I realize my hand is shaking, and the picture frame bobbles between my fingertips. I quickly set it back on the dresser so as not to make any more noise. I strain my ears once more to hear what my mother is doing. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten seconds of silence. The only sound I hear is the quiet humming of the air-conditioning and the loud thumping of my heart, which feels as if it's about to rip its way out of my chest. I try to reassure myself that she must just have been repositioning herself on the chair.

I'm still safe. Slowly I turn around to face the king size bed with its old wooden frame and yellow patterned comforter. I walk on the tips of my toes to be sure I don't make a sound. One, two, three slow steps and I reach the edge of the bed, her bed. The question of why I'm standing here rattles around in my brain, but I try to tune that thought out. I know I don't have a rational answer to that question, and I know I should leave the room just as quietly as I entered before she hears me, but I also know I won't follow my own advice.

Carefully I climb onto the bed as my mind once more tries to convince me to leave the room and I once more resist. I let out a slow silent breath because I've forgotten how incredibly comfortable this bed is. My body tries to relax itself as I lie down and look up at the ceiling. My feet dangle from one end and my head from the other. It feels strange to be as tall as the bed is wide. I didn't used to be this length. I try to think of the last time I was on this bed, but my mind comes up empty, so I roll over onto my stomach in frustration. Why can't I remember? There's a neat pile of books below the open windows on the carpet. A layer of dust has gathered on Julia and the Wolves, the book on top of the pile. The edges of some of the others, like James and the Giant Peach, Lassie Come Home and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, are curling due to the morning dew that comes through the always open windows.

That's when the answer comes to me. I remember when I used to think this bed was the largest bed in the world. I used to sit in a curled-up position every night during elementary school along with my brother and sister. Mother would read to us every night like clockwork. The bed always seemed so large and there was always plenty of room for everyone to nestle comfortably with room to spare in case our dad joined us. I used to look forward to nighttime, when we would all pile around her and listen to her voice as she read to us out loud. We would all laugh and smile as the story progressed and inch closer and closer to her when the suspense got scary.

"No fucking way," I hear her scream. I bolt to sitting on her bed and look around like a deer in headlights. The room is still empty and the door is still closed. I hear her feet storming out of the library and toward the staircase leading to the third floor. My hands ball into tense fists as I slide off the bed in anticipation of whatever will soon happen. "That little piece of shit," she yells as she races up the stairs at a pace that isn't comforting. Instinctively I count her loud steps as she climbs the stairs – one, two, three, four, five steps. There are 15 steps on this staircase. I know I don't have more than a few seconds to prepare myself.

I rack my brain for something I've done that might have resulted in her current rage. My bedroom and bathroom are a mess, but she doesn't know that. I go back to counting – nine, ten, eleven steps up the stairs. It doesn't matter what her reasoning is now. She'll be here soon enough and everything will be revealed. I brace myself for the impact of the double doors flinging inward as she reaches the top of the stairs. I listen to one, two and three more of her steps before I realize something is off. Her steps are taking her in the opposite direction from her bedroom. She isn't coming for me. I'm still safe. I breathe in a sigh of relief. She's headed toward Ben's room. I hear her opening Ben's bedroom door with a thud much louder than necessary and I wonder if she's succeeded in breaking the door or the wall. It wouldn't be the first time.

"Why the fuck did you not turn in four assignments last week?" she screams. "Shit Ben, you're failing three of your classes now. I hope you're proud of this because no college is gonna' want to take a kid who doesn't give a fuck about his schoolwork. Hell, you're headed to the front line of the army to get shot at and killed. Is that what you want," she yells even louder.

I know what's going to happen next. It's happened so many times before. Ben will yell back at her, which will only prompt her to get more aggravated with him. I know they will continue screaming without re-

ally listening until one of them breaks down into tears. The first one to cry loses. The only person who can even attempt to end their fights in anything but tears is my dad, and he is currently at work. All he does is work now because it's his escape out of the house.

I force myself to move away from the bed. I don't want to hear another round of their fight. I don't have to sneak because I'm no longer concerned with her hearing me. She's a little busy now. The only thing I want to do is put as much distance between the screaming and me. My feet carry me across the master bedroom and into the walk-in closet so I don't have to hear them.

I make myself keep walking into the closet without reaching up for the light switch. There's no need for the light to be turned on; I can see well enough by the natural light that spills into half of the closet, and I know I'm not actually looking for anything. I move deeper, into the dark part of the closet, my mother's side of the closet, in an attempt to muffle the noise, counting my steps to drown out the screaming – one, two, three, four steps deeper into the closet until I reach the furthest depths.

Back here, I'm almost invisible, but I sit down on the ground in an attempt to make myself blend into the darkness completely. There's a large clear plastic box to the right of me on the ground, a colorful poster board pressing against it. As I reach my hand up to open the lid, I realize what's inside and stop my hand – so many forgotten art projects from when I was in elementary school.

I was seven-years-old the summer day the colorful poster pressing against the side of the box was made. Our mother had set up an elaborate finger painting workshop in the middle of our front yard and told us to do whatever we wanted with the paint. No one was sure how to start. We all looked at her for guidance and received an understanding smile in return. She told us we were allowed to get as messy into the paint as we wanted to, as long as we were creating something. To make her point, she dunked her right hand into the blue paint and her left hand into the yellow. I watched in silence as she painted beautiful designs with her hands on the white poster board while singing, "Here Comes the Sun" right there in the middle of our front lawn. When she was finished she walked back over to where my brother and I stood and placed one of her fingers on each of our noses before wiping her paint-covered hands across her white shirt with a smile.

The sound of the double doors slamming open with entirely too much force jolts my hand into the side of the box. I don't dare move from my position on her closet floor now that I know how truly close she is.

There are no longer layers upon layers of walls separating me from her. I try to keep myself from panicking by reminding myself that she doesn't know I'm in here. I can tell she's still fuming about her fight with Ben because her feet are pacing in loud unproductive circles around the room. I wonder if she believes she won this round. My nerves are so tightly wound that I'm sure I'm going to accidentally make some sort of sound that will reveal my position. I try counting her steps to calm myself – one, two, three, four steps to the right followed by one, two, three, four steps to the left. Repeat.

After about fifteen seconds of listening to her pacing she suddenly stops. I haven't truly breathed in twenty seconds, and I suck in a much needed breath while listening to her steps pick up as she heads back toward her bedroom door. I breathe in a sigh of relief as I slowly stand up. This is my chance to get out of her room. My left foot is about to take the first step toward the front of the closet when I realize something isn't right. The sound of her feet has stopped and I can't tell where she is.

"Paige," she shouts from the entrance to her bedroom. I jump and almost fall onto a pile of clothing on the floor before regaining my balance. The truth of my situation comes crashing in around me. I'm not safe. I'm trapped. This time she's calling for me and I have no excuse. The closet is getting smaller and smaller and I know if I don't get out soon I will suffocate. I inhale a shaky breath and force myself to move one foot in front of the other as if teaching myself to walk – one, two, three, four, five indecisive steps toward the front of the closet. As I lift my right foot to take the sixth step, I hear the phone ringing. I stop walking and listen.

I hear my mother walk away from the closet door and back into her bedroom to answer the phone on her bedside table. Even from the closet I can hear as she audibly sucks in a breath to calm herself before picking up the phone. "Hello," she says cheerfully.



Birthday Brownie - *Laura DelPrato*

The **BEAR** I Didn't See *By Denise Parker*

We'd seen it earlier that day, or evidence of it, all of us crowded into my uncle's camper, peering excitedly at the screen. The hidden camera had snapped a few images of a bear, so from the comfort of an awkwardly orange couch we appraised it via thumbnails. "It doesn't look so big," my dad asserted, while my aunt looked nervous. Phil was running his fingers over the camera's casing, which had been decorated with new ridges, claw marks scraping down it like riverbeds. I glanced out the window bravely.

Later that night we had a bonfire, the three of us lounging in uncomfortable chairs, burning our fingers on marshmallows and banishing the night. I sat with my back to the building; there on the ridge surrounded by trees my bravery had faded and every crackle of twigs sounded to me like something crashing through the mountain directly at me. I pulled my smoky sweater closer to my face and forced myself to watch the flames. My dad and uncle drank their beers and talked about their plans to clear a patch and build a real house. I told them I'd help clear trees, when I really meant I'd sit in the shade and read a book. Thoughts of warm sunlight made the blackness fade to greyness in my sight and I joined the conversation to keep it that way, avoiding the unseen bear lurking at the edges of my mind. I began to get comfortable in the familiar softness of night, ignoring the threat that had invaded my favourite time of day.

When night had faded into a properly inky, thick darkness they rose and announced that it was time for an adventure. We'd walked that way before, but now it was dark and so everything was new. I clutched my flashlight and was torn where to point it. It didn't take long for me to decide that tripping over shadowed roots was preferable to not seeing my doom lumbering toward me through the trees, not seeing the light reflect off the beady black eyes that were sure to seek me out as soon as we stepped foot on the trail. The moment I'd made up my mind they told me to turn off the light; they wanted to wholly experience the dimness.

I was blindfolded, the night wrapping itself across my face. For a moment it was tangible and I couldn't even breathe. As the air came in short small gulps I heard little crunching, crashing sounds, envisioned a raging demon, silky furred, teeth bared, breaking down trees a few feet from me. I reached out and touched my dad, human contact settling me back down to the earth for a moment. Then I heard it again, and I was sure it was real this time. A substantial stomping from up the mountain, sounds of something large and living and deadly brown delighting in having found a helpless girl-morsel for dinner, not even armed with her flashlight.

Then silence fell and my mind began to race, working overtime as I realised that worse than the noise of a clumsy animal was the silence and stealth of an agile, careful black bear. I wouldn't even hear it sneak up behind me, wouldn't know what was happening until I felt the paw smack into me, the claws sink into my laughably soft flesh. I began to whimper, and they chuckled, telling me to breathe and that I was okay. But it got closer, I stepped back and stumbled on a shadow, squeaking aloud, a wordless cry for help.

It was only then that they relented, flicking the light on and leading me back to camp. I glanced behind me the whole way, eyes scanning the beaten path for the bear whose breath I surely felt on my neck. It seemed like hours before we reached the clearing again and I let out the breath I'd been holding, relaxed my white-knuckled grip on the flashlight. The fire still burned and within its circle of light I slowly came back to myself. I was whole, unsliced, unmauled, uneaten. The building still stood, free of claw mark decorations. There were no paw prints to be seen in the soft earth. I laughed weakly against my fear, made myself wander a bit, but even then at the back of everything was the fear of the bear that I didn't see.



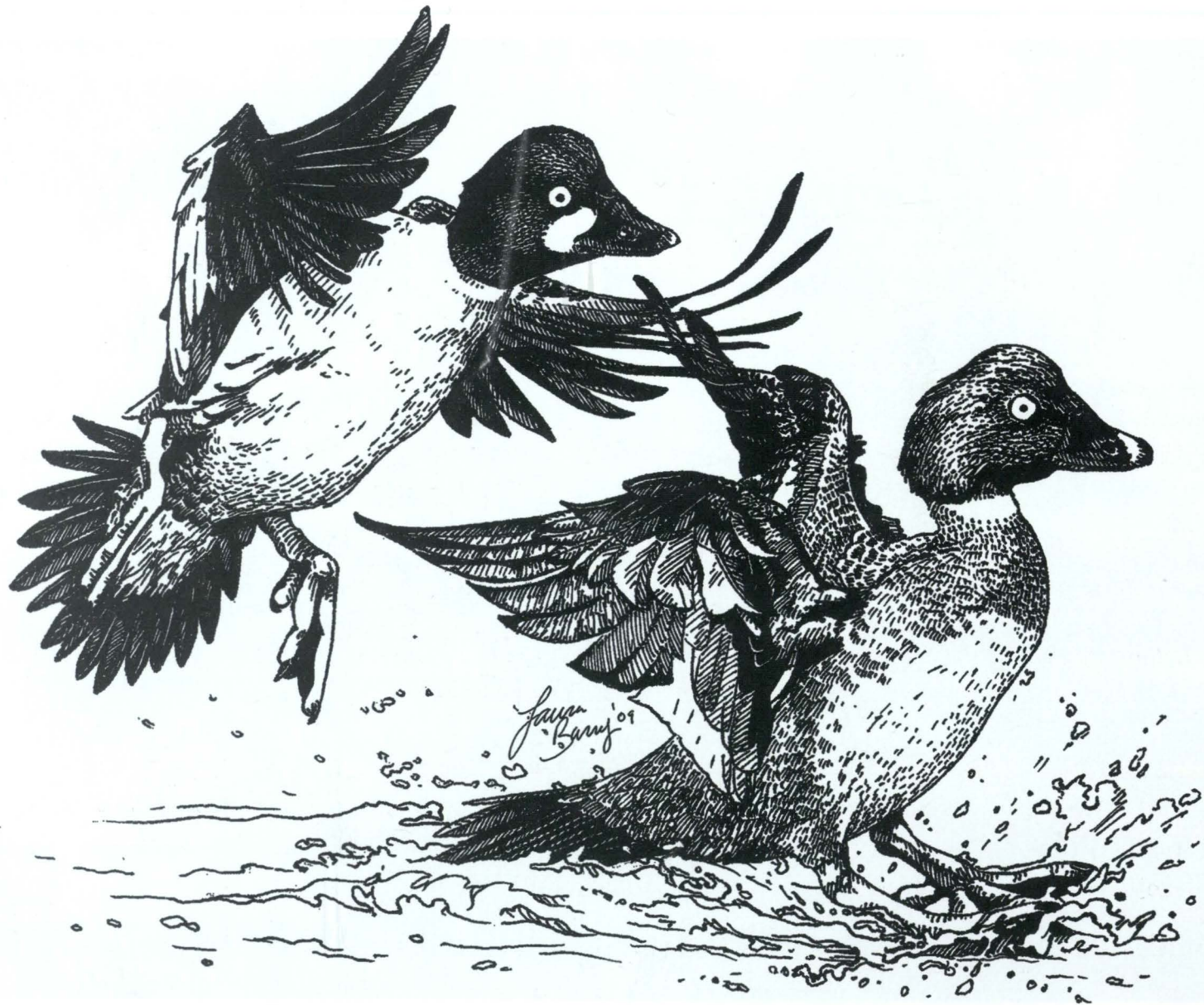
Adrenaline - *Laura Murray*



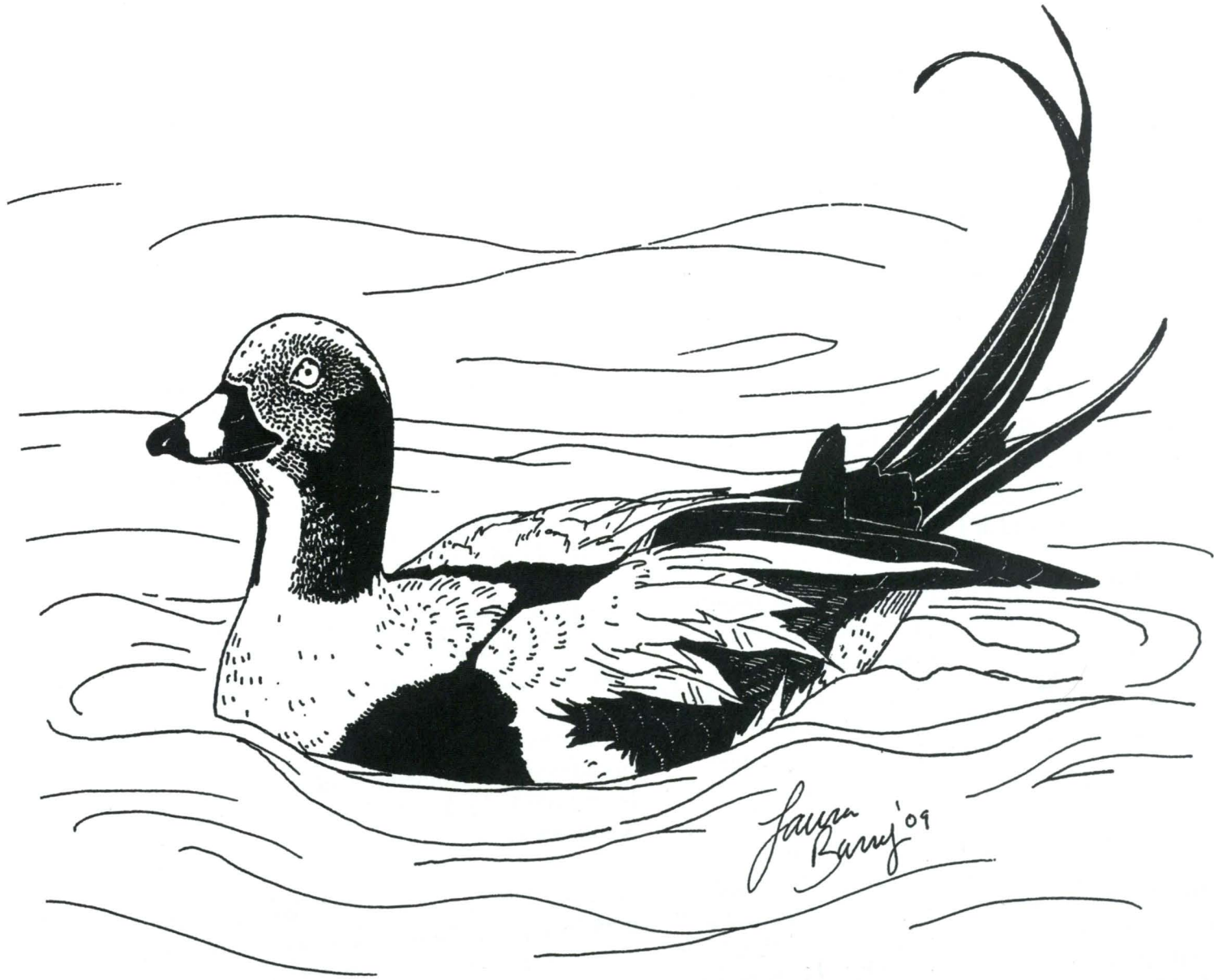
Untitled - *Emily Marsch*



Untitled - *Emily Marsch*



Common Goldeneye - Laura Barry



Longtail Duck - Laura Barry

THE MAGICIANS' DUEL

By Victor J. Wasserman

It seems so long ago I dreamed of the magicians' duel. I was in a room that was, in every sense, the kind of place I thought of when I heard the word "chamber". With me were two figures, an old man, and a boy not much older than me. It seemed the three of us were somehow acquainted and the old man was very polite to me, smiling the wide, tight-lipped grin he always gave me and squinting his eyes as he leaned on his tall staff.

He called me by my pet name, which I only have in dreams and can never remember, and I called him Jo-jo, because it was impolite to say his name in front of other people. Jo-jo said that the boy had challenged him to a test, and the boy rolled his eyes and gave me a nasty look. He was dressed kind of funny, like Prince Valiant with a red suit and blonde bowl cut hair, but he stood so straight and looked so angry I didn't want to make eye contact, so instead I looked at Jo-jo.

It was then I remembered that Jo-jo was a wizard. After I remembered it was very obvious; he was dressed how I'd expect a wizard to dress, though he never wore that silly pointed hat because it made him feel stupid and at one of our tea parties he had told me he could never keep it straight and it would constantly flop over and get in his face. The boy was Jo-jo's apprentice and the two of them were going to have a duel, and Jo-jo had invited me to be the referee.

The wizard asked his apprentice if that seemed fair, and for an awkward moment, the boy glared really hard at me, sizing me up and I blushed and had to cover my face. But then he twitched his nose and that seemed to mean he was fine with it. So then Jo-jo told me to get comfortable and so I found a chair and brought it over so I could sit about halfway between them. The student reached into a bag he had tied around his belt that looked sort of like a limp fanny pack that I always saw Robin Hood had and he would keep money in it, so I was surprised when the boy pulled

out a wand that looked like it shouldn't have been able to fit. It didn't look like a wand, but it had to be a wand because what else could it be and he held it like it was the most important thing in the room and that was true.

Jo-jo had once told me, I suddenly remembered, that a wand is the most powerful thing in the world. It's more magical than any fairy and more powerful than any wizard. No wizard, not even Jo-jo, can be more powerful than the wand he uses, so it made sense that the apprentice was so careful. But he seemed awfully rude. Sure, he probably knew as much as me or even more about how strong wands are, but he didn't treat Jo-jo like that at all. He seemed to be laughing as he held it in his hands, wetting his lips just slightly, like he was hungry for a fight, like he was about to do something really bad and was excited about it. I didn't like him but I knew I had to be fair because I was going to be the judge.

But Jo-jo didn't get out a wand. He didn't even seem to be getting ready. He just leaned on his staff, looking sort of sad and distant, maybe just sleepy or maybe his wrinkled face didn't show what he was thinking anymore. I remembered having that thought before, when I had thought about why everyone thought he was so smart, and why everyone wanted his advice. I remembered thinking that's why the king sent his son to learn from Jo-jo about being smart. I remembered that was who the apprentice was.

But Jo-jo didn't move much. He just kept leaning, glancing halfheartedly at the boy across the room and once or twice looking in my direction, but never really at me, and that made me sad because I thought we were friends. This went on for what seemed like a really long time, because in dreams everything goes fast so that you're never bored but this was boring because nothing was happening and nothing happened even after I waited. Finally Jo-jo straightened up a bit, and he tapped his staff on

the floor and it made a lot of noise and got my attention as well as the prince's. Then they were ready to start.

The Duel

The old man's getting tired of reliving old memories. Even if they aren't real memories. Even if they are all just lies he's feeding to this girl, if she really exists. Fake memories of a past, of a relationship, of a dream and a life within the dream that hasn't happened and never will. An empty dream with nothing but happy thoughts. What a crock.

Even if the girl is real, even if she's from someplace I don't know about, some place that hasn't been unmade yet, it doesn't matter. Once he's inside her head, it's really just his dream. He says it makes people happy, that peace makes them peaceful, that happy thoughts make lives good, somehow worth living. Empty dreams in empty heads. Heads that can't support a crown. Better to have an empty thrown.

And now we do. Now there's no king, we have no despotic ruler, no tyrant, and that's what he wanted. Now there are no people, we don't need to placate them with happy thoughts, make them dream of a life without mud and shit in their teeth, and that's what he wanted. Now there's no land, we have no invaders, no turmoil, no fear of being pillaged, and that's what he wanted. I've made my master's wishes come true. I brought a lasting peace. And I did it without lies.

I can get into heads too. I saw each one of them; saw them dreaming his dream, each as blind to the world as the old man himself. I've seen the perfect world that doesn't exist, that I've never believed in and then I showed them what I was going to bring. I showed them a real peace, the peace that would follow when I had sent everything away. When sound is banished, you can't hear a scream, so it was quiet. When emotions are quartered in the oblivion, all the world is tranquil. When people have no bodies, pain stops. I made this happen, and each of them understood it before they became a part of my eternal peace. Unity through abolition, oneness out of nothing, the only eternal choice, the only honest choice.

Now there is just us, just this semblance of a room and that shadow of a girl, perhaps the shadow world she comes from, but no, I'm too close to being able to rest to weigh that chance, to risk playing his game if she is an illusion. This wand is strong enough to unmake reality; I don't need anything more to kill him.

My mentor taps his staff, my mentor calls for attention. My former master accepts my challenge. He explains in that friendly manner by which he enslaved my world that the contest is between wizards, and as such, subject to different rules. The wizards play a game, chosen by a spectator. The spectator then acts as the judge, responsible for announcing the end of the duel. The referee has no other duties. The duel ends when a magician falls.

My master and I turn to our spectator. The girl is tiny, young, misplaced from her bed in the dead of night. As I stare at her, I hate her. I hate her for not understanding how vital she is. I hate her because she will never fully grasp that there is nothing beyond these walls. I hate her because she is the last living thing left and she may not even be real. I hate her because she is a trick, I hate her because she thinks she loves the old man, I hate her because when I've finished with him I will have to deal with her and when I go to peace, her fear will be the last trouble I know. And yet still, she does not speak!

The Game

I knew they were waiting and it was tough to think on the spot. Jo-jo had asked for a challenge, not a fight but a contest, something difficult. But what's difficult?

I could have thought of a bunch of difficult things, tasks that were challenging for me at the time. Learn all the words to the national anthem; pull all the weeds in the garden. But then there were things that were too hard for me to do too, like when I had to flush Philip because he died and mom said it was part of growing up, but I couldn't because he was my friend and I didn't want to do that to him, even though I knew he was dead, so dad had to do it and he wasn't happy about it.

But that wouldn't be very fair. One of them would probably be able to do it already. It had to be challenging now, so it had to be something new. But I couldn't think of something new that didn't seem silly, and I felt like I did whenever we played truth or dare and I could never come up with anything on the spot. I was stuck. I couldn't think of anything.

I apologized. I said I was sorry and that I wanted to go home and the prince sneered at me and I wanted to cry. But Jo-jo smile and calmed me down. He said it didn't have to be something strange. Or something magic. Wizards, he said, can do all of that on their own and what he and his apprentice wanted was something neither of them would have come up with. He asked me, what was I better at than anyone else I knew?

So I thought, and I thought about flushing Philip because I was still sad, and I thought about how Dad had been angry that I couldn't handle the responsibility. He made me want to cry and so I ran and hid in the woods behind the house for what seemed like a really long time until I was less angry and sad and more scared because I was getting cold and it was dark, so I went home. And my dad said he had been wondering where I was and I told him I had been hiding in the woods and wanted to know why he had not tried to find me. And he said, I was so good at hiding that he didn't even know I was hiding and so he didn't know he was suppose to look for me. So he kissed me on the forehead and said he was sorry he made me want to hide in the woods. And he asked me to tell him next time so he would know to count to one hundred and come find me. So I told Jo-jo, hiding.

The Prince's Turn

I do not need to ambush you to best you in a fight. I do not need to hide from you to survive your attacks. My honor is not so flimsy as to need protection from challenge, my courage not so soft that it shies from a test.

I've come too far to fear you and there is nothing left to fear; I've made ruin of all other obstacles and have done so plainly and without deceit. If this is another of your tricks, then you should cower from my wrath, but willing it is a fair challenge, I hide myself in the last place that is.

At the far end of my father's realm, there is another. Beyond that region is a third and a week's journey from there is my uncle's land. All of that no longer exists. Stretching out from that point, which is no more, were three more lengths of the distance between my father's throne and his brother's. Those four lengths, redoubled and that whole expanse laid down once more past its own tip, stretch to the last point I know of. Beyond there, an imperfect nothingness, populated sparsely in the most conservative sense, reaches out for an unknowable time before it abruptly ceases. Beyond there is nothing. It would be months to reach the beginning of that nothingness. Lifetimes to cross it. But at that final end, there is an indestructible boundary, which marks by its existence the true nothingness beyond. This boundary is like the space between the air and water. It is a surface, composed of nothing but the shift from substance to absence. It cannot be crossed nor can it be seen through. I hide behind that.

The Wizard's Turn

There is a place, and it's not where you're thinking of. It's not a lofty tower rising over a windswept plain, built stone by stone with the raw strength of its barbarian masons. Each stone carved from mountains long crumbled to dust, the tower a mausoleum in memory of what no one recalls. Nor is it a fortress deep below your feet, perched on a black rock of pitch and ash and obsidian, all around it over come with a lake of fire and liquid stone that splashes and burns with a single wave. Windowless, entryless, no one comes, goes or knows of this prison any longer. Warden and flock are but dust in the stagnant air which chokes within and burns without. No, not there either. Nor will you see it if you turn your face to the sun, in search of that speck you know must be there, the minor eclipse which crowds the light so it cannot be seen: you are thinking of that floating isle where only flightless things live, creatures that could never be there yet are the only ones living at that great height in that lost land. There, flowers grow, ants crawl and horses run, but that place knows no nest or tree and nothing stands higher than a stump. No, not even there. The place I mean is nowhere you can see so easily, reach so easily. The place I choose to hide is in a speck on the small of your back, so close you'd never search it, so far you could never glance with even a fingertip, hidden so as only a friend could seek me in your stead, and of

those, I am the last.

The Waking

I remember thinking how strange it was to wake up in my bed that morning. I remember my pillow being wet, as though I had been crying the whole night. I felt exhausted, as though I hadn't slept at all but tossed endlessly, though really my bed looked as though I had hardly been there. I looked out my bedroom window and saw there was still light shining in. The prince hadn't unmade this world too while I was asleep.

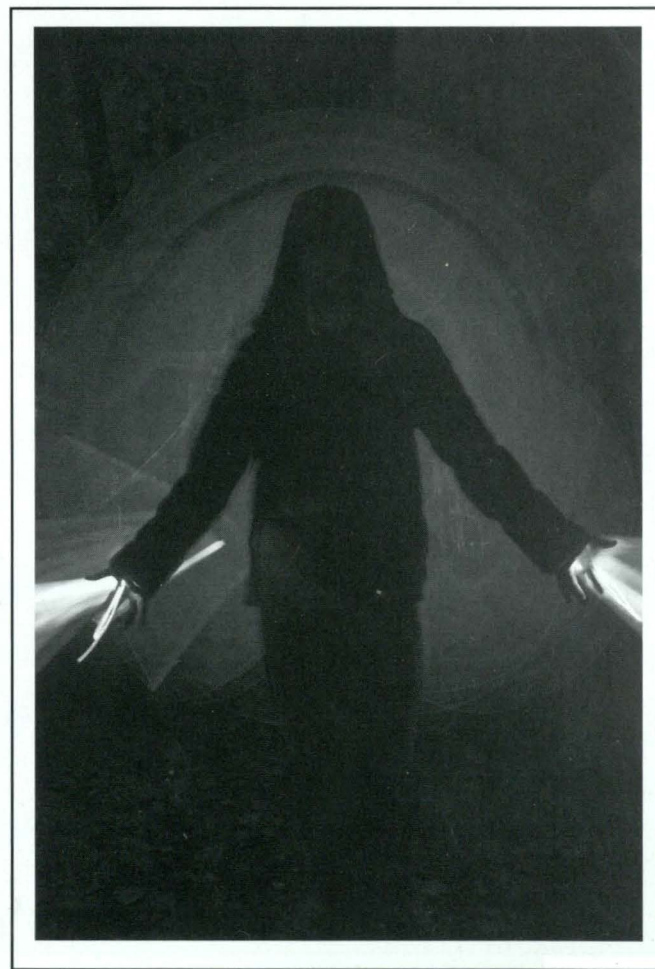
I remembered feeling so sad as I watched the magicians duel. I remembered the illustrations the prince conjured, the fierceness with which he mapped his voyage to the furthest point, biting at the words he spoke as though he was loath to surrender his secrets, but even more afraid to seem a coward for playing my silly game.

I felt the exhaustion of his trip as though I had taken every step myself, and he too was choking for breath by the end. It's hard to express how sad he was. He knew this place he wanted to hide in as though he'd been there every day of his life. As though it was where he looked forward to going some day, the place he wanted to retire to, the place he dreamed of at night. Something about it was special, secretive, his every action was in pursuit of something like this place, and it was killing him to have to relive it in front of me and the wizard.

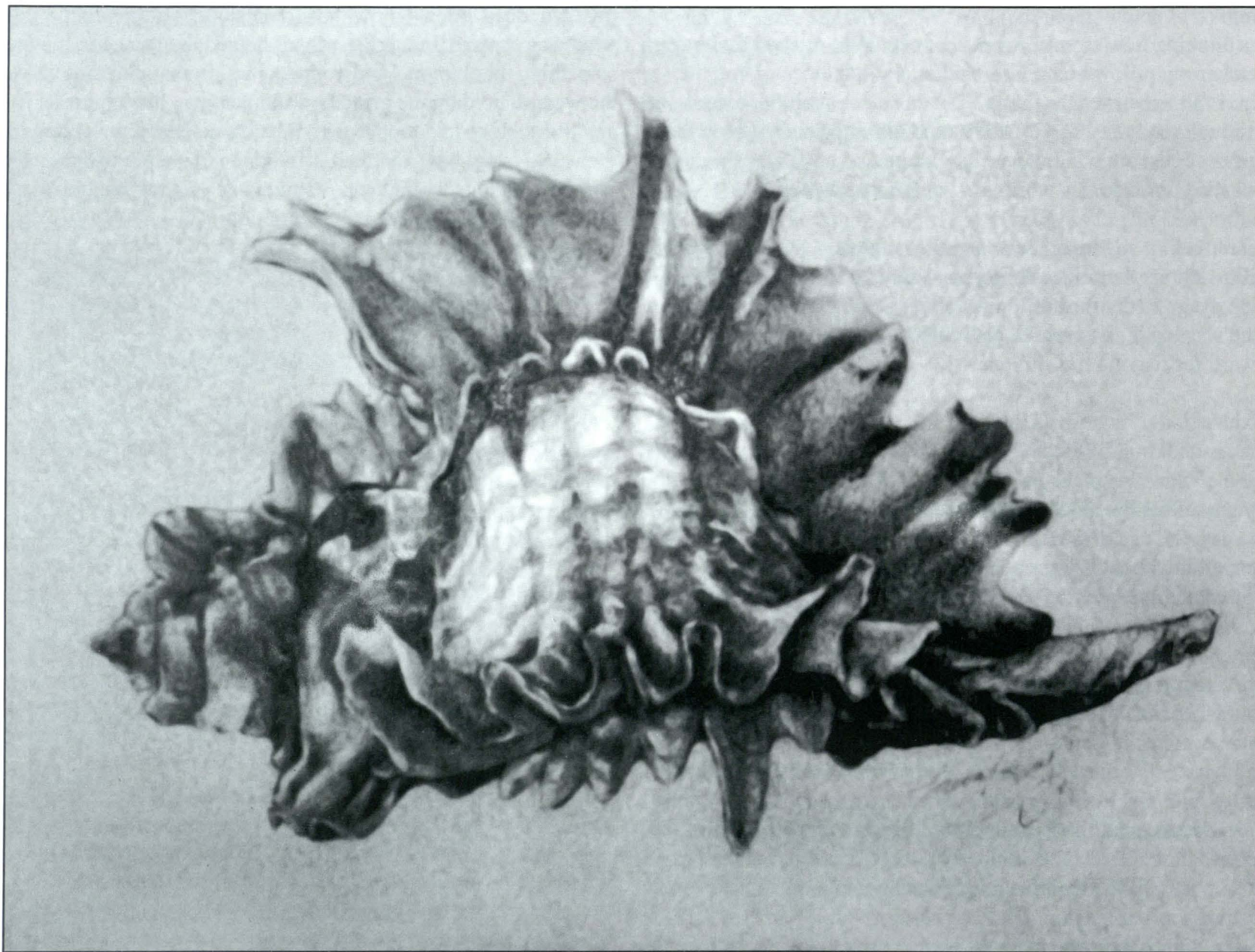
The wizard. Dreams are funny things. I don't know what the wizard said. I don't know where he chose to hide. I know I heard him say something. I know he gave a reason for his choice and I know I felt moved by it, like I did when I heard the prince speak, but I know what I remember isn't what he really said, just like how I know I didn't really call him Jo-jo. I called him something, but that part my mind filled in after. Wherever the wizard chose to hide, I'll never be able to know for certain, but the prince heard the real answer and when the magicians had both taken their turns, only the wizard was left standing.

The prince had fallen to his knees, tears pouring from his eyes. The duel was over and I announced this to the room. One of the players had fallen.

What followed was a conversation I was too young to understand, so I can't trust myself to say I didn't fill much of it in over the years with my own ideas. I don't know the circumstances of the duel, I don't know what was at stake, but as the wizard helped the prince to his feet, he said something that I know I did not make up. In that pleasant voice of his, the wizard, holding the prince's wand between his fingers as if it were any old stick he had found, said "There's no harm in wanting to destroy the world every now and then, I've done it a couple of times. The trouble with the world is that it keeps coming back." And this, for me, has always been true. I still dream about the prince.



Focusing Energy - *Laura DelPrato*



Untitled - *Laura Barry*



Untitled - *Shannon Rollins*

Real Pizza

By Lourdes Figueroa

“The diet is off.”

So Jack is off the diet. Is that what the doctor said? Yes, that’s what he recommends. I simply nod. I do not smile with him.

No more shopping at two different supermarkets in search of the special foods, buying regular cereal at one place and then paying for those odd, gluten free brands at another store. No more reading the label of every product I take to check its contents. No more dividing the groceries. Putting the regular things on the highest cupboards so Jack won’t accidentally get them when he goes around the kitchen looking for his special snacks. No more baking pizza with chewy toppings and plasters of hardened glue pretending to be cookies.

“I don’t understand. After all these months, just like that, we should take him off the diet?” I am perplexed, enraged, relieved. The doctor explains the situation. “Although the gluten free lifestyle has produced improvement in Jack’s behavior, it is not significant enough.” I can feel my face turning red and my hands sweating cold. The doctor notices this too, and so he lengthens his explanation to keep me focused. “It is not worthwhile to have your son under those intense restrictions.”

No more awkward dinners with the family. Pretending no to notice my nephews’ and nieces’ petrified faces as I cut the vanilla cake at Jack’s ninth birthday party, dreading the moment when the cake would be served and eaten. No more acting as if I didn’t know what they were discussing in their youthful conversations, how the plastic plate probably tastes better than the cake and wondering why there weren’t two cakes, a real cake for everyone and one for Jack. No more vanilla cakes that are not real. Claiming their existence just by taking up space at the table.

“Since Jack’s degree of autism is not so high, it is not as beneficial to keep him on the diet. You see, it wasn’t playing a crucial part in his improvement.”

So the diet is off.

No more preparing a lunchbox whenever we go out on the weekends. Carrots in the small Tupperware with the red lid, fish in the long blue container, flavorless cookies in the Ziploc bag. No more explaining to the waiter that the “little man” doesn’t need a menu because he brought his own food. By the fifth time we went out in this style, I let Jack do the explaining. He was thrilled to tell anyone who would listen that his carrots were more abundant in vitamins, his fish richer in protein, and his cookies healthier. Silly inventions my husband came up with for Jack to feel better about his bland meals. But now he would be able to look at the menu again, not that he needed it. He always ordered the same thing: pizza.

“So he can start eating regular food now? Right away?” I ask, trying to forget all the culinary routines of the past year and looking forward to the possibilities of upcoming meals.

No more downloading online recipes. No more buying cookbooks. No more attempts to make gluten free food taste, or at least look, like a normal meal. To make the best gluten free pizza had been my mission for months. That’s how I had spent countless mornings, baking pizza. I often didn’t go to the gym, forgot to pick up the dry cleaning, and rescheduled dentist appointments and lunch dates with my friends to stay in the kitchen, struggling to make the bread crispier and the cheese less elastic. Trying to make a gluten free pizza look like food.

“He can go back to eating regular food right away. But with moderation, that’s all I am asking for. The transition should not be too abrupt.”

The doctor makes me stay for thirty-three more minutes going over Jack’s results, arranging the next appointment and other details. I just want to leave his office and prepare one single meal for the three of us at the house. I’m thinking rainbow pancakes with powdered sugar and scrambled eggs with sausages. A side of bacon for my husband and Jack. Fruit Loops for dessert. The diet is off. Breakfast for dinner. Why not?

As I drive home I pass by Anthony’s Coal Fired Pizza. I change my mind about the breakfast for dinner thing. I make an illegal U-turn and drive into the parking lot through the exit. I don’t care. The diet is off. The restaurant is packed, but I don’t mind. I wait for almost an hour before I get my large cheese pizza.

“Guys, I brought dinner!” My husband meets me in the living room. He is puzzled as he sees me holding the box with gluten rich pizza. “The doctor said the diet is off.” I’m beaming. “Let’s talk about it later,” I say quickly as I hear a door slam and Jack running toward the stairs.

“Is that pizza I smell?” Jack screams from the second floor. His question is redundant. He knows very well what the smell belongs to even though he hasn’t seen the pizza. Jack gets to the living room and opens the box I’m holding. He doesn’t give me a kiss or even say hello. But tonight I overlook his lack of manners.

“But this is-” he stutters.

“Yes. Real pizza. Now go wash your hands for dinner.” He runs off with no hesitation.

While my husband and Jack set the table, I throw the gluten free pizza I had baked that morning in the trash, curse it, take a minute to swallow my tears, and sit at the table with my boys.

Section Two

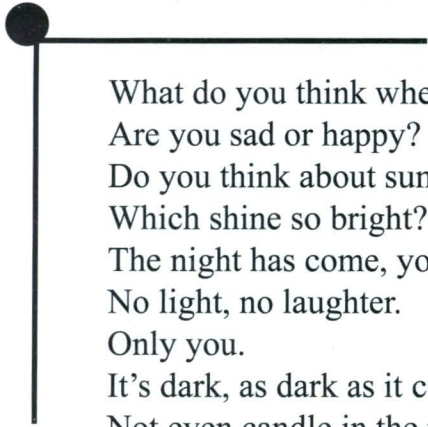
Poetry



Agate 2 - Elizabeth Ygartua

Poem One

By Meggi Agrba



What do you think when you're alone?
Are you sad or happy?
Do you think about sun or stars at night,
Which shine so bright?
The night has come, you are alone.
No light, no laughter.
Only you.
It's dark, as dark as it could get.
Not even candle in the room.
You dream about future, remember the past.
No present exist anymore.
You don't feel sleepy.
You don't feel scared.
The most beautiful thoughts are coming.
The only light you see is the moon light.
You can see little sparkles bouncing from it.
You are in a dream, but still awake.
The stars are reflected by the moonlight.
The thoughts are reflected by the path you
take.
The night is coming to get you.
No more thoughts to disturb your sweet sleep.
Leave all the worries behind.
Morning is wiser than the evening.

You Will Never Know

By Meggi Agrba

I still think of you from day to day,
And still I call your name.
But you will never know.

Yes, I remember all the things.
And all my smiles you turned from tears.
But you will never know.

I still say that you're the one.
The one, who holds my heart.
I still say that you're the one.
The one, who taught me love.
But you will never know.

I still remember how we met.
We hated then we loved.
I still remember that one day,
That changed my life from grey to bright.
But you will never know.

I still dream about you,
From night to night,
From day to day.
I still dream about you,
And still I call your name.
But you will never know.

The Decision

By Timothy Boykin

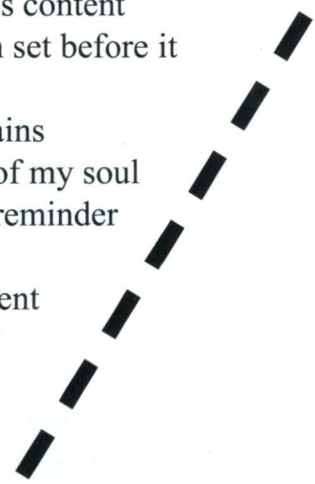
I look out onto the waters
my mind
somewhere between sobriety and regret drifts to you

In a flash I see our future
for the first time
I am not afraid

the moment is fleeting
as my consciousness is content
to continue down the path set before it

but a spark remains
deep within the fabric of my soul
a silent and constant reminder

that every moment
spent in sear



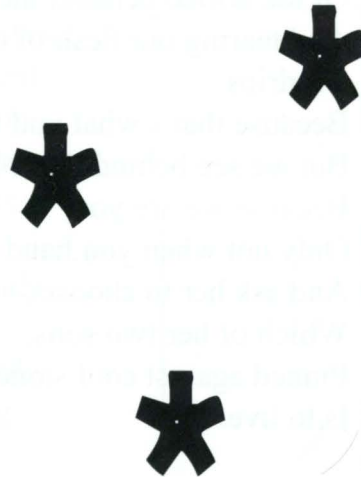
My Faith Lies In The Stars

By Whitney Cavin

All is hushed to silence as the crickets chirp a tune,
Hidden in the shadows drawn by castings of the moon.
I look up to the stars above that twinkle in their glow,
Telling me there's more to life than simply what's below.

The stars, they dance in joyous glee; a story to be told,
As if to say they know the tails of what this life may hold.
I wonder if they see me here, beneath their glowing light,
Pondering their secrets in the middle of the night.

For if they know my story and the things I've yet to find,
Can they tell of the mysteries the good Lord has in mind?
Oh Heavens on this starry night, please guide me on my quest,
My faith now lies where darkness falls, the night sky where you rest.



Le Mur

By Nicolas Doreste

You throw us against the wall
Where we wait for death
Delivered by the eyes behind the shades
Of the armed beneath the shade
And tearing our flesh of canvas,
Oil drips
Because that's what you wanted.
But we see behind those black, convex mirrors
Because we are you,
Only not when you hand a mother a gun
And ask her to choose
Which of her two sons,
Pinned against cool stone,
Is to live.

theatre

By Nicolas Doreste

With his black cloak and drawn sword,
He looks down into guilty eyes,
Dozes off and, for a moment,
Reverse-engineers emotion,
While his clean-shaven men
With creased-khaki pants,
Safe within doctrine,
Hold a golden, blinded Lady
Up in the sky
As they beat to the ground,
An innocent, black King.

Breathing Life

By Clayton Helms

When the softness of the forest in September
Recedes to crisper breaths from trees
With apples awaiting outstretched hands
When cloudless exhale brings a breeze
We take it to the forest
Us and our gusto
To slip through cool and closing doors
And shake it with the sugar maple
While she still has children who dance
When cloudless exhale lifts a trance
We have eight legs to run from diminished
Waves and laughs and bent dreams
But flowing not unlike her streams
We bask in cool yet golden winds

BUS

By Clayton Helms

There is a bus that rolls forever
Where the streets merge ocean's tide
Where the whitened leaves turn and grow
Where the lights at midnight burn and glow
Where the clay not centered loves to throw
Where the driver sleeps and trusts the ride

Lets laugh and love and ride this steel
And leave the sidewalk trees behind
Lets bring my brother legged four
Past the hidden wire door
And ride to prankster's shifting shore
On the bus that rolls forever

Lets dance and stamp our shoeless feet
On the line that skies divide
The steady amber from the blue
The shades that block the morning hue
And through what pranksters shuffled through
To pale and chilling weather

We built this bus that rolls forever
Out of grins and tears and hands
That mend each other without thought
And search for what these makers sought
In tying light into a knot
For this bus that rolls forever

And lines the page with pheasants' feather
From the barrel of more perfect cause
From the greenest eyes in all the land
From future's present's former sand
From music playing for the band
In the bus that rolls forever

On this bus that rolls forever
We built no belts to keep us safe
For this vessel can't collide
With blue and amber unified
And love replacing air inside
This bus will roll forever

I walked along the liquids edge
And saw fire laden lily
Too far ahead to know what's been
They turned and burned and fell

As heat vanquished, fleeting well
We knew not what we'd seen
Their chirps unflowing, silence seeps
Like water over stone

And searched beside and yet throughout
The tides and ripples merge
They shake their legs along the flies
And swallow them in turn

That neverending burns and melts
Into purity, reality, perceptually
Blending with the colors
Mirror image true

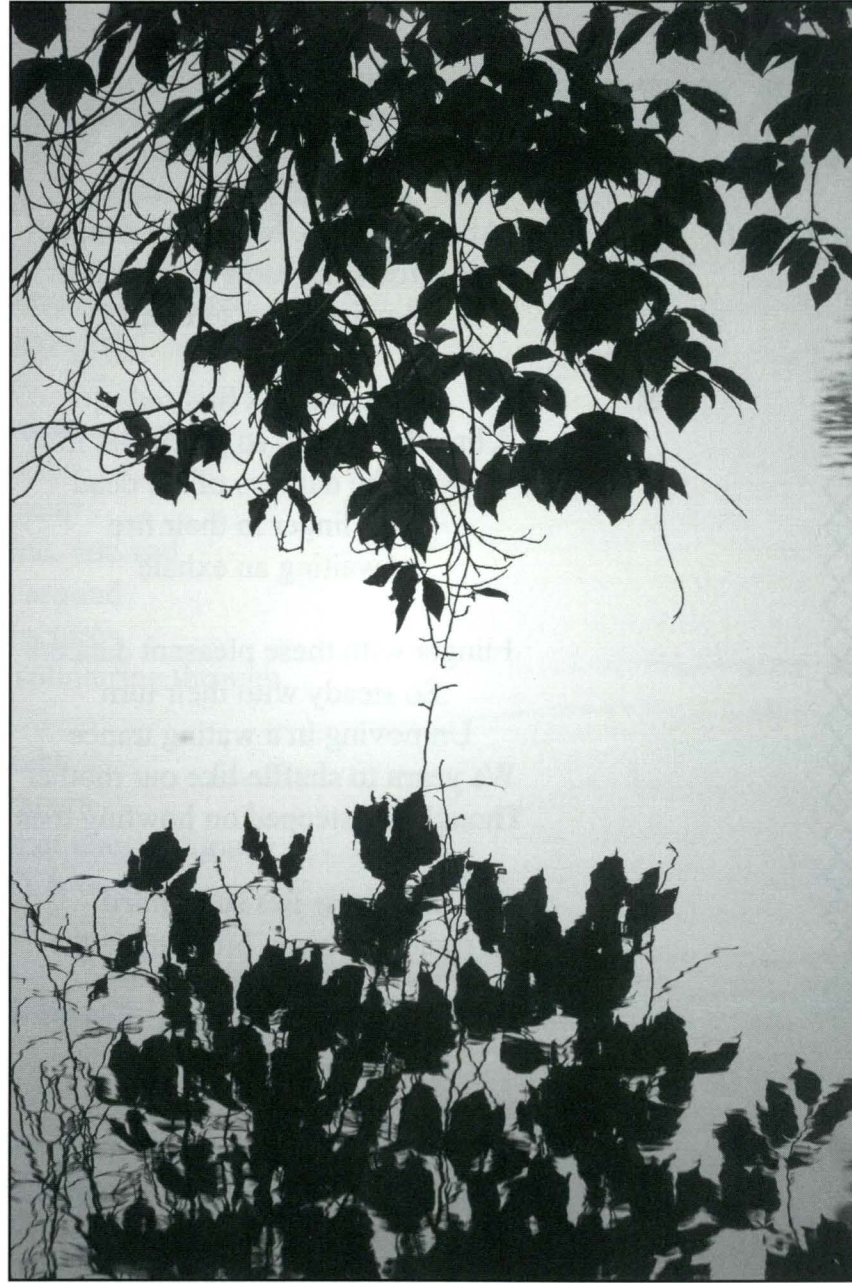
Through red and black and blue
We held their tails inside our hands
With laughter and touch
And felt numb while it ran

Those long thirdly nights
While I walked in sunless light
With flames lit at the end
Forcing me to contemplate

The feet that surely walk
The lips that surely talk
While descending into lights of three
We sought to only see

lily

By Clayton Helms



Topsy Turvy - *Nicki Smith*

The Dancers

By Clayton Helms



It breathes, the wind
And laps its ripples
Above the fish, below the winged
It throws the roots into the air
Allowing them to breathe

The forest's first red
A breath released so green can flow
With the dancers of the dead
They linger in their fire
Awaiting an exhale

I linger with these pleasant dancers
So steady with their turn
Unmoving in a wating trance
We yearn to shuffle like our mother
Though she stepped on howling toes

And now lies suspended
From a growing, breezing anger
So silly how,
It laps its ripples
To hide the fish
Yet struck our mother down

We wait for him to breath again
To steal them from their home
And drift gently down
To feed their friends
Whose mother's danced more modestly

ALPHABET POEM

By Katherine Hoffman

And there you were in
blue evening, waiting on the stone
curb, cold hands nervously
drawn into pockets,
eyes soft in the dark as I, road-
fragile, stepped off the
grey bus and took your
hand. Walking home, you and
I slipped carefully around
jagged sidewalk fractures,
knotted tree roots splintering through,
luminous as two
moons in failing light,
numberless skyscrapers
overhead-- a forest of uneven figures
piercing purple sky. It was
quiet and I shivered but you
reached for me and we walked
straight down the long path
toward home,
unyielding in the advancing
violet tide. Together
we were a glimmering
xenolith in cracked cement,
yellow as leaves in an autumn
zephyr.



broad street

By Katherine Hoffman

■ Broad Street, early morning
The dinge-clad
■ shuffle plastic bags,
backs curved
on bus stop benches
as I drive down Broad

■ each morning,
sunlight greying sidewalk
and sky as the red
■ pawnshop sign
blinks Open

■ I pass them, backlit
by warm yellow
coffee shop windows.

THE WINDOW

By Katherine Hoffman

Through the rectangle of my window
I see a man framed in deep blue
under the old yellow gaslights
looking for dropped change
on the sidewalk. The glass
is cold against my nose.

I wonder if he knows
he is watched from a window
as he searches among broken glass
bottles: brown, green, blue,
not the color of dropped change,
but twinkling in the old light.

Looking up toward me, he lights
a cigarette and rubs his nose.
I shift in my chair, change
position. To him the window
mirrors the sky, a blue
rectangle of glass.

I am eclipsed by glass,
hidden by reflected light
as though the moon's blue
face obscures me. No,
sitting in the window
I am changed,

I am wholly changed.

I am the glass.

I am the window.

I am reflected light.

The searching man knows

I'm there. I'm deep blue.

But rising sun fades my blue.

The man stops looking for change,
gaslight having shown no
sign of cash among the bottle glass.
He crushes his cigarette light,
not looking back at the window.

I push my nose against changed
glass, no longer blue, framed
window clear in growing light.

i choke

By Betty Holloway

down your lighter
breath only to
throw it back
up later or let
it burn in the
shallows of my stomach
for an irresponsible amount
of time, or maybe it
will evaporate
behind my eyes, once
again blinding me with
fleshly colors to
fill the naked
space between us.

i stumbled

Our smoking bench, outside
our first hate verses, rare antonyms, shadows
--a gabble of broken relationships
and the cigarettes we smoked to fix them

when i saw

By Betty Holloway

And how they were never fixed
but linger in my head
a small place with whitewashed walls
no doors, just windows
an immense orange hazard sign reading
DO NOT ENTER. TRESSPASSERS WILL BE SHOT.

I can't fill it with everything that came after.

I stumbled when I saw

I can only see it through new-fangled eyes
morphing all those slaps in the face
to touches that wake you from too-long sleep,
startling your senses from a quickly fading dream
to a cold sweat with a heartbeat.



OLive

.....

branch

By Betty Holloway

the word hangs
in the air like a traveling
feather, burning
slowly. Part of
you, part of me lost
in smoke. Soft edges
singed, each fleck
smoldering and
falling: lost to

ash. But the interior
remains a charred
frame. It dangles
in limbo above our
faces. Too close, it lingers
on our wet cheeks and in
the corners of our

eyes. Every mouthful
of smoke, burn of
our tongues, sweep of our
noses. And I can
see myself in yours. And you
can see yourself

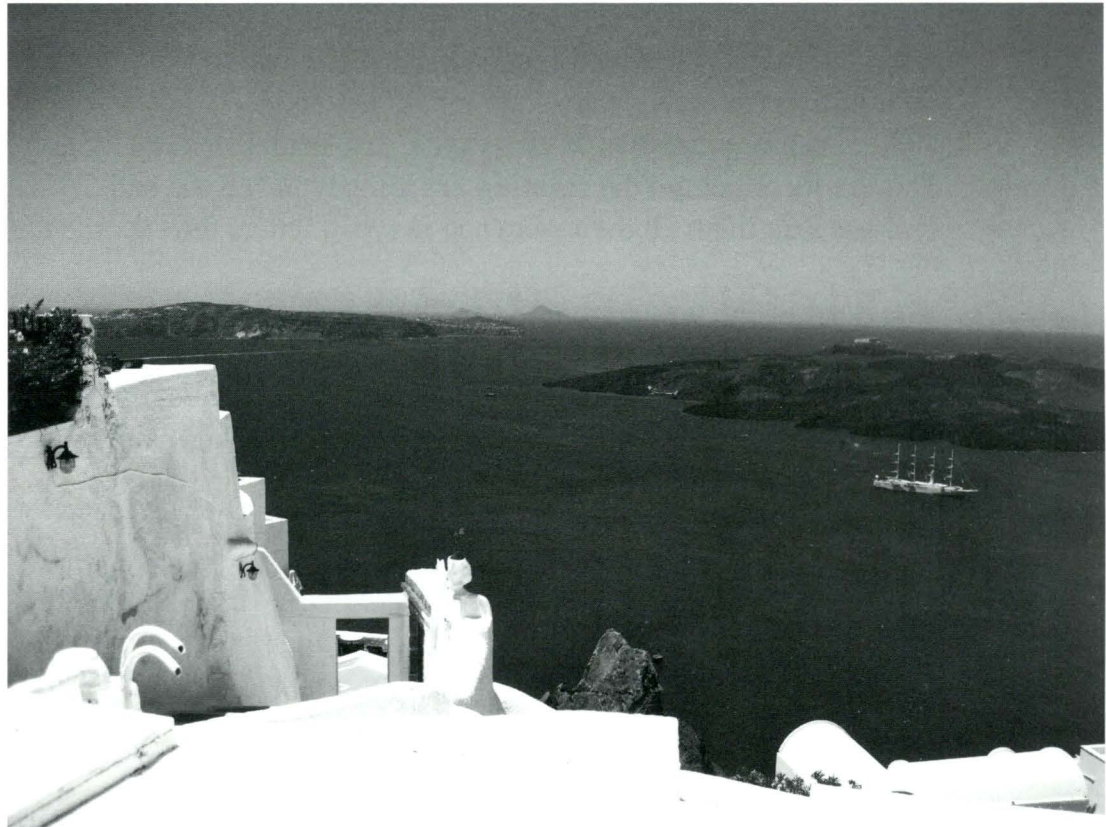
in mine. And you
are here. And I am
here. But we are
not here
together.

A VOICE

a voice crying out in silence.
the depths of my dreams bare witness to it.
its loud--- clear as day,
even though it only sounds at night.
or maybe that's just when i hear it.
too saturated with conscious to listen to this spirit--
that earnestly cries out for me

By Cheleah Jackson

Untitled - Caitlin Manak



Pell-Mell World: *a sestina*

By Addison Liming

The town men had been waiting though their faces remained pale,
and the sky did not speak storms though its hue was morbid grey.
The men would all be punished, now victims all the males.
It would do no good to fight, they saw no other path
than to be taken for the deeds once done in rooms where they now laugh,
to be taken to the trial when the world is split in half.

They protest: "The world is splinters, it cannot be in half!
As if the world is but two liquids, balanced in two pails!"
A notion so ridiculous they cannot help but laugh.
"There is more than two to every side, just shades of vaguely grey."
But the force behind the splitting has already paved the path
and has sent them all their sentence in typed letters through the mails.

The deed which was committed by the town's own set of males
divided men from women, split the town in two, in half.
The deed they planned together when they started down this path
has led them to this letter, and the consequence makes pale
and sickly all assumed in a world presumed grey,
their chuckles merely pleas to stop the judge's final laugh.

Oh there were cackles, there were chuckles, at that deed each one *still* laughs—
Each had forced love on a woman, to prove that he was male.
Each had thought he'd be forgiven in the somber sunlight grey
by the generosity and need of the lovely other half,
their cheeks and lips so red and their foreheads deathly pale—
but in the ash grey light of morning men saw just a new nasty path.

And they'd forged their own black chains to clank along the path,
but the moral grey they saw in life still gave them gall to laugh.
Now each reads his sentence in letters typed on paper pale.
It is calling him the criminal, him the forceful, him the male.
It summons him to where he will be tried by the world in half,
proof of all the colors—a world not merely grey.

*While It's nice to paint the world into shades of moral grey,
your deeds, you men in town, have built up walls upon your path
that divide you from the brightness that would have been the better half.
Your rooms will not protect you and neither will your laughs.
So spoke the judge's letters, received by the town males,
the letters which colored their world and made their faces pale.*

Laugh do not the women, though deserved are the males
as half the world turns colors and half the world turns pale.
Form their path it's all still grey, though—all is play, but all is grey.

CONSPIRACY POEM

By Steve Minnich

The poet is widening the space
between the conspiracy
and the theory. Every grand organization
has its rogue groups, its maverick individuals.
Somewhere along the chain,
word will be that the order comes from the top.
There will always be a social element
involved, the action must be approved
by a peer, at least. Even a higher order.
The conspiracy is not necessarily a bad thing.
Only an element of change.
The Olympians were rogues. This is a celebrated concept.
Of course, every truth must involve
some chaos, Loki can attest.
The reader now recalls the period of chaos that was the war for Olympus.
The Civil War. Revolutionary War.
Although every war is a revolution in some way.
This has multiple understandings :
 things carry on
 things change
These understandings are not mutually exclusive
but simultaneous. The poet wonders
if she is a conspiracy or a theory,
a rogue, a maverick, one of the many.
She wonders if conspiracy only exists in theory, if she only exists in theory,
the difference between herself and the poet.

She wonders if even the God figure
could be only part of a conspiracy,
what that would make of her,
of the strings holding her pen,
of the reader pulling the strings.



Untitled - *Caitlin Manak*

'No'

the poet responds

'I will not write him a love poem.'

It was a suggestion from a friend
to make her heart known.

'The poet cannot write of love
if the poet is in love.

The perspective is lost.

The love poem suddenly becomes about the poet,
and the ordering, first person, second,
it's all wrong.

Every poem fails, in the end, to finish what it started.'

But the love poem, the poet argues, fails to even start.

She goes on. The businessman finds the best market
to buy a rose. He knows

its terrible inadequacy, but he knows nothing else.

The truth of it is, he would trade all
to be with the one he loves. The actor
knows to cut the act.

The professor grows silent.

The poet cannot help but to signify on the examples set before her :

the king hands over his crown for a dance in the court

the Goodman deals with the devil

young lovers destroy the possibilities of age

Odysseus ends his journey, native soil unrecognized.

Each of these acts requires a destruction of character.

'How can I destroy the poet

by writing a love poem?'

The poet voices her ultimate paradox, uncaps her pen. The reader reads a page smeared with
overflowing ink, the pen's contents spilled out. This poem was written for him long ago. He
wonders if anyone has been able to read it in the time between.



love poem

By Steve Minnich



Shock and Awe - *Allie Gutshall*

journey forward

We can't quite skip
this pavement, the path-
os ringing, resonant for this ex-
odus back to the middle—the end
cannot be overt-
ly satisfied—crouch
to the heavens, press
narrowly against the split
ends of hell's blazes, crawl
swiftly—we must water
our budding wingspan or
be consumed within
the crevices
of this un-
charted path

By Armani Morrison

AFTERNOON TRANSIT

By Armani Morrison

Yeah, I said to her, something like that. It didn't matter that she hadn't said anything. Or that I was possibly wrong. It didn't even matter that she hadn't heard me, if indeed she hadn't. We remained as we were—she sat with feet apart yet legs touching at the knees, slouched over like a crumpled piece of newspaper, and I stood a yard away, holding on to the hanging ceiling loops, staring at her so as to not concentrate too hard on the odor drifting from another, uncomfortably close commuter. Bracken Square stumbled through the windows and the bus slowed to a halt. Jerking herself up from her post, she half-sauntered, half-stomped her way past the standers and the sitters to descend the handful of steps that led to home, I assumed. For a second I thought I saw her turn and wave goodbye to me or fix her belt or sneeze violently, but I don't think she did any of those things. She mounted the curb and didn't bother looking back, although my eyes never left her. She would be back. Tomorrow maybe, or next Wednesday. And we would pick up our conversation where we left off, and maybe she would hear me and maybe she wouldn't. And that was okay with me.

Shameless
In
*Los
Angeles*

By Shohsei Oda

Welcome to the city of the eternal night
Our sins and scars hidden by the production light
Afraid of the forgotten, scathing sight
Of our uncrucified Jesus Christ

No one has saved us, no one could
No Holy redemption in Hollywood
For a lost cause born of the merciless
Sons and daughters of unrelenting masochists

So we're swept into our realm with no place to go
Hidden from the higher, ushered into the low
The underground subculture that has been unknown
But into the mainstream we have grown

Unaware of our strength we have stayed silent
But with the flashing of cameras we will grow violent
Not of resentment or desire of solutions
But because it's the only outlet for our confusion

How did our culture of swallowed pain and strife
Which only set foot in the world of nightlife

Become the daytime programming that it now is
On sobriety and monogamy we take a piss

Countless whores we will call lovers
And drugs become our pain relievers
Alcohol replaces the comfort of mothers
Our creativity and brain cells sent into the ether

We've relieved heroes for drunken sex symbols
Privacy less valuable than the need to know
Baptized in the endless neon glow
We will attempt to fill this bottomless hole

The grief of unfulfilled Disney dreams
Mutating princesses, witches obscene
Skiing in bathrooms before every scene
Slaving away for the cash machine

And we will write in a fairy tale ending
Sponsored by Coke, happiness vending
Our names and deeds by tonight will be trending
The result of your mindless money spending.

MY MOTHER'S PIANO

By Katie Toussaint

At times I comprehend the reason for remnants.
How broken dust means something happened here.
The hands I can hear are not my own.
At midnight they thorn ivory slenders.
Through minutes they prick me from sleep.
Through minutes they pass hesitant, imperfect.
The hands lull me to listen to their marbled echo,
never to respond, for their answer is their own.
A fragment of slumber is only subverted
by embellishments of night; this quake
wakens what is deemed unnatural.
Just once I watched but could not see
the hands, only back, tired, bent.
But the back was not old, nor the hands.
The sheets twisted in my fists give me nothing
when I need more than the music of hands.
This bed is a hollow place.
This bed knows no movement of its own.
I know the movement of others.
I know better that which is not my own.
At times I comprehend how wrong I am.
At times I comprehend how confounded I can be
to think these days have years between them, have space
that stretches. How it's not worth looking for more than what I see—
quit this pretense that these hands are attached
to something more than what the eyes can level.
Quit waiting when these hands will no more rest
than touch.



Untitled - Kyle Oliver



To The Good Life - *Laura Barry*

maybe

By Cheyenne Varner

somewhere in a house on a street
lined with sidewalks and grass

maybe not green grass, maybe
no grass at all, maybe just roads

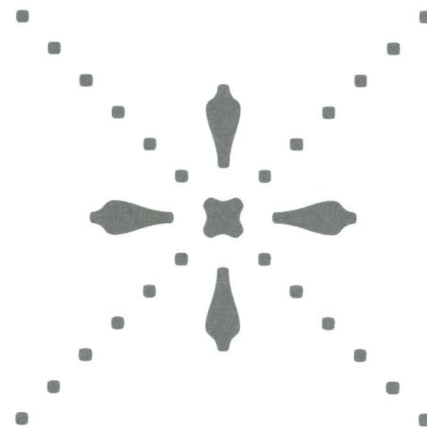
there is a man in a window, or
maybe just by a window, or maybe
just inside a door, or sitting in
a chair, or at the side of a bed;

he is waiting for the same thing
i am waiting for
the same thing we all wait for;

he wonders if somewhere in a city
filled with buildings and trees,

in a room at a school, or maybe
in a library, or at a little table for two
in a small cafe, or sitting outside
on a park bench, maybe

there is a girl;
and look, here i am.
funny how that works out,
maybe.



if

for every needle prick
every paper cut
every knee scraped
every tongue bit
every finger jammed
every elbow banged
every eye poked
every toe stubbed

every hope flown
every dream sunk
every adoration unreturned

a word were whispered
in my ear
i would have either written
one million poems
or one
crushingly human.

By Cheyenne Varner

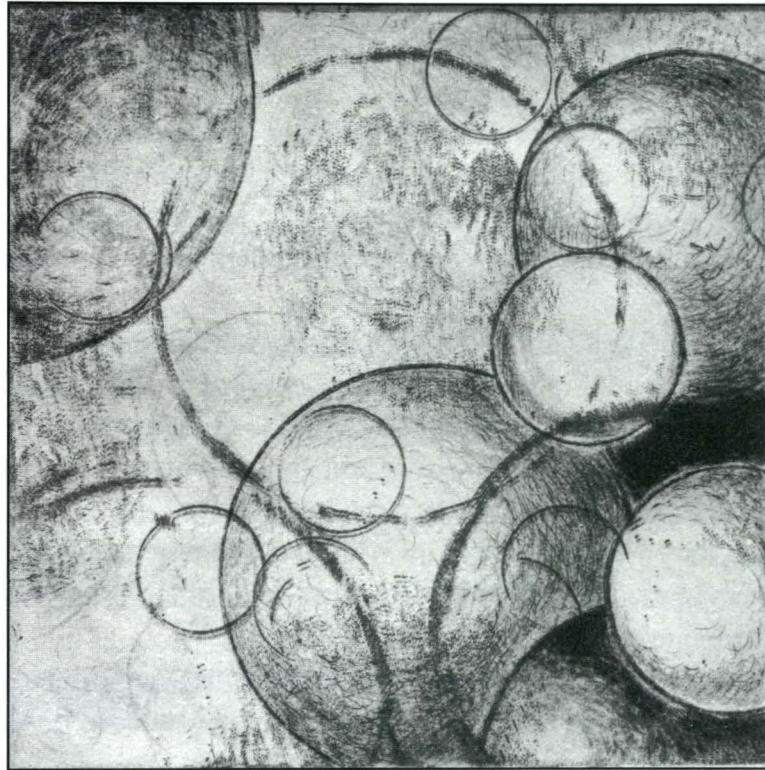
Untitled

By Cheyenne Varner

watch her hopscotch down
the steps— a good morning
little girl with a tear in her eye.
it's too early for crying,
says the neighbor— she replies:
just a bit of fairy dust in my eye
from last night's bittersweet
dreams; do you have any
teaspoons of sugar?—
but he'd just run out.

Section Three

Miscellaneous



Hemitite - *Elizabeth Ygartua*

THEOPHOBIA

By Nora Ciano

I have an unnatural void deep in my gut that I first got when I watched Father Bill make the funniest kid in study hall's sister translate to her immigrant parents that St. Columbus wouldn't bury their son because he hung himself in his bedroom closet before he could even drive. They changed the death certificate betraying his last sinful statement just so Jesus could lay him down in the ground like the missionaries had said was right. That's when I realized that the love of god can black out compassion and just some basic common sense

that was missing in San Geronimo when I listened to a condescending British woman preach all that was holy to children orphaned by choice until she tired and decided singing songs about the Shepard would be more productive. She invited all to join upstairs, while simultaneously asking me to keep Marco in the courtyard. I did, and Marco had to pretend that in addition to being blind and crippled, just because medicine never reached mountains like these, he was also deaf and couldn't hear the voices of his fifty brothers and sisters above. The hymns ended and she came back and complained how awful the rat bites were last night even though these brown dusty babies asked to be tucked in too tight each evening so that they wouldn't wake up with toes missing because they never knew any different. It leaves me so scared that I'm angry, an anger

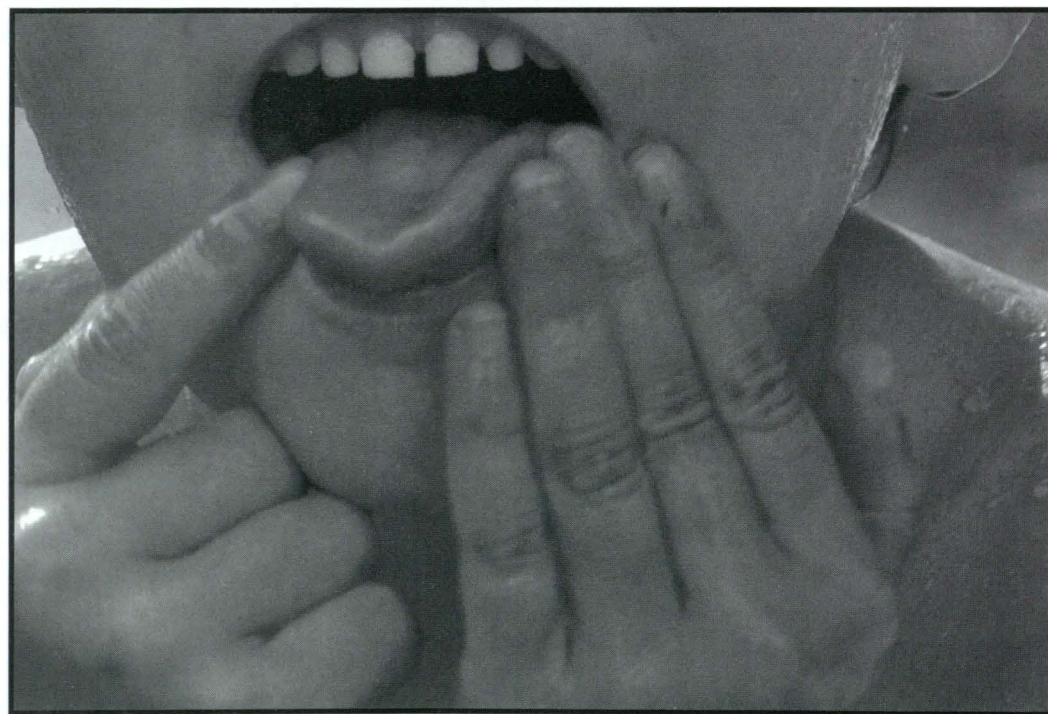
I can feel growing, in a pit in the ground sprouting at my cousin's house in Sag Harbor, the place he came after the seminary didn't want him anymore. Pictures of his dead partner line the antique dresser in the hall so he can look at what he got and gave up through his own face being eaten away. My boiling frustration is squeezed through his thick sacred space that I can't even turn in without my shoulder brushing against another ceramic ordained display or cross until it erupts and I shake him in my head shouting "Enough! John Paul still doesn't want to taste your Easter pies!"

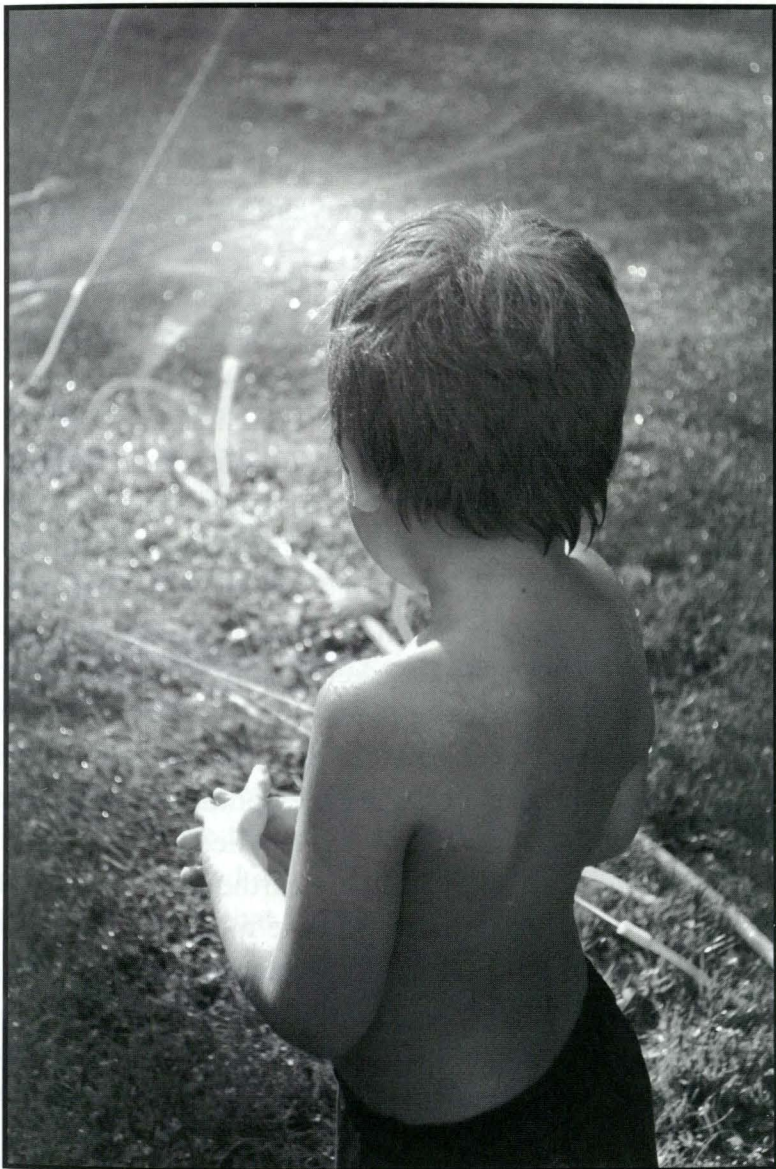
The Egon Schiele *Exhibit* in Cesky Krumlov

How tragic that *The Woman With Legs Drawn Up* should be hung in a place she was never suppose to be and compared especially in death to his real live, the first one, of which she was cloned from in the color of her hair, the sound of her voice and even her eyes that reveal the aching desire to be the other red-head looking through his mother's Bohemian windows at the fairy tale burnt orange rooftops.

How even more humiliating for her to be clothed when everyone else is naked. Her forced modesty claims the title of wife, but surrenders the glory the other children hold in her husband's portrayal of the stunning red slits between their legs and barely budded breasts. He stroked them over and over with his paint-brush so intimately that the viewers can't look for too long. She stares straight on.

By Nora Ciano





Set of 4

Caitlin Manak



AN EARTHQUAKE

a collection of dissimilar moments

Not only was it our first class together, but it was also our first class after the earthquake. As our first assignment for our Creative Writing class with visiting professor and distinguished writer, Honor Moore, we had to write, in fifteen minutes, our experience of this event. It was still very fresh in our minds. Even though we had all been on the same shaky ground about forty-seven minutes before, the differences in our stories surprised us as much as the earthquake itself.

When I think of an earthquake, I think action. Ground-shaking, building-crumbling, earth-splitting action. Really though, the climax of my earthquake was the opposite. It was the waiting. Maybe this is because nothing actually happened in my earthquake. Nothing crumbled, no one died. The earth below my feet is all in one piece. The waiting for all of these horrible things to start happening (that never actually happened) was the worst part. I had finished eating some delicious 302-calorie mozzarella sticks in D-Hall with ketchup (because I am just not classy enough for marinara sauce). Leah and I were sitting at a circular table in the center of the middle room. All our other friends had left, the conversation was waning, and I knew we would be leaving any second. Then, I felt it. I stood completely still, a defense mechanism I normally find silly when employed by scared rabbits in my front yard. Nonetheless, I froze. I looked at Leah to see some sort of reaction in her face that she felt it too, that I wasn't crazy. When her eyes met mine, we exchanged a glance of mutual confusion, and then both looked up. Why one would look up when it is the ground below you that is threatening, I do not know, but I froze even more so when I saw the large chandeliers quivering above me. My eyes stayed fixed on them as I listened to my classmates shout in excitement and panic around me. I thought of my mom and my brothers and how I really should move away, far, far away from these quivering chandeliers. And, yet, I waited. I must have waited for at least a minute, but thoughts rushed through me at

an impatient, panicked pace. Part of me wanted to grab my frozen self by the shoulders and shake me. Why am I still waiting?

I never thought I would experience an earthquake, and even now I don't fully grasp the idea. It was on the first day of classes on a beautiful day in August, with no wind, or rain, or warning. The professor had stopped explaining the syllabus turn off the air conditioner because people were complaining of the cold. No more than a minute later and the building was shaking as if a class had just been let out and they were stampeding down the stairs and through the halls. We sat for a minute, unable to understand the fact that this might actually be an earthquake. None of us even knew how to handle this particular natural disaster. The professor asked if maybe we should go outside, so we stood up and left, some of us laughing and some of us sprinting. When we finally escaped the building, the mass of people on the lawns and clustered on the sidewalks essentially verified the earthquake theory and the phone calls from terrified parents began pouring in. Though it was a tried and true earthquake, the gentle shaking of the tables in the room reminded me more of a massage chair at the nail salon and less of a deadly disaster capable of killing millions. Though I am grateful this particular quake has not, to my knowledge, injured anyone, I am most grateful that the professor was too scared to return to the building and we held the remainder of the class outside in the beautiful August sunshine.

I was eating my brie and ham “mini” sandwich, extra mango chutney because what they had was not enough. Outside, because the weather was beautiful. Inside, because we were enclosed in the courtyard. The ground started rumbling, and I thought nothing of it. Construction, we thought, it is believed. Then confusion, because the ground, the walls, the arches, all were shaking. Beautiful, prone, architecture about to fall. Take what’s yours and run away. Laughter because we are glad to be alive. Small earthquake, big feelings. See friends of long away. Laughing, laughing gossip. Wait it out, because he says so. Aftershock, maybe. Wait it out, and see what happens. Long gone, time slips through and we are back again. Back to normal life.

I had been sitting wedged in the middle of the same navy blue plush sofa for thirty minutes. The University of Richmond women’s basketball head coach had been talking to the entire team about the coming season for at least thirty minutes. As usual, I was nervous listening to the head coach. My nervousness was the cause of my statue-like position. Sure, my butt and legs had fallen asleep ten minutes ago, but I did not dare to move.

My coach had been discussing expectations for the season when it all began.

A rumble in the locker room walls started off gently, almost like the distant vibrations of a construction site. I still tried to focus on the voice of our coach, but I could not help seeing out of the corner of my eye something that I knew was not normal.

A picture frame on the wall was shaking. My initial thought was that it looked as if the picture frame was shaking in fear. The comical thought that the picture felt the same as I felt at that moment made me smile slightly.

That was when I started to feel my frozen figure vibrate and the couch rumble, as if I were on one of those expensive massage chairs you see in the mall, but that no one actually dishes out hundreds of dollars to buy.

Just as I was really starting to enjoy my massage, it stopped.

I looked across my body and saw another basketball player gripping her chair with such force that you would have thought its entire wooden frame would shatter at any moment.

At the beginning of my full body massage, our coach had momentarily stopped his speech. But once the shaking ended and he figured out what had happened, he chuckled to himself as someone in the room yelled, “Earthquake!”

I was in my room trying to read before a meeting and the bottle on the bookshelf started to shake. The whole room was shaking, really, and that old Jerry Lee Lewis song – A Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On – came to mind. This room shakes too much. I should go smoke. Wait, rooms aren’t supposed to shake. Maybe I should let my boss know – if those bottles on the bookshelf break he’ll think there was a party in here. But there’s no party without music, we ain’t fakin’. Anyway, it’s not even 2pm. The sun is still out. Is it laundry? Christ, that’s a lot of laundry. Oh shit, it’s an earthquake, isn’t it? I just trained for this. If the bottles would stop shaking I could focus. In the blue binder by my bed there’s a piece of paper, cut in half, that says “In the event of an earthquake something something something.” Call a number? Go to the basement? No, that’s dumb – in an earthquake buildings fall from the bottom somehow. I’ll just leave. I’ll just stay away from trees and maybe never come back. I have to come back for class, okay, but I’ll still leave and if anyone asks I’ll say I was at D-Hall. I just go around the back and walk back to the hall – there are people outside that will have seen me coming back but not leaving. That’s perfect. It’ll be like I was gone the whole time.

I was lost again, looking for Ryland. Of course I was late because I had spent too long chatting in the dining hall, and of course I was lost because Richmond is confusing with all the buildings and courtyards that look the same. Eventually I did find my class, and I made sure to make good use of my voice to say “sorry”, so they would know I was international and think that my lateness was ok.

Around two we had a bit of an interruption. There was a really loud

noise that was shaking the building a little. "What the bloody hell is that?" I said to myself, thinking those people upstairs were a bit rude and couldn't drag those tables a bit quieter. Then it got a little louder, and when I say a little, I mean a lot. I was sitting there a bit confused, wondering why they dancing for upstairs. Bit strange, I didn't know they had a place for that in this building. Everyone else was chatting, and someone told me that this building was old and it was the air conditioning. Oh that explains it, but it didn't really because then, why was everything shaking, and now that noise was getting louder, and it was a noise I'd never heard before, and now my chair was having a bit of a rattle too. I still didn't think anything was really wrong. But my professor looked at me and said that we do get earthquakes here in Virginia. Earthquakes? No, not really, this couldn't be an earthquake. Where's the split in the floor that you fall into? But then I stopped questioning it and I got a little scared. The professor said we should go outside.

Outside it wasn't shaking anymore, and I think the earthquake had stopped. This is where the funniest thing I observed happened. We grouped for a second and then everyone was on their iPhones. First of all, how did everyone have iPhones. And secondly, they weren't on the iPhones to confirm the earthquake, but to facebook and text. So outside everyone was texting, and facebooking, and I was just having a look around because I had nothing else to do. There were files of people coming out of the buildings, and teachers from others classes came over to tell us that indeed it had been an earthquake. A real earthquake. I had been in a real earthquake in America. Now this was something really different to write home about.

The earthquake was the silliest thing that happened all day. I was in my Art History class, Art of Japan, thinking that I wanted the professor to be my grandfather, even though I already have a grandfather. And then my desk started moving. My first thought was that there was some construction going on in the room right below. But the motion did not stop, it kept going. I could feel myself smiling as I

saw the three girls sitting in front of me holding each other's hands and about to cry. Their eyes glassy and the tears wanting to fall. But they didn't. The window shutters were drawn and they moved along with the vibrations of the building, allowing the light from outside to come into the room in fast-paced intervals.

The professor was still talking, explaining how earthquakes were very common in Japan. His voice remained serene. Secretly, I think he was enjoying it as much as I was. His calm voice was preventing anyone from running out of the classroom. The window shutters were flapping against the windows and the loose nails in the desks were hitting against the iron. But my professor kept on talking about Japan as I thought, this earthquake is not as bad as the one we had back home that afternoon I was with my grandfather.

When the earthquake happened, part of me, a larger part than I'd like to admit, thought it was a really well timed special effect. When I have one of my many daydreams I imagine my life as a movie or book or TV show with all the artifice and plot contrivances that go with it. It was just too perfect. I hadn't missed much despite being late for my philosophy class. I had only skimmed the reading the professor had sent so I was glad we were staring with an exercise that had nothing to do with it: "Write one philosophical question and one scientific question." After we'd finished, we were told to explain why we assigned the question as such. We only got to one girl. There was the beginning of a lively discussion that I had no intention in taking part of. She said something about her scientific question being scientific because it dealt with facts. Just the sort of mistake the professor was waiting for. Like a cop or a lawyer on a cornered criminal, the professor's words seemed to dance and entrap until finally she ended with, "Are you trying to say there are no FACTS in philosophy?" The roomed rumbled. I thought it was thunder. My God, I thought. It's like she did that with her mind. Though as it continued, it became less dramatic and more bizarre. Thunder doesn't last that long, or cause the ground to shake. We were more confused than scared. "Guys, this is an earthquake," someone finally said.

"It's like we pissed off the gods of philosophy." Which I decided was much cooler than my thought. We did nothing until someone told everyone to get out of the building. And suddenly life was disappointing again. No cool dramatic timing or the beginning of a grand adventure. Just a thing that happened that lead to awkward small talk outside. And we didn't even get out of class.

I was pushing the cubes of honeydew melon around my plate thinking of something I could say. Dear Michael, what a guy, had brought two friends to our lunch date and I was having trouble adapting to the manliness of the conversation. They were saying something about alcohol. I popped a cube into my mouth, and just as soon, had to spit it out. "Jesus, D-Hall," I said, poking at the rest of the melon in the bowl. The fruit was rock hard.

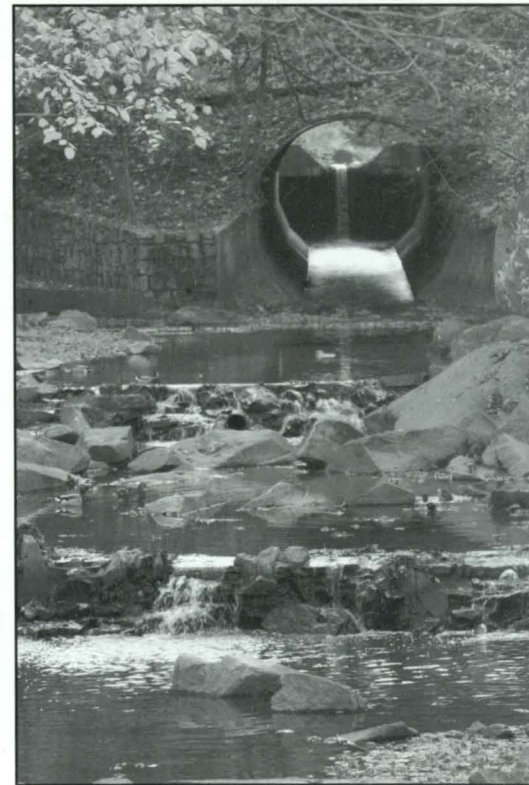
Then, our drinks were shaking, and all of us were at a loss for words. Wide-eyed, we whipped around to scan the room and found that everyone else was doing the same. Forks clanged onto tables and trays as we watched, waiting for a hint at what to do. Then, a distressed staffer, bucket and rag raised overhead, shrieked for her supervisor. "Help! Quick!" We ran.

Another staffer: "Whose got a smart phone?"

By:

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Nabila Rahman, Ryann Dannelly, E.B.,
Lean Crowley, Lourdes Figueroa,
Tiffani Lewis-Lockhart, Katie Branca.*

Stadium - *Emily Marsch*



Sewer - *Kyle Oliver*



Ebb and Flow - *Laura Barry*



Turkish De Light - Allie Gutshall

Untitled - *Emily Marsch*



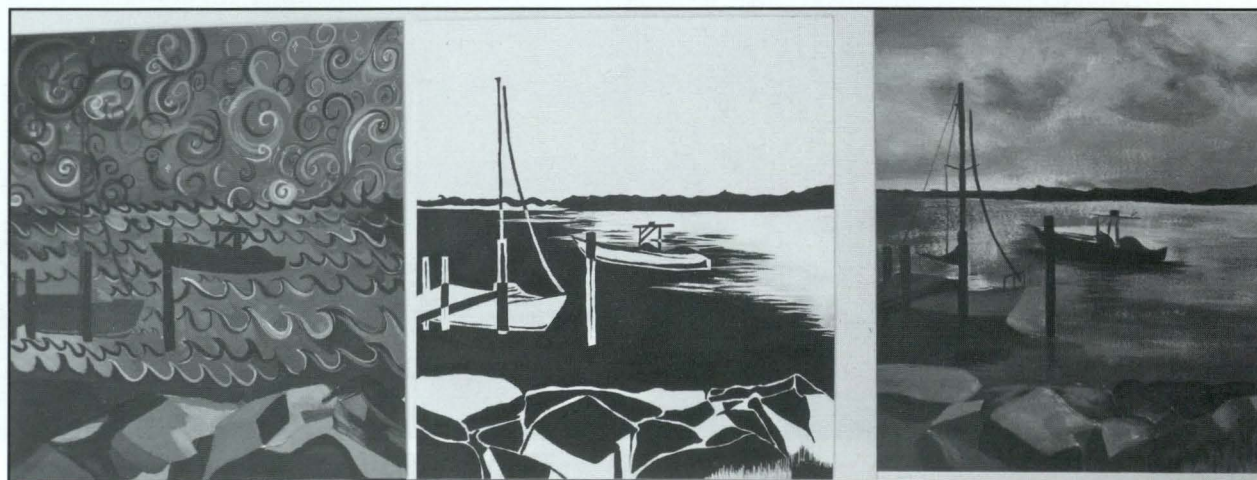


The Warmth of a Streetlight - *Laura Barry*



Nautical

Sarah Muse





Notes:

